

**THE SOCIAL VISION OF GENGA IDOWU'S
FICTION**

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE MA DEGREE IN LITERATURE
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UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION

DECLARATION

This is this is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other
University

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Date: 8/7/2003.

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university
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Signature: 

Date: 9 July 2003

DEDICATION

To my mother Teresia Wangari Muturi,
my father Mr.Eliud Muturi Kamau,and the whole Muturi family

for their love and care.

Asante sana nyote.

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ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of the social vision of Genga Idowu's fiction. The study relies on library research and the critical analysis of Idowu's literary works. It also demonstrates that Idowu's life influences the vision in her fiction.

Theoretically, the thesis is hinged on Liberal Feminism and the Sociological Theory of literature. On the one hand, Liberal Feminism enables it to explore feminist ideals embedded in Idowu's fiction and to argue that she does not advocate the total annihilation of patriarchal social structures for the realisation of a gender sensitive society. On the other hand, the Sociological Theory gives credibility to the study's assertion that Idowu's fiction is functional and that her gender does influence her fiction.

Finally, the study mainly through a critical analysis of the emergent social vision from Idowu's portrayal of indigenous African traditions and modernity in Africa, concludes that Idowu in her fiction envisions a moral, humane society based on gender equity.

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INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The late Genga Idowu, who passed away in 1993 at the age of thirty-eight years, was an upcoming Kenyan writer with a lot of promise. Before her untimely death, she had published two novels: Lady in Chains (1993) and My Heart On Trial (1997). Apart from these, she had also published a didactic literary text on gender and marriage entitled Memories into Marriage (1995), and numerous short stories for children. Despite her literary contribution, Genga Idowu's literary works are yet to receive serious and sustained critical attention from literary critics who concentrate on canonical writers. The only criticism it has attracted is that of newspaper reviewers whose articles are by nature short, and in some instances too general. This study aims at giving Idowu's literary works the deserved literary attention they have been denied by studying the social vision they project. This kind of attention is desirable for "(t)exts become important and find their way into syllabuses - are, in short, admitted to the literary canon-when they are written about" (Stratton, 3).

In its analysis of the social vision in Genga Idowu's fiction, this study defines social vision as the insight of a desirable future society that emanates from a comprehension of the existing social realities. It is positive in nature, as it is a yearning for humane social relationships that are the mainstay of a healthy society.

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1.1 Statement of the Problem

There is no known comprehensive literary research that has been undertaken on Idowu's fiction. This means that her fiction is outside the literary canon. The study examines the pertinent issues dealt with in Idowu's fiction, and through a critical analysis of their presentation seeks to determine the underlying social vision. In a nutshell, this study endeavours to determine the positive social message about the future that Idowu's fiction contains.

1.2 Definition of Terms

The term "traditions" refers to values, beliefs, practices and modes of life that have a long relationship with a group of people. Tradition is "perennial, or a part of what has endured in the culture of the people" (Oruka, 80). In this thesis we confine ourselves to the traditions, that have been passed down from one generation to the next, of indigenous African communities.

"Modernism" has been used to mean values, beliefs, practices and lifestyle that have a more recent relationship with African people (Oruka, 80). In this thesis, it refers to western values, beliefs, practices and lifestyle that have a more recent relationship with the African people as opposed to African indigenous traditions.

1.3 Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the study are:

i) A critical analysis of Genga Idowu's fiction reveals that she has a vision of a humane society.

ii) The social vision discernible in Genga Idowu's fiction is considerably influenced by feminist ideals.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

i) To pioneer an in-depth literary study of Idowu's fiction that would create interest in her work.

ii) To critically analyse the social vision in Idowu's fiction.

1.5 Justification

Firstly, by studying Genga Idowu, we hope to divert attention from male writers and canonical female writers such as Grace Ogot, Rebecka Njau and Oludhe Macgoye and direct it at new and upcoming female writers. Secondly, Genga Idowu's fiction has only received a little critical attention. The only criticism available is in the form of newspaper reviews. These reviews are inadequate for some are poorly researched and others general in nature. This means there is room for research. Thirdly we believe that Idowu's literary works have something important to say to society, that her fiction has a vision that is geared towards a better society.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

This study examines Lady in Chains (1993), Memories into Marriage (1995) and My Heart On Trial (1999). It also refers to the available stories by Idowu published in various issues of Pied Crow magazine. It excludes her short stories published in Germany, Switzerland and Nigeria, which were inaccessible. Her posthumous collection of children stories, The Hero of the Ridges and other stories (2000) which was acquired during the final stages of the thesis was integrated in chapter one that deals with Idowu's biography and literary works.

1.7 Literature Review

The literature review is divided into four parts. The first is a general review of studies on social vision, the second reviews some texts that theorise about the role of female writers vis-à-vis the position of women in society, the third reviews some critical works on Kenyan women writers, while the last part will review the available material on Idowu's fiction.

Myth, Literature and the African World by Wole Soyinka dedicates two chapters to the study of ideology and social vision. In this book Soyinka defines social vision as:

A creative concern which conceptualises or extends actuality beyond the immediately attainable, a concern which upsets orthodox acceptances in an effort to free society of historical or other superstitions ...(66).

He also says that the extension of reality into regions of "ideological projections, the social vision" (64) is the second function of literature, the first being the reflection of reality.

Soyinka's definition of social vision which shows that it is a yearning for that which is not immediately achievable, and which aims at freeing society from certain accepted practices,

beliefs and so on, is illuminating for our study. Firstly it shows that social vision concerns itself with the future, and that it seeks to change social reality. Secondly, his belief that the extension of reality into the realm of social vision is one of the fundamental function of literature, makes our study of the social vision of Idowu's fiction, a worthwhile academic undertaking.

Apart from defining and theorising about social vision, Soyinka also discusses the social vision of some literary texts. These include William Canton's The African, Lewis Nkosi's Rhythms of Violence, and Richard Rive's Make Like a Slave. His analysis, which also comments on the artistry of the works, reveals that the vision propagated in each of these texts is that of social reconciliation. The positive nature of this vision, and others that Soyinka discusses bears out the fact that social vision is positively inclined and geared towards a better society. The revelation of the fact that social vision is positively inclined in Soyinka's analysis of texts, touches on an aspect that is not clarified in his definition which talks about "upsetting orthodox acceptances", and which we incorporate in the one adopted in this study. Soyinka's analysis is also important to our study not only because it increases our understanding of what social vision is, but because it also shows that as critics we should not shy away from criticising the artistry of writers merely because they project positive social visions.

"The Social Vision of Robert Seremuga's Works" an unpublished thesis by J. Masheti defines social vision as "the ability to comprehend and grasp the truth that underlies facts, and the use of such knowledge to creatively look ahead" (2). This definition like the one adopted in this study shows that social vision that is geared towards the future springs from an understanding of social facts. However, like Soyinka's definition, Masheti's definition does not explicitly

capture the positive nature of social vision. This aspect only comes out after a rigorous analysis of themes, characters and the stylistic features of symbolism and imagery in Seramuga's fiction. Masheti concludes "Seramuga envisages social change on a large scale in the efforts of morally upright and dedicated individuals who will educate the rest of society towards initiating positive social change" (Vii). All in all, Masheti's thesis demonstrates that social vision is positive in nature, and that both form and content complement each other in the delivery of a writer's social vision. In this thesis, there is a deliberate attempt at an integrated approach that also comments on some aspects of style used in Idowu's fiction. This is in spite of its approach being mainly thematic.

"Rebeka Njau's Social Vision" an unpublished thesis by John Mugubi defines vision as a mental picture that a writer conjures through his perception of reality. It "alludes to noble or excellent ideas about the future which may be attainable but some of which may require gallant and excruciating struggles to achieve" (11). This definition ideally concurs with that of Soyinka, Masheti and the one adopted in this study. It however goes a point further for it links the struggle to the achievement of the desired ideals. This means that an element of sacrifice is required by a society that desires a positive social vision.

To arrive at Njau's social vision, Mugubi analyses the social vision in each of the three texts under study, and then relates the stylistic device of symbolism to the vision unravelled in each of the text. Njau's vision that emerges after this in-depth study, is that of a society free from inhumanity of any kind, a "society where virtues abound" (196).

Mugubi's thesis is important for our study as it not only proves that the study of social vision is a viable academic undertaking, but it also tackles some issues that are similarly addressed in this study. A case in point is the discussion of female subjugation by traditional customs and practices. This thesis provides us with background information on theories that enhance female subjugation. These are biological, cultural and anthropological, religious and lastly economic. The biological theory is based on the belief that man is both physically and intellectually stronger than woman. The cultural and anthropological theory is based on anthropological evidence which reveals the "universality of the patriarchal family" (Mugubi, 14), and the belief among anthropologists that primitive societies moved from matriarchal to patriarchal societies. The third theory that is based on religion hinges on the fact that Islam, Christianity and Judaism all share the view that "woman with her moral imperfections and weak virtues was solely responsible for the fall of man" (14). Evidence is also adduced to show that woman's subordination is divine and sanctioned by God. The last theory based on the mode of production and distribution. Mugubi argues that with the shift from communal to private property, in the new system men own property and women are considered part of the property. This last theory is however silent on when the shift from communal to private ownership is supposed to have taken place and on whether during the communal stage there was equity between men and women in the ownership of property. In spite of this, it touches on the issue of economic subordination of women. Mugubi's discussion of these four theories on which female subjugation is hinged, is enriching to this study for it too, like Mugubi's, does address the issue of female subjugation.

Genga Idowu is a female African writer. Concerning the role of women literary writers in Africa, Ciarunji Chesaina in a paper entitled "Grace Ogot: A Creative Writer's Contribution to Cultural Development and Women's Emancipation in Writer's Forum Vol.2, says that since for generations African women have been victims of oppression, African women writers have a responsibility to seek justice for themselves and for their fellow women. This is because as women they are "closer to the situation than men", and even if they themselves have not experienced oppression, they can empathise with their fellow women more easily than male writers (74). To Chesaina, literature written by women has an emancipatory function to play in society.

Gloria Chineze Chukukere in her book Gender Voices and Choices: Redefining Women in Contemporary African Fiction, says that "(t)he role of female African writers is ...clear. They dramatise injustices against women and thereby attract society's attention to them". Chukukere argues that the awareness created by the writers should in turn lead to "the evolution of a humanistic order in the society"(14). Chukukere sees female African writers creating social awareness about the oppression of women with the ultimate goal of creating a society that is fair to all its members.

Mineke Schipper in a paper titled "Mother Africa on a Pedestal: The Male Heritage in African Literature and Criticism" in African Literature Today (15) has the following quotation by Mariama Ba which reveals the role she perceives for the African female write. She says that:

The woman writer in Africa has a special task. She has to present the position of women in Africa in all aspects. There is still so much injustice. In spite of the fact that the United Nations has paid special attention to woman's problems, in spite of beautiful speeches and praiseworthy intentions, women continue to be discriminated. In the

family, in the institutions, in society, in the street, in political organisations, discrimination reigns supreme. Social pressure shamelessly suffocates individual attempts at change. The woman is heavily burdened by mores and customs, in combination with mistaken and egoistic interpretations of different religions...As women, we must work for our own future, we must overthrow the status quo which harms us and we must no longer submit to it. Like men we must use literature as a non-violent but effective weapon (qtd. in Schipper, 47).

To Mariama Ba, literature is an important tool in women's plan to change the social status quo that harms women. Like Chesaina and Chukukere, she sees literature as having an emancipatory role. The view of these writers about the task of the African woman writer is not without support amongst fellow female writers. In the same article, Schipper says that in a conference on African Women and Literature Organised by the University of Mainz in 1982, one of the conclusions by the participants was that women writers "must pick up their pens and express their own ideas about women in African Society, and thus correct or complement the one sidedness of certain perspectives" (49). The participants invested the African woman writer with the task of expressing what it means to be an African woman. We expect to show in this thesis that Idowu's fiction does contribute to the elevation of the woman's position in society.

Molare Ongundipe-Leslie in "The Female Writer and her commitment" In African Literature Today (15), says that African female writers should be committed in three ways: as writers, to their womanhood and to their third world reality. As writers, they should do justice to their art, and be committed to their vision which they should be "willing to stand or fall for" (10). As women committed to their womanhood, they should tell what it is to be a woman and destroy male stereotypes. As writers committed to their third world reality, they should be politically conscious and provide their readers with the political reality of the Third World.

Ongundipe-Leslie presents the issues she considers imperative for an African woman to consider very clearly. Her theory touches on the aspect of a writer's vision which is the concern of this thesis. We intend to show that Idowu has a social vision, which is projected in her works. Ongundipe- Leslie's theory also requires that a woman should be politically conscious. In this thesis, Idowu's political vision is analysed in chapter four, which deals with modernity.

While the critics we have looked at argue that the literary woman in Africa has the role of re-defining the position of women in society, other critics see this as a role for all creative writers and critics irrespective of their gender. Ciarunji Chesaina Swinimer in Perspective in Women in African Literature observes that among many African Patriarchal communities, the low status of women was maintained through certain traditionally accepted beliefs and practices. However, she holds the view that African Literature, which "for it has always helped society to maintain its balance in the face of cultural changes, has a role to play in "the reassessment of gender relations and particularly the position of women in society" (1). To this critic, this reassessment should be an important subject for both creative writers and critics of African Literature.

Lauretta Ngcobo in her paper entitled "African Motherhood-Myth and Reality" in Criticism and Ideology says that African writers perpetuate attitudes which are enfeebling to women. She castigates this kind of literature for being oppressive to women, and for denying them justice. To correct this anomaly, Ngcobo urges writers to change the portrayal of women in their literature and come up with

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Ngcobo in advocating for a literature that is sensitive to the position of women in society, does not designate the writing of this kind of literature to women writers only, but to all writers, be they male or female. This is the same position adopted by Swinimer Chesaina in her paper reviewed earlier. To these critics, this task is not gender specific, but includes both sexes in the gender divide. Considering the argument of these two critics, and of the others previously looked at who only define the role of the African female writer, we expect that Idowu in her fiction will contribute to the reassessment of the position of women society.

Genga Idowu is specifically speaking a Kenyan female writer. Many critics have written about Kenyan female writers and addressed the issues in their works. Taiwo Oladele in his book Female Novelists of Modern Africa that has come under scathing attack from some critics (Stratton, 2-3; Aidoo, 166) says that:

The female novelist not only glorifies womanhood in her writing; she also shows concern for the material and spiritual well being of the society of which women form only part (15).

Among the African female writers whose works he analyses are four Kenyan writers namely: Rebeka Njau, Charity Waciuma, Grace Ogot and Miriam Were. His analysis of the works of these women justifies this claim. It would be interesting to find out in this thesis if Idowu follows in the footsteps of her predecessors.

Jean O'barr's article "Feminist Issues in the Fiction of Kenyan's Women Writers" analyses the works of Grace Ogot, Rebeka Njau, Charity Waciuma, Muthoni Likimani and Miriam Were

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from a feminist perspective. In this article that adds one more writer to the ones analysed by Oladele, O'barr observes that the works analyse issues from a woman's point of view "providing information on how women conceptualise issues and how they handle them when the changing social milieu militates against any consensus on alternatives" (57). Her analysis of the poetry of Likimani, the novels of Rebeka, Were and Waciuma, and the short stories of Ogot validate her view in the quotation above. O'barr's article is of interest to this study not only because it provides background information on fiction written by Kenyan female writers, but because it also uses a feminist approach. This study similarly uses a feminist approach.

Christine Matzke in her unpublished dissertation entitled "Embodying the self: Aspects of the Body and Female Identity," observes the following about literary writing by Kenyan Women:

Many contemporary narratives aspire to raise critical awareness of the hierarchical value system, the male biased, male controlled substructure from which Kenyan Society still operates and which relegates woman to an inferior position (8).

Elsewhere in the thesis, she says that while the first indigenous novels re-claimed literature, largely from a masculine point of view, nowadays women writers "re-inscribe the allegorised female body in nationalistic writings from a more woman centred 'gender-sensitive' (authors emphasis) perspective" (11). Matzke sees the ultimate role of these writers as that of raising awareness about gender-issues and women predicament.

To validate her assertions, Matzke analyses the works of Rebeka Njau, Grace Ogot and Asenath Odaga. In addition she also analyses the 'gender-sensitisation' narratives by Kenya Oral Literature Association (K.O.L.A) such as Wanjira Muthoni's "A Cure for Executive

Stress" and Wanjiru Kabira's "The Good Witch of Kiaritha-ini". She says that these narratives are an attempt by female writers to subvert their traditional gender roles.

In terms of the literary works she analyses, Matzke is to be commended for she does not only concentrate on canonical female writers such as Grace Ogot and Rabeka Njau, but she also includes other less studied writers such as Odaga, Muthoni and Kabira. Her work also shows that there is a discernible continuity in the works of Kenyan women writers. The upcoming writers, just like the canonical writers such as Ogot and Njau, are interested in uplifting the position of women.

Sophia Macharia in her article "Freedom of choice: Kenyan Women Writers", mainly discusses the theme of freedom of choice in the short stories of Grace Ogot and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's novel Coming to Birth. Margaret Ogola's novel The River and the Source is mentioned in relation to the theme. In the introduction to her article, she says that Kenyan women writers have contributed to the themes of cultural conflict, colonialism and education that form the central themes of African Literature. According to her their presentation of these themes differ from that of their male counterparts in that "They stress the significance of these themes with regard to the issues affecting woman and womanhood in Africa" (41). As we shall see in chapter three of this thesis, Idowu addresses the theme of education. The theme of cultural conflict is also implicitly addressed in its discussion of Christianity.

In her article, Macharia argues that in Land Without Thunder, Ogot "exposes the woman situation as vulnerable" (42). The woman's freedom is curtailed by a patriarchal society that limits her freedom. The situation is however different in Oludhe's Coming to Birth where

Stress" and Wanjiru Kabira's "The Good Witch of Kiaritha-ini". She says that these narratives are an attempt by female writers to subvert their traditional gender roles.

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Macharia argues that the woman demonstrates freedom of choice. She grows with the society from a victim to a person who can make her individual choices. Macharia's paper demonstrates that the issue of freedom for women is one of the important concerns addressed by female writers. Macharia is also to be commended for including a literary work by Oludhe, one of the most prolific writers in Kenya.

Wanjira Muthoni's "The Literary Road to Empowerment" is an ambitious paper that attempts to trace the development of gender responsive literature in Kenya from the 1960s to the 1990s. She argues that the literature of the 1960s and 1970s was characterised by stereotypic images of women and men as can be seen in the literary works of Grace Ogot and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. She targets Grace Ogot's collection of short stories The Other Woman and Other Stories for criticism and says that in spite of the fact that it creates awareness of the plight of women, its depiction of men and women is still conservative (56).

In the 1980s, Muthoni looks at Francis Imbuga's play Aminata, which was written in 1985 to mark the 2nd United Nations Conference on Women, and complains about its lopsided depiction of male and female characters. She says that in this play Imbuga is unable to empower a woman without disempowering the men around her (57). Muthoni's comments on Aminata shows that her interest is not in merely analysing the positive depiction of women in literature, but in the positive depiction of both male and female.

In the 1990s Muthoni argues that the literature in this period contributes to the breaking of "the traditional barriers and mapping out the Road to Empowerment for both sexes" (68). She dedicates considerable space and time to this period, her main focus being in the collections of

short stories published by the Kenya Oral Literature Association (K.O.L.A) in its gender sensitisation project. She also analyses a few selected stories from Writer's Forum volume 1 and 2. She concludes that the stories she examines which are written by less-known male and female writers, "deal less with condemnation than with depicting women in a positive light and men in their new position as partners not leaders, to women"(67). Her conclusion that is based on the works of both female and male writers, is a pointer to the fact that the positive depiction of woman in literature is required of both female and male writers. This conclusion also highlights the need for a new positive image of men to be depicted.

While Muthoni's paper should be hailed for its attempt at retracing "the road to empowerment", it can be criticised for concentrating too much on the K.O.L.A produced literature of the 1990s, at the expense of other literature produced during this period such as Idowu's literary works.

Katsuji Nakamura in his unpublished thesis "Asenath Bole Odaga's Vision of Gender Relations in Endless Road", has one of the most comprehensive overview of the literary writings of Kenyan female writers. The overview, whose aim is to shed light on the depiction of gender relations in these female writings, has the earliest literary work by a Kenyan Woman as Rebeka Njau's play The Scar (1963), and the latest as Wairiu Kibugi Gitau's novel We Will Start a New Life (1996). This overview that can be said to be a summary of "who is who" in literature by Kenya women writers, writing upto 1996, has one major limitation-it does not include Genga Idowu whose literary works such as Lady in Chains (1993) and Memories Into Marriage (1995) which were published during the period covered by the overview. In spite of

this it is a priceless study to any research on Kenyan female writers as it provides invaluable information on the growth and development of literature by Kenyan female writers in terms of gender. This overview also comments on the works of new writers and those rarely discussed such as P.M Ngurukio, Wairiu Kibungi Gitau, Carolyne Adala among others. Most importantly, however, the overview explicitly and implicitly highlights some of the major concerns of female writers in Kenya such as the plight of women in patriarchal societies, modelling a new image for women, and healthy gender relationships. In this thesis, all this concerns are explicitly or implicitly addressed.

The critical material available on Idowu's fiction is the form of book reviews and newspaper articles. There are two reviews of Lady in Chains. One is the Sunday Nation dated 17th September 2000, while the other is in The East African dated 5-11th June 1995. The first review which is titled "Urban Squalor Laid Bare" and written by George Jakoyo, attempts to summarise the plot. It however has many errors such as claiming that Polycap files a divorce against Susan, which he wins, and that Susan loved her husband Ochola whom she finally reunites with at the end of the story. Despite this weakness, the article introduces the novel to the general public.

The second review that is the East African is titled "A woman Writer Balances War Between the Sexes" by Ciugu Mwangi. In this review, Mwangi hails Lady in Chains as a novel whose outlook of male-female relationship is reasonably balanced and that the weaknesses of both male and female characters are brought out. Mwangi's review, however, concentrates not in the depiction of gender relationship, but in the depiction of Susan, the main character. He

describes her as a “quintessential predatory woman, a scheming go-getter who will stop at nothing to secure her objective”. He describes her as such because of her materialistic tendency. In her pursuit of material gains, she ruthlessly exploits the men in her life. According to Mwangi, she depicts the new breed of women who stop at nothing in their pursuit for wealth. In spite of this observation, Mwangi says that the author’s depiction has some kind of sympathy for such women as they are presented as the products of social systems beyond their control. Mwangi’s review is of interest to our study as we look at the materialism in the novel. However, unlike him, we do not only analyse the depiction of the materialistic characters but also use the depiction to help us unravel part of the vision in Idowu’s fiction.

Idowu’s second novel My Heart on Trial is reviewed in The Sunday Nation of April 12, 1998 by Rose Adhiambo. The reviewer highlights the conflict between modernism and traditionalism, and attributes the woes of the characters to this conflict. To her, traditionalism is represented by a torrent of beliefs, which must be followed, while modernism has to do with modern education and lifestyle. Under modernism she also looks at the callous political system. In this thesis, both “traditionalism” and “modernism” are looked at more critically not only in My Heart on Trial, but also in Idowu’s other literary works. This is crucial in unraveling the vision of Idowu’s fiction.

Memories into Marriage. Idowu’s didactic text is reviewed by Ciugu Mwangi in The Sunday Nation of March 31, 1996. The review is entitled “Literary Jab at Traditions that Demean Womenfolk”. In this review, Mwangi says that Memories into Marriage is a book dealing with family life education. It focuses on “the faulty socialisation of boys and girls”. He goes

ahead to summarise most of the pertinent issues on gender socialisation addressed in each chapter. Mwangiru says that the strength of the text "lies in its presentation of gender discrimination as a matter that affects men as well as women, and which needs to be addressed by both sexes if the family unit is to survive". Having read the text, one concurs with this view.

Mwangiru's review of Memories into Marriage is informative as it captures the essence of the text. In our study we analyse the same issues raised in it as we endeavor to unravel the vision in Idowu's fiction.

Ciugu Mwangiru who seems to have taken an interest in Idowu's literary works, has an article entitled "Genga-Idowu's Mirror of the Dark Side of Society" in the Sunday Nation of July 23rd, 1995. In this article that provides invaluable biographical information, Mwangiru says that the titles of Idowu's books "are rather foreboding and reflect the tension that pervades the world of the characters". He gives the example of Lady in Chains, a book without real heroes, where the main characters are "caught up in the topsy-turvy world of collapsing morals and economic hardship". This view is insightful as Susan "the lady in chains" is chained by materialism so much that she loses her morals.

The article also provides Idowu's own reaction to her own writing. . Asked by Mwangiru why her female characters in Lady in Chains are materialistic, she reportedly answered that she saw the characters as victims of a society that has no place for traditional norms. She, however, explains that she has no sympathy for people who like Susan, one of her characters degraded themselves for material gain. As far as her intention as a writer is concerned, Idowu says that her intention as a writer is to "mirror socio-political economic situations" and to explore how

they affect people. She also adds that she believes that evil in society persists because people do not care.

Idowu's reactions are interesting, and strengthen the belief of this study that Idowu's writing is functional and has something important to say to society. The study hopes to expose the evil that Idowu addresses in her fiction, and discuss what she hopes to replace it with.

Although Mwangi's article is insightful to the study, it says that Idowu had a novel entitled Thorns and Thistles, which was with her publishers Longhorn Kenya. Inquiries with the said publishers, and information got from her husband discounts the existence of such a novel.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study mainly relies on liberal feminism, but it also depends on the sociological theory of literature. Liberal Feminism is one of the many competing theories that inform feminist criticism which is "an offshoot of the larger feminist movement concerned with the political, social and economic equality of sexes" (Wales, 172). Like all other feminist theories such as Radical, Marxist and Psychoanalytic Feminism, Liberal Feminism advocates societies that are "not characterised by relations of domination and subordination" (Hunter, 85). This advocacy for societies free from subordination and domination is discernible in Idowu's fiction.

However, Liberal Feminism as an independent theory has its own peculiarities. To liberals, "right" should be given priority over "good" as "our whole system of individual rights is justified because these rights constitute a frame within which we can all choose our separate

goods, provided we do not deprive others of them" (Tong, 11). This liberal view is particularly informative in discussing Idowu's vision on urbanisation. This is because it will help us critically analyse the individualism that thrives in the city.

Liberal Feminism also advocates an egalitarian society. It endeavours to bring about gender justice by ensuring that both men and women have equal accessibility to the economic and social opportunities of the community. For instance in the field of education, liberal feminists will demand that girls should have equal access to education as boys. Although liberal feminism endeavours for gender justice, it believes that "this goal can be achieved without fundamentally changing the existing structure of society" (Palmer, 267). Idowu's social vision is influenced by this view, for unlike a radical feminist, she does not seek the total overhaul of all the social structures of society.

The Sociological Theory of literature posits that literature is "a social product with a social function" (Sammons, 5). It is a social product for it "does not grow and develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society" (Ngugi, Homecoming, XV). In addition, the literary writers are members of a particular social class or group, and their social perspectives or world views are influenced to a large extent by their class or social group (Ngugi, Writers, 6). When this view is applied to Idowu, it means that her fiction is not only influenced by her society, but it also means, "she sees reality through a woman's eyes" (Matiangi, 10).

Literature also has a social function for it aims to influence our perception of reality in a certain way (Plekhanov, 5; Soyinka, 67; Githae-Mugo, 186). These critics advance a utilitarian

view of art as opposed to “the art for art sake” view. Literature is seen as contributing to the development of the society. This thesis adopts a utilitarian view and seeks to show the Idowu's fiction seeks to positively influence her readers' attitude towards reality.

1.9 Methodology

This research involved a critical reading of Idowu's fiction. This was necessary for our comprehension of the pertinent issues addressed in Idowu's fiction. The study also involved library research on social vision, African women writers and literature, feminism and gender studies, and research on critical material on Idowu's fiction. This research was essential as it sharpened our understanding of social vision, major themes in literary texts by women, feminist theories, and Idowu's fiction. The Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library, the Literature Library (University of Nairobi), and the Nation Media Group Library were used.

E-mail and telephone services were also used in this study. E-mail services were used to contact Abayomi Idowu, the late author's husband. The information acquired through these services beefed up the biographical information on Genga. In addition, it shed light on Genga's literary works and provided invaluable information on her publishers. The telephone was used to contact Idowu's publishers.

10.0 Contents of the Thesis

- i) Introduction.
- ii) Chapter one: Genga Idowu: autobiography and literary works.
- iii) Chapter Two: African indigenous traditions: portrayal and emergent social vision.
- iv) Chapter Three: Modernism in Africa: portrayal and emergent social vision.
- v) Conclusion.
- vi) Works Cited.
- vii) Appendix.

CHAPTER ONE

GENGA IDOWU: AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND LITERARY WORKS

This short chapter introduces Genga Idowu and explores the relationship between her life and her works. This is done in the belief that Idowu's life does not only help in the interpretation of her fiction, but it also illuminates her vision. The chapter also introduces Idowu's literary works. Considerable space is given to The Hero of the Ridges and Other Stories, Idowu's posthumous collection of short stories. This is done because the collection was acquired when the study was in an advanced stage.

The late Genga Idowu was born 1960 in Rapogi village, Homa Bay district, Nyanza Province, Kenya to a Luo Catholic family. Rapogi, the place of her birth, is immortalised in her novel My Heart on Trial . In the novel it is the place from which Dr. Ondiala a victim of the cruel political system hails from. Her Luo and Catholic background also influence her writing considerably. In her two novels, Lady in Chains and My Heart on Trial , she explores Luo traditional beliefs . In addition, she uses Luo words, and gives Luo names to most of her characters. The meaning of the Luo words are provided in glossaries at the end of the novels. Idowu's Luo background, other than influencing her literary style, also considerably influences her vision. This is particularly so in relation to her vision of African traditions which we look at in the next chapter. Her Catholic background may explain the predominance of the Catholic

Church in her novels. It is also worth noting that two of her texts, Memories into Marriage and The Hero of the Ridges and Other Stories were published by Paulines Publication Africa, a publishing house owned by the Daughters of St. Paul, a Catholic order. In relation to her vision, Christianity plays an important role in shaping her social vision of modernity. We shall examine this in chapter four.

Idowu attended Rapogi Boarding Primary School before joining Lwak Girls, a Catholic School, for her secondary education. She got distinctions in Literature, English and Christian Religious Education in her Kenya Certificate of Education (K.C.E), and was admitted to Butere Girls for her Advanced ('A') level education. She passed her 'A' level examination and was admitted to the University of Nairobi in 1979 to pursue a Bachelor of Art Degree programme. For her programme, she studied Philosophy, Literature and History. Later she majored in Literature. Idowu graduated in 1984 having taken more than the minimum three years required for her course. This was because of recurring health problems. According to some of her lecturers at the University of Nairobi, her problem was psychological (mental) in nature.

Idowu's educational background shows that she had an interest in Literature from an early age that she maintained upto University. In an interview with Ciugu Mwangi, she said that her favourite authors were Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Sembene Ousmane and Alex la Guma (Sunday Nation, July 23, 1995). Idowu's interest in the works of these reputable prose fiction writers may have nurtured her interest in a prose fiction. Her literary background and her study of Philosophy may also explain the strong feminist presence in her fiction. This is

because the feminist theory is taught in both Literature and Philosophy at the University. In her fiction, mainly in Memories into Marriage , one detects a strong feminist message. It is the hypothesis of this study that, a feminist vision informs Idowu's social vision.

Apart from the above, Idowu's educational background illuminates some instances in her novels. We note that Mrs. Ondiala in My Heart on Trial studies in a girl's secondary school. This is the same case with Susan in Lady in Chains. Interestingly, other than schooling in girl schools like the author, they also have Catholic backgrounds (Lady, 86; My Heart, 82). In addition to having characters who school in girl schools like herself, Idowu demonstrates a knowledge of pervasive sexual behaviour in such schools in Lady in Chains. Her knowledge might be attributed to the fact that she attended girl schools and as we shall see shortly, taught there. We address this issue of sexuality in chapter four in relation to education.

After completing her University education, Genga Idowu taught at Kaptagat Girls in the Rift Valley province, and Dede Girls and Nyabohanze Girls both in Nyanza province. She however broke her teaching career to pursue a two-year counselling course in Holland. On her return to Kenya in 1986, she taught at St. Lucia Girls in Nyanza province. Two years later, having got married to a Nigerian from the Yoruba community, she left Kenya for Nigeria. She stayed in Nigeria for two years, and while there she learnt to speak decent Yoruba. After returning to Kenya, she worked as the editor of Pied Crow magazine published by C.A.R.E-Kenya. As the editor of the magazine, she closely worked with Kenya Alliance for the advancement of Children Rights (K.A.A.R.C). Idowu was also an associate editor of Bookbird a journal of the

International Board of Books for the Young (I.B.B.Y) published in the United States of America. In addition to these, Idowu was Kenya's country director of the International Board of Books for the Young. As the director of the organisation, she presented papers at the Zimbabwean Book Fare in Harare, Pan-African Book Fare in Nairobi, University of Stuttgart in Germany among other places.

Idowu's life after university reveals an interest in the lives of young people. Her career as a teacher and later as an editor are both related to young people. In her novels, Idowu shows her concern for the welfare of children through Susan's children in Lady in Chains, and Dr. Ondiala's children in My Heart on Trial. We look at the plight of these children in our discussion of urbanisation and politics in chapter four. In Memories into Marriage, Idowu shows her concern for the plight of girls when she questions traditional socialisation that subordinates them. This issue is explored at length in chapter two that examines Idowu's vision of African traditions. In addition, Idowu has written a collection of children short stories. We shall say more about this collection later on in this chapter.

The most important thing, however, that Idowu's life after university reveals, is her flexible nature and her desire for positive change. To begin with, she interrupted her teaching career to improve herself academically. Then she left her teaching job for an editorial one. In addition to these, she got married to a foreigner in spite of the challenges such a marriage poses. Idowu's flexibility and desire for positive change in her own life, informs her vision. As we shall see in this study, the social vision she projects in her fiction is basically that of change. Society just like her should strive to improve itself.

As a literary writer, Genga Idowu has two novels to her credit. These are Lady in Chains (1993) and My Heart on Trial (1997). The main theme in the first novel is urbanisation, while the main theme in the second novel is politics. Minor themes in both novels include education, tradition and Christianity. As far as characterisation is concerned, both novels have multiple significant characters amongst which the omniscient narrators shift the readers. The narratives in both novels can be described as bounced narratives (Raban, 36). This technique enables her to freely explore a broad spectrum of issues.

Apart from novels, Idowu has written a didactic literary text and short stories. The didactic literary text is entitled Memories into Marriage. The text addresses the twin issues of gender discrimination and gender socialisation. Christianity is an important theme as all the discussion sessions end with Christian prayers. The text mainly utilises the first person mode. A member of the group narrates his or her experiences, which are then discussed by the group. This text plus the two novels we have briefly discussed above, are the main focus of this study.

Idowu's children stories are found in the Pied Crow magazine, various German language publications in Germany and Switzerland, in publications in the United Kingdom and Nigeria, and in The Hero of the Ridges and Other Stories (2000) a collection of children short stories.

Some of the stories in the Pied Crow magazine are "Tilda" and "Behaving Smartly?" These stories are didactic in nature, and mostly rely on pictorial illustrations to communicate their message. This is probably done to make them attractive to its young readers. The first relates a day's events in the life of a girl called Tilda. It is a day full of chores and duties. These chores, in addition to her schoolwork, leave her no time to relax. Due to tiredness she sleeps in class

during the day, and sleeps over her homework in the evening. We shall discuss this story in relation to Idowu's vision of tradition in the next chapter.

"Behaving Smartly?" is the story of two school boys who smoke cigarettes. Having no money to buy cigarettes, they decide to steal mangoes from Mr. Jim D's which they can later sell. They are however caught in the act, and are taken away by a policeman to be punished. The story not only teaches young people that stealing is wrong and should be punished, but also shows that smoking is bad as it can lead one to crime. This story is therefore didactic in nature as it aims at influencing its reader's attitude towards smoking. As we shall see in this study, Idowu fiction has a functional role as it endeavors to positively change society's attitude towards certain issues.

The stories published in the German language are "Down in the Mines" and "My Own Threatened By a Goofer" by Baobab publishers in Switzerland, and "My Hulky Dad" by Solidariatat in Germany. These stories published in Switzerland and Germany are not included in this study as they were inaccessible.

The stories published in the United Kingdom and Nigeria are "The Hero of the Ridges and Other Stories" by Heinemann United Kingdom, and "Hawks in the Plain" by Longman Nigeria. The first story is the title story of Idowu's collection of children stories published by Paulines publication Africa. The second story was inaccessible. It was therefore impossible to determine whether it is included in Idowu's collection under a different title.

Idowu's collection of children short stories, The Hero of the Ridges and Other Stories, is a post-humous publication that has six stories. African oral narratives have influenced most of these stories. This is particularly so in characterisation. Two of the stories, "Humpy Tortoise

Flies to the Sky” and “The Two Brothers” are actually modified versions of African oral narratives. The first story is a slightly modified version of the Ibo story about the tortoise and the birds that is rendered in Chinua Achebe’s novel Things Fall Apart (67-70). Idowu has modified the names of the animal characters by the addition of descriptive names such as “Humpy Tortoise” and “Dainty Dove”(20). She probably does this to make the characters memorable to the children. However, the plot of the story is preserved.

The second story is a modified version of a Luo migration legend known as “The bead of migration” (Onyango-Ogutu and Roscoe, 133) or “How the Luo Divided” (Bukenya et al, 116). Idowu in her story changes the names of the two Characters Labong’o and Gipir to Luke and Musa. The most significant change, however, is in the plot of the story. Firstly, while in the original story Gipir the younger brother goes to look for his brother’s spear because he demanded for it, in Idowu’s story Musa the younger brother does so by his own volition. Secondly, while the elder brother in the original story splits his child’s stomach to retrieve his younger brother’s precious bead after it had failed to either vomit it or pass it in its stool, in Idowu’s story the child passes Musa’s pearl after it is given some medicine. Thirdly and most importantly, the brothers in Idowu’s story do not disagree and part company. They continue living in the same place, helping each other out in times of problems, as brothers should. Musa, despite his attachment to his precious pearl, eventually sells it to raise money for his brother’s medical bills, and school fees for both his brother’s and his own children. Idowu’s story permeates with love and brotherhood, unlike the original story that is dogged by egocentricism and quarrels.

Other stories in Idowu's collection that have been influenced by the African oral narrative are "The Hero of the Ridges", "The Playful Little Hawks", and "Mischievous Rat on the Train". The first story is an ogre story, while the last two are fables. The first and the last story however do share a similarity in that they both have modern settings.

All the stories in The Hero of the Ridges and Other Stories, including "Marcelo and Me" the story that shows little influence of the African oral narrative, have a similarity in that each of them has a moral lesson. In "The Hero of the Ridges", cruelty that is symbolised by the ogres is castigated, while humanness and heroism are exalted. In the stories "The Two Brothers" and "Marcelo and Me", the virtue of love is encouraged, while selfishness is discouraged. Trust in God is also encouraged in the second story. The vices of greed and selfishness that are epitomised by Tortoise in the story "Humpy Tortoise Flies to the Sky", are punished. The story implicitly encourages its readers to be sensitive to other people's welfare, and the need to be grateful to those who help them. In the story "Mischievous Rat in the Train", obedience for ones parents is exalted, and disobedience shown to be the cause of avoidable problems. Lastly, in "The Playful Little Hawks" laziness is discouraged, but hard work is encouraged.

The moral lessons in Idowu's collection of children short stories shows that Idowu has a positively inclined social vision. She desires a society of hardworking, God trusting, obedient and caring individuals. Such a society is one that would not condone unfairness of any kind. As we shall see in the forthcoming chapters, Idowu in her other works also projects the vision of an altruistic and humane society.

Idowu's rendition, rewriting and borrowing from oral narratives, reveals her interest in tradition. She is interested in the well being of African traditions. In addition, it symbolically captures a belief in the need for tradition to be modified according to the needs of society. This interest in tradition and desire for its flexibility is also present in Idowu's major texts that are analysed in this study. We shall examine this in the next chapter.

In concluding this short chapter, we can say that Idowu's life has considerably influenced her fiction. We have shown that knowledge of Idowu's life aids in the interpretation of her fiction, and illuminates her social vision. We have also adequately introduced her as a writer as we have not only provided her autobiographical information, but we have also introduced her literary works. Having done this, we shall now begin our search for the social vision in Idowu's major fiction works by examining her vision on African indigenous traditions.

CHAPTER TWO

AFRICAN INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS: PORTRAYAL AND EMERGENT SOCIAL VISION

The background of Idowu's fiction is contemporary Africa, where African indigenous traditions are still practised alongside western acquired values, beliefs and lifestyles. Her novels are informed by Luo patriachal traditions, while Memories into Marriage by what can be termed as African patriachal traditions. In these works, therefore, the portrayal of indigenous African traditions an important thematic concern. This Chapter analyses its portrayal by Idowu and the vision that emerges from that portrayal. It adopts a woman-focused approach by looking at how Idowu portrays African indigenous traditions vis-à-vis the growth and development of women from birth to adulthood. Moreover, it looks at the effect of these traditions on the woman even after death.

Idowu in My Heart On Trial shows that the birth of a girl, especially if she is a first born, is not a cause for celebration, but disappointment and fear. These feelings are exhibited after Yada's first wife is delivered of a baby girl. Her mother-in-law Nyar Tanga, on seeing this, says to a friend, "I haven't seen anything to be happy about...The thing that was brought (sic) me for a daughter-in-law has gone and brought home a fox "(25). Nyar Tanga is disappointed, as she had been expecting the "reward" of a son after spending a lot of her time and precious food on Bella Rose.

Nyar Tanga's language reveals her great disappointment with not only her daughter-in-law but also her granddaughter. She refers to her daughter-in-law by the impersonal phrase "the thing" to

express her disgust, and metaphorically refers her granddaughter as "a fox" to express her distrust. She distrusts the girl because she will one day desert her home for a man's. Like the ever-moving fox, she cannot be trusted to remain in one place. It is because of this same reason that in the "Bamboo Hut" by Grace Ogot Chief Mboga describes daughters as "the birds of the air, who at the appropriate season, migrate to another land "(Ogot, Land, 28). This is unlike a son, who will not only remain at home, but he will also carry on his father's name into the future. This is why he is a reward.

Nyar Tanga's nameless friend sympathises with her for she too has a similar problem. Her daughter-in-law is "pissing" girls "like a locust" (25) and this disturbs her since her son had no one to carry on his name. The simile is demeaning and derogatory. The woman's low opinion of her daughter-in-law is revealed by her comparison of her to a pest, and her delivery of girls likened to passing urine. The views of this woman and those of Nyar Tanga reveal their belief in the inferiority of girls and the superiority of boys.

There is also fear when a girl is born, especially as a first born. Bella Rose's sister fears for her sister's marriage after her "poor performance" (25). This is because it portends the arrival of a co-wife, and threatens her sister's marriage. However, at this point, it suffices to say that the birth of a girl is traditionally seen as more of a curse than a blessing.

Ironically, while the women, Nyar Tanga, her friend and Bella Rose's sister are apprehensive of the birth of a girl, Yada, the child's father shows no ill feelings towards his new born child. He, on the contrary, makes time to spend with his daughter. He rushes home after work to spend sometime with his daughter, despite protest from his extended family that his behaviour is unmanly. His positive conduct dispels any fears that his wife might have had about their marriage. While Yada's

attitude is progressive, that of the women is traditional and conservative. Ironically, they perpetuate a belief that actually harms them as women for it is girls who grow into women. Their behaviour shows just how deep rooted tradition is and that women play an important role in perpetuating it. Idowu, however, uses Yada, a man, to point out the right attitude towards girls. They should be welcomed into the world with love, but not with regret and uneasiness. Yada's attitude is very significant, as it shows the readiness of some men to reject unfair traditional practices despite their kind being the main beneficiaries.

Apart from being received with apprehension at birth, a girl in some patriarchal cultures faces discrimination when it comes to nutrition. In Memories into Marriage, Doctor Ferns in the chapter entitled "Why Should Only Men Eat the Best of Everything?" tells his listeners that in some communities of the world, girls are neither breast-fed as long as boys, nor are they fed on some nutritious foods. Such food, as Williams, his fellow doctor, says, "are preserved for the male children. The girl child often feeds on the remains (sic)..." (47). This practice according to Dr. Ferns is harmful as it weakens a girl's immune system that makes her susceptible to diseases that she would otherwise not be.

Idowu's use of doctors to articulate this view gives it credibility and objectivity. Doctors commenting on issues of health are more convincing and dependable than laypersons as their arguments are based on medical grounds. Although the doctors do not directly tell their listeners to stop such practices, they do so indirectly by pointing out their dangers. The author therefore uses Doctor Ferns and Doctor Williams to advocate the dropping of discriminatory practices that are harmful to the health of girls (especially in early childhood). This view gains more credibility when

we consider the prayer at the end of chapter eight in which the issue of food is discussed. In this prayer the discussants pray to God:

Help us to treat one another fairly
Even in little things
And to avoid all forms of discrimination,
Even in our families' (51).

This prayer shows the group members desire for a fair and just society free from discriminative practices such as denying girls nutritious foods.

During her childhood, an African girl is socialised for her future role as a mother and a wife. Buchi Emecheta in her paper, "Feminism with a small f!" commenting about this says that:

From childhood she is conditioned into thinking that being a girl she must do all the housework, she must help her mother to cook, clean, fetch water and look after her younger brothers and sisters. If she moans or shows signs of not wanting to do any of this, she will sharply be reprimanded by her mother. 'But you are a girl! Going to be a woman' (179).

In Memories into Marriage, this kind of conditioning is challenged. This is because it subjugates the girl and harms her psychologically. In the two chapters entitled "Six Sons and a Helper, the Girl" and "How I Hated to Be a Girl" two women, Agneta in the former and Binetta in the latter, tell their fellow group members about their childhood. As the titles suggest, these past experiences do not bring fond memories, but bitterness and sadness. They both grew in homes where they were treated differently from their brothers. It was their duty to cook, wash utensils, and wash clothes, which included their brothers'. Their duties were similar to those of Tilda in "Tilda" a short illustrated story by Genga Idowu in Pied Crow. Tilda does all the domestic chores in the home .She does them before going to school, after school, and before going to bed. Her brother is excepted

from all this chores. Similarly, Agneta and Binetta's mothers exempted their brothers from these duties. As girls they had to do them, as these would form part of their duties as wives and mothers.

Due to the privileged position that their brothers occupied at home, and the treatment they received as girls, both Agneta and Binetta got to a point where they hated their gender. Being girls or being 'different' was like a curse as it meant that one had to do all the chores in the house, which in most cases went unappreciated. Binetta hated these chores mainly because they interfered with her studies. By the time she was through with doing all of them, she was too tired to study. In addition, being "different" meant that they had less freedom than their brothers did, as they were not supposed to interact with boys.

Agneta's and Binetta's attempts to challenge the Status quo were thwarted, and when they persisted as in Binetta's case, they alienated them from their mothers. Her mother frustrated her challenges to the order of things. Once, Agneta dared to express her disgust towards her brother's question her brother after he had asked her where his socks were. Her mother, who had heard her, was quick to reprimand her. She told her: "Since when have you learnt to answer back your brother like that? He is a man, do you not know that? You don't answer a male in that manner" (14). Her mother's rhetoric questions emphasised her mother's strong disapproval of her behaviour. On another occasion, she demanded to know why her younger brother had beaten her for merely talking to a young man. Her brother beat her again. Her mother instead of reprimanding her brother supported him as she deemed it a necessary disciplinary measure. Agneta's mother made her realise that traditionally her position vis-à-vis that of men could never change. She was expected to submit to them despite what she felt.

Binetta, unlike Agnetta, was more headstrong. Determined to escape the limitations that being a girl meant she began a war against being different by shunning the company of girls in preference to that of boys. Although her parents, particularly her mother, reprimanded her for her tomboyish behaviour, she did not change. This in turn alienated her from her mother. This meant that when she became a teenager and could no longer keep the company of boys because of the suspicion it raised, she could not turn to her mother for companionship and advice as her mother had little respect for her. She therefore went through the tumultuous adolescent period without her mother's guidance. Binetta's persistent challenge against the status quo cost her, her mother's love.

In Memories into Marriage, Idowu in each chapter, which corresponds to a discussion session, gives prominence to one or two characters, who she then uses to develop one major idea. This is the role that Agnetta and Binetta play in the respective chapters in which they are given prominence. From what we have already said about them, we can conclude that the author uses them to show the plight of girls in patriarchal societies. Through them, she shows the harmful effects that traditionally sanctioned socialisation has on girls. It ties them to endless chores, and negatively affects them psychologically. Any attempt to break away from this order of things is greatly discouraged. It is this reality that the author wants her readers, just like Agnetta's and Binetta's immediate listeners, to re-examine.

Although the discussion sessions in Memories into Marriage end without any 'declaration' reached, the concluding prayers and some of the characters illuminate the author's vision. Of the two characters we have discussed, Binetta does this better than Agnetta. Apart from being used to sensitise the readers, she is also used to show the best way forward. This comes out in the answer

she gives to the question on whether she treated her children as "different". She answers in the negative, and says that she treats all of them equally, both in terms of opportunities and responsibilities. None of the discussants asks her any question, which suggests their agreement. The vision that Idowu propagates through her is that of change of attitude, especially when it comes to the socialisation of children. Both girls and boys should be given equal treatment. It is this need for change of attitude that the prayers that end the discussion sessions, in which Agneta and Binetta are the main speakers, beseech God for. In the prayer that comes after Binetta's presentation, the group members ask God to help them "to pursue the best goals/using the right attitude/ the best intentions towards one another" (43). Hildy's prayer at the end of the discussion session, in which Agneta is the main presenter, has a similar message. She asks the Lord to give her, and by extension the whole group, "the firm hope to believe/ that things can change for the better" (19). The prayer clearly illuminates Idowu's vision.

When a girl reaches puberty in some African patriarchal communities, she has to undergo circumcision. This rite of passage that generates a lot of heated debates, has been of literary interest to some African writers. Ngugi Wa Thiongo tackles it in his novel The River Between that explores the theme of cultural conflict. Ngugi explores the sub-theme of female circumcision through Muthoni, who in defiance to her Christian father, and in spite of her Christian faith, undergoes the rite. Unfortunately, she dies of parturition. This initiation practice, is also the main theme in the Daughter of a Lioness a comic story in the "Sara" series by U.N.I.C.E.F (United Nations Children's Fund). In this story, Sara the main character escapes from seclusion through her own ingenuity, and the help of her friend Juma and Zingo her pet monkey. Her escape triggers a discussion on female circumcision in the community. Her mother, and some village women borrowing a leaf from her

courage, speak openly against it. Finally, the community accedes to Sara's wish and does not force her back into seclusion. It is this same theme of circumcision that Idowu addresses in Chapter five of Memories into Marriage. In this Chapter that is entitled "The Problem of Female Circumcision", Idowu uses Doctor Williams and Dr. Ferns, who we have already mentioned elsewhere, to explore the health risks posed by female circumcision. Dr. Ferns who is present at the beginning of the discussion session and who hold the view that female circumcision is "purely a cultural necessity and not a medical one" (44), enumerates the medical risks that female circumcision exposes women to. These are exposure to the AIDS virus due to unsterilised instruments, bleeding, and trauma due to the pain involved. His colleague, Dr. Williams, who finds the discussion in session, adds the risk of complication during labour and delivery to this list. Ms Matata and her students in *Daughter of A Lioness* discuss some of these risks after a fight between students who support female circumcision and those who do not.

It is one of these risks, the risk of becoming traumatised, that Dr. Ferns cites as the most probable cause of the sexual frustrations that Peter, one of the discussants, was experiencing in his marriage. He explains to him that his wife, who he thought was faking sickness at bedtime, was not as she actually got sick each time she had to engage in coitus. Dr. Ferns advises Peter to seek medical help for his wife. Idowu, therefore, using Dr. Ferns and Dr. Williams advances the view that female circumcision is inappropriate as it poses health risks. In addition, the author uses Dr. Williams to argue that female circumcision is a form of sexual abuse. According to Dr. Williams, this is so because woman's sexual organs are interfered with "savagely and unnecessarily" (45). This is in contrast to male circumcision that he considers "necessary". Dr Williams, however, sees some similarity in the two, as male circumcision also poses the risk of infection for the initiates, and is

savage as it also involves pain. To eliminate these disadvantages, he advocates that male circumcision be done clinically in hospitals.

While the author's abhorrence for female circumcision and support for male circumcision is apparent in Dr. Williams's argument, the reason for her advocacy of male circumcision is not clear.

Dr Williams through whom the author articulates her views on male circumcision, merely terms it "necessary" and does not elaborate. This is despite the fact that he considers male circumcision is savagery due to the pain involved and risky for it poses the danger of infection to diseases. His argument that the clinical performance of male circumcision would eliminate the risk of infection and lessen the fear of the development of traumatic conditions makes matters worse as one could argue that female circumcision can be made safe if clinically performed. Clinical female circumcision would address all but one of the reasons advanced against female circumcision-the risk of complication during childbirth that is pointed out by Dr Ferns. The reader feels that had she highlighted any medical advantages of male circumcision instead of merely terming it necessary, her argument would have been strengthened.

Despite the weakness in Dr. Williams's argument, he and Dr. Ferns succeed in making their listeners see the need to critically re-examine the practice of female circumcision. Before the end of the discussion, the men, namely: Victor, Abe and Mahmood, ask questions that show their desire to know more about female circumcision, and other cultural activities and attitudes that are harmful to women. These men, the main beneficiaries of the Status quo in a patriarchal society, express willingness for change. It is this desire for change, that we have seen the author consistently advocating for in this chapter that informs her vision even on the issue of female circumcision. The group at the end of the discussion on female circumcision expresses this desire when they pray:

Lord, no to rigidity
No to lack of openness
No to traditional practices
That we feel are harmful.
Yes to flexibility,
Since times change,
and we too often change with them (47).

This prayer reveals their yearning for positive social change.

After childhood, whose end in some patriarchal societies is marked by female circumcision, the practice we have just discussed, a girl is considered by the society ready for marriage. In Idowu's fiction, girls begin to get married at a very tender age. In Memories into Marriage, Japheth says that his friend, who has a psychologically troubled wife, married her when she was sixteen years old. This age is slightly above the age at which the Bella Rose, in My Heart On Trial, gets married for she was already a mother of two at sixteen. It is this institution of marriage for which a girl is prepared and socialised for right from childhood, and which in Idowu's fiction she enters at a tender age, that we now proceed to examine.

Marriage in Idowu's fiction, especially in the novels, is defined and influenced by certain customs. These are the payment of bride price, wife replacement, wife inheritance and polygamy. It is the author's presentation of these customs that we are going to analyse.

The bridegroom or his family pays bride price or dowry in Idowu's fiction to the bride's family. In My Heart On Trial, the omniscient narrator tells us that Yada had paid twenty four heads of cattle for Atiz Pata's hand in marriage. He also hastily pays four bulls and three heifers as dowry for his wife Bella Rose who had just died. In Lady in Chains we also have evidence of men such as Ochala, Odhiambo and Jayoo having paid dowry for their wives.

Although dowry gives a marriage legality and social recognition, it also subordinates the woman as it gives the man total claims over the woman (a claim that extends even to the children the woman bears). The character that Idowry uses to bring this out is Jayoo who holds the view that "the boss is he who pays the dowry" (Lady, 68). This character's story is partly told by the character himself, and by the omniscient narrator. The character tells a part of his story under the pseudonym of Jona, to convince his listeners, particularly Obar whose wife had run away after he beat her, that since he had already paid dowry for her, he had nothing to worry about. The omniscient narrator on his part reveals 'Jona's' true identity, and tells the last part of Jayoo's story that he conveniently withholds.

The part of his own story that Jayoo tells as that of Jona, relates to how he used the legality bestowed on his marriage by the payment of dowry, to force his wife and children back to his home. His wife had taken his three children and left home, after he had beaten her. Having found another man, she failed to return to him. However, she could not be legally married to him as Jayoo refused to reclaim his dowry as was required by tradition before the other man could pay dowry. This therefore meant that his wife's marriage to the other man could not be legalised. Jayoo bid his time until his son had finished school and his daughters were nubile, then he had sued his wife in a court of law. The court ruled in his favour and forced her together with all the children that she had to move to his home. Jayoo had found the "gaffer-met law" (69)-government law- more profitable than tradition because according to the government law, all the children belonged to the legal husband, while tradition stipulated that only the children sired by the legal husband belonged to him. Jayoo concludes his story by insinuating that he had not only succeeded in reclaiming his son, who was working in Nairobi when the court ruled in his favour, but also that he had greatly profited from his plot.

It is this conclusion that the omniscient narrator through dramatic irony falsifies. The narrator tells us that though Jayoo travelled to Nairobi to see his son, his son had rejected him. Full of anger, he had gone back home and beaten his wife for "poisoning" his son against him. His son on getting this information had him arrested and arraigned in a court of law for attempted murder. He was jailed for three and a half years. By the time he was released, he found a deserted home, save for the children of his second wife. The second wife had long gone. It was the poverty that he found in his deserted home that forced him to migrate to Ahero, where he works as a cobbler, and tells his incomplete life story as that of Jona's.

Idowu through Jayoo's story shows that although dowry is important as it establishes legality in marriage, it also subordinates women as it denies a woman, such as Jayoo's wife, the right to divorce their husbands. In addition, it also makes some men, such as Jayoo, think that after they pay dowry, the woman belongs to them as part of their property, and they can do whatever they wish. To counter this, the author through Jayoo's wife, shows that women in bad marriages can be separated from their spouses, or seek legal redress especially in cases where they are victims of domestic violence. The author still has faith in the courts despite showing that men who have paid dowry can also use them to frustrate their defiant wives. Idowu's vision, which seeks to punish cruel men, reveals the author's abhorrence for inhumanity and her yearning for a humane society. Women would not have to run away from their husbands or to arraign them in courts of law if they were kind and humane to them. Her vision, however, has a limitation as it fails to show how a woman can permanently be set free from a man who has paid dowry for her; it only offers her separation even in cases where divorce would be the best option. The question that lingers on is: can a man be forced to take back the bride price he paid so as to set the woman free? The author's

inability to address this question could be attributed to her realisation that some traditional practices and beliefs are so deep rooted and can not be reformed overnight. Her vision, however, shows the need for a critical re-examination and change.

In Idowu's fiction, an African traditional marriage does not end with the death of one of the spouse. If a woman, for whom dowry has been paid for dies, she is replaced by a close relative. This is done to ensure the continuity of the dead woman's house, and to provide a surrogate mother to the children left behind. In My Heart On Trial, when Bella Rose, Yada's eldest wife, dies, she is replaced with her younger sister Mary-Jane. She inherits Bella Rose's position as the eldest wife, and becomes the mother of the children left behind. This way, the relationship between Bella Rose's and Yada's family established through marriage, thrives.

While the society values wife replacement for the cultural role it plays, Idowu shows that this practice is detrimental to the welfare of women. Through Mary-Jane, she shows that due to this custom, a woman is forced to sacrifice her ambition, and even her happiness. On her part, Mary-Jane is forced to sacrifice her education and her dream of becoming a medical doctor in the future, and her love for her boyfriend Nick. This fills her with a lot of bitterness. It is this bitterness that makes her resent everyone, including her late sister's children, in her new home. Mary-Jane, unlike Chewa who in Bole Odaga's short story "The Replacement" betrays no bitterness with having to replace her late sister as Sigoti's wife, is a very bitter woman. It is due to this bitterness that within two years of being in Yada's home, she acquires a permanently unhappy face. Her mother-in-law observes this and exclaims: "this Nyar Chula is bitter like Bondo. You can never catch even the trace of a smile on her face!" (31). Yada's mother's simile emphasises Mary-Jane's bitterness with life. It is this same unhappy face that her late sister's son, Kenneth, observes during his father's

funeral. This was many years after her arrival at Yada's home as Kenneth, whom she had taken care of since childhood, was now an adult. Mary-Jane therefore spends most of her adult life as a very unhappy woman.

Mary-Jane's unhappiness, is not only aggravated by her bitterness with life in general, but also her husband Yada. During their first sexual encounter, he is very insensitive to her. He reaches "for the objective without minding the object" (30). Yada, by his insensitivity, which also comes out through his constant comparison of Mary-Jane to Bella Rose, is a pointer to the fact that his marriage Mary-Jane was devoid of love the most important determinant of a fulfilling marriage.

Idowu's presentation of the traditional practice of wife replacement through Mary-Jane, reveals that it is harmful for it robs women the opportunity to pursue their ambitions, and fills their marital lives with a lot of bitterness and unhappiness. Insensitive husbands frustrate any hope of changing this. Idowu, by highlighting the negative aspects of wife replacement, probably wants society to see the urgent need to drop this practice. The author envisions a society free from such a harmful tradition.

After looking at Idowu's presentation and vision on wife replacement, let us now analyse her presentation and vision on wife inheritance. Wife inheritance, which is closely related to the traditional practice of wife replacement as it follows the death of a spouse, refers to the practice in which a widow is inherited by a relative of the dead husband. According to the omniscient narrator in My Heart On Trial, this practice is mandatory for every widow. What this means is that the practice is repressive to widows as it denies them the right to chart the course of their lives. However, some widows like Rosalina and Columba in Lady In Chains, choose other alternatives. These two choose to live in the house for the poor widows provided by the Catholic Church. But

the omniscient narrator in My Heart On Trial tells us that “(w)ether a widow hid in the Church or not, there always came the time when she finally belonged only to the community. Then the ritual had to be performed for the sake of her family and the society” (28). It is the ritual that ensures that iconoclastic widows, or those who die immediately after their husbands, satisfy the mandatory practice of wife inheritance, and by so doing save society from any ill-omens, that Idowu concentrates her attention on. It is through this ritual, that we get a glimpse of her vision on the issue of wife inheritance.

In My Heart On Trial, the omniscient narrator informs us that, for the society to ensure that dead widows satisfied the mandatory practice of wife inheritance, it required a brave man who had nothing to lose. Salmon, a habitual drunk without any fixed abode, is such a man. From what he tells Yada, we realise why society required bravery, and a carefree attitude towards life. His duties required bravery and some kind of recklessness, as he was supposed to engage in coitus with dead widows. In his "confidential confession" (28) to Yada, he tells him that in spite of the liquor his hosts offered him before his special duty; he had to brave each occasion he was left alone with a dead woman, because of the paralysing fear he experienced. His most important confession, however, is that he never engaged in sexual intercourse with the dead widows.

Salmon's confession undermines the society's belief in the occurrence of bad omens if the ritual of wife inheritance is not observed. This is because, despite Salmon's deception, nothing ominous had been reported by those he deceived, and as Yada observes, nothing out of the ordinary had happened to Salmon. This can be interpreted to mean that widows can reject wife inheritance, die and be buried normally without any rituals, and nothing ominous would happen to the society. The author, through Salmon, seems to proffer the argument that wife inheritance, which denies women

their right of choice, can be eradicated, if only the society would stop believing in the occurrence of bad omens if the ritual of wife inheritance is not satisfied. In addition, Idowu indirectly shows the need to drop this practice, by presenting the appalling experiences men like Salmon undergo. As readers, we feel that it is wrong for society to make some of its member's go through such experiences. Salmon's bravery and carefree attitude towards life, are utilised by society not for his good, but for society's own good. It is probably because of the liquor that Salmon consumes before his duty that he is a sot, or can not deal with his drunkardness. In addition, his restlessness is partly, if not wholly, connected to his appalling duties. From all these, we can conclude that the author's wish is that of a society free from the practice of wife inheritance, a practice that not only denies women their right of choice, but also subjects some men to appalling experiences.

The last traditional practice related to marriage that we shall look at is polygyny or polygamy, as it is popularly known. In Idowu's fiction, this practice which results from man's search for prestige, lack of son's in a marriage, and men's need to exert their authority, is negatively portrayed as a practice that harms married women emotionally, and one that deprives them the full love and attention of their husbands. It is by analysing this portrayal that we shall be able to unravel Idowu's vision, as appertains this traditional practice.

In Lady in Chains, polygamy whose cause is probably that of prestige as Obar marries a second wife only after he acquires wealth, leads to Salome's neglect. Obar after marrying Nyar Tanga transfers most of his attention to her. He builds her an iron-roofed house and buys her good furniture, utensils and clothes. He does none of this for Salome, his senior wife with whom he had created his wealth. This breeds bitterness and jealousy in Salome's heart. These feelings finally explode one day. The narrator relates this occurrence in a flashback. On this particular day, Obar

was expecting some important visitors, but since he and his younger wife Nyar Tanga had to go to Kisumu to do some shopping, he asked Salome to entertain the visitors in Nyar Tanga's house, which had been prepared for the occasion. When the visitors arrived, instead of Salome doing as her husband had asked her to, she hosted the visitors in her grass-thatched and smoke filled house. She even maliciously added wet firewood to make the house more smoky. The eye stinging smoke is symbolic of her bitterness with her husband that she could not contain. The visitors were only saved from the smoke by Obar and Nyar Tanga's arrival. After the visitors left, Obar demanded to know from his stubborn wife why she had disrespected him. Salome answered him: "I have a house too. Baba Mica why should I entertain my husband's guests in another woman's house and a junior one for that matter?" (67). This question not only reveals her pain, but it also shows that she found her husband's behaviour incredulous.

This response annoyed Obar, who concluded that Salome's disobedience was rooted in her jealousy for her co-wife. As a corrective measure, he took a whip and gave her "the treatment accorded all disobedient wives"(68). Salome, lamenting of mistreatment, took two of her children and went back to her people. It is actually because of this incident and the circumstances surrounding it that Jayoo, who we have mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, tells his 'censored' story to his unsuspecting listeners. As readers, we feel sorry for Salome, in spite of the fact that we do also recognise that she erred by disobeying her husband, and maliciously 'smoking' his visitors.

The reason for this is because, unlike her husband, we realise that her complaints are true. Obar is outrightly unfair to her. We find it surprising that Obar is so blind, that he cannot see this. While we feel that Obar's fairness to both wives would have been a better option, we can not help feeling that avoiding polygamy would have been the best idea. This is because, if Obar had not married

Nyar Tanga, he would have given all his attention to Salome. Had this been the case, Salome would have had nothing to be jealousy about. Monogamy is therefore a better option for a woman. It is also fair, as none of the spouse would be deprived of the other's love and attention. It is the vision of a monogamous family that is free from the jealousy of neglected wives that the author suggests.

In My Heart in Trail, Yada's polygamy is as a result of two self-serving reasons. The desire for prestige and his need to assert his authority. According to the omniscient narrator, he marries Angela, his second wife due to "an elusive culture which besides having an autocratic nature insists on holding an emblematic advantage"(20). This view has some truth in it as Yada tells his son Kenneth that he married Angela for her education. He did this because he felt that Bella Rose, Kenneth's mother, who was not well educated, could not live up to the demands of his status as a provincial administrator.

Yada's marriage to Angela, which caught Bella Rose by surprise, was a hard blow to her. It actually killed her love for him. After this, to her, he reverted to Mr. Yada her primary school teacher who asked hard questions in class. Yada was to later recognise his cruelty to Bell Rose, as he considered "The shock that his action gave her... one of the cruellest blows he dealt anyone in his entire life" (20).

Yada's marriage to Angela, which was based on other factors other than love, was a total disaster. Yada found Angela incorrigible. She was a "masculine female who treated him as part of her property" (34). To reassert his authority, Yada married Atiz Pata, a teenager who made him feel young. This third marriage also proved disastrous for him as Atiz Pata was a "human Padlock" (18) who only knew how to supervise, but not how to comfort. The metaphorical reference to her

as padlock emphasises her insensitivity and inflexibility. As a result of Yada's inability to withstand her, he took her back to her parents. After this debacle, and unable to find any love from his wives, Yada got himself a mistress named Niki.

Yada's polygamous marriage, which is based on selfish interests, is a failure. It actually costs him the love of Bella Rose; the only woman he married out of love. Polygamy brings him neither happiness nor love, and he has to seek these outside marriage. In addition, it brings rivalry amongst his wives, which culminates in the struggle for his body after his death.

In contrast to Yada's tumultuous polygamous marriage, is his father's monogamous marriage. Ernesto, unlike his son, has a stable marriage. His marriage to Sabina (Nyar Tanga) lacks any major disagreements, and abounds in great interpersonal communication and understanding. It is due to this existing relationship, that Ernesto consults his wife after his son informs him that ghosts were haunting him. His wife Sabina makes him realise that in spite of his Christian faith, the best option is to consult a medicine man. It is this kind of consultation and discussion that lacks in Yada's polygamous marriage. It is probably due to this breakdown in communication that Yada's polygamous marriage fails. Sadly, the communication breakdown can partly be traced to the nature of the marriage itself.

Idowu, by highlighting Yada's unsuccessful marriage, which is in total contrast to his father's monogamous marriage, demonstrates how unsuitable polygamy is, and how suitable monogamy is.

By so doing she hopes to make her readers choose monogamy over polygamy. It does not escape the readers attention that Yada would probably have had lesser marital problems had he remained married to only one woman - his first wife Bella Rose.

In Memories into Marriage, polygamy is a result of lack of sons. In the chapter entitled "kidnapped or the Curse of Bringing Nothing but Daughters into the World", Judith one of the main narrators, says that like her mother, she had got a co- wife because she could not bear a son. As a consequence of this second marriage, her disappointed husband had withdrawn his affection and attention. These he had transferred to his other wife who bore him sons. Judith's marriage life was like a re-run of her mother's marriage for she too had suffered the same fate in her father's hands. To break away from this "curse", Judith exchanges her fifth daughter with the son of a woman she had met in the maternity hospital she had been admitted. This she did without the other woman's knowledge. Her theft momentarily helps her, as with the birth of a "son", her husband returned her into his favour and affection. However, this moment of happiness finally comes to an end when the mother of "her son", who ironically, happened to be her husband's relative, recognised her during her mother - in - law's burial. Her "son" was taken away from her, and her husband divorced her.

Judith's and her mother's experiences are moving. As readers we empathise with them as we realise that they are victims of the traditional belief that women are to blame for lack of sons in a marriage. It is this belief that Dr. Ferns seeks to undermine when he says, "procreation is not the work of one particular partner. Both play major roles, therefore, it is wrong for one partner to blame the other" (35). Dr. Ferns even gives a scientific explanation of procreation to clarify his assertion. It is this same belief that women are to blame for lack of sons in a marriage that the religious sounding Andrew undermines with his view that children are a gift from God, and neither a gift from the husband, nor from the wife. His view also implicitly suggests that children, whether boys or girls, should be equally appreciated as it is God's will that they be born.

Idowu uses Dr. Ferns and Andrew to project her wish for a society, which appreciates the birth of both girls and boys. A society in which women are not blamed for the lack of boys in a marriage. It is only in this kind of society that women would be safe from polygamy and neglect that result from lack of boys in a marriage.

Having said this, we should however note that Idowu's argument against the practice of men marrying second wives is undermined by the fact that Judith's father and her husband succeed in getting the coveted sons. Although this may be realistic, it suggests that this practise is a viable alternative for "son hungry" men. On one hand, we feel that had she made Judith's father and husband fail in getting sons from their second marriages, she would have presented a much stronger case against this practice. On the other hand, we see this as evidence of the authors fidelity to reality .She accepts that this happens in life. In addition, it also helps to highlight where the root cause of the problem is the preference of boys by patriachal cultures.

To conclude our discussion on polygamy, we can say that Idowu in her fiction shows that it is motivated by the selfish interests of men, and that it is harmful to women. In addition, it can be the cause of frustration for men, for it can fail to satisfy whatever need men had sought to satisfy through it. For these ills and inadequacies, Idowu implicitly suggests its eradication, and probably its replacement with monogamy. Idowu, therefore, expresses a desire for change, the same desire we have seen her express about those traditional beliefs and practices that in one way or the other subjugate women, be it in childhood or in adulthood.

Although Idowu's vision for a better society seems to lean against tradition, it would be wrong to conclude that she is against tradition in toto. In her fiction, there are traditional beliefs and practices whose portrayal reveals her support for them. One such belief in the presence of believing in the

presence potent ghosts after the death of women who suffer gross mistreatment in the hands of their husbands. In My Heart on trial, the omniscient narrator says that "Women especially by virtue of becoming migogo immediately after puberty pallor had this power to have their ghosts haunt so malignantly that no amount of magic could help"(17). This assertion is borne witness by the case of Ajwang Nyar Kadiem that Ernesto thinks about while looking for a diviner to treat his sick son. People said that after her husband murdered her, she persistently haunts him. His recourse to diviners is of no help as all the diviners he consults are unable to stop her ghost. Another case that shows the potency of women's ghosts is that of Bella Rose. Her ghost haunts Yada, her husband, after she dies. Yada attributes this ominous occurrence to two reasons. Firstly, the fact that he did not satisfy the ritual that required him to 'sleep' with her ghost before he could sleep with any other woman, and secondly his second marriage to Angela which was a big blow to Bella Rose. Although we can add a third reason to Yada's two and say that his 'haunting' is the hallucinatory effect of the drug he is injected with-a fact he realises just before he dies, we cannot conclusively rule out the two reason he advances. His haunting could be as a result of one, two or all the possible reason presented. This being the case, the belief in the ability of a woman's ghost to endlessly haunt its tormentors cannot be easily dismissed.

From Idowu's presentation of the belief in the uncontrollable power of female ghosts, we note that it is a belief that if taken seriously would protect women from harm. People would fear being haunted by unstoppable ghosts. As Onyango-Ogutu and Roscoe in Keep My Words argue, unverifiable stories in the Luo society relating how the ghosts of the women haunted their murderers, were meant to be a deterrent for murder (15). Idowu in her presentation also implicitly

recognises the utility of such a belief. It is a belief that is advantageous to women as it protects them from inhumanity.

Another tradition that reveals that Idowu is not against tradition in toto, is a requirement for young people to respect their elders and the wisdom embedded in them. The logic behind this being that member of the society, especially the young, by so doing, can save themselves from avoidable problems. Interestingly, this is the moral of the children fable "Mischievous Rat in the Train" that we discussed in chapter one. In Lady in Chains, Odhiambo and Polycap, who turn a deaf ear to the advice of their parents before marriage, encounter major marital problems. Odhiambo, who had married a woman from Alego despite protest from his family, is left with no option but to divorce her when he discovers that her mother is a witch. Jaduong Owiti, after his son's shocking discovery is quick to remind his son about his initial objection to the marriage. He tells him, "since the time of our ancestors, marriage has never been a thing to jump into, especially where a strange family is involved, but you never listen to me, do you?" (64). Jaduong Owiti's comments suggest that Odhiambo's marriage fails because he never listened to him. He mentions his ancestors to show his son that his advise was grounded on their wisdom, which had stood the test of time. Polycap on his part marries Susan, a woman he meets in a bar, despite his father's objection. He is, however, shocked to discover later after siring two children with her, that she was ironically legally married to Ochola (the man he knew as his father-in-law). His father, Honourable Mbogo, like Jaduong Owiti, sees his son's refusal to listen to his advice as the cause of his failed marriage. Idowu uses Odhiambo and Polycap to caution young people against dismissing the advice of their elders, as this can be catastrophic.

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In My Heart On Trial, the need to respect the elders and the wisdom they represent is articulated by Ernesto. He tells his son that an elder is an "owner of wisdom" (168), who should be respected and approached with humility. He argues that this should be the case even when one does not agree with the elder. This humility, according to Ernesto, would save one from the elder's wrath that carries a curse with it. He emphasises this by using a Luo proverb which states that "it is the fierce buffalo whose skin adorns the shield, and the cowardly hyena who lives to see the morrow" (168). This proverb implies that those who fear their ancestral traditions would live long. The apologetic tone Yada uses towards his father after his speech shows that he finally respects his wisdom. Idowu's vision of African traditions that recognises that there are beliefs, values and practices worth keeping, and others which need discarding is further demonstrated in Memories into Marriage and My Heart on Trial. In the chapter entitled "The Problem of Female Circumcision" in Memories into Marriage, the concluding prayer rejects harmful traditional practices, but at the same time advocates the retention of traditional practices that are good (47). This prayer, like the others in the text, reveals the author's vision on certain issues. In this case it reveals her overall vision of African traditions.

In My Heat on Trial the same overall vision we see in Memories into Marriage is also present. It is presented through Kenneth and the epilogue. The presentation through Kenneth, Yada's son and Ernesto's grandson, is ironic as he is a symbol of the patrilineal tradition that Genga consistently attacks in her texts. This irony reveals Genga's liberal feminist views. Through the pivotal role Kenneth plays in projecting her vision, we realise that she is not totally against patriarchy that characterises the African societies she depicts. If she were, she would have used a woman, probably Jackie Yada, Kenneth's sister. This would have symbolically

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overthrown patriarchy both at the family and societal levels. Genga chooses to use Kenneth to symbolise the valuable in African indigenous tradition and to emphasise the central role for men in the fight against the subjugation of women in society for they are the beneficiaries. It is partly through him that a vision for the future is presented. After his father's death, which has a tinge of superstition, Kenneth is not dismissive of his grandfather's superstitious beliefs. The omniscient narrator tells us that he had come to realise that:

There was reason in the distant and almost 'unreal' that his grandfather had to offer, which could be fatal not to see. To wit that the present must be founded on the past (sic) and the past not left to slide past, should inaugurate the future. That his grandfather was an old man was a fact, senseless and with nothing to offer in the modern world? No. But one from whose figure-loaded quips a lot has to be sorted out carefully and patiently (182).

Kenneth recognises the value of the past in the present and the future. However he takes cognisance of the fact that there is need for the past to be carefully scrutinised. This is to ensure that it is well understood, and that only the valuable is adopted from it. His thoughts echo those of Pastor Ngoya in his prayer in Imbuga's play Aminata. This is the same view that Idowu posits in the poetic epilogue of the novel. It says:

May we carry the past
into the future only if treasured
To open a future vast... (186).

Idowu envisions a society that learns from its past, one that preserves the good in the past as it meets the future. Idowu in spite of showing that some traditional beliefs that are inherited from the past are gender biased, recognises that it has treasures of its own. The author's conviction that

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there are treasures in African indigenous traditions will be revisited in our discussion of Christianity in the next chapter.

In conclusion we can say that Idowu through her character speech, thoughts, experiences, and desires shows that certain African traditional practices, beliefs and values are enfeebling to women and need to be dropped. She implicitly implies that if this were to happen, then a better and more humane society would be created. This humane society would also have room for the good in African traditions, as Idowu does not advocate the wholesale dropping of everything embodied in African indigenous traditions.

Having unravelled Idowu's vision of African indigenous traditions, in the next chapter, we shall examine her vision of modernism in Africa. This will be in our quest, for Idowu's social vision.

CHAPTER THREE

MODERNISM IN AFRICA: PORTRAYAL AND EMERGENT SOCIAL VISION

This chapter analyses Idowu's portrayal and vision of modernism in Africa. The aspects of modernism that this chapter analyses in its endeavour to unravel Idowu's vision of modernity are: western education, Christianity, urbanisation and contemporary African state politics.

In Idowu's fiction, "western education or school learning" (Macharia, 2) is presented as a valuable acquisition. In Lady in chains it is linked to employment and socio-economic success. In this novel, Abdalla, after spending all his savings on his son's education, is disappointed when he fails his form four examination and is unable to join university. Abdalla is unhappy for he believes that academic success leads to employment. His belief in education comes out in his internal monologue. He wishes that he had his son's "blessing" (189) during his days as he would now be having fifty degrees. With these degrees, he would have been able to acquire any job he chose in the country. To Abdalla, academic success opens the doors to unlimited employment.

Abdalla values employment which education facilitates for it leads to socio-economic success. He had personally witnessed this through his childhood compadre Honourable Mbogo. Mbogo, who after converting to Christianity had been taken to school in Mangu, had become a teacher after his education. Other than acquiring two new names - Nicholas and Teacher, he had prospered economically. He dressed smartly, and after a while bought himself a car.

The view that western education is valuable is also present in Idowu's two texts My Heart On Trial and Memories Into Marriage. However, in these two texts, Idowu introduces the issue of sacrifice in education. She shows that when some parents who value education lack enough money to educate all their children, they marry off their daughters to educate their sons. One cannot, however, rule out the fact that tradition, which as we saw in chapter one favours boys more than it does girls, is mainly the reason why it is boys who are allowed to continue with their education. In My Heart on Trial we learn through the omniscient narrator that Samson Jalango's elder sister blamed him for her "ill-fate" (71) in life. She claimed that their father had "practically dragged her out of school to be sold to the earth's ugliest and most obtuse old man for the sum of sixteen head of cattle" in order to meet the cost of Samson's education. From these claims, we realise that Samson's sister is a bitter woman for she realises that her life would have taken a different course had she been allowed to acquire an education. Her thoughts are not illogical for Samson, her brother, who had gone to school, had risen in society to become a provincial commissioner. Idowu, through Samson Jalango's sister, proffers the argument that sacrificing women's education is wrong, for it denies them the opportunities that education avails. Other than that, it fills some of the women who are deprived a chance to acquire education with bitterness. This bitterness is sometimes wrongly directed at their educated brothers, instead of their parents. To avoid all the problems related to sacrificing women's education, Idowu implicitly seems to suggest a change of attitude. She, however, stops short of showing how this can be done. It is this aspect that she further explores in Memories into Marriage.

In Memories into Marriage, in the chapter entitled "Opportunity for All," Victor tells his listeners that his father married off his younger sister, who had just qualified to join form four, so as to finance his education. His father had the conviction that Victor on acquiring an education "could bring, not only pride but also future financial blessing to the family" (21). Although Victor did fulfil his father's dream, his sister after marriage descended to a life of hardship and poverty, as her husband was "abjectly poor" (21). Later, Victor in spite of having two children of his own, decided to help his sister by taking two of her children - a boy and a girl to school. He was, however, unable to send his sister's third child to school when he attained a school going age as he was financially constrained. To solve this problem, his sister requested him to stop paying school fees for her daughter, and instead pay for her second son. When Victor demanded to know why this had to be so, she simply answered, " (b)ut she is a girl, Victor!" (21). Her reasoning like her father's before her, was based on the traditional "myth of the importance of a baby boy" (Mutuota, 66) that leads to the elevation of the boy over the girl which came out in our discussion of tradition in chapter one. It is also the same logic used by Sara's mother in the comic story The Special Gift by United Nations Children's Fund. When Sara's lying uncle says that he only has money to send one child to school, her mother and grandmother choose her brother over her. As her grandmother explains, Tsumi her brother is chosen over her because he is a boy (18).

Victor was shocked and ashamed by his sister's request. He could not believe that his sister was willing to let her daughter go through what she herself had gone through. It was then that Victor realised that he had to do something if the practice of depriving girls' education in the family was to be eradicated. He decided to convince his sister to go back to school and continue from where she had left. Despite facing opposition from his own mother and his brother-in-law, he finally

succeeded in sending his sister back to school. She registered for the London G.C.E which she passed. Later, through his encouragement she did her Advanced level exams and passed very well and qualified to join University. At university, she studied law and graduated with honours. Her success relieved Victor of the guilt he had always felt for having been the cause of his sister dropping out of school, and the burden of paying school fees for her children. Apart from these, her success won over those who were at first opposed to her going back to school, and made her father a proponent for "School Fees For All, Equal Opportunity For All" (author's emphasis) (22).

The academic and financial success of Victor's sister is not only a boon to her own family, but also to Victor himself. When Victor loses his job, it is his sister who pays school fees for his son for a year, and promises to do so for another year. Her economic empowerment, which is a product of her education, enables her to be of help financially to others.

Idowu through Victor's narration brings forth her vision of western education. It is valuable as it empowers its recipient economically, and therefore should be offered equally to both girls and boys. She shows that there is a need for change of attitude, and that men have an important role to play if this is to happen. In addition, she shows that educating a woman is also beneficial to society for when she acquires employment as a result of her academic prowess, she ceases to be a burden to others, and like Victor's sister, helps others in need of financial aid. Idowu summarises her vision of education in the prayer that comes at the end of the chapter entitled "Opportunity for All" in Memories Into Marriage in which the issue of education is discussed. In this prayer Victor asks God to give the discussants courage to resist the temptation of favouring boys in education. He beseeches God to help them remember the old saying that says: "Educate a man and you educate an individual / Educate a woman, and you educate a nation"(24). Although this 'saying' that Buchi

Emecheta also propagates in her essay "Feminism with A Small f!"(175) is controversial as there is no evidence in the discussion that precedes the prayer to support it, it captures the importance that the author places on the education of women. She believes it is crucial for the development of a nation.

Victor's prayer apart from revealing Idowu's belief in the importance of women's education also reveals her desire for equality between men and women. The prayer ends with Victor beseeching God to remind the discussants that all human beings are equal in his eyes. This last part of the prayer shows that Idowu advocates for equality in education. Both women and men should be given equal educational opportunities. The title of the chapter on education, "Opportunity for All" aptly captures Idowu's egalitarian vision.

Despite the fact that Idowu portrays western education as valuable, she also highlights some of its limitations. One of these limitations is related to human sexuality. In Lady in Chains, we get a glimpse of pervasive sexual behaviour in educational institutions. This is brought out through Susan who after primary school is admitted into a government school. At her new school, she nearly gets involved in lesbianism or "crashing" (86) as it was known in the school. Susan who has a Catholic background is appalled when she learns the meaning of crashing. She learns that 'crashes' stole test tubes from the laboratory to use "use like boy and girl at it"(86). Here 'it' is used as the euphemism for sexual intercourse. Susan, like the rest of the schoolgirls, realises the danger of this practice when Brownie Pamela, a fellow student, is not only hospitalised, but is also expelled because of it. Idowu while showing her desire for school going children to follow school rules in her portrayal of pervasive sexual behaviour also shows that the school administrations do not adequately handle it. Susan's innocence and near fall into bad company, suggests the presence of an information gap on

sexuality for students in schools. The presence of such an information gap is further illustrated by the fact that Susan gathers information on sexuality from her peers. Together with some of her friends, she learns “the one and two of sexual intercourse” from the wild demonstrations of Maggie, a colleague, who makes “the whole procedure feel like a fantastic game, harmless and most sweet” (87). These wild demonstrations awaken sexual curiosity in Susan’s mind. It is probably due to this aroused curiosity and the reading of *Romeo and Juliet*, “the Shakespearean story of unquenchable love”, that leads to Susan’s untimely romantic relationship with Ochola. This relationship that begins while she is in form three, ends tragically with pregnancy and her expulsion from school.

Susan’s predicament can be blamed on an educational system that does not provide the necessary information on teenage sexuality. As a result of this, the young people rely on misleading information either provided by peers, or gathered from their own unguided reading. Idowu by exposing this limitation, and showing its probable consequences through Susan, implicitly expresses her desire for this situation to be redressed. Idowu implicitly envisions an educational system that imparts knowledge on sexuality on its students. This would enable them make responsible decisions on matters related to their sexuality.

The second aspect of modernism we shall look at is Christianity. This religion, despite its long history with some parts of Africa, is exotic to Africa and was mainly spread on the vast continent by Europeans. In Idowu's fiction, Christianity is presented as a religion that is sensitive to the plight of widows in society. In Lady in chains, we learn through the omniscient narrator that Ochala's aunt Rosalia and her friend Columba, who we mentioned in chapter one, “had both been housed in the home for the poor widows built by the Catholic Church (111). The Catholic church in this novel is

shown as playing the same role it does in Margaret Ogolla's The River and the Source, where it provides a new home for the two widows, Nyabera and her mother Akoko.

The help the church extends to the widows is not appreciated by all in the society. In Lady in Chains, Jaduong Owiti who considers Christianity "a strange religion" (112) for subverting his people's traditions, wonders about what kind of future a widow was expected to have without ter (wife inheritance). His conservative attitude prevents him from appreciating the help the church was giving to the poor widows, and from critically analysing the practice of wife inheritance and finding out whether it had weakness which may have contributed to the presence of widows in society who needed help.

Idowu by showing that the Catholic Church helps poor widows in spite of there being opposition from traditionalists who still favour traditional ways of handling them, intends to show her readers the positive role that the Catholic Church, and Christianity by extension plays in society. It promotes the welfare of widows and even defies traditional practices and public opinion in the pursuit of this endeavour. Idowu probably envisions the Christianity continuing to play this role.

Christianity in Idowu's fiction is also presented as a religion that promotes dialogue in society. In Memories into Marriage in which the presence of Christianity is revealed by the Christian prayers that close each discussion session, dialogue is linked to God. In the prayer that closes the first discussion session, Lydia thanks God for "the gift of prayer" as it is "the offer of dialogue" (21) that God has given his people. Dialogue in this case is presented as an activity that God values, as through prayers, he dialogues with his people. The fact that God values dialogue makes it divine and thus an activity worth emulating. Thus the discussants in Memories into Marriage, are actually imitating God by peacefully discussing family life problems that are rooted in gender discrimination.

This kind of imitation is encouraged by Christianity as the bible encourages Christians to be imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1).

Dialogue in Memories into Marriage ensures a free flow of ideas amongst the discussants, and enables them to confront the ills of gender discrimination. Moreover, its centrality emphasises its desirability by the author. Although overt suggestions are not openly stated in the discussions on how this traditionally rooted discrimination can be eliminated, they are revealed in the prayers. In Chapter one we saw how the messages of change of discriminative traditional practices were brought out in the prayers. In this chapter, while discussing education we have seen the message of equality in education being presented in the prayer. Idowu by revealing her vision on tradition and education in the Christian prayers after the discussions (dialogues) shows that Christianity through dialogue and faith in God can eliminate gender discrimination in the society.

Idowu's vision of Christianity as a religion that can eradicate gender discrimination is an interesting one as the bible, Christians holy book, does propagate the subordination of women (Gen. 2:18, Gen. 3:16, 1 Tim: 11-12). We actually note that Agneta's mother in Memories into Marriage, used Genesis 2:18 to justify the reason why Agneta had to serve her brothers and all men. She used to tell her that "the Bible says that God created Eve to be Adams helper" (16). Idowu's vision is a departure from this kind of interpretation of biblical teachings, as it desires gender equality. The vision is also shown to be biblically acceptable through the allusion of Gal.2: 28 in Memories into Marriage. Victor's prayer that ends the chapter entitled "Opportunity for All" in which education is discussed, says that human beings are equal in the eyes of the Lord. This is the same idea contained in the biblical verse; men and women, just like the poor and the rich are equal in the eyes of the Lord.

Although Idowu envisions Christianity improving the position of women and thus contributing to a better society, she also highlights the social conflicts and divisions that are related to it. In My Heart On Trial, one of the conflicts emanates from the denominational division of Christianity. In the novel, Yada tells his son Kenneth that his mother was disowned by her father “a staunch Anglican parishioner”(13) for marrying a Catholic. He even refused to receive any dowry. This was a source of sorrow for both Yada and Kenneth’s mother Bella Rose as it denied their ‘marriage’ legality. Christianity in this case is portrayed as a divisive religion Its denominational division fans divisions amongst its converts. These divisions strain interpersonal relationships, and even affect important social institutions such as marriage. Idowu’s portrayal of Christianity as a divisive religion is aimed at making Christianity re-examine itself and seek ways of eliminating suspicion and divisions amongst its converts.

The main kind of conflict which is related to Christianity is based, however, on its belief system vis-à-vis the traditional beliefs of its converts. In My Heart on Trial, Ernesto, Yada’s father, best illustrates this. Ernesto had been a practising Christian for forty years His Christian faith is however shaken when his son claims that he was being haunted by Aloo a legendary evil spirit. Despite the fact that Ernesto reminds his son of his Christian faith, which has no room for such superstitious beliefs, he is deeply disturbed. It takes his wife’s effort to convince him to seek help from a traditional diviner. His initial argument that such an act is unchristian is successfully countered by his wife’s argument that “God helps those that help himself”(47). Ernesto decides to consult a traditional medicineman for he does not want to lose his son to madness or death.

Although his son Yada dies, his death awakens him to the fact that “what is written in the in the books of the church cannot erase the writing of all-time the will and the being of a people and their

community”(37). The internal monologue he has during his confrontation with father Arthur his parish priest who accuses him of being a non-believer not only reveals this, but also reveals that he believed that his son's death was as a result of his desertion of his people's beliefs. Furthermore, it exposes his alienation from Christianity. In the confession that follows his confrontation with father Arthur, Ernesto confesses to sinning against "the God who made the herbs and the medicine-men, who gave us eyes to see, ears to hear and a brain to think" (172). Ernesto is not remorseful for having consulted a diviner, as the priest believes he is but betrays his misgivings for having allowed strangers to control his life and thoughts. This had made him to even discard traditional knowledge that was useful to his life such as that provided by medicinemen. By the end of the novel, Ernesto is superstitious and keen on observing his people's beliefs and practices. Ernesto does not tell Father Arthur whose faith in him, ironically, had been restored after his 'confession' of his religious transformation. This suggests that he would henceforth be like his wife who had no problem turning to tradition for help when circumstances demanded it.

Idowu through Ernesto and Sabina demonstrates that the tension and conflict that emanates from Christianity's and rejection of traditional religious beliefs can be eliminated through some kind of integration. Idowu's portrayal of Sabina and her husband Ernesto as the Africans of tradition who went to church but did not reject their culture (P'Bitek, 66), reinforces this argument. Christianity has to re-examine its stand towards the traditional beliefs of its converts or risk producing quasi-Christians who adhere to both. Idowu who as we saw in our earlier analysis of Christianity recognises its contribution to society particularly to women, envisions it becoming responsive to the belief systems of its African converts as they still respect them.

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The third aspect of modernism we shall address in this chapter as we search for Idowu's vision of modernism is urbanization. Although urbanisation existed in Africa before the advent of Europeans to Africa, they are credited for its spread in the continent particularly during the painful era of colonialism. In Idowu's fiction, urbanization is the central theme in Idowu's "transitional novel" (Teiye, 28) Lady in Chains. This being the case, the novel will be the central text of reference in our analysis.

In Lady in Chains, the city is depicted as a place that is 'divided into compartments' (Fanon, 29). The compartmentalization of the city is captured in Idowu's personified description of the city of Nairobi:

The skyscrapers and freshly mowed lawns of Lavington and Muthaiga bless her with beauty. Karen and State House powder her face to make her bright. Scabies attack her hands placed in Kibera, Kangemi, Kariobangi, Korogocho, Kawangware, and Kayole. Under her dress - a rare material consisting of heterogeneous fabrics - lies an infectious gangrene named Mathare. Under her chin, an army of fungi named Majengo mobilize(sic) intensively as they attack (60).

From this description, we notice two sides of the city: one that gives it beauty and brightness, and another that mars its beauty like a deforming human disease does to a body. The contrast between beauty and ugliness connotes an economic division, that of riches and affluence versus that of poverty and deprivation. These two sections of the urban center, as Teiye observes in his unpublished thesis "Individualism in the East African Novel" correspond to Frantz Fanon's settler's town and native town. The settler's town was so solidly built, brightly lit, neat and well fed, while the native town was congested, dirty and starved (142). Fanon's "settler's town" is similar to the beautiful, bright sections of the city of Nairobi, while the "native town" is similar to the diseased, ugly sections of the city.

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In Lady in Chains, the economic division of the two sides of the city is captured through the characters. Polycap, a Civil Engineer who drives an expensive car, dines in classy hotels and restaurants and lives in Lavington, one of the places that blesses the city with its beauty. In contrast, Ong'ora, a watchman, does not own a car; he frequents dirty, lowly bars and lives in Mathare, the infectious gangrene of the city. What this basically means is that the quality of life for the city dwellers is determined by their economic power. It is with this background of an economically divided city, where money and wealth are synonymous to a good life and poverty a condemnation to a squalid existence that Idowu explores the materialism and concomitant individualism that thrive in it.

Idowu explores the materialism and individualism that exists in the city mainly through Susan, one of the main characters in Lady in Chains. Susan epitomises the urban woman who fits into the theory of the "New Woman" who

represents a theory of personhood where the individual exists as an independent entity rather than her kinship relations(sic), where she has a responsibility to realise her potential for happiness rather than to accept her role, where she has indefinable value rather than quantitative financial worth, and where she must reason about her own value rather than fit into stereotypical traditions (qtd in Frank, 17).

The development of Susan into a "new woman" who reasons about her own "values" and does not fit into 'stereotypical traditions is closely linked to her acquisition of urban values and lifestyle. Susan, her husband Ochola and their three children like Meja and Mwangi in Meja Mwangi's Kill Me Quick migrate to the city to escape the poverty in their rural home. The decision to migrate to the city, however, is not hers, but is made by her husband Ochola in the belief that the city had opportunities for economic advancement. From what we learn of the omniscient narrator, his cousin Ong'ora who worked in the city of Nairobi had fired his belief.

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We get glimpses of Susan's feelings towards her husband's decision to migrate to the city through the numerous verbal exchanges they have during the journey to Nairobi. In one of these quarrels which foreshadow the disintegration of their family, Susan intimates that she had not wanted to leave home, and complains that she left her home like a thief, for she was not allowed to bid farewell to her people. Susan's journey to Nairobi is not filled with excitement, but with complaints and bitterness. However, this transplants her to a new environment and her life, as we shall demonstrate shortly, greatly changes.

On arrival in the city, Susan like her husband is equally disappointed with it. Their host, Ong'ora, who commanded a lot of respect in their rural home, and whom people thought was a rich man, was a mere watchman who lived in Mathare slums; a very dirty and overcrowded place. Susan, who considered the reality of the city a nightmare, "secretly hated Ong'ora for painting a non-existent world" (14) which her husband, whom she considered foolish, had taken in for the truth. Susan apportions blame for her disappointment on both Ong'ora and Ocholla her husband for whom she demonstrates neither love nor confidence.

Susan's adaptation to the ways of the city and its economic realities is gradual. At first, she plays the role of the traditional woman whose main preoccupation is taking care of the children and doing the chores in their one roomed slum house as her husband goes to work. During this period, she constantly reminds Ocholla, whose paltry watchman's salary is never enough for the family's up keep, of his inability as a man. She particularly complained about his inability to buy a bed. This period of a traditional woman who relies on a man for her economic upkeep for Susan does not last for long. Her fellow women warn her that if she does not change her approach, "She would soon go naked and starve with her children (21). Heeding

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their advice, she saves some money from what she gets from her husband and like Ongo'ra's wife begins selling Chang'aa. Although the business thrives during the first month, it eventually collapses due to Ochola on one hand and the police on the other. Ocholla who Susan bribes with some liquor so that he does not interfere with her business, begins demanding more than the bribe and even demands that his friends be given free liquor. His behaviour is similar to Wamala's in The Burdens who demands free enguli from his wife though he knows that it is meant for sale. The police on the other hand demand hefty bribes that Susan cannot raise. With the collapse of her business, Susan falls back to the traditional role of a domestic wife.

Ironically, Susan's change of status from a housewife who wholly depended on her husband for her upkeep is largely due to her unsupportive husband. Feeling the pressure of supporting his family on his partly salary, he decides to ask his wife to work as a barmaid. This is a profession he had initially considered the same as prostitution. At first Susan finds this incredulous of her husband for he had contributed to the collapse of her trade in illicit brew. In addition, she also considers the suggestion repugnant to her morality. Through Ochola, we learn that his suggestion had been the cause of one of their major physical fights (49). In spite of these initial rejections, Susan does this with the hope that one day she will be able to save some money, go into business and uplift herself economically. This to her is important as she did not want anybody in future to find anything "to belittle her with" (37). It is after taking this job, that her materialism and individualism which are motivated by her desire to escape poverty come to the fore.

Susan, through the efforts of her husband, is employed as a barmaid at Sabina Joy a popular nightclub in the city. Through Mike the cashier of the bar, we learn that her first days were very challenging. She cried a lot as the customers were rude to her “for they poked their hands under her dress and into her bra” (56). This transitional period was a painful one for her. However, she learnt quickly and become an expert at her job. In addition, she got herself a rich male admirer.

Susan’s successful passage through her transitional period at Sabina Joy, and her development into a “new woman” is not solely through her own efforts, but is aided by Merilyne. Merilyne, a regular customer at Sabina Joy and who is more knowledgeable in the ways of the city, plays a similar role to that of Mrs. Waswa in Grace Ogot’s short story “The Other Woman”. Like Mrs Waswa who shows June, the new city immigrant, the short cut to owning a house in the city, Merilyne advises Susan on economic survival and advancement in the city. This drop out of the University of Nairobi, like Amaka in Flora Nwapa’s One is Enough uses her “bottom power” (Frank, 21) to advance herself economically. She has no qualms about exploiting men financially in exchange for sexual favours for she blames them for her failure to complete her degree course, and for the lose of a number of jobs. From the omniscient narrator, we learn that she believed that she was an “activator in the women’s lib” and that Susan deserved to learn “the short cut to women’s lib” (103). Although in a characteristic egocentric way Merilyne at first attempts to exploit Susan’s beauty to her own advantage, she later endeavours to show Susan the short cut to women liberation. Her methods are not moral as they include prostitution and economic exploitation of man.

While Susan resists Merilyne's attempts to lure her into prostitution, she gains a lot from her friendship and advice. Merilyne warns her against self-pity for once a person succumbs to it, it "survives all weathers" (92). She also advises her on how to deal with the bar patrons who considered any women in a bar immoral. Merilyne tells her to let them think that she was "the only daughter of Lucifer left walking on earth" (92). These pieces of advice must have helped Susan for she stops crying and wallowing in self-pity. She gains confidence and expertise in dealing with male patrons in the bar. It is, however, in relation to Susan's extra-marital affair with Polycap, her rich boyfriend, that Merilyne plays a crucial role. This affair is rich in dramatic irony, which enhances Susan's deceitful nature that develops in the urban environment. This will become apparent in our discussion.

Susan, as we observed earlier, meets Polycap in Sabina Joy. A friendship sprouts which ends up in emotional and sexual intimacy. This happens in spite of the fact that Susan is a married woman. Susan ensures the survival of her illicit relationship by concealing the truth about her marital status from Polycap, and by bribing her poor and materialistic husband with money got from Polycap. In addition, she moves her family from Mathare to a better place. Despite her success in doing this, in moments of moral consciousness, she gets tempted to tell Polycap the truth about herself. When she tells Merilyne about her desire to tell Polycap about her past, Merilyne is appalled. She calls her "a bloody fool" (77) and strongly warns her against it for that was the surest way of losing him. Merilyne instead advises Susan to exploit her situation while she still can. She tells her not to spend all the money she got from him, but to save some of it. Merilyne's reason for telling her this is because "A woman cannot afford to be careless

these days”(117). She even advises on the best business to invest in. Susan follows Meryline’s advice as she does not tell Polycap the truth and thus saves her emotionally and financially fulfilling relationship with him. Later when this relationship breaks, Susan is not overly worried, as she is already rich and financially independent.

Susan does not, however, totally depend on Merilyne’s advice on everything. Once she gains confidence in herself, she develops into a wily schemer. She is able to control Ochola her overbearing husband, whom she blamed for her failure in life (37) As we observed earlier, she uses money and the promise of a better house to achieve this. She also convinces Ochola to pose as her father so as to ensure the survival of her relationship with Polycap. When Polycap proposes marriage Susan convinces Ochola to play along by promising to return to him once Polycap had paid the “bride price” to him. However, Susan who had realised “how wretched and unfortunate it is to be poor” (196) does not keep this promise. She chooses to stay with the rich Polycap instead of her poor husband. She buys Ochola’s co-operation in her well-plotted scheme by guaranteeing his financial stability. She also helps him out when he is in financial difficulties. This not only ensures his silence, but it also assures Susan that their three children who were under his care were provided for. We note that Marilyne is unaware of this plot and only learns about it later. Susan, therefore, demonstrates an intellectual resourcefulness of her own; an ability to make her own individual decisions without relying on Marilyne or anybody else.

Susan’s intellectual resourcefulness and her ability to make decisions guided by her own individual needs, is further demonstrated when her true identity is revealed to Polycap. This

happens after the couple's fateful visit to Kisumu. During this visit, all goes well, until the couple, in the company of Opon, Polycap's childhood friend, meet Otieno Seda at Sanganyinya bar. Seda, Ocholla's cousin and therefore Susan's brother-in-law, oblivious of Susan's deceitfulness, greets her and enquires about the identity of her two male companions, and the whereabouts of her cousin. This annoys Polycap and a fight ensues. This fight ends with Seda's arrest by the police. Afterwards, Polycap on confirming from Susan that she did not know the man files a suit against him. In court, Seda is charged with 'malicious damage and character assassination' (147). It is during this court case that Susan's true identity is revealed to Polycap. During the case, Susan to everybody's surprise confirms the nullity of her marriage to Polycap. To absolve herself from any blame, she claims that she has been forced into the marriage by Ochola, her legal husband. Most importantly, however, are the actions she takes once she realises that her 'marriage' to Polycap is over. She takes their two sons and moves out of his house. In leaving, she takes the property and the money she had got and made as his wife. In addition to these, she repossesses all the property that she had given to Ochola. Later, Susan uses trickery to get her three impoverished children from Ochola. She gives him a worthless check in exchange for the children. Ochola takes the check without realising that he has been cheated. Susan's actions after her exposure reveal shrewdness and sharpness. Unfortunately materialism motivates this shrewdness.

While Susan's and Merilyne's immorality, which is motivated by their urban acquired materialism, brings them riches and financial stability, it harms some members of the society. In Susan's case, the main victim is Polycap. Polycap, marries Susan out of love. He supports her financially, and even buys her a house in Kisumu. He shows a great deal of trust and love, importantly, he fathers two

sons, Victor and Vince, with her. It is therefore devastating for him when he learns that Susan, the woman he loved and the mother of his sons is a cheat. His pain is made worse by his father's death during the same period of time he discovers the truth about Susan. Polycap gets very close to committing suicide. He actually gets hold of himself just before he throws himself into Lake Victoria.

Apart from Polycap, Susan also hurts her children emotionally. Amongst her five children, those who suffer most are her three children by Ochala, namely Akinyi, Nyangweso and Tom. She leaves these children under the unwholesome care of Ochala, when she decides to remain "married" to Polycap, after their illegal marriage. By doing this, she deprives these children of her motherly love and care for the whole period the marriage lasts. The damage that this period of separation does to her relationship with her children is manifested by the cold reception she gets from Akinyi and Nyangweso when she goes to pick them from their father after the end of her "marriage" to Polycap. Apart from this, Tom, the youngest of the three, had forgotten her, and calls her "auntie" (188).

Victor and Vince, Susan's two sons with Polycap also suffer due to their mother's behaviour. After the truth about their mother comes out, they get separated from their loving father as their mother takes them away with her. Victor and Vince miss their father after this separation and keep asking after him. It is unfortunate that Susan their mother considers this question, plus the others they ask concerning the identity of Akinyi, Nyangweso and Tom, "sickening endless questions" (197).

Susan's individualism also harms her relatives. Her main victim is her brother-in-law Otieno Seda, who is arrested and arraigned in court after he fights with Polycap at Sanganyina Bar in Kisumu. These two men fight after Otieno addresses Susan as his sister-in-law. This incenses Polycap and he

fight to defend her honour. In court, Otieno is charged with causing "actual bodily harm" (147) to Polycap and for slandering Susan's name. Although Polycap later terminates this case when he learns the truth, Otieno had already suffered from his incarceration. In addition, the policemen who guarded the police cells had harassed his worried relatives. All this suffering is connected to Susan's materialism and individualism.

Idowu's presentation of Susan's moral deterioration after she moves to the city depicts the urban center as a place that endangers morality and altruism. It is as an urbanite that Susan becomes sexually immoral. Moreover, it is due to the materialistic and individualistic tendencies that she picks in the city that she becomes insensitive to other people's welfare. Idowu's rejection of the city's corrupting influence is revealed through the rural inhabitants. After Susan's iconoclastic behavior is exposed, her family back home in the rural areas receives her "(l)ike a rotting corpse" (195) when she pays them a visit. Her own mother received her with caution and treated her "like one would an unconfirmed poisonous snake" (195). The similes reveal the attitude of Susan's family members as contemptuous. Their reception clearly shows her that they detested what she had become. Idowu, through Susan's rejection by her family, implicitly shows a desire for morality and altruism in urban centres. These are the qualities that the urbanized Susan lacks.

Idowu's dislike for the materialism and the individualism that exists in the city that comes out in her depiction of the negative impact on the society also reveals itself in the omniscient narrator's description of the wealthy Susan at the end of the novel. Susan, whom the author renames Suzane to capture her personality and economic transformation, visits her modern bar and restaurant adorned in a lot of jewelry. We are told that:

Suzane wore a heavy looking, coruscating gold chain around her neck. The same kind of chain adorned her left ankle. Large earrings clung to her ears like leeches. A large chain belt wrestled her belly. Uncomfortable bangles of various sizes and colours adorned both wrists. They looked heavy but she didn't find them so" (198).

From the expressions used in this description such as "heavy looking", "wrestled her stomach" and the simile "large earrings clung to her ears like leeches" in relation to her jewelry, one gets a glimpse of the author's feelings towards Susan. Her lack of admiration for Susan's jewelry, which these expressions connote, unmask Idowu's dislike for her character Susan.

The expression "Lady in Chains" used by one of the customers of Suzane's bar and restaurant to point her out to a friend, that is also the title of the novel, similarly reveals Idowu's feelings towards her character. Although it is a befitting description of Suzane as she wears two golden chains and a chain belt, it also connotes her enchainment by materialism, which the golden chains symbolise. It is this enchainment that weakens her human qualities. Idowu, therefore, uses the symbolism of the chain to implicitly warn her readers against becoming victims of materialism. This is because materialism destroys humane qualities that are essential for the existence of healthy human relationships, and a healthy society. She shows this through Susan.

In spite of the fact that Idowu portrays the city as a place that promotes the growth of materialism and individualism at the expense of altruism and morality, she recognizes that it contributes to the growth of a new woman. A woman who refuses to be cocooned into the stereotypic definition of a woman, but one who aggressively exploits her opportunities so as to improve herself. She is intelligent, decisive and a good economic manager. Through "New Women" such as Suzane and Marilyne, who interestingly Idowu does not destroy, Idowu envisions a society that allows women room for growth and empowers them economically.

This is crucial, as it will enable them to develop their potentials, and financially be able to support both themselves their families without sacrificing their morality.

The last aspect of modernism we shall examine in this chapter is state politics in post-colonial Africa. The modern African states and their politics are an aspect of modernism as their statehood can be traced to the partition of Africa by the European powers in the second half of the 19th Century. The specific country that Idowu writes about Kenya, as the names of places that she uses are those of real Kenyan towns such as Nairobi and Kisumu. Moreso, the names of most of the characters are recognisably Luo; a large community in Kenya. We shall look at its portrayal and the author's emergent social vision that is related to women's impassive role in politics.

In Idowu's fiction, politics is male dominated. In Lady in chains, where politics is a minor theme, the only politician who is developed to some length is a man. This is Honourable Mbogo, a cabinet minister who dies in a mysterious road accident. His presence in the novel is significant as it symbolises men's dominance in politics. This male political dominance is also revealed by political discussions. In this novel, only men such as Polycap and his male friends discuss political issues. The women such as Merilyne and Susan are pre-occupied with economic survival and their discussions rotate around this. The interest in politics shown by the men shows that they are more likely to participate in it, and control or influence it. This is unlike the women who are preoccupied with economic and domestic issues.

Male dominance in politics is also visible in My Heart On Trial. In this novel, the political elite represented by the shadowy "big" men, and the senior quasi-political civil servants, are all men. The women who are visible in this top echelon of power are either wives or lovers to the men. Of

these, we have Niki and Nancy. Niki the first woman, starts off as a mistress to Yada, a permanent secretary in the office of the president, but ends up as a mistress to one of the big men after Yada ends their relations on realising the big man's interest in her. Nancy, the second woman, is married to Samson Jalang'o, a provincial commissioner, but also becomes a mistress to one of the big men.

Although these women play a passive role politically, they illustrate the big men's lust for women, especially those with boyfriends or husbands. This behaviour is similar to that of Chief Nanga in Chinua Achebe's A Man of the People or Mr Osigo the "servant of the people" (1) in Okoth Okombo's The Cannibals. Chief Nanga, a prominent politician seduces and sleeps with Odili's girlfriend Elsie. He is so insensitive that he does this while Odili is in the same house. Mr Osigo, a cabinet minister, on his part is a serial philanderer. He picks women while performing his political duties, and orders his men to bring them to him in a room he rents in a hotel specifically for this purpose. Among these women is Sophie a married schoolteacher.

The big men's lust, like that of chief Nanga and Mr. Osigo's, symbolises their lust for power, and their insensitivity to others while in its pursuit. They would do anything to keep the power they have. As we shall see later in our discussion, the big men use the police to eliminate anybody they do not trust. They do this to safeguard their power.

The male dominance in politics, and women's passive role can be attributed to the patriarchal nature of tradition. As we saw in chapter one, tradition in Idowu's friction favours men and subordinates women. In this kind of situation, politics, which deals with leadership, cannot be divorced from men. It is the political leadership provided by men, and the new political vision that Idowu proposes in which the woman plays a significant role that we shall examine.

The male dominated politics in Idowu's fiction is characterised by intimidation. In Lady in chains, the political discussions between Polycap and his friends Mvavita, Makanga and Mbaya reveals that politicians use threats and violence to silence any opposition against them. In the dialogue between Polycap and Mvavita, we learn that a government minister, who had been featured in a daily newspaper, had threatened to name dissidents. This threat by a cabinet minister shows that the government he represents opposes any opposition to its rule, and that it punishes its dissidents. We get an inkling of what kind of punishment the government gives its dissidents through Polycap's reprimand to Mvavita during one of their discussions. Polycap to end their discussion which was critical of politicians who threatened to expose those opposed to the government, tells Mvavita that being a husband and a father of two, he did not want "to be put away for holding unlicensed talk" (122). From this comment we note that imprisonment is the punishment meted out to dissidents.

Politicians apart from using threats to intimidate their opponents, also use violence. Like chief Nanga in A Man of the People and Osigo in The Cannibals, they have groups of supporters who they use to beat up their opponents. Makanga a lawyer, in Lady in Chains bitterly complains to his friends Polycap, Mbaya and Mvavita about this. He even vows that the day any of the "Rough and Ready Youth Winger's" (127) who are used by politicians to cause violence steps in his courtroom, he would charge him with contempt of court. Although this sounds emotional, it captures the anger that political violence generates in some members of the society. They feel like taking matters in their own hands so as to rectify the situation. Idowu through Makanga hints at the need for members of the society to participate in changing the political culture of violence in their society for this would lead to a better community.

The politics in Idowu's fiction is not only characterised by intimidation, but also by murder and intrigue. In Lady in chains, Honourable Mbogo dies in a road accident that is suspect. An eyewitness account discounts it as an accident as the minister's car was dropped at the scene of the accident by a large truck. In addition, the wounds on Honourable Mbogo's body were covered with congealed blood, suggesting that he had died elsewhere before being dumped there. Although the eyewitness account raises the need for a thorough investigation, the police appear at the scene of the accident to make trivial observations. This peculiar behaviour of the police and the lack of mention of Honourable Mbogo's cause of death during his burial are disconcerting to the reader. The reader feels that there is some kind of official cover up as the government does not pursue the death of one of its own despite there being clues linking it to murder. This omission paints the political establishment as sinister and murderous.

The political intrigue and murder that we see in Lady in Chains is, however, better developed in My Heart on Trial. In this novel Idowu takes on a theme that is also evident in the works of other African writers such as Francis Imbuga and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye. Imbuga briefly tackles it in Betrayal in the city through Kabito's murder that is executed at Mulili's command, while Macgoye handles it in her historical novel Coming to Birth. Macgoye in this novel she alludes to the assassination of Pio Gama Pinto, Tom Mboya and J.M. Kariuki, all of who were prominent Kenyan politicians. However, Idowu unlike Imbuga and Macgoye does not make political murder a minor theme in her novel, she places it at the centre. It is the murder of Yada, one of the main characters in the novel that links most of the characters and events in the novel. The importance of this murder in the novel is captured in the prologue. From the prologue we learn that the story in the novel is rooted in a quarrel between two couples that the narrator meets in a restaurant in Europe. The

quarrel between Kenneth and his sister on the one hand, and Rebecca Siele and Samson Jalang' on the other, is related to Yada's death. The first couple not only accuses the second of tailing it, but of being responsible for their father's death. These allegations are, however, refuted by the second couple. It is in an attempt to find out the truth of the matter from the foursome, that the narrator unearths the story she narrates in the novel. We should also note that the novels jerky, discontinuous style captures the instability in the lives of the characters. This instability is mainly related to the tyrannical political system.

In My Heart on Trial, Yada's death is as a result of poisoning. His personal doctor on orders from the police poisons him. The reasons for this heinous act are not clear although the police after his poisoning meet with the provincial administration to set in motion investigations into his "contagious activities"(74). These activities, are however, not spelt out. One thing that is clear though is that his poisoning follows his ostracization by the big men, his political bosses. Peculiarly his fall from grace comes after Niki, the woman he jilts, becomes a mistress to one of the big men. While we cannot say with certainty that Niki has something to do with Yada's problems, we can confidently say that the big men are involved as the police who are under them are linked to the murder.

The official conspiracy behind Yada's poisoning comes out after Dr. Ondiala, a doctor in the hospital Yada is admitted to after his poisoning, discovers the truth. Before he informs Yada's distraught family of the real cause of his illness, the police who also seal off Yada's room arrests him. The police's conspiracy to keep the truth hidden is similar to that of the police in Nuruddin Ferah's Sweet and Sour Milk .In this novel, the police who arrest Loyaan so as to prevent him from finding out that his brother Soyaan had been killed by the government. However, while the police in

Farah's book only interrogate Loyaan, those in Idowu's novel beat up Dr. Ondiala and throw him into an eerie room. This physical and psychological torture is meant to make him tell them about who else apart from himself knew about Yada's poisoning. Dr. Ondiala is unable to withstand the police torture; he breaks down and becomes hysterical. The police call in a doctor, whom the omniscient narrator tells us was getting tired of misusing his training, to drug him and declare him insane. However, for Dr. Ondiala to be admitted to an asylum, the signature of his wife is necessary. It is in relation to this signing that Idowu's political vision, and her vision of woman's impassive role in politics begins to emerge.

In a bid to convince Mrs. Ondiala to sign her husband's institutionalisation papers, two police officers, the nameless Senior Superintendent and Sergeant Rebecca take her some money, and a promise from the state that it "will diligently look into the future needs" (79) of the family. Mrs. Ondiala who sees through their hypocrisy, rejects their offer. She declares that her husband is not for sale, and demands to see him. When she gets to the hospital where her husband is admitted, she refuses the doctor's request that she signs her husband's hospital admission forms. She tells the doctor that her husband did not need anybody's help. On being told by the doctor that all insane people needed a doctor's help, she asks him:

Is it sane to use a human being without his consent for experiment? Is it sane to force a human being into a state of unconsciousness and then jerk him out of it at your own will? Is it sane to inject poison into a human being's blood, abandon him to die convulsing, foaming and gasping for life? Then you come back to diagnose him a victim of a particular organic malfunction? Come on doctor is it sane?" (85).

Mrs Ondiala's questions not only reveal her doubts about the doctor's sanity, but also the fact that she knows about the doctor's malpractice. She links him to illegal experiments, Yada's poisoning and her husband's mental problems. The doctor's reaction to Mrs Ondiala's insinuations confirms

his guilt. He angrily sends her away, and then calls the police. He asks them to eliminate her for she knew too much. The police respond viciously for Mrs. Ondiala and her youngest son are killed in a freak road accident on their way home from the hospital. Her death literally orphans her two surviving children, a son and a daughter, as their father is institutionalised. It is worth noting that the death of Mrs. Ondiala and her child is foreshadowed by clothesline that breaks before she leaves home for the hospital.

Although Mrs. Ondiala's obstinacy costs her and her son their lives, it is heroic. She stands up against the murderous police force and the tyrannical political system they represent. Idowu, through her, shows the need for citizens of oppressed societies not to be cowered into supporting oppression, but to outrightly reject it. Idowu, however, recognises that this heroic path is dangerous and life threatening.

As readers, while appreciating the author's suggested vision, we feel that it has limitations. It openly pits defenceless people against a merciless regime. We feel that a tyrannical and murderous political regime like the one the author presents requires to be approached with tact, but not with emotions. This is because open and emotional confrontation like in the case of Mrs. Ondiala, exposes one to imminent death. It is probably in recognition of this fact that Idowu modifies her vision ironically through Sergeant Rebecca, a member of the ruthless police force.

The first time we meet Sergeant Rebecca, she is in a meeting with her boss Senior Superintendent and Samson Jalang'o a provincial Commissioner. This is in Senior Superintendent's office in the twenty-third floor of a building next to Kenyatta Avenue. During this meeting, she looks bored and even uninterested in discussing the fate of Yada, "one of the country's most powerful men" (65). The only time she talks is to warn Samson Jalang'o against moving too close to the window as

many accidents were known to happen in that room. She betrays no emotions when making this ominous comment that alluded to murders that were passed off as accidents. Like her boss, Senior Superintendent, whose lack of a name suggests his depersonalisation by the police force, she is not emotionally involved in Yada's case. This is in contrast to Samson Jalang'o who is emotionally disturbed by Yada's poisoning, and his involvement in its cover up.

Sergeant Rebecca also demonstrates emotional detachment when she accompanies Senior Superintendent to see Mrs. Ondiala. This is in spite of the emotional nature of the case, and the crudity of what they are supposed to do. While Senior Superintendent explains to Mrs. Ondiala about her husbands, "insanity" and tries to buy her co-operation, Rebecca remains professionally detached and only makes a comment where necessary. She is so professional, that Mrs. Ondiala's warning that she had better not be part of the police's evil scheme does not elicit any kind of response from her.

Cracks in Sergeant Rebecca's policewoman's demeanour, however, begin to appear when the disturbed and scared Samson Jalang'o seeks refuge in her house. She first drops the formality between them by telling him to call her Becky, then she advises him to run for his life as Senior Superintendent was looking for him. In addition, when Senior Superintendent with whom she was having an affair returns to her house to pick his key's, she hides the unconscious Samson under her bed. She then handles Senior Superintendent so well that he leaves without suspecting anything. Sergeant Rebecca's act of hiding a man wanted by her senior, reveals her humanness. It also marks the beginning of her rift with the police and the political system.

The continued development of Rebecca's humane consciousness, which is lacking in the police force and the political system she defends, is further demonstrated when she helps Samson to

escape from the city. She makes him disguise himself as a woman, and then gets him out of the city in her car. She is able to do this easily not only because she is a policewoman, but also because she has official business out of the town. She is sent by Senior Superintendent to do some investigative work in Rapogi village, Nyanza province. This was the village from which Dr. Ondiala, the unfortunate doctor whose family is destroyed, hailed from.

It is at Rapogi that the development of Sergeant Rebecca's humanness reaches its apex. The suspicion with which the villager's receive her with, makes her realise that "she was not a servant of the people as she wanted to believe, but somebody else's servant, an enemy of her own people" (120). It is probably this realisation that makes her decide not to report the villager's unwillingness to provide her with information concerning Dr. Ondiala and Yada, and their dislike for the government to her seniors. Her decision is a humane one for we are told by the omniscient narrator that she knew that "(t)he response from this area ... would not please the Director, and Senior Superintendent would find justification for armed pacification" (122).

Sergeant Rebecca's decision not to subject the Rapogi villager's to any suffering, ensures that her humanness triumphs over her career. She realises that she can no longer continue to be a tool of oppression, and decides to leave her job. This is a big sacrifice on her part for she had ambitions of rising in her career. Her affair with Senior Superintendent was supposed to hasten this.

Having decided to desert the police force, Sergeant Rebecca dedicates herself not only to Samson's escape from their country, but also her own. Her decision to escape is probably informed by her knowledge of the police force and the political system it served. She knows that her desertion would raise doubts about her loyalty and put her life in danger. We say this because she tells Samson that "the red spotlight" (134) was turned on him after his loyalty became questionable.

This was after he visited Dr. Ondiala, a victim of the police, in the asylum he was admitted disguised as a woman. Sergeant Rebecca's choice of action is therefore influenced by prior experience.

Sergeant Rebecca is very important to the development of Idowu's political vision. She represents the re-awakening of the humane consciousness in the people used as tools of oppression by a tyrannical political system. In addition, she shows that women's involvement in politics "would lead to greater sensitivity to human interests"(Hunter, 536). It is this quality of sensitivity that is lacking in the male dominated political system.

Apart from showing the need of sensitivity and compassion in politics, Rebecca also shows that exile is a viable political option. This is the option that Chris in Chinua Achebe's Anthills of the Savannah chooses on realising his life is threatened by Sam's oppressive regime. Unluckily, he is shot in ironical circumstances by a border. In Rebecca's and Samson's case, however, they succeed and flee to Europe to escape persecution in their country.

The option of self-exile that Sergeant Rebecca and Samson choose, unlike the confrontational method used by Mrs. Ondiala, preserves their lives. Sergeant Rebecca's escape ensures that the qualities of sensitivity and humanness do not die in their infancy. It is given a chance to grow, although away from the land that needs it most. We also note that had sergeant Rebecca and Samson not escaped, the information that they give the narrator concerning Yada's death and their relation to it, would not have been known. Their exile therefore gives them a chance to talk about the experiences of working for an oppressive system and by so doing expose the evils of such a system. What they say has the potential of sensitising their fellow citizens and the world about the inhumanity of tyranny. This could in turn lead to the rejection of oppression by people facing it.

Sergeant Rebecca's and Samson's escape, therefore, has the potential of positively contributing to the political development of their society.

From our discussion in this chapter it becomes apparent that Sergeant Rebecca is mainly the vessel through which Idowu's political vision is revealed. Idowu envisions the male dominated political system in Africa, which is characterised by intimidation and tyranny, becoming humane. She shows that women have an important role to play in this transformation. Her vision also recognises that exile or escape from an oppressive political system does ensure the survival of social ideals such as humanness and sensitivity.

In concluding this chapter, we can say that Idowu's social vision on modernism emerges from her portrayal of western education, Christianity, urbanisation and politics in Africa. From our analysis, Idowu's vision of western education is that it is valuable and should be provided to both girls and boys without discrimination. Her vision of Christianity is one that recognises its contribution to the improvement of gender relations in African societies. Idowu envisions it continuing to improve the position of women through dialogue and its religious teachings. Idowu also envisions Christianity re-examining its stand on traditional African beliefs that are still valued by its converts. This would enable it to become more responsive to the spiritual and social needs of its converts. On urbanisation, Idowu desires that it should promote morality and altruism; qualities that are endangered in urban centres. Apart from this, she envisions urbanisation contributing to the development of a new woman, a woman who is not inhibited by her traditional roles. Lastly on post-colonial African politics, Idowu desires a humane political system that does not harm its people in any way. Her vision for such a system

recognises the important role women will play in its realisation. She envisions women playing a vital role in the humanisation of politics in their nations.

Idowu's overall vision of modernism in Africa that emerges from these separate visions is that despite its shortcomings, it can immensely contribute to the development of a fair, humane, spiritually stable society. This can, however, be achieved if the members of society recognise its shortcomings and address them. Idowu has highlighted some of these weaknesses in her fiction.

CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to test the hypotheses that Idowu's fiction has a social vision of a humane society, and that this vision is influenced by feminist ideals.

In relation to the vision of a humane society, the various chapters in this study show that Idowu's vision is positively inclined. In chapter two where we look at Idowu's autobiography and literary works, we see that her short stories for children project a vision of a morally upright society, free from vices. In chapter three we see that Idowu desires an altruistic society as she implicitly advocates the dropping of traditional practices that are unfair to women. Lastly in chapter four, it emerges that Idowu desires that modernism in Africa should contribute to the creation of a humane and spiritually healthy society. In short, Idowu's social vision is that of a moral, altruistic and humane society. The analysis of Idowu's fiction, therefore, reveals the vision of a moral humane society that cherishes gender equity. This confirms our first hypothesis.

Our second hypothesis is also confirmed by our study. In chapter three we see that Idowu's vision of tradition is greatly influenced by her depiction of traditional customs and practices that subjugate women. Her portrayal is feminist in nature as it "stresses the way in which women freedom has been curtailed, their rights to choose severely restricted"(Miller, 122). Her depiction of education, Christianity and urbanisation that we analyse in chapter four are also influenced by this ideology as it highlights how these issues affect women. Furthermore, Idowu's overall desire to make society humane, which in some cases is brought forth through

strong female characters, is also a feminist concern as “(f)eminists often start by attempting to make our immediate communities more humane and satisfying and cooperative places to live and work”(Hunter, 89). In conclusion, therefore, we can say that Idowu’s social vision is humane and informed by feminist ideals.

Although this study has accomplished what it set out to do, it has not exhausted everything there is to say about Idowu’s fiction. This in essence means that other researchers should explore gaps not addressed by this study. A suggested area of research is style in Idowu’s fiction, as this thesis does not exhaustively address the stylistic concerns in Idowu’s fiction for it is thematically oriented. A stylistically oriented study will therefore be a welcome addition to this thesis. Another suggested area of research is in the field of children literature. Idowu has written a number of literary works for children, some of which this study was unable to acquire. To fill the gap it leaves, a study of Idowu’s children’s fiction ought to be carried. These two areas, and others that may be present, can be explored for further research.

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