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## Digital Folklore Narratives: 'The Seen Story' and 'The Told Story' in Selected Songs of John De Mathew

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### Abstract:

Digital advancement has expanded the research landscape in folklore studies. The digital space has become a resourceful arena for the dissemination of contemporary folklore, such as the popular song. This evolution relates to folklore studies in terms of accessibility to research content because it enhances scholarship in African popular culture. Folklore materials are now more readily available on digital platforms for modern folklore scholars. This has reduced the traditional research challenges of accessibility, such as distance and inaccessibility, transport costs, hostility, and climatic issues, among other capital and social hardships related to fieldwork in orature, as pointed out by Nandwa and Bukenya (1983). The artistic complexities of orature composition, performance, delivery and reception have experienced a compositional shift from the traditional performance arena into a modern hybrid mode where composition and performance are filmed into audio-visual discourses. The filmed content produces a 'told story' and a 'seen story' delivered on the screen through the audio-visual platform. This platform generates narration in the popular song two-fold: the performed story (in this case, the dramatized song) and the narrative constructed through lyrics and melody. This compositional transaction opens the reception ground to not only the audiences present during the performance but also the viewing and listening audience congregated by the audio-visual platform. This paper presents the two versions of the 'told story' and the 'seen story' in selected songs of John De Mathew, a legendary Gikūyū Benga artist. The songs were selected purposefully, and the analysis employed a qualitative research design. The data is collected from digital platforms for transcription into scripts. The selected songs have been listened to and viewed on the screen to identify the two versions of each song narrative emerging as 'the told story' and 'the seen story'. Translation of the lyrics from Gikūyū into English has been done for the purpose of accessibility by non-Gikūyū speakers. A description of the narratives has been made using the theoretical provisions of narratology. This has been guided by three theoretical principles of narratology: story, narration and narrative. These principles are fundamental elements in the construction of a story. The main achievement of this article is to enhance the trajectory that the encroachment of folklore dissemination within digital platforms provides new research paradigms for contemporary scholarship.

**Keywords:** Audio-visual, digital, folklore, narration, narrative, popular song, Orature

### 1. Introduction

The digital platform has enhanced the incorporation of singing and dramatization in the production of the popular song. Wainaina (2008) says that the popular song is disseminated primarily through electronic media. This article attempts to demonstrate that digital space provides artistry platforms where folklore is composed, produced and disseminated. This evolutionary milestone in the composition and production of folklore materials provides new research paradigms in literary scholarship. Scholarship in oral forms today can enjoy the advantage of direct sourcing of analytical data from the digital space, which is a break from the traditional practice of physical interaction with artists in the communities. The choice of genre for analysis in this paper is the Gikūyū popular song. The data has been obtained from selected songs of John De Matthew, a popular Gikūyū song artist.

### 2. 'The Told Story' and 'The Seen Story'

Oral composition involves the imaginative construction of a story that is contained in the artist's genre of choice (Miruka). In this article, the focus is on the construction of a story that the artist houses in the popular song. Dissemination of the oral composition by John De Matthew on the digital platform produces two versions of a single story. One version of the story is the audio mode that results from the artist's verbal output, referred to here as 'The Told Story.' The other version is the story told in pictures through dramatization of episodes on the screen. Narration in song occurs through the artist's making of melody in actual singing in which description of events is made through utterance (Segre, 1980). In this case, a story is made, 'a told story.' This version of a story may be enhanced through dramatization of episodes in a process that, once filmed, creates a new version of the story for screen viewing. This version is the story in pictures or the 'The Seen Story' in this paper. For the selected songs in this article, the description of events involves dramatization through narration, auditorium acting, dancing and setting as recorded and displayed on the screen. The songs selected for analysis

in this paper exhibit these characteristics. Both singing and action take place concurrently as events occur on stage rather than just being referred to in utterance (Ommaney & Schancker, 1972) so that the 'told story' becomes the 'seen story'. The enactment of events on stage by characters constitutes dramatic actions that result in two narrative versions on stage. These narrative versions, as produced in selected songs of John De Mathew, are the subject of analysis in this study as a 'seen story and a 'told story.'

John De Mathew, the artist, participates in the action in a multiplication of artistic roles. He assumes the role of the persona: the protagonist, man, actor, observer, commentator, dancer and singer. Genette (1993) labels this mode of narration as the homo-diegetic narration. The narrator presents himself as a character in the story he tells who is actively involved in the events. He is the composer, the performer and the producer. This narrator is also sometimes the persona and a character in the story.

Other characters who act out episodes on the stage in the selected songs include the pervasive wife of subversion, the meek women of submission, the glorious mother, men, women, and the dance troupe. The artist's choice of characters and their framing in terms of roles and costumes carries a lot of meaning in depicting various thematic issues as the stories unfold.

As mentioned earlier, events and actions in the selected songs are brought to the screening stage as acted episodes. The occurrence of events on stage makes them immediate and clear. Styan (1960), it is an utterance in the actual singing that advances action by clarifying the enactment of the events on stage. In this case, action and narration complement each other. Downs (1988) says, "Utterance advances action", and this is important in this article since words in drama must create meaning, as can be seen in Foley (.....), who introduces the concept of world signals in context. Description and analysis of the selected songs in this study will take a contextual trajectory.

In all the selected songs, the characters appear on stage, re-enacting the events described in the narration through melodious utterances. Characters accompany the singing with action in which they act roles that re-enact the events of the told story on stage. The stage drama by actors has been captured on camera and recorded for viewing on the screen. As the audience hears the 'told story,' they also see the 'acted story'. Thus, the description becomes clear and immediate.

### 3. The Use of Action, Character, Shifts of Focus, Scenery and Narration

The stage drama by actors in the production of the songs has been captured on camera and recorded for viewing on the screen. The drama depicted in the visual form creates a picture story. Events in the picture story on the screen are illustrations of what has been said by the singer in actual singing. In this section, therefore, we shall identify the picture story that appears on the screen by describing the actions of various characters. This is the 'acted story' or the 'seen story' In *Geithaniai Mūtīkarūe*, the events are acted out by the male persona, his first wife, the new wife and the children. The artist is a central character, the protagonist man, who has taken a second wife to counter his wife's mistreatment. When the song opens, there are pictures of a heavily sobbing wife on the screen. A negotiation forum follows with a round table seating two women and a husband in the middle. The women are passive, and they follow the man's proposal without question. The man proposes that they accept a co-wife status because, inevitably, they are both his property, and that cannot change. He holds them together by the shoulders, urging them to put on a compromise handshake symbolic of an agreement. They reluctantly walk towards each other and shake hands. The man happily dances with the two, holding them together by the shoulders. They do not resist. The persona says that they are both his property, suggesting that a man is the superior owner of a woman. There are more handshakes between the two women without smiles across the table. The handshakes are symbolic of the ultimate legitimacy of a polygamous co-existence.

Their actions reveal that polygamy makes women unhappy, but they are helpless in fighting it. Butler (1990) presents the argument that gender is constructed through language. Language is an embodiment of culture. Women so socialized into patriarchal provisions remain submitted to the prejudicial outcomes of their contexts, as happens in this song. Further, the man persona remains in the middle. A picture of many black pots juxtaposed upon each other, out of which flows a liquid, comes to the screen. These are metaphorical emblems of derogatory mythology that associate co-wives with profound wickedness powered by peer jealousies and envy. There is a flashback episode that depicts a home setting at night as the man of the homestead arrives from a drinking spree. His wife chases him and locks him out. He spends the night in the care. Another scene depicts a happy evening session with the same man in Mercy's home. The man relaxes on the sofa, and Mercy feeds him with a spoon. There are pictures of Mercy warmly opening the gate for the man and relaxing with him on the couch. Mercy is the ideal woman who provides warmth for the man. Mercy may be the new wife in the roundtable episode where two wives are being introduced to one another. In this case, a woman is a fulfilment agent for a man's satisfaction. The happy round-up pictures of the two wives sitting together and sharing jokes and hearty laughs with the man cheering them on shows that polygamy has been accepted by all the parties. The conflict has ended, signifying the perception that a man owns the power to take a second wife at will.

*Ngwanĩrĩra Ta Amario* opens with a lot of dancing. The actors include the male persona, a young woman, the persona's mother, Amario and a Maasai Moran. The persona has advertised like Amario that he is looking for a wife. Women have flooded his home for him to make a choice. A group of girls are seen crowding a staircase in the company of the persona dancing. This depicts men as highly valuable benefactors of women. A gigantic Amario comes to the screen, demonstrating power with gestures to show that a man is full of power and much stronger than a woman. The persona's well-kempt mother is seen with a Masaai Moran negotiating terms of employment. The Moran will be employed to guard the large numbers of women who have crowded the persona's home in pursuit of marriage. Ndungo (1988) identifies the portrayal of prejudicial and derogatory perspectives of women in oral literature, such as the insinuations of desperation advanced in the framing of women in this song.

There follows a scene during one of his night shows. This is a flashback picture of Wa Yunny's party at Juja. The artist is soon surrounded by women fans after a stage show. They lavish him with celebrity praises, cheers and greetings. His wife becomes volatile and jealous and splashes the women fans with beer. Her volatile actions depict women as simple-minded and full of jealousy. There are more pictures of Amario with chains to demonstrate the power of a man over a woman. The Moran guards the girls like cows. The girls are seen as commodities of pleasure for a man. There is an inset picture of a happy woman, Wanjiku, the persona's mother. Her radiance emanates from the successful maneuver by her son to attract groups of women into romantic union. The presentation of men as benefactors of women is a patriarchal construct that subordinates women to gender servitude and male control.

*Arūme Kwīna Mbu* opens with a 'men only' consultative meeting. The actors are the persona, a group of men, a male doctor, a male patient and a housewife. The focus shifts to a ward scene. A man lies on a hospital bed, supposedly with the 'sugar disease' and uncontrolled heartbeat. He is a victim of a wife's perverted character. A male doctor examines his heart with a stethoscope. A modern family house comes to the screen. It is the man's home. There are various episodes that depict the man's struggles to succeed in life. In one job-seeking episode, he is thrown out of the office. A picture of Kamau, a fellow suffering man in the hands of a wife, is shown. Kamau is adjusting his belt buttons because his immense marital problems have pushed him into unusual thinness. This indicates that many women have become perverted, causing a lot of suffering to men. The person is seen in a flashback eloping with his girlfriend, now his wife, from her father's homestead. They hide behind water tanks and brave crossing barbed wire to go and cohabit illegitimately, supposedly because they cannot raise enough money for legitimate marital formalities. Currently, she has become too nagging and aggressive. In one of his many hardships, a picture is shown of a lorry grounded with multiple punctures at Kahuro. His driver is on the phone at night, summoning him to the puncture scene to sort out the mess. A fierce wife is ferociously quarrelling on his return the following day. There are pictures of a woman scrutinizing her husband's mobile phone to access his day's communication out of suspicion that he had secret lovers. There follows heated enquiries and interrogations by the woman concerning the contents of the phone calls. In another episode, the persona is drinking with friends but is deeply troubled by his wife's aggressive phone calls enquiring about his whereabouts. The effect of her nagging is captured in a jungle scene that depicts an over-wary antelope on the watch against the danger of flesh-eating lions. Women are the metaphorical flesh-eating lions who eat men's comfort and freedom. Moreover, the jury causes the man more suffering upon divorce. The judicial verdict divides his hard-earned property into two, yet the woman was a non-contributor to the acquisition of martial wealth. She is depicted in a flashback picture joining him in marriage, carrying a few personal effects and wearing canvas shoes. The verdict is, therefore, an injustice for men. These dramatic descriptions effectively depict women as evil, malicious beings and men as the victims of their ruthlessness.

The story of an eternally dissatisfied wife is told in the singing of *Ngūkū ya Gūkua*. The description by singing is also accompanied by stage acting. The actors are a man and his wife. There is a home setting. A man has fastened a chain on the leg of his unattractively dressed wife. He pulls at it, and she comes back to him. He is controlling her movements. She walks again towards the gate, and the man stands up, holding the chain. There is a whistle in this mouth. He Whistles. The chain and the whistle are tools of control. The woman is under the control of the man. It is the man who measures her freedom of movement. He owns the power to regulate his wife's freedom of movement. In another scene within the home, the persona with his daughter forces a concoction down a hen's throat. A dead hen lies on the ground. There is a picture of more efforts to treat the ailing hen by the persona and his daughter. The ailing hen destined to die signified the man's perverted wife. The descriptions here depict women as difficult to satisfy. An Aloe Vera plant is shown on the screen. There are pictures that depict affluence, such as a good home, the persona in a gymnasium, a pool table scene and a well-stocked music shop. These are symbols of bounty, insinuating that the woman in this home has no reason to complain about anything because of her husband's provisional ability. In a shift of focus, the persona carries *mikengeria* and grass home, showing that a man is in total servitude to the woman, but she is unappreciative. His wife chooses grass and proudly shuns *mikengeria*. She is so difficult to please or satisfy and completely unpredictable. The persona is depicted at the river, a beaten male victim of a wife's perverted nature, fetching water with a sieve as the production closes. The descriptions in this song depict women as difficult to please or satisfy. They are portrayed as agents of evil who cause untold suffering to men.

A similar wife is mentioned and brought to the stage in *Mbūri ya Rwanio*. She demonstrates the same character of dissatisfaction. The song opens with a modern wife dressed in informal clothes. The cap on her head is tilted to cover part of her forehead. This dressing mode is a mark of defiance and a subversive attitude in a woman. A huge nest-less male bird comes to the screen. It implies that this woman has a temporary lifespan in the marriage due to her perverted nature. She will soon exit the home. There follows a thin goat feeding on leaves and bleating continuously. The artist keeps pointing at the goat when addressing the woman in the refrain. The goat is a metaphor for the woman. An indigenous hen is also vigorously scratching the ground for feed. It is yet another metaphorical reference to her. The chorus is loaded with repetitive shots of the bleating goat, the modern house and the indigenous hen in her natural habitat. The bird, the goat and the hen display the perverted nature of the ungrateful woman. The focus shifts to a city street. A 'mama safari' woman traverses a street after deserting her marital home. A flashback brings an episode in the marriage prior to the current exit. Various business establishments arranged for her by their husband are shown. In one of them, she is transacting the big business of a fully stocked shop, then follows a picture of a *posho* mill and a good family car. The man complains that she held despite his selfless efforts to make her comfortable. This creates the impression that those women with a subversive attitude undermine male superiority. Men are depicted as good people who make every effort to build homes by satisfying women.

Subversive behaviour in women is also highlighted in *Muoyo Ti Kibandī* through the description of a wayward wife. Both narration in singing and stage acting are employed. The woman in this song demonstrates defiance against any oppressive action exercised by her husband. She counters dissatisfaction with 'a departure' and 'a return' whenever she is wronged. *Muoyo Ti Kibandī* opens with green scenery in a productive highland zone. There is a rich market brought to the screen with all forms of buying and selling of farm produce. This market is Mūthithi. It metaphorically represents the poet's home. This representation depicts the man as the owner of the home and the insinuation that the woman is the inferior beneficiary. In a violent turn of events, a wife is being chased out of a marital home with the whip. This shows that a man owns the power to chastise the woman or even evict her physically from a marital establishment.

The focus shifts in the chorus to depict Sheria House, the office of the Attorney General that controls the preparation of identity cards in Kenya. A picture of a grave and a cross comes to the screen. Then, the wagons of a train are filmed. These descriptions indicate that women are never serious with the marriage institution, and a man is always a victim of a woman's evil actions. The persona displays his identity card on the screen. The focus shifts to a drinking spree with the person's cheating wife in the company of lovers. This is an immortal woman whose subversion has driven her into unfaithfulness. There is a picture of fresh milk in a container, and the persona touches his breast to demonstrate milk production for survival. Trees away in a thicket to indicate the essence of oxygen as depicted in the proverb, 'Oxygen belongs to God' The defiance exercised by the woman in this song has overwhelmed the man and driven him into calling off the marriage because a wife should be submissive. In this case, again, the man possesses the power to call off the marriage when dissatisfied.

The description made in *Nyoni Ya Njamba* displays women as immoral and materialistic. The actors in *Nyoni ya Nyamba* are a youthful wife, her lovers, her children and the persona who takes the role of the complainant's husband. The action opens with pictures of a well-dressed, modern young lady. An inset photograph of the lady antagonist is flashed several times on the screen. She is depicted entertaining a multitude of lovers, all of whom are mentioned by name and brought to the screen. They are Njoroge, Ng'ang'a and Mwangi Wa Kigio. This means that she is a permissive and immoral woman. A large black he-bird with mighty feathers illustrates the chorus. This bird has no permanent nest. It is brought to the fore repeatedly as a metaphor for the lady. She has no permanent man or home. Further, the woman is filmed relaxing in the front seat of a car. The driver adjusts the gears from number one to gear number two. She is then depicted in the coffee bushes of Gatanga land in rural dress. She makes derogatory gesticulations in contempt for coffee farming, bringing out her materialistic nature. Soon, she gets into the front seat of the familiar car yonder.

In a contrasting scene, the lady is in better moments in the hands of a new man in the tea country of Kīria-inī. She can be seen happily counting wads of notes within a background of tea bushes. Tea is presented as more profitable than coffee. However, a car soon drives into the homestead and whisks her away. She is seen in Wamachini's butchery at Karatina, chopping and selling chunks of meat. She collects a lot of money. There are interludes of the car carrying the lady and a driver adjusting gears. The woman in focus is depicted as greedy, materialistic and very immoral. In a shift of focus, a city street in Mombasa is depicted. The woman antagonist is selling clothes during the day. The Florida area of Mombasa is shown at night. She is scantily dressed and chasing wildly after lovers. Inset on the screen are photographs of the woman and the big he-bird walking. A picture of a skeleton is brought to the fore of the screen, a premonition of looming death. The action ends with a speeding mini-bus headed upcountry with a coffin fastened on the carrier.

Singing and acting on stage are also employed in *Kiūra Kīnene* to highlight the perception that men are victims of women's evil nature and subversive deeds. The actors are a young woman, her mother, young men and the persona. The song opens with pictures of a passive young man with a lover. The woman looks domineering interpretively; this is a perverted woman who does not take a lesser position when relating with a man. Another man is expressing the agony and pain of a subdued status. There is a picture of a scheming suitor in a car. It is followed by a modern woman in red. She is walking past the car, swinging seductively. A naïve young man holds her on his lap. An anxious mother is depicted at home as an accomplice in foul play against her daughter's suitors. There are interludes of a forest frog with a dual identity of a frog and a chameleon in the leaves. The frog represents the lady. She is an evil, crafty courtship cheat who, in the company of her mother, practices fraud on innocent suitors. In these pictures, both mother and daughter are displayed as dangerous, simple-minded and materialistic courtship cheats. The two women value money more than love and marriage.

A man demonstrates by gesticulation the shaving of eyebrows with a razor. Another displays money notes in wads to represent the secret meat in a man's private barrel that is prey for the lady in question. She is the razor that clears everything. There are also pictures of strong bulls illustrating the magnitude of the lady's ability to tell lies. There are interludes of an exposedly dressed lady running towards parked cars along a city red-light street. This is prostitution. She is the frog. A group of men pulls away their legs in awe as she approaches, showing that women are to be treated with caution because they are unpredictably dangerous. The focus shifts to a home scene to show how this woman is unfit for marriage. A mother and a daughter-in-law are doing domestic chores. They disagree with a small suggestion from the mother. The daughter throws waste matter from the sieve onto the unsuspecting passive mother and leaves her in shock. In another home scene, we see the frog's mother. There are pictures of many girls with covered faces and a suitor struggling to identify his own, then follows a money exchange exercise between the crafty, materialistic mother and suitors. This is fraud. The mother has collected money from many young men. She is a liar and an accomplice in her daughter's pervert business of practising fraud on multiple suitors. Then, there is a man running away from the frog with somersaults of fright and repetitive inset pictures of the frog, razor, men, and the frog in the red-light city streets. This description portrays women as perverted, materialistic and immoral.

*Niūdukanīrie* describes an evil woman whose materialistic nature and greed drive her into moral ignominy. The actors include a male person, a woman, an older man and other men. The song begins with a scene depicting hyenas in a

jungle to mark the dreadful quagmire into which an innocent man has been through. The focus shifts to a road. There is a car accident, and the victim is a man. He has found himself in a romantic web of mixed love. The persona comes to the screen holding a he-goat. He is in the company of an elder man. There is a picture of a magnificent house with an assortment of foodstuffs on a table inside. There is a bus scene. A man pours beer into his lady companion's glass. The focus shifts to a scene in a township. It is Gatūnyū shopping centre. The persona is in the company of an elder, well-built man holding a chart. The persona is getting shocking information about the lover's wild moral mannerisms. She is a hypocritical romantic cheat. In a contrasting picture, the same lady is depicted in the earlier bar scene. This time, she pours a multiple of beer into her companion's glad to make a mixture. This is a woman of detestable morals. A *Mūkūrinū* faithful carried a worship drum and a walking stick. Dogs walk across the screen. There is also an inset picture of bulls. The bar set comes back. This time, the woman is feeding the man with a cup like a baby. The persona is seen walking away with the elderly man, chatting freely. The bar scene comes back. The man walks the lady out of the club, holding her by the waist. She is carrying two beers. A seductively dressed lady walks towards a waiting car. There is a group of men playing cards. This is the end of the picture story, leaving the impression that this woman is an immortal person whose choices in life are driven by the lust for money.

The song, *Ūrathi wa Ma*, opens with a green land. Against this background calmness, there is a car accident. The victim is a man. Metaphorically, the agent of the accident is a beautiful, modern young lady. This lady acts the role of the common calabash mentioned in the chorus. She is seen gesticulating with her hands as she walks away. It is clear that she is the calabash from which all the men drink. She is another woman of extreme moral perversion. There follows long episodes of men in slavery. They toil in harsh conditions of forced labour. These are pictures of destruction and vain love engagements with an immoral woman. Pictures come to the screen of hyenas dragging carcasses in the jungle. An eagle is seen mounting the sky, followed by a floating feather. There is also a feast of vultures in the jungle.

The men who are taking this woman in question are headed for destruction. A local singer, Kīgia, is playing on the musical drums. The young lady keeps coming to the screen, walking and gesticulating wildly without caring about the world. Inscriptions of the dreaded biblical number 666 appear on the screen, flashing in colour red. This is symbolic of danger. A forum of men, the persona's addressees, is shown. They are taking beer in a relaxed atmosphere, and they receive advice from the persona to take moral precautions when dealing with women. A goat shed full of restless goats is shown to illustrate that a vampire has invaded. Again, in *Ūrathi wa Ma*, women are framed as wicked characters whose immorality is a big threat to the stability of men.

The characters in the song, *Purity*, include the male persona, his first wife, some men, his lover and his mother. A picture of the song persona (a man) opens the song. He is filmed at a stream making vain scooping of water into a can with a sieve. We learn that the container is full of holes. The persona is then filmed with an earthenware pot. He lifts it and drops it to the ground. It breaks into many pieces. In another episode, the persona is with his mother in a rural kitchen. He is cooking, stirring broth over an open fire, which he often puffs on. His mother is tragically sad. This is a subdued male who has been subjected to carrying out domestic chores meant for women, such as fetching water and cooking. This unfortunate status is the aftermath of his vain union with the subversive second woman, 'queen' that he had taken to serve him after abandoning Purity.

Unfortunately, Queen is too subversive for him. She is a permissive woman of adventure. The persona holds up a pot above his chest and drops it to the ground. It breaks into many fragments. A picture of Mombasa comes to the screen, depicting the entry features of the port of Mombasa, including palm trees and huge elephant tusks. Mombasa is Queen's romantic field. There is a scene at a tailor's shop. The trouser buttons of the persona are getting one of their routine adjustments to fit his ever-growing thinness due to marital tribulations caused by the 'Queen'. There are interludes of the pot-breaking episode to symbolize broken love. The persona makes supplication to God, lifting up the bible with his eyes facing heaven, yearning for a grand reunion with his first love, Purity and asking God to tighten their love knot forever. He kneels down at the feet of a white-turbaned priest who performs the prayer ritual. This is desperation. It brings out the magnitude of the man's subjugation in the hands of a crafty woman of immorality. The song, therefore, depicts women as permissive and immoral.

*Wacokera Kī?* begins with pictures of a young woman being flushed out of a house by a husband. This man, like the one in *Muoyo Ti Kibandī* has the power to evict a woman of disobedience from a marital establishment. We learn that she is a desertee wife of ten years. A young schoolboy, the abandoned infant now grown, walks out of the house later with playthings. In a shift of focus, we are taken to a town setting. There is a flashback of the woman at a table with a man in a beer bar. Different brands of beer fill their table. The pair is sitting compromisingly at close range. She is another immoral woman of perversion. A pack of dogs walk along a street. This image reveals the artist's disgust at the woman's moral conduct. The focus shifts to the rural home. The woman is seen approaching an iron sheet gate. It is opened by the persona. He finds the woman and scornfully treats her as detestable. She is physically forced out back the way she has come with contempt. The woman's younger days are captured in a flashback. She is filmed sitting outside a house admiring her image in a mirror. As the song closes, the school-going boy is seen outside the family house holding a photograph. We learn that it is a photograph of his mother, who deserted him after he was born. He looks at it and then tears it into pieces. He violently throws down those pieces. The picture descriptions in this song portray women as wicked, immoral and simple-minded. They also depict men as the owners of power in the home who exercise superiority over women at will. This is the reason the man persona threatens the returnee's wife of perversion and sends her to wherever she has come from.

The actors in *Kīmūhe Kabuuri* include a middle-aged modern rural mother, a young teenage girl, men and groups of men. It opens with a rural home scene. A well-built modern mother is seated outside. There follows the arrival of her teenage daughter. She is dressed in a mini skirt. They embrace warmly. The focus goes to a town setting. The teenage girls

are depicted traversing the heart of the city with confidence and vigour. We are taken back to the rural home. The daughter presents beer bottles of Guinness, roast meat and fashion clothes to the mother. These are girls earning from prostitution. They are received by the mother with exceeding joy. This reception is a license for prostitution. A mini-bus heading upcountry speeds up with a coffin on the carrier. The mother escorts the daughter as she exits home, symbolically ushering her into city life with a hearty send-off. The teenager is metaphorically depicted as having a city *Matatu*. Pictures of the city *Matatus* come to the screen. The persona says that the young girl has been issued with a prostitution licence similar to the *Matatu* operational licence by the mother. There are interludes of repetitive skeleton scenes that have connotational associations with death. Presumably, the ultimate end of prostitution is death. The focus goes back to the city street at night. There are street girls in the red-light district. The girls are in a nightclub with scores of male lovers. Open fondling occurs. She is now in full-blown prostitution.

The loaded mini-bus speeding upcountry keeps coming to the screen with interludes of the skeleton frame. A graveyard and an avocado tree are brought to the screen. The crisis of a mother is depicted using a picture of a woman single-handedly carrying a critically ill daughter in her hands. It is a personal, painful load. The girl is terminally ill with HIV/AIDS. The song ends with pictures of the Aids control billboard carrying the message, '*Ongea*.' This is an awareness emblem developed in Kenya to facilitate the dissemination of information on basic knowledge on the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS. The rearing of a snake illustrates the jeopardy posed by keeping danger incumbent in your hands. It is a satirical attack on a mother's insensitivity in indirectly enhancing her daughter's engagement in consequential prostitution. The song depicts women as weaklings whose moral choices should be controlled by men's failure, to which their daughters become moral perverts, ignorable in homemaking.

*Radio ya River Rorri (The Radio of River Road)* incorporates many actors of the Gikūyū singing fraternity, most of who serve illustrative roles. They include De Mathew, the artist, Wa Yunny, DK, Eva Maina, Makibi and Kamande wa Kīoi. It opens with one happy singer, Wa Yunny, and his wife in a satisfactorily fulfilling home relationship. In a preceding episode, a woman on the go with her belongings is walking out of a marriage. We are introduced to a ridiculous woman: the city gossip. She is the villain subject of this song. The woman is aimlessly traversing a city street in unfashionable wear and a headscarf of old fashion. One singer, D.K., is shown in a jovial conversation with his wife, which is evidence of marital bliss. De Mathew's happy family sleeps inside a mosquito net. They wake up to dine happily with their wife and child in a classy urban dwelling. The city gossip has visited a home. She is seen spreading gossip to the homemakers. More of the woman (the song radio) is seen walking around the city, an aimless city loiterer. A picture of a hawker with hanging trade wares on its neck and arms comes to the screen. The hawker is an analogical metaphor reference to the woman city gossip. More gossip episodes are shown of the woman poisoning Ka Lucy and De Mathew's wife with derogatory gossip matter about their men. There are pictures of respectable fellow singers like Kamande Wa Kīoi, Eva Maina and Makibi. The end of the performance comes with the woman gossip walking towards a church for repentance. In this song, women are depicted as wicked gossips who break homes and disturb the peace with empty talk and wicked lies.

The song *Nyambura* opens with dancing and a modern rural setting. A picture of a young woman, Nyambura, well-dressed and calm-looking, comes to the screen. She then appears in the company of a loving husband who is holding her fondly by the shoulders. Her sister appears from a thicket. She is eloping with Nyambura's husband. They tiptoe away. A scene at Gatūnyū where the new couple is preparing to cohabit after eloping is depicted. The man pays money to a landlord. He is hiring a house for them to settle. The focus shifts to reveal a devastated Nyambura. The setting is the sprawling Githūrai suburb of the city of Nairobi. The lady Nyambura has found another husband. He is the strong chap from Kībichoi. In a busy moment, the industrious Nyambura is filmed working tirelessly as a hairdresser. She is also filmed in a poultry shed tending the chicken. Nyambura and the chap from Kībichoi make a happy couple. They joyously chat inside their co-acquired family car. He is driving her to enjoyment at Michael Rūa's 'Mūgithi' night. During the night fun, they encounter Nyambura's sister, who is seen exchanging phone contacts with Nyambura's husband. We are taken to Nyambura's boutique. She had hired her sister as a sales girl and then followed a maize farm with a trench around it. Nyambura's sister walks the chap from Kībichoi quietly away past the fence with caution. She has stolen him. The production ends with Nyambura sobbing and wailing in agony at her father's graveyard in vain. Nyambura represents the good woman who satisfies men through humility, hard work and love. She is heavily glorified by the persona because she is a fulfillment channel for her man. However, her sister is condemned for her promiscuity and romantic perversion. She is the immoral sibling who repeatedly snatches and elopes with her sister's husbands. Their mother is also condemned as an accomplice in the wickedness who does not curb a daughter's perverted moral choice, a shortcoming that the persona equates to her social status as a single mother. The song reveals the authorial displeasure at the parenting quality provided by a woman in the absence of a man. To the persona, the problematic character of the immoral daughter is a result of the weak motherhood ability of the widowed woman that causes agonizing trauma to the good Nyambura. The extent to which parental inadequacy in a woman of single marital status gets measured in the context of the song may be chauvinistic or fluid. However, the song presents single women's parents as weak and inadequate in providing standard parental patronage for daughters.

#### 4. Conclusion

The description of events in each of the selected songs of John De Mathew, therefore, involves actual singing and acting on stage. In this case, the descriptions made in singing are depicted on the stage through the acting of characters. The 'told story' becomes 'the seen story' because the events are heard about in the singing and seen through action on stage by actors. The 'told story' in singing and the 'seen story' in acting on stage is disseminated using audio-visual technology. The singing and the acting of events on stage play complementary roles in the descriptions and the depiction

of the subject matter of the songs. This shows that the digital platform is a modern arena of oral production. The literary content disseminated in digital modes is an artistic reserve for literary scholarship in the postcolonial dispensation for analyzing modern interaction patterns in communities and across society. This article suggests a further literary focus on digital orature across diverse social settings and groups of people in Kenya and other parts of the world.

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