

IMAGING SOCIO-POLITICAL SPACES IN SELECTED THEATRE TEXTS

AIRED ON KENYA BROADCASTING CORPORATION TELEVISION,

KENYA

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for examination or for the award of a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

To Dr. Joseph Otieno Wasonga

Your value for education and humanity never falters.

I cherish you,

my love.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the imaging of socio-political spaces in selected theatre texts aired on Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) television. The study analysed six episodes of each of the three selected texts namely: *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani*, and *Angel's Diary* with the intention of establishing how these television theatre texts managed to create and air content with socio-political undertones. The study recognised the fact that most theatrical productions in Kenya of the 1970s to the late 1990s were censored by government. Therefore, informed by the social-political milieu of theatre reception in Kenya, the study problematised theatre production in a state broadcaster against the background that television theatre draws its raw material from people's experiences. This approach to the study suggests possibilities of reading the selected texts against contemporary experiences in Kenya. Methodologically, the study applied content analysis of videotapes of the selected texts. The texts were purposively selected to ensure that episodes relevant to the study were subjected to critical analysis. In addition, the study was enriched by library research where relevant secondary sources were consulted and used. The study was guided by three objectives which were to: investigate how *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* engage with socio-political issues of the moment beyond entertainment function; interrogate the strategies employed in *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* in addressing socio-political issues in Kenya; and lastly to examine how *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* contest and subvert discourses of domination and subjugation in Kenya. The study used postcolonial theory and semiotics literary theory as analytical tools. Using the postcolonial theory, the study examined various ways in which the selected texts address manifestations of discourses of domination, subjugation, equality, and agency. Postcolonial arguments from scholars such as Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, Michael Foucault, and Edward Said were applied to appraise the problem under study. Additionally, the study used semiotics to analyse how signs and images signify more than what they stand for. Semiotics theory was particularly informative as I examined how the signs, characters, speech, setting among others are read metaphorically and symbolically in relation to the happenings in the society. Drawing its conclusions solely from the texts examined, the study established that despite KBC being a state broadcaster and having a mandate to air government-related policies and neutral themes, which to a large extent is the case, the selected television theatre texts analysed in the study artistically used unique strategies such as setting, characterisation, humour, allegory, and journeys in imaging socio-political spaces as experienced in contemporary Kenya. The study recommends that studies be carried out on technical aspects and theatrical elements of popular television theatre. In addition, comparative studies of theatre texts aired on KBC and any other private media broadcaster in Kenya should be carried out. There is also need to carry out studies on the power of humour in dictatorial regimes as advanced through popular television theatre.

ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

CBD: Central Business District

EACC: Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission

KACC: Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission

KANU: Kenya African National Union

KBC: Kenya Broadcasting Corporation

KES: Kenya shillings

KPU: Kenya People's Union

KTN: Kenya Television Network

NFB: National Film Bureau

NTV: Nation Television

TV: Television

TfD: Theatre for Development

TJRC: Truth and Justice Reconciliation Commission

VOK: Voice of Kenya

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

I have only provided brief and working definitions for purposes of clarifying how these terms are used in the research. The following are some of the terminologies used:

Art: Expression of ideas reflecting life in images. Television theatre is considered as art in this research.

Ethnicity: It is a social organization of a group of people who share cultural values, beliefs, norms, language and a common ancestry.

Reading: Critical watching, analysis and interpreting of theatre texts.

Socio-political: Occurrences involving both social and political experiences of a people.

Subversion: Transformative rejection of/deviation from structures that limit one's potential.

Theatre: A live event that puts performers and audiences in an immediate and mutually affecting relationship.

Television theatre: A production that employs performers to present experience of a real or imagined event before an audience through the medium of television.

Text: Any material whether spoken, written, painted, or acted that contains meaning which is open to analysis and interpretation. In this study, the selected television theatre episodes in the study are referred to as texts.

Image: The representation, portrayal or reflection of something.

Imagining: The creation of artistic texts such as theatre texts, novels, poetry and drama.

Setting: The physical place, time, social context and period in which the events take place in a theatre text

Space: The loose confines within which an entity or phenomenon exists and has a relative position and identity. It can also be said to be the loose confines within which we live and create relationship with other people, societies and surrounding.

CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Popular theatre has increasingly become an interesting area of scholarship in African popular cultural studies. The presence of researches on popular theatre from scholars, theorists and practitioners such as Amollo Maurice Amollo's *From Playing to Learning to Change: Theatre in Conflict Transformation and Peace Building*; Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh's "Theatre, television and development: A case for Third World"; Christopher Joseph Odhiambo's "Theatre for development in Kenya: In search of an effective procedure and methodology"; Fred Mbogo's "The 'comical' in the 'serious' and the 'serious' in the 'comical': A reading of *Vioja Mahakamani*", and Dinah Adhiambo Ligaga's "Radio theatre: The moral play and its mediation of socio-cultural realities in Kenya", demonstrate the significance of popular theatre as a rich field worth of critical engagement. Commenting on popular culture scholarship in general, Karin Barber observes that "the study of popular culture in Africa has attracted the best and most imaginative of younger Africanist scholars [and that] it is no longer seen as a by-product or afterthought: it has moved to the center stage" (vi). Barber's argument is particularly important as it demystifies the depiction of popular cultural products as 'trivial'.

The versatile and flexible nature of popular theatre has seen most researches adopting inter- and multi-disciplinary approaches in their analysis to explicate the different issues advanced by theatre. For instance, Ligaga's study deals with radio theatre from the moral story perspective while taking into account the sound effects in theatre production, while Christopher Odhiambo's study looks at theatre for development. The present study is interested in popular theatre and television theatre in particular

and how the selected television theatre texts represent the socio-political spaces in contemporary Kenya.

Popular television theatre has been on the rise, especially with the expansion of democratic space and media freedom in most post-independence African countries. Another reason for the growth of television theatre is its ability to address a number of lived experiences which the audience easily identifies with. Barber argues that “popular forms of expression serve to help people understand ways in which their survival is circumscribed socially, politically, and economically” (5). According to Simon Peter Victor Otieno:

Theatre is fundamentally a people’s conscience. It reflects on issues in the society and hence focuses on individuals in society in its approach. In this process, it develops its intricate laws and maxims as it explicates, analyses, satirizes and wrestles with the issues pertinent in its grip (86).

Therefore, since television theatre has become part and parcel of the socio-political making process, it is necessary to examine how the selected theatre texts have managed to stay on television airwaves while dealing with the sensitive realities of the time.

Based on the discussion above, it is imperative to examine how socio-political realities in contemporary Kenya are imagined and imaged in Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) television theatre texts. The crux in this study is to problematize the thematic spaces imaged in the selected texts through KBC as a state broadcaster. The next section briefly explores the establishment and operation of KBC. This section is essential in the study as it helps me to draw the nexus between the state broadcaster and the thematic spaces imaged vis-a-viz the strategies employed in the television theatre texts for the study.

1.1 The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation: A Brief Background

The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation was established by an Act of Parliament (CAP 221 of the laws of Kenya) to undertake public services (*Kenya Law Reports* 3). According to Edith Njeru, radio and television broadcasting in Kenya started in 1928 and in 1962 respectively (6). Njeru points out that the first transmitting station was set at a farm house in Limuru and the second television station was opened in Mombasa in 1970 (6). After Kenya's independence in 1963, the name KBC was nationalised under an Act of Parliament to become the Voice of Kenya (VoK). However, Benjamin Nimer observes that the nationalisation of VoK was done in total disregard of the recommendations by a commission under the chairmanship of Benna Lutta who had been appointed by the first president of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta to look into the problems faced by KBC. The name VoK was changed back to KBC in 1989 through the KBC Act, Cap. 221 (*Kenya Law* 3).

Since its inception in 1962, KBC television remained a monopoly until 1990 when the Kenya Television Network (KTN), a private station, was established. Later, other broadcasting stations including Metro TV (1996), Citizen TV (1998), Family TV (1999), Nation Television (NTV) (2005), and K24 TV (2007) were started. Despite the introduction of private media broadcasting stations mentioned above, KBC remains the largest broadcasting media station in Kenya with a nationwide coverage for both radio and television, as of the time of writing this thesis.

The establishment of KBC television was informed by the fact that it would bring and influence the necessary changes in independent Kenya. George King'ara Ngugi observes that television was viewed as "a symbol of development [since] it could be harnessed toward representing the various "development" aspirations of the new

government if not for rallying the different ethnic groups within Kenya into a nation” (30). However, immediately after independence, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation television was turned into a government propaganda tool rather than for development as had been imagined at its inception. Murej Mak’Ochieng points out that television was used in advancing political agendas and government policies yet despite this mandate, the selected texts subverted and used KBC to image socio-political issues of the day.

KBC is funded by the government of Kenya, hence most of its content is influenced by the needs and policies of the state. According to Peter Oriare Mbeke “KBC programmes are deliberately controlled by the state to broadcast socio-culturally tailored content that seeks to fulfill people’s daily needs” (17). Thus, the political, economic and socio-cultural factors that informed the establishment of Kenya Broadcasting Corporation have, over time, created a heritage that continues to control television content in Kenya today. The above brief overview of the development of Kenya Broadcasting Corporation demonstrates how the government interests influenced the content of the programmes produced by the state broadcaster. The next section proceeds from KBC’s overview to examine the relationship between the Kenyan government and artistic productions in general.

1.2 The Relationship between the Government of Kenya and Artistic Production

In most independent states in Africa such as South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya, political leaders have had a history of intolerance towards theatre production and performance. Theatre artists in the above mentioned post-colonial states such as Es’kia Mphahlele (South Africa), Wole Soyinka and Ken Saro Wiwa (Nigeria), Ngugi

wa Thiong'o (Kenya), John Ruganda (Uganda), were either exiled, or detained for voicing injustices perpetrated by the political establishment.

The history of theatre and its reception in Kenya show the government's spirited efforts in muting it. James Akanga points out that censorship "applied on individual author's works because the authors held opinions divergent with those of the government of the day. This forced many writers to seek sanctuary abroad" (11). A good example of the government's intolerance towards theatre is evident in the banning of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii's *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, a play that had been staged at Kamiirithu cultural centre. On the banning of this text, Joseph Gichingiri Ndigirigi points out that:

Ngaahika Ndeenda was the first play to be banned in independent Kenyan history and it set a dangerous precedent. With the death of Jomo Kenyatta (independent Kenya's first president) in August 1978, and the installation of a more paranoid regime, censorship in the theatre reached unprecedented levels. When in 1982 Ngugi tried to have *Maitu Njugira* performed at the Kenya National Theatre, the regime refused to issue a license for the performance. In February 1982, the performance of *Muntu* by Joe de Graft had been stopped at the same theatre barely a week before *Maitu Njugira* was supposed to open, ostensibly because the play promoted violence. With the effective banning of *Maitu Njugira*, the need for writers to censor themselves became much more urgent (75).

Ndigirigi's observation shows the government's determination to censor theatre in Kenya. The banning of the performance of *Ngaahika Ndeenda* was informed by the political establishment's fear of the ability of the text to consciously awaken the citizens' knowledge about their rights, social injustices and betrayal by Kenya's post-independence government. However, it is interesting that the banning and censorship of theatre by the government did not deter artists from writing and performing.

The first political leadership in independent Kenya was characterized by an atmosphere of censorship and repression geared toward intimidating the general

population. As such imaginative works and cultural products such as theatre were targeted and stifled accordingly. The muting of theatre texts was to advance the regime's agenda and propaganda. In addition, the press, parliament and the civil society had been forcefully silenced and manipulated at the ruling party's whims. The Voice of Kenya (VoK), the present KBC, as the only broadcasting station at the time was subverted and was mostly used for propaganda by the government of President Jomo Kenyatta. After the death of Jomo Kenyatta in 1978, the then Vice-President Daniel arap Moi became Kenya's second president.

Dinah Adhiambo Ligaga observes that Moi used parliament to have his way to ensure that he stays in power. According to Ligaga, "in June 1982, a section of the constitution (Section 2A) was revised, and Kenya became a *de jure* one party state, whereas from 1963, it had been a *de facto* one party state" (11). Moi's actions were an appropriate way of silencing dissenting voices thus making himself a powerful president. Moi's reign as the president was marked by what is commonly referred to as the *fuata Nyayo* (following in the footsteps) era. In as much as *fuata nyayo* aimed at making people to follow in the footsteps of the previous regime and now Moi's regime, the period saw a growing agitation for democracy including the attempted coup by a section of the Kenya Air Force on 1st August 1982 (Ligaga 11).

The increased attempts to revolt against Moi's repression made Moi to devise ways of controlling the dissention. One of the ways was tailoring KBC's content to project the government as having the people at heart. In this regard, KBC could be said to have to a large extent become the government's mouthpiece, used for political control. Though KBC did not abandon its mandate of informing and nation building role which is evident in its nationwide audience appeal to date, it was infiltrated by the

regime in power. Carla Heath succinctly points out that KBC “broadcasting was part and parcel of Moi’s authoritarian regime” (43). Those opposed to the regime were either detained, or forced into exile, while others were tortured in the Nyayo House torture chambers. James Kariuki opines that “Moi’s brutality, corruption, assassinations and repression ensured his firm control of political power” (70).

Literary works were not spared government’s assault and censorship either. On literary censorship, *Citizens for Justice* point out that:

Special branch police invaded university libraries and removed all books with information on or relating to Vladimir Illyich Lenin, Karl Marx, Che Guevara, Malcom X, Franz Fanon, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Maina wa Kinyatti and Fidel Castro from the shelves since [according to the Moi regime,] such literature could destroy Kenyan minds with subversive foreign ideology (18).

This shows that the government not only targeted literary imagination produced in Kenya but also those deemed politically subversive from other regions of the world. The artists and critics cited in the quotation above were believed to create material that attacked political dictators across the world such as Daniel Moi. This is the reason their texts were removed from university libraries in Kenya. *Citizens for Justice* pointed out that the government had argued that by removing such literature, it was protecting the young minds from corrupt and subversive literature.

Gibson Kamau Kuria observes that an instance of literary intolerance during Moi’s time was the banning of the production of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* in 1991. Livingstone Njomo Waidhura details how censorship takes place starting with the selection of drama texts studied in schools as part of the literature syllabus, through the Ministry of Education Inspectorate upon which the ruling elite ensures that only plays acceptable to the regime may be prescribed (23). In addition, Waidhura points out that African authors are discriminated against in favor of European writers. In

this way, such authors are “omitted because they address themselves to contemporary issues such as corruption, nepotism and neo-colonialism” (23).

Accordingly, literary censorship was also witnessed in the banning of drama texts performed at the Kenya Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals. Livingstone Njomo Waidhura observes that there has been an official clampdown on drama activities in schools, especially in the years since 1982. According to Waidhura, censorship started when the Drama Teachers' Association switched the venue of the National Finals of the Kenya Schools' Drama Festival from Nairobi, where it had been held for twenty-five years, to Kakamega, in Western Kenya. While the Festival was acclaimed as the best ever in official circles those involved in its success were victimized (23). Immediately after the drama Festival in Kakamega, a number of officials and drama practitioners were relieved of their duties. For instance, Jerry Okuingu was banned from attending all school drama activities in the country (24). In addition, those in the “forefront of the popular drama were either transferred to hardship remote areas of Kenya” (24).

On his part, Simon Peter Victor Otieno, a theatre practitioner and scholar, points out that “in 1981, the government, through the Ministry of Education, banned *‘Makwekwe’* (weeds), a play written by Tim Wandiri who was later laid off by his employer (TSC)” (87). Otieno further observes that “in 1982, *‘Visiki’* (tribulations) written by Khaemba Ongeti and acted by Chepterit Girls; *Kilio* (a cry) written by Muchiri Wahome and acted by Nairobi School; *‘Shakia’* by Minishi Oliver and acted by Bungoma High School; *‘Coup’ D’etat’* by Akhonya Khainga and acted by Musingu High; and in the recent past, *‘Shackles of Doom’* written by Cleophas Malala and performed by Butere Girls’ High School, were banned by government (87-88).

Most of the banned texts mentioned above directly addressed the socio-political injustices perpetrated by the government in contemporary Kenya. The ban of drama texts at the festival showed the government's attempts to control theatre content and production regardless of where it was performed.

The political intolerance that characterized Kenya's leadership and the manipulation of broadcasting mandate of KBC television by government, placed theatre artists and practitioners in a dilemma. The government's infiltration into KBC controlled the artists' discretion in selecting the appropriate content for the programmes produced. The artists' predicament was worsened by the government as it dictated what was to be produced for the audience. However, it is interesting that despite the government's presence, KBC television theatre artists created and produced texts that imaged socio-political concerns similar to the mainstream texts that had been banned under the government's watch.

This study analysed *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* aired on the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation television. *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani* have been on air for the longest period in Kenyan history. Of significance to the study is that *Vitimbi*, and *Vioja Mahakamani* were performed during Kenya's repressive regimes. I therefore problematize how these texts address socio-political experiences in the wake of government's censorship policies. Unlike *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani* that have been on air for long, *Angel's Diary* was on air from 2011 to 2014 in a space of relative media freedom. *Angel's Diary* was produced during a time when state censorship had loosened its grip on media and literary content in general. Therefore, I investigated the strategies employed in the selected texts to sustain both their existence and their treatment of Kenyan social-political experiences. This was

informed by the fact that freedom of expression had been muffled in Kenya spanning over three decades since independence. In turn, this drove artists to devise subversive tactics in interrogating government policies and any other matters relating to public experiences.

In an attempt to address the problem under study, I acknowledge that theatre is an integral part of society, tied to the socio-political experiences and concerns that generate it. Elo Ibagere and Stevenson Omoera Osakue observe that the “theatre artist is not apolitical because of his involvement in the socio-political making process” (71). Ibagere and Osakue’s observation is demonstrated by theatre artists such as Francis Imbuga, Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Ngugi wa Mirii, whose texts raise moral, political and social questions such as injustice, corruption and repression that bedevil post-independence African states.

Theatre has been used in different societies to express and address an array of social issues. Sophia Dowllar Ogutu et al. observe that “theatre has played a fundamental role in different aspects of life such as religion, ritual and social practices” (1). Susan Gallagher and Rodger Lundin note that a “work of art reflect[s] social structures of societies from which they emanate” (6). However, I make haste to add that art does not only reflect social structures as it is a living component of any society. Hence it also enlightens and socializes people in a particular manner. It is therefore against this background that I interrogate KBC television theatre texts and their ability in imaging contemporary socio-political experiences within a state broadcaster.

The study therefore examines how KBC theatre texts that would be deemed “harmless” by the censorship apparatus could represent issues critical of the

government under the regime's watchful eyes. The question that arise from this is: Is there a possibility of reading the selected KBC television theatre texts beyond their entertainment function as comedies? Based on this, my analysis of socio-political spaces in this study demands an understanding of Kenya's post-independence experiences and how such experiences are addressed by theatre practitioners.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

This study examines the representation of socio-political spaces in selected texts on KBC television. While recognizing the fact that the selected theatre texts namely *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* were popular among Kenyan TV audiences, mainly due to their entertainment function as comedies, this study investigates the possibility of reading the selected television theatre texts beyond their entertainment function as socio-political commentaries. Through the analysis of the selected episodes from the three texts, the study sought to explicate how socio-political themes are imaged. In order to do the above, the study examined the theatrical strategies employed in the texts to mask political messages and make it possible to air politically incisive programmes on KBC, the state broadcaster.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study set out to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To investigate how *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* engage with socio-political issues of the moment beyond entertainment function;
- ii. To examine the strategies employed in *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* in addressing socio-political issues in Kenya; and
- iii. To examine how *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* contest and subvert discourses of inequality, domination and subjugation in Kenya

1.5 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- i. How does *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* engage with socio-political issues of the moment beyond entertainment function;
- ii. What strategies do *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* employ in addressing socio-political issues in Kenya; and
- iii. How does *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* contest and subvert discourses of inequality, domination and subjugation in Kenya

1.6 Justification for the Study

The present study is necessary for a number of reasons. To begin with, the study sheds more light on the crucial role played by television theatre in Kenya and in particular how KBC is used as a space to address critical socio-political issues. This study contributes to the existing body of research on popular theatre in Kenya such as George Odera Outa (2009); Fred Mbogo (2012); Dinah Adhiambo Ligaga (2008); Miriam Maranga-Musonye (2014); and Busolo Wegesa (2014). The present research enriched other studies on television theatre and more specifically the socio-political experiences in Africa.

The theatre texts produced on KBC television are many. The choice of *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* is particularly significant as I seek to problematize the relationship between the state and the socio-political experiences that informed the texts' creation. *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani* are comedies and have been on KBC television for over three decades. As such, I interrogate the possibility of these texts in addressing the socio-political issues over the period they were on air. This was

informed by the recognition that they were produced and performed in a period when censorship of literary materials was rife. *Angel's Diary* was aired on KBC for less than a decade. Unlike *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani* which are comedies, *Angel's Diary* is not a comedy. *Angel's Diary* does not rely on humor to address the thematic issues. Thus the text is selected alongside comedies to investigate how it addressed the socio-political experiences without humor as a strategy. In addition, my choice of this text is informed by the subversive way in which it deals with the socio-political issues in Kenya. However, what was interesting is that despite *Angel's Diary's* short span on television airwaves, it engages with socio-political experiences similar to *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani* which are comedies. In this regard, all the three texts deal with socio-political experiences in Kenya by subverting hegemonic discourses.

It is also important to note that theatre production and reception in Kenya witnessed a lot of censorship. Since independence, some theatre texts such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o's and Ngugi wa Mirii's *I will marry when I want* and *Maitu Njugira (Mother, Sing for Me)* were banned. Yet given the needs for television theatre texts to both delight and inform the audience, theatre practitioners censored themselves, the content and presentation of the texts. Despite the government's surveillance, theatre artists continued to address socio-political issues. Therefore this study demonstrates television theatre's contribution in addressing socio-political issues of the day.

1.7 Scope and Limitation

This study confines itself to content analysis of the video tapes of selected episodes of *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary*. Purposive selection of episodes is imperative especially in considering that there are over one thousand episodes of *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani*. It is also important to take note of the time limit of

this study vis-à-vis the episodes that can possibly be subjected to analysis to provide material for critical reading. The focus, therefore, in this study is limited to six episodes for *Vitimbi* and six episodes for *Vioja Mahakamani*.

To arrive at the six episodes, I watched ten episodes of both *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani* where I purposely selected six episodes relevant to the study in terms of content. The research involved visits to the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation library to access the primary texts for the study. From the available texts within KBC library, the study focused its analysis on the digital video discs (DVD) of the episodes selected. The DVDs were relevant to the study as they enabled me to watch the performance more than once which then aided in the analysis of the texts.

Angel's Diary has been in existence for less than a decade so I picked six episodes for the period in which the text was performed. Since the performance in *Angel's Diary* is chronological as it develops on the previous episodes, I analysed six of the aired performances successively. This was sufficient in analyzing the socio-political experiences as represented in the text. References to Kenya's political history is limited to information relevant to the study and KBC television theatre.

1.8 Literature Review

This section deals with a critical review and analysis of related literature in the following thematic areas: theatre in Kenya, functions of theatre, setting, and comedy with the aim of contextualizing the current study within popular theatre scholarship and to establish the scholarly gaps which this study fills.

1.8.1 Theatre in Kenya

The history and development of theatre in Kenya is traced to traditional performances such as rituals traced in African traditional practices. Kimingich Wabende study

From the Bukusu fireside to the stage: The performance of the oral narrative in the shifting spaces, examines artistic adaptation of the oral narrative from the traditional setting of the Bukusu community to the modern conventional and converted spaces. Wabende highlights how African oral literature was discriminated against by colonialists as they staged European texts for Africans. Wabende decries the fact that by introducing westernized texts, the African's interests were never taken into consideration (11). This in turn advanced a colonial induced inferiority complex aimed at undermining Africans' artistic production (11).

Therefore instead of theatre entertaining the people, staged texts was used as a tool of oppression by colonialists. The establishment of the Kenya drama festival in 1953 by East African theatre guild saw the festival ran alongside the Shakespeare festival. Wabende observes that the colonial control of theatre was away of emasculating theatre performance. However, the same control of artistic performances, he says, found itself in independence Kenya (12). Wabende's study is significant as it informs the present study in interrogating how theatrical productions have been received and consumed in Kenya. Of significance is the idea of censorship and modelling of the texts against European standards. Most literary texts especially those in the canon grapple with modelling the European standards. However, the texts in the present study are popular cultural products hence they are likely to subvert such standards in treating the subject matter. In this way, this study examines how popular texts address different issues by escaping government control.

The above discussion traces how Kenya drama festivals came into existence. Based on this, one can observe that modern theatre in Kenya has to a large extent been influenced by traditional rituals and the school drama festivals which started in 1959

as a secondary school event (Loukie Levert and Opiyo Mumma 36). Over the years, the event has grown to include primary, colleges and universities. Levert and Mumma aver that the Kenya “drama festival is a significant literary intervention as it provides a range of performances and techniques unique to Kenyan theatre” (38). More so, drama festivals have provided idioms in performance writing. As such, school and college drama festivals laid the ground upon which other theatre productions flourished since they worked well with the different communities that make up contemporary Kenya.

The drama festival texts performed for the competition usually address a range of issues, from political, economic, religious and social injustices aimed at sensitising society. It is therefore within the drama festivals that theatre in general and television theatre developed. Simon Peter Victor Otieno observes that the Kenya Schools and Colleges Drama Festivals’ “performances explore the current issues in the social scenario and resolutely reach out to the audiences country wide in a manner best understood in the communicative code entrenched between the audience and the performers” (86).

Most scholarly research on Kenyan theatre demonstrates the significance of theatre in addressing a host of issues. For instance, George Outa’s *Performing Power: Ethnic Citizenship, Popular Theatre and the Contest of Nationhood in Modern Kenya* systematically analyses how power is performed and how the concept of the nation is contested through popular theatre. He argues that “relations of power represented through popular theatre have ambiguities; complexities and antecedents that necessitate and condition instincts for survival and through it, the very might of power is contained within limits, or deflected” (198). In as much as Outa’s study does not

address television theatre, it offers insightful ways of analysing the selected theatre texts in this study.

Fred Mbogo observes that *Vioja Mahakamani* operates as an “entertainment program employing comedy as its prime mode... tailored to suit the need to provide learning on the penal code system” (250). In his analysis, Mbogo established that the integration of the aesthetics of performance with pedagogy is not only part of a long tradition within the performing arts in Africa but that the popularity of specific works, such as *Vioja Mahakamani*, lies in that very combination (242). He further argues that there is a moral attachment and teaching as regards norms of behaviour within the urban setting in which laws apply for the restoration of order as depicted in *Vioja Mahakamani*. The question that arises from Mbogo’s argument is: Can the same moral attachment that Mbogo highlights in *Vioja Mahakamani* be applicable to the entire nation or is it only meant to cater for the metropolitan population?

Despite the above researches on Kenyan theatre, it was important to carry out this research on the selected KBC television theatre productions to find out how socio-political experiences have been imagined and imaged since the selected productions may run the risk of being seen as only serving an entertainment function. Such a misconception in the reading of KBC television theatre texts is illustrated when Outa points out that *Vitimbi* was “disparaged and low rated at the University of Nairobi” (198) may be resulting from its classification as a popular theatre product and as a comedy. Therefore, the present study is worth undertaking as it allows the reading of KBC television theatre texts beyond their entertainment function.

1.8.2 Functions of Theatre

Theatre in most African societies has been used for a number of functions. As a text, theatre is versatile in nature as seen in its ability to address different social issues as they emerge. For instance, socio-political themes have been a preoccupation of theatre practitioners such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, John Ruganda, and Francis Imbuga. Most theatre texts produced by the above artists highlight political leadership's inefficiency and myopic approach to governance. The above artists' creation of theatre underscores the significance of artistic work in dealing with "political and economic realities" (Simon Gikandi 198). One of the functions of television theatre is to "harness popular culture and communication to bring about social change" (Shereen et al. 60). This is referred to as "edutainment" since it involves weaving together of daily experiences into the entertainment genres. This is the case with *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary*. In as much as theatre entertains, it also addresses social injustices thereby raising consciousness of the citizenry. Accordingly, change cannot occur without creation of awareness.

Christopher Joseph Odhiambo observes that theatrical space is powerful in dismantling cultural barriers through its ability to transport performers into another time and place. It is during this transportation that time and place are doubled so that both performers and audiences experience change of mood, attitude and the awakening of consciousness. Odhiambo considers space as essential to the development of cultural intervention, information transmission, development communication and conflict resolution. In this case, theatre is pivotal in creating the awareness needed for social development. Although the theatre scholars cited above make critical attempts to probe theatre in developing social change, they do not seem

to unravel how television theatre is responsible for transforming people in line with their socio-political experiences.

In an attempt to demonstrate the importance of a national culture, Glorstad Vibeke observes that “national culture is the main source of a people's cultural identity where regional and ethnic differences are placed under one political roof with a common language which creates a national culture” (6). However, according to Stuart Hall, it is not enough to be aware of such an identity because in order to make “political national states work, a common culture is constructed as ‘lifeblood’” (292-293). The nation state requires the pulling together of people regardless of their culture, ethnicity and language to identify as a nation-family. Although the above argument lays emphasis on the construction of a national culture and identity, it is still of import in this study in interrogating *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani* and their depiction of contemporary social experiences in Kenya.

Theatre exploits the “influential forms and rituals in a given community in demonstrating the cultural dynamics and power relations among people” (Tim Prentki 117). As such, theatrical expression becomes “a site of empowerment for participants which can in turn lead to changes both within the community and between the community and its wider environment” (Prentki 117). Prentki’s study draws illustrations from Theatre for Development (TfD) projects in Africa such as the Kamirithu Community Theatre in Kenya. By focusing on TfD projects in Africa, Prentki’s study demonstrates that studies on theatre in Africa have not addressed the contribution of Kenya broadcasting television theatre. This research paucity as seen in the foregoing forms the basis of the present study as it advances the argument that

KBC theatre is a significant contribution to theatre studies and to the socio-political debates in post-colonial societies.

Zakes Mda observes that TFD enables “communal participation where participants perform what they go through in everyday life” (179). Communal participation in theatre contributes to the right to communicate as it gives voice to those who otherwise have difficulty making their views heard. This help communities to articulate common positions on issues affecting them. It can also help disadvantaged groups to raise their concerns within the community thus allowing them access to the production and distribution of messages.

In “Theatre for Development,” Odhiambo argues that “problems facing communities can only be addressed adequately when community members are actively involved in the search for solutions” (11). Odhiambo’s argument underscores the significance of communities in addressing problems they face. In this way, each community member hold a stake for the general wellbeing of the society. The above is important in understanding how individual community members can become agents for change. I borrow this argument in this study to examine how the “subordinated” members of society assert themselves in the face of suppression so that they attain a level of becoming participants in the search of solutions to what they face.

Ngugi wa Thiong’o in the “Foreword” to Byam Lee Dale’s *Community in Motion: Theatre for Development in Africa* points out that “community theatre is a performance about the people by the people for the people. [Community theatre] celebrates people’s struggle to change their social environment and in the process, changes people” (xv). Penina Muhando Mlamba observes that popular theatre

transforms “people’s emotions and anger into concrete and objective action to change the situation for the betterment of the people's way of life” (205). The above is germane to my study in investigating the possibility of *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel’s Diary* in promoting individual agency in the society.

Although the above studies do not directly address KBC television theatre, some of their propositions are important in examining how theatre addresses contemporary social experiences. This is imperative especially in considering that KBC theatre is geared towards informing the public about different development messages and policies since “most popular forms of [theatre] in Africa mix entertainment with strong doses of instructions” (David Kerr 176). This tasks theatre creators to structure their work to accommodate both learning and entertainment. This research borrows from the above studies to examine how KBC theatre production addresses socio-political themes in Kenya.

1.8.3 Significance of Setting in Theatre

Peter Dahlgren points out that “most television viewing takes place in the home, which is traditionally a private space where talk about public matters starts” (18). He further says that “emancipation and behaviour change begin from domestic spaces” (18). An emancipated family is reflected at the national level and it is used to gauge national development and that negative behaviour is a setback for the nation. Dinah Adhiambo Ligaga notes that theatre’s preoccupation with themes of ordinary occurrences in the domestic space has worked in its favour as it operates away from the government’s direct watch (72). Domestic setting provides many avenues through which theatre texts are read. The above observation is of interest to this study as it is

insightful in the reading of domestic space in KBC television drama series which we argue was revisited because of censorship.

John Fiske emphasises the significance of cultural competence in the understanding of any work of art. According to Fiske, this “involves the bringing of both textual and social experience to bear upon the text at the moment of reading, and it involves a constant and subtle negotiation and renegotiation of a relationship between the textual and the social” (15). Therefore, an understanding of social reality is important in the reading and interpretation of art. I therefore borrow this proposition to examine how the social context influences the reading and assigning of meaning to *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary*.

In a study on the nature of images used to communicate the African personality and the city in independent Zimbabwe through television drama in Shona, Pedzisai Mashiri established that the dominant images advanced are those of a fragile middle class African family threatened by social change, the 'rebellious' middle class woman and the ideal traditional woman, the patriarchal man defending his position and the traditional cultural ethos.” Though the above study dealt with images in television drama in Shona, I borrow these ideas in discussing *Angel's Diary* and how it subverts the status quo in the family set up.

1.8.4 Comedy and Social Experiences in the Contemporary Society

Comedy as a genre has been in existence since time immemorial. A good example is seen in African traditional oral jokes from different communities across the continent. In the contemporary society, comedy has been an important genre in the entertainment industry as witnessed in a number of stand up comedies such as

“Churchill live show” and other television comedies in Kenya. As an industry, comedy employs a number of strategies and rhetorics to capture and maintain their audiences. One of the rhetoric devices often used is humor. It is the humor gouged from the daily experiences that keeps the audience glued on the screen while at the same time seeking for more. As a field, comedy has attracted interesting and insightful researches on different aspects of this genre. For instance, Margherita Dore in *Laughing at you or laughing with you? Humor negotiation in intercultural stand-up comedy* examines stand-up comedy in English at Rome’s Comedy Club.

The study investigated how “comedians and the audience deal with humor based on stereotypes about Italians and foreigners living in Italy. She observes that stand-up comedy is a fascinating and versatile way of performing humor dynamically negotiated by interactants” (105). The study was carried out in Italy and dealt with how Italians and foreigners are stereotyped. Though the study was carried out in Italy, a different region and audience, Dore’s study is informative to the current study as it helps me in the analysis of ethnic stereotypes in Kenya.

Michael Mule Ndonye, Bartoo Phylis, and Josephine Mulindi Khaemba examined how ethnic jokes from televised shows determine ethnic relations in Kenya. Their study was based on implications of televised ethnic comedy from "Churchill Live Show" and how they affect ethnic relations in Kenya. They concluded that "Churchill Live Show" is a source of ethnic stereotypes in Kenya; and that Kenyans use such stereotypes to relate ethnically with members of other ethnic groups. Kenya is made up of different ethnic groups as such, identifying with ones’ own ethnic group is common practice. “Churchill live show” relies heavily on humor to comment on a number of issues such as ethnicity, social classes, and politics among others. It is

therefore within the humor that comedians comment and comically talk about the behaviour of the other community or the class position. This fosters the tendency to stereotype other ethnic communities that the audience does not belong to. Though the audience may claim that what happens in the show does not influence how they relate with others, the fact is that it stays in their subconscious and may from time to time resurface. Ndonye, Bartoo and Khaemba's study dealt with "Churchill live show" which is aired on NTV. Though NTV is a private media station and the show is live other than recorded as it is the case of the texts in the current study, I find this study informative in the analysis of chapter three where I examine ethnicity as a theme.

Fred Mbogo in "The Profit-making Template in Kenyan Comedy" observes that "*Vioja Mahakamani* has developed a bag of tricks whose contents have created a pattern for Kenyan comedy" (11). His study looks at how elements such as "pitting of confused and ignorant characters against the confident and knowledgeable others, deliberate use of characters that have identifiable Kiswahili accents based on the various Kenyan ethnicities and visual exaggeration in the design of characters' dress advance particular messages" (11) to the audience humorously. What is of note in Mbogo's study is how:

[T]he elements function within certain stereotypic schemes or views on perceived habits, practices, thought patterns, or interests of various groups of people based on "tribe," class, age or profession. The elements are meant to appeal directly to an audience and are couched within a language that is directly accessible. The deliberately amusing names of characters whether through pronunciation or literal meanings, for example, excite audiences toward the oncoming comical servings which often play along formulated stereotypes: Ondiek Nyuka Kwota Olobaa Man Gidi, Tamaa bin Tamaa Tii Tii, Ojwang' Mang'ang'a Sibuur, or Masanduku Arap Simiti (literally; boxes, son of cement) (11).

He concludes by pointing out that while comedies following in the mould of *Vioja Mahakamani's* internal elements are successful in terms of getting funding within the

larger education-entertainment enterprise, or in terms of getting massive audiences when on live performance tours, they nevertheless are limiting in terms of potential (12). Mbogo's study evaluates how *Vioja Mahakamani* as a pioneer text on television airwaves has influenced other television texts in terms of internal elements. This is especially key in as far as funding is concerned. However the risk of this, is limiting of artists' ability to try and experiment with other elements. Though Mbogo's study deals with *Vioja Mahakamani*, one of the texts studied in this study, his study focuses on the profit making aspect of the texts produced yet the current study is concerned with the socio-political representation of experiences in the texts. In spite of this gap, his study is significant in terms of the elements used in the text such as ignorant characters. This is useful in the study as it helps me to read the elements through semiotic lenses in terms of signs that signify something else.

From the literature reviewed above, it is evident that scholars place premium on theatre in general by highlighting its significance in addressing a number of issues. The above studies have not addressed the contribution of KBC television theatre in popular theatre scholarship in general. The literature review reveals lack of specific studies on *Vitimbi* and *Angel's Diary*. There is also a dearth of studies on the imaging of socio-political issues through KBC television theatre hence giving impetus to my study. Therefore, there is need for a deeper interrogation of KBC television theatre which is what this study has done.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

The present research employs postcolonial theory and semiotics literary theory in the analysis of the problem under study. While postcolonial theory is used in the study to interrogate domination, power, subjugation, inequality and subversion, semiotics is used in the analysis and interpretation of figurative use of language such as symbols

and how they signify something other than what they stand for. The two theories are informative as they complement each other in the analysis of the socio-political images in the selected KBC theatre texts.

The first theory discussed in this section is the postcolonial theory. I found postcolonial theory suitable in discussing experiences in contemporary Kenya. The use of postcolonial theory in the analysis of KBC television theatre texts lays focus on “the subjugation and domination manifest in contemporary post-colonial societies” (Young 11). As such, the theory is used to read domination and its agents that are enforced through political, economic and social exploitation in contemporary Kenya. This approach to the study helps me in examining any form of domination, power play, resistance and subversion.

The attempts for emancipation by the oppressed is based on an understanding that postcolonial theory as observed by Robert Young, “emerged from experiences of oppression and struggles for freedom” (383-426). According to Young, any criticism based on this theory “focuses on the oppression and coercive domination in contemporary world” (11). Therefore, the application of postcolonial theory in this study was realized through an analysis of various forms of domination in the society based on one’s ability to control and oppress others. In discussing different forms of dominations in contemporary Kenya, I applied readings of postcolonial theory to the unequal political, social, economic and cultural relations likely to lead to domination.

The manifestation of different forms of dominance in contemporary society is sufficient in grounding the study within the postcolonial theory. The postcolonial

theoretical strands used in my study are Homi Bhabha's ideas on the formation of culture, hybridity and mimicry; Frantz Fanon's concept of Psychopathology, and Michael Foucault's concept of colonial discourse. Each of the above mentioned postcolonial theorists ideas are expounded in the discussion below.

In "The Location of Culture," Bhabha examines what happens when opposing cultures come into contact and try to demonstrate their differences. According to him, the "in-between spaces" created by an encounter of two different cultural groups is where "new signs of identity" form, leading to a hybrid culture. Bhabha uses hybrid culture in analyzing the oppressor/oppressed relations by stressing their interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectivities. Bhabha asserts that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space he calls the 'Third Space' of enunciation (37).

Related to hybridity as noted above is the concept of ambivalence which is significant in reading subjugated individuals. Ambivalence is realized through mimicry sometimes referred to as mockery. In mimicry, the subjugated subject mimics the language and behavior of the dominant entity. In this way, the one mimicking becomes "a subject of difference that is almost the same [as the dominant entity], but not quite" (122). Therefore the ambivalence that results out of the imitation is manifest in the difference between the dominant centre and the mimic.

The dissimilarity between the dominant entity and the mimic subject is realized through race, culture, ethnicity, gender, economic power, and history that inhibit the mimicking subject from becoming the desired dominant's near perfect image. In failing to become the dominant's mirror image, the ambivalence becomes a threat

because it renders the dominant incomplete denying the dominant a totalizing center. Bhabha argues that “the repetition of partial presence, which is the basis of mimicry, articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of [dominant] authority” (126). In this way, mimicry subverts the authority of the dominant’s original form by reflecting the presence of other perspectives in the representation.

In the “Location of Culture”, Bhabha observes that ambivalence interrupts domination because it disturbs the simple relationship between domination and subjugation.

This is because:

Mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (86).

Therefore, ambivalence works against the dominant entity since within the position of ambivalence, the subjugated other seeks recognition. This is because the dominant entity’s endeavour is to create submissive subjects likely to replicate the oppressor’s structures, habits and values -a situation that ‘mimics’ the dominant locale. However, ambivalence has worked against the oppressor since instead of producing their desired products; it has instead created ambivalent subjects whose mimicry is never very far from mockery. Such a relationship therefore is counter-productive as it disturbs and deconstructs dominance. In doing this, the ambivalent individuals subvert discourses of authority which turns dominance into the grounds of intervention and interrogation.

In “Culture in Between,” Bhabha points out that the contact point is where “the authoritarian attempts to objectify itself as a generalised knowledge or a normalising,

hegemonic practice. While the hybrid discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal” (212). This space lays possibilities for the emergence of an agency that refuses the double representation of social opposition. The agency is likely to resist wholesome exercise of domination hence construct sites from which they claim their voice.

On his part, Fanon proposes an understanding of the psychological effects of domination and disempowerment on the subjugated as important in the process of individual liberation in postcolonial societies. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon explores the racial difference by pointing out that under domination, the objective sphere of material oppression involved the subjective sphere. He refers to this situation as the “colonisation of the mind where the subjugated believe that wearing the white mask (culture) is the only way of dealing with psychological inadequacy” (74). Fanon further notes that any attempt to understand domination should “include not only the interrelations of objective historical conditions but also the human attitudes towards these conditions” (84).

This implies that resistance against domination and any other forms of oppression must not only be material but also deal with the oppressed’s mind. Fanon refers to this process as the decolonization of the mind. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin explain that decolonization is the “process of revealing and dismantling oppressor’s power in all its forms. This includes dismantling the hidden aspects of institutional and cultural forces that maintain power” (63). In using Fanon’s concept of psychopathology, I interrogate the inner effects of domination on the subordinated

and examine how such an approach provides the necessary tools of resistance. This is because the process of decolonization originates from the positive change of the mind.

Colonial discourse is another strand in postcolonial theory that is applied in this study. Michael Foucault argues that a discourse is a loaded sphere of social knowledge where a system of statements forms a basis within which the world can be known. According to Foucault, the world is not simply 'there' to be talked about but it is through discourse that the world is brought into being. Discourse also helps its users to understand themselves, their relationship to each other and their place in the world. He refers to this as the construction of subjectivity. As such discourse, organizes social existence and social reproduction in the society.

In most societies such as Kenya, there exists unspoken rules controlling which statements can be made and which cannot within the discourse, and these rules determine the nature of that discourse. There are rules that allow certain statements to be made and not others and rules that allow the development of a classification system. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin observe that "these rules concern such things as the classification, the ordering and the distribution of that knowledge of the world that the discourse both enables and delimits" (71).

Foucault's concept of discourse is significant in this research because it helps me in analyzing aspects of domination in terms of power and knowledge production as expressed in the TV theatre series. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in discussing discourse point out that the powerful entity usually has control of what is known and the way it is known, and those who have such knowledge have power over those who do not (72). I employ ideas of discourse in analyzing power and knowledge

and how the same affects the relationships between the dominant and dominated in the present study. According to Foucault, “knowledge is a form of power” (49) as it is likely to produce particular effects when applied to particular situations. The analysis of power and knowledge is realized through an attempt to supply answers to the following questions: what is the relationship between power and knowledge? How does the dominated section of a society exploit knowledge to subvert the power within the dominant class? Is there a possibility that the oppressor’s discourse can classify individuals in different groups?

Bhabha’s and Fanon’s ideas are valuable in analyzing forms of resistance against agents of oppression advanced through political, economic, cultural and social exploitation in Kenya. This is helpful in responding to questions of how dominant discourses operate to legitimize their superiority and how the ‘oppressed’ respond to the same. The above brief examination of some conceptual strands in postcolonial theory has been valuable in grounding this research within postcolonial conditions thus highlighting notions of individual domination. Based on the above discussion, I use postcolonial theory to re-locate sites of power continuities, exploitation and domination as presented in *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel’s Diary*.

The second theory employed in this study is Charles Sanders Peirce’s semiotic theory. Semiotics examines the production and function of signs and sign systems of a language. It further deals with the methods of their signification in a given language. Kimingichi Wabende observes that signs are “those objects by which human beings communicate meaning; words, images, behaviour or ideas [which] are relayed by a corresponding manifestation we can perceive” (34). Therefore the concern of

semiotics in the analysis and interpretation of any literary text is with how a sign signifies leading to a manifestation of its meaning at a deeper level. That is, meaning over and above what the sign stands for. Semiotics, according to Mohammad Aghaei provides “a set of unified principles that underlie the construction, signification and communication of any sign system” (24). Based on this understanding therefore, a “literary text as a sign system serves as an artfully constructed fictional discourse that is signified in similar way as the signification of other sign systems” (Aghaei 24).

Peirce classifies sign into icon, index and symbol based on the relation between the signifying item and that which it signifies. Nasrullah Mambrol succinctly points out that:

An icon is a sign by virtue of its similarity with what it signifies. For instance the similarity of a portrait with the person it portrays. An index is a sign which has cause/effect relationship with what it signifies. For instance, smoke signifies fire. While a symbol becomes a sign as the relationship between the sign and the signifier is socially constructed by convention and meaning is arbitrarily attributed. For instance, the red traffic light signifying stop (Par 3).

Peirce holds that a literary text has an iconic nature that can be explained in terms of the different modalities. These modalities make possibilities of expanding language to express multiple meanings. This is especially discernible in literary texts since literature manipulates language artistically beyond the actual words to signify other objects, worlds and reality. Lucia Santaella observes that manipulation of language in literature “transfigures conventionality into motivated senses that emerge at the surface of the words. It is under the power of analogies, at the core of iconicity, that literary language, in its quintessence which is poetry, comes closer to...reality” (62).

The manner in which language is manipulated has a bearing on how literary interpretation is realized. Informed by the fact that artistic works capitalize on

language manipulation, the literary critic preoccupies himself/herself with the analysis of “the aesthetic dimensions of the text because a proper interpretation of a literary text depends much on its aesthetic aspects” (Aghaei 26). This allows the reader/viewer to construct a comprehensive image of the story and any other accompanying features. The features may include facial expressions, gestures, and body movement which allow one an opportunity to interpret the text in relation to other objects signified.

Related to the above, semiotics also advocates for the examinations and interpretation of literary texts in relation to other cognitive processes such as metaphor as observed by Gonzalez-Marquez (179). The metaphorical reading of any text is significant since it maps and brings out “the representative character of a sign by representing a parallelism in something else” (Langendonck 398). De Cuypere Ludovic points out that such a reading provides an opportunity to establish “an iconic ground which is not shared between the sign and the object referred to, but between the sign’s object and new object with which the sign is connected” (81). Reading a literary text from this approach requires the reader/viewer to decipher the figurative elements such as metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, parody, irony and other symbolic components of literary discourse. In this way, one is able to decode other meanings other than what the sign stands for. I therefore use semiotics theory in this study to examine figurative use of language in the selected theatre texts. This approach allows me to draw the relationship between the sign and the socio-political reality advanced in the selected texts against Kenya’s social milieu.

Apart from the figurative analysis, semiotics also advocates for the analysis of a literary text from a pragmatic point of view. In this case, any meaningful signification

should take into consideration the social context within which the text is produced. The pragmatic approach to the study of a literary text deals with “the cultural aspects manifested or represented through its narrative units, carrying cultural semantic contents” (Aghaei 29). The narrative units such as setting, plot structures, character traits, literary styles or techniques employed in the organization of a narrative are significant in the analysis and interpretation. In doing this, the narrative units function as socio-symbolic mediations that relate the literary text to a given culture and social context. In this case, a literary text is interpreted by considering the socio-cultural aspects of a given society within which the text is produced.

Based on the above discussion, I find semiotics literary theory applicable to the present study. This is because the study of signs is particularly important in the analysis of popular television theatre texts. This theory is particularly informative since the texts artistically structure the content and manipulate language in packaging the messages and images advanced in each. It is even more significant if you read the texts while cognizant of the fact that popular cultural products are the most censored material. The artists therefore device ways/signs of communicating to avoid censorship. It is therefore within the signs that I interrogate their signification. The presence or/and absence of certain signs is likely to influence the perception of a particular theme in relation to the socio-political context within which it is generated and consumed. In addition, the reading of signs as used in KBC television theatre texts serve to situate its audience in a particular way of appreciating and relating to what is performed.

Of significance is the interrogation of how language has been manipulated to communicate in the texts. The analysis of how language has been manipulated allows

me to examine how language in the selected texts is made to signify and to stand for something else. This implies the reading of one thing for instance characters behaviour in relation to something else. In this regard, my analysis of the selected texts through semiotics allows me to examine how signs are used to reveal the underlying themes and meanings. According to Peirce:

A sign or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the ground of representamen (99).

Based on the above quotation, the application of semiotics to popular television theatre programmes as is the case for this study, implies that when a sign (image) is viewed, the audience in most cases consumes and associates the viewed images to particular experiences they have witnessed. In addition, the signs conveyed through television form the basis of how the audience perceives what is communicated. The viewer's perception and recognition of what they see is influenced by the previous scenes in the programme, how the scene is portrayed and the relation of the scene to the wider society. Therefore in watching and analysis of the selected texts, I interrogate how the signs are manipulated to communicate more.

1.10 Research Methodology

This study uses qualitative approach in reading *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* with the intention of examining the representation of socio-political themes in the texts. The different video tapes of the selected episodes formed the subject matter of investigation in this study. For the purpose of this study, content analysis of video tapes was the primary method of research. In content analysis, I

interrogated how KBC television theatre provides a platform on which socio-political experiences are addressed. The analysis of socio-political issues was limited to the representation of leadership and its intricacies, social norms, forms of domination and the resistance that ensues from such a space.

I watched each of the video tapes of the selected episodes of the texts one at a time. The sample content was tracked from the video tapes of the episodes watched, translated, transcribed and analyzed. The contextual interpretation of data in this research was significant as it helped me grapple with the socio-political experiences in Kenya advanced through KBC television theatre texts.

Postcolonial theory is applied in the study to interrogate sites of domination and its impact on the subjugated members. According to Robert Young, postcolonial theory “seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between the different peoples of the world” (7). Based on Young’s observation, postcolonial theory helps me to read the different manifestations of power disparity and how the same can be addressed for equality. Homi Bhabha’s ideas on the formation of culture and hybridity is applied in the reading of characters’ agency made possible through the different cultural locations they inhabit. A good example is Mama Kayai in *Vitimbi* and Pitch and Paula in *Angel’s Diary*.

Mimicry is applied in reading humour in the selected theatre texts especially *Vitimbi* and *Vioja Mahakamani*. In the two texts, the characters such as Ojwang and Ondieki struggle to show that they are men. However, in trying to show manliness, they come out as a shadow of the same. Cognisant of the fact that *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Vitimbi* are comedies, my reading of the selected theatre texts lays focus on

domination. In this way, I take note of how dominant understandings of artistic works and institutions are destabilized and subverted by comedy and popular television theatre texts in general. The application of postcolonial theory to comedy is justified since comedy underscores different ways in which an expression either undermines or conforms to dominant discourses. As such, comedy and popular television texts creatively offer indirect articulation and counter discourses to the status quo comically. Therefore the use of comic interrogates and brings to the fore the ironies, intrigues, and absurdities of domination, subjugation and inequality in the society. In doing this, comedy subverts the status quo's control of knowledge, power, and resource distribution by disintegrating the power.

Frantz Fanon's concept of psychopathology is applicable to the study of the subjugated members of the society. According to Fanon, domination not only deals with physical control but also mental control which he refers to as psychopathology. Therefore, there is need for physical and mental freedom on the part of the subjugated individuals. Fanon's ideas is therefore used to read characters such as Mama Kayai, Kitali's daughters and wife. In this way, such individuals need to move beyond their cultural and conditioned belief that by nature they are to be dominated. Their freedom therefore has to begin with freeing the mind which eventually leads to the realization of their potential.

Foucault's Colonial discourse is used to analyse societal experiences in the selected texts. Contemporary forms of domination are advanced in various ways through cultural, social and political power relations in the society. This is based on the fact that he who is knowledgeable has ability to manipulate and control the other. It is therefore within such a situation that the once subjugated individuals free themselves

ones they become aware of their rights and potential. Secondary data such as books, journals, and internet sources were used to further ground the argument in the study. These sources were useful in supporting arguments made and at the same time, they complemented primary sources.

The semiotic literary theory is used to interrogate how language is used in the texts. In the main, I examine how language is used figuratively to signify or stand for other objects, or reality in the society. In this way, the study looks at other elements of the story such as setting, characters, and language in representing daily experiences in Kenya. Therefore, texts are read allegorically and symbolically in relation to the socio-political themes in the texts.

1.11 Chapter Breakdown

This research is organized in five chapters as indicated below:

Chapter One: Contextualizing the Study

The first chapter provides a brief background on theatre. It presents the research problem and objectives of the research, literature review, theoretical framework, research methods, and scope of the research. In the main, it shows why this research was worth undertaking by highlighting the topic and area of research, locating it in the appropriate background and context of the research problem.

Chapter Two: *Vitimbi* as a Commentary on Kenya's Socio-Political Experiences

The second chapter discusses *Vitimbi's* setting by focusing on familial relationships, and political readings of the domestic setting. This deals with the interpretation and analysis of content in *Vitimbi* in relation to political intrigues in Kenya. The chapter focuses on how *Vitimbi* portrays the problems and solutions of the post-independence era by drawing evidence from its content. The chapter employs postcolonial theory

in its analysis of the family to demonstrate how domination and subordination are played in the nation-state.

Chapter Three: Judicial Intervention and Social Reality in *Vioja Mahakamani*

This chapter uses Homi Bhabha's ideas of the in-between space and Michael Foucault's concept of Colonial discourse in analyzing the courtroom in *Vioja Mahakamani*. This is done to examine the possibility of *Vioja Mahakamani* in addressing emerging social issues in contemporary Kenya. In using Foucault's concept of colonial discourse, I interrogate how knowledge and power operate in either reinforcing domination or in undermining it.

Chapter Four: Silence, Marginalisation and Women Agency in *Angel's Diary*

This chapter explores ways through which subordinated members of society assert themselves through the analysis of *Angel's Diary*. Bhabha's concept of hybridity and Fanon's psychopathology and semiotic theory was used to demonstrate how individual characters claim their agency.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study by highlight its contribution to television theatre studies. The conclusion further discusses the implications and possibilities arising from an understanding of television theatre in popular theatre practice.

CHAPTER TWO: *VITIMBI* AS A COMMENTARY ON KENYA'S SOCIO-POLITICAL EXPERIENCES

2.0 Introduction

The years immediately after Kenya's independence saw the rise of repression of Kenyans by the government. To ensure unchallenged loyalty to the ruling class, the state censored any content perceived to subvert the regime's policies. Of all censored material, theatre suffered the most as seen in the banning of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii's play *I Will Marry when I want*. However, regardless of government censorship and the hostile political environment especially in relation to theatre, *Vitimbi* flourished to stake a niche on KBC television and to its audience. It is therefore within such a socio-political milieu that I interrogate how the happenings in *Vitimbi* can be related and compared to the socio-political happenings at the nation state.

Based on the knowledge that art is a reflection and a product of society as observed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981), *Vitimbi* cannot fail to reflect that very society that has given it the raw material. Commenting on the role of the artist, Ernest Emenyonu points out that "an African literary artist must have a stake in the serious political and social issues of his times and people. He cannot create in a vacuum if his works must have relevance, authenticity and acceptance" (35). Emenyonu's observation forms the basis on which I interpret *Vitimbi* in relation to the socio-political experiences in contemporary Kenya.

Therefore, this Chapter examines how socio-political spaces are imaged through familial interactions in *Vitimbi*. I situate the action in *Vitimbi* at the intersection of domestic intrigues and post-independence social experiences of Kenyans in the years

referenced by the theatre texts studied. The ability of *Vitimbi* to intricately knit familial and patriarchal structures on one hand with social, economic and political experiences on the other against a backdrop of Kenya's history is pivotal in my discussion. In this way, I grapple with how the family in *Vitimbi* can be read as a microcosm of the post-independence states and how masculine authority, as embodied in the father figure (Mzee Ojwang), is comparable to manifestations of domination and subjugation in contemporary Africa and Kenya in particular.

As a microcosm of society, I analyze *Vitimbi* as an allegory of post-independence Kenya. The interpretation of *Vitimbi* allegorically is premised on Fredrick Jameson's argument that the "Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic, necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory [and that] the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situations of the Third World culture and society" (69). Based on Jameson's reading of allegory, this chapter examines how the family experiences in *Vitimbi* can be employed to investigate the socio-political conditions that shape and dictate the thematic issues imaged. The chapter also problematizes characterisation within the domestic setting in order to establish how specific characters are used to address political nuances. The analysis of characterization is limited to Mzee Ojwang, his family and his employees.

2.1 Synopsis of *Vitimbi*

Vitimbi is a television theatre series that was aired on KBC television from the late 1970s to 2014. *Vitimbi* uses the domestic setting as its point of reference. The action in *Vitimbi* is centered on Mzee Ojwang's family and the family hotel business. The cast consists of Mzee Ojwang, his wife (Mama Kayai), their daughter (Kabu), and the

hotel employees such as Mogaka, Mwala, Ole Matope, and Ngomongo. *Vitimbi* deals with a variety of themes while using the family as its backdrop. It is also an episodic text with each of the episodes dealing with a different point of reference, themes, and setting in each week it is aired.

Mzee Ojwang remains in the same character role all through and is depicted in his traditional and patriarchal roles as the head of the family. Through the performance of who and how a man should behave, Mzee Ojwang is always out to show that he is in control of his family, business and that his decisions should be obeyed to the letter.

Vitimbi often makes reference to the hotel that is ‘jointly’ run by Mzee Ojwang and Mama Kayai. This is the only source of income for the family and because of the good returns, the Ojwangs are well above the rest of the people in their neighborhood in terms of material resources and social class. Despite the hotel being a family business, most of the time, Mzee Ojwang does not allow Mama Kayai to access hotel premise and accounts. It is from the hotel proceeds that Mzee Ojwang lives large and finances his promiscuous behaviour. Apart from the numerous concubines and women that Ojwang services, he also engages in fraudulent activities that lead him to lose a lot of money. This often leads to the near collapse of the hotel.

Based on the structure of *Vitimbi* as discussed above, my analysis in this chapter deals with individual episodes. This is because *Vitimbi* is not a continuous story since each episode is complete in itself and deals with different issues and referents. This approach therefore helps me to extensively examine each of the episodes before embarking on the next. I group episodes that deal with similar themes together and analyze them one after the other. It is therefore important to briefly explore the

reception of drama in Kenya and how happenings in *Vitimbi* can be read against Kenya's socio-political experiences as discussed in the section below.

2.2 The Family in *Vitimbi* and the Political State

In a study of this nature, it is imperative to examine the relationship between the government and art, especially theatre before conceptualizing the family and the father figure in *Vitimbi* and in Kenya's historical terrain. The overview of the government and art gives a microscopic picture of the socio-political milieu that informed the production and performance of *Vitimbi*. Consequently, it allows me to interrogate the implication of the domestic setting in *Vitimbi*.

Vitimbi was first produced in early 1980's when Kenyans were struggling for more democratic space under President Daniel arap Moi's repressive regime. Moi's regime was characterized by different forms of silencing and intimidation of those opposed to the ruling elite's policies. Dinah Adhiambo Ligaga observes that among the people targeted by the agents of the regime were opposition politicians, academicians, literary scholars, student leaders and outspoken church leaders such as Bishop Andrew Muge (11). This scenario was worsened by the country's social, economic and political turbulence which exacerbated an increase in the government's intolerance to its critics. Therefore, cognizant of the government's hostility toward art, and John Street's argument that "artistic creativity depends upon freedom of expression to which state interference is antithetical" (77), *Vitimbi*'s performance within the domestic setting was deliberate to mask the serious undertones over and above the social concerns therein so that the government could not easily relate the issues advanced to what was happening in the country then.

As already discussed in chapter one, the relationship between the Kenyan government and artists was strained because of the government's unbalanced nature and hostility toward artistic works. The state created a stifling environment for artists as it monitored and harassed those perceived to be anti-government or critical of the state. The government's determination to censor and mute art in Kenya is evident in the silencing of critical creative voices such as Ngugi wa Thiongó and Micere Mugo.

Censorship in most post-colonial societies manifests itself in various forms. Censorship, according to Kai Kresse, is realised through acts such as "forbearance from speech, absence of mention, obscurity, secrecy and omission" (qtd. in Nomsa Moyo 22). Though Kresse's observation is made in relation to censorship in Zimbabwe, the same is applicable to the Kenyan socio-political scenario. This is because the Kenyan government was paranoid of dissent and art especially theatre because of its ability to raise people's awareness about injustices and government failures. To deal with pockets of resistance and opposition, the government set up mechanisms of monitoring literary productions to ensure that only government friendly creative works flourished while the radical ones were banned. Despite the government of Kenya's skewed monitoring and control of literary output, popular cultural productions such as *Vitimbi* flourished and grew in numbers under the direct watchful eyes of state censorship machinery.

Johannes Fabian points out that in situations of collective oppression and in contexts where overt criticism and dissenting voices are not accommodated, popular cultural productions become important channels of expression in "creating collective freedom precisely where individual freedom is denied or limited" (19). *Vitimbi* was first produced in a repressive regime in Kenya, a regime that was out to silence any

material perceived to raise people's awareness of socio-political injustices perpetrated by the state. Therefore, *Vitimbi*, a popular cultural product, provides a safe haven to anchor lived experiences of the people since it appears "apolitical". This could be one of the reasons why it was allowed television airwaves on a state broadcaster because it was perceived as "harmless" in as far as the government was concerned.

It is within this hostile political environment that *Vitimbi* succeeds in addressing 'public' experiences through the supposedly 'private' sphere of the family. *Vitimbi*'s domestic setting therefore provides a sanctuary of freedom which projects the text as only entertaining the audience by advancing familial themes. The domestic setting masked political themes making the government pass it as a "trouble free" text in comparison to subversive literary productions such as Francis Imbuga's *Betrayal in the city*. In the first and second regimes under Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi respectively, artists and the population at large were not free to speak about a number of issues. Ngugi wa Thiong'o was one of the literary artists that encountered the silencing mechanisms of the government. The artistic silencing took the form of detentions and banning of his literary texts. On the banning of *Mother sing for me*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o points out that the government's action was deliberately thought out since in "attacking the theatre of Kamiriithu, one can now definitely say that the whole cultural repression was not an accident or an isolated mistake by some over-zealous philistines in the provincial administration, but *was a scheme by a paranoiac government*" [emphasis mine] (*Women in cultural work* 136).

The government had perceived the live performance of *I Will Marry when I Want* as a threat to its authority. As such, the government ordered the closure of Kamiirithu Cultural Centre where the play had been performed. Dinah Adhiambo Ligaga notes

the government's fears by pointing out that *I Will Marry when I Want* was a direct "attack on Kenyatta's government [particularly on the government's] treatment of the working class or peasants" (14). It is worth noting that *I will marry when I want* painstakingly explores how the common people in contemporary Kenya were betrayed by the political leadership after the colonizer. The citizenry had hoped for freedom and a share of the "fruits" of independence once they got independence.

However, what happened was the reinforcing of oppressive apparatus under the founding African leaders. Ingrid Bjorkman argues that the government's fear of the performance of Ngugi's text at Kamirithu was informed by the fact that it could make majority of the population, who Ngugi refers to as peasants, revolt against the status quo thereby disorienting the power equilibrium. The banning of the performance of Ngugi's text raises philosophical interrogation of power with government's fear on one hand, and the peasant's agency on the other hand. Michael Foucault deconstructs the belief that power is embodied in a single entity by arguing that power manifests itself in different ways. According to Foucault:

Power is dispersed across complicated and heterogeneous social networks marked by ongoing struggle. Power is not something present at specific locations within those networks, but is instead always at issue in ongoing attempts to (re) produce effective social alignments, and conversely to avoid or erode their effects, often by producing various counter-alignments (109-110).

Foucault's argument demonstrates that the citizenry have the power to change the status quo and it is because of this fact that the government was uncomfortable with the performance of *I will Marry when I want*. Therefore, the banning of theatre texts considered revolutionary was an attempt to muzzle any form of consciousness hence inhibiting people's seizure of power. The closure of Kamiriithu was aimed at muting

theatre so that people would not be aware of political immoralities flourishing at the time. However, *Vitimbi's* action is staged within the domestic setting. The domestic setting therefore allowed the text to engage with the lived experiences of the people away from the government's censorship apparatus.

It is also important to restate that the artist's task is to mirror society as observed by Ngugi wa Thiongo. Therefore, the use of the domestic sphere is a strategy that was employed to ensure *Vitimbi's* continued production and its long stay on KBC television. Related to the domestic space is artistic setting. The term setting has been defined variously by scholars. For instance, Allan Brown defines theatre setting as:

The many spaces, venues, and locations where art's experiences take place, and is used intentionally to broaden the discussion beyond conventional arts facilities. Settings may be formal or informal, temporary or permanent, public or private, and physical or virtual. In the broadest sense, "setting" is a sort of meeting ground between artist and audience—a place both parties occupy for a finite period of time to exchange ideas and create meaning (Par. 4).

What stands out in the definition above is the fact that setting in theatre is not only limited to space but a number of other elements that embellish the interpretation of a theatre text. On his part, Lukens, as quoted in Jackson Watson, classifies setting as either backdrop or integral (638). According to him, the backdrop setting has little influence on characters, plot and theme, while the integral setting influences the values, speech and actions of characters, plot movement and the presentation of theme. The examination of setting in this chapter transcends time and place to focus on the implications the same has on the interpretation of *Vitimbi*. This is particularly important as it aids in examining Kenya's post-independence experiences against the happenings in Ojwang's family.

On setting and meaning in theatre, Ayo Kehinde, in “Rulers against Writers, Writers against Rulers: The Failed Promise of the Public Sphere in Post-colonial Nigerian Fiction” observes that meaning in literary texts is “contextual- a function of the situation within which it is articulated” (Kehinde 43). This is because the interpretation and assigning of meaning to any text should be informed by “situated and historical analysis of the specific conditions of the socio-political groups (Kehinde 43). In order to analyse *Vitimbi*, there is need to examine the social environment that informed its production. The analysis of *Vitimbi* within the situated and historical conditions is invaluable in relating and interrogating post-independence experiences in Kenya. The *Vitimbi* artistically uses the family as a locale within which micro and macro conflicts are played out, interrogated and subverted. All this is neatly encapsulated within familial power relations witnessed in Mzee Ojwang’s household under his headship as the father and husband. The domestic space therefore suffices as a rich ground for anchoring society since the family is an organic social unit from which other social structures spring. On the significance of the family, Charles Kebaya argues that:

The centrality of the family space in Kenyan television drama is not a new concept since for decades now local dramas have made use of the family set up to foreground conflicts that exist in various binaries such as individual desire and family interest, modernity and tradition, family turmoil and national turmoil among others (70).

The family as an institution has been used artistically in *Vitimbi* as a signification of the nation. As such the family setting is resorcesful in drawing the nexus between the family and the state. I appropriate the happenings in the family to the happenings at the state level. In this way, the family is read as an allegory of the state. Allegory, according to Howard Abrahams is:

A narrative fiction in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are continued[sic] to make coherent sense on the “literal” or primary level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of agents, concepts and events (4).

Based on the definition above, an allegory can be said to be a literary device that refers to a situation or an item that relates its meaning or interpretation to another that is not similar in physical appearance. I argue that *Vitimbi* uses the family and the gendered relationships within the family to comment about the post-colonial African states. I start by discussing the family and the position of the father by illustrating the authority he has in the family and how the same is comparable to political leadership and authority at nation-state level.

Irene Visser and Heidi van den Heuvel-Disler define the family as the “primary social unit in any community; the individual’s opening into the wider social network” (5). The family is the first locus for individual development and the nucleus upon which society gets its citizenry and upon which other institutions such as political state and religious institutions are established and maintained. As an institution, the family is essential in realizing a healthy and sound citizenry since the state needs the family for its socio-political, cultural and economic stability. Christopher Ernest Ouma Werimo observes that “the family’s role in socializing its members stands out as key to linking the family with the larger socio-economic and cultural life” (78).

A healthy family can only be realized if the family’s leadership is capable of ensuring that family needs are adequately met. Sound leadership in the family in turn guarantees that children grow to become law abiding citizens and morally upright individuals. A healthy family, just like the state, has rules and regulations that guide its members. It is also where its members become aware of their position as they

grow. As such, order and social classes that later define state and political discourses originate from the family. This justifies the reading of the family in *Vitimbi* allegorically since within the familial space, concerns of the individual family members and the political state are articulated. The family in *Vitimbi* is presented as a contested space characterized by different forms of resistance, imposed silence, intimidation, interplay of power based on social hierarchies, familial struggles and gendered roles. For instance, Mama Kayai and Kabu come after Mzee Ojwang in terms of their position in the family respectively.

The hierarchies in the family are realized through the African socialization which reinforces the father as the head of the family. Kebaya observes that:

The image of the family space as an allegory of the national space is enhanced by orderly governance of society not merely in the strict supervision of the family but in the head of the family's own mastery of his position and role (71).

In this way, the father becomes the sole decision maker in all matters that concern his family. Therefore, the social hierarchies in Mzee Ojwang's family sets parameters on how individual family members relate. Mzee Ojwang occupies the most revered position in the household hence becomes the head/leader, while the rest of the family members are his subordinates/subjects. On the position of the father in the family, Adrienne Rich points out that:

The power of the fathers: a familial, social, ideological, and political system in which, by direct pressure-or through tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and division of labour-men determine what parts women shall or shall not play, and the female is everywhere subsumed by the male (57-58).

Rich's observation above captures the pronounced disparity of social hierarchies that exist in the family. Though the argument cited above emphasizes subordination in

terms of male-female relations, the same can be appropriated to other forms of subordination in the society. The relegation of family members based on the position they occupy is not only in terms of familial bonds but encompasses major institutions of society as observed earlier on in this section. On her part, Anne McClintock argues that:

The subordination of a wife to a husband, and child to adult occurs as a natural order in the society. As such other forms of social hierarchy could be conceptualized in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature (64).

The view of other social hierarchies as illustrated in the quotation above is informed by the fact that power relations that inform people's position in the society determine family members' participation in matters that inform their lives. Domination in the family setup manifests itself through male exercise of power over the female and children. On this, Gilbert Shang Ndi argues that

This subconscious basis of power underlies the postcolonial State, created on the myths of the invincible and virile founding father, the Head of State, the Father of the Nation, Father of independence, etc. Subjects of the new nation are therefore supposed to go through the same convalescence and tendering process enjoyed /endured by a newly planted tree and a new-born baby by the *initial agent* that wills it into being. Within the pseudo-cultural mind-set of family conviviality with its legitimizing gloss of "protection" of the "weak" by the "strong" the father figure seeks to evade accountability to those he governs (149).

In similar vein, I compare Mzee Ojwang to post-colonial African leaders. I point out that the domination and eventual subordination of his family members is a reflection of how the post-colonial political leadership subordinates and marginalizes the people they purport to lead. As such, the undertakings and shortcomings of the state may well be played out in the family drama as depicted in *Vitimbi*. However, I point out that the family's relationship with the state is complex than just envisaging the family as a representation and reflection of the state. Therefore, the examination of the

happenings in the familial space is done in relation to the explicit happenings at the level of the state by highlighting the way these events transcend simplistic manifestation of either institution. In relation to this, Homi Bhabha points out that:

In the stirrings of the unhomely, another world becomes visible. It has less to do with forcible eviction and more to do with the uncanny literary and social effects of enforced social accommodation, or historical migrations and cultural relocations. The home does not remain the domain of domestic life, nor does the world simply become its social or historical counterpart. The unhomely is the shock of recognition of the world-in-the home, the-home-in-the-world (141).

The quotation above provides a way of understanding not only a dynamic and interactive but also equal and reciprocal relationship between the home and the outer society. The social, political, economic and cultural happenings in the outer society is felt in the home, yet the domestic setting does not remain merely acted-upon and shaped by the larger world as pointed out in the quotation above.

Frantz Fanon emphasizes the significance of psychological reading of familial relationships into national power, by pointing out that “[f]or the individual, the authority of the state is a reproduction of the authority of the family by which he was shaped in his childhood [...] He perceives the present in terms of the past” (143). Fanon’s observation links the authority of the state as reproducing power dynamics similar to those experienced within the realm of the family, and also as a means of understanding portrayals of state struggle and national division as it maps onto the struggles and divisions that occur within the family.

Thus, familial power struggles in *Vitimbi* is emblematic of the effect of political happenings upon those experiencing state upheaval. This is because Mzee Ojwang’s behaviour resonates with the political underpinnings in post-colonial dictatorial regimes and Kenya in particular. Wilhelm observes that “in the figure of the father,

the authoritarian state has its representative in every family so that the family becomes its most important instrument of power (qtd in Patience Alden 74).

Grace Musila highlights the significance of family in the post-colonial society by pointing out that “artists revisit the familial space as a site of experiences which inevitably provide important insights into the murky national socio-political terrains” (349). Therefore, I point out that the conflicts witnessed in *Vitimbi* are symbolic of conflicts experienced at state level. The text uses the experiences of Mzee Ojwang’s family under the leadership of Ojwang as an image of the brutalities, failures, betrayals and excesses of political leadership and its effect on the general well-being of the ordinary citizenry. I read the family as a metaphor because the family is not just a passive recipient of the external happenings but it is a part of those happenings. Therefore in as much as the family may be remote from the happenings at the political arena, the action in *Vitimbi* demonstrate that the same family images the nation state. Michael Etherton and Brian Crow point out that:

[Theatre] plays must take the part of the local people. They should reflect life from the viewpoint of the [viewers] themselves; and they should not avoid articulating criticism of government policy which is inadequate. Thus, although they may initially set out to be less than political in their aims, these plays may end up as the most politically active of all African theatre (57-8).

Just like *Vitimbi*, the quotation above shows that artistic work cannot run away from addressing the happenings in the society since it cannot operate in a vacuum devoid of societal experiences. Despite *Vitimbi*’s performance oscillating between the confines of the home to the hotel, the text interrogates critical issues such as leadership, and gender. It is worth noting that *Vitimbi* sets out as addressing conflicts that occur within the home but ends up mirroring the socio-political experiences of the outer society. In this way, Mzee Ojwang’s family (centre of power) serves as a miniature of

the state. Mzee Ojwang's behaviour and struggle to show that he is in charge of his family is to a large extent informed by patriarchy. Terence Chong argues that:

Patriarchal order or patrimonialism refers to a power relationship in which the leader commands the obedience of an administrative staff based on his "patrimony" and their personal loyalty to him. Obedience was *demand*ed from subjects and not *persuaded* from members such that their political and economic rights, as social entities, were one and the same thing (287).

The scenario described above seems to be the template that Mzee Ojwang is using as he struggles to demonstrate that he is the head of his family and that his wife and daughter should obey his decisions. He uses a number of ways to ensure that the authority and control he has over his family is firmly retained in the father figure. This is demonstrated through a number of *Vitimbi* episodes selected for the chapter. These episodes are *Mpenzi* (lover), *Safari* (Journey), *Ndizi au Chungwa* (Banana or Orange), *Chama* (Table Banking), *Mkopo* (Loan), and *Biashara ya Ng'ambo* (Overseas Business).

The first episode analysed in this chapter is *Mpenzi* (lover). This episode features Mzee Ojwang, Mama Kayai, Kabu, Zipora (Mzee Ojwang's mistress), and Hotel employees (Mwala and Mogaka). The action in this episode begins in Zipora's house in the morning and it appears Ojwang has spent the night there. Ojwang is still in bed when the action begins. Zipora has prepared fruit juice for Ojwang and herself. She later calls Mzee Ojwang to join her for breakfast. In this episode, Zipora is heard referring to Mzee Ojwang as "my sweetie." Mzee Ojwang comes in, wearing a red T-Shirt and a white short. He finds it hard to see as he is not wearing his spectacles. As a result, he sits on the floor instead of the chair next to him. Zipora helps him to sit on the chair by reminding him that he should not worry as she is his eyes. Zipora is seen

feeding Mzee Ojwang as a sign of their romance. To show his love for Zipora, Ojwang does grand shopping for her.

On the other hand, at Mama Kayai's house, Mama Kayai is worried as she is convinced Mzee Ojwang is lost. She has searched for Ojwang everywhere in the city even in the mortuaries to no avail. At this time, she has called in Mwala and Mogaka to help her in the search. Both Mwala and Mogaka are aware of where Ojwang is but do not tell Mama Kayai. Mzee Ojwang has bribed them to keep his romantic affair with Zipora a secret from Mama Kayai. We also learn that Mama Kayai does not have cooking gas in her house since she does not have the money to refill the gas cylinder.

In the same episode, Mwala (Ojwang's employee at the hotel) has been secretly admiring Zipora and he seizes the opportunity when he is sent by Ojwang to take money to Zipora. He lies to Zipora that he is the one who has been helping Ojwang with money. As a result, Zipora believes his lies and they start an affair. When Ojwang learns of Mwala's and Zipora's intimate affair, he ends his relationship with Zipora and sacks Mwala from the hotel. Later on in the episode, Zipora realises that she is pregnant. However, because of having an affair with both Ojwang and Mwala, she is unable to identify the father to her unborn child as both Mwala and Ojwang deny responsibility. The episode ends with Zipora in Ojwang's house and refusing to leave, claiming that Ojwang has to take responsibility for the luggage (pregnancy) she is carrying.

The action in *Mpenzi* negates Mzee Ojwang's stature as the father and head of his household. We expect that as a father his family and not his concubine should be his first priority. Mzee Ojwang's family is a perfect example of what can be said to be a

modern type of nuclear family with the father, mother and child. Despite this, the family seems not to be united as would be the case. In this regard, Mzee Ojwang's show of manhood and authority in his family is caricatured. Based on this, one can tell that Mzee Ojwang's portraiture is an indication of a performance of masculinity but also an interrogation of what truly makes one a man, husband and father. This is because Mzee Ojwang is a contradiction in himself: on one hand, he wants to show how manly he is in terms of being the head of his family and on the other, he negates the same through his actions.

Mzee Ojwang's disposition is in tandem with what Judith Butler and Michael Foucault refers to as gender performance. Since Mzee Ojwang wants to show that he is a man, he has to act in line with what society expects of him as a man. In depicting Ojwang in this manner, the text satirizes and deconstructs the ideological construction of a man by society. Ojwang is at best comparable to Naipaul's male characters in *Miguel Street* who engage in outrageous activities to prove that they are "man among we men." One can rightly observe that Mzee Ojwang's behaviour is informed by his socialization as a man. However, beyond this socialization and struggle to act as a man, Mzee Ojwang is hollow and devoid of the values that define him as the head of his household. His struggle to demonstrate that he is in control of his family is subverted through his constant blatant mistakes and gullibility.

In the *Mpenzi* episode, Mzee Ojwang is depicted as a typical macho man who betrays his wife by having a romantic relationship with another woman. However, what is interesting is that the same is not allowed for women whom society expects to remain pure and chaste while being chased. The text demonstrates through romantic relationships that infidelity is one of the causes for women marginalization in the

society. This is because such relationships are biased in that most men seem to have been socialized into using, exploiting and dumping women without any remorse. The text employs Mzee Ojwang to satirize men who are promiscuous as portrayed in African artistic texts and production. For instance, Mzee Ojwang can be compared to Honorable Chief Nanga in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*; Issa Bello Pallat in Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*; Mr. M in Marjorie Oludhe's *Coming to Birth*; or even Boss in Francis Imbuga's *Betrayal in the City*. All the characters mentioned in the above texts hold revered positions in their respective societies yet they betray the people they are supposed to lead both in their families and at state level. I therefore read Mzee Ojwang's sexual escapades as a revelation of the shaping effects of socio-political experiences upon home, family and the population at large. Ojwang's sexual escapades is for personal and selfish gains. In doing this, he denies his family the basic needs. This is an indication of greed and exploitation of the masses by their leaders. Kehinde Ayo points out that male uncontrolled sexual prowess "signify the overwhelming disparity between the dominant, privileged exploiter-class and the exploited" (234) in the post-colony.

In *Mpenzi*, Mzee Ojwang behaves like an adolescent boy, full of romantic fantasy. Both Ojwang and Zipora are seen holding hands in similar manner as young lovers do. To ultimately steal Zipora's heart, Mzee Ojwang does impressive shopping for her yet the viewer knows that Mama Kayai does not have even cooking gas in the house. The lack of basic utilities such as cooking gas in Mama Kayai's house is a pointer to a failed leadership by the father figure who is supposed to adequately provide for his family. The fact that Ojwang shops for Zipora implies lack of priority by those mandated to take care of the welfare of those they lead. I point out that Ojwang's

infidelity neatly relates with post-colonial African leadership that has failed its people. The absence of gas as a basic commodity in Ojwang's household signifies a non-performing economy.

Lack of food supply and gas in Mama Kayai's house hinders her from cooking for her family. Food is treasured in most African communities, as it is during meal time that people commune, socialise and even discuss matters relating to society. However, the very essential commodity is threatened as there is lack of appropriate tools to realize it. As such, the familial bond is affected. This foreshadows the death of familial bond as a result of the individualistic and selfish character of Mzee Ojwang.

Mzee Ojwang's betrayal of his family members can be compared to different manifestations of betrayals in politics, religion, and culture that characterize life in the contemporary society. It is important, therefore, to emphasize that domestic betrayals are imbued with a multiplicity of interpretations as they go beyond ordinary betrayal. Mzee Ojwang's betrayals are emblematic of betrayals at the political level where those who hold political positions fail in their cardinal role of servant leadership and as individuals of high moral integrity. Instead, such leaders have subverted this fundamental responsibility given to them by the electorate to gratify their own ego.

Mama Kayai's predicament is symbolic of the hopelessness and pain experienced by people who are let down by their leaders. Mzee Ojwang's failure to meet his family's social and economic needs images the social realities in post-colonial societies. In addition, the impact of Ojwang's failed leadership and responsibility in his family has far reaching implications in the life of those he purports to lead. For instance, Mama Kayai is psychologically disturbed when Mzee Ojwang disappears for some time. Her

psychological turmoil is thus captured when she explains to Mogaka and Mwala that “it seems Mzee is lost and it’s the reason I have called you here.” This scenario undermines what we would expect of Ojwang as the head of his family.

When Mzee Ojwang eventually shows up and finds Mogaka in the house, he is scared because to him, Mogaka is likely to have told Mama Kayai about his (Ojwang’s) whereabouts. When Mzee Ojwang arrives home, he finds Mama Kayai complaining about Mogaka and his behaviour. In this instance, Mogaka had been asked to take home (Zipora’s house) the filled gas cylinder, but because of communication breakdown, Mogaka takes it to Mama Kayai’s house. Mama Kayai is happy because her cylinder had run out of gas. This does not go down well with Mzee Ojwang as his secret affair is on the verge of being exposed. He totally denies having met Mogaka that day. The manner in which Mzee Ojwang vehemently denies to have bought gas is very hilarious given his age. Consider the following conversation between Mzee Ojwang, Mama Kayai and Mogaka:

Kiswahili

Mama Kayai: Sasa Mzee Ojwang wewe unafikiria naweza ongea peke yangu, nashangaa na maneno ya wafanya kazi wetu, mara Mwala mara Mogaka. Mogaka kwanza ndiye anisumbua sana.

Mzee Ojwang: Wanakusumbulia nini?

Mama Kayai: Mogaka si yuko hapa ndani.

Mzee Ojwang: Anafanya nini na anatakikana kuwa kazini?

Mogaka: Aaa Mzee, unauliza na sinimeleta ile ulinituma

Mzee Ojwang: Nini? Nani? Wapi? Mimi nishaonana na wewe leo?

Mogaka: Hayaa, si ndio, umenituma nilete mtungi wa gesi.

Mzee Ojwang: Ulikuwa wa colour gani? Wewe uko na ubaya wa akili yako? Mimi tumeonana na wewe wapi?

Mogaka: Kwani Mzee umefanya shopping mingi mpaka unachoka akili anasahau

English translation

Mama Kayai: (*Responding to Mzee Ojwang*). Do you think I can talk alone?

Am confused because of what our employees tell me especially Mwala and Mogaka. By the way, Mogaka makes my life hard.

Mzee Ojwang: Why?

Mama Kayai: Mogaka is here.

Mzee Ojwang: (*Appears uncomfortable*). What is he doing here? Is he not supposed to be at the hotel? (*Mogaka returns from the kitchen where he had taken the gas cylinder*)

Mogaka: Aaa Mzee, why are you asking? I came to deliver what you had sent me to.

Mzee Ojwang: (*Feigning ignorance*) What? Who? Where? Have we seen each other today?

Mogaka: Hayaa, yes, we have seen each other. You sent me to bring cooking gas.

Mzee Ojwang: Which colour? Is there something wrong with your head? Have we seen each other today?

Mogaka: You mean that grand shopping has made you forget that you sent me here?

The dialogue above presents Mzee Ojwang as a mimic of the father figure. He has failed to be the perfect resemblance of the man that he aspires to be. As he struggles to explain himself, he comes out as a liar and as somebody who cannot face the truth. Through humor, Ojwang is brutally caricatured and emasculated. The audience is treated to humor as Ojwang asks Mogaka if there is something wrong with his head yet we know that it is Mzee Ojwang's head that has something wrong. If someone's head has a problem then the person is sick and it is exactly what can be said of Mzee Ojwang. As an old man, Mzee Ojwang is not supposed to engage in scandalous undertakings as seen in his behaviour, especially denying to have sent Mogaka to take home the gas cylinder.

“Head sickness” is a mental disease. However, in most post-colonial societies, madness has been used as a label to mask the truth especially if such societies are bent down on silencing people. A mad person says the truth of what he sees and knows. Therefore, anyone who speaks truth in a repressive environment is considered mad. The madness label has come to be used in tyrannical regimes to refer to people who

say truth in the face of the dictator without fear. In this way “mad people” are not in the strict sense of the word mad but their action and speech in a socio-political environment where people are cowed can only be done by those who are ‘mad’ otherwise how can one face the oppressor and tell him off? The head sickness that Mzee Ojwang alludes to when talking to Mogaka could as well be read as Mogaka’s ability to say truth in the presence of an electorate (Mama Kayai) who seeks accountability from her husband (leader). In telling the truth in such circumstances, Mogaka can be said to be “mad”. Mzee Ojwang referring to Mogaka as mad allows him to run away from truth in the face of Mama Kayai.

However, I point out that it is ironical for Ojwang to say that Mogaka has “head sickness.” To the contrary, it is Ojwang who has the actual “head sickness.” As an old man, doing what he is doing is satirical and absurd. Ojwang’s behaviour at this point is compared to other forms of leadership such as political governance where leaders fail to take responsibility of their actions and blame it on others. In the quotation above, Mzee Ojwang is enraged to a point of stuttering as he paces up and down. One is inclined to ask why the rage if indeed he “did not” send Mogaka? However, the rage is meant to intimidate Mogaka into not exposing him. As an old man, Mzee Ojwang is expected to be wise and prudent in his behavior and engagements. However, we see that he cannot make any wise decision since all along he has been modeling what masculinity has made available to him.

Mzee Ojwang’s struggle to run away from the fact that he indeed sent Mogaka to deliver gas and that Mogaka took it to a wrong house is telling. Mzee Ojwang’s flagrant denial and character of the untrustworthy husband is underlined by the fact that he runs away from responsibility. In this way, Mzee Ojwang breaks away from

the responsibilities of being husband and father. He does not only betray his family's trust but even his employees who depend on him. At the state level, political elites in Africa have faced similar dilemmas in trying to explain to the electorate their failures. In most post-independence states in Africa, political leaders have not lived up to the spirit that led to independence. As such, the citizenry, who bank their trust and hope in the leaders just as Mama Kayai, are betrayed.

The changing socio-economic realities in contemporary Kenya is a contributing factor in the behaviour of characters in *Vitimbi*. The demands of contemporary society explains why Zipora does not care about Ojwang's age as long as he provides for her needs. Consider the following conversation between Mwala and Zipora:

Kiswahili

Mwala: (*Anatoa wallet kwa mfuko na kuchukua pesa, Zipora anavutiwa na zile pesa na hasira yake inapungua*) unapendeleanga nini maishani mwako. Hii pesa nilikuwa naenda kununua suti yangu ya krismasi.

Zipora: Ngoja, Mzee Ojwang hajakutuma leo? Na suti gani ya krismasi inanunuliwa Julai?

Mwala: Hajanituma, unajua mimi hununua mapema ndio zisipande bei. Yako utanunua gani (*Nagawa vile pesa itatumika. Eifu tatu ni ya suti yake, elfu moja ni ya soksi, na elfu mbili ya T-shirt. Anampa Zipora pesa zilizobaki akimwambia ni ya kununua soda. Zipora anafurahi sana, anachukua pesa ya mwala na kuweka kwa zindiria yake*). Unajua ukiweka hapo inamaanisha tumefika?

Zipora: Kufika wapi?

Mwala: Unajua huyu Mzee ako na bibi?

Zipora: Ndio. Mimi sina shida mradi mahitaji yangu imeshughulikiwa

English translation

Mwala: (*Gets his wallet and starts placing money on the table, Zipora is enticed with the money she is less annoyed once she sees money*) Tell me anything you have ever wished to have in your life. I was going to buy my Christmas suit with this money.

Zipora: Hold on, have you been sent by Mzee Ojwang? And by the way, which Christmas suit is bought in July?

Mwala: He has not sent me. I buy my Christmas suit in July before the price is hiked. What will you buy? I am distributing how the money will be used. Three thousand for my suit, one thousand for socks, and two thousand for a T-shirt. (*He gives the remaining money to Zipora to buy*

“soda”. Zipora is very happy, she picks all the money and keeps it in her bra). You know, when you keep the money there, it means we have reached.

Zipora: Reached where?

Mwala: Do you know Mzee has a wife?

Zipora: Yes. I have no problem with that so long as all my needs are taken care of.

The dialogue above shows that Zipora’s survival is the most important thing and that is exactly what she is up to in as far as her relationship with Mzee Ojwang is concerned. Zipora’s relationship with both Ojwang and Mwala images Africa’s economic dependence on the super powers who regardless of the injustices they met out on developing nations, the developing nations still look upto them for assistance.

Zipora’s relationship with Ojwang demonstrates the hopelessness of the masses in their struggle for survival. Zipora’s lack of caution in using her body sums up the height of human exploitation in post-independence era for monetary gains. Zipora’s behaviour results from hard economic and social times that force people to engage in anything to survive. Zipora does not care about Ojwang’s age (approximately above 70 years, while Zipora could be in her early 20s) so long as he can cater for her needs.

The text uses Zipora’s situation to comment on the impact of poverty, post-independence disloyalty and the dehumanization of the masses by the dominant group such as Mzee Ojwang. In this regard, Zipora represents the citizenry in post-colonial African states betrayed by their imposing leaders who exploit them and finally destroy them. When we first encounter Zipora and Mzee Ojwang, the picture presented raises a lot of questions. For instance, there is a gap between the two in terms of age difference-Zipora is a very young lady compared to Ojwang, and that the relationship appears mechanical. One can easily tell that Mzee Ojwang has economic power over

Zipora. This is one way in which domination is manifested in the society. Those who have economic power use it in their own interest to influence others.

Zipora, Mwala and Ojwang live in a capitalistic society where money matters. Just like Mzee Ojwang, Mwala decides to try his luck with Zipora and the only bait he has is money. Once Zipora sees Mwala's money, she is trapped and she severs her relationship with Ojwang. It can therefore be pointed out that both Ojwang and Mwala are out to gratify their male ego but bonding that informs their relationship with Zipora. For instance, the moment Ojwang and Mwala realize that Zipora is pregnant, they refuse to take responsibility:

Kiswahili

Mzee Ojwang: (*Kwa Zipora*) Unafanya nini hapa?

Zipora: Nimekuletea mzigo wako.

Mzee Ojwang: Mzigo gani na iko wapi? Fanya hivi, hebu wewe toka! Hapa sio kwako.

Zipora: Niko nayo kwani unaniharakisha nini? (*Akicheka*) sasa kuanzia leo hapa ni kwangu na sitoki hapa. Nimekwambia hii mzigo sitoki nayo hapa.

Mzee Ojwang: Na basi si uache hapa na utoke uende

Zipora: Siku ile uliacha kwangu, ulitaka nikuletee hadi hapa. Sasa mimi na huu mzigo hatutoki hapa.

Mzee Ojwang: Mzigo inatokea wapi na siione na inatokea wapi?

Zipora: (*Akionyesha tumbo yake*) mzigo, ndio hiyo

Mzee Ojwang: Hata hauna haya. Hii mzigo ni ya Mwala na sio yangu

Mwala: Eee mzigo ya nani? (*anajaribu kuondoka*) mimi mtaniona nje

Mzee Ojwang: (*Anashika Mwala*) nje ya wapi? Wewe na huo mzigo wako toka muende nayo.

English Translation

Mzee Ojwang: (*To Zipora*) What are you doing here?

Zipora: I have brought your luggage.

Mzee Ojwang: Which luggage and where is it? Leave! This is not your house.

Zipora: I have it here, why are you in a hurry? (*Laughing*) From today, this is my house and am not leaving. I have your luggage and am not leaving with it.

Mzee Ojwang: Then why can't you leave it here?

Zipora: When you left it at my house it was indicative that you wanted it brought here. Therefore, the luggage and I are not leaving.

Mzee Ojwang: Where is this luggage and where is it coming from?

Zipora: (*Pointing at her tummy*): This is the luggage.

Mzee Ojwang: You ain't even ashamed? That is Mwala's luggage not mine.

Mwala: Eee whose luggage? (*tries to leave*) see me outside.

Mzee Ojwang: (*Gets hold of Mwala*) which outside? You and your luggage leave....

The word "luggage" used in the dialogue above refers to the pregnancy that Zipora is carrying. However, Zipora's situation is complicated because both Mwala and Mzee Ojwang were intimate with her. Despite this knowledge neither Ojwang nor Mwala is ready to take responsibility of the pregnancy. This is because Zipora was a woman on the side to satisfy the two men and be abandoned. She is therefore reduced to a mere source of sex to those with authority and money. Male sexual adventures is multivocal in the context of post-colonial societies since it is not only a case of pleasure but also an avenue through which the dominant class perform power. Achille Mbembe succinctly points out that the:

Pride in possessing an active penis has to be dramatised, with sexual rights over subordinates, the keeping of concubines, etc. The un-conditional subordination of women to the principle of male pleasure remains one of the pillars upholding the reproduction of the phallocratic system (9).

The quotation above shows that male sexual escapades is a demonstration of male domination over women, thus helping to illuminate the domination of Zipora by Ojwang. Zipora's predicament in the face of the tyranny is a pointer to the deep seated oppression of women who are only available for the service of men. In addition, Zipora's pregnancy is brought to question since she had a relationship with both Mzee Ojwang and Mwala. As a result, she cannot tell who between Ojwang and Mwala is the father of her unborn child. *Vitimbi* uses Zipora's dilemma to determine the paternity of her unborn child to criticise her behaviour and her greed for money. Zipora's situation therefore demonstrates that the hard economic times in contemporary society is the reason for unstoppable pursuit for money resulting into a

situation with complete disregard of any moral or social considerations to satisfy individual desires.

Zipora's relationship with Mzee Ojwang and Mwala is based on deceit. There is no way Zipora's pregnancy could be by both Mzee Ojwang and Mwala. In addition, Ojwang's and Mwala's refusal to accept their possible responsibility of fathering the child demonstrates the brutality of masculine power. It is pertinent to point out that a child is usually considered the hope for the future. This is because the children regenerate the society and also form the human resource for any nation-state.

In addition, the nation-state needs the young generation for administration be it political, social, economic and cultural. Yet the two men are not ready to accept that fact to salvage that future that is being threatened. In a way, this denial images the destruction of the future that society would wish to have. This situation offers no potential possibility of regenerating the state if the likes of Mzee Ojwang and Mwala are to thrive in their wayward behaviour. The actions of both Mzee Ojwang and Mwala therefore paint a picture of a society marred by greed, exploitation and failure.

Society frowns upon and stigmatizes women such as Zipora. This is because as observed by Christine Obbo, they do not conform to social expectations of a good woman confined to a home. Such women are usually relegated to the margin of society and 'othered.' "Othering" according to Simone De Beauvoir means relegating a group to the least favoured position by the powerful majority. She further points out that it is the idea of "othering" which brings about domination. In this way, a group is "othered" in the manner that they do not have the prescribed qualities, power or even social status similar to those who consider themselves much better than the "other."

Based on the discussion above, it is instructive to point out that Zipora belongs to the category of the “other” since she does not fit into the traditional fold of a good woman.

The social stratification and ideology of ‘othering’, therefore, seems to justify male domination. The stratification in turn forms the foundation upon which masculinity and domination is performed and exercised in the society as people are segregated based on social standing. Since Zipora belongs to the minority group of people-concubines, she is marginalised and treated with a lot of disdain. Therefore the presence of Zipora challenges societal morality as she interrogates and subverts what the society regards as a good woman. With such societal outlook, Zipora exists as a voiceless and marginalised individual. This could be the reason both Ojwang and Mwala run away from the responsibility of taking care of her child. This is a strong indictment of the status quo and a pointer to the fact that those who have power such as Ojwang are morally bankrupt.

Based on the above, I point out that the relationship between Ojwang and Zipora demonstrates that both the oppressor and oppressed, the leader and the led, each has a fair share of the blame. This is well captured through Zipora, Mzee Ojwang and Mwala. Through the trio, the text advocates for collective responsibility for both the leader and the led since Zipora’s inability to exactly identify the father to her unborn child, suffering and humiliation is a result of her affair with both Ojwang and Mwala whom she only accepted to sexually entertain because of the money but not love. This a wakeup call for the citizenry to reject anything that is likely to put anyone into any form of marginal position.

Moreover, *Vitimbi* suggests the need for the ‘oppressed’ to take charge of their situation and stop exploitation by the dominant group signified through Ojwang. In this text, I consider Zipora as belonging to the oppressed group. This is because her relationship with both Mwala and Ojwang is based on who has money hence the possibility of her assuming unequal position in the relationship. However, despite the society’s misconception that a woman especially a concubine occupies the marginal position, we see Zipora subverting this when she goes to Mzee Ojwang’s house to face her tormentor. This makes Mzee Ojwang uncomfortable as he frantically tries to ask Zipora to leave. Zipora’s entry into Mzee Ojwang’s house is seizure of her agency against exploiters.

Zipora’s presence in Ojwang’s house disorients him, especially the fact that Mama Kayai is likely to return soon. This is contrary to the picture that Ojwang had exhibited all through as having power and authority. Ojwang’s discomfiture at Zipora’s presence and her reluctance to leave symbolizes that Zipora has taken some of the powers that Ojwang had been enjoying and she seems more powerful. In addition, Zipora challenges the existence of a general culture of exploitation and intimidation that has permeated the entire socio-political fabric to an extent that it seems ‘normal’ for those who indulge it.

However, it is also important to emphasize that under such settings, there is tendency for the oppressed and society to yearn for power. This is well captured in Achebe’s *A Man of the People* when Odili is at Nanga’s Bori house. He surveys the house taking in all the affluence around and concludes that if he was made a minister for one day, he would remain one forever. This is how envious and enticing power is. Those who have the power struggle by all means to keep it to themselves while those who do not

have, such as Odili, admire and envy it and at the same time struggle to have part of it. This is exactly what Mwala does when he snatches Zipora from Ojwang. In this instance, Zipora is depicted as an object upon which power is contested and exercised between Ojwang and Mwala.

Additionally, Zipora is employed in *Vitimbi* to demonstrate social and political degeneration in African states. *Vitimbi*'s utilises Zipora to speak out against social, political and economic injustices in Africa. Zipora becomes a 'loaded' medium for socio-political protest and commentary in situations where silencing is the norm. To this end, a woman's body is read metaphorically. A woman is considered a mother of the nation-state since she gives life and children to the nation. Therefore, a woman is an important resource that should be taken good care of and respected. In fact, Mwala refers to Zipora's curves as "resources" in the following conversation:

Kiswahili

Zipora: Ala, kwani uko na kifafa? Amka. Kwani wewe ni mgonjwa?

Mwala: Hapana, kwani unamaanisha hiyo raslimali yote ilikuwa ya Mzee?

Zipora: Raslimali gani?

Mwala: Environmental. (*Mwala anampapaza Zipora huku akiwa amesimama juu ya kiti juu ya ufupi*)

English translation

Zipora: Ala! Do you have epilepsy? Stand up. Are you sick?

Mwala: No, You mean all those resources belonged to Mzee?

Zipora: Which resources?

Mwala: Environmental. (*Mwala kisses Zipora while standing on the chair because of his height*)

In the dialogue above, Zipora's hips and curves are referred to as "resources". Mwala's proclamation of a woman's body as a resource is an affirmation of how women are defined according to their sexuality and reduced to consumable items. What stands out in this excerpt is perhaps what George Odera Outa refers to as "the

relationship of power, manifesting itself in ways other than the preferred reading... of oppressor vs. oppressed” (352).

I stress that Mwala’s outburst confirms Zipora’s feminine curves as powerful statements and tools. With her body, she is able to zombify her tormentors. Mwala collapses not because he is epileptic but because of the thought of how such nice “things” could pass him. Zipora’s body therefore is power being sought by those who want to possess and consume it such as Ojwang and Mwala. Mwala’s “false epileptic attack”, due to Zipora’s body curves, captures male-female relations and how the same is played out.

Mwala’s behaviour seems to confirm Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi’s argument that male exploitation of women’s bodies reduces women to mere “reproductive receptacles or as instruments of sexual pleasure for men” (151). On the issue of sexuality and objectification, Immanuel Kant observes that humanity and love can only be exercised within monogamous marriages and any other sexual expedition outside this is a case of objectifying the other person with the intent of selfish gain. He avers that:

Sexual love makes of the loved person an Object of appetite; as soon as that appetite has been stilled, the person is cast aside as one casts away a lemon which has been sucked dry ... [Sexual love] taken by itself is a degradation of human nature ... as an Object of appetite for another, a person becomes a thing and can be treated and used as such by everyone (“Lectures” 163).

The quotation above captures Zipora’s situation since in the eyes of Mwala she is a resource, something to be used, desired, sub-divided and a battlefield upon which power is contested for the benefit of the other. In this way, Zipora is not equal to both Ojwang and Mwala since she is a “consumable.” Zipora cannot therefore demand for

equality and humane treatment from both Mzee Ojwang and Mwala. On the issue of equality, Immanuel Kant observes that:

The relation of the partners in a marriage is a relation of *equality* of possession, equality ... in their possession of each other as persons and that in polygamy, the person who surrenders herself gains only a part of the man who gets her completely, and therefore makes herself into a mere thing ("Metaphysics" 63).

To a great extent, Kant's observation is applicable to Zipora as her relationship with both Ojwang and Mwala is predatory. This is because the trio are out to satisfy their immediate need-for Mwala and Ojwang, sexual prowess while Zipora the financial gains. Zipora is therefore an object to be used and discarded.

However, the use of Zipora as a concubine has wider implications in the reading of state power and operations in contemporary society. If conceptualised in terms of such pronouns as "she", then Zipora is symbolic of the nation-state since most states are referred to as "she". Therefore as a signifier of the nation-state (Kenya) or continent (Africa), the term "resources" refers to the natural resources being prostituted, grabbed and exploited by those who are mandated to shepherd them. Accordingly, if we read Zipora against the mother Africa trope advanced by Negritude proponents such as Leopold Senghor, it can be said that Zipora is used metaphorically to comment on the exploitation of resources by African leaders.

According to Florence Stratton, "the mother Africa trope is symbolic of male potency/power and sexual/political allegory in which women's experiences are transformed into male supremacy" (123). Stratton further points out that "the embodiment of Africa [...] in the figure of a woman is a literary commonplace or topos, a recurring feature in a tradition that can be traced back at least as far as the

Negritude movement of the 1930s” (112). Based on this, Zipora’s body is a rich resource only accessed by those with both economic and political power. This setup reinforces the existence of oppressor/oppressed dichotomy. For instance, both Mwala and Ojwang use money to trap Zipora in order to exploit her. *Vitimbi* utilises the character of Zipora to speak out against social, political and economic injustices in contemporary society.

The other episode related to *Mpenzi* is *Safari*. This episode features Mzee Ojwang, Mama Kayai, Kabu, Mwende, (friend to Kabu), Kanini (Sister to Mwende and Mzee Ojwang’s mistress), hotel employees (Mogaka and Mwala), Ngomongo and Ole Matope (suppliers to Ojwang’s hotel). The term ‘safari’ is a Kiswahili word that translates to the English equivalent ‘journey’. The action in this episode begins in Mzee Ojwang’s sitting room. Mzee Ojwang is smartly dressed ready to leave on a journey supposedly to look for money. The setting captures all the affluence that marks Ojwang’s lifestyle and stature in comparison to other people he interacts with.

Mama Kayai comes in with breakfast, ready to serve Ojwang before he embarks on this journey. However, Ojwang does not want to break his fast because he is in a hurry to leave. Mama Kayai reminds him that there are family issues that need to be sorted urgently yet Ojwang is not ready to sit and dialogue. Some of the issues that Mama Kayai wants addressed is Kabu’s university fee arrears, salaries for hotel employees and the accruing debt that they owe the suppliers. Ojwang informs her that most of those issues needed money and is the reason he is leaving to look for money. Overpowered by Ojwang, Mama Kayai gives in to his demands and asks Kabu to escort him to the bus stop. He however refuses being seen to the bus stop as he demands to know whether he had escorted Kabu when she at one time, ran away from

home. After getting his way, he leaves alone. However, in a dramatic irony, the audience is privy to the fact that Mzee Ojwang is not going to look for money as he claims but to have good time with his mistress (Kanini).

Ojwang becomes furious at Mama Kayai to the extent that she and Kabu are forced to keep quiet. He does not allow Mama Kayai to serve him breakfast and even discuss issues affecting the family. In doing this, he succeeds in forcing his household into submission. Mzee Ojwang's disposition resonates with contemporary forms of domination where the dominating entity is only concerned with establishing, maintaining and restoring their power, as well as their influence and control over others. Mama Kayai reminds Mzee Ojwang that he is the one who has been mismanaging the hotel. However, Ojwang is quick to remind her that he is the one who owns the hotel and not Mama Kayai.

The *Safari* episode raises a number of pertinent issues. This family is faced with a lot of challenges that threaten its harmonious existence. Mzee Ojwang is out to demonstrate that he is in charge of his family and does not allow anyone to question him. Ojwang starts screaming and even shouting at both Mama Kayai and Kabu. This is aimed at intimidating his family. In doing this, he comes out as an entity that wields all the power as compared to the rest of the family members. In this way, he is the dominant force while his family the subordinate. The importance of reading power in *Safari* episode in relation to male dominance is informed by representations and practices of power in terms of the socio-political forces that structure it. In silencing his family, Mzee Ojwang reinforces the construction and reproduction of the dominant and subaltern domains in safeguarding social, economic and political

inequalities. This is well captured in the fact that Mama Kayai is prohibited from the hotel.

The text seems to suggest that if only Mzee Ojwang had tapped into Mama Kayai's intellect and managerial resourcefulness, the hotel would be a success. This is because Mama Kayai is endowed with the requisite intellect and skills crucial in Mzee Ojwang's household and also to the hotel. Mama Kayai's disposition demonstrates that the subordinate groups- to which she belongs- form the firm pillars for economic development and growth of the society. Therefore, Mama Kayai's resourcefulness should be harnessed for the greater good of all. In addition, the episode shows how resource ownership and distribution is maintained and distributed in the society. Mzee Ojwang demands to know whether Mama Kayai came with the hotel from her parents' home as seen in the following excerpt from *Safari* episode:

Kiswahili

Mama Kayai: Lakini naulizaje, si pesa zikipatikana, kila wakati wewe unaenda hotelini kuchukua, nikienda hotelini naambiwa hakuna pesa Mzee amechukua, hizo pesa unapeleka wapi?

Mzee Ojwang: Hoteli ni ya nani?

Mama Kayai: Si ni yangu na wewe

Mzee Ojwang: Eh, ukitoka kwenu ulikuwa na hoteli?

Mama Kayai: Sasa hiyo ni maneno gani Mzee Ojwang?

English Translation

Mama Kayai: My question is, is it not true that every time we have money at the hotel you keep taking it? Where do you take that money?

Mzee Ojwang: Who owns the hotel?

Mama Kayai: It is ours

Mzee Ojwang: Eeh, did you come with the hotel when I married you?

Mama Kayai: Now what is this Mzee Ojwang?

The conversation above depicts the discrepancy that marks resource ownership in the family and society at large. This is a clear demonstration of the context of marriage as

unequal relationship in the African society. On socio-political discrepancy in Nigeria and Africa in general, Jean Wilson points out that the:

License for men to explore the political and economic opportunities offered ..., together with their traditional freedom to explore their sexuality uninhibitedly while demanding feminine self-restraint, assured the continuation of male dominance. Men's expectations that women would limit their adoption of change presumed their continuing subservience and exclusion from positions of power in the wider community, in politics and commerce (7).

Wilson's argument above captures the embedded exclusion of women from positions of power. It is therefore from such institutionalised forms of exclusion in the society that informs Mzee Ojwang's disposition as he reminds his wife that she does not own the hotel. This is meant to intimidate her so she does not cross her boundary in terms of who is supposed to own resources (financial power) in the family. Therefore resource ownership is pegged on social strata within the family and since Mzee Ojwang is the head, then he is the only one supposed to control what the family owns. Mzee Ojwang's reminder of who owns the hotel unconsciously echoes the deep rooted gender discrimination between men and women in the African society. This demonstrates that without direct female representation in matters pertinent to their own existence, the female voice as imaged through Mama Kayai will remain silenced and marginalised. Jean-Francois Bayart's position on post-colonial leadership in Africa is that:

The link between holding positions of power within the state apparatus and the acquisition of wealth is also related to the political hierarchy. The exercise of supreme authority in particular generally goes hand in hand with a proportional increase in wealth....The post-colonial state thus represents an historical mutation of African societies, taken over the long term: never before, it seems, has the dominant class managed to acquire such marked economic supremacy over its subjects (2).

Bayart argument above on political leadership is replicated at most leadership levels in the society. In this way, the problem of women marginalisation and exploitation as seen in the character of Mama Kayai is pegged on the unbalanced distribution of resources that begin in the family so that only some members suffer from the negative effects of economic mismanagement by those in position. Mzee Ojwang uses the hotel as a tool to silence Mama Kayai since property in the family belongs to the man.

Mzee Ojwang shows his callousness by prohibiting Mama Kayai from participating in the daily operations of the hotel. Mzee Ojwang's behaviour demonstrates a moral and political bankruptcy of majority of those in authoritative positions. However, by using Ojwang as a dictator in his own family, the text succeeds in satirising manifestations of dictatorship in contemporary Africa. Mzee Ojwang is used to show how the dominant group imposes its rule through gendered exercise of power based on inclusion and exclusion. The hotel is a public space accessed by all, yet Mama Kayai belongs to the domestic space as a wife. As such, her movement into the hotel is curtailed. Ojwang's action is in line with Frantz Fanon's observation that the 'dynamics of colonial power are fundamentally, though not solely, the dynamics of gender' (qtd. in Anne McClintock 97).

The discussion above shows that power manifests itself as the ability to influence others in one's interest. Those who have power use it to maintain and sustain hegemonic structures that define society at large. The reason women are placed in passive positions could be a way of showing the inhuman order imposed on women by society. Thus, *Vitimbi* embodies and portrays the power positions and the hierarchy of the society, with those who have the power in the centre, and the subordinated at the peripheral background.

Similarly, Ojwang's relationship with Kanini and Zipora leans toward the exploitation and marginalisation ideology that sustains subordination of those who do not have economic power. Hence the two women are used to symbolize post-colonial states constantly exploited by economic heavy weights and by extension tyrannical leaders signified through Mzee Ojwang. As a coercive act, the motivation behind sexual exploitation of the female is closely linked to the socialisation of males in a way that links masculinity with aggressive striving for dominance over others and that identifies women's sexuality as the reward for successful men.

Masculinity and fatherhood are the other components advanced in *Vitimbi*. In most African communities, men, and fathers in particular, are privileged. This privileging of men happens in *Vitimbi* as seen through Mzee Ojwang's portraiture. However, of significance in *Vitimbi* is that the depiction of Mzee Ojwang is subversive of this position. Mzee Ojwang is represented as a failure at being the father figure and the man in this family. Robert Davis argues that "a father is not simply an individual but a function while paternity is the place from which someone lays down laws" (74).

Fatherhood is a position of power determined by what one does and ought to be but not what one is. In the text, Mzee Ojwang has the privilege of creating the laws that govern his family. Because fatherhood is a position of power, we see the rest of the family powerless and not allowed to question anything. Consider the following conversation between Mama Kayai, Mzee Ojwang and Kabu:

Kiswahili

Kabu: Kwani fathe unasafiri na hujaniambia?

Mzee Ojwang: Wewe wacha maswali mingi. Ulipokuwa umetoroka, uliniambia ukitoroka?

Kabu: Sikukwambia lakini...

Mzee Ojwang: Ee. Na sasa unataka mimi nikwambie?

Kabu: Mambo ya university itakuwa aje sasa?
Mzee Ojwang: We fanya vile unaambiwa na mamako. (*Kabu anauchukua bag ya babake tayari kumsindikiza*)
Mama Kayai: Sasa (*anacheka*)
Mzee Ojwang: (*Amekasirika*) kabu, hebu weka hiyo bag hapo (*Kabu anarudisha bag kwa kiti*). Kwenda jikoni.
Kabu: (*Anateta*) lakini fathe, kwani hutaki nikusindikize?
Mzee Ojwang: Mimi hapana mtoto wakusindikizwa. Nimesema uende jikoni.
Kabu: Si ninakufikisha tu hapo nje?
Mzee Ojwang: Ee, mimi nilikufikisha hapo nje wakati ule ulipokuwa ukitoroka?

English Translation

Kabu: Daddy you are going on a journey yet you have not told me?
Mzee Ojwang: Stop asking too many questions. Did you tell me when you ran away?
Kabu: No I didn't but...
Mzee Ojwang: Eee. So you want me to tell you?
Kabu: What will happen to my university studies then?
Mzee Ojwang: Do what your mother has told you. (*Kabu takes her father's bag ready to see him off*)
Mama Kayai: (*laughing*)
Mzee Ojwang: (*Annoyed*) Kabu, put down that bag (*Kabu puts the bag where it was initially on the chair*). Go back to the kitchen.
Kabu: (*Irritated*) But dad; don't you want me to see you off?
Mzee Ojwang: Am not a child to be seen off. I have said go back to the kitchen.
Kabu: I will not go far, just out there?
Mzee Ojwang: Eee, did I see you off out there when you were running away? (*Safari episode*).

The dialogue above captures the inequality that exists in the family. Mzee Ojwang uses his position to have his way. He silences both Mama Kayai and Kabu yet we know he is supposed to be in charge of the family since it appears from the dialogue that there are unresolved issues that urgently need to be addressed. Ojwang's intimidation subordinates the rest of the family members. The silence is thus an indication of the helplessness of the society under a dictator who employs his power to manipulate his subordinates. Through Kabu, the text satirises leaders who shift

blame for governance failures. For instance, instead of Mzee Ojwang owning up to his failures, he uses his daughter's mistakes as a scapegoat as he asks Kabu whether she informed him when she ran away from home. In this way, Kabu does not have a moral obligation to ask her father where he was going to. Mzee Ojwang's inability to be truthful is used to read those in leadership positions who run away from the responsibility of their actions yet the obligation of running family or even state affairs is squarely placed on the leaders.

In addition, Mzee Ojwang's behaviour could be likened to the intimidation that characterises social reality in much of post-colonial Africa where those in position subjugate the citizenry. For instance, during the political leadership of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Arap Moi, dissenting voices were forced into silence in form of detention, imprisonment and assassinations. As a result, the subjects were forced into silence to avoid being victims of state silencing apparatus. Silence in tyrannical regimes manifest itself in a number of ways. In texts such as *Betrayal in the city*, *A Man of the People*, *Arrows of Rain*, and *Shreds of Tenderness*, silence is brought out through assassinations, imprisonment, violence and forbearance of speech. This gives the tyrant a false impression that people will comply with what he does. For dictatorial regimes, silence is a vital tool used to ensure continued stay to power. Pauline Adah Uwakweh observes that "silencing as a patriarchal weapon of control is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate" (75) members of the society. This is well captured in the following excerpt from the *Safari* episode:

Kiswahili

Mama Kayai: Lakini Mzee Ojwang, wacha nikuulize, tangu jana na juzi nilikwambia kuna maneno tunatakikana tuongea, sasa leo asubuhi unataka kuondoka uende, hata hayo maneno hatujaongea, hutaki kujua ni nini, hata hutaki kujua?

Mzee Ojwang: Sasa unataka niache safari yangu pale nakwenda

halafu nika hapa chini tuseme nini na wewe?

Mama Kayai: Sasa tusiposungumza Mzee Ojwang? Kuna karo ya kabu ya university ambayo hatujakamilisha, kuna madeni ya wafanyikazi wetu ambayo hatujawalipa, sasa hawa wafanyikazi pia si watatoroka kazi Mzee Ojwang?

English Translation

Mama Kayai: But Mzee Ojwang, since yesterday and a day before yesterday, I told you there are issues we needed to sit and address, now you are ready to leave yet we have not talked and you do not want to know what it is that we need to talk about.

Mzee Ojwang: (*Demeaning Mama Kayai*) So you don't want me to go so I sit here to talk to you about what?

Mama Kayai: Now, if we do not talk Mzee Ojwang, we have Kabu's university fees that we have not completed, employee salary arrears, will these employees also not run away?

In the dialogue above, Mama Kayai points out issues ailing the family but she is met with a lot of resistance from Mzee Ojwang. She, for instance, is worried about Mzee Ojwang's failure to talk about issues affecting their family. These are serious issues that as a family, Mzee Ojwang is supposed to shelf any other engagement to address especially as it borders on the wellbeing of his family. It is also evident from what Mama Kayai says that the former hotel employees quit as a result of salary arrears, a fact that Mama Kayai is afraid of if this happens to the current employees. The text uses Ojwang's inability to manage the hotel to signify the inability of those in leadership positions to run institutions well. This is similar to most post-independence African states such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and Burundi whose leaders do not encourage dialogue even when the state's wellbeing is in the balance.

Of interest is the fact that Mzee Ojwang believes he cannot sit down with his wife to talk about issues affecting his family. This is because in most patriarchal societies, women are not allowed to participate in the decision-making process, as it is a domain for men. From the dialogue, it seems Mzee Ojwang does not value Mama Kayai's

input in what is happening in the family. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in discussing Foucault's concept of discourse point out that "the powerful entity usually has control of what is known and the way it is known, and those who have such knowledge have power over those who do not" (72). Therefore, since Mzee Ojwang knows what society expects of women, he relies on this to silence his wife and daughter.

In this regard, the subjugation of Mama Kayai in Ojwang's family signifies state subjugation of some groups and sections of a country in terms of resource allocation and political positions of power. The subjugation and eventual marginalisation of some members and regions of society in terms of governance leads to political, economic and social turmoil in such nations. Since most political establishments in Africa have been predominantly masculine, patriarchal ideologies have been used to justify, to a greater degree, issues of authority and subordination in similar manner as what Mzee Ojwang is doing to Mama Kayai.

Therefore the entrenched domination in most spheres in the society does not spare the family from subordinating its members. Mzee Ojwang forces his daughter to keep quiet. This is similar to what happens in *Nervous Conditions* when Babamukuru struggles to silence Nyasha, his assertive daughter or even Eugene Achike in Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi's *Purple Hibiscus*. Eugene uses crude means such as violence and pain to ensure that his family is docile. Though Mzee Ojwang does not beat his daughter like Babamukuru and Eugene, he still succeeds in silencing her. Kabu as the child in the family is reduced to silence since her father does not allow her to question and know.

Mzee Ojwang lacks the capacity to lead his family in the right direction since he rides on societal portrayal of a father in controlling Mama Kayai and Kabu. He demonstrates his masculinity in his household by instilling fear in his family. In this regard, Mzee Ojwang's family is reduced to docility in the face of the father. On domination, Edward Said (19) affirms that "domination and inequities of power and wealth are perennial facts of human society" as such, Mzee Ojwang's family is not an isolated case. Therefore, Mzee Ojwang comes out as a dictator and an incompetent leader who relies on intimidation and silence to consolidate his power base. He exploits masculinity as institutionalized by society, to stamp his authority and material pursuits. The atmosphere in the above episode evokes crude use of force characteristic of a tyrannical ruler more particularly in post-colonial Africa.

The use of Kabu as a child in this family to comment on the family and state cannot escape discussion. In as much as Kabu is an adult, she is still a child to Mama Kayai and Mzee Ojwang. As already mentioned about the relationship between the family and the state, the welfare of the child becomes a commentary of the state and society. Robert Pattison points out that artists have been in the practice of consciously using the child as an evocative literary device for purposes of exposing the essential imperfections of the world around the child. While Pattison's argument explains the use of the child's narrative perspective and view, it also expresses the very essence behind the use of the child figure as well especially in theatre. In the *Safari* episode, I point out that it is not what the child does or sees but the condition of the child that becomes the commentary of the state and governance.

The condition of the child says a lot about the capacity of the parents to care for her. In a similar manner, it is a commentary on the state's capacity to provide an

environment that enables the parents to meet their parental obligations. As seen in the conversation between Mzee Ojwang and Kabu, it appears Mzee Ojwang has not paid Kabu's fees yet we know he is going to see one of his concubines. This means that he has money and that his failure to pay fees is absconding his responsibility as a father. If this is compared to the state, I read the state as being positioned as a 'parent' that should provide for its children.

Therefore, the condition of Kabu, as a child, is an indication that the leadership has failed to provide and perform its responsibility. Kabu is worried because her university fee has not been paid yet we know it is only through citizenry education that the economic development of any country is realised. The fact that citizenry education is in the balance, then the wellbeing and economic development of the state is threatened. In the episode *Safari* it happens that Kanini- Mzee Ojwang's concubine has a sister-Mwende who is Kabu's friend. When Kabu pays a visit to Mwende's, she is given fruit juice which she takes in a hurry and asks for more. It appears she has not eaten a decent meal for some time. However, it is ironical that it is her father who has bought the juice for Kanini yet his own child lacks food. It disheartening that Mzee Ojwang cannot take care of his own family but affords to entertain others with the luxury that goes with such a lifestyle.

It is also important to note that Mzee Ojwang runs a family business yet he cannot sustain it. He is always running the hotel down only to be salvaged by his wife, whose input he does not value. Mama Kayai confirms to the viewer that Ojwang keeps on using money from the hotel for his own selfish gains yet he claims to be going to look for more money to take care of issues that need addressing in the family. What strikes us is that Mzee Ojwang is not worried at all about the state of the hotel so long as he

meets his concubine. Although this episode is premised on familial failures and mismanagement of family resources, the same space images the nation-state leadership and administration.

On her part, Mama Kayai is worried since she feels the employees will run away and that the family's only source of income is at stake. Mzee Ojwang's selfish ego and deficiency in management skills epitomises the economic, social and political state of Kenya in the 90s. This period saw majority of people lose jobs as a result of structural adjustment programmes during the Moi regime. The structural adjustments led to hard economic times peppered with unorthodox survival techniques. The near collapse of the hotel is symbolic of the multifarious problems faced by post-independence African states, the misery of the masses and the incapability of the state to provide for its subjects. For instance, in this episode, Mogaka and Mwala had gone to the shop where they take supplies for Ojwang's hotel. From what transpires, Mzee Ojwang has not paid for previous supplies, and under strict instructions, Olematope has the following to say to the duo:

Kiswahili

Mwala: Mwenyewe ako wapi?

Ole Matope: Mimi sijui lakini kwa leo mimi ndiye niko hapa.

Mwala: Si unajua vile tunafanyanga, tupatie unga bundle mbili

Mogaka: Walisema tatu

Mwala: Fanya nne

Olematope: Ile deni mko nayo hapa? Kwanza nimeambiwa na Ngomongo hakuna kitu nawapatia nyinyi.

Mogaka: Na mafuta utupatie 20 ltrs

Olematope: Hakuna kitu nawapatia. Wacheni mchezo. Mnasikia ile kitu nasema?

Mwala: Sasa ni business tunafanya ama wewe unatuambia vile tunafanya?

Olematope: Sijui na sitaki kujua. (*Kwa Mogaka*). Amemshika Mwala. Huyu mtu namfunga hapa saa hii. Na wewe enda ulete pesa ulipe deni.

Mwala: Unajua mambo ingine ni aibu hata majirani wanaona nifikungwa kamba.

Mogaka: (*Kwa OleMatope*) tafadhali achana nayeye hizo pesa...

Olematope: Ondoka! Hizo pesa lazima mlete ndio nimfungue.

English Translation

Mwala: Where is the owner?

Ole Matope: I don't know but as for now, am in charge.

Mwala: You are aware of what we usually do? Give us two bundles of flour

Mogaka: It is supposed to be three

Mwala: Make it four then

Olematope: I have instructions from Ngomongo not to give you anything unless you settle the debt.

Mogaka: Give us 20 litres of cooking oil

Olematope: I will not give you anything and stop joking. Do you understand?

Mwala: Now, is it not business we are doing or you want to tell us how to do it?

Olematope: I don't know and I don't want to know. (*Olematope gets hold of Mwala. To Mogaka*). I am tying him here, and for you (Mogaka), go and bring the money you owe us....

Mogaka: (*To Olematope*) Please leave him alone, that money...

Olematope: (*To Mogaga*) go away! You must bring the money before I untie him.

The conversation above shows that as a result of Mzee Ojwang's mismanagement, suppliers refuse to deliver foodstuffs to the hotel which threatens its survival. In this regard, the suppliers represent those who keep the nation going by making available the necessary goods and services for it to flourish. Therefore, the constant running down of family business by the father is symbolic of the breakdown of systems of accountability and development in the society. Public institutions just like Ojwang's hotel are supposed to be well managed as they determine survival of its subjects.

The impact of mismanagement of institutions is captured in the way Mogaka and Mwala are handled by Olematope. For instance, Mwala is tied on a pole at the shop to force Ojwang to settle the rising debt he owes them. Mwala and Mogaka represent a class of people who groan under poor working conditions yet they have no option but to continue working. Mwala's and Mogaka's daily experiences are employed to harp on the helplessness of the masses in contemporary African societies.

Mogaka and Mwala are left with no alternative to guarantee they have supplies in the hotel and is the reason they have gone to ask for more supplies. They rely on the hotel for their wellbeing and if they do not have food stuffs then definitely the hotel will collapse. Therefore, they are exploited to enrich the few in the society such as Mzee Ojwang who can afford to keep concubines yet he cannot give his workers a decent pay. In failing to pay his employees their dues, Mzee Ojwang comes out as an exploiter who rides on his employees sweat to enrich himself. Commenting on the African novel, Huma Ibrahim points out that the African novel reflects:

Social and political realities of the post-independence era in which the coloniser has been replaced by a political elite. African literature of the past two decades has transformed the theme of disillusionment. Where the coloniser was once the sole object of criticism, now African technocrats, cadres and government officials are depicted exploiting the masses they had promised to uplift (85).

Though Ibrahim's observation above is about the African novel, it can as well be used to comment on the thematic issues expounded in African popular theatre and KBC television theatre to be precise. In essence, what is happening to Mwala, and Mogaka is exploitative in nature. Their rendered service only benefits a few who are able to live large. It is also noteworthy to point out that when Mwala is detained at the shop, he is paying for Mzee Ojwang's failures. He is not in any position able to settle the debt that Mzee Ojwang owes the shopkeeper but he is held at the shop to force Mzee Ojwang to pay. Mwala is seen complaining about the shame that this is causing knowing that the neighborhood was witnessing everything that was happening.

Mzee Ojwang's inability to ensure proper operation of his hotel is comparable to the failure by political leadership to govern well. This can be likened to Kenya's situation in the 90s or even at the time of writing this thesis since it is characterized by a

leadership that seems to be incompetent and corrupt. The failure of the state to govern well saw a slow death of national parastatals during president Moi's and Uhuru Kenyatta's regimes. Some of the parastatals that were crippled during Moi's presidency include the Kenya postal corporation which to date is struggling to stand, the agricultural sector such as the collapse of Sugar factories, collapse of KCC, and the mismanagement of the cotton industry. While in Uhuru Kenyatta's regime, Parastatals such as the sugar industries, and agricultural sector in general has been mismanaged. In similar manner as the political elites during Moi's reign, Mzee Ojwang is privileged to be in the hotel management but lacks the requisite skills to allow him perform effectively. This has grave repercussions not only to the family but the society that the hotel serves.

Mzee Ojwang single-handedly runs the hotel and does not have room for a second opinion regarding priorities for the hotel. Just as Mzee Ojwang's family relies on the family business, running down of public parastatals starved the majority of Kenyans during the one party system in Kenya. The effect of mismanagement of the hotel has wide repercussions not only to Mzee Ojwang's family but to his employees and suppliers. This is a clear indication that a sick leadership does not only affect those who depend on it directly but also indirectly such as the international community.

Grace Ahingula Musila observes that leadership failures directly impact the domestic space. She adds that the leader's failures not only destroy the family's livelihood but also emasculates the father who finds himself unable to continue performing his role as chief breadwinner. Therefore, Mzee Ojwang is allegorical of the masculine state apparatus that witnessed instances of failed states that could not provide for its people adequately. I also underscore that *Vitimbi* seems to suggest that the prime failure of

government emanates from the failure of political governance to re-establish vital links with the poor and deprived who move the nation forward.

Therefore, a reading of Mzee Ojwang as symptomatic of post-colonial leadership in Africa provides space within which post-colonial leadership's ability is dissected and interrogated. The life of any organization flourishes or stutters depending on the choices taken by its management and leadership. The forceful occupation of Mzee Ojwang in the hotel management while barring Mama Kayai represents those with vested powers to lead public parastatals but perform dismally ensuring unsustainable performance of such institutions. Fred Mbogo observes that Mzee Ojwang's untrustworthy behaviour renders him incapable of fully committing himself towards the success of his family. The question of integrity interfering with leadership is reflected... (55).

Apart from the foregoing, *Vitimbi* also deals with issues of integrity such as corruption in the society. The term 'mkono mtupu haulambwi' as said by Mogaka in the episode *Mpenzi* literally translates to "you cannot lick an empty hand." This expression is commonly used in Kenya to refer to corrupt means of getting something through giving and receiving of bribes. Corruption has been on the rise in Kenya and has reached unprecedented levels in each passing regime that has been in existence. Both Mogaka and Mwala ask for bribes to keep secrets about Mzee Ojwang. For instance, when Ojwang asks Mogaka to take gas home, he asks for a bribe, he still asks Zipora to give him money to take her to Ojwang's house.

Mwala on the other hand asks for a bribe from Ojwang to keep Ojwang and Zipora's affair a secret. This scenario thus captures the spirit of greed that had gripped those

involved such as Mzee Ojwang, Mogaka, Mwala and Zipora by turning them into heartless fortune seekers who would stop at nothing to get money. However, in as much as what they are doing could pass for a way of survival given what they earn at the end of the day, receiving and giving bribes affects society socially, economically and even developmentally. Interrogated from the perspective of what happens at the state level, giving and receiving bribes has defined Kenya's socio-political landscape. The giving and receiving of bribes is an act engaged for several reasons such as making one keep secrets, to get/provide services and make ends meet or even greed.

Bayart points out that acts of corruption results from social inequality but also becomes in some cases what he terms 'a method of social struggle for the nation' (236). This happens when people are forced to resort to corrupt means to make a living. *Vitimbi* humorously talks about corruption as a norm. In this way, the *Vitimbi* does not spare anyone by showing how people are caught up in a mad rush to benefit through corrupt means and where everyone has joined "in the great procession of corruption" (Fanon 138). The episode is a collective wake up call that requires viewers to engage with the cause of corruption as the audience but also satirises it.

In addition, *Vitimbi* tackles the issue of accountability of those placed in positions of leadership. A good example here is the time Kabu asked her father about the journey that he had not informed them about. Kabu asks her father "Dad, you mean you are travelling yet you have not told me?" Mzee Ojwang responds as follows: "stop asking too many questions, did you tell me when you ran away from home?" Kabu's question was very simple and did not call for the manner and tone with which Mzee Ojwang responds.

There is nothing wrong about Mzee Ojwang telling the daughter where he is going. In the exchange, Mzee Ojwang appears agitated and one is left to wonder why. However, this is a way of running away from his accountability to family members. Mzee Ojwang's reasoning is very simplistic in the manner in which he compares his deeds with that of his daughter. In similar manner, most African governments squarely blame the problems of the state that they themselves have created on peripheral and nonsensical issues, such as "Kabu's escape from home", thereby absolving themselves of all accountability. Mzee Ojwang is at pains and unable to face his constituent-the family- and tell them the truth.

The same scenario seems to invoke a call for accountability for all people not only those in positions of leadership. Mzee Ojwang questioning the inability of Kabu to inform them where she was is a call to all people, that is, if one demands accountability, you too need to be accountable. In this way, the text puts the blame for the lack of accountability on the nation (the masses) and not only the leaders. By so doing, *Vitimbi* draws attention to the fact that the country's masses put the leaders in power, as such, the citizenry are responsible for what the leaders do and for whatever they produce.

For instance, Mwala for a long time kept Ojwang's relationship with Zipora a secret and later betrayed Ojwang by having a relationship with the same woman. Mwala seems to encourage his boss' behaviour that he later assumes too when he woos Zipora to his side:

Mwala: Yes. In fact you have chosen the right guy. At least we can go swimming. Look at Mzee Ojwang's teeth; I lent him money for replacement. In fact am shocked that a young and beautiful girl like you has put her hopes on a sewage.

Zipora: True, I have lost since I have confirmed that he was playing me.

The excerpt above highlights the role that money plays in modern Kenya. The moment Mwala gets money from Mzee Ojwang, his true self of male ego emerges and he displays a side of him that he has managed to suppress for years. He also tries to display the importance of having money by snatching Zipora from Ojwang. As a result, Mzee Ojwang sacks Mwala to revenge. Mzee Ojwang's dismissal of Mwala from working in his hotel is a manifestation of paranoia that characterise leadership in most African states. It is apparent that those in power are always scared of any competition and resistance from radical individuals challenging their powers.

The quotation above is a demonstration that often the liberators are never different from the oppressors that they try to topple. They are only out to find their time to 'eat'. Mwala is not any different from Mzee Ojwang as he yearns for his time to exploit the available "resources". In order for such leaders to safeguard against their selfish interests in protecting the power they have amassed, they rely on intimidation such as denying them a livelihood. In this regard, those who possess power are portrayed as victims of inferiority complex, who attempt to compensate for their low self-esteem through a false pretense of power on their subjects. Similarly, the preceding years after independence in Kenya saw many politicians opposed to the regime dying in very mysterious ways.¹ In this respect, personalities such as J. M. Kariuki, and Tom Mboya were killed for openly challenging the regime in power or for being a threat to the political power.

¹ The period immediately after independence saw people opposed to the regime being killed. For instance, J.M. Kariuki, a former Mau Mau detainee was assassinated in March, 1975. It is said he was very critical of the government. At one moment, he warned the government that "we do not want a Kenya of ten millionaires and ten million beggars" (Sayer, 1998). Others assassinated around this period include Pio Gama Pinto, Tom Mboya and Argwings Kodhek. See Sayer Geoff (1998), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981), Macgoye Oludhe (1986), Kurtz Roger (2005).

From the foregoing discussion, one observes that the way a society is organised; the operation of its machinery of power; how and by whom that power has been achieved, the class alignment and the maintenance of power; and the ends to which the power is put, are all issues in the domain of leadership and the state. This means that there could be two forms of leadership: a leadership that holds back the progress of humanity and the one that enhances it for the benefit and improvement of humanity. The latter leadership is that of resistance against all forms of pressures and forces which stifle and inhibit the full realisation and development of the potentialities of human beings; thus, a leadership that questions the status quo and the hegemony of the exploitative ruling class and in doing so, it frees the masses in the process.

The resistance type of leadership is what *Vitimbi* is suggesting by projecting characters such as Mama Kayai to offer resistance to the authority. In this case, liberation becomes a product of resistance which, according to Gutierrez Gustavo, “expresses the aspirations of the oppressed and social classes emphasising the conflicting aspects of the economic, social, and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes” (24). In this case, liberation can only be attained when the people are truly free. Such a freedom can only be measured in cases where people are able to control all the tools as instruments of their physical, economic, political, cultural and psychological being.

The next episode analysed in this Chapter is *Ndizi au Chungwa* (Banana or Orange). This episode features two families: Ojwang’s family that comprise of Ojwang, Mama Kayai and Mwala as their son. The second family features Ondieki, Mize (Ondieki’s wife), and Sukumawiki (a neighbour). The episode is based on the 2005 constitutional

referendum in Kenya. “Banana” and “Orange” were used as symbols during the referendum where “banana” was used to indicate one was against the constitution while “orange” was for those who were in support. Mzee Ojwang is supporting while Ondieki is opposing the constitutional referendum. Their stand of the political divide in the referendum has defined even the type of fruits to eat as they ban either of the fruit that each side is against in their families. On this day, it happens that Mama Kayai serves oranges to Ojwang. As a result, Mzee Ojwang beats and chases away Mama Kayai and Mwala. This is because they had gone against his order to only eat bananas in his house.

On the other hand, Ondieki’s wife serves him bananas yet Ondieki is an “orange person” in the referendum. Ondieki is also annoyed and physically and psychologically abuses his wife. Sukumawiki intervenes and Ondieki stops beating his wife. Meanwhile Mama Kayai and Mwala arrive at Ondieki’s house having been beaten and sent away by Ojwang. Sukumawiki who had intervened in Ondieki’s case suggests that all those present should go to Ojwang’s house to sort out the same.

At Ojwang’s house, Sukumawiki tells the two families that the referendum will pass and that each person should be allowed to vote for whichever side they wish. Sukumawiki tells Ondieki and Ojwang that there was no need to beat their family members because of the referendum. They reconcile and accept that eating fruits in the house does not mean you are voting for the side you are against. The episode ends with the men going out to have good time as Mama Kayai and Mize stay at home.

As indicated above, the action in this episode is centered on the 2005 referendum in Kenya. The government side under President Mwai Kibaki was against the

referendum and was therefore voting for the symbol of the banana. While the opposition side under Raila Odinga was for the referendum and was voting for the orange symbol. Therefore the episode captures that period before the actual voting takes place. As mentioned, each of the family has taken sides on how they were going to vote based on their political inclinations.

Inherent in the episode is the choice of the family space as an appropriate place for the thematic issues advanced. The happenings in this episode are illustrative of how the family's rhythm is affected by the happenings of the state. The anger, physical and psychological violence that the Ojwang and Ondieki's go through explain why the family cannot be severed from the political making of the state. Wife beating by Ondieki and Ojwang is used to intimidate and disempower the women in making their own independent decisions of which side to vote for. In this way, Ondieki and Ojwang's actions are attempts to deny these women their fundamental right of free voting.

Ondieki and Ojwang's action demonstrates that they are the heads of their families and that their decision is final. Therefore, any opposition as seen in Mama Kayai and Mrs Ondieki actions should be dealt with violently to deter the same from happening. What is conspicuous in the two families is the lack of dialogue between the men and their wives. We do not encounter any instance where either of the men explains to the wife why they should not vote for the side they are against. Therefore one is interested in asking why this is the case.

Ondieki's wife assertively tells Ondieki that he can continue eating his oranges but she will eat bananas and even vote for the side she wishes to vote for not what

Ondieki wants. In doing this, Ondieki's wife resists the dominant force to act on and control her. Unlike her husband who resorts to physical and psychological violence seen in shouting and humiliating her, she is assertive in pointing out her own perspective on which side to vote. In doing this, Mize offers resistance to the dominant force that seeks to curtail her rights as a voter. Mrs. Ondieki emerges the winner because at the end of the day she declares that she will choose the side to vote for.

Mize's outburst is symbolic of her claim of power from the dominant entity who has all along marginalized her in terms of decision making. The ability to talk in an environment that demands women's submissiveness and silence is a key step toward the emancipation of the self against the limitations created by society. Mize defies her husband's illogical decisions by reminding him that she will vote for the side she deems appropriate. For instance, when Ondieki arrives home and finds Mize at her neighbours, the following transpires:

Kiswahili

Ondieki: Unafanya nini kwa jirani?

Mize: Tunaongea mambo ya wamama.

Ondieki: Hayo mambo ya wamama ndio inafanya muongee kuhusu chungwa na ndizi?

Mize: Kwani kuna ubaya gani?

Ondieki: Mimi ndiye mume hapa. Nikiongea unasikiza. Unajua ikiwa temperature rises naweza kukupiga until you get an accident?

Mize: Hii ni nini? Aibu ndogo ndogo ni ya nini mbele ya majirani.

Ondieki: Majirani sikia! Fungeni masikio. Hii ni domestic yaani dome. *(To Mize)* Na wewe, ingia ndani.

English Translation

Ondieki: What were you doing at the neighbours place?

Mize: We were talking about women issues

Ondieki: Does women issues deal with oranges and bananas?

Mize: What is wrong with that?

Ondieki: I am the husband. When I talk you listen. Do you know when my temperature rises, I can beat you until you get an accident?

Mize: What is this? Ashaming ourselves in front of our neighbours.

Ondieki: Listen neighbours! Close your ears. This is domestic affair. And as for you Mize, go inside.

Inherent in the dialogue above is Ondieki's struggle to control Mize. He does this by reminding her that he is the husband and that she should be silent. In denying her the ability to speak her mind, the oppressor gets his way. Commenting on silence, Michael Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* points out that:

Silence itself-the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers-is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses (27).

The excerpt captures the complexity that inform readings of silence in discourse. Key in the excerpt is the fact that there seem to exist multiple forms of silences ranging from imposed silence and silence by choice. Mize is not supposed to question. In this way, her silence does not mean that she is silent but that she is communicating. I also read silence as the position occupied by Mize in the society. As a woman, though physically present, she is not considered in decisions that matter in her life and family. However, despite the concerted efforts by Ondieki to silence her, Mize does not accept Ondieki's exploitation of the status quo to silence her. Therefore, through speaking, Mize finds agency as she rejects Ondieki's acts of dominance. Mize's tongue becomes a symbol of her struggle against her marginal status as a wife. It is within her role as a wife in this family that she claims her voice by telling Ondieki what is contrary to his decisions.

The happenings in Ojwang and Ondieki's family demonstrate the intertwineness of the family and the political state and how the state finds itself in the workings and

operation of the family. The intrusion of the political happenings into the family not only affects the decisions but also the food that the family is supposed to eat. I read food in this episode beyond nourishment of one's body as it also symbolises the consumption of political discourse by the family members. Politics is thus forced down people's throats as seen when Ojwang demands that Mama Kayai is only supposed to serve him bananas while Ondieki insists that only oranges should be eaten for fruits as shown in the following dialogue between Ojwang and Mama Kayai:

Kiswahili

Mama Kayai: Karibu mzee wangu. Juu chakula hakipo tayari, wacha nileta kile Kilicho tayari (*Anaingia na machungwa*)

Mzee Ojwang: sasa hii ni kitu gani unaniletea. Hapa nilisema nisione machungwa. Halafu unaniletea. (*anarushia Mama Kayai machungwa*) Yaani, kila kitu ninaongea hamwezi kunisikia?

Mama Kayai: Machungwa yana ubaya gani?

Mzee Ojwang: Yana ubaya gani? Hapa nilisema banana. Simple and clear. (*Anaingia chumbani, anakuja na fimbo na kumshambulia Mama Kayai na Mwala*)

English Translation

Mama Kayai: Welcome my husband. Since I have not finished preparing food, let me serve you what is ready (*comes back with oranges and serves Ojwang*)

Mzee Ojwang: What is this you have served me? I banned oranges in this house. (*throws oranges at Mama Kayai*) Why is it that you do not understand what I say?

Mama Kayai: What is wrong with oranges?

Mzee Ojwang: (*imitates Mama Kayai*) what is wrong with oranges? I said we only eat bananas. Simple and clear. (*He enters the inner room, comes back with a whip and starts beating both Mama Kayai and Mwala*)

The dialogue above shows the conflicts witnessed in the family emanating from non-compliance with the decisions made by the heads of the family. The family conflict can as well be likened to state conflicts marked alongside different political affiliations. Therefore, the intersection of the family and the state happens due to political sycophancy by both Ojwang and Ondieki. Informed by their strong

affiliations to their respective sides, the two men are out to force their family members into their baseless fanaticism.

Through Ojwang's and Ondieki's behaviour, the episode structures the family in relation to the political milieu at the time. The two men are therefore used to read the political leadership's hypocrisy and empty political positions in matters affecting its citizenry which they exploit for selfish gains. Commenting on state politics and the family, Christopher Ouma Werimo observes that "state politics and related issues can have resonance within the familial space and can affect familial relationships in a complex way" (81).

Ndizi au Chungwa also underscores the place of neighbours in families. It takes Ondieki's neighbour's effort to broker peace between Ondieki and Mize and also between Ojwang and Mama Kayai. Sukumawiki takes the two families through the repercussions of what they are doing as he reinforces the significance of family. Sukumawiki represents mediators who intervene to bring peace in warring communities and countries that have witnessed war. Sukumawiki becomes an arbitrator as he encourages each of the warring factions to respect the other's decision without being forced. Ojwang and Ondieki realise their mistakes as they acknowledge the importance of making own choices and of maintaining peace.

The conflict witnessed in Ondieki's and Ojwang's family is representative of conflict in the wider society. In as much as the episode employs domestic squabbles at this point, the conflicts define the post-colony. Most post-colonial states in Africa have witnessed conflicts of varying levels of magnitude. Kenya as a nation has also had its share of civil conflicts at different stages of its existence. The text captures the effects

of violence on the victims through both physical and verbal violence witnessed in the two families. One of the effects is the destruction of the family as an institution. In most societies where civil war has occurred, family life has been disrupted. This is seen in the text when Mama Kayai and Mwala are beaten and chased by Ojwang.

The *Ndizi au Chungwa* emphasizes the role of mediators in conflicts be it in the family or political state. Mediation requires that one freely offers his services in an attempt to reconcile and create peaceful co-existence between the warring groups. This is seen in the episode when Sukumawiki intervenes to restore peace. Ondieki is reluctant as he struggles to inform Sukumawiki that what was happening was a domestic conflict and therefore he should not interfere. However, regardless of it being a domestic issue, its impact is likely to affect the life of others who interact with the two families. It is through mediation that we see Mama Kayai and Mize make their suggestion on what they deem fit instead of following what their spouses want them to do. Women in most cases are not participants in the decision making process and as such, the mediation by Sukumawiki has allowed them to be listened to. In this way, the text underscores the significance of mediation and inclusivity of all concerned parties in matters that affect the society.

2. 3 Women Resilience in *Vitimbi*: A Reading of Mama Kayai

This section examines Mama Kayai's resilience and agency within a male dominated social milieu. Focus is placed on the strategies employed by Mama Kayai in interrogating the limitations imposed by society. I examine Mama Kayai ability to speak in her traditional, socio-political and historical obscurity in the face of hegemonic discourses. Bhabha's ideas on the ambivalent is germane as I re-read post-colonial Kenyan narratives that supposedly set out to agitate for equality but ended up

reinforcing the inferiority-superiority dichotomy that mark human existence in contemporary society.

In addition, postcolonial ideas on equality and subversion in general is used because it delves into the historical and ideological factors that thwart efforts put in place in realizing equity for those who occupy the margins. I appropriate postcolonial theoretical ideas to interrogate any form of subjectivity, difference, inequality, silence, omission, and commission placed on Mama Kayai to withhold her agency. I also employ semiotic literary theory in analyzing how mama Kayai is used to signify agency and subversion of structures that had inhibited her potential. In this way, she is read figuratively in relation to the culture that has socialized her.

Although Mama Kayai is developed as a strong character as seen in the way she handles the different problems in her family from her standpoint as a woman, it appears that the leader of the family remains Mzee Ojwang. In addition, Mama Kayai is portrayed as a hands on person and problem solver, yet the family environment is not enabling. This is because Mzee Ojwang uses all means possible to place Mama Kayai in her traditional place of a woman. As a wife and mother, she is expected to behave in the “acceptable” manner as stipulated by society. This could be as a result of the socialisation of both men and women especially in the African context where the husband and father is the head while the rest, his subordinates. Samuel Muchoki and Simiyu Wandiba argue that “emphasis on dominance, physical strength and male honour” (202) is still rife in contemporary society.

Mzee Ojwang is the decision-maker in his family while Mama Kayai and Kabu implement the decisions made. In doing this, Mzee Ojwang, succeeds in suppressing

his family to the level of coerced obedience. According to Kehinde Ayo women's suppression and marginalisation in most patriarchal societies, have demonstrated the different manifestations of women's subjugation such as customs, culture and ways of life which help to endorse and reinforce norms that serve to control them (47). In *Vitimbi*, Ojwang seems to read from patriarchal structures to run his family. For instance, in the *Mpenzi* episode, Mama Kayai is concerned about the running down of the hotel. When the hotel's well-being is threatened, Mama Kayai has a genuine concern in as far as the family and the hotel survival is concerned.

The hotel is the only source of money and its collapse foreshadows doom for the family's well-being. However, Ojwang reminds her that she did not come with the hotel from her home when she got married. In most African cultures, women and girls are not supposed to own or inherit property. They only access property through their husbands or sons. Therefore, Ojwang's statement is meant to let Mama Kayai know that she owns nothing in Ojwang's family as a wife. In this way, Ojwang summons his suppression tools from his authority as a husband to curtail Mama Kayai's quest to actively participate in matters affecting her and the family at large.

In addition, Mzee Ojwang's question as to whether Mama Kayai came with the hotel reinforces Mama Kayai's traditional role. It serves to remind her about her position as a wife and mother in the family. This reminder is meant to restrain her to operate within the edicts that society has designed for women especially her undisputed occupation of the domestic space. In doing this, Mzee Ojwang manages to indoctrinate and condition Mama Kayai to the fact that as a woman, she is inferior to her husband. As such, her acceptance of her status as a mother places her into the domestic space which has limited opportunities. This could be the reason Mzee

Ojwang prohibits Mama Kayai to enter the hotel. To this end, the domestic space is read as a form of a wall that shields Mama Kayai from the public space which is enabling if she has to realise her potential. In this regard, Mama Kayai is used to image the socio-political disparities in contemporary society. The term 'mama' is a Swahili word for 'mother.' As a woman and mother, Mama Kayai's socio-political agency is pegged in the ideology of motherhood. Mzee Ojwang uses the institution of motherhood to inhibit her growth. However, it is ironical that Mama Kayai subverts this space to her advantage in her rich human resource that she often displays.

Therefore, Mzee Ojwang's family is depicted as stifling to normal human growth. The family characterised by division of labour leads to conflicts and struggles evident in the position held by Mama Kayai. As a result, the oppressed and deprived people as signified through Mama Kayai are not given major roles to play. On marginalisation, Emmanuel Ngara (122) notes that such a category of people "either are pushed to the periphery or relegated to oblivion" by those who categorise them so. This creates a huge gap between dominant and the subordinate in the family. However, Mama Kayai deconstructs such categories by shuffling into the center as demonstrated in the sound decisions she makes.

Vitimbi also addresses issues of individual morality, domestic strife and cultural alienation through male- female relationships. On this, one will want to understand why Mzee Ojwang and Mama Kayai are the opposite extremes of one another. This is because, regardless of what Mama Kayai experiences, she remains sober as she operates within societal norms. On the other hand, Mzee Ojwang is depicted as an embodiment of the African macho man who is always having trysts with concubines

while Mama Kayai is portrayed as the good woman always waiting to welcome her husband home.

However, such portrayal is contradictory as it seems to encourage male infidelity while requiring women to remain pure. The question that should be asked at this time is first, what is the case and what ought to be the case? In this way, the society needs to uphold what ought to be and not what has been. Therefore, Mama Kayai's disposition reinforces the same readings of social disparity. Mama Kayai's depiction seems to point at the view that women are "guardians and symbols of cultural particularism" (UNESCO 114) while the same does not apply to men.

Regardless of Mama Kayai's social situation that she finds herself in, she remains the voice of reason since she brings order in the house. In this text, Mama Kayai finds herself in a disadvantaged social class yet very informed and critical. Despite this limitation, Mama Kayai proves her unwillingness to remain oppressed. She does this through the numerous confrontations with Mzee Ojwang especially her inquisitiveness of what Ojwang does behind her back. For instance, she questions Mzee Ojwang's deceit, dishonesty and repression by taking it upon herself to find truth.

In the episode *Chama*, Mama Kayai offers a counter discourse contrary to the one that Mzee Ojwang has all along subscribed to. In this episode, Mzee Ojwang is a member of a women's self help group sometimes referred to as table banking. He is the only man in this group which he had kept as a secret from Mama Kayai. As a member, Mzee Ojwang had borrowed KES150, 000 from the group. So when he fails to repay the money as agreed, the members decide to auction his household items. The action

in this episode is very hilarious. Instead of Mzee Ojwang handling the issue himself, he screams calling his daughter for help and upon the entry of Mama Kayai, he starts stammering claiming that it was the women who owed him money. The camera focuses on Mzee Ojwang as he paces up and down and appearing confused in the presence of Mama Kayai. He is conspicuously incoherent in his speech as he does not explain what the commotion was all about. After listening to the women's side of the story, Mama Kayai asks Ojwang how he spent the money he had borrowed but Ojwang is unable to account for the money. When Mama Kayai demands that he pays the money, Mzee Ojwang responds as follows:

Kiswahili

Mama Kayai: Mzee Ojwang, utalipa hawa wamama pesa zao.

Mzee Ojwang: Inakuhusu nini wewe?

Mama Kayai: Siwamechukua TV yangu.

Mzee Ojwang: Nani alinunua hio TV?

Mama Kayai: Si ni wewe.

English Translation

Mama Kayai: (*to Mzee Ojwang*) you must pay the money you owe these ladies

Mzee Ojwang: How does it concern you?

Mama Kayai: They have confiscated my television set

Mzee Ojwang: Who bought the television?

Mama Kayai: You.

The fact that it is Mama Kayai who salvages the situation symbolises her ability in dealing with different issues affecting her family. In this regard, Mama Kayai's ability to take care of the situation is a probing interrogation of the construction of a man as a decision maker. This is because Ojwang has failed to make sound decisions at the time when the family needed his leadership. Therefore, Mama Kayai's action is symbolic of opposition of "hegemony in an effort to challenge the power of established authorities that disempowers the African woman (the marginal subject)" (Kehinde 49). As such liberation of subordinated groups, yoked by the pressures of

traditional institutions, entails a shift from the margin to the epicenter of affairs, rather than being "... in the peripheral, tangential role of a passive victim of a masculine-based cultural universe" (Mezu 27-8).

By giving Mama Kayai voice and unrelenting fighting spirit, *Vitimbi* interrogates the traditional moral codes enforced on women to suppress them without considering their potential. In this regard, Mama Kayai seems to be revolting against such readings using all available options. Mama Kayai's behaviour fits in Luce Irigaray observation that:

When women want to escape from exploitation, they do not simply destroy a few 'prejudices'; they upset the whole set of values-economic, social, moral, and sexual. They challenge every theory, every thought, every existing language in that these are monopolised by men only (68).

The excerpt above demonstrates the need for women to liberate themselves regardless of the means they employ. In regard to *Vitimbi*, Mama Kayai revolts against the established norms in a society where the promises of the father figure and husband have consistently failed. Through Mama Kayai, the text envisages a society where the disempowered groups devise ways that transgress patriarchal rules and power imbalances to free themselves from the restraints of authoritarian leadership.

Mama Kayai's relentless struggle to voice her worth in the face of Mzee Ojwang demonstrates how social power is fashioned as masculine and asserted by masculinised apparatus, which has to be constantly confronted, challenged and subverted. Mama Kayai's actions undermines the dominant discourses that reinforces women's vulnerability and powerlessness in a patriarchal society. Therefore, her resilience and ability to stand up and confront masculine failures is insightful in the understanding of the socio-political challenges facing women in contemporary Kenya.

In this way, women can be perceived as subjects and agents but not mere objects pegged at the receiving end. Therefore, *Vitimbi* proposes that the oppressed need to adopt context-specific paths to freedom as shown by Mama Kayai's actions. This is because each situation is unique and not uniform to what happens in other areas. Homi Bhabha refers to this as the new spaces where awakening starts that eventually leads to an informed society.

Based on the discussion above, the socio-political experiences advanced in *Vitimbi* cannot be limited to familial relationship as presented but as a text with wider implications. *Vitimbi* painstakingly explores issues of marginalisation rooted in patriarchy and how it relates to other forms of exploitation in contemporary society. The text provides space within which the dehumanising and exploitative disposition of leadership is satirized. This episode also signifies the political leadership in Africa who behave like Ojwang'. Mzee Ojwang represents African leaders who accumulate debts while the citizenry as represented through Mama Kayai pay for the debts whether directly or indirectly. Based on the foregoing, I point out that Mama Kayai's actions are a realisation of her agency and resilience in a society that has relegated her. It is therefore the marginal space that she occupies that gives her the tools that she uses to emancipate the self.

In the episode *Biashara ya ng'ambo*, we see Mama Kayai engaging in what she had not been allowed to initially engage in. The cast in this episode include Mize, Mama Sukuma Wiki, Mama Kayai, Mzee Ojwang, Kajogoo and Mwala (the house boy). In this episode, Mama Kayai approaches Mama Sukumawiki who is a business lady for advice on how she can start a business. We are informed that Mama Sukumawiki imports the items she sells and it appears she makes a lot of money. Mama

Sukumawiki advises Mama Kayai that she needs KES 400,000 as the initial capital for the business to pick up. When Mama Kayai informs Ojwang about the business deal, Ojwang is of the view that the money is quite a lot. He tells Mama Kayai that since he is old, Mama Kayai should till people's farms since she is still energetic to raise the money for the business. Mama Kayai advises him to sell one of the pieces of land and cows to raise the money since the returns are good. In the end, Ojwang sells a piece of land to raise the money required. This helps Mama Kayai to start the business which makes a lot of money.

In the course of the business venture, Mama Kayai starts a romantic relationship with Kajogoo. Most of the time when Mama Kayai returns from her business trip, she goes to have good time with Kajogoo in pubs in the pretext that she is going back to the airport. On one of the escapades, Mama Kayai convinces Kajogoo to marry her but Kajogoo is reluctant to do so. As a result, Mama Kayai storms out of the pub very late in the night and goes back home while very drunk. Ojwang opens the door for her and demands to know where she was coming from at that time of the night. The episode ends with Mama Kayai asking Mzee Ojwang for food.

Of importance in this episode is Mama Kayai's sexual infidelity. Most societies in Africa frown at a woman engaging in wayward behaviour such as having multiple sexual partners. However, what is interesting is that the same society allows and has normalised male infidelity. The question that arises from Mama Kayai's infidelity is: Why is it that Mama Kayai engages in sexual immorality only when Ojwang allows her to start a business? Is there any relationship between money power and infidelity?

I relate Mama Kayai's infidelity with power if juxtaposed with Ojwang's infidelity in the other episodes discussed in this chapter. In this case, material power that Mama Kayai wields presents an opportunity to be unfaithful just as as Mzee Ojwang. As already mentioned in this chapter, power is very enticing and is the envy of the oppressed of the society. In this way, if the oppressed manage to get a piece of the same power, then they exploit it too to their advantage. As such, Mama Kayai is exploiting the power that comes with material well standing in the society. However, it is instructive to point out that Mama Kayai's infidelity does not mean one to one equality of what happens in reality but it is read metaphorically here. Mama Kayai's infidelity is a commentary of the sexual shortcomings of both men and women. As such, the society's complacency of male infidelity is placed in the spotlight. The text seems to point out that if infidelity is wrong for a woman, it is wrong for men too. As such, Mama Kayai is used to interrogate traditional institutionalised practices that are biased in their application to either genders.

In addition, Mama Kayai's behaviour is read metaphorically as her resistance of her position as a woman in the society. For instance, society requires that a woman should act within her traditional role and should remain in her domestic space. Therefore, Mama Kayai's access of the public such as pubs and her travel overseas demystifies her limiting domestic role. In doing this, Mama Kayai dares to move into a territory reserved for men only. Consequently, Mama Kayai's infidelity is symbolic of her resistance of being controlled by the patriarchal structures that have ordered and defined her as a woman. For instance, women in most societies do not have a choice over their own bodies as decisions about their sexuality and marriage is arranged by the older members of their families.

The scenario described above is depicted in a number of African literary texts in characters such as Paulina in Macgoye Oludhe's *Coming to Birth*, Akoko in Margaret Ogolla's *The River and the Source*, Paulina in Grace Ogot's *The Promised Land* and Edna in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*. Therefore, when Mama Kayai engages in activities that had otherwise been denied to her, she is in essence moving beyond societal limitations to emancipate herself from the shackles of Ojwang.

When Mama Kayai returns home at night and very drunk, it is Ojwang who opens the door for her. She even asks Ojwang for food. This in most African communities is an abomination and would have called for a thorough beating from the husband. On the contrary, Ojwang does not beat her but demands to know where she was coming from. This incidence is a critical occurrence that threatens the rhythm of life especially in the African context. In most communities in Africa, women are supposed to stay home and take care of domestic chores. However, in this episode, we see a reversal of these roles when Mama Kayai becomes the breadwinner in this family while Ojwang becomes a stay home husband.

Men are charged with the responsibility to provide for their families and not women. In doing this, Mama Kayai demonstrates that women have the potential to take care of family needs if provided with a conducive and enabling environment. This is well captured when Mzee Ojwang complains that he is sick to which Mama Kayai gives him money to seek medical attention. Therefore, Mama Kayai's financial stability is likely to impact men's place in the society through a reversal of roles. Some scholars such as Stratton, Nnaemeka and Tabitha Kanago have argued that lack of financial stability was the reason for women subjugation in most societies. Women were

reduced to being depended on their close male relations such as husband, sons, brothers, and fathers. However, through her business, Mama Kayai is depicted as a resourceful person. Therefore, Mama Kayai succeeds in challenging the age old tradition that had privileged only men to take care of their families.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how the family serves as a microcosm of the nation-state and how the authority of the father is comparable to nation-state authority. The chapter's reading of the family allegorically reveals an overlap with the nation-state in terms of power dichotomies and how power is played out. The chapter used the conflicts witnessed in Mzee Ojwang's family as a form of struggle by the subordinated members to subvert the dominant social order. The discussion established contradictions and complexities encapsulated in the domestic space- a place that is supposed to have warmth, love and care and as a place characterised by a number of dominance conflicts.

The disintegration of family values and the political state in post-independence Africa and Kenya in particular offers critical re-evaluations of power relations and there inferential readings of the nation-state. The chapter found out that domination in the society manifest itself in a number of ways such as controlling the family members and those perceived to be under the father figure. It is, therefore, this disparity in the family that come to characterise disparity in the society at large whether politically or socially.

The study also established that state and national conflicts have a way of intruding into the domestic space. In this way, the domestic space cannot be said to be apolitical

as it shapes nation-state discourses through the performance of power. This then helped me to draw the conclusion that contrary to the misconception that the family is a private space where moral teachings do occur is interrogated. This interrogation is informed by the fact that *Vitimbi* uses the family setting to engage with governance issues. To this point, the pivotal role of the family setting as an avenue to advance the socio-political experiences through a state broadcaster is imaged and realized.

In doing this, I concur with Ngugi's assertion that artistic work is not created in a vacuum by demonstrating the ability of *Vitimbi* in dealing with realities as intertwined in familial "everyday life experiences." The everyday experiences were then applied to the reading of other "social and political realities that mirror dominant social order" (Ligaga 115) in contemporary societies. The next chapter examines the use of the legal system in *Vioja Mahakamani* in addressing a myriad of issues in contemporary Kenya.

CHAPTER THREE: JUDICIAL INTERVENTION AND SOCIAL REALITY IN *VIOJA MAHAKAMANI*

3.0 Introduction

Popular cultural products and popular television theatre in particular serve different functions across the world. Generally as a text, theatre is versatile in nature. This is seen in its ability to image different socio-political spaces contemporary societies. One of the cardinal functions of television theatre is to “harness popular culture ... to bring about social change” (Shereen, Christofides, Malepe, and Maker 60). Accordingly, Sarah Ives observes that

Television, with its depictions of the dramas of everyday life, provides a compelling medium for influencing a normative national consciousness. Through the use of language, image and sound, television (re)produces a vision of the world for its audiences. These productions link television with the political economy of nation building. The medium can work to socialize people, foment material desires, and normalize consumer relations (154).

The quotation above underscores the pivotal role that television theatre plays in the society. Its ability to dovetail multiple functions seamlessly together is thus highlighted. In as much as theatre entertains, it also reflects and addresses social injustices in a given society thereby raising citizenry’s consciousness that eventually leads to change.

The previous chapter examined *Vitimbi* as an allegory of the Kenyan nation-state. Chapter two examined the family experiences, conflicts and hierarchical structures that define family members’ positions in *Vitimbi* as signifiers of the nation-state experiences and intrigues. The present chapter examines how *Vioja Mahakamani* addresses contemporary social realities in Kenya by applying law. The courtroom, characterization and humour are resourceful tools that *Vioja Mahakamani* relies on to examine social realities represented in each of the selected episodes.

Unlike *Vitimbi* which is set within the privacy of the domestic setting, *Vioja Mahakamani* is set in a courtroom which is “official.” *Vioja Mahakamani* is a popular television theatre text which heavily relies on laughter yet the courtroom is marked with a high level of seriousness as it deals with serious issues. *Vioja Mahakamani*’s performance in a “courtroom” allows most viewers not able to reach courts to access and interact with law through television. The courtroom setting therefore is significant as it relates the problems advanced in each episode to the legal mechanisms that serve to uphold the rule of law.

In this way, the courtroom registers in the mind of the audience that the action is not only a matter of “play” but also provides legal knowledge. Therefore, the audience is likely to understand how the characters’ actions or inaction were in contradiction with the law and even societal dictates. In addition, its entry into the courtroom is a powerful strategy employed to demonstrate the subversive and the potential of comedy in destabilizing dominant ideologies and institutions in the society. This is artistically captured through the use of humor. In doing this, *Vioja Mahakamani* asserts and establishes a borderline between the flawed socio-political system on one hand and the knowledgeable laughing subject on the other.

This chapter focuses on how *Vioja Mahakamani* employs the justice system in addressing the violation of law. This is significant in examining the socio-political issues advanced in the selected video tapes of the episodes studied. The justice system used in *Vioja Mahakamani* provides parameters in determining what is considered lawful since the action flourishes upon themes of guilt, innocence, morality and immorality. Most of the video tape episodes selected for analysis in this

chapter highlight the damage caused by characters' actions and inactions and its impact on society. This Chapter examines the following episodes: *Inflammatory Publication*; *Hate speech*; *Vijana* (youth); *Akala Awards*; *The Day of an African child*; and *Marehemu Ochola* (the late Ochola). Each of these episodes is analysed at a time with some episodes clustered according to the themes therein. The chapter is thus structured on three themes namely ethnicity, corruption and poverty/social classes as advanced in *Vioja Mahakamani*.

Vioja Mahakamani is episodic, with each show dealing with one issue. The characters with the exemption of the judge, court clerk and prosecutor take on different roles in different episodes. *Vioja Mahakamani* is performed in a courtroom and the court set up is mimetic of the actual courtroom. For proper simulation, the courtroom mechanics, language and mannerism of the court session are incorporated in *Vioja Mahakamani*'s performance. This is done in a simplified manner with an intention of informing the viewers about Kenyan court procedures and law. For instance, the prosecutor uses phrases such as your honour; the oral verbatim of the ruling such as the court finds you guilt and sentences you, the court finds you guilty and that you have a case to answer among other performatives used.

During the performance, viewers are treated to a scenario where actors give evidence in self-defense or in support of the case in court for trial. Most episodes of *Vioja Mahakamani* have the prosecutor who presents the case and introduces the complainant. We also have the defense comprising of the defendant, and lastly the witnesses. In normal circumstances, we expect both the complainant and the accused to have lawyers to represent them, but it is not the case in *Vioja Mahakamani*.

It is also imperative to underline that *Vioja Mahakamani* plays the function of entertaining and educating. The first function is realized through the humor that is employed in its performance while the second is advanced through the judge as she engages in a moral dialogue with the wrongdoer in order to raise awareness of the negative consequences of the actions of the accused. By doing this, *Vioja Mahakamani* familiarizes the viewers with the justice system that may be far away from them. This makes the text versatile as it interweaves judicial underpinnings with the contemporary social realities. To contextualize the discussion, it is important to provide a brief synopsis of the text. This is captured in the next section below.

3.1 Synopsis of *Vioja Mahakamani*

Vioja Mahakamani, which is a comedy, has been on air since 1979 to date making it the longest drama text on Kenyan television. It is aired on KBC television between 7.30 pm and 8.00 pm every Wednesday, immediately after the Seven o'clock news. The same episode is replayed on Thursday afternoons between 2.00 and 2.30 pm. The term "Vioja" can be translated to mean "dramas", "incidents", "questions", or "comedies." "Mahakamani" refers to "courtroom" thus the two terms put together means incidents/dramas/comedies in the courtroom.

The cast in the courtroom underscores three pertinent issues as is the case with an actual court: the law, the law breaker and the plaintiff hence the judge has to arbitrate between the two sides by citing the Kenyan legal law. The characters (Except for the judge and the prosecutor) play different roles in each episode. The characters include Olexanda Josephat Olimidi Msigun, Gideon Ondieki Nyuka Kwota Oloba man Kidi, Alphonse Makacha Makokha, Tobias Lichodi Kokoto, The prosecutor, the court clerk and the judge. We also have other characters who only take part in some episodes but

are not always there. All the characters except the judge, the prosecutor and the court clerk have names identifiable with particular communities in Kenya. Most of the episodes have utilitarian goals of increasing the audiences' understanding of human rights and rule of law in Kenya. The next section is an analysis of *Vioja Mahakamani* within Kenya's socio-political context.

3.2 *Vioja Mahakamani*: An Alternative Peace and Conflict intervention tool

This section examines how daily experiences in post-independence Kenya are imaged and addressed through the selected episodes of *Vioja Mahakamani*. I situate *Vioja Mahakamani* within Kenya's historical and socio-political context in order to relate the action therein with the social realities within which the text is performed. This is informed by the fact that artistic work gets its raw material from a people's lived experiences. Ngugi wa Thiongó's observes that:

Literature results from conscious acts of men in society. At the level of the individual artist, the very act of writing implies a social relationship: one is writing about somebody for somebody. At the collective level, literature, as a product of men's intellectual and imaginative activity embodies, in words and images, the tensions, conflicts, contradictions, at the heart of a community's being and process of becoming. It is a reflection on the aesthetic and imaginative planes, of a community's wrestling with its total environment to produce the basic means of life, food, clothing, shelter, and in the process creating and recreating itself in history (5-6).

The observation above is general in terms of literary output, however, the same is applicable to *Vioja Mahakamani* since the text explores historical, social and political experiences of Kenya's being. However, it is also important to note that as a popular cultural product, *Vioja Mahakamani* does not only reflect reality but also suggests possible solutions to the problems advanced. *Vioja Mahakamani*'s ability to interrogate daily experiences confirms George Gissing's observation that:

[an artist] brings home the ghastly condition (material, mental and moral) of our poor classes, to show the hideous injustice of our whole system of society, to

give light upon the plan of altering it, and, above all, to reach an enthusiasm for just and high ideals in this age of unmitigated egotism (83).

Contemporary Kenyan experiences have impacted society negatively as seen in the manner in which the characters interact with one another in *Vioja Mahakamani*. The weakening of the traditional approach in inculcating a particular code of conduct in modern day Kenya has contributed to the behaviour exhibited by characters in *Vioja Mahakamani*. Therefore, the breakdown of traditional morality demands alternative mechanisms in advancing philosophies and ideologies of living in present day Kenya. One of the mechanisms is the use of broadcast media which generates knowledge about how life is and how it should be lived. George Ngugi King'ara observes that products of broadcast media have capacity to “disseminate, circulate moral teachings, norms and values of a society” (103). As a result, viewers are led to see and evaluate the consequences of deviating from societal moral code.

It is worth noting that contemporary Kenya is a multi-cultural society, therefore any discourse aimed at a unified nation is embraced. Rooted in what is moral and lawful, *Vioja Mahakamani* accentuates the importance of cultural diversity and individual coexistence in Kenya. *Vioja Mahakamani's* seeks to enhance cultural diversity by discouraging negative ethnicity. According to Max Weber, an ethnic group refers to those groups that:

Entertain a subjective belief in their common descent- because of similarities of physical type or of custom or of both, or because of memories of migration- in such a way that this belief is important for the continuation of non-kinship, communal kinship relationship...regardless of whether an objective blood relationship exists or not (306).

In the Kenyan context, I define ethnicity as a group of people who reside in a specific region of the country with a common ancestry, cultural heritage, language and even social processes. Kenya has more than 70 ethnic communities. The most dominant

ethnic communities in contemporary Kenya include the Gikuyu, the Luhya, the Luo, the Kalenjin, the Kamba, and the Kisii. Historically, most communities in Kenya have specific geographical regions where they originally occupied. However, because of the changing socio-political times, people have moved to live in other regions that were not “originally” theirs. Such movements have led to violence and evictions by those who claim ownership of the occupied lands by immigrants over time in Kenya. This is a problem that Ngugi wa Thiong’o has relentlessly addressed in most of his books such as *Petals of Blood*, *The River Between*, and *Devil on the Cross*. As such, expropriation of land is one of the historical injustices suffered by several Kenyan communities. Unfortunately, this problem has not been adequately addressed by the different political regimes since independence.

One of the government initiatives to address some of the historical injustices is the ‘Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission of Kenya’, hereafter referred to as TJRC, that was tasked with looking into these injustices with the aim of addressing them. Despite the formal mechanisms such as the TJRC that has been put in place to address some of the injustices in Kenya, popular cultural products have also proved to be resourceful in addressing such issues. Unlike the official discourses, the nature of popular cultural products make them a viable means of addressing such injustices directly and also attempts to provide plausible solutions to the problems. One of such problems is the issue of ethnicity which *Vioja Makhakamani* grapples with in an attempt to broker peaceful co-existence of different communities in Kenya.

Ethnicity in *Vioja Mahakamani* is well captured through the characters who are given names identifiable with particular ethnic communities in Kenya. For instance, Gideon Ondieki Nyuka Kwota comes from the Luo community, Alphonse Makacha Makokha

and Tobias Lichodi Kokoto from the Luhya community, and Olexanda Josephat Olimidi Msigun from the Maasai community. The characters in *Vioja Mahakamani* are representative and hint at the many ethnic communities that make up contemporary Kenya. In this way, the performance in *Vioja Mahakamani* is representative of the different communities in Kenya.

The characters' ethnic groups allows the viewer laugh at the stereotypical portrayal yet awakens the consciousness in the viewer to relate to what is morally right. While I acknowledge the deep-rooted ethnic stereotypes that mark the existence of individuals in contemporary Kenya and the call to eliminate the same, it is also important to point out that the masses play a significant role in the production and circulation of the same ethnic stereotypes that have worked against calls for national unity. This is the same trouble that *Vioja Mahakamani* has run into by developing characters steeped into their ethnic cocoons. As a cultural product that is easily consumed by the public, *Vioja Mahakamani* cannot run away from the fact that in doing this, it has in essence undermined the concept of a unified nation that it initially sets out to advance.

I point out that any attempts at addressing the issue of ethnicity is likely to be viable if efforts put in the same does not lie in trying to stop stereotypes. Stuart Hall observes that countering stereotypes has to happen "within the complexities and ambivalences of representation itself, and tries to contest it from within" (274). *Vioja Mahakamani* exploits the embedded ethnic stereotypes in Kenya as seen in its casting and performance to comment on the negative use of ethnicity. This allows viewers to see ethnicity as a reality staged and are able to learn from what is presented. In this regard, the text does not fight ethnicity head on but interrogates it through the

existence of stereotypes as a normal occurrence by leading the viewer through the impact of the same on ethnic diversity and wellbeing of the society.

Ethnicity in Kenya has for a long time been used by political elites as a tool for consolidating both political and material power. For instance, the first Kenyan president (Jomo Kenyatta) was from the Kikuyu community, which is one of the largest ethnic communities in present day Kenya. The available literature shows that Jomo Kenyatta used his ethnic community to consolidate his power and in turn rewarded the community with state goodies such as employment and land. Samuel Decalo observes that during Jomo Kenyatta's rule, "political and economic power was increasingly vested in his trusted circle of fellow Kikuyus" (177). The same was the case with Daniel Arap Moi from the Kalenjin community. As such, political power during Moi's reign was concentrated in the hands of Kalenjin elites. Therefore, those who did not belong to the ethnic community whose person was in power were discriminated and marginalized in the distribution of national resources. Karuti Kanyinga Points out that:

The areas from which influential elites and the president originate tend to have a relatively higher share of senior public sector positions than those of other groups. The state is, therefore, not viewed favourably from an accountability point view. This perception has been entrenched by the actions of the Kikuyu elites in power under President Jomo Kenyatta and President Mwai Kibaki and by the actions of the Kalenjin elites under Daniel arap Moi (14).

Kanyinga's argument in the quotation above is a summation as to why different ethnic groups in Kenya struggle to safeguard their ethnic territory to ensure that only those who "belong" to the political elites' group benefit from the communal resources and state "goodies." On state goodies, Fred Jonyo observes that "the ethnic elites from the president's ethnic group are assured of plum jobs from which huge kickbacks are

drawn and lucrative government contracts (166).” This conclusion dovetails with Stefan Wolff’s argument that:

Ethnicity acquires enormous power to mobilise people when it becomes a predominant identity and means more than just a particular ethnic origin; it comes to define people as speakers of a certain language, belonging to a particular religion, being able to pursue some careers but not others, being able to preserve and express their cultural heritage, having access to positions of power and wealth or not. In short, when ethnicity becomes politically relevant and determines the life prospects of people belonging to distinct ethnic groups, it is possible to mobilise group members to change a situation of apparently perpetual discrimination and disadvantage or in defence of a valued status quo (31).

The excerpt above shows that ethnicity is politicised because of the opportunities it is likely to offer but not as a source of cultural identity as would be the case. This seems to be the case in present day Kenya where ethnicity has been manipulated for selfish gains. However, it is worth noting that feelings of inclusion/belonging on one hand and exclusion/unbelonging on the other are a good recipe for conflicts. Commenting on South Africa, Jendele Hungbo observes that the politics of inclusion and exclusion “stem from the intensity of the fragmentation which brutal pasts impose not just on the structural composition of society but also on the psyche of its inhabitants” (147). In this regard, ‘immigrants’ living among such ethnic communities are discriminated against. Stephen Castles observes that “the migrant has always been the “Other” of the nation and that national identity is often asserted through a process of exclusion- feelings of belonging depend on being able to say who does not belong” (187).

In *Vioja Mahakamani*, individuals’ identity is understood in relation to the ethnic group that one belongs to but not Kenya as a nation. This is illustrated in the 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya. *Vioja Mahakamani* through creatively designed performances captures how the violence was initiated and fueled based on ethnic politics. I examine the video tapes of *Inflammatory Publications, Hate Speech,*

and *Vijana* episodes of *Vioja Mahakamani* to illustrate the issue of ethnicity. The episodes mentioned above deal with how 2007/2008 post-election violence was fueled to the proportions that it reached by politicians. The three episodes are set in different regions in the Rift Valley region in contemporary Kenya. The physical setting of the action in the episodes were the places hit hard by 2007/2008 post-election violence, which were choreographed appropriately to authenticate the thematic issues.

Inflammatory Publications is set in a Kenyan town called Burnt Forest. This episode features Ondieki as the politician who calls on his community to evict all immigrant groups living amongst them. The other characters include Fred Kamau (one of the young men hired by Ondieki to distribute and post the inflammatory publication leaflets), Makokha (the one who printed the leaflets), and Olexanda (one of the immigrants). In the court trial, the magistrate reads the charges as follows:

Kiswahili

Jaji: Ondieki Nyuka Kwota na Fred Kamau, mnashtakiwa kwamba, mnamo tarehe kumi na moja mwezi uliopita mwaka huu katika kaunti ya Uasin Gishu huko Eldoret, mkiwa na wengine ambao hawako mbele ya korti hii, mlishirikiana na kusambaza makartasi ambayo yalikuwa na uchochesi na ambayo ilizua vurugu. Mmekuwa mkifikishwa mbele ya korti hii mkikana makossa. Leo mnakubali ama mnazidi kukataa.

Ondieki: Ninakataa.

Fred Kamau: Nakataa.

English Translation

Judge: Ondieki Nyuka Kwota and Fred Kamau, you are hereby accused that on 11th of last month in Eldoret, Uasin Gishu County, in the company of others not in court, you distributed leaflets with inflammatory information which later led to violence. You have been denying the charges, are you guilty or not guilty?

Ondieki: Not guilty my lady.

Fred Kamau: Not guilty my lady.

It is also established that Makokha has a cyber where he offers printing and photocopying services. On this day, Ondieki had asked him to print the leaflets bearing the following information:

Kiswahili

ONYO

KWEKWE NA MADOA DOA
YOTE LAZIMA WAHAME

English Translation

WARNING

ALL WEEDS AND UNWANTED STAINS
MUST RELOCATE

However, it seems Ondieki exploits Makokha's innocent and ignorant disposition in printing the leaflets. Makokha is not aware of the coded meaning of the content in the leaflets he has printed. In this instance, Makokha is presented in court as a prosecution witness. From the court proceedings, it is proven that immigrants suffered a lot as some were killed, property destroyed, and evicted from their homes in Burnt Forest in Rift Valley. Makokha says that:

Kiswahili

Kiongozi wa Mashtaka: Eleza mahakama ni nini ilitokea tarehe kumi na moja mwezi uliopita mwaka huu.

Makokha: Kuna mheshimiwa mmoja aliniambia nimprintie kartasi ambayo iliyokuwa imeandikwa kwekwe na madoadoa lazima wahame. Nikamuuliza kwekwe na madoadoa inamaanisha nini? Akaniambia hiyo ni dawa ya mimea mheshimiwa. Halafu mimi nikaprint.

Kiongozi wa Mashtaka: Na baadaye mnamo tarehe hiyo walikuja kina nani?

Makokha: Ondieki alikuja na polisi.

Kiongozi wa Mashtaka: Kwa nini?

Makokha: Juu ya maandishi yaliyokuwa kwenye hiyo kartasi. Niliambiwa ilimaanisha wale watu waliohamia hapo wahame.

English Translation

Prosecutor: Explain to the court what happened on the 11th of last month this year.

Makokha: There was a politician who came to my cyber and asked me to print for him some papers that read "weeds and stains" must be removed. I asked him what weeds and stains meant. He told me that it meant pesticides. Upon which I printed them your honour.

Prosecutor: Later the same day, who came to your premise?

Makokha: The politician and the policeman.

Prosecutor: Why?

Makokha: Because of the information in the paper I had printed. It meant those people who are not the original inhabitants of that place should be evicted.

From the dialogue above, Ondieki incites his ethnic community to turn against their immigrant neighbours. This is confirmed by Olexanda during the cross examination when he says that “hizo karatasi zilimaanisha kwamba watu wasio wa hapo wahame juu wanazuia watu kupata faida” (those leaflets meant that those people who are not the original inhabitants should leave because they hinder people from enjoying their resources). The choice of words in the publication hints at the fact that only people from Ondieki’s community are “pure” while the immigrants are “impure” and therefore their occupation of Ondieki’s communal land should be resisted at all cost. This is well illustrated in Ondieki’s use of “makwekwe” and “madoadoa” in the above quotation as a coded message. “Kwekwe” is a Kiswahili term that refers to ‘weeds’ while “madoadoa” translates to “unwanted stains.” Just as weeds or stains, Ondieki encourages his community to forcefully evict immigrants from Rift Valley.

Language at this point becomes a powerful medium used by Ondieki to summon his ethnic group to turn against their neighbours. In carrying out the havoc, there is a level of irrationality as nobody questions Ondieki’s actions and motivation. On language, Mikhail Bakhtin points out that:

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue (276).

Language therefore becomes a weapon with which socio-ideological consciousness is build and exacerbated. Socially, those who believe to be the “original” inhabitants of Rift Valley want to protect “their” resources. However, Ondieki uses his ethnic community for selfish ends-to ascend to power but not to protect what the community refers to as “ours”. In summoning his community, Ondieki is able to gain political mileage since land is emotive and the only resource that gives one identity with the mother ethnic community. My reading of Ondieki in this manner concurs with Fred Jonyo’s observation that “in post-independent Kenya, politicians employ ethnic identity to aggrandize themselves in terms of economic and political power while pretending to be acting on behalf and for the benefit of their respective ethnic communities” (159).

Commenting on selfish pursuit of power by politicians in Kenya, James Ogude succinctly points out that “if political governance-the control of state power- is the gateway to riches, it is understandable that the state rather than economic arena has been one of the most contested spaces in Kenya” (176) as demonstrated through Ondieki. Such a scenario therefore presents ethnicity as a desired tool for political power and not as a marker of belonging. In manipulating ethnicity, politicians succeed in engendering people to ethnic groupings which in turn become centres of solidarity used to ascend to power. In being susceptible to politician’s gimmicks, ethnic groupings and identity become political formations whose struggles with other ethnic groups is pegged on inclusivity and exclusivity of individuals. I am inclined to point out that one’s identity with a particular ethnic group is not wrong, however, the manipulation of ethnicity for political selfish gains is the problem as it is replicated at national level through the skewed distribution of national resources by political elites.

The only way to foster national identity and harmonious co-existence among different communities in Kenya has to begin by addressing the socio-political discrepancies, complexities and dynamics but not by addressing ethnicity as an end in itself. The identification of one with a particular ethnicity is not the problem. This is because people in Kenya do not fight simply because they belong to a particular ethnic group, people fight because of ethnic politicisation and the skewed national resource distribution. The foregoing discussion confirms Michael Schatzberg's argument that "ethnicity may also arise in opposition to the state, especially when a group feels excluded from the benefits the state has to offer and thus relatively disadvantaged" (22). The political atmosphere in Kenya demonstrates that ethnicity is used to play different roles depending on how, why and who uses it.

Of significance in *Inflammatory Publications* is the method employed to fuel violence in the vast Rift-valley region and Burnt- Forest in particular during the 2007/2008 post-election violence. Preceding the 2007/2008 general elections, the political elite as represented through Ondieki in this text, had conducted campaigns based on divisive ethnicity and the different ethnic identities that define Kenya. It is established that politicians used the different ethnic identities during the campaigns to advance their political agendas to either remain in power or to ascend to power.

In Kenya, the evocation and (ab)use of ethnic identities and allegiances for political and economic interests has been in existence before independence. Karuti Kanyinga refers to this type of ethnicity as 'ethnicity from below' (354-355). This is a situation where the state and its elected political leadership are forced by their community to

use state resources for ethnic development in its varied forms. Westen Kwatamba

Shilaho observes that:

[This mode of ethnicity] thrives on the logic of ‘eating through one of our own’. Thus ‘it is our turn to eat because another group has eaten becomes the organizing slogan around which other considerations revolve’. As such, the politicization of ethnicity is an enterprise that involves both the political elite and the masses (87).

The quotation above shows that rather than ethnicity being a source of defining oneself with a particular ancestry, it has been used as a socio-economic enterprise comprising the political elites and the gullible masses. If related to the text under study, I point out that Ondieki’s motive in printing the inflammatory papers is for selfish gains as an individual but not his ethnic group. Olexanda says that:

Kiswahili

Wakati polisi walifanya uchunguzi, tuligundua kwamba alikuwa ni Ondieki. Yeye hatosheki, anatafuta cheo kwa kila kitu na kila mahali. Ametafuta kuwa chairman akashindwa hata akaenda kutafuta hii ya chama ya kina mama hata hiyo alishindwa. Hatoshaki. Hata kwake anatafuta kuwa chairman.

English Translation

When the police investigated the matter, it was established that it was Ondieki who had used the youth to distribute the leaflets. Ondieki is never satisfied. He has run for all elective positions to be chairman but he has failed. He even run for a women group’s chair and failed. Even in his own house he runs for chairmanship.

In the excerpt above, Ondieki uses all available means to seize power. It is established that Ondieki as a politician had paid youths to distribute the hate leaflets. During the court session, the prosecutor in a preamble spells out to the court and the viewer that it was the likes of Ondieki who fueled violence through the distribution of leaflets. The following exchange captures how violence was started when Ondieki cross examines Makokha in *Inflammatory Publication*:

Kiswahili

Ondieki: Unasema wewe ni printer na uliprint hizo karatasi

Makokha: Ndiyo

Ondieki: Makwekwe nini ni? Na ilitumika vipi wakati wa uchaguziwa 2007?

Makokha: Watu ambao sio wa RiftValley

Ondieki: Wewe ndiwe ulichochoea!

Makokha: Beba msalaba wako mwenyewe.

English Translation

Ondieki: You say you are the printer and you printed those papers?

Makokha: Yes

Ondieki: What are weeds and how was it used in 2007?

Makokha: Immigrants

Ondieki: You are the one behind inflammatory information

Makokha: Carry your own cross.

Inherent in the quotation above is the description of how post-election violence happened in Burnt-Forest and the entire Rift Valley. The blame is squarely placed on politicians as seen when Makokha tells Ondieki to carry his own cross. In this case, since he is the one who hatched the idea of “weeding” out immigrants from the region, he has to take responsibility and not blame others for his actions.

In the courtroom, Ondieki adorns a trouser suit befitting his stature. In a society where majority of the people struggle for survival, Ondieki’s outfit is a demonstration of the different social classes- the poor and the rich. Notwithstanding his position and status, the judge finds him guilty and that he has a case to answer since his action is a threat to peaceful co-existence of people and is punishable in a court of law. In this way, law is not applied in relation to the status of the wrongdoer but the crime committed by one. The episode shows that Ondieki belongs to the wealthy while Makokha and Fred Kamau represents the poor in contemporary Kenya. Makokha says that he printed the papers because he needed money while Fred Kamau says he accepted to post the

leaflets to earn KES 200. Fred's predicament as a young jobless man brings in another aspect of how ethnicity is sustained.

Political elites such as Ondieki exploit the poverty levels in their communities as a fertile ground to advance their ill intentions. In doing this, Ondieki widens the gap between the poor and the rich since the poor do not benefit directly from the power he desires so much. Ondieki is not interested in making the life of his ethnic community better but to gain political mileage. Therefore, impoverishing ones' own community is a strategy that politicians use to garner votes as the gullible poor masses do not question because they are only interested in meeting their basic needs. Since the young people such as Fred are poor, they fall prey to the money offered by politicians to carry out unorthodox actions. On how ethnicity is used in Kenya, Ogude cautions that:

One has to be careful not to create the impression that in countries like Kenya where access to state power is often constituted in ethnic terms that those ethnic communities who are perceived to be loyal to the state necessarily reap the benefits. On the contrary, the Kenyan state from its inception has always worked through ethnic leaders whom it hopes, through co-optation, will represent regional or ethnic interests (181).

The excerpt above puts into perspective the complexities of ethnicity in the workings of Kenya's political arena.

The *Inflammatory Publications* episode also raises pertinent issues of citizenship which is appropriated to the politics of inclusion and exclusion in post-independence Kenya. For instance, one may want to understand what qualifies one to be a member of a community or a citizen of a nation while at the same time who should be excluded. The term nationalism or national family sentimentally invokes belonging, communality, loyalty and allegiance to a country. The ethnic belonging alluded to in

Inflammatory Publication is pegged on what Jendele Hungbo refers to as the “classifications of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ where the competition for scarce resources is heightened by a capitalistic society and worsened by the need to protect boundaries and local privileges at the same time” (81). Accordingly, Francis Nyamnjoh points out that:

Belonging and identity based on the logic of exclusion are informed by the erroneous assumption that there is such a thing as the ultimate insider, found through a process of selective elimination and ever-diminishing circles of inclusion. The politics of nativity, authenticity, autochthony, indigeneity or citizenship, premised narrowly around cultural difference and the centrality of culture, are pursued with this illusion of the ultimate insider in mind (58).

In as much as there are government initiatives to reinforce common identity in Kenya, there exists forms of difference such as ethnicity and regionalism that communities have not embraced. However, stratifying individuals of one nation in ethnic groups is not enough to justify one’s occupation of a region that originally did not belong to his/her ancestors. Such a worldview is a potential recipe for violence in any region of the world.

Another episode that deals with ethnicity is *Hate speech*. The episode has its setting in Narok in Rift Valley. The episode has Josephat Olexanda Olimidi Msigun as a politician from the Maasai community, and Ondieki Nyuka Kwota as an immigrant who has a number of businesses in Narok. Like Ondieki Nyuka Kwota in *Inflammatory Publications*, Olexanda incites his community to evict immigrants from Narok. The Maasai community are pastoralists with huge tracts of untilled land. This has attracted people from other communities who buy and farm. Ondieki is a farmer in Narok as he says that “nilikuwa large scale farmer na nilikuwa na 5000 acres shamba ya ngano, and 10,000 acres ranch. I was reduced to a pauper in one day” (I

was a large scale farmer with 5000 acres of wheat farm and 10,000 acres ranch. I was reduced to a pauper in a day).

Olexanda is vying for Member of Parliament post. He therefore urges people to vote for him and threatens all immigrants who have not been voting for him in past elections to relocate to places they came from. Later that day, violence erupts with youths targeting the non-Maasai people as captured in the following exchange at the beginning of the trial:

Kiswahili

Jaji: Olexanda Josephat, unashtakiwa kwamba mnamo tarehe ishirini mwezi uliopita mwaka huu ulichochea watu kupigana na kaharibu mali na hata kupotesa maisha. Unakubali au unakataa

Olexenda: Nakataa, kama walichocheka, hiyo ni mambo ingine

Jaji: Kiongozi wa mashtaka unaweza endelea na kesi

Kiongozi: Mheshimiwa, upande wa mashtaka una shahidi watatu.

Mheshimiwa, mshitakiwa akiwa anawaania kiti cha ubunge Narok na akiwa katika Narok stadium kwa mkutano wa kisiasa, aliweza kutoa hotuba ya uchochesi. Alisema kwamba jamii ambayo sio ya Narok, kama hawatampigia kura round hii wafurushwe. Halafu akawaambia vijana wawafurushe na wapigwe na kwamba wenye mashamba, vijana wachukue. Hili tukio lilifanya mali iharibiwe na hata watu kufurushwa.

English Translation

Judge: Olexanda Josephat, you are accused that on the 21st of last month this year, you incited people to fight and even destroy property in Narok. Guilty or not guilty?

Olexenda: Not guilty, if they were incited, that is another issue.

Judge: Prosecutor proceed with the case.

Prosecutor: Your honour, the prosecution has three witnesses who are before the court. Your honour, the accused who was vying for a Member of Parliament position while in a meeting held at Narok stadium incited and threatened immigrants that if they will not vote for him this time, they will be evicted. He also told the youth to take all farm land under the ownership of immigrant individuals. This led to a lot of havoc as property and lives were lost.

The violence and chaos in this episode paint a picture of a beastly humanity willing to do anything for selfish gains. It is established that the youth chopped off cows' flesh

while the animals were still alive. Such acts demonstrate how humanity had degenerated in the wake of irrationality and selfishness. Following the above, Olexanda is arrested and arraigned in court for mobilising people to evict others who were not members of his community. He vehemently denies having initiated the evictions. In fact, he says that “wenyewe walichocheka” (they (immigrants) incited themselves).

The prosecutor and later the judge take time to explain to Olexanda that he had violated the law and that people need to embrace brotherhood for peaceful coexistence. Upon this, Olexanda shows his ignorance as he says that:

Kiswahili

Olexanda: Mimi nilikuwa tu natafuta kura vile nimefanya hiyo miaka yote na sijapata lakini round hii nikaona niongezee chumvi ya watu waheme ndio kura iniangukie. Lakini pia naona media walinimisquote. Hata mimi nilipigwa picha upande hii ambayo ilikuwa imeenda na upepo ndio wakaweka kwa gazeti headline ili nipoteze kura. Hao ndio watu hawataki nipate ubunge. Mimi nasema sorry, sorry sana juu nilipitisha kiwango ya maneno kwa kusema watu wahame na nasema wasihame lakini wanipatie kura.

Kiongozi wa Mashtaka: Hii iwe funzo kwa wengine tukienda election ya 2013 ili wasirudie makosa kama haya.

English Translation

Olexanda: I was only looking for more votes the way I have done in the past. However, this time I decided to add “salt” to the campaigns to get votes. But I also feel media misquoted me....They do not want me to be elected Member of Parliament. I am so sorry because I went too far in my speech. I call on all immigrants not to move but please give me your votes.

Prosecutor: This should serve as a lesson to others as we near 2013 elections to deter such occurrences.

Though there are hilarious snip chats in the trial and that the viewer knows that it is just acting, the end result of advocating for peace is highlighted. The camera focuses on Olexanda as he struggles to show how he sought for votes through incitement.

Therefore the trial in the above episode demonstrate the efforts put in place to address issues of peaceful existence and unity among the diverse ethnic communities that make up Kenya. This is well captured when the judge says that:

Kiswahili

Sheria iliyokushtaki iko katika the Kenya national cohesion and integration act 2008 section 13 inahusika na kesi hii yako vile vile mambo kama hate speech, incitement etc. Inatakikana ujue ni hatia kutoa matamshi ya uchochesi ambapo watu wanaleta vita na kuacha wenzao maskini, bila chakula, na bila nyumba. Kulingana na kesi hii jua kwamba hii nchi ni yetu na kila mtu anatakikana kuishi popote juu hakuna sheria inayowazuia. Kupiga kura pia ni hiari ya mtu na huwezi lazimisha watu. Hii ni uchochezi. Ndio maana watu walifanya iliyotokea na hiyo hasara haitarudishwa na maisha ya watu hayatarudishwa. Korti hii imekupata na hatia na imekufunga kifungo cha miezi tatu. Inatakina watu wapendane, wasemehane na kuishi pamoja kama watu wa jamii moja. Hii kuchochea ni mbaya. Kuwa na upendo na ukisimama utapata hicho kiti. Tuishi kama wakenya na juu tunaelekea uchaguzi wa 2013, kaa huko ndani ndio hayo maneno yako isipate watu.

English Translation

The law that has found you guilty is the Kenya national cohesion and integration act 2008 section 13. This law is also applicable to other issues such as hate speech, incitement etc. It is wrong to incite people to cause violence and destroy property leaving people poor and without food. In relation to this case, this country belongs to all of us and one is allowed to live anywhere he feels like and also that voting is ones' choice and you should not force people. This court has found you guilty and sentences you to three months imprisonment. There is need for people to love one another, forgive and live together as one family. Use words of love and you will be elected. Let us live together as Kenyans and since we are nearing the 2013 elections, it is good to be jailed to stop you from inciting others.

The judgement above reinforces that unity in Kenya is a collective undertaking by all Kenyans and not the prerogative of the government to monitor what people do and say. Ondieki's and Olexanda's ethnic inclinations in *Hate Speech* and *Inflammatory publications* impede initiatives for national unity. The political history in Kenya demonstrates that during the electioneering periods such as 1997, 2002, and 2007/2008, ethnic tension contributed a lot to the civilian clashes witnessed at the

time. Of the years mentioned above, the 2007/2008 violence was the worst experienced in Kenya's history as it was countrywide.

The third episode analysed under ethnicity is *Vijana* (youth). This episode is set in Karagita in Naivasha in the wake of 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya. The episode features Makokha, Olexanda, and Susan. Before the trial, there is a replay of what had happened in Karagita. The replay contextualises the judicial proceedings to the actual crime committed by the accused. In this episode, Makokha and Olexanda are accused of a number of crimes one of them being rape and forceful eviction of immigrant communities from Naivasha. Naivasha is famous for its horticulture industry as such most employees in the horticulture firms are drawn from different regions in Kenya. Prior to the violence witnessed, a local politician had urged members of his ethnic group to evict immigrants because they did not vote for him and that they should go back to their ancestral homes.

One of the immigrants is Susan and her family who are attacked in their house, beaten and she is raped by seven men in the presence of her husband and children. Susan amid sobs says that:

Kiswahili

Hiyo siku kulikuwa na mkutano Karagita ambapo wanasiasa walichochea watu wasio wakabila yao kuhama na kufurushwa. Mimi nilikuwa nyumbani kwangu na bwana na watoto wangu. Nilisikia kelele halafu baadaye mlango wa nyumba yetu ulivunjwa na watu wakaingia ndani kwa fujo. Halafu hao watu wakachapa bwanangu na watoto wangu na kuamrisha kupiga magoti. Mimi nilibebwa juu kwa juu hadi bedroom na kuvuliwa nguo halafu nikabagwa na watu saba mmoja baada ya mwingine mbele ya watoto na bwanangu.

English Translation

There was a political meeting at Karagita where politicians incited people to evict and beat up people who do not belong to their ethnic community. I was in the house with my husband and children when I heard some unusual noise,

next my house was broken into. Those people beat up my husband and children and were later forced to kneel down. I was carried to the bedroom and forcefully undressed and was raped by seven men one after the other in the presence of my husband and children.

The excerpt above shows why Makokha and Olexanda are in court. They are accused of causing violence and raping Susan. Ordinarily, rape is seen as the forceful exercise of sexual acts without the consent of the victim and is mostly carried out by men over women. Beyond this, rape in this chapter is read as an expression of power and domination over a subject that is inferior. The social context within which rape takes place in the episode is unique. It is not only a matter of exercising power but also a tool, just like a gun, for violence aimed at intimidating, dehumanizing and to teach one a lesson.

In this episode, I read Susan's family as powerless in the face of the oppressor and Susan as the means through which the powerful and dominant gains entry into her household. This is because rape happens in situations where the perpetrator is dominant hence powerful whereas the victim is powerless. By the rapist forcing himself on Susan, he is exercising his power over a weaker entity (Susan). As an immigrant family, Susan's existence within the host community puts them at the margin hence powerless. In addition, rape in this episode has wider societal implications than just men forcing themselves on women and Susan in particular. The violence and force meted on Susan and the family cannot be equated to simply men forcing themselves on Susan. Susan Brownmiller in *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape* argues that the:

[B]ody of a raped woman becomes a ceremonial battlefield, a parade ground for the victor's trooping of the colours. The act that is played out upon her is a message passed out between men -vivid proof for one and loss and defeat for the other (14).

In light of the above, I point out that rape in this instance is used as a weapon against the immigrants, communicating that they should go to their “rightful” place and also used to scare away others who have plans of settling there. Susan’s body is violated, humiliated and disrespected as it is reduced to a battlefield as observed by Brownmiller above, upon which power is tested, exercised and realised.

On rape as a weapon, Brownmiller argues that the penis is an appropriate weapon in warfare since rape does not occur naturally but it is a well calculated action by the doer on a weaker victim. In addition, rape has lifelong impact on the victims as it becomes a destructive and violent weapon. Rape goes beyond physical and psychological violence to being a stigma that marks the victim’s life thereafter. Another impact of rape is seen in the destruction of families, societies and the individual victim. The destruction of families in turn has serious repercussions on the nation since the nation needs the family for its sustainability as already discussed in chapter two of this study. This view is based on the fact that in most African communities, women are custodians and transmitters of culture and symbols of a nation. Yet, it is the same source of life and transmitter of culture that is destroyed. For instance, in societies that have had civil war such as South Sudan, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, women who were raped were deserted by their husbands and stigmatized by their immediate families and society at large. In this way, the family as the basic unit of society is destroyed by rape.

The performance of *Vijana* demonstrate that the politicians’ exploitation of their ethnic communities to carry out inhumane acts is a performance of ethno-political “duty” in safeguarding their ethnic resources. This is seen when Makokha and

Olexanda seize the opportunity necessitated by post-election violence to rape their neighbour. Makokha and Olexanda's action is an indication of moral degeneration characterising despicable human acts in the absence of reason. If it is just a matter of rape, then any other woman regardless of ethnic affiliation would have been raped. However, Susan is raped because she is the 'other', the marginal at best and an intruder into a space that she is not supposed to occupy.

During the court proceedings, Olexanda (the second accused) is visibly ashamed of his actions. His eyes appear glassy with films of tears as he turns the other way to avoid facing Susan. This is because Susan's narration of the rape ordeal is moving and shows how the entire ordeal is dehumanising as captured in the dialogue below:

Kiswahili

Susan: ...mheshimiwa hawa watu walinirape mmoja baada ya mwingine (*Susan Analia kwa uchungu*) Olexanda na Makokha wanapinduka kuangalia ukuta wanavyo ona Susan akilia. Wote wawili pia wanaanza kulia. Olexanda anafunika uso wake na shuka.

Jaji: Mama jikaze uendeleo (Kiongozi wa mashitaka subiri). (*Anaongelesha Makokha na Olexanda*) nyinyi mnafanya nini? Kwa nini mnaangalia kando? Acha upuuzi.

Kiongozi wa Mashtaka: Naomba wale wote walioko hapa kuondoka kortini tafadhali.

English Translation

Susan:...your honour, these people raped me one after the other in the presence of my husband and children (*cries painfully as she is unable to speak*). Both Olexanda and Makokha turns to face the wall as they are embarrassed to face Susan as she cries. Olexanda covers his face with a Maasai sheet he was putting on. Both Makokha and Olexanda starts to cry too out of shame.

Judge: Mum, please try to continue. (*To the prosecutor, hold on please, to Olexanda and Makokha: what are you two doing? Why are you facing the wall? Stop the nonsense!*)

Prosecutor: I ask that all those in the court to leave. (This is to allow Susan to talk).

Makokha's and Olexanda's discomfiture in the above episode demonstrates the guilty and shame resulting from their actions. The realization of their wrongdoing is an eye opener to the consequences of their actions.

Susan's ability to narrate the rape ordeal is significant in this episode. In most cases, victims of rape withdraw into silence because of the trauma and the ruthless nature of the manner in which rape occurs. In addition, the stigma associated with sexuality in general and rape in particular especially in Africa force victims into obscurity. However, instead of the rape ordeal silencing Susan, it instead gives her a voice within the rape margin that the rapist has forced her into. In narrating the ordeal, Susan is transformed into a voice for all those women assaulted and raped during civil violence in post-colonial societies. In societies that have witnessed civil war, rape as a means of suppressing and dealing with political opposition go unreported as it is viewed apolitical in nature and again because society does not allow people to talk about it.

In tracing the root of violence in post-colonial societies, Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, observes that the type of violence in most post-independence African states has its pedigrees in imperialism. According to him, post-colonial societies have failed in their obligation because they mimic the coloniser since the post-colony simply adopted the same strategies used by the 'master' to subdue the subject (31). On her part, Ines Mzali observes that "it would not be wrong to read post-independence violence as the betrayal of the political class and the failure of the post-colonial state, yet it would also be a mistake not to read further into the novels' attempts to establish a clear, if not direct, link with the colonial era and current global economic and political power" (48). Fanon and Mzali's argument is significant when

read against the youth who are used by politicians to subordinate and subdue others considered “outsiders”.

In addition, Susan’s rape can be read as an interrogation of the construction of masculinity in the society. The performance of masculinity whether in the family or at the nation-state is similar since, in most cases, it is realized through totalitarianism and sometimes through violence. Both the leadership of nation-states and the family is a domain for men where masculinity is pegged on one’s ability to be strong, provide, protect ones dependents especially one’s wife among other things. However, the episode seems to deconstruct this view as we see the inability of Susan’s husband to protect her as he is even beaten in the presence of the subordinate members of his family. In this way, rape has been used to emasculate and feminize Susan’s husband. Just like women who are forced into silence in the presence of the more powerful person, Susan’s husband is forced into the very silence that has defined women in contemporary society. He is therefore powerless and submits to what the rapists demand of him in his own house. In this way, Susan’s husband, like his own wife, is relegated to the powerless and subordinate position in the face of the rapist.

Based on the above discussion, it is germane to point out that *Inflammatory Publications, Hate Speech* and *Vijana* point to the fact that the animosity perpetuated by ethnicity is a threat to peaceful coexistence of diverse communities in Kenya. The episodes analyzed above indicts the political elites and their cronies for perpetrating ethnicity for selfish gains. However, I also make haste to point out that identifying with ones’ ethnic group is not a problem in itself since it gives one a sense of belonging. It only becomes a problem when it is exploited for selfish gains.

The characters' actions in the above episodes are pointers to the unaddressed social injustices in Kenya emanating from a culture of a political system not willing to engage citizens. Therefore, there is need to address discrepancies that mark access to national resources by the different ethnic groups in post- independence Kenya. This is informed by the fact that the reason as to why politicians fall back to their ethnic communities for support results from biased distribution of national resources. As such, the weight of a history of inequality as observed above and its impact become overriding parameters which must be unmasked as advocated for in *Vioja Mahakamani*.

The reading of Olexanda, Makokha and Ondieki should, therefore, be contextualised within the history informing their behaviour. For instance, the Maasai community that Olexanda belongs to is considered as one of the 'marginalised' groups and therefore his behaviour needs an understanding of Olexanda as a construction and product of this community in relation to his perception of other communities living in their midst. Commenting on identity, Charles Taylor (1989) observes that 'the full definition of someone's identity involves not only his stand on moral and spiritual matters but also some reference to a defining community' (36). As such, the characters' behavior and actions in *Vioja Mahakamani* cannot be severed from their communities of origin. Taylor's observation underscores the link between an individual and the others that constitute a community and that the sum total of behaviour is what others have created to make a whole. It is this interrelationship with the community other that determines an individual's sense of belonging and identity in the society.

The inability of Ondieki, Makokha and Olexanda to let go of their ethnic prejudices is embraced in the fact that at independence, perceived injustices were never acknowledged and addressed. In this regard, reading Ondieki, Makokha and Olexanda as villains devoid of a history informing their actions would be subjective. This is because their behaviour arises from what they see as the government's failure to deal with injustices meted on their ethnic communities. However, the characters' ruthless manner of addressing issues of relocation and belonging is strongly discouraged by the courts through reference to law that allows people to stay anywhere in present day Kenya.

Ondieki, Makokha and Olexanda are led through the law in an attempt to help them understand that what they did was wrong. At the end of each episode, the accused persons are apologetic and beg for leniency. Their remorsefulness images a vision for a new Kenya that embraces peaceful co-existence in diversity. According to Raphael David Daiches, the law seems to suggest that "if each individual is allowed to act on the basis of what he or she thinks is right, then the system becomes unworkable" (11).

Related to ethnicity as discussed above is the issue of identity and the question of belonging in contemporary Kenya. In envisioning the common identity as people of Kenya, there is a likelihood of emergence of different views that shape and constitute this identity. This is because different people perform and produce effects that combine to create the self that can fit into the acceptable social fiber thereby allowing them to have a belonging. On identity, Jendele Hungbo observes that "selfhood itself is socially and discursively constructed as the individual self cannot be properly understood outside the socio-political landscape that gives rise to different forms of debates and contestations for space" (38).

The performance of the lived social experiences in *Vioja Mahakamani* provides a vent through which different subjectivities and stereotypes are defined with an aim of transforming them. In exploiting particular ethnicities, *Vioja Mahakamani*'s efforts at change, addresses socio-cultural norms and practices at the social system level. Since the judge's verdict at the end of each episode seeks to correct behaviour, the text interrogates societal beliefs by demonstrating that each individual can have a hand in bringing about change. Commenting on identity, Charles Taylor argues that:

My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand (27).

The excerpt above highlights the fact that identity is created by parameters that determine what the social milieu makes available as standards that define an individual. This is because knowing oneself orients one into a "moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary" (Taylor 28).

Vioja Mahakamani endeavours to create a shared national identity for socio-political and economic development. This is because in order to have a stable political and economic growth, peaceful co-existence and unity must prevail. Though the judge bases her verdict on Kenyan law, she goes ahead to explain that it was wrong to turn against one's neighbours and hack them to death and destroy property.

The judge's moral dialogue with the wrongdoer and the society at large when she says "na hii iwe funzo kwenu na wengine ambao wana tabia kama yenu kukoma kutenda

mambo kama haya” (this should be a lesson to you and others who have similar behaviour to stop engaging in the same) is significant in discouraging unbecoming behaviour that threatens national cohesion. It is instructive, therefore to point out that *Vioja Mahakamani* employs both the official national narrative of peace and traditional morality to promote calls for a unified nation in which Kenyans can proudly identify with one another as members of a national family. Mariaye Marie Hyleen Sandra observes that “morality is used in many different ways to refer to a person’s or society’s view of what is perceived to be the highest good” (22). Accordingly, Aiken Lewis observes that “morality is an evaluation of what is good and entails praising what is good and condemning what is bad” (5).

On national unity, George Odera Outa succinctly points out that popular theatre presents “the possibility that Kenyan ethnic communities can actually unite into an important strategic whole” (60). Though unity calls in Kenya have proved a difficult task, *Vioja Mahakamani* has managed in assuming a stake in amplifying the significance of unity and peaceful coexistence of people. In this way, negative ethnicity and animosity is shunned. However, I make haste to point out that since the the selected texts use KBC television theatre as a mirror through which contemporary realities in Kenya are performed, *Vioja Mahakamani* not only advances campaigns for Kenya’s national unity but also interrogates the need to acknowledge national betrayals and failures that inform realities in post-independence Kenya. This approach therefore calls for an understanding of both material and historical realities that inform experiences in post-colonial societies in general.

3.3 Interrogating Corruption and Social Classes through *Vioja Mahakamani*

Most African countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Kenya has struggled with the fight against corruption and the bridging of the different social classes. However, efforts put in such fights by the government have not yielded much fruit. It is therefore from such a background that *Vioja Mahakamani* joins the official discourses and initiatives put in place to address corruption and social classes as a social reality in Kenya. To illustrate corruption, I examine the episode *Akala Awards*. The performance of *Akala Awards* is anchored on the Akala Awards function where a number of media houses and personalities are to be acknowledged for their excellent performance. In attendance at this function is Ondieki Nyuka Kwota who is the owner of Kwota Media Services, Cecilia Waitherero- CEO National Film Bureau (NFB), Tobias Lichodi Kokoto-Employee of National Film Bureau, and Makokha- one of the best comedians who is optimistic to win some of the awards at this function.

The performance shows that Ondieki had approached Cecilia Waitherero, the CEO of National Film Bureau (NFB), a body mandated to recognise excellence in media performance and talents with a 5 million bribe to have all awards given to his media house (Kwota media services). Cecilia accepts the bribe promising to give all awards to Kwota Media Services. To disguise these awards to appear genuine, only one person apart from the Kwota media services is awarded. The motive behind Ondieki's bribe is to entice all those with advertisements to take them to Kwota Media Services because it will be "recognised" as the best after the awards. Out of the KES 5 million total bribe given, KES1.5 million is given to Kokoto to influence him in endorsing the awards as genuine. However, Kokoto refuses the bribe and reports the matter to Kenya Anti-corruption Commission (KACC). KACC launches investigations into the

matter where they find Ondieki and Cecilia to have engaged in corrupt dealings. This is the reason the duo are arraigned in court. The judge opens the trial by reading the charges to the accused as follows:

Kiswahili

Jaji: Ondieki Nyuka Kwota na Cecilia Waitherero mnashtakiwa kwamba mnamo tarehe ishirini na tano mwezi wa tisa mwaka huu, mshtakiwa wa kwanza akiwa mkurugenzi wa Kwota Media services na mshtakiwa wa pili akiwa mkurugenzi wa National Film Bureau, mlishirikiana nyote wawili kusema kwamba kituo cha Kwota TV kilikuwa kimeshinda Akala Awards zote. Mmekuwa mkifikishwa mbele ya korti hii mkikana mashtaka. Je leo mnakubali ama mnakana?

Ondieki: Nakataa.

Cecilia: Nakataa.

Jaji: Kiongozi wa mashtaka endelea na kesi.

Kiongozi wa Mashtaka: Mheshimiwa tunao mashahidi wa nne na pia exhibit ya cheque iliyokwa imeandikwa ili kuinfluence judges kusema kwamba Kwota TV ilikuwa imeshinda awards zote ndio watu walio na matangazo wapeleke Kwota TV.

English Translation

Judge: Ondieki Nyuka Kwota and Cecilia Waitherero you are hereby accused that on the 25th of September this year, the first accused being the proprietor of Kwota Media services and the second accused being the Director of National Film Bureau, you colluded that Kwota TV had won all the Akala Awards. You have been coming to court and denying the charges. Are you guilty or not guilty?

Ondieki: Not guilty your honor.

Cecilia: Not guilty your honor.

Judge: The prosecutor is asked to proceed with the case.

Prosecutor: Your honor, we have four witnesses and a cheque that had been written as a bribe as an exhibit. This bribe was to influence all those with advertisements to take to Ondieki Media.

The *Akala awards* episode mirrors the magnitude of moral and political disintegration. Corruption in Kenya has been and still is a widespread phenomenon occurring on a daily basis. In the *Akala Awards* episode, both the rich and the poor give and receive bribes. Commenting on the extent of corruption in Kenya, Donald Mogeni observes that “corruption has grown roots in society and that it has become

endemic” (1) thereby ensnaring the entire populace regardless of age or status. People holding high positions whether in corporate world or governance lack integrity that would otherwise define a morally upright society.

The entrenchment of corruption in different sectors in Kenya is a pointer to a collapse of morality and a failure of governance. *Vioja Mahakamani* has been used artistically as a platform to criticise the rife and effects of corruption in Kenya. The fact that genuine and deserving people are not recognised for their performance has its ripple effect to individuals’ performance hence killing morale. Makokha’s response that Ondieki Nyuka Kwota and his ilk are selfish to an extent of not allowing other people feel the way they (those who win) do foregrounds the rampant corruption in a number of key institutions in Kenya. At this point Makokha lays blame squarely on all those involved in corrupt ways and on the society hence allowing the viewer to relate what happens in the episode to contemporary realities in Kenya. This episode shows how the rich manipulate institutions created by government such as NFB to remain at the aristocratic pedestal in total disregard of the effects of the same.

Akala Awards is performed against the existence and establishment of an Anti-Corruption Commission that is mandated to address and fight corruption in Kenya. Kokoto informs the court that when he was offered his part of the bribe amounting to Ksh1.5 million, he declined and reported the matter to Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission hereafter referred to as KACC. Consider the following dialogue:

Kiswahili

Kokoto: ...CEO wa Kwota Media Services alikuja National film Bureau (NFB) akaongea na Cecilia halafu akampa shilingi milioni tano ili Akala awards zote zipewe Kwota media. Halafu NFB CEO alinipa 1.5 milioni lakini sikuona ikiwa jambo nzuri na ndio maana nilienda kwa PLO juu hiyo ilikuwa kuibia wananchi indirectly.

Kingozi wa Mashtaka: PLO ni nani?

Kokoto: Huyu mkubwa wa KACC. Nilienda huko na kuripoti yaliyojiri juu hiyo ilikuwa conspiracy kuinfluence watu walete matangazo na mambo mengine kwa Kwota media services.

English Translation

Kokoto: ...The Kwota Media Services CEO came to National film Bureau (NFB) and talked to the CEO-Cecilia Waitherero. He then gave her a bribe of five million shillings to ensure that all the Akala Awards are given to Kwota Media. Out of the total bribe amount, the NFB CEO gave me 1.5 millionas my bribe. However, I refused because it was not right. I therefore reported the matter to PLO as this amounted to stealing from citizens indirectly.

Prosecutor: Who is PLO?

Kokoto: He is the KACC Chair. I went there and reported as this was conspiracy to influence those with advertisements to take them to Kwota Media Services.

What we see in the quotation above is Kokoto's conviction that taking bribes is immoral as it indirectly robs the entire population. The portraiture of Kokoto in this performance is of a person from the lower class. For instance, the camera zooms over Kokoto slowly and lastly focuses on his outfit which is likely to place him in the category of the poor. The coat and trouser are oversize and of poor quality. His social status in terms of material wellbeing is likely to make him susceptible to accepting the bribe. Therefore, his refusal to take the bribe demonstrates the existence of the morally upright individuals in contemporary Kenya.

The presence of KACC alluded to in the episode intimates the existence of corruption in Kenya. KACC was established in 1997 to investigate and recommend prosecution of corruption cases in Kenya. KACC was rebranded in 2011 and changed its name to Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC). However, it is interesting that despite the establishment of this commission to fight and curb corruption, the vice has flourished cutting across different sectors and social classes. Though KACC was

mandated to fight corruption, it appears the commission is toothless in terms of final prosecution of corruption cases.

One of the setbacks that KACC faces in dealing with corruption lies in the fact that it is only tasked with investigating and providing evidence of corruption cases but not prosecuting as this is the work of the public prosecutor. As such, the presence of bureaucratic chains in fighting corruption has led to the growth of the vice. This episode underlines that fighting corruption is a collective responsibility that requires an informed citizenry who are empowered to identify and report instances of corruption. The fact that Kokoto, who belongs to the lower class, rejects the bribe is pivotal in interrogating the practice of corruption.

The evidence provided before the court details how the Kwota Media Services bribed the National Film Bureau in order to get all the Akala awards. This shows how corruption has become a normal day occurrence since those involved are not ashamed of their behaviour. In fact, Makokha's use of the collective pronoun "hamtaki watu wasikie vile nyinyi mnasikianga mkishinda awards" which translates to "you (plural) do not want other people to feel the way you do when you win awards" is a lamentation and at the same time an urgent call on the society to fight corruption. In this way, Ondieki's corrupt acts is symbolic of societal corruption because of the society's complacency in the face of moral decadence.

Makokha's utterance is contradictory in terms of subject congruence because it is Ondieki who had bribed yet Makokha refers to him in plural form. This sucks the entire society into the vice of corruption. Makokha's claim is meant to influence the viewer's perception of corruption not as a crime benefiting or affecting the individual

but that it impacts the entire society. Similarly, the same utterance insinuates that there are others who are corrupt just as Ondieki. As such, if corruption is allowed to flourish unabated, it will automatically lead to a retarded economic growth with the poor such as Makokha bearing the brunt.

Taking and receiving bribes hints at excessive accumulation of material wealth and a thirst for more if juxtaposed with Ondieki in this episode. This is because corruption encourages tendencies of excessive materialism, quick rise to affluence and glorification of ill-gotten wealth at the expense of honest and hard work as seen in Makokha's bitter complain about what Ondieki had done. In this episode, the excesses of corruption are captured in the body size of the individual characters. Overweight in this case has been used as a metonymy of corruption. For instance, during cross examination, Ondieki says:

Kiswahili

Ondieki: Pole. Punguza unono utoshane na Manywele ili pia wewe ushinde na pia itakusaidia kupunguza ujinga na uzito.

Makokha: Pole ni wewe. Unono gani? Wewe ndiye mnono na mzito.

English Translation

Ondieki: Sorry. Reduce your body size to be slim as Manywele to win. It will also help you reduce weight and foolishness.

Makokha: You are the one who should be sorry. Which fat? You are the one who is heavy (Overweight).

The excerpt above places emphasis on body weight, especially being overweight. Though humorously put, the utterance is metaphorical. In the Kenyan urban popular discourse, "mzito" (the heavier one) refers to a rich and influential person. In this quotation, Makokha rejects the reference and throws it back to Ondieki as the heavier one. Makokha seems to suggest that Ondieki as a rich and powerful person deserves the label "mzito". Ondieki's physical appearance shows him as having a potbelly and

some extra flesh. I read the potbelly and excessive flesh as a result of excessive accumulation of material wealth. It is therefore this extra body flesh that I relate to Ondieki's corrupt nature in terms of excesses.

In most societies and literary texts, the image of eating has been used to refer to corruption which has its origin in the formation of post-independence states that envisaged a unified nation based on equal distribution of the national cake (resources). A flashback into the early promises at independence by the African founding national fathers such as Mzee Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Nelson Mandela of South Africa was based on equal resource sharing commonly referred to as fruits of independence. However, most of the promises made at independence were never fulfilled as the fruits were only "eaten" by those close to the political leadership. This meant that those in power continued to "eat" while those secluded from the national share were left out salivating and yearning for their share of the national cake. This could possibly explain why majority of the population in post-independence Kenya is enmeshed in the unstoppable rush to accumulate and "eat" in total disregard of the means used to acquire the same. To this end, the formation of KACC was premised on the lack of integrity and ethics that has led to a higher degree of corruption.

Ondieki is used symbolically to highlight how corruption is used by those with material power to get services fraudulently. Being a media entrepreneur, Ondieki is rich, however, he seems to have a thirst for extreme accumulation of wealth through unconventional means. Ondieki's behaviour can at best be comparable to what Franz Fanon writes in *The Wretched of the Earth* that the national bourgeoisie "has done nothing else but prolong the heritage of the colonial economy, thinking and

institutions” (120) and in so doing, perpetuate the class strata in society. I read Makokha as the representation of the hard working and disillusioned poor who cannot raise huge amounts of money to compromise institutions such as NFB that is mandated to ensure sobriety and genuineness in recognising hard work. The *Akala Awards* exposes bribery and corruption as a setback in development. Therefore, NFB is a microcosm of other institutions in Kenya that perform dismally due to corruption.

Akala Awards underscores the need for corrupt individuals such as Ondieki and Waitherero to face justice regardless of their social standing. This is only realisable if there are incorruptible people such as Kokoto who are determined to earn their living in an honest manner. The fight against corruption should not only be left to the institutions mandated with the task but it should be a collective responsibility by all people. It is also worth noting that it is the rich who bribe in this episode. One would expect that the poor stand a higher chance of bribing to get their way up the social ladder which is contrary in this episode. The impact of corruption on the society is a widening gap between the rich and poor with no feasible attempts of bridging the same.

It was also established that Ondieki does not only bribe but he is also morally corrupt. For instance, most of the traditional African moral code dictates that matters to do with intimacy are not addressed in public. However, in this episode, Ondieki romantically kisses Cecilia Waitherero as a show of their love right in court. Ondieki is advanced in age and he is therefore expected to act with decorum, restraint and discipline yet he turns out to be an embodiment of greed, dishonesty and sensual indiscretion characteristic of teenage romance. Ondieki tells the judge that he should not be referred to as an old man since he is young and that life begins at forty years.

Ondieki is not only an epitome of corruption but also a representation of old rich men who buy romance. In this way, the similarity between Ondieki's personal eroded moralities with corruption at national level is highlighted. At this point, the court not only deals with cases about the violation of law but also issues of propriety and morality that mark daily experiences in contemporary Kenya. Ondieki's romantic behaviour is used to show the magnitude of moral and social erosion in Kenya.

In this way, the court positions itself as an arbitrator thus helping the viewer to relate with ethical practices that society holds in high esteem. This in turn invites the viewer into the moral dialogue beyond the court performance. The question that arises from this episode is: why is *Vioja Mahakamani* doing what official institutions such as the court and KACC are supposed to do? The answer to this question rests in the nature of *Vioja Mahakamani* as a text.

In addition, the court as an institution is not easily accessed by most of the population in Kenya, unlike *Vioja Mahakamani*, which one can watch within the comfort and confines of ones' sitting room provided one has a television set. Therefore, *Vioja Mahakamani* uses the court setting and the law to gain authority in addressing behaviours that taint the expected moral conduct of the citizenry. More so, the court or even KACC treats their operations in a serious and structured manner hence less likely to appeal to the public, a function that *Vioja Mahakamani* handles adequately through humor. In this regard, *Vioja Mahakamani* as a popular cultural product appropriates mainstream institutions and makes them more readily available and consumable by the general public.

The existence of social classes has been a problem that most contemporary societies grapple with. Social classes is explicated in the study through the analysis of *Siku ya kimataifa ya mtoto Mwafrika* (*The international day of an African child*), and *Marehemu Ocholla* (the late Ocholla). *Siku ya kimataifa ya mtoto Mwafrika* is set on the eve of the day when the world is to celebrate the African child. In this episode, we have the street children one of them called Eddie Wambua, Ondieki Nyuka Kwota-the rich man whose car is vandalized by street children; Makokha as the owner of the auto garage where the street children sell the stolen car parts, Kokoto as Makokha's employee and Olexanda as the watchman at the garage. It is alleged that Makokha uses street children to steal car parts in the Central Business District (CBD) which he later buys from them cheaply. On this day, the children had stolen a side mirror from Ondieki's car. The children are apprehended and forced to take Ondieki and the police man to where they sell the stolen items.

The children take Ondieki and the police man to Makokha's garage in Grogan along Kirinyaga Road in present day Nairobi, a place with many auto garages. Based on this, Makokha and Kokoto are arrested and taken to court. Ondieki, the police man, Olexanda and Eddie Wambua are used as prosecution witnesses. The judge reads the charges to Makokha and Kokoto as shown in the dialogue below:

Kiswahili

Jaji: Alphonse Makacha Makokha na Tobias Kokoto, mnashitakiwa ya kwamba, mnamo tarehe kumi na tano mwezi huu, mlitumia watoto wa kuranda randa mjini kuiba viungo vya magari. Mmekuwa mkifikishwa mbele ya korti hii mkikana mashitaka, leo mnakubali ama mnakataa?

Makokha: Tunakataa.

Jaji: Kiongozi wa mashitaka ukiwa na mashihidi waweza kuwaleta.

English translation

Judge: Alphonse Makacha Makokha and Tobias Kokoto Lichodi you are accused that on the 15th of this month you used street children to steal car parts. Guilty or not guilty?

Makokha: Not guilty.

Judge: (To prosecutor) continue with the case and if you have witnesses in the court they may be called upon to proceed with evidence.

Ondieki is the first witness to take to the witness stand. He elaborately introduces himself with a lot of emphasis placed on each name as Gideon Ondieki Nyuka Kwota Oloba man Kidi. He crowns his introduction by bragging that he is a successful business man who owns Kwota Enterprises, Kwota Bus Company, and that he has over seven companies to his name. He also informs the court that he parks his car either at the Anniversary Towers where he has an office or at the CBD. On the day his car side mirror is vandalized, he had parked it in the CBD as he was meeting with his business associates over a cup of tea and it is from here that the side mirror had been taken off.

In this episode, Ondieki comes out as a very rich old man who shows off the power that comes with material wealth. His accent identifies him as somebody from the Luo community. The Luo people occupy Nyanza region along Lake Victoria in contemporary Kenya. In Kenya, Luos are stereotypically viewed as brilliant, proud, arrogant and extravagant people who display their lifestyle through accumulation of luxurious items. Siku ya kimataifa ya mtoto Mwafrika portrays Ondieki as an extravagant and proud man. It is this portrayal of the Luoness in Ondieki that gives him that air of importance as he talks about what he owns as a person.

The depiction of Ondieki as a rich man signifies the social disconnect that exists in contemporary Kenya. His wealth is juxtaposed against poverty as seen in the

existence of street families as portrayed through the children who steal his car's side mirror. Ondieki's emphasis of what he owns and that he was having a cup of tea with his business acquaintances in the CBD symbolically points at a selfish individualistic class society. Ondieki can afford food over a simple chat with his business colleagues when the street children have nothing to eat. In addition, the Anniversary Towers which is situated in the Central Business District is a place where the affluent can afford to rent as compared to Grogan where Makokha has a garage.

Grogan is located in downtown Nairobi along Kirinyaga Road. This area is populated with a number of informal businesses such as sale of motor spare parts and vehicle repair trade, food vending, hawking, and car washing. The services offered in Grogan are cheap in comparison to formal businesses in the Central Business District. Despite the booming business in this area, Grogan appears to have been neglected in terms of development by successive city governments that have been in existence since independence. A case of neglect by county government is seen in the congestion, filth, flowing raw sewer, insecurity and a sense of disorderliness that characterise Grogan. The proximity of Grogan to the CBD and the presence of auto repairs businesses make it a ready market for the car accessories stolen from the CBD.

Therefore, the juxtaposition of the Anniversary Towers and Grogan in *Siku ya kimataifa ya mtoto Mwafrika*, is deliberately used to demarcate and map spaces occupied by different social classes that constitute the urban population. By placing the poor in Grogan, an area with poor sanitation and a high level of petty crime such as pick pocketing and Ondieki in Anniversary Towers, the viewer sees the relationship between the physical location occupied by individual characters and their social status in Kenya's urban landscape. Boneace Chagara observes that the portrayal

of physical locations as a “representation of the alienating model of the urban space in contemporary African cities is indicative of the relationship between the spatial and socio-political/economic spheres” (65). Therefore, juxtaposing the poor against affluence in this episode is a performance of urban realities where the same spatial demarcation marks the deplorable social and economic conditions that the poor grapple with in post-colonial urban cities.

Makokha’s garage and what he buys from the street children is symbolic of the struggle for survival by the poorest population of the urban dwellers. On socio-economic conditions in urban centres and society in general, Tom Odhiambo, avers that “[t]he state of a permanent uncertainty about the future, the improbability of ever getting employment, of ever satisfying one’s immediate needs and of ever planning for the future causes a sense of hopelessness for many young men and women” (147). In considering the characters who are poor in the text against the rich, it is evident that the poor are the majority with few rich. This interrogates the problem and pain of existence in contemporary urban cities in Kenya where on one hand, we have the poor while on the other, people who have more than enough in the character of Ondieki. In this regard, Makokha, Kokoto and the street children are used metaphorically to capture the difficulties faced by city dwellers in an attempt to survive. Ondieki says that the street boys are only given eight hundred Kenyan shillings for the stolen side mirrors when the actual price is twenty six thousand Kenyan shillings. Therefore, *The International Day of the African Child* not only underscores the disillusionment that characterise people’s life in the metropolitan but the episode overtly offers socio-political commentary by interrogating the failures and betrayals of the contemporary Kenyan society.

However, despite Ondieki's emphasis on the actual market price for the side mirrors, the same is not important for the street families. The children are only concerned with satisfying the biting hunger. In this way, the children steal to buy food which is a basic necessity while for Ondieki, a car is a luxury only afforded by few. To this point, I am inclined to point out that *The International Day of the African Child* is not only interrogating the presence of children on the street. The text is an indictment of governance in terms of unbalanced resource distribution that has pushed the poor to the peripheral position in terms of resource distribution and access. In this way, those pushed to the fringes of resource distribution are left with no otherwise to satisfy their daily needs but find alternative means such as stealing.

Therefore the increasing cases of street families, the poor, crime and general moral breakdown in contemporary society, is a consequence of the institutionalized unbalanced distribution of economic resources across board. Tom Odhiambo points out that “ crime and violence...goes beyond mere performance of socio-economic protest by a marginalised group to suggest an attempt by socio-economically deprived and disadvantaged young men (and women) to re-assert themselves within the structures of social and economic privileges in Kenya” (244). The risk that society runs in this scenario is the increased crime and insecurity in the urban cities as witnessed in the courtroom during the performance of this episode.

The depiction of Makokha and Kokoto does not show that they gain a lot from the proceeds of the stolen items. They come out as a poor lot trying to make ends meet and that the presence of street children is a demonstration of the hardships and breakdown of institutions that would have come in to mitigate the situation. This is well captured in the following dialogue:

Kiswahili

Ondieki: ...ni vibaya watu wazima kutumia watoto vibaya. Hata nikiwaona hivi, nasikia vibaya and am actually losing my temperature. Ni vibaya sana haswa tukikaribia kusherehekea siku ya motto mwafrika tarehe kumi na sita mwezi huu.

Jaji: Mshitakiwa wa kwanza, una swali kwa shahidi?

Makokha: Ndio.

Jaji: Uliza.

Makokha: Niliiba kio ya gari lako?

Ondieki: Ndio. Nililetwa kwa karakana yako.

Makokha: I think you are normal. Yes you are normal my friend. Kichwa chako hakipo kizuri.

Jaji: Mshatakiwa wa pili una swali?

Kokoto: Ndio. My brother, kwa nini umewaacha hawa watoto kurandaranda mjini ilihali wengine umewapeleka shuleni?

Ondieki: Sijapeleka wengine shuleni nikaacha wengine. Wako mjini kwa sababu mbalimbali.

Kokoto: si uwaadopt.

Ondieki: Kuadopt is a legal process na ni refu.

Kokoto: Waadopt uongezee kwa wale uko nao wawe kumi na nane.

English Translation

Ondieki: ...It is bad for adults to exploit children. In fact, when I see you I am actually losing my temperature. It is especially bad when we are preparing to celebrate the International day for An African child.

Judge: The first accused, do you have any questions for the witness?

Makokha: Yes. Did I steal your car's side mirror?

Ondieki: Yes. We were brought to your garage by the two boys.

Makokha: I think you are normal. Yes you are normal my friend. Your head is not ok.

Judge: Second accused, do you have questions for the witness?

Kokoto: Yes. My brother, why is it that you have left these children on the streets whereas you have taken others to school?

Ondieki: I have not taken some to school and left others. They are on the streets for different reasons.

Kokoto: Why can't you adopt them?

Ondieki: Adoption is along legal process.

Kokoto: Adopt them and add them to those you have to make eighteen.

In the excerpt above, Ondieki suggests that street families are on the streets for a number of reasons. This is confirmed by one of the boys later when he says that his mother died and therefore cannot take care of himself. Notwithstanding, the excerpt raises pertinent questions about the government's responsibility of taking care of its

people. A government has the responsibility to ensure that basic needs of its people are met, yet this seems not the case. Development of any state is founded on the investment in its young generation. The excerpt is thus satirical of the Kenyan government and society at large. In the above quotation, Ondieki points out that it was unfortunate that exploitation of the children by Makokha happens on the eve of the celebrations to mark the international day of an African child. One wonders what there is to celebrate if the children are struggling to survive in a society that does not care about them.

Eddie Wambua says that if he gets a sponsor, he is ready to go back to school otherwise he will still roam the streets. Though children belong to the marginalised groups in the society, they are used to comment on the state of the society. Inequality in contemporary Kenya is a social concern that cannot easily be erased as it is embedded in people's actions and inactions. The children are used in this episode deliberately to help the viewer enter the two spaces occupied by both the rich and the poor in Kenya's urban geospace.

Before the trial in the court, the two street children are seen at Makokha's garage. They are asked if they have any "bizna" that day. "Bizna" is a slang term referring to business. However, Makokha is annoyed because the children had supposedly sold the items to Mwasi, his competitor in the spare parts market. Makokha beats them and sends them away to come back with wares to sell. The pain inflicted on the children is meant to force them to continue with stealing. This endangers their lives especially in the city where they are considered social delinquents. The violence and pain inflicted by Makokha on the children is symbolic of the hostility that street families encounter in the course of their existence on the streets.

This episode also questions the responsibility of the society in relation to the wellbeing of its individual members as seen in the life of the street families. To the children and the likes of Makokha, surviving in the city without a job, becomes a toll order. However, since they have to survive, they resort to petty crimes such as stealing car parts. Kokoto asks Wambua how long he has been stealing side mirrors. Wambua responds by saying many years. To this response, Kokoto says that Wambua is very experienced than his years. He even points out that their garage in Grogan is not even six years old. This paints the grim picture of life on the streets where its inhabitants are forced into crime to earn a living regardless of their age.

Juxtaposing Wambua, Makokha and Kokoto with Ondieki underlines the socio-economic difficulties and inequalities confronting post-independence Kenyan society. In fact, it is absurd that the populace and vulnerable members of the society such as Wambua suffer amidst plenty under the glare of the state. In this way, the masses in the persona of Wambua and Makokha signify the magnitude of socio-economic gap between the rich and the poor. The text humorously uses the characters' daily experiences in the city to signify the helplessness and disillusionment of the masses in the face of hard economic times. For instance, when Makokha cross examines Ondieki, Makokha appears to have no grasp of the English language. He asks Ondieki as follows:

Kiswahili

Jaji: Mshitakiwa wa kwanza uko na swali kwa shahidi?

Makokha: Ndio mheshimiwa. Kuna mahali mimi nimekuibia gari?

Ondieki: Ndio.

Makokha: Wapi?

Ondieki: Nililetwa kwa garage yako huko Grogan na watoto ambao wewe unatumia.

Makokha: I think you are normal my friend. Kichwa chako sio mzuri.

English Translation

Judge: The first accused, do you have any question to ask the witness?

Makokha: Yes your honour. Is there any time I have stolen your car?

Ondieki: Yes

Makokha: Where?

Ondieki: The children who were caught stealing the side mirror took us to your garage at Grogan.

Makokha: I think you are normal my friend. Your head is not ok (abnormal).

In the quotation above, the last statement by Makokha is paradoxical and hilarious. Richard Gill observes that paradox is “an apparent contradiction which says something strange yet true” (35). Paradox contains self-contradictory elements placed side by side yet having some deeper implications in the context within which it is used. For instance, in the above episode, Makokha says that Ondieki is “normal” and at the same time that Ondieki’s head is not ok (abnormal).

In this context, Makokha’s poor English is humorous but raises questions about the society that he inhabits. Makokha’s statement is insightful in reading society’s insensitivity to the plight of the poor. To this point, we agree with Makokha that Ondieki is normal because of his social standing with more than seven companies to himself. Therefore, in the face of society, Ondieki evinces the qualities of a hardworking African man befitting his current status. In this respect, Ondieki is normal. Society labels individuals as normal depending on what one has and even abnormality is just a label depending on what one does under what circumstances. However, the same statement is satirical. Ondieki’s head is abnormal since in an environment where majority of the population is poor yet one has so much signifies poor and ineffective governance policies. In the courtroom, Ondieki tells the court

and the viewer that he was having breakfast with his business associates yet the children are hungry. Is this not head abnormality that Makokha alludes to?

Therefore, in a society where a number of people are struggling to survive; petty crimes such as stealing and selling car parts will thrive. Unless the gap between the rich and the poor is bridged, then the social maladies afflicting the society will continue thus giving people head sickness that Makokha refers to. When cross examined by the prosecutor, Wambua confirms that their engagement in crime is not exciting. It is established that Makokha does not pay them always and that he even beats them up.

When asked by Kokoto who they sell car parts to, Wambua pointing at Makokha says, “huyo buda wa kitambi”. This is slang for “old man with a potbelly”. This description does not go down well with Makokha who says that “sina kitambi mheshimiwa” (I do not have a potbelly your honour). Though physically Makokha has a potbelly, he is not rich. In this way, Makokha’s potbelly can be interpreted in two ways. One is that Makokha’s belly compared to that of Ondieki is not a sign of wealth as he barely survives thus demystifying the myth of equating the belly to wealth. This could be the reason why he denies having a potbelly. On the other hand, the belly symbolises greed. Makokha is not satisfied with what he earns from his garage but relies on street children to supply him cheap stolen car parts which he sells at high prices. In this way, Makokha’s belly subverts the equation of the belly with success and material endowment but instead uses the belly to underscore the greed and moral deficiency that inform Makokha’s mode of operation in accessing his wares for sale. To this point, the criticism lies in the immoral manner in which material wealth is realised by people such as Makokha.

The next witness in this episode introduces himself as Olexanda Josephat Soldier. The following is what transpires as he is interrogated:

Kiswahili

Olexanda: Naitwa Olexanda Josephat Soldier na nimekuja.

Kiongozi wa Mashitaka: Unatoka kikosi gani cha jeshi?

Olexanda: Mimi sio soldier wa kikosi, ni ya walinda mlango

Kiongozi wa Mashitaka: wewe ni watchman?

Olexanda: Wacha kusema hivyo

Kiongozi wa Mashitaka: Eleza mahakama kilicho tokea tarehe kumi na tano mwezi huu.

Olexanda: Kuna watu walikuja garage: msikari moja, toto mbili na ingine Simjui, wakwaulizia mwenyewe kisha wakaniambia kwamba hao watoto walikuwa wametumiwa vibaya na mwenye hapo kuiba mirror side, eel cap, macho ya gari (Anafunga macho kuashiria ni kitu gani anachoongelea), na signal ya gari. Na sikujua hawa watoto ni wezi juu hao huleta hizo vitu ambavyo huoshwa na hatimaye kuuzwa.

English Translation

Olexanda: My name is Olexanda Josephat Soldier and I have come.

The prosecutor: From which battalion are you from?

Olexanda: I do not belong to a battalion but belong to those that secure the gates.

Prosecutor: So you are a watchman?

Olexanda: Don't say that

Prosecutor: Explain to the court what happened on the fifteenth of this month.

Olexanda: There were people who came to the garage: a policeman, two children and another one I did not know. They then asked for the owner of the garage. They also said that the owner of the garage was exploiting the children by using them to steal motor vehicle parts such as mirror side, eel cap, car eyes (blinks his eyes to demonstrate what car eyes are), and car signal. I didn't know that the car parts they brought to the garage were stolen. Once delivered, the same could be washed nicely and later sold at a higher price than what they were paid by Makokha.

The audio visual version of this excerpt is hilariously presented yet within the humor, the critical socio-political issues that mark experiences in contemporary Kenya are laid bare. First, Olexanda is a watchman but does not want to use the term

watchman as it is degrading. He instead prefers to use “soldier” which is euphemistic hence masking the negative connotations associated with the term watchman.

Olexanda’s embarrassment of his job is illustrative of the kind of work that people decide to do in the face of scarcity of better jobs on one hand and a demanding lifestyle on the other hand. Olexanda’s predicament therefore is symbolic of the dashed dreams of a majority of young people living in urban centres in Kenya. Olexanda can be said to be in the same category of Meja Mwangi’s characters in *Kill me quick*. In this text, Meja and Mwangi move to the city with the hope of getting employment after their studies. However, they realise that getting a decent job in the city is hard to come by. They eventually resort to doing casual labour which is not even enough to cater for their needs. At the end, circumstances force them to engage in criminal activities for bare survival.

In the case of Olexanda, it is even hard to get a decent job since he is illiterate. He struggles to explain in English the car parts that are sold to Makokha as follows “mirror side, eel cap and eyes (sic)”. However, what he wanted to say was side mirror, wheel cap, and head lamps. He is very excited and proud for having spoken in English. English is a language of power and sophistication and by using it; Olexanda feels the importance that comes with it. However, corrupting the very language of power is more than a lack of grounding in the language but a reflection of the unconscious rejection of the same power that is elusive.

After all the presentations in court, the judge finds Makokha and Kototo as having a case to answer. She cites children’s act of 2001 section 127 (1) of the Kenyan law which established that the accused used under age children to engage in crime. She

further points out that this should serve as a lesson to all those exploiting children. They are fined two hundred thousand Kenyan shillings. This startles Makokha who had confused the Kenya Shillings 200,000 for Kenya Shillings 200 which he had in his pocket and ready to pay. When the amount is clarified, Makokha declares that the fine was quite a lot and he instead prefers to be executed to paying the fine. In this regard, Makokha innocently voices the poverty level in the society. To him two hundred thousand shillings is quite an amount to raise by people of his caliber and it is the reason why he prefers execution.

The casting in the episode *The Day of an African Child* is very significant. In post-independence Kenyan social political context, Makokha, Kokoto and Eddie Wambua best fit in the category of what Edward Said refers to as the ‘Other’ because they exist on the margins of society in comparison to Ondieki who has material wealth. Makokha and Kokoto get their daily bread from mechanical repairs by using stolen car parts while Eddie Wambua is a street boy who supplies the duo with the car parts stolen from cars parked at the Central Business District (CBD).

Makokha, Kokoto and Eddie Wambua are used as resourceful tools to voice the socio-political experiences from the position of marginality. This is because, these characters’ social standing depicts them as the “silenced” section of the society thus they are employed to authenticate the experiences of people from these margins as presented in the text. The physical appearances and locations they occupy in the city are also marginal since they are on the periphery of the city. Their occupation of this places highlight the blunt snapshots of poverty levels in Kenyan urban landscape. The presence of children in the episode is used to capture and signify the position of marginal persons in the cityscape through their physical maneuvers in search of

survival. The children's entry into the CBD to get items to sell is an indication of how margins push back to the centre. This is because, though the children operate and belong to the back street in Grogan, they get their wares from the CBD. In this way, they are a part of the workings of the centre.

The presence of Eddie in the text forces one to interrogate the root causes of the situation that this child finds himself in. The street families are used to satirise the post- independence Kenyan society. The aim of satire is to criticise behaviours that go against the moral good and wellbeing of the society. Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Homecoming* points out that satire attacks with the aim of correcting 'society's failings' (58) especially so if the behaviour deviates from the norm. In this way, laughter allows one to interrogate the behaviour as well as provide a vent through which people can model what is considered moral.

As such, street children have been used to criticise political, economic, social and moral decay in Kenya. Any country with a progressive government is tasked with making available the necessary environment for a better life for its people especially an investment in its young generation. Therefore, the presence of children on the street tells us more about a government that does not care about its children. The street children are used to challenge the society to reflect on the future of the Kenyan nation. The young generation often form the bulk of the future human resource and therefore unless the society takes responsibility in making all the necessary conditions to realise children's full potential, then the future is bleak. The characters are, thus, forced to do what they are doing because society collectively and the government in particular is not functional as it should. Eddie is left with no option but has to live on the street where they are highly vulnerable to petty crimes and violence as illustrated

in this episode. This is an indication of his disillusionment and resignation to his fate on the street since the city and the society at large have not given him what he needs as a child in contemporary twenty first century Kenya.

The space occupied by the characters in this text is vital in reading the contemporary political state. The reading of space in this episode is in line with Edward Said's observation that invented geographies are part of a system of dominance in most formerly colonized regions. On her part, Joyce Wambui Nyairo observes that most former colonial metropolitan centres had master plans and geographic spaces outlined for the city. These spaces determined where individuals resided depending on their social class. Though this was used during the colonial era, the same plans and geographic spaces were inherited by post-colonial societies and leadership where people were placed in different geographic regions in the city considered as legitimate spaces.

However, within these physical geographic demarcations, there exists the 'other' that is not legitimate who more than often occupies the city's periphery. Nyairo says that all the "other" spaces form all those other plans that do not conform to the official plans envisioned by the post-independence leadership in terms of a modern city plan. Makokha, Kokoto and Eddie Wambua are the "other" who occupy the unofficial city spaces that do not conform to the Nairobi master plans. When Wambua and his friend are caught in the act of stealing Ondieki's car side mirror, they are forced to take Ondieki and the police officer to the person who buys the items they steal. They set out walking from the city centre to a place called Grogan at Makokha's garage and lastly to the court.

The journey from the city centre is significant since it maps the city as the viewer is able to relate the spaces the characters occupy with their daily experiences and their social class. At the same time, the viewer is taken on a metaphorical journey together with the characters as they move around the city. As the viewer accompanies the boys through the city, one realises that these journeys are journeys for survival and also demonstrate the need for the characters to make their imprints in the same landscape that they are “othered”. The imprints left by the characters on this journey cannot be erased easily thereby suggesting that the problem of street families and social classes cannot be ignored. This is a wakeup call to the government to devise appropriate measures in addressing this social phenomena.

The city’s allure and tendency to consume its inhabitants especially those who cannot keep up with the capitalistic and stifling economic realities is thus played out. In this way, the city according to Werimo “becomes a collage of images of poverty and affluence, a “dual city” of conflicting material realities that give a complex image because of how they are contiguous to each other” (171). The city belongs to no one as it attracts a majority of the society with the goodies that come with the metropolitan luster. However, the same city seems to contradict this perception because of its alienating effect in the manner in which it “others” the newcomers and those who cannot keep up with its economic pace. To survive in the city, the characters have to move with the economic heartbeat that defines its social lifestyle.

The failure of such characters to meet the demands of city life make them to engage in unorthodox ways in keeping up with the city rhythm as seen through the characters in the episode. In this way, the viewer comes to terms with the stark realities of life that the city’s “other” grapples with in an attempt to survive. It is also important to point

out that when street children mingle with other city dwellers, their presence is not “felt”. Physically, the children are there on the streets but since their existence is peripheral in relation to other people’s lives, their presence becomes negligible. To the society and particularly the city dwellers, the street children are a nuisance.

Another episode that forms our analysis of social classes and poverty in this chapter is *Marehemu Ocholla* (The Late Ocholla). The performance begins with a song “chakutumaini sina ila damu yake bwana sina wema wa kutosha dhambi zangu kuziosha” (there is nothing else to trust but the blood of Jesus to wash away my sins). The accompanying background sound captures the atmosphere and emotions of its setting. This song is very significant in the context of the episode as it sets the mood of the characters at the demise of Ocholla. The weaving of this song into the setting and content of the episode introduces the mood and at the same time invites the viewer to empathise with Ondieki for the loss of his brother. The song ties well with the physical setting of the play at the mortuary before the trial in the court, based on what had transpired at the mortuary.

The events that make Kokoto and Makokha be arraigned in court start at the Nairobi mortuary where Ondieki, who is the brother to the deceased (Ocholla) and Olexanda (their neighbour), had gone to pick Ocholla’s body for burial that was to take place in Nyanza region of Kenya. According to Ondieki, his culture demands that before the corpse is dressed and put in the coffin, a close relative checks to confirm that the corpse is theirs and that everything is intact. However, upon checking, Ondieki realises that Ocholla’s penis had been chopped off. What follows is very hilarious as both Ondieki and Olexanda storm out of the mortuary screaming while Olexanda is seen covering his penis with his hands. According to Olexanda, the reason he is

shielding his manhood was informed by the possibility that his could also be chopped off just as Ocholla's. The two inform the police upon which the mortuary attendant who was on duty that night is arrested together with a driver of Lala Salama Funeral Services. This is the reason they are arraigned in court to answer to the charges as shown in the following dialogue:

Kiswahili

Jaji: Alphonse Makacha Makokha- ukiwa mfanyikazi wa mortuary na Tobias Kokoto Lichodi- ukiwa dereva wa Lala Salama funeral services, mnashitakiwa kwamba mnamo tarehe sita mwezi uliopita mwaka huu, katika Nairobi mortuary, mlisumbua maiti kwa kukata sehemu zake za siri. Mmekuwa mkifikishwa katika korti hii mkikanusha mashtaka. Leo mnakubali au mnazidi kukataa?

Makokha: Nakataa.

Kokoto: Nakataa.

English Translation

Judge: Alphonse Makacha Makokha (mortuary attendant) and Tobias Kokoto Lichodi (Lala Salama funeral services), you are accused that on the 16th of last month this year, at Nairobi mortuary, you disturbed the corpse by chopping off its reproductive organs. You have on several occasions appeared before court and denied the charges. Are you guilty or not guilty?

Makokha: Not guilty your honour.

Kokoto: Not guilty your honour.

In the dialogue above, the judge spells out that Makokha and Kokoto are accused of disturbing a corpse by cutting its penis with an aim of selling the organs to witchdoctors. The performance of this episode is very humorous as seen in the characters' discomfiture in saying exactly what had been chopped off Ocholla's body. Human reproductive organs in most African cultures are taboo organs thus people are not allowed to mention the exact name openly. This is the case in this episode as the male reproductive organ is referred to using different euphemism terminologies such as Vuvuzela, Cargo, Mzigo, burungo, dalili, sehemu nyeti, sehemu za siri, vitu,

machine, and jembe (Vuvuzela, luggage, burungo, signs, private parts, things, machine and hoe).

On a lighter note, Olexanda says “kumbe hii kitu iko na majina mingi hivyo? Mimi sikujua” (I did not know that this thing has so many names). In as much as the court requires one to be clear in terminologies used, the African dictates on decorum is upheld in the way the male organ is referred to in the courtroom. In this respect, the text seems aware of the unique audience who could comprise children, parents, church leaders among others. So by not referring to the male reproductive organ using the exact term, the text accommodates the unique composition of the audience but at the same time advance the message embedded in the episode humorously.

Ondieki is the prosecutor’s first witness. He introduces himself by saying that initially he was a catholic but changed to a protestant church called Israel immediately after Ocholla’s death. The mention of the church here is significant in reading how people fall back to religion for comfort in trying moments. What stands out here is that Ondieki only joins this church upon Ocholla’s death otherwise he was a staunch catholic. The way of worship in the Catholic Church is conservative. In this way, Ondieki joins Israel church because of its charismatic way of worship and its appeal to his emotion at this time of bereavement. It is while in this church that he is named Methuselah which is an allusion to the biblical Methuselah.

The biblical Methuselah had lived for 969 years (Genesis 5:27). Similarly, Ondieki says that just as Methuselah, the church leader told him that he will live for 969 years. He also informs the court that he had been prayed for by the church members that no part of his body would be taken away. Ondieki also promises to fight for his rights

when he dies so as to protect his organs from being taken away. Ondieki is unable to control himself and starts crying in court as he pauses “where can a man without a bag go to?” This question underpins the significance of a man’s reproductive organ especially in the African society.

This episode images the social realities in contemporary Kenya. The weight of this reality on characters is overwhelming to the extent that they are willing to do anything for survival. Chopping off the corpse’s penis is bloodcurdling yet Kokoto is able to cut it. Before the chopping, Kokoto is seen talking to the prospective buyer and he asks “unataka gani? Ya mtu mzima au mtoto na kilo ngapi? Nakwambia huyu ako na mzuri sana hata wewe mwenyewe utafurahia” (which one do you want, for a child or an adult and how many kilograms? This one has good ones which you will be happy about). Kokoto’s conversation with the buyer paints a ghastly situation where people negotiate the sale of human body parts as if they are wares on the market. However, the pressures of life in the metropolitan leave individuals with no alternative as they have to eke out a living. It is established that the organs were to be sold to witchdoctors to make a concoction of medicine for a number of ailments, women infertility, getting rich, and getting power.

The policeman who investigated the case found Ocholla’s penis stored in Kokoto’s fridge alongside foodstuffs in Kariobangi area of Nairobi County. Kariobangi is a low income suburb in the Eastlands region of Nairobi. Given its distance from Nairobi CBD, Kariobangi alludes to cheaper living standards for low income earners of the city. Eastlands generally, is punctuated with a wave of violence, insecurity, a perverse immorality and a host of petty crimes. Kokoto’s audacity to store Ocholla’s reproductive organ in the fridge together with the family foodstuff is an indication of

the stark realities and absurdities of life facing low income earners in the urban centres. The demanding lifestyle in the face of minimal monetary income is the reason why Kokoto and Makokha chop off Ocholla's private parts to survive. Kokoto's behaviour depicts a senseless and brutal society presented in all its hopelessness and misery in the face of hardships. Makokha's and Kokoto's acts interrogate the irrationalities of life in contemporary Kenya. The performance thus confronts the viewer with a society enmeshed in a mad rush to survive against all odds.

Just like Kokoto, Makokha lives in Makadara area in Eastlands which is also mostly populated by low income earners within Nairobi. However, he prefers to refer to Makadara as Sonko's area. The mention of Sonko in this episode is telling as it is juxtaposed against a high level of both physical and moral poverty. "Sonko" is a sheng term that translates to a rich person. The term has come to be associated with Mike Mbuvi aka Sonko. Sonko acquired the name as a nick-name due to his flamboyant lifestyle. In Kenyan urban discourse, Sonko is a philanthropic politician known for dishing out plenty of cash to the poor especially in Eastlands section of Nairobi. Therefore, the use of sonko in the episode is contradictory since Makokha is poor despite his insistence that he stays in a rich region. Makokha seems to say that by staying in Sonko's place, then he has also acquired that state of being rich. Therefore, the physical location occupied by one in the city is used to give a person a sense of status especially economic power. However, to Makokha, this is wishful thinking that is far away from his reach.

Against widespread level of poverty in Eastlands, the episode alludes to how society has carefully placed people in different locations in the city. The poor of Nairobi live in places such as Kariobangi and Makadara while the rich in Karen. For instance,

Olexanda tells the prosecutor that he (Olexanda) lives in Hardy within Karen. He sarcastically tells the prosecutor that he (the prosecutor) cannot afford land in Hardy since it is far beyond the prosecutor's pocket. Therefore Kariobangi and Makadara are used to demarcate and map Eastlands from other places occupied by the rich such as Karen.

However, it is worth noting that the demarcation of people alongside economic ability is challenged in this episode. Karen is a legitimate city space which has adhered to city plan as envisioned at independence while Eastlands is unofficial settlement since it crops up against the city plans. This clearly tells one that to own land in Hardy, you have to be rich. This was however not hard for Olexanda who sold the many cows he had to get the money. As this may be the case, the slum has a way of entering the official space where it disorients and disturbs it. This is because Makokha and Kokoto have not only cut off Ocholla's manhood but have also decentered the Karen official space.

When Makokha cuts off Ocholla's organs, the very rich (Olexanda and Ondieki) are seen scampering for safety. The two could not stand to face the evil that was before them. This demonstrates how the existence of social classes with a majority poor is a threat to society. Since the different classes have to coexist alongside each other where they rub themselves against each other in the course of finding a livelihood, the realisation of lack and plenty is revealed. The poor usually do not steal from their poor neighbours but the rich. Therefore, as long as we have the disadvantaged people living amidst the urban rich, the rich will always be targeted in similar manner as Ocholla. Commenting on the gap between the rich and the poor in Kenya, Nyairo observes that Nairobi constantly locks its doors on the poor, relegating them to its

periphery, and some of them to a life of crime (148). This is exactly what informs Kokoto's and Makokha's behaviour.

The episode *Marehemu Ocholla* seems to suggest that unchecked urban growth juxtaposed against squalor lifestyle breeds moral decay as demonstrated through Makokha and Kokoto. The moral degradation and the devaluing of human values characterising Kokoto and Makokha's behaviour depict a high level of economic entrapping and despair of common people in contemporary Kenya. In this way, slums become sites of urban strugglers' daily battling to afford a meal otherwise how can one explain Kokoto keeping human reproductive organs together with food in a fridge or Makokha mutilating a corpse to get the private parts.

In addition to the above discussion, the penis lends itself to another interpretation. I raise the following questions: is there a possibility to read the penis beyond the fact that it is a part of the male body anatomy, a form of sexual identity and as a gender identity mark? In this episode, the male reproductive organ is read as an image of power. I point out that the possession of the penis affords most men the supremacy and domination that they wield over others. In this regard, the penis is confluent with the power to control and influence. In his examination of body politics, Michael Foucault argues that the body is always a political field and that the "power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, for it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (173) and that the body has power that facilitates resistance, rebellion and even disruptions. Based on this, I point out that in as much as Ocholla is dead, the corpse still elicits that power that Ocholla held while still alive as a man. In this way, when the penis is severed from the rest of the body, it is that power that has been taken away thereby making Ocholla look like a

woman. In fact, Olexanda says that Ocholla looked like a woman after the chopping off of his manhood while Ondieki asks: where can a man go without a hoe?

In this way, it is the “hoe” (the penis) that defines one as a man and is the reason Ondieki and Olexanda are in a dilemma because it is missing. Olexanda’s observation of drawing the similarity between Ocholla’s mutilated penis and a woman’s reproductive organ unconsciously images the sexuality discourses and disparity that mark individual existence. Beyond this, the same utterance is an unconscious acknowledgement of the subjectivity that women go through. As a man, society has privileged Olexanda and most men in general and therefore any thought of assuming the subordinated position courtesy of the penis being chopped off is scary for both Olexanda and Ondieki. Olexanda’s and Ondieki’s realisation that Ocholla has been reduced to the society’s “other” and a woman at best images the fragility of power that the dominant group possess. It is also important to point out that the Ocholla’s penis is used to advance the discourse of belonging and unbelonging. By having the penis intact, Ocholla belongs to the male gender and its mutilation suggests the contrary.

Achille Mbembe in *Provisional notes on the Postcolony* provides a detailed understanding of various manifestations of relations of power through the use of the grotesque and the obscene (7). In Mbembe’s argument, power is multifaceted and defies the common binary oppositions of domination and subjection evident in most studies. For instance, Mbembe examines the human body as a locale of power made visible through lampooning and obscene. Mbembe’s observation is applicable to Ocholla’s body that is mutilated thus rendering it a text upon which other readings occur. In most African cultures, it is a taboo and obscene to mention a reproductive

organ by its name whether it is for a man or woman. The text manages to talk about the penis through use of different terms as discussed earlier on in this chapter. The terms provoke laughter and a gesture at some form of play.

However, I point out that, in using Ocholla, the text succeeds in talking about the male reproductive organ freely while upholding the African traditional decorum. To this point, Ocholla's body suffices as a locale of discourse where power is exercised and performed. Though the performance in the episode is humorous, it is within this humor that the audience is sucked into parodying the power that the dominant group brandish. Mbembe observes that the use of the obscene makes:

Active statements about the human condition, and as such contribute integrally to the making of political culture in the postcolony. Every reference, then, to mouth, belly or phallus is consequently a discourse on the world and on death, a means of auto-interpretation, and of negotiating that interpretation and the forces which may shape it. Beyond this concern specifically with the mouth, belly and phallus, the body itself is the principal locale of the idioms and fantasies used in depicting power (7).

In line with Mbembe's argument in the quotation above, Ocholla is only a man and powerful even in death with the penis intact but without it, he is reduced to an object and therefore powerless. Like a woman's body that lacks the penis, Ocholla's body is dismembered at will by those in positions to get access to where power is thus projecting power as shortlived and insecure.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored how the selected videotapes of *Vioja Mahakamani* interrogate and address socio-political experiences in Kenya. Through a number of strategies such as characterization, setting, and humor, showed how the text addresses socio-political nuances through the application of Kenyan law. The

discussion in the chapter has established that ethnicity, corruption, poverty, social classes and street families are some of the socio-political issues that Kenya has to wrestle with. The chapter has demonstrated that though *Vioja Mahakamani* is a popular cultural text, it has managed to address key socio-political issues in Kenya. In this way, popular theatre has staked its niche with other institutions such as courts and artistic texts to offer alternative solutions to and highlight the problems facing Kenya. The next chapter examines *Angel's Diary* to find out how silence, exclusion and marginality impacts the behaviour and responses of characters to different issues in the society.

CHAPTER FOUR: SILENCE, MARGINALISATION AND AGENCY IN *ANGEL'S DIARY*

4.0 Introduction

Discourses of domination and subordination have been a preoccupation of most artistic productions in contemporary society. Of significance in such discourses is the struggle to consolidate power and sustain it by all means on one hand and on the other, the struggle to gain access to power. Domination and subordination dichotomy in artistic productions and imaginations has been realised through a number of strategies. This chapter holds that children (represented by Kitali's twin daughters) and women (represented by Kitali's wife and sister) are resourceful tools used in *Angel's Diary* to address silence, domination and subversion. Of interest in the chapter is the happenings and interactions in Julius Kitali's family². As such, I examine the strategies such as music, journey, internal monologue and writing employed by characters to transcend the different forms of limitations in their quest for agency.

I grapple with manifestations of unequal power relations, which in most cases favour the dominant centre. Edward Said's readings of the Orient inform the discussion in the chapter. Said's ideas are germane in analysing how the subjugated members in Kitali's family offer dissent to hegemonic discourses that define them. In doing so, I appropriate instances of marginalisation and silence witnessed in Kitali's family to Edward's concept of the "other". I also use semiotics theory in reading how signs in the text are used to signify thus allowing me possibility of realizing meaning beyond a sign.

² see the plot summary in the section that follows below

4.1 Synopsis of *Angel's Diary*

Angel's Diary is a story about Julius Kitali's family consisting of his wife, Rebecca Kitali; his twin daughters Paula and Pitch, and his son Hans, Aunt Pam (Julius Kitali's sister). The events in the text highlight a typical middle class family in contemporary Kenya. The events in the text highlight the strained relationship in the Kitali family resulting from Kitali's high handedness. Kitali is depicted as a man deeply steeped in patriarchy in running his family.

After a brief discussion about Julius' daughters and the failure of the parents to teach the girls house chores, Julius allows Pam to take Paula with her back to her house in Jericho in Eastlands suburb of Nairobi. Eastlands is a vast area that comprises the neighbourhoods of Jericho, Makadara, Maringo, Mbotela, Bahati, Ofafa, Buruburu, Ziwani, Donholm, Shauri Moyo and Majengo. Most inhabitants of Eastlands are low income earners with a majority living below the poverty line. This is contrasted with Lavington, one of the secure, affluent neighbourhoods of Nairobi.

While Paula is at Aunt Pam's place, the rest of the Kitali family travel upcountry to Western Kenya. Initially, Pitch was unwilling to travel but Kitali insists that all must travel home. The children enjoy their stay in the village especially the merry-making and plenty of fresh food from the farm. Rebecca decides to join politics by running for Member of Parliament for Mashimoni constituency. Julius promises to support her both morally and financially. However, in the middle of the campaigns, Julius decides to freeze all the bank accounts. The reason for Julius' drastic decision was that Rebecca was growing "horns". When Rebecca insists that Julius should allow her use the money, Julius beats her up. The children are aware of the beating and advise their mother to do something.

4.2 Agency and women Emancipation in *Angel's Diary*

Debates on whether the human being is an agent or not have been in existence in scholarly researches over time and still, it is a discourse of concern in contemporary society. For instance, Mirium Glucksmann observes that any meaningful interpretation of subjects resides in the interrelated concepts of structure and history (106). This therefore requires an understanding of the place and role of the subject therein. However, I make haste to point out that of significance in this case is an interrogation of how the subject negotiates its way out of such social structures and history. It is therefore only when this is done that one can talk of subjects as agents. Historically, in most societies and Africa in particular, ones gender and the position one occupies often form determinants of the possibility of individual agency. This is because cultural, social, economic and political structural and institutional workings are modelled along gender lines. Additionally, the same structures are employed in overall organization of key institutions such as the family in the society.

Familial relationships and interaction in the African society is hierarchically structured. As already discussed in chapter two, the family is replete with veiled discourses of domination, dictatorship, supremacy, and subjugation that dictate social interaction of its members. The family members are supposed to obey decisions made by the head of the family. With the headship of the father well designed, the rest of the family members are supposed to listen, obey and do what the father figure requires of them. This reduces family members to silent listeners and passive partakers of the decisions made for them. This structured arrangement of the father as the head relegates the rest of the members to the peripheral position.

The members or individuals placed at the periphery are denied active participation in the workings of the family and society thus are silenced. I read silence symbolically as any barriers and structures in the society that prevent women from equality and dignified treatment by the status quo. Silence, according to Cody Mullins “carries with it a power capable of oppressing masses, uniting peoples, and hiding the inner workings of the mind....silence is used as a weapon by oppressors to quiet the “other” in society” (1).

Therefore, silence in this chapter is read at two levels: silence as denial of voice/agency and silence as a tool used to oppress and represent the ‘other’ by the dominant entity. The “other” is marginalized and silenced, because the oppressor is in the “privileged centre” (Ashcroft 104). This is premised on the fact that women are not allowed to participate in decision making like their male counter parts. In this way, they are removed from the active workings of the society. Secondly, women and children are not supposed to speak in the face of authority since they keep quite unless asked to speak. In this case, silence serves as a tool used by the oppressor to oppress women. Trinh Minh-ha argues that within the “contexts of women’s speech, silence has many faces, silence as a will not to say or a will not to unsay and as a language of its own” (73). Accordingly, Benita Parry succinctly points out that “silence has been read as a many-accented signifier of disempowerment and resistance, of the denial of a subject position and its appropriation” (152). Silence in *Angel’s Diary* is entrenched in several hegemonic socio-political structures that inform the characters’ way of life especially in the denial of the active position for women and children.

Women and children in *Angel's Diary* remain on the periphery, are marginalised, “silenced”, and “unseen” by those who matter. Though women and children exist physically, they are excluded in the decision making process hence their presence reduced to that of the voiceless “other”. On the inability to act in the presence of the hegemonic power, Said avers that a woman “never spoke of herself, [...] never represented her emotions, presence, or history. [Those who have power] spoke for and represented her” (6). Despite this exclusion, the marginal position provides an appropriate vantage point from which its occupants subvert to interrogate structures that have relegated them to the very position they occupy.

The subversion of key structures by the silenced “other” underscores the fact that voices from the marginal position echo their presence. This demonstrates that such individuals cannot go unnoticed as wished for by dominant discourses. Subversion as used in this chapter is not a deviation from what is expected of an individual but that it is a transformational kind of subversion- one that is geared toward liberation. In doing this, subversion disorients the center thereby allowing the “silenced” members some form of agency.

4.3 Strategies Used to Liberate the Self in *Angel's Diary*

This section explores the different strategies employed in *Angel's Diary* to address marginalisation and characters’ quest to emancipate themselves from situations that limit their agency. *Angel's Diary* interrogates the operations of power, veiled forms of muteness and the obstacles that stand in the way of the characters in their attempt to realise their agency. Despite the Kitalis’ affluence and social standing, there exists forms of domination and subordination as seen in his relationship with his wife and children.

The first strategy employed in the text is the long gazes and stares that both Pitch and Paula use to communicate. Most of the time, the children do not talk but just stare at each other or at the one speaking. It appears that Kitali's twin daughters are not allowed to speak in the presence of their parents especially their father. Though the children are always together as siblings, they do not speak to each other especially in the presence of an adult. The children resort to "speaking" using long and extended gazes when confronted with situations that demand their verbalised thoughts. To show the significance of the gazes as a strategy, the camera's focus and emphasis is placed on the faces of the girls showing their eyes facing upwards towards the upper eyelids and straight to the person speaking to them.

The camera captures the girls' defiant blank stares without any noticeable facial expressions to reveal their feelings and thoughts. On one hand, the blank stares signify the girls' lack of voice to speak their thoughts and on the other, the stares are demeaning and annoying. The children's stares, I argue, is a strategy used not to unsay what society has put in place in terms of children's relationship with parents. In this way, it is a forced kind of silence to obey and not to speak when adults speak. However, the same can mean that the girls' are aware of what they are supposed to say in the circumstances but they choose not to speak. The stares become a form of resistance of structures that impede their freedom of speech. It is interesting to note here that the girls inherently possess communication capabilities but openly and defiantly refuse to speak. Their refusal to speak signifies their rebelliousness toward the speaker.

The reason the children communicate through gazes is because of the violence embodied through the father. This is illustrated when Pitch hints at both physical and psychological violence in Julius Kitali's house when they are caught entertaining a boy from the neighbourhood in the absence of an adult in the house. She tells Aunt Pam that "please do not go, Dad is going to kill us after you leave". This is sufficient confirmation of the violence that the Kitalis live with. What is interesting in Paula's observation is that Kitali's house has an element of domesticated violence juxtaposed against a resolute silence imposed on Paula and Pitch. This is made possible through dread and veneration of their own father who the girls cannot talk to. In this way, the punishment that Kitali administers to his daughters fail to correct the wrongs that children have committed but forces them into silence. In this particular incident, he does not give the children a chance to explain why they are at home and not in school. The allusion to violence in this household paints an atmosphere that is stifling, suffocating and an atmosphere that forces the children into docility.

Music is another strategy used in the episode to demonstrate the girls' strive to attain both physical and psychological freedom. It seems Paula and Pitch have never danced in their lives as they ask their boy neighbour to teach them how to dance. Paula and Pitch are not flexible enough to dance but at least they enjoy the moves and some little shaking of their bodies. I read the body inflexibility of the girls metaphorically by pointing out that imposed silence on the girls does not only manifest itself in terms of the physical violence enforced by Kitali but that silence also shows itself in the form of the lack of freedom of the body. This therefore means that if the girls have to free themselves from the silence that has engulfed and entrapped there being, it should happen at two levels where both the mind and body are freed otherwise the children

are likely to remain trapped in their own inflexible silenced bodies. Music and dance serve as emancipatory tools aimed at freeing both body and mind if read against coordinated movements.

In addition, music and dance breaks the monotony of the schedules in Kitali's household.

Paula in an internal monologue says:

My plan to avoid school, day one was working out perfectly but Deno's visit to the house was a curse. The dancing part was a relief from the usual monotonous lifestyle in our house but it spoiled my plans to the trench (Episode 11).

When their father arrives home unannounced, he refers to the music that his daughters are dancing to as 'noise' and that it should be switched off. Dancing requires movement of the body which implies some form of freedom. In stopping the music, Kitali unconsciously inhibits the freedom that his daughters are yearning for.

The text also employs the journey motif as a strategy of emancipating Paula and Pitch. On one of the occasions when Julius and the wife had travelled out of the country, Aunt Pam realizes that the girls cannot make a simple mug of tea. She blames her brother for the behaviour of his children by pointing out to her brother that "I don't blame them, I blame you. You don't even know your children. It is like you are living with strangers in this house" (Episode 11). It is Pam's revelation that makes Julius agree that she takes Paula along with her back to Jericho in Eastlands. As already discussed in the synopsis section, majority of people in Eastlands are low income earners who rely on casual jobs for a living. This journey is pivotal in Paula's life as it helps her move away from her limiting home. It is a journey that opens Paula's world to the life outside the affluence and a journey that allows her to

evaluate her own life in relation to others she encounters on this journey. For instance, Jericho exposes her to the social realities that low income earners grapple with daily.

Life in Jericho is contrasted with life in Julius' house. For instance, in their home, the children's life oscillates between books, eating, sleeping, watching movies, and sometimes family leisure outings. In this way, the children do not know anything beyond their ordered and punctuated lifestyle. However, when Paula goes to Jericho, she comes face to face with a care free lifestyle in Aunt Pam's house. Pam has many friends and neighbours who are always welcome to her house. Aunt Pam's house is small and the friends and neighbours make use of the little space available. The social company and laughter in Pam's house lacks in Kitali's house where people talk and interact with one another mechanically. Paula notes down in a diary her first encounter in Eastlands as follows:

My first night, my first ever night in Eastlands was scary. It begun well. But this friend of my aunt really scared me, I thought he would go away, but instead he was going to spend with us the night under the same roof. I wasn't sure of my safety because I have heard of unbelievable stories about Eastlands. Welcome day one in Eastlands. (Episode 11)

The excerpt above captures Paula's initial fear of Eastlands which is worsened by the presence of Aunt Pam's boyfriend. It is the first time Paula encounters a man sleeping in a house not his. In addition, Paula's fear is made worse when Aunt Pam's boyfriend does not leave the sitting room immediately. Contrary to their house that has many rooms and plenty of space, Pam's house is one bedroomed and small in size. Paula is forced to sleep on the sofa while Aunt Pam uses the bedroom. The sleeping arrangement in Aunt Pam's house is a typical scenario of life in Kenyan urban centers where lack of enough bedrooms, make people to use any available space such as the couch, sitting room floor or even the kitchen for a night. Pam's

boyfriend is unable to join her in the bedroom immediately since Paula is still awake. He therefore sits on the chair next to Paula's waiting for her to fall asleep before he could join Pam. On her part, Paula is not sure of what he is up to given the stories she has heard about Eastlands, thus she is also waiting for him to leave before she could sleep. She feigns sleep which makes him to join Pam and this allows her to write down her first experience in Eastlands in her diary as observed in the quotation above.

In contrast to their house, Aunt Pam's house is small and lacks most of the amenities such as running water that the Kitalis have in plenty. The following quotation captures the kind of life in Eastlands:

Kiswahili

Pam: Ah Ousi, niaje? Haki sidhani kuna maji kwa hii nyumba yangu.

Ousi: Na ulikuwa umepotea.

Pam: Nilikuwa nimeenda kwa bro wangu...

Ousi: (*seems to be admiring Paula as he stares at her*) Na uko na mrembo poa...

Pam: wee wacha kumwangualia hivyo. She is my niece. (To Paula) come, now this is where I stay. Sijui kama utamiss home? Well welcome, come in. This is my little paradise what do you think. I know you will like it. There are so many people around. Let me find out about this boy bringing water (to Ousi) oh Ousi, kumbe umefika. Nilikuwa nafikiria haufiki na umekuwa tu hapa around. (Episode 11)

English Translation

Pam: Ah Ousi, how are you? I don't think there is water in my house.

Ousi: You were away for some time.

Pam: I had gone to my brother's place...

Ousi: (*seems to be admiring Paula as he stares at her*) You have a very beautiful girl...

Pam: Stop looking at her that way. She is my niece. (To Paula) come, now this is where I stay. I don't know if you will miss home? Well welcome, come in. This is my little paradise, what do you think? I know you will like it. There are so many people around. Let me find out about this boy bringing water (to Ousi) oh Ousi, so you have arrived. I was wondering what was taking you so long to bring the water.

The dialogue above depicts Pam's simple abode amidst the squalid lifestyle in Eastlands. Of interest in the quotation above is that Pam's house lacks in material wealth but is rich and abundant in human feelings and presence. This confirms Aunt Pam's observation that it is a paradise.

This journey helps Paula to grow and learn about the social realities in low income areas such as Jericho. It is therefore ironical that it is within Pam's lack that Paula is able to learn about life, something that lacks in her father's luxury. Contrary to her communication with her twin sister Pitch using eyes as discussed earlier, Paula starts laughing and even engages in household chores. When Ousi delivers water, Pam asks Paula to make a cup of tea for him. Paula has never cooked back at home since they have a house girl who, according to her father, is paid handsomely to do the job.

Consider the following conversation between Julius and Pam:

Pam: Brother, your children don't know how to cook, leave alone make a simple mug of tea.

Julius: Come on Pam, they are only twelve and someone is being paid handsomely to do that.

Pam: You don't get it, do you? Your eyes are open but you don't see where you're going. (Episode 11)

However, in Aunt Pam's house, Paula is able to cook since Pam believes she is of age to start doing household chores. This is a learning experience that is missing back in her father's house. In fact, Pam does not show her how to prepare tea but simply asks her to make a cup of tea for Ousi. In the kitchen, Paula seems lost as she keeps looking at all ingredients and items on the Kitchen shelf. I point out that this is expected of her as it is the first time she explores the world of the kitchen. Despite her lack of knowledge in the kitchen, she eventually finds her way out as she finally manages to prepare a cup of tea for Ousi. Another occasion where Paula finds herself in the kitchen is on the 1st of January 2012. Aunt Pam asks her to prepare a glass of

juice for Ousi. This time round, Paula is able to prepare juice with a lot of ease. She is not confused and lost as was her first day in the kitchen. She has gained a lot of expertise as she appears to be freer in the kitchen.

In the course of Ousi enjoying his glass of juice, other neighbours come in and Paula is asked to bring more juice and snacks. Since the seats are few in Pam's house, some of them sit on the floor. As they eat, laughter fills the air and they seem very comfortable talking over food. On the contrary, merry making lacks in Kitali's household as the family eats quietly while observing table etiquette befitting affluence. Paula is able to fit into the Jericho mold with a lot of ease through the guidance of her aunt. She also starts laughing and participating in the merry-making that characterises Aunt Pam's lifestyle. Indeed, Aunt Pam's house is a paradise with all the fullness of life, human presence and happiness.

Laughter is important for Paula as it propels her into growth and freedom that she so much desires. Mikhail Bakhtin points out that "laughter purifies from dogmatism, from fanaticism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation, from didacticism, naiveté and illusion..." (123). As such, laughter for Paula is symbolic of freedom and an expression of feelings that had been silenced within her body. In this way, the laughter in Pam's house images individual freedom involving both the body and mind despite the squalid environment within which Pam lives. In this way, the positioning of Paula into Jericho leads to her self-realization as she is pushed away from the silence and marginal position that had informed her upbringing in their home.

Jericho therefore opens Paula's horizon beyond the Kitali home. Kitali has plenty but does not share with the less privileged in the society. In this way, life in Kitali's house

is deficient of human values. One instance that demonstrates that the Kitalis do not share with others is when Paula had invited the gate man's wife and children for a glass of juice. Pitch is not comfortable with their presence in the house as she is supposed to be watching her favorite soap opera at that very moment. When Julius comes in and finds the gate man's family, he chases them away saying that he does not want beggars in his house. This is illustrated in the conversation below:

Julius: Oh my God! What circus is this? (*Paula is surprised as she suddenly stands up*)

Gate man's wife: Pole mzee. (sorry sir)

Pitch: (*Comes down the stairs*) Thank God Dad is here. I present to you, Paula's guests

Julius: Get out of my house! Get out! I don't want beggars in my house. Get out!

Gate man's wife: (To the children) pita pande hii (pass this way)
Paula stands up staring at Pitch. Pitch closes the door behind the gateman's family

Paula: Pitch that was mean of you!

Pitch: I was meant to be watching my favorite soap opera at this time. It is over now. Dad purged out your guests.

Paula: Those are the gate keeper's kids. I just gave them a glass of juice.

The dialogue above shows the social status of Julius as belonging to the middle class in contemporary Kenya. Julius has plenty in his household but is not ready to share with the less fortunate such as the gatekeeper who takes care of the same wealth. This is disheartening as Julius is oblivious of the reality and lack that such people live with. To him, the poor are beggars while Pitch refers to them as rats. Like Pitch, Julius does not care about the poor that live amidst them. In using this incidence, Paula is contrasted with both Pitch and Julius who have not encountered the social reality outside their home.

Paula's encounter with life in Eastlands has helped her grow as a human being, able to reach out to the less privileged. On social inequality, Robert Young observes that

postcolonial theory “seeks to change the way people think, the way they behave, to produce a more just and equitable relation between the different people” (7). Through Paula’s generosity, the text succeeds in depicting the different social classes in society and the need for equity. The relationship between the poor and middle class witnessed in Julius’ house is contrasted with life in Jericho where people share the little they have despite their lack. The text succeeds in criticising selfishness and inability to care about one another by deliberately placing Paula in the very place that Kitali despises for her growth.

The second journey in this text is the one that Julius and the family make upcountry. Initially, Pitch is not enthusiastic about going upcountry as shown below:

Pitch: Mum what about Paula? I don’t like shags. It is a long journey and it is tiring.

Rebecca; No we just have to travel so we will just go.

Julius: You are not going to carry your computer there.

Rebecca: Today, I asked you to come help me serve the food you didn’t.

Julius: I want you to learn to plant, harvest, how to take care of cows.

Rebecca: How to milk them. I know grandmother will teach you how to do that. (Episode 12)

The dialogue captures the fears and misconceptions that Pitch has about the village. One of her fears is the dialect spoken at home. Since Kitali’s children were born and raised in town, they do not speak their mother tongue. The situation is even worse as the children speak English, a language that is in tandem with their stature and educational background. One would expect that they could be conversant with Kiswahili which is a language spoken by a majority of urban dwellers in Kenya. I read this as another form of silence. A mother tongue is significant as it gives a person identity, a belonging, a genealogy and even a culture. Since they cannot communicate in their own tongue, the children are alienated from their own roots. In this regard, when Pitch fails to speak her own language, she is in principle rejecting her own

culture. This is a characteristic of formerly colonised people who see the language of the coloniser as better than their own tongue.

Pitch's reluctance to go to the village because of accent is informed by a clash of cultures. Kitali's children have been brought up in the metropolitan thereby embracing some "Englishness" such that their own village is "othered". In this way, the children find themselves at crossroads illustrative of what Homi Bhabha (qtd in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin) refers to as the Third Space (156). Homi Bhabha observes that the Third Space is a psychological location that comes into existence as a result of a superior culture and inferior culture interconnecting. This forms what is commonly referred to as the hybrid individual characterized by a number of features such as the language used and traditions or cultures that inform one's behaviour. Kitali's children can be said to be ambivalent individuals occupying the third space based on their urban upbringing. This is the reason why Pitch foresees difficulties in using her first language in the village.

Pitch also says that she does not like the village. This is because the village does not have what the city has for her. One of the conditions given by her father is that she will not carry her laptop upcountry. This is a lifestyle that the Kitali children are used to back in the city. On the contrary, this journey allays Pitch's fears about the village. To begin with, Pitch comes in direct contact with reality in the village as she is exposed to the beauty of village life as seen in the communal lifestyle that characterise people's interaction. In an internal monologue, Pitch says:

Wow! I like this. This is good, this is real life. I like the presence, no money, alot of beans, maize, bananas, name it and they are so jolly, look at their fashion, oh my! I must write a composition about this (Episode 12).

Pitch's internal monologue above can be interpreted in a number of ways. Pitch has realized that despite lack in material wealth, the villagers are rich in their own right as they have plenty of food stuffs. In addition, she observes that the people are jolly and satisfied in lack.

Pitch's journey to the village marks her sense of agency as it is symbolic of her growth. After observing the beauty of life in the village, she confirms that she wants to write a composition about her experience in the village. Writing, at this point, provides a sense of freedom by getting down thoughts and feelings without fear, thoughts which would otherwise be silenced. The village therefore jump starts her to the need to engage with her inner ability, that of doing and being that her own father had hindered. Pitch's potential to tell her experiences comes to fruition only when she comes into contact with the village. One would imagine that the city has opportunities that would enable her write but in this case, it is the village that initiates that.

Pitch's home back in the city had plenty with all the luxury but lacked experiences that would make one think independently. The village becomes a resourceful tool for her to claim her agency and ability to tell her experiences from the perspective of a girl child. Unlike her internal monologues that are personal and within her, writing makes her thoughts public and accessible by many. In this way, her experience as a child is no longer private but public. In the city, Pitch's life is artificial as she spends most of her time on non-human gadgets such as laptops. The city lifestyle therefore cannot allow her experience direct human interaction and creativity. Pitch observes that in the village people laugh, shake hands, socialise, and eat together. Their grandmother's house in the village is full of neighbours and relatives all laughing wholeheartedly at the top of their voices. Laughter, in Christopher Ernest Werimo's

analysis of *Purple Hibiscus*, [is] a speech-act that allows [one] freedom to act and exist (77). In this way, laughter entails some form of freedoms of those who laugh. By observing how people laugh in the village, Pitch says this is “real life.” This is because, their life in the city is mechanical and dull, lacking all the human social aspect evident in the village.

Through the use of laughter, the village and the city is contrasted in that the former is depicted as a space of freedom and action while the later as a choking environment. It is important to note that after the journeys to different places, both Paula and Pitch decide to write down their experiences of the places they journey to. Paula keeps a diary where she notes everything that happens while Pitch says she intends to write a composition about life in the village. Writing becomes a powerful tool for both girls as it allows them to assert their individuality as each writes her experiences from a personal point of view. In addition, writing signifies that both Paula and Pitch have prevailed over their silenced limitations and excessive control by their father. In this way, writing is used metaphorically to symbolize the girls’ quest to speak, to do and to be. To this end, writing becomes a space within which the girls are no longer victims but actors of their own thoughts and feelings.

The behaviour of Paula and Pitch demonstrates that silence is not the absence of speech. This is because silence manifests itself as having a multiplicity of meanings both as a site of subjugation and at the same time, a self-empowerment weapon. Therefore Paula and Pitch subverts the supposed silence to show that they have prevailed over limitation to be free agents. The writing thrusts Paula’s and Pitch’s invisibility and obscurity into action. In this way, the journeys are used

metaphorically to signify how the girls walk away from their physical and psychological entrapment by their father to a locale of action.

The journeys open up dialogic spaces for the girls to re-evaluate their lives independent of their father's looming control and presence. As the girls move out of their home to different directions, they literally embark on a learning journey of experience, dropping their long held negative beliefs and attitudes of the two places they journey to as they move further away from their home that is limiting. At the same time, the journeys allow both Paula and Pitch to pick new ideas and experiences that ultimately change their mindset. Paula in a monologue says that "I resolved to go and stay with my aunt in Jericho estate indefinitely. Whoever thought it was punishment. Oh no, I will feel most needed." Paula's sentiments capture her desire for human presence which is critical in her learning and growth. The text seems to point out that Kitali's home is devoid of the necessary conditions for the children's personal growth. In order to realize individual growth, Paula and Pitch must transcend and navigate their social, and geographical limitations through the journeys they embark on.

I also read the internal monologues as a strategy employed to depict a quest for women's agency in *Angel's Diary*. Paula and Pitch have the urge to speak but their thoughts are not verbalised. In one incident, Paula's internal monologue points to the reason as to why the girls did not report to school and the fact that they love their father despite his violent nature. In this internal monologue, Paula says "I am sorry Dad, sorry Dad it is just that the school is too much on us, that is why we decided to be sick at least for a day. Don't kill us Dad" (Episode 11).

However, of import here is that Paula's thoughts and desire to speak is not verbalised. The physical and psychological violence that Paula alludes to explicates the visibility of the family space as a silenced one. In this way, punishment as a form of disciplining and correcting the wrongs by children turns out to be a form of silencing. It instills fear and emotional turmoil to the children that inhibits their potential. The punishment fails to correct since it seems to be severe as it is compared to death. Through punishment and violence within Kitali's family, the children's voices have been suppressed by the authoritarian leadership that manifest itself in the father figure. It is only the viewer who is privy to the children's thoughts and feelings and not the parents.

The internal monologue above captures Paula's internal conflict of wanting to say, of the desire to do and of making known thoughts which fail to be realized in speech. The monologue images a repressive environment which has robbed children of their own voice and agency thus gagging them. Additionally, the monologue shows that in a repressive environment, it is only the mind that is free to wander since the oppressor cannot mute it in the same manner as with speech. In this regard, monologue becomes a space within which Paula and Pitch attain some freedom of thought to "articulate" their unvoiced feelings.

One may want to know why the girls resort to internal monologues rather than just speak out loud. I point out that the monologues are significant especially so in a situation where one's voice is muted. The monologues therefore provide a space within which the girls can "speak" freely without fear. In addition, within the sphere of the monologues, Paula and Pitch question, criticise, disapprove, reject and

sometimes agree to what is happening around them. Paula and Pitch's desire to "speak" is in agreement with Duncan Brown's observation that

Popular performance genres from colonial and postcolonial societies suggest that the attempts to silence the other were far from successful: the colonized have continued to speak, often in unofficial ways and from unofficial spaces, but also from the centres of their societies (47).

The monologues become dialogic spaces for debate within the self which in turn empowers one to discern right and wrong. At the same time, the monologues are Paula's and Pitch's cry and thirst for knowledge especially a cry to know more about what is happening around them. Kitali's behaviour is unpredictable and is the reason the girls are always afraid of him and what he is capable of. For instance, when Kitali finds his twin daughters entertaining a boy neighbour, Paula in a monologue says "dear God, I wish I never hatched this plan. What is in Dad's mind, only God knows (Episode 11). Inherent in this monologue is Paula's cry to know. Paula's innocent concern about what is in her father's head in the quotation above confirms the children's yearning for knowledge.

In addition, through the internal monologues, the viewer is able to get pictures and snippets of the girls' experiences. The fact that the girls' experiences are relayed to the viewer through the girl's position is significant in as far as reading the marginal space is concerned. As twelve year old girls, they are children and marginalised in terms of important happenings in Kitali's family. Therefore the internal monologues are used to define Paula's and Pitch's position of "otherness" in their own family and at the same time a demonstration of resistance by the girls. The girls speak from the marginal position, on the fringes of the Kitali family. What is interesting and ironical is that, it is within this marginal space that Paula and Pitch get the agency in telling their experiences. Towards the end of the text, both Paula and Pitch have attained

significant agency as they speak their thoughts with ease. A case in point is when their father beats their mother.

On the morning when their mother is beaten, they were supposed to be dropped to school by their father. However, he had changed his plans that their mother does that. The girls are aware that the parents had fought the previous night and it is the reason their mother has a swollen face and a black eye. Of the two girls, Paula is the most affected by what her father has done. Paula tells her mother that it is not right since this is not the first time she is beaten as shown in the quotation below:

Paula: *(In an internal monologue: Somehow, Dad and Mum fought and this brought us really down. I didn't like the way mum wanted me to respect Dad, especially a man who battered her day in day out.) (Rebecca calls them) Mum, we heard everything that happened last night and we know what is going on.*

Pitch: Mum we are no longer babies. We know what is going on.

Rebecca: *(wiping tears)* I am fine, ok! I had a small fight with your father but I am ok, alright. You need to go and change into school uniform I take you to school.

Paula: This is not the first time this is happening.

Pitch: Mum you need to do something before he kills you.

Paula and Pitch are concerned about their mother's life especially with constant beatings as seen in the quotation above. The children feel that if the beating is not controlled, Kitali will one day kill their mother. The excerpt captures Paula's disparagement of her own father as she refers to him as "a man used to beat my mother." This declaration is significant as it points at Paula's agency from the peripheral position they have occupied all along. During the fighting, Paula goes to her parents' bedroom door holding a wooden rod as she shouts "that is enough, am tired of this! Stop beating my mother!" and on the morning after the night ordeal, Paula tells her mother that she must do something before her father kills her.

Paula's outburst and advice to her mother is a revolt and a voice for the subjugated women who have chosen to keep quiet such as her mother. On the need for agitation for equality, Paul Freire succinctly points out that:

In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform (49).

Freire's argument in the quotation above underscores the need for action by the oppressed in terms of making use of the opportunities available. Paula's awakened consciousness provides a window within which she transformatively subverts structures that dictate her being. On the use of violence in its varied forms, Etienne Balibar points out that violence is "the repetition of certain habitual dominations at the invisible or indiscernible limit of violence because, it seems, they are part of the very foundations of society or culture" (10). On her part, Obioma Nnaemeka describes actions such as what Paula does as "women's desire for freedom, a desire that often assumes the form of counter violence, but also other channels such as writing and solidarity/sisterhood through which women survive and gain freedom" (18-19). In Paula's case, the channel available to freedom is being in solidarity with her mother, talking and writing as seen in the diary she keeps. In this way, Paula wrestles the various obstacles institutionalised and normalised by the oppressor such as violence that inform Kitali's behaviour.

To this end, Paula deconstructs the long-held view that equates submissive and "powerlessness" as values that define women especially in the African society. This is because such long held practices fail to acknowledge the fact that as post-colonial subjects, women are likely to offer resistance from within the dominating forces that

work to contain them. Commenting on Asian American women, Insook Lee observes that:

Women like postcolonial subjects, have an ability to enter into the “interstitial space” created by power imbalance to subversively negotiate their identities and thus resist and potentially transform the unequal relationships from the inside out. This resistance is different from an oppositional, confrontational Western model based on binary thinking. Rather, as a “hybrid” subject that practices both the “discipline of civility” and “disobedience” and has both the capacity to be contained and to resist containment ... women become agents who can threaten the dominating power from within (11).

The quotation above is significant as it relates to Paula’s ability to question structures that undermine women’s emancipation within the unequal power equilibrium in society. By moving out of the space designed for her by her father and society at large, Paula has actually occupied the third space and it is within this space that she is able to offer her resounding resistance to her father’s authority. Paula’s marginal position is used as a source of knowledge in her agitation for agency. In doing this, the text succeeds in giving the women (masses) in Kitali’s household “a space from which they generate alternative interpretative modes and, in turn, speak out and become an agent of their own history” (Kehinde 49).

However, Rebecca struggles to convince Paula and Pitch that all is fine. In saying this, Rebecca unconsciously imparts the same complacency of wife battery in her girls. Unlike her daughters who see that things are not ok, Rebecca says the contrary. In fact, Rebecca is not different from Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus* who is always battered by her abusive husband but often takes it as her fate as she tells Aunt Ifeoma that she has nowhere to go to. This is similar to Rebecca who claims everything is fine when we know that she is an abused woman. In fact, the camera focuses on her face where the viewer is able to see that despite her claim the she was fine, her face

shows the contrary. Rebecca is therefore symbolic of women who are indoctrinated to believe that violence and wife battery is a normal occurrence.

On the contrary, Paula and Pitch are not ready to accept the cover-up advanced by their mother. When their father shows up, Paula is visibly annoyed with him. He tries to play the whole issue down by giving the girls their weekly allowance, however, Paula defiantly rejects the money. Kitali is speechless as his hand remains extended to Paula while still holding the money. Paula's rejection of the money interrogates and destabilises the manipulative tools used by their father to coerce them into docility. Paula's action confirms John Hyland's argument that the "Other must construct herself as an autonomous subject by destabilizing those discourses that produced her" (5). In rejecting the money, Paula has consciously rejected the silencing instruments used by her father. In this way, Paula offers resistance to the oppressor's expectation thus a case of ambivalence. Paula's action confirms Bhabha's views as he locates "resistance in the spaces between the [oppressor's] expectations and the [oppressed's] response, so that the disempowered can calculate strategies, 'alter,' and 'displace' authority within these in-between spaces (Riyad Shahjahan 276).

Rebecca insists that Paula has to take the money since what she was doing was disrespecting her father. She eventually takes the money but throws it on the floor in the presence of her father. This takes Julius by surprise as he has never encountered such behaviour in his house. At this point, it is not Paula's speech that matters but her action which emasculates Kitali in the presence of other "marginal persons" in his family. Paula does not talk but just stares straight into her father's eyes. Paula's action is a defiance of her father's authority and power that is masked in the money he gives them. This is significant as it is the first time the girls revoltingly reject their father's

hypocrisy-a gentleman physically but a brute inside. Julius confirms his violent character by saying that “I am very impatient with people who go against my principles.... I don’t advocate for wife battery but I couldn’t help it” (Episode 15).

Through domestic violence, the text raises critical questions and identifies serious concerns regarding the impact of violence as a weapon used to silence women and children in families. The text seems to suggest that violence cannot be sustained by the doer as victims such as Paula, and Pitch adopt strategies that allow them to resist and emancipate themselves. The eventual resistance and challenge of Kitali’s power by Paula leaves him speechless staring at Paula who also stares at him. Paula’s action takes away a percentage of the power that Kitali had wielded before thus emasculating him. In this way, Paula has deconstructed structures that had curtailed her potential. Like Babamukuru who is slapped by his daughter in Tsitsi Dangrebuga’s *Nervous Conditions* or Eugene Achike whose daughter wrestles him as she shields her grandfather’s portrait in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, Julius appears confused and speechless when those he considers marginal revolt.

Paula and Pitch’s agency strips bear the false power that Kitali had been privileged with through patriarchy that place a man in the highest position in the family. Julius confirms such false power when he says:

Sometimes being tough all the time doesn’t help. This time round, I met a tougher lady than me. What baffles me, both of us had forgotten to pick our son from school until 11pm. The headmistress could not allow us to pick our son and she didn’t mince her words. I know Becky was really happy because I had met a tough lady in her presence and my money couldn’t help me out (Episode 14).

What stands out in the quotation above is the fact that the margin has the potential to destabilise male “power” and is the reason why Kitali’s money cannot help in the face of the silenced’s revolt and quest for agency.

When Paula refuses to take the money, Rebecca is seen encouraging her to take the money and that she has to respect her father. Two things come to the fore, one, as a wife and mother in the family, Rebecca is the custodian of norms and customs that define the family as an institution. As such, she is supposed to inculcate the “right” values in the children and at this point, she is performing her role as a mother and wife. In doing this, Rebecca is able to advance order and the power discourses that mark individual positions in the family. This therefore demonstrates that wives and mothers unconsciously aid the father’s exercise of domination in the family. Secondly, the text interrogates Rebecca’s behaviour since she is the one battered by Kitali, yet it is the daughters who speak on her behalf. She is therefore an abettor in the vice of wife battery as seen in her assurance that all is well.

Rebecca’s disposition contradicts what most available research on artistic scholarship has pointed out that education emancipates women. Rebecca Kitali is an educated and a professional woman. We would therefore expect that her finances and education should form a foundation for her empowerment. However, she still remains folded under the traditional roles of a battered woman and therefore a good wife. It is argued that financial stability has potential of liberating women, something that lacks in Rebecca. For instance, in my analysis of Macgoye’s *Coming to Birth*, I argued that:

Paulina’s economic success offers her an inner stability that results from her ability to be self-sufficient and be able to support her extended family as well as herself. By negotiating economic parity with the male, women in the embodiment of Paulina demonstrate their capacity for independent action.

Paulina's economic stability leads to a personal reconstruction of the dispersed female self-leading to her physical beauty (78).

Unlike Paulina who has acquired beauty and agency from her financial stability as observed in the quotation above, Rebecca's financial stability has not accorded her physical beauty since she is battered. The fact that she cannot reconstruct herself in the face of Kitali, is a clear demonstration that she has accepted the margin and has chosen to remain there. This is something that her sister in-law (Aunt Pam) says she cannot fathom by pointing out that "Unajua mimi nashindwa vile madem huishi na chali hata wakichapwa. Mimi siwezi!" (I wonder why women live with men who batter them. Personally, I can't). Pam is used as a mouthpiece in voicing domestic violence in contemporary society.

Pam's observation images the deep rooted silences and gender inequalities that manifest themselves through violence across the world. Hyland observes that "the systemic violence of the post-colony, which is a miniaturized but direct descendent of those beginnings, continues on under cover of seemingly mutable social structures" (5) such as patriarchal structures that define the African family. Commenting on silence, Pauline Ada Uwakweh observes:

Silencing comprises all imposed restrictions on women's social being, thinking and expression that are religiously or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or mutual female structure (75).

The citation above demonstrates how silence is sustained in contemporary society. In this context, silencing in Kitali's family is not only a manifest of patriarchal order but a case of subjection of those oppressed by the system. Rebecca has not only failed to claim her voice but has also failed in terms of being a mother. Aunt Pam decries this by asking Julius:

How well do you know your children? I did not even know that there was a boy in this house, I had gone to school to seek permission for both the girls since they were sick and each teacher I met had an issue with each one of them. But do you know what, I don't blame them, I blame you. You don't even know your children. It is like you are living with strangers in this house (Episode 11).

The quotation above highlights the fact that Julius and his wife have neglected their duty as parents. Aunt Pam squarely lays the blame on Julius and his wife for their failure to nurture their children.

Apart from the above, the use of Angel (Rebecca's daughter out of wedlock) is key in reading silence. This girl is forced to stay with her grandmother in the village and endures a lot of hardships. Initially, her mother used to pay her school fees on time but has since stopped. She is therefore sent away from school. While conversing with her friend, Angel says:

Angel: I don't know what is happening to my mum lately. She has really changed.

Friend: Don't take me badly, my mother told me that your mother has deeply entered into politics.

Angel: That is not a good enough reason for her not to pay my school fees.

Friend: Yaa, but why can't you talk to your step dad. I heard he is a very rich man. He may help.

Angel: I even wonder if he knows that I exist. I have never visited them and even don't know the twins. Do you remember the photos I showed you?

Friend: Yaa I do. By the way one of them resembles you so much

Angel: That is Pitch, the eldest sister. The other one is Angel Paula. We share the first name. It's quite confusing.

The dialogue above captures Angel's dilemma and predicament as a child. Education is a basic need for all children yet Angel cannot attend school because of fee arrears. Her mother has never invited her to the city despite the wealth they have. Initially, she does not want to go to her mother as she is not welcome. However, she is later forced by harsh realities in the village and she decides to follow her mother in the city. On

arrival, her mother warns her against revealing her identity. If this is done, then she is assured of good life in Kitali's house.

This arrangement places her to the periphery as seen in her position and relation to the rest of the Kitalis. She is taken to the school where the Kitali twins study but she is still "othered". The inhuman treatment of Angel in Kitali's household images the insensitivity of parents to the plight their children face. Instead of Rebecca embracing Angel in similar manner as Paula and Pitch, she is ashamed of her because of her illegitimacy. This serves to "other" Angel since she does not belong to the ideal mainstream family. Angel's predicament is symbolic of the plight faced by children born out of wedlock as she cannot have equal access to family resources and material benefits. The treatment meted on Angel best fits into Edward Said's concept of the "other." This is because the "other" is usually perceived to lack in qualities of the one looking down upon him or her. In Angel's case, she lacks the legitimacy therefore she is "othered", silenced and pushed to the margin of this family.

Angel's relocation from the village to the city is to better her life. This is particularly informed by the misconception that the city is greener in terms of opportunities. This misconception has been the reason for increased rural urban migration that characterise life in post-colonial African cities. Commenting on migration, Tina Steiner points out that "migration is characterised by a movement from an often oppressive system that made the exodus necessary in the first place to a host environment, which instead of facilitating the building of a new home rejects the migrant on racial or cultural grounds" (4). In Angel's case, her rejection is based on cultural grounds that stigmatise children born out of wedlock. Angel encounters an unfriendly environment that alienates her in the presence and watchful eyes of her

own mother. As an illegitimate child, she continues leading her life in a marginal space despite the affluence that surrounds the family. Her existence in this family confirms how hostile the home, family and society are towards her.

The forced silence does not last since Angel starts to interrogate the marginal position she has been pushed into. Angel protests this discrimination by confronting her mother. To silence her, Rebecca promises to buy her anything she asks for and even promises to take her out. Like Kitali, Rebecca uses money to buy her daughter's silence and loyalty. Angel's relationship with her sisters is strained to the extent of being referred to as a pest out to enjoy Kitali's affluence. Initially, Angel had embraced silence as the only weapon out of her predicament. On silence as a strategy, Michael Marais observes that:

Silence is neither a sign of submission nor merely a strategy of passive resistance, but a counter-strategy, through which the other preserves, even asserts, its anterior status and in so doing interrogates the fixity of dominant power structures and positions (74-75).

Marais' observation underscores the ability of the silenced in interrogating the structures that inhibit their individuality and potential. Through the use of Angel, the text raises questions about parenthood and the parent's failure in nurturing their children whether biological or adopted.

When the insults and abuses become unbearable, Angel resorts to violence and verbal outbursts to defend herself from her often provoking sisters. Through violent attacks, Angel is able to create her own voice in interrogating the injustices she has endured all along in the hands of the Kitali family. Angel's acts of defiance are powerful statements of asserting her identity. She is no longer a victim but an actor and a partaker in her situation as a child. The inability to remain silent is what informs

Angel's outburst in the text. The outbursts help her to step out of silence by upsetting the modern family social structure and demystifying the idealised images of the African child in contemporary society.

Another character worth analysing in this text is Aunt Pam. Unlike the other female characters in Julius Kitali's household, Aunt Pam is assertive. When Julius blames Pam for allowing a man into his house, Pam tells him that:

Mr. Julius Kitali, look at me keenly (*hands akimbo*). I am neither your wife nor your daughters. I was only taking care of your children because you and your wife were away. So many things have happened. Here is a letter from school from both their teachers (Episode 11).

And later in a dialogue, she tells Julius:

Julius listen to me, you do not have respect for me and you heard me clearly. You treat me like a house help and embarrass me in front of your tough headed children? You should have packed them in your expensive suitcase and flown with them wherever you wanted to (Episode 11).

The quotations above depicts Pam as knowledgeable hence evinces power as an emancipated individual. According to Foucault, knowledge is vital in reading oppression since knowledge and power are intertwined. Pam's demeanor demonstrates that she is knowledgeable and powerful. By reminding Julius that she is neither his wife nor his daughters, Pam communicates to Julius that he has no power to control and manipulate her the way he does with his family. Pam's declaration confirms Harald Weinrich observation that:

A husband and father as head of the household derived from this economic control of his dominant position in the family and full authority over his wives and children. He was respected and feared because everybody realized his power over them. His words had always to be obeyed and those who aroused his displeasure were physically punished (47).

Pam's refusal to obey what society has privileged Julius demarcates his power and authoritative behaviour to being only viable in his family. At this point, Pam subverts patriarchal structures that bestows the father absolute power over his household and at

the same time requiring those under him to comply without questioning. Pam's voice in the above quotation is crucial as it disorients the hegemony that has existed in Julius' house. Kitali is the only person who has been speaking and making decisions on behalf of others, in this way, Pam is supposed to have surrendered her voice to Julius. However, Pam is not ready to let go her voice and be silenced by the patriarchal controlling instruments. It is within her rebellious personality that she refuses to be acted upon by men in the embodiment of her own brother.

Pam is fast in reminding Kitali that he has no respect for her. As a woman, ordinarily the mishandling of Pam would have passed as a normal thing given Julius' reaction. Pam debunks the myth and fear created around Julius as a person and by so doing rejects the label of a subject supposed to be acted upon. Pam subverts what Achille Mbembe refers to as "official fictions that underwrite the apparatus of domination" (111) personified through Julius Kitali. Commenting on the construction of individuals as subjects in the society, Louis Althusser points out that the:

Invention of ourselves as concrete, individual, distinguishable and naturally irreplaceable beings and the belief of ourselves as people who form our own ideas and who act on the basis of these ideas is to think of human beings in ideological categories of subjects (162).

The subject position seems to be what *Angel's Diary* interrogates in presenting a strong willed personality in the character of Aunt Pam. Althusser's argument points to the fact that people's perception of themselves as subjects is inculcated in them by the ideological apparatus such as Julius Kitali. In this way, the subject comes out as a construction of society in the manner in which one is socialized.

The text raises critical questions of how the subject is socialised to be complacent in the marginal position that society has pushed them into. Women's assumption of the

subject/dominated position needs to be debunked to free them from the mental disease of complacency. This is because socialisation in most societies emphasises the binary oppositional relationship of subordination and superiority of different people. Dominica Dipio points out that “these patterns are continuously reproduced and insisted upon as natural, eternal and unchangeable. Social institutions, both formal and informal, socialise their members to reinforce distinct gender roles and differentiate between women and men” (78).

To gain individual agency, there is need for the oppressed to wrestle societal structures placed in their way in order to free themselves from any form of limitation. Kitali’s demand that Pam owes him an explanation is informed by the fact that he has the power and deserves to know by force. In knowing one acquires knowledge and it is in this sphere of knowledge that one can make decisions. Pam refuses to give Kitali the information he so much demands from her. This is the reason why Julius is zombified standing there in the presence of his daughters not knowing what to do when Pam leaves.

Aunt Pam like other women in Kitali’s house was expected to stoop low to comply with her brother’s demand for an explanation. However, I read Julius’ outbursts and demands as false acts of power. In as much as Julius expects Pam to behave in similar manner as his wife and daughters, Pam is “rebellious”. Pam’s level of consciousness has helped her to transcend social limitations to reach a new self that is liberated and free, a self that talks than being silent. Unlike the other women characters in Kitali’s family, Pam is strong willed. Her stubbornness and courage become the only weapons against male dominance.

Pam is contrasted with Rebecca Kitali who is silent under Kitali. Pam's behaviour resonates with Frantz Fanon's concepts on the process of decolonisation where he argues that the oppressed suffer from psychopathology and that for decolonisation to happen, the mind has to be liberated. This is because it is the mind that is indoctrinated to accept what society has normalised. In most cases, complacency as illustrated through Rebecca leads to women's acceptance of the marginal position. On the contrary, Fanon proposes a violent rejection of such mentalities to acquire free thinking approach to overcome injustices and attain freedom. In the quotation above, Pam does not adopt the physical violence but uses her tongue to free herself from her brother's domination.

4.4 Conclusion

This Chapter has examined the silence in Julius Kitali's family which is as a result of the demeaning presence of the father figure. The looming presence of the father in this family has instilled fear in the children and the wife thus limiting their potential. Julius Kitali uses his privileged masculine position to intimidate and marginalise his family from being active participants in the decision-making process. However, despite this, the characters devise ways of transcending the silence to assume a level of agency.

For instance, the chapter has demonstrated that the journeys that the children in Kitali's house embark on are conscious awakening and once they come back home, they are empowered and can engage their father. The Chapter further read women's marginal positions as having been made possible through the domination that exist in the society. On this, the chapter used Fanon's argument of decolonisation and

psychopathology to demonstrate how women need to be decolonised to free themselves from dominating structures in the post-colonial state.

This chapter through an analysis of women and children, has demonstrated that the traditionally oppressed and subjugated individuals use their silence as a weapon to attain agency by subverting power and authority. The chapter through an elaborate analysis of the different strategies employed by female characters challenge structures that have limited their potential. In this regard, those perceived to be silent need an enabling environment that thrusts them into the subject position. The next chapter is the last chapter of this study and provides the conclusion and findings of the research.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to examine the socio-political spaces in selected television theatre texts aired on Kenya Broadcasting Corporation television. This was done with the aim of interrogating how the selected KBC television theatre texts addressed socio-political spaces through people's daily experiences on a state broadcaster. The study began by contextualizing Kenya Broadcasting Corporation theatre texts within the popular theatre scholarship and proceeded to examine the relationship between the government and artistic production in Kenya. The relationship between the government and artistic production is significant in the study as it helped in contextualizing the study based on a history of censorship which influenced the content and the language of the texts.

The study had the following objectives: to investigate how *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* engage with socio-political issues of the moment beyond entertainment function; to examine the strategies employed in *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* in addressing socio-political issues in Kenya; and to examine how *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary* contest and subvert discourses of inequality, domination and subjugation in Kenya. Theoretically, the study was premised on postcolonial theoretical postulations of Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Frantz Fanon and Michael Foucault and also Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory.

Chapter two investigated the happenings, intrigues, power play and experiences within the family set up and how the same impacts on the outer society. The chapter laid focus on Mzee Ojwang's family especially how the behaviour of the father in a family affects the the members in varied ways. I read Mzee Ojwang allegorically as

he was compared to leadership in the nation- state. Through critical analysis of the selected texts from *Vitimbi*, the chapter demonstrated how the happenings in Mzee Ojwang's family signified the happenings at the nation-state level. This was especially related to the historical happenings in the study.

Chapter three critically analyzed *Vioja Mahakamani*. Of interest in the chapter is how the text subverts the courtroom setting, which is an "official" space by infusing humor in the performance of serious issues. The analysis examined setting, casting, and humor as significant strategies that were employed to advance the issues. The chapter through selected texts demonstrated that though comically performed, the text addressed serious issues in contemporary Kenya.

Chapter four focused on *Angel's Diary* where setting, music, internal monologue, and journeys were interrogated. This was significant in examining how domination and subordination is played out in the text. The chapter further demonstrated how the subjugated individuals such as women subverted structures put in place to curtail them to attain agency. Through subversion, the text showed how fragile power is in the face of the oppressed's agency.

The discussion in all the three chapters is linked to each other through their subversive nature which allows them emerge as commentaries of the socio-political milieu they reflect. The focus in all the chapters is linked to the discourse of power, domination, subjugation and subversion/resistance of the oppressive structures and institutions. By tracing and discussing the lived experiences portrayed in the selected studied texts, the study draws similarities between the socio-political experiences in Kenya through the historical referents given in support of the discussion.

Chapter one outlines how discourses of domination and subordination is advanced in the thesis. Therefore, the study investigated manifestations of different forms of domination and subordination both at macro- and micro- levels in Kenya. In the main, the study examined manifestations of domination in the society such as gender, family hierarchies, masculinity, ethnicity, and class as discussed in several chapters of the study. These are contemporary experiences beyond the entertainment function of the selected texts.

The different popular television theatre episodes aired on KBC analysed in this study are compelling enough in helping us to revisit popular views and ways on how theatre has been received and consumed in Kenya. Popular cultural products by their nature and in general, have in most cases been disparaged, especially by those who look at them as lacking the seriousness with which the elite arts have as observed in the literature review of this thesis. However, my analysis has shown the contrary, since the selected texts have staked a niche in the provision of avenues through which the performance of the daily experiences of Kenyans is anchored and staged.

This study established that KBC television theatre texts analyzed were not censored by the state yet they incisively interrogated the socio-political happenings in Kenya. This was informed by the fact that they are comedies, thus partially thought to be "trivial". Comedy relies much on humour and laughter. However, it is important to point out that it is within this laughter that the texts addressed the serious socio-political happenings in Kenya. Further, in a repressive regime, laughter becomes a key component and strategy in parodying the powers that be. Thus, laughter as a strategy creates a window through which texts comment on sensitive socio-political

experiences. The study also found out that though the studied texts employ humour, they were able to transcend this humour and mere reflection of what is ailing society. This is because the texts raise philosophical and pertinent issues in as far as post-independence society is concerned.

The study situated the selected KBC television texts in Kenya's historical and social political milieu. This was done deliberately not because the texts were commentaries of historical and socio-political happenings but that as popular cultural expressions, their very existence is informed by the happenings of the day. It is within such interactions that the same texts could offer dissent, contradictions, and above all agitate for recognition as cultural products capable of countering official discourses.

In this way, the popular television theatre succeeds in carving a niche for itself as a rich field of scholarship and as an artistic production complete in itself. In addition, the study found out that the television theatre texts analyzed in the study used appropriate strategies in addressing a number of socio-political issues in contemporary Kenya. This conclusion affirms Ngugi's observation that an artist is a product of society. In this way, the texts demonstrate their awareness of the socio-political conditions of their society through the performances.

Tribalism was-and remains- a serious socio-political issue in present day Kenya. The existence and perpetuation of ethnic discrimination in Kenya is particularly fueled by people in powerful positions especially the politicians. For instance, in *Vitimbi*, ethnic prejudice/tribalism is advanced by Mzee Ojwang who is the father figure in this family. While in *Vioja Mahakamani*, it is the political leaders (in the persona of Ondieki, and Olexanda) who exploit their ethnic groupings to gain political mileage.

As a result, the undertones of ethnic bias propagated by politicians negatively impact the country's cultural and ethnic diversity. Among the consequences of such ethnic discrimination and favouritism is tribal animosity and intertribal clashes that lead to displacement, deaths, rape and a retarded economic growth.

Another issue that came to the fore in my analysis was poverty, especially in Kenya's urban centres. Using *Vioja Mahakamani's* episodes *The International Day of the African Child* and *Marehemu Ocholla*, the study explored the problems that street families and the poor in urban centres encounter in their struggle for survival. Through a reading of the selected episodes, the study established that the presence of street families and the urban poor juxtaposed against the rich depicted the different social classes in contemporary Kenya. *The International Day of the African Child* and *Marehemu Ocholla* explored at length how the urban poor struggle for survival in the city. This is because the little money they get is not enough to cater for their basic needs. The child character in *The International Day of the African Child* suggested his willingness to go to school if he could get a sponsor. The child character underscores the significance of education as a means of attaining a decent life and a form of empowerment. The absence of opportunities and decent employment that is likely to make the life of the characters better results to either street or slum life as seen in the life of characters in this text.

The street children's involvement in crime is a consequence of deprivation. The children's vulnerability becomes a source of insecurity to the privileged individuals in the society. By juxtaposing Ondieki with Makokha and the street families, the text depicts the failure of the post-independence Kenyan government in bridging the socio-economic gap. This episode therefore satirizes the government and the rich for

standing in the way of equality which could have seen the population in contemporary Kenya savoring the fruits of independence together.

Vioja Mahakamani also images the harsh socio-political and economic realities in urban centres. *Marehemu Ocholla* is specifically interested in the manner in which ordinary people in urban centres acquire their daily livelihood. The squalor in which the majority of people in the metropolitan live predisposes them to immoral activities so long as they can get their way out of the economic incapacity. This episode shows how and why Ocholla's penis is chopped off. His assailants plan to sell it to a witchdoctor. For Kokoto and Makokha, the fulfillment of their socio-economic needs is more important than moral consideration. Beyond this, the study also established that the penis cannot only be read as a part of male anatomy or sexual and gender identity mark. The body was conceptualized as a text that elicited other interpretations and meanings. The study established that the use of the obscene and humor in this episode allowed the text to parody power by showing its fragility and instability.

The study has also established that KBC theatre texts not only address the issue of marginalization and silencing but also portray the strategies employed by the marginalized to attain individual agency. Using *Angel's Diary*, the study demonstrates that most women characters in this text have been socially silenced but gradually assert themselves. Rebecca Kitali, Paula Kitali and Pitch Kitali are all silenced by Julius Kitali. In the same text, Aunt Pam is depicted as having an awareness of her rights and does not allow the silencing apparatus to act on her in similar manner as the Kitalis. However with time, Paula, Pitch and Rebecca crawl out of the marginal position as they claim their agency.

Using *Angel's Diary*, the study established that the silenced are not “silent” but have a language of their own used to destabilise hegemonic discourses and social practices hindering their growth. What was interesting in this text is the behavior of the dominant power in the presence of an assertive “other.” Initially the father figure was powerful but the moment the marginalized attain their agency, he is unable to act. The study concluded that such behavior is informed by the fact that patriarchy had privileged Kitali as the man in his household. As such, when faced with a situation that requires him to decide, he is unable hence a pointer to the fact that his power was borrowed power and cannot be sustained.

On strategies, the study begun with the settings of the selected three KBC theatre texts. The action in *Vitimbi* takes place in Mzee Ojwang's family. I referred to this as the domestic setting. The action in this text revolves around Mzee Ojwang and his relationship with other characters he interacts with, *Vioja Mahakamani* has its setting in the courtroom. I pointed out that this was used deliberately to authenticate the text and to demonstrate the ability of popular theatre to enter the official space of the courtroom and subvert it to its advantage. In doing this, popular theatre proves to be a viable means in providing alternative interventions in addressing the social realities. Like *Vitimbi*, *Angel's Diary* has a familial setting in the affluent middle class family of Julius Kitali.

Artistic setting is significant in the analysis and interpretation of the theatre texts under study. *Vitimbi* and *Angel's Diary* take place within the domestic setting. The study examined how the domestic setting was used as a strategy to mask and advance themes that would otherwise be censored. Through the domestic setting, the study

shows the power relations within the domestic space and how it advances discourses of domination and subordination. In addition, within the domestic space, wider societal experiences are advanced and interrogated. In *Vitimbi*, Mzee ojwang was read as a signification of leadership at the nation-state. In this way, he was read as an allegory and that his family members are a miniature version of the subjects of a nation. Like *Vitimbi*, *Angel's Diary* happenings within the domestic setting highlighted the power dichotomy that marks relationships within the family. The study established that the father had subjugated and silenced his family courtesy of the power embodied in him by society. Despite the power bestowed to the father, the study established that the oppressed members devised ways and strategies to subvert structures that curtailed their agency thereby emasculating the father.

Vioja Mahakamani is set in the courtroom. This setting, the study established, was used deliberately as a strategy to demonstrate the ability of popular television theatre to enter into and subvert the “official space” with the aim of commenting on serious happenings. Through humour, the text succeeds in attacking unbecoming behaviour and also indicting those in positions of power. The courtroom setting is also significant as it allows the audience access to Kenyan law in a simplified manner. This is contrasted to an ordinary court session that is marked with seriousness and abstract law that requires interpretation.

Characters in most artistic work are symbolic as they aid in the interpretation of the text and also advance themes and ideologies of a given society. Depending on a given culture and community, characters evoke particular feelings. Vladimir Propp observes that “semiotic analysis of characters puts emphasis on the function of characters” (36). All the three selected texts borrowed heavily from the various ethnic groupings

in Kenya. Most characters had names and mannerisms that would neatly place them in a particular community in present day Kenya. For instance, in *Vitimbi*, Mzee Ojwang is from the Luo community, Mogaka from the Kisii community, Mwala from the Kamba community, Olematope from the Maasai community; in *Vioja Mahakamani*, Gideon Ondieki Nyuka Kwota Oloba man Kidi is from the Luo community, Makokha from the Luhya community, Kokoto from the Luhya, Olexanda Josephat Olimidi Msigun from the Maasai community, Zubeida Olexanda from the Somali community, and lastly, in *Angel's Diary*, the Kitalis are from the Luhya community.

Characterisation was particularly important as it mapped and reflected the different ethnicities that make up Kenya. This was resourceful in discussing the issue of ethnicity. I concluded that ethnicity is a critical issue that requires collective responsibility in order to be addressed fully. However, if such tribal stereotypes as demonstrated in each of the texts is left to flourish, they are likely to exacerbate cases of “othering” which is likely to distance people from one another because of discourses of belonging and unbelonging. This is likely to be an impediment to the realisation of a unified Kenya. Therefore, brotherly embrace as advocated by the court in *Vioja Mahakamani* can only be realised if Kenyans identify one another as belonging to the family of the Kenyan nation. The hope of having a unified nation as advanced in the text is in agreement with what Loren Kruger refers to as “a subjunctive enactment of a desirable future” (10). However, the study also established that discourses that agitate for nationalism and brotherhood as seen in *Vioja Mahakamani* does not only suppress difference but are also a source of diversity. This is because in as much as the court ruling at the end of each performance is aimed at

calls for brotherhood, it also points at that difference that need to be embraced in the course of harmonious co-existence.

The journey motif was significant especially in *Angel's Diary*. I read the journey as a reflection of the efforts by certain characters to outgrow the limitations that inform their live. Paula and Pitch in this text make journeys to different locales, away from the Kitali home. Paula goes to Aunt Pam while Pitch travels upcountry, where they separately come face to face, with the social realities outside the affluence in Kitali's home. These journeys facilitate the growth of both Paula and Pitch. The journeys involve acquisition of knowledge and skills that enable the characters to seize their voices and become active agents of their lives. In addition, Pitch's and Paula's logging of the different experiences they encountered in the places they journeyed to was informative to the study.

Based on the above discussion, this study concludes that despite the studied texts having been domiciled and aired on KBC as a state broadcaster, the texts through a number of theatrical strategies artistically addresses the different socio-political issues that have come to define people's lived experiences in Kenya. The representation of socio-political spaces contextualised in the making of Kenya as a nation-state help us to witness the different socio-political experiences through the different episodes studied. In this way, KBC television theatre not only entertains but also suggests and voices socio-political negotiations related to gender, class, familial relationships, leadership, accountability and ethnic realities.

This study focused on Kenya Broadcasting Corporation popular television theatre texts. The study was delimited on a selected number of episodes from *Vitimbi*, *Vioja Mahakamani* and *Angel's Diary*. By examining the strategies employed in each text,

the study interrogated the socio-political concerns advanced. However, informed by the richness of popular television theatre, the study opens up opportunities for more studies on technical aspects and theatrical elements of popular television theatre. In addition, comparative studies of theatre texts aired on KBC and any other private media broadcaster in Kenya should be carried out. There is also need to carry out studies on the power of humor in dictatorial regimes as advanced through popular television theatre.

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Inflammatory Publications

Hate Speech

The International Day for the African Child

Vijana

Marehemu Ochola

Vitimbi (1975-2014). Episodes analysed:

Safari (Journey)

Mpenzi (Lover)

Biashara ya Ng'ambo (Overseas Business)

Ndizi au Chungwa (Banana or Orange)

Chama (Table Banking)

Mkopo (Loan)

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