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The Role of Cultural Evolution in the Construction of Modern Gĩkũyũ Romance: An Analysis of Selected Gĩkũyũ Popular Songs

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Abstract

This paper contains a postcolonial reading of selected Gĩkũyũ popular songs evaluating how cultural evolution, change and transition influences, affects and complicates the modern Gĩkũyũ romance structure. The data for analysis has been obtained from selected Gĩkũyũ popular songs and the selection was done using purposive sampling. The research employed qualitative research design and it was guided by postcolonial theory through the reflexive reading approach in the analysis of the songs. The study revealed that some of the cultural factors that affect, influence and complicate the construction of Gĩkũyũ romance include postcolonial patriarchy manifested in polygamy, division of labour, alcoholism and male chauvinism. Christianity is also an influential factor in the construction of modern Gĩkũyũ romance. Change and transition is manifested through the emergence of shifting gender ideologies that promote tolerance for gender balance and women empowerment leading to reversal of gender roles, erosion of culture and emergence of the career woman. The process of this cultural evolution causes tragi-romance while cultural diversity and traditional patriarchy produces for productive romantic relationships.

Keywords: Gĩkũyũ, intertextuality, popular song, postcolonial, post coloniality, romance, Tragi Romance

1. Introduction

European imperialism subjected the Gĩkũyũ to the colonial experience in which many cultural traditions and complex native civilizations were destroyed as the colonial masters imposed European Christianity, the English language and other cultural values on their subjects. This led to an incorporation of many British norms and practices in the Gĩkũyũ culture. Hall (2001) says that rich cultural traditions and complex indigenous civilizations were destroyed as European religions, languages and values were introduced and imposed on the colonized peoples. This means that the cultural aftermath of colonialism is characterized by changes wrought on the indigenous people by the imperialists. These changes linger in the Gĩkũyũ culture long after independence and they have become contemporary components of post coloniality. Hall (2001) states that quite often there are attempts to recover traditions and other pre-existing aspects of culture after the retreat of the colonizer. The Gĩkũyũ popular song highlights how the imposed elements such as education and religion have evolved into almost legitimate conventional components of the culture but attempts to suggest that contemporary Gĩkũyũ should balance the incorporation so that it can suitably fit in the African situation. One of the cultural elements affected by the colonial experience is romance.

Social scientists have explored the subject of romantic love for a long time. Historians contend that passionate love has always existed in all historical times and regions of the world. Hartfield & Rapson (2002) observe that the earliest western literature abounds in stories of lovers, fictional and real, caught up in a sea of passion and violence. Western culture takes romantic love as the idealization of love. Stone (1989) views romantic love as a western invention not found in other cultures of non-western countries except for the elite of those countries. Among the Gĩkũyũ, romance existed in controlled measure and was practiced in controlled designate forums such as *Nguĩko* procedures as highlighted by Kenyatta (1938). *Nguĩko* is a legitimate forum where a young man and a woman are placed together for an overnight romance characterized by heavy petting and cuddling in which intercourse is forbidden for socialization, wellbeing and promotion of self-control. Moreover, Kenyatta's work shows that a lot of romantic engagement accompanied *Nguĩko* forums and various Gĩkũyũ dances such as *Mwomboko* whose formational structure paired male and female dancers.

Evolutional psychologists argue that passionate love is innate in human nature and is based on biological processes that are universal in all cultures. Ruan (1991) says that love and sexual pleasure are the great joys of life. Jankowiak & Fischer (1992), present the following indicators of love: young lovers that talk about passionate love, sing love songs, recount love tales and discuss the longings of infatuation. Apart from contending that romantic love is controlled by various cultural variables the scholars are of the opinion that people fall in love more or less often depending on their culture's social

organization and ideology. That is why the postcolonial experience in Kenya is an ideological factor that influences the construction of *Gĩkũyũ* romance patterns.

Hartfield, Rapson & Martel (2007) state that culture has a profound impact on people's definitions of romantic love. Moreover, culture is an entity that transforms romantic love to passionate love. Passion is dependent on certain principles of sexual selection. Buss (1994) notes that men and women in all societies prefer someone who possesses a dependable character, emotional stability and maturity as well as a pleasant disposition. Other factors include; in the findings of Wallen (1989), good looks, financial status, gender and geographical origins. Buss (1994) found that men valued physical appearance whereas women preferred high status and resources necessary to protect them and their children. All these components are found in the songs selected for this study as elements integral in the construction of *Gĩkũyũ* romance.

Some scholars contend that passionate love has always existed in all historical times and regions of the world. Hartfield & Rapson (2002) observes that the earliest western literature abounds in stories of lovers, fictional and real, caught up in a sea of passion and violence. All cultures have experienced dynamism in the expression and practice of romance. In Africa, the traditional structure was the love-marriage-sex- Happy-Ever-After mode. African romance practices have been affected by cross-cultural influences and modernity. Mimicry and migration are the key agents of romantic dynamism. In this case western romance models have diffused into African romance practices in the process of cultural evolution. Western models are transported via media and other channels. This reality has attracted scholarship activity and it is a motivation for this study.

As a universal entity, the practice of romance in *Gĩkũyũ* culture has undergone global dynamism as has occurred in almost all the cultures of the world. This dynamism has affected romantic practice in *Gĩkũyũ* since the traditional structure of *Gĩkũyũ* romance has been subjected to evolutionary processes by the postcolonial experience. The evolved structure is the subject matter of the selected songs in this study and the findings are that postcolonial experience has influenced the *Gĩkũyũ* romance structure by facilitating relationship stability or complicating it and causing tragi-romance.

Analysis of the songs has employed a reflexive reading technique proposed by Mwangi (2009) in which he suggests that 'Africa is writing back to Self' because she is now mature and the discourses that constitute African literature are now African, targeting African audiences within an African setting. Hall (2001) refers to this setting as post coloniality, constituting of the evolutionary incorporation of the imperialistic imposed norms and the indigenous African traditions that form a legitimate conventional modern culture. The songs have been analyzed from the precept that contemporary *Gĩkũyũ* experience is responsible for the existing romance patterns and the artists depict the nature and characteristics of *Gĩkũyũ* romance in attempt to speak to African audiences in pursuit of positive interaction for social stability. It is in this light that the postcolonial cultural factors responsible for the emergence and existence of the contemporary romance structure in *Gĩkũyũ* have been analysed.

There are two patterns of *Gĩkũyũ* romance depicted in the selected songs. In one pattern the couples involved enjoy satisfactory happiness. Then there is the negated subversive category that contravenes the conventional cultural dictates referred to in this study as tragi-romance. There are a number of fundamental postcolonial cultural factors underlying the construction of this structure. Most of these factors are products of *Gĩkũyũ* gender ideology, gender politics of women liberation, protection of gender rights, empowerment of women, education, career growth and emerging postcolonial factors such as capital economy and cultural dynamism.

2. Methodology

The study has employed qualitative research design and purposive sampling method. Cassettes, CDs and VCDs containing the selected songs were obtained from leading music stores and played on the screen. Viewing and listening to the songs has been done and observations made from the productions on the screen. The songs have then been transcribed into scripts and free translation into English was done. Words without an immediate English equivalent have been explained using the most appropriate and related diction. Live show occasions were also attended by the researcher and participant observation made. Open conversations were also held with consumers of the songs.

3. Cultural Evolution and the Construction of *Gĩkũyũ* Romance

The construction of romance in the postcolonial *Gĩkũyũ* culture is related to a number of cultural factors. The post-colonial experience begins for the *Gĩkũyũ* upon contact with the European. Pre-colonial *Gĩkũyũ* is patriarchal in nature, a factor that regulates romantic relationships to avoid subversive threat. Women are socialized to be subordinate to men with controlled romantic freedom while men are allowed a relative degree of freedom and polygamy. Postcolonial *Gĩkũyũ* incorporates the ideology of gender balance and Christianity, factors that compromise the traditional patriarchal order. This experience is responsible for the modern tumultuous romantic structure in postcolonial *Gĩkũyũ* emergent from the clamour for women liberation and protection of gender rights. On the contrary, the pre-colonial *Gĩkũyũ* romance has less or no upheaval because there is no gender competition and power brokerage.

A thematic evaluation of *Wamahũa*, by Joseph *Kamarũ* reveals that traditional *Gĩkũyũ* romance is satisfactorily fulfilling for the partners probably because of its patriarchal contexts. The artist has borrowed from the poetic structure of the traditional *Gĩcaandĩ* poetic contest in the construction of a modern version of *Wamahũa*; a traditional *Gĩkũyũ* folk song, in which romance dominates the performance. A lot of romantic insinuations are made in *Kamarũ's* version of *Wamahũa* thus;

*Mĩgũnda nĩ ũrĩ mĩgũnda nĩ ũrĩ...ĩ, Wa Wanjirũ
Ĩĩ Ngaatha ĩno ũkwenda ngũrĩmĩre ũrĩkũ? Ii ũũĩ?*

Haiyaa...ĩ ũũĩ ũkwenda ngũrĩmĩre ũrĩkũ ...ĩ ũũĩ?

The gardens are two... ũ... the gardens are two..ĩ... son of *Wanjirũ*

Oh queen lady which one do you want me to cultivate for you?

Haaiya...ĩ oh..which one do you want me to cultivate for you..?

Rĩmĩra rĩgongo rĩmĩra rĩgongo ĩ.... Wamahũa

Ĩ ooiyio... kĩanda nĩ kĩa mwene mbũri...ĩ..ũũĩ

Haiyaa ...ĩ..ũũĩ kĩanda nĩ kĩa mwene mbũri...ĩ..ũũĩ..

Cultivate the upland cultivate the upland... *Wamahũa*

Ĩ ooh.. the valley belongs to the owner of the goats..

Haaiya...ĩ oh.. the valley belongs to the owner of the goats..

The man in this song is courting a lover for sexual favours. The romance in the story is an extra-marital affair made in distinct concealment for the man says that he prefers a sexual encounter far from the homestead because his actions might be traced. He takes acknowledgement of the woman's marital status as a married woman by openly revealing that she has a husband who must not know what is happening by discovering the affair. This means that this affair is a side plate dish to the main marital affair within the institution of marriage. We learn that her formal husband even complains whenever she is outside the homestead a situation the persona concludes is a result of romantic jealousy because his wife is very full of warmth. He is therefore a possessive husband, a trait that indicates their union is satisfactory. *Wamahũa* speaks to modern *Gĩkũyũ* by challenging modern forms of extramarital engagements that result in romance crisis for lack of concealment due to subversive inclinations such as is demonstrated in *Nguruneti* where the woman romances her boss inside the office as her husband waits on her at the reception. Further she gets into drinking sprees late into the night as the husband grudgingly waits for her at home. Expressing the agony of his disillusionment, the man in *Nguruneti* says; "*Ūinũkage thaa thiita cia ũtukũ wĩ mũrũ...ndaarage ngĩtaara mĩĩrĩro..ĩ*" meaning; "You return home drunk after midnight...and I wait in agony counting the rafters..." Mwangi (2009)'s proposal for reflexive reading is vital in the interpretation of *Wamahũa* because it helps to see that pre-colonial *Gĩkũyũ* romance is less tumultuous when compared to the contemporary one that in some cases travail upheaval in estrangement, separation and divorce due to the subversive inclinations of modern lifestyle.

Tũgatigithanio nĩ Gĩkuũ and its part two in *Thigari cia Waitina* also has a pre-independence setting. It captures the romance situation during the period of the struggle for independence by showing that true love out smarts colonial threat. The obstacles in the romance depicted in the song are the colonial control strategies to counter *Mau Mau* rebellion. One of the colonial strategies in this endeavour is the declaration of the state of emergency in Kenya in 1952.

Fifty two nĩrĩo majeneti yakinyire Kenya,

Nĩrĩo ndeharĩirie gũthĩ kwa mwendwa.

52 is the year a state of emergency was declared in Kenya

It is the year I had prepared to go to my love's home.

Colonialism is a brutal ideology of native control that violates all the basic human rights of the *Gĩkũyũ*. The declaration of a state of emergency curtails basic freedom for the natives. These include; the freedom of movement, association and expression because the colonial government oppressively forces Africans to acquire permits for movement and association. The persona traverses wells and ridges within the atmosphere of violence and insecurity to go and get his woman in the far away land of *Nyeri*.

The journey to *Nyeri* is characterized by fear and looming death. "*Mũrĩma ũrĩa gatora na ũrĩa ũngĩ gatoro, rithathi nacio cioiraga ta mbura. Across the ridge gunfire and over the other gunpowder.*" Although successful, the arrival back to *Kangema* is with the bride. A wedding party; (*Chai*), is organized by the villagers for the introduction of the bride. This is seen in *Thigari cia Waitina* below;

Twakinya gwitũ Kangema nĩ ndathondekire chai,

Wa andũ arĩa matangiakinyire Nyĩrĩ,

Mũhiki nĩ ũyũ ũtũmĩte mbũri ciitu ithĩ Nyĩrĩ,

Tũkũnyua na rĩa ingĩ twĩthambe nayo..

On arrival to our home in *Kangema*.

I organized a tea party,

For those people who did not go to *Nyeri*,

This is the bride who made our goats to go to *Nyeri*,

We shall drink it and the rest we bathe with it.

Chai is a common *Gĩkũyũ* reference to a modern village party. All ceremonies are treated with suspicion by the colonial government as the persona reveals in the song. Rumour brings bad tidings into the party. The family is accused of arranging an oathing ceremony in the name of a wedding party. The *Mau Mau* oathing ceremony is a sacred party in which all adults are sworn into allegiance as reliable supporters of the struggle to ensure that all members facilitate operations, coordination and networking either with material supply or with communication between the forest and the people. His mother reports in panic that *Waitina's* soldiers are on the way (either to attack by shooting or to arrest by detention) further suggesting that they dissolve the party. The soldier's storm and disrupt the party and there is disarray. The moment is saved by the presentation of the church document issued by the priest as a marriage certificate. The soldiers are pacified thus because the persona states that there is no difference between the priest and the imperialist.

*Maya nĩ marũa marĩa twahetwo nĩ mũbea,
Na gũtirĩ mũthũngũ na mũbea.*

This is the letter that we were given by the priest.

And there is no difference between the priest and the white man.

This shows that the agenda of the imperialist and the missionary is the same. The missionary is supported by the colonial government to spread Christianity in pursuit of civilizing the savages and converting them into the new religion of submission so that they are easy to govern. The depiction of a colonial romance and its challenges in this song is a historical record of preserving the history of the struggle for independence. The artist; Joseph *Kamarũ*, gives the setting of the song as war time. The aim is to explain the social political challenges of romance experienced by Africans during the struggle for independence. Using a reflexive approach, the record targets African audiences of the latter-day African nation and her generations.

Tũgatigithanio nĩ Gĩkuũ also highlights the early involvement of the church; a factor that remains in the culture long after independence, in the construction of *Gĩkũyũ* romance. The clergy issues a legitimacy emblem for marital union called the marriage certificate. The persona calls it a letter issued by the priest. The marriage certificate in postcolonial *Gĩkũyũ* is a contentious document because it has connotations of both religious legitimacies to discourage polygamy and judicial attributes of formality of a marriage. The wedding certificate becomes an identity commodity of great value in contemporary *Gĩkũyũ* because until recently (when other forms of romantic relationships for a man have been recognized in the law in matters of property distribution and inheritance), the wedding certificate used to be a judicial tool to lock out women claimants related to the man within an 'otherness' of romantic engagement.

Another wedding is conducted in *Waruirĩ* by Sam *Kĩnũthia* much later in the post-independence era. The Christian perspective considers written documentation with the church's signature as signals of standard acceptable romance practice within the institution of marriage. This is a marriage certificate in the order of European Christian practices and customs. The practice begins long before independence showing that *Gĩkũyũ* marital traditions and structure begins to experience change and transformational transition into modernity long before independence. This is evident in *Kamarũ's Thigari Cia Waitina*. In this song, the artist refers to the wedding certificate as a powerful letter issued by the priest because it saves the situation during a raid by the colonial government on a wedding tea party on allegations of *Mau Mau* dissident activities camouflaging as a wedding celebration. He says;

Maya ni marũa marĩa twahetwo nĩ Mũbea

Na gũtirĩ Mũthũngũ na Mũbea.

This is the letter were given by the Catholic priest,

And there is no difference between the colonial master and the priest. Couples are issued with marriage certificates as legal documents of legitimate marital order. This is a shift from the indigenous *Gĩkũyũ* tradition of solemnization of marriage with procedural rituals such as, the planting of the branch to mark betrothal, the negotiation of bride price, payment of bride price and the cutting of the shoulder. Cutting of the shoulder is the most advanced marriage negotiation ritual that signifies total legitimacy of a marital union. The wedding certificate issued by the Christian clergy is one of the factors that influence the stability of the modern romance unions. Although this emblem has its origins in western marital practice, the modern African culture has incorporated it as no longer a foreign commodity but as an African feature that operates for the African people in modern religious and political functions. The marriage certificate is a symbol of marital identity and social cultural legitimacy.

Modern *Gĩkũyũ* culture has incorporated modern modes of courtship such as the coordination of dating programmes using the written discourse. Leakey (1954), explains that traditionally lovers in *Gĩkũyũ* meet during social ceremonies but modern culture opens space for interaction through modern forms of communication such as the letter and the telephone with recent times getting the advantage of technological inventions such as the mobile phone and the internet. Letter writing carries the bulk of romantic expression in the world of *Kamarũ's Gathoni* where romantic exchange and expression of love is done explicitly through the letter. There is even strategic coordination of the dating procedure with *Gathoni* specifying the crucial dates of introduction to the parents and her postal address thus;

Watua kwandĩka marũa njĩtagwo Sussy Gathoni....

Na ithandũkũ nĩ 42004

Kamarũ na ndũkarege nĩguo ngwathĩrĩre mucĩ

Kamarũ....ĩ nĩngwenda... ũgoka april ikumi.

When you write the reply letter,

My name is *Sussy Gathoni*,

And the address is 42004,

And please *Kamaru* don't fail,

So that I give you directions to our home,

Kamarũ....oh Kamarũ... please come on April 10th.

Love rhetoric fills the letter as is characteristic of the language of lovers. Jankowiak & Fischer (2007) highlights how lovers express romantic feelings for each other in conversations as is happening in the letter *Gathoni* writes to

Kamarū. Kenyatta (1938) outlines courtship procedures preceding marriage in traditional *Gikūyū* such as formal introduction of a suitor to parents and critical rituals like payment of bride price. The procedure is still practised in modern *Gikūyū* in preparation for marriage. *Kamarū*, the suitor in the song, mentions goats; the purchase commodities for a girl in *Gikūyū*, that marks prestigious installation of a woman as legitimate wife. The refrain of *Gathoni* brings out the cultural reality of the vitality of goats in legitimizing romantic union; *Gathoni...ĩ.. Nīngwenda...atuīke wakwa wa mbūri..*, meaning, *Gathoni...oh I want Gathoni to become mine, exchanged for with goats*. Goats are symbols of prestige and legitimacy, marking the significance of the woman and the social status of ability to provide on the part of the man. Reflexive interpretation of the discourse shows that the song *Gathoni* carries the message of cultural intermarriage between *Gikūyū* tradition and European practices for contemporary *Gikūyū*. Goats are also mentioned in *Korūo Nī Ndakūū Tene* and the suitor in this song drives not only goats into Lucy's homestead but also cows to show the importance of payment of bride price in both traditional and modern *Gikūyū*.

Kenyatta (1938) explains that traditional *Gikūyū* has a controlled procedure for leisure and entertainment with the main refreshment agent as the *Gikūyū Mūratina*. *Mūratina* is a tasty home-made brew prepared with sugarcane extract, honey and the prestigious *Mūratina* tubers for fermentation. There is a controlled procedure for consumption of the brew in traditional *Gikūyū* and only designate categories of the population are admitted into legitimate consumption. There are procedures of consumption such as ceremonies or special parties of adults past the age of reproduction. Party indulgence is always after work and youthful people are excluded. Modernity dismantles the traditional arrangement and allows fluidity of alcoholic production and consumption. In *Waarī Mūhonoki*, alcohol is contentious and is responsible for the disintegration of the family in focus. The man reports that his wife complained to his mother that he does not provide subsistence for the family for he virtually remains in the bar throughout necessitating that she takes full load, the duties of a man. He says; "*Werire Maami ndigūteithagia ndūraga Bar....*" Meaning, "You told my mother that I don't assist you because I live in the Bar...." And she replies thus; "*Ndaririkana ndiikuonaga ūtūraga Bar...*" All these allegations indicate that modern *Gikūyū* culture fails to regulate indulgence with alcohol, a factor that complicates romantic relationships resulting in tragi-romance. The factory manufactured alcohol often gets compromised by subversive practices of capitalistic utilitarianism driven by the dictates of maximizing profit margins that attract inclinations into adulteration of content like what the man victim in *Mūhiki Wa Mīkosi* calls; "*irīa ngananie*," meaning, "the forbidden." He says;

Ndakinya thagana ngari ikūra bara

Na ikūhura gikīngi ta ndūrūme hau ndarutirwo nī ahītūki

Ngītwarwo borithi nginya thibitari itekwīgua....

....ngīthimwo thakame...

Ngīmenywo ndanyuite nginya irīa ngananie.

When I reached *Sagana*, the car lost control
And hit a pole like a he-sheep
When in hospital, my blood was tested
And it was discovered that I had
Consumed even the forbidden..

The forbidden are hard alcoholic drinks whose effect requires a few sips. The man in *Mūhiki Wa Mīkosi* consumes them and suffers a blackout that comes with a multiplication of problems. The *Mūrang'a* bar in the song is opened too early in the day and there is an influx of clients such as *Kamarū* and the woman of bad luck. In *Momo*, this liquor is referred to as *Kairacī* with insinuations of its problematic properties. The refrain in *Waarī Mūhonoki* part2 reveals that uncontrolled consumption of modern liquor is consequential to romantic stability for it exposes couples and family to complications of insecurity, dismissal from formal employment, disintegration in divorce, illness and Hiv/Aids. The latter is depicted in *Waarī Mūhonoki* part1 in the following lines;

Wīmenyerere my dear kwīna kagunyū,

Kena hathara nene mūno gatiūatigi,

Kehuīrīra he mumeera ūcio ūgetuba...

Wīrire narua ūūke nguohere ūcooke na mūcī..

There is a dangerous worm my dear,
So hazardous it does not leave remnants,
When it touches a plant, that plant withers away,
Repent quickly and come I forgive you,
So that you can return home.

The message of *Mūhiki Wa Mīkosi* for modern *Gikūyū* is that there should be moderation of production and administration of alcoholic drink culture so that alcohol does not interfere with economic productivity and security as witnessed when the main character hits an electric pole when driving under the influence of alcohol.

Traditional medical procedures such as midwifery evolve in the postcolonial dispensation into the sophisticated modes of efficiency provided by the introduction of the hospital and modern European medicine. Hospital is enjoyed in *Gikūyū* as one of the cherished inventions of European civilization in Africa due to its enhancement of healthcare and long life. In *Nī Ngaatho*, the woman expresses her appreciation of the husband's venture to take her to the private hospital and the services she gets there saying;

Kahinda kangīkinya ga gūthii matenetii,

*Witungumanagia ūkona ndathii ya goro,
Arīa angī magītwara atumia aao magūrū,
Kana na matatū nī ūndwaraga na mbiūki.*

When time comes to attend maternity
You struggle and ensure that I attend the private hospital
When others are taking their wives on foot or matatū
You transport me in a luxury motor.

The production of songs like *Nī Ngīkūrīhīra* and *Nī Ngaatho* is an artistic appraisal of the benefits of European civilization that indicates that not all cultural imports from Europe are negative as some postcolonial critics may insinuate. Mwangi (2009) enhances interpretation of African art that highlights components of imported forms that profit African progress through reflexive analysis. For example, the hospital is an evolutionary milestone that in many cases enhances romantic enjoyment and stability especially by averting the tragedy of child mortality as seen in the two songs; *Nī Ngaatho* and *Nī Ngīkūrīhīra*. In the two songs the women are delivered of their babies in the hospital situation and given modern maternity services. In this case, medical evolution is an element of Gīkūyū culture that positively affects romance for the two women express gratitude to their male partners for giving them access to the services. Although hospital service may bring complications of financial nature due to the payment of medical fees as happens in *Nī Ngīkūrīhīra*, the establishment is an essentiality in the stability of romantic union.

Modern empowerment of the woman that promotes access and control of financial and material resources either through formal employment or private enterprise disenfranchises the traditional patriarchal order that confines women into the home space and opens the outer space to the man, a factor that brings relationship complications. Hall (2001) states that, empowerment makes women to become self-reliant and to develop capacity for decision making regarding what they consider relevant to their prosperity. Due to the possibility of financial independence and capital muscle, a segment of women defy abusive unions of trauma and change house such as happens in *Waarī Mūhonoki* where the woman settles in another big town and *Amsterdam* where the woman has heavier financial capacity and dares abroad in Amsterdam with the children. In *Waarī Mūhonoki* part 1 the man says chauvinistically; "*Wathiire ūkīhitha tauni ūmwe ici nene... Nanī ndūire ..ī. ngūcaragia na ndūrī thooni...*" meaning, "You went and took a hideout in one of these big towns.... Then am left to look for you in vain and you have no shame...whereas in Amsterdam the other aggrieved man laments; *Kaā rīu Ngai baba ūtangīndūmīra kūngūyū,
Kīmerie ta Jonah kīningie mūrīmo wa iria,
Njūke ngumīrīre my dear wee kūu wee worīre,
Nguone tu na maitho na ciana ngoro ūhorere.*

Oh God my father, if you could send me a shark,
To swallow me like Jonah and transport me across the ocean,
I come to that place my dear you took cover,
Then see you and the children for my heart to get peace.

The woman in *Waarī Mūhonoki* can finance her survival away from the husband of irresponsibility in another town whereas the woman in *Amsterdam* has a bigger financial capacity to relocate abroad and lead a satisfactory life. These are results of the evolutionary empowerment of women whose interpretation along the provisions of reflexive reading of African art, speaking to its African space, may highlight interpretations twofold; that empowerment rescues women from marital abuse and discomfort and that empowerment dismantles marital unions completely for women design departure and end the unions. The two interpretations may be contentious and criticism must extend interrogation on the realities of their occurrence. Empowerment of women also introduces other discourses of female independence like control of sexuality and romance choices. The employed woman finds extra space for interaction with multiple males from whom she chooses extra romance partners such as witnessed in *Nguruneti* and *Tūirio Twega*. The former chooses romance with her boss and the latter finds a man of better financial standing and frame of body. Fischer & Carnochan (1990) highlight both factors as critical elements in the process of mate selection. In *Tūirio Twega*, the woman owns up to betraying the first romance with reasons;

*Ndauma gīchagi, Josee ndoka Nairobi,
Ndakorire, anake handīsaamu,
Meena ithūūrī na meena mbece nyingi,
Ngīkīrigwo ingīhika gīchaagi atia.*

When I left the village, Jose and came to Nairobi,
I found handsome men,
With huge thorax and lots of money,
And I wondered how I could get married in the village.

The men of the city are more handsome and physically stronger as compared to the woman's lover in the village. The city men are even more promising providers because they have lots of money. The concept of money increasingly comes out in the songs as a basic factor in influencing the course of romantic survival. Those men with weak financial ability often become losers in the romance game while those with a strong financial status enjoy the privilege of being preferred by the women. This does not reduce the character of the modern *Gikūyū* woman into labels like materialistic or greedy because the inclination is a natural trait that governs mate selection.

The emergence of money economy promotes cultural perversion and patronage of the financially privileged over the vulnerable. Due to the patriarchal dependence of the woman as the weaker gender on the man for financial and material support, a small portion of the male population of the rich category takes advantage of the status quo clad with the traditional allowance for a man to take a young girl as wife. Rich men of financial advantage abuse the traditional status of polygamy as a mark of prestige and evolve into the Sugar Daddy figure who gives goodies to young girls in return for sweet girl romance without marital commitment. The naive girl of vulnerability falls prey and travails the peril of abandonment. In *Njeri Gaitū*, the girl laments;

*Ūūūi nīnderīire na rwa njora,
Na rwa njora, mūrio nī wīrīagīra*

Ooh I ate myself with the sheathed sword

The sheathed sword, sweetness also bites for itself.

Traditionally an elder man takes the girl with legitimate responsibility rituals of marriage and makes her wife and he is answerable to the culture but the modern Sugar Daddy circus is a form of queer debauchery resultant in divorced women of no moral identity that *Njeri* in the song calls; *Gicookio* with illegitimate children like those three that *Njeri* is abandoned with. This is a crisis caused by romantic perversion of old rich men in modern *Gikūyū*. In producing a song like *Njeri Gaitū* the artist exposes the flaws of a cultural transition that dismembers traditional modes of control such as the practice of polygamy in favour of European monogamy and Christianity, at the expense of productive cultural merger designs. In this case *Gikūyū* is advised in *Njeri Gaitū* to sample the cultural imports of Europe and gradually incorporate them into the local in order to curb the advancement of romantic patronage. One such import is Christianity which should be modified into tolerance of positive African aspects like polygamy so that patronizing senior males can make legitimate objects of their desire through formal marriage of younger girls instead of abandoning them.

Gikūyū traditional polygamy has been adversely affected by Christian doctrine. Mbiti (1969) shows how the new doctrine compels affiliates to denounce polygamy as a satanic mode of primitive worship and embrace Christianity as a yardstick for civilization and true religion. As a result, a large segment of the population has been rendered unmarried creating new modes of cultural perversion in the emergence of the Sugar Mummy phenomenon. The women in *Momo* and *Mama Kīwinya* are single women without husbands and they become examples of female romance patronage like their male Sugar Daddy counterparts represented in *Njeri Gaitū*. The senior unmarried women persuade young men with upkeep facilities of housing, motor vehicle, money and a job to tether them into romance unions. The persona in *Mama Kīwinya* complains;

*Wetuire surveyor ūnjiganagigie ta mīhaaka,
Ūkīoya kabirū ūkīnjaka ta cia mahiga ...Maami
Mīaka yaku nīyarega tūikaranie...*

You made yourself a surveyor to align me like boundaries
And took the tape measure and built me like stone houses
Your years and mine have refused our union.

*Nī ngūka gwaku ndokiite kuria wīra,
O hīndī ndarīkia kīrathi kīa form four
Ūkīnjīra ngūteithagie gūikaraga nduka-inī
No ūkīhenereria aī ngomage gwaku
Nīguo ngūteithagie gwīkaga ithabu
Rīa wendo....*

When I came to your premises, I had come to look for a job
As soon as I had just completed form four
You told me to be assisting you in the shop
Then you persuaded me to be sleeping in your house
So that I can be helping you to do mathematics
The mathematics of love.

The capitalistic money economy of modern *Gikūyū* also introduces new challenges that influence relationships in terms of dependency for survival. *Ngūgī* (1986) reveals how in the cities, social stratification produces classes of the rich and the poor characterized by the top category that possesses capital power, the class of the proletariat and the class of the worker that provides cheap labour. A critical component of survival for all the classes is housing. The capital owners own homes and invest in real estate housing for commercial purposes. Their clientele are the classes of the proletariat and the

worker with the lowest categories taking residence in makeshift quarters often referred to as the ghetto or slums. Residence in the cities and towns demands payment of rent which is an element of economic evolution because traditionally, the *Gikūyū* is rural and housing is self-made or communal with materials from the natural environment. In this context, men procure romance by paying house rent for women lovers and lay legitimate claim of control of the woman as a romance territory where no other man is allowed intrusion. Sometimes, the woman indulges in an extra romance spree and complications occur especially if the new lover is invited into the loan premises and combat between the two men occurs as happens in *Nyūmba Ūtarīhaga* where a man victim warns other men saying; "*Nyūmba ūtarīhaga, mwanake tigana nayo,*" meaning, "A house for which you don't pay, young man, leave it alone." In composing a song like *Nyūmba Ūtarīhaga*, the artist is speaking to governance to develop housing policies that promote affordable housing for all categories of people from the financial barons to the marginalized in order to curb romantic crisis and conflict that often results in the tragedy of the love triangle realities which sometimes become fatal.

The *Gikūyū* woman belongs to the man especially within the institution of marriage. There are cultural structures that ensure almost all women are placed in this arrangement especially through polygamy. The man is allowed possession of young women including girls for romance. The opposite is taboo and the culture does not allow romance indulgence between a young man and an old or older woman. In *Momo* we encounter a reverse of this sacred *Gikūyū* romance precept in the emergence of sugar mummy lover. It is predominantly a sub phenomenon of perversion and an indication of conflicting cultural ideologies of modern *Gikūyū* culture. Cultural erosion of this nature is also depicted in *Mama Kīwinya* as a characteristic of modern *Gikūyū* romance. The two songs highlight the contribution of rural-urban migration to the construction of this type of subversive romance reality. The concept of unemployment and its relationship with urbanization is not only alluded to in *Momo* and *Mama Kīwinya* but in many other songs. The youthful job seekers migrate to the city in search of jobs because there are job opportunities created by industrial growth, business and administrative institutions. It is this migration that contributes to the construction of urban romance realities. Sometimes lovers meet and form conventional unions that result in happy marriage. Other times the unions are unorthodox and they end up in the trap of disillusionment and pain. For example, *Tūirio Twega* is a story of romance adulterated by rural-urban migration. A woman leaves for the city and leaves the man to whom she is betrothed in the countryside with a promise to come back and marry him. However, life is too enjoyable in the city, for she gets a job and a promotion to the position of supervisor in quick succession. She says;

Ndathī Nairobi mūtūrīre ūgicenjia
Ngīona wīra, ngītuo supervisor...

When I came to Nairobi, my lifestyle changed

I got a job and a promotion to a supervisor...

She also discovers that men of the city are more handsome, rich and of better body frame. Soon she finds a husband among them and abandons the village romance of her first lover. The abandoned man is a devastated figure of disillusionment. This shows that city life affects the construction of romance twofold; giving satisfaction as in the case of the woman and causing trauma as in the case of the man in the above songs.

Modern entertainment modes such as the *Mūgiithi* dance and the one-man guitar performances also provide space for romantic experiences. This is seen in *Ndaaci ya Karatina* where the persona is the artist; *Kīmani wa Turracco*. During a rare performance at *Karatina*, a secret lady admirer is overcome by romantic emotion to the point of fainting. It is the man artist who conducts physical First Aid on her. This is the birth of a romance between the two. The song depicts entertainment forums as an expansion of romantic space where people fall in love and start romantic unions. The man says that he misses another fainting episode so that they can repeat the drama in which he pumps oxygen into her lungs using his mouth as well as the embracing and the kisses that follow.

Nī misaga ūkaringīka rīngi ndītho..
Tūcokere ūndū ūcio nī wangenirie mūno,
Ndakūheire rīera na mīromo yaakwa..
Wokīra ūkīhmbīria na ūkīhūra kiss.

I miss another occasion,
When you will faint again in my presence,
So that we repeat the drama,
Because it made me feel so nice,
I gave you air using my lips,
And when you woke up,
You embraced me and gave me a kiss.

The song; *Ndaaci Ya Karatina*, is a description of romantic possession with a successful artist in which the artist too falls in love and the romance thrives. Quite often both men and women get attracted to successful artists and seek them out for romantic relationships. Modern entertainment space acts as action area for the meeting of potential lovers, introductions, contact exchanges and construction of dating procedures as is also depicted in *Kamarū's Gathoni*. In *Gathoni*, the two meet in a performance arena, introduce themselves to each other and exchange contacts in readiness for a post event encounter that marks their dating. Ellis (1960) explains that passion, elation, emotional and sexual desire accompanies romance as happens in *Ndaaci ya Karatina* where *Njagī*, the artist and persona talks about his longing for a similar occasion when the woman would faint and they repeat the action of passion. According to Jancowiak & Fischer

(1992), young people recount and discuss the longings of infatuation similar to *Njagĩ's* longing for another fainting episode in which he administers first aid physically with his mouth upon the woman's. *Ndaaci ya Karatina* is therefore a representative occasion of similar possibilities that lead to romantic relationships. By composing such a song, the artist is highlighting how the modern *Gĩkũyũ* song functions as an entertainment agent as indicated by almost all the interviewees during the live show survey. Almost all those interviewed during the live shows stated that they attend the occasions for both entertainment and education.

Cultural evolution influences the construction of romance in *Gĩkũyũ* because of the dynamic transition of traditional *Gĩkũyũ* culture to the modern mode that is a merger of tradition and European forms.

4. Postcolonial Patriarchy

The selected songs present reminiscences of the patriarchal past evident in postcolonial *Gĩkũyũ*. Analysis of the songs reveal that Patriarchal attitude and practice has not been eradicated by the colonial experience and modernity. *Gĩkũyũ* patriarchy has only evolved into a postcolonial mode that struggles to conserve the old norms and the new modern forms. Gender ideology remains patriarchal after independence but gradually evolves into incorporation of global inclinations of inclusivity that promotes gender balance and liberation of women from the retrogressive status of confinement into domestic gender roles. Hall (2001) on patriarchy says, that social structure empowering men throughout history, has come under intense critical scrutiny and there has been an explosion of interest in women's rights and possible avenues for social empowerment in recent years. *Gĩkũyũ* women are now easily absorbed, accommodated and accepted into the modern economic sector, government and leadership. This study has evaluated the element of career inclusivity for women. The modern *Gĩkũyũ* woman is a product of the liberating power of education. Women participate in the national economy either in the public sector or the private sector with those educated getting advantage of choice into either of the two. Those with no or little education find a niche in the private sector as business personnel and acquire enterprise acumen. *Timona Mbũrũ's Nguruneti* gives an example of the career woman in the office; presumably a beneficiary of formal education. *Momo* and *Mama Kĩwinya* give the example of the successful business woman who in *Gĩkũyũ* is either pseudo-educated or lacks education completely. Although education affects the woman's financial status, the completely uneducated woman maintains the traditional patriarchal position in the home managing domestic affairs.

Traditional *Gĩkũyũ* society had a distinct patriarchal gender positioning structure that ensured construction and maintenance of positive romance patterns. In this order the woman is socialized into submissive character and the man assumes the family position of power with a bonus of freedom to engage in extra romance in and beyond polygamy. Although this male trait is highly contested in the post-independence era due to the advancement of Christian ethics, modernity has not eliminated polygamy from the *Gĩkũyũ* romance space. A good example is in the song; *Kĩhiki Understanding* in which the aggrieved man declares his intention to get another woman of tolerance because his wife has refused to take up the female status of submission. There are sentiments such as the following in the song;

Kũhĩaga nderu nĩ Ngĩrugĩra,

Getting my beard burnt as I bend,
Onto the fire cooking my food.

Mũndũ aremwo nĩ wĩra, nĩathĩ leave,

Ndũkegwatie ta mbura, Ya rũhuho.

If someone is tired of her job, let her take leave,

And stop giving excuses like empty rain blown by the wind.

The man is specific that a woman has her own domestic duties in the home. Hall (2001) explains that biologically, women's emotional and nurturing capacities are distinct from men's testosterone-driven engagement with the world around them. For example, a woman is responsible of preparing her husband's food. When this order is distorted by subversive behaviour and defiance, then tragi-romance occurs as the man exercises his cultural mandate to get an alternative woman and become polygamous. The reading of *Kĩhiki Understanding*, within the context of *Gĩkũyũ* post coloniality reveals that patriarchal gender roles are important for the stability of romance unions as long as equitable distribution of opportunities is provided for both men and women. The modern *Gĩkũyũ* woman should balance domestic efficiency and engagements outside the domestic space. In other words, *Gĩkũyũ* should evolve into a postcolonial patriarchal merger of gender roles for tranquillity and prosperity, the reverse of which is consequential romance crisis and tragi-romance.

Kĩnuthia also presents a similar scenario in *Wairurĩ*. In this song, a man finds himself in a church wedding drama in which he decides to take the traditional *Gĩkũyũ* option and weds both women against the backdrop of Christian derogatory labels of polygamy.

Wairurĩ wee rekia mũhunja ngingo,

Reke ũreherwo neeti ona we tuohithanio,

Ndũke wa ndebe igĩrĩ, Ũrĩa gĩkaina kĩine.

Wairurĩ please let go the preacher's neck,

Wairurĩ please let go the preacher's finger,

Let them bring you a veil as well we get wedded,

Then I can be the owner of two containers,

And let the dance to take whichever shape it prefers.

The events of this song show that the postcolonial *Gikūyū* man is aware of modern Christian marital ethics but hibernates in the patriarchal order when in threat. Although Christianity has been embraced in *Gikūyū* culture, the patriarchal strand of polygamy remains influential in romantic relationships. Christian marital precepts then become fluid in the context of African patriarchal structure. The woman remains passive and powerless when the man decides to turn a marital union into a plural status meaning that just as it was in the tradition a man in modern *Gikūyū* has the moral and cultural capacity for polygamy and the status quo remains legitimate. *Gikūyū* culture should therefore redefine and adopt modern Christianity by accepting the place of polygamy in contemporary times.

In *Nguruneti*, the strained relationship ends up in traumatic separation. The man too has options of getting another woman to replace the promiscuous wife. This woman indulges in office romance with her boss and takes permissive drinking sprees late in the night as her husband feels abandoned and ridiculed. *Gikūyū* culture allows moderate permissiveness for a man and not a woman. A woman of dignity is expected to maintain decorum and get home early if she is into career. Alcoholic behaviour in women is abhorred and consequential to the point of physical banishment from the marital premises and divorce. This is what happens in the story. The man in *Nguruneti* becomes polygamous and claims to be deriving a lot of happiness and satisfaction from the new woman. When his first wife returns, she finds him enjoying a hair manicure on the laps of his new wife. It means that the first wife claims legitimate membership status in the home, meaning that Polygamy is a strong component of *Gikūyū* culture that cannot be easily uprooted.

Gikūyū culture promotes masculinity as an agent of power positioning and control in marriage. One indicator of masculinity in *Gikūyū* is the ability of a man to provide for his woman as seen in the songs, *Nī Ngīkūrīhīra*, *Nī Ngaatho*, *My Dear Kwaheri*, *Njeri Gaitū*, *Tūirio Twega* and *Waarī Mūhonoki*. A woman in *Nī Ngaatho* hails her husband for his acts of providence and presents him as a hero. It is from her gratitude to him that the song gets its title; *Nī Ngaatho* meaning, 'This is gratitude.' The woman enumerates the abilities of her husband in her maintenance making him a legendary sung hero because of his masculine duties of providence. He works extra-ordinarily, beating all other men in hard work to ensure that her maternity is not in the public hospital but in the expensive private hospital which has excellent care. He does not escort her to maternity on foot like every other man does with his wife but hires a private car of luxury; *Mbiūki* for her transport to hospital. He is therefore a man of great masculinity because of his ability to maintain a woman to such a high level of satisfaction. In return she sings a gratitude song to him to make his pride public. Likewise, the men in *Njeri Gaitū* and *Tūirio Twega* attract the attention of the women because they have money to give them high class lifestyle and they are given romantic favours in return. Those men who fail to cater for material needs of the women are deserted and the women take lounge elsewhere either alone or in the abode of other men's custody as lovers and wives. The ideological message on this matter is that modern men should take patriarchal responsibilities of masculinity such as providing sustenance for women and their families because patriarchy is not a thing of the past but a component of post coloniality in *Gikūyū*.

Transitional factors are also depicted as influential agents of the evolution of the romance structure in the post-independence era. However, the traditional patriarchal gender arrangements retain their status of influence in male-female relations. The man's position of influence and authority continues to dominate romantic parameters of interaction. It is the man who makes romance proposals for relationship initiatives. It is expected in the culture that he has physical resources inclusive of land and money for the upkeep of his woman. Money is a major factor of qualification to acquire a bride. John De Mathew highlights this reality in *Nī Ngīkūrīhīra*. A man salvages a school dropout girl from detention in hospital over maternity fees in *Nī Ngīkūrīhīra*. She has been abandoned by a lover who got her pregnant. The lover is displayed as an example of a male weakling who cannot pay a hospital bill for his woman in maternity. It is the persona in the song who pays the bill and escorts woman and new born baby to the bus stop. To crown the gesture, this super male of material wealth pays her transport to her parents' homestead so that she can recuperate successfully. He too gives her transport to travel to her parents in the village and later provides her with money to sit her O level examinations. This act of providence is depicted in the song as a masculine triumph. His payment of her bus fare to the village, is a gesture of male power and ability for which he attracts gratitude from both the girl's mother and herself. Her mother vows to visit his parents in future to present appreciation for their son's acts of goodwill. The girl also much later requests him to allow her to reward him with feminine acts like washing his clothes and cooking his food.

Nī ngīkūrīhīra, Na ngīkūhe tigiti,

Ngīkumagaria kwanyu Rwaitira,
Ūkahiūhīrio ni aciari aku.

Personally, I paid your bill, and gave you bus fare,
And then I escorted you to your home in *Rwaitira*,
So that you get post natal care from your parents.

In *Nī Ngīkūrīhīra*, the male patriarchal role of providing for a woman is described. Modernity has not completely made man and woman equal partners in modern *Gikūyū*. Gender roles are still practised along the provisions of patriarchy. Women seem to be enjoying material hand outs of support from men and they voluntarily follow those men who provide for them and give them romance as happens in this song. This shows that patriarchy still contributes to the construction of romance in *Gikūyū*. According to Mwangi (2009) raising such issues in the song is an artistic call to the society to look back to itself to understand what it is not doing right because while traditionally polygamy is accepted by both men and women and there is shared romance with no material attachment, modern romance gets complicated because of the material implications brought about by economic changes.

John *Njagĩ* in *Korũo nĩ Ndakũũ Tene* prides in fictitious ownership of herds which he is driving into Lucy's paternal homestead in form of dowry to demonstrate to his in-laws that he is wealthy enough to maintain his woman. Since the culture considers the man a provider for the woman *Njagĩ's* full of confidence and pride that his masculinity will win him great admiration, an achievement Lucy affirms in Part two that the villagers talk about *Njagĩ's* prowess to the present day; "*Nĩ watigire ngumo Njega gwiitũ....*" meaning, "You left a great legacy in my village.." As stated above patriarchy in modern *Gĩkũyũ* should moderate incorporation of patriarchal modes into modern civilization because traditional attitude cannot be uprooted and replaced with modern forms of interaction completely.

Another man in *Mũtino wa Ndege* leaves his woman and goes abroad to look for greener pastures in order to provide for his woman. She is left waiting patiently for his return but unfortunately, he dies in a plane crash in the Atlantic Ocean leaving his her devastated. In this case, demise also means end of providence and tragi-romance as revealed in her words below;

Iria-inĩ rĩa Atilantũ,

Bũrũri-inĩ wa Abijanũ,

Kũu nĩ kuo mwendwa wakwa akuĩrĩre,

Mbĩrĩra yake irĩ iria-inĩ,

It was in the Atlantic Ocean,

In the land of Abidjan,

That is where my love passed away,

His grave is in the ocean.

The gender structure in postcolonial *Gĩkũyũ* maintains patriarchal designations of duty for men and women. Although contested against the emerging contexts of women empowerment and liberation, most gender roles like provision of upkeep for women remain patriarchal. Men more often get mobile in search of greener pastures including abroad or away from home in the cities as can be seen in *Wendo Ūgũrũki, Mũtino wa Ndege* and *My Dear Kwaheri* as it is expected that they shoulder a large share of the cost of family upkeep. In other cases, even women with whom they relate romantically outside marriage expect and sometimes demand upkeep as seen in *Nyũmba Ūtarĩhaga* and *Nĩ Ngĩkũrĩhĩra*. The songs imply that although culture is open to cultural evolution and change, certain elements of culture such as patriarchy are difficult to erase and rather than wish them away and ignore them, society should consider varied incorporations and modifications to guarantee coexistence of the past and the present in order to avoid romantic redundancy and tragi-romance.

Modern *Gĩkũyũ* romance is affected by chauvinistic inclinations often considered as tolerable parameters of measuring femininity upon submission by women on the positive and subversion upon defiance. Those women who subordinate themselves are labelled good while those who defy are given derogatory identity and punished. In most cases as seen in *Waari Mũhonoki* part 2, the passive woman is often the wronged party and a victim of male chauvinism as seen in the following stanza;

Nĩ ti kwĩhitha ndehithire tathikĩrĩria,

Ndonire nyambe ngwĩtĩkĩrie wambe ũrie maicha.

Tondũ ndonire twaikarania nĩ ngũgũrũka....

For your information, I did not go into hiding, Listen,

I decided to first allow you indulgence into your life of lust,

Because I realised if we live together any longer I will lose my mind.

However, other than physical escape for safety or preservation of sanity from emotional turmoil, the woman has no cultural frame for punitive capacity against the male offender. We also find this in *Kĩhiki Understanding*. The persona claims his wife ignores him completely in the house and sometimes humiliates him with stinging outbursts indicating presence of unresolved domestic conflict. "*Na gũkwaragĩria ũkirĩte ta bubu....*" "and addressing you as you remain silent like a deaf person." "*Na kũjinũraga ona mbere ya ciana....*" "And sometimes humiliating me with stinging sentiments in the presence of the children." The audience may infer that there are a number of post-colonial challenges facing this union but the man is either too cowardly to resolve them with his woman or he is an overlay chauvinistic character. His threat of departure and polygamy shows the extent of romantic complication presumably caused by postcolonial challenges. In *Amsterdam* the artist presents a situation of total separation. The woman physically runs away and without reach this time because she goes overseas to Amsterdam with the children. There is also physical departure of the woman in *Waari Mũhonoki*. It is only in *Waari Mũhonoki* part 2 that the accused woman replies. The reply illuminates the cause of the conflict. We learn that the cause of the estrangement is the man's villainy. A chronic drunkard who neglects his domestic duties and leaves them to his wife, a burden she struggles with until she decides to run away. The man's mother is cited by

the woman of estrangement as a witness of the man's unbecoming demeanour. Modernity has resulted in reversal of gender roles and moral decadence. That is why the man villain of *Waari Mūhonoki* part 2 neglects his marital duties of providence and becomes permissive, turning to alcohol and heaping blame on his woman when the marriage fails and she runs away. Alcoholism and negligence of masculine duties in the marriage leads to a state of broken romance and marriage. The song is a critique of cultural dynamism that remains silent on modern reversal of gender roles where men escape their patriarchal responsibilities with impunity and society listens to them heaping blame on women because they are passive. In the world of the song alcoholism promotes permissiveness in men and it should be controlled either by social or government policy to avoid marital conflict and family disintegration.

Domestic conflict leads to tragi-romance. *Kīhiki Understanding* describes a situation of romantic vulnerability caused by unresolved domestic conflict. Unresolved domestic conflict degenerates into estrangement and physical separation; a factor that leads to family disintegration. In a number of songs where this irregularity is addressed, the persona is passive and noncommittal on his role in the conflict or angelically portrays himself as the 'good partner.' No attention is given to the accused woman's side of the story over the allegations or her self-defence because she is not accommodated as a participant in the story. She is always the shadow character, vulnerable to character assassination by a chauvinistic male voice. Leakey (1954) states that traditional *Gīkūyū* provided forums for dispute resolution on matters of marriage and domestic conflict. As a result, disputes were resolved amicably and order restored for satisfactory marital union and stability. On the contrary, change has distorted such designs and individualism made it difficult for resolve to be made productively when disagreements occur. Individualism is responsible for the present-day marital unions that are characterized by lack of communication between the couples as seen in *Kīhiki Understanding* or channels of solving disputes with elders resulting in marital tensions and complications that end up in tragic separations and divorce. Modern *Gīkūyū* must therefore revive traditional methods of checking the emergence of marital tensions by considering incorporation of cultural channels of solving disputes at the marital level.

In *Nyūmba Ūtarīhaga* by *Kariūki Kīarūtara*, a man finds himself in a position of vulnerability to physical attack, violence or threat of death for taking lounge in a woman's house ignorantly. A romantic fling exposes him to the danger of being attacked by another man who pays rent for this woman's house. This situation is described in Kenyan social circles as love triangle. Quite often it is fatal because it involves violence and death either directly or indirectly with the cheated lover attacking his opponent in person or making sinister deadly plans to eliminate him by proxy. This is tragi-romance. In this song, the man who pays rent and maintains the permissive woman, is regarded as the legitimate lover and her house becomes his romance territory. This shows that the man who provides house rent and maintenance capital assumes legitimacy and treats the woman as his own alone; even if he has not customarily married her. The persona says;

Nyūmba ūtarīhaga mwanake tigana nayo...

A house whose rent you don't pay, young man leaves it alone...

This is an indication of the operation of patriarchal gender roles and positionings in the postcolonial context. Hall (2001) posits that certain tensions in a text emanate from economic worries and the effects of specific material deprivations such as access to housing, education and general upkeep, that for this song may be responsible for the woman's limitation to afford house rent and other implied supplies for upkeep necessitating that she gets into multiple relations with men. Since patriarchy does not end with colonialism or the encroachment of modernity, women of such economic marginalization become objects of possession by the men who support them. Just like in the song, *Nii Ngīkūrīhira*, a man who is paying house rent for a woman in *Nyūmba Ūtarīhaga* owns her as his romance territory. The threatened entry of another man into this space causes a physical fight because the legitimate male becomes aggressive. In this case patriarchy influences romance to the point of complicating it through physical combat by men over a woman in contested space. The contested space is a woman for whom house rent is paid by a man who assumes legitimacy of possessing the woman and her house. Payment of house rent is an expensive component of the modern money economy which complicates romance because life in the cities is too expensive and a woman may procure maintenance favours from different men for different supplies such as rent, food and other forms of upkeep. When this happens, there is threat of discovery by the different men and the plural indulgence may result in fatal consequences. Hall (2001), suggests that a complete modification or overhaul of the current economic system may remove women from the financial marginalized category and elevate them into a position of relative management of income to avoid the tensions of physical combat by interested males in her territory.

Cultural diversity is another factor that influences the character of romance. As a multi-tribal country, cultural interaction is a post-colonial characteristic of modern Kenya. Cultural diversity does not hinder romantic interaction. The *Hamisi* in *Hamisi* falls in love with the persona; a *Gīkūyū* beauty who has gone for a live show music extravaganza at the coast. *Hamisi* is a coastal dweller from the city of Mombasa. He is a Muslim and *Sarafina* is a Christian. The two youths fall in love anyhow in spite of the cultural and religious differences. *Sarafina* says that their blood(s) have bonded in agreement and that love is possible across the borders. Cultural and tribal diversity is also highlighted in *Wainaina*. The Good Samaritan woman who rescues *Gathoni*, demonstrates tribal and cultural tolerance. She takes in *Gathoni*; the vulnerable young *Gīkūyū* girl who is on the verge of suicide at the waterfall. Likewise, *Gathoni* happily feels safe in the hands of this woman from a different tribe and comfortably travels with her to far away *Kisumu*. She too demonstrates cultural tolerance by adapting quickly to the unfamiliar diet of *Ugali* and fish. She says that back home in *Kīandegē*, the staple food is *Gītheri* but in *Kisumu* it is *Ugali* and fish.

Tondū andū a gūkū Gīthumo matiū Gītheri,

Marīaga ngima na thamaki...

Because people here in *Kisumu* don't know *Gītheri*,

They eat *Ugali* and fish.

She later adapts to eating fish and it becomes a delicacy. *Gathoni* reveals that romance could also have been possible during her stay in Kisumu had it not been for her great love and commitment to *Wainaina*. It is her romance with *Wainaina* that has made her live as a sojourner in Kisumu. Otherwise a large number of suitors have demonstrated great desire to shower her with romance. They even gift her with *Ugali* and fish to test the romantic waters. But her love for *Wainaina* is golden. The *Gĩkũyũ* exists in a context of multi-ethnicity in which all Kenyans have a democratic right to romantically engage across race, religion, tribe or status. The two songs reveal that inter-tribal romance is a characteristic of modern *Gĩkũyũ* romance. The artists in *Wainaina* and *Hamisi* propel modern Kenya to develop a sense of pride in the Kenyan ethnic, cultural and religious diversity by promoting inter-ethnic interaction and romantic endearment for the growth of national cohesion and nationhood in pursuit of the creation of an integrated Kenyan identity. In the views of Mwangi (2009), art is a tool of social construction of cultural forms, political practice and economic patterns because creative works speak to their societies on various social referents aimed at regulating behavioural choices and practices.

One effect of European culture on *Gĩkũyũ* culture is the vulnerability of the *Gĩkũyũ* morality precepts. For example, the *Gĩkũyũ* woman belongs to the man especially within the institution of marriage. There are cultural structures that ensure almost all women are placed in this arrangement through polygamy. The man is allowed possession of young women including girls for romance. The opposite is taboo and the culture does not allow romance indulgence between a young man and an old or older woman. In *Mama Kĩwinya*, the young man persona arrives in the city after completing secondary school as a job seeker without money. His status of financial want exposes him to romantic exploitation by his woman employer who metamorphoses into a Sugar Mummy lover and the young man is trapped in a subversive romance due to; on the one hand patronage and vulnerability due to his status of economic disadvantage and on the other, the luxury supplied by Sugar Mummy in housing, money, motor vehicle and other romance goodies. The lot is supplied clad with control modes such as decline to give a ride to a beautiful girl along the road or going upcountry to see parents rest there is exposure that enlightens the man and threatens the union. In *Momo* we also encounter a reverse of the sacred *Gĩkũyũ* romance precept in the emergence of 'Sugar Mummy lover.' It is predominantly a sub phenomenon of perversion and an indication of conflicting cultural ideologies of modern *Gĩkũyũ*. Cultural erosion is also depicted in *Mama Kĩwinya* above as a characteristic of modern *Gĩkũyũ* romance. The two songs highlight the contribution of rural-urban migration to the construction of this type of subversive romance reality that reveals cultural erosion facilitated by unemployment and poverty in the context of a money economy.

5. Shifting Gender Ideologies

The effect of the 1995 Women's Conference in Beijing has constantly affected the romantic structure of the *Gĩkũyũ*. The ideology resultant from the conference influenced the gender structures of the *Gĩkũyũ*. The Beijing ideology proposed gender equality and equity in support of the global women movement on the liberation of women from traditional patriarchal disadvantage. *Kĩgia* in the song *Equality* describes the effect of this ideology at the domestic level. The artist complains that the ideology of equality is destroying the family unit rather than promote its stability. It has brought a reversal of gender roles that subjects men into carrying out female duties such as cooking, washing and changing baby diapers. In conventional *Gĩkũyũ*, this is an insult to manhood and an act of subversion. Equality even subjects men to sleeping next to the wall in the bedroom yet the culture positions them to occupy the near-the-door segment of the bed. This is a position of masculinity that *Gĩkũyũ* culture places on men mandating them a superiority status of power with connotations of the ability to battle threat or approaching danger. Their conventional position on the bed is therefore a position of aggression in which the woman is also subordinate to the dictates of the man in the bedroom situation. On the contrary, now the women are so satirically elevated by the ideology of equality that they have the audacity to vacate their sleeping area of subordination and occupy that of their husbands. This is tragi-romance in the eyes of the singer.

The empowerment of women as a modern practice against the background of gender imbalance is a topical referent in the selected songs. It is captured in the songs through the presentation of the career woman and the woman in business. The songs *Nguruneti*, *Mama Kĩwinya* and *Tũirio Twega* describe this phenomenon. However, the description indicates that the phenomenon is contested heavily in the culture. The persona in the three songs is male. They are all uncomfortable with the empowered woman in their lives and therefore the women's occupations are presented as female villainy. In *Tũirio Twega*, it is the woman's acquisition of a job in the city and her subsequent promotion that edifies her beauty. As a result, she finds a better husband in the city leaving her rural fiancé in the romantic cold. This is tragi-romance. Urbanization introduces more luxurious lifestyle and enjoyment, improved status and widens interaction space for rural women arrivants who adapt with ease into new relationships that bring them happiness. Another description of female villainy is made in *Nguruneti*. In this song the woman indulges in a romantic affair with her boss. Her husband says he witnesses it himself when he goes to collect her in the office one evening. She takes alcohol long into the night and arrives home late and drunk. Career and empowerment of women are therefore depicted as controversial factors that destroy romance. The career woman in modern *Gĩkũyũ* appears to be quite permissive and in control of her romance character; freedom that takes her marital status into a crossroads resulting in estrangement or physical departure in divorce. The two are elements of tragi-romance that the songs interrogate and propose that the empowered woman should engage caution and moderation in her interaction procedures in order to maintain marital responsibility. If this fails, then the achievements of women empowerment, gender balance and liberation of women from domestic confinement, will remain contested as agents of romantic and family destruction.

6. Conclusion

The analysis in this study reveals that there are a number of cultural factors that influence the structure of *Gikūyū* romance. Some of these factors include traditional and postcolonial patriarchy manifested in polygamy, division of labour, alcoholism and male chauvinism. Christianity is also an influential factor in the structure of modern *Gikūyū* romance. Change and transition is manifested through the emergence of shifting gender ideologies that promote tolerance for gender balance and women empowerment. Cultural erosion leads to tragi-romance while cultural diversity is often responsible for productive romantic relationships.

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