1. Introduction

The paper focuses on generational conflicts as depicted in four Swahili novels namely: *Vuta N’kuvute*, *Kufa Kuzikana*, *Msimu wa Vipepeo* and *Tumaini*. Generational conflicts depicted in the novels are seen as a contest between tradition and modernity when viewed against the cultural changes that have taken place within the East African societies. Authors have deployed *narrative voice* and *focalization* narrative techniques to communicate the implied author’s ideological stance on the notions of tradition and modernity in respect to the conflicting issues captured in each novel.

Section two highlights some postulations about the concepts of ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’. The third section discusses the concepts of generation and generational conflicts while the fourth focuses on *narrative voice* and *focalization* as the narrative strategies that reveal generational conflicts portrayed in the four novels. The final section is the conclusion relating the ideological stance of the implied author in relation to the concepts of modernity and tradition.

2. Tradition and Modernity

‘Tradition’ and ‘modernity’ are social constructs that elude water tight definitions by virtue of their temporal connotations. Subsequently, there are contrasting views as to whether modernity and tradition should be conceived as dichotomies or rather as two sides of the same coin in the light of a dynamic society (Gusfield 1967).

‘Modernity’ as a term has been criticized for its connotation that the present is discontinuous with the past. For instance, Chabal and Daloz (1999) assert that it is possible for a society to manifest traditional and modern characteristics at the same time. Oommen observes that the underlying assumption behind the tradition-modernity dichotomy is the proposition that there is a wide variety of traditional societies and that a series of ‘izations’, for example, industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization, will eventually bring about a single global or world society. He argues that the notion of unilinear globalization and singular globality is untenable for the following reasons: first and foremost, the displacement, whether cultural or otherwise, is never total and invariably partial. Secondly, the process of displacement differs across societies in the sense that what is displaced in one society may not necessarily be displaced in another society. Thirdly, accrual of alien elements into societies is necessarily selec-
tive. He thus concludes that the perception of a monolithic globality and modernity should be examined with great care (2001: 1).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve in a detailed discussion of what tradition and modernity mean. However, to provide a basis of our discussion of how generational conflicts in the Swahili novels are a manifestation of a contest between the two concepts, we shall highlight some of the features that are generally associated with modernity and tradition.

Normally, modernization refers to the overall societal process by which societies change technologically, socially, politically, economically and culturally. As (Giddens 2002) observes, ‘modernity’ as an expression encapsulates the progress of societies from primitive civilizations to more advanced ones. He notes that societies have evolved through distinct stages, arriving at a modern age characterized by industrialization and capitalism, culminating in the current, post-modern state of globalization. Browning, Halcli and Webster (2000: 166) also admit that a defining feature of modernity is the realization of democracy, demanded by a free-thinking people, originating from Industrial Revolution in Western Europe throughout the mid eighteenth century, and the French Revolution of 1789. The radical feature of the Enlightenment brought about significant changes in society which continue to reverberate to this day. Consequently, a society exhibiting modernity tends to value “individualism (with free will and choice), mobility and progress” (Macionis & Plummer 2008).

On the contrary, tradition-oriented societies tend to value filial piety, harmony and group welfare, stability, and interdependence (Macionis and Plummer 2008). In traditional societies, the family was responsible for gathering and distributing food, educating, and bestowing essential survival skills on their children. Toennies defines this type of social arrangement as ‘Gemeinschaft’ — a society based on traditional values, shared belief and affection bonds (Kivisto 2004: 91). However as man developed more sophisticated tools and modes of production, the traditional society gave way to more advanced societies leading to what is now referred to as modern or even postmodern societies (Macionis & Plummer 2008).

Therefore, modernity and tradition are notions that are only conceivable in a dynamic society. Since every human society evolves with the passage of time, the dichotomy between tradition and modernity is generally associated with a linear model of social change in which societies evolve from a traditional status to a modern one. Therefore it is better to talk of ‘multiple modernities’ rather than modernity without anything added since ‘modernity’ or ‘progress’ are relative concepts (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992). In addition, whether the transition of any given society from a traditional status is totally linear is a question that is of concern to the current study.

Some scholars have contended that change in any given society is gradual and it is not necessarily smooth. There is no simple linear move from tradition to modernity since one can be both ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ at the same time (Chabal & Daloz 1999). Individuals and groups are able to draw upon tradition in a way that enables them to accommodate to the
modern world (Oommen 2001: 1). Indeed as Arce and Long (1999: 4) observe, the term ‘modern’ connotes a sense of belonging to the present and an awareness of the past to which people can link and at the same time distance themselves. Consequently, we can only talk of modernity in relation to tradition.

Probably cultural theories of modernity could offer an explanation of how generational conflicts are indeed a manifestation of a struggle between modernity and tradition. Taylor (2001: 1) argues that cultural theories of modernity tend to describe the transition to modernity in terms of a loss of traditional beliefs and allegiances. Mobility and urbanization are understood to erode the beliefs and reference points of relatively static rural society. The loss may also arise from increasing prevalence of modern scientific reason. Such change may be positively valued, or it may be negatively judged as disaster by those who value traditions and see scientific reasoning as too narrow.

Mlacha (1988: 45-46) concedes that in the second half of the 20th century the African societies were seen in the face of two generations in opposition where the older generation was faced by a younger generation that refused to take what the older generation have inherited and are to transmit. On the other hand, the younger generation wanted the older generation to recognise and accept the new values they had learnt despite the fact that they were new in their culture. He observes that it is mainly after 1970 that the question of two cultures has received more attention in Kiswahili literature, noting the tension existing which has been created by the conflict between the traditionally established culture and the foreign culture inherited from the colonial rule. The current study focuses on the generational conflicts captured in the four Swahili novels and how they demonstrate this tension between traditional cultural values and the ones of modern.

Therefore, ‘modernity’ in this study denotes all those cultural practices associated with Western culture. They include Western form of education, Christianity, gender equity, human rights and dignity, freedom of choice and urban life. Tradition, in contrast, designates all those cultural practices that are associated with rural life, such as ethnic and kinship loyalties, observation of traditional customs such as circumcision and burial rites, traditional marriage and gender roles and conventional forms of healing and medicine.
3. What is a Generational Conflict?

Generally, a conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources (Boulding 1962: 5). Sources of adversarial relationships are not limited to tangible economic interest or control over power, but also extend to value and identity differences (Jeong 2008: 5). Subsequently, a conflict arises when individuals or groups of people clash due to their varied opinions, ideas, values and beliefs over pertinent socio-cultural and political establishments.

On the other hand, generation is a categorization term that defines a person’s position in familial descent or social position in respect to his/her age mates. This is what Mannheim (1952) means when he uses the term generation to refer to a person’s biological and/or his/her social placement. Generation as a biological placement designates an individual’s position in familial descent. In this sense, a parent and his/her child belong to two different generations. Conversely, social placement considers the age group that an individual belongs to in a given society.

This study adopts O’Donnell’s definition of generation as an age group or a cohort. O’Donnell (1985: 2) asserts that a generation is a form of age group comprising of all those members of a society who were born approximately at the same time, whether or not they are related by blood. From this perspective, a generation is synonymous to an age group or a cohort. A cohort consists of a group of persons born around the same time who share a particular set of social and historical experiences (Ryder 1965). Since each cohort has a distinctive demographic composition and characteristics, it grows up with a particular set of age norms, expectations, and opportunities that help condition the attitudes and behaviour of its members throughout life. Consequently, social and political events may have differential effects on the various generations in society depending on each generation’s stage in life-cycle development and its previous experiences.

When a society changes rapidly and cohorts/generations come of age under different conditions, the members of each generation are likely to develop their own perception on cultural and political establishments (Braungart & Braungart 1986: 215). When such perceptions are substantially different from the experiences of others, they may provoke generational conflict. Therefore a generational conflict entails a clash between individuals within (intragenerational conflict) a given generation or between generations (intergenerational conflict) due to their varied opinions, ideas, values and beliefs over certain cultural practices. Mlacha (1988: 45-46) attests to this fact in his argument that the coming of Europeans to the African continent disrupted the economic, political and social structures of the African traditional society. Subsequently, the European influences have created a conflict not only between the members of the younger generation and the older, but also between the members of the younger generation. This point is well illustrated in the section discussing specific examples of generational conflicts.
In most of the African societies, an age group or a generation is the main principle of social organization (Arnold 1960; Lowie 1961). Similarly, we have classified the East African societies captured in the four Swahili novels in four distinct generations based on the typical African family. According to Mbiti (1982: 106), an African family typically consists of grandparents, parents and children. However, in this study we include the youth as a distinct group because in most African societies it is a transition stage when individuals move from childhood to adulthood after undergoing initiation rites (Mbiti 1982: 95). Subsequently, conflicting characters in the novels are placed in similar groupings with roughly 17-year age ranges as given in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Generation</td>
<td>0 – 17 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Generation</td>
<td>18 - 34 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Generation</td>
<td>35 - 52 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparent Generation</td>
<td>53 + years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Narration of Generational Conflicts in the Swahili Novel

4.1. Narrative Voice and Focalization

Before discussing the specific generational conflicts captured in the selected novels, it is expedient to clarify two key concepts namely; narrative voice and focalization. Based on these concepts, the reader is not only able to decipher the specific generational conflicts (as the narrated story) but also their implications in respect to the dichotomy between tradition and modernity.

Several scholars acknowledge the importance of narrative voice and focalization in the analysis of a narrative text. For instance Toolan (2001) points out that focalization highlights the ‘bidirectionality’ of the narrative. The focus on a particular object accomplishes two tasks, firstly revealing the specific object (what is focalized) and secondly, it reveals the perspective or ideologies from which that object is seen. Bortolussi and Dixon (2003: 166-167) also concede that “a theory of focalization should provide an account of the source of knowledge and perception within the text based on the relationship between the narrator and the characters”. More emphatic on this is Chatman’s assertion that any discussion of narrative discourse rests upon the narrator’s voice. However, to understand the concept of narrator’s voice, we must consider among other issues the meaning of ‘point of view’ and its relation to voice. He stresses that in a narrative theory, narrative voice and focalization are the key narrative strategies in the sense that the rest of the devices are dependent on them (Chatman 1978: 147). Indeed Jahn (2007: 96) notes that, if one aims at dividing narratology (narrative theory) into two
major parts, *narration* and *focalization* appear as two suitable candidates. But what do we mean by *narrative voice* and *focalization*? In what ways do they determine the reading of a narrative text?

*Narrative voice* or *voice* basically refers to the narrator or ‘narrative agency’. For Genette (1980: 186), *narrative voice* refers to the speaker or ‘voice’ of the narrative discourse. S/he is the agent who establishes communicative contact with an addressee (the ‘narratee’). This agent decides what is to be told, how it is to be told (especially, from what point of view). As Jahn (2005) notes, *narrative voice* answers the question: *Who speaks?* Therefore, in the current study, *narrative voice* designates the construct that relays the generational conflicts in the Swahili novels.

In a narrative text (the novel included), the *narrative voice* could take the form of the *implied author* (omniscient narrator, heterodiegetic), *character*, or both (Fowler 1977: 76, 81; Wales 1989; Jahn 2007: 102). Sometimes the *narrative voice* is confused with *focalization*. The confusion arises from the fact that sometimes both the narrating agent and the focalizing agent of the story are one and the same thing (Chatman 1978; Genette 1980: 186). However; there are instances when the agent that speaks (*narrative voice*) and the one that sees (*focalizer*) are different as is the case with internal *focalization*. In such a situation, the *narrative voice* is the external or heterodiegetic narrator who is not part of the story but s/he tells the story from the perspective of the character. This can be realized in instances when direct speech is employed in the narration process.

Several scholars attest to the fact that in narrative texts, *narrative voice* and *focalization* are closely related. Fowler (1977: 76) and Rimmon-Kenan (2002: 73-74) rightly observe that it is almost impossible to speak without betraying some personal ‘point of view’, if only through the language used. Mieke Bal (1997: 19) remarks that ‘narration’ always implies *focalization* because language shapes vision and world-view rather than the other way round. Subsequently, narration and *focalization* come out as mutually reinforcing and mutually dependent factors of storytelling (Jahn 2007: 102). If *narrative voice* is the agent that speaks or tells the story in a narrative text, what then is *focalization*?

Essentially, *focalization* refers to the orientation/angle from which the story is presented to the narratee. Rimmon-Kenan (2002: 88) observes:

> The story is presented in the text through the mediation of some ‘perspective’, ‘angle of vision’, verbalized by the narrator though not necessarily his. This mediation is what Genette (1980) refers to as ‘focalization’...This is what Anglo-American readers refer to as ‘point of view’...While *narrative voice* addresses the question; ‘Who speaks?’ *focalization* is concerned with the question; ‘Who sees?’

The term *focalization* is adopted in this study not because it avoids the specifically visual connotations as claimed by Genette (1972: 206). It is rather used as a technical term so that the purely visual sense of the term *focalization* is broadened to include cognitive, emotive and
ideological orientation (Genette 1972: 79-82; Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 71; 2002: 73). The ideological facet of focalization is especially of interest in the current study because it best reveals the implied author’s ideological stance on the narrated story. The ideological facet of focalization is often referred to as ‘the norms of the text’ which consists of ‘a general system of viewing the world conceptually’, in accordance with which the events and characters of the story are evaluated (Unpensky 1973: 8; Rimmon-Kenan 2002: 83).

Normally an author assumes a certain point of view when s/he evaluates and perceives ideologically the world which s/he describes in a narrative text. This point of view, either concealed or openly acknowledged, may belong to the author himself/herself; or it may be the normative system of the narrator, as distinct from that of the author or it may belong to one of the characters. Hence various ideological points of view may be involved in the composition of a text. However, the simplest case occurs when ideological evaluation is carried out from a single, dominating point of view. In this case, this single viewpoint will subordinate all others in the work; if some other point of view should emerge, non concurrent with the dominant one, they will in turn be re-evaluated from the more dominant position (Uspensky 1973: 8-9).

It should be stressed that the authorial point of view (the author’s ideological focalization) refers not to the author’s world view in general, independent of his/her work, but only to the viewpoint which s/he adopts for the organization of the narrative in a particular work. This ideological stance may be communicated either through the central character, or a secondary, even an incidental character. Generally, the main character in a literary work can be either the object of evaluation or its vehicle. However, sometimes a secondary or minor figure only incidentally related to the action may serve as the vehicle for the authorial point of view (Uspensky 1973: 11). This authorial point of view is what is referred to as the implied author’s ideological focalization or stance in the current study. Since the implied author is of crucial importance in this study, we shall briefly explain its meaning and its relationship to the concepts of narrative voice and focalization.

The implied author is the entity through which the real author can postulate whatever norms s/he likes. This entity is reconstructed by the reader from the narrative on the basis of all the textual components (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 88). Chatman stresses that the implied author is not the narrator but rather the principle that invented the narrator, along with everything else in the narrative. Since it is an abstract entity, its voice may not be heard but it nevertheless communicates through the whole design of the text (Chatman 1978: 147-9).

Other scholars see a close link between the implied author and the real author. For Wayne Booth (1961: 67-71) the implied author is an ‘implied version’ of the real author who establishes the norms of the narrative. Jakob Lothe (concedes that the implied author is indeed ‘an image of the author in the text’ (Genette 1988: 141) as well as an expression of ‘textual intention’ (Chatman 1990: 104). The implied author then becomes practically a synonym for the ideological value system that a text, indirectly and by combining all its resources, presents...
and represents (Lothe 2000: 19). It therefore follows that the implied author is indeed the ideological stance that is inferred from the entire text. Suzanne Keen (2003: 32-3) clarifies that there are several levels of communication in a narrative text that involves different agents that play the role of sender and receiver. Among these agents we have the implied author and implied reader which are textual constructs that are projected by the text. The implied author is the version of the author projected by the text itself and sometimes also conditioned by our knowledge about the author’s life and career. This implied author addresses the implied reader that is also projected by the text.

Consequently, the implied author is an entity that represents the real author’s ideology in a narrative text. If we consider that the real author is authoritative by virtue of representing the public voice (since his/her work has been published) (Lanser 1981: 121), then the implied author is equally authoritative. There is a “generative authority” behind textual speakers that emanates from the authorial person-him or herself (Lanser 1981: 117). Indeed Roger Fowler (1977: 76-80) asserts that the implied author is authoritative in the sense that s/he represents the society’s ideals, values and norms inferred in the literary strategies adopted in a given narrative text. This authority can also be inferred from his/her credentials such as his/her gender, age, level of education, the language use and literary skills employed as well as the story that s/he tells in the narrative text.

Subsequently, the implied author is the textual construct that manifests the real author’s ideology which is communicated via narrative voice and focalization. We therefore postulate that the meaning of the narrated story in a given narrative text can be inferred from the stance of its implied author. In this study the narrated story consists of the generational conflicts in the four Swahili novels. This study thus examines how narrative voice and focalization devices facilitate first and foremost, the identification of the generational conflicts in the four novels namely: Vuta N’kuvute (Tug of War) (Shafi 1999), Kufa Kuzikana (True Friendship) (Walibora 2003), Msimu wa Vipepeo (Season of Butterflies) (Wamitila 2006) and Tumaini (Hope) (Momanyi 2006). Secondly, how they aid us to decipher the meaning of the generational conflicts in respect to the dichotomy between tradition and modernity.

Toolan (2001) informs us that through focalization, we are able to detect not only the story that is being narrated but also the perspective from which it is narrated. It is therefore symptomatic that the way narrative voice and focalization appears in a given narrative text will influence the readers’ perception of the narrated story. Suzanne Keen remarks that understanding narrative situation (the location and nature of the narrating and focalizing agents) has a great influence on the reading of the story in a narrative text. This is because the various combinations of narrators and focalizers suggest different degrees of authority and reliability, and they profoundly affect the way readers interpret stories. Moreover, the manipulation of narrative situation is one of the most useful strategies possessed by fiction writers to elicit sympathy, to command respect, and to unleash the complicated effects of irony (Keen 2003: 30-31).
In general there are two types of narrative voice and focalization depending on the location of the narrating and focalizing agents in the story world. The homodiegetic narrative voice belongs to a narrator who is also a character within the story world (Genette 1972; Mackay 2011: 200). This is exemplified in *Kufa Kuzikana* where the protagonist (Akida) is the narrating agent. The heterodiegetic narrative voice is usually associated with the omniscient narrator. It belongs to a narrating agent that is not part of the story world. The heterodiegetic narrative voice is predominant in *Tumaini*, *Vuta N’kuvute* and *Msimu wa Vipepeo*. The narrating agent may or may not be the focalizer of the story that s/he narrates (Fowler 1977; Rimmon-Kennan 2002: 73-74). Subsequently, we talk of character (internal) focalization when the story is narrated from a character’s perspective and narrator (external, heterodiegetic) focalization when the story is narrated from an external narrator’s point of view (Genette 1972; Bal 1997). In the following section we explore how the different authors manipulate narrative voice and focalization devices in relating generational conflicts in the selected Swahili novels.

### 4.2. Examples of Generational Conflicts in the Swahili Novel

Generational conflicts in the four novels circumvent around issues such as: negative ethnicity, Western form of education, circumcision rites, freedom of choice, gender roles /relations and traditional medicine. Based on the narrative voice and focalization as the agents that relate the generational conflicts and orient the narration respectively, we now discuss some of the generational conflicts captured in the novels.

#### 4.2.1. Generational Conflict on Negative Ethnicity

Ethnicity generally describes a person’s ancestry, heritage, religion, culture, nationality, language and region. It is a multi-faceted phenomenon based on physical appearance, subjective identification, cultural and religious affiliation, stereotyping, and social exclusion (Berthoud, Modood & Smith 1997). Certainly, ethnicity is a conglomeration of many features that give a person or a group of persons their identity and sense of belonging. On the contrary, negative ethnicity as portrayed in *Kufa Kuzikana* and *Vuta N’kuvute*, is a tendency to discriminate against people by virtue of their ethnic/racial background. Such tendencies are seen to spark intergenerational conflicts involving characters from the youth generation on the one hand and characters from the parent generation on the other.

The youth generation in *Kufa Kuzikana* is represented by characters such as Akida, Tim, Tom, Pamela and Jerumani. These are young people whose age ranges between fifteen and thirty years as reported by the heterodiegetic narrative voice. It is a generation that is exposed to Western form of education, Christian religion and urban life. The parent generation is in turn represented by characters such as Samson Tungu (Tim’s uncle), Zablon (Tim’s father), Mzee Uledi and Tina (Jerumani’s mother) and Pamela’s aunt. These two generations have opposite views on negative ethnicity as revealed in the following excerpt:

“Ethnicity is a disease that is widespread. Its remedy should be sought for,” suggested Tom. “Where shall we get its remedy?” asked Tim. “First and foremost, the question, ‘What is your ethnicity?’ should be erased from our conversations. Whenever a person asks ‘what is your ethnicity?’ s/he is trying to estimate the distance that exists between you and him.” “And names and language will betray us.” hinted Tim. “Then we should no longer be called Tom Mangala,” said Tom. “Once someone hears Mangala or Sululu s/he gets to know that you are of the Kanju clan. We had better be called Tom Michael or Abdi Ahmed, Tim John…” “What about the language?” I inquired. “Language? We should just have one universal language.” “Why do Somalians have one language and yet they hate and kill each other!” I reasoned. “Then the most important thing is for people to have a different mindset and a change of heart. One should know that you belong to a given ethnic group but s/he should not hate you on account of your ethnicity,” said Tim. “Here in Kiwachemer, everything is done on the basis of ethnicity, I said. “Oh yes my friend!” Tim intercepted citizens of this nation forget that we are all brothers; our origin is in the Garden of Eden. We all have the same destiny; there is no difference between a person from this ethnic group or the other.”

The heterodiegetic narrative voice and the focalization of the character’s (Tom, Tim and Akida) here clearly indicate the youth’s stance on negative ethnicity. Tim, Tom and Akida are appalled by negative ethnicity which is rampant in their country (Kiwachema). It is a vice that is compared to a plague whose remedy they say must be sought. Their opposition to ethnic discrimination brings them into conflict with their parents. For instance, we see a clear inter-generational conflict between the parent generation and the youth generation in their interaction with strangers. On meeting a stranger, the first thing the parents’ generation would like to know is the person’s ethnic background. We see this happening at the hospital when Tim and Akida meet Mzee Uledi in their search for their relatives. First and foremost he wants to establish their ethnic background before he can engage them in a conversation (76). Similarly, when Samson Tungu (Tim’s uncle) meets Akida, he first of all wants to know his ethnic group (p. 25). The same scenario is witnessed when Akida is hired as a servant at Mzee Muyaka’s home. Tina (Jerumani’s mother) is keen to know about Akida’s ethnic community. On the contrary, Tina’s son (Jerumani) relates very well with Akida and is least bothered about his ethnic background (p. 149, p. 154).
There is mutual interaction between members of the youth generation from diverse ethnic groups. For example, Akida and Tom who are of the Kanju clan relate cordially with Tim from the Korosho clan (p. 59, pp. 81-2). Pamela from the Sangura clan is engaged to Tim (p. 21) while Jerumani from the Sangura clan is a good friend to Akida (p. 154). Akida vividly brings out the position of the youth on negative ethnicity when he says:

“…Bi Tina ndiyeye aliyeniuliza kabila langu, swali nililolichukia sana” (p. 149).

“…It is Mrs Tina who inquired of my ethnicity, a question that I detest most.”

On the contrary, the generation of parents seems to propagate negative ethnicity. Samson Tungu (Tim’s uncle) openly despises members of the Kanju clan. He has no regard for Tim’s friendship with Akida (p. 25). Tim demonstrates his disapproval to his uncle’s discriminative attitude towards Akida when he begs to leave and apologizes to Akida for his uncle’s behaviour. Furthermore, Tim is willing to lose his job rather than his friendship with Akida. The following excerpt shows how this conflict is brought out via character focalization:


“My friend I have been fired.”...“Didn’t I tell you that my uncle is the manager at my place of work?”(Tim) asked me. “Yes,” I replied. “He wanted to know where I had gone yesterday and I told him that I went to attend a ceremony where my friend was being awarded. Then he asked, ‘from which ethnic group is your friend?’I answered him ‘from the Kanju clan.’ ‘Eeh? You befriend people from the Kanju clan and yet you know that they are killing those of us from the Korosho clan? Are you betraying your clan?’...I then told him that I believe in the Bible: The Bible says love your enemy and leave revenge to God!” ‘Get out. I have sacked you!’ “Have you been sacked because of me?”“Do not worry Akida... We shall always be together come rain or sun shine. I cannot blame you...”

Evidently, Tim has embraced some modern ideology in the form of Christianity. But Tim’s uncle appears to be a traditionalist who subscribes to ethnic loyalty. He dismisses his nephew from his company on account of associating with members of the ‘enemy’ clan. However, as a Christian Tim believes one ought to love everyone including his/her enemies. Therefore, in Kufa Kuzikana, the implied author’s stance on negative ethnicity is communicated through the young characters’ conversations and their actions.
In *Vuta N'kuvute*, negative ethnicity is propagated by the parent generation. Through the heterodiegetic narrator’s report, we learn that it is a taboo for Indians and the Swahili to inter-react or intermarry (p. 84). Just like we witnessed in *Kufa Kuzikana*, it is the youth generation that is opposed to this discriminative attitude. When Yasmin (an Indian girl) is disowned by her parents for abandoning her Indian husband, she takes refuge at Mwajuma’s place. She happily lives with Mwajuma, a Swahili young lady, and even falls in love with Denge, a Swahili young man. Yasmin’s interaction with the Swahili people is considered an abomination by her mother and Gulam, her uncle (p. 84).

By abandoning the husband that was chosen by her parents, Yasmin demonstrates her disapproval of the traditional practice where parents choose marriage partners for their children. Moreover, her choice to live among the Swahili people is in itself a protest against racial discrimination propagated by her parents. For Yasmin, Africans are like any other human beings and so she does not understand why her parents despise them. See how the heterodiegetic narrative voice and character (Yasmin) focalization brings out the conflicting attitude in the following excerpt:

“Sasa sina mwingine ila mimi na Waafrika, nd’o ndugu, baba zangu nd’o mama zangu, nd’o shoga zangu, nd’o ndugu zangu. Na wanawadharau kwa sababu gani hasa? Wao si watu?...Ah! haidhuru na waseme wasemavyo, potelea mbali” (p. 43).

“Now I have no one to turn to except to the Africans, they are my brothers, my fathers, my mothers and my friends. And exactly why do they despise them? Aren’t they human beings? ...Ah! It does not matter anymore to me. Let them say whatever they have to say, I do not care.”

*Yasmin alikuwa sasa kama nd’o kwanza ameiona dunia, dunia ya raha na starehe...Unaweza kula yamini kwamba yeye si mtoto wa Kihindi aliyezaliwa akaku lia Uhindini, akenzwa kwuwa mbali na Msawahili tokea utotoni kwake. Kwa Wahindi Yasmin alikuwa asi, aliyevunja mila na miikyo yao yote kwa kuchanganyika na Waswahili. Kwa Waswahili Yasmin alikuwa ni mfani wa jinsi gani watu na makabila mbalimbali wanaweza kuwa pamoja, wakawa wamoja hata tofauti baina yao zisionekane* (p. 85).

It was like Yasmin has just seen the world for the first time, the world of pleasure and happiness... You can swear that she is not an Indian child who has been taught to stay away from the Swahili from her childhood. To the Indians, Yasmin was an outcast, one who had contravened all her community’s taboos by mixing with the Swahili people. To the Swahili, Yasmin is an example of how it is when people from varied ethnic backgrounds can coexist, be united and become one people so that differences between them disappear completely.

Here we surmise the heterodiegetic narrator’s ideological position in the evaluative statement that he makes about the character of Yasmin. He clearly shows that he supports the position taken by Yasmin in the statement:

*Kwa Waswahili Yasmin alikuwa ni mfano wa jinsi gani watu wa makabila mbalimbali wanaweza kuwa pamoja, wakawa wamoja hata tofauti baina yao zisionekane* (p.85).
To the Swahili, Yasmin is an example of how it is when people from varied ethnic backgrounds can be united and become one people so that differences between them disappear completely.

Since the heterodiegetic narrative voice is usually associated with the implied author (Fowler 1977; Lanser 1981; Rimmon-Kenan 2002; Jahn 2007), it can be concluded that the implied author is against racial discrimination. Moreover, Yasmin displays modern tendencies of individualism and freedom of choice. She chooses not to be enslaved by traditional ideas upheld by her parents. She believes that she has the right to choose a spouse that she genuinely loves irrespective of his ethnic background (p. 1). It is on this basis that she accepts to marry Bukheti, a Swahili young man from Mombasa, when he asks her hand in marriage (p. 275). However, the two lovers have to wrestle with their parents who inhibit deep ethnic prejudices. This is seen in the derogatory terms that the parent generation uses in reference to those they consider to be ‘inferior’ to them. Indians use the term ‘golo’ to refer to the Africans while the Swahili call Indians ‘ponjoro’ (p. 254).

The implied author’s stance is further shown in the way the youth generation represented by Yasmin and Bukheti surmount ethnic prejudices. This is illustrated through character focalization as follows:

“Mtu ni m'tu. Hakuna m'tu m'tu, na m'tu kinyaa, kwangu wote ni watu, ni viumbe walioumbwa na Mungu. Ikiwa wao watakuangalia wewe kama Mswahili kinyaa, kwangu we ne ni m'tu, ikiwa wao watajiona bora kuliko wengine, ati wao ni Wahindi, mimi nawaona wao ni m'tu kama watu wengine” (p. 248).

“A human being is just a human being. There is nothing like one human being who is more appealing than the other. To me they are all human beings, they are God’s creation. If to them you are less appealing because you are a Swahili, if they consider themselves to be better than others because they are Indians, to me they are just like any other human beings.”

Similarly, through character focalization (Bukheti) we deduce a conflict between Bukheti and his uncle over ethnic prejudices against Yasmin as follows:


“Bashiri should have seen who Yasmin really is so that he could show me her ‘ponjoroness,’” thought Bukheti. “Where has the respect for human dignity gone to, if an Indian calls a Swahili golo and the Swahili calls an Indian ponjoro?” asked Bukheti.

In this inter-generational conflict, the opposition between traditional values and modern ones is further revealed through character focalization (p. 250, p. 259): Kermali (an Indian) and Matar (a Swahili) represent the generation of the grandparents. The two mediate between the two lovers and their parents to resolve their differences. Eventually Kermali succeeds in persuading Yasmin’s parents to accept her marriage choice (p. 251). Similarly, Matar convinces Bukheti’s uncle who finally allows Bukheti to marry Yasmin instead of Somoye (Buk-
heti’s cousin) (p. 255). Here the ideological stance of the implied author regarding modernity and tradition is exemplified through the generation of the grandparents. It is shown that change in cultural practices is inevitable. This is brought out via character focalization (Matar & Bukheti) in the following conversation:


“…So he has rejected your fiancée? This Bashiri is really old fashioned. Does he want to choose a spouse for you?” “Yes.” “Your uncle is quite ignorant; Bashiri is not aware of modern trends. Doesn’t he know that nowadays young people look for their own partners? A young person looks for his own partner. How do you call them these days, is it ‘gali frendi’ or isn’t it the case Bukheti?”

Through Matar, the implied author’s position regarding the traditional practice where parents choose marriage partners for their children is challenged. The young generation prefers the Western style where the parties are free to choose partners based on love. Consequently, members of the society must be willing to change their world view with the passage of time. In particular, racial discrimination is rendered obsolete since the youth do not adhere to such prejudices. This is well captured in the following comments that the heterodiegetic narrator makes:

_Arusi yake (Bukheti) na Yasmin ilikuwa ya kukata na shoka...Bwana Bashiri na mama Somoye walicheza na kutimka kila waliipoitwa...Bwana Bashiri babaye arusi, mama Somoye mamaye arusi. Gulam naye alisahau Uhindi wake. Naye pia akatoka uwanjani aliipoitwa “babaye arusi” upande wa Bi. Arusi...Ugolo na uponjoro ukaisha. Kwa Bukheti, Gulam akawa Baba na Zenabhai Mama. Somoye naye akapata wift_ (p. 275).

The wedding between Bukheti and Yasmin was wonderful...Mr Bashiri and the mother to Somoye danced ecstatically whenever they were invited to the stage ...Bashiri as the bridegroom’s father and Somoye’s mother as the bridegroom’s mother. On the other hand, Gulam put aside his Indianism. He too took to the stage when the “bride’s father” was invited to dance ...Ugoloism and Ponjoroism vanished. To Bukheti, Gulam became a father and Zenabhai his mother. On her part, Somoye acquired a sister in-law.

The heterodiegetic narrator’s comments here reveal the implied author’s stance on racial discrimination. Uspensky (1973: 8-9) affirms that the ideology of the narrator-focalizer (who is outside the story world) is usually taken as authoritative, and all the other ideologies in the text are evaluated from this ‘higher’ position. In this respect, the racial discrimination is considered an outdated practice as brought out by the character of Matar. Instead people are encouraged to embrace modern trends where people from diverse backgrounds coexist harmoniously.

In _Vuta N’kuvute_ as well as in _Kufa Kuzikana_ the generational conflicts depicted are presented from the protagonists’ ideological stance which reflects the implied author’s stance.
Examining how the main characters relate with the story, one readily notices that they are amplifying the omniscient narrator’s stance which as Jahn (2005) observes, is synonymous to the implied author or the version of the real author (Booth 1961: 67). Moreover, in *Vuta N'kuvute*, the heterodiegetic narrative voice makes evaluative comments that vividly show his attitude on the conflicting issue. He subscribes to the Western notion of human dignity irrespective of racial and ethnic background.

4.2.2. Generational Conflict on Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage as used here refers to the cultural legacy inherited from previous generations; a legacy which we often want to identify with and preserve because it reinforces our cultural identity or sense who we are as people. Cultural heritage may be tangible as well as intangible. Tangible cultural heritage may include historic sites, monuments, graves, and culturally significant landscapes such as sacred places. Intangible cultural heritage include language, oral histories, beliefs, practices, rituals, ceremonies, customs, traditions, music, dance, crafts and other arts (Blake 2000). In the selected Swahili novels, some of the intangible cultural heritages upon which generational conflicts occur include burial rites, circumcision rites and traditional medicine.

In *Kuja Kuzikana*, an intra-generational conflict ensues between Tim and Tom over observation of traditional burial rites. This is brought out in the following conversation:


“And when will you bury the old man? Tim asked Tom... “Soon. I do not know exactly when.” “Where?” “Baraki.” “Why don’t you bury him in the government cemetery in the city?” Tim asked him. “My father is not a stray dog; he had his own homestead.” “Such customs are overtaken by time Tom,” said Tim after a while. “Which customs?” “Customs that involve unnecessary expenses of transporting the body to be buried ‘at home!’” I thought you are an educated person who has even gone abroad.” “Tim being educated has nothing to do with one’s traditions. I believe whoever forsakes his traditions is as good as a slave. Probably it is that religion of yours that is making you to think that way...I must bury my father with the respect he deserves whatever may come.”

From Tim’s point of view, an educated person like Tom ought to have a Western world view. Hence he should not be observing customs such as traditional burial rites causing him to incur unnecessary expenses. Tom holds a contrary view in that he believes one’s education has nothing to do with his/her cultural heritage. This is an explicit case where the ideological stance of the implied author is verbalized through the focalization of the character (Tom).
Rimmon-Kenan rightly notes that a character may represent an ideological position through his way of seeing the world or his behaviour in it, but also through explicit discussion of his ideology (2002: 83).

The intra-generational conflict between Tim and Tom emanate from differences in their value systems due to their social exposure (Braungart & Braungart 1986). Although the two belong to the youth generation, Tom has a higher level of education and is more exposed to Western culture (having studied in America and married to a Canadian) (p. 80). This, in turn, places him at a vantage point that enables him to have a more critical outlook on cultural issues. For Tom, cultural heritage is what gives a person his/her identity. On the contrary, Tim (a primary school graduate) appears to prefer the Western culture to his traditional African culture. From Tim’s point of view, Christianity and Western form of education signify civilization and progress.

Definitely, the intra-generational conflict between Tom and Tim is a manifestation of the uncertainties that the contemporary society is faced with, as the society changes and people acquire new value systems. Should they discard their traditional practices and adopt foreign ones the way Tim seems to do? The implied author seems to suggest the way forward through the character of Tom. Tom demonstrates how an individual can be both traditional and modern at the same time. He has embraced the modern culture in the form of Western education and does not subscribe to racial or ethnic prejudices whilst living in a posh house in the city (p. 80). However, he is still proud of his cultural heritage which has earned him respect in his village (p. 81).

Therefore, through the focalization, (character, Tom) the ideological stance of the implied author seems to concur with Comaroff and Comaroff’s (1992) idea of ‘multiple modernities’ as opposed to one ‘ideal’ form of modernity. That, although we live in a modern era, it does not mean that our cultural heritage accrued from our predecessors, is irrelevant. The intra-generational conflict between Tim and Tom illustrates what Caplan (2004: 3) considers to be a tension between cultural heterogenization and cultural homogenization. The implication is that people do not passively absorb new cultural practices, rather local actors appropriate various aspects associated with modernity in order to construct their own social worlds (Arce & Long 1999: 14). What results is a variety of cultures as opposed to a homogeneous global culture.

Another aspect of the cultural heritage that sparks generational conflicts is the circumcision rite and early marriage for the female child. In Tumaini we see an inter-generational conflict involving young girls like Tumaini and their parents. Through the focalization of the character (Yusuf), we learn that some girls have taken legal action against their parents when they attempt to force them to undergo the circumcision rite (p. 40). For the younger generation, the circumcision rite is outdated and, hence irrelevant in the contemporary society (p. 22). In the novel, Tumaini vehemently opposes the rite because accepting it means forfeiting her educa-
tion for marriage (p. 6, 15). On the other hand, from the social point of view, Amina is expected to fulfil her duty as a mother by ensuring that her daughter (Tumaini) adheres to the community’s customs (p. 16). These contrasting views eventually lead to an overt intergenerational conflict between the mother and her daughter culminating in a physical bout as can be seen in the following excerpt:

“Tuma, it is about time I told you what is actually happening”, Amina started, “I know you will not like it, but we must adhere to our community’s customs,” she went on. But before she could tell her, Tumaini rose from her seat…and said, “If what you are about to tell me has to do with circumcision, mother, forget it, forget it completely because I already said that such traditions are outdated, they are brutal and primitive”… “Tuma my daughter, what you are unable break you must kiss.” Tumaini interrupted ironically, “I cannot kiss it if by so doing I will be digging my own grave.”… “Tuma, I do not have time to persuade you on this matter. I am trying to tell you what is important, but instead you disrespect me! Don’t you have respect, you child! I even do not know what you people learn in that school…”… “I am sorry mother, but I would like all of you to understand that circumcision rite for a girl child is illegal. And if you are going to force me to undergo it, then legal measures…,” before she could continue, Tumaini suddenly heard a sharp slap on her cheek.

Apparently, the younger generation is opposed to the traditional form of socialization. It is more inclined to the Western form of education as the alternative means to equip them for adulthood. There is a hint at a super structure that seems to dictate on the members to hold on this custom. The heterodiegetic narrative voice illustrates that although Amina would have liked her daughter to pursue an education, she is overwhelmed by the traditional demands imposed on her by the patriarchal system in which she finds herself (p. 16).

Conflicting views over the circumcision rite are also found amongst the generation of the parents. Masumbuko, Namvua and Amina are characters that are reported to support the rite. However, Halima and Shabani (her husband) and Yusufu (brother) are opposed to it (p. 5, p. 6, and p. 15). Amina differs sharply with her sister Halima when she pursues Tumaini who has taken refuge at her place. Amina insists that Tumaini has no choice but to fulfil the demands of their custom. But Halima tells Amina that the circumcision rite is no longer warranted in the present time. Moreover, forcing Tumaini to undergo the rite against her wish is
infringing on her personal freedom (p. 32). A more vivid case that shows how generational conflicts manifest the opposition between traditional and modern cultural values is witnessed in the conflict between Masumbuko, Yusufu, Shabani and Halima as follows:


“...Nowadays no girl child is willing to undergo the circumcision rite. Some of them have even taken legal measures against their parents over this issue. You have witnessed these incidences but you have decided to live in the past centuries...” Yusufu responded angrily. “Ooh! You see, these are all your plans,” said Masumbuko, but Shabani intercepted, “No-no Masumbuko, you cannot blame us for this. Your daughter took refuge at my place. Did you want me to send her back so that you could accomplish your brutality?” “Brutality? How does observing our community’s traditions become an act of brutality?” asked Masumbuko... “First of all, it is your wife who was on the forefront choosing women who went to. I do not know Bei...Beinyingi!” Halima interrupted and said, “It is not Beinyingi but Beijing. Yes, what you are saying is true, and I have no regrets for that. Women all over the world came gathered there to discuss their progress. What is wrong with that?” “...You people are being cheated by Europeans to discredit your own customs and you just accept without questioning their intention,” Masumbuko said angrily.”

The Beijing Conference mentioned in the excerpt is a historical fact. The World Women’s conference took place in 1995 in China. Some of the issues that were resolved include women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power as a way to ensure development and peace. The notions of gender equity, democracy and human rights are indeed some of the features of modernity (Engineer 2005: 195). Therefore, in a situation where some people are more conservative, while others are more liberal in embracing new life styles, social conflicts are inevitable. In fact Wamitila (2009: 458) comments that the conflict between Halima and Masumbuko reveals a rejection of modernity:

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1 See http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/fwcwn.html
Bi Halima, a defender of young girls’ rights and a staunch opponent of female genital mutilation, is determined to defend her niece from the malevolent (malicious) plans of Tumaini’s father who is unwilling to embrace modernity. She is willing to take on the irrational and autocratic Masumbuko, a man who is prepared to do anything to satisfy his egoistic desires.

Therefore, in Tumaini we see a case where traditional cultural values are losing ground due to the wave of globalization. Tumaini and her aunt Halima have a revolutionary mind and are challenging the traditional establishments in their community. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman describes those challenging, excessive and even order-violating manifestations as the guidelines to the modernizing mind of any society. He points out that whenever a new generation comes into being, generational conflicts are inevitable since an emergence of a generation connotes a change in cultural orientations in a given society (Beilharz 2001).

The same scenario is witnessed in Kufa Kuzikana. The protagonist (Akida) reports of a case where a male character is forced to undergo circumcision by his colleagues as an initiation into adulthood. It is ironical that although the character is already a father of two children, he is still considered a child (55-56). This emanates from conflicting cultural values between traditional systems and Western ones. It was mandatory for everyone to undergo circumcision rite in certain traditional African societies. Mbiti (1982: 91-93) observes that traditionally, where the custom was followed, every girl had to undergo clitoridectomy while every boy had to be circumcised to be initiated into adulthood. Through the focalization of the character (Akida) we not only infer a generational conflict over the circumcision rite, but also assume the implied author’s stance on the custom. See the following excerpt:


“I was taken aback by that incident. The entire market was shut down for the sake of ‘that particular child’. A funds drive was conducted for his sake...He was loved indeed. The people in the market gave generously so that this ‘child’ becomes ‘a man’. They really care for him. They want him to become wise. Does it imply that nowadays people’s brains are located on the southern part of a man’s pants? And where is the freedom that people claim was obtained after the patriots shed blood for the colonialists to leave? Or does it mean that the society got the freedom of denying a one’s personal freedom? In other words, a person is expected to take anything that the society gives him/her? S/he has no choice, isn’t it? As it were I asked myself several questions of which I could not get suitable answers.” “This is injustice,” said Pam... “I am fed up of incidences where people are publicly embarrassed and forcefully circumcised.”
In this excerpt, the young generation represented by the protagonist (Akida) and Pamela vocalize their indignation against the circumcision rite. This is a typical case where focalization becomes a means of foregrounding the focalizing agent, and of creating an empathic or ironical view on the focalizer (Jahn 2005). The manner in which Akida (the focalizer) asks rhetorical questions elicits his ideological stance and subsequently the implied author’s stance on the circumcision rite.

As noted earlier, the implied author is essentially a textual construct that represents the norms of the fictional world. However, more often than not, the fictional norms reflect the norms or ideology of the society from which the real author hails (Lanser 1981; Rimmon-Kenan 2007: 88). Suzanne Keen categorically states that the implied author is the author projected by the text itself, and sometimes also conditioned by our knowledge about the author’s life and career (Keen 2003: 32-3). This is quite applicable to the authorship of Kufa Kuzikana. Ken Walibora, the author, is of the Luhya ethnic group from Western Kenya (Bertoncini 2009). To date, some conservative members of the Bukusu sub-clan of the Luhya community still insist on observing this rite. However, its relevance is contested in the contemporary society due to the fact the social economic factors that spelt its validity no longer apply (Mbiti 1982: 97).

The implied author’s stance can also be inferred from the characters of Cynthia and her mother. Cynthia tells Akida that some time back she thought that it was acceptable for her to undergo the rite but now she has changed her mind because she has realised that it can be life threatening (p. 170). Tina is accused of playing a double standard because she helps her daughter to escape the circumcision rite but at the same time demands that relatives be invited to the marriage ceremony of their daughter, Nana (pp. 170-2). However, Tina declares that there are good traditions and others which are overtaken by time (pp. 176-7).

Evidently, circumcision as a maturity gauge is contested. As depicted in Kufa Kuzikana and Tumaini the circumcision rite is to some people a prerequisite to maturity. However, to others, it is irrelevant, especially in the contemporary social context where Western education is preferred. This in itself shows that there is a tension between modern cultural values and traditional ones.

4.2.3 Conflict over Gender Roles/Relations

Gender roles are an individual’s endorsement of personal characteristics, occupations and behaviours considered appropriate for women and men in a particular culture (DeBiaggi 2002: 39). Roles constitute a patterned cluster of behaviours and attitudes that are culturally prescribed. Individuals act and interact according to these prescribed understandings of what is appreciated and expected of them.

Gender roles like any other social construct are supposed to change with time as people acquire more skills and knowledge (Ibid: 43). Western education has had an immense impact
on the African traditional society in terms of division of labour. Women are no longer limited to domestic chores but are capable of handling jobs that earlier were considered to be appropriate only for men (Mbiti 1982: 97). A failure to appreciate changes in the contemporary society that have altered gender roles and relations has resulted in generational conflicts, as captured in the Swahili novel (Mlacha 1988: 45-46).

In Tumaini, an inter-generational conflict over gender roles ensues between Tumaini and her head teacher (Majaaliwa). Tumaini defies his directive that all the girls choose art-based courses at the university. Tumaini disapproves Majaaliwa’s hypothesis that girls are not good in sciences. This conflict is narrated and focalized by the heterodiegetic narrator as follows:

Siku moja, mwalimu wao mkuu Bwana Majaaliwa aliingia darasani na kwapu fomu za maombi na kujinga na vyuo vikuu vya kitaifa...aliwaambia kuwa pasiwe na mwanaafunzi atakayejaza kwenda chuo kikuu kuchukua masomo ya sayan-si...Habari hizi zilimpunguza sana Tumaini ambaye tangu mwanzo alidhamiria kufanya masomo hayo ili akefuzu shahada ya udaktari...Tumaini aliwaambia mwalimu mkuu kufuzu chuo kikuu, "Ala! Tumaini, hujajaza chochote? Una shida gani?" Mwalimu aliwaambia Tumaini, "Pasire na mwanafunzi atakayezaza kwenda chuo kikuu...Habari hizi zilimpunguza sana Tumaini ambaye tangu mwanzo alidhamiria kufanya masomo hayo ili akefuzu shahada ya udaktari...Tumaini aliwaambia mwalimu mkuu kufuzu chuo kikuu, "Ala! Tumaini, hujajaza chochote? Una shida gani?" Mwalimu aliwaambia Tumaini, "Pasire na mwanafunzi atakayezaza kwenda chuo kikuu...Habari hizi zilimpunguza sana Tumaini ambaye tangu mwanzo alidhamiria kufanya masomo hayo ili akefuzu shahada ya udaktari...Tumaini aliwaambia mwalimu mkuu kufuzu chuo kikuu, "Ala! Tumaini, hujajaza chochote? Una shida gani?" Mwalimu aliwaambia Tumaini, "Pasire na mwanafunzi atakayezaza kwenda chuo kikuu...Habari hizi zilimpunguza sana Tumaini ambaye tangu mwanzo alidhamiria kufanya masomo hayo ili akefuzu shahada ya udaktari...Tumaini aliwaambia mwalimu mkuu kufuzu chuo kikuu, "Ala! Tumaini, hujajaza chochote? Una shida gani?"

One day, Tumaini’s head teacher Mr Majaaliwa entered the classroom and gave them the entry forms for the Public University...He cautioned them against filling in science-based courses... Tumaini was disturbed by this news because all along she had aspired to excel in subjects of science to pursue a career in medicine. Apparently the head teacher had already made a decision for her future, a decision she did not like at all... “Ala! Tumaini how come that you have not filled your form? What is the problem?” asked the head teacher. “Excuse me teacher, I would like to choose science subjects in case I qualify for university. I would like to be a medical doctor,” Tumaini answered the head teacher. “I have said no one should fill in science subjects. It is seldom for you girls to excel in these subjects. First of all, how many girls have you heard ever graduated from university with a degree in medicine!” Tumaini was disgusted and decided not to fill the forms...She felt the teacher had deliberately denied her the freedom to choose what she preferred for her future. She did not want anyone to choose for her or even think on her behalf regarding what she wanted in life because such an act was tantamount to infringing on her rights.

One would have expected the head teacher to champion gender equity by virtue of his social status (a head teacher). On the contrary, he is among those characters that are propagating stereotyped gender roles. By insisting on her choice, Tumaini demonstrates that she has embraced some of the modern values like, freedom of choice and respect for one’s rights. In most of the African societies the juniors were not allowed to question what their seniors said...
or did because it was assumed that they were always right. This is especially so when the young generation is perceived in the passive sense as opposed to the active one. Alber et al (2008: 2-3) point out that members of a generation are not surrendered to their cultural and social position but are able to use that position to bring about new ideas and practices and pursue their own interests within the historical circumstances in which they live. This is very well demonstrated by Tumaini. The Western form of education that she is exposed to has equipped her with the knowledge of her rights. Moreover, role models like her aunt Halima (p. 15) motivate her to courageously fight for her right (pp. 115-16).

Similarly, through the focalization, (characters Amina and Maimuna) we witness an intra-generational conflict within the generation of parents over gender roles in Tumaini. Amina and Maimuna have conflicting views about the woman’s place in their society. See the following excerpt:


“Your son Sifa intends to proceed on with his education after his examinations isn’t it?” (asked Amina). “Yah! In fact he desires to join the University to train as a doctor…Let him study my friend, a man is credited for the job he does,” said Maimuna. “Mnh!” Murmured Bi. Amina. And then she said, “therefore what you are telling me is that your child should study, while my own should get married and stay at home as she waits for her husband because a man is credited for the kind of work he does.”

Maimuna believes that it is the duty of men to provide for the family needs. That is why she sees no problem suggesting that Tumaini marries her son soon after secondary school. To her it is natural for her son to proceed on with university education because he would be the family bread winner. Amina who has now embraced modern ideologies of gender equity and freedom of choice does not agree with Maimuna. She directly tells Maimuna that she would not deter her daughter from advancing academically if she wishes so.

In all these instances, one notes that members of the depicted community are as if at a crossroad. Although they see the merits of some of the new social structures such as the Western education, they are reluctant to relinquish some of the established structures that favoured the male folk. In this sense, generational conflicts are a manifestation of the conflict between the traditional social establishments that were gender biased, and the modern social structures that advocate for gender equity.
Regarding gender relations, there is an intra-generational conflict between Julia and Miranda in *Msimu wa Vipepeo*. Miranda is opposed to the belief, upheld by Julia, that childlessness in a marriage is the woman’s fault. The heterodiegetic narrator thus reports:

Julia has grown up in a society that has taught her to believe that a woman has no security in marriage if she is childless; a child is like an investment that a woman invests in her marriage to accrue some interest… “Juli, how can you hold on such an idea in this century?” “You have no idea because you have never been married!” “Juli, my friend it is not like you have chosen not to conceive; some issues are beyond human beings. It is unnecessary to torture yourself whereas it may be that the person you are torturing yourself for sleeps soundly unbothered.”

Through the focalization of the character (Miranda), the ideological stance on gender relations is conveyed. Women should not necessarily bear the blame in a childless marriage. Once again, we see one’s level of Western education playing a key role in empowering people to challenge stereotyped gender relations in society. Miranda, who is a university graduate, is more knowledgeable about gender and reproduction issues than Julia who never went to university. Julia holds the traditional belief that a woman is only secure in marriage when she is able to bear children. In this case the intra-generational conflict between these two young women is due to differences in social exposure.

4.2.4 Conflict over Traditional Medicine

In *Msimu wa Vipepeo* Julia and her father Mzee Kitali have conflicting views on traditional medicine. Julia, who has embraced modern forms of medication found in the hospitals, despises the traditional medicine. On the contrary, Mzee Kitali is proud of the traditional medicine as a valuable cultural heritage. Let us see how the heterodiegetic narrative voice and character focalization brings out the conflict in the following conversation:

On arriving home, Julia started quarrelling when she saw her father Mzee Kitali preparing some traditional herbs for her mother…Ndumi sat next to her grandfather asking him several questions regarding this particular medicine. It was clear that she was quite fascinated with his expertise…”Why can’t we take mother to the hospital instead of giving her these concoctions? Father this is sheer witchcraft and superstitions!” (Julia) retorted. “Witchcraft?” “Ehh…!” “I can see that your European-like life has confused my child! Can you recall what you did when you had a stomach upset? (Julia bowed her head). How about when you got bruised as you played; when you sustained a cut yourself while in school and even when you had wounds, didn’t we use msubii leaves? How about when you had problems with high blood pressure and even constipation, did he not use cinnamon leaves? Didn’t your mother eat terere and managu to enhance her blood level whenever she was expectant?” He posed as he looked at Julia and then at his grandchild who appeared to be impressed by this high tech traditional science, “Now having lived in Kitambaasie are you so Europeanized to the extent of despising where you came from! This European mentality that has captured you should not make you foolish my child!” “That is not the case father; I see you are becoming like Mukoma!” said Julia. They all knew who Mukoma was…He was an old man who was known to oppose any acts and mannerisms that he considered to be foreign behaviour.

A father and daughter have different historical experiences of the cultural heritage. Although Julia grew up in the rural village, she is now married to a politician and leads a modern life in the city. This, in turn, has made her to lose touch with the realities of rural life which her parents lead. Therefore, while she can afford modern medication with ease, her father has sometimes to rely on the traditional medicine to treat his family. Consequently, he disagrees with Julia when she rubbishes his cultural heritage. Mzee Kitali represents the ideological stance of the implied author implementing the view that traditional medicine was and still is valuable to day. Moreover, the heterodiegetic narrator’s comments about Ndumi (Julia’s daughter) who seems to appreciate Mzee Kitali’s medical skills confirm that he sides with Mzee Kitali and not with Julia on this conflicting issue. See the following comments from the excerpt:

Ndumi aliketi karibu na babu yake akiulizauliza maswali kuhusu dawa zenyewe. Ilikuwa dhahiri kuwa alivutiwa na ufundi ule... (p. 71).

Ndumi sat next to her grandfather asking him several questions regarding this particular medicine. It was clear that she was quite fascinated with his expertise…

Alitua akimwangalia Julia kisha mjukuu wake ambaye alielekea kuvutiwa na sayansi hii kali ya jadi (p. 72).

He posed as he looked at Julia and then at his grandchild who appeared to be impressed by this high-tech traditional science.
Through Mzee Kitali, the implied author suggests that despising one’s rich cultural heritage in favour of foreign ones in the manner that Julia does, is tantamount to being brainwashed. As it is unavoidable that societies change with time, Mzee Kitali is depicted as a model of how people ought to respond to the new cultural values. He embraces new cultural practices that are profitable to his family. He allows his children to acquire Western form of education. He is quite the opposite of his counterpart Mzee Mukoma who rejects virtually every foreign practice including modern utensils and insists on upholding his traditional life style (p. 72).

5. Conclusion

In view of the generational conflicts discussed in the four Swahili novels, it can be concluded that ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’ are two sides of the same coin in respect to culture. Culture is a way of life and it changes as people change with time. The generational conflicts are manifestation of different cultures in conflict; the traditional African culture and the Western culture brought by the white missionaries and the colonialists in East Africa (Mlacha 1988: 45).

Through narrative voice and focalization techniques, the authors of the four novels have revealed the implied author’s stance on the dichotomy between traditional and modern cultural practices. Mzee Kitali in Msimu wa Vipepeo, Tom in Kafa Kuzikana, Masumbuko in Tumaini and Matar and Kermali in Vuta N’kuvute are vehicles for the implied author’s ideological stance on this dichotomy. The argument is that while change is inevitable, people should not just embrace new cultural practices blindly nor stick to the old ones passively.

The conflicts demonstrate that people do not discard their accrued cultural heritage as they embrace new ones. It is a fact that neither all that glitters (modern practices) is gold in the same way, nor every old artefact is gold. Consequently, generational conflicts depicted in the Swahili novels should be seen as a negotiation of interests, values and ideals in the context of the changing world. As Giddens (2001) observes, we do not have one universal culture to be embraced by all people globally. Moreover, the state of an individual or a society being traditional or modern should be seen as a continuum on a spectrum. In this global era, every human society is a conglomeration of unique traditional and modern elements.

Bibliography


‘TRADITION’ VERSUS ‘MODERNITY’


