AN ANALYSIS OF THE WOMAN IN GENDER ROLE - PLAY DYNAMICS IN KENYAN KISWAAIIILII DRAMA

By

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A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
In the University of Nairobi.
DECLARATION

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

Francis Mwangangi wa Musyoka

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors.

Dr. Kineene wa Mutiso

Dr. Rayya Timammy
DEDICATION

To all my teachers.

Formal, informal and non-formal.

To my parents.

Musyoka

and

Kamengi.

For supporting my welfare and education enterprises in their unique ways.

To Maria, my wife.

For her unwavering support and our intrinsic mutual understanding.

And for our cherished sons

Timmy and Edwin.

In anticipation for their future and lives.
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The underlying aspiration of this study was to analyse how gender role-plays and identities have been progressively constructed by Kenyan Kiswahili playwrights since the birth of Drama in the Kenya literary scene to the present. Consequently, we have undertaken a chronological appraisal of the changing representation of gender roles through the various stages of the genre's evolution. In order to come up with a balanced literary view, the study has investigated the extent to which literary critics conceptualize and reflect the dynamics of gender role-plays as manifested in the changing socio-political environments represented by Kenyan Kiswahili playwrights.

The study is divided into six chapters.

In chapter two, the study analyses gender role-plays in the indigenous African societies before the infusion of foreign ideologies into the African cultures. The chapter then explores how these alien influences contributed to re-alignment of power structures and determination of gender role-plays in the new social dispensation. It interrogates the after-effects of how the cultural cross-breed between the external and indigenous values affected social inter-relations in the African societies. The chapter thus interrogates some of the pertinent issues which determined gender role-plays in the indigenous African societies and how they assumed new dimensions after the advent of colonialism,
capitalism and imperialism. This gives an insight into the genesis of the confusion surrounding gender role-play positioning in the post-colonial literature. This chapter also evaluates how cultural and feminist perspectives influence gender relations in the contemporary African societies.

Chapter three looks into the extent to which socio-cultural forces are manifested in the gender characterization patterns in Kiswahili drama. It evaluates gender role-play representation in the formative and the middle phases of Kiswahili drama evolution. In the middle phase, the study interrogates the representation of gender role-plays in selected plays authored by Kenyan playwrights. The chapter demonstrates that the negative portrayal of the woman character in Kiswahili drama was entrenched in the middle phase. To widen the literary perspective on gender role-plays, the chapter also engages a comparative study of how gender role-plays are represented in the African literature by a cross-section of renowned African artists in English literature. This is a deliberate attempt to have an inclusive overview of how gender roles have been represented in the broad African society, not only in Kiswahili drama, but also in English literature as well.

Chapter four analyses the representation of gender role-play inter-relations in a modern society. It explores how the dynamics of social conventions are altering the social parameters which shape role-play determinism. This has seen the opening up of the social space to allow the woman exploit her human potential at a competitive level with the male character. The study evaluates the challenges faced by cultural values in the interpretation and determination of social roles along the gender axis in the contemporary Kiswahili plays.
In chapter five, the study evaluates the nature and the implication of language usage across the gender divide and how it impacts on the societal values and gender status attached and associated with the gender divide. It interrogates the salient manifestations of the power of language in decoding inter-personal attitudes behind given discourses. The chapter underscores the essence of language in understanding the undercurrents behind the individual and societal identity and sentiments.

Chapter six is the last and it contains summary of findings, review of the statement of the problem, evaluation of objectives, verification of hypotheses, and recommendations for further research.
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

**Contemporary** - Current, as opposed to the past - viewed in the context of passage of time or events. The contemporary Kiswahili drama is one which is reflecting current issues in a modern society. In the context of our study, the contemporary drama captures the dynamic nature of gender inter-relations which show the extent to which role plays are undergoing radical metamorphosis as opposed to the past phases of Kiswahili drama progression. The study undertakes a comparative analysis of gender role-play representation in the formative, middle and contemporary phases of Kiswahili drama.

**Dynamics** - The salient forces that induce change in a given field or environment. The dynamics affecting gender roles are the cultural, economic and political factors being witnessed in the wider spheres of the social scene which necessitate re-defining and re-positioning of gender role-plays in the literary domain.

**Equality** - to treat or value oppositional sides in the same manner. Gender equality relates to the parity accorded to the dignity and worth of men and women, equality in their rights and opportunities to participate in political, economic, social and cultural developments and benefit from the results. Gender equality is thus the stage of human social development at which the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals are not determined by the fact of being born either male or female.

**Equity** - It is a general condition characterized by fairness, justice and mutual respect for the both divides of gender without neither seeking to dominate the other. It adverts to the
Possibility of inequality between men and women which necessitates the application of
differential treatment to get rid of inequality.

Feminine - Human traits thought to be appropriate to, or associated with women or girls.
These are general human attributes conventionally associated with women according to
some set social factors which determine gender demarcations.

Femininity - Quality or nature of the female sex. It denotes the trait of behaving in ways
considered to be typical of women. Basically, it is a conventional idea about women. It is
the quality of looking or behaving in ways conventionally thought to be appropriate for a
woman or girl.

Feminism Literary Theory - It is a literary theory used to analyse gender and related
issues in literature. It is an offshoot of the mainstream theory of feminism. The branches
of feminism are Western and African. The Western branch is further divided into French,
American, and English. In the wider perspective, feminism as a social agency aims at
transforming gender perceptions that are oppressive to women and threaten their social
and human status. It is a literary theory which seeks to safeguard women's rights viewed
to be under threat in a male dominated society. It is founded on the shared principle of the
need to secure, or a commitment to securing rights and opportunities for women equal to
those of men, by appreciating and appraising their human potential. African feminism
literary theory is founded on the principles of traditional African values and addresses
gender and related issues within the African socio-cultural setting. It is a theory which is
reinforced by the need to liberate the African woman from cultural, religious, political
and economic discrimination.
**Formative Phase of Kiswahili Drama** - It is the pioneer era of Draina evolution in Kenya. This phase occurred during the colonial period. One distinguishing feature about the formative phase is that the playwrights did not address the pertinent socio-political issues of the day and their thematic inclination gravitated more towards comedy and the negative influences of Western mannerisms on the Africans culture.

**Gender** - It refers to the socially determined distinction between male and female. Gender encompasses the various social, cultural and psychological meanings that are attached to sexual identity. It is a universal adage that refers to both man and woman. It is the sex of a person or a whole category of people or any one of the categories- masculine or feminine. Although gender and sex are sometimes used in literary and lay circles to refer to the same human condition, sex is reserved for the straightforward biological distinction between men and women. On the other hand, gender is not indicative of a specific sex of a person, or an attitude towards somebody as it refers to both men and women and their status, relative to each other.

**Gender role-play** - The space, status and profile given to any of the gender divide in social roles in a given literary work. These include the roles assigned or performed by a character from a particular gender divide and how their relevance and worth are weighed against those of the other divide.

**Masculine** - Possessing qualities or characteristics considered typical or appropriate of man. These are traits usually associated with men and not women. They are human attributes socially held to relate or belong to men and boys rather than women and girls.

**Masculinity** - The trait of behaving in ways considered to be typical of men.
**Matriarchy** - A social order where women have power. It is a form of social organization where women are in charge and are recognized as the heads of families, with power, lineage from mother to daughter.

**Middle Phase of Kiswahili Drama** - This can be referred to as the transitional phase. It is the period after colonialism which is characterized by socio-cultural confusion due to infusion of foreign ideologies into the African cultures. The literary society depicted in this era is trying to assert its cultural and political identity which has been severely disoriented by invasion of alien values, effectively altering the social order as existed in the indigenous African setting. This new development brings new perspectives in the interpretation of gender role-plays, femininity and masculinity, the determination and practice of power as well as the value of labour.

**Patriarchy** - A social system in which men dominate. Men are regarded as the authority within the family and the society, in which power and possessions are passed on from father to son.

**Representation** - A visual depiction of something or somebody. A description, account or statement of real or alleged, especially one meant to induce a response. In the literary domain, the general representation of a given character defines the roles the artist assigns or expects of a given character and how and why they should be performed in a certain manner.

Role - The behaviour enacted or apportioned to a given status. It can be defined as the behaviour deemed by an individual or society as appropriate to a given gender or class in a given social hierarchy. In any given society, social roles are determined by a variety of
factors, all which pivot around the socio-political cultural constructions of gender interpretations. A society may be patriarchal or matriarchal.

Sex — Either the male or female division of a species. This is usually determined by the differences by which the male and female are distinguished. Usually, sex is defined along biological determinism where the base of consideration is the presence or absence of certain body organs. This means the property or quality by which organisms are classified as female or male on the basis of their reproductive organs and functions. Sex differentiation can also be arrived at through the physiological, functional, and psychological differences that distinguish the female and the male.

**Status** - Collection of rights and duties that attach to particular positions. Status in gender refers to the placement of females relative to males in a dual-level hierarchy. Social statuses are conferred according to social values accorded to the roles associated or performed by individuals across the gender divides. The concept of status of women is used to refer to the placement of females relative to males. In this sense, the term status connotes stratification and invites comparison with other systems of human categorization. It often denotes subordinate-superordinate relationship.
CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Drama as a genre in Kiswahili literary production is a fairly recent development with a history within a range of half-a-century. In this span of its existence, the thematic progression of Kenyan plays can be categorized into three phases - the formative, the middle and the contemporary.

The formative phase is the pioneer era in which Kiswahili plays made their debut in the Kenyan literary scene. This phase occurred when Kenya was still under colonialism and the plays written during this period include *Afadhali Mchawi* and *Mgeni Karibu* (Hyslop, 1957), *Nakupenda Lakini...* (Kuria, 1957), and *Nimelogwa Nisiwe Na Mpenzi* (Ngugi, 1961). The writers in this phase concentrated on experimenting with issues of form and content that approximated Western models of drama. According to Mugambi (1982), the adoption of local hybrid of the European model of drama in the Kenyan scene was a trend initiated by Hyslop, a European missionary, who played a leading role in nurturing upcoming playwrights of the time. Kuria and Ngugi, his compatriots in the era, who were the first Kenyan Africans to write Kiswahili plays, were his literary interns who had been schooled in the colonial system of Western education. This system had a significant influence on its recipients towards making them appreciative of Western Philosophies and mannerisms about life in general and more specifically, the degraded social status of the African subject. It is out of this background that the thematic Mentation of Kiswahili drama in this phase largely gravitated towards comedy, derision,
ridicule and mockery of Africans at adapting and adopting to Western mannerisms which had been introduced to them. The Africans were assumed to have low intellectual capacity which was only deemed to merit entertaining literature. Drama in this formative phase therefore focused mainly on social conflicts such as those involving general lifestyles between urban and rural settings, the elite and the illiterate, contrasts between African and Western cultures, and it generally inclined towards populist entertainment.

Kiswahili drama in Kenya therefore evolved from the colonial system of education aided by missionary efforts. And due to the prevailing political temperatures and the teething problems of an evolving genre, pertinent social issues of the time were not accorded due attention. The missionary and colonial agencies worked in cahoots to control the mental and physical domains of the Africans. The plays in this era therefore did not give due prominence to the pressing socio-political local issues of the day. For example, Mungai (in Topan 1971:27) observes that although these plays were written during the peak of Kenya's agitation for self-independence and notably the Mau Mau uprising, they give no mention of the human injustices meted on the native Africans by the colonial regime.

The second phase of Kiswahili drama progression came after independence and it is categorized as the middle phase. I'lic artists in this era diversified their thematic scope to encompass wider spheres of social life, especially as concerns the cultural structures defining and determining inter-personal relationships in everyday life. The plays in this phase portray a society in which the social life depended on cultural dictates. The society's reasserting its identity after sustained domination by colonialism whose capitalistic ideologies have thrown gender relations into a state of confusion due to the introduction
of Western concepts into the African way of life. This confusion revolves around what virtues are indigenous to the African societies and which are alien. Gender inter-relations in this phase therefore reflect a situation where the male gender occupies the authoritative echelon in decision making as well as the performance of core social responsibilities while the woman is consigned to peripheral social roles which are primarily domestic in nature. It is on the basis of this that the writers explore how different age groups in the society interpret and practice their cultural norms, resulting in a generational conflict pitting the old against the young. While the old generation reveres the preservation of cultural institutions which favour patriarchy over matriarchy, the young generation is torn between allegiance to this social order and adapting to the emerging contemporary social dispensations. The Kiswahili plays in this category include Kitsao's *Tazama Mbele* (1980), *Uasi* (1980) *Bibi Arusi* (1983), and *Malimwengu Ulimenguni* (1983), and Nyaigotti's *Mke Mwenza* (1982), among others.

Many literary critics such as Omboga (1986) and Wafula (1999) contend that this is the phase in which gender and related issues began receiving notable literary recognition in Kiswahili drama in Kenya. They also intimate that the presentation of gender role-plays and the social placement of the gender divides were later to ensconce the dogma among literary critics that the woman is held in low esteem and disregard in a society in which the male enjoys socially profiled privileges of dominance. The plays in this phase collectively portray the woman as a lesser human being to man and her social arena is confined within the homestead, where she is also expected to attend to the man's whims without complaint or reservations. The playwrights also highlight how women characters
in this era are passively enhancing retrogressive stereotypes against themselves by not challenging the social institutions which are bent on legitimizing male chauvinism.

The portrayal of the subordinate status of the woman character during this phase has prompted the later-day Kiswahili playwrights and critics to pick up the gender debate from the position that the woman is oppressed and denigrated in a male dominated society. The peculiar and common stance they adopt is a concern that for a long time, the male gender has unwittingly and sometimes deliberately imposed restrictive socio-cultural sanctions against the female gender. This has had the effect of endorsing the imposing status of the male gender as given, natural and sacrosanct - making it appear unchallengeable. The implication of this school of thought is that man, through acts of commission and omission, continues to limit the social space of the woman through social institutions which propagate gender inequalities.

The third phase comprises contemporary playwrights whose works interrogate gender relations from the perspective of social dynamism in a modern society. They have introduced new insights into the nature of changing gender role-plays in which they highlight the gains women have made in their campaign for equal space with men in the performance of social responsibilities. Their works are literary embodiments of social liberation as well as custodians of pillars of basic human rights, including gender equality. The playwrights in this phase include Alamin Mazrui, Ari Katini Mwachofi, Kithaka wa Mberia, Kimani Njogu, and their peers. Ideally, Mazrui and Mwachofi should be classified among the playwrights in the middle phase since they wrote within the same time-frame. However, when their works are put under critical literary scrutiny, it is clearly evident that they are well ahead of those of their peers in the way they represent
gender issues. The works do not exhibit as much conservatism in determining gender inter-relations as those of their counterparts. The image of the female character they represent is that of one who is determined to defy retrogressive social norms and assert herself as an equal human being to man in the societal organization. She is liberated and is no longer willing to remain in the restrictive inferior cocoon which the society expects of her. The two artists seem to have initiated the literary revolution in the gender relations that the contemporary artists are advancing and can therefore be rightfully categorized as belonging to the league of their peers in the contemporary phase on the basis of their commonality in progressive thematic inclinations.

The contemporary playwrights have challenged the positions taken by their earlier counterparts on gender identities and role-plays. While appreciating that gender role differentiation has previously been socially and culturally defined in ways which create and reinforce relationships of male dominance and female subordination, they have asserted the fact that with the emerging dynamics of the changing social order being witnessed in the socio-political domains of the modern society, gender role-plays have progressively acquired new revolutionary attributes. Their representation of gender role-plays reflect a radical departure from the predictable position identified with the playwrights in the formative and middle phases in which the woman was always the passive victim while the man remained the habitual villain. They have introduced new dimensions as regards the social inter-relations between man and woman and (heir status in society. Their views have challenged earlier popular literary perceptions accorded to the gender role-play representation; that the woman is always meek, submissive and laid-
While the man is assigned domineering attributes such as being the natural leader, intelligent, rational, reliable and strong in principle.

While the all-positive literary attributes associated with the male gender have remained unchallenged in previous literary critiques, the emerging repositioning of gender role-plays by the contemporary playwrights calls for an updated literary appraisal which appreciates that gender role-plays as exhibited by the both divides are progressively becoming complimentary and intertwined, with each divide acquiring new social and human attributes hitherto not associated with it before. This is out of the necessity that when a critical analysis is subjected to the way gender role-plays have been represented by playwrights in the various phases, it is emerging that the contemporary phase has demonstrated a clear paradigm shift in the way they perceive and interpret their positioning in a dynamic society.

1 2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Gender and related issues are some of the emergent themes that have generated a lot of attention among playwrights and literary artists in general. In many of the analyses undertaken on gender literature, the general tendency adopted by most of the literary critics has been to isolate the gender divides and evaluate their attributes independent of each other. In most instances, the female agenda is accorded more prominence and focus, highlighting issues such as woman oppression, woman identity, the woman's status in literature and society. In these analyses, the woman character is usually portrayed as a disadvantaged human being who is constantly under the shadow of man. The gender
debate therefore tends to revolve around the vulnerable and disadvantaged position of the woman. It centers on her inability, not ability. This kind of critiquing has been entrenched for such a long time that criticism on gender issues stagnates around the dogma of woman as the subject with man being the object. Gender inter-relations have not been receiving sustained reviews to reflect the progressive dynamism of role-plays being projected in the Kiswahili drama which is highlighting the positive attributes of the woman. As such, the strengths of the woman have not been receiving constant appraisal to reflect the changing nature of the gender representation being portrayed by contemporary playwrights.

The popular approach adopted in many of the analyses is that the woman continues being sidelined in social issues which the man continues to dominate. The male character is presented as all authoritative and domineering. At the same time, the man is always depicted taking advantage of his privileged social status to exploit the vulnerable position of the woman to his advantage, lie also does not appreciate the woman's human capabilities as an equal partner who can offer meaningful contribution in social development.

*  

Literary critics have therefore been projecting gender role-plays of female and male characters in such a way that they appear to be pre-meditated and predictable. The male character is assessed alongside the more challenging social responsibilities which are also viewed as holding together the centre of the society's destiny. These are usually the tasks that the female character is deemed to have limited capacity to either initiate or execute. The gender roles are expected to be performed according to certain prescribed social patterns. While this gender stereotyping reflects gender relations in the middle phase of
Kiswahili drama, literary critiquing fail to reflect how contemporary playwrights are highlighting the emerging radical dimensions gender inter-relations are taking in a modern society. There is thus a the need for a contemporary gender critique which engages a bipartisan and inclusive interrogation of the way the gender divide exhibit various human traits and also perform core social responsibilities in reflection of the new trends gender role-plays are adopting.

This study has sought to undertake a consolidative and comparative analysis of the gender role-plays in their diversities and commonalities. Whereas it enquires if the traditionally peripheral position assigned to the female character remains static in the face of social pressures of changing times, it also evaluates if the male gender retains its domineering and decorated attributes the literary artists have associated it with all along. This is out of the concern that although the contemporary playwrights are reflecting progressive dynamics of changing gender role-plays, the critique of the same does not address the emerging pragmatism. It falls short of highlighting the fact that gender role-plays in the contemporary drama are progressively undergoing a momentous phase of change, rendering the traditional gender stereotyping irrelevant and outmoded. The contemporary Kiswahili playwrights in Kenya are demonstrating that gender role-plays are no longer being pre-determined on the basis of gender anatomy, but competitive capabilities.

It is thus the contention of this study that the female character as portrayed in the contemporary drama is exhibiting her positive human potential in a way that the critics should no longer continue taking for granted. At the same time, a critical literary analysis shows that the domineering attributes which have been assigned to the male character
should be subjected to unprejudiced review against the capabilities of the female character. In essence, the gender role-plays as represented by Kiswahili playwrights through various phases of social and literary evolution in Kenya have undergone radical metamorphosis which should be reflected in the contemporary critiquing.

The contemporary Kenyan Kiswahili drama has introduced women characters who are assertive and self-confident. They have come out of their inferior cocoons and are making notable contributions in the mainstream spheres of the society, alongside men. They are etan excelling where their male counterparts fail to meet the standards often associated with masculinity, and have demonstrated that they have the capability to initiate and manage meaningful social changes for the betterment of the wider society. Such female characters in the contemporary Kiswahili drama in Kenya include Lnnina (Mazrui, 1981), Mwavita and Tenge (Mwachofi, 1987), Atega, Tanya and Nywale (Wa Mberia, 2000), Sudana and Shume (Mazrui & Njogu, 2006) and Angela and Mama (Njogu, 2006).

On the other hand, the contemporary playwrights have acknowledged that there are men who appreciate that a woman can offer valuable contribution in other crucial spheres ol lile outside the domestic domain, and are partnering with her for the common good. Some of the examples in Kiswahili drama incude Musa and Dewe (Mazrui, 1981), Ndovu (Ongeti, 1984), and Mwelusi (wa Mberia, 2000).

I lie import of this new development is that gender role-play critiquing needs to be re-evaluated and re-positioned to reflect the emerging social and literary realities.
1.3 **OBJECTIVES**

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1) To undertake an appraisal of the changing representation of gender role-plays in Kiswahili drama in Kenya through its various stages of progression.

2) To investigate the extent to which literary critics conceptualize and reflect the dynamics of gender role-plays as manifested in the socio-political environment represented by Kenyan Kiswahili playwrights.

3) To interrogate how the language used by, and associated with both gender divides defines the societal values in relation to self and community identities and the determination of gender role-plays.

14 **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

When analyzing various aspects of gender in literature per se, the popular view adopted by many literary critics is that women are discriminated against in a male-dominated society. This society, which is predominantly patriarchal in orientation, deprives women of equal opportunity in the performance of important social responsibilities which are often categorized as a male preserve. In Kiswahili drama, among the literary critics who have embraced this point of view include Ndungo (1985), Mule (1991), Katola (2006), and Musyoka (2007). However, a literary analysis is yet to
be initiated on the peculiar position of the male character. Similarly, no comparative undertaking has so far been initiated to debate gender role-play attributes of the both divides on a common platform.

It can be argued that the character traits and gender role-play positioning have been accorded different interpretations largely due to the fact that they are not weighed alongside each other. There is no literary analysis that has engaged a simultaneous and a duo-dimensional evaluation of the diversities and commonalities of the character attributes of the gender divide as presented by the Kiswahili playwrights in Kenya. This implies that despite the fact that many topical research analyses have been undertaken on the (dis)empowerment of the woman in several Kiswahili plays, there is need for a literary analysis which consolidates and inclusively evaluates gender role-play representation in the plays written by Kenyan playwrights.

This study has engaged a comparative analysis of how Kenyan Kiswahili playwrights have been interpreting the nature and the implication of the prevailing gender inter-relations through the various stages of drama evolvement. The underlying belief is that the attributes and roles assigned and performed by a given character in any literary work are a central consideration in appreciating the positive or negative contribution of any gender towards human liberation and social advancement.

By consolidating and engaging a comparative analysis of the attributes of the gentler divide of, the aspiration of the study is to determine the link and contrast in their characterization and in the process, investigate how both their negative and positive attributes impact on the existing social, economic and political structures. This is an effort to determine the prap-ntism in gender role-play portrayal as reflected by different
Playwrights in various stages of social and literary metamorphosis of the Kenyan society. By so doing, this has enabled us revise and reconstitute literary portrayals of gender role-plays and bring to the literary platform the changing positioning of gender status the earlier literary critics had taken for granted all along.

The study has therefore sought to create a literary bridge as regards how Kiswahili playwrights in Kenya conceptualize patriarchy and matriarchy in their co-existence and practice by undertaking a progressive analysis of how gender role-play representation reflects the dynamics of social inter-relations in a changing society. This has been done through evaluating the nature and the implication of social roles assigned, associated and performed by the gender divide.

1.5 **SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

This is a thematic gender role-play appraisal which focuses on the characterization orientation of Kiswahili plays authored by Kenyan artists. The study analyses gender role-plays under the scope of feminism literary theory. It has interrogated how over various phases of Kiswahili drama progression, the artists have been interpreting gender role-plays through social parameters as manifested in the general intricacies of daily life including speech, thought and deed, and how these attributes impact the search for individual, gender and community identities. It has also evaluated the extent to which literary critiquing has been able to keep abreast with the progressive representation of tender role-plays as portrayed by Kiswahili playwrights in the various phases of its
thematic categorization. These phases are the formative, the middle and the contemporary.

The study has embarked on a critical analysis of the following plays: -

- **J. Kilsao** (1980) *Ilasi*
- **A. Mazrui** (1981) *Kilio Cha Haki*
- **N. C. Chacha** (1982) *Mkc Mwenza*
- **A. R. Mwachofí** (1987) *Mama ee*
- **K. wa Mberia** (2000) *Kijb Kisimani*
- **A. Mazrui & K. Njogu** (2006) *Sudana*
- **K. Njogu.** (2006) *Zilizala*

The study has undertaken a chronological evaluation of how the playwrights have been representing gender identities and role-plays from the time gender and related issues began gaining formidable literary recognition in drama from 1980's up to the present. It has investigated how gender role-plays have been acquiring different dimensions from the inception of drama through various stages of its thematic evolvement.

The pioneer era of Kiswahili drama is what is labeled the formative phase. The plays in this period comprise those written when Kenya was still under colonization and the playwrights were in fact aspiring students of English literature. Having been schooled under the Western system of education, their thematic orientations assumed the European Philosophical point of view, especially the low esteem in which the colonialists regarded their colonized subjects. The playwrights therefore did not engage a critical evaluation of the pertinent African issues of the time. They were heavily inclined on comedy and cultural whitewash where Africans were aspiring to fit into the Western lifestyles which
were being introduced to tieni. Gender relations were addressed in the characteristic comical way as any other issue the playwrights of the time addressed. The study has consequently not delved much into this era.

As its main thesis therefore, this study has undertaken a comparative review of gender representation and the resultant implication on the existing social order between the middle and the contemporary phases. It has interrogated how gender portrayal has progressively been shifting from conservative stereotyping to reflect and accommodate the emerging social realities as dictated upon by the dynamics of a changing society. Under the historical scope, the middle phase constitutes the plays written in 1980's such as Uasi, Mke Mwenza, Kilio Cha Haki and Mama ee. The plays in this category explore how gender role-plays are largely determined by conservative cultural dictates which accord the man authoritative position in the society against the subordinate status and restricted social space of the woman. In this literary era, the playwrights present a situation where the woman is so overwhelmed by the bondage of the existing cultural norms to the extent that she is unable to challenge the social institutions which deprive her of her human rights and privileges as enjoyed by her male counterpart.

The study however recognizes that although Kilio Cha Haki and Mama ee were written within the same period with the plays in the middle phase, their presentation of gender inter-relations is beginning to take unprecedented radical dimensions. The only similarity they bear with the plays in the middle phase is that in the literary society under review, gender inter-relations seem to be defined along retrogressive cultural dictates. However, unlike their peers in the same time-frame, the playwrights have introduced omen characters who are beginning to rebel against the cultural norms imposed on
gender identities and role-plays, and which the society still holds paramount as symbolic in the preservation of the existing social order. Against restrictive cultural structures, these women are challenging the societal notions of gender on woman as concerns the performance of 'public' and 'familial' roles. They are beginning to chart a new meaning to the ideal identity of women as females and human beings against the male position. In effect, this marks the revolutionary phase of gender role-play representation in which the Kiswahili drama begins to question the basis of societal determination of gender roles as well as gender status. This is the issue the other playwrights in the contemporary phase are addressing in their quest to demystify some of the revered traditional beliefs that have bogged down the campaign for gender equality. The literary gender revolution exhibited in *Kilio Cha Haki* and *Mama ee* despite the historical frame of their authorship has been of special relevance to this study as it has shown that gender imaging has been undergoing gradual transformation over time. It is out of their thematic deviation from (the conservative socio-cultural norms defining gender inter-relations exhibited by their peers in the middle phase, where they categorically fall, that the two plays have been analysed alongside the contemporary plays.

The contemporary phase constitutes plays written after 2000 such as *Ki'jo Kisimani, Sudana* and *Zilizala*. The playwrights' representation of gender role-plays in this category demonstrates a major paradigm shift from the stance adopted by the artists in the preceding phases. The plays in this phase present pragmatic social interactions in a modern society which is shedding off the conservative positioning of gender role-play determination. They are challenging the earlier popular gender-role stereotyping which assign the woman peripheral social roles while bestowing upon the man domineering and
authoritative responsibilities. This era portrays a woman who is more liberal and assertive in initiating and executing core social roles, alongside the man.

The study also recognizes that not many Kiswahili plays were written in Kenya in the 1990's, with the notable exception of Nalola (Wa Mberia, 1997). However, the play exhibits similar characteristics of gender role-plays as other plays by the same author. This period (1990's) could therefore be termed as the dividing phase between the middle and contemporary categories.

Apart from engaging a critical analysis of how the playwrights mould and present their characters, the study has also evaluated language usage by characters from the two gender divide. This is out of the conviction that language used in any conversation harbours coded manifestations as it may be intended to demean or extol certain virtues of a particular gender divide. More importantly, it can be employed as an artistic tool to decode the personal attitudes as concerns the inter-personal relationships between the speaker and the intended recipient in a given discourse. It may also expose personal attributes such as various degrees of confidence, conviction, sense of inferiority or superiority, and the general spirit of determination or submission of a particular character.

His choice of drama was motivated by its unique mode of facilitation. Compared to prose, the presentation and portrayal of its fictional characters enact a near real-life situation in terms of the characters' conversations, interactions and inter-relations. The artistic styles it employs, which are basically dialogical, brings out the inner feelings, Noughts, reflections and projections of the characters. This usually has the effect of leaving lasting impressions on the issues presented and the import they pose on the target audience.
1.6.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This section contains three parts. The first looks into how role-plays were represented in the classical Kiswahili literature. The works reviewed in this category are the epic and the long poem identified from the point of view of their substantive gender role-play literature. These are sub-genres of poetry. In the history of Kiswahili literature, the poetry was the first to evolve, with the epic and long poem being the first to be ever published. The epic and the long poem accord prominent space to gender and related issues. It is therefore imperative to note that not only in drama, but any Kiswahili literary critique on historical progression of gender inter-relations can greatly benefit from evaluating the epic and the long poem. These works have been captured primarily to investigate how gender and related issues were articulated in the pioneer era of Kiswahili literature.

The second is a general review on how various literary critics in Kiswahili literature interpret gender inter-relations. This is a deliberate effort towards understanding how literary works outside the scope of the study position gender role-plays in order to acquire a wider perspective of the gender question.

The third part analyses the thematic inclinations of the critiques done on the chosen Pays of our study to evaluate the prominence accorded to gender issues and how they relate or differ with our thesis.
In Kenyan Kiswahili literature, the first genre to emerge was the poetry and more specifically, the epic and the long poem. These two sub-genres of the poetry also share prominent structural features of presentation and form with drama.

A historical appraisal reveals that the long epic had accorded gender issues a notable prominent space long before the emergence of Kiswahili drama. Gender relations in the epic can be interpreted depending on whether the epic was secular or religious. Secular epics were those meant to entertain and mostly extolled heroic deeds of some prominent personalities in the society such as warriors and royalties. The secular epic accorded the female character some measure of recognition although not at the same wavelength with the man. The characterization had some degree of evenness as there were heroes and heroines. On the other hand, the religious epics were more restrictive to women's liberty and social space. Their lives were governed by strict religious norms which were further reinforced by strong social conventions. Gender inter-relations were thus defined alongside these religious canons and socially revered social virtues. When secular and religious epics are sampled, the representation of gender role-plays as well as gender statuses expose glaring contrasts.

*Utenzi wa Mwanamanga,* for example, is an epic meant for social entertainment. It is designed to be a love song poem which gives a graphic detail of the woman's body parts and why they attract the man. The woman is portrayed in such a flattery language such asower and an asset to the man's comfort. On the onset, the epic appears as if it is in the...
some intimate details of the female. This long poem has two characters, a man and a woman. However, it is the man who takes much of the narration space to state what he finds most attractive in the woman. The woman is not accorded an equal opportunity to give her own perception of the male body. At the end, the woman becomes a passive participant and is not even allowed to react to the issues the man raises that concern her. It appears that the message being sent out is that the man's body is a restricted territory which should not be exposed like that of the woman. Either deliberately or unintentionally, the epic is an affront to the honour and human worth of the woman.

Ulenzi wa Mayasa na Mikidadi is another secular epic whose narration centers around the heroic deeds of Mikidadi and Mayasa. The plot revolves around the conditions set up for Mayasa's marriage. They are such that apart from beating her in battle, her would-be husband must also beat all other contestants intending to marry her. Mikidadi fulfils these conditions. However, Jabir, Mayasa's father lays down fresh demands. Because Mikidadi is poor, Jabir sets up a very high bride price and gives Mikidadi three months to look for it. Through his heroic conquests, Mikidadi manages to acquire it but upon his return, he finds off that Mayasa is already betrothed to another man against her wish. Mikidadi gets her only after vanquishing his opponent in a fierce battle.

I his epic gives a measure of positive accolades to the female character. Mayasa's heroic exploits in the battle field are well documented as she even beats most of the male suitors who come to engage her. However, it should also be noted that she is just being marketed as a common commodity on public sale. She is not accorded the freedom to marry the man of her desire as any man who is victorious in battle stands the nee of marrying her. She is but just an asset being auctioned. It does not occur to all
the parties concerned that she should be offered the opportunity to choose whoever she
should be married to. That her life and future is being determined by others and more
specifically by men, is a clear testimony of how the society holds the human worth of the
woman in low regard. The overall picture that is created in the epic is that the woman
may have positive attributes that match those of man, but she still has very little freedom
in making vital decisions regarding her life.

_Ulendi Wa Funw Liyongo_ is another secular epic with its own version of gender
relations. This epic has some special relevance to this study as it is believed to have
inspired one of the plays under the scope of this study, _Kifo Kisimani_ (wa Mberia, 2000).
Liyongo was a famous warrior on the island of Pate in the Eighteenth Century. The
people's acclaim of Liyongo made Daudi Mringwari, the sultan of this island-state,
envious of him as he regarded him a threat to his throne. As a result, he made several
attempts to have him killed, but Liyongo always devised ways around them. He was
eventually arrested and put in a cell. He only managed to escape after his mother sent him
a file hidden in a loaf of bread through a girl named Saada; Arabic for happiness, which
he used to break his chains and flies. Undeterred, the sultan courted the friendship of
Liyongo's son by an earlier marriage whom he offered the hand of his daughter in
marriage if he could kill his father, he stabbed him with a copper dagger while he was
asleep. Liyongo pursued his assailant to a well in the center of the town where died.

Just like in this epic, Mwelusi, Liyongo's nemesis in _Kifo Kisimani_, was arrested and
put in the cells accused of destabilizing the oppressive regime of Mtemi Bokono. He also
managed to escape after Atega, his comrade in the freedom struggle, took him a flic
den in a loaf of bread. However, Mtemi Bokono was later to convince Mwelusi's
brother, Gege, to kill him on the promise that, like Liyongo's son, he would marry his
daughter. He managed to stab him and like Liyongo, died by the village well.

Several observations can be drawn from Liyongo's epic and *Kifo Kisimani* about the
gender relations, all which contradict some of the popular and mythical beliefs associated
with the two gender divides. One, women in the two works are strong-willed than their
male counterparts. It is Liyongo's mother who makes easy his escape. Similarly,
Mwelusi's girlfriend, Atega aids in his escape. Both escapes are cleverly plotted using
file hidden in loaves of bread. On the other hand, men can be envious, evil, and
malicious. Sultan Daudi Mringwari and Mtemi Bokono plot for Liyongo's and Mwelusi's
murders respectfully because they are envious of their popularity with the masses and
ils regard them as threats to their positions. Men can also be weak-minded and short-
sighted. That Liyongo's son can be convinced to kill his own father while Gege can kill
his own brother, with all disregard to their blood relations, both on promises that they
would marry the leaders's daughters as their rewards, debunks the all-positive human
traits attributed to the male gender. In a nutshell, the secular epics recognize some of the
positive attributes of women-Mule at the same time challenging the rationality of some of
the assumed positive character traits of the male gender.

On the other hand, when the religious epics are subjected to a critical analysis on
the nature of their gender role-play representation, what comes to the fore is that due to
the cultural and religious values haboured by the societal set-up of the time, woman's
social space is severely restricted. She is depicted as a domestic tool who is indoctrinated
perceive her core duties as fulfilling matrimonial obligations and the maintenance of
the home for the comfort of man.
A classic long poem that depicts how gender relations are closely intertwined with religious teachings laced with revered cultural values is *Utendi Wa Mwana Kupona* (Allen, 1972). In this epic, a mother offers 'invaluable' advice to her daughter on how to relate to her future husband. She is advised to attend to his every whim without complaint. She is made to understand that her success in marriage and life depends on how meticulous she performs her domestic and wifely duties to the satisfaction and gratification of her husband. The man is elevated to the status of a god. He is so powerful over the hapless life of the wife to the extent that he is even accorded the power to determine her after-life destination, hell or heaven. To be on the safe side therefore, the woman should do her best to pamper and appease her husband so that he can determine her fate favourably. The mother tells her daughter:

Siku ufufuliwao
Nadhari ni ya mumeo
Taulizwa atakalo
Ndilo takalotendewa

Kipenda wende peponi
Utakwenda dalhini
Kinena wende motoni

1 'una budi utatiwa. (p.7)
During judgement day
The verdict will be vested in your husband
He will be requested his wish
And that will be your fate

Should he desire that you go to heaven
You will go
If lie opts that you go to hell
You will be consigned there.

The degradation of the woman's social status in Kiswahili literature can thus be traced to this pioneer phase and it appears so deeply entrenched that even the woman accepts her inferior place as God-given. She appears to have internalized her denigration to the extent that she helps cement some of the social conventions which seem to oppress the womenfolk. This is best demonstrated by El Saadawi (1979). El Sadaawi's work depicts artistically how women have come to terms with their disadvantaged position in the society and even propagate certain stereotypes against themselves. The setting of the narration is a women's prison. Boudoir, one of the inmates justifies the mistreatment of her colleague, Fawqiyya. She tells her:

God could not possibly expose to pain or torture or prison or beating without sin on your part. Woman is nearer to Satan than man. Woman was created from a crooked rib and she becomes straightened only through blows which hurt her.

^1 ler du, y is to listen and obey without objection, (p.24)
That this is a woman telling her fellow woman such hurting and insulting words indicates that she herself would not mind being treated in the same manner. That she can express her sentiments about how women were created to be subservient to man and bear all the torture he may subject her to is a testimony that she has resigned to the fate of playing second fiddle to man.

_Utendi Wa Ayubu_ (The epic of Job) is another epic that demonstrates the limitless loyalty and affection with which a woman should accord her husband. Prophet Job is revered by both Muslim and Christian faiths. He is a righteous man who is blessed with all worldly wealth; a beautiful family, livestock, and numerous servants. However, Satan tells God that Job worships him because of the wealth He has given him. To test Job's faith, Satan asks for permission to take away his wealth and the request is granted. Job loses all his possessions in painful steps, starting with his livestock, servants and then his children. All he is left with is his wife, Rehema. To cap his trials, he catches leprosy and is banished from the community to isolation to await his death. Despite all this, Job does not lose his faith in God. At the same time, his wife nurses him for seven years under very difficult circumstances. She looks for food to feed him, nurses his wounds and sleeps by his side to offer him comfort and consolation. She is devoted to stand by him when, with her famed beauty, she can easily walk out on him and leave him to bear his nuseries alone. Satan, who appears in different personalities, persistently tempts her to leave Job for a better life, but to no avail.

According to the two religions, Rehema is an ideal wife whose love and loyalty to disband should be emulated at all times by other women worthy their name. Their devotion to the Lord should never waiver under whatever circumstances. Rehema's
yally and patience is finally rewarded when God restores Job's health and wealth, and
cap the joy, their children.

1.2 A GENERAL REVIEW ON KISWAHILI PLAYS

There are several analyses undertaken on Kenyan Kiswahili plays touching on
different themes, including gender and related issues. Mugambi (1982) has, for example,
analysed general themes in Kenyan Kiswahili plays. His study starts with plays written
during the colonial era such as Graham Hyslop's *Afadhali Mchawi* and *Mgetii Karibu,*
and Henry Kuria's *Nakupenda Lakini...*, all published in 1957. The most recent play he
analyses is Al-Amin Mazrui's *Kilio C'ha Haki,* published in 1981. In total, he has
analysed nine plays. His work can be categorized as the pioneer attempt in telescoping
Kenyan Kiswahili plays. However, his study is evidently very wide in scope. It does not
zero in on a particular theme, but engages general issues in the plays he analyses. It
therefore cannot be cited as any reliable authority on the gender issue as it does not
accord any significant prominence on the same.

In contrast, the current study has undertaken to specifically analyse the thematical
progression of gender role-play representation in Kiswahili drama in Kenya through the
prism of characterization. It has evaluated how the roles have been structured under
changing phases of social and literary evolution in the Kenyan society. It has also sought
to determine the pace at which the literary critics are re-adjusting and incorporating the
emerging social realities which have been gradually challenging the conceptualization of
their identities and role-plays in Kiswahili drama over the passage of time.
The phases the study has analysed include the formative, the middle and the contemporary. In all these phases, the study has sought to ascertain the degree in which gender role-plays have progressively been acquiring different dimensions through the view of both the playwright and the literary critic.

With the exception of the contemporary phase, the popular position adopted by literary critics on gender role-plays in the previous phases has been that the woman's social space has been relegated to the sidelines in a society which upholds masculinity over femininity virtues. Different critics offer various views as to what contributes to the 'inarginalization' of the woman. Lihainba (1985), for example, apportions blame on her lack of assertiveness and calls upon the womenfolk to be more proactive. She says the fact that the woman has been oppressed and exploited is out of her weaknesses and lack of self determination to fight against socio-cultural stereotypes that propagate patriarchal ideologies. She says:

We have been oppressed a great deal. We have been exploited a great deal. It is our weakness that has led to our being oppressed, exploited and disregarded. Now, we want a revolution - a revolution which brings to an end our weaknesses so that we are never again exploited, oppressed or humiliated, (p.47)

This argument is particularly applicable when viewed against the backdrop of the gender role-plays advanced by the playwrights in the first category of the scope of this study, the middle phase. The artists present a woman whose social space is dependent on cultural dictates which place the man as the undisputed decision maker and prime mover.
of the man are so glaringly evident, yet the woman is not seen taking any meaningful
decisive step to challenge and change them. This is partly because gender oppressive
structures have been in existence for such a long time that they have come to be seen as
part of the community social order. Secondly, the man is guarding his privileged turf in
such a way that the woman is effectively denied the social forum and voice to challenge
the situation and is in fact forced to conform by supporting the existing social
conventions which give undue advantage to the position of the man.

According to Omboga (1986), the demeaning of the woman is best exemplified by
the playwrights of the middle phase such as Kitsao in *Uasi* (1980). This play presents a
society in which the social space of the woman is heavily dependent on socio-cultural
norms. He cites the case of Nyamawi. After he marries off his daughter, he feels that his
homestead needs another woman to replace her. When he fails to convince any of his
already married sons to marry second wives, he decides to marry a fourth wife despite his
advanced age and the fact that he has three wives already. His eyes are on Riziki, a girl
who is an age mate of his daughters. Riziki's parents endorse the marriage because
Nyamawi is very wealthy and comfortably pay the bride price. Although Riziki later
manages to wriggle herself out of this unworkable marriage, it is out of her unexpected
defiance when she ambushes the marriage ceremony and publicly stuns everyone that her
choice of husband is John, a young man who is her age mate.

Omboga further highlights the irony of how also even women characters support
retrogressive cultural norms which aggravate their disadvantaged status in the society.
Nyamawi's wife supports her husband's decision to take on a fourth wife. Riziki's
other is equally for the idea that her daughter be married to the old man, arguing that
she was herself married off to a man she had not even met before, yet they are still bonding well in their marriage. These women are not supporting the marriage out of their own inner conviction, but rather on the understanding that it is what the society, and more so their husbands, expect of them.

The current study supports Omboga's sentiments as it recognizes the fact that the playwrights in the middle phase of Kiswahili drama in Kenya, under which this play falls, portray a society where social life revolves around archaic socio-cultural norms and is resistive to new and emerging forces of social change. However, this study takes cognizance of the fact that while that has been the position upheld by the critics and playwrights of yester-years, the literary depiction of gender identities by the contemporary artists has changed to reflect a new socio-political order in the social organization. The contemporary Kiswahili drama is portraying a more assertive and pro-active woman who is out to challenge the male dominance in the society. This study has demonstrated that contemporary artists are reflecting a social re-awakening where gender roles are being assigned and performed more competitively across the gender divide.

What the study contests is that literary critiquing has not kept up the pace. The study has attempted to fill up the void by appraising the new dynamics of gender role-plays as presented by the contemporary playwrights, who recognize that the woman is fighting her way out of the social bondage of retrogressive cultural norms. She is asserting herself as a key player in vital decision-making agencies which affect her well-being as well as that of the entire society.

Ule (1991) argues that African women constitute a marginalized constituency little advantage of the literary forum to contest the certitudes of
dominant traditions of cultural, literary and political practices which give undue advantage to men. He says that the structural and formal organization of African communities continue to codify female gender difference as a signifier of inferiority, and therefore, a valid basis for exclusion of women from active participation in the public domain. He says that by being reluctant to challenge this psychotic position, women are tacitly admitting that they are less human than men.

According to him, one handicap in the fight for gender equity on the side of women is lack of enough female writers to advance their cause. He claims that most writers who engage in the gender debate are male. He argues that in the absence of female gender representation in the literary field, the male artists continue advancing their chauvinistic philosophies at the expense of that of women. He urges female artists to exploit the literary arena as a platform to agitate for women's liberation from patriarchal enslavement. Mule appears to be echoing De Beauvoir's (1949) sentiments when she asserts that the literary arena has all along been uneven to the advantage of male literary artists. This is why it has always been assumed at face value that all writers are male. She argues that this uneven gender representation in the literary arena requires the female artist to first of all introduce herself if she happens to venture in the male dominated literary field, an act a male artist would not be expected to do. She says:

A man would never get the notion of writing a book on (he peculiar situation of (he human male. But if I wish to define myself, I must first of all say: 'I am a woman'. A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex - it goes without saying that he is a man. (p.87)
De Beauvoir says this arises from the fact that woman has been traditionally defined exclusively in her relation to man. The asymmetry of the categories - male and female - is made manifest in the unilateral form of sexual myths in which the woman is always cast under the shadow of the man. She observes that the representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men. They describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth. In this case, it is assumed that the man needs no definition since he is the norm against which the woman is defined as an aberration. She therefore calls for abolition of social institutions which demean and marginalize the woman, foremost among them religion, marriage and culture. She argues that religion indoctrinates the woman to be submissive. In marriage the man has the upper hand. Culture dictates that a woman is subordinate to man. This study has benefited from De Beauvoir assertions as it has interrogated how such social institutions dictate and determine gender role plays in the literary society under review.

Mule (2007) also takes issue with the way some of the female artists who make forays into the literary arena articulate women's agenda by noting that some of them even advance chauvinistic egoisiff I ie however observes that with the increasing numbers of African female playwrights, representation of gender role-plays is bound to change the equation and reflect the changing status of the woman in a more positive way. I le is of lie opinion that the contribution of African women in the literary fold has created new imperatives to confront ones that the earlier generation of writers and critics had taken for Bunted. I o rectify the earlier and unfair gender stereotyping, he says there is need for temporary writers and critics, especially female, to respond to the new challenges
posed by the changing status of women in the modern economy amid the confusion generated by the co-existence of tradition and the emerging forces of modernity.

Mule's observation of the inadequacy of women literary activists reflects the position of this study, especially as concerns Kenya, the constituency of focus, where women playwrights advancing the women's cause are few. However, this study seeks to allay the fears that the few women artists available are not doing enough to advance the female agenda. Ari Katini Mwachofi, the only female artist under our scope, is a fervent crusader for women's rights. Wafula (1999) observes that in Mama ee, she presents women characters who are aggressively confronting concerted efforts mounted by the male gender to deny them the social space they rightly deserve, and are determined to prove that they are capable of managing their lives independent of men.

At the same time, this undertaking has gone great lengths to emphasize that not all male artists sideline the female cause and agenda as Mule contends. The contemporary male playwrights such as Mazrui (1981), Wa Mberia (2000), Mazrui and Njogu (2006) and Njogu (2006) are among some of the Kenyan Kiswahili artists who are supportively recognizing the human potential in the modern woman. They portray her capabilities in a more positive light and appraise her contributions in the core spheres of the society. The woman character they present is the one who has shed off her laid-back approach. She is now more visible and proactive in the public domain, as opposed to her obscure and feeble image presented by playwrights in the earlier phases of Kiswahili drama.
As concerns the plays at the core of our study, several critics have analysed them from different thematic perspectives.

In his critique of *Kilio Cha Haki*, Mohamed (1988) dwells more on the unconducive work environment that the expatriate land owners subject native employees from whose sweat they amass astronomical profits. He pinpoints how imperialist capitalists consort with law enforcement agents and compromised administrators to subdue any voice and effort of dissent out to agitate for better and humane working conditions.

While Mohamed's critique leans more on the existing unfavourable economic and the political components, the point of deviation with the current undertaking is that this study has analysed characterization of both gender divide in an effort to determine how the roles performed by different characters across the gender divide impact on the socio-economic life of the society. It appraises the contribution made by different characters from the gender divide towards the state of the existing socio-political inter-relations in the society. And unlike in the previous critiquing where the standard norm has been to present the woman as passive and incapable, the study has sought to emphasize that the contemporary drama is projecting a woman whose human potential and capability measures up to that of the man. In the play for instance, Lanina is out to prove that a woman's social roles should not be confined to domestic chores. She is out to fight against retrogressive customary norms which restrict the woman's social space and is in forefront in the fight against social injustices not only directed towards her as a man also oppressed in the wider society, such as her co-workers.
This silliily also embraces the fact that the contemporary Kiswahili drama in Kenya recognizes that a new crop of men has emerged who appreciates the human potential in the woman and are partnering with her for the betterment of the society. In *Kilio C'ha Huki*, they include the likes of Musa and Dewe. They recognize that the woman has the capability to contribute to the welfare of the society. This is in contrast to the popular literary perception man holds the woman in low regard in the belief that she lacks the 'strong' and 'positive' attributes often associated with the male gender. Musa and Dewe have confidence in Lanina whom they anoint as the de facto leader of their liberation struggle. The relevance of this development to the current study is that it reinforces the fact that not all men underrate women’s human potential and capacity.

Wafula (1999) is another literary critic who also analyses Al-Amin Mazrui’s *Kilio Cha Huki*. In this effort, he dwells more on neo-colonial imperialism and how it affects the political and economic spheres of a developing society, especially the exploitation of African labour by multi-national corporations. And like in Mohamed’s critique, his work does not delve into how different gender divide make specific contribution towards the prevailing social structures of governance and economic systems and their efforts either to sustain or change them - a fete this study has endeavoured to address.

According to Matti (2005), Wa Mberia is an artist who explores the society in its entirety by highlighting the social evils afflicting it, which emanate from unfair social, Political, and economic practices. In his analysis of *Kifo Kisimani*, Matti notes that among the issues Wa Mberia addresses include bad governance and the resultant struggle for liberation, corruption, the need for fair social justice, and the status and identity of the woman, among others.
Matti analyses the general themes that Wa Mberia addresses in his work. On the contrary, our study has confined itself to the specific theme of gender representation and it has evaluated how the roles assigned and performed by the characters from the both divides of gender impact on the issues the writer advances. These include their roles in the fight for gender equality and their general positive and negative contributions towards human liberation and social advancement. Although previous literary critics have sought to define and conceptualize role plays along gender lines, and mostly highlighting the vulnerable position of the female character against the imposing status of the man, our study has sought to demonstrate that the artist appreciates that the contemporary woman is playing a pivotal role in the struggle for a new social order.

In *Kifo Kisimani*, there are women of admirable resolve and vision. Female characters in this play are central in masterminding and executing a revolution that removes the repressive regime of Mtemi Bokono from power. Atega is a comrade-in-arms of Mwelusi in the fight against this bad governance. There are other female characters who are solidly behind the struggle for a better society. They include Tanya, Mwelusi's mother, and Autlua, his sister. Of special mention is Nywale, Mtemi Bokono's wife, who stands out as a voice of reason against her husband's evil and oppressive policies, such as wanton land grabbing. She also cautions him about the misleading advice from his aides.

On the other hand, this study has demonstrated that Wa Mberia is well averse to the fact that human attributes are not to be permanently associated with any particular gender divide as has been popularly perceived by many previous artists and critics. He has \( J_{wn} \) that not all male characters exhibit the all-positive attributes always associated
with them. For instance, while there are women who are fighting for a just society, there
male characters who support Mtemi Bokono in his administrative excesses. These
include his core advisers such as Batu and Zigu. There is also the case of Mwelusi's own
brother, Gege, who is the praise singer of Mtemi Bokono. Me ends up murdering
Mvvelusi on the false promise that he would marry Bokono's daughter, among other
ticements. The essence of such characterization is what gives credence to our thesis
that both divides of gender are capable of exhibiting both negative and positive human
attributes.

Katola (2006) looks into the issue of oppression against women in Kiswahili drama.
Among the plays she analyses are Mke Mwenza (Nyaigoti, 1982) and Mama ee
(Mwachofi, 1987). She opines that the abuses the woman undergoes are as a result of
institutionalized cultural practices which give undue advantage to man in policy making.
She cites some of these abuses as denial of her human rights, being forced into forced
marriages, being ostracized by the society, physical abuse, among others. Her opinion is
that the woman is subjected to these social abuses simply because of her gender as
woman whom the society ha** all along labeled as spiritually and physically feeble to
challenge the oppressive social institutions which enjoy strong backing from cultural
orientations. She singles out the institution of marriage as one in which the woman's
freedom is highly curtailed. To illustrate how the marriage institution is lilted in favour of
He man, she cites the case of Boke in Mke Mwenza (Chacha, 1982). Boke is a voiceless
Partner in her marriage with Chahe, who does not value her as his wife simply because of
her inability to mother a boy to inherit his wealth upon his demise. This prompts him to
arrangements to marry a second wife. Although Boke is against the idea, she can do
little to alter the course of events as Chahe has already paid dowry for Robi, her would-be wife. Chahe breaks the news to her about her impending position of being a co-wife when the arrangements are in fact too advanced for any reversal.

Katola's work, though thematically different from ours, is an important reference point as it highlights some of the areas gender analysis can focus on. One, it offers graphic details of the social areas the woman is denigrated most. The fundamental difference with the current study is that Katola's work largely evaluates only one divide of the gender as it primarily sets out to explore the social misdeeds directed at the woman. This means the man's case is pre-determined as the one who is always seen to be pushing the agenda of women denigration. In such a case, what is presented is only the inhumane and insensitive side of his character.

The core objective of our study is to compare and contrast the positive and negative, as well as the weak and strong attributes exhibited by the gender divide on the same plane. For example, it should be pointed out that while Boke is being denied her voice in her marriage with Chahe, her predicament is occasioned by the fact that Robi, a fellow woman, has assented to be married as her co-wife. Secondly, although Chahe's decision to marry a second wife is retrogressive, it should be leniently judged when it is taken into account that the tradition of the society of the time approves of polygamous marriages: Thirdly, Chahe has expressed his willingness to cater for both of them and has in fact taken the initiative to introduce Robi to Boke in the hope that they can appreciate one another and thereafter live in harmonious co-existence. At the same time, it should also be considered that whereas Katola's presentation of Boke's plight should elicit public
sympathy, her evil side is revealed after it turns out that she has a secret young lover with whom she later plots to poison Chahe, her husband and the father of their children.

Our study has also sought to contest the popular view that the male gender's authority over the female gender is entirely embedded in inherited traditional practices. Many literary playwrights and critics often associate the disadvantaged position of the woman in the society to retrogressive cultural practices propagated by the old generation. In Mania ce, Katola narrates how Mwavita is suffering because the society she lives in still reels under archaic traditions. The irony is that Kinaya, Mwavita's husband, is fairly educated and 'modern', yet he still believes in outdated practices which govern the institution of marriage. He believes that paying dowry is tantamount to giving him the leeway to own everything his wife acquires and can even beat her up at will. The irony is that this point of view is contradicted by the elders who maintain that wife beating was never encouraged by their traditional customs.

When analysing the social tribulations undergone by the female gender, this study, unlike Katola's, also considers it justifiable to apportion on the woman her fair share of blame. Mwavita's mother is very much aware of the suffering her daughter is being subjected to in her marriage, but she still supports the elders when they reach the verdict that she goes back to Kinaya. On her part, she beseeches her to accept to return to Kinaya 'for the sake of your child' (p.37-38). Katola is also castigating Tenge's father and brother for assaulting Tenge when she arrives home after she is expelled from school due to her Pregnancy. However, Katola does not take issue with the fact that Tenge's trials are seen afflicted out of the mere fact that she chose to engage in sexual affairs when she was under age and still in school. Finally, there is the issue of women movements
purporting to fight for women's rights. Their agenda seems to lean more on the monetary gains they are making from the banner of women's liberation rather than the practical sense of offering the assistance their battered women colleagues require.

In a nutshell, while Katola takes sides and engages an all-out war in the defense of the woman character, our study has undertaken a comparative analysis of the attributes assigned and exhibited by characters from the both divides of gender without any presuppositions. This is out of the concern that when general observations of the various critics of the gender and related issues in Kiswahili drama and literature at large are subjected to a consolidated scrutiny, what becomes evident is their tendency to analyse the two gender divide independent of each other. The critiques also appear to have premeditated positions on gender role-plays to be expected of, or be performed by each divide. The principal point of deviation with this study is that it has undertaken a bi-partisan investigation of the both gender divide with a view to ascertaining if literary myths associated with popular gender role-play stereotyping such as being weak or strong, capable or incapable, oppressive and discriminative, are a preserve of any particular divide of gender or can be exhibited by both genders under different circumstances and environments. It collectively analyzes gender role-plays outside the previous literary canons and accords each divide its due merits and demerits based on circumstantial literary and empirical evidence.

The study appreciates that although the male gender has persistently sought to interpret cultural norms to its own advantage and to the detriment of the female gender and self-actualization, the social dynamics of a contemporary society have to a woman who is more visible in the performance of core social
responsibilities and the campaign for gender equality. The study has therefore investigated the extent to which gender role-play representation in contemporary Kiswahili drama has been shifting from the conservative gender role-play stereotyping to accommodate the more liberal perspectives of gender inter-relations fronted by contemporary playwrights. These playwrights are out to reflect the social reality that the modern woman is competitively engaged in social roles which were hitherto considered as the sole domain of the male gender. At the same time, they are demystifying some of the decorated human attributes that have been associated with the male gender, and which were believed to be lacking in the female gender.

1.7.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

This study has analysed the dynamics of gender role-play representation in Kenyan Kiswahili drama. Due to the geographical setting of the area of the plays under study, it has adopted African literary feminism as the principal theory. This is a literary theory which can be aptly used to analyse cultural influences and other social conventions which determine gender inter-relations in African societies as well as other African cells in the African Diaspora. However, we have also undertaken a general review of the mainstream ethinism literary theory and its various divides and their relevance in analyzing gender and related issues in Kiswahili drama and literature in general.
Feminism is believed to have started in France in the middle of 19th century as an offshoot of a mass movement for agitation for basic human rights by the oppressed segments of the society. However, in its refined form, scholars largely associate it with Wollstonecraft (1792), who traces its origin to the struggle for human women's rights initiated by Black and Coloured women in America in the 18th Century. Feminism evolved in an era of intense intellectual activity which has come to be branded as the Age of enlightenment. This agitation for women's rights was borne out of the lived experiences that enslaved coloured women endured in America under global imperialism, slavery and racism. The racial discrimination and the denial of their basic human rights that they experienced made them realize that the only way they could attain social, political and economic liberation was being resourceful, self-reliant and independent. It is also in this period when gender activists began questioning traditional ideals that based the rights of citizens on their race, wealth and social status. These views were later to serve not only as the springboard for the campaign for gender equity in different spheres of life, but also as the cradle of different divides of feminism.

The fight for gender equity and human liberty was inspired by the ideology that all human beings are borne with natural rights that make them free and equal; hence equality between sexes was a natural right. Although African feminism did not originate directly in Africa and it was only to gain momentum on the continent from 1960's, it can be traced that feminism was initiated and nurtured by African women in the Diaspora to undergo the dehumanizing experience of political domination coupled with
racial and social segregation. The only contribution made by the West towards its growth was that the Africans and especially the Blacks in the Diaspora learned the art of resistance to oppression and discrimination from the West. The difference was that while the resistance movements in the West were basically fighting for civil rights, the Africans were campaigning for human and gender rights.

Wollstonecraft's argument for gender equity was hinged on the qualities and rights that liberal philosophers claimed human beings to be in possession of at birth, namely freedom and equality. She pointed out that it was only logical that women be recognized as having the same capacity of rationality and reason if they were born equal to men. This is the branch of feminism which was later to be known as liberal feminism. It was also to be termed as the bedrock of feminism as it questioned the assumed dependence of women on men, their capabilities, capacities and rights. Later, these viewpoints were to be reinforced substantially mainly by democratic political ideals in capitalist USA, France and the United Kingdom.

It is in the light of these developments that Whyte (1978) posits that African feminism can be applied culturally to black women resisting oppression during the post-slavery era in the USA and the former Danish Virgin Islands. He cites the central role women played in the liberation for themselves and their fellow blacks. In the US for example, Harriet Tubman's name has been celebrated since 1840's due to her leadership in the Underground Railway Freedom movement where she led other black workers in demanding for humane working conditions and better remunerations. During the Civil War she joined the Union Army where she earned recognition through her heroism and also won admiration among freed black people in the way she selflessly attended to the
sick and brought freed men's problems to the attention of authorities. Tubman's heroic deeds reflect strong-willed women of African descent in the Diaspora creating their own means of survival for themselves and fellow blacks during and after slavery.

Other black women helped end slavery in Danish Virgin Island in 1878. They led other black slaves to burn sugar plantations and factories as a show of their disapproval of the barbarity of slavery. The women leaders included Queen Mary Thomas, Queen Agnes and Queen Matilda, all nicknamed 'Queen' due to the fact that their leadership exploits had been recognized by their community.

It is also to be understood that in the US, networks of professional black women led to political reforms that eventually won black women the right to vote. Their struggle was motivated by the desire to use political means to improve the quality of life in black communities where historically, black women had been at the bottom of the economic strata.

It is thus a historical fact that the branch of feminism that originated in America had strong African influences which nurtured its growth. It was to a very large extent mooted by black and coloured women in the Diaspora who had borne the brunt of social, political and economic injustices orchestrated by slavery and capitalism. This exposed them to oppressive gender relations and instilled in them the determination to challenge these conditions throughout history. Feminism is thus a strategy that African women developed and consistently nurtured for their survival in the face of race, class and sex oppression. Steady (1981) observes that the only connection between feminism and Westernism is because feminism literary theories, just like other theories, have been influenced and "Pounded by external influences emanating from colonialism and imperialism.
However, she notes that more importantly, African literary critics have formulated a specifically African feminism - the African feminism.

Eagleton (1986) observes that although women undergo different experiences due to the unique geographical and social settings they find themselves in, feminism has liberation of women from all types of social discrimination as its ultimate objective. One unifying feminist principle is that feminist leaning literature should be the platform from where women's issues and experiences are articulated in order to expose their areas of vulnerability as the launching pad for the struggle for their empowerment. She therefore maintains that literature should nurture and consolidate mutual feelings among the womenfolk as a segment of the society which is marginalized and underprivileged, with a view to encouraging them take decisive steps towards realizing their full human potential. It should therefore initiate human revolution to idealize how women should perceive themselves and relate with their male counterparts. Further, it should strive to enhance gender equality by portraying role model women characters who are liberal, assertive and independent of thought and means.

Liyoye (1990) defines feminism as a movement which is against any and all forms of oppression and its core aspiration is to resist gender biased hierarchy which upholds He superior status of the man against the inferior position of the woman. It is founded on the principle of questioning the endorsement of this gender hierarchy as a divine or natural ordinance rather than a human and social construction. Feminism may thus be seen as an ideology of conscientious advocacy and implementation of equality of men and women in social, religious, educational, political and economic spheres of life. According to her, feminism is basically a direct attack on sexism.
The current study echoes these sentiments and approaches the gender debate from the point of view that gender discrimination is a social construction and it can only be overcome if concerted efforts are put in place to advocate for a social re-alignment where gender role-plays are not determined or viewed from a sexist point of reference.

Wamitila (2002) observes that feminism literary theory is geared towards fighting for women’s liberation from the bondage of archaic cultural, political and religious institutions. He views feminist literary theory as the study of literature with particular attention to the status of women via-a-vis that of men. This observation is of special relevance to this study as it seeks to evaluate the status of the roles assigned and performed by both the female and male characters in Kiswahili drama and the social implication of such roles. Feminism also strives to evaluate how different social institutions determine gender inter-relations as regards the assignment and performance of various roles in the society.

Bressler (2003) notes that in general, a feminist model of literary analysis can adequately address four broad areas. These include the body image, language, psyche and culture. All these aspects will feature in this discussion. The body image can reveal even what is not loudly spoken in the event the speaker is denied the freedom of speech for some reasons. Language is the most commonly used medium of communication that human beings use to express their feelings and views. Psyche is the inner component of persona that controls several aspects of human activity, including mental coordination. It determines the content and the manner of what is expressed. Culture features prominently in this study as it analyses gender characterization from an African o-cultural interpretation. The study interrogates the cultural forces that underpin the
Assigning of gender roles and values in society, and therefore have the capacity to marginalize or mainstream a particular divide of gender. The underlying aim is to understand how socio-cultural aspects shape and inform both the man's and woman's understanding of themselves and the society they live in.

According to Wafula and Njogu (2007), feminism is a theory which fights to safeguard the rights of women in a male dominated society. They assert that the main tenet behind this theory is that the social discrimination women undergo is as a result of their gender as female. This mere fact tends to place them as a disadvantaged segment of the society. What gives the impetus to this theory is therefore the need to revise this point of view and re-assert the position of the woman as a human being with equal rights to that of man. According to them, there are several divides of feminism, all which draw their aspirations from different ideological standpoints. They cite some of its divides as free feminism and social feminism. Free feminism is sometimes referred to as capitalistic feminism and it crusades for the equality of men and women at all social levels. It holds that since all human beings are created to be equal, they should have equal opportunities which are not apportioned on the basis of gender considerations. This divide of feminism encourages all divides of gender, and especially male, to cooperate and participate in social roles which have been hitherto perceived as preserves for women. On its part, social feminism questions the validity of the traditional virtues of socialism which perpetuate gender inequalities in the way role-plays are assigned to gender divides. It seeks to establish the legality of social parameters which determine the suitability of a particular gender divide for a specific role.
Showalter (1986: 249) asserts that the major divides of feminism can be categorized on geographical foundations in which there are four divides the world over. These are French, American, British and Africa. The French divide is basically psychoanalytic and it stresses repression. It views gender imbalances as a tangle of psychic symptoms explained in relation to desires repressed to the unconscious. The French category takes issue with language structures which are biased in the way they extol male virtues while demeaning those of the female. According to this divide, the imagery devices used to define authority, grandeur, strength and ability are masculine while those depicting weakness and incapability are feminine. To further illustrate how the society holds the woman in low esteem, it cites how the masculine morphemes are made the roots of feminine words such as princess, prophetess, actress, hostess, and so on.

The American feminism basically focuses on expression. Its proponents support the French position on the role of language in determining how it alienates gender attributes. In addition, they also observe that women have their own unique way of expressing themselves and that liberal speech is a major component of human emancipation. British feminism is described as essentially Marxist which is more concerned with social oppression and it takes special interest in the material conditions of people's lives. The British divide of feminism interprets gender role plays on the basis of Political structures. It holds the view that inherited historical and political structures act the social standing of the woman in the society as they uphold male supremacy, "lis is particularly relevant to our study when it is taken into consideration that in most A C can cultures, the virtues of male supremacy against female subordination are alien neepts. They were non-existent in indigenous African cultures and only came about
after sustained infusion of colonial and imperialist influences. More specifically, capitalism, their economic correlate, introduced the concepts of public and domestic domains which were to be occupied by men and women respectively. This differentiation was done on the basis of the nature of the roles associated with them. The public roles were deemed to be more challenging and that is why they were assigned to men while the domestic front was assigned to the woman on the consideration that she was the 'weaker sex.' It is thus from this colonial historical point of view that gender role-plays came to be mapped in African societies and occasioned inequalities in gender statuses even long after the exit of colonialism. African feminism is thus geared towards correcting cultural mis-interpretations which explain the patriarchal nature of African societies as rooted in indigenous social conventions.

Although this study adopts African feminism as the principal theory, it has benefited from other relevant tenets of other brands of the mainstream feminism in contrasting and appreciating how various attributes of feminism interpret gender inter-relations in different socio-cultural settings. For instance, from the mainstream feminism, the study concurs that the gender debate revolves around safeguarding the social position of the woman who is discriminated against simply because of her gender as woman. It also supports the French and American views that language structures play an important role in gender polarization by extolling male virtues while demeaning those of the female. From the British divide of feminism, the study agrees with its position that historical events played a significant role in the social standing of the woman in the society.

Alijean scene, the virtues which support male supremacy ideologies are historical...
cultural import from the West. The study also agrees with the view advanced by free feminism that all human beings are created to be equal and are entitled to equal opportunities in all social spheres.

Simons M. (1986) observes that feminist literary theory ought to represent the diverse voice of women. It emphasizes the need for women to gain power through art's politics by means of usurping masculine modes and believes in a new concept of human nature as universal. She thus maintains that feminist literary theory may be interpreted as a bid to extend membership in universal nature, and hence eligibility for human rights, to that category of being named women. It categorically insists on assimilating women to the class of 'human' by asserting that whatever it is to be human, women are too, and therefore eligible for the rights of human beings. The process of specification within the total formulation of 'woman' can come to rest in literary study only by grounding literature in individual subjectivity.

Maryam (2011) explores the nature of universal oppressive cultural practices. She explains that whatever any culture values, women get less of it than men. She says that if you want to know what a particular culture does not value, you should look at what it gives or ascribes or leaves to its women. Disparities between and among cultures however have been so diversely affected by historical factors that we may not maintain that all women are dually culturally aligned. Liberal feminist theory for example does not deny differences in women experience depending on cultural uniqueness but assumes that whatever they may be, they do not justify denying women their rights as human beings, in essence, despite their geographical and ideological differences, all divides of

n, s, r, a, n, e, c, e become gynocentric in the sense that they all aspire to find a common
round to liberate the feminine from its stereotypical associations with inferiority. This is r
ly feminist theories are generally viewed as pluralist because they borrow from whatever discipline they find anything useful to the cause of women's emancipation. The justification for this approach is that women have been oppressed by more than one set of structures and it may require more than one set of approaches to address their current conditions and to prescribe for future remedial measures.

However, although these different tenets of feminism have their own inputs to offer to our study, their general observations remain broad-based and not tied to any particular literary orientation and location. The fundamental difference with the current study is that it seeks to review how specific principle tenets of African feminism can be used in interpreting various gender perspectives as represented in the literary setting of an African society and more specifically, Kiswahili drama in Kenya. This is through the interrogation of the social implication of the nature of the existing gender inter-relations and how they relate to the prevailing social values which define and determine gender identities and role-plays in the target society.

AFRICAN FEMINISM LITERARY THEORY

African feminism is believed to have taken root in Africa in 1960's. It was mooted and nurtured by gender activists out of the conviction that African social institutions were Bhly patriarchal and restricted women participation in the core organs of their •nimunities. Millet (1977) notes that African feminist literary is founded on a solid
platform into a wide variety of social roles in African societies. It thus emphasizes equal and authentic public participation and decision making by men and women alike in all the social spheres affecting human life. It views black women's oppression and their resistance to it as inextricably linked. Millet observes that women's struggle in Africa has to be a human and social struggle against an ideological system which upholds men's privileges while depriving the women of the same.

These views are shared by this study as it believes that the institutions which enhance women discrimination in the African society have for a long time been sustained by cultural beliefs which bestow authoritative responsibilities on the man. However, the study recognizes that in the contemporary African society, the struggle for women liberation is being aided by the fact that socio-cultural institutions are becoming more liberalized and accommodative of gender role-play interpretations and practices as dictated upon by the dynamics of emerging social realities. In this new social order, the society is both recognizing and appreciating the human potential in the woman.

Strobel (1980) observes that although African feminism is neither new nor static, it has been faced with challenges from divergent quarters. Because it questions the origins of selective perpetration of power in all its forms, the forces against it have devised various obstacles to frustrate its aspirations. On the international front, predominant voices of Western white feminists insist on a universal brand of feminism whose agenda should be concentrated at, and limited to, the elimination of gender hierarchies. Within Africa, there are those who argue that feminism is a Western phenomenon with relevance to Africa. In our view, while we concur that feminism is a movement which universally seeks to secure and safeguard the rights of women, we hold that there is the
nurture different brands of feminism to address unique and specific geographical and social demands as women experiences differ due to historical and cultural diversities associated with different societies. As such, African feminism is best suited to address gender issues in an African setting.

Steady (1981) is arguably one of the outstanding proponents of African feminism. She defines it as a humanistic ideology which recognizes the inherent multiple roles of women and men in reproduction, production and the distribution of wealth, power, as well as the responsibility of sustaining human life. She says:

African feminism combines racial, sexual, class and cultural dimensions of oppression to produce a more inclusive brand of feminism through which women are viewed first and foremost as human, rather than sexual beings. It can be defined as an ideology which encompasses freedom from oppression based on the gender, political, economic, social, and class biases... It is largely a product of polarizations and conflicts that represent some of the worst and chronic forms of human suffering. (p.67)

Steady observes that African feminism advocates for the elimination of all vestiges of human oppression which give birth to class and gender conflicts. She argues that it resolves the totality of human experience, portraying the strength and resilience of the struggle for the total liberation of humanity. She observes that, in essence, African feminism is humanistic feminism.

concerns its place in the African literature, African feminist literary theory is looked upon i
African woman. She further observes that African feminism has its distinctive attributes. First, although it does not delink itself from other strands of feminism, it addresses gender issues within the African cultural perspective. She proposes an androgynous approach to literary criticism touching on gender and related issues. Woolf (in Eagleton 1986:29) defines this as a situation of "that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself." It is borrowed from two Greek roots; 'andro' for male and 'gyn' for female.

Steady notes that African patterns of feminism can be seen as having developed within a context that views human life from a total, rather than a dichotomous and exclusive perspective. For men, the woman is not "the other" but part of the human same. Each gender constitutes the critical half that makes the human whole. Neither sex is complete in itself to constitute a unit by itself. Despite the fact that each possesses unique features of its own, it needs the other to compliment its totality. In theory therefore, no gender should dominate or control the other and that, ideally, the best society is one in which both the female and male should come together for harmonious co-existence without fear of one sex domirftting the other.

Steady's observation on African feminism offers valuable contribution to the thesis of our study. The current study has sought to analyse gender role-plays away from the iindidonnl school of thought in which the term 'gender' has always been (favoured with of femininity. It has evaluated the human potential as depicted by Kiswahili Paywrights through the way they present characters from across the gender divides 11,0 st.8sna Afferent social roles. The study supports the androgynous approach in the debate as it does not lay undue emphasis on any particular gender's cause and
instead, comparatively interrogates their attributes from an equal point of humanistic reference.

According to Christian (1985), the fundamental distinguishing feature of contemporary African feminism is the self-conscious presentation of an African woman keen on taking bold steps to liberate herself and promote the broad agenda of the entire womenfolk. It is tasked with the principal agenda of articulating black women's agenda by building an organizational base to advance the core theme of gender parity. This view is supported by this study as it recognizes that the contemporary African woman is becoming more conscious of her denigrated status in the society and is taking deliberate and decisive steps to secure and safeguard her rights as a human being.

Baffoun (1985), observes that feminism in Africa is not a new phenomena because ever since patriarchal and class oppression were imposed on African women, various forms of counter resistance have since evolved. Feminism in the African continent is therefore not a recent event but a long historical process which has not yet been sufficiently brought to light. One of the tasks which face African feminists therefore is to study the historical development of women's resistance in Africa against the oppression of class and men since the patriarchal and class oppression exercised against African women extends to all domains of life - economic, political, social, cultural, psychological and sexual.

This study has benefited from these arguments in several ways. First, by 'dertaking a chronological review of how gender role plays have been represented in Klsvcelliji I

'tama along the historical perspective since gender and related issues began "8 ,iteraf y recognition in this genre, it has been able to establish the degree and
pace that gender role-plays have undergone. In addition, it has evaluated how
discrimination of women manifests itself in socio-political and economic institutions of
the society and the steps the women are taking towards liberating themselves in an effort
to realize sustainable gender equality.

According to Carby (1987), African feminism is premised on the belief that women
should be regarded as individuals with distinct values to the society. She regards the
social discrimination against women as part of the patriarchal socio-cultural system
promoted by a distortion of unfair gender stereotypes. She envisages the ideal situation as
the one in which sexual differences and similarities, as well as sex roles, enhance sexual
autonomy and cooperation between women and men, rather than promoting polarization
and fragmentation. She props her argument by observing that within the metaphysical
realm, both male and female principles encompass life and operate jointly to maintain
cosmological balance. This point of view is embraced by this study as it seeks to
inclusively discuss the social implication of gender role-play representation regardless of
which gender divide initiates or performs them. In this regard, it has demonstrated that
although the society is still -dominated by patriarchal structures which are reluctant to
accord the woman the social space she rightly deserves, the woman has herself made
great strides in proving her capabilities in the performance of core social roles. This
means that underrating her human potential is a misplaced philosophy which has 110

"oral standing in the modern society.

Miller (1990) dwells at length on African feminism. According to him, it differs from
stern feminism in that it examines gender issues in Africa from an African
Perspective it analyses the position of the African woman through social, cultural and
economic spectrum and assesses how these institutions contribute towards her somatization and discrimination. He observes that in Africa, female subordination takes intricate forms embedded in traditional African cultures. He posits that gender, being a social construction, is also historical and a cultural phenomenon.

Allen T.J. (1995) observes that African feminism literary theory questions the presumed social institutionalism that guarantee male authority over the female and at the same time, exposes the inadequacy of female identity constructions based on an adopted role of female submission. It articulates specific demands by questioning the existing social structures that hinder the cause for self-actualization of the African woman. The core theme in the struggle for gender equality is thus the search for the female voice, independence of thought and action, and the significance of the female gender empowerment in everyday life. It therefore challenges not only the discriminative pillars of patriarchy but also interconnected structures of domination and exploitation in the society. African feminism is thus a process of self-consciousness that seeks to empower human beings to realize a universal vision of humanity.

Diedre (1996) asserts that African feminism embraces a complex matrix of power. It demonstrates that power and femininity are intertwined rather than antithetical and that African women's power exists as a complimentary to that of man. It is premised to describe the gender paradigm in an African setting, assessing the damage occasioned by regressive socio-cultural structures and as a result, reflect the changing image of the woman in Africa in a dynamic contemporary society.

(1997) observes that African feminism's fundamental goal of creating a gender-sensitive society is more focused than that of other social action
movements. She notes that African feminism is essential to the social, political, economic, cultural, and evolutionary aspects of human life. It extols the virtues of mutual female-male inter-dependence and co-existence and derives its inner strength from ancient African philosophy and cosmology which recognizes that through the womb of woman, all humanity passes. She observes that the marginality of women of African descent globally is largely as a result of external culturally generated factors manifested in male hegemony, paternalism and sexism.

Wafula and Njogu (2007) posit that the advocates of African feminism believe that female subordination in Africa takes intricate forms embedded in traditional African cultures. They observe that there are salient homegrown African cultural values which dictate gender roles in the society, all in favour of the male gender. African feminism therefore targets to secure the freedom of the woman from cultural institutions which are patronized by patriarchy, and as a result, accord her unrestricted participation in the core spheres of the society. African feminism is thus intent on highlighting the efforts initiated by the African woman to assert and claim her rightful position in the African society. In particular, it leans towards the emancipation of an African woman who is viewed as having been deprived of her basic human rights by a male dominated society. Njogu and Walula (ibid) cite some of the Kenya Kiswahili artists who advocate for women's rights 38 Mazrui (1982), Mwachofi (1987), wa Mberia (1997, 2000).
There are different divides of feminism. Bressler (2003) categorizes these divides as Western and African. She further recognizes three divides in Western feminism based on geographical differences; American, British and French feminism. Within these major divides, there are other branches carved out on philosophical and ideological orientations. Njogu and Wafula (2007), for instance, cite free and social feminism as some of the branches borne out of ideological foundation. Mannathoko (1991) also cites liberal feminism, radical feminism, and Marxist feminism. All these branches of feminism have some insight to offer in the interrogation of the nature of characterization, gender role-plays and gender identity in Kiswahili drama.

Liberal feminists question the viewpoints about women which are disparaging and discriminatory. The questions they pose are related to women's dependence on men, their capacities, capabilities and rights. They in turn demand equal opportunities and equal participation in the management of their societies. However, although liberal feminism has a long tradition of fighting for the rights and opportunities for women, it does not question the genesis and the existence of the structural inequalities prevailing in the society. The theory does not pinpoint the supremacy contests between the sexes as the epicenter of gender tensions.

Liberal feminism is especially applicable in the evaluation of gender relations in the middle phase of Kiswahili drama evolution. The playwrights in this period present a nation where the existence and maneuvering space of the female gender is under the •oritative discretion of the male gender. Women are not incorporated into the
mainstream policy making organs as their menial capabilities are not deemed as capable of making any meaningful contributions. As a result, they are left to endorse and abide by the decisions which are exclusively made by the male gender. In effect, the female gender in the middle phase of Kiswahili drama progression is considered to be less human than the male gender. Her fundamental rights as a human being are greatly curtailed. Her exclusion from the core social processes confirms that her social ranking in the human categorization is not equated to that of the male gender which occupies the super-ordinate echelon against her subordinate status.

Radical feminism is generally concerned with women/men, female/male dichotomies. According to this brand of feminism, the concept of women and men tend to be essentialising and naturalizing. Women are 'essentially' passive and cooperative while men are competitive and instrumental. Such concepts become totalizing as they generalize from one trait or aspect of a person to the whole and ignore possibilities of differences and change. They also introduce concepts of 'innate' differences between women and men. Radical feminists locale women's oppression in the social institution of gender. They consider the man as the enemy and as a result, launch a whole scale onslaught against male-dominated society. Radical feminism puts sexuality, reproduction and patriarchy at the centre of the social debate. They believe in empowering women to analyse their lives as part and parcel of common experience in patriarchal society, and thereby encourage them to challenge the conventional assumptions with regard to the less Privileged position of the woman in the society.

The campaign for the gender equality that the female gender in the contemporary iswahilj drama is fronting appears to have been inspired greatly by radical feminism.
The woman in this era appears to have come to the realization that her somatization in the society arises out of the basic fact that she is a vulnerable female in a society where her space is conscripted by patriarchal structures. To fight against this sexist view, she also realizes that the institution of patriarchy is reinforced by cultural institutions which define and determine social roles along gender lines, assigning the core roles to the man on the assumption that he is more capable to execute them, while leaving the woman to perform peripheral roles due to her assumed inability to perform the more challenging tasks. Towards this end, the woman has realized that the only way to redeem her social image and assert herself is through proving to the society that she is capable of being independent of thought and deed, and can equally be competitive in performing social tasks hitherto designated as a male preserve.

Marxist feminism attempts to apply dialectical materialism in analyzing sources of gender oppression. It considers capitalism, imperialism and sexism as inseparable. It associates men with production of goods and women with reproduction of children. Liberation of women is thus linked to the liberation of social and economic systems. It locates women’s oppression in "Their inability to participate in the public sphere, and assume that inclusion of women into the public domain would greatly contribute to their liberation.

Marxist feminism has some basic tenets which are applicable in the evaluation of the state of gender role-plays in an African society. This brand of feminism has historical j entation and it can be employed to understand the unfavourable gender relations as Presented in Kiswahili drama, especially in the middle phase of this genre. One, it is ciative that gender inter-relations have historical bearing in the sense that the advent
Colonialism disorientated the harmonious co-existence between the gender divides that was known to exist in the indigenous African societies. Gender role-plays were thereafter polarized, giving the male gender the more challenging sphere of capitalistic pursuits as it was regarded more aggressive and enterprising, hence equal to the competitive challenges associated with the capitalistic dictates of production. On the other hand, the woman was deemed to be passive and less ambitious and was thus to be entrusted with domestic chores, and more basically, the reproduction of children. This had the long term effect of consigning the social contribution of the female gender to the periphery.

These are the social perceptions which the contemporary Kiswahili drama is out to counter. The playwrights in this phase are exposing the strong attributes of the female gender. They are presenting a woman who has the capability to perform the social tasks which she was deemed to be incapable of undertaking before. By so doing, they are representing a proactive woman who is worthy more to the society than just a human factory for reproducing children.

However, despite its many divides and differences in historical and ideological inclinations, feminism has a clear goal in engaging serious enquiries into how the various interpretations of masculinity and femininity determine the social virtues influencing gender role-plays and the placement of social statuses. One of its most important missions is to front for the empowerment of women by engaging the social structures which hinder the realization of her human potential in a bid to liberate conservative tenets or perspectives. The contemporary focus trained on gender as a fundamental analytic f0ry literature, rather than its perpetuation as a feminine supplement to the stream, has therefore some obvious implication on the revolutionary transformation
in the way we should position and analyze gender role-plays. Such a transformation, however, should depend on the degree to which gender inclination does not mean a Repolarization of feminism criticism. This is because there is a danger that gender will continue being misconstrued as a synonym for femininity. As such, literary critics will continue pontificating about the representation of women without investigating masculinity, thus making gender representation separatist. It is from this point of view that the contemporary drama is more focused on empowering the woman while at the same time inclusively exposing all the human attributes of the male character.

In conclusion, it is our view that in order to accommodate all factors, gender studies need to be defined within a framework that insists on a balanced evaluation of female-male representation outside the existing sexual bias. In the African context and in Kiswahili drama in particular, in order to put gender roles in their proper perspectives, a homegrown solution can only be attained if gender relations are evaluated from the historical factors that governed social structures before the advent of colonialism, how they were influenced by foreign virtues and how they are currently acquiring different dimensions occasioned by the forces of modernity. This means sieving out the negative foreign elements that have adversely changed gender interpretations in the African cultures as a way of restoring the positive values that can work to ferment and preserve gender cohesion in the African societies.

In this study, African feminism literary theory has been identified as appropriate for several reasons. African feminism fights for woman liberation from social institutions that are patronized by 'African' cultural norms, which determine and dictate gender role plays in favour of the man. The man is assigned the more challenging and respectful tasks
lie is assumed to be more capable than the woman, who is left to perform light duties which are largely familial. It is a theory that is founded on the principles of traditional African values and explores cultural factors which contribute to the marginalization of the African woman. It thus addresses gender and related issues in Africa within the African socio-cultural context. It seeks to emphasize the fact that neither gender is complete in itself to constitute a unit by itself. It therefore advocates for mutual female-male inter-dependence and co-existence. More importantly, it recognizes the social obstacles that the woman has to surmount in the campaign for gender equity.

African feminism literary theory articulates the black woman's agenda and advocates for building an organizational base to advance the core theme of gender parity. It is a theory which views gender equality as that stage of human development at which the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals are not determined by the mere fact of being born male or female. Although it appreciates that women oppression is rooted in cultural ideologies which uphold men's privileges and discriminate against those of women, it vouches for androgynous approach in the gender debate. This is an approach which views gender roles as complimentary and autonomously linked. The theory also takes cognizance of the fact that the discrimination of the woman in the African society is culturally rooted and since culture is dynamic, the cultural forces which contribute towards this social scenario are subject to change.
HYPOTHESES

1) The thematic progression of Kiswaliili drama in Kenya demonstrates that the retrogressive socio-cultural institutions which have been hindering women empowerment are becoming more liberal and responsive to the social dynamics of a contemporary society.

2) The gender role-play representation in Kiswaliili drama effectively reflects that the playwrights interpret and represent the prevailing socio-cultural and political environments in their works.

3) The nature of the language usage by different characters across the gender divides is projected to reflect the existing structural hierarchies of gender inter-relations in the social organization.
19 METHODOLOGY

The main undertaking of the study has been to interrogate how Kiswahili playwrights in Kenya perceive and represent gender role-play dynamism in a contemporary society. It is a comparative analysis of the diversities and commonalities of human attributes exhibited by both the male and female characters against the social values which are used as the yardstick in interpreting gender inter-relations. The methodology used to achieve this has two basic components. The first involves textual data collection where literary data related to feminist literature was collected. The bulk of this was library research. The literary data was categorized into three main areas. The first were the plays under the scope of the study. In this category, an in-depth analysis of the plays in the middle and contemporary phases of Kiswahili drama was undertaken. Those in the middle phase are *Uasi* (Kitsao, 1980) and *Mke Mwenza* (Chacha, 1982). The plays analysed in the contemporary phase were *Kilio Cha Haki* (mazrui, 1981), *Mama ee* (Mwachofi, 1987), *Kifo Kisimani* (Wa Mberia, 2000), *Sudana* (Mazrui & Njogu, 2006) and *Zihzala* (Njogu, 2006). The study has engaged a critical analysis of the selected plays with a view to determining how gender role-play representation reflects the social attributes of the male and female characters as regards their potential and Polities in the performance of social functions, as well as their capacity to initiate positive or negative changes in the society. An evaluation of how both the female and male characters initiate, contribute or relate to the social environment around them
thus been undertaken. This has been a deliberate effort to explore how the attributes of each gender divide contribute and impact on the campaign for gender parity and social advancement. At the same time, the study has evaluated the various roles played by existing social structures and other social conventions in the determination of gender role-play assigned and performed by the gender divide.

Secondly, data was collected on the feminist literary theory. This included literary data on feminism in general and African feminist literary theory which was specifically used to analyse the status of the woman in gender role-play dynamics in Kenyan Kiswahili drama. The third area of data collection covered was the general perspectives on gender and related issues generated by literary artists and critics.

Apart from the core texts, the study also substantially benefited from other literary works, not necessarily Ironi drama, which offer a lot of literature on issues touching on various gender perspectives. These include scholarly dissertations, published articles and other texts. In general, the study has incorporated various views of scholars whose works dwell on gender and related issues.

The second component of the methodology was interpreting, evaluating, synthesizing and analyzing the data collected and blending the analyses within the realm of the aims and aspirations of the study.
CHAPTER TWO

0 CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF FEMINISM IN AFRICAN CULTURES AND AFRICAN DIASPORA

INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to evaluate how gender roles were defined and practiced in the indigenous African societies and the effects of the infusion of alien values on the existing cultural order. Although patriarchy as a social institution existed in the indigenous African societies long before the advent of colonialism, many scholars of African history and anthropologists have argued it became more entrenched and oppressive after sustained cultural contacts with the West. As a result, a new social order came into place and more specifically, gender inter-relations assumed new dimensions. They claim that prior to the coming of Europeans to the African continent, African societies had their own elaborate social structures which determined how different social spheres functioned. Power structures and gender role-plays assumed different dimensions when foreign virtues were introduced into the African cultures.

These alien ideologies went a long way in changing gender role-plays in the new social order that came into place was particularly profound because the indigenous African societies and those of the West were built on totally divergent
ideological and social values. Historically, the principle of cultural exchange has always been that the 'less' developed borrows more from the 'civilized' culture. In this case, African cultures borrowed more foreign experiences from the West than the West borrowed from the African cultures. As a result, the African societies adopted more foreign virtues to the detriment of their own values. And since the effects of colonialism extended its tentacles to all the social spheres of the colonized, the ideological definitions of the Western cultural concepts came to prevail over what the Africans had held onto prior to the coming of the Europeans. These were to change gender inter-relations not only during the period colonialism reigned, but even long after its exit.

This study therefore aspires to interrogate the extent to which the fusion of indigenous and foreign values contributed to the re-alignment of gender identities and role-plays in post-colonial African societies, and more specifically Kenya, as reflected by Kiswahili playwrights.

21 GENDER ROLE-PLATS IN THE PRE-COLONIAL AFRICAN CULTURES AND THE KICHAS OF COLONIALISM

A popular trend adopted by many literary artists and critics per se in the gender debate is the sensationalism in which they come to the defense of the female character. "Sensational approach emanates from the fact that for a long time, the female gender been portrayed as socially alienated by social structures which are patronized by ideologies. What is always cited for this vulnerable position of the woman is P passive human nature which is manifested in her lack of assertiveness to counter the
raw demonstration of power that the man exercises to safeguard his social privileges. The literary position of woman subordination and male super-ordination has reigned for such a long time that it has almost become synonymous with any social statement explaining gender inter-relations in African societies.

When conceptualizing gender role-plays in the African context, the subordination of the female gender is always projected to draw its legitimacy from the fact that the male gender has always been placed at the apex of authority and decision-making by the indigenous African cultural order. Male superiority is thus propagated as an extension of what gender relations have always been since time immemorial. The common postulation is that in traditional African societies, gender role-plays were fashioned in a way in which the male gender enjoyed greater social advantages and authority over the female gender. This assertion implies that the core responsibilities dictating the very existence of the society were a preserve of the male gender while the peripheral roles and especially those associated with familial and domestic chores were left for the female gender. This implies that the positioning of gender roles was discriminatory as it was skewed in favour of the man on the strength of his superior attributes. This explains why in most African societies, 'traditions' continue to emphasize, and often dictate women's primary role as mothers and housewives.

As a result, a strong patriarchal social system has been in favour of sexually legated roles for men and women. The so-called cultural values militate against the vance, progress and participation of women in the core social processes. This is often legitimacy by adopted gender ideology and cultural patterns, which favour a of pre-determined assignment of social roles for both women and men. Societies
over are dominated by an ideology about "a woman's place in the society" which often turns out to be restricted and smaller than that occupied by man in the social hierarchy.

While acknowledging that the institution of patriarchy has always been more prominent than that of matriarchy in most societies the world over, Menuni (1965) notes that in the indigenous African societies, it did not stand in the way of gender roles in such a forceful way before the infusion of Western ideologies into the African cultures. The imposing status of patriarchy in the African societies was significantly aggravated after sustained cultural contacts with the West occasioned by the introduction of colonialist, imperialist and capitalist ideologies. The alien experiences which were introduced by the ideals of capitalist and imperialist practices permeated into the core fabrics of the indigenous African social systems and introduced diverse effects on the existing socio-economic structures. In the economic front, capitalism introduced new concepts in the value of labour and means of production. Whereas in the indigenous African society labour was basically a means to sustain the community and both women and men contributed in a complimentary way, capitalism came to commercialize it. It came to be categorized as the public social sphere dominated by men who ended up gaining more from the enterprise than women. On the other hand, women were consigned to the domestic sector where work was neither quantified nor paid. In the political arena, colonialism introduced new virtues into the power structures which altered the definitions of gender, masculinity and femininity. This is because colonialism thrived on the demonstration of raw power by the strong over the weak.

Thus came to extol masculinity over femininity and played a significant role in
entrenching the patriarchal institution and making it more oppressive. The long term effect of the infusion of foreign ideologies into the African cultures was that new dimensions in the definition of power were introduced. These were to alter in a significant way the socio-cultural factors determining gender role-plays for a long time.

When analyzing gender role-plays in most African cultures from a historical perspective, Sudarkasa (1981) observes that, except for the highly Islamized societies in Sub-Saharan Africa, in pre-colonial times, women were conspicuously in high social places. They were queen-mothers, princesses, chiefs, warriors, and holders of other public offices. There were also parallel chieftaincies where one line was made up of males while the other one consisted of females. Where they existed, they both exercised authority over male and female subjects alike. Cases also abound where societies were simultaneously ruled by both genders when there was a queen and a monarch reigning over one society. Women held formal leadership roles in matriarchies and were also influential in decision-making in patriarchies. In this case, what the West has come to reter to as public domain controlled by males and the private sphere reserved for women is not applicable to the Africa* context. Responsibilities in the both domains were shared in consideration of social and natural factors which did not border on discrimination between the two sexes since the two divides of gender were recognized as having important and complimentary roles to play. The popular perception that gender role-pla  are tailored exclusively in favour of has thus come to be interpreted as a distortion of * nographne reality. The postulation that men occupied the public domain while women assigned the domestic domain was thus manifested in the misconception that since * ``and authority were vested in the public domain, women had lower status than men.
more appropriate conception would then be to recognize that the two domains were internally ordered in a hierarchical fashion and both provided personnel for domestic and extra-domestic activities in a complimentary fusion since there was a considerable overlap between the two domains.

What Sudarkara's (ibid) observation portends is that gender role-plays and social positions were not determined along sexual basis. African women had definite social roles that enabled them to achieve a measure of recognition and autonomy. A woman's status changed throughout her life cycle, rising significantly during her reproductive years and reaching its zenith during old age, when she became an elder eligible for certain social positions equally held by men. In the line of social contribution, just like their male counterparts, they positively contributed to the welfare of the society through participation in production and reproduction in a complimentary manner. For example, it is to be observed that in the indigenous African societies, women and men alike partook in activities such as farming, trading and other kinds of craft. However, the society did not differentiate value attached to labour of women and men working in the same line of production nor were women and men differentially rewarded for the products of their labour. Everyone's contribution was appreciated and appropriately rewarded.

Sudarkasa's argument disputes the much touted position that the indigenous African cultures discriminated against women in the magnitude that was to be witnessed after the contamination of African cultures by foreign values. It highlights the fact that social organization of the time ensured that there was harmonious co-existence between gender divide. The social roles were structured in such a way that each had designated roles to play, and all supplemented each other in their own and unique way.
since, without the society would not function smoothly. This division of labour was not in any way intended to demean or extol the contribution of any gender divide. In profession for example, the division of labour along sexual lines promoted reciprocity of effort.

Steady (1981) observes that the colonial penetration in Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries produced the most profound changes in the lives of African women on the continent and greatly disrupted the traditional system of gender relations. Colonialism was to introduce systems of social inequality and oppressive forms of social stratification since it introduced the concept of demarcation of power and authority in which one human division was to be categorized as strong and the other weak. The male gender was supposed to have stronger human attributes than their female counterparts and that is why men were tasked with challenging responsibilities such as those of authority, while the women were assigned less challenging domestic chores on the insinuation of their weaker human attributes. The colonial invasion thus had the devastating effect of disorientating the indigenous gender relations and the self-provisioning traditional economic systems through the introduction of exploitative commercial wage employment which relied on the supply of cheap African male labour while the woman was left to sustain the household through unpaid labour which went "recognized and unappreciated. This created a differential process of quantifying male and female labour. Women served primarily as a mainstay for subsistence and inductive sectors. In the process, they became relegated as marginal sources of cheap

This is in line with the fact that capitalist theories associate men with production and women with reproduction of human beings.
While Memmi and Steady (ibid) acknowledge the fact that there were both autocratic female leaders and despotic male rulers in the indigenous African societies, what they observe is that women degradation became more entrenched and pronounced after the onset of colonialism. They observe that in the history of mankind the world over patriarchal institutions have all along sought to control the vital societal structures to the exclusion of the woman. What they emphasize is that the position of the African woman was especially rendered more precarious after the advent of external influences especially those from the West. They attribute this turn of events to the humbling and humiliating experience that the African man went through under colonialism. The colonial experience subjected the man to the raw demonstration of power more than the woman. As the bedrock of the capitalistic economy as the provider of unskilled labour, he was stripped off his dignity and robbed of his manhood. Coupled with this, the colonial administration incorporated only men in positions of administrative positions they regarded marginal for them to hold. As it were, it is only men who were schooled in the colonial demonstration of power and authority. After the exit of colonialism, the African male seized the opportunity to reclaim the dignity and manhood he felt had been taken away by the humbling colonial experience by lording it over the woman whom he had been shown to regard as the weaker sex. It should thus be noted that despite the universal campaign for the empowerment of the woman, women in Africa as well as other communities which underwent colonization remain unique due to the alien ideologies "traded to them by the external influences.

The colonial experience thus introduced new concepts of authority in the gender hierarchy which was interpreted to mean the domination of the 'weak' by the 'strong',
such as the colonized by the colonizer and women by men. As Davies (1994) puts it, colonialism, with its emphasis on assimilation and expropriation, asserted Western culture on the African people it sought to conquer. This had the effect of destabilizing the very core foundations of the African societies and substantially disorientating the existing social values determining gender identities and role-plays. This was the genesis of the social categorizations of the weaker sex denoting women, with the men being the stronger sex.

This new social dispensation brought about by the imposition by the West of new concepts about power and authority into African cultures played a significant role in entrenching and legitimizing the imposing institution of patriarchy over the vulnerable position of matriarchy. This was to have a major influence on how gender identities, inter-relations and roles-plays in the African societies were to be interpreted and determined in future.

The proponents fronting for the existence of intact social structures that characterized indigenous African societies before the advent of colonialism also point out that the structures were well-developed self-reliant social systems where men, women and children were involved in production in a communal, rather than in individual context. This means that although their social roles could be different from each other, the basis of this role division was not interpreted in the light of either inferiority or superiority of the particular gender divide performing it. On the contrary, it was mutually understood that all roles had their distinct contribution to the well-being of the society. Contributions made by the gender divides were supposed to compliment each other. "Auction was primarily for sustenance, hence the question of differential valuation
between the two domains did not arise. This implies that division of labour was simply a formality in the assignment of tasks. The proceeds from labour were thus seen as a product of communal corporate enterprise.

On the other hand, the basis for reproduction was more metaphysical rather than being attached to any other interpretation. As a result, a woman's role in reproduction often received symbolic value since it strengthened the human race, ensured continuity of life, and became equated with the life force itself. Women therefore had the added advantage of being intrinsically central to the preservation and continuation of life through their reproductive roles. Contrary to the belief that those reproductive tasks were a constraint on women's participation in the formal sector, they in fact compelled them to engage more in the production process to supplement in the growing consumption needs of the community. It is therefore worthy noting that the institution of motherhood did not lead to the domestication of women. Rather, it was an impetus, not in any way an impediment, to social and human advancement.

As regards the determination of social status, Mbilinyi (1991) observes that in most African communities, ranking of individuals depended first and foremost on seniority, which was usually defined by relative age and other social conventions related to kinship. Interpersonal relations tended to be negotiated around seniority as determined by order of birth rather than gender. Hence, a senior sister outranked a junior brother in social status. Secondly, social positions of individuals shifted constantly in relation to those with whom they were interacting. Consequently, social identity was relational and not serialised. Every individual had their own place in the society which they understood belong and which was respected by the others. The roles the individuals performed
have been separated but were coordinated for a common cause. It could thus be rightly argued that the division of labour being magnified in some literary quarters was in fact specialization of roles where a section of the community which performed them better was left to do them. This did not mean any other person willing to perform them was prohibited from doing so. Indigenous African societies also de-emphasized gender in relation to personal attributes and other insignia of status which were recognized and rewarded, regardless of which gender divide those exhibiting them belonged.

What can be synthesized from the various positions adopted by different scholars about the social organization of African societies is that the literary elevation of patriarchy over matriarchy which is best exemplified in the division of labour along gender axis is a Western import and is not representative of the indigenous African social set-up. The exclusion of the woman in the execution of designated social responsibilities of authority in the pretext that it is African is thus a misconception of historical reality as such discrimination did not exist prior to the inculcation of Western values into the African cultures. The roles which were clearly understood to belong to the women were those dictated upon by natural orientations such as going through pregnancy and breastfeeding. However, taking care of the young ones was undertaken by both girls and boys. From the early age, social roles were performed by both boys and girls without gender considerations. For example, in many African societies, both gender alternated in performing domestic roles such as gathering firewood and fetching water as well as extra-domestic tasks such as looking after the family livestock. Differentiation in gender plays occurred only when it was necessary to align them according to the need for siblings to acquire essential inner facts about themselves due to natural physical
endowments. In such circumstances, socialization of children took place in groups rather than within the context of a nuclear family, with men being actively involved in the socialization of boys and women with those of girls. Adolescents played an important role in the socialization process of younger ones. In many societies, peer group socialization was institutionalized through units composed of 'age' mates. Regardless of the form of the social organization, the dominant ideology was the group preservation and well-being ensured by checks and balances to reduce social tension, especially between sexes.

We can therefore observe that although the demarcation of gender role-plays existed in the indigenous African societies, the after-effects of imported virtues into the African social institutions made it more glaring. In this regard, it should be pointed out that the African societies had solid cultural structures governing power structures and the determination of role-plays before these alien influences infiltrated the existing African social structures.

It should therefore be noted that the emphasis in literature that presupposes the existence of a 'woman' as a social category always understood to be powerless, disadvantaged, and controlled and defined in relation to man's all-powerful attributes was not as pronounced in the indigenous African societies before Western concepts were "imported into them. It was aggravated by Western philosophical discourses which peg tender definition on biological determinism. So the traditions which are represented in colonial African literature as representative of the African norms governing gender are cross-breeds nurtured by foreign influences and passed on to the post-African societies.
Despite the organizational diversities characteristic of many African societies, it can be argued that pre-colonial gender relations varied depending on class, ethnicity and social positions of individual women and men in the society, meaning that this could make either of them have higher social status. Relations between women and men in one class were often more egalitarian than across class, ethnic gender relations. In the more egalitarian societies, anthropological evidence suggests that women had a great deal of power and autonomy, (Okeyo, (1987), Muntemba, (1985). Gender relations have therefore become more oppressive in the colonial and post-colonial periods, especially under the dictates of capitalism which greatly changed modes of production and the value of labour. Literature therefore has an obligation to interpret the imbalances in gender role plays in the post-colonial African society by analyzing what constituted African values on gender role-plays before they were disorientated by alien ideologies, with specific attention to the contribution of the ideals of colonialism and imperialism as regards the definition and practice of power and authority and capitalism on the value of labour. As Gaidzanwa (1985) observes, capitalism flourishes on the exploitation of women within households and exploitation of both women and men outside the households. As a result, theories which legitimize the capitalist mode of production cannot adequately criticize and analyse the origin of women's oppression within the capitalism system.

In our view, gender, production and reproduction are the main domains of social 'e developed for the purpose of differentiating between economic structures and gender tons. I his is done to illustrate that gender systems have certain autonomy and are at sepa ate from economic forces. It should be understood that gender systems
involve both the relations of production in (he biological sense as well as other dimensions such as labour. To have a better insight into what determines the status of gender role-plays, the definitions of gendered concepts such as power and authority, public and private, and formal and informal, should be re-evaluated in line with the dynamics of a contemporary society because in practice, they transcend the boundaries of the gender divide.

It can also be argued that in societies where basic sustenance is crucial, such as the indigenous African societies, the exigencies of survival would militate against dichotomies between private and public spheres. In post-independence Africa, interpretations of female subordination have shown the dichotomy between public and private domains to be only superficial. Because of the need for male-female complementarity in ensuring the totality of human existence within a balanced ecosystem, and because of the negative and destructive effects of historical processes, values stressing human totality, parallel autonomy and self-determination have emerged to correct gender injustices occasioned by historical mis-interpretations. The product of this new development is the fimalization of the innate feature of the overlap, rather than the dichotomy between the public and private in line with the more desirable position in pre-capitalist African societies.

lorres (1991) notes that the confusion in the placement of gender role-plays in African societies occurred with the onset of colonialism and capitalism, its economic elite. These created hierarchical relations between sexes. This came about after "stained intrusion into the African cultural core fabrics by alien influences from the which looked down upon the woman's intellectual capacity, organizational ability
and physical capability. This was further fuelled by the obsession of Western scholars who interpreted African gender relations from the viewpoints of, and within the paradigms appropriate to Western values and the social parameters found in Western societies. For example, when we look at 'woman to woman' marriages in African societies, the institution of 'woman marriages' signifies that gender is not the sole basis for the qualification to the 'husband' role in Africa, and the authority attached to that role is not gender specific. At the same time, the term 'wife' has two referents: a female married to a given male or female, or a female married into a given household. In essence, this means that the African society held the woman in high esteem as she had even the privilege to 'marry' and by so doing, become the head of a household. In most African societies, this was prevalent in the circumstances where a woman happened to be childless or had the misfortune of having her children pass away, leaving the household childless. By tradition, she was allowed to 'marry' a wife who would in turn give birth to other children to fill up the void. These children were duly identified with the family and enjoyed all the rights as any others borne in male-female households. It was accepted as a way of preserving the family name and lineage. The women in this category constitute what Memmi (1965) refers to as the 'third gender'.

Meena (1992) questions the stereotypes which support the subordination and delusion of African women from the responsibilities categorized as public as a reflection of indigenous African cultural creation. While emphasizing that the woman's social status was as much respected as that of man, she describes her indigenous society as her golden age. This was the time when women had great freedom and had both political and equality. She employs the term 'victimology' to portray the second phase. She
explains that patriarchal influences imposed from outside displaced women's cultural and social roles, so are also women excluded from expressing themselves in their own ways today. To win their freedom back, she resolves that women should organize and consult their grandmothers and grandfathers on what makes a man a man, a woman a woman, and a society a society.

Media's sentiments attest to the fact that gender role-plays in the African indigenous societies were tailored in such a way that ensured that there were no gender conflicts and instead, what prevailed was harmonious co-existence among the gender divide. There was mutual respect as appertained to the nature of the gender role-plays. They were not perceived through the prism of ability or disability but rather in terms of their centrality in the contribution to societal development. This means that the scenario in the post-colonial literature which highlights the disadvantaged position of the woman against the authoritative echelon of the man, and which has remained to haunt the African societies even after the exit of colonialism and imperialism, should be interrogated against a sustained analysis of the differences and commonalities of indigenous cultural values and imported Western ideologies?

In Africa, independence did not bring about significant changes in the social, sexual and racial inequalities perpetuated by colonialism mainly because many of the socio-economic structures of colonialism remained intact and in some cases, became even more exploitative. This is mainly due to the fact that those who took over the power snictures after colonialism were men who had been schooled from the sidelines by the colonialists on how to exploit patriarchal privileges of authority to dominate and in "nidate those perceived to be less powerful. This is further fuelled by the fact that
ontempo[^x]ly, Africa is marred by its dependence on the West and its adoption of exploitative models of development. The minimal participation of African women in contemporary political institutions, as opposed to their complimentary participation in traditional social spheres, is but only one of the numerous examples of the continuing cultural domination by the West. It also reveals the tenacity of cultural and economic imperialism through which a subjugated people remain in an equally subjugated position. That is why liberation from foreign imposed social structures of power and gender role-play determination has been an equally important component of African feminism literary theory.

In the Kiswahili drama, the after-effects of alien values as witnessed in the social structures where gender inter-relations seem to favour the patriarchy over the matriarchal are exemplified by the playwrights in the middle phase. In this phase, the representation of the woman character is predictably that of a gullible human being who has no stake in the decision making process when it comes to the core issues determining the community destiny. The man decides and dictates what is important not only for his household but also for the society as a whole. The social role of the woman is reduced to that of a passive supporter. Her views are not sought even in the issues that have a significant bearing on her as a human being. The society in this literary phase limits the social space of the woman under the guise of cultural dictates, insisting they are old-age cultural norms which determine the role-plays and social status between genders, and which should be strictly adhered to in the name of preservation of the social cultural order. The society appears to hold such norms in such reverence to the extent that challenging them is regarded as a cultural taboo.
While the playwrights in this phase seem to be representing the gender inter-relations of the time, they appear to give emphasis to the notion that what they are representing are inherited traditions passed on from one generation to the other. In the contrary, the indigenous African cultures allowed the woman as much social space as that of man. This means that to restore the cultural equilibrium in the African social order, the society has to retrace its cultural roots if the woman is to be liberated from this cultural bondage which did not exist in such an exaggerated scale in the indigenous African societies before gender role-plays were significantly altered by the infusion of alien experiences.

In the contemporary phase, the playwrights are demonstrating that contrary to popular literary positions which question the woman's human potential, she has the capability to initiate and perform the roles hitherto considered a preserve of the male domain. What they are exposing in their works is that there are no fixed attributes which can be permanently associated with any particular gender divide, be it negative or positive, weak or strong. This means that all gender divides possess equal human potential which can be exhibited interchangeably under different circumstances. The woman has as much human potential as man, only that the social space to make full use of it has been severely restricted by retrogressive social structures which are fortunately opening up to appreciate her human worth.
From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that in the indigenous African societies, gender relations were structured in such a way which ensured there was harmonious co-existence between the gender divide. This changed significantly when alien social values were introduced into the Africa cultures. It is therefore imperative to note that the uneven gender role-play stereotyping in African societies became more entrenched after they were engaged in sustained contact with the West. Davies (1994) observes that as a result of the assimilation of Western gender interpretation into African categories, the African subject became construed as male. He argues colonialism in its practice is a patriarchal order, sexist as well as racist in its ideology. The women's position relative to men's thus deteriorated under colonialism as this system subjected African women to foreign experiences of male domination. It is this difference between men's and women's experience of colonization that created the dilemma in the African societies and chartered gender relations in the post-independent Africa. This cultural assimilation was more entrenched in the male gender. The male bias was even evident in the colonial education system as the ratio of boys to girls in school was quite uneven in favour of the boys. This was further compounded by the new acquired ideology by African males who came to believe that Western education would be a barrier to a woman's role as wife and mother and an impediment to her success in these traditional tasks. This brought about more Elusion in the already disorientated categorization of gender roles. The new colonial experience thus thrust the man deep into a cultural dilemma as the allure of the new
power structures which favoured male hegemony made him discard the African gender identities the society had upheld all along. Davies (ibid) explains his predicament thus:

Colonialism puts the native male in a double bind. If he chooses to be conservative and remains loyal to his indigenous culture, he opts to stay in a calcified society whose development momentum has been checked by colonization. If, however, the colonized person chooses assimilation, then he is trapped in a form of historical catalepsy because colonial experience severs him from his own past and replaces it with the shadow of the colonial experience, (p. 5)

The implication here is that the male gender was more receptive of the foreign ideologies that came along with colonialism and its cultural influences. This is mostly so because the imported ideology on power favoured his position and status in the society. It inculcated in him the desire to be domineering as the new lifestyle brought about by the colonial experience demanded. To adapt to the new social dictates, he had to ditch his indigenous values for those introduced by Western orientations, and in the process lost his cultural identity.

It is to be understood that the colonial experience was that of raw domination where authority by the patriarchal leaning foreign administration was exercised without restraint. This introduced the African male to the power ideology which he had not known before. The socially structured co-existences between the gender divide which existed in the indigenous African societies thus took different dimensions to the disadvantage of the female gender. This was because the new social order enforced gender differences which extolled masculine virtues while placing feminine values at the
bottom of the social categorization. The colonial administrations therefore imported a view of the world in which women were of secondary importance. The radical changes inaugurated by colonialism indicate that one of the ways in which men resolved their cultural dilemma was to mould a society of separate social roles for men and women; a situation which was later to justify and reproduce the structures of male domination which continue to deny girls and women equal space in societal roles in many post-colonial African societies.

Oyewumi (1997) describes colonial rule as a manly or husbandly or lordly prerogative. She notes that colonial custom and practice stemmed from world view which believe in the absolute superiority of the super-human over the sub-human, the masculine over the feminine, or progressive over the conservative. She further observes that the colonial process was sex differentiated insofar as most of the colonial personnel was male and used gender identity to determine policy. In their order of social hierarchy, there were men (European), women (European), native African male, and then the African woman. In essence, she says African women have suffered double colonization; under the Western colonization and thereafter under male-leaning gender stereotypes acquired and adopted by African men from the colonial experience.

It is also worthy noting that the combination of race and gender bias worked in cahoots to degrade African women further. European women did not occupy the same social status with African women in the colonial order. Although there were female leaders before the advent of colonialism, the colonizers did not incorporate women in administrative structures. At the same time, the few men who were given "miniservative positions, although in the lower cadres of the colonial governments,
exercised autocratic powers over the people than was vested in African leaders traditionally. This was the beginning of the process of the entrenchment of male liegeniony in the African cultures and it was to be epitomized after colonialism when African men assumed the mantle of leadership and had the opportunity to exploit it unchallenged by the female quarter.

Jeffner (1984) observes that the cultural confusion brought about by the erosion of African values by alien influences made Africans lose their historical bearing and cultural identity. Having lost their political sovereignty and mental independence, they began to believe in the new imperialist values to the extent that they looked upon the colonizer for direction, even for the interpretation of their own history and culture. This new development was particularly harmful to the social status of women which the colonial system had already consigned to the periphery. He says:

The most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from their history. For the African women, the tragedy deepened in that the colonial experience threw them to the bottom of a history that was not theirs. The ultimate manifestation of this new order was the evolution of a 'West-centric' African society which unfortunately survived the exit of the Western empire and continued to haunt the African communities. Gender roles had been deeply disoriented, (p. 153)

that this portends is that the colonial experience led the Africans to lose their historical bearing through the confusion generated by the foreign values that went with it. They came to despise their history, culture and identity. In this new
social realignment, it is the female gender which suffered most. Her human worth was grated to the extent that she came to lose her self esteem to the point that she even began to believe some of patriarchal dogmas which questioned her capabilities.

In the African societies, entrenching the African masculinity was done by men as an extension of 'cultural imperialism' after colonialism, as they felt they were better placed to occupy the authoritative echelon left behind by the colonizers. This is because as Muditnba (1988) puts it, colonialism tended to organize and transform non-European to fundamentally European constructs. He maintains that the colonial organization entailed three main processes: the domination of physical space, the reformation of native minds and the integration of local economic histories into Western perspectives.

In a nutshell, in order to put the existing gender relations in the contemporary African society in their proper perspective, it is important to understand the diversities in the epistemological foundations of Western and African cultures. This is out of the historical 'discovery' that African cultural values have been deeply influenced by Western values through various historical phases of colonial, economic, and social integration. In our view, that-tender is socially constructed should be a clear pointer that the criteria that make up male and female categories vary in different cultures.

The categorization of women in feminist discourses as powerless, victimized and passive therefore docs not take into account the fact that gender relations are dynamic and social conventions are not historically grounded nor culturally static. If the logic that Bender is a social construction is to be upheld, then it follows that gender relations cannot main the same way across time since the society keeps changing all the time. In (his k'lt, from a cross-cultural perspective, one cannot assume the pragmatism in social
organization of the interpretations of the experiences of a particular society as explaining another, since the historical experiences undergone by different cultures are equally different. That is why the cultural logic of Western gender categories and those of African societies differ in the sense that those of the West are founded on the ideology of biological determinism. The categorization of gender in West is synonymous with sexual differentiation. Its cultural logic of social categories is based on an ideology where the presence or absence of certain body organs determines social interpretations of gender constructs.

Mudimba (ibid) observes that prior to the infusion of Western notions into African cultures, the body was not the basis of gender differentiation nor was it used as a yardstick in determining the inclusion or exclusion of a particular gender in the performance of social responsibilities. It simply was not the foundation of thought and identity. The body was a theoretical phenomenon which was known, and accepted to exist, but its existence did not feature in the determination of gender role-plays in the social life. Gender was simply not inherent in human social organization. As a result, women and men were not conceived oppositionally. Consequently, in order to understand how and why gender is constructed in the contemporary African societies, interrogating the role and impact of the West is of utmost importance, not only because of the European rule, but also because of the continued dominance of the West in the Production and determination of knowledge, whereby, its creation and constitution remains largely influenced by Western thought. This is further compounded by the fact that even Alricau feminist advocates accept and identify so much with the Western
thinking that they have created African versions of Western philosophies without drawing distinctions between the uniqueness of both.

To have a better understanding of the relationship between cultural practices and gender role-plays in the African societies therefore, it is imperative that we adopt a reactionary approach because there are various distorted concepts that have been introduced into this realm by Western perceptions. One of the perceptions is the patriarchal dominance by the male gender over the female which is touted to have its origin in the traditional African set-up. In this order, the argument has been that the male gender occupied the more productive sectors of the society while the female counterparts engaged in the Mess' prestigious roles such as reproduction and home-keeping. Unfortunately, this is the kind of ideology that the male gender seems to have inherited from the colonial experience and is still keen to propagate. This is in complete disregard of the fact that gender roles in pre-colonial Africa were complimentary and each had their own special place in the society.

It is worthy noting that while all divides of gender actively took part in the struggle for independence, power was essentially transferred to men who inherited the colonial administrative structures and ideologies. As Fanon (1963) observes, decolonization was simply replacing a certain 'species of men' with another. Power was transferred to these men whose immediate pre-occupation was to assert their own fashion of 'African masculinity' after undergoing humbling experience under the degrading pillars of onialism. He explains that the first generation of African leadership spent a lot of ciicriiy :

ic-wntmg an African history, literature and philosophy from their male Ptllfictives. | h c 're-invention' of the African identity was therefore simply constructing
African power structures on adopted European models. It is therefore imperative to emphasize that the social identity of the woman in the post-independent African societies was influenced by male constructed values and standards. And the crop of men who were now at the helm had waited for this opportunity for a long time and when it finally came, they seized the opportunity with zeal. Fanon (ibid) explains their anxiety in the long wait:

The look that the native turns on the settler's town is a look of envy; it expresses his dream of possession - all manner of possessions: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife, if possible, (p.72)

After independence, the man inherited this empire he had coveted for a long time, with all its trappings intact. The woman was now of secondary consideration. This is a testament that the histories of both the colonizer and the colonized have been written from the male point of view - placing women at the periphery, if they appear at all

When the nature and the influence of patriarchal social structures in African societies, both indigenous and imported, are interrogated, what becomes evident is that from the indigenous society, through the colonial period, immediate post-colonial and the contemporary phase, it is observed that due to the influence of the imported Western social values, all contemporary societies can be classified as patriarchal in the sense that they insist on operating social systems characterized by male dominance. Amadiume (<1987) says this is why in the contemporary society, "the African woman is weighed down by super-structural forms derived from the colonial past which inculcated the attitudes of male superiority brought about by foreign incursions." (p. 130). This point of view is further reinforced by Ogundipe-Leslie (1987) who claims that the male
ioneinated post-independence African administrations continue to sideline women's participation in their political structures as an extension of the colonial experience which convinced them of women's inferiority in intellect and capability. She makes the following observation:

Women are naturally excluded from public affairs. They are viewed as unable to hold public positions of responsibility, rule men or even be visible when serious matters of the society are being discussed. Women are viewed to need tutelage before they can he politically active. In modern African nation-states, politics is considered the absolute realm of men. (p. 93)

Although the social structures are yet to be fully liberated from the patriarchal ideology that positions of authority are better managed and controlled by the male gender, the contemporary drama is making a literary statement that the modern woman is contesting the infallibility of men to exclusively control the power structures. As a result, she is surmounting gender stereotyping social obstacles to assert herself in the core of social undertakings hitherto considered a male preserve. As opposed to the gullible and passive image of the woman character portrayed by the playwrights in the formative and 'he middle phases of Kiswahili drama, the contemporary woman is assertive and Proactive enough to challenge the societal norms that restrict her social participation to Peripheral roles and is competitively engaging in the core responsibilities alongside her "male counterpart.
2 3  GENDER ROLE-PLAYS THROUGH CULTURAL AND FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

The confusion brought about by the intrusion of foreign ideologies into the African cultures has been instrumental in the many emerging interpretations of culture, gender and feminism, owing to the various historical perspectives attached to them. Basically, the bone of contention arises from the social perspectives these terms held in the indigenous African societies and the new definitions that were later to be associated with them after the sustained contact between African and Western cultural values. The search for their place in the African context thus remains restoration of African cultural virtues and discarding alien ideologies which threaten the cultural identity as well as the political history of the African societies. Analysing feminism alongside history is important because the various dimensions feminism has adopted can be explained from the different occurrences in the history of mankind. In the first place, feminism has its origins in various historical episodes. It is due to the many adverse historical experiences borne mainly by marginalized women that different divides of feminism have sprung up in different spheres of the world. Secondly, the various dimensions that gender interrelations have taken over time can be ascertained through chronological historical evaluation. This can greatly aid in the campaign for gender equality by assessing the gains made against the challenges expected.

"The injustices that women undergo are basically embedded in historical myths associated with masculine and feminine virtues and demystifying them is an important Ponent in the liberation of the female gender. For example, if the argument that
then feminism is already a lost cause. On the other hand, if men have always been more rational, more judicious and more authoritative, then patriarchy is a fact of nature and women might as well accept it as it is. However, these hypotheses have been proved untenable on the basis that history can challenge them with tangible evidence of change in gender relations. This means that the nature of changes should be critically evaluated updated to reflect the changing social realities. It should also be noted that these changes have been hampered by the different interpretations accorded to feminism, gender and culture.

Feminist cultural history emphasizes the ways in which social conventions tend to operate on behalf of the dominant group. In this respect, the norms of masculinity, which upholds this gender divide to be more dominant, have worked against the interest of femininity. The social dominance of the male gender over the female draws its moral inspiration from 'culture'.

Culture has been described by Spelman (1988) as the totality of people's ways of living as expressed in their politics, ideologies, economic activities, language and a variety of other artistic expressions. It is the patterns of behaviour that people living in social groups create, learn and share. While it is not possible to generalize on African culture as Africa represents cultural diversities which have been exposed to a variety of external forces, there is a common consensus that culture has been used by many scholars and particularly those who have masculinity leaning as an excuse to conceal existing oppressive gender relations and legitimize the perpetuation of these discriminatory acts. Resley (1985) believes that gender relations have to do more with custom than nature because it is the society which designs these relations. As such, gender is a
relational concept that denotes the manner in which women and men are differentiated and ordered in a given socio-cultural context.

Gender has been defined as socially constructed and culturally variable roles that women and men play in their daily lives. It refers to a structural relationship between women and men as manifested in the social institutions as well as in political, economic and other social structures. It is reinforced by custom, law and specific social developments. Gender is acquired and constructed by the society. So the meaning of femininity and masculinity, as well as sexual differences are multiple, contradictory, and dynamic and are informed by present-day social interactions. Meena, (1992) posits that the concept of 'gender' rose to prominence in anthropological and Marxist circles, as well as in other disciplines in the late 1970's as feminist proponents looked for ways to conceptualize the social construction of masculinity and femininity. It was then that attention was shifted away from the biological - female/male, woman/man - to the social relations between and among women and men. Gender analyses examined the multiple layers of social relations and identities among women and men, both individually and collectively, in the complexity of their inter-relations. The proponents then believed that the conceptualization of men and women should be contested as there was no unitary subject(s) called man or woman. What were fixed about the two identities were only bodily traits since the other attributes about them are unstable, inconsistent, ambivalent and contradictory. The perception and interpretation of biological differences are as a result of social context and discourse open to multiple and different kinds of interpretations. The way in which the conceptual gender functions in feminist  

If*86 was rased 0ll the assumption that biological and social conceptions could be
separated and applied universally. This was proved untenable since while biological concepts are fixed and static, social concepts are prone to constant changes as even the society itself is in constant motion of change.

According to Obbo (1980), there are three aspects which provide the rationale for gender research, namely the human rights' rationale, the economic rationale and the women's self image. This implies that any gender debate should revolve around how both gender divides are accorded their basic human rights, how they both participate and benefit from the economic sphere, and more pertinently how the society defines and perceives the image of the woman. That is why feminism is viewed as the recognition of the systematic discrimination against women on grounds of gender. Similarly, gender studies are categorized as a branch of social science discipline devoted to the study of women's status in the society.

Spender (1980) maintains that gender as an analytical variable has its historical location in the Western feminist movement within the bourgeoisie liberal frameworks. While African societies had their own interpretations of gender, it was later to be altered by the introduction of Western concepts. As such, genderism is considered by most African scholars as a foreign inspiration which has been tailored to suit the homegrown situation. That is why human right's proponents and feminists from the African region have been inspired to construct knowledge on gender interpretations from the African experience and point of view. Spender observes that the African gender issue is Western-derived as it is as a result of epistemological shift occasioned by the imposition of Western gender categorization on African cultures that physical differences between man

Woman began receiving notable focus as an area of gender polarization. Prior to this
Oycwuini (1997) observes that, from the ancients to the moderns, gender has never been the foundational category upon which social categories have been constructed in the African societies. The category 'woman' is pre-cultural, fixed in historical time and cultural space in antithesis to another fixed category; 'man.' Femininity is thus a cultural construct: one isn't born a woman, one becomes one. As such, patriarchal oppression consists of imposition of certain social standards of femininity on all biological women, in order to make believe that the chosen standards for femininity are 'natural', and a woman who chooses not to conform to the set standards can be labeled both unfeminine and unnatural. To diffuse this confusion, it should be elaborated that though women are undoubtedly female, this in no way guarantees that they will be feminine. This is because gender relations are socially constructed and deconstructed as a result of men's and women's behaviour themselves, through periodic moments of social transformation.

Feminism, according to Mnunnnlhoko (1991) is a broad term for a variety of conceptions of the relations between men and women in the society. Feminists question and challenge the origins of the oppressive gender relations and attempt to develop a variety of strategies geared towards changing relations for the better. All feminism pivots 'round the recognition of existing women's oppression and addresses the prevailing and discriminatory gender relations. It should thus be understood that feminism not just deal with issues of justice and equality but also offers a critique of male- and female-entrenched institutions, values and social practices that are oppressive and discriminative. At the same time, it is worthy observing that even though...
...ists share (lie same ideas in terms of what gender oppression might imply, they differ widely in terms of analyzing its origins and what constitutes women's liberation.

On the other hand, patriarchy is a specific form of male domination based on the powerful role of a father head; an order characterized by male dominance and the means, both actual and symbolic, of perpetuating that dominance. However, male supremacy rather than patriarchy is a more appropriate term of description for the social systems where there is rigid classification of gender roles in favour of the man. Other words with similar meanings are androcentric (male centered), and masculist (the male bias in language and culture).

The history of feminist criticism is traced from the position of someone who believes in the importance of social, historical and economic, as well as textual and psychic factors in shaping gender ideology. African feminism, by virtue of its inclusive and humanistic character, signals a major step in the pragmatic struggle for African societies devoid of class and gender biases. The struggle against modern forms of oppression, economic hardships and other social ills adds new dimensions to the figuration of African feminism which is resulting in increasing political awareness affirmative action for women's liberation from retrogressive gender stereotypes.

Feminists stress the determining influence of literature in shaping assumptions about women and strive to liberate women from false concepts about their sex. They encourage women to eject culturally constituted gender role values imposed on them and instead their character as human beings regardless of the distinction of sex. This is a plea to deny the specifics of their sex. The nascent feminist interest is a call to resist identification with dominant masculine assumptions on what are or
should be the roles of a woman. One way of achieving this is through dismissing the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as only metaphysical.

This study embraces the neutral definition of gender where the biological differences between men and women are not taken into consideration when analyzing gender roles. It is guided by the belief that both divides of gender have equal human potential to undertake social roles in an even playing field. The differentiation in role plays comes about when social institutions demarcate gender roles for each divide for reasons not associated with human capabilities. This happens in gender supremacy contests when a particular gender divide, and especially the male, seeks to extol its virtues in a bid to dominate over (he other, in this case the female.

In Kiswahili drama, the playwrights in the middle phase have highlighted how society exploits patriarchal virtues to sideline the female gender in the core social processes. The social space of the woman is highly restricted to the extent that she is denied the avenues to exploit her human potential. The society determines what roles she is capable of performing without giving her the opportunity to prove her incapability in performing the tasks she is deemed unable to undertake. This gender role-play discrimination is purported to draw its legitimacy from cultural norms which are expected to govern social behaviour. This discriminatory gender role-play practice is changing in the contemporary phase of Kiswahili drama where the woman herself is taking the initiative to get involved in social roles hitherto designated as a male preserve. Although the cultural tenets which have been curtailing women's freedom are still struggling to gain her human liberty. Her efforts are bearing fruit in the sense that the social
structures which have been a hindrance to gender equity are opening up to accommodate
J appreciate her human worth, albeit reluctantly.

24 WahiLi DRAMA IN POST-INDEPENDENCE KENYA

In many African societies, the end of colonialism did not have any immediate positive impact on the ideology of power is a preserve of the male gender. Alongside neo-colonialism, this ideology remained behind to haunt post independent Africa. This is the position expounded by Kiswahili playwrights in the middle phase. They depict a society where women are excluded from the core social organs which have a crucial bearing on the destiny of the community. Men have assigned themselves the ultimate authority to determine what is good for the society and the role of the women is to endorse their resolutions. However, the society mistakenly believes that this uneven gender role stereotyping is a dictation of African cultural set-up. It believes that this kind of gender placement was inherent in the indigenous African societies. The critics have failed to point out that this gender discrimination that women are subjected to was introduced by the colonial administrative structures through the ideology that men are naturally superior to women in all social and human spheres. What should be pointed out is that this ideological distortion of facts which continue to haunt the modern day organization of societal structures in Africa is a foreign import as it did not exist before the advent of colonialism. Prior to this, there were harmonious inter-relations between the divides of gender and social roles were not prejudiced. It is a historical fact that in indigenous African societies, women held positions of authority alongside men. role-plays were complimentary and there existed mutual respect for what each
gender did as it had a distinct value to the overall welfare of the society. The uneven role-play representation as portrayed by the playwrights in the middle phase therefore came about after the indigenous cultural order was infiltrated by foreign values that came along with colonization.

To address this cultural anomaly, Okeyo (1987) suggests that the problematiqueing of gender within Africa has to be generated from within and effective strategies for change have to be conceptualized within a framework in which women fully participate. This is because although political independence in Africa brought with it certain degrees of autonomy in various sectors of the society, it did not redeem the status of women. More specifically, it did not bring about significant changes in the social, sexual, and racial inequalities perpetuated by colonialism mainly because many of the socio-economic structures of colonialism remained intact. The male gender inherited the discriminative social structures which were a hindrance to the emancipation of the female gender and continued to perpetuate them. In Kiswahili drama, this is literary position embodied in the nature of gender role-play relations that are represented by the playwrights in the middle phase where male chauvinism reigns supreme. The men are exercising their attitude of superiority over the female gender with vigour, and continue to guard the status quo with passion. The social conventions defining gender roles, which being determined by patriarchal structures, are so entrenched that the woman is denied the platform to question or challenge them. The middle phase, being the Mediate post-independent era in drama to highlight pertinent social inter-relations from the imperial and the capitalist social structures.
However, the contemporary playwrights are fighting to restore the old cultural order as it existed in the indigenous African societies where roles, power and positions of authority were shared equally between the two gender divides. The society portrayed in the contemporary drama is recognizing the vanity of gender role-play segregation which looks down upon the human attributes of the woman. The modern Kiswahili playwrights have come out forcefully to contest the archaic gender role stereotyping where men are assigned domineering attributes over women. The playwrights are keeping abreast with the dynamics of a changing and modern society and have come up with revolutionized gender representation in which role-plays are not pegged on gender anatomy. The literary statement they are making is that the modern woman is taking bold steps to redeem her image by initiating and performing core social roles alongside man. At the same time, the playwrights are challenging some popular perceptions accorded to the man as regards his decorated attributes. In essence, they are empowering the woman by restoring her virtues as a human being with equal capabilities to that of man. The contemporary drama is demonstrating that it has reached a point where the female gender can no longer tolerate his slate of social discrimination based on sex differentation. The contemporary woman is thus taking bold and deliberate steps to liberate herself and reclaim her place as a human being who has the potential to initiate and perform social tasks on equal footing as her male counterpart.

This chapter has engaged a historical evaluation of gender inter-relations in the Benous African societies. It has been observed that gender as a divisive term did not
exist in the pre-colonial African communities. Social responsibilities were not determined along gender considerations and what existed was a form of specialization where certain segments of the society were known to perform given responsibilities better than others. All social contributions from the gender divides were seen as a joint communal effort to meet important social needs. Commercial ventures were rewarded equally without any gender considerations. This organized social order came to an acrimonious end after the infusion of foreign values into African cultures which led to disorientation of the social structures which held together the harmonious gender inter-relations in the African societies. Foreign values came to change the interpretation of gender, power, and the value of production. This had the effect of re-aligning social responsibilities and power structures along the virtues of strong patriarchal and weak matriarchal institutions. The female gender lost its complimentary participation in the public sphere and her social space was strictly restricted to the domestic front. This is what is represented in the middle phase of Kiswaliili drama.

The subjugation of the female gender was to continue until the forces of social change have come to enlighten and ettpower her to campaign for her rights both as a woman and a human being. Her sustained effort in this campaign has seen her appear undertaking important social responsibilities at competitive levels with the man. This is the literary Secnm, o which is represented in the contemporary phase of Kiswaliili drama where the Paywrigliis are exposing the positive attributes of the woman as well as challenging "eol the hitherto decorated virtues associated with the male gender.

The next chapter, we analyse the impact of socio-cultural forces on characterization the formative and the middle phases of Kiswaliili drama.
CHAPTER THREE

SOCIO-CULTURAL FORCES IN CHARACTERIZATION PATTERNS
IN THE FORMATIVE AND THE MIDDLE PHASES
OF KISWAHILU DRAMA

This chapter looks into how socio-cultural factors have been instrumental in defining and determining gender relations in the formative and the middle phases of Kiswahili drama. This is the period that covers the colonial and the immediate post-colonial periods in Kenya.

The formative phase was the stage in Kiswahili drama in Kenya when the genre was founded. This was a period when Kenya was still under colonial rule but was witnessing heightened agitation for self independence. Due to teething problems which can be associated with a genre at its infancy and also because of the political atmosphere of the Period, the thematic scope of drama then was not expansive and it did not address serious issues of the time. It instead preoccupied itself with less serious social issues such as comedy and cultural dalliance between Western and African societies.

The middle phase is the immediate post-independence period. As it were, the society was highly male-oriented as it had just inherited the patriarchal structures of authority of the departed colonials. Gender relations were therefore skewed in favour of the gender. The female gender had been pushed to the periphery away from the central
organs of the societal organization under the guise of adopted 'culture' and 'tradition'. The gender inter-relations represented in the plays in this phase thus reflect the contest between male supremacy against female subordination.

KISWAHILI IN THE FORMATIVE PHASE

The formative phase of Kiswahili drama per se did not seriously give locus to the pertinent issues of the day. A well cited case is that although this phase coincided with the height of the state of emergency in Kenya, the playwrights did not capture the many atrocities committed by the colonial authorities against the natives under the pretext of crushing the Mau Mau uprising. The playwrights who pioneered in Kiswahili drama had undergone the colonial system of education which instilled the virtue of subservience and loyalty to authority. Hyslop (1957), who played a significant role in the evolvement of the genre, was himself a White missionary-cum-educationist and was naturally inclined more towards the colonial "Cause than that of the Africans. The pioneer African playwrights were thus indoctrinated into adopting Western ideological thought of school 30 had come to identify more with the European philosophical outlook than that of Africans.

The thematic leaning of drama during this time was, to say the least, meant to clash with comedy. The playwrights largely presented general lifestyles conflicting cultures of Europeans and Africans. The influence of the education had made many Africans aspire to achieve the European standards of
living. They were thus depicted as clowns playing Europeans without the necessary means and level of civilization.

In Afadhali Mchawi for example, Issa is so obsessed with the Western habits such as dressing that he engages in anti-social vices to sustain them. He sells drugs. He feels that being trendy and fashionable would distinguish him from the rest of Africans. Not to be left behind, girls have become so materialistic that they only engage in relations for material gains in an effort to afford the Western lifestyles. In Nimelogwa Ni.siwe Na Mpeizi, the youth is desperately trying to adapt to the Western concept of 'love' and 'friendship'. His generation is depicted as lost and spoilt. This is why Hen borrows things like a scarf and a suitcase so as to impress Beatrice. Kmia (1957), in Niikiipciidn Uikini, presents a woman who is so intoxicated with foreign values that she is prepared to go all lengths to achieve them. The society, which is highly capitalistic and materialistic, has made her be of loose morals in the pursuit of good life. She is ready to befriend any man who has the material capability to cater for her needs. In the play, I3en is courting Rodh for marriage. Roda has affectionate feelings for him, but because he lacks the "cans to adequately provide for her! she tells him:

Ndiyo nakupenda, lakini wewe ni inaskini wala lumiwezi kunifanya niishi maisha mazuri ya furaha kwa pesa ulizo nazo.

I love you yes, but you are poor. You cannot make me live a good and happy life with the kind of money you have, (p.51)

A general observation which can be made about the social environment represented of an ignorant generation which has just been introduced to Western mannerisms is eager to make the best out of it. The boys are equally doing whatever
lliey can to live up to the new lifestyle dictates. What is presented can be equated with a normal African society where young boys and girls are after normal relationships but each with his or her own expectations. The only difference is that this is an unenlightened society which has been poisoned by European lifestyles, which they are pursuing crudely.

In a nutshell, the pioneer drama addressed the gender issue with as much comedy as it dwelt with the oilier issues of the day. The works in this phase therefore do not offer ground to support a sustained analysis of gender inter-relations as their representation lacks a refined literary thematic direction.

3.2 GENDER STEREOTYPING IN THE MIDDLE PHASE OF KISWAHILI DRAMA

The next phase of Kiswahili drama progression is referred to as the middle phase. This is the immediate post-colonial period in which gender inter-relations had been left at a confused state by sustained influence of Western values during colonialism. Although the colonial experience of raw domination had both the man and the woman highly denigrated, it had the overall impact of humiliating the African male out of his manhood. Mer independence, he resorted to assert his masculinity on the woman whom he considered easier to manipulate. During the colonial period, gender status had placed the woman at the bottom of the social hierarchy and her continued subordination was therefore not anything new. Having taken over the reigns of power from the colonialists, male-dominated power structures continued to promote gender inequalities and the foal Bender assumed responsibility of the core sectors of the society while consigning gender to 'peripheral' tasks mainly associated with domesticity.
In this phase therefore, the social status of the woman did not enjoy any reprieve. Her social roles continued being belittled and her human capabilities underrated. In this immediate post-independent era, the society depicted is still smarting from the colonial legacy that installed male supremacy and introduced a sub-culture whereby the man controlled all the important organs in the society. The mystical authority of the man had already been entrenched and the social roles of the woman were relegated to the periphery. It is this culture that the playwrights in this phase reflect in their works, in which the male gender is striving to legitimize its superior status in the society by pegging it on the prevailing cultural dictates. Gender role-plays in the middle phase were thus being assigned and performed according to these patriarchal dictates.

It can therefore be argued that the middle phase is a transitional period when the society is trying to re-organize most of its social sectors which are still under a strong spell of foreign ideologies. Gender inter-relations are disoriented after sustained cultural influences from the West which has entrenched into the African society the culture of domination by the strong over the weak and in this case, the male over the female. That is why this literary phase, the male character is presented as the custodian of domestic societal rights. The literary world presented is clearly dominated by patriarchal Pictures of social organization.
LENDER STEREOTYPING IN *UASI*

*Uasi* (Kitsao, 1980) is a play which was written during the middle phase. As stated earlier, the assignment and performance of gender roles in this period is highly influenced by the existing socio-cultural forces of the time. These are especially upheld by the older generation from both divides of gender. The characterization is patterned in such a way that the male gender is the undisputed decision maker and regards its female counterpart as its subordinate in the core processes determining the societal destiny. Kitsao illustrates this by presenting a situation where the male gender is the overall authority on matters relating to domestic and marital issues. The old generation still believes it retains the upper hand in deciding and designing the marriages of their sons and daughters. In the play, one of the main characters is Nyamawi, a wealthy old man who also boasts of three wives. He has also managed to educate his sons to high levels and are now in gainful employment. In the public opinion, there is prosperity in his homestead.

Nyamawi's trials begin after he marries off his daughter, Sidi. His conviction is that the dowry he has received from the transaction should be used to bring another woman to the fold to replace the daughter who has been married. This leads him to summon his sons, who are already married, in an effort to convince them to marry second wives. They decline, citing the high cost of living. It is then that he proposes that he himself may take a power wife. The idea appears to be preconceived because immediately his sons turn of marrying second wives, he asks them if they have any reservations if he himself decided to marry a fourth wife. They have none. He only caution they raise is that he is not party to any responsibility arising out of his venture. This seems to give
...awi the go-ahead he appears to have been looking for. After all, he is a wealthy
and would not need any external assistance.

However, having three wives already seems to be keeping him in a domestic fix. Me
he can not take such an arbitrary decision without at least informing his
Having consulted his children, the next person he has to involve is his first
Mainake Kesi. Although he feels obligated to seek her opinion, he is all aware that
point of view will not matter. He does it as just a matter of formality. I le has already
taken a decision and for her, to be on the safe side, she must be seen to be supporting it.
She is aware that she must at all times massage the ego of her husband if only to re-assure
him that he remains the undisputed patriarch of the homestead. When he calls and breaks
the news of his intention to marry a fourth wife, he does it in such a way that it is as if he
is being forced by circumstances to do so. He cites cultural demands that once a girl
household after having been married, another must be married into the
family using the bride wealth acquired. His lamentation is that he has talked to his oldest
Clicengo, and even his young brother, Kalana, and they have both declined to marry
'woild wives. I lis reasoning is tflal lie himself must fulfill the cultural obligation by
a fourth wife. Listening lo him justify his decision, it is clear that the flimsy
citing are not convincing to justify his action and is just a scapegoat to
fill a long nurtured dream. He for example fears that the cattle given as dowry may die
epidemic!

BabA: Mainake Kesi, Sidi ashaolewa.

Kesi's mother. Sidi has been married.

MAM: Najua.
I know.

BABA: Mahari yatneshalipwa.
Dowry has been paid.

MAMA: Hiyo pia najua.
I am aware of that too.

BABA: Nini 7ilidi kimebaki?
Wlial else is remaining?

MAMA. Najuaje mwanangwa mino?
How can I know poor me?

BABA: Kweli hujui cho chote. Kufuatana lla mila za kikwetu, msichana
akiondoka kwao, yaani akiolewa, mahali pake luiclmkuliwa na
mwingine. Ania sivyo?
Certainly you do not know anything. According to our culture, when
a girl leaves home, that is after she gets married, her place is taken over
by another one. Or isn't it?

MAMA: Ndivyo. "
It is true.

"ABA: Wewe umcshapata mwcnza - msaidizi wako ndio, lakini uonavyo ltala wcwe,
luiyo mke inwenzio pia naye anahitaji msaada. Ameshakuwa intu na shugluili
zake. Ingawaje, huwezi kufanya kazi za nyumbani ati kwa sababu bintiyo
keshaolewa. Lazima mahari ya Sidi yatumiwe kuolea msichana mwingine
atakayefanya kazi ambazo zingefanywa na Sidi. Au nakosea hapo?
You have a co-wife - your assistant yes, but as you can even see, your assistant also needs to be assisted. She has her own responsibilities. At the same time, you can't go back to performing household chores just because your daughter has been married. Sidi's dowry must be used to get another woman to perform the tasks that Sidi is supposed to be doing. Or am I in the wrong?

MAMA: Hukosei.

You are right.

liABA: Mamake Kesi, Chengo, ambaye ndiye mwenye haki ya kuoa kwa mahari ya Sidi nimeshazungumza naye. Nimejaribu kumsihi aoe mkc wa pili, akakataa katakata. Sasa mahari liaya yatafanywaje? Au tuwaache ng'ombe wote wafe bure kwa mwimu?

Kesi's mother, I have talked to Chengo, who rightfully deserves to use Sidi's dowry to marry. I have tried to plead with him to marry a second wife but he has completely refused. Now, what do we do with the dowry? Or do we leave all the cattle to perish from an epidemic?

MAMA: Mimi sina neno lsS utakalolitaka. Ikiwa amekataa kuoa mke wa pili, bila hakosi ana sababu zake.

I have no problem with whatever you wish. If he has refused to marry a second wife, lie must be having his own reasons.

Kwa kuwa Chengo amekataa, mimi basi nilaoa mkc wa line. Au wcwe waonaje juu ya jambo liili?

Because Chengo has refused, then I will myself marry a fourth wife.

*i what do you think about this issue?
IvlAMA: Haa, sina neno. Kwanza mimi pia nilikuwa nafikiria jambo kaina liilo.

I have no objection. I was even thinking along the same lines, (p.4-5)

When their conversation is scrutinized critically, Mama Kesi's inner voice is indeed loud that deep inside her, she is not for the idea that her husband marries a fourth wife, but she must play the obedient wife. But there are pertinent issues which can be raised concerning her purported position of acceptance. Why on earth would she wish that her husband, at his very old age, deserves a fourth wife? And if she had thought about it before, why didn't she talk to him about it? What can be read between the lines is that circumstances force her to follow the tide. It is clear that she is in no position to state her honest opinion in the intimidating atmosphere where societal norms dictate that women must abide by the decisions their husbands make. Going against their decisions will just be an exercise in futility. That his wife has no objection to the idea means his mission is accomplished. He then dismisses her thus:

I3ABA: Ehee, naona umechukuana nami kimawazo...basi ni hayo tu niliyotaka mimi nawe tuzungumze. Juzi nilikuwa na Dadazha, akanicleza nikiwa nahitaji kiboma, niende k^a Chande. Nimeambiwa nitapata msichana huko.

Ehee, I see you concur with me in thinking...then that is all I wanted us to discuss. I was with Dadazha the day before yesterday and he told me if I wanted a homestead I can go to Chande's. I am told 1 will get a girl there.

The closest she comes in questioning her husband's decision is at this point when he Closes the family he intends to marry from. She obviously searches her mind but she eSnot see which girl in the Chande's family can be married by her husband. She asks
MAMA: Msicliana yupi atakayekufaa luiko kwa Chande?

Which girl will suit you in Chande's family?

BABA: Kwani kuna wasichatia wangapi huko?

How many girls are there?

MAMA: Utamweza msicliana aliyesoma huyo?

Will you be able to handle that girl with her level of education?

BABA: Sikiza mamake Kesi, yeye amesomea kizungu, mimi nimesomea dunia.

Listen Kesi’s mother, she has learned English while I have learned the world, (p.5)

While Nyamawi feels that he has enough experience accumulated over many years with the female gender and brags about his prowess in the art of seduction, what gives him more confidence is the fact that he takes pride in his immense wealth, which makes him be convinced that no woman would turn down the offer of being his wife.

It appears that Nyamawi's generation of old men hold a universal view that women are easily obtainable creatines who are always at their beck and call. Dadazha, Nyamawi’s friend and agemate shares the sentiments that no matter their position and women will always be there for marriage at men's convenience. This emerges when they are discussing Nyamawi’s desire to marry Riziki, but Nyamawi expresses his fears that she may resent him because of his old age and the fact that she is also educated.

BABA: (Nyamawi) Lakini ulinieleza pia kuwa msicliana huyo kasoma mpaka-

But you told me that girl is educated up to -

DADAZHA: Kwani kusoma ndiya nini siku hizi?
What does education imply nowadays?

BABA: Atakubali kuolewa na jizec lenyc kunuka uruji kama mimi?
Will she accept to be married by a smelly old man like me?

DADAZUA: Rafiki yangu, wanachotaka wanawake siku liizi ni kuolewa tu.
Hawaijali wataolewa na mtu wa aina gani. Hata awe na mkia. Bora tu awe mwanaume anayeuma.
My friend, all that women desire nowadays is just to get married.
They don't mind what kind of a person who marries them. Even if he has a tail. What they need is just a man who is sexually active, (p.7)

The old generation in this phase is assured that one sure way of winning and keeping a woman is the capability to cater for her basic needs such as being able to feed her to her satisfaction. One reason Dadazha is assuring Nyamawi that Riziki will accept his marriage proposal is the 'plenty' that is to be found in his home, considering the high level of poverty at her home.

He tells him:

Helm nikwambie wazi teisi. Ikijulikana tu kuwa una haja naye liuyo msichana, atatuinwa nyanyake azungumze naye. Nyanyake atamweleza kuwa hapa kwako watu wanakula inpaka wabakishe. Ataingiwa 1la wazimu hasa akisikia kuwa asubuhi akiamka, ni chai na boflo iliypakwa siagi. (p.8)

Let me tell you the naked truth. The moment it is known that you are interested

"at girl, her grandmother will be sent to talk to her. She will explain to her how People in your homestead eat until there are left-overs. She will particularly get excited when she will be informed that when she wakes up in the morning, tea
and a loaf of bread with margarine will be at her disposal.

This kind of reasoning and explaining the all-important needs for a woman is very jarring to her human worth and dignity. It reduces her status to that of a small child whose only care in life is food and petty comfort. It is as if the woman has no other important considerations to make as regards her self-advancement in life.

The social structures defining gender relations in the middle phase have inculcated in these women the blind loyalty to support men in their venture to degrade the feminine institution. Mamake Kesi’s endorsement is as hollow as it is artificial. Similarly, Ri/.iki’s mother is not nudging her daughter to accept the proposal out of the conviction that it would be in the best of her interests. They are all aware that the proposal is not tenable. What lacks in the two women is the liberation of their conscience to voice out their convictions. Given the necessary platform and space, they would undoubtedly oppose the marriage. This is the forum that the society denies them. At the same time, Kitsao demonstrates how the old men have joined forces to further their interests without due regard to the consequences they bear on other people and especially the female gender.

Nyamawi, Chande and Dada/Jfti are in the conspiracy to ensure that Riziki is married by Nyamawi despite the fact that the decision is clearly in favour with Nyamawi’s wife, s mother and Riziki herself, for the old men, the sentiments of the women do not ^ as long as their own interests are catered for.

The female characters in this phase are supportive of the purportedly cultural norms ‘esociety and particularly their male gender prescribe for them mostly because they ^ebeen socialized to abide by them. At the same time, the society’s restrictive nature does not accord them social platform to question and challenge them. Their role in
decision making organs is very limited. As Omboga (1986) observes, they are just expected to be seen, not heard. In normal circumstances, it would be expected that the entire womenfolk would rise against Nyamawi and his bunch of like-minded old folk in their effort to enforce retrogressive cultural practices. It is clear that Nyamawi is an old man long past his prime and does not deserve the luxury of marrying a fourth wife. He is not even moved that his younger sons decline the offer of marrying second wives. There is also a twist of irony that his choice of a bride is Riziki, a young and educated girl. The only person who seems to share in his dream is his friend and age mate, Dadazha, who also offers him extra tips on how to go about the courting assignment.

That men hold women in low esteem is exemplified by the fact that Nyamawi has not even talked to Riziki to express his intention to marry her. Instead, he seeks the consent of her father, Chande, to approve of his intention to marry his young daughter. Being in the same school of thought, Nyamawi is convinced that once Chande assents to the marriage plans, it would be as better as done. The expectations are that Riziki would be bound by customary norms to go by what her father decides. On his part, Chande agrees to the proposal on the basis that Nyamawi is a wealthy man who would have no problems paying the dowry.

When Chande seeks to enlist the services of his wife to convince their daughter to go along with the agreement, she is at first wary about the age of Nyamawi, the suitor, helpless, she however endorses the idea and plays a pivotal role in trying to convince their daughter to accept the proposal. A casual analysis of the unfolding scene of the events can attest to the fact that Riziki's mother is not for the idea that her daughter be eloped by the old man. However, it appears that she is aware that it is a cultural taboo to
go against the wishes of her husband and it would be safe for her to play along. This further demonstrates the extent to which traditional norms are so much averred in the society such that they curtail the freedom of the female gender, leaving her with no avenues to challenge them. Riziki's mother has no option but to encourage her daughter to accept her father's proposal. She consoles her thus:

Hata ni lieri wewe pengine wamjua machoni huyo anayetaka kukuoa. Mimi na huyu babako hatukujuana majina au hata kusikiana habari kabla ya mimi kuletwa kwake na babangu na tumeishi kwa masikilizano mpaka leo. (p. 19)

You are even lucky you know who intends to marry you by looks.

Your father and I had not known one another or even heard of each other before I was brought to him by my father and we have lived in harmony ever since.

What the society in this phase fails to put into consideration is the fact that social life is vibrant and prone to change. Riziki is living in different times and lifestyles have changed from what they used to be in her mother's time. There are physical, emotional as well as other life prospects that have come up. At the same time, that Riziki is educated means that her perception in life is more enlightened than that of the old generation which seems to be ignorant of the changing nature of lifestyles.

» should also be noted that the low esteem in which the society holds the woman be clearly discerned in the relations in the dialogue between man and man and man to B“18. When Nyamawi calls his (wo sons in his attempt to convince them to marry id wives, (heir consultation is one of mutual respect. I le is requesting them to marry,
not ordering them to. Furthermore, although it is a project he has been thinking of for some time, he has not decided with finality that they must marry. He talks to them as his equals and listens to their views with patience. When they finally decline the proposal, he does not reprimand them nor does he get angry with them. This sober consultation does not apply when, for example, Nyamawi is talking to his wife, Mamake Kesi. When he calls her to announce his intention, he expects her to literally come running. Again, it is not that he is calling to seek her views as regards his intentions but as a matter of fact, he is just announcing what he has already decided on. This is because he does not expect her to either question or object to a decision he has already made up his mind on. And true to his expectation, she goes along and supports his proposal.

Nyamawi’s relation to his wife is that of a man who does not entertain petty talk. When he is talking to his sons, his character turns to be of a man who can be equally patient as well as considerate. He is also even seen humorous when he talks to his age mate, Dazadha, when he excitedly narrates to him how he was so warmly received by Riziki although most of it is exaggerated. When he is talking to his fellow men, he is a different Nyamawi from the nonsense man when talking to his wife.

The same low regard in which men hold women is again embodied in Chande, the father of Riziki, the girl Nyamawi is eyeing to marry. When Chande confronts both his wife and daughter about the proposal, he broaches the issue in a manner to suggest that what he decides on should not be subjected to debate. As the head of the household, his order should always prevail. That is why it appears as a matter of formality when he demanded his daughter to inform her of the news that he has identified a suitable suitor for her. He does not have the time to reveal all the details and instead tasks his wife, whom
he had intimidated and psyched up earlier, to do it. When Riziki asks both his father and mother the details about his husband to be, his father dismisses it as non-issue and assures her that it is somebody who is wealthy enough to pay the bride price. After Riziki finally jigs out the identity of the bridegroom, she is visibly wary about his age and expresses so. It is amid physical threats from the father that her mother intervenes and reminds her of her earlier advice that she should always listen to whatever her father says. She finally 'agrees'.

What can be deciphered from the proceedings is that Chande places both his wife and daughter at the same pedestal simply because they are female. Me admonishes them the same way but for different reasons. He is mad with his wife because he feels she has failed in her customary role as mother to inculcate in their daughter the sanctity of the social obligation that she must always obey what he says. At the same time, he is infuriated that her daughter can have the audacity to question or contest his decisions. That lie has no respect for them is exemplified by the fact that besides talking to them in the most denigrating manner, what he sees in her daughter is her worth in bride wealth, 'o him, it does not matter what kind of life her daughter will face after her marriage. Alter all, marriage is marriage especially when the household one is getting married to can cater for the basic needs of the new wife.

Kitsao represents a society in which gender identities are being defined across the sexes, in this case, the socialization process keeps clear social boundaries between fathers and sons on one side and mothers and daughters on the other. It is the situation Aidoo (1970) explains when she says:

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For a daughter, sexual difference and the difference that underlies the functioning of the symbolic order are not the same in the way they are for a son. The daughter discovers that she is the same as her mother and different from her father, (p. 162)

However, what the writer brings forth at the end of the play is that these archaic cultural values are being threatened by social forces of modernity. The simmering generational tensions explode when Riziki publicly defies them. She categorically states that she cannot be married to an old man and declares her choice of husband as John, a young man of her age. Although Riziki's father has been fiercely opposed to their marriage on the basis that John's parents are not wealthy enough to raise the expected dowry, he finds himself unable to control the unexpected turn of events. The import of this development is to underline the fact that literature, just like the society, is dynamic and it keeps on changing alongside the societal and generational pace. Riziki belongs to the young generation which does not share in the old school of thought that the old generation of their parents "Celong. Her generation is that of Nyamawi's own sons, Chengo and Katana, who are serious young people with no time for trivialities. This is why they turn down the offer to take on second wives citing modern trends such as the spiraling cost of living.

The wind of change shaking the archaic cultural institutions becomes more evident after Riziki declares openly that her choice of her husband would be John, and her grandfather who is in charge of the ceremony tries to convince her otherwise. However, success, he is left with no option but to wed the young couple. Although Chande,
Liizi ki's father is still adamant that her daughter should be married by the wealthy old Nyamawi. Mzee tells him that they have to go along with Riziki's wish. The old men are opposed to be the custodians of the old social order which they have known to defend with passion. That it has come to a point when they can loosen their grip on it and let go is a telling testimony that social forces of modernity are unstoppable.

In the middle phase, besides women being underrated in their capabilities and hence their exclusion from the core functions of the society, they have also been branded as evil minded and betayers of the noble causes of the society and humanity. Kilsao has presented several instances where the evil side of the woman is revealed. In Tazama Mbele (1980), David and Rose have been married for a long time but have been unable to get a child. This leaves David a very worried man. He has sought medical intervention to no avail. However, the doctors assure him that he is capable of siring a child. On the other hand, his wife is unwilling to undergo a fertility test. It turns out that she is well aware that she is unable to get a child because when she was still in school, she got pregnant and aborted against doctor's advice that she would not be able to conceive in future. David ends up marrying Flora as a second wife. As it were, Flora is just too willing to be married because she is already pregnant and is all very ready to take up her place as a second wife as a safety exit to conceal the real father of the child she is pregnant with.

When Rose got pregnant, her aunt was among the first people to know. She was also aware that David was pursuing her for an intimate and long-term relationship. In the act, she does not develop an outside eye for any other woman. That is how Rose
convinced David all along that she was a virgin who had vowed to preserve her virginity until the wedding day. And despite many temptations and attempts, David persevered. He got the shock of his life when he later learned that Rose had aborted while still in school and that was why she could not even conceive. This is the time it dawned on him that he had to get a second wife, Flora.

Both Rose and Flora are an embarrassment to the moral standing of the female fraternity. These are young girls who are still in school, yet they can afford to engage in love affairs to the extent that they get pregnant. On her part, Rose sees abortion as the only way out of her predicament. Flora accepts to be married as a second wife after she discovers that she is pregnant. In both cases, David is unfortunate to be the victim of circumstances. He first marries Rose who cannot conceive because of the abortion she procured, and then marries Flora who is in a rush to hide her teenage pregnancy.

Kitsao also presents the case of Atnina in Malimwengu Ulumwenguni (1983). Amina has been married to Sogora for a long time. Her husband gets an opportunity to go for further studies abroad. They make a pact that they will be faithful to each other during the time they will be away from one another. However, it later turns out that Amina is not able to keep her part of the promise. Consequently, she becomes pregnant. This puts her such a fix that she sees abortion the only way to save her marriage as she is worried about the circumstances she would find herself in if her husband came back and found "er with a child borne out of wedlock. Upon seeking the advice of her doctor, she is told hat such a move is not viable as her life would be at risk since the pregnancy is already an advanced stage. At the end, it is Ruzuna, her friend, who advises her to move to her town where she is not known, give birth, and throw the child away. As fate
would have it, she gives birth to twins and throws them away and goes back home an innocent wife!

In the meantime, this seems to solve her immediate problem as her husband eventually comes back to find her without any circumstantial blemish. However, she still awaits to atone for her sins. It happens that when she threw away the twins, a kind hearted man in the name of Msondongoma happened to be passing by and rescued them. Msondongoma and his wife had not been blessed with children in their marriage. They took care of the twins as if they were their own until they were adults. The children had all along believed that their guardians were their real parents until their neighbours told them the truth. They then began searching for their identity and requested to be shown to their real parents. Msondongoma obliged and took them home. Needless to say that the home-coming was chaotic. While Amina was thoroughly embarrassed, Mpole was deeply devastated.

The female characters that Kitsao presents in his work can be categorized into two social divides. First, there are those who are so overwhelmed by cultural norms which uphold male supremacy that they are shut out of the public arena. Secondly, there are those who attract public attention but for all the wrong reasons. They are evil, malicious and inhuman. They do not seem to take life seriously just because they are chasing after the simple pleasures of life. They appear so shortsighted that they do not even consider the implications of their actions on their very own lives and that of their families. Getting involved in sexual relations while still in school, aborting, gelling children out of wedlock and throwing them away, are actions which can be associated with human
The woman character Kitsao presents is that of a human being who does not offer meaningful or positive contribution in the society. One face of her character is that of a denigrated human being whose liberty of speech and deed is gagged by social conventions. Her other image is that of an evil and inhuman being who is a disgrace not only to her womenfolk but also to the entire human race.

3.2.2. GENDER STEREOTYPING IN **MKE MWENZA**

Chacha (1982), just like Kitsao (1982), also offers a detailed account of how the female character in the middle phase of Kiswahili drama thematic progression is denigrated. The male dominated society appears to attach special value to the male gender over the female. Chacha cites traditional values as the main excuse men cite in seeking to justify their egocentric interests.

In _Mke Mwenza_, Chahe and his wife, Boke are a successful family. They are blessed with four daughters. However, Chahe is ill at ease as he does not have a son to inherit his property upon his demise, as the tradition demands. This disturbs and stirs the male ego in him to take a second wife in the hope that she may give him the son he desperately desires. He has already identified, Robi, a young lady, as his would be second "at this point that he seeks the opinion of his wife as regards her position to be a ""wife. The irony is that the arrangements for his second marriage are so advanced, if not complete, as he has already paid dowry to Robi’s parents as required by the custom, makes it clear that seeking her opinion is just a matter of courtesy, not necessity. **justification of his intended action on the traditional beliefs that a household
should have a male heir to carry on the family tradition and name. When his wife dismisses the traditions as primitive, he vigorously defends them saying:

Utamaduni wetu, hauwezi kainwe kuwa wa kipumbavu. Nimejaribu kukupa haki yako na katna hutaki kuafikiana nami nitatumia madaraka yangu nikiwa mkuu wa nyumba hii...Si kwa sababu hiyo tu, ati umeshindwa kuuizalia mvulana, bali kama ujuavyo kura ni mwaka ujao. (p.8)

Our culture cannot be primitive. I have done my best to accord you your rights and if you don't agree with me, I will invoke my powers as the head of this family...Again, it is not just for the simple reason that you are unable to give me a son, but as you can remember, elections are next year.

Chahe evidently values sons more than daughters otherwise he would be satisfied with the four daughters they already have. This is one of the reasons he has taken the decision to marry a second wife after Boke has been unable to get a son who would merit his vast wealth. It also happens that Chahe's first wife is not from his tribe. This is an act which did not go down well with his kinsmen. Robi, the woman he is keen on as a second wife, is from his tribe. The tribe is very populous. Since Chahe is contemplating to run for an elective office, he reasons that by marrying from his tribe, lie would win back their favour and they would in turn back him in the polls. So marrying is not only for the purpose of getting a son but also as a calculated step to appease kinsmen so that they can vote for him in the impending elections.
It is obvious that Cliahe does not value the human worthy of these two women, one who happens to be his wife of many years, and the other one he plans to marry. First, he has an issue with Boke for not giving him a son. Secondly, he is bent on taking in Robi as his second wife is that he is aspiring to stand for an elective seat and Robi, being from his own tribe, would increase his leverage and popularity and in the process, assist him get more votes. Chahe is thus using the two women as tools for his own convenience.

One of the theses of this study is that the womenfolk have failed to take a common stand against the socio-cultural institutions which contribute to their marginalization. Instead, they have passively contributed to cement the pillars that continue to portray them as less humanly endowed. While it is clear that Chahe is misusing Robi and Boke for different but selfish intentions, the two women are unable to adopt a common stance to counter his move. Instead, they are fighting each other to win his confidence and own him. Robi has no reservations being a second wife despite the huge age difference between her and the would-to-be husband. On the other hand, despite her objection to the planned marriage, Boke is unable to gather enough courage and opt for an independent life away from Chahe. This implies that the two women have unconsciously consented to be misused by Chahe. The artistic portrayal here is that one of the impediments to the campaign for gender equity is that women have failed to identify the man as their common enemy as they launch their assault on patriarchy. They also contribute to their subordinate position by being gullible and short-sighted. One can easily imagine that 'he has assented to be Chahe's second wife, not for the love she may have for him, but for wealth and social status he enjoys. Her action is therefore tantamount to
Boke is at the receiving end because she is forced to accept the reality of being a co-wife without her consent. This implies that she is a voiceless partner in her marriage with Chahe and her main undoing is her inability to get a son, despite the fact that she has four daughters. On learning that Chahe is set on marrying a second wife, she is helpless as she is well aware that she cannot leave him and chart her own life outside his shadow and the luxury of their shared home. Stratton (1994) provides an astute analysis of the motives, as well as the fate of women who decide to remain with their husbands in such circumstances:

The reason they do not leave is cowardice, fear of assuming responsibility for themselves. They are kept prisoners by the habit of not thinking for themselves, not taking any decisions, not seeing with their own eyes, of letting others take over... They don't know the meaning of liberty, (p. 161)

Boke's plight should elicit public sympathy considering the way she is undergoing domestic ostracization for a "mistake" she has no control of. However, this evaporates the moment her evil side is exposed. She is accusing her husband of trying to ruin their family by bringing in a third party to their lives. Although her accusations are valid, Chahe may escape condemnation due to the fact that the prevailing traditional circumstances of the time do not prohibit polygamy. At the same time, he is not doing it secret as he has already stated to the first wife his intentions to marry a second wife. He has even brought her home to introduce her to the first wife but Boke turns hostile and finds that he takes her away. However, next turn of events lead to the exposure of 'He's inner Personality. It turns out that Boke has a young secret lover whose lifestyle
...je even finances from the family resources. Immediately Chahe walks out with Robi, 
Joke calls this young man over and fetes him in that very same house without any care in 
the world.

**BOKE:** *(Anainua chombo cha simu. Anapiga na kuzungumza kwa sauti legevu).*

Bwana Sigawa...Huku siyo kwema...yale niambo yamezidi...
leo nimemkuta hutnu nyutnbani akiwa na msicliana...wewe njoo
liapa utapata zaidi...Njoo tu usiogope, hawezi kurudi
mapema leo...Nakusubiri kwa hamu...njoo upesi bwana naungua...(p. 16)

*(She lifts up the phone. She dials and speaks in a weak voice.)*

Mr. Sigawa...Things here are not alright...Those issues have brimmed up..
Today I found him in the house with a young lady...just come you will
get more...Do not fear, he can't come back early today...
I am anxiously waiting for you...come quickly I am burning up...

**BOKE:** *(Ilaada ya kusikia mlango ukigongwa, anasimama haraka na kwenda
kuufungua, huht akiwaambia watoto):* Nendeni nje nikacheze na
wenzenu. Tokeni wote na dada zenu. *(Anafungua mlango watolo
wanatoka na Sigawa, kijana wa miaka ishirini na tano hivi anaingia.
Amejikwatua kweli. Wanasalimiana kwa kukumbatiana).*

Oooli kipenzi, nilijua ungekuja...karibu uketi. Nitakufanyia kinywaji.
Unatumia waragi au konyagil

*(After hearing a knock on the door, she stands up quickly and goes to open
it, as she tells the children):* Go out and play with your friends. Get out all
you with your sisters. (She opens the door and the children go out as
Sigawa, a young man of about twenty five years gets in.
He is immaculately dressed. They greet by embracing). Oooli my dear,
I knew you would come...Have a seat. I will make you a drink.

Would you prefer waragi or konyagf (p. 19)

For a person who feigns such high morals in marriage to the extent that she can not
stand her husband with another lady, Boke is a pretender of the highest order. Inviting her
young lover to their matrimonial home just moments after her husband leaves confirms it
all. She has even no respect for her young daughters whom she entices out of the house to
create room for the lover. It is this young lover who eventually assists in poisoning her
husband so that they can enjoy his wealth without any further hindrance. However, the
mystical powers associated with the male gender appear once again. Her husband's spirit
makes her have no peace of mind. It haunts her to the extent that she publicly confesses
her evil deed for which she pays through death by mob justice.

That the spirit of a dead man can still haunt a living being to confess to such a crime
is a testimony of how the plifywi rights in this era are out to extol the invincible position of
the male gender. The narration is a ploy which is intended to give credence to the belief
that the supremacy of the male is so overbearing that it can even overcome death.

Hoke's story also adds to the negative image of the perception of the woman in the
here is no doubt that she has been unfaithful long before she learned that her
and wanted to take a second wife. For a woman married for so many years and with
Bhters to crown the marriage to behave in such a manner is socially despicable.
8h it is a fact that women characters suffered a lot under polygamous marriages,
they were nevertheless expected to be faithful to their spouses and maintain acceptable **degree** of self-respect. That she had the audacity to even sustain a long-term extra marital affair with a young lover reflects negatively on her morals and those of the other women she is meant to represent in the society. Lastly, she plots and assists in the murder of her husband. In most societies, such an action is perceived as the epitome of human cruelty. Her reason for this evil scheme is motivated by her short-sighted desire to have all the wealth and time in the world with her young lover. She does not even reason that the man she wants out of the way is the father and benefactor of her daughters. This adds on to the social stigma which had taken root in many societies that the woman is malicious and evil minded and her mental capacity is questionable.

At the same time, Boke's young lover betrays the 'rational nature' which has been associated with the male domain for a long time. He is obviously in this relationship with Boke, a woman senior to him in age, for the material benefits he is getting out of it, not for genuine affection for her. This makes him lose all his senses of reason and agree to play along in the murder of Chahe. This is a clear literary testimony that human attributes are unstable and unpredictable and are not permanent features identifiable with any particular gender divide. Both divides of gender are capable of exhibiting negative and positive, or strong and weak attributes.
COMPARATIVE OVER-VIEW OF GENDER ROLE-PLAY

It is not only in Kiswahili drama that the immediate post-colonial literature extols male virtues over those of the female. Many literary artists in this period began portraying gender roles and identity against the backdrop of the cultural confusion generated by the fusion of African and Western values. Repressive policies against women were further reinforced by the fact that the mainstream critiques of the post-colonial state either deliberately or otherwise ignored to highlight the dynamics of gender oppression.

Chinua Achebe remains one of the most celebrated writers in Africa. In the literary circles, he is regarded as the father of African literature. That notwithstanding, Palmer (1979) asserts that his pioneer works regard women in low esteem. In Things Fall Apart (1958), for example, Okonkwo, the main character, embodies male virility against the more obscure women characters in the narration. His authoritative attributes are highlighted right from the onset. He is introduced as a man who was clearly cut for great things. He is relatively young but has already won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nne villages of Umuofia. He is a wealthy farmer and has just married his third wife. To cap it all, he has taken two titles and has shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars.

Okonkwo is an embodiment of a 'true' African male psychology who should not possess feminine weaknesses' even in the most trying of moments. This is highlighted as he participates in the brutal killing of Ikemefuna, his adopted son. He thereafter
darts having nightmares. This makes him admonish himself with the very worst of words he can think of:

When did you become a shivering old woman? (Okonkwo asks himself)

You are known in all the nine villages for your valour in war. How can a man who has killed five men in battle fall to pieces just because he has added a boy to their number? Okonkwo, you have become a woman indeed (P.59)

It is to be understood that it is fear of femininity that impels Okonkwo to participate in the killing in the first place. His meditation also reflects the social values attached to male and female gender divide. It appears that all the attributes of weaknesses should oidy be displayed by women and any man who habours them is not worthy the name.

The society Achebe presents is so patriarchal that Okonkwo's wives, as others in the narration, are named in numbers, and rarely by names. The women are also systematically excluded from the public domain such as the membership of the governing council, the Indichie, or the powerful Egwugwu. The only woman character given Prominence is Chielo, the high priestess simply because she has mystical powers, overer, a lot of negative traits are still attached to her. First, in most African cultures, sc powers are often associated with witchcraft and evil spirits. As the high priestess, a makes demands which are cruel and irrational, such as ordering that a sickly child be lab

When on a long journey in the middle of the night to her shrine. The character Bributed to Chielo are intended to demonstrate that in the African culture, women
are incapable of exercising power responsibly. As such, when they acquire power, they become despotic. Power, therefore, should not be entrusted onto them.

It appears that, just like in Kiswahili drama, the passage of time and the resultant phenomenal changes taking place in the society, including gender relations, has forced English literature artists to change their perceptions on vital societal changes and accommodate them in their later works. While Achebe did not accord the woman much privilege and status in his pioneer works, he recognizes the visible roles she is playing in his later works. In *Things Fall Apart*, his first novel, (1958), women are non-entities whose presence is shadowy. They are depicted as voiceless creatures which are rarely seen nor recognized in the society. This, perhaps can be interpreted from the historical perspective that (his work is written during a political atmosphere when the society is dominated by a clique of male elite whose grip on power is tenacious and brutal. The social and political arena is controlled by men and women are relegated to the sidelines.

However, in his later novels and notably *Anthills of the Savannah* (1897), women are accorded much more visible social status. In the novel, Beatrice, the heroine, embodies both traditional and modern charisma. She is educated in the West. Back in her society, she is transformed in the course of events into a priestess of Idemili. The role of office is not only to empower women but also to moderate male power.

Judging from the earlier position Achebe took on gender issues, it appears that lie is altering the way he represents the female gender image. By so doing, Achebe seems to be everting back to the indigenous African scenario where women traditionally held of power. The social responsibilities then were shared equitably between men depending on individual capabilities. That he is presenting Beatrice as a
modern lady who can be entrusted with a public leadership role is a positive pointer that he recognizes that the positive human attributes in the contemporary woman are being restored and the society is recognizing them. In the story, Achebe also seeks rapprochement with the African history tradition by elevating Beatrice to be a woman writer and narrator of part of the story, taking on the task of 'bringing together as many broken pieces of this tragic history' as she can.

In an interview he gave shortly after the publication of *Anthills of the Savannah*, he talked about the issue of women's liberation. His heroine, Beatrice, he offered, provided a model of womanhood in the role she performs as the harbinger of a new social order. He said:

> We have created all kinds of myths to support the suppression of the woman, and what the group around Beatrice is saying is that time has now come to put an end to that....The position of Beatrice as a sensitive leader of that group is indicative of what I see as necessary in the transition to the kind of society which I think we should be aiming to create.

(Rutherford 4)

In the Kenyan scene, the pioneer artists in English literature did not also accord women characters as much a positive image as men, until much later. For example, Wa iniongo, one of Kenya's respected writers, identified women with simple peasant lives outside loose morals. In the *Petals of Blood* (1977), for instance, there is an example of Wa > a school girl during the time of Mau Man. She is seduced by one of her father's ends.

- a entrepreneur and a supporter of the British side in the struggle. She gets drops out of school. When she gives birth, she dumps the baby in the toilet.
Nditi leaves for the city where she becomes a barmaid-cum-prostitute. She eventually goes home when the city life has taken away the better part of her life and joins her grandmother in tilling the land.

Wanja's life story is an embarrassment to her fellow womenfolk. It is very irresponsible of her to get pregnant while still in school and more so, by an old man who is also a sympathizer of the colonialists. She then goes ahead and throws away the child she gives birth to. Her later life in prostitution and withdrawing back to the village when she can no longer cope up with city life is a literary parable of how the prospects of the woman in this period are dim.

However, Wa Thiong'o, like Achebe, changes his perception of his female character in his later works. In *The Devil on the Cross* (1982), Wariinga and Wanja of *Clals of Blood* make a perfect pair for comparison, although they live in different times. They both come from the same village, Ilmorogo. In their youth, they are both impregnated by wealthy old men who disown them thereafter and both head to Nairobi where they are tempted to join prostitution. Their similarities end there. Wanja gets into it fully while Wariinga, after noticing the oppressive nature of men and (her desire to control and misuse, decides to change her lifestyle. After undergoing several trying "foments in her life, it comes a time when she finally discovers her identity and place in society. From then on, her life changes drastically and she takes the role of an evolutionary women's rights' advocate. She is also out to prove to the world that a woman is equally capable to undertake the social responsibilities associated with men. As she says, "Past misdeeds, she defends her actions by appealing to the conventional notions of a woman. I am weak. There was nothing I could do." (p. 191). However,
jjis marks a turning point in her life and she thereafter undergoes a transformation for the
\textsuperscript{\texttt{^tter}}. She declares:

\begin{quote}
Today's Wariinga has decided that she'll never again allow herself
be a mere flower, whose purpose is to decorate the doors and
windows and tables of other people's lives, waiting to be thrown
on to a rubbish heap the moment the splendour of her body
withers. The Wariinga of today has decided to plunge into the
middle of the arena of life's struggles in order to discover her real
strength and to realize her true humanity, (p.216)
\end{quote}

The difference between Wanja and Wariinga is that Wanja is shortsighted and just Hows
away with the tide of life until the current casts her ashore at a time when she can no
longer pick up her pieces of life together and reconstruct them. On the other hand,
Wariinga can exercise control over her life and can make affirmative decisions as regards
how much she can make out of her life.

Wa Thiong'o (2004) was later to explain his change of attitude in presenting inspired
women characters by stating:

\begin{quote}
Because women are the most exploited and oppressed section of the entire working
class, I would like to create a picture of a strong determined woman with a will to
resist and struggle against the conditions of her present being.

In the light of this later change of gender perception that Wa Thiong'o creates a
woman who is courageous, resourceful and intelligent. Wariinga is later presented as a
mechanical engineer, revolutionary leader, top civil servant, writer and a fervent feminist.
In the Kenyan literary scene, another writer who has contributed a lot to the gender
jejndte is Ogot, one of Kenya's pioneer women artists. And like Alicebe and Wa
Tilong'o, she did not make a strong literary statement in favour of women in her
formative stages of writing. In *Land without Land* (1968), the image she portrays of her
female character is that of a gullible peasant woman whose measure of success is
weighed against how best she performs her matrimonial and household chores. She gives
a good example of an ideal wife as Nyapol, Ochola's wife. Her attributes are thus explained:

Nyapol was a good wife! Many people had remarked how strong she was in the
fields and how well she cultivated the land. Her hands were light during weeding
time. She had also proven herself fertile by giving birth to a son. If only she was
able to brew beer, then her qualities as an ideal wife would be complete, (p.64)

In this narration, the roles of the woman are confined around the homestead and her
worth is judged through the way she executes them. Secondly, the society has a special
place for men as Nyapol is being praised for having given birth to a boy. We are not even
taingtold how many girls sh£has. This is obviously a very patriarchal society. I lor only
blemish is that she doesn't know how to brew beer, which, it can be assumed, is for the
exclusive consumption of men.

However, Ogot was later to change her perception about women and even extol their
\textit{S\textsubscript{h}Ve} \textit{tributes against the weak virtues of men. Her story, 'The Old Witch', is set in a
hospital where both women and men trainees are undergoing a nursing internship
\textit{t\textsubscript{r}\textsubscript{p}}

supervision of Matron Jack, 'The old witch', so nicknamed because of her high
\textit{I\textsubscript{ness}} Although the male nurses and other African members of the hospital staff
privately incensed with the matron for 'treating them like little chidren' and excluding
\( \text{m} \) from the administrative participation, they opt to remain silent about their
gvances and are seen to identify with the hospital authorities in the dispute. Much to
the matron's consternation, she finds that the female trainees do not conform to the much
hyped theory she had been made to believe about African women being subservient to
\( \text{a} \) lliority. Instead, they turn out to be the ones proving to be 'ungovernable'. This
shocking realization leads her to lament:

She wished the African womenfolk were as obedient as their men. She had been
told time and again that African men were little Ceasers who treated their women
like slaves. But why was it that she found the men more co-operative? It was these
headstrong women she found impossible to work with. (p.38)
The 'old witch' is lamenting because she would have expected men to be more vocal
about her dictatorial tendencies than women would. She is thus astonished that it is
instead women who are revolting against her oppressive administrative policies. Here is a
case of reversed roles. Whereas Ogot previously presented women as docile and innocent
housewives, she is now empowering them to stand up for their rights when their male
uninterparts accept to be humiliated and mistreated. Ogot's primary concern now turns to
\( \text{c} \) liibatiiig sexual stereotypes and promoting the acknowledgement of gender dynamism
\( \text{n} \) social and literary circles. This she does by discrediting the male subject as a strategy
\( \text{in} \) er assault on the sexual allegory, a strategy that compliments the tactic of privileging
finale subject. The main ideological function of Ogot's fiction here is to undermine
\( \text{archal perception by means of a reversal of the initial terms of the sexual allegory as}
\( \text{b} \) bersive manoeuvre against patriarchal manicheism. It exposes the sexist bias of the
ial literary tradition and creates space for the female subject. Ogot counters the popular representation of women as passive as well as providing a critique of the socially Lsed patriarchy.

In conclusion, what can be deciphered from the progressive trend of gender imaging is that the artists were simply reflecting the societal position of gender role-plays of the tune. For example, *Petals of Blood* (1977) was written against a backdrop where socio-cultural structures were highly patriarchal and the woman had little social space to chart her own destiny. This explains why when Wanja slid and fell, she could not gather enough energy to reconstruct her future life for the better. She just resigned to her fate. On the other hand, the *Devil on the Cross* (1982), which was written later when the society was opening up to the dynamics of social changes, presents a woman who has recognized how oppressive the society has been to her gender as woman. She has then realized that the only way out of this gender enslavement is being assertive enough to fight for her human rights and dignity.

In essence, Achebe's, Wa Thiong'o's and Ogot's later works exhibit a literary desire to correct or to revise their earlierUegative images of women to more positive ones. They transform the status of gender from that of a covert category to that of a recognized important item on the agenda of serious literature.
So far, we have analysed how gender relations in the formative and middle phases of Kiswahili drama were defined and determined within the confines of conservative social norms. The formative phase was during the colonial era. This is the time the first indigenous Kenyans were starting to develop the drama as a genre. It was like an experimental phase because the playwrights dwelt more on comedy and did not address the pertinent issues of the day such as liberation struggle initiated by the Africans who were agitating for self-rule. The artists also did not engage in in-depth interrogation of gender inter-relations. The social aspects they largely highlighted were the social conflicts between African and European lifestyles, and contrast between rural and urban settings.

The middle phase can best be described as the transitional period between the after-effects of colonialism and the self-determination of a developing society trying to assert its political and social identity. We have observed that gender inter-relations in this phase are still affected by foreign values which seem to favour masculine attributes while demeaning feminine virtues. The vulnerable position of the female gender is further complicated by the fact that the patriarchal structures are being given illegitimate support by cultural norms which have been conveniently placed to favour male hegemony.

We have also undertaken a comparative study on gender inter-relations in English literature. What has come out of this effort is that just like in Kiswahili drama, the African artists did not accord much literary space and recognition to the female character. What was mostly highlighted of her is her docility as a simple peasant and
dedicated housewife. The other image of her is the shortsighted woman who engages in thoughtless love relations at her youth, gives birth, dumps the child and heads to the city where she ends up perfecting the art of prostitution. She later goes back to the village when the city life has taken away the glow of her youth. However, these artists were to later change their perception of the woman by portraying her as assertive enough to competitively feature in social spheres hitherto perceived as male domains.

In the next chapter, we look into how literary and social dynamism explain gender role-plays in the contemporary Kiswaliili drama.
CHAPTER FOUR

40 DYNAMISM IN OKNDKR ROLE-PLAYS IN THE TEMPORARY I'EMPORARY

III ASK OF KISWAHILI DRAMA

IIIILBQDUCLION

Allhougli there has been a lot of research on gender issues undertaken in the past, there is still a knowledge gap in several areas such as the changing dynamics of gender role-plays in a contemporary society. One of the hindrances in the way of an informed position on gender and related issues is the fact that many literary critiques remain conservative in the way they analyse and synthesize gender role-plays in a modern society. On their part, the contemporary Kiswahili playwrights are representing gender role plays in a much more positive and unbiased manner reflective of a dynamic society. They are not only highlighting the hitherto sidled positive and strong attributes of the woman character, but are also*?lighted light on the previously unexplored question on the negative and weak side of the male character. This new development comes against the backdrop of the fact that the previous representation of gender roles tend to Phasize the position of the woman as the weaker of the sexes who is always the victim of the man's oppressive practices. On the other hand, the man is accorded the decorated snc as the prime mover, enterprising and authoritative. As such, for a long time ter-relations have been addressed from a familiar predictable plane and as been done to appraise the deliberate efforts taken over time to address the
structural inequalities which define the relationships between women and men as expressed in terms of power, economics and ideology. The literary gap in these analyses is that they have remained conservative and have not taken the initiative to interrogate the degree and nature of women's resistance against oppressive gender relations.

The contemporary phase of drama has witnessed a remarkable revolution in gender imaging as well as role-play representation. A fundamental feature of gender characterization in this era is the determination of the playwrights to demonstrate that the female character is forcefully coming out of her inferior cocoon and is making concerted efforts to reclaim her social space and restore her human dignity. The playwrights in this context have made statements of authorial intention with regard to the role of their central female characters, statements which indicate a commitment to gender reform. At the same time, they seem to question if the mythical male attributes of power and dominance over the female gender are unchallengeable. The artists are thus introducing women characters who are pro-active and self confident enough to challenge the social "dilutions which limit their social space and consign their roles to the periphery.

That women have suffered in silence for a long time is a fact that should be acknowledged in social and literary spheres. This prolonged period of denigration seems to have made them be able to identify the social structures which hinder their social and 

development. The contemporary drama is highlighting the fact that it has come to a point where the female gender can no longer bear the social discrimination directed at it and it has taken measures to light and restore its human worth. Barbara (1985) "human suffering has the counter effect of giving birth to the spirit of
The ancient consciousness of woman, charged with suffering and
insensitivity for so many ages, seems in them to have brimmed and
overflowed and uttered a demand for something - something they scarcely
know what - but something that is perhaps incompatible with the
facts of human existence, (p.27)

Barbara is highlighting the fact that there is a limit which a human being can tolerate
unbearable situations. She is simply stating that the long period that women have been
subjected to social injustices by a society controlled by male dominated social structures
has sowed in them a revolutionary spirit of determination to fight for their basic human
rights. For them, it has come to a point where they can no longer sit back and watch as
men take charge of the core organs of the society in the false illusion that women are
incapable of undertaking them. The previous representation of gender role-plays has been
skewed in such a way to suggest that the woman would always remain voiceless,
"capable and vulnerable under the domineering shadow of the man. The revolutionized
presentation implies that the human experience is not static and new experiences give
new social transformations. In the case of the women's question, the fact that they have for a long time suffered under unfair patriarchal patronage should not be
pruned as a permanent feature that would prevail in the entire period of human
existence. What the contemporary playwrights are demonstrating is that gender role-plays
"pencil up instead of restricting their assignment on the assumption that they
"omied better by a certain gender divide and not the other.
4.1. GENDER ROLE-PLAY DYNAMISM IN *KHİO CHA HAKI*

In the contemporary Kiswahili drama, the playwrights have demonstrated that gender role-plays have internal dynamics and are able to generate their own experiences in tandem with the social evolution of a modern society. In their literary presentation, they produce a society in which the campaign for gender equity has reached a point where the momentum for female inclusion in social affairs has put in motion the process of radical dismantling of outmoded gender role-play stereotyping. The woman is exhibiting a determined spirit to free herself from the manacles of oppression perpetuated by a society which has been traditionally extolling patriarchal virtues and is still reluctant to accord her equal social space. However, despite the many obstacles the woman has to surmount to win back her freedom and social recognition, she has demonstrated parrarelled will-power to exert herself in the mainstream of the social action and liberate finale gender from obscurity and suppression.

L-anina in *Kilio (ha Haki* (Mazrui, 1981) is a character who can be cited as a liberated and a leading crusader for women's rights. One distinguishing attribute about campaign for the rights of her fellow womenfolk and the entire humanity in general is "st women and human liberation. In this era, such pillars in this era include male P^ony and retrogressive traditional norms in a society which is becoming B& singly dynamic. Lanina's woes mainly emanate from her fierce resistance to
exploitation of indigenous labour by expatriates who enjoy support from compromised local administration. Analysed critically, her problems revolve around societal and gender values. First, the patriarchal society in which she lives does not fathom how a woman like her can be so vocal and at the forefront in championing human rights.

The fact that the male dominated society still underrates the woman's capabilities is exemplified by Delamon, the expatriate capitalist whose exploitative labour policies Lanina is striving to counter. When the First strike is initiated on Delamon's farm, the voices of the workers demanding for better working conditions are so intimidating that Delamon is, out of his usual character, shaken. The workers are complaining how they are being exploited and are demanding for better and humane working conditions. Delamon, in his restlessness, demands to know from his foremen what is happening; lie is shocked by the answer he gets; that it is a workers' strike which has been initiated by Lanina.

ZARI: Yaani...yaani ni wale...wale viongozi wao tu. Ni yule Lanina tu...
yule mwanainke mshenzi...yule...
I mean...it iff'them...it is their leaders...It is that Lanina.
That stupid woman...that...

DFLAMON: Mwanainke? Yaani mzozo liuu ni kazi ya mwanainke. Mwanainke mmoja
tu? Naye amewashinda? Hamukuweza kuinnyosha? Nimefanya ujinga ulioje kuwapa kazi madubu katna nyinyi? (p.8)
A woman? You mean all this fuss is the work of a woman? Just one woman? And you can't contain her? You could not straighten her?
What folly have I committed to give work to such dim-wits like you?
It is apparent that Delamon holds women in very low regard. He can't believe nor does lie expect that a woman can initiate a strike of such a magnitude. He chides his foremen on their inability to counter 'this woman'. He wonders how his foremen, who are men in the first place, cannot contain her. lie is simply perplexed, lie eventually calls in the police who quell the riots and arrests Lanina and Tereki.

To a society not used to women executing such episodes, Laniua's sudden emergence as a powerful leader of oppressed masses comes as a shocker since the human attributes of a woman have always been looked down upon. It appears that Delamon's shock would not have been devastating had he been informed that it is a man who was behind the strike. However, the turn of events is a wake-up reminder to the society that the woman's fighting spirit, which has been suppressed for a long time, has erupted with a vengeance. That it is not about to fade away is further demonstrated by the fact that Lanina's resolve proves to be unbreakable even after the harassment she is subjected to, including undergoing untold suffering in custodial confinement. In the custody, she and Tereki are enticed with all promises of personal benefits if they accept to drop their hard-line stances. Tereki is compromised at the end after lie confessed his role in the strike. I lie 1s pardoned, and even made the leader of the workers's new union which Delamon himself has initiated. On her part, Lanina remains steadfast even as the police try unsuccessfully to break her resolve the way they did to Tereki. In fact, Tereki's change of heart comes to her as an unwelcome surprise as she had expected that they would together take the liberation struggle all the way. It is the police who break the news of s turn-about to Lanina as they try to convince her to follow suit:
JCACHERO WA 2: Kwa nini...hu...huerevuki kama mwenzako?

   Why don't you become wise like your friend?

LANINA: (Anamtazama kachero kwa jicho la kuulizia)

   Mwcuzangu?

   (She looks at the detective questiongly)

   My friend?

KACHERO WA 2: Ndiyo! Tereki!

   Aineungama na amerudishwa kazini.

   Sasa anapata nyongeza nzuri, na hata

   amefanywa mkuu wa chama cha wafanya-kazi

   wa Delamon kilichoanzishwa hivi karibuni!

   Yes! Tereki! (p.26)

   He has confessed and has been reinstated back to work.

   He now has a good salary increment, and he was even

   made the leader of Delamon's workers's union

   which was starteel recently.

   What Lanina feels is a very deep sense of betrayal. It dawns on her that Tereki has

finally been compromised to abandon the workers's cause for his own personal gain.

'erliaps this is what makes her to even harden her resolve. She leaves the police cells as

determined as ever to continue with the struggle.

When Mazrui showcases Tereki caving in to pressure while Lanina remains

Infest, he is in effect challenging the decorated attributes always associated with the

a're &eider. Tereki was amongst Lanina's trusted comrades in the struggle for better and
humane working conditions for their fellow workers. At first he seemed steadfast and determined. However, after his first incarceration with Lanina after they initiated the first strike, the allure of a good life for himself makes his fighting spirit wane. Under both temptation and pressure, he finally succumbs and joins hands with the oppressors. One reason he abandons the liberation struggle is that he is weak-willed for the challenge. His second motivation is personal gain after he is offered a generous package alongside a few of his associates. However, not even physical torture, humiliation or tempting promises can move Lanina. Her principle remains that the workers' welfare should be improved for all.

What we would like to emphasize here is that against Lanina's uncompromising resolve and her determination to fight for the workers' rights from imperialist exploitation, there are male characters who betray this noble cause and are supporting the oppressive policies of the farm owner and his cronies. Such male characters include Tereki, Zari, Shindo, Phelekha and Matovu. They are social sell-outs who are willing to compromise their conscience and humanity for personal gain.

Lanina learns of their treachery after she is released from the police custody when Tereki, Matovu and Pelekha come to pay her a 'courtesy call' at home and give their sympathies for the lengthy time she has spent in the police cells. It turns out that they are actually Delamon's emissaries whose mission is to convince her to go back to work. They are all full of praises for Delamon whom they describe as a caring person who is ready to assist. They even say he is willing to give Lanina back her job without conditions. It is at this point that Lanina can take it no more, lie tells them:

\[ \text{ANINA: (Akisimama kwa hasira) Aina nyinyi minejazwa kasumba!} \]
Delanion atusaidie! Sisi hatukuomba msaada kwake! Na itakuwaje aiatasaidia na anayenufaika ni yeye?

Sikizeni nyinyi viutnbe mliopotoka - tunacliopigania ni haki yetu, na kupata haki yetu si jambo la msaada. Kumbe! Kumbe mmekuja hapa kunishawishi niungane nanyi katika kuwasaliti walanya-kazi wenzetu!

Terek! I lata wcwe Terek!

Nilipopewa habari zako na wale makachcro sikuamini!

Kumbe kila kitu ni kweli!

(Anawasogelea) Tokeni hapa! Tokeni !!! (P.51-52)

(Standing up agitated) So you have really been compromised!

Delamon to assist us! We did not beg for his assistance!

And how can it be that We is assisting us while he is the one benefiting?

Listen you misguided creatures -

What we are fighting for is our right getting our right is not being assisted.

No wonder! You have come here convince me to join you betraying our fellow workers!
Tereki! Even you Tereki!

When I was told about you by the detectives,

I did not believe it!

But now everything is true!

(Moving closer to them) Get out of here! Get out!!!

Lanina is appaled by the degree personal greed can blind human beings that they can't see the treachery in Delamon's evil schemes. She is irked by the extent to which they can be compromised to discard their self respect and worth, since she is aware that Delainon means no good to anybody and his only sole objective is to enrich himself off the sweat of hapless workers. At the end, she does not take up Delamon's offer to go back to work and instead, opts to go to work in Mzee Ingeli's small food eatery where, although the salary is meagre, she feels what she does is being appreciated and she is also being respected as a human being.

That there is a revolution in gender role-plays in the contemporary drama is demonstrated by the fact that Lanina is waging almost a lone campaign in a field where men are the majority. Her organizational capability astonishes Delainon. Most of the male workers are compromised while she remains steadfast. Through Lanina, what Mazrui is expressing is that despite the many social obstacles keen on restricting the woman's space, the contemporary woman is now more determined to have her voice heard and her human capabilities recognized.

At the second front, Lanina is faced with the task of countering social gender stereotypes which are still claiming considerable influence in the way gender roles should be structured and performed in the private and domestic domains. It appears that the
society is still uneasy to accommodate a woman it perceives as liberal, assertive and revolutionary in the public domain when she is expected to be busy undertaking her familial roles, with which it still associates her. When Lanina defies socially imposed gender role-play stereotypes and takes the front role in leading her oppressed co-workers in the fight for better working conditions, she not only faces strong opposition from her father and husband but also her own mother who seems to harbour the belief that domestic chores are the core roles of an ideal wife.. Her mother is concerned that due to her activism, she has discarded her domestic tasks. She is also worried that she is giving the institution of marriage a bad name due to her constant association with men which can easily make the society brand her a prostitute. She tells her:

MAMA: Mwengo atiasema siku nyingi hujipikia mwenyewe...

Mara nyingi awaoshe yehe watoto.
Mara nyingi asafishe nyumba yehe.
Mwanangu, sasa hivyo atakuwa ameoa an arneolewa? Si kuoa huko mama!
Mutneo afTike, afagie, afue, eh?
Si utakuwa umemwoa hivyo Lanina,
badili ya yehe kukuoa wewe? (p.41)

Mwengo says he cooks for himself most of the days.
Most of the time, he bathes the children.
He cleans up the house most of the time.
My daughter, has he married or has he been married?
That is not marrying!

Your husband to cook, to do the cleaning, to do the washing, eh?

Will you not have married him instead of him having married you?

Lanina's mother has been socialized in the cultural gender role-plays to the extent that she cannot envisage a situation where a woman can go beyond the confines of the homestead and take active involvement in roles which have been categorized as male preserves since time immemorial. This is why she opposes Lanina in her liberation struggle. To her, Lanina would be a good woman and wife if she abandoned her activism and remained at home. This reinforces the fact that women have been over the time supporting social institutions which have been instrumental in their marginalization and discrimination. They even construe in bad light efforts of their fellow women engaged in the struggle for gender equality through challenging archaic gender role-play stereotypes. Ironically, there are men like Musa and Dewe who support Lanina in her liberation struggle. This is what Stephanie (1979) means when she says:

For one man who would strengthen a woman's hands in a struggle against injustice, there are twenty women who would strike them down. Their cry is always, 'Submit, submit.' (p.59)

The centrality of domestic chores for a woman in marriage as upheld by social inventions is demonstrated by Lanina's father who is so incensed with her daughter's cultural rebellion to the extent that he disowns her, telling her not to call him her father Win. Me i, 'ashamed' (o have sired a daughter who defies customary norms by engaging many activities. This opens Lanina's eyes to the fact that as a woman, conservative
social institutions which discriminate against women are another front she has to direct her liberation efforts towards.

The dilemma Lanina finds herself into emanates from the fact that the society she is living in is yet to appreciate the leadership capabilities of a woman. According to Davis (1994), in most African communities, women in leadership are always viewed as if they me somewhere they don’t belong, behaving in ways that are not natural to them. This is because in order to succeed in public domain which is still considered a male preserve, a woman exhibiting extra-ordinary leadership capabilities is regarded as asexual since she does not live by the virtues the society considers feminine. She assumes an identity of somebody who cannot be identified as a woman through sexual characteristics. Often, women in leadership positions are tasked to correspond to this image of manly authority status imposed on diem as the society is yet to fully appreciate their human potential. What should be pointed out is that the ability to make decisions and implement them is not a gender-specific trait, but a trait common to all. Simply put, a man wielding power is natural, and a woman holding power is equally natural too, or it ought to be.

Women's attempt to cope with new social situations confronting them in their struggle for liberation is a challenging endeavour as it is regarded as a betrayal of traditions which are often confused with women's roles. Perhaps, unease with liberal women and those in positions of authority could be seen as a feeling of inadequacy coupled with fear for women's achievement and domination. This dilemma Mwengo, Lanina's husband, finds himself in. He is wary of what the society Perceives of him when he performs domestic chores when Lanina is away Paged in public activities. He is also aware that Lanina has made for herself a name in
liberation struggle, a fete that many, even men, can ever achieve. He therefore fears for his

This is reflected in the way he laments about the reversed roles in his household when he is left to take care of the children in Laniua's absence. To him, this is a grave issue but, Lanina, who is on a mission to

Mwengo's fear is equally reflected in Ireri (Ogot, 1980). In the narration, Juanina karungaru, Ireri's wife, is appointed the only woman minister in a new government. This comes with a lot of trappings of power such as free housing, security for her and other privileges that go along with her new elevated position. She is soon to realize that her appointment has brought her husband unease and pressure fuelled by his mates. Her husband's friends start cautioning him to be on the look-out for tell-tale signs in preparedness to take corrective measures in case of change in behaviour that his wife may exhibit due to her new social status. This becomes a social issue to the extent that Juanina gets to hear of it herself:

She had overheard a friend (husband's) warning him to be tough with a woman minister who might soon be drunk with power, and might forget that she was still a wife. She was the one who was given the free house, the free car, and a handsome allowance with security and all, not him (p.67)

The reason as to why men seem to be collectively suspicious of women's success in Social arena is simply because they are measuring these achievements against their achievements. This arises from the fact that they have dominated the social spheres
for a long time and they perceive the new development as an unwelcome invasion to their reserved privileges. Their fear is that women are taking over social positions of authority which used to be their sole domain.

In the contemporary society, women's spirit of liberalism and campaign for human equity is being judged against normative femininity. They find themselves on the collision course with established social ethics governing gender behavioural roles because they engage in social tasks hitherto deemed a male preserve. According to the imposed cultural standards, a woman who does not live and behave within the acceptable parameters of female behaviour is placed outside the traditional symbolics of gender expectations. Mazrui therefore positions Lanina and other like-minded women as figures who disrupt the very foundation on which patriarchal dominance draws its strength from.

The fact that the society is uncomfortable with the woman's role in the socio-political and economic domains explains how the construction of the image of African womanhood is yet to acquire informed definition. Aidoo (1970) explains how various depictions of the woman distort her true identity:

We can read her as asocial subjectivity produced by the economic, political and ideological practices organizing the economy of signification around the dominance of the phallic signifier. Woman is produced in social signification as the other on which the very existence of man and the assymetrical relations of exploitation, power and privilege in patriarchy depend. She is revealed simultaneously oppositionally to man in a position of oppression in patriarchal capitalism, (p.70)
The contemporary playwrights underscore the fact that the campaign for gender equity is a complex process which requires concerted efforts from the both divides. It should no longer be viewed as solely a women's endeavour but a communal undertaking whose realization should be seen in the light of its social benefits for the entire humanity. This can only be achieved if the man appreciated the human worth in the woman. Mazrui demonstrates this when he presents male characters who appreciate and support the cause for women empowerment. In *Kilio Cha Haki*, Musa and Dewe are supporting Lanina's liberation initiatives and even recognize her as the designated leader of the workers' liberation struggle. This means that contrary to popular perception that a patriarchal leaning society has always underrated woman's capabilities, the contemporary man is beginning to appreciate the human potential in the woman and are partnering with her for the betterment of the society. They appreciate she has the capacity to contribute to the welfare of the society as opposed to earlier conceptualizations based on social gender stereotypes which depict the woman as incapable of measuring up to the man's 'positive' capabilities, and therefore a lesser human being. For instance, Musa and Dewe appreciate Unina's capability to lead the war against oppression. This is exemplified by the fact that even after she is no longer working at Delamon's farm and has taken a low profile job at Mzee Ingeli's kiosk, they still follow her there to seek her counsel.

After the final strike at Delamon's, Musa and Dewe go into hiding. Despite the fact "at Lanina was no longer working 011 Delamon's farm when the strike was initiated, she was Crested as the main mastermind suspect. When Musa and Dewe later learn that Lanina has been arrested, they resolve to go back and continue with the struggle where Lanina
left. This means that they believe in the course she has been championing all along and would not let Iter efforts which led to her incarceration go down the drain. They resolve:

DEWE: Ni lazima lurudi.

Kichinichini ni lazima tuauzc
kuwaamsha wafanya-kazi wenzetu.

Kichinichini ni lazima tuiendeleze kazi ya Lanina

We must go back.

We must clandestinely start enlightening our fellow workers.

We must clandestinely carry on with Lanina's struggle.

MUSA: Sasa umesema ndugu!

Huu ndio mwanzo wa mwanzo.

Huku ndiko kuzaliwa kupya.

Twende ndugu! Twende...(p.6)

You have just said it brother!

This is the beginning of the beginning.

It is wfiat it means to be born afresh.

Lets go brother! Lets go...

The indication here is that Lanina's selfless initiative to liberate oppressed humanity has borne fruit in the sense that she has recruited dedicated disciples to carry on her work even in her absence. It also bears testimony to the fact that men are now appreciating leadership capabilities of women and can trust them to lead the way in charting a new destiny for the society. This is a positive step towards attainment of gender equality. It
demonstrates that gender roles in the contemporary drama are drastically changing, becoming more complimentary and intertwined.

Elsewhere in the contemporary Kiswahili drama, Lanina's character attributes as strong willed, assertive, focused and determined are comparable to those of Natala (in Natala, Wa Mberia, 1997). In the play, Natala is abruptly 'widowed'. The death of her husband consigns her to formidable challenges. One of her most immediate challenges, which interestingly mark one of the most contested sites in women's marginalization, is the need to fight for her rights to inherit her husband's estate within the narrow and strict confines of inherited traditions. In an effort to wade through this quagmire, Natala faces many hurdles which basically emanate from her position as female. However, she manages to maintain her resolve to safeguard her dignity and rights as a woman. This she does without any external assistance from either male or female consort in the period of her husband's 'death'. Some paramount happenings attest to this. For one, she goes all alone to the mortuary to claim her husband's body. In the mortuary, she repulses sexual advances from the attendant, Bala. When she declines his approaches, he decides to use his physical advantage as a man to rape her, but is met with Natala's fierce resistance. Initially, Bala thought it would be a simple task because he had the notion that a woman may not pose a big physical challenge. However, Natala's counter-attack leaves him humiliated:

"3la: (Akijiweka tayari kumrukuia Natala) Kazi buret Moto utazimwa. Leo utajua mimi ni mwanamume halisi.

(Heprepare to grab Natala) Useless. You are fighting a lost battle. I will have to satisfy myself. Today you will know I am a real man."
Matala: *(Akijitayarisha kujikinga kutokana na shambulizi la Bala).* Nawe utajua mimi ni binadamu kamili. *(Bala amrukia. Natala ampokea na kumpitisha kwa nguvu. Bala anaanguka kwa magotì na mikono. Picha yake sakafuni ni ya mnyama anayesimama kwa miguu yake mine. Natala anamsubiri kwa ukakamavu mwingi.)*

*(She prepares to fend off Bala's attack.)* And you will know I am a complete human being. *(Bala goes for her. Natala gets hold of him and throws him offbalance. He falls on his knees and hands. On the floor, he looks like an animal walking on all fours. Natala defiantly awaits his next move.)*

Bala: *(Baada ya kumwangalia Natala kwa muda) Unajiona shujaa sana. (Akimnyoshea kidole). Wewel Wewe! (After seizing her up for a moment). You think you are very brave. (Pointing his finger at her). You! You! (p.22-23)*

It is obvious that, were it not for Natala's physical strength and determination, she would have been raped.

That Natala is a determined and principled woman is again proven when she stands firm against fervent approaches from her brother in-law, Wakene, who is out to inherit her as a second wife as a condition that she is not chased away from her husband's estate. After sending several emissaries to convince Natala to accept his proposal to no avail, Wakene finally goes himself to face her. He tells her that since she has declined, it means he is not part of the family and should vacate the family land, but leave behind the children. He tells her:
Vakene: Nimeletwa na mainbo mawili. Kwanza, kuchukua clichti cha shamba. Pili,
kukujulislia utafute mahali pa kuhamia. Nitaanza kuishi hapa baada ya
muda wa wiki inbili. Bila sliaka hutaondoka 11a watoto. Watabaki nasi.
Ni watoto wetu. (p.53)

Two issues bring me here. First, to take possession of the title deed for
the farm. Secondly, to inform you to look for elsewhere to move to.

I will be occupying this compound within the next two weeks.

And of course you are not leaving with the children. They will remain with us.

The children are ours.

The unfolding scenario brings into focus the social and domestic place of the woman
as concerns her basic rights. There are pertinent issues that arise out of Wakene's
decision to order Natala to leave. First, how come that as Natala is being chased away,
she is supposed to leave the children behind, an indication that they are being recognized
as part of the family while their mother is not? This means that the society views the
woman as a factory for manufacturing children and once this is done, she is deemed to
have outlived her usefulness. Anyway, Natala stands firm and even forcefully takes back
the title deed Wakene had grabbed from her.

Secondly, even fellow women do not stand by her during these dire moments of
need. After the 'burial' of her husband, it is Mama Lime who approaches her with the
news that elders have decided that she gets inherited by her brother-in-law as a second
reminding her that she will get everything she would need such as food, shelter,
clothing and even many more children. Despite the fact that Wakene has another wife,
Li’gtiia Lime assures Natala that the numbers do not matter as every one of them will get their desires. She tells her:

Hata wanawake wakiwa wengi, bado kila inmoja wao ataridhika.
Atapata idadi ya watoto aitakayo, atavaa nguo, atakula na kushiba na atakuwa na malazi. (p.39)

Even if the wives are many, everyone will still get satisfied. She will get the number of children she wishes, she will be clothed, fed well and will have shelter.

To enforce her message more, Mama Lime tells Natala that this is the usual way things are done according to the tradition. She will thus not be the first or the last. Looking at it, Mama Lime is trying to justify retrogressive cultural practices such as polygamy and wife inheritance that a dynamic modern society is out to phase out. Her reasoning revolves around the petty cycle that all a woman needs in life is getting as many children as possible, dressing and feeding, and a man’s presence, all other factors notwithstanding. However, in spite of the stakes at hand, remains steadfast in her principles up to the point when her husband, whom she did not expect in the first place, resurfaces.

Natala’s character attributes are an exception rather than the norm. In similar and exigent moments, it would be expected that out of desperation, she would passively give in to special demands as she would be assured of retaining her husband’s estate and still have a man to watch over her homestead. However, her determination not to compromise her man dignity and principles shows the strides made by a contemporary woman in luting for, and safeguarding her human worth and dignity.
4.2 GENDER ROLE-PLAY DYNAMISM IN KIFO KISIMANI

Wa Mberia is among the contemporary artists making a strong literary point that the modern woman is much more liberated and enlightened to discard the laid-back approach previously associated with her in the social life. In his play, Kifo Kisimani (2000), there are several cases in support of this position. Nyalwe is the wife of the powerful Mtemi Bokono. Throughout history, the wives of leaders, including kings and monarchs, have been known to support their husband's administrations in the false hallucination that they would never come to an end and thus they would continue enjoying the privileges that go with it for eternity. In fact, in many developing and improvised societies, many leaders' spouses have been blamed for ursuping the powers of their husbands and misusing it to the detriment of the common populace. In Nyalwe's case, one would expect that she is contented with the trappings that can be associated with her position but she is not. She is disturbed that her husband's administration is riddled with corruption and other social malpractices which make"the subjects loose faith in it. She does not keep these misgivings to herself but she takes the unprecedented step of speaking her mind to her husband.

Bokono is convinced that he is a popular leader because that is what his advisors keep on telling liiui. However, against all odds, Nyalwe tells him the populace is not happy with his administration and that his core advisors are misleading him about his Policies. She informs him that one way he can redeem his image as a leader is changing administrative policies. Bokono does not take Nyalwe's words kindly as he has faith
ill his advisors who are his eyes and ears on the ground. However, these advisors who are
telling him that the people of Butangi adore him as their leader are just massaging his ego
in order to retain their positions. Nyalwe is eventually proved right when Bokono's
administration is finally toppled by a popular mass uprising.

Nyalwe's initiative to tell her husband the bitter truth is a bold step taken by a
leader's wife in trying circumstances. She is aware that what she is saying is not soothing
to the ear of her husband, yet she finds it important to tell him the truth which had been
shielded from him by his advisors. As expected, lie does not take it lightly and this is why
he dismisses her with an air of arrogance. However, Nyawale's initiative earns her the
distinction as a voice of reason against her husband's evil and oppressive polices. Apart
from cautioning him about the misleading advice from his aides, she also keeps on
reminding him the injustice he is doing by dishing out public land to his cronies. She tells
him how people are complaining after the only public land available for their children's
recreation was allocated to the Commissioner of police. Even though Bokono feigns
ignorance, Nyalwe would not let him wish away the issue:

NYALWE: Ninayozungumzia ni muhimu. Usitie mzaha. Mama Agoro

alikuja kulalamika. Anasema uwanja wa kuchezza

watoto wao umechukuliwa. Umepewa Askari Mkuu.

What I am talking about is important. Don't dismiss it as a joke. Agoro's
mother came to complain. She says the field on which their children play
has been taken away. It has been allocated to the Police Commissioner.

Aliyempa Askari Mkuu ni nani?

Who allocated it to the Police Commissioner?
FjYALWE: Mgawa Ardhi.

Tlie Commissioner for Lands.

pOKONO: Basi kwa nini alikuja hapa badala ya kwenda kwa mgawa ardlii?

Then why did she come here instead of going to the Commissioner for Lands?

NYALWE: Wafanyikazi wanapopuuza kanuni zinazoongoza mamlaka yao, sliarti mkubwa wao akumbushwe kuzingatia kanuni hizo.

If civil servants go against the ethics that guide their powers, then their boss should be reminded to ensure they are followed. (p. 18-19)

The contemporary community is also appreciating the leadership capabilities of the woman. That Mama Agoro has been entrusted by the community to push their agenda in petitioning against a public utility land that has been allocated irregularly is a sure testimony that they have faith in her as a woman leader.

There is also the case of Tanya, Mwelusi's mother, who displays extra-ordinary measure of courage and selflessness. For one, she is well aware that her son, Mwelusi, is inciting the masses against the administration of Mtemi Bokono. In any society, this is a treasonable offence which can attract capital punishment. However, she is supporting the cause. Her daughter, Andua, is also engaged deeply in the struggle. Equally involved is A'ega who distinguishes herself as Mwelusi's comrade-in-arms and his principal assistant. When Mwelusi is arrested and confined in police captivity, Atega is the one "who cunningly takes to him the loaf of bread in which a file is concealed. It is this file "at Mwelusi uses to cut off the chains and escapes from the police cells. In appreciation,
fvivcinsl's mollicr, who was worried of what his confinement may portend for Iter son's
life, tells Atega:

TANYA: (Akimkumbalia Atega). Asante, mwanangu. Sikujua kikapu ulichowapatia
askari kilikuwa kimebeba maarifa na usalama kwa mwanangu. (Kwa
Mwelusi) Karibu nyumbani mwanangu. (p. 820
(Embracing Atega) Thank you, my daughter. I did not know that the
basket you gave to the police was carrying wisdom and safety
for my son.
(To Mwelusi) Welcome home, son.

The strong attributes that the writer accords these women is a clear testimony that the
contemporary woman has resolved to be actively engaged in important issues that
determine the destiny of the society. She is not prepared to sit back when important
organs of the society are being threatened. She is prepared to counter male excesses even
when her personal security is at stake. The modern woman is not that passive and naive
character that was presented by Kiswahili playwrights in the preceding phases. She is
assertive, proactive and viable in the public domain.

Gender role-plays as represented by the contemporary playwrights demonstrate a
new paradigm shift from the popular trends adopted by the playwrights and critics of
yester-years. They introduce new perspectives in which gender roles should be perceived
and interpreted. They are especially giving prominent recognition to the way the image of
"te female character has been acquiring new and positive attributes as opposed to the
Pm In Kifo Kisimani Wa Mberia introduces women of admirable resolve and vision,
though it is Mwelusi who can be credited as the overall leader in the campaign against
Pokono's bad governance, there are several female characters who play important roles in the same struggle.

Finally, Mtemi Bokono plots for Mwelusi's murder in the hope that his problems would come to an end. He is however mistaken because Mwelusi's female comrades-in-arms play a central part in masterminding and executing a revolution which removes his repressive regime from power. The coup is so meticulously planned that it is pulled off without bloodshed and Bokono and his aides are put through an organized trial, not summary justice as it happens to most despotic leaders.

However, Wa Mberia (ibid), also cautions that there are women characters who lack self-respect for themselves and are a disgrace to the womenfolk. In Kifo Kisimani, Kaloo allows herself to be misused by Mtemi Bokono as his praise singer out to do all she can to please him, despite the unpopular sentiments about his administration. Whereas reform-minded people like Mwelusi and Atega are mobilizing the community to boycott his public meeting due to his retrogressive leadership, Kaloo is the first to arrive at the venue to ensure that the preparations are done properly. Her character can best be explained as a disgrace not only to the womenfolk, but also to the entire society.

In literature, there are several instances where the roles women play degrade the social status of the female gender. Mlama (1991) sees a close correlation between the degraded position of women and their own actions. She blames women for perpetuating their subordinate status by agreeing to play social roles which depict them as equally subordinate. She sees some of the areas where women degrade themselves, besides being "grated, as music and drama. She observes that the tendency of most modern drama to half-dressed' women has abused the traditional role of this art which was primarily
to express aspects of people's culture in a dignified manner. On the contrary, the roles which women play in most cultural troupes are stereotyped. The wriggling of the waist, which depicts the sexual role of women as objects of men's pleasure, can only be seen as intended to legitimize the patriarchal ideology of the African male. In this context, women are seen as own perpetrators of negative image they are associated with. Women should therefore work towards redeeming their image by playing social roles which are more respectable and reconstruct new images and attitudes which depict equality of both sexes.

The contemporary representation of gender role-plays also demonstrates the fact that the mythical human attributes hitherto associated with particular gender divides are not permanent fixtures. In particular, the female gender has been routinely associated with negative attributes while those positive are reserved for men. This is the position that the contemporary drama is contesting. In *Kifo Kisimani*, while there are women who are fighting for a just society, there are male characters who support Mtemi Bokono in his administrative excesses. These include his core advisers such as Batu and Zigu. Also worthy of mention is Mwelusi's own brother, Gege, who sees no evil in Bokono's administration. He ends up murdering Mwelusi on the false promise that he would marry Bokono's daughter, Alida. The essence of such characterization is that the fight against gender inequalities and human injustices should not be waged with any presuppositions and, instead, should be interpreted through the human traits exhibited by individual characters from across the divides. This is because human beings from across the gender divides have the capability to exhibit either positive or negative traits at one time or
another. Neither attribute can therefore be permanently associated with any particular divide.

In the contemporary Kiswaliili drama, the dynamism in gender role-plays has even gone to the extent where women are even partnering with men to suppress fellow women and humanity in general. This means that they have shed off the tag of being the victims and assumed that of the oppressors. In Visiki for example, Ongeti (1984) portrays Bi. Taniaa as a malicious, greedy and heartless woman who partners with Ndovu in exploitive business ventures, which cause untold misery to the hapless 'squatters' on their farm. In the first instance, Bi. Tamaa conspired with Ndovu to allocate themselves a farm which was supposed to be sub-divided amongst the former workers of the previous While owner who left at the dawn of independence. Ndovu and Bi. Tamaa, who were also former workers, used their influence to subvert government efforts to subdivide the farm equally among the former workers. At the end, they kept it for themselves as the rest of the former workers became squatters. Matanga, a former worker and now a squatter, reveals this when he says:

MATANGA:..

I remember how the government made efforts to divide to us squatters this farm. The efforts came to an end when Ndovu was elected to Parliament. He moved a motion against sub-dividing the Whiteman's farm. That is how we missed having our farms. And we are still squatters on black Europeans's farms.

In the ensuing injustices they mete on the squatters, Bi. Tamaa is even more visible than Ndovu. She is in the forefront of organizing that the food crops which sustain the poor peasants and their families be uprooted to create more room to grow flowers for export.

However, inspite of her negative publicity, Bi. Tamaa has shown that the modern woman is not to be associated with household chores any more. She has ventured out in the public domain where she is exerting her presence and influence just as her male counterpart. These changing attributes for female characters attest to the fact that she has acquired traits hitherto associated with the male gender. Bi. Tamaa's unpeculiar representation attests to the fact that having the subject of women oppression and liberation as the object of concern may not be an adequate marker since this ignores the instability and the very varied nature of gender relations. As a result, differences between 'ales and females are to be located and interpreted in practical social practices, not through assumed sexual differentiation. After all, it is a historical fact that just as men, African women leaders and slave-owning women exploited their subjects. There are also documented cases of brutal women leaders in indigenous African societies. Gender dies and feminism have therefore a complex multi-dimensional and contradictory by, which is constantly acquiring different social dimensions with the passage of time.
The dynamism in gender role-play representation is also demonstrated by Mwachofi (1987). Mwachofi is one of the few formidable female playwrights in Kenya to undertake a critical analysis of gender role-plays in a literary field dominated by male playwrights. The scarcity of female playwrights in the Kiswahili literary scene in Kenya explains why her play, *Mama ee*, is the only one by a female playwright to feature in the scope of this study.

The social setting of this play reflects a society where the woman is making concerted efforts to assert herself in the society which still places many social obstacles in her way to self-determination. It is a society where the male character is out to exercise his dominance over the female but the female character is fighting back with a passion. One of the main characters, Mwavita, is a victim of circumstances. At the beginning, she is introduced as a dutiful wife making a determined effort to hold her household together. Although her husband has a better paying job, he does not support his family financially. He is a typical drunkard and womanizer who cares very little about the family welfare. Mwavita is as a result forced to use her meager salary to cater for all the domestic needs. At the same time, she has to put up with an unfaithful husband who frequently abuses her roth physically and psychologically. Overwhelmed by the trials she is undergoing in her "larriage, she laments:

Nalete pesa za kununua chakula. Hijo ni kazi ya mikono yangu.

Nikija chakula hicho nipike mwenyewe, kisipikika vizuri, balaa!

Yeye bwana akioa amepata mtumwa anayemtumikia kwa kila njia.
Yeye hanajukumu analotekeleza...Hufanya kazi ndiyo lakini liizi pesa apatazo ni za kujifurahisha tu. (p.46)

I provide the money to buy the food. This is out of my sweat. I prepare the food and if it is not well cooked, I will have problems.

It is as if after he married, he got himself a slave to serve him in all ways. He has no obligations in the house...He works, but his money is for his own use.(p.46)

Mwavita lakes care of the basic needs of the family and at the matrimonial front, she is a dutiful wife who is at Kinaya's beck and call whenever he needs her. However, lie neither recognizes nor appreciates her efforts. I Ic rules the home as his own chicfdom where he can come at whatever time and still expects to be pampered. The assumption is that what Mwavita is doing is what is expected of her as per customary dictates. Her situation reflects the conservative traditional view in most African societies in which a woman's contribution in the homestead, as opposed to the man's, was taken for granted.

Mwavita's plight is replayed in Anastasia (Ogot, 1989). Finding herself in a similar position, Anastasia turns over in her mind the code of conduct which regulates her behaviour as a wife, as dictated upon by patriarchal conventions governing relations in toe institution of marriage. What pains her most is the fact that although she is aware of toe suffering imposed on her, she has no avenue to seek for redress. At the end, she has give her husband all the leeway to do as he pleases. She is fully aware that she’d never argue, that she ought not to question her husband about where he had been turned in well af< midnight. She knew that she was supposed to humbly ^ vhen he up with a smile to quickly warm his food and serve him. This is what the society
expects of her. According to the customary norms of the day, this was the ideal Luo
vonian, treasured and respected by all men, whose praises were echoed whenever men
gathered. This is the typical representation of a woman enslaved by cultural dictates so
much so that her entire life is centred on fulfilling set social parameters under the
watchful eye of the man and the society in general. Ironically, there are no set rewards for
her efforts. The situation Mwavita and Anastasia find themselves in shows how gender
insensitive social conventions consign the female gender to perpetual social bondage and
deprive her of equality in the institution of marriage.

The cultural and societal expectations placed on the woman make her unable to locate
her identity and humanity with certainty. Aidoo (1970) explains her predicament in the
confusing situation her character, Anowa, finds herself in. She paints a grim picture of
being a wife which she says applies to many women cross-culturally, apart from minor
details such as local colour and family needs. To her, being a woman is a position defined
in relation to serving the male. The woman then comes to occupy the position in society
against which the male identity is installed. The wifely tasks are so demanding and
"predictable such that one can hardly be adequately prepared for them. Anowa
presses this disturbing position poetically:

Someone should have taught me how to grow up to be a woman. I hear
in other lands, a woman is nothing. And they let her know this from the
day of birth. But here, O my spirit mother, they let her grow up as she
Pleases until she is married. And then, she like, any other woman
where, in order for her man to be a man, she must not think, she
must not talk. (p. 68)
Aidoo depicts the marriage institution as a form of enslavement where the woman has to give up her freedom so as to meet the social expectations placed on her. All she does should be in the interest of massaging the ego of her husband who does not care of the implication of her efforts on her personal well-being. One wonders what benefits the women ever derive from these relations, yet the few options they have for opting out force most of them to continue clinging onto them. P'Bitek (1973) gives a graphic account of such an abused woman as:

The docile, obedient village woman, custodian of culture,
the simple peasant grinding millet outside the productive
life of the community, the matriarch of the market place...

These are the stereotypes of much Africanist, Western
feminist and African scholarship, such as it is. (p. 10)

Such a woman is forced to be docile by the social circumstances prevailing around her For one, she linds out that the pitiable situation she is undergoing is universal among her women colleagues. The women continue suffering in silence because they lack individual or collective initiative to challenge the social structures which consign them to such deplorable conditions. In the ensuing confusion, the man continues taking advantage of the situation.

For a long time, many artists and literary critics have assumed that this trend defies Nations in changing historical experience, economic structures, as well as social ynamisin. hi the contrary, the contemporary Kiswahili drama has demonstrated that the ^dem woman has acquired radical attributes and is fighting for equal social space with • lan. However, she is doing this against the odd tides of social norms embedded in
patriarchal virtues which are still reluctant to embrace the strong waves of change in gender role-play interpretations and practice.

A major impediment to the campaign for gender and marital equity is the fact that the contemporary man is still exploiting the archaic patriarchal pillars to continue enjoying the privileges bestowed on the male gender by retrogressive social conventions. Kinaya, for example, is well educated. However, it beats logic that he still believes in outdated practices which give the man exclusive rights over his wife. The subordination of many women in African societies arises out of the mis-interpretation apportioned to the payment of bride-price. While it was traditionally meant to be a token of appreciation given to the bride's parents for taking good care of their daughter, many African men interpret it as buying a wife and all the human and material rights she possesses. When Mwavita complains to Kinaya that she is the one who finances the family budget without any assistance from him, Kinaya implicates his indirect contribution through the argument that he in fact owns what she thinks is hers, including the money she works for. He tells her:

KINAYA: Wewe una perffi gani hapa? ...


What money do you claim to have here?...

A woman does not possess anything. The moment she is married, everything, including herself, becomes the property of the husband.

That is our (customary) law, forget about Westernization.

MWAVIJA  (Kwa mshangao) Wasemaji Kinaya, yaani ukilipa mahari umemnunua mtu?
(Surprised) What do you mean Kinaya, that after paying the bride-price you have bought someone?

KINAYA: Kwani ulifikiri vipi wewe?

How else did you think?

MWAVITA: Mbona mababu zetu hawakufikiria hivyo?

How come our forefathers did not think along those lines?

KINAYA: Wao hawakulazimika kulipa pesa zaidi ati kwa kuwa mke ana shahada!

Baba zenu, siku hizi wanawauza. Mimi nililipa shilingi elfu mbili zaidi kwa kuwa ulifika kidato cha sita. Wengine hulipa zaidi- si kununua nini?

They were not forced to pay extra money because the wife had a degree.

Your fathers are selling you nowadays. I paid two thousand shillings extra because you went up to form six. Others even pay more - is that not tantamount to buying? (p.4)

What Kinaya is saying is tantamount to telling his wife that she should not complain even when she uses her own money to cater for domestic needs as everything in that house, including herself, belong to him.

In many African societies, the issue of bride-wealth has always been contentious and as such, has been interpreted in different perspectives by many feminist scholars, according to Levi-Strauss (1969), Western interpreters of many African societies regard bride-wealth as a transactional exchange akin to buying a wife. The situation is made worse by the fact that while men have certain rights over their female kin, including the right to dispose them off in marriage, women do not have reciprocal rights over their kin. They do not even possess full rights to themselves. As a result, the institution of
marriage puts the woman at a great disadvantage because she does not lay claim on any marital property in the household they are supposed to jointly share with her husband.

Mwavita and Kinaya hold extreme divergent views as regards their rights as individuals and more specifically their privileges as husband and wife. Their marital differences result from different historical and cultural interpretation of gender roles and the modern values. Mwavita is fighting for her rights in a modern marriage from a point of an enlightened and progressive platform. On the other hand, Kinaya still expects his wife to behave the way married women used to generations back. Kinaya abuses his wife verbally and physically. He does not provide for the domestic upkeep. He coincs home at very odd hours of the night and still expects Mwavita to wake up and serve him. His confidence that Mwavita would always serve him whatever the time of the day is boosted by the notion he habours diat he is the patriarch of the household. This makes Mwavita feel that her human worth is being abused. When she is finally fed up, she tells him:

MWAVITA: Kama wanitazamia mimi kuingia jikoni saa hizi umekosea sana.

Oa mwingine atakayekubali huo utumwa. Mimi ni mkeo si mtumwa wako.

If you are expecting (hat I will go to the kitchen at a time like this, you are very much mistaken. Get another wife who can tolerate such slavery.

I am your wife, not your slave.

KINAYA: Mimi ni mume wako na ndiye mwenye amri kalika nyumba hii.

Lazima ufanye nisemalo. Usifikiri hiyo elimu yako na kazi ya mshahara imekufanya niiime sawa na mimi. Tangu zainani mabibi zetu waliwalii mababu zetu.

Vivyo hivyo lazima nawe unitii mimi.
I am your husband and I am the one who issues orders in this house.

You must do whatever I say. Don't think that your education and salaried employment qualifies you to be a man like me. Since time immemorial, our grandmothers have been obedient to our grandfathers.

In the same way, you must obey me.

MWAVITA: Sahau sana enzi za inababu zako. Hii ni karne nyingine kabisa.

Forget completely the era of your forefathers. This is another century altogether.

I is quite contradictory that Kinaya quotes tradition as a basis that wives should abide by, yet this is a modern society with its own different lifestyles occasioned by social dynamics of change. Mwavita even reminds him that although he insists that things should remain the way they were in the past, unlike him, their forefathers used to take care of their households. She tells him:

MWAVITA: Lau wataka turudie enzi za mababu nawe uwe tayari kuishi kama mababu walivyoishi... Mradi uujue na kuutimiza wajibu wako liapa nyumbani kama we mume k^eli walivyokuwa mababu zetu.

If you want us to live like our forefathers, you must be ready to live the way they used to. You must understand and fulfil your family obligations if you are really a man as our forefathers used to do.(p.3)

to irreconcilable differences, their lives are characterized by constant quarrels and it Mwavita who suffers most because the verbal and physical abuses she is constantly ^Jected to leave Iter emotionally wrecked. On top of all this, she has to fool all the ^ePenses in the house.
Ill most African societies, the only remedy abused wives have is going back to their parents in the hope that elders would come in and solve their differences to their advantage. This is the option Mwavita opts for when she is overwhelmed by the conditions she is being subjected to by Kinaya. However, she finds herself in a more precarious situation. Expecting a fair arbitration and severe reprimand for Kinaya, all the council of elders can do is to impose a paltry fine on Kinaya and decide that she goes back to him. Mwavita finds that she has no support. When she complains how much she suffers under Kinaya's unreasonable behaviour such as demanding for food at very odd hours, even her own grandmother is not sympathetic. She tells her that it is her wifely duty to attend to Kinaya's every need even when he does not provide for anything in the house. She tells her:

\[ \text{Hiyo ndiyo kazi yako kumpikia, bwanako na wanao. Hata kama mlevi nainna gani, lazima umpe chakula.} \]

That is what is expected of you, to cook for your husband and the children.

Even if he is a drunkard, you must give him his meal. (p.35)

\(^{11}\) It is obvious that what Mwavita's grandmother is telling her is how she has been indoctrinated to relate to her husband all her married life. She strongly believes that in damage, the husband has the upper hand and his wife should ensure that his wellbeing is cared for at all times. However, unlike her, Mwavita is living at a time when lifestyles have changed. There are so many household expenses to cater for, yet her husband who is earning a better salary than her, is not willing to assist, but expects her to finance everything. It is expected that Kinaya should understand the changing lifestyle but lie is "merely tapping the responsibility or just ignoring the prevailing demands of life..."
circumstances. He is just taking advantage of the situation, considering that lie is educated and living in a modern society.

After she goes back to live with Kinaya, it does not take time before life becomes unbearable once again. This time, it has finally dawned on her that she can no longer put up with him and she decides to go back to her parents for good. However, this is in no way a reprieve for her troubled life as more challenges still await her. Despite the fact that her mother is aware of the suffering she is undergoing in her marriage, she pleads with her to go back for the sake of their child. She tells her:

MAMA MWAVITA: Waswahili walisema mama wa kainbo si mama, mwanao utamwachia kulelewa na mke atakayeolewa baada yako!

There is a Swahili saying that a step mother is no mother, so you will leave you child to be brought up by the woman who will be married after you! (p.38)

It appears that besides the worry Mama Mwavita has about her grandchild being mised up by a step mother if Mwavita leaves Kinaya, she also harbours hidden fears that Kinaya will marry again, meaifing her daughter would lose out her position in marriage. She fears maybe this will spell doom to Mwavita's future life as her place in marriage will have been taken up by another woman.

Religious leaders are not left behind in preaching to her how sinful it is to leave one's husband. Once she finally decided to leave Kinaya for good, a priest comes and *tells her;*
The law of (he church says the husband and wife become one after (hey marry.
And God said in (he Bible that no one should separate the two whom God has
brought together to be one body, one spirit. Even you Mwavita, you have no
authority to break away from Kinaya. You are breaking the law of God.

This is when the religious morality comes into question. The padre, being a man of God,
should be partisan enough to consider the both sides and address the situation in a neutral
ground. However, his compromised position is understood when it turns out that he is an
acquaintance of Kinaya and also a close companion in drinking places. It is likely that
what he is preaching under the guise of religion is an issue that was deliberated upon
during a drinking session. He is an emissary of Kinaya.

Mwavita then takes a personal decision to live her own life with her son outside
marriage. However, when slff goes to court to seek custody of her child, her plea is
dismissed on flimsy and questionable grounds as it turns out that the law enforcers are
also Kinaya’s best friends. She turns to women movements who pupport to light for
women’s rights but they are of no assistance either. In the end, Mwavita is forced to
relinquish the custody of their son to Kinaya.

The impotence of these women movements is reflected by Njogu (2006) in Zilizala.

^m ^e piay, Atieno is a house girl in the household of Udenda, the mayor of Zilizala.
knda showers her with various gifts which she accepts in the false belief that they are
tokens of appreciation for her good work. She in fact regards him as a father figure. One jay, when the rest of the family is away, lie turns against her and rapes her. When she tearfully narrates the ordeal to her mother, she consoles her that they would report the matter to HAWAA - Haki za Wanawake Africa (Movement for Women's Rights in Africa). At the end, nothing comes out of it and no redress is forthcoming. In their state of poverty, the family cannot pursue the matter any further and Atieno is left to nurse the anguish of the abuse alone.

The reprieve for Mwavita comes when it finally dawns on her that the only way she can salvage her life is resolving to live her own life outside the shadow of any man. It is interesting to note that it is only after she opts for independent life that she prospers materially and can finally afford to lead a life full of bliss.

The social discrimination Mwavita is undergoing is not spared Tenge, her sister. Tenge gets pregnant while still in school and the father of the child disowns the pregnancy. She is expelled from school, only to receive a very crude welcome at home. Both her father and brother insult and physically assault her, labeling her a prostitute. Ironically, the brother who is so incensed by her sister's predicament has impregnated three girls in the neighbourhood and got away with it. Tenge's only reprieve in life is when they finally team up with her abused sister and both resolve to lead independent lives. Mwavita and Tenge are now living stress free lives and even the men who initially made their lives fall apart are even envious of their achievements. Kinaya is making frantic efforts to have Mwavita back. There is a lot of literary irony when Kinaya, who so-pathetically mistreated and abused Mwavita, is now keen on having Mwavita back. Having aizoel his folly and also the fact that Mwavita is able to manage her own life even
better than when they were living together, he now begs for forgiveness and pleads that Mwavita goes back to him. The language he is now using depicts a man who is humbled and desperate. He implores:

Mwavita huna msamaha? Nimekuja hapa siku nyingi nikiomba msamaha.
Kosa langu limekuwa kubwa lisilosameheka? Rudi nyumbani Mwavita.
Nitakupa na kukufanyia lolote utakalo. (p.89)

Mwavita, can't you forgive? I have come here severally asking for forgiveness. I las my mistake become so big such that it can not be forgiven? Just come back home Mwavita. I will give you and do for you whatever you will desire.

It is hard to believe that this is the same Kinaya who had treated Mwavita as if he held the key to her life and destiny. His unparalleled arrogance was so pronounced as if he was convinced Mwavita would not survive outside his shadow. After now realizing that Mwavita has moved on to better prospectives in life, he is now making belated frantic efforts to have her back.

The emerging scenarfo is captured by Davies (1994) in her poetic prophecy of what follows after such a fall-out and the truth finally dawns on the errant former husband:

After the quarrels and the departure and the signing of formal separation papers, the wife puts up a Hag of independence, cleans out his presence from her space and defines a new identity for herself. Not long after, the husband, who had moved miles away moves back into the general neighbourhood and seeks indirectly to re-assert his
removed presence in a series of scenarios that have to do with money, the children and so on. The woman has a choice to relate to him in order to ensure some continuity in their general well-being. But there are other possibilities... (p.80)

In Kinaya's case, he cited their son Juma as one of the reasons why they should make amends. However, Mwavita reminded him that he took him away from her when she desperately needed him. She told him he can continue keeping him but he would later make his own decision when he comes of age. She was simply not ready for any sort of association with Kinaya any more and she demonstrated this when she resorted to physically remove him from her house when he last came calling.

As Alcoff (1989) observes, when women become feminists, the crucial thing that has occurred is not that they have learned new facts about the world but because they come to view those facts from a different position; from their own positions as subjects. This difference in positional perspective does not necessitate a change in what are taken to be facts, although new facts may have come into view from the new position. It just signifies that the point of departure, that point from which things are measured, has changed.

In the light of this insight, not that Mwavita was not aware that she was living in an abusive marriage. She was suffering as the alternative options she could take had their own customary and social implications, as well as their price tags. However, it finally came to a point when she could no longer tolerate the circumstances she was living in and had to make a choice. It was then that she decided that she had to opt out, despite the consequences, which luckily turned out to be in favour of her decision. This is the time she is able to savour her personal freedom.
It appears that this kind of new-found freedom is unique especially for someone who had been under marriage and gender bondage. Nwapa (1986) illustrates this when she narrates the story of Amaka, an innocent rural girl. Amaka was brought up in a religious family and internalized all the virtues of morality that go along with this kind of upbringing. It was thus no wonder that when she was coming of age, she had a burning ambition to get married so that she could prove to the rest of humanity how a model marriage should be. What stood between her and her dream was just a home she could call her own, a man she would love and cherish, and children to crown the marriage. She eventually got married but soon realized that a woman has no 'home she can call her own' unless she builds a house for herself; and that loving and cherishing a man means 'subjugation, self-abnegation, and humiliation.' This is after her husband started to abuse her physically at every slight opportunity.

Amaka dually opts out of marriage at a tender age and heads to the city. There, she makes friends of reputable statuses, including an Alhaji and a Catholic priest and within no time, she is a woman of means. With time, she becomes the mother of twin boys the priest has fathered. But when the father decides to leave priesthood and marry her, she is adamant in her refusal. She has already made up her mind that she will never entertain married life again. She explains her decision thus:

I don't want to be a wife any more, a mistress yes, with a lover, yes of course, but not a wife. There is something in that word that does not suit me. As a wife, I am never free. I am a shadow of myself...I am in prison, unable to advance in body and soul. I don't want to go back to my 'wifely' days. No, I am through with husbands, (p.67)
Amaka's life can be questioned especially from the point she gets to the city. It is obvious that she engages in immoral practices to sustain herself and even acquire property. However, before she can be condemned, some facts must be considered. She had been a well behaved girl and an obedient wife before the society proved to her that her morals were no longer in demand. Feeling dejected, walking out of a marriage she had striven so hard to keep was her last act of desperation. She had no option but to pay back to the society with its own coin. After all, it was a rotten society if the list of her most prominent clients included religious leaders, including the catholic priest who fathered her twin boys.

When Mwavita's and Amaka's marital trials are brought under scrutiny, some observations become open to diagnosis. One, they have put in their best and sacrificed immensely to sustain their marriages. However, their husbands did not reciprocate in equal measure. Men's laxity in meeting marriage expectations could be attributed to the patriarchal arrogance that women would always be there for them as they have few options anyway. Finally, the marriages had to collapse. To the women, it was a monumental loss of emotional investment.

That Mwavita and Amaka finally decide to shun the institution of marriage for good should not be misconstrued to mean that marital life has no place in the society. On the contrary, it is one of the most important pillars which guarantee human continuity and gender harmony at its best. However, it is also a very sensitive institution where both Partners must play their roles with dedication and mutual respect. As the old adage goes, 'two to tango.' That is why when men don't keep their part of the bargain, the When feel utterly betrayed and misused and the damage this causes becomes
irreparable. In most instances, it has been observed that it is the female partners who do their best to keep the marriage working even under some of the most difficult situations. That is why when it fails, they opt to take charge of their lives independent of men. It appears that the cruel experiences they undergo at the hands of men make them shun the institution of marriage and are not willing to give it a second chance.

All in all, the contemporary playwrights are presenting a modern woman who is liberated enough to take vital decisions as regards her life instead of letting social and marital institutions determine her destiny towards whatever direction they may deem as suitable for them.

4.4 GENDER ROLE-PLAY DYNAMISM IN ZILIZALA

The women characters as portrayed in the contemporary drama exhibit a common trait in their resolve to fight for the restoration of their human dignity and recognition of their basic human rights. Similar determination like that exhibited by Mwavita is also demonstrated by Angela in Zilizala (Njogu, 2006). She is the wife of Udenda, the town mayor. Despite the prestigious title she has as the mayor’s wife, Angela is undergoing a psychological trauma. To the outside world, Angela may seem a contented and a privileged woman whose every other need is taken care of by the mayor husband. On the contrary, Mwavita, she is left to take care of all the domestic responsibilities since she does not even bother to go home any more. This comes to the light through
Karo ya sluile nalipa miye, inavazi miye, chakula miye, maradhi...

Tulichonacho ni jina "Madam, mke wa Meya au Thai's the Madam, the mayor's w//e...nikipita mitaani" (p.31)

It's me who caters for the school fees, clothing, food, medical...

What we have is only the name, "Madam, the mayor's wife or That's the Madam, the mayor's wife...as I pass along the streets."

Udenda's excuse for neglecting his family is that he is a public figure who is very busy solving other people's problems. According to him, Angela can take care of the family needs while he is engaged in more serious issues. The irony is that he does not provide the finances. At the same, the issues he talks of are neither beneficial to the community nor to his immediate family. The mayor has insatiable appetite for public resources, lie is a notorious land grabber who evicts the poor masses from informal settlements which lie in turn sells to multinationals for astronomical profits, lie also has a siring of mistresses whom he expensively supports.

Udenda expects Angela to be an obedient housewife who never sees any evil. However, Angela is not pfpared to suffer silently under the financial burden of taking care of the family when her husband is busy entertaining city women. When she defiantly confronts her husband, he is alarmed by the sudden change he sees in her. lie does not understand how a once docile wife has changed to one who can talk her mind so candidly. According to him, she has become stubborn unlike before. This prompts him to complain:

Naona uineanza kumea pembe. Pembe ndefu kama za faru.

Zamani ulikuwa mtiifu. Siku hizo, kila nilipokwambia unyama ze
ulinyamaza; kila nilipokwambia fanya liili au lile uliTanya; kila
nilipokwainbia ubweke ulibweka...(p.29)

I can see you are starling to grow horns. Horns as long as those of a rhino.
You used to be obedient in the past. Those days, if I told you to keep quiet
you would. If I told you to do something you would. If I told you to bark you
would...

Udenda is being nostagic about 'the old good days' when his word was law unto itself.
He would give orders to his wife who would in turn follow them without question. He is
now alarmed that this very same wife has turned to be inquisitive and strong-headed.
However, Angela reminds him that times have long changed.
She tells him;

Mlaumu Mwenyezi Mungu kwa kunipa macho, masikio na ulimi.
You may as well blame the Almighty God for granting me eyes, ears and the
tongue, (p.21)

Although Angela is speaking for herself, her sentiments are representative of the
contemporary woman. She lws the eyes to see the injustices that the male dominated
society is subjecting her to. At the same time, she has ears to hear the patriarchal
conspiracies against her. And more importantly, she has the tongue to speak out her mind
agitate for her rights as a woman and a human being.
Angela is not only tired of the mistreatment her husband is subjecting to their family
also He evils he is committing to the general public. As a result, she is at the forefront
enlightening the masses who have been duped by their mayor for a long time. A case
"it is when IJdenda is convincing people to vacate a certain locality because, as he
wanis them, an earthquake is about to strike the area soon. However, the truth of the matter is that he has already struck a lucrative deal to sell the parcel of land. Angela tells people to stay put and not to fall for the trick. She also exposes other unethical deals that Udenda has been involved in such as selling drugs to school children.

It appears that it takes more than verbal battles for women like Mwavita and Angela to win these domestic battles. In her case, Mwavita is forced to physically light off Kinaya to keep him away from her house. Similarly, Angela's separation with Udenda comes after an ugly public brawl after she can no longer tolerate his waywardness and publicly exposes him. It is from this point that she joins hands with other like-minded citizens to bury his political career.

That Mwavita and Angela can stand up against their husbands is a deliberate attempt by the playwrights in the contemporary drama to demonstrate that women are now more enlightened of their rights and are more focused in the struggle for their liberation. This is coining as an unexpected development in a society whose social institutions have thrived under the dominance of male patronage all along. Angela's sudden change of attitude is unveiled when she boldly questions her place in the domestic arrangement as well as the roles she is supposed to play. She is also prepared to sacrifice her marriage by publicly exposing the evil in her husband who has been using his position to fleece the people he supports to lead. This new development implies that women are no longer passive victims of men's excesses. Their strategies in struggle and resistance continue changing time and the pace of societal development. This counters the line of critique which supposed that in gender role-plays, the woman is always the eternal victim of male domination. While it is true that women have been victimized intellectually, emotionally
and physically by men in the past, it is also true that the contemporary woman is challenging male machinations and is keen to win her freedom back.

The boldness in the woman is also exhibited by Mama. Udenda is busy telling people to vacate town because an earthquake is imminent. His intention is to sell the land once it is vacant. Unknown to him, there are people who are aware of his evil scheme. Angela, his wife, is one of them. Mama is another one. As Udenda is trying to convince people to vacate, Mama goes to him and narrates a litany of the many evil deeds the mayor has committed against his people. She confronts him thus:

Wewe ni Meya Udenda, sio? Bila shaka wewe ni Udenda. He! Ama kvveli dunia ni rangi rangile: Ni wewe uyiyeagiza akina mama wapigwe marungu kwenye bustani ya Tusafiane, hadi mama mmoja mja mzito akavya. Unakumbuka?

Ni wewe uyiyanuru mama wafanya biashara wafukuzwe mjini eti wanauachafua mji na kuwanyima watalii sherehe zao? Ni wewe, Meya msifika, uyiyanuru vibanda kuteketezwa? (p.9)

You are Mayor Uddhda, isn't it? You are Udenda, without doubt. True, the world has its own colour: You are the one who gave orders that women be beaten up at Tusafiane park until one pregnant woman miscarried. Do you remember? You are the one who ordered that businesswomen be chased out of town on the pretext that they were dirtying the town much to the chargin of the lourists's comfort? Are you the one, the famous mayor, who ordered that market stalls be razed down?
This brave confrontation attests to the fact that women in contemporary drama are liberated to the extent that they can speak out their minds without fear of victimization. Mama has the guts to narrate to the mayor the many ills he has committed against the society. She is now wondering what change he has undergone to be so caring about the same people he has misused in the past to warn them of an earthquake. In simple terms, she is telling him that he can no longer continue fooling people because they now understand his habitual lines of trickery.

By emphasizing the degree of dynamism in gender role plays and the radical dimensions they are acquiring, the contemporary playwrights are calling for re-evaluation of familial responsibilities. While Angela is complaining that her husband has abdicated his domestic tasks, in *Kilio Cha Haki*, Mwengo, Lanina's husband is complaining that due to her wife's activism, he has become the "wife" of the house. He is the one who takes care of the household, attending and cooking for the children, cleaning the house, and so on. He complains that this is against their traditional norms. On the other hand, Angela in *Zilizala* is complaining that her husband has forsaken his family in the pretext of his mayoral engagements. Mwavita in *Mama ee* laments that she shoulders all domestic responsibilities despite the fact that her husband even earns more money than she does. In highlighting these new developments, the playwrights are emphasizing that contemporary society defies the social boundaries demarcating and defining gender role-plays. There is a reversal of roles where the gender divides find themselves obliged undertake certain responsibilities hitherto associated with the other divide. All roles across the two domains can be equally performed by both members from the two gender divides as circumstances may demand.
5. LENDER ROLE-PLAY DYNAMISM IN *SUDAN*

In *Sudana* Mazrui & Njogu, (2006) expose some of the positive and negative attributes of the female character. In this play, the authors assign a woman, Sudzungu, the honour of being the captain of a ship which incidentally wrecks in the high seas. After the mishap, they are rescued by a ship captained by Amerigo, a white man, who also orders them to offer menial services for the duration they are on board. This captain proves to be brutal, oppressive and a chauvinist. Although his initial gesture was that of offering assistance to a stranded crew, the rescues are soon to learn that they are like captives. After some time on board the new ship, Sudzungu appears to abandon her crew and takes sides with the oppressive captain of the new ship. She unashamedly watches her crew, including her own sisters, being raped and murdered. She even has the audacity to ask Sudana, her mother, to give in to sexual advances she is repeatedly receiving from the white captain. This makes Sudana regret why she even was unfortunate enough to mother Sudzungu in the first place.

In contrast, there are female characters among her crew who are principled and strong-willed. Sudana, Sudzungu's mother is torn between granting sexual favour to the captain who is threatening to kill her daughter in the event she does not, or giving her saving her daughter's life. Finally, in the defense of her honour and dignity, she tries and watches her daughter die. Sudana's gesture can be seen as the epitome of personal sacrifice a person can offer to safeguard one's dignity and honour.
The heroine in *Sudana* is Shunie. Although she is just an ordinary crew member in the all-black Zinji, she becomes the unsung custodian of the other members's rights after it emerges that Sudzungu, who is their captain and naturally the one expected to take care of their well-being has deserted them. After the black crew is rescued, the initial arrangements are that the crew of Amerigo will assist in repairing Zinj and once it is seaworthy, she and her crew will sail their way. However, this is not to be for Sudzungu, the captain of the ship has not only abandoned her crew for the special position she has been bestowed upon on the new ship, but she has also written off her ship and does not make any effort to have it repaired. She in fact endorses that it be destroyed after it is discovered that some wood on Amerope is rotting and needs to be replaced. Destroying Zinji becomes the easy alternative although there is enough supply of wood on board Amerope. That Sudzungu does not object to Zinj being destroyed is an indication that she does not mind being on the new ship for as long as it would take. It is Shuine who vehemently tries to stop their ship being destroyed:

MZANJI 4: Mbao, Bwana nahodha. Mbao nyingine zimeoza lniku chini

maji yamcanza... "

Woi! Woi! Woi! Leo tumekufa...

Wood, Mister Captain. Some of the wood underneath is rotten and water has started... Woi! Woi! Woi! Today we are as good as dead.

Damn it! *(Kimya)* Maya, tuna mbao za kutosha kuziba ubovu wowote.

Haya, twendeni chini. *(Anaanza kuondoka)*

Damn it! *(Silence)* Fine, we have enough wood to fill up any rot

Let's go down. *(He starts leaving)*

(Shuine anas age a mbele haraka haraka.)

A-a That’s it. Wait a bit. (Muzungu stops.) There this this ship Zinji which we are tagging along. It is just unnecessary weight. It is better we use some of its material to repair our own ship. We can keep the wood and other material we have in case we need them in future.

(Shuttle steps forward very fast.)

SHUME: Hapana Bwana Nahodha! Hii ni mashua yetu, na masikilizano yetu ni kwamba huko mbele mtatusaidia kuitengeneza ili tuweze kuendelea na njia yetu, peke yetu...

No Mister Captain! This is our ship, and our agreement is that later in the journey, you will assist us to repair it so that we can go our way, 011 our own...

*S*

SUDZUNGU: Aah! Mwache huyu afande! Mashua yetu!

Mashua yetu! Mashua yetu tutaifanyia nini bila msaada na ukarimu wa Amerope? Amerope ikiangamia si nasi tumeangamia?

Na Zinji nayo si imeangamia?!

Aah! Leave this one alone Captain! Our ship!

Our ship! What can we do with our ship without the assistance and generosity of Amerope? Should Amerope wreck, would we not perish also?
And even (he Zinji will also have perished?!

AMERIGO: Haya! Haya! Hatuna wakati wa kupoteza hapa. Kiongozi wenu ameshatoa kauli yake. Haya kazi ianze! Move it!

Fine! Fine! We don't have time to waste here. Your leader has already given out her verdict. Let work begin. Move it! (P.20)

I( appears as (hough Sudzungu does not take her responsibilities as (he captain of Zinji seriously. The fate of her crew depends on the ship in the hope that once it is repaired, they are free to chart their own course. That she can sanction that it be destroyed is an implication that she has no future consideration for their well-being. The import of her role as an irresponsible leader can be taken as a deliberate attempt by the playwrights to show thai in the contemporary society, bad leadership can be associated with the male and female gender alike. Traditionally, what is depicted mostly in literature is failure in leadership of the male gender who are often presented as despotic, repressive and corrupt. In progressive literature therefore, human attributes are not static and keep on acquiring different dimensions.

Like many other retrogress^Tve leaders, Sudzungu finally pays for her sins with her life after her own crew, totally fed up with her shameless betrayal, eventually behead her. To show how much they resent her, Shume organizes for a special dance where her head is Presented as a gift to her white friends. Intially, the dance, which has been much Publicized, was innocently explained to the whites as simply traditional so that it does not tract their suspicion about its motive since Shume is well aware that Sudzungu was 'darling. As the dance progresses, they eventually get the shock of their lives when a is represented to them and upon opening it, find inside it the head of Sudzungu.
When Shuine is doing all this, she is aware her action would attract reciprocal punishment from the brutal whites. That she still goes ahead is enough testimony that she has made peace with herself to bear the consequences. She is shot dead by the whites but not before she nearly succeeds in beheading Amerigo. This marks the beginning of a revolution where the members of the black crew fearlessly confront their white tormentors who back away in fright. Despite her death, Shuttle's heroism has given the impetus for a new beginning aimed at ushering a new era of liberation for the oppressed blacks.

In a nutshell, gender characterization in the contemporary drama has produced women who are out to revolutionize the imaging of the female gender in a positive way. These are the women Hooks (1990) describes as 'the contemporary women, frequently viewed as active rather than passive, powerful rather than powerless, vocal rather than voiceless, productive rather than unproductive members of the society.'

46. CHALLENGES PACINCKENDER RELATIONS'S INTERPRETATIONS IN Kfr>NTrHN/KpoRKY LITERATURE

There are several challenges that complicate the positioning of gender inter-relations in literature. One of them is the tenacity of cultural norms in the social life. In the dynamism of gender literature, the women characters challenging the previously entrenched cultural norms which the male gendered society has all along revered as rosanct are what Ogot (1989) categorizes as the 'strange brides'. Ogot chronicles the cultural hurdles women have to surmount and the numerous individual sacrifices
licy have to make in the arduous struggle to gain recognition in the society. This is out of the fact that the society is still not accommodative of liberal and assertive women and those who attempt to make a mark on important social issues are considered intruders into what has all along considered a male domain.

In her story, the strange bride she introduces is Nyawir. The patriarchal society views her as strange because she has taken the initiative to bring about a revolution in the livelihood of her people by agitating for the growing of new crops such as tobacco as a cash crop, as well as rearing of cattle, to supplement the perpetual dependence on fish as the staple food and source of income. She is a strange bride because she is intruding into sensitive social sphere in which such important initiatives should be fronted by men. The society feels that such vital decisions should be arrived at by men who are supposed to be looked upon as custodians of the realm of wisdom while women are expected to be outsiders. This is taken to have been the trend since time immemorial. Her husband, Owiny articulates this viewpoint when he tells her:

"As the roots are the strength of a fig tree, giving it life and energy, our forefathers are the strength of our nation, because Were Nyakalaga (their god) put all the commandments which govern our hands in their hands. That is why when we try to alter our customs, we are breaking the commandment of our god; and we are destroying the earth," (p. 122)

Clearly, this is a society which is not prepared to embrace change. It is a society in which "things are expected to be done the way they were done by the forefathers. What is not openly revealed is that the social structures that are being quoted to have been laid by the forefathers favoured a patriarchal system where the woman was not expected to
play any significant role in the issues that were of importance to the welfare of the society. The woman was under restrictive bondage of socially imposed norms which did not accord her maneuvering space to assert her own identity as a human being with equal rights as those of the man.

Ogot attempts to counter the male myth of a traditional woman who is enslaved by social dictates. She identifies her female protagonist with the determination to change retrogressive cultural practices and viewpoints. At the same time, Ogot injects optimism that the female gender is countering these challenges with determination geared towards success. In Nyawira's case, she is not cowed nor does she give up her advocacy for change. She tries to convince her husband that things have inner generative mechanisms of changing with time. She argues her case thus:

Generations succeed one another. What an elder did when he was a child, his own child will one day try to do in a better way. That is what development involves. It is the increase in knowledge which builds a society, (p. 123)

Another challenge facing gender role-play analysis is the literary assumption that the social discrimination that women are subjected to is purely a projection of male excesses on the passive women. This is the situation that women in progressive literature are striving to address. However, in spite of the assertiveness and industry demonstrated by the female character in the contemporary Kiswahili drama in Kenya, the playwrights are also adverse to the fact that literature has the obligation to offer an ideal reflection of social human life in a given society and time.
There has been a tendency in the traditional critiquing to present the unblemished image of the woman in an effort to vindicate her being the habitual victim of the patriarchal order. The contemporary artists are keen to demonstrate that she is also capable of exhibiting negative human attributes as would be expected of any human being. One outstanding feature of gender role-play characterization in the contemporary phase is that the male characters are living up to their reputation in their crave to seek to be domineering. This attitude can be attributed to the fact that their lengthy domination of all core social institutions has given them the false sense of illusion that it is God-given. It is out of this background that the thematic orientations in the middle phase of drama revolve around debating the negative attributes of the man as the oppressor against the disadvantaged position of the woman as the victim. This point of view should be re-evaluated in the critique of the Kiswaliili drama as the contemporary playwrights have demonstrated that the both divides have the capacity to either oppress or liberate. As a result, an area of critique which needs to be accorded due interrogation is the contribution of the female character towards her social stigmization.

In *Mama ee* for examine, Mwacholi presents Tenge as a girl whose world has come tumbling down. She has been impregnated by a man who desires no further association with her, and has been expelled from school. At home she doesn't find any solace. Instead, she is assaulted and ridiculed by her father and brother who place her predicament squarely on her irresponsibility. When the circumstances surrounding her situation are addressed, there is no denying that she has her fair share of blame to shoulder. She is underage and still in school and she is not expected to engage in sexual affairs.
When Kimani (2003) looks into the issue of women oppression in Kiswahili literature, she cites some of the abuses meted on women as denial of their rights, forced marriages, absence of inheritance rights and being disowned by their parents, especially fathers. For instance, when analysing Kezilahabi's (1971) *Rosa Mistika*, she focuses on two main characters, Zakaria and his daughter, Rosa. Kimani condemns Zakaria as sentimental and frivolous especially for banishing Rosa from home. Whereas the abuses Kimani makes manifest are true, she does not demonstrate how such abuses are discerned and perceived, especially when weighed against social and parental expectations. While we do not condone injustices directed towards any gender divide, it is our considered opinion that we should also note that Zakaria's "erratic" actions are provoked by Rosa's unbecoming character and her undesirable lifestyle. She is a girl who is well known in the community as of loose morals. This social notion has the counter effect of bringing shame to herself and her family. She also goes to the extent of inviting her boyfriends to their family home. As a father who is living in the shadow of yet to be liberated cultural norms, Zakaria can't help but feel being insulted. To him, Rosa has not only brought shame to him as a father, biff also to the entire household and community at large.

This analytical gender amnesia is earlier reflected by Ndungo (1985). While condemning the brutal traits of Maksuudi, Maimuna's father, which finally make her lice home, she takes lightly the fact that it is Biti Kocho, motivated by personal malice, who plots her escape. There is also the evil scheming Kazija who engages in commercial sexual relationship with Maksuudi and his son, with the ultimate aim of having them meet in her house and therefore break up their family bond. Maimuna is finally rescued
by Kabi, a poor and physically challenged fisherman who eventually showers her with genuine love and they eventually end up being happily married.

It is therefore important to note that when analyzing character attributes, we should appreciate the fact that the faces of both the man and woman have changed and new trends have emerged to challenge some of the traditional beliefs which were previously assumed as permanent features in any analytical work touching on gender issues. Gender role-plays are changing and each gender divide is acquiring new attributes not associated or expected of it before. As Kardiner (1951) puts it, "...the female has now acquired some of the social attributes of the male and the male those of the female...Their roles are reversed." (p.348)

CONCLUSION

The contemporary drama is demonstrating that the social institutions which have all along sought to curtail the freedom of the female gender are still struggling to retain their fading relevance. However, the playwrights are keen to highlight the fact the modern woman has shed off her laid-back image and is aggressively lighting for her rights. This is mostly witnessed in the institution of marriage where the male gender is still keen to continue exploiting the cultural tenets which accorded it more rights and privileges than the female gender. In this respect, it has been observed that the payment of bride wealth plays a major role in making men believe that it enables them to own their wives, who are expected to be at their beck and call all the time. However, women are opposing the notion of servitude in marriage and are demanding equal rights and mutual respect.
in marriage. That women are agitating for equality in marriage is demonstrated by the fact that they are even opting to lead independent lives when their spouses are not reciprocating in sustaining the marriage. Women are therefore not only vocal in safeguarding their rights in marriage, but are also actively involved in public ventures in an effort to eliminate social ills for the good of humanity.

At the same time, due to the changing nature of economic trends, women are also agitating for a revolution in familial roles. The message they are putting across is that due to their increased participation in the public domain, familial roles should be a shared responsibility undertaken and performed by all.

The study has also found out that gender attributes are changing between sexes. This means that the strong and the weak, as well as the positive and negative traits are to be found in all divides of gender. This new development demonstrates that gender attributes should be analysed from a neutral ground with a clear notion that human behaviour is not predictably static. This implies that affixing gender traits to previously assumed trends is a literary misnomer as they are increasingly becoming reversed and intertwined. Acquiring balanced gender behavioural trends should therefore be purely based on circumstantial literary evidence.

In the next chapter, we interrogate the implication of literary language on gender identity and role-plays.
CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 LANGUAGE USAGE AND ITS IMPLICATION ON SOCIETAL VALUES ON GENDER ROLES AND IDENTITY

INTRODUCTION

Language is the universal medium of communication. It is also the avenue through which we can understand the mind and soul as it communicates specific messages and emotions from the two coordinating centers. Language systems reflect, and to some extent, are shaped by the functions which it serves. Language can therefore be used as a yardstick in understanding people's way of life, human attitudes and the social values determining the nature of inter-personal relations. In this way, it gives an insight into the way a people's culture is shaped and transmitted.

Lanser (1981), in what she labels the poetics of point of view, delineates three relationships that operate in the interpretation of a discourse. These are the status, the relationship between narrator and the speech act: contact, the relationship between narrator and audience, and stance, the narrator's relation to the discourse content or message. The notion of point of view subsumes the mode of presenting and representing speech, perception, and event: the identities of those who speak and perceive, their relationship with one another and with the recipients of the discourse; their attitudes, uscs, personalities and beliefs. The relationship between the sender, receiver and essi. He is often subtle and complex and may change the very nature of what is
communicated. This is because messages transmit not only propositions but images of the sender and receiver and attitudes towards utterances. The message and the delivery imply the inner relations between the speaker and the intended recipient since the very act of enunciation penetrates every verbal utterance. The message is the point at which the tensions between the originator and recipient crystallize.

The choice and use of language exposes hidden forms of intentional behaviour. The way people produce language depends enormously on unspoken culturally shared knowledge of social conventions that are in play when language is used in a given context. The meaning of a given utterance is a function of its production according to certain norms applied under particular conditions. Many formal aspects of speech can be explained when aspects of communicative situations are taken into account. In other words, integral to the understanding of a given verbal act is knowledge of who is speaking to whom, for what purposes, and within what kind of inter-personal relations. This is why part of the concern of feminist critical linguistic analysis has been to uncover asymmetries and inconsistencies in the way language is used. In the wider societal view, language can be used as a social tool to interpret gender inter-relations. This is because language goes in tandem with the changing nature of these relations.

The use of language in given historical circumstances is in turn a function of social ideology. The speaker's identity is usually determined by the social hierarchies and roles in a particular cultural community. The speaker's age, social position and class are for identity status. It is conventional among communicators that the receiver should decide how much weight to give a message, what kind of point of view to assume the speaker's communicating, and how to interpret the message according to the image s/he
lia fashion of the speaker's identity. The speaker asserts his identity by ensuring that the speech activity is understood and it carries its intended illocutionary force. Identity includes such aspects of social status, gender, marital position, sexual preferences and so on. Of these categories, gender is the most universally central to linguistic activity and is also central to cultural communication because of the importance gender distinctions play in everyday life.

Sex differences therefore permeate the use of language and condition the reception of discourse. Alongside other social identifiers marking relationships of a textual personage to the dominant social class, sex is important to the decoding of narrative voice. From a critical linguistic perspective, ideology normally describes ways in which what we say and think interact with society. An ideology therefore derives from the taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs and value systems which are shared collectively by social groups. A central component of the critical linguistic creed is the conviction that language reproduces ideology. Because language operates within its social dimensions, it must, as a matter of necessity, reflect the existing social ideology. And when the ideology in existence is that of the particularly powerful social group, it is said to be dominant.

Dominant ideologies operate as a mechanism for maintaining asymmetrical power relations in society. Since language can be used by the dominant group to reinforce this dominant ideology, then language needs to be interrogated as a specific site of struggle. In other words, by highlighting insidious discursive practices in language, the oppressive practices themselves can be challenged. The critical rationale concerning the relationship of language and ideology is that dominant ideologies are ingrained in everyday discourse. They become rationalized as the ideal parameters about the way
tilings are and the way they should be. A process of naturalization takes place to the extent that people are often no longer aware of the hierarchies and systems which shape their social interaction. The conventions for a traditional type of consultation embody assumptions which treat authority and hierarchy as natural, meaning those in disadvantaged social positions should comply and co-operate.

There is a controversy over the relationship between language and gender which hinges on the degree to which one can say that the system of language projects sexist bias. One side of the debate views sexism in language as inherent to the system itself, and considers that by using a system which is intrinsically biased, speakers and writers construct the inequality that exists between men and women in the society. The other side asserts that sexism is encoded into language, either consciously or unconsciously, by users of language. In this way, linguistic practices will tend to reinforce and naturalize sexist divisions in the society. This is particularly inherent in a society which is organized in a patriarchal order. This is a symbolic order in which men simply have power over women. Closely related to the concept of patriarchy is the notion of androcentrism. Coates (1988: 15) described androcentrism as a male-centred world-view wherein male activities are evaluated positively and female activities negatively.

On her part. Spender (1980:142) contends that by a straightforward act of linguistic appropriation, men have constructed a supremacist social position which oppresses and excludes women. She says:

It has been the dominant group - in this case, males - who have created the world, inverted the categories, constructed sexism and its justification and developed a language trap which is in their interest, (p.73)
Spender observes that through control of language, men are able to exercise their control over women. She makes a direct connection between this type of linguistic domination and the existence of patriarchal order. She further observes that the chain of reasoning involved in the argument is that man made language, language controls reality, men control reality and hence men control women.

In Kiswahili drama, language usage has been varying according to different forms of societal organizations which have been largely determined by the existing cultural norms and other social conventions. For example, the language used in the epic, especially religious epics, was meant to instill obedience and loyalty to the womenfolk as a way of ensuring that they performed their domestic and marital obligations to set social standards. In the formative phase, the language, especially that used by the young generation, was liberal as were their lifestyles. In the middle phase, the language reflects the patriarchal nature of the society. It is the man who speaks while the woman listens, obeys and acts without any debate. However, in the contemporary phase, language usage between the two sexes is acquiring radical dimensions, just like the gender relations themselves. This is a social plnfte where the woman has become liberal and is fighting for social equality in a society hitherto controlled by men. As such, she is more vocal and expressive. In this era also, breaking with the tradition, there are women who are using Ul'savoury language against fellow women, a trend which is showing the narrowing 'titularies of sex differentiations. However, instances of men using derogatory language Kanist fellow men are rare except in situations where the relationship is between a ^""i and a subordinate.
5.1 A GENERAL OVERVIEW ON LANGUAGE AND GENDER INTER-RELATIONS

Language analysis is among the core components of any thematic analysis of a literary work. The essence of the interrogation of language used by a certain gender divide or associated with various characters across the gender divide is that it harbours hidden codifications as concerns how a specific gender divide perceives its own identity and self-esteem, as well as the societal values it attaches to the other gender. It can also be used as a yardstick in determining each gender's capacity to evaluate itself, accept its designated status in society or challenge it. This is out of the belief that language, being a deliberate creation of the artist, can have deliberate artistic manifestations intended to demean, extol some human virtues, or exhibit various degrees of self-esteem or submission of a particular character.

Language is pre-eminently a social institution and as such, it constitutes and is constituted by culture that is revered in a certain society. Because of the pervasive nature of language, it is legitimate to ask what a particular language tells us about the culture from which it is derived. Being a cultural institution, it affects social patterns of behaviour both at individual and societal levels. As such, a people's language reflects the distinctive patterns of social interactions. At the level of the individual, it affects social behaviour as regards how individuals relate amongst themselves. A people's language enacts their patterns of social interactions, levels of status, preferences and obsessions, instance, in the English speaking West, feminists have discerned the relationship between the male-centeredness of the language and women's secondary status. They have
argued dial the so-called generic use of 'man' or 'mankind,' intended to denote both man and woman, is not actually generic but another way of promoting the male superior status through language.

According to Wa Mutiso (2005), there is close correlation between language and sexism. Sexist language embodies, affirms, or reinforces discrimination against women or the patriarchal subordination of women by men. In the social orientation, sex refers to the biological distinction between man and woman while gender is used to describe socially constructed categories based on sex. One universal feature easily identifiable with sexism in language is its bias in favour of men. Women are often described as lazy, passive, less intelligent, easily fooled, betrayers, and petty. This is why they are identified with the responsibilities which are deemed to be of little significance to the societal well-being. On the other hand, men are depicted as more intelligent, have greater mental perseverance and moral strength, and more authoritative. As a result, they can be entrusted with the more challenging tasks which determine the society's destiny. Consequently, concepts of superior value are categorized as masculine while those of inferior value are categorized as feminine. Men are thus depicted as doers and women as recipients.

In this regard, men have continued to achieve their sexual dominance by limiting (he range of women activities to the domestic sphere of house keeping and child rearing, and V extension, limiting the range of women's linguistic activity to home. Ibis has contributed immensely towards their role in the preservation of linguistic tradition.

Oilman (1986) observes that (he nature of most languages tells us more about the structural hical structure of male-female relationships. Consequently, in a society where
gender is a primary organizing principle, gender distinctions are reflected in the language. In many societies, language patterns are part of the social norms which are determined by the nature of socialization processes. Furman (1985) posits that people are not only born into language which moulds them, but any knowledge of the world which they experience is itself also articulated in language. This implies that in the social organization where socialization is undertaken along gender divides, sexual differences are reflected in the language usage. She explains the inseparability of language and the socialization process by giving her own experience when she narrates:

My past was my mother. I could hear her voice as she spoke to me in a language any female could understand. Although I did not want to be like my mother, I later realized that I was not like my inother-
I was my mother, (p.27).

What Furman is emphasizing is that for a daughter, sexual differences that underlie the functioning of the symbolic order in the society are influenced by the maternal relationships while those of the son take after paternal patterns. In this case, sexist language is thus universal. "

F.instein (1988) asserts that power is constructed in and through language, which criss-crosses the realm of the entire social organization. Language as a discourse transcends the splits between objective and subjective, as well as empirical and normative. In essence, language embodies a standpoint. Discourses focus on the importance of context within meaning on the open textureness of reality. Language can therefore express multiple standpoints, multiple truths or multiple facets of knowledge. It  

Therefore follows that if we accept the premise that at the heart of the language lies the
image that the artist aspires to articulate and represent, then interrogating the nature and implication of the language used becomes important in decoding the specific leaning of a given text.

According to Gilbert (1985), language is a process of cultural artifice that both distances and defines culture, nature and humanity, and embodies the bodily difference through which each human being first confronts the fundamental sexuality of his or her own identity. In the same regard, sexual difference is translated by, and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic difference to power, language and meaning.

Feminism embraces the view that the material effects of images and words and the oppression or resistance which can be associated with them. There are feminist theorists such as Robin (1978) who maintain that language is closely bound to sexuality and that in most cases, it is deliberately used to demean feminine virtues while extolling those of the male. They posit that there is a long masculinist tradition that identifies female anatomy and attributes with a degrading linguistic orientation. At the same time, it has been observed that the historical raflge of male linguistic features suggest that not all variations on the theory of language function to confirm masculine sexual definitions. That is why feminist critics question the correlation between the sex of the author and how gender issues are articulated in the text content. More specifically, the literary debate generated Quires around the question of if the sex of the author determines the sexuality in the text.

Feminist criticism began gaining foothold when literary critics began to note the 'Hiled and secondary roles allotted to fictional heroines, women writers and female Critics in relations to literary study. Some of the fundamental questions asked were how
women were represented in the men's literary texts, the relationship between textual harassment of women and the oppression of women in society, if there was a tradition of women's writing, and if both the women's and men's writings were marked by gender connotations.

Farr (1991) notes that the repositioning of women in language can only occur when we reverse, interrupt or dismantle the cultural mythologies which position women in language in negative ways by challenging how the gender language is structured. This emanates from the general concern that the word for women has negative connotations while the male term implies authority. As a result, language does not merely name male superiority; it produces it. That is why it has been argued in some literary quarters that the only way we can have gender friendly language in literature is through having many female writers in the literary arena who can be specific about what norms of language patterns ought to be altered. The argument here is that women's issues are best articulated by female writers.

There has been a concern that women writers' contribution has been minimal in the campaign for gender equality. Mule (2007) is not only particularly concerned about the marginal numbers of women playwrights, but also equally alarmed that the few women artists even advance the male agenda at the expense of those of women. In the Kenyan situation however, the contemporary Kiswahili playwrights who have introduced new Perspectives in gender role-plays, especially in the empowering of female gender, are mostly men as female playwrights are not as many. These male playwrights are what Walton (1994) describes as 'men of goodwill' who have attempted to transcend the allegory in an effort to resolve the problem of gender in ways that run counter to
the biases embedded in the previous gender literary tradition. They have made statements of authorial intention with regard to the role of their female characters, statements which indicate a commitment to gender reform. They are aware that because women have been exploited and oppressed, they have the obligation to present a picture of a strong, determined woman with a will to resist and to struggle against the conditions of their present situation. These women characters provide a model of womanhood in the roles they perform as harbingers of a new social order.

The question about the gender, authorship and the text content has also been raised by Liesley (1985). She is of the opinion that when analyzing gender issues, some of the pertinent issues that are looked into include how the text(s) represent women, how it says about gender relations and how it defines sexual differences, and more importantly, how the language used reflects gender inter-relations. These may assist a literary critic to understand what it means to be a woman or a man, and encourage them to re-affirm or challenge existing social stratifications which are aligned along gender lines. However, she also emphasizes that the women's experience is better articulated by the women themselves because they hold the first-hand account of the experiences they undergo.

Besley raises this out of the concern that there is a current literary criticism that has sprung up in response to the analysis of the patriarchal culture. Its main concern is that woman's writing as a mode of resistance has not been consistent.

Hi what Moi (1985) inventively terms 'gynocritics', in the debate of the woman as a writer, she should be encouraged to speak for herself even if she has to do it within a Patriarchal culture. Moi identifies a female sub-culture in which fiction by women institutes a record of their experiences. She defines three separate but overlapping
phases which can be cased to define the historical progression women's writing lies undergone. These are the feminine, feminist and the female. The feminine phase run from 1840's to 1880. In this period, women wrote mainly in imitation of masculine models, but with distinctive feminine concerns. During feminist era (1880 - 1920), iliey formulated specific feminist demands and protests against the discrimination of women's writing in literary analyses. From 1920 onwards, women's writings have been moving increasingly towards self-discovery and the exploration of an inner space of female experience.

While gynocriticism long maintained that all writing was gendered, in practice, feminist critics applied this insight only to women's writing. Few feminist critics were analyzing men's writings as a gendered literary discourse. Instead, they looked for the representation of women in male texts. Such a perspective poses a literary distraction as it may imply that gender will continue being interpreted as femininity. Maryam (2011) observes that gynocriticism is vulnerable to the Utopian expectation that all works by women would be ideologically 'correct' in all spheres, that they would completely be free of class, race, ethnic or sexual prejudice. To avoid such generalizations, she is of the opinion that gender studies need to be defined within a feminist framework that insists on a continued analysis on men and women alike, and a commitment to the continuing struggle against sexism.

Besley's (ibid) sentiments are shared by Ha (1982) who asserts that the African woman has a huge task to liberate herself through sustained literary engagement. She specifically points out that the woman writer in Africa has to present her position of African women in all aspects. She maintains that despite the global lide of gender re-
awakening, (lie African woman still reels under so much injustice in the family, in the streets, in political organizations - discrimination reigns supreme. She appeals to women to work for their own future and overthrow the status quo that has been a hindrance to their advancement. Like men, they must use literature as a non-violent but effective weapon. She says women must no longer accept the nostalgic praise as African mother, who, in his anxiety, man has confused with 'Mother Africa'.

What Ba is saying is that in their idealization of African womanhood, most African writers belie the actual position of women in Africa and that through the Mother Africa trope, they mask the subordination of women in the patriarchal socio-political systems of African societies from which they do, indeed need to be liberated. However, there seems to be remarkable consensus among gender and feminist scholars that women writers and activists have an important role to play. Lordes (1991) captions this when she says:

The future of earth may depend upon the ability of all women to identify and develop new dimensions of power and new patterns of relating across the gender differences. The old designs have not served us. The old patterns, no matter how cleverly arranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, recrimination, lamentation and suspicion, (p. 34)

The fear Lordes raises is that the social structures which have been put in place to advance the women's cause, which have been largely initiated by men, are not comprehensive enough to address the woman question. As a result, they lack the Omen's initiative and may not adequately address the women's experience. At the same time, it should be pointed out that if feminist criticism is characterized by its social
commitment to the struggle against all forms of patriarchy and sexism, it should be reiterated that the very fact of being female does not necessarily guarantee a feminist approach. It can therefore be argued that not all texts authored by women on gender exemplify anti-patriarchal commitment. A female tradition in literature or criticism is not necessarily a feminist one. The debate here is that there may crop up a general confusion between feminism and female writing. It is not a given fact that woman-centered writing has any necessary relationship to feminism.

De Beauvoir (1949) asserts that in usage, feminine represents nurture, and female nature. Femininity is thus a conventional idea about women. It is the general perception of behaving in ways conventionally thought to be appropriate to the female gender. Feminine attributes are thus those associated with women. This means that one is not born female or male, but is nurtured to be one through cultural socialization. Femininity is therefore a cultural construct and as such, it is a virtue which can be manifested in both female and male. On its part, patriarchal oppression consists of the imposition of certain social standards of femininity on all biological women, in order to make believe that the chosen standards of femininity are natural, hence not debatable. As such, a woman who refuses to conform can be labeled both unfeminine and unnatural. Feminists therefore conclude that though women are undoubtedly female, this in no way guarantees that they are feminine, unless it is a view expressed by those who want them to conform to pre-defined patterns of femininity.

According to Heath (1982) the author's gender does not reflect sexuality in a given context since stereotypical codes and patriarchal images are used by men and women authors like He concludes that it is the inscription of the feminist subject positions in the text,
which can be expressed by men as well as women, which can determine their potential bias in favour of a particular gender divide, and not the author's biological sex. In defense of his argument, he asserts that there are men who write about issues pertinent to feminism from a sympathetic vantage point even with the male privileges they enjoy within a literary system that has historically marginalized women, lie notes that as a social discourse, feminist criticism draws its rationale from outside criticism itself and as such, it can be argued that not all books written by women on gender issues exemplify anti-patriarchal commitment and many indulge in the kind of patriarchal stereotyping feminists want to combat. This is especially so when it is considered that if feminist criticism is characterized by its commitment to the struggle against all forms of patriarchy and sexism, it then follows that the very fact of being female docs not necessarily guarantee a feminist approach. As a literary discourse, feminist criticism derives its position from outside gender orientations.

The debate is thus misunderstood when it is positioned on the premise that only women can theorize their oppression because they have representative experience. Although language is indeed linked closely with sexuality, it should be decoded to uncover the discursive production of all its connotations in order to pinpoint whose interests they support so as to locate the contradictions which may render them fundamentally conservative or open to change. In this regard, it should be understood that femininity and masculinity are cultural constructs which are not fixed and may acquire different dimensions in different cultures or from one generation to another.

Mitchell (1992) explains how sexual identity is acquired by repressing norms which
emphasize that sexual identity is not synonymous with anatomy. The feminist clarion should therefore define a human being outside the confines of sex. This will discourage those who consider their biological sex as superior from dominating over the other sex they consider inferior.

5.2 LANGUAGE AND GENDER INTER-RELATIONS IN THE MIDDLE PHASE

INTRODUCTION

A careful analysis of language usage in Kiswaliili drama reveals that the language patterns are determined by a multiplicity of socio-cultural factors. These range from the existing traditional values of the day, the age factor, and the nature of existing social inter-relations. These determine if the language used is derogative or respectful, authoritative or subdued. In the circumstances where social structures uphold patriarchal ideologies, derogative and authoritative language has largely been used by male gender against the female gender. It is aimed at demeaning the social status of the woman as way "affirming her social position as a human being who is inferior to man. In response, the language used by (he female gender towards their female counterparts is respectful and subdued. Derogative language is usually sexist as it is specifically used negatively against particular gender.
It is to be understood that the most derogative and sexist language against the female subject is witnessed in the middle phase of Kiswahili drama. This nature of language reflects the nature of existing social inter-relations. The society is highly patriarchal where the male gender is the prime mover of the core social issues while the woman largely remains on the margins of the mainstream of social processes. This social scenario dictates that the views of the woman are not sought nor is she expected to liberally air them even in matters bordering on her conscience. When she has to speak, there are strict behavioural codes she is expected to adhere to and as such her language must exhibit guarded levels of humility, subservience and obedience. The female voice is hardly heard except in the guarded circumstances when what she is expressing is what is desirable to the audience. The women in this literary era are therefore denied social agency in deed and speech.

5.2.1 SEXIST AND DEROGATIVE LANGUAGE IN THE MIDDLE PHASE

The language connotations employed by the playwrights in the middle phase is deliberately skewed to depict how the female gender is held in low esteem and disregard by its male counterpart. In this phase, the language used by the male gender is demeaning, just as the social roles that the community reserves for women. In the middle phase, traditional values are the major determinant of gender relations and language use particularly. The playwrights capturing this era present a society which is largely patriarchal in nature and the man is above reproach regardless of whatever utterances he make especially against the female gender. The male institution is responsible for
determining what and how important social as well as domestic responsibilities are to be determined and the woman is simply a passive participant. The man expects total loyalty from his spouse and children and more so, his daughters. As such, the language he uses on them is not only disrespectful but also authoritative enough to reflect his elevated superordinate status against the subordinate position of the woman.

The language used in the middle phase of Kiswahili drama by the male gender against its female counterpart is therefore sexist and derogative. Kitsao (1980) in Ijası expounds on how men expect to be revered such that the language they use keep their wives always on their toes. One example is Nyamawi, one of the main characters in the play, he has just concluded a private consultation with his sons, Chengo and Katana. He was trying to convince them to marry second wives because there is pending wealth which was acquired after one of his daughters was married recently. However, they both decline, citing high cost of modern living. In turn, he asks them if they have any objection should he decide to take another wife for himself. They give him their blessing on the understanding that they would not be expected to shoulder the extra baggage.

Nyamawi is excited after the meeting for reasons of his own. Probably, he has been secretly harboring the idea of getting himself a fourth wife but was at cross-roads on how the rest of his household and especially his sons would interpret his move. He has won them over and he is obviously in high spirits as he calls out to his wife. A slight delay by his wife to answer his call is enough to work him up and he admonishes her thus:

Ei, nanina gani mwanamke wee! Wataka niwe kama huyu Ngoloko
ainbayc akimwita nikewe mlaa m/ima utasikia? Walnnya ka/ i gani
liuko inayokuziba masikio? (p.3)
What is wrong with you woman! You would like me to be like that
Ngoloko who whenever he calls his wife everybody in the
neighbourhood hears? What are you doing which is impairing your
hearing?

His wife comes rushing in fear, wondering what on earth she has done wrong. On arrival
and obediently taking a seat, she is yet to learn that her woes are not yet over.

*Keti kama mwanamke, ala! Adabu yako iko wapi?. (p.4)*

Sit like a woman! Don't you have any respect?

What transpires after all cools down turns out to be nothing to warrant such an
alarm. Nyamawi was simply summoning his wife to explain to her his intention to marry
a fourth wife. Perhaps he was creating a scene to instill fear into her to forestall any
chances that she may raise any objection. In the discussion that follows, the wife's
language is guarded and carefully calculated. For example, when she learns that her
husband intends to marry Riziki, a young and an educated lady, she has her reservations.
However, instead of summoning enough courage to tell him (hat he is day-dreaming
because the two are not compatible since she can not simply allow herself to be married
by an old man like him, (he nearest she comes to speaking out her mind is when she
wonders whether the young girl would accept him with her level of education.

Nyamawi is not treating his wife as an equal partner in their marriage, but rather as
*a* child who should merely listen. When he consults her, it is only a mere formality as
the fact is that lie has already taken a satand on the issue he has in mind. His consultation
's there just a matter of information on the line he expects certain premeditated events to
kke. This kind of a scenario is not a new phenomenon in the African societies.
Molokamine (1990) observes that in Botswana, there is a popular saying that "mosadi ke ngwana wa monna"—a woman is the child of the man. He says that the ideals of what patterns of behaviour and activities deemed appropriate for women and men are largely social and cultural in orientation and are acquired through the socialization process whereby the woman learns that she should be subservient to man from a very young age.

The cultural indoctrination in the upbringing process is more evident among women and their daughters and it appears the male gender knows this too well and is poised to exploit it to the maximum. It is expected that the mother should prepare her daughter in the required mannerisms which will enable her fit well in the society and more importantly, know how to relate with her seniors, especially those of the opposite gender. In *Vast*, Chande, Riziki's father, has made up his mind to marry off his daughter to Nyainawi. His decision is reached mainly after the consideration that Nyamawi is wealthy enough to pay for her daughter's dowry. He is however aware that it would not be easy to convince her to go along with the idea as the age difference between the two is too obvious. That is why he decides to engage the services of his wife as he is well aware that she can use the language her daughter can understand better. As expected, the language the mother employs conforms to his wishes. She starts with telling her how lucky she is to know who she is getting married to. In other words, all she is telling her is that the tradition requires that the parents have the sole mandate of determining who she should be married to. However, when Chande formally breaks the news to her daughter about the impending marriage he has already arranged for her, he is taken aback when Riziki does not give him straightforward answers to affirm her excitement to the proposal. In fact, she displays signs of disapproval. This makes him think his wife had failed in her
duty to adequately prepare their daughter for this most important occasion. As if to assure her husband that she has done her part in preparing their daughter to be obedient, she asks her leading questions for her husband's benefit:

Riziki nilikwambiaje mimi unapoambiwa maneno na babako?

Riziki, what have I told you when your father talks to you? (p. 19)

This is supposed to reassure Chande that in deed she has in the past told Riziki that she should always adhere to whatever her father requires of her. She then goes ahead to convince her to accept the proposal her father is putting forth, assuring her that she herself does not find anything wrong with it. She tells her:

Nilipodokezewa maneno hayo na babako sikuona ubaya wowote na sioni kwa nini wewe ulete pingamizi. (p.20)

When your father hinted to ine about the issue, I did not find anything wrong with it and I don't see any reason why you should dispute.

Being satisfied that she has played her part to perfection, she now turns to reassure her husband that she is convinced that their daughter will raise no objection to being married by Nyainawi.

Nina hakika atakutii huyu Riziki. (p.20)

I am sure Riziki will obey you.

It is also worthy noting that Chande habours the same degree of low esteem for both his daughter and wife. From them, he expects his orders to be followed without opposition or debate. He has made up his mind that his daughter will be married by Nyamawi. He is getting impatient as he expects that his wife should have finalized the issue with their daughter. The tone of his language is that of a man who is not used to
being engaged in a lengthy debate on what he considers an issue in which lie alone should have the final word. When he notices that Riziki is not giving the degree of commitment to the marriage as he would expect, his speech turns menacing and he wants the debate ended the soonest possible.

Hebu niyafanye mafupi hivi. Riziki, utakubali kuolewa na babake Kesi au sasa hivi wewe na liyu inamako —(p.20)

Just let me make it short. Riziki, will you agree to be married to Kesi's father or else now you and this mother of yours...

The major reason why Riziki is hesitant to give a straightforward answer is simply because although she is under extreme pressure to show obedience to her father, she is equally faced by a very sensitive position because inwardly, she is opposed to the idea. This is why she has to carefully weigh the kind of answer to give which will not attract the wrath of her father. She coyly states that she has no objection. Her father is relieved abit. But then he does not end the talk that easily because his ego is still bruised due to the fact that it has taken him that long to solve the issue. To avert further trouble, it is his wife who answers the questions directed at Riziki.

CHANDE: Na waleta pingamizi gani lena? Hebu nikurudishe mahali
tulipokuwa tumefika. Riziki utanisikiza au sasa hivi nipawakishe mo...
Then, why are you arguing? Let us go back to where we were. Riziki, will you listen to me or not or else I ....

MAMA: Haa baba Riziki. (Kwa Riziki)...Riziki mwanangu. Msikize babako.
Usinimwagie zani.
Haa Riziki's father. (To Riziki). Riziki my daughter. Listen to your
father. Don't cause me trouble.

CHANDE: Haya nikuulizeje basi: Riziki atanitii au la?

Then let me ask you. Will Riziki obey me or not?

MAMA: Nina hakika atakutii mwanao Riziki huyu.

I am sure your daughter Riziki will listen to you. (P.20)

The reason why Riziki's mother is intervening to moderate the charging atmosphere is because she is aware that both herself and their daughter will suffer her husband's wrath should Riziki happen to invoke anger in Chande. She is thus labouring to go into the extra lengths to appease her husband as she is well aware that lie would not entertain anything short of his expectations. Here, the inequality in gender relations is displayed in the sense that although she should be wielding some measure of respect as an equal partner in the marriage, her husband accords her the same treatment as their daughter. Chande's authoritative language reflects the aura of a man who views himself as the undisputed head of the household.

In a nutshell, the perception of the playwrights in the literary society in the middle phase is that being a woman is a position which is defined in relation to the way she serves and obeys the male. Since the man has assigned himself the sole prerogative of decision making, he does not take it kindly when his orders are subjected to any slight debate. His wish is law which must be must be followed.

According to Butler (1990), the cultural socialization process which defines gender identities begins from the time children are born when they start being indoctrinated into different roles on the basis of their sex. This is why the low esteem in which the female character is regarded by the old male gender is also evident among the young generation.
John is supposed to be Riziki's fiancee and it is expected that a strong bond of mutual respect exists between them. However, this is obviously lacking when John insists to have his way and engage in sex with Riziki against her wish. Riziki is simply declining his advance out of principle. After all, John should learn to respect her wishes if he really values her. However, he sees nothing of substance in her argument and even insults her as a person of little intelligence. He tells her:

Sijui ni nani kakujaza kakichwa kako kadogo kwa mawazo ya
kitoto na ya kiupuzi namna hiyo. Mwanamke imeandikwa sharti
ajinyenyeyekeze kwa yule- yaani mimi unayenitazamia kuwa mumeo wa
baadaye, elewa dada wee! (p. 13)

I am yet to understand who has polluted your small head with such childish nonsense. It is written that a woman should humble herself to the one she is looking forward to be married to in the future.

This you should understand clearly.

Again, this disrespect in John is evident when explaining to his friend, Raymond, the hard-line stance taken by Riziki when he describes her as 'jisichana lenye kichwa kama andazi' (An ugly girl with a head that resembles a bun).

Although John is still a young man, he has grown up in a cultural setting where the man feels and acts superior over the woman. That is why he is already practicing male chauvinism despite the fact that being in the league of the young generation which is expected to be pragmatic, he behaves just as the men in the older generation would.
5.2.2 THE EMERGENCE OF WOMAN'S VOICE IN THE MIDDLE PHASE OF KISWAHILI DRAMA

As already diagnosed, an appraisal of language usage in the middle phase reveals that liberal and authoritative expression of opinion was a manly affair. The woman's voice was systematically suppressed. However, there are isolated instances in this phase where female characters exhibit social dissent through the language they use. Such instances include where the characters' human endurance is pushed to the limit and despite the social conventions dictating the controlled way in which they should react in such circumstances, they break away with social expectations and discard the culture of suffering silently. These cases are exceptional in the sense that despite the fact that patriarchal tyranny is a deep-rooted socio-cultural reality in this era, women have been unable to counter it due to the many social obstacles placed around them. It is therefore a great act of courage for the few who act in defiance of these cultural norms in defense of their human rights and dignity.

Riziki in Uasi is one such woman who can be cited to have garnered enough courage to speak out defiantly against social injustices directed at her, and which she 'eels touches on a very sensitive faculty of her life; marriage and the resultant implication of her future life. A traditional marriage has been arranged between Riziki, a young educated girl, and Nyamawi, an old and polygamous man popularly known as Babake. Riziki also happens to have a young boyfriend, John. However, her parents,
especially the father, Chande, have disapproved of the relationship because John comes from a poor background. His preferred choice of a son-in-law is the wealthy old Nyamawi who is able to pay brideprice. Riziki has been opposed to this marriage right from the onset as she can not imagine being married to an old man who is her father's ageinate. However, she has been coerced and intimidated to assent to the marriage. As the only way out of the imminent reality of being married off to an old man against her choice, she turns to her boyfriend, John, and his friend Raymond, to save her from the ugly predicament. John and Raymond explore different viable options but they feel that Riziki's father is the biggest obstacle. Riziki's rebellion starts at this juncture. She sees no reason as to why another individual, including her own father, can determine the destiny of her life. She defiantly tells them:

RIZIKI: Babangu ahusikaje na maisha yangu? Mimi ni binadamu kaina yeye. Wakati ushapita wa wazee kwachagulia waume binti zao na wake watoto wao wa kiume. (p.26)

What does my father has to do with my life? I am a human being like him. The time when parents used to choose husbands for their daughters or wives for their sons is long gone.

At the end, Raymond suggests that the best way to save Riziki is to wait for the marriage plans to proceed and then snatch her away at the end of the ceremony. Although John agrees to the idea, he still feels that the plan should be executed in such a big magnitude to teach the conservative generation the changing realities of the time. He says:
JOHN: Mpango huu mzuri sana. Ingawaje, lioja nzuri ni laziina zizipishe hoja bora.

Kitu cha busara cba sisi kufanya sio tu kumnyakua Riziki kutoka mikononi mwa babake Kesi, bali vile vile kuionyeslia lii mijizee kuwa wakati umebadilika, na kwaniba kwenye mainbo yaposa na ndoa, wazazi buwa wasbauri tu. Hiari ya kuolewa liuwa ya msichana mvvenyewe. (p.28)

The plan is okey. However, good ideas must also give way to better ones.

It is not just enough that we only snatch Riziki from Kesir's father, but we should also show this old generation that times have changed, and that when it comes to engagement and marriage, parents are just advisors.

The consent to get married is the prerogative of the daughter.

It appears that John and Raymond should not have been so hard tasked to llnd a suitable way of showing the generational conflict of lifestyles as Riziki herself was later to do it in a big way. Elaborate wedding plans have been completed, with Nyamawi contributing generously towards them. The debacle is witnessed when the would-be newly weds are required to publicly affirm their commitment to each other. On his part, Nyamawi declares his readiness to marry Riziki. However, when it comes to Riziki's turn, the unexpected happens. She declines.

RIZIKI: Mimi sikukubali, sijakubali, wala sitakubali kuolewa na Babake Kesi.

I never accepted, I have not accepted, and I will not accept to be married to Kesi's father.

CHANDE: (Azozana na watu akitaka kumwendea mwanawe lakini anashindwa nguvu)

Mimi nitakubaliaje- mtoto wa kike huyu kuniasia?

(He struggles to reach his daughter but is restrained by the public.)
How do I accept that this girl can defy me?

MZEE: Riziki my granddaughter, I have never suspected you of unbecoming behaviour. I am asking you, does it mean that you don't want to get married?

RIZIKI: I will get married, but not by Kesi's father.

MZEE: Who will marry you so that even us can be in the know.

RIZIKI: A certain young man (She scouts the crowd) that one over there, he is known as John.

MZEE: Riziki, you have decided to defy your father and opted to be married by this young man?

RIZIKI: I am not defying my father, but I believe I preserve the right to choose the right husband for myself, (p.36-37)

No prodding could make Riziki change her mind. Reading the signs, her grandfather, who was incharge of the ceremony, had to abide by her wishes and amid jubilation of those in attendance, John and Riziki were wedded as man and wife.

Under the prevailing social conditions, Riziki's rebellion was one not expected. This is a closely-knit and highly patriarchal conservative society where men are the
undisputed decision makers. Parents, especially fathers, have bestowed upon themselves the final word on matters touching on the lives of their children and especially the daughters. It then comes as a big shock to Chande that Riziki can let him down in a matter of such immense importance like marriage, which he had all along believed had been completed and sealed. Deep inside himself, he must have been fretting how he would be able to counter the shock of being the laughing stock to the whole community. However, it was too late. He left in a huff, his manly pride having been shattered. Nyamawi too left in embarrassment.

It appears that the women who are vocal in the middle phase are safeguarding their rights in the institution of marriage. In Kike Kiwenza, Boke and Chahe have been married for a long time and have been blessed with four daughters. This happens to cause Chahe some discomfort as he yearns for a son to bequeath his inheritance. It makes him plan to marry a second wife and he has identified Robi, a beautiful young lady. Arrangements are at an advanced stage and Chahe takes Robi home to introduce her to his first wife, Boke, with the intention that the two would as well bond as co-wives. However, the reception they get from Boke is very hostile. She is particularly incensed with Robi whom she terms an intruder out to disturb the tranquility of their cohesive life. Chahe's intention that they would sit down and reach some understanding backfires as Boke would not entertain it. She rebuffs the gesture outright and dismisses any chance for compromise. She fumes:

BOKR: Ilakuna liaja ya kuclewana. Tuellecane nini ila nyinyi mmcesliaelenna?

(Kwa upole) Na ninawaomba mnifanyie hisani ya kuniondokea machoni pangu upesi. (Anamuashiria Robi, ambaye wakati wole huu amesimama
tuli anawasikiza mtu na mumewe). Litoe hili kahaba lako huinu ndani, tena upesi.

I don't see any reason why we should reach any understanding. What do we compromise about when you have already agreed among yourselves?

(Politely) And I beg that you grant me the favour of getting out of my sight, and the soonest possible. (She points to Robi, who all this time has been standing still listening to wife and husband talk.) Get your prostitute out of here, fast!


(Boke anamrukia. Wanashikana kupigana, bali Chahe anaingilia kati upesi na kuwatenganisha.)

(She reacts to Boke's words) A prostitute? Me a prostitute?

Tame your tongue you woman. What do you have as a woman which I don't have not to qualify from becoming Chahc's wife? A prostitute? Again I tell you be respectful. (Boke attacks her. They hold as they fight, but Chahe steps in and separates them quickly), (p. 14)

The drama here is between two women who are fighting for different reasons. Boke is incensed that Robi's entry into their home as her co-wife to be will definitely come with its own challenges and ultimately destabilize her marriage with Chahe as a result of the inclusion of a third party. It is this anger that drives her to hurl invectives at Robi. She calls her a prostitute. Robi takes it as a big insult on her person. To safeguard her dignity,
she feels compelled to give Boke a piece of her mind. She is aware that she is the root cause of all this when she consented to be married as a second wife by Boke, but she still feels she deserves some respect since, as she puts it, she has all the woman endowments Boke has. Although Boke is her senior in age and also deserves all the respect as Chahe's first wife, Robi feels she has gone overboard and is compelled to hit back if only to salvage her dignity.

5.3 LANGUAGE IN THE CONTEMPORARY PHASE OF KISWAHILI DRAMA

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary phase of Kiswahili drama has witnessed remarkable achievement of social liberty in several spheres of human life. However, it is still not safe to assume that the male gender has fully ceded its claim to symbols of authority and dominance. The relics of this mentality are still recurrent in most of the social sectors. Although significant strides have been made in dismantling social institutions which limit the woman's space in social participation, her liberation from social agencies which denigrate her status remains an ongoing process. Hence, the demeaning language used against the female gender is also to be found in the contemporary drama although in a lesser magnitude than the case in the previous phases.
5.3.1 AN OVER-FLOW OF DEROGATIVE LANGUAGE: TRANSITION FROM THE MIDDLE TO THE CONTEMPORARY PHASE

The language defined in masculine over-tones meant to denigrate virtues of femininity, usually associated with the middle phase, has been extended to the contemporary phase by male chauvinists who still believe in the preservation of patriarchal ideologies. These features demeaning the human worth and capabilities of the female gender are still operational in the contemporary phase even though gender activism has taken root. This implies that several spheres of social life, including the language itself, remain to be fully liberated from the tentacles of patriarchal conservatism. The social structures of patriarchy have been in existence for such a long time that they have been ingrained as part of the legitimate social order. Uprooting them would thus require concerted efforts as well as the elusive social goodwill from across the gender divides. This is especially so because the men would continue countering any perceived threats to the privileges associated with the elevated status they have been enjoying as the dominant gender.

In *Kilio Cha Haki* for example, this is evident in the way some of the male characters despise Lanina’s role in the fight for human dignity and gender equality. When Delamon is informed that Lanina has once again initiated another workers' strike, the words he uses against her are not only demeaning but also abusive. He blurts:

**DELAMON:** Lanina! Lanina tena!

*Iluyu mwanamke ni punda, hana fadhila,*

*liana shukrani*

*kama hay a wan i...* (p.66)
Lanina! Lanina yet again!

This woman is a donkey, she is ungrateful
she is never thankful
she is like an animal.

Delamon's sentiments are a reflection of how die society is still reluctant to accept and appreciate a woman's capabilities. lie finds it quite disturbing that a simple woman can still have the influence to organize a second strike even when she is no longer an employee on his farm. The derogatory language lie uses against Lanina reflects bis frustration as well as the low regard he has for women.

Another front where the male gender's use of language degrades the status of the woman is when it uses it to imply that she is of loose morals and can be easily exploited as a sexual object. This is the language used by a customer in the eatery where Lanina is now working after leaving Delamon's employment. The male customer enquires and is told about the prices of different types of food. He then asks Lanina how much she is worth herself. He asks her:

MTU WA 2: Na wewe mwenyewe, je?

Mbona umejitoa katika orodlia dada?

And what about you?

Why have you excluded yourself from the menu sister?

I-ANINA: Siuzwi wala siuziki kaka!

I am not 011 sale nor can 1 be sold brother!

MTU WA 3: Hapo umesema ukweli dada...
Lakini je mapenzi dada!

Mtu kama lnimi naweza kukupenda sana.

Unaseniaji dada!

(Anamshika Lanina mkono na kuanza kumvuta)

You have said the truth sister...

But what about love sister?

A person like ine can shower you with lots of love

What do you say sister?

(He gets hold of Lanina's hand and starts pulling her.)

LANINA: Nina munie wangu bwana. Usinisumbue.

I have my own husband please. Don't disturb me.

MTU WA 3: Si neno dada. Hata mimi nina mke, tena wawili!

It's not a problem sister. Even me I have a wife, in fact two.(p.57-58)

This conversation shows how men are still clinging to the belief that they are the dominant sex and they can still manipulate the female gender at will. These customers are not known to Lanina and as such, it is expected that they at least exhibit a certain degree of decorum the first time they meet her. They are not even aware that she is a fervent human right's crusader who happens to be working in this small eatery just because she could not withstand the mistreatment that she had experienced in her former station of work. She is working here because although the salary she is getting is meager, she feels more respected and has finally found her peace of mind. The men who are making advances to her imagine that she is just a cheap woman who can be enticed with as little as the equivalent of the price indexes 011 the menu. When Lanina respectfully tells them
that she already has a husband, one even brags that he intact has two wives. What he is implying is that to him, women are so ch‘ap that he can have as many as he wishes. Simply put, he holds women in low regard. The men are finally put in their place when Lanina tells them it is their kind of retrogressive thinking that is stalling the campaign for gender equity and social development. She informs them that women should be accorded their due respect because even in employment, they enjoy equal status just like their male counterparts. This takes them by surprise.

LANINA: (Kwa hasira) Hebu niache bwana!

Lini mtaanza kuwaheshimu dada zenu?
Lini mtazinduka mfahamu yakwainba kunyanyasa na kudunisha wanawake kunarudisha nyuma ukombozi wa wote wanaodhulumiwa?...(p.58)
(In anger) Please leave me alone!
When will you start respecting your sisters?
When will you be enlightened and realize that oppressing and underrating women is a drawback to the liberation of all who are being oppressed?...

Such a candid talk from a woman whom they initially mistook for a simple street woman leaves these men embarrassed. However, the significance of it all is that the contemporary woman is more enlightened about her human rights and is even more determined to fight for them.
Mama ee, there are several instances where the male gender uses calculated language imagery to show disrespect for the female gender or to emphasize how worthless a woman is. When Tenge is expelled from school for example, her father and brother address her in a language not expected of them. Her father laments that the money he has spent on her fees was wasted because although it was meant to finance her education, it was instead used to learn "prostitution". Both the father and brother descend on the hapless Tenge with both physical and verbal abuses:

BABA: Wacha nimfundishe malaya huyu apate kuregesha pesa zangu zote

   nilizopoteza ati karo ya shule, kumbe ni karo ya kujifunza umalaya.

   Let me teach this prostitute a lesson so that she can return all my

   money I lost thinking it was for school fees, when in reality it was

   for learning prostitution.

KAKA: Ana nini, amefanya nini? Mbona wampiga?

   What is wrong with her, what has she done? Why are you beating her?

BABA: Si limepachikwa mimba na George. Niambie pesa zangu nitazipata wapi?

   Na liilo George litainwoajana la shule?

   'It' has been impregnated by George. Tell me where do I get my money back?

   And will that George marry a school girl?

KAKA:(ATwa hasira anarukiafimbo na kumpiga Tenge) Nilikukanya na liilo George

   lako. Faida gani uinepata sasa? George anasoma bado na wewe je! Ulijiona

   umesoma sana husikii unayoambiwa. Hawara mkubwa we.

   (In a fury, he goes for a stick and beats Tenge.) I warned you against that George

   of yours. What benefit did you get now? George is still in school, what about
you! A prominent prostitute, (p. 12)

To her father, Tenge is no longer a 'she' but 'it'. Again, it is very unfortunate that both her father and brother can shamelessly call her a 'prostitute'. There is no denying that Tenge has made a mistake in over-indulging in love affairs while still in school to the extent that she even gets pregnant. However, there should be a better and respectable way of addressing the issue instead of publicly humiliating her by hurling all kinds of obscenities at her person.

The case where parents use derogatory language against their daughters is also reflected by Mazrui (1981). In *Kilio Cha Haki*, Lanina is actively involved in fighting for the rights of fellow workers who are being exploited by Delainon. In this venture, she is forced to interact a lot with men who are her comrades in the struggle. Her numerous engagements see her spend long spells away from home. This does not go down well with her husband and also her parents. Her father is particularly incensed that Lanina's lifestyle is an embarrassment to those related to her. On her visit to her parent's home, the father even disowns her and uses abusive words against her.

LANINA: Baba shikainoo!

Shikamoo mama!

Dad, I greet you!

I greet you mum!

MAMA: Lanina inwanangu! Aaaah mwanangu!

Wasiwasi gani uliyotuachia.

Njoo! Njoo ukae hapa.

*(Lanina amcuwau. Yeye na ha hake wanatazamana.)*
Lanina my daughter! Aaaah my daughter!

You have kept us in a lot of suspense.

Come! Come over and sit here.

(Lanina is confused. She and her father stare at each other.)

LANINA. Baba, mbona...

Father, why...

BABA: Baba? Umeseina nini?

Babako mimi?

Mimi sikuzaa malaya!

Father? What have you said?

You called me your father?

I did not sire a prostitute!

LANINA: {Kwa kustaajahu} Babaa!....

(Surprised) Father!...

BABA: Nimekwambia usiniite baba, husikii?

Ndiyo! Mimi sikuzaa malaya!

Wala sikuzaa wana wasaliti!

Sikuzaa binti anayetaka uume. (p.37-38)

I have told you don't call me your father, don't you hear?

Yes! I did not sire a prostitute!

Neither did I sire rebellious children!

I did not sire a daughter who aspires to be a man!
It appears that the society has misgivings with women who associate a lot with men. One thing that makes Lanina's father uncomfortable is the fact that her daughter is mostly in the company of men. These are usually men whom they partner in the liberation struggle. For somebody who does not understand what Lanina stands for, he can easily mistake her for all the wrong reasons. Again, the society thinks a woman's place is at home. That is why Lanina's father feels her daughter is taking over social roles designed for men, hence the allegation that she keen assuming masculine attributes.

The use of derogatory language is rarely associated with women amongst themselves as it is assumed that there is a common bond borne out of their shared oppression meted on them by men. However, in a twist of events, there are cases where women use derogatory language against fellow women. In Sudana, Sudzungu's ship wrecks in the high seas and her crew is taken abroad another ship captained by Amerigo, a white captain. This captain falls in love with Sudzungu's mother, Sudana. However, Sudana repulses all his advances. Ironically, her daughter Sudzungu, whose conception was illegitimate as she was conceived after a rape ordeal, steps in to convince her mother to assent to Amerigo's sexual demands. This makes her mother so furious that she curses:

SUDANA: (Kwa masikiliko) Sudzungu , kweli ningewasikiliza wnnangu wcnginc

nikaiharibu mimba yako. Niibilisi gani wcwc niliyckuznaL .Ni ralia
gani utakayoipata kunigeuza nialaya wa Wamerope? (p.22)

(In a angry lone) Sudzungu, I should have really listened to the advice of my other children and terminated your pregnancy. What kind of a devil did I give birth to? What kind of pleasure will you derive from turning me a whiteman's prostitute?
Sudana is incensed that her own daughter can go to the extent of trying to convince her to assent to the sexual demands of the white man. That she regrets that she ever gave birth to her implies the degree of hate and resentment she harbours towards her.

Another front where the contemporary woman feels insulted is when she is reminded that her place is in the kitchen when she is in fact looking beyond such trivialities. In *Zilizala*, Angela is forced to take care of the domestic needs because her husband, Udenda, who also happens to be the town mayor, has forsaken his family on the pretext of his many engagements. What irks Angela even more is that he takes pleasure in hurting her ego by reminding her that the task of taking care of the small family matters belongs to the woman while the man is out there engaged in bigger issues. Udenda harbours the notion that a woman's roles are primarily domestic. When Angela complains that Udenda has left her to run the family without any assistance from him, he tells her:

*Ililo ni jukumu lako. Ulezi ni kazi ya mwanamke. Kazi ya mwanamume ni kuteka na kulcta nyumbani.*

That is your responsibility. To bring up children is the duty of the woman. The duty of a man is to look for the resources, (p.26)

Udenda is degrading the woman in the sense that all she is capable of is taking care of the small family issues. According to him, it is only the man who is capable of engaging in big time social enterprises. That is why he thinks Angela should be comfortable at home waiting for the fruits of his big undertakings.

Derogatory language being used by men against their fellow men is also not common. However, there are some instances when it is used by men who are superior in
social status against their subordinates. For example, in *Kilio Cha Haki*, Delamon uses unpalatable language against his workers. When a strike on his farm is eminent, out of fear and uncertainly, he turns to his workers whom he vents his frustrations on:

DELAMON: Kimbo!
DELAMON: Kimbooo!

KIMBO: *(Sauti inatoka nje)* Yes-saaa! Comin-saaa.

*(A voice is heard from outside)* Yes-sir! Coming sir.

DELAMON: *(Kwa dharau)* Coming Sir! Coming Sir!

*(Akiwageukia Zari na Shindo)*

Kwa nini hamtafuti maboi wenye akili zaidi?

Foolish baboons!

*(In a demeaning voice)* Coining Sir! Coining Sir!

*(He turns to Zari and Shindo)*

Why don't you look for houseboys who are more intelligent?

Foolish baboons, (p. 10)

Delamon is an expatriate who is living off the sweat of the locals providing the bulk of the labour on his farm, yet he neither respects them as human beings nor appreciates them as his workers. He acts the imperialist who still thinks Africans are still a sub-species which is yet to coine fully out of its evolution cycle.
The contemporary phase of Kiswahili drama can be categorized as an era where women's degree of liberation in several social spheres can be quantified for a significant measure of achievement. Many of the social institutions which have been major obstacles in the campaign for gender equity are becoming more liberalized and accommodative of the fact that the female gender possess as much positive attributes as men. This level of women's achievement has been made possible by the degree of enlightenment which has enabled them to be aware of their basic human and gender rights. This has instilled in them a new-found confidence in their own capabilities to undertake social responsibilities at equal footing with their male counterparts. This new development in gender inter-relations is also reflected in the language structures.

In the contemporary phase of Kiswahili drama, the use of language by women as a literary tool of liberation and self expression as they counter the resilient spirit of patriarchy is more bold and pronounced. The woman in this era is more enlightened, liberal and vocal of her rights and does not shy away from using the language she feels make herself be understood when her basic fundamental rights are under threat, is largely so because the sustained struggle for gender equality has surmounted most of the obstacles placed by social structures in upholding the pillars of patriarchy. At the same time, the social pressures of modernity have given birth to a society in which the potential of the both divides of gender are exhibited at competitive levels. This
lias been given a major boost by the fact that in the even social arena, the woman has proved the capabilities in her to the extent that the man has come to endorse his recognition of her hitherto suppressed abilities.

In *Kilio Cha flaki* for example, Lanina has been suffering in silence for a long time under constant pressures especially from those close to her who happen not to understand that she has a mission to accomplish in the struggle against a myriad of social injustices. They are complaining that her constant escapades with the law and her involvement in activism for workers's welfare renders her incapable of executing her household roles as expected. Among the people she expects would understand her better is her husband, Mwengo. However, he too gets into the fray and starts complaining of the reversed roles that Lanina's lifestyle have forced him to perform during her absence:

**MWENGO:** Lanina, unajua ...siku liizi...

  Nakuona unachelewa kurudi nyumbani...
  Mimi ndiye mpishi siku nyingi...
  Ndiye ninayewalea watoto...
  Lanina, you know...these days...
  You have been coining home late.
  I am the cook most of the time...
  It is me who looks after the children...

**LANINA:** Na unaona ni makosa Mwengo?

  Wewe kuwatazama watoto wako?
  Wewe kuipikia jamii yako?
  And you think it is wrong Mwengo?
To look after your children?
To cook for your family?

MWENGO: Yaani... yaani si... si utamaduni wetu!

You know... It is not our culture! (p.32)

Lanina is aware that her social life is being restricted under the banner of archaic cultural norms which everyone around her, from her mother, fadier, and now her husband, are citing. She does not understand why these old-age cultural values should continue being a hindrance to women's liberation. She is well aware that it is a taboo to question an issue revered so highly by the society but she feels it is high time her stance about it was known. Unable to contain her feelings any more, she asks:

LANINA: Utamaduni! Utamaduni!

Utamaduni ni kitu gani Mwengo?

Kwa nini sisi tuwe watumwa wa utamaduni? (p.32)

Culture! Culture!

What is culture Mwengo?

Why should we allow ourselves to be enslaved by culture?

Lanina does not intend to be disrespectful to her husband and all she wants to tell liiin is that he should rise above these petty beliefs and focus more on important issues. She is pained that what she is doing out there is for the benefit of the whole community and her comrades such as Musa and Dewe appreciate what she docs, yet those who are closest to her and who should even be giving her moral support and encouragement are bogged down by retrogressive thinking.
Iii Kifo Kisimani, Nyalwe, (lie wife of the powerful Mtemi Bokono, is expected to be a loyal wife who should be supporting her husband in his administrative policies. Being the wife of the great leader, she is supposed to hear no evil, see no evil. However, her eyes are open enough to know that her husband's advisors are misleading him into believing that he is popular with the masses, despite the many injustices his administration is committing against them. She takes it upon herself to tell him the bitter truth in the hope that he can understand the reality and change his leadership style.

NYALWE: Mbona usibadili mienendo yako?

Why don't you change your lifestyles?

BOKONO: Mienendo gaiii?

Which lifestyles?

NYALWE: Uongozi mbaya! Waclia kutenda mambo yanayowaumiza watu.

Bad leadership! Stop doing things which make people suffer.

BOKONO: (Kwa sauli lliabiti) Napendwa sana lla watu wangu. Uongozi wangu ungelikuwa mbaya, watu hawangelikuwa wakinipongeza katika kila pembe ya Butangi.

(In a very firm voice). I am very much liked by the people. If my leadership was bad, people would not be praising me from all the comers of Butangi).

NYALWE: Unadanganywa. Unadangananywa na wanafiki unaowaita washauri waaminifu.

You are being misled. The people you term as your loyal advisors are misleading you.
BOKONO:  (*Akimnyoshca kidole*) Usitukane macho ila masikio yangu!

*(Pointing his finger at her.)* Don't insult my eyes and ears!

NYALWE:  Unadanganywa!

You are being misled !

BOKONO :  *(Sauti ikipanda)* Sidanganywi!

*(His voice now beginning to rise)* I am not being misled.

NYALWE:  Nakwambia hupendwi ila watu. Unadanganywa.

What I am telling you is that people don't like you.

You arc being misled.

BOKONO.  *(Sauti kali)* Sidanganywi! Na Nyamaza!

*(With a menacing voice)* I am not being misled. And shut up!

NYALWE :  Basi! Basi! Usinipasue masikio. Pongezi kipenzi cha watu! Lakini

kumbuka sikio la kufa halisikii dawa.

Fine! Fine! Don't split my ears. Congratulations the people's darling!

But remember who has a date with fate does not listen. (15-16)

Nyalwe is being extra courageous to summon enough guts and tell her husband the truth of the matter. Her wish is that her husband sees the truth and corrects where necessary so that the people of Butangi can have the kind of leadership they expect. He does not take her advice seriously, but is later to face due consequences when his administration is overthrown by a popular mass revolt. While he is publicly humiliated by being bound with ropes like a common criminal, Nyalwe is spared. The people behind the revolution understand not only what she stood for, but also how much she identified with the people of Butangi during the trying moments.
There is also the case of Udenda in Zilizala, a mayor who has been used to having his way all along. He has for a long time managed to fool the people of Zilizala that he is a champion for their welfare. At the domestic front, he leaves his wife to take care of everything without any material support. However, he is taken aback when he begins to notice rebellious tendencies in her. It is then that he complains that his wife used to be obedient, and would listen to him and do whatever he wanted of her without question. I Ic does not understand how all of a sudden, she has become rebellious.

The bone of contention between Udenda and Angela is that Angela has become more vocal and inquisitive. Just like Nyalwe of Kijo Kisimani, Angela is well aware that her husband is a leader not worthy the name. He is very corrupt and selfish. For example, while Udenda is telling people to vacate a certain area because a huge earthquake is just about to hit it, Angela knows quite well that his intention is to sell the land once it is vacated. Angela's 'rebellion' comes in because Udenda is aware that she knows too much for his comfort and she is even spilling the beans in public.

Angela: Kwani liili tetemeko ni la enco hili peke yake?

Ania ni tetemeko la kibinadamu? (Anacheka karna kwamba kuna kilu akijuacho)

Does it mean that the earthquake will only hit this area?

Or is it human induced? (She laughs as if she knows something more to it)

Udenda: (Kwa hasira) Fyata do mo lako! Ukaidi huu umeutoa wapil

(Angry) Shut up? When did you become this stubborn?

Angela: Si ukaidi bali nimepata sauti yangul Huwezi kuifilisisha wala kuididimiza tena. Kila kitu kina mwislio wake.
I am not being stubborn but I have finally acquired my voice. You cannot silence it any more. Everything has its own ending. (P.33)

Angela is speaking on behalf of the contemporary woman. What she is saying is that it has come a time when the woman's voice can no longer be intimidated. This signals a new era in the history of gender inter-relations when the male gender should no longer take the female gender for granted. It is no longer the time when the views and the feelings of the woman were suppressed by marital conventions which gagged her freedom of expression. Women are now more enlightened of their rights and are boldly fighting for them.

Mwavita in Mama ee has suffered in her marriage with Kinaya for a long time. She has persevered sustained physical and verbal abuses. However, it coines to a point when she realizes she has her own life to live. It is then that she throws all the caution to the wind and starts taking Kinaya head-on. One area of their conflict is that whereas Kinaya takes so much pride in their son Juma, he does not provide for his upkeep. His bragging makes Mwavita remind him in polite words that it takes more than just siring to bring up a child. She reminds him of the bitter truth that he even does not know how his son survives:

KINAYA: Juma ni mwanangu, hilo nina hakika nalo... Juma usimchezee, usicheze nayc kabus. Mtoto wangu hasal

Juma is my real son, that one I am sure... Don't joke around with him at all

He is my real son!

MWAVITA: Ati Juma mtoto wako! Mhh!

So Juma is your son! I see!
KINAYA: Mtoto wangu eeh, kwani ni wa nani? Tangu lini waiawake wakawa na watoto? Ulikuja naye kutoka kwenu? Nikikufukuza sasa hivi utatoka liapa wewe tu!

My son yes, or who else does he belong to? Since when women did have children? Did you come with him from your place? If I decided to chase you from here now, you will leave alone!

MWAVITA: Juma, Juma - unajua ala nini au anavaa nini?

Juna, Juma - Do you know what he eats or what he wears?

KINAYA: Si chakula tu na ngu. It is not just about food and clothing.


Stop being childish. Your child just in name. Just because you one day had your pleasure on me. That is the only thing that makes him be yours. You only know his happiness while all his burdens fall on me. I am the one who feels the pains of my child. Nine months through hell and at the end, you were not even there as I was in labour, only to appear three days after Juma was born. You are not even ashamed to say that in front of me.
Mwavita lias reached a point where she can no longer take Kinaya's nonsense lying
down. While she has all along raised Juina without any assistance from Kinaya, lie has
the audacity to show pride in him, yet he can not account for what he eats and what he
dresses. This is a message that the time when men took pride in massaging their ego
when talking about the children, yet they do not contribute towards their well-being, is
long gone.

Mwavita is also out to make it clear to Kinaya that she has equal rights to the house
they share. After one of their numerous quarrels, Kinaya decides to vent his anger 011
Tenge whom he accuses of plotting to ruin his marriage with Mwavita. When he attempts
to kick Tenge out of the house, Mwavita stands her ground in defense of Tenge and tells
Kinaya off:

KINAYA: (Amwendea Tenge) Tenge toka uende zako nisikuone hapa. Kisirani
mkubwa. Tangu uje liapa sina raha na inke wangu. Mimi nilikubali ukae hapa
kama dada yangu kwa kukuouea imani kunibe wewe luina imani wataka
nivunjia nyumha yangu. Toka joka kubwa la balaa! (Tenge asimama akilia
liana la kusema. Alaka kuloka lakini Mwavita amshika mkono na
kusintama.)

(He goes to Tenge) Tenge get out and go away because I don't want to see
you here. You are just a big nuisance. I have had no peace with my wife since
you came here. I accepted that you stay here as my sister in trust but then
you me not trustworthy as you want to ruin my family. Get out you
cursed serpent (Weeping, Tenge stands up speechless. She is about to gel
out but Mwavita gets hold of her hand and stands up.)

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MWAVITA: Tenge luiondoki liapa. Kama ataoniloka tutaondoka sole. Aondoce acinic wapi? Kwa nini?

Tenge, you are not leaving this place. If she has to go, we will go together.

Where is she supposed to go? And why? (p.50-51)

At the end, Tenge does not leave. However, it appears that if Kinaya had his way and if he had total control of the house, Tenge would have left. When Mwavita came in and staled in no uncertain terms that her sister would stay, Kinaya did not push the issue further. Mwavita had managed to prove to Kinaya that they had equal ownership over the house and he could not just make arbitral decisions alone.

On the other hand Tenge herself also appears to have finally found her ground after a lot of suffering since she got pregnant while still in school. She was expelled from school and her boyfriend then had disowned her. At home, she could not find peace due to the hostility extended to her by both her father and her brother. She had to seek refuge in her sister's house in town where at least she found some solace. Finally, she meets Kheri, a very polite and promising young man with whom she feels they can bond well in marriage. It is at this point that she happens to meet George, the father of her child. George had earlier impregnated but had then disowned the pregnancy and left her to bear the consequences alone. When they happen to meet again after a long time, he has the audacity to ask her how their child was faring. Me asks her:

Tenge tulizaa pamoja, mwanangu hajambo? (uk.84)

Tenge, we both are responsible for our child's birth, how is my child doing? Tenge goes back down the memory lane and wonders how George is now remembering that they have a child together. After the incidence, Tenge was expelled from school and
went to face the hostile world on her own while George continued with his education. All that time, he never bothered to know about her welfare nor that of the child. It is then after this coincidental meeting that he shows concern for the child he forsook upon conception. She underwent a lot of suffering as a result and now she meets this joker. She tells him:

Sikiza bwana mkubwa mashahada. Kama miaka hii yote ilikusahaulisha, nitakukumbusha yote.

Ulinidanganya katika utoto 11a ujahili wangu. Ulipoona rabsha imezuka, ukaniruka ukasema hunijui kamwe. Sasa luinijui iinekuaje leo intoto ni wako? Mbona siku zile ulijitia ugumba ukasema mimba si yako?

Leo umcona mwanangu asoma slmle wamtaka. I lima liaki yoyote juu ya Jasiri. Jasiri ni wangu mwenyewe.I lana baba, ana mama tu Mimi ndiye kila kitu kwake. Sahau kabisa mambo yako na ukimkaribia tutakwenda mbele! Kuna mashahidi chungu nzima waliokusikia nkisema mimba si yako. (p.84-85)

Listen mister degrees. If all these years have made you forget, I will remind you all. You took advantage of me in my youth and innocence. When hell broke loose, you disowned me and said you don't know me. If you don't know me, how come the child is today yours? How come those days you feigned impotence and said you were not responsible for the pregnancy? Today you want my child because you have noticed he is in school. You have no right whatsoever over Jasiri. Jasiri is mine alone. He has no father, just a mother. I am everything to him. Forget
everything about him and if you come near him we will go before
the law. There are so many witnesses who heard you say you were not
responsible for the pregnancy.

Tenge has a right to speak her mind to George. This is one person who made her
suffer so much in her early life when he impregnated her. Disowning the pregnancy then
implied that he was not willing to share in the consequences that were bound to come up.
I le now re-appears alter Tenge has struggled to bring up the son single-handedly and has
even managed to take him to school. He surely deserves public humiliation.

Alter so many tribulations in life, Tenge and Mwavita seem to have finally found
their footing in life. Having decided to give up marriage in which she was more of a
domestic slave rather than an equal partner, Mwavita has not only found peace of mind
but has also prospered materially to the extent that Kinaya, her separated husband, is
envious of her achievements. Tenge has also met a serious man whom he hopes to get
married to.

The powerful voice of the woman is finally exemplified in *Kifo Kisimani*. One of the
main characters in the play is Mtemi Bokono who is the leader of Butangi. His
administration is to say the least very corrupt and repressive. This is why dissatisfaction
is high among the progressive people like Mwelusi, who take it upon himself to sabotage
it in all possible ways in the hope that it will come down. However, Bokono and his
advisors plot his assassination before his dream can be realized. But if they thought that
having Mwelusi out of the way would solve their problems, they are mistaken. The
liberation struggle is taken up by equally charismatic women who had earlier partnered
will Mwelusi. These women play a very crucial role in the revolution that finally brings
Bokono's administration down. After the revolution is carried out, the first person to storm Bokono's palace is Azena, who finds Bokono with some of his advisors. The scenario is depicted as follows:

(Azena anaingia kwa ushujaa mwingi na kumsimamia Batu kidete huku ameina panga. Batu anashiluka na kurudi kinyumenyume. Bokono anainuka ghafla. Yeye na Nyalwe wanakumbattiana wakiteiemeka)

(Azena goes in gallantly and stands majestically in front of Batu as she raises a panga. Batu is frightened and goes backwards. Bokono stands up abruptly. He and Nyalwe hold each other as they tremble.)

BATU: (Kwa Azena) Wewe ni nani?

(To Azena) Who are you?

AZENA: Mmemuua Mwelusi. Lakini kitendo chenu hakitafua dafu. Tumcfika!

You have killed Mwelusi. But your action will not achieve its goal. We have come.

BOKONO: (Anaita kwa sauti) Mweke! (Kwa Batu) Nenda ukamwite Mweke!

(He calls loudly) Mweke! (To Batu) Go and call Mweke!

BATU. Nitapitia wapi? Njia ina kikwazo.

Where do I pass? There is an obstacle on the way.

AZENA: Yetu imekuwa na vikwazo kwa miongo miwili. (Kwa Bokono) Baba wa Busara, Baba wa Butangi, Baba wa Wanabutangi wote, ukitaka nikuitie silaha yako, nitakuitia. (Akielekeza sauti mlangoni) Mweke! Mweke! Unaitwa na Mtukufu Mtemi. (Mweke anasukumwa ukumbini na Kame. Mavaziyake yana damu. Andua anaingia akimkokota Gege, ambaye pia)
Ours has been having obstacles for the last two decades. (O Bokono) Father of Respect. Father of Butangi. Father of all people of Butangi, if you want me to summon your sidekick, I will summon him.

(She directs her voice towards the door.) Mweke! Mweke!

Your excellency Mtemi is calling you. (Mweke is pushed inside by Kame.)

His clothes are bloodied. Andua comes in dragging Gege along, whose hands are also bound.)

The fate of Bokono and his advisors is now in the hands of the women who orchestrated his ouster. One of his former policemen is even about to kill Bokono with an axe but Atega steps in:

ATEGA: La! Usimwage damu...Mfungeni kwa kamba. (Andua anamfunga Bokono mikono. Anataka kumfunga Nyalwe mikono pia.) La, Andua! Usiinfunge Nyalwe mikono. Uovu wa inuine si uovu wa mke...(p,103-104)

No! Don't shed blood. Bind him with a rope. (Andua binds Bokono's hands with a rope. She wants to hind Nyalwe's hands as well.) No, Andua. Don't bind Nyalwe's hands. The sins of the husband are not the sins of the wile.

This revolution masterminded by reforin-minded and charismatic women finally marked the end of a retrogressive of Bokono's regime. Mtemi Bokono, who had been used to issuing orders, was now the one taking them. The gallant and courageous women had meticulously executed the bloodless revolution and were now at the helm. Bokono and his henchmen were put in detention to await their trial by a special tribunal. And to
show that they were rational and organized, the women leaders ensured that no unnecessary blood was shed.

In *Sudana*, the authoritative voice of the woman is equally asserted more dramatically. The crews of the black ship had suffered a lot after their ship Zinji, wrecks and are rescued by Amerope, a ship captained by Amerigo, a white man. The fate of the black crew is even made more precarious because Sudzungu, their black female captain literally deserts them and joins hands with the white captain. Sudzungu turns out to be so insentitive to her crew who include her own mother and sister. At one point, she even tries to convince her mother to grant sexual favours to Amerigo who has been persistently pestering her. The accumulated anger borne out of the suffering the black crew undergoes under Amerigo and the blatant betrayal by Sudzungu is finally atoned for when Shume, Sudzungu's sister, who has taken over as the leader of the oppressed black crew, requests Amerigo for a chance for the blacks to stage a traditional dance. Shume insists it is a special dance and the request is granted. The stage is now set and the whites have taken their seats to watch this much hyped traditional dance.

**AMERIGO:** Mko tayari?

Are you ready?

**SHUME:** Ndiyo afande

Yes sir.

**AMERIGO:** *(Ahazama huku na huku)*

Sudzungu yuko wapi?

(Throwing glances here and there)

And where is Sudzungu?

She is coining sir. She is dressing up. She will be in the second part of the dance.

AMERIGO: Ilaya vizuri, mnaweza kuanza.

Fine, you can start.


Kuua chuki iliyopo ili upendo uweze kumea.

Na ni matumaiui yangu kuwa ngoina hii itakapomalizika, inoyo wako, rollo yako, inwili wako, vyote vitakuwa vimeburudika kabisa, vyote vitakuwa katika liali ya kutokuwa na neno nami tena afande. Asante afande.

*(Shume analoa ishara... Ngoma zinaanza na wote wanaanza kucheza pamoja na Sudana. Ifaada ya muda, Shume anapiga makofi na ngoma na wacliezaji wdfiasimama. Wamerope wanapiga makofi.

Shume anasogea mhele kidogo.)*

Sir, this is our traditional dance. It is a dance to confess and to contain the spirit of destruction. It is a dance to atone for sins, and to give punishment its chance. It is a dance of death, sir. To kill the existing hatred so that love can flourish. And it is my hope that by the time this dance comes to an end, your heart, your spirit, your body, all will have enjoyed themselves to the maximum; they will be in a position not to have
any grudge with the again, sir. Thank you sir.

(Shume gives a signal. The dance starts and all begin to dance alongside Sudana. After some time, Shume claps and the dance stops. The Europeans dap. Shume edges closer a bit.)

SHUME Afande sasa naomba kukuleteeni mkono wangu wa kutubia kabla ya kuendelea na sehcnui ya pili ya ngoma hii.


Sir I would like now to request that I present my hand of confession before embarking on the second part of the dance.

(Amerigo nods Jbr dji/troval. Shume daps twice. One member of the black crew comes in carrying a box. He goes infront of Amerigo and Muzungu, kneels and and places the box before them. He then stands up, salutes, and exits. Muzungu stands up ready to open the box as Shume goes closer towards where Amerigo is seated. Muzungu opens up the box. He and Amerigo lean forward to see what is inside.

Then both of them let out a cry.)
AMERIGO NA

MZUNGU: Aaah! Kichwa clia Sudzungu...Oh, my God! Oh my God!

Wamcmuua Sudzungu!

(Both of them thro* themselves backwards. Then hell breaks loose.

The Europeans bump into each other, others are trying to assist both Amerigo and Muzungu, others are fighting the Blacks. In the ensuing confusion, Shume lunges herself towards Amerigo, ready to behead him with her panga. But Muzungu manages to draw and fire his pistol. Shume Jails.

AH suddenly becomes quiet. Shume tries to get up, her panga still in her hand. Blood is seen flowing from her chest. By this time, Amerigo has drawn his pistol and has stood up. He aims at Shume and Jires. Shume falls again.
Silence. Shume raises her head a hit.)

SHUME: (Kwa sauti dhaifu) Bado Amerigo! Bado Muzungu! Wakali ungali pamoja nasi. I lata mkafanya nini, wakati u pamoja nasi!

(Amerigo na Muzungu wanafyatua tena hastola zao kwa pamoja.

(In a weak voice) It is not yet over Amerigo! Not yet, Muzungu! The time is still on our side. Nothing you can do that can stop the time being on our side.

(Amerigo and Muzungu again fire their pistols simultaneously.
Shume ‘* head falls off. Silence. Sudana wails as she runs towards Shume as her tears flow. .. There is anger on the faces of the lilacks and their fists are clenched.
They surge towards Amerigo, Muzungu, and the other Whites. The Europeans are visibly frightened. Amerigo and Muzungu point their pistols at the Blacks hut they are still edging forward. Amerigo, Muzungu and the other Whites start to withdraw backwards slowly by slowly until they are. all out of view, still pursued by the Blacks. Silence. Sudana and Shume are now left alone. Sudana has
stopped crying. She raises her right hand, with her fist clenched.

SUDANA: (Kwa sauti thahiti)

Usisahau jina Inko Shume!

Wakati ni velu Slunnc

nn kifo cliclu,

ni njia tu

katika maisha yetu ya inilele.

(Anainua ngumi)

Mapambano yaendelee!

(In a firm voice)

Don’t forget your name Shume!

It is our time Shume

And our death,

is but just a way

in our eternal life.

(She raises up her fist)

Aluta continual (p.51-53)

Judging from the elaborate preparations Shume and her people accord this dance, it is designed to be of special importance. This is seen from the fact that not only has Shume sought and secured permission for it, but she has also convinced Amerigo, his assistant captain, Muzungu and the other whites to attend the dance as special guests. Although it is billed as a traditional dance, it’s title is not clear as it is casually explained as just an opportunity to give punishment a chance and eliminate hatred so that
love can blossom. To say the least, the details Shume gives are scanty. Why the dance has been so publicized becomes clear in its second part when Shume takes time to present Amerigo with her part of confession in a box. It turns out that inside the box is the head of Sudzungu. It is only after this that the puzzle begins to unravel itself.

Sudzungu is a sell-out to her people. She was the captain of the ship that wrecked and from the time her and her crew were rescued by the one captained by Amerigo, she joined the oppressing Whites and forsook her Black brethren. She has the ear of the White captain, but she does not use the position to intervene when her people are being Hogged, raped, killed and subjected to other degrading and inhuman conditions. Naturally, her own people are fed up with her. While Sudzungu was the darling of the whites, she was an embarrassment to her own people.

It appears that this time round, Shume, who organizes this special dance, had decided that actions speak louder than words. The sole purpose of this dance is to show the whites how betrayers should be dealt with. It also exhibits the epitome of heroism and personal sacrifice. Shume is aware that being the mastermind of the whole saga, she cannot possibly escape with her life. Her action shows the great lengths women are prepared to be heard in a society which is adamant to grant them their rights. Although she pays with her life, she defiantly manages to tell the Whites that this is the beginning of the struggle for their liberation. She then breathes her last.

In Zilizala, Angela is the wife of Udenda, the town mayor. She has persevered greatly to stay in this marriage since her husband has neglected her and the entire family. She is also aware that Udenda is a selfish and deceitful leader who engages in many social vices such as drug trafficking and wanton land grabbing. To liberate the society
from the retrogressive leadership of her husband, she plays an important part in exposing his evil side to the public. It is out of this courageous expose that like-minded people who have already suffered under Udenda's leadership join Angela in subjecting him to a humiliating open trial where he is finally dethroned of his mayorship.

The resilient nature of the fighting female spirit is also boldly exhibited by Lanina in *Kilio Cha Haki*. This is a woman who has made personal sacrifices in the struggle for the emancipation of humanity and more specifically, the recognition of gender equity as an important component in the social sphere. This has seen her undergo torture in police cells. It has also threatened to ruin her own family ties when her father disowns her because of her involvement in labour disputes, which he thinks is unwarranted intrusion into a male domain. I let husband also complains of having been turned to be the 'wile' of the household. There is also the persistent nagging from her mother to drop her activism and concentrate on her domestic chores. Lanina's activism makes her lose her job at Delamon's farm. She ends up getting a lowly paid job at Mzee Ingeli's small food eatery.

Lanina's determination in her quest for a just society is demonstrated by the fact that being away from Delamon's farm does not deter her from sowing the seeds for another workers' strike as she still retains her contacts with Musa and Dewe, who have taken up her place as the custodians of the workers' rights on Delamon's farm. When they come to pay her a visit at Mzee Ingeli's kiosk, she talks so passionately against exploitation that people who gather to listen to her are left mesmerised. She says only determination and concerted efforts by those oppressed can bring meaningful changes to their lives she says:
My fellow brothers, our determination is our only hope.

We must guard this determination jealously,

this determination which we have endured for years,

full of sweat which cannot be appeased,

so that it can lead us till we get to our destination.

so that it can grant us a safe haven,

and end the eternal darkness,

eternal darkness prevalent all over.

This motivational speech is what gives the impetus for the second strike at Delamon's farm. The strike proves fatal as even Delamon is murdered. Despite the fact that Lanina was not there when it was staged, she was nevertheless arrested as the prime suspect and what is expected is that she awaits the routine torture in the police cells. Lanina's unwavering conviction for a better society in spite of the many social obstacles, the major being vested in her gender as woman, is a sure testimony that the contemporary
woman has taken a bold and uncompromising stance in the campaign for human liberation and gender equity where every individual's effort and contribution is appreciated outside the confines of gender considerations.

CONCLUSION

When interrogating language used or associated with the gender divides in Kiswahili drama, what comes to the fore is that in the middle phase, women were not expected to be heard, but only seen. The patriarchal nature of the society was structured in such a way that women's voice of dissent or defiance would be treated as a social transgression. It took a lot of courage for women to disregard this set social convention of silence. As such, the realm of liberal expression was predominantly a preserve of the male gender. The patriarchal dominance of social spheres during this era was so entrenched to the extent that its tentacles spilled over to the contemporary phase of Kiswahili drama.

It is in the contemporary phase that the woman's voice is becoming more assertive on personal and social issues. However, Ibis is still amid many social obstacles. Although the society is opening up to the radical dimensions gender relations are adopting, due to the long period patriarchy has controlled the social structures, uprooting its influence is proving to be a gradual process. It is apparent that the male gender is still fighting to preserve its dominace over the female gender. This is why even in the contemporary era, there is still a section of the male gender which is fighting hard to inculcate the woman's voice. The only reprieve is that the woman's struggle for independence and equality is so sustained and consistent that it is evidently unstoppable.
This is also aided by the fact that there are men who have come to appreciate the positive and strong attributes of the female gender and are even giving her way to lead in different social fronts.

One social sphere where women have been voiceless is the institution of marriage because men have been under the false illusion that women must always depend on them for upkeep. That is why women had to keep up with abusive marriages because contesting the injustices subjected to them could jeopardise this privilege. This has drastically changed as the modern woman has shown that she can no longer tolerate an untenable marriage just for the sake of it. This is especially so because she has attained economic independence and mental liberation. That is why she can speak out without fear as experience has shown that many women are even happier after they opt out of abusive relationships.

All in all, it has been observed that the female gender has made irreversible strides in her campaign for human equality and personal independence. This is reflected in her confidence in the way she initiates and undertakes social responsibilities. Above all, her language reflects the level of liberation she has been able to reach in the campaign for self-actualization.
CHAPTER SIX

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

In this last chapter, we summarise our research findings, the contributions we have made and finally make our conclusions. We also make recommendations for scholars and future researchers who may embark on analyzing the many facets of the expansive gender question.

6.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter revisits the stated statement of the problem, aims and objectives, and the hypotheses of the investigation in view of research findings and the generalizations made in the five chapters of the study.

6.2 A REVIEW OF THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A principal statement adopted by the study is that the literary gender analyses in existence do not adequately address the evolving dynamism in gender inter-relations in Kiswahili drama in Kenya in pace with its progressive thematic developments. Evaluation of gender inter-relations has remained tied up to the conservative view that the woman remains passive in her contribution in the core spheres of the society. The society remains portrayed as male dominated where the woman occupies little social
space. We have identified the obligation the society feels indebted to preserve binding culture, as well as the skewed interpretation of the cultural norms in favour of the male gender, as the main obstacles to women's liberation and realization of human equality. We were able to discern that although patriarchy is an universal institution which features in many societies, gender role-play differentiations were not as pronounced in the indigenous African societies before the infusion of foreign cultural, political and economic influences. Sustained historical research has established that sex was never used as a basis of social discrimination in the indigenous African societies. Alien ideological values inspired new dimensions in the definitions and practices of power and authority: the two social components which were instrumental in determining future considerations in gender role-plays. This new social order entrenched male hegemony that saw the social status of the woman be consigned to the periphery of the social mainstream. This trend did not only prevail during the entire period of colonization but was also to be inherited by the post-colonial social structures. The effect of this cultural influx is reflected more in the immediate post-independence drama where these alien values are yet to be challenged by social dynamism of change.

I lowever, what the subsequent literary critiques do not address is that the legitimacy of culture as the basis for social determination of gender role-plays continues to wane in the face of the genre's thematic progression. The woman is now questioning the relevance of the cultural norms in a changing and dynamic society. As a result, women are now more visible in the social arena where they are undertaking important social responsibilities at competitive levels with the male gender. The contemporary phase has witnessed the social structures which have been central to women's exclusion from core
social spheres becoming more liberal in accommodating competitiveness in role performances across gender divides. We have therefore emphasized that gender role-pla
ys are acquiring radical dimensions with the thematic evolution of Kiswahili drama which needs to be highlighted in upcoming analyses.

6.3 EVALUATION OF OBJECTIVES

This study had three objectives. The First objective was to undertake an appraisal of the changing representation of gender role-pla
ys in Kiswahili drama in Kenya through its various stages of progression. Towards this end, it has established that gender role-pla
ys have indeed undergone remarkable transformation in the way they have been represented by different playwrights in various phases the formative, the middle and the contemporary.

The formative phase was basically the era in which the foundation stone was laid for the future development of drama. The pioneer playwrights did not address pertinent social issues of the time, including gender inter-relations, from serious literary perspectives. The middle phase reflects the spill-over effect of the extension of alien cultural influences into the post-colonial African societies. Gender inter-relations in this era are not pragmatic and are presented as a contest between the authoritative attributes of the man against the weak traits of the woman. In the contemporary drama, a social revolution has occurred in gender role-pla
ys. The woman is exhibiting a resolve to assert her human worth by challenging male dominance in the social arena. At the same time,
llie contemporary playwrights are questioning the hitherto assumed decorated attributes of the male gender by expositing his human weaknesses and vulnerability.

The second aim of the study was to investigate the extent to which literary critics conceptualize and reflect the dynamics of gender role-plays as manifested in the socio-political environment as represented by Kenyan Kiswahili playwrights. In this domain, we have found out that a progressive critiquing is lacking. Most critics concentrate their focus on the way gender role-plays were structured in the middle phase of Kiswahili drama and the critiquing is skewed to give prominence to the pertinent woman question. What is mostly highlighted is the vulnerable position of the woman in a society dominated by patriarchy ideology. The critics do not reflect the dynamism in gender inter-relations in the contemporary drama in which the woman is taking deliberate and concerted effort to fight for her human rights and equal social space as enjoyed by the man. This is out of the observation made by the study that the image of the woman as presented by the contemporary playwrights has undergone considerable metamorphosis.

The third objective entailed analyzing if the relationship that the nature of the language used by, or directed to a certain gender divide defines societal values in relation to self and community identities as well as the determination of gender role-plays. Our findings are that language usage can be used to discern the social complexities of gender inter-relations. For example, in the middle phase where the woman is highly denigrated, her language is that of humility and submission. In the contrary, the man, whose position has been elevated by the patriarchal institution as the undisputed decision maker on all important issues, uses a language that embodies the overtones of authority and dictatorship. In the contemporary phase, the woman is more informed and liberated as
she has reclaimed a significant portion of her social space. She has regained her voice. Consequently, she can express herself more confidently even when what she is articulating is considered by the male gender as betrayal of previously socially accepted norms.

6.4 VERIFICATION OF HYPOTHESES

We had three hypotheses. Our first hypothesis was that the thematic progression of Kiswahili drama in Kenya demonstrates that the regressive socio-cultural institutions which have been hindering women empowerment are becoming liberal and responsive to the social dynamics of a contemporary society. This has been confirmed to be true. It has been observed that social structures in the middle phase severely restricted the woman's social space. Her mental capacity and human potential were so much underrated to the extent that she was excluded from participating in the core spheres of society. These were regarded as the sole preserve of man who was deemed to possess the necessary attributes required for the tasks. However, this perception has been contested in the contemporary drama. In this phase, society is recognizing that the woman is endowed with capabilities to enable her participate in social activities in the same way a man would, if not better. This has been given a moral boost by the fact that the modern man is appreciating the contribution of woman towards societal development and is partnering with her in the execution of core social responsibilities. The existing social structures reflect social dynamism where roles are played in a competitive environment by individual characters from across the gender divide.
Our second hypothesis was that the gender role-play representation in Kiswahili drama effectively reflects that the playwrights interpret and represent the prevailing socio-cultural and political environments in their works. When a historical account of African societies is taken, what comes out is that the social set-up of most of them in the immediate post-colonial period encouraged gender discrimination on role categorization. We attributed this to the fact that the male gender had been initiated to the world of power by the colonial administration and was busy savouring the privileges associated with it. The plays in the middle phase were written during this time and that is why the artists present a society which is discriminating against the female gender. It can therefore be argued that they were correctly interpreting the social environment of the time. The playwrights in the contemporary drama are aware that due to social pressures of modernity, the social structures are now more liberalized. The modern society has given birth to an enlightened woman who is aware of her basic human rights and is not willing to allow outdated gender stereotypes to curtail her freedom or limit her social space. It is on the basis of such social transformation that the contemporary playwrights are depicting a society which is discarding prejudice against gender roles on the basis of biological sex classification.

The third and final hypothesis was that the nature of the language usage by different characters across gender divides is projected to reflect the existing structural hierarchies of gender inter-relations in the social organization. There is literary evidence to this. The language used by various characters towards others reflects the degree of respect or disrespect they have towards them. In the circumstances where the society upholds patriarchy as the symbol of authority for example, the language used by the man...
against those who he deems subordinate is equally authoritative. It has also been observed that there is a certain leverage of mutual respect among the characters of the same gender. It is rare for a woman to use derogative language against a fellow woman unless in extreme provocative circumstances. Similarly, man to man language is mostly respectful unless it is between a superior and a subordinate.

The language used also reflects the levels of self-esteem and confidence on the part of the speaker. Language spoken in an intimidating atmosphere will exhibit signs of fear and lack of confidence. That is why the language used by women in the middle phase was guarded as it is the men who were at liberty of expression of thought without fear of intimidation. On the contrary, the women in the contemporary phase are more enlightened of their rights and their language exudes confidence.

In general, our study has come up with some conclusions. First, before the advent of colonialism, gender relations were well structured in a way that each divide had its special space in the society. There was mutual understanding and respect among the gender divides. Secondly, in the formative stage, gender was not accorded a special literary recognition and this phase cannot be used as a meaningful yardstick in evaluating gender relations of the time. The middle phase reflects an extension of the colonial legacy of male supremacy and domination.

However, there is a clear paradigm shift in gender relations in the contemporary phase. The woman is more visible in the public domain and is partnering with man on competitive footing in the core spheres of the society. She has regained her voice and liberty to fight against gender injustices and unfair stereotypes which have hitherto consigned her to the periphery of the social organization.
6.5  RECOMMENDATIONS

There are some recommendations we would like to make. First, in order that the campaign for gender equity is given the necessary impetus to sustain and maintain its steady progress, it is important that it be accorded more space and prominence in the literary field. This is out of the observation that in many literary works, while other social issues are prioritized, the gender question is mostly addressed as a secondary issue.

Secondly, it is felt that there are more male artists who are articulating gender issues than women. While we do not overly emphasise the relationship between the content of the text and the sex of the author, history has shown that one source of inspiration that motivates an artist is borne or witnessed experiences. In this context, the possibility that there are unique experiences that women undergo but remain undocumented can not be underestimated. To bridge this literary gap, the articulation of gender issues by female artists from their own points of view can go a long way in unraveling some of the gender questions that still remain in the dark spot.

Thirdly, there is little doubt that gender inter-relations are progressively acquiring radical dimensions which are reflected in the empowerment of the female gender. However, artists do not adequately expose the social factors which are contributing to the human enlightenment to the extent that they can advocate for their basic fundamental rights while appreciating the unique attributes vested in the gender divides. What is portrayed is spontaneous agitation for suppressed social privileges and gender equality while the undercurrent initiators of such re-awakening are left insufficiently emphasized.
They should be highlighted so that the society can nurture and groom them for the future sustainability of human liberation and social advancement.

Finally, this study has only analysed the dynamics of gender role-plays in Kiswaliili drama. Drama is just one of the four main genres of literature, others being the novel, poetry, and the short story. We specifically recommend that further research on gender inter-relations be undertaken in these other genres in an effort to consolidate a comprehensive insight into the changing nature of gender role-plays in a contemporary society. This would expand the empirical view of the gender question and account for some of the missing links in the nature of human relations.
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