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KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CONFORMITY AND SUBVERSION IN GIKUYU CHILDREN'S ORAL POETRY

BY

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in another university.

27-03-07

Wallace Kamau Mbugua Date

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

SUPERVISOR **SIGNATURE** **DATE**

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to Kenyans

The children of Gikuyu and Mumbi,

Whose lives are for ever present,

In the ever changing landscapes,

Children whose mere existence,

Presents unending challenges,

In a world,

Where the adults call the shots,

A world,

Where children,

Are often caught

In a heated crossfire.

To them I say,

March on!

You are the ones,

Who carry the vision,

March on!

You are always in the dreams,

March on!

You are the potentialities of the adults,

And they, my dear ones,

Are the actualities of your being.

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ABSTRACT

Children's oral poetry is an important genre in the way it uses verse to inculcate social values and conditions the child's mind to conform to social expectations. It is potent in lodging in the child's memory social lessons through stylistic presentation of social expectations. It is not only a pedagogical tool but also a commentary on the society from which it emerges. While one would expect the poetry to make the children conform to social norms designed by adults, the poems stage stylistic, thematic and performative moments of subversion against certain values embraced by the privileged especially adults. Children are not passive recipients of the message, but are active participants in the creation of an ideal society. Looking at themes, performance, stylistic devices and the social background against which the poetry is created, the thesis analyses the tension between conformity and subversion engendered in the children's oral poetry.

The agency of children performers has not been systematically analysed. Most studies of children's literature seem to see children as passive objects that need to be moulded into whole subjects through literature. The study attempts to fill this gap in scholarship by investigating whether Gikuyu children's oral poetry exhibits patterns that express subversion and conformity at the same time. It also analyses how the conflicting issues of conformity and subversion are reconciled into an aesthetic and thematic unity. It examines whether the songs' themes, style, and the artists' performance provide reconciliation of the conflicting elements. The study uses library research, preliminary field survey, actual collection of data and finally processes and analysis. The study investigates whether children's oral poetry expresses the gender, philosophical and moral consciousness

subject to their composition, performance and reception. The overriding question is whether stylistic devices employed in the composition and performance are appropriate for the content of the poetry.

The study is anchored on ethnopoetics theory which is complemented by deconstruction, hermeneutics and psychoanalysis as theoretical tools to probe the dialectical relationship between conformity and subversion.

The study critically investigates and analyses how the tension between conformity and subversion in Gikuyu children's oral poetry impacts on composition, performance and reception of that poetry against a backdrop of adult values. We make the assumption that Gikuyu children's oral poetry uses thematic, stylistic and performative patterns that bring together subversion and conformity, and that the conflict between conformity and subversion is an expression of the social consciousness of the Gikuyu children. This study is justified by its pertinent concern for and contribution to the understanding of contemporary children's art. This study makes a contribution to an area that is gaining popularity not only in Kenya but other parts of the world. It stimulates further research into the area. By association, the study illuminates our lives as products of our childhood.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

In providing definitions of terms as used in the study, we must admit that the definition of African literature in general, and oral literature in particular has been a problematic one (Achebe 1975:56, Chinweizu et. al: 242, and Ngara E. 1985:46). Even defining a child is a complex matter.This study subscribes to the following meanings and interpretations:

A Child: According to the U.N., a child is a human being who has at least attained the school going age of six years but under eighteen and dependent on his parents or guardian/s. For the purposes of this study, we exclude those who are in secondary school. The study includes those who are in the age bracket of six to eighteen even if they are not currently in school.

Children's literature (oral literature, oral poetry)

This means literature of the category of people defined above as children, that is, boys and girls below 18 years of age who or whose peers are in primary school. Other aspects of definition includes: oral literature designed (by adults or children) but presented to or for an audience of children; produced by children themselves for children or for adults; and which appeals to children due to its stylistic or thematic relevance.

There is a whole continuum of levels of meaning in regard to childhood as opposed to adulthood. Meanings are also embedded in society from which the literature comes. For instance: This is well articulated by Eagleton T:

> Literature does not exist in the sense that insects do and the value judgements by which it is constituted are historically variable. (These) value-judgements themselves have a close relation to social ideologies. They refer in the end not to private taste, but to assumptions by which certain social groups exercise and maintain power (1983: 16).

In our case, there are two social groups: namely children and adults. Each group has to 'exercise and maintain power' within the dynamics of society. Gikuyu children's Oral Poetry therefore means verse transmitted by Gikuyu children in Gikuyu language; verse in Gikuyu, orally transmitted by children whether the audience is Gikuyu or not; and verse/song performed or composed by the Gikuyu children whether for adults or for other children.

Conformity

In their book Psychology and Human problems, Lee Sechrest and John Wallace capture the spirit of conformity.

> Through subtle systems of reward and punishment, the infant and the young child is shaped into the prevailing pattern (*conformity*). Uniqueness-individuality and differences are frequently regarded with suspicion and in some cases open hostility by adults entrusted with the development of children. (54; Emphasis Mine).

The study addresses children's creation and response to their oral poetry within a social context comprising parents, teachers and other adults who interact with children. Our focus is on children's reaction to the kind of conformity or prescription described above. The

current study broadens the meaning of conformity to include stylistic conventions as indicators of conformity.

Subversion

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines subversion as feeling/acting against or in opposition to ideas, style, behaviour, ideals or ways of others, Changing the expected order / stand points or style, challenging established thoughts, styles, ideas or ideals. The complex notion of the freedom of the individual in a dynamic and conformist society has received a lot of attention from scholars, (Fromm 1941, Freud A. 1943 and Freud S. 1930) among others. There are times when some groups of individuals fail to conform to the established norms but invert or protest against the socially accepted and communally respected values to satisfy their own interests. The current study sees non-conformity as distortion of the conformist ideologies. Whether ideological or stylistic, the study sees it as amounting to what we call subversion. Our interest is to see how such subversion is designed in children's oral poetry and how it impacts on creation, delivery and reception of oral poetry.

Oral poetry is oral art constructed in verse and composed in performance. Even when it is composed for public performance in the privacy by the artist, it becomes actual oral poetry in the performance where the audience interacts with the artist to receive the poetry.

Literary interpretation and analysis – refers to a critical assessment, appraisal, evaluation or appreciation of a work of art (in our case oral literature / poetry) taking into account its composition, delivery and reception; and employing theoretical and critical skills to engage the work.

Gikuyu Tradition: Every society tries to perpetuate itself through its repeated use of styles and ideas that characterize it. These recurrent elements form the customs of doing and perceiving things. They include the expressions of hopes, fears, fulfilments, celebrations, struggles, victories, defeats and anxieties, among other experiences. The Gikuyu people (including children), like many other African people, have a tradition of celebrating life through songs or poetry. This study concerns itself with the Gikuyu literary oral tradition in exclusion of other traditions. The Gikuyu people themselves, are Bantu speaking Kenyans who predominantly live in cental Kenya, but can be found living and working in other parts of Kenya and the world. They are predominantly subsistence farmers, traders, artisans and professionals in various fields.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Children's literature is a critical area of study because it helps us understand children's socialisation process into their environment. However, there is a general misconception that the literature lacks the subtlety and complexity we encounter in adult literature. Such a misunderstanding stems from the failure to apprehend the underlying complexity of children's art, especially oral poetry. This is an art that is not only enjoyable, but also dynamic and changeable. It has great facility in expressing different worldviews and attitudes.

Children's oral poetry is an important genre in the way it uses verse to inculcate social values and expectations. It is potent in lodging in the child's memory social lessons through stylistic presentation of social expectations. It is not only a pedagogical tool but also a commentary on the society from which it emerges.

While one would expect the poetry to make the children conform to social norms designed by adults, the poetry stages stylistic, thematic and performative moments of subversion against certain values embraced especially by the privileged, and more so adults. Children are not passive recipients of the message, but are active participants in the creation of an ideal society. Looking at themes, performance, stylistic devices and the social background against which the poetry is created, this thesis analyses the tension between conformity and subversion as engendered in the children's oral poetry.

In trying to understand the impact of poetry on children, we broadly subscribe to Leland Jacobs' view about the centrality of poetry among young people in shaping aesthetic faculties later in life. For Jacobs, children's poetry is an important and pleasurable ingredient in a person's appreciation of art and life-affirming values in adult life:

> Pleasure in poetry is not foreign to young children. When poems are given a real chance to work their spell, with the aid of a sensitive, enthusiastic adult, poetry becomes indispensable, a vibrant life-related affirmation of joy in being, and a true clarification of the new, the wonderful, the intimate, the in-no-other-way describable – sense of things, (20; emphasis mine)

This study hopes to capture the "spell" within the children's familiar ground. As Jacobs admits, this is what William Butler Yeats calls "Blood, imagination and intellect running together", (Yeats qtd in Jacobs 2).

1.1 Background to the Study

There are people who have sung their poetry in vernacular right from nursery school to university, but still find themselves uncomfortable with the study of poetry. In his study of ten poets entitled Understanding African Poetry, Ken Goodwin notes the difficulty in assimilating African with Western material.

> There was, I think, a problem about how far traditional material might affect the content and texture of verse in English. There were, perhaps inhibitions derived from familiarity with British and American models (xv).

The legitimacy of Goodwin's claim lies in the paucity of analyses of African poetry in children's first languages before they learn Western rhymes. There are teachers who still think that Western poetry of the former colonial masters is better than their own indigenous oral poetry in form of songs and enchantments, among others. Children and adults, therefore, continue merely singing oral poetry without giving it much thought. While written and adult poetry have received a lot of attention, children's oral poetry has been neglected.

This matter is compounded by the fact that white missionaries (and the teachers who were products of Christian institutions) treated ethnic poems as fossils worth noting but with little significance in the lives of children. For example, African children sing:

Bah! Bah! Black Sheep, x2

Have you any wool? X2

Yes sir, yes sir

Three bags full

One for my master

And one for my Dame

And one for the little boy

Who cries down the Lane

Some Africans value such a song more dearly than their own songs in spite of the alien social and political environment presented in the song. The song is not only subtly derogatory to the black racial category, but it also perpetuates the slave-master attitude in

which the African child is supposed to minister to the whims of the white master. Yet these songs are extremely distant from the children's African experience. Some of them overtly contradict the values held by the African children.In the example below, the child John, pleads with the rain to go away because he wants to play.

Rain Rain Go Away,

Come Again Another day

Little John wants to play

This rhyme is suitable for a British child far away in his country where it rains so much that it is a nuisance. For the majority of the African children, rain is always welcome.

Mbura ura	Rain Fall,
Nguthinjire	I slaughter for you
Gategwa,	A young bull
Na Kangi!	And another!

Unlike the first rhyme where rain is wished "away", the Gikuyu verse promises a young bull as a reward for rain. In the African context, rain is always a welcome blessing. The message is within the Gikuyu environmental context: when there is drought, the elders sacrifice young bulls under the sacred Mugumo (fig) tree. This is done by medicinemen. This song is evidence that there is a dialectical relationship between poetry and societal sacrifices. Mere singing of this song by children expresses subversion of Western values.

This conforms to the argument forwarded by Goodwin, who says that for a long time, the African teachers could not overcome the colonial influence:

> They [African teachers] see themselves as having been subverted by European values, as having drawn away spiritually and often physically from their homeland. (Goodwin xviii).

When African children matured, they found it quite difficult to remove themselves from the Western imprint effected in their childhood.

This situation is rapidly changing. Contemporary scholars admit that there is need to study children's perspectives in oral poetry and encourage them to participate in its composition, performance, and critical appreciation; an area which holds the key to the motivation of children to participate in the composition, delivery and reception of oral poetry. This is perhaps best summarised by Austin Bukenya in his introduction to Notes on East African Poetry:

> East African's, however, should not look at oral poetry as simply an aid to understanding poetry in English. Oral poetry and other forms of Orature (Oral literature) exist in their own right in All East African Communities. (5).

Austin Bukenya's sentiment is slowly being addressed. Studies by Ezekiel Alembi, (1991), and others are evidence of the growing interest in Kenyan Oral Poetry. Scholars have noted that children do not always subscribe to adult values. Katheline Kappas, in an essay appearing in A Critical Approach to Children's Literature expounds on the desire for children to reverse the logic of the adults:

> They also know that these are adult rules of proper behaviour (conformity) in which they have been schooled for some time. At this age, these children relish the great pleasure of doing just the opposite (subverting) of what adults tell them to do. (Fenwick 76; emphasis mine)

This disparity in perspective where the children subvert the conformist prescriptions by adults in Gikuyu children's oral poetry has received little attention. A close look at an actual Gikuyu oral poem illustrates the importance of our task. The poem is a song called "Wamucuha", meaning, One who swings:

Wamucuha ii	Wamucuha ii
Mai mahia ii	Water has boiled ii
Maitika thi ii	Got spilled ii
Na ndikunde ii	And I have not drank it ii
Waciariirwu oro hau	You were born there.

And the children laugh at the matter. This song is performed with two children swinging a rope between them. A third one jumps trying as much as possible not to be tripped by the rope. Other children form a circle or semicircle as the audience awaitins their turn when the jumper is knocked out.

Children engaged in the performance of the poem wamucuha

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Alternatively, two children join hands and hold the one in the middle. They swing the child in the middle until they get tired. They bring the child down as they chant the last line of the poem. Although the actual audience is made up of children, the song is broadly addressed to the Gikuyu community.

4. WAMUCUHA-II	**(OH SWINGER)**
Wamucuha-iii, maii mahia ii	Oh swinger! Water has boiled
Maitika thii	And has spilled over
Na ndikunde iii	And I have not drank
Waciariirwo o hau.	You were born there !

The complexity of the poem is intensified by the word "waciarirwo," which means both being born and being conceived. When we consider the playfully articulated word "waciarirwo" as a euphemistic expression of the sexual intercourse that led to the child's conception, we see the performers' imaginative intrusion into their parents' private space. In a quick turn of logic in the last sentence, "You were born there," the allusion turns into an accusation that the child's birth came as a result of fooling around. The interpretation depends on the age and level of socialization of the child. Subversion in this case is realised in the sense that the blame, which had been pointed to the children is now shifted to the parents. In Gikuyu culture, children do not give birth. A further twist lies in that children are supposed to avoid having children before marriage – but it seems as if the parents were

playing about (like children) when the mother conceived. The irony in the poem becomes so pointed in the performance that even the adult audience enjoys the song.

The question of conception is gender-loaded. It is not acceptable for the Gikuyu community to discuss matters of conception with children. Surprisingly, in Wamucuha, the children are inserting their perspective in this sensitive matter, thus subverting adult expectations.

Further, the above example reveals that there is no doubt that children, in spite of their status as vessels for the consumption of the moral tonics prepared by adults, have a strategic way of putting their voice in societal matters. The contradictions between adults' and children's manifest themselves in many ways. It is, therefore, not unproductive to investigate the significance of the tension between conformity and subversion in children's poetry. One of the aspects we established in the field is, that the children understand the songs/poetry and merely enjoy the sounds without enjoying the meaning.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The study investigates whether the literary tension between subversion and conformity expresses the artistic use of language, the social significances of performance, the social consciousness and pedagogy of children, as well as the gender identities and relations in Gikuyu children's oral poetry.

As has been implied in the background, the problem is embedded in the adults' miconception that children are passive recipients of moral tonics passed through orature, particularly oral poetry. The problem is further compounded by the incongruity between the adults' conformist expectations (that oral poetry will mould their children) and the

reality that children use the same vessel to subvert these expectations and actively assert their own values. This conflict and competition of interest attracts our scholarly attention.

Therefore, the task of this study has been to probe the intrigue that is expected to permeate through the study of the tension between conformity and subversion. As Shelton L. Root observes, there is a tendency to emphasize the literal in print form at the expense of the aesthetic in oral art:

> So much of the child's school time is occupied with the task of acquiring literal meaning from print that the potential beauty of the spoken word is frequently neglected (Jacobs 25).

This means that the potency of oral literature is denied the priority and prominence that it deserves.

The centre of interest in this study is the child as a composer, performer and respondent among other children and adults. In studying subversion against conformity we have looked at the adult's world through the lenses of a child. We have used ethnomethodology because it is the most appropriate tool for soliciting, collecting, collating and analysing our primary data.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to critically investigate and analyse how the tension between conformity and subversion in Gikuyu children's oral poetry impacts on composition, performance and reception of that poetry against a backdrop of adult values. Specifically, this study strives to achieve the following set objectives:

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(a) To describe and critically analyse the interaction between performance and social setting in enhancing subversion and conformity in Gikuyu children's oral poetry;

(b) To determine and analyse how language and style express conformity and subversion in Gikuyu children's oral poetry;

(c) To analyse the social consciousness and pedagogical values encapsulated in Gikuyu children's oral poetry; and

(d) To engage an interpretive explication of how conformity and subversion manifest gender ideologies in Gikuyu children's oral poetry.

1.4 Research Assumptions

The study has the following assumptions whose veracity it seeks to demonstrate through critical analysis of Gikuyu children's oral poetry:

(a) The interplay between performance and the social setting enhances the tension between conformity and subversion in Gikuyu children's oral poetry.

(b) Gikuyu children's oral poetry uses literary, stylistic and performative patterns that bring together subversion and conformity;

(c) The conflict between conformity and subversion is an artistic vehicle for the expression of moral and philosophical consciousness dependent on an oral poem's choice, composition, performance and reception.

(d) The tension between conformity and subversion in Gikuyu children's' oral poetry reveals gender thought, diversity and controversy.

1.5 Justification and Significance of the Study

The study is justified because self-expression in Gikuyu children's oral poetry has not been given systematic analysis. Most studies of children's literature seem to see children as passive objects that need to be molded into whole subjects through literature. They also call for protection of children from certain forms of art, without appreciating the children's ability to insert their perspectives into the art. Secondly, children's oral poetry is an organic pedagogical tool, yet it has not been systematically analysed to help the society tap the genre's educational potential.

Researchers have covered the following topics in the study of Gikuyu oral literature: Oral Artistry (Kabira 1980), Struggle for Independence (Kinyatti 1980), Aesthetics and Structure (Wa Gachanja 1987), Gender (Kabira 1993), Lullabies (Chesaina 1994)]. Mythology (Wainaina, 2002). Our study extends the findings of these scholars and fills the gaps left by their studies, specifically focusing on conformity and subversion in children's performance.

We take cognisance of the observation made by Shelton L. Root Jr. (1965) that orality is neglected in children's literature, with priority being given to written forms. In critically analysing children's oral poetry, we expound the meaning of the neglected spoken word. Some scholars have openly admitted that their focus or interest is not entirely on children. The centre of interest in this study is the child as a composer, performer and respondent among other children and adults. In studying subversion against conformity we have looked at the adult's world through the lenses of a child. We have used ethnomethodology because it is the most appropriate tool for soliciting, collecting, collating

and analysing our primary data. The genre under analysis contains subtle suggestions which one cannot fully grasp if one has not lived in the community for a considerable length of time. We have chosen the ethnic community from which we grew up to enable us to analyse authoritatively the stylistic subtleties in the poetry and demonstrate the transformations some of the songs have gone through over time.

Furthermore, the study is justified because of the paucity of rigorous analyses of Gikuyu children's poetry. Researchers have nearly neglected children's perspectives in oral literature, this research makes a major contribution to the study of children's literature, not only from the Gikuyu community, but also from other ethnic communities. By comparatively referring to the few similar studies that have analysed children's oral poetry from other communities, the thesis stimulates interest in the rising concerns for children across ethnic and national boundaries.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

The study has limited itself to Gikuyu children's oral poetry. It describes and analyses the linguistic, stylistic and para-linguistic devices employed by the young artists. These include the facial expressions, body movements and gestures observed during live performances. The study was conducted in Gatanga Division in Thika District; and Kiambaa and Githunguri Divisions in Kiambu District. These are areas with rich oral traditions and plenitude of oral literature. Gatanga on the other hand is home to the most prominent and prolific Gikuyu musicians and Kanunga is fertile ground for oral artists. Gathugu is at the boarder of Thika and Kiambu. The three areas are within the proximity of Kenyatta University a factor which has been significant in their selection as centres of

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operation for the research. In addition to this, the researcher has worked in and around the two areas. He was the chairman of Thika District secondary school Heads Association in 2001 and 2002. Gatanga is one of the administrative divisions in Thika District. He was also the principal Kirwara Boys High School which is situated in Gathanga. This means that he was already familiar with the head teachers of the schools in the sample. The significance of this is that, he was able to get information readily and truthfully from the teachers in those schools. They treated him in a respective and friendly way and had no suspicion whatsoever about what he was doing. This rapport was useful since it made the data collection easier and meaningful. It also means that the respondents had no inhabitations since the researcher and these assistants were not strangers to them. They gave honest and froth light answers the researcher's questions. The same can be said about Gatanga and Gatunyu especially. The selection of Gathugu and Kibubuti was based on similar lines of thought. The wife of the in researcher was working near Gathugu and had similar orientation there. At the time, she was teaching at Kiereini Secondary School and the headmistress of Gathugu primary school Mrs. Githuka was her neighbour and friend. This made selection easy particularly because she accompanied the researcher to the field. For ten years i.e from 1980 to 1990 the researcher, lived and taught at Kanunga High school which is within the proximity Kibubuti. He had made some of these were teachers in the Kibubuti primary school which is about away form Kanunga High school. Therefore it was easy to access the pupils and the teachers in Kibubuti. This again encouraged the research in that it made the work easier since the environment was conducive to the study. This means it was easy to establish rapport with artists. This is an important consideration

for our study which employees ethno poetic theory as well as a qualitative research paradigm. We have mainly used MLA recommendation in the documentation of the study.

1.7 Literature Review

There is a large body of work relevant to this study. Researchers have had different interests, least of which has been children's oral poetry. This section reviews the literature, dividing the materials into two sections for clarity. The first part focuses on studies done by scholars outside Africa. We start by reviewing anthropological studies which offer important perspectives on folklore and Africans, although they ignore the performative and literary components of the particular works. We proceed to modern scholars who are well versed in the theory of Literature. The second section focuses on studies conducted by African scholars who view the materials as literature. This section also focuses on Kenyan scholars who have shown a lot of interest in the current studies of oral literature in the area. Except where there is interferance with logical flow, we have adopted a chronological presentation of the works to reflect the temporal growth of oral literature. While the earlier works tended to be general, current works are more focused on specific genres.

Studies by Scholars from outside Africa

Early researches, mostly by missionaries and ethnographers, collected oral literature materials from Africa; but they regarded them as anthropological tracts, not artistic works. Some were also condescending, looking upon the African as primitive and incapable of

artistic expression. Colonialism further aided in the marginalization of oral literature studies because it circulated attitudes that African literature is unsophisticated. Colluding with Christianity, the colonial government banned performances for fear they would be used to subvert its rule. But, as Nandwa and Bukenya have noted in African Oral Literature for Schools (1983), the bans did not succeed in obliterating the performances; the performance survived the colonial and Christian onslaught to emerge in different forms.

Studies of oral literature gained in the early part of the 20th century owing to the incorporation of rigorous research methodology in ethnography in Europe and America. From the 1920s on, folklore studies became committed to the anthropological method of research that has characterized it ever since.

Information is collected through fieldwork by close study of a group of people and the context of their lives through firsthand contact. From the 1930s through the 1950s and beyond, British social anthropologists were dominant in African studies. They produced the major ethnographic and comparative works during that era. They approached their work with a basic theoretical presupposition that there was an underlying coherent logic in the customs and ideas of each African society. The fieldwork standard of these British anthropologists was set by Bronislaw Malinowski, who became a prominent teacher in the field. He showed that the method of study he developed while living in a Trobriand island (in the Pacific) for two years could be applied anywhere else. His functionalist approach influenced Jomo Kenyatta, who attended his seminars at the London School of Economics.

Jan Vansina's African Oral Tradition (1973) and Ruth Finnegan's Oral Literature in Africa (1970), are some of the texts that have dealt with orature from the African continent.

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Spanning the whole continent, the studies do not have enough space to deal with intricate issues that govern artistic production in specific communities. Informative as the studies are, they do not give a detailed study on a specific African people or a single genre. Ruth Finnegan observes has noted the paucity in depth analysis of existing oral works:

> Little systematic interest has been taken in children's verse in Africa and although isolated instances have been recorded, this has been without any discussion of content or local significance, (Finnegan 299; emphasis mine).

This study, therefore, bridges that gap by tracing how conformity and subversion in sampled Gikuyu Children's Oral Poetry impacts on the society that produces it particularly with regard to children as artists.

In an introduction to U'Tamsi, Tchicaya's Selected Poems (1970), Gerald Moore notes the importance of exposing children to poetry. He says the "tension between childhood memories of Africa and everyday mundane experience in an alien capital (Paris), between his passionate presence in the suffering Congo and his physical absence from it, is one of the dominant themes of his (Tchicaya's) poetry (vii). This study addresses the dichotomy between the child's world and that of the adult. It examines the response of children to oral poetry, probing the tension between conformity and subversion that influences their immediate choices.

In her essay appearing in A Critical Approach to Children's Literature, Elizabeth Nesbitt argues that literature's existence for the purpose of giving pleasure and delight liberates it from a moralistic existence:

> These charges, these new beliefs, had their roots in other, and for a time revolutionary ways of thinking. The former conception of a child as a miniature adult changed to a conception of a child as an individual in his right and childhood came to be looked upon as a way of life. (Fenwick 121; emphasis mine)

Although this study does not see any conflict between the hedonic and moral functions of literature, it supports the view that childhood is an important stage in an individual's development. It probes into the children's perspectives in relation to the setting that also comprises the adult's. We are taken to the poetic world of children, not the "miniature" adult. In applying ethnopoetics as a method of analysis, we take the study to its grassroots level: children's oral poetry, which is material from their live experiences. The notion of the rigidity of the miniature adult is subordinated to the sensitivity to children's feelings, fears, aspirations and suffering. The study addresses in essence, how or whether the subversive elements in children's poetry are products of the perceived conformity of the adults.

Describing how literature can give children an opportunity for enjoyment, Leland Jacobs observes that "the enjoyment of being knowledgeable both in fact and feelings, the enjoyment of language gloriously used in moments of heightened sensitivity to life and living" can effectively be achieved through poetry (Jacob 2). In spite of this potential, scholars have neglected children's sensitivity as expressed in poetry.

In Catching Them Young (1977), Bob Dixon recognises the role of literature in moulding the child's mind. He says that children's literature was incorporated in the colonial project because it could easily be utilised to brainwash students of colonial regions to accept colonialism and compel children of the colonising powers to uphold empire-building. Inherent in his argument is the view that literature can be used to make children conform. This fits into our objective to examine how how Gikuyu children's oral poetry has been used to reveal subversion of power relations. Our main interest is literary subversion. However, as insinuated in our definition of terms, our understanding of the term subversion is broad.

Some scholars recognize the essence of feelings in oral literature. In his book Orality and Literacy (1988), Walter J. Ong points out that oral aspects express the actual lives of the people. He goes on to say that oral literature manifests people's sensitivity to their physical environment. Children's poetry reflects a similar supposed sensitivity to their social environment, and also offers insight into the child's worldview and aesthetic critique of life. Conflict between subversion and conformity is employed by children to serve their interests. How this is done is the focus of this study. A look at two other texts illuminates our understanding of the theoretical concerns of scholars outside Africa.

Maria Nikolajeva's Introduction to the Theory of Children's Literature (1997) analyses children's literature from different theoretical perspectives. These theories include the intertextual theory and method, archetypal theory, children's literature from a Jungian perspective, French thematic criticism, feminist criticism, reception theory, structuralist theory, and translation theory. Largely a theoretical text, the book does not analyse

performed children's literature. It is a good example of a theoretical analyses perceived from outside Africa.

David Proveda's Quico's Story: An Ethnopoetic Analysis of a Gypsy Boy's Narratives at School (2002) examines a narrative related by Quico, a five-year-old Gypsy child, in a Spanish kindergarten classroom. This study is relevant to us because, unlike the text above, it uses ethnopoetics and performance-oriented analysis as its guiding framework. However, it is far removed from the African perspective, let alone the Gikuyu landscape. We conclude this literature review by pointing out that scholars outside Africa have had a lot of interest in children's oral literature. However, in depth analysis of specific people has been glossed over. There have not been any studies on the tension between conformity and subversion.

Studies by African Scholars

Kenyan scholars have paid some attention to the country's oral literature. Kenyatta's Facing Mount Kenya (1938) is an anthropological masterpiece. It gives elaborate details about the Gikuyu community; their arts and beliefs. This study is important because it provides us with details of the cultural milieu in which the poetry under analysis has traditionally been performed and appreciated. It also discusses dances performed by young people. However, Kenyatta's approach is largely anthropological and does not pay attention to language, themes and performance. While the community that he presents in the book comprises the Gikuyu who have not been influenced by foreigners, this study focuses on conformity and subversion in children's oral poetry as it is performed today.

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When other local scholars turned to oral literature as a subject of academic attention in the 1980s, they collected and transcribed materials, but they conducted little analysis of the literary items. Some of the analyses, as in Liyong T.L. Popular Culture from East Africa (1972), treated oral literature as mere expression of culture, without paying attention to the centrality of performance and stylistic realization. Children's perspectives were largely ignored. Although some of the poetry collected could be analysed for subversion, this is not done since it is not the interest of this study.

In Writers in Politics (1982), Wa Thiongo Ngugi shows that the nature of the literature given to children affects their views of life. Wa Thiong'o's position ignores the children's agency in politicising and subverting the literature given to them. For her part, Kipury N. in Oral Literature of the Maasai (1983) discusses poetry from the perspective of adults. While extending Wa Thiong'o's and Kipury's cogent observation on the social imperatives governing African art, our study investigates whether children are just passive recipients of literature or whether they insert their ideas in the texts.

Other Kenyan scholars have explored the aesthetics that constitute congruity with the norms of the Gikuyu. For example, Muigai wa Gachanja's Ph.D dissertation, "The Gikuyu Folk Story: Its Structure and Aesthetic" (1987) is an in depth scholarly analysis of "memorable stories" collected in actual field research. Wa Gachanja uses a structural approach and provides insights into the form and the aesthetics of these narratives. He also discusses the meaning of the narratives in his collection. This study underscores the significance of field research in oral literature. Like Wa Gachanja's, our study has taken us to the field to collect primary data but deviates from Wa Gachaja's in that it seeks

children's oral poetry. This poetry has been given an ethnopoetic analysis which utilises ideas from deconstruction and psychoanalysis. Our study has further deviated from narratives to oral poetry which children spontaneously use at work and in play.

Alembi E., a writer for children, has given due attention to children. In his M.A thesis The Oral Poetry of the Abanyole Children; Context, Style And Social Significance (1991), Alembi illuminates our understanding of children's oral poetry. His study is important to us because it offers invaluable methodological insights into analysing children's oral poetry. We have used Alembi's work for comparative purposes. It is our study is expected to give impetus to more comparative studies of similar oral literature from different Kenyan communities, especially in the co-mingling of subversion and conformity in children's self-representation.

The significance of performance is related to conformity and subversion – in the current study. Similarly, in African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character, and Continuity (1992), Okpewho I. underlines the centrality of performance in oral literature. He says the interaction between the audience, the situation and the performer determines the meaning and aesthetic possibilities. This view is supported by Micere Githae-Mugo in an interview in 1984 in which she said children should be encouraged to give open-air public performances (Wilkinson 116). However, Okpewho does not pay attention to children's poetry. Gikuyu children's poetry serves as the child's avenue for criticism of the society and harmonisation of social realities.

Kabira W. M. has conducted detailed analyses of Gikuyu oral literature. In her Ph.D thesis entitled "Images of Women in Gikuyu Oral Narratives" (1993) Kabira, a

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prominent scholar in Gikuyu oral literature, gives insights into relationship between brothers and sisters in order to show the images of women in Gikuyu culture and literature. For example, she observes that "the relationship of brother and sister is reflected in songs of contemporary Gikuyu musicians" (78). Relationships particularly between children and the elder siblings who might be adults generate tension which assumes antithetical positions. In identifying conformity and subversion, this study extends the analysis to presentation of themes that are not gender-demarcated. We also analyse the style. Further, by focusing on the children's poetry, we get a clearer picture of the socialisation that children as artists have gone through. This is because children use the poetic licence to complain about mistreatment by others.

Our study is also inspired by Chesaina C's Perspectives on Women in African Literature (1994), which is a cogent analysis of the use of literature in reflecting and transforming gender relationships. The critic shows how artists conform and transgress conventions. She shows how artists, in creating more gender conscious works, transgress images they created in earlier works. She analyses the presentation of gender issues by male and female artists. Our analysis probes further gender issues and focus on children artists' treatment of conformity and subversion. Although subversion is not the concern of Chesaina's work, she has illustrated how the nannies subvert messages meant for children to inject their voice in the poetry.

Poetry uses language to convey meaning. One Kenyan scholar explores this issue. Mwanzi, Helen Oronga Aswani (1995) provides an excellent analysis of the use of language in short stories. She says that the genre exhibits a high level of clarity which

"involves saying the right thing at the right time" (14). It has been interesting to study style in children's poetry which, like a short story, is brief, concentrated and subtle.

Wanjohi, Gerald Joseph's The Wisdom and Philosophy of the Gikuyu Proverbs (1998) briefly discusses the antithetical elements in proverbs. He concentrates on the philosophical content of the proverb to show the genre as a distillation of communal wisdom and sense of justice. This study shows that children's songs, which unlike the proverb have not been recognised as repositories of wisdom, encapsulate political, educational and philosophical content in a subtle and aesthetic manner.

Along a similar line of thought, Mwangi Evan's postgraduate seminar presentation entitled Images of Women in Gikuyu Oral Literature for Children (1995) depicts a thematic and stylistic analysis of gender stereotypes in children's art. Using psychoanalysis, structuralism and stylistics, the study concludes that children's oral literary genres are used to create and entrench negative images of women. Informative and rigorous as the study is, it seems to advance the belief that children are passive reflectors of dominant gender ideologies. A similar argument is presented in his reading of children's literature entitled "Embodying Art among the Young" (1999). In the study, he proposes actual oral performance of children's literature and presentation of physically active characters in written children's literature. Underlying his argument is the view that children are passive consumers of art. This study recognises children's potential to invigorate their art without waiting for the adults to do it for them. We have analysed how children subvert adults' songs to conform to their audience's expectations. Contrary to Mwangi's view, this study sees subversion as a creative tool used by children for communication.

Just as subversion thrives on conformity, there is a symbiotic relationship between men and women. Bwonya Jane (1998) conducts a useful analysis of gender dynamics in Maragoli songs. She deals with diction, semantics and imagery in marriage songs from the Maragoli community. She posits that "women's monopoly of marriage songs is reflected in their composition which is manifested in their manipulation of certain words" (85). Like Bwonya's, our study investigates the relationship between the style and message in the poetry. However, we analyse poetry as presented artistically from a child's perspective while Bwonya's work is on adult's. We appreciate that although Bwonya's study is not implicit on subversion, some of the songs by women seem to subvert male values. This brings us to the conclusion that subversion as a literary tool is not only used by children, but also by adults. The irony is that children's poetry expresses messages, attitudes and knowledge that are intelligible to children but not to the adults, who sometimes form part of the audience. The study explores the tension between children's worldview and adults' expectation.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Our research is entrenched in the understanding that a competent study of Oral Literature and by implication oral poetry must be informed by a well-grounded and relevant theoretical tool. Our mission having been to investigate and interpret the tension between conformity and subversion in Gikuyu children's oral poetry has led us to consider many theories for the study. Therefore we have divided this section into two important areas namely:-

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(a) Competing theories

(b) Theories applied in the thesis

(A) Competing Theories

(i) The Marxist Theory: The first theory considered was the Marxist theory because we thought it would enable us makes sense of the class contradictions and stratifications expressed in Gikuyu children's poetry. We were particularly interested in the Marxist literary theory since the proponents of the theory argue that before evaluating any work of art, we must know the economic, social and political background of the work. The father of marxism (Karl Marx) postulates that the history of any community is the history of class struggle. The Marxist critics go ahead to conclude that the purpose of literature is a didactic one. They say that it is not the consciousness of man that determines his being but the being that determines their consciousness. Our interpretation here is that consciousness refers to ideas and perceptions of men and women i.e. humankind as they experience their world. Marxists argue that since consciousness is derived from the material base, ideologies are also relating to the class positions. Marxists also seem to support the idea of structuralists that we would understand things if one understands their structure. They states that everything exists because of its structure there is a literary opposition between structures. This explains why Marxists see the society as comprising the haves and the have-nots and the oppressors and the oppressed just as we have the rich and the poor. Among those who seem to support the idea of structures are Ferdinad De Saussure, Levi Strauss and Vuladimir Prop. The proponents of structuralism and the Marxists agree on the idea that language which is also structured is fictional and didactic. That language is a tool

used to flavour certain levels of the structure is something the theorists from both sided of the divide agrees upon.

This far, the theory is an appropriate one for our study. However, we noted that the theory tends to ignore style and deals more with material consideration while Gikuyu children's poetry expresses contradictions other than class-based ones using unique stylistic devices that cannot be glossed over.

(ii) The Hermeneutic Theory: We had also considered using hermeneutics which, according to Joel Weinsheimer "is the theory and practice of interpretation. Its providence extends as far as to meanings and the need to understand it." (Douglas et al 117). Hermeneutics is a broad theory that applies to knowledge in different perspectives and seems relevant to our ethnopoetic analysis of Gikuyu children's oral poetry. On closer examination, we found this theory to lean more on philosophy than literature. Moreover, some of the strands we may have found relevant are articulated even better in the theories that we have finally used to guide our analysis in this thesis.

(B) THEORIES APPLIED IN THIS STUDY

(i) Deconstruction: We are living in the post-modern era. We thought it was wise to capture this spirit in our study. Children express themselves in linguistic and paralinguistic symbols which are open to a variety of perspectives. They are curious human beings who, just like the adults who live with them, try to seek meaning in their lives. Children respond to ideas rapidly and meanings have to be explained all the time to satisfy the ever curious young human being. We had therefore to look for an interpretive tool that captures that

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state of affairs. We sought to understand the theory of deconstruction and assess its appropriateness in the interpretation of our data. Jacques Derrida the father of deconstruction theory was born in 1930 and died on 8th October 2004. Derrida postulates that deconstruction reading of a text opens it up. Murfin Ross and Supryia Ray M. in their authoritative text, The Bedford Glossary Of Critical And Literary Terms, give a lucid definition of the term.

> Deconstruction involves the close reading of texts in order to demonstrate that any given text has irreconcilably contradictory meanings rather than being a unified, logical whole. As J. Hillis Miller, the preeminent American deconstrutor, has explained in an essay entitled "Stevens" Rock and criticism as Cure, (1976), deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text, but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently solid ground is no rock but thin air" Deconstructing a text involves showing that it-like the DNA with its double helix-can and does have intertwined yet opposite discourses, multiple and conflicting strands of narrative, threads of meaning that cross and contradict one another.(2003:91)

As demonstrated in the definition above, deconstruction therefore seeks to capitalize on the fluidity of the binary opposition of structuralists. The argument advanced is that that there is no single basic truth or meaning of phenomena. Attempts to claim certainty of absolute truth is treated with suspicion and rejection (Norris Christopher 1982 p 57). According to deconstruction, truth is based on time and space. It changes according

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to history and culture on which it rests. Derrida rejects the practice of some disciplines to truth or meaning as a given. This means that some thinkers do not prove the existence of meaning but seek to describe the meaning as if it already exists. Derrida argues that meaning is plural, unstable and elusive. For this reason destruction seeks to discover hidden meanings and assumptions. It supports ethno poetic thinking in that it stresses that there is no 'pure' knowledge outside culture and language.

Deconstruction is therefore relevant to us since it captures the meanings in the ever-changing world of children. For example, children one can turn from friend to foe and vice versa within minutes. Children shift their perception of themselves through role play. One child can move from the world of a baby (crying) to the world of a parent (father/mother), animal (e.g.) bird and even to an angel (imagination). This means that children have vivid imaginations that make them appreciate and or condemn the people and things within their environment. Therefore, deconstruction helps us to question certain meanings and appreciate perspectives that are different from ours. Although some critics of Derrrida might argue that his thoughts are against truth, morality permanence and presence, we must appreciate that the theory opens the world to unlimited interpretations. This helps us to cast away the dogmas and become dynamic in our enterprise of assigning meaning to the oral texts performed by children.

(ii) The Psychoanalytic Theory: Psychoanalysis, largely attributed to Sigmund Freud, is based on psychology and concerns itself with the interpretation of ideas through symbols emerging from the subject's narration of his past. We consider it a useful theoretical tool

for the study because we are dealing with conformity and subversion that are expressed through children's behaviour. One of the ways through which we learn about people is by analysing what they say. Subversion and conformity can be revealed through children's oral poetry. Basing his argument on the Freudian perspective, Alan Dundes affirms:

> Among its functions, folklore provides a socially sanctioned outlet for the expression of what cannot be articulated in the more usual direct way. It is precisely in jokes, Folktales, folksongs, proverbs, children's games gestures etc that anxieties can be vented. (36; emphasis mine)

Our interest has been to find out how psychoanalysis can be used to interpret what cannot be articulated in the usual direct way. Our understanding is that conformity and subversion are the issues involved in this interpretation. The tension that exists in the oral text is reflective of the conflicts in the society. Psychoanalysis whether Freudian or Lacan pays attention to motives and feelings of the characters described in the poetry. Therefore, using psychoanalysis helps us to understand these unconscious conditions that are interlocked between conformity and subversion as we have argued Sigmund Freud attributes human behaviour to the function of the mind. Following his argument, we find that in every segment of the society, family, home school and the like, there are social restrictions. These are expressed or executed in form of punishments and rules. These restrictions are supposed to suppress human desires or behaviour that is considered outside the norms (conformity) of the society.

> It is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built
> Upon renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely

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the non- satisfaction ... of powerful instincts. (Freud, 1930, 38)

In spite of these social controls, such desires or behaviours do not disappear. They lodge themselves in the subconscious. As a result psychological tensions always exist in individuals who feel that their normal drives have not been gratified. These desires cry out for satisfaction. Sigmund Freud explains this in terms of the id, the ego and the super ego. The desire and other anti-social behaviour that are suppressed are symbolized by the id. There is also the super ego in the extreme opposite of id demanding that people behave in a morally upright manner. It is the super-ego that pricks people's (including children) conscience. It evokes feelings of guilt and lack of integrity. These feelings of guilt play the significant role of creating awareness of an individual drives – even though they are considered negative in their community. At the level of children the super ego demands that they obey the commands of the adults under whose care they live. Obedience is a form of compliance or conformity as far as the society is concerned. The super ego is seen as a means through which anarchy is introduced to the community.

Freud's super ego is conceived as having a repressive and persecutory function, and Freudian analysis could therefore be understood as emancipation from guilt, especially sexual guilt. In contrast, guilt in Klein's 'depressive position' is understood to arise from the recognition of the pain suffered by or inflicted on others, and as an essential part of relatedness (Rustin, 1982, 81)

In order to avoid the anarchy of excess of the restriction by the society (read adults/the tension created looks for ways of venting itself. One such way is to create work

of art in which certain people commit offences and get away with it. In the children's poetry certain linguistic strategies are employed in order to get away with behavior that children find unacceptable to adults but which they, themselves, enjoy. For example, in the song 'Ciru na Mwangi i.e. Ciru and Mwangi, the under-age couple has got away with an illegitimate marriage. In fact the song is a celebration of this illicit cohabitation.

Another proponent of the psychoanalytic theory is Carl Jung. While Freud sees the trickster as a scape goat for the externalization of people's desire at psychoanalytical level Jung's perspective is different. He argues that the trickster is an archetype who is a representative of certain aspects of our lives which have something to do with our basic survival in the universe. The trickster is, therefore, an embodiment or memory or principles that are universal and natural for human kind, whether adults, of children, throughout history.

He argues that the trickster symbolises the shadow in every one of us. This shadow is interpreted as evil but sometimes evil is necessary for survival in the ruthless world of adults. Children sometimes find the world of adults ruthless and uncompromising, therefore, they, resort to other 'means of survival including composing songs and poems to vent out their frustrations as we shall see in the actual analysis of the oral texts. Therefore, the psychological theory applies to the analyses of both the characters in the work or art as well as function of art in liberating humankind. We have, however not used psychoanalysis exclusively since our main interest is to interpret Oral Literature from an oral tradition. A different but complimentary society-based theory helps us appreciate the social construction and deconstruction of identity and perceptions.

Therefore, the current study of Gikuyu children's oral poetry examines the dialectical relationship between conformity and subversion as perceived and expressed through the dynamics of the society. This thesis requires a theory that competently addresses the way the Gikuyu children's oral poetry illuminates this plane where the two seemingly opposed axes (of conformity and subversion) intersect and probably diverge.

(iii) Ethnopoetics: A theory that recognises that performance sites are pedagogical fora for the Gikuyu society, and that children are people with impulses, special needs and desires that are dear to them, is most appropriate for this study. After an intensive and extensive search for such a theory, we found ethno poetics suitable since it is not only performance based but can also reveal whether there is incongruity between children's worldview and that of adults. Employing ethno poetics as a literary tool, the thesis probes whether the existence of such incongruity in oral poetry of Gikuyu children is an integral aspect of the tension between conformity and subversion.

In one of his essays "Ethnopoetic Analysis and Finnish Oral Verse" appearing in Songs Beyond The Kalevala, Periti J. Anttonen clarifies:

> In its emphasis on the aesthetics of form as one of the guiding lines in performances, the ethno poetic approach is in line with Bakhtinian concept of finalization, by which is meant the constructive process whereby an, utterance, song, or narrative, aims at fulfilling an internalized (but socially constituted) idea of completeness in the performances. In verse, finalization is manifested in the making of unitary structure. (Siikala 115).

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Anttonen captures the direction of the current study in that he has provided some definition of ethno poetics and placed the theory within society. This study holds the belief that whatsoever exists as art, though it may be ideal and complete, changes when confronted with a new creation. This dynamism between the new and the old is a reflection of the continued relationship between the past and the present. Our study of conformity and subversion through ethno poetics sheds light on how poetry can become the mirror through which the society sees itself. We interpret the language which is also a social reality, the performance which is a social event, and the social consciousness; including gender awareness.

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Ethno poetics is relevant to this study in that it sees the society as a living organism whose qualities can be observed from oral performance. Applying the theory to Gikuyu children's oral poetry the study sheds light on how conformity and subversion reveal the dynamics of the community. Dell Hymes, one of the leading proponents of ethno poetics, holds it that the theory is based on the notion that songs, poems and narratives are "subtle organizations of lines and verses" (121). Hymes goes further to explain:

> The lines and verses are organized in ways that are not only poetry, but also a kind of rhetoric of action in that they embody an implicit cultural schema for the organization of experience. These patterns are best worked in myths but can also be found in personal narratives. (121)

Poetry is a highly organized genre. It is naturally in verses commonly called stanzas. Dell Hymes himself hints above that the patterns are best worked out in myths. This study pays attention to the verse patterns in the poems and establishes how best ethno poetics

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applies in the analysis of the Gikuyu oral poetry. The study probes the conflicts within the seemingly patterned literary world.

Another prominent ethno poetic scholar is Dennis Tedlock. He emphasizes the oral nature of texts and sees pauses as deliberate markers of lines (Tedlock 1983). The main distinction between Tedlock and Hymes is that Dell Hymes does not support the pause as necessarily a stylistic device. Further the latter deals with the analysis of materials collected by himself or other scholars while Tedlock insists on the researcher himself collecting the material. The paralinguistic features which are components of performance can be employed in subversive strategies. They lie within the communication process.

Whatever divergent perspectives the two scholar's (Tedlock and Del Hymes) hold are useful to this study since it is from their works that we form our theoretical basis. We feel that a combination of the four theoretical approaches give a better plane for observation and analysis of Gikuyu children's oral poetry. Other scholars who share the view that the performer is as important as the performance are Charles L. Briggs (8) and most recently John Miles Foley. After thorough study of Albert Bates Lord's path-breaking study The Singer of Tales (1965) and Richard Bauman's illuminating book Verbal Art As Performance (1977), John Miles Foley gave the title The Singer of Tales in Performance (1995) to his book which establishes a "common ground" to the study of ethno poetics. It is significant to note that Foley's work holds literary currency. It shows the growing trend for ethno poetic scholars to combine the study of the artist, the performance as an event and the tradition that inform the art. Foley justifies his position by observing the interaction of the performer, the art, and the social event:

> Because the situated verbal art of the works examined in this volume depends on a specialist and individual, we can speak of singer of Tales. Because the art depends for its expressive force on its emergence within a specialized context, we can speak of a realm of performance. Even when the discussion turns to texts, and even when those texts are not transcriptions but lettered works in traditional idiom, rhetorically the singer persists and the performance goes on. (Miles xiv)

The tension between conformity and subversion also "goes on". Our study of the oral poetry of the Gikuyu finds its fulfilment in Ethno poetics since it addresses not only the performer and the performance but also the tradition that in forms the setting. In other words the current study finds Foley's attempt to harmonize Hymes and Tedlock's views on ethno poetics substantially relevant in that he clears the path and defines a new direction for the study of Oral Literature.

In addition since this study uses ethno methodology as a tool for collecting data, the supremacy of performance within the society is stressed and justified. John Miles Foley's harmonization brings out a perfect problem –method-theory linkage for the current study of the oral poetry. Running through this vein is the tension between conformity and subversion. It can correctly be deduced from the ongoing exposition that Ethno poetics is a theory that is entrenched in tradition, performance and the use of both linguistic and para-linguistic features in the communication and interpretation. These are the tenets of the theory which we exploit in this study. Ethno poetics captures the dynamism between tradition and performance within the lenses of the oral art in question. On the basis of these

points, we have found it an important tool for the interpretation composition, delivery and reception of Gikuyu children's oral poetry. In using this theory, we have seen how children create, reject and manipulate the ideas that dynamically come to existence within their experiences. Tension between conformity and subversion has guided us through this ethno poetic approach. In this study we start the premise that life itself is rhythmic and the children's art under study is constructed in such a way that it moves with the rhythm of life whether of home or in school. Real experiences resonate around the Gikuyu culture and the performances conditioned by the social setting. In the oral texts, there are pregnant pauses that carry suspense as style and foreground thematic implications of the text. There are moments when pauses are employed to take us back in the time or project us into the future. This is demonstrated in the sampled poetry. Pauses also give us insights into the character depicted in the oral text. These characters might pause since they want to reflect on the matter in question. However, they can also pause for lack of knowledge or because they are defiant. All these causes are anchored in the ethno poetic orientation.

In the study we also paid attention to specific conventions of Gikuyu grammar, the complexity of linguistic expressions and the variety of linguistic communications and the variety and style that mark the oral expressions ethno poetics also enabled us to look at events, situations and interactive that keeps changing to allow new meanings to evolve from the dynamics of performance. Those are the areas the study has focused on. We appreciate that ethno poetics as a theory has continued to grow from the earlier treatment of literary works as material culture to a modern theoretical tool suitable for the contemporary

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study of oral poetry. Deconstruction and psychoanalysis complement ethno poetics and enable us to address our subject from varied theoretical orientations.

As demonstrated by our analysis, these theories complement one another, enriching the interpretation of our texts through diversity and depth. This approach enabled to probe the diametrically opposed concepts of conformity and subversion in the Gikuyu oral poetry.

1.9 Research Methodology

The field study was carried out between August 2003 and April 2004. We conducted an orientation survey which helped us establish rapport with teachers and pupils.

As expected, this preliminary survey enabled us achieve the following objectives:

a) To evaluate the suitability of the field research sites in regard to physical and social accessibility.

b) To determine the extent to which data varied from one area to another

c) Establish with certainty based on the facts on the ground that such poems/songs which we expected to collect as data were in existence and could be accessed.

d) To assess the size, readiness and availability of the respondents within the identified regions.

e) To determine what equipment and instruments were appropriate in the research.

It is during this preliminary survey when we had a chance to recruit and engage three teachers per school to act as our research assistants. We selected them from over fifteen teachers in each school. The criterion for their selection was their interest and knowledge on oral literature, particularly poetry. This was established through observation and

competence as demonstrated in their participation and skills in organizing the performances. In total twelve research assistants were recruited.

These research assistants helped us in planning the field research. As we progressed to the actual research phase, the same teachers were used to help us collect data. With the help of the three research assistants per school, we identified the teachers who responded to the interview questions.

In this phase of our study, we randomly sampled eight schools which included, Kirwara, Rwegetha, Kigio, Gatanga, Kimandi, Gatunyu, Kibubuti, Gathungu and Riara primary schools. We visited all these schools during our survey. We watched and listened to the pupils perform. We also talked to the teachers and the pupils during our interaction. We appreciated the warm reception from the pupils and teachers. We also noted and appreciated the high level of interest and participation by both teachers and pupils. What struck us, as we also participated and interacted with the pupils and the teachers, is that in all the eight schools, children performed similar songs. This is became important and helped us in making our decision about the final list of schools that we visited in the actual field research and data collection. That way, we were able to settle on four primary schools namely: Gatunyu, Gatanga, Gathungu and Kibubuti. We were also able to determine the size of the group respondents. With the help of the research assistants, we selected twenty pupils and ten teachers per school to respond to interview questions. In all we interviewed eight pupils and forty teachers form the above schools.

Determination of the research equipment and instruments was made with serious consideration of the nature of our study. We needed data relating to the children's songs. We intended to seek the meanings of these songs to the children and the adults as well. We therefore decided to use observation and interview schedule fort children and teachers. These are detailed in the appendices. We sought to get details of performances including the linguistic and the Para-linguistic features. Consequently we had to identify and acquire tools that would enable us to capture this. We decided to use a combination of video and still camera to capture the elements of performances as well as the voices in the songs. We used audio-tapes to capture the voices during the interview as well as in the performances.

Since electricity gadgets may fail or be tampered with by the elements of nature, we had to cushion ourselves by recording the performances and interview details using pen and paper. A combination of all these strategies enabled us to collect a huge amount of data which we have used din this study. We now proceed to phase two of the field research.

Phase Two: Actual data collection

In the actual data collection, we participated in the performances of the songs and poems. We also recorded our observations in regard to the linguistic as well as the paralinguistic application. The linguistic aspects involve the timbre of quality of the voice, projection which is the carrying capacity of the voice as well as other prosodic features. These include the softness, loudness and length of the utterances. The paralinguistic details involved the postures, gestures, consuming, facial expressions and body movements including dance.

The data were collected using random sampling strategy. The poetry was numbered and given titles to make reference easier and faster. Any point that was not clear was clarified in the discussions after the performances.

In addition to this, we replayed the performances so that the children could own their performances. This created more enthusiasm and it became apparent that the replaying was a motivation to both the children and the teachers.

Having already established the suitability of the data collection instruments and determined the data size, we were able to proceed to the field. In the school settings, we acted as teachers in the institutions. The study focuses on how the community views itself through its poetry. Our guiding light in the study was the tension between conformity and subversion in the Gikuyu children's poems. To sustain the rapport, we participated in the children's oral poetry. This made it easy for us to identify the children who were the centre of the study.

This study deals with the day-to-day activities of the Gikuyu children and focuses on their oral poetry. Ethno methodology deals with ordinary situations. We support the opinion of Lee Harvey et al that this is a methodology which:

> Concentrates on how people make sense of everyday aspect of their world. People adopt different sets of meanings in different situations and by so doing construct a variety of rationalization. (42)

This open-minded approach to the data collection was suitable for our study since we were able to observe children's performances (roles). We interpreted the production, delivery and reception of their poetry. We explored the variety of meaning within the

dynamics of performance. It was of significance to look at meaning as revealed through the tension between conformity and subversion in the selected poems. The meaning would help us in the next stage.

Phase 3: Data Processing , Analysis and Writing

The objective of this stage was to reach out to other scholars in the subject and to enrich the literary world through explication and exposition of the data. The first task was to go through the data in depth looking at the notes of linguistic and paralinguistic details, then listen to and watch the audio and auto-visual records. We also looked at the interview schedules for the children and also for the teachers' adults.

The data had been collected with a view to seeing how they related to the objectives and the assumptions of the study. In addition an attempt was made to determine what data were suitable for what chapters. This depended on the subject matter of the data. Many challenges came to us particularly because some of the poems cut across themes and varieties of literary and per formative style. At this stage, we made consultations with other scholars and members of the community. This was done to keep our focus clear and enable us to sustain the freshness of the ideas. All the time we were aware that meanings keep shifting and cannot remain permanently. We take cognisance of Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln's postulation:

> The interpretive practice of making sense f ones findings is both artful and political. Multiple criteria for evaluating qualitative research now exist, and

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> those we emphasize stress the situated, relational and textual structures of the ethnographic experience. There is no single interpretive truth. As we argued earlier, there are multiple interpretive communities, each having its own criteria for evaluating an interpretation. (1998).

There were slight variations in meaning dependent on performance and prosodic realizations of oral text.

Transcription and translation: We transcribed the poems from the audio tapes in their original language. Details of per formative features were recorded. This transcription formed the primary texts which were used for our analysis. After this exercise, the songs/poems were translated into English. A creative translation was preferred since it was a conscientious production of the form and content of the original. This translation, therefore, reflected the style and meaning of the original. Our main interest was the oral event, the oral text and the context of the performance. Our attention revolved around conformity and subversion at all levels of interpretation.

We subscribe to Okoth Okombo's postulation in his essay "Oral Literature and Translation" in which he says that translation should be patiently and meticulously done through repeated listening to the recorded materials:

> A translator of an oral text must record the text on tape so that he/she can listen to it as many times, as the translation work requires. Listening to the tape many times before and during the translation process is important because our minds have a way of registering hidden meanings after having

several impressions of the same text. This is one other reasons why translation should not be done in a hurry. (2)

Since tension between subversion and conformity was revealed through behaviour and express social consciousness through language and performance, this study has used qualitative research paradigm because the technique is suitable for our data. This approach takes cognisance of the complexities and divergence of the experiences of children. The research has probed the Gikuyu children's artistic reality in observation and the intricate interactions among children in performance. The poetry is subtle in the sense that it provides meanings and enjoyment at various levels. One poem will be enjoyed by a standard one child because of its sweet sounding words and utterances. A standard eight pupil will enjoy the same performance for its meaningful words. Whole audience will enjoy the entire performances because of its thrilling dance. In the final analysis this thesis is a critical analysis of the phenomena using a scholarly interpretation based on the data.

In the words of teacher Rosemary Njeri gachomba of Kibubuti primary School, "the entire performance of these songs is like a family sharing a meal". The study itself has been a communal experience among artists, the audiences and the researchers.

1.10 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has introduced our study, reviewed relevant literature, and offered the theoretical framework underguarding our analysis. We have also explained methodological approaches we have deployed to achieve our objectives and test our hypotheses. The next chapter discusses in detail how performance techniques aid the

articulation of conformity and subversion of social values. In the chapter, we examine the intersection of performance and social setting in enhancing subversion and conformity in Gikuyu children's poetry.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 PERFORMANCE, SOCIAL SETTING, AND IMPLICATION ON MEANING

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at describing and critically analysing the interaction between the performer and the social setting in enhancing conformity and subversion in Gikuyu children's oral poetry. The question of what constitutes a text is a problematic one. This study is concerned with a performed text. By this we mean the audio-visual real life realisation of the poetry through performance. The art which we now call text includes the linguistic and the paralinguistic features which are strategically employed by the artist in his production. In the text, the plot or train of thought is carried progressively as a kind of unfolding of ideas or events as shared by both the artist and the audience. The perception of the artist as well as that of the audience must be total but varied in accordance with the context that informs the performance. It needs to be appreciated that although the eye, the ear and the brain are the repositories of performance, the community responds to the performance at both individual and collective levels. The range of performance is from an utterance or gesture to a whole theatrical production. In our case, the performances are staged by children but the adults form the backdrop that informs and contexualises these performances. Meaning does not directly relate to the size of the performance. Linguistic features are often accompanied by para-linguistic ones to propel the performance.

Dramatization, postures, gestures, variation of voice, tonal variation, facial expressions and demonstrations are the common features in children's performances.

The pitch and tempo of a scream can carry the mood, progression and the urgency of an event. For example, when a scream takes the form of fast intermittent utterances it will be construed as requiring expedient response. The opposite--long continuous screams--imply intensity of the danger requiring proper preparedness. The event signified might be real disaster. Therefore, any utterance is meaningful. The paralinguistic strategies accompanying utterances help the audience to perceive the intended meaning and the expected response better. For example, when in the poem 67, "Ninguga Mbu" [I Will Scream] the persona says – she will scream, the accompanying gestures, voice and facial variations reveal the persona's commitment in carrying out the threat.

Enactment of the threat

This chapter uses ethno-poetics as the major theory that informs our analysis. We seek to interrogate how the flow of the performance enhances meaning in the work. In addition we appreciate that the study is not just serious scholarly work, but also a form of entertainment. We look at children not only as consumers of their poetry but also as

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creators of the poetic art. Further, we have tried to avoid too much compartmentalization of the genre, since this might divert our attention to interests outside the study. Finally, we have used other theories to complement ethno-poetics and broaden our understanding. These theories are deconstruction, psychoanalysis and hermeneutics. Our role has been to observe and investigate meaning which we believe is entrenched in the text and the people themselves. Therefore our interpretive enterprise emerges from the culture of the Gikuyu and is focused on the Gikuyu children as they conceive and deliver their poetry. We are also interested in how the sampled poetry has been received. This chapter addresses the three areas –namely conception, delivery, and reception of the poetry. As we have observed, these aspects are tied to the idea of the social setting.

2.2 The Research Site

In all situations, the performers were predominantly children except where the researcher, his assistants and teachers participated in the performances. In terms of the analysis of data, we went to the field to search for meaning and the spirit of ethnopoetics meaning was discovered through interaction with time and space. There are those moments when the meaning of the poems got deconstructed within the same space. Our physical presence motivated the pupil to perform with greater zeal. At every step of our research we took keen interest in the various moments which propelled us to the end. Location was significant in that as we moved from one physical setting to another, variations in the poems and the subsequent meanings began to emerge. We discovered that circumstances and conditions influence the meaning communicated in a performance.

Teachers organising the performances

The performance took place during the tea and lunch breaks. Some of the performances particularly the play songs were conducted during the Physical Education (PE) lessons- Faith Muthoni-Gatunyu primary, Joyce Nyokabi-Kibubuti primary attest to this. In such cases, the place was the field and the P.E teacher would play a leading role in the organization of the performance. At the home environment, children preferred performing outside the house. The home environment offered no restriction and the audience swelled as other children from the neighbourhood joined in wherever we went. In addition, children's participation was spontaneous. They joined in the performance easily and as easily left at any point in the performance. The lower primary pupils especially, had no inhibitions. They were not shy and readily made friends with the researchers. However, as we went to the upper classes, i.e. Standard Seven and Eight the pupils had to be persuaded to perform. In some of these cases, the performances took place in the classroom and were limited to a few poems.

We take cognizance of the fact that society is always changing. Dull performances which had been conducted before break time became more animated and had more participants when they were repeated later in the day. Similarly, performances at home were at their best in the evening in spite of the fact that the children were tired. Time is at

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the centre of the organization of a field study, and time also impacts on the quality and enthusiasm of performances. The social setting is significant in performance because children are exposed to the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the community. In Facing Mount Kenya, Kenyatta Jomo, stresses the role of oral literature in inculcating communal values:

> The mother is in charge of the co-education of her children. In the evening, she teaches both boy and girl the laws and customs, especially those governing the moral code and general rules of etiquette in the community ... There are children dances held occasionally at which praise songs are sung. The children merge automatically into dances of the later years ... (63).

Although Kenyatta made this statement in 1938, and the society has has changed, children continue to sing and dance their poetry to this day. The mother's role is today complemented by the school teacher. Two important considerations have contributed to this. Mothers of Kenyatta's time were full time parents, whereas today many mothers work away from home. In addition, the mothers before the early twentieth century and earlier were committed to their community values which they religiously safeguarded. Today most mothers are not certain about certain values. Some of them are actually ignorant of these values. This becomes particularly true as one moves from the rural homes to the urban setting. In cities and towns children live in multi-ethnic environments and might not be certain about the source of the social code their parents expect them to follow. Under such circumstances the school teacher becomes the source of moral authority. Where some teachers exhibit immoral behaviour, then the learners are left to make their own decisions.

This is the social background that informs the sampled oral poems. The social context forms the climate in which the oral performance of children's poetry thrives or fails to impact on the society.

Althugh adults are mainly entrusted with teaching society, there are times wwhen children also teach the adult. This view is articulated in Kariuki, P. Wangari's project *Style And Meaning In Childrens' Biography: A Case Study Of Kenyan Titles*. "on the other hand, children teach grandmothers new words. This is an indication that adults can also learn from children."(2007:11)

Dundes, Allan in his book, Interpreting Folklore, emphasises the need to examine oral texts within their social context:

> I would like to propose three levels of analysis, each of which can aid in the task of definition. With respect to any given item of folklore, one may analyze its texture, its text and its context. It is unlikely that any genre of folklore could be defined on the basis of just one of these. Ideally, a genre should be defined in terms of all three. (22)

Dundes underscores the role of context in assigning meaning to a text. Although Dundes is concerned with definition, the question of the context of an oral text is important. In most poetry, texture and cohesion are dialectically related features. The social context today is dominated by the institution we call school. A child moves from the familiar setting called home to a new one. This is a challenging experience for the child.

Adjusting to a new environment has an impact on the growing child. The change for each individual child is fast and irreversible in every respect. Both the physical and psychological effects exert their pressure on the child, who must respond accordingly.

There was a carefree spirit of mutual trust within the family. Almost everybody within the family knew and obeyed the social code to a certain extent. The school code, which seemingly reinforces the family code of conduct, is too complicated for immediate comprehension by the new-comers in the school system. The world becomes wider – some times too wide and baffling for the child. The resultant social interaction challenges and broadens the child's knowledge and worldview. Sharing becomes a survival tactic since it teaches a child that he cannot live alone. Therefore, within this context the child becomes eager and willing to engage in survival strategies. Play offers the child new opportunities to be free, to make friends and to learn. The psychomotor skills translate into dancing and play.

Children dancing and playing

Those who fail to shine in class can outshine their peers in chanting, singing and dancing. Of course, even the ones who shine in class try to assert their supremacy in the playground. The affective domain generates cohesion as well as conflict within the peer group. Through interaction, the children conceive new poetry and learn other poems from those who are ahead of them. They get excited about the function of newfound artistic expressions. Dundes, A.. notes that poetry in the form of songs expresses hidden wishes of children:

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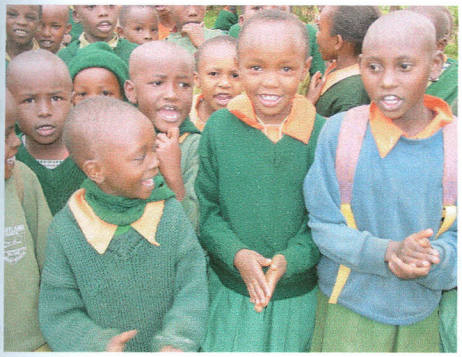
It is my contention that much of the meaning of folkloristic fantasy is unconscious. Indeed, it would have to be unconscious – in the Freudian sense – for folklore to function as it does. Among its functions, folklore provides a socially sanctioned outlet for the expression of what cannot be articulated in the more usual, direct way. It is precisely in jokes folktales, folksongs, proverbs, children's games, gestures etc. that anxieties can be vented. (36).

Children always fantasize being adults. They have always been shown that adults are responsible people. They think that their parents and teachers are infallible. When children observe certain behaviour which in their subconscious mind they feel is not good or right, they point out these weaknesses which have become embarrassing to the society. In many of the poems in our sample, children seem to be paradoxically subverting the notion that children's knowledge and feelings are subordinate to those of adults while at the same time they are asserting and affirming the more encompassing morality and dignity of their community. In these poems, the children fantasise their own dignity as adults. The children's voice becomes a deconstruction of the general belief that adults are the custodians of these values in exclusion of children. The children's oral poetry echoes the hypothesis that even children contribute to those norms to which the society is supposed to conform. This fundamental premise is a bitter pill for those adults who think that they are the custodians of morality. The children know this. Therefore, they artistically insert their views through manipulation of the common belief. In a deconstructive fashion, the children question the meaning of the norms and create uncertainty in the text. The occasion

during which the poem is performed is also part of that context. For easier analysis, we focus on specific oral poetry within the constructed social function.

2.3 Meaning and Play

Play helps children to release tension but at the same time voice their displeasure or pleasure in an artistic manner. In the school situation, we have singing games as well as play songs. Most of children's poetry is realised in the song mode. Children sing and dance in seeming abandon. To them and their audience, they are engaged in having fun and enjoyment. However, a careful examination of the specific texts reveals a different story. Subversion of reality is expressed within this poetic realization. The poetry is on the surface addressed to the children. The children's overt freedom in the playground is only a subversive veil. The hidden truth is that children deliberately and consciously put their voice in certain matters. Even those children who might not have the intellectual sophistication to understand the message still feel there is something peculiar they are involved in. This mystery and the inherent curiosity expressed in the poetry provide aesthetic appeal. Children use poetic licence in their performance to ridicule the errant adults. Yet the adults let them get away with it since in their estimation, children are naive. Naivety is a conformist mask while the chanting and singing of poetry reveal the true views and feelings of children.



Children involved in an emotional chant

Children capture play and turn it into a weapon to attack negative adult behaviour and attitude. In the song "Nyoni Cia Riera-ini Ni Ciinaga" performed by_pupils from Gatanga primary, [Birds of The Air Sing], the children mimic the movement of the birds perching on a tree branch. The movement of the wind is in harmony with the swaying of the leaves. In performance, the children indicate this through gestures and tonation. Therefore, the intonation and the physical movement of the natural elements – wind and trees blend well to capture the mood. This means that this poem is realised in harmony with nature and in response to the environment. On the surface everything conforms and blends well with the other elements in the environment. However, careful analysis will reveal that a subversive element reigns in this equilibrium. The children's perspective here needs to be observed. This song is performed in the class-room and there is no interaction among pupils. Therefore, the children are making a humble demand that they be allowed to be part of nature. The underlying question is: If birds of the air are so free to mingle with nature, why can't we be allowed to do the same? The children are, therefore, protesting against the confinement of the four-wall-classroom. In terms of performance, subversion is hidden in the tranquillity reflected in the verse. The mood is usually sad.

This opposes the assumption that all is well. The irony was that the teacher who supervised the singing of this song did not think of the hidden implications. It is important to note that children's opinion is implicit since the teacher is in charge here.

However, when on a different occasion, the same children were allowed to play in the field, they echoed the same message more explicitly this time. To illustrate this, let us examine song number 8 "Riria Tukenete Tungiaga Kuina" meaning when we are happy. Performed by the same children, the song is dominated by a jovial mood since the children have been let out into the field. They directly state their case that when they are happy they sing but if they don't sing they would become donkeys. They mimic the donkeys. In striking contrast to the song about birds above, this song is about donkeys. Donkeys are beasts of burden. They contrast well with birds, which are normally free to fly out of reach of the creatures that walk on earth including adults. This song is performed in a school setting but as we pointed out earlier, the school sometimes reinforces the family norms. Parents and teachers are always complaining that children are making noise and, therefore, censor their speech and play. The children directly state their message to the adults and complain that if they do not sing, they will be like donkeys.

RIRIA TUKENETE	**WHEN WE ARE HAPPY**
Riria tukenete	When we are happy
twendaga kuina,	We go singing,
tungiaga kuina	if we don't sing,
Twatuika ndigiri,	We would become donkeys
hihi! hiho! hiho! hiho!	Hiho, hiho, hiho, hiho!

Through voice variation, they make their imitation of the noise made by donkeys sweeter than it really is almost suggesting that donkeys are freer than them. Yet they make it clear that they do not want to become donkeys. The idea is that, the teachers and parents over-burden children with work and curtail their freedom and enjoyment. The song is performed in a line indicating unity of purpose for the children or in a circle symbolising their solidarity. Obviously this song is subversive in the sense that it is destabilising the requirement that they obey the teachers and parents without question. They know adults would not like to have children who are donkeys. That is what they are psychologically capitalising on.

There are cases when serious songs which should have pedagogical value are subverted to serve the interest of children. A good example is song number seventy nine (79) "Imwe Igĩrĩ" meaning One Two, performed by children from Gatunyu primary. The song is in the category of singing game. Each child claps her hands, and then claps those of her partner who faces her and the other does the same alternately.

IMWE, IGIRI.	**ONE, TWO**
One, two turiandu	One two kneel down
Three, four forana,	Three four Borans
Five, six cindano	Five six needle
Seven eight iitina	Seven eight, it is in the buttocks
Nine, ten tengura	Nine ten remove from the fire
Eleven, twelve twero twa nguku	Elven twelve a hen's thigh

The performance is interjected with laughter, which is an expression of excitement and humour. It is supposed to teach children number practice i.e. counting. Children are supposed to use polite language all the time. The children also know that the songs help in learning, Jane Wambui a standard three pupil at Gatunyu, says that such songs help children to develop speech. She adds that she learnt how to communicate through the use of songs with the help of her teachers. In shocking subversion, the children become naughty while singing the song above. They start in a most simple and seemingly innocent manner and proceed to complicated and naughty eloquence. They sing, "one two three forana" *meaning the people called Borans.* It is difficult to understand how these "innocent" children have known about the Borans who live in the Northern part of Kenya – not anywhere near Central Province. They proceed to "count five six a needle" putting us off balance since a needle can be used for sewing or injecting people. However, when they say "in the buttocks", we have no doubt that it is a doctor's needle. The word "itina" could also mean "anus" which is a taboo word among the Gikuyu. Therefore, the children are deliberately becoming naughty within the poetic licence. The word "itina" has other vulgar insinuations in reference to female genitalia. For example "sindano" meaning needle is phallocentric. From a psychological perspective the destination of the needle becomes the "itina" and in this case it can no longer be buttocks or anus. Therefore, the polysemic nature of the word "itina" is a deliberate manipulation of the lexicon to provide the performers with an avenue for camouflage. There is also an attempt by the children to construct the arithmetic basics they have been taught. This is a form of subversion. Again the irony is that the poem is performed within the teachers' earshot.

Audience comprising children and adults

Surprisingly, this poem demonstrates children's ability to reconstruct certain poems to suit their interests. The children sing this song loudly and cheerfully displaying a carefree attitude. This is in total defiance of what they have been taught. The mention of "thighs" is also suggestive of sex, but this is quickly hidden in the words "twa nguku" meaning "of the hen". This removes the sexual reference but still creates unanswered questions. For example, since when did hens develop thighs? When the poem is performed in front of adults, it is normally the assumption of the audience that children do not understood what is meant by the taboo words. Fortunately, for the children, that is how they get away with their enterprise i.e. subverting societal norms.

Not all play songs subvert adult values. For example song Number 80 "Wanjiku Kimukuyu" meaning *Wanjiku who is like the fig tree* performed by Irene Njeru –Gathugu primary, operates within the children's world. The song is about a girl who went to steal sugarcane on a rainy day. When she returned home, her ears were curled up. (The children dramatize this). She therefore, called "Karungari" meaning the upright one to make oil to help uncurl her ears. The girl is abused by other children and called Wanjiku Kimukuyu (a big fig tree).

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Ndaathire, kuuna kigwa,	I went to fetch sugarcane
Muthenya wari mbura	On a rainy day, I were back
Ngicoka na mucii ngiita	Home and called Karungari,
karungari ngimwira ndugira	And asked her to make oil for
maguta ma gukunjura moni moni	Me, to uncurl the ears, the ears
niigukunjara thuu-yi ngicawe	Will be wrinkled thuu yi
Wanjiku kumukuyu!	Ngicawe, Wanjiku kimukuyu.

We should note that the tree bears fruits which are of little value to the society since they are not edible. Wanjiku is compared to the tree i.e. Kimukuyu. The 'ki' spices it to make it derogatory. The song highlights the crime of theft and the punishment metted out by the peers who are part of the society. First of all, Wanjiku's ears are pulled and curled. Secondly she is abused and ridiculed by her peers. The poem is a warning to those children who contemplate stealing. They are fore-warned of the consequences. The adults always teach children not to steal. Here, the adults role as custodians of morality has been taken over by the children.

Girls performing the poem Wanjiku Kimukuyu

This song is performed by girls in a circle. They go round dancing, singing and touching each other's ears. This is a didactic poem whose pedagogical value is located in subversion where the roles are reversed. The prefix "ki" in "Kimukuyu" can be seen as indicative that Wanjiku belongs to the "ki" class of adults – big ones. If she were small, she would be "Ka" as in "Kamukuyu" which is an endearment. Therefore, again this is a very pleasant and humorous way of teaching children to conform to the morality of the society. Instead of the adults condemning evil and punishing errant children, the children themselves take up the responsibility. This might allude to the fact that the adults have absconded their responsibility.

Most of the poems we have discussed so far are popular with the lower primary classes. Let us now look at poem Number 37 "Watata" [cousin/or belonging to the Aunt.], performed by children in Kanunga location, and at Gatanga primary:

Watata watiriri	Watata watiriri
Nyumba itu ni njega,	Our house is good
Watata watiriri,	Watata watiriri
Ningicinda itu,	It can't be better than ours
Watata watiriri	Wtata watiriri
Tukwenda mundu umwe	We want one person
Watata watiriri	Watata watiriri
Mukwenda uriku,	Who do you want
Watata watiriri	Watata watiriri
Tukwenda Wambui,	We want Wambui
Watata watiriri	Watata watiriri
Mutikimuiyire,	Come for her
Watata watiriri	Watata watiriri

Nitumuiyirite. We are coming for her

This poem is characteristically performed by older children in Standard Five, Six, Seven and Eight. The title "watata" indicates that the persona is individually addressing a cousin. Of significance from an ethnopoetic stand point is that although the poem is performed by two groups, the address is to "watata" – cousin who is a single person. Performance by older children, though still simple in composition, has elaborate choreography and meaning. The song plays on alliteration with particular emphasis on the consonantal sound "t" and the vowel sound "a". It is performed as both a singing and play game. The singers form two circles, representing the rival houses or clans, close to each other.

Performance showing competition between houses

The first photograph depicts the two circles as different entities. The second photograph shows girls from each circle chasing each other while the third photograph shows the girl who was defeated joining the victorious house.

The members of the first circle boast that their house is better than that of their neighbours who are in the second circle. In the performances the singers praise the positive attributes of their houses. The version presented here is the Kanunga one. In the Gatanga version,

each group specifically justifies the claim that their house is better. For example, when one says that their house is made of timber, the other outdoes them by saying that theirs is built of stone. Finally, as is the case here, the contentious issue of quality has to be settled by two candidates from each house.

They are asked who they want. When they name the person, e.g. Wambui, they are told to come for her. Wambui then runs round the circle as the one from the other circle chases her. The Gatanga version required Wambui to go to the other circle and chase the chosen child. The race now becomes the one to determine which house is better. If, for example, Wambui is defeated, she leaves her circle and joins the challenging group. The criteria now shift to just mere claims of the quality to the population of the house. The house which wins more people will depopulate the other. In this case the house with more people is declared the winner. There is celebration in that house. In the Gatanga version the first house demands to have one person. The children make two sets of lines facing each other. Each line has a child challenging the one opposite her in a heated exchange. This complex performance creates the spirit of competition and rivalry in the houses or homes. In the performance, children learn to be disciplined and tolerant in times of victory and defeat. The lesson is clear that while victory is sweet, defeat should be tolerated. Behind this seemingly innocent play poem there is a subversive grain. The title "watata" refers to a cousin. The two circles in the performance are personified "cousins" of each other. This view is enhanced in the use of the word "watiriri" meaning those who say "atiriri" – a word which the Gikuyu use to call attention to the fact that the speaker wants to say something. The title, therefore, has the implication that a cousin is calling attention to a cousin. This

blood relationship requires cousins to relate well to one another. Ironically, the performance is about rivalry between "houses" which refers to homesteads in which cousins live. Going back to the use of alliteration of "r" sound, it is known that the Gikunyu have a heavy "r" accent. Therefore, there is no doubt the song is about them as the "watiriri" people. The poem calls for cohesion within the ethnic group and the competition between the two "houses" could be broadly interpreted to mean rivalry among ethnic groups. In this case, there is --- veiled tribal sentiment. This now amounts to subversion since the Gikuyu teach their children to respect their neighbours especially those who are not at war with them. In the actual performance, the defeated circle symbolising the rival house joins the victors in celebrations. The idea echoed here is that the fittest ones in the race survive. The Gikuyu people like referring to one another as "Mundu wa Nyumba" meaning a person of a house – or cousin. This fits in well with our interpretation that solidarity is valued in the community

The performance of play songs is characterised by variety in mood, tempo, pitch and other performative features. For example, the poem "Ni Ndete Marua" performed by std 3 pupils- Gathugu primary, that means "I have lost a letter", proceeds from a slow pace in the beginning to a fast one at the end. The performer echoes the words creating a moment of urgency.

Ni ndete marua,	I have lost a letter
Caria!	Look for it!

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Children enacting the loss of a letter

Through dramatic dialogue and repetition, the children create a sense of urgency that culminates in the identification of one child as the "letter". This child runs after the persona as the others cheer. The one who is defeated then starts the game again. The poem is realized in rhythm and enables the children to enjoy themselves as they develop the spirit of playing together. For instance, Esther Njeri-Gatunyu primary, James Kinuthia-Kibubuti primary, say they enjoy the song 'since they shake their body' i.e dance to the song. It is also important to note that through poetry the children are able to improve their psychomotor skills and even become good athletes in future.

The spirit is maintained through out the performance. Each child is either a performer or the audience. Through the play, the children themselves instil virtues such as obedience and discipline. The A letter is a foreign idea and symbol of Western education. It is at the centre of all this satire. It is, therefore, subversive to give prominence to the concept of a letter and worse still to treat it as an embodiment of a child as is the case in this performance. We have now looked at play let us now turn to another feature of oral poetry.

2.4 Meaning; Work and Leisure

In the traditional Gikuyu society, children helped their parents perform certain duties such as looking after cattle, digging, collecting firewood and taking care of their younger brothers and sisters. These roles were gender demarcated. However, in this chapter we are interested in the concept and practice of performance as expressed in modern Gikuyu children's oral poetry. In this section, we locate the work and leisure poetry within the dynamics of the experiences of the Gikuyu children. Although we are dealing with issues of comformity and subversion, we have noted that a veil runs across the tension between the two. This veil creates intermittent intersections that result to a subversive reconciliation of the antithetical values. To illustrate this point, let us refer to the world of oral tradition as recorded by Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi in his novel The River Between:

> To the strangers, they kept numb, breathing none of the secrets of which they were the guardians. Kagutui ka Mucii gatihakagwo Ageni: the oilskin of the house is not for rubbing into the skin of strangers. (3)

While for Ngugi the strangers are either those who are outside the clan including the white men, the children's perception is different. The proverb is embedded in the tradition and the interpretation given by Ngugi wa Thiong'o conforms with the established communal ethics among the Gikuyu. However, for the children in our field study, the foreigners are interpreted to mean the adults while the oilskin becomes the children's secrets whereas home is interpreted to mean their world. Therefore, those who are outside the children's world are strangers. As children play and work within the vicinity or earshot of adults, the latter deceive themselves that they are operating within the Gikuyu values

which are taken as a given. As demonstrated in our analysis, there are times when the opposite is quite true. Children stage a protest of these very values which they are supposed to uphold. According to the adults, children are not conscious of their social reality. But this section investigates the veracity of this statement through analyses of selected work and leisure songs.

Poem Number 87, "Wakariru" [The Luxuriant One] as performed by std four pupils at Gatunyu primary is performed as dialogue. The first person sings telling her companion to move faster but the respondent says that she did not want to go to fetch firewood. She complains that there is nobody who is ready to help her. She grumbles saying that the only person who is ready to meet her after work is the door post. The performers hold hands and dramatise the activity of workers fetching and carrying fire-wood and hurrying home. The urgency gets intensified as night seems to set in. The mood is sad since one of the members seems to anticipate loneliness at home where only the doorposts are expected to welcome her. The song which was actually performed by children, particularly girls fetching firewood, was used to encourage those who were not keen on their work. In singing and working together, the children develop understanding and co-operation among themselves. Repetition of the sibilant [s] in "cwa, cwa", meaning move faster, enhances meaning since the words are ideophonic and represent the movement of the feet as children walk home. In the school performance of the poem, children recreate the home environment and school work becomes the equivalent of fetching firewood. In other words, the teacher is, through this dramatization, reminded that the children are supposed to go home early. Unfortunately, some of the teachers do not understand this. Therefore, they continue

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detaining the children in school where they are expected to do remedial or menial work. Under such circumstances, the pupils sing more loudly and urgently in order to call attention to the fact that they need to go home where they are expected to fetch firewood. Children are supposed to avoid darkness and they really want to "cwa, cwa tuthii" meaning move fast and go home. Subversion comes since the teacher is the one who is delaying them in his ignorance of the signs of approaching dusk.

Another feature of this performance is the repetition. In one of her scholarly papers "Performance: An Integral Art of our Teaching Oral Literature," Wangari Mwai observes:

> Repetition is also a common feature in oral literature. Although in writing it looks cumbersome, in performance it comes out very impressively. Repetition usually occurs in choruses or even major phrases in verses. Interjections are also commonly repeated in performances. When some express surprise haiya in Kikuyu, others express sorrow such as expressions wooi. (30)

What Mwai W. says is significant to the linguistic realisation of this song which blends well with the para-linguistic features in performance. The interjections Ii hai huu, ii hai huu, ii huuiyi are embodied in the movement and the totality of the performance. This impacts on the audience who emphathise with the young workers whose task of collecting firewood (symbol of warmth and light) is in competition with the ensuing darkness (symbol of danger and uncertainity). The result is that the audience joins in the interjection echoing the increasing sense of urgency. Again, we must emphasize that the message is directed to

the children at work but in school, it is the stubborn teacher who has to be reminded about time and its bearing on the children's roles and obligations at home.

Poem No. 61 "Wandundu" [The Owl] performed by the same pupils, is a short verse that focuses on children at work. Like the poem above, its central concern is to encourage children to cultivate.

WANDUNDU	**WANDUNDU**
Wandundu ii ndume ii	Wandundu ii come out ii!
Wone ii kurima no ngurima x2	And see! me cultivate,x2
Na Kamau ,	And Kamau
Kurima no ngurima	To cultivate I wil cultivate
Na Muthoni,	And Muthoni,
Kurima no ngurima	To cultivate, I will cultivate
Wandundu ii ndume ii	Wandundu, ii come out ii.
Wone ii kurima. no ngurima	You see!! To cultivate,
	I will cultivate

"Wandundu" who is a person, is being called out to see the singer cultivating. Other children such as Kamau and Muthoni are also called to help in cultivating. As a work song, this verse is repeated as the children make progress in their task. In the performance, children form a line and sing as they dig. The names called out are of those who are expected to join in the work. The ones who are called out are usually present and step forward to demonstrate their competence in work. They are praised for their good work. Since this is an enactment of a real work situation and the past experience of children, the social setting is familiar. In the olden days, cultivation used to be done communally among the Gikuyu and the children would come together and dig their parents' shambas in turns until all the shambas were cultivated. Therefore, this enactment evokes nostalgic memories

in the adult audience who might have participated in such communal work. However, a subversive element is directed to the adults through the use of the name "wandundu". The owl is always sad looking. It is never happy. It is a bird of bad omen. Therefore, the children seem to be directing their satire to the negative adults who do not seem to appreciate children's work. These adults are symbolised by 'wandundu.' The hidden script is that no matter how hard they work children receive little appreciation for their work. This deconstructs the earlier view that this is merely a work song intended to encourage children to work communally.

Another example that serves to illustrate our point is song number 62, "Mwari Ukurima" meaning a *Daughter Cultivating,* performed at Gatanga primary. The poem is about a daughter who is lazy. She stands and looks up at faces the sky all the time instead of cultivating. She is asked whether she is looking for her goat in the clouds. This is a sarcastic question. In a surprising turn, the poem goes on to ridicule her mother. It says that they went to the mother's house, but instead of being given food, they were told to fetch firewood to roast caterpillars, which Gikuyu people do not eat. This song is largely a conformist appeal to lazy girls to stop this behaviour. The lazy ones are ridiculed but their mothers are not spared either. Another allusion is that when people don't work hard, there will be no food. Therefore, we must work hard in order to produce surplus food that we could share with others. The poem emphasizes the dignity of labour. In performance, the poem is realised in song. The girls cultivating communally (ngwatio) as described in the pre-ceding poem, resort to singing it to discourage one or two girls in their midst who seem to be slackening.

However, through this poem, the girls remind the adults (parents) of their role in the provision of food for those who are involved in communal work. They satirise mothers who might have nothing to give them to eat after their exactions. In a subversive allusion, the children state that they hold such mothers responsible for the laziness of their daughters. Masinde, a class eight boy at Kibubuti primary, emphasises that such poems are very educative to the children as they point out vices/weaknesses e.g laziness. It brings awakening to the children to avoid being lazy. Enacting this poem in a school environment has broad implications. Cultivation takes the form of learning activities while the lazy girl represents those who do not do their work at school. The mother here implies the male or female teacher who has little to offer his/her pupils. Food here is equivalent to the education the learners are supposed to get from the teachers. The focus of ridicule is the lazy teacher. In the poem the teacher is symbolised by the mother.

Leisure is also important in the lives of children. Song number 64 Kanyoni Ka Nja [*bird of outside (the house)]*, performed in all the schools sampled, is a vivid illustration of children's poetry about leisure. This poem is realised as a song about a small bird. It lives within the proximity of homes and is a darling of many children. Adults particularly mothers feed it with cereals and other grains. The performer requests the bird to go and accompany them to the hills:

Kanyoni ka nja mirima-ini	Small bird in the hills
Kanyoni ka nja mirima-ini x2	Small bird in the hills
Uka, uka kanyoni ka nja mirima-ini	Come, come small bird o the hills
Thia, thia kanyoni ka nja mirima-ini.	Go, go small bird in the hills

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Children develop a liking for the bird probably because they empathise with its small size. Children perform the poem I a circle. They sing to the little bird as they pass time. They move sideways indicating where they want the bird to go. They enact an imaginary dialogue between themselves and the bird.

Children enacting a dialogue with the small bird

However, at the back of their mind, the children would like to be treated like this small bird. The insinuation here is that adults do not allow free existence of the children. It is good to note that although the bird does not perform hard work, it eats the grains which are provided by the adults. Children ask themselves why they cannot be allowed to exist just as the birds and be guaranteed food provisions by the adults. In the performance children act adult roles of seeming to provide the grains. These performances illustrate a fictitious world created by the children for wish fulfillment. In a Freudian sense, the children enact their wishes and thus psychologically attain them in the world of fiction. In this study, children e.g. Samuel Kamau-Gatunyu primary, said that by performing the songs, they represent other people in society, including parents teachers and even the president of the country.

2.5 Meaning; Courtship and Marriage

According to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, the word "court" has two meanings that are relevant to this chapter. The first is (of a man) to try to win the affection of a woman especially with the idea of marrying her. The second one is (of a man and woman) to spend time together especially with the idea of marrying. According to the Gikuyu practice, courtship was not explicit. It was done discreetly and was initiated by the man's family. Girls won the hearts of their prospective lovers through both their beauty and industry. The second meaning of spending time together does not directly apply but could refer to restricted open dances and other related customs which were acceptable to the community. As Kenyatta stresses in Facing Mount Kenya, "in the Gikuyu community boys and girls are left free to choose their mates, without interference on the part of the parents on either side" (87). There was social interaction which took the form of dances for children, young men and women. Thus, hasty judgment in choosing ones husband or wife is almost out the of question (Kenyatta 87). Although our sample covers a wide spectrum of values, it provides us with some information about courtship. This knowledge emerges from children's oral poetry performed in the present.

In the traditional Gikuyu practice young men and women came together through courtship, but marriage was done with involvement of the entire clan. The main purpose of marriage in the Gikuyu society was procreation so as to perpetuate the couple's clans. It also brought people from the two clans together. Today marriage is performed in accordance with religious as well as traditional requirements.

Song number 1 in our sample i.e. Nyakaratha [One Who Shoots] as performed at Gatunyu and Kibubuti schools. This song is performed by children who have not attained the age of courtship and marriage.

...Nao aturi, nao aturi.	...And the smiths x2
Mature tuhiu, mature tuhiu.	Will make knives x2
Natuo tuhiu, natuo tuhiu,	And the knives x2
Tuthece matu, tuthece matu.	Will pierce the clouds x2
Namo matu, namo matu,...	And the clouds x2...

The protagonist tells another boy to take out his arrows so that they can shoot one another. He dares the other boy that if he shoots him, he would slaughter some kind of "animal" for him. The smiths will then forge and make knives which will pierce the clouds. The clouds will make rain fall and grass grow. This grass will make a calf grow and the calf will be used to get the boy a wife. The wife will make gruel and they will drink it together in enjoyment.

Shooting and celebrating: An enactment of stages of life

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As is evident, the children's performance is a musical celebration of the stages one has to pass through from childhood (as characterised by the shooting), to maturity. The highlighting of the social expectations is an admission that they take pride in their customs. They have to work hard and there are no short cuts. They must pay the smith and conform to the practice of paying the bride price. No courtship is explicit. However, it is the boy who is good at shooting who would be admired by girls. In a performance there are two competing groups each alternating and interjecting as the performance develops to a climax. The boys look for sticks which they use as props symbolising arrows. In the end they enact the celebration through depiction of the symbolic drinking of gruel. They all shout in enjoyment. The performance is linked through a chain reaction, where one action is embedded in the preceding one. This threading matures to a moment of celebration.

This poem shows that there is rivalry in all the undertakings from childhood to maturity. The shooting could be symbolically interpreted to mean competition either in getting a daughter from the clan or in any other act of display of prowess. The reference to "gruel" in the Gikuyu Language has sexual connotations. It means one who is fertile. Gruel is a symbol of fertility. From a Freudian perspective, the arrow is a phallic symbol and the act of piercing the cloud could mean the thrust to the womb. Again the cloud, from a psychoanalytic perspective, is a symbol of a fertile womb. Therefore, the poem revolves around the price in hard work and the value of acquiring a potent wife. What is subversive here is that these matters of sexuality are not expected to be understood by children, yet as they enact these stages from childhood to maturity, adults can no longer feel certain about children's perceived ignorance. They seem to know all the stages by heart.

Probably one of the most interesting poems in the sample is poem number (3) "Ciru Na Mwangi" performed at Gathugu primary:

Ciru na Mwangi, matindaga makiria	Ciru and Mwangi keep on crying
Makiuranagagia ,	Asking themselves where did we
Ciru twarutanire ku	get each other from?
Twarutanire, mutitu wa	We found each other at the forest of
Ngai ndeithia	Oh God help me…

The performance is a full-length drama dance that starts with the dramatization of two youngsters already having become a couple. This is subversive because they are not of age and seem to have declared themselves a couple without parental blessings in conformity with Gikuyu custom. The performance then takes the form of a dialogue juxtaposed with rhetoric. In a flashback the couple tells us that they have been in a lot of trouble. They sing of a "forest of God help me" where they were escorted by a grandmother from Turkana whose bare breasts were flapping in the wind. They complain that they were given food usually served to demons which they refused to eat. Consequently, they were told to leave because they were too arrogant. After this, a G.K. meaning a Government of Kenya vehicle is introduced in the enactment. They also complain of forced education. In a very humorous way, they reveal that when they went back to school they found that the other children had already learnt mathematics and only English remained to be done. In a twist of the tale, the couple asks the teacher to punish them quickly rather than have their parents informed about their truancy. The parents would not only give them a thorough beating but also hang them in the "itara" (loft) where they would slowly suffocate from the smoke ensuing from the hearth.

Underlying this narrative poem is the idea that courtship can be a daunting encounter for children. They know that they have to conform to communal ethics yet their time for courtship presents many challenges. There is the implicit suggestion that the government and the parents are the same – too severe and unable to understand children. The subversive train here is that these children get away with everything in spite of their defiance of the societal ethics. They evade the Turkana grandmother (Are they asking whether their love should wait until they become like her?) They also try to negotiate the quick punishment from the teacher. It is important to note the implied fact that the teacher will be compromised by the children. Subversion occurs in the couple's act of undermining the parent's and clan's authority with regard to courtship and marriage. There is also an implied suggestion that children will eventually take charge. This is clear when the children order the teacher to beat them and teach them well.

In the live performance, the grandmother was ridiculed with her breasts echoing the flapping and the children enjoying it all. Yet the children were celebrating disobedience. Hymes D. (1961) points out that there is a difference in the overt form of presentation (surface) and the covert (underlying) action of the unravelling of the narration. This was quite clear in this performance. In the poem *Ciru and Mwangi*, the two represent the youth while the victims of their ridicule are the adults as symbolised by the grandmother, the teacher and the parents.

Now let us turn to poem number 5 "Kairitu Gaitu" [Our Girl] as performed at Kibubuti pri. This is a poem about a girl who is being assured that she would not be touched. The implied speaker is a boy. Touched is symbolically ambiguous. It could mean

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that she would not be fondled or made to have sex before the boy is circumcised. The word "guthera" here means be circumcised although the literal meaning is be clean. After that act of "cleaning" he would fill a form. The implication here is that he would have an identity card (I.D.). Again this implies that he would become an adult. The "stomach" in this poem means "pregnancy". The boy finds out that the girl is pregnant although he had sworn that he would not feed her with "yai" meaning an egg. He complains and swears that he cannot be the father. His rejection of the child is based on his beliefs that he is not the biological father. There is also the implied reason that he is too young to be called a father. He uses the word "mutumia" (a woman or wife) to refer to the girl meaning she has already become a woman and is no longer in the race for courtship. The boy says that the only option is for this child to be thrown into a pit latrine. This suggestion is important for our interpretation since it portrays an egocentric way of dealing with the products of courtship that turn sour. The boys and girls who performed this song were ridiculing those among them who indulge in pre-marital sex. The consequences are obvious here. This poem is an enactment of anti-social behaviour among children. The irony in the message is that children have taken it upon themselves to ridicule those who are not sexually responsible. In ordinary circumstances, parents are supposed to counsel children but the roles are subverted here. There is a covert suggestion that the adults have absconded their responsibility and the children are forced to take charge before things got out of hand.

Another poem that reinforces the idea that parents are more misguided than the children is song number (12) "Waigoko" sang by pupils from all the schools sampled, which is the name of an older man the singer is being forced to marry. This song was

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performed by boys and girls. It is polyphonic in that the voice of the speaker and that of Waigoko the respondent are heard in harmony. The performance is led by the girls while the boys get involved in the dramatisation of the old man with some of them seeming to enjoy the conflict. The poem is about a young girl who is being forced to marry an old man. She is telling her friend Wakiri (agemate) to sit down so that she can tell him her problems. The name "waigoko" is symbolic. "Igoko" means the bark that covers a tree. It is the top cover that shields the internal stem from hard weather conditions. The girl complains that her father insists on her marrying this old man. She laments that she should be left alone to chose her mate to whom she would be willing to submit: she would acquiesce to this abuse with head lowered like a grazing goat.

The animal metaphors used here are significant. The word "goat" in Gikuyu is the symbolof all that is valuable. Human dignity and material value are attached to the idea of a goat. This study does not have space for explication of the term "mburi" meaning "goat" but suffice it to say that the term goat has far reaching implications. For example "mburi yakwa ni nyune kuguru" means my daughter has been made pregnant. The other symbol is an animal called "ngondu" which means sheep. In the context of this performance, "ngondu" becomes a referent for humility. Therefore, in totality the girl wants to be humane and valuable to a young man of her choice. In the dramatisation, gestures, facial expressions and voice variations define this poem as a lament. The rhythm is monotonously regular signifying melancholy. The girl assures the audience that if she is given her free choice she would always keep quiet like sheep eating grass. This means she would be humble and obedient.

Boys and girls satirizing Waigoko through drama

This performance is subversive in that it the girl who is reacting against parental interference in her of marriage. It asserts that parents, particularly fathers, want daughters to marry men who are past their prime. In the actual performance the children formed two groups, each moving in single file. In the middle of the two was a sad girl and a jovial boy enacting the forced marriage scenario. When it came to the girl's rightful choice, the old man was thrown out. The old man sat on a stool away from the group looking dejected. The children repeated the song ridiculing the old man and praising the young man through gestures and dramatization. The poem addresses contemporary emergent issues in education such as gender and generation gap. In another performance the children formed a circle with the old man and the young one inside competing for the girl.

A further subversive element here is that parents are misguided and have resorted to encouraging young girls to marry old men. Adults are not able to read the signs of the times and are indifferent to children's rights. Therefore, again the recurrent assertion by children is made. Adults have to understand their children in spite of their position and assumption that they (adults) are the custodian's of human values. Children are reinforcing their

position as participants in matters to do with their own welfare. They feel it is being undermined by parents. This totally deconstructs their parents' attitude.

2.6 Meaning: Poetry about Looking after Children

This section suffers from a paucity of samples of lullabies in our collection. This however, is a reflection of the facts on the ground. The study noted that lullabies were often sang by older people – usually adults – who were looking after children. This fact is not only true in the traditional Gikuyu setting but also in contemporary times. The explanation is that today most children in Kenya go to school at the age of six leaving them little time to look after children. Moreover, most children's oral poetry is practically functional. This explains why we do not have many lullabies in our school collection where there were few children requiring to be encouraged to stop crying and go to sleep.

An illuminating observation has been made by Ruth Finnegan in her book Oral Literature in Africa. Finnegan notes that poetry about children is performed by adults according to the prevailing norms:

> Lullabies provide a good example of the way in which what might be expected to be a simple, 'natural' and spontaneous expression of feelings in all societies – a mother singing to her child, is in fact governed by convention and affected by particular constitution of the society. (199)

Although conventions are constantly affected by lapse of time, this observation is relevant. The common understanding is that lullabies are sung to children by their mothers. This is the most common representation in the study of lullabies. It is the conventional but not the exceptional way of looking at this category of children's poetry. What Finnegan

does here is to include lullabies under the chapter title "Children's Songs and Rhymes". In matters of what constitutes children's poetry, it is clear that according to Finnegan, Lullabies, though they are constructed by adults for children, are children's oral literature. We also share the opinion that lullabies are mainly for the interest and consumption of children. In addition, we know that older children look after children and sing them Lullabies. For this reason we would like to discuss poem Number 2 "Njeri Koma" [Njeri Sleep] performed in Kanunga location, in the light of the foregoing explication.

Njeri koma	Njeri sleep,
Wakoma ningugwita	If you sleep, I will call you,
Ngurugire ngima ya cukari	And cook stiff porridge made of sugar
Waigua ngiuria	If you hear the guitar,
Nu ucio uramihura	Who is playing it
Ni Jonisoni, Jonisoni Mwangi	It is Johnson, Johnson Mwangi
ungimwona, eyohete tai	But if you see him he has put on a tie
Na kiratu gia twerovu thate.	And a pair of shoe of twelve thirty.

No

Pairs of girls in a Lullaby

The poem is realised as a song about a girl called Njeri to whom it is addressed. Basically the purpose of the poem would be to make the girl sleep. This corresponds well with the Gikuyu social convention. However, the speaker introduces complex ideas to what is expected to be simple thus subverting our understanding that children only understand

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simple ideas. There is also the implication that the girl who is expected to be looking after the child is inserting her own feelings into the subject of the poem. Njeri is promised a bribe in form of ugali which is made of sugar. Again the girl seems to be unrealistic since ugali is made of flour but not sugar. The other observation is that parents don't allow their children to eat sugar. In this case the speaker can either be another child, probably an older one, or an adult sympathiser. In both cases such promises can only be made if the conventions of morality are subverted. Such violation would result in conflicts between children and adults. She does not seem to care about this. This poem takes a departure from the child as a subject to another subject which is objectified. A young man who plays guitar and is highly sophisticated in a western manner is introduced. The young man becomes the subject of humorous attack by the speaker. The allusion here is that the persona is an older girl since a mother cannot discuss the wealthy and overtly progressive Johnson with her child. The other conclusion we can draw is that even Njeri is a young girl probably of the age of the speaker. This would make the satire directed to the young man meaningful. However, the poem can still be sung to a baby since it is the rhythm in it that will make the baby sleep. What is certain here is that the children in Kanunga village were performing the poem as a song for their own enjoyment. There was no baby within the vicinity. In a dramatic realisation of the oral text, each child in an enactment tried to send the one next to him or her to sleep using this lullaby. In the traditional setting this poem would be performed by girls since they were responsible for looking after children. However, nowadays even boys look after children. After all, boys and girls learn now the same songs

since they play and go to school together. We, therefore, feel that it is necessary to discuss a slightly different orientation of oral poetry before we conclude this chapter.

2.7 Meaning: Poetry performed in Drama Festivals

Oral performances at the drama festivals include poetry among other genres. The festivals are an apposite venue for the study of children's oral poetry because they bring together performances from different schools in a competitive environment where only the best pieces are presented. We have included these items in this study because they provide an interface between the purely oral and scripted oral poetry.Again, children sampled in the study: Phylis njanja- Gatanga primary, Hannah wanjiku-Gatunyu primary, posited that they perform these songs during and for drama festivals. This poetry offers diversity in terms of media presentation and issues presented. The festivals are official and expected to be normative but it is interesting to see how the pupils exploit this venue to subvert dominant adult opinion. The competition is judged by adults who also form part of the audience. Consequently, the performers find it critical to reach both the adults' and still enact their own perspectives, some of which are critical of adult patrons, judges, and sponsors. Our study posits that oral performances at the drama festivals are creative works of orature. However, we must hasten to note that the drama festival poems reach the audience after the performers have rehearsed them over and over again. This robs them of the spontaneity we find with the random performances of poems already discussed. The reason is that oral poems are scripted and accompanied by synopsis written for the adjudicators to peruse before and during actual performance.

Another feature that makes this poetry slightly different is the fact that the audience is larger and often multi-ethnic. This is completely different from the setting of the earlier poems which were performed ad hoc among friends: playmates, classmates, desk-mates and any other mates. The festival oral poetry is, therefore, a little removed from the warmth of friendship; it is fraught with rivalry and competitiveness. The atmosphere is no longer free and easy and the social setting that informs the performance is indeterminate. Each time a poem is performed at a festival the constitution of the audience is different. This means that the ethnopoetic standpoint that the culture of the people assigns meaning to oral literature becomes elusive. Therefore, meanings shift and become multiple in performances. Children are conscious of their audience and they manipulate the performance to elicit the desired response from the audience. There is also insistence on action on stage. In his essay, "Embodying art among the young", Evan Mwangi, a supporter of children's art, states "we are persuaded that performance is a necessary component of delivery and consumption of children's texts. ... Performance in children literature would involve action by children before an audience" (121).

Against such background, let us look at one poem from our sample. Poem number (95) "Kuru Kuru Ndumaini" meaning "Kurukuru in the Arrow Root, derives its title from a riddle. The answer to the riddle is "gicogoru" which is a bird that lives in river banks where arrow roots are grown. We watched the performance of this poem twice at different places and occasions – at school and at Gatanga Catholic Hall the venue for the Divisional Drama Festival. At school it was performed solo.

KURUKURU NDUMA-INI	*KURU KURU IN THE ARROW ROOTS
Kurukuru nduma-ini,	Kuru Kuru in the arrowroot garden
Aca irabu-ini, nyumba-ini,	Oh no, in the bars, houses
mucii-ini ati ni ihenya,	In the city, hurriedly
Ihenya rinene ria kunana,	Hurry hurry, to do naughty things
Gwetha rwimbo runene,	Looking for the big dance
Ati ni ndumburu ya coro,	This Ndobolo of coro
Ni ya coro kana ni ya toro?	Is it for coro or sleep
Ndumburu ithukitie andu mitwe,	Ndobolo has spoilt peoples heads
Munini na munene,	Big and small
Ikamakumbakumba ta ngima,	It has wrapped them up like ugali
Ciana ciroiga, ni itu x3	Children say, it is ours x3
Nao aciari, ni itu x3	Parents say, it is ours x3
Ii natwo tucucu? tutiramenyania.	And the grandmothers, they don'tknow
Tikaba mumburo,	It is better **Mumburo is better
Handu ha ndumburu ya coro,	than ndobolo of coro
Ni ya coro kana ni ya toro?	Is it for coro or sleep

* Kuru kuru ndumaini – refers to a sound made by a bird that lives in an arrowroot garden.kurukuru are an anamatopoeic word referring to the noise.
** Mumburo – A dance for young boys

Ndumburu iraikia andu njuui-ini,	Ndobolo is throwing people into rivers
Cia mawaganu, magatherera,	Of naughtiness, they swim
Makagwa, magakururio ni kiguu,	Fall and are carried away by floods
Kia mukingo,	Of HIV Aids
Uui! Uui!	Uui uui
Iyo niyo ndumburu ya kieha?	Is this Ndobolo of sorrows?
Mutangimenyerera mugarurire ya coro,	If you don't take care and change this Ndobolo
Ikumuringithania imutungumanie,	It hits you and throws you down
Mwiigue mwi biti ithathatu,	You come to and find yourself six feet under
Tiri-ini kwega kwega.	In the soil singing "kwega kwega'
	So stop this Ndobolo of childishness
Gitigei ndumburu ya wana,	We sing in our Gikuyu dances
Tuini gikuyu gitu,	Mm. it is well
Mmm. Niwega	

The performance is, therefore, entirely a riddle. The performer is throwing a challenge to the audience and she expects an answer from them. The performance starts with "kurukuru" an ideophonic production of the sound made by a large bird as it runs through the arrow root garden. The words "nduma-ini" could also mean in the darkness. This meaning is derived from the idea that the leaves of arrow roots form a canopy that covers the soil on which the bird "gicogoru" walks. It is, therefore, difficult to see the bird

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except for the noise it makes. The implication here is that something clandestine is being done. The performer becomes more explit in this allegorical allusion when she names the sites of the sinister acts – in clubs, houses and homes. She insists that people are in haste to do wicked things. So far, the persona has refrained from naming the evil deeds. Thus, she creates suspense. However, she says that naughty things are happening during the dance called "Ndumburu ya Coro". "Ndumburu" is the name of a vigorous dance while "coro" is the Gikuyu name for a trumpet. Therefore, the performer makes the poem polyphonic when she – a representative of children – asks whether the dance is for a trumpet or for "toro" meaning sleep. The persona is playing around with the rhyme in "coro" and "toro". Again the persona in the performance employs ambiguity in the Gikuyu lexicon "toro" meaning sleep. The word sleep in this context could mean two things: to sleep literaly or make love. She goes on to lament that the dance has taken over the households, the village and everyone. Everyone claims that it is the dance fit for everyone. It is for the young, the old and even the third generation youngsters "tucucu". Everyone claims that it is their dance. The repetition employed by the persona suggests that the matter is nagging her mind.

She says it was better "mumburo" – a Kikuyu circumcision dance instead of this "sleep" or "making love" dance. Therefore, the dance now becomes a metaphor for sex. All these people have been having sexual intercourse – having irresponsible sex. The "ndumburu" now becomes a euphemism for sex. The performer goes ahead and discloses that the dance has led people to the river through the floods of HIV/AIDS resulting in "Ndumburu of sorrow (coro) the performer blends the gikuyu word "coro" with the English one "sorrow" and since the two are homophonic, they reinforce the intended meaning. This

play of sounds and meanings creates fluidity of expectations which has rich aesthetic effects on the audience. The persona finally brings in an element of intextuality to conclude her poem. She warns that if people do not change, they will die and find themselves six feet under the soil and people will sing; "Magatura kwega kwega", a Christian funeral song that says that people will live happily, paradoxically, when they die. There is evident dialogue between the secular poem and this sacred song. However, both emphasize the theme of death.

The poem warns people to stop dancing "Ndumburu" of childishness and become mature. They should instead start dancing the old Gikuyu dances. The metaphor here is that the community should desist from newfound immoral practices and follow their traditions. At the festival it was a choral production with all the props, costumes and backdrop enriching the performance. The audience comprised both pupils and adults ranging from teachers to the general public. The message was well received with the audience interjecting the performance with rejoinders and other responses including provision of answers to the rhetorical questions. This propelled the young performers to the level of artistic abandon and the power of the spoken word and the performed text in its totality held the audience spell-bound. This poem addresses the menace of the AIDS scourge which has afflicted the members of the Gikuyu community indiscriminately. The performance is a very persuasive and effective tool for behaviour change. Again the roles are reversed and the pupils teach and counsel the adults through dramatization of their poetry.

Performance in the festivals enables the children to broaden their agenda to touch on national issues such as social graft. In other words, they insert their voice in the matters

of the state. According to the adults, children are vessels which should be moulded in accordance with the dictates of the community and the state. Children also develop confidence in expressings themselves in their mother tongue, which is a vehicle of cultural transmission. According to Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Decolonising the Mind, creating art through the mother tongue decolonises the mind (Ngugi 1986). The children are not only liberating themselves but also their community.

2. 8 Conclusion

The sampled poetry is an instrument of mobilization of the community through the education of the children and by the children. Poetry creates a feeling of hope in the community since today's child is tomorrow's adult. Performance embodies feelings that dominate the whole breadth of realisation of oral literature. It evokes the feelings from the past experiences of the artist and enacts the perceptions of the artist's feelings of others. These feelings are expressed through words and body language which the oral artist uses to convey his attitude. The child artist is usually free: he has few inhibitions all too common with adults. His young and vibrant mind cries out for an audience. The society, therefore, becomes the major audience of the young poet's creative expression. The object of the children's oral poetry is not just entertainment; it is change. Contrary to the popular belief among adults that children's knowledge of adult experiences is limited, the children confront repugnant adult practices using oral poetry. This allows them to employ poetic license and when necessary to resort to abstract art that orients the adults towards sensitive and controversial subjects. Adults trust children so much that they rarely suspect that they have the potential to negate established communal thought.

This logic can be best understood through deconstruction as propagated by Jacques Derrida. The boundary between child as a consumer of distilled ethics and the adult as a brewer of these morals is no longer clear cut.A transformation of those boundaries seems to have occurred. Looked at from another angle, it is probable that the society lacks understanding of the dichotomy between adult and children knowledge. The long standing Gikuyu tradition is challenged by the new understanding that has shifted the basis of knowledge. Just like western thought has an illusion that reason can dispense with language and sill arrive at truth, adults continue to neglect children's perspectives and still hope to uphold their well- guarded authority. Some adults do not interpret children's poetry beyond the surface level. The repression of children's feelings finds expression through subversion against conformist ideologies.

This is the powerful strategy that children employ to bring about change in the community. Therefore, there is need to be sensitive to these feelings in order to avoid the pitfalls in the society. Since a performance is a shared experience, it becomes a significant tool for social cohesion, particularly among the underprivileged (including children). This enables the children to create a common front through which they can negotiate better treatment by adults.

Although the adults have created the norms which are the touchstones on which everybody including children should measure themselves; it is not easy for them (adults) to justify the very construction of these ideas and ideals. Therefore, it is quite in order for the children to question these seemingly stable societal norms. By so doing, they make us probe into the ideas we hold about life. Therefore, within the communication process, there

is nothing that cannot be probed. Scholars must seek meanings from all perspectives even those of the children. No one has the last word in this matter. Both the initiator (encoder) and the recipient (decoder) must allow all meanings as possible and perceive the instability and uncertainty or multiplicity of the oral texts which carry the meanings. All in all, this chapter has looked at performance as a form of social reality. In Chapter Three, we examine how children artists deploy linguistic strategies to achieve aesthetic effects while subverting conventional norms.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 LANGUAGE, STYLE AND MEANING

3.1 Introduction

Since language and style are critical areas in the expression of meaning in any work of art, the objective of this chapter is to examine and analyse some of the materials collected in the field to see how language and style express conformity and subversion.

3.2 Language and Oral Poetry

It is important to note that although the two constituents of our title "Language" and "Style" are both commonly used in literature, they are still problematic. As Jeremy Hawthorn notes, there are approaches that "use the nature and the study of language as a model of investigation into Literature" and the second approach which considers language "as a medium of Literature". This approach argues that the more we understand a particular Language, the more we understand literature. This thesis disengages itself from further debate on the approaches. It is the understanding of our study that Language is both the raw material and the product of Literature. We share Hawthorn's opinion, that:

> Literary works are the only art-works which consist largely of Language – if one interprets 'literary work' in such a way as to include such things as oral poetry and some of the performing arts. It is not surprising, therefore, that the artists have sought to use ideas about Language in the construction of theories about literature. (51)

There are other forms of art e.g. fine art, that express ideas without use of Language. Gikuyu oral poetry is also a "performing art" since it is realized in performance. This study recognizes that the Gikuyu Language like any other, is used to construct not only theory about literature but also Literature itself. The concept of Language is intertwined with that of style.

This study uses an interpretive approach to examine the linguistic choices the Gikuyu children make in the creation of their oral poetry. It analyses how such choices influence meaning and aesthetics. The idea of choice and use of Language brings us to the matter of style.

3.3 Style and Oral Poetry

The study of style addresses the specialized use of language to elicit interesting ways of communication. It offers insights into the strategies through which the oral poetry deals with conformity and subversion. One of the most interesting disparities between literary art and other art works as observed by Hawthorn is that:

> … Language is not stable or unvolatile as is stone or paint: Languages are only apparently unchanging – historical study reveals that they are in a state of constant development. The oral poet and his or her audience share the same Language: … (52)

This thesis discusses how the dynamism of language is used to bring out the interplay between conformity and subversion. It reveals that subversion questions history which tends to have an affinity to conservatism. While the adults want to conform to their

grand old ways, children want to inject their ideas into the contemporary world. This defiance of history is expressed in style. However, this study is informed by what Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short state in their authoritative work, Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose:

> We shall not be dogmatic on the use of the term "style" itself. Like many semi-technical terms, it has suffered from over definition, and the history of literary and Linguistic thought is littered with unsuccessful attempts to attach precise meaning to it. All too often these attempts have resulted in an impoverishment of the subject. (38)

Although Leech et al are discussing prose, what constitutes style is a complex issue that is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the mission of this thesis is to conduct a critical analysis of children's oral poetry. Our interest is in the oral text. consequently, we identified a style as it is constructed and lodged within the sampled oral poetry. Poetry as a genre already represents a stylistic given in which it thrives and operates. Each poem also captures certain stylistic features that give it its unique existence.

3.4 Language as a Stylistic Tool for Cohesion

The significance of language as a vehicle through which culture is realized and transformed is a subject of controversy. Scholars have dealt with this problematic area through various perspectives. This chapter determines and analyses the politics of language in the stylistic realization of the tension between conformity and subversion in Gikuyu children's oral poetry.

The study takes cognizance of the fact that language and style are mutually complementary. However, comprehension of the complexities of linguistic realization from denotative to connotative levels demands that we discuss the two separately yet together. That is the paradox of this chapter. We proceed to address this paradoxical nature of language in use. Our analysis is based on the primary text in Gikuyu.This is the one that comes raw from the field. Among those who have put language at the center of construction of ideas within the social realities is Dell Hymes. He sheds light performance as overt behaviour. He relates this behaviour to the idea of tradition. In his book "In Vain I Tried To Tell You" Essays in Narrative American Ethno poetics Hymes discusses the importance of linguistics and argumentation in works of art.

> ...the Linguistics and the argumentation, let me stress, are means to that end. I am interested in the linguistic discoveries that result for their own sake, to be sure. When one looks at linguistic elements from the standpoint of their interaction into a higher level of discourse in the service of a higher function, new relationships come to light that are contributions to linguistics itself. Poetics requires an evenhanded attention to stylistic and referential function alike, to the benefit of an understanding of language and competence. (1951:80)

In the sampled oral poetry, logic is entrenched within language and the structural arrangement of the oral texts. When children enumerate the various stages of life in poem

number 1 ' Nyakaratha' meaning "the one who shoots"; (from play, through marriage to celebration of life), they are artistically enacting their lives from children to adulthood. They use the prefix "tu" meaning "we" to show that they are also part and parcel of that society. They assert, through the use of the pronoun "we", that they are willing participants in this celebration of life. The last bit is even more interesting:

Nake muka, nake muka,	And the wife x 2
Akiye ucuru, akiye ucuru.	Will make the gruel x 2
Naguo ucuru naguo ucuru,	And the gruel x 2
Tugakundukia, tugakundukia,	We will drink
Kunduuuuu.....!	Kunduuuuu

The act of preparing gruel or porridge is traditionally associated with sex "Gukiya" is to pound maize with the pestle, in the process of preparing gruel. Taking the gruel is seen as communal acceptance of the gruel which symbolizes sex. From a psychoanalytical point of view, the mortar and the pestle are phallocentric symbols. Children are supposed to know very little about sex. It is ironic that sex is celebrated in this oral poem. The reason is that: like teacher Alan Njoroge of Gathugu primary affirms, matters of sex are supposed to be kept secret from children. This view is subverted by Grace Wambui, a standard eight pupil from Kibubuti primary, who claims while laughing mischievously, that girls should only make porridge when they get married. Even within the performance, children emphasize the 'ki' in 'akiye' and 'cu' in 'ucuru' to capture the sexual nuances in the oral text. The articulations of these words help convey the meaning intended by the children.

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Most of the children in primary school are in their pre-adolescence and adolescence stages. This is the time when boys and girls are interested in their appearance as well as the opposite sex. That is why a poem like 'Nyakaratha' attracts a lot of attention. Since the words of the poem cannot be changed much, children use varied tones to depict a variety of meanings. This is an aspect of style in the oral presentation. For example, when they hold sticks and dramatize the grinding of maize in the mortar, they are communicating through dramatization

In the Gikuyu context, children enact what they know. The young artists live in an age when one seeks meaning in almost everything that is happening around him. Joseph Macharia from Gatunyu primary says, children sing and dance these poems because they are about them. His teacher, Gladys Mwangi concurs. She says that children are interested in songs that are set in their environment.

Children live within a certain setting that is both temporal and spatial. Their oral poetry reflects this setting. Hymes states that the performer has knowledge of his tradition which he realises through performance. The sampled oral poetry is part and parcel of that knowledge. Children share this knowledge amongst themselves. They do this in the presence of adults in the community. These performances are within the childrens' familiar contexts.

We have given this chapter the title "language and style" to highlight two important ideas. The first is that language is the raw material that is used to produce or create literature. This means that there is a dialectical relationship between language and

literature. The second idea is that just as language is important to literature, style is central to the creation and analysis of literature. Employment of language resources helps us to realise style that is interwoven with the fabric of a work of art.

This study embraces the idea that our conscious experiences as humans form the basis of our socialization. Their interaction with the world they find themselves in is a human experience. In that world, language whether, written or spoken, is used for human communication. Gikuyu children, therefore, employ language to apprehend and describe their social reality. One of the ways in which they do this is through oral poetry. This study, therefore, unravels the phenomenon of poetic communication and how it is effected particularly in the area of conflict between conformity and subversion. The logic behind this study is that by critically analyzing the conflict and tension reigning between conformity and subversion, we will create some understanding of how children socialize with their world. We have discussed that later in the study. Suffice it to say that Language aesthetically used becomes style.

Paul Simpson has conducted studies on the interface between language and literature in which he underscores the importance of language in education:

> From a pedagogical point of view, it is the case in many parts of the world that students (read children) focus on literary texts, especially in the mother tongue, before undertaking any formal study of language. (X)

The Gikuyu child gains some mastery of spoken Gikuyu language before making any formal study of it. This study is not merely based on the language competence of children but on the artistic expressions of the Gikuyu oral poetry. Conformity and subversion,

though seemingly diametrically opposed, are terms that describe the way Gikuyu children constantly perceive themselves and their world. In this chapter it is expected that an analytical study of the poetry will reveal how the two notions lead to a deeper understanding of the socialization of the Gikuyu children in a world dominated by adults. This might seem to apply to the Gikuyu tradition alone but as Margaret Githuka, a teacher at Gathugu primary asserts, we do not only pass on what is handed down to us but we also create our own art in the process.

The study sees Gikuyu children not just as vehicles of transportation of culture from the past to the present but as creative artists who are able to insert their voice in matters of tradition. This is done through Language and Style. The way in which they enter the creative arena is one of the concerns of this study. We shall now look at some of the specific features of this artistry to see how Language works within the oral texts.

Repetition and overlapping characterize children's oral poetry. These poetic features give flavour to a poem. Although we are dealing with oral poetry, it is easy to discern poetic features that dominate the genre. Taking pauses as line markers, we realise that most poems are short. The specific lines are also short and repetitive. This implies that the pace is fast and the poem easy for the child to manipulate and inject new ideas or tunes into it. A careful look at the string of meaning manifest in the examples below will show a contest between what is traditional (conformity) and what is contemporary in the eyes of the children (subversion).

In some poems, the action involves overlapping of lines where part of the preceding line is repeated in the current line. To demonstrate this kind of structure, let us work on

two songs namely (1) Nyakaratha (One who shoots) and (2) Njeri Koma (Njeri Sleep) performed by pupils from Gathugu and Kibubuti schools. Our focus will be on the patterning manifested in these two oral poems.

Nyakaratha x2	One who shoots x2
Niturathane, niturathane	Let us shoot each other x2
Nawandatha, Nawandatha ----	And if you shoot me x2 ---

In the first line "ratha" meaning shoot is repeated twice. It appears in the final or end of line position. This gives it some prominence. However, in the second line "ratha"(shoot) appears in the penultimate position followed by the morpheme "ne" which shifts the meaning slightly to "shoot each other". In the third line, we have "tha" which is a carry over from "ratha" through the process of overlapping. This "ratha" appears after "nda" to form the lexicon "ndatha" meaning "shoot me". All these aspects of repetitions and overlapping are not only aesthetic in the text but also form constructs of structural shifts. These features infect the oral text, which is phonetically and phonologically realized, with variety and diversity. In essence monotony is broken and harmony in contrast sustained within the oral text. This style is employed throughout the poem with slight variation in emphasis. Each overlap links ideas from the preceding line to the present. The result is that coherence is guaranteed. In a way the poem conforms to children's nature of repeating words and lines- a fact reinforced by the children's [Winnie Muthoni-Gatanga primary, Daniel kamau-Waguithu location] assertion that repetition makes the song enjoyable. At the same time the question of shooting which is associated with war becomes a contest of play. This way the young poets enjoy the suspense, which

they themselves have created. Suspense is created through the introduction of a shooting competition whose result is indeterminate.

Another significant contribution of overlapping is that it is an internal structure that becomes an embodiment of the build up in meaning in each stanza. This observation leads us to the question of the authorship of children's oral poetry. This poem "Nyakaratha" defies the simplicity of children's ordinary oral expressions. It does not conform to our expectations of straightforward text for children. However, even if we assume that an adult had had a hand in the artistic creation of the poem, then we must admit that the poem gives us an informed setting of what kind of poems children enjoy in their play. This study posits that the poetry belongs to Gikuyu people as composers. However, the oral performer becomes the creator of his art in performance. This is because every performance is a new and unique creative experience. The artist has the licence to include, exclude, modify or change the focus or the shape of an oral text. This is true of both children and adult artist regardless of their background. Overlapping and repetition make it easy for the children to enjoy and learn the lines. It is important to point out that the Gatanga children who sang this song had learnt the poem by heart.

To corroborate our observations let us examine another song "Njeri koma" meaning Njeri sleep:

Njeri koma	Njeri sleep
Wakoma ni ngugwita	If you sleep I will wake you up
Ngurugire	I'll cook for you
Na ngima ya cukari---	Stiff porridge made of sugar ---

"Koma" meaning sleep appears in line one. It is followed by "koma" in "wakoma" meaning if you sleep – in the second line. On the same line "Ngugwita" means "I'll wake you up." The Gikuyu form "ngu" is a first person pronoun in its subjective form. "Ngu" meaning "I" appears in "Ngugwita" where it refers to the speaker. It is a "ngu" that is "I", which in the text carries the force /voice of the persona. This contrasts sharply with the "wa" in "Wandatha" in the poem discussed above. The action of shooting is by a person other than the persona and the persona becomes the victim or recipient of the shooting. The "wa" refers to "you". What we see here is that the point of view in the poem is first person singular. The persona assigns himself the role of calling the "you" of the poem to obey his wish. The contest between the persona and the 'you' of the poems is realized through deft lexical choices. This becomes obvious in performance but even at the textual level the duel between I and you turns to a dialogue between two distinct young oral artists. The interplay between lexicons and phones is symbolic of children's play, where repetition and overlapping blend well. It is interesting to consider why the persona orders Njeri around while still pretending to be her friend. This kind of approach is deeply located in the notion of subversion.

The persona's interests are suspect. The contrast between *sleep* and *cooking* precipitates some tension. Sleep can be seen as passive while cooking is kinetic. The same can be said of overlapping which is veiled repetition in the two poems discussed above. The two are common features in Gikuyu children's oral poetry. As we mentioned earlier, devices of repetition and overlapping are clear examples of how children use language for aesthetic effects. Repetition of parts of the lines or even whole lines helps to

create rhythm which in turn entices children to listen and participate in the performance of the poem. Notice that a line which is supposed to be "asleep" (dormant) is made "awake" (active) in the next line by having one of its constituents repeated.

In some of the poems, "I" and "him" are used as lexical choices. In such a case the "I" dominates over "him" which is in objective form. In striking contrast as is the case discussed above where "I" and "you" are used, the two are subjective pronouns and using them in the same stanza creates balance. This brings a kind of equilibrium, since both "I" and "you" are subjects and can have dialogue on equal terms. This is demonstrated in the two poems above.

However, the presumed equilibrium is only a superficial veil to cover the internal subversion particularly when the persona (I) requests the "you" i.e. Njeri, to sleep. One cannot tell for certain whether the persona will keep her part of the bargain. Suspense is realized since the persona's hidden interests in Njeri sleeping are not made explicit. The "you" in Njeri sleep is, therefore, surbodinated.

Parallelism: In some of the selected poems repetition is used to construct parallelism and sustain it for aesthetic effect. Let us look at one poem to illustrate this point.

Kairitu gaitu Ndikaruma iyai (1)	Our girl, I will not eat an egg,
Ndikaruma (2) itambite gutherera (3)	I will not eat it without going down
Na ndatherera, (4) Njoke njiyurie form,	And after going down I will come and fill the form.

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Parallelism is realized through repetition of the lexicons 1, 2, 3, and 4 above. This creates a form of internal rhythm which enhances the aesthetic ideal in the poem. If you examine the specific meaning of the words, you will realise how the stanza challenges its own utterance. For example the first word underlined above "Ndikaruma" is a declaration that the persona will not eat the egg. This assertion is made with a finality in tone. However, when it appears again in the second line the word "itambite" meaning "without" or "before" a certain condition, weakens the word "ndikaruma". This subverts the earlier declaration which had indicated finality and betrays lack of resolve in the persona. In performance, this weakening creates humour which is embedded in the suspended changing values of the same lexicon. This change corresponds to the growing uncertainty. We do not want to engage in the analysis of the rest of the poem but the next item of parallelism is hinged on the repetition of the word "gutherera" meaning going down. The word is symbolically loaded: It might mean "traveling," it might imply "drifting along" and it might as well allude to "alienation" which all subvert the persona's assurance to her "sister" made earlier. He had declared that he would never eat an egg. This makes it clear that the persona is lying. Lying is a vice that is condemned by the society.

The foregoing can, therefore, is seen as evidence of the child artist exercising his liberty. This he knows to run counter to the social expectations to which he is tied. He is expected to be honest and clear in his requests, yet he has hidden himself in an ambiguous claim. He pretends that he is committed to her sister but we know this is a lie. This feigning constitutes subversion of the established ethics. This is quite put very succintly Burgin, Victor in his book The End of Art Theory - Criticism and Postmodernity:

> The putative 'freedom' of the artist is no more or less constrained than that of the critic. Contrary to the bland dogmas of our 'new', dissent-free, Romanticism, the artist does not simply 'create' – innocently, spontaneously, *naturally* – like a flowering shrub which blossoms because it can do no other. The artist first of all inherits a role handed down by a particular history, through particular institutions, and whether he or she chooses to work within or without the given history and institutions, for or against them, the relationship to them, is inescapable. (158)

Although Burgin is giving us a postmodern perspective, he is also asserting the role of tradition. This brings us to ethnopoetics where matters of language and creation render themselves to hermeneutic interpretation. Subversion of the moral expectations and longstanding truths that children should be united, honest and loving amounts to a kind of protest. It is an attempt to escape the "inescapable" through use of language and style. It is a kind of reconciliation of the two extremities. The child artist manipulates language to arrive at her goal. She first constructs her world within the confines of the adults'. The poem above is addressed to Njeri. This deceives the adult audience who might have temporarily forgotten that Njeri is their daughter. The adult audience might be misled into thinking that the persona is offering Njeri positive advice. They might misread the persona's interest as a genuine case whereas we are not certain about it. This deconstructs our adult response. Again adults are in the habit of giving orders and the child artist orders Njeri to sleep probably to depict the "role" played by adults in society. It is important to note that the persona can be a boy or a girl.

3.5 Style and Language use

Now that we have dealt with aspects of linguistic realization of children's oral poetry, let us turn to the foregrounding which is a stylistic device employed by artists including oral performers. Since we are dealing with two antithetical concepts of conformity and subversion in the sampled oral poetry we find deviation significant as a stylistic device that is central to our literary analysis. Our justification in examining deviation in children's oral poetry lies in its frequency and intensity. Deviation refers to divergence and difference from the norm. Deviation is realized in the way certain features break away and differ linguistically or structurally or both. Deviation calls attention to the work of art in focus. It juxtaposes itself against the norm (conformity, thus apprehending the inherent tension between itself (subversion) and the norm (conformity). Surprisingly, instances of realization of the said tension foreground both conformity and subversion-bringing them to sharp focus. The focal point is an intersection of varied aesthetic effects. This results in the realization of the broader stylistic device of foregrounding.

There is need to examine the term "foregrounding" within the framework of our argument since subversion and conformity are both embedded in the concept of foregrounding. For the purpose of this study we take cognizance of the fact that foregrounding is a very important literary strategy. When the audience in an oral performance perceives a foregrounded feature in an oral text, he pays special attention to it. He explores the meanings, intentions and implications of this feature at that particular context. This is easy to understand when we realise that even in the terms of modern computer language you can only chose what is highlighted. Your commands are restricted

to the foregrounded items. A foregrounded item calls attention to itself. It is also important to note that since literature is dynamic and more so in performance, what might not be foregrounded at one point of the text might be highlighted at another point. This implies that froegrounding is also a strategy for evaluating the prominence of parts of a text. Since interpretation is the act and process of assigning meaning to literary works of art, foregrounding is a significant feature because it appeals to our cognitive and affective domains. Its essence is also contingent upon the artist's imaginative dexterity and the precision of his choice of words. As has been evinced in the preceding analysis, foregrounding comprises two sub-varieties namely, conformity and deviation.

In this case we find deviation as a kind of circumlocution or subversion of the norm. We proceed to examine how deviation is realized in Gikuyu children's oral poetry

3.6 Deviation

Borrowing a leaf from Jan Mukarovsky, we can argue that deviation is the intentional violation of norms of a language so as to bring out artistry and enhance communication. We differentiate subversion from deviation in that subversion is a wider term that connotes intention to distort the course, ideology or purpose. Both deviation and subversion are expressed in language. The meaning of the two terms intersects. The Gikuyu language expresses deviation in aspects based on transgression of norms in the language. This manifests itself in the areas of lexis requirements, syntactical rules and semantic principles. We proceed to consider how these manifestations are realized in the sampled Gikuyu children's oral poetry.

Lexical Deviation refers to the act of going against the norms of language in regard to usage of words or lexicons. Within this category we examine neologism, archaism, taboo and foreign words. **Neologism** refers to usage of words that the oral artist coins to fit a given situation. In many instances the oral artist does this so as to put the message in a style that will suit his communication to the audience.

In the song "Nyakaratha" the "nya" prefix is affixed to "karatha" meaning one who shoots. But when you fix the prefix "nya" to it, the prefix introduces a playful mood. The connotation to the new word "Nyakaratha" relevantly refers to the game of shooting. It is from this understanding that the invitation to the game becomes meaningful. All that follows is tied up to the idea of the persona competing with Nyakaratha in a shooting game. Therefore, the usual meaning of one who shoots is slightly subverted to include the new meaning of one who plays. This broadens the interpretation.

In a similar fashion affixing "wa" to the Karuguru forms "wakaruguru" in the poem of the title. Again, this affixation has the effect of creating light-heartedness by endearing Wakaruguru meaning "one from the west". The prefix "wa", meaning "of", foregrounds a playful mood in the poem. In both cases the playfulness is foregrounded by this neologism. These new lexicons also become independent entities. Formation of the new words subverts the normal or ordinary language and entrenches new meanings within the lexicons. Formation of new words through "*Kikuyunisation*" of English words by fitting them to the phonology of Kikuyu language. There is a lot of evidence of borrowing in the selected oral poetry.

In the poem Njeri Koma, we experience Africanization of English words in a unique way:

Njeri koma	Njeri sleep,
Wakoma ningugwita	If you sleep, I will call you,
Ngurugire ngima ya cukari	And cook stiff porridge made of sugar
Waigua ngita	If you hear the guitar,
Nu ucio uramihura	Who is playing it
Ni Jonisoni, Jonisoni Mwangi	It is Johnson, Johnson Mwangi
No ungimwona,	But if you see him,
Eyohete tai	He has put on a tie
Na kiratu gia.	And a pair of shoes
Twerovu thate	Of twelve thirty.

The word "tai" in the sixth line means "tie" – the piece of neckwear. Similarly "Twerobu thate" means Twelf Thirty. The realization is both at the orthographic and phonological levels. Those who do not understand or speak English and the ones who cannot visualize the hands of the clock at twelve thirty would not understand the persona's meaning. However, when the idea is put in Gikuyu, it becomes a shared phrase among peers – the children in the present case. Since the song was performed among and by primary school pupils, it served as a pedagogical tool. The symbol of twelve thirty is straightaway memorable. The phrase carries the wonder of a new experience. These two lexical items "tai" and the phrase "twerobu thate" signify subversion of the established fashion to address a thought that is more European than African. John who as a subject in

the poem has an English name which depicts his subversion and alienation from his traditional name and deportment

Behind this seemingly simplistic poem are serious concerns such as alienation and colonization. As we have seen, lexical deviation is used to foreground subversion. It is employed in Gikuyu oral poetry to satirise the aping of the white culture. The young artist instead of naming the guitar uses an allusion. She deliberately and consciously refuses to name the guitar directly in order to create suspense. She keeps the audience guessing what the infix "mi", which refers to the guitar, really means. The word "Uramihura" meaning "He *who is playing it*," carries the suspense at the level of "mi" – guitar or something else and at the level of "hura" meaning "beat." The second lexical item "hura" throws the audience off-balance. Suspense is sustained and style intensified in it. Again the ambiguity inherent there is a stylistic strategy. It should also be noted that a guitar is a foreign instrument. Interwoven with the use of language is the stylistic feature of thematic surprise. The singer starts by pleading with Njeri to sleep. Then he comes up with the idea of the guitar and its player and finally the strange style of dress of the guitarlist. At the end, one is left wondering about the meaning of "Kiratu gia twerobu thate," the shoe of twelve thirty. The phrase is a pun.

Archaism, the use of outdated words in the context of modern language is common in Gikuyu children's oral poetry. In the poem "Nyakaratha," the word "muka" meaning a wife is used. The modern equivalent is "mutumia wa" *wife of* which is more euphemistic than "muka." In modern Gikuyu the word muka is derogatory since it emphasizes that the person is a stranger – "one who has come". This use foregrounds aspects of gender

disparity in the poem. Another example of an archaic word is "umbe" meaning create. In the poem "wakaruguru", the word "umbe" means woo and keep probably as a concubine. This word has a long history. For example, the Gikuyu people have a saying "umbani uri thina" [wooing is problematic.] This means that anybody involving himself in it should do so at his own peril. Among the Gikuyu, there was a romantic practice called "Ngwiko" meaning heavy petting in which boys and girls were allowed to practise acts of fondling without penetration. However, the girls did not necessarily get married to those who had befriended or had Ngwiko with them. Anybody earning himself the title "kiumbani" one who woos or befriends a member of the opposite sex is regarded as a playperson. Therefore, in the context of the poem the words "umbe muhiki" i.e. "you woo and win a bride" does not only form a foregrounding feature but they also provide a kind of punning in use of the word "bride".

Archaic words provide a challenge to the participants to travel back to the past and discover the meaning of meanings within the original contexts. For example "ngage" meaning jigger is used in a poem by that title perfomed at Gatanga hall:

Ndutu wandiire thiage naki?	Jigger, since you infected me,
Ndutu wandiire thiage	what did you expect me to walk
naki?	With...?

The modern word for jigger is "Ndutu". Use of the archaic form distances the artist and the audience from the present time and transports them psychologically to the past. This psychologically subverts their present consciousness to the complexity and profundity of the poet's, past: flashback to an imaginary world.

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The Gikuyu people, particularly children, are socialized to avoid explicit use of taboo words. Use of taboo words by an oral artist constitutes a lexical deviation. It amounts to subversion of the etiquette surrounding language use. Children are always required to be well-mannered, obedient and polite. Let us examine the way taboo words have been used in Gikuyu children's oral poetry. Poem number 10 in our sample, "Kanyoni Ka Miu Miu" (Bird of Miu Miu) as perfomed by pupils from kibubuti primary, starts in a shocking use of a taboo word in the second line—"Ndatunga Waceke ena "nyondo" [I have met Waceke with breasts.] The word "nyondo" ["breasts"] is not mentioned publicly since it is one of the taboo words. It is a private word just as the part is private. Therefore, to refer to it even within poetic license is in itself a deviation. When children mention the word, it becomes a shocking daring. This reference, therefore, serves as a lexical deviation that foregrounds the chosen taboo word. In the study, children: Faith Muthoni-Gatunyu primary, Sophia Njeri-Muthanduku-ini location Thika district, Lucy Njeri-Kibubuti primary, contended that they use songs to put across messages such as the need for abstenance to prevent H.I.V /AIDS.

In the song above, if she "acquires" breasts, she ceases being a child. Childhood is celebrated in every community. It is associated with innocence. Losing your childhood denotes losing your innocence. Therefore, the foregrounding of the word "nyondo" in this lexical deviation is a deliberate and conscious strategy to call attention to the lexicon. The conclusion is embedded in the alluded incompatibility between breasts (maturity) and

"slim" symbolising childhood. There is also the contrast between Waceke meaning slim and breasts that cannot be described as slim. The two ideas are incompatible.

Another poem that uses a taboo word is "Nuu ucio" (who is that) performed by Gathugu and gatunyu pupils. "Nuu ucio wathuria? meaning who has farted? The euphemism is the phrase "Wathukia riera" (has spoilt the air). Therefore, to use this word is disgusting to the members of the Gikuyu community. A child who uses such a word would be regarded as lacking in good manners. Again, use of the word "wathuria" is a deliberate strategy. The artist wants to highlight this behaviour and castigate those who do it. Here subversion is used to create emphasis. Children should conform to good behaviour. Although it is a biological function, the children feel irritated by those who are unable to control or perform the act privately (beyond smelling distance). Since they can do nothing about it they satirise the offender hoping the culprit will behave better next time. It is important to point out that the occasion for this song is more often than not immediately after a child has "farted". The performance becomes even more involving if the children are in a group and are not sure who has done it. The song is treated almost as a curse for those who practice the act deliberately with an intention of creating mischief. The poetic license is in good use here for the children employ it to reprimand the offender. In some cases such an offender reveals himself either by psychologically feeling exposed or by trying to justify his act. The poem is performative in the sense that it curses as it gains audience

3.7 Syntactic Deviation

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Syntactic deviation manifests itself through the violation of grammatical or syntactical rules. We have the following varieties--ellipsis, elision, transposition, and cataphora. We shall only examine the use of ellipsis in details to demonstrate how syntactic deviation is realized in the sampled Gikuyu children's oral poetry. Ellipsis refers to the omission of certain words that are grammatically and structurally necessary but not semantically necessary. Although this is usually an orthographic feature, there are oral poems that depict a feature that is equivalent to ellipses. Orally, the pauses represent what is equivalent to ellipses. There are not many examples of use of ellipses in the sampled children's oral poetry. However, in poem 20 "Airitu A Murimoria" meaning (Girls From Yonder Ridge) as performed at Gatanga, the lines:

Mundu ni akindirie ithenya	Let a person be contented in her space.
Na uria ungi akindirie ithenya	And the other be contented in her space

reveal good use of ellipsis. The word "ni" meaning let, is used in the first line. It is a necessary constituent of the sentence since it not only carries the action but also the request. However, in the second line, the young artist finds it unnecessary and omits it entirely. Similarly, the word "mundu" meaning a person is used as a subject in the first line quoted above. However, with the introduction of "Na uria ungi" meaning, and the other one, it becomes unnecessary to use the word *mundu* and is dropped in the second sentence. The rhythm would be difficult to achieve since there would be discordance created by irregular metric oral structure. Therefore, the omission of these words helps to enhance performance without loosing the semantic implications of the specified lines or the whole

poem. This subversion helps create economy and style in the oral text. Another example is the poem titled "watata" meaning of the aunt. The oral artist uses a pause, represented by an ellipsis in the second stanza

Watata watiriri x2	Watata watiriri x2
Tukwenda mundu umwe…	We want one person…
Watata watiriri x2	Watata watiriri x2
Mukuenda uriku?...	Who do you want?

In the line "Tukwenda mundu umwe" (we want one "mundu" meaning *person*), the word mundu is used predicatively. The subject is "tu" implying "we" and what we want is "mundu". However in the second line, "Mukwenda uriku?" (Who do you want?) the subject "Tu" (we) has changed to "mu" meaning (you) but the verb "kwenda" meaning want is repeated. However the word "mundu" should syntactically appear in "mukwenda mundu uriku?" Who is the person you want? However, the word ("mundu") has become unnecessary since "uriku" meaning "who" also carries the idea of "mundu". It is stylistically appropriate to leave the word "mundu" (person) entirely with the result that the audience knows the referent without reminder. They know the persone is referring to a person. That is a form of deviation that highlights the idea of the mundu (person). It is also worth noting that the word "mundu" (person) is not gender demarcated – typical of kikuyu grammar. In all three cases the artist deliberately fails to conform to the established syntax so that he may insert his own economy of words in line with aesthetics constraints. This deliberate realisation has the underlying implication that the artist conforms to the

society and therefore surrenders his poetic freedom to construct his art in his individual way. It is also significant to note that use of language is within the ethnopoetic setting. The syntactic standards employed in the poem conform to the Gikuyu language practice to exercise economy in its use of word

3.8 Semantic Deviation

Refers to instances that are incongruent in terms of meaning. Subtle interplay between conformity and subversion form the interpretive focus. The artistic performance aims at effectively communicating specific or general meaning to the audience. However, sometimes there is a striking deviation from this norm in Gikuyu children's oral poetry. This incongruity is manifested in two main categories, namely semantic absurdity and semantic redundancy.

Let us now refer to specific examples that can be said to constitute this deviation. However, we do not have enough space to deal with all varieties of semantic deviation. **Semantic Absurdity** appears in the poem Ciru na Mwangi. The child tells the teacher "Nduhure narua" meaning beat (punish) me quickly. Although the beating is seen to be less painful than being discovered by his father, it is absurd for the child to order the teacher – a custodian of authority – to beat him quickly. The only context when this would conform to expectation would be a situation where the persona pleads that he be beaten up quickly so that he can quickly get through it. This, therefore, is an example of an oxymoron, which involves usage of words in antithetical reality. Subversion is realized in the absurdity of the request. Another example of absurdity is the poem "waciuri" meaning a person by that name or one who belongs to big goat's kids. The description given is that of

a herding experience. When the goats reach the bush where we expect them to concentrate on the plentitude of green forage, the opposite happens.

Twakinya githaka-ini x2	When we reached the forest, x2
Mburi ikiguruka ikianjia kuina ndaci	The goats went bersek and started dancing

The word "ikiguruka" meaning "they went berserk semantically occupies an antithetical position with the word "ndaci" meaning "dance"[notice that children in the study e.g Dominic Wanyaga-Gatunyu, Purity Wanjiru and Ann Njeri-Kanunga location, say that they really enjoy the poems for they can dance as they sing] Therefore, there is semantic absurdity in that, what happens after the goats become mad subverts our earlier expectations. It deconstructs our interpretation, opening wild possibilities of meanings of the oral text.

Another example of an oxymoron appears in the poem "Gathigiriri" meaning small ant. It comes in the last line. "Naguo mucibi ni muting'oe wa mbia" meaning: "and the belt is a rat's tail." The idea of "mucibi" (belt) being "the tail" particularly of a rat elicits humour due to the absurdity of the semantic allusion. Unlike the example of the strange goats above which creates suspense, the belt versus tail perception elicits a lot of humour. It is strange for a tail to be a belt. This humour ties in very well with the earlier absurdity where the small ant had been promised a skirt made of bags. Everything in this poem is humorous. Behind this humour is bitter satire at girls' expense. The small girls are too daring and boastful in spite of their size. This evokes laughter since the audience can tell how foolish they are: they walk in the middle of the road oblivious of imminent danger.

3.9 Deviation in the Poetic Structure and Narration

Poetry being a unique genre whose distinct characteristic is verse, even when performed, it is expected to conform to its structural or modal uniqueness. Therefore, when the oral artist decides to deviate from the usual structure, we can justifiably argue that he is subverting the modal existence of the genre.

In the sampled poems, there are instances when this happens. The poem "Hiti" (Hyena) is actually a narrative that can be presented in continuous prose without altering the sentence structure or punctuation. However, through meaningful pauses, the performer presents the song in poetry – singing it in a way that emphasizes the poetic structure. The same case applies to the poem "Mwarimu ari thibitari" (Teacher is at the hospital) sang at Kanunga, the poem is a linear narration of how the teacher went to the hospital to have his tooth removed and how he was received by his pupils when he came back to school. However, the young oral artists use rhythm and calculated pauses in order to subvert the narrative to achieve poetic realization of the text. This style has the effect of integrating narrative technique and plot with the poetic realization through rhythm. It subverts prosaic representation in order to conform to poetic realisation.

This subverted realization of the narrative genre texts constitutes an artistic strategy that apprehends suspense then sustains it by flavouring it with a stylistic setting which is familiar to the pupils. As we shall see later, a kind of illogicality is also conveyed as a perfect device to enhance subversion as a stylistic tool.

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3.10 Deviation in the Textual Titles

The titles of the some songs are intriguing. Artistic creativity demands that titles conform to the established ethics ie, giving sufficient hint to the subject matter of the text whether oral or written. In the case of poem 36 "Mwarimu Ari Thibitari", (The Teacher At the Hospital) the subject seems straightforward. However, the psychological context of the title is that in the eyes of the children the teacher is invulnurable. He should not fall sick. He should not go to hospital. That is what is foregrounded. Therefore, there is a kind of subversion when you bring in the idea of the teacher as an ordinary human being who falls sick. It is particularly significant that this controversial matter occupies centre stage as a title structurally. The same can be said of poem 78 "*Hiti" (*Hyena*) performed at Gathugu primary. Nothing good, except that the *"hyena does not eat its baby", is usually said about a hyena in the Gikuyu lore. To make the hyena the title of a poem is to attract ridicule and make your audience question it. Yet the artist is daring enough to invite criticism even before he has orally realized the body of the poem. In both cases the structural subversion is intentional and forms part of the style in the poems. The title foregrounds the entire meaning of the poem.

3.11 Conformity as a Form of Subversion

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* A gikuyu proverb "Hiti ndiriiaga Mwana", meaning a hyena inspite of his greed, does not eat his child. It is used as a warning to those who have the practice of mistreating or exploiting their children.

of his greed, does not eat his child. It is used as a warning to those who have the practice of mistreating or exploiting their children.

We have examined how young artists use language to subvert expected norms of language and content. Let us now look at "Conformity:" We shall use the term conformity in this section as a foregrounding that does not involve violation of established norms of language use. Under the umbrella of conformity we shall revisit two manifestations of foregrounding: repetition and parallelism. However, we must realise that even as we take cognisance of instances of conformity, there are hidden allusions to subversion within these manifestations.

Repetition implies the frequent realizations of certain parts of a text. In our case it is the oral text. In the poem 11 "cera, cera" (Serah) sang at Gatunyu and Kanunga, the first line repeats the word "cera" three times.

CERA CERA	**(SERAH)**
Cera, Cera, Cera witu	Serah, Our Serah,
Niugoka gwitu wiyonere,	Will come to our place, and see
Ngari yakwa guthondeka,	My car which I have made
Ndarutire Kairo na maguru	I found it at *Cairo having walked
Ngirariria Karatina	and slept at Karatina
Ndakinya kimandi ikirugama	When I reached Kimandi,it stopped
Ikihura honi maita matatu	It hooted three times,
Ikihura ringi igithii Nyiri	It hooted again, and went to Nyeri.

This has semantic implications in that the first appearance of the word means Serah – a proper noun. It is the name of a girl. The second meaning is ambiguous. It can mean Serah the girl again or could be a verb "cera" meaning 'roam about.' When the word

appears for the third time it reverts to the name of the girl. This shifting of meaning is stylistically directed to the tickling of the mind of the audience. In addition, it creates humour since the audience can understand the relationship between the behaviour of "cera" the girl and her (mis)conduct of roaming about. The girl's behaviour becomes an object of humour. Therefore, this conforms well to the homonymic nature of language use. However, there is thinly veiled subversion in that the girl who has been given a Christian name seems to be misbehaving.

In the poem "Waigoko" (Number 12 in the sample), we see repetition in a different angle. First we know that Waigoko is a name of a male character. In the performance of the poem the name is preceded by an exclamatory construct [ii] which is a linguistic feature denoting that the name Waigoko should also be exclaimed. It is a wake-up call to him. Again the name is repeated twice. This is a wake up call to Waigoko not only in the performance but also in the society. The Waigoko's of the society are all called upon to listen. The repetition is for emphasis of both the signified person and the oral performance itself, which has Waigoko as its focus. No doubt the audience will be anxious to know and understand what is wrong with Waigoko. Why is Waigoko becoming the subject when there are so many people? It is also important to note that "igoko" means "bark" which is the cover of a tree. This is an apt symbol particularly because the persona who is a girl keeps complaining about how her father pesters her to marry Waigoko. The poem goes on to repeat the name "Waigoko" to show how much he nags the mind of the girl yet she does not want him. Waigoko wants to stick to the girl like the back of a tree. In the end the audience is tempted to sympathise with the girl and say "let her choose".

This repetition takes us on a journey that unravels the incisive differences that exist between the persona and her father: all caused by Waigoko. It is an apt device that helps us to be critical about human relations. It helps us understand the dichotomy between the persona's values and those of her father. As a dramatic device, the repetition of "Waigoko" is realized in a form of satire and is easy for the children to repeat, understand and enjoy it in spite of the pathos in the poem. We shall address the broad thematic implications of this poem later. However, it should be noted that the poem is subversive in the sense that the persona is protesting against her father's choice. Tradition demands total obedience by children. Oral literature is always contextualised. But once art is created, it exists as an entity. It is also influenced by the context in which it is entrenched.The objective existence of art does not prevent us as critics from evaluating it in terms of the existing knowledge. We experience art as we experience life. The audience experiences the oral poetry by watching and participating in the performance. In the current oral poem "Waigoko" for example, our concern is not necessarily the girl or the boy called Waigoko. The main focus is in the mode of existence of the poetry and how the poetic form changes those who experience it. The performers might be only playing in the field as was the case when the poem was collected. However, the art once created has its own existence outside the performers. You can re-live it many years after you have watched the performance. The point of departure for our literary analysis must be the work of art itself. This is the hermeneutic assertion. The question of mode should be interpreted broadly in our case. An oral poem's becoming is a process and should not be explicated as a kind of finality.

The chapter on performance explores this act of becoming. Our concern here is the linguistic expression that threads the art; the being.

Repetition is done within Language that is the fabric for the mode of being of the work of art. As we have observed even mere repetition of a proper noun, Waigoko, nags the mind of the audience. The result is that the response to the work becomes spontaneous. Every individual in the audience asks himself:

Who is waigoko? The rhetoric of the poem resonates around the experiences of the audience. Repetition serves to invite the audience to participate. In addition, it helps to clarify certain issues that are raised in the poem.

3.12 Parallelism as Subversion

Now let us examine another poem that exploits both repetition and parallelism as aspects of foregrounding. Our main focus will be on parallelism. In a way parallelism is a special kind of repetition. It is the use of phrases, which are similar in structure or form. We intend to examine one variety within parallelism: phonological deviation. In this unique parallelism a child oral artist plays about with sounds to create a communication level that is more directed from the meaning focus to the sound pattern. The second aspect is given more prominence. For example:

In the poem "Muturi" (32) as performed at Gatanga, which means blacksmith, the words "cangarara ii ca" which echo the rhythm of the blackmith's tools at work are repeated very many times. The result is that the audience responds spontaneously to it by singing the words thus getting involved in the performance. The gradual building up of

interest in the words can be attributed to the phonological features such as alliteration and the intonation that blends well to create the rhythm. In time the audience identifies with the words and by extension, with the meaning of the poem. Again, there is a subversive tilt where deviation from meaning to sound presents a stylistic shift.

After the aesthetic appeal settles down, children have time to think of the meaning. "Cangarara ii ca" now becomes a metaphor for a kind of mockery of a man who is supposed to be with his family but seems to have absconded his responsibility. He is working away from home. He has lost touch. This poem is based on an oral narrative – "*The pregnant woman*" – in which an ogre helps the wife of the blackmith to delivgive birth then proceeds to torments her. Therefore, the poem provides an intertextual relationship between the oral narrative genre and the poetic one. Thus, the phonological realization creates some relief in an otherwise tense narrative. Phonological deviation, therefore, functions as stimulus relief.

3.13 Deviation as Genric Subversion

This refers to deviation from the unique characteristics that define a genre. Some of the poems in our selection could as well be delivered told as oral narratives. One example is the second part of poem 10 "Kanyoni ka Miu Miu [Bird of Miu Miu], which reveals the greed of "hiti cia Kabete" [the Kabete hyenas]:

Hiti cia kabete	The hynas of kabete
Nicia korokire	Have become very greedy,
Ngutunga waceke ena nyama njithi	I met waceke with raw meat,
Ngimwira ndiniria	I told her to cut a piece for me,

Ndingigutiniria	I will not cut for you
Niwangururirie	You dragged me
Mugongo ukiunika	Until my back peeled off,
Ta wa hiti nguru	Like an old hyena's

The item starts as a narrative but by introducing a regular rhyme in the performance, the narrative is elevated to the sublimity of a poem. It is then enriched by the tonation and intonation within words and lines respectively. Naratives are told in an orderly and systematic manner. This poem deviates from the narrative mode in a gradual, calculated manner.

As we have already observed from the poems selected poems, children seem to introduce deliberate flaws in plot in order to create structural deviation. In other poems the children have organized their artistic creations in such a way that the events in the poetic oral text seem confused, illogical or scattered – yet all these aspects constitute the plot. Again it is important to look at the idea of "play" involved here from a hermeneutic perspective. The children know that whatever they are doing is only a game. They have some inkling of what *play* means but cannot analyse exactly what it is they know.

However, in our analysis we must address the mode of being which is Gikuyu children's oral poetry. To be exact we must direct our interpretation to oral poetry. Our main concern here is not the aesthetic consciousness of the artists and their respondents. Aesthetics is truly located in the experience of art. It resonates on the experience and the mode of being. What this art does is to provide us with an experience. As interpreters,

artists and the audience we, experience the art and respond to it intellectually and aesthetically.

Meaning and playfulness are inter-implicated. However, underlying the experience is a work of art that is manifested as children's play – oral poetry becomes the purpose of the play. The purpose is what is serious. The function of art is serious. The interpretation alludes to the subversive element within play. There is a dialectical relationship between what is serious and what play is. Again language is the communicative tool through which the subtle matters of play are communicated. Paralinguistic communication enhances the expressive mode of being. The totality of being is realized in linguistic and paralinguistic strategies. That interpretation is a serious and scholarly discipline seems to bestow a kind of infringement of freedom on the children's play. It subverts the enjoyment of art – children's oral poetry.

This as we shall see later is best realized in performance. However, for the purpose of our current concern about language and style, let us examine the contextual manifestation of this style: We need to remember that poetry is lighthearted and musical. Our interest is to determine what happens when genric deviation interferes with the modal existence. To illustrate this point let us look at the dialogical exchange between the narrator and the respondent in poem 16 "Mbia yagera haha" meaning "A rat has passed this way"as sang by children at Kanunga. The poem uses the opening formular strategy often associated with oral narratives. The performing child asks the partner whether he or she would like to know how the rat went to check its well. The oral piece which starts as poetry, builds up to a climax through dialogue. Then in a sharp twist towards the end, the performer shifts from

poetry to prose unexpectedly surprising the members of the audience who are anticipating otherwise. The audience wonders why the performer was holding their attention with long poetic indulgence only to spoil it by a prosaic anti-climax. In essence, the narrator begins by introducing us to the movement of the rat, which is the subject of the poem. The oral artist uses the journey motif to capture and maintain suspense. However, in the last three lines, the artist turns to prosaic musing.

An enactment of the journey made by the rat

He starts shedding doubts on the existence of "his well". However, this seemingly illogical interpretation is the moment of reckoning: the performer uses it to tickle the co-performer who is also part of his audience. In performance this is done practically. At the intellectual level experienced by the artist and his respondents as well as the audience, the conclusion is drawn through humorous response. The audience laughs at the child who is tickled.

On reflection, we realise that the presumed allusion to the existence of the well is a ploy to fool deceive the audience so that they are not unable to predict the next move by the performer. The laughter that results is a credit to the performer who has manipulated the audience's inner feelings through a seemingly confused plot. Our expectation that it is all about a rat fails to conform to what happens in the end.

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Another aspect of this generic deviation is that it is realized at both physical and intellectual levels. This is significant in that, symbolically, it is the poetic genre which shifts to the narrative genre to act as the stimulus for humour. It is a case of the shorter genre being swallowed up by the longer one. Yet in the actual structure of the poem, the narration runs throughout the whole oral text.

The word "gathima" meaning water-well has humorous implications since the site of the tickling (The armpit) is always wet – probably implying it is life-giving like a water-well. A well is a source of life just as the armpit is a source of pleasure. A psychoanalytic interpretation might bring in the idea of libido and the question of a secret desire or forbidden wishes in the Freudian sense.

However, this poem tickles our cognitive potential, elicits physical pleasure through psychomotor exploitation, and provides a moment of play that becomes affective. As a children's poem, we find it stylistically appropriate. The artist has used language to manipulate and subvert the poetic genre so that he can create total enjoyment for the audience. We have discussed generic deviation that falls under the general use of language in oral literary genres. Let us turn to a closer look at semantic deviation within the location of generic deviation. As we have already pointed out use of oxymorons or words used in an anti-thetical manner is an aspect of style.

In the poem:

Ndathii kugira* Ngoi ya mwana witu,	I have gone to get our child's "ngoi"
yariganiire iganjo.	which was forgotten at "Iganjo" Njeherera
njira ndithiire,	Give me way, and let me go.

The "ngoi" and "iganjo" are both symbols of fertility. However, it was taboo to make love to a woman whose "ngoi" was left at the working place or shamba. This means that the current home is infertile. The two semantic items have anti-theatrical referents since the "ngoi" is left at the "iganjo". The persona expects the implied "you" of the poem to understand the reason and urgently allow her to pass. There is no fertility without the "ngoi". It is also suggested by the word "witu" meaning ours that it is probably the sister of the baby who is the persona. The lack of fertility contrasts sharply with the fertile homestead. This oxymoron is embedded in the original narrative from which the children have extracted the chorus. The poem is therefore in dialogic relationship with the narrative. Children are not supposed to discuss matters of fertility in relation to grown ups. Therefore this poem subverts our expectations.

3.14 Paradox as Subversion

A paradox is a statement that is self- contradictory but true. Children's oral poetry uses paradox as a stylistic tool. The contradiction between two ideas or situations demands complex approach to interpretation. Firstly, the audience must identify the contradiction so as to appreciate it. Secondly the audience must interpret the paradox precisely and appropriately. A paradox becomes a medium of subversion in that some times it appears

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* "ngoi"-a device for carrying babies

* "iganjo" - an abadonmened homesite.

deceptively simple yet it is quite profound. A paradox is not supposed to be easily understood by children. Adults might not expect children to understand the depth of the adult interpretation. Therefore, subversion is realized by the incongruity between the adult's understating and that of the children. When that happens humour prevails as a result of the ensuing dramatic irony.

Let us now examine two examples to illustrate use of paradoxes in children's oral poetry. In the song "Ciru na Mwangi" (poem number 3), meaning Ciru and Mwangi. The two - Ciru, a girl and Mwangi, a boy - are living together. There is an allusion that the two are lovers or husband and wife. We are surprised when we hear that they always ask themselves how they ever got together. People who chose to live together must know where and how they met. In Gikuyu society a man was supposed to know the woman well before taking her wife. There thorough surveillance of the girl's behaviour. The boys clan was supposed to conduct their investigation before reaching the verdict that the girl was suitable. Similarly, there were prescribed rules with regard to choosing a man to marry a certain girl. The girl's relatives and friends were involved in investigations and negotiations. Therefore, when the poem echoes:

Ciru na Mwangi	Ciru and Mwangi
Matindaga makirira	Keep on crying
Makiuranagia,	Asking themselves
Ciru twarutanire ku?	Where did we get each other from?

We are thrown into a state of confusion. The rest of the poem tells how the two might have met and creates doubts about their questioning where they met. It dawns on us

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that they are contradicting themselves. They don't know and they know where and how they met. The poetic narration unravels how they came together but questions abound about where the truth lies. Do they, or do they not know? However, deeper examination of the entire poem demonstrates the truth of the initial perplexing statement. By asking how and where they came together, they are trying to evoke the past and show that the meeting was wonderful. It is in this respect that they cannot even today comprehend how they ever came together. It is a kind of marvel. The doubts are reconciled in the wonder and mystery of their meeting. All this is done through strategic use of language.

The poem "Airitu a Murimo uria" (20) meaning: "Girls from Yonder Ridge," is a dialogue between two groups of girls from two ridges that face each other. The subject is whether they should steal "Njahi": which are highly valued and nutritious legumes. Njahi or black beans are the mandatory diet reserved for women who have just given birth. The bean is of high nutritional value. Therefore, already there is some kind of subversion where children fail to conform to the norm and get interested in acquiring the "njahi" illegally. This subverts the ethical expectations of Gikuyu society. The paradox comes in the line

"Njahi cia aturi ni njuru" Blacksmith's black beans are bad.

As far as we know the beans are delicious and cannot be bad. However, further reflection on the matter sheds light on the aspect that makes the beans bad. They belong to the blacksmiths. In the Gikuyu tradition it was believed that anything belonging to blacksmiths was not supposed to be touched by ordinary people. It would bring misfortune to whoever touched it. Therefore, one group warns the other about the potential danger of

misappropriating blacksmiths' crops or property. There is also some ambiguity in the poem. This will be discussed under ambiguity below.

3.15 Ambiguity as Subversion

Ambiguity refers to a word or a statement that allows several possible interpretations. We realise deviation in ambiguity when the performer or oral artist uses ambiguity to permit many semantic possibilities. The oral artist does this consciously and purposely. To understand deviation, we need to remember that language is supposed to be used in a clear and precise manner. But the oral artist subverts the rules of precision and clarity in communication. In the above poem, "Girls of the Yonder Ridge", there is ambiguity in both the word "aturi" and the word "njahi". "Aturi" could mean smiths or mysterious people. This is because blacksmiths have always remained mysterious since they have always kept the secrets of their trade to themselves. It is when the girls become afraid of stealing the smiths black beans that we realise that "aturi" could be implying mysterious people in this context. Similarly, the word "njahi" could imply the beans or the offspring of the strange people. This is derived from the idea that when women tell one another to go and eat "Njahi" it means that they want to visit and see the newborn baby. Therefore, when the witch has been the causative agent of the *njahi* it becomes subversive to the norms. Therefore, the entire poem can now be broadly interpreted to revolve around having illicit sexual relations. The poem now becomes a warning to those who are likely to engage in

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" "Njahi" – Black beans NB: This translation is closest to the idea in the text. However we do not seem to have an English equivalent of the word njahi.

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such illicit relations – with mysterious people symbolized by the "aturi" or witches. Children; Sophia Njeri- Muthanduku-ini location Thika district, Lucy Njeri- Kibubuti primary and Peter Ng'ang'a- Kanunga location, posit that the song is very use in creating awareness of the dangers of H.I.V/A.I.DS.

One of the most intriguing poems in terms of ambiguity is "Cengere Cema" (17) sang at Gatunyu and Gathugu schools. The meaning itself seems to be based in the world of children. From the beginning of this play song, nobody seems to understand what is meant by "cengere cema". Then the performer lists down things, which could mean "cengere cema". This does not help since the list includes "uthi" meaning thread. The rest is total confusion. "Kagira" which is vague, cockroach who is "wairi", the handled, ground, witch and nest of vultures exposed to animals are all ambiguous referents– since they are too general. Vultures are always generously exposed and still exposed to one another. This creates a complexity that heightens the level of ambiguity in the poem. When a statement is too general it is non-specific and therefore ambiguous. When the child artist concludes: "Noho cioriire" meaning "it is there they got lost," we know that he has lost himself. He does not understand the poem. The difficulty in the comprehension arises from the wealth of ambiguity and the complexity of the oral text. Subversion lies in that the adults do not pay attention to the inherent complexity in the context. They think that the children are just playing yet this is one area where the adults could help by providing the children with an appropriate interpretation. This poem has profound philosophical implications on the children's world. What we need to appreciate is the children's

willingness to engage in a difficult interpretation of a poem like "cengere cema". This does not fit in well with the adult's assumption that children should not intellectually engage difficult subjects.

The poem "Nguruta Ngware Ku" (83) performed at Gatanga, and that means "From where Shall I Get a Guinea Fowl" is another excellent example of ambiguity. It is set in an academic institution. Ambiguity is embedded in the persona's implicit use of language. The poem uses first person singular point of view. The persona poses the question to the audience.

Nguruta Ngware ku? From where shall I get a guinea fowl?

In reality we are not sure whether the question is intended for the audience or for himself. The persona does not initially reveal the reason why he is looking for the guinea fowl. When he finally discloses that it is intended for the teacher, we are temporarily satisfied. However, the persona restores our earlier ambiguous perception when he says that if the teacher eats the bird his beard would crack. We can no longer trust the persona's conclusion: that the beard would crack because of the bird's deliciousness. This creates other possibilities in interpretation. Suspense is intensified. Subversion lies in the sense that the child persona is hiding in ambiguity to ridicule the teachers. This is not in conformity with the societal norm that requires a child to respect his teacher. We must determine the learners' real motivation and intention in launching this attack.

3.16 Repetition as Subversion

A close examination of the selected poems reveals that children's oral poetry is characterized by repetition a feature which children:Jemima Wamaitha- Gatunyu primary,

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Winnie Muthoni-Gatanga primary say makes the poems interesting and easy to learn, even for a newcomer in a class. This is a norm in the construction and choice of children's poetry. However, as we have seen in the study of deviation, repetition itself is a kind of style that gives prominence to a text or part of it. In the poem (16) "Mbia (ya) gera Haha" meaning *A rat has passed this way*, the pronoun denoting the rat i.e. "ye" or "ya" is repeated in 7 out of the 11 lines which form the text of the poem. The repetition of this poem becomes an aspect of foregrounding the subject of the poem i.e. the rat. This repetition also creates a kind of coherence in that all that is said is about the "rat". However, repetition is broken in the last three lines.

Reke ngarore gathima	Let me go and see the well
Karia gakwa kana no gatuire	To check whether my small well still exists
Kwe! Kwe! Kwe! ...	Kwe! Kwe! Kwe! ...

This serves to subvert the meaning as well as the narrative style – to relegate it to a joke and an aspect of prose. The seriousness of the pre-ceding narration is diluted by the conclusion. Intertexuality is used to blend the poetic and narrative genres in form of intertextuality that blends well with repittatio. This style is fused with the structurally determined repetition to produce an exciting anti-climax. Another example of conformity manifests itself in the instance of foregrounding which does not involve violation of established norms of language in use.

Parallelism as the name implies refers to acts of repetition of certain parts of a text. Let us consider poem (28), "Hiuria Irinda" meaning Swing the Skirt.

Hiuria irinda nginya kamithi thiinii x2	Swing the skirt, up to the inside of the pettycoat x2
Ndikuhiuria gakwa ni kagacire x2	I will not swing mine, it has become wet x2
Kagacaga ukiruta wira uriku x2	what work were you doing when it got wet x2
Ndarutaga wira wa ndagitari x2	I was doing the work of a doctor x2
Warutaga kai wari muhiku x2	were working were you marriedx2
Ti kuhika ni kumateithiririria x2	I was not, but only helping them x2
Wamateithagia we ugateithio nuu x2	You helped them, who will help you?
Ningateithio ni aria ngakora mucii x2	I will be helped by those I will find at Home x2
Ndaga gukora ni ngateithio ni Ngai x2	If I don't find anyone, I will be helped by God.

The words "Hiuria Irinda" are repeated twice in the first line. This repetition is for emphasis. It gives prominence to the title of the poem and within the conformity of literature; it highlights the main action of the poem. In the third line, the constituent of the line i.e. "Hiuria" meaning swing appears in "Ndikuhiuria" meaning I will not swing it. The persona then immediately explains that she cannot swing the skirt since hers is wet. The word "wet" is "Kagacire" which occupies the end position in line three which is repeated.

This positioning again is in tune with language in use – where the last word is in most cases is important in matters of prominence. It is clear that repetition is becoming stylistically important as it turns into a kind of overlapping. In line four in which is the word "kagacaga" is repeated carries the interrogative meaning of: how it got wet "what work were you doing? The next line now changes from "warutaga" to "ndarutaga" (I was doing the work) meaning that it is the persona who is explaining why the skirt got wet. She says she was doing the work of a doctor (ndagitari) but the next line deconstructs the implied meaning.

Warutaga	When you were doing that work
Kai wari muhiku?	Were you married?

This now brings in the idea that such work can only be done by married people. The girl says that she was not married but was helping people she does not name. We have a feeling here that the girl was doing the work of married people while she was not married. That is what she meant by doing the work of a doctor or nurse (ndagitari).

This dialogue leads to the narrator's defeat for she cannot logically justify her behaviour. She now resigns to her fate in the name of "Ngai," meaning God implying that only God will be able to help her when her friends forsake her.

Since this chapter is dealing with matters of language and style we will save the discussion on the thematic implications of this poem for another chapter. However, we must point out that the seemingly innocent conformity is subverted by the persona's or protagonist's destabilization through use of language. The dialogue between the persona and the audience is so powerful that in the end the persona's logic collapses. She tries to

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justify her actions but she cannot sustain her logical stand. At a symbolic level we can argue that the persona represents the individual while the interrogative audience represents the society. The persona is in our opinion a representative of the children who are questioned by inquisitive and insistent adults who want to assert their supremacy over them. That the persona finally lays her trust in God is also interesting. It might mean that even if adults do not respect the children's views, God will always be there to help His children

3.17 Textual Cohesion as Reconciliation

Cohesion is a complex concept that denotes relationship of meaning that exists within the text. This important feature contrasts sharply with Derrida's view that there cannot be a central meaning in a text since a text deconstructs itself. Derrida's view, therefore, subverts the concept of cohesion. In discourse analysis, cohesion occurs when interpretation of one element of a text is dependent on another. Cohesion is entrenched in Gikuyu, a system of language. We are writing about oral language or speech. This study sees both writing and speaking as modes of expression of literature.

> Writing takes on the subversive character of a "debased, lateralised, displaced theme" yet one that exercises" a permanent and obsessive pressure ... it erases the presence of the self-same within speech (Derrida 139)

According to Derrida, meanings keep shifting and are never stable. There cannot be absolute cohesion of texts whether oral or written since meanings are always plural and uncertain. However, stylistics recognizes that texts are not only contextualised but are

interwoven through cohesive strategies. Discourse analysis concerns itself with the study of the linkage among or within texts.

In the sampled oral poetry, cohesion is realized through language. However, language can be interpreted in a multiple coding system comprising a three level strata. The semantic form is the main component but as we have seen, the phonological and paralinguistic components are significant in decoding the meaning of a text. The ordering of these components in live performance can change the whole enterprise of assigning meaning to a text. For example, in the poem Njeri Koma (2) meaning "Njeri sleep," the emphasis is on Njeri since she comes in the initial position. It means that it is Njeri who is being requested to sleep. If you interchange the words "koma Njeri" prominence would be given to the verb "Koma" or sleep. The second line "wakoma ni ngugwita" meaning *"if you sleep I will call you"* is embedded in the first line. The hidden script is that if you do not sleep I will not wake you. However, although the first word "wakoma" seems to have the verb "Koma" or "sleep" as its constituent, the "wa" which precedes the verb refers to Njeri again providing a cohesive realization that Njeri is the main subject of the poem. However, this reasoning has hidden subversion in that it is illogical. This is because it alludes to the idea that if you do not sleep I will not call you. It is obvious that if Njeri does not sleep, then there will be no need for her to be "called." The word call means (gwita) woken up. The persona tells Njeri that if she sleeps he will wake her up. In a way, there seems to be some other interest in the persona. Why does he want Njeri to sleep? This again subverts our earlier trust of the persona. In matters of the plot, suspense is created in our suspicion that the persona might have other interests in Njeri sleeping. Therefore, our

interpretation is deconstructed in the hope that it will reconstruct itself, if the current uncertainty is resolved. Ironically, it is this deconstructive uncertainty that fuels our interest in the oral poem.

As we have demonstrated in the preceding example, cohesion can be realized through syntactic relation. We have also realized that the lexicon of a text expresses meaning. Cohesion is about meaning. It manifests itself in syntactic as well as lexical relations. However, one of the most important features of cohesive realization in oral poetry is the use of pauses. The performer deliberately leaves out some information so that the audience can fill them in for themselves. The result is that the audience becomes participant in the performance. The pauses constitute cohesive elements that provide suspense which inturn enhances the flow of the oral text.

From this analysis it can be observed that there are moments when subversion and conformity strangely ease out the tension to create a reconciliation and flow of the narrative logic. It is clear that meaning is also located within the traditions. This view ties up well with the ethnopoetic perspective. The community decides what is ethical. The "mbu" or scream is a special feature of language. The Gikuyu people scream to raise alarm. Therefore, it is within this semantic field that the persona exercises her right to scream or not to scream. She must assess whether screaming is the acceptable thing to do for she is a member of the speech community whose conventions contribute to the meaning of every utterance. This environment is what John Miles Foley refers to as performance arena. In our opinion this is where conformity and subversion are reconciled and intensified.

3.18 Suprasegmentals as tools for subversion

In any language, what we mean is determined by what we say and how we say it.

> 'It ain't what you say but the way you say it'. This familiar comment, immortalized in song, is the time honored way of indicating what suprasegmental analysis is all about'. (Encyclopedia of language)

This is particularly true when we consider segments of spoken language which change fast and meaningfully. Stress, tone and the general intonation help to assign meaning to utterances. In Gikuyu children's oral poetry, pitch, timbre, volume, pace and rhythm help the performer to create artistic expressions.

The following are prosodic features that we observed and noted were at play in shaping meaning of the sampled oral poetry. For example, in poem No. 2 'Ciru and Mwangi', the word "makiurania' was said at different levels of pitch and pace to vary the meaning. At one time, it was said in a flat normal way to suggest that the couple ask each other questions. When the pitch was raised "makiurania" now means wooing. This meaning (wooing) was reinforced by the facial expressions that suggested excitement which is associated with courtship. Children from Kibubuti, Gathugu, Gatunyu and Gatanga primary schools, seem to be in agreement that it is wrong to have relationships in school. The element of subversion reigns in the seeming approval of the illicit relationship between Ciru and Mwangi. There are other features achieved by intonation or the rising and falling of pitch. In this particular song, the grandmother's breasts are said to flap and rattle. The children make a lot of fun about it. They dramatize the movement of the granny's breasts

using their hands and rhythmically dance the flapping act. When we asked Margeret Gichungu, a teacher at Gathugu primary, to comment on the song, she said:

> It is wrong for children to make fun of a grandmother. Among the Gikuyu, it was wrong to make fun of adults in the presence of other adults. The children would earn instant punishment for it.

The truth, however, is that children made fun of the granny who represents a respected institution i.e. elders. They did so with impunity and within sight and earshot of the adults who were represented by the teachers. All this amounts to subversion. The grandmother, who is traditionally a custodian of culture and morality, is obviously the object of ridicule in this song. The matter is aggravated when children refer to her breasts as the subject of their poetry. They are not expected to bring in the grandmother or her breasts in their relationships. The children were further observed to change their tone and even shout the words. 'Mutitu wa Ngai Ndeithia' meaning the 'Forest of God help me'. This indicated their courage and readiness to face the problems associated with wooing or courtship. Hannah Wanjiru from Gatanga primary said that children whisper as they sing the song. She said that sometimes boys and girls enact the courtship game as they go down the Kiama river to fetch water. Although there was nothing serious about this, there was controversy over its importance. Some teachers like Mr. Njiru from Kibubuti primary, felt that it is a healthy process in their maturation. Most children however, admitted that parents and teachers were always against it.

Another aspect of paralinguistic features being used to alter meaning and thus gain multiple implications in the entire oral text, is the stress. For example, in poem number 1, 'Cera' which is the Christian name of a girl called Serah, the children fully exploit tonal variation. In the first line 'Cera' means the girl Serah. But in the second line, the word is given some special stress to mean loitering about. The two lines now seem to say "Serah loiters about". When we asked Sophia Njeri from Gatunyu primary to tell us what she thought about 'Cera' in this poem, she commented:

'Serah should be allowed to go wherever she wants'.

This view was contradicted a teacher from Gatanga Mr. John Njeru, who said:

'Girls are not prostitutes to roam about whenever they like.'

Our understanding is that the song is subversive in that it questions the authority of adults to restrict the movement of girls.

The most amusing song was "Muturi" song number 32. The song is realized in a sad tone. It is derived form the Gikuyu oral narrative in which 'Muturi' – a husband – leaves his pregnant wife at home to go and work as a smith. The ogre takes advantage and helps the woman to deliver, but torments her until the wife sends a bird to call her husband home. He comes and kills the ogre using a spear. The words "cangarara ii ca' are supposed to be sad. However, in their enactment of the situation, children vary their voices, pace, timbre and pitch to create contradictions. They make fun of the man. They ridicule him for lack of wisdom as demonstrated in his leaving the helpless wife at the mercy of the ogre. In the

actual performance, girls seemed to allude that the boys were the ogres by mischievously pointing at them. It was clear that children understand the symbolic implication.

Miss Gachomba from Kibubuti primary said that many men from Kanunga and other surrounding areas work in Thika, Nairobi, Ruiru, Limuru, Kiambu and other big towns. She added that in case of a problem at home, the mothers would not know what to do. Teacher Njoroge Maina from Gatunyu caused laughter when he said that many men who work away from their homes are in constant suspicion and fear of the 'ogres'. The scenario is common, but problem is inescapable due to the social economic realities that force adults to look for jobs away from home. Goerge Gichohi, a teacher in he same school, observed that even women work away from home, and leave their husbands unattended.

Parents would like to keep children out of this but there is very little that they can do. Children are already singing about it and through prosodic realization create sarcasm as a form of condemnation of the negligent and confused adults. Poetry, as we have seen employs suprasegmental strategies to fulfill the important task of changing the meaning. In the performances, irony, sarcasm and humour are achieved in the poetry.

3.19 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have demonstrated that language and style are significant in the realisation of a work of art. Foregrounding stands for a variety of stylistic features virtually existing in all genres of literature. It is succinctly employed in a purposeful, intentional, intersubjective and intertexual environments to create prominence and aesthetics in both written and oral texts. Gikuyu children use stlyle in the construction and expression of their oral poetry. This poetry is collected in performance and the primary text is in the first language. It is foregrounded in both the linguistic and paralinguistic realization. As we have pointed out, deviation as style foregrounds both conformity and subversion. The co-existence of these anti-thetical concepts in itself creates salient ground for investigation. We have used interpretive analysis of language and style to probe into manifestation of conformity and subversion even where the concepts have not been obvious. We have accomplished the second objective of this study: We have determined and analysed how language and style express conformity and subversion in the Gikuyu children's oral poetry investigated. The thiories of hermeneutics, deconstruction, ethnopoetics and psychoanalysis have been used to illuminate our perspectives. In the next chapter we shall examine children's poetry in the light of their response to the social consciousness that emerges from the art.

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CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND CHILDREN'S RESPONSE

4.1 Introduction

The interplay between conformity and subversion thrives on the need to establish social positions within a community. The word social describes a community. It has everything to do with what people do together or what we would call socialization. We subscribe to the following explanation:

> The shaping of human behaviour through experience in the knowledge of certain social institutions: the process by which individuals are made aware of the expectations others have on their behaviour; by which they acquire the norms, mores, values and beliefs of a social group or society; and by which the culture of a social group or society is transmitted. Socialization continues throughout life as individuals change their roles and membership of social groups. (Watson and Hill 62)

This definition is relevant to this study because it brings into focus aspects of social interaction through which the consciousness of the society is shared. It also highlights the notion that individuals and groups are socialised throughout their lives. Man is a social being and is always reaching out to others. This is even more true with children than it is with adults. In their innocence, children have fewer inhibitions and are more spontaneous in their socialization.

The Gikuyu people are interested in how people socialise. There is a Gikuyu proverb that " mundu uria utathuiaga augaga no nyina urugaga wega" one who does not go outside his home always says that it only his mother who cooks well. In other words, those whose sphere of socialisation is narrow, think that their mothers cook best. This proverb encourages the Gikuyu particularly the chidren to interact with other people outside the family or ethnic community. However, the same community also says "kaihu gacangacangi gatigaga kwao gugithinjwo" This means that one who roams aimlessly will leave home when an animal is being slaughtered. Since meat is valued and is associated with ritual festivity in the Gikuyu community, it would be wise to remain at home and eat the meat. Children are therefore encouraged to socialise but in an intelligent way.

Adults therefore create awareness about the nature of human consciousness in relation to other beings. In addition, the idea of the question of becoming and being is raised and we are made aware that the human world has been there for a long time i.e from 'ndemi amnd mathathi' meaning from time immmemorial. We should not emphasize the question of "this being" human, this study sees sense in and interrogates how the Gikuyu perceive their world. We are particularly interested in that world as it is reflected in the Gikuyu children's oral poetry. We focus on anti-thetical expression in children's poetry that is contingent on the social consciousness of the Gikuyu.

4.2 Religion

According to Jomo Kenyatta's Facing Mount Kenya, in every generation the Gikuyu ethnic organization is stabilized by the activities of the various age-grades of old and young people who act harmoniously in the political, social, religious and economic life

of the tribe (2). This means that religion is a source of harmony or conformity within the Gikuyu community. Religion occupies a central position for the Gikuyu community and almost all the activities are in one way related to the traditional African beliefs. Christianity was cleverly imposed on the Gikuyu but they embraced it easily since they already believed in the "Lord of Nature" who lived in Mount Kenya. Another aspect highlighted by Kenyatta is that there was harmony between children and adults. The implication here is that the Gikuyu people of the olden days ensured that their children, and the youth in general, upheld certain forms of moral behaviour that guaranteed piety.

This study is, therefore, an interrogation of whether that harmony is always achieved and a determination of the children's response to the expected equilibrium. Citing a myth, Kenyatta describes the genesis of the Gikuyu as a people, detailing the origin of the community. This myth of the origin is passed on from one generation to another in order to give the Gikuyu, particularly the children, an identity and explanation of their becoming. This myth explains why the Gikuyu occupy the Mount Kenya region. *The Mwene Nyaga* is a supernatural being who is not questioned by Gikuyu from whom the community descended. He has total and unquestionable influence on the Agikuyu as human beings. He provided the land as well as counsel to Gikuyu and his wife Mumbi. This means that the Agikuyu people believe in a supernatural being who provides their material wants as well as wise counsel in difficult times. This is what every Gikuyu child should learn. Contingent upon this is the idea that the Gikuyu adults and children should worship their God all the time. This is a requirement and the children must know it. Only those who obey Mwene Nyaga will continue being blessed. Those who do not conform to the

prescribed behaviour will be cursed. That is the religious landscape that exists as a belief in regard to God as far as the Agikuyu are concerned. However, the Agikuyu have a contradictory proverb "Ngai ndathumburagwo" meaning that God is not pestered. In other words, according to Kenyatta, the Gikuyu people trust their God and go to him only when there are calamities or important issues such as sacrifice, harvesting or drought.

Gikuyu oral literature demonstrates the response of the people to their religion. In some of the oral narratives, children are sacrificed to the Supreme Being in order that the community evade the punishment from Mwene Nyaga.

The children are often taught the difference between the supernatural Being and the human being. Humankind is mortal while Mwene Nyaga is immortal. Humankind is immoral while Murungu or Mwene Nyaga is holy. Therefore, conformity to God's will is a given expectation in the lives of the Agikuyu. They observe social conventions, such as prayers, sacrifices and rites, in order to cement the relationship between humankind and their God – Mwene Nyaga. Although many contemporary Agikuyu people have joined other religions, they are aware of the need to worship a Supreme Being.

We have evidence from oral literature that there are agents through whom God is able to perform his service or duty to humankind. These agents include elders, seers and other leaders who are the custodians of morality. It is also important to note that this religion, like any other, takes the existence of a group as a given. Religion exists only when there is a group. This means that there is a relationship between religion and society. Religion is practised within space and time. There must be a physical environment such as Kirinyaga (Mt. Kenya) in order to have a religion. This is the backdrop against which

worship, sacrifice and ritual are performed. All these aspects are well supported by the sampled oral poetry which we proceed to analyze.Again, children in the sample-Michael Kimani-Gatanga primary and Joseph Mwangi-Gatunyu primary also said that the songs teach them about the religion, culture and traditions of the Agikuyu.

In the song "Nyakaratha" [which translates as "one who shoots"] as performed at Gatanga hall, the question of religion is pervasive. The children sing about the stages of life from childhood to adulthood and stress certain religious activities that are observed by the people, such as slaughtering a bull as an offering to the Almighty:

Na wandatha x 2 If you shoot me x2

Ngaguthinjira x 2 I will slaughter for youx2

The practice of slaughtering goats, sheep, or bulls is accepted as a God ordained way of showing gratitude and peace. In the shooting competition enacted in the poem, the speaker promises the contestant that if he defeats him, he would slaughter (an animal) for him. The insinuation here is that the two will eat together (unlike the people who "eat" separately after defeat in politics). This is a good settlement of the contest. It is both a reward to the winner and an admission of defeat by the loser. When he goes further and says that the meat will be taken to the smiths, he is voicing his recognition that the "smiths" are a privileged class ordained by God to intercede in matters affecting the society. They are the ones who make knives to pierce the clouds so that rain may fall. The temporal setting here is that of famine caused by a dry spell. Inherent in the idea of the clouds is the belief that the Gikuyu God lives in high places – probably in the mountains and clouds.

Any sacrifice had to make reference to these high places as a way of evoking the magic of the supernatural. Therefore, this poem can be seen to be a call to the people to offer sacrifice in order to get rain. As can be seen images of "nyeki" grass, "Mbura" (rain), "njau" (calf), "muka" (wife), and "ucuru" (gruel) are evoked. They all have something to do with the fertility of the community which has its genesis in the clouds. The collective involvement in the ritual is demonstrated in the last line.

Tugakundukia x 2	We will drink (the gruel)x2
Kunduu …	Kunduu

"We" is collective and "kunduu" which is ideophonic is a celebration of the completion of the ritual – a celebration of life. Therefore, the poem affirms that the children understand the rituals of the community. While this conforms to the idea that they should be taught about the stages of life of their community. Reference to gruel carries hidden eroticism which is supposed to be for adults only. It is, therefore, intriguing for the adults to imagine that the children will not understand the coded meaning.

Similarly poem number 9, "I will send somebody" sang at Kibubuti primary, is about relationships. However, the last two lines carry religious implications.

Riria wandigire,	When you left me,
Ni ndonire kangi	I found another
Ga guikara nako,	To live with
Nginya Ngai akenda	As long as God wills it

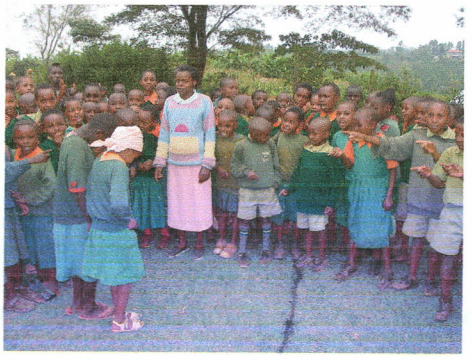
This poem carries a fatalistic conclusion of a love gone sour. The girl throws her trust to God as the final judge of how long she will live with her newly found lover. This

trust in God has double meaning. It would imply that the girl has given up making her own decision and left the matter to God, or she is seeking God's blessing of her newfound love. In short it is the quest of divine intervention in human affairs.

Poem number 20 "Airitu A Murimo Uria" [Girls from Yonder Ridge] is about young girls calling the girls from the opposite ridge to go witrh them to pick black beans from somebody's garden. The others in response say that they cannot do so since the owner is around. They further say that they have been advised by a person called Nyakairu that one should stick to her place. They assert that the black beans of the "aturi" or smiths are bad for they might make you cry: the smiths are reputed to possess supernatural powers. The owner of the garden is such a special person that to steal from him would lead to dire consequences. Black beans are very nutritious and as earlier mentioned are a preserve of mothers who have just given birth. The beans are a tonic to their lost energy. There is symbolic implication here that the girls might be made mothers if they steal from the smiths.

However, the dominant theme is that girls must behave according to the prescribed morals because although God is not physically present there are people like the smiths who might punish the offender through premature motherhood. The subversive girls have unsuccessfully tried to derail the moral train of the community. This should discourage other girls from doing the same. When the poem is performed in the presence of an adult audience, it becomes an assurance to them that their daughters have come to the social realisation of the tenets of their morality.

Poem number 31 sang by all the child respondents, which is a chant "Mwarimu" meaning Teacher, is a highly subversive one. Its central theme is morality and the spatial setting is a school. The poem employs code-switching to symbolise the confusion to which the teacher is subjecting children. The children tell the teacher and by extension all teachers that he has done a bad thing. He (the teacher) has allowed the children to go and steal maize from a garden. This they have done without permission. The children mention the word permission as representative of the order that should prevail in an institution. The teacher has subverted this order and has to be castigated by the pupils who have become custodians of order and morality. These are reversed roles each subverting the other.



An enactment of the teacher going back to school

To the general audience, the children are affirming that adults should not tell them to obey blindly whatever they are told by the enforcement officers. The pupils are asserting their social consciousness in terms of what is good and what is evil. This poem makes the point that adults who are here represented by the teacher are not infallible.

This view has a contemporary relevance. In schools particularly at the primary level, we have heard of teachers who have misled learners into committing certain

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offences. Cases of adults who have forced children to disobey their God and commit such evils as fornication and drug abuse are common knowledge. Therefore, the poem has moral undertones and calls the children to disobey those who might influence them to commit evil deeds.

Poem number 43, as sang at Gathugu primary, "Ringa Kiunduri" [Hit a Calabash]

RINGA KIUNDURI	**DRINK KIUNDURI**
Ringa kiunduri,	Drink kiunduri (calabash)
ndunyu,	Market
Ndatigiirwo ni Awa,	left to me by my father,
ndunyu,	market.
Na mugendi wa ithe.	And the Mugendi
Ndunyu.	(a drinking vessel)
	of the father, market

is based on morality and questions the role of tradition in human affairs. The performers ask one another and by extension the general audience to drink from the calabash. They say that the big calabash was brought to the market and was left to him by his father. The implication is that he inherited it from his father. The visitor is encouraged to drink from the calabash. This poem encourages the idea of indiscriminate sharing. It satirises those adults who allow their children to have the custody of ceremonial properties such as the calabash. The boy is definitely misusing the calabash. This is a serious violation of the ethical practice. The poem is subversive since in the Gikuyu community, consumption of alcohol is governed by strict moral discipline. There are specific rules and regulations

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governing drinking among adults. Children are prohibited from drinking. Therefore, the poem seems to subvert these moral tonics since it calls for their open defiance. The market place is where everybody including the parents can see their defiance. Reference to the father who left the calabash to his son might be interpreted to mean that it is him who taught the son this anti-social behaviour. From this perspective we can say that the children are blaming the adults for their disobedience.

Poem number 55, "Wakimunya," performed at Gatanga, meaning "one who uproots," is about somebody who is accused of being the uprooter of things. The allusion is that the person is a destabilizer. However, the persona surprises us when she says that she will also uproot what the "you" has uprooted. She goes on to say that she crossed a poisoned well – or watering place which belongs to God. She calls all different people who have no partners to dip themselves into the well and look for partners. One should look for the one (s)he likes and not leave the partner behind. This poem has a complicated logical plot. The children are subversive in the sense that they want to get partners without the blessings of the parents and relatives. Reference to a "poisoned well" introduces a paradox.

A well is most precious. It is an ever flowing fountain of life. However, if it is poisoned then it ceases to be life saving. To encourage boys and girls to submerge themselves into the well and look for partners is outrightly ridiculous. Again to say that the well belongs to God is to state a contradiction because God is well meaning. However, the poem captures the attributes of the Supreme Being who can provide the desired objects of our lives through unexpected and strange sources. It particularly emphasizes the dual nature of God, who can both create and destroy. There is an element of subversion in the

idea of uprooting. It symbolises destruction, which the persona openly admits he/she is prepared to undertake.

Poem number 76 "Tondu Twathii" [Though we are going] as performed at Kanunga, is highly philosophical. The children ask themselves where they are going. They reply that they are going to the sea. This four line poem is allegorically symbolic. The children use the journey motif to ask what their destination in life is. The underlying question is: Is life a destination or a journey? Children are engaged in seemingly minor issues of the society. They are probing their conscience. They want to be conscious of their becoming. What direction is their becoming taking? This is the deep question of being – whether they already are or they are still becoming is a salient point here. The girl and her friends admit that they are in motion, that is, "twathii" or are going. However, the truth is that they do not know their destination yet.

Paradoxically, they say they are going to the "iria-ini" or sea. This complicates our interpretation further in that the sea symbolises vastness and depth which is unfathomable. That is the symbolic implication. The sea in matters of knowledge could imply something unknown – the world which is so complicated that it is beyond the knowledge of the children. The magnitude and significance of the implications of the children's interrogation of truth provides insights to ourselves. We understand that in spite of their age and innocence, children are not vessels into which we put serious matters of being – even of the Supreme Being – they are concerned about the direction and shape of their lives. What is subversive here is that the probing questions are contrary to our expectations of children. The other idea is that adults should know that even in matters of morality, children ask

themselves questions about the direction of their behaviour. They have social consciousness which gives them insights on whether their lives are still progressing in the right direction. In performance, the children move in a line, then stop to ponder and sometimes change direction. It should be noted that the children use "we" which is first person plural pronoun. This means that they might as well be asking the entire community whether they are leading meaningful and fruitful lives. This interpretation is relevant particularly when you consider that the children perform to both other children and a number of adults.

Finnegan R. in her book, Oral Literature in Africa, observes that scripted and oral literature and religion are interrelated. For her, "it is common for a written tradition of religious literature to co-exist and to some extent overlap, with an oral tradition" (167). This is true of Gikuyu children's oral poetry. During our field research we collected many poems that were derived from written forms but we have not included them in our sample. We proceed to analyse one poem which was realised in song. Poem number 96 "Mwathani Ngai" meaning *Lord God,* which is constructed along the written Christian forms but it was performed orally at Gatanga Catholic Mission. There was a backdrop and a set on stage. The performer starts by thanking God. She says that she wonders what God looks like. Then she turns to the audience and asks them to behold the wonder of the works of God. She says that God sees the smallest leaf, the ant and other small animals and proclaims that God created them all. She says that when there is thunder and when the stars shine they all are being grateful to God. Then the persona turns to her father and mother. She accuses them of telling her to go to church yet they do not go to church to thank their God. She

informs the audience that her father wakes up to read a newspaper, after which he says that he has gone to bless his work with "machozi ya simba? Meaning "changaa" or ethanol. Then she turns to her mother who wakes up and goes to Ciru's mother. She comes back complaining that she is very tired and, therefore, she should rest. Then she says that the girl – probably a housegirl does her work quickly so that she can go to "kuria riica," meaning enjoy herself.

Although there is no direct mention of Christianity in this song the reference to "kanitha" or church is seen to imply a Christian setting. The performer, a child condemns the behaviour of adults who are not grateful to God. The child performer praises the greatness of God through reference to the wonderful works of creation he has wrought. Although the child does not offer solutions, her explicit condemnation of adults amounts to an infringement of their right to choose to be either religious or not. She is giving us her perspective and probably expressing the silent wishes of many Agikuyu children. Highlighted in this poem is the observation that adults are no longer concerned about religion. They seek self-satisfaction and pleasure through drinking and association with other members of the society. Christine Mwaura, a teacher at Gatanga observed that children have been left to counsel one another. Parents especially fathers are rarely at home and are too busy looking for money, leaving them with little time to get involved in their childrens socializaton process.

This social reality has in itself subverted the expectation of children. The words "Ni wega" are satirical. They mean; it is well. Fitted against all the grievances the child performer has raised in the poem, we can conclude the opposite: it is not well. According to

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the children this might be well in the mind of the adults but it is not well. In the actual performance the words do sound a warning to those who have forsaken religious practices. Therefore, the child is making a counter subversion of the adults whose behaviour violates religious conscience.

In summary, this section demonstrates that children's oral poetry is highly influenced by religion. The performers use religious ideas to subvert conventional wisdom and criticise the shortcomings of adults.

4.3 Education

We have observed that Language is a medium through which poetry is created. This poetry illuminates, recreates and reconstructs our social consciousness. This view is based on the understanding that society is made up of individuals in interaction.

How each member responds to social reality depends on his values, skills, knowledge and attitude. These are the components of education. This section sets to explore and analyse the social consciousness of the Gikuyu expressed in their children's oral poetry as a pedagogical tool.

As we examine some of the sampled poems, we determine how the poetry depicts the members of the community in relation to ideas and feelings. The Gikuyu, society, like other communities all over the world, comprises many complex characters who resonate with others in their day today lives. Each member of the community has his unique feelings, inadequacies and capabilities that make him or her a special component of the whole. What constitutes a community is often determined by common social

consciousness. A community's enactment of their history and life experiences comes out clearly in performed poetry.

Children's poetry is often expressed in song and dance or play. Watching and listening to performed poetry exposes the audience (including children) to what goes on in the mind of the performer(s). The audience is equally engaged in an intellectual and educational response. Interpretation of performance as phenomena behoves determining the allusions, allegations, assumptions, intentions and insinuations as well as the broad implications. In the end, the interpretation leads to transmission of education derived from the content and aesthetics of the performed poetry. This understanding includes aspects of poetry as art and the context that informs it. This means that our study creates a deeper understanding of the Gikuyu social consciousness.

It is impossible to undertake an exhaustive analysis of all aspects of education depicted in the sampled poetry. We have made a careful selection of the poetry that uses education as a tool to institute Gikuyu social consciousness. Our argument proceeds from the premise that the conflict between conformity and subversion is an artistic vehicle for the educational expression of moral, philosophical and political consciousness dependent on the oral poem's choice, composition, performance and reception. What we call political here should be interpreted to apply broadly to criticism rather than governance. Again, performance in this premise refers to the delivery as initiated and driven by the artist, whereas reception applies mainly to the response by the audience and other people involved in the performance.

Gikuyu children's oral poetry embodies values and ideas that refer to the worth of their culture. The community holds these values dearly. They treasure and inculcate these values in their children through a variety of media including oral poetry. These values are embedded in the cultural expressions and are orally transmitted through poetry. The community keeps on replenishing their corpus of children and youth poetry. A good case in point is the case of Odhiambo, a standard eight boy at Gatunyu primary who although a Luo language speaker, has learnt a kikuyu song 'twu mandng ma en okimwi'. This is done so as to incorporate contemporary or emergent issues. The poetry provides a significant avenue for members to have artistic communion with others through poetry. A close examination of the sampled children's oral poetry reveals and illustrates the kind of social consciousness embodied in the poetry. Interestingly, the poetry also marks points of divergence and discontent in certain aspects of the social consciousness. Let us now look at individual poems to illustrate and expound our postulation.

In formal areas of education, children spend most of their time with teachers in schools. Consequently, songs about teachers abound in children's poetry. The teacher is supposed to be a role model and rarely do children have problems with teachers. Children seem to understand the value of formal education and that is why they tell one another through oral poetry that if you want to be educated you must start from nursery school. This fact is brought home by poem number 29, "Ungienda Guthoma" [If you want to Read]:

Ungienda guthoma,	If you want to read
Buraimari cukuru	In Primary School

Wambe uthii nasari	First go to nursery school
Umbe meciria	And build your brain,
Teacher ni mwarimu,	Mwarimu is a teacher
Chair ni giti,	Giti is a chair
Window ni ndirica	Ndirica is a window
Arm ni guoko.	Guoko is an arm.

The poem also hints at the process starting from the simple act of naming before proceeding to the complex aspects of education. The value of the teacher as the one who imparts knowledge is shown by the fact that he is the first to be identified and named in English. The current song which was performed by the Gatanga Nursery School children reveals that the children know that their seniors in Standard One to Eight think that they are "Kiddish" or childish. Through the performer they make the record straight by informing the audience that a learner must start from the basics and mould his intellect by rising on the simple concepts to higher levels of knowledge. In the words of Freire Paulo in his book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, ideal education is the one that recognizes the interrelation between the pupil and the educator:

> The students, (read children) alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teachers existence – but unlike the slave, they discover that they educate the teacher. The *raison d'eter* of libertarian education, on the other hand, lies in its drive towards reconciliation. (53)

The children recognize the teacher as the person on whom their acquisition of knowledge is contingent. The view that the teacher learns from the children is not apparent here. The nursery school children have subverted the idea that they do not understand the process and development of education but still depict the teacher as the custodian of education. This ties up very well with Plato's ideas of philosophy as the core of wisdom. Plato sees society as having an important role to play in imparting their love of wisdom to children through education. Some of the poems in our sample illustrate this position. However, in this poem, "If you want to read," the children are passive recipients of that knowledge and they do not seem to question it. Freire argues that for education to have fulfilled its liberating function this contradiction where the teacher is regarded as more knowledgeable and privileged must be reconciled. According to Plato education is innate and all that a teacher does is to help the child recall what he forgot at birth. This ties up with the probing strategy employed by Socrates in his philosophical dialogues.

Learning can be monotonous. That is why children naturally device ways of making it interesting as they perform the counting songs (30, 71, 79, 91). The songs are devised to make the learners master the numerals. The rhythm in the poetry also helps to make the process interesting. The poem "Karamu" (49) performed at Gathugu primary, which means 'pencil' is an important pedagogical tool. The children emphasize the importance of a pencil in the learning process. Underlying the message is the assertion that writing is as important as speaking (singing). That is why the children say that one of the pencils belongs to the teacher. The reconciliation we referred to above is alluded to here. That the children offer one pencil to the teacher clarifies that the children love their teacher

and recognize him as one of them. It signifies the dialogical learning process. Subverted in the image of a pencil is the suggestion that even the children can give something back to the teacher: education.

Poem 72 "Baba Ndwara Cukuru,"sang at Kibubuti primary, meaning *Father take me to school*, reflects the dilemma some children face in making the decision whether to go to school or not.

Baba ndwara cukuru,	Father take me to school
Ngarore kahii gaitu	I go to see my small brother
Karari na ngoro igiri	He was undecided
Kumbika kumbi ku !	Cover, cover Ku!

There is a subversive element in this song since the persona considers looking for his young brother more important than attending school. There is also a suggestion that the parent is not worried about the absent brother. He seems not to care yet the child wants the company of the father probably for security. This poem demonstrates that there are some adult members who have developed apathy towards the education of their children and have to be reminded and directed back to their roles by their own children.

However, the role of a teacher as a disciplinarian is depicted in poem number 73 as performed at gatanga and Gatunyu: "Nguria Njereirwo Ku?" meaning, *from where am I late?* The persona explains that her parents who had sent her to the shop to buy sugar for the family tea caused her lateness. However, she admits that inspite of her justification; she deserves and is ready for the punishment. Several issues arise from this poem. It is possible that the parent's interference with the persona's education was a deliberate attempt

to stop her from attending school. If this is the case, there is a subversive note that such parents must be stopped probably by the intervention of the teacher. Here the child creates conflict between two groups of adults and expects to benefit from it. On the other hand, the parents might have acted in ignorance but without malice. This interpretation subverts the view that adults have better understanding than children about the role of education in society. The admission of the wrong done and acceptance of the impeding punishment constitutes recognition of the school as an authority in matters of education. The teacher is seen as an agent of that authority. Again the school, which is symbolized by the teacher, is fitted against the home represented by the father and mother who are the parents of the persona. This means that there are cultural disparities between home and school as social environments. The persona has this social consciousness and is prepared to suffer in order to reconcile the two. She makes an appeal to the teacher to impart knowledge in the best way i.e. after punishing her. By so doing the persona makes a value judgment on the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers. This subverts the common understanding among adults that they can teach children in any way they like.

One of the emerging issues in education is the subject of this poem. The persona says:

Mwarimu witu hura	Oh, our teacher, cane me
Na uthomithie wega	And teach us well

Use of the cane as corporal punishment has been abolished in Kenya. This has come about as result of international pressure on prevention and protection Against Child Abuse. It should be noted that the persona puts education above punishment and does not

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mind the physical affliction as long as she is taught well. This in itself subverts the efforts and opinion of the child rights movement. However, it can be argued that parents are sometimes the ones responsible for the suffering children encounter in school whether physical or otherwise. In this poem, the parents are responsible for the girl's lateness.

Luvai Arthur, Kabira W. and Muluka, B (Eds), in their introduction to Tender Memories Poems and Short Stories, have noted that it would be a "noble effort to reach out and bring to the attention of the world unadorned facts about abuses adults inflict knowingly, or unknowingly, on children" (ii).

The poem illustrates the kind of problems children have to face in order to acquire education. As can be deduced from the poem the children are not to blame for this situation. They are forced to conform to double standards that are set by adults and are often caught in the crossfire between home and school. That is the social reality that the children are living through. This poem, therefore, calls for a subversion of the status quo.

One of the most revealing poems in our sample is poem number (83) "Nguruta Ngware Ku? *From Where shall I get a Guinea Fowl?* The child asks the all important question about where he can find a guinea fowl. This is a rare bird, which is hunted by young boys. Its meat is a special delicacy. He wants to undertake the difficult task of procuring the fowl to show that he loves his teacher. However, the persona also says that if the teacher eats the meat, his beard will become cracked. Here, we discover that he is making the teacher an object of ridicule to the amusement of his audience comprising both children and adults. This can be deduced from the apparent contradiction.

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The concept of a teacher within the African ethnopoetics is conventional. The teacher transmits norms, skills and attitudes of the society. These values are cherished by the society and constitute their positive social consciousness. A person who instills these values in the society should be seen as an elder (even if he is young) and be treated with dignity and respect. Therefore, making the teacher the subject of ridicule is in bad taste. The children also know that the teacher holds a position of respect and authority. Therefore, when they direct their good natured humour at his expense, they are committing an infringement of the societal ethics.

Fortunately, this subversive strategy can be seen from a psychoanalytic perspective. The children would like to have fun with the teacher. Contrary to their wishes, this is forbidden by the Gikuyu community who take learning as a very serious matter. As a result, the children create the poem – a work of art that enables them to ridicule the teacher, and thus have some fun and get away with it. In this respect, the oral poetry is seen as fulfilling both its hedonic and therapeutic roles simultaneously.

Poem number 31, has similar strategy but touches directly on the conduct of the teacher. In spite of adhering to his role of promoting moral values among children, the teacher instructs the children to steal maize.

This constitutes a violation of Gikuyu ethics. The irony is that this violation has been committed by an adult who is supposed to be inistilling the morals for consumption by children and adults alike. He is supposed to set a good example for the children to emulate. The teacher has, therefore, subverted the role assigned to him by the community.

As a result the children, who are his pupils, are left with no option but to spell out explicitly to the teacher that he has committed a great evil.

If we consider this poem a creation of the children, we can see that they have stamped their opinion on the very important matter of communal ethics. By so doing they have revealed a generation gap that has set some competition between the youths and the adults. This has reversed the roles so that they are seen as conformists while the adults are subversive. In matters of style, the children have used irony and sarcasm to make their point: "You have done well teacher … to send children to steal maize" The adults sense of good is questioned and weighed against that of the children. A teacher is not infallible. In this instant of subversion the children affirm that they should be involved in the determination of the content of education. They have made an indelible claim to a participatory approach to education. They have also opened a dialogue with the teacher thus stating and impressing on the audience the importance of both the normative and the dialogical dimensions of education.

In Gikuyu society, roles are always fixed. Therefore, poem number 36 addresses reversed roles as a form of subversion of this category.

MWARIMU ARI THIBITARI	**TEACHER AT THE HOSPITAL**
Mwarimu akurirwo igego ari thibitari,	The teacher had his tooth removed at the hospital
Agiuka akiriraga cukuru	He/she has come to school crying,
Na ithui tukimwira atiri,	And we told him this,
Tiga kurira,	Don't cry,

tondu wi mwarimu mwega	since you are a good teacher
wa ciana,	of children,
Na ti ciana cia githumo	And not the children of Kisumu
Kana Nairobi,	or Nairobi,
Ni ciana cia Kibubuti cukuru	But the children of Kibubuti school.

The standard two and three children who perform this song have one or more milk teeth missing. Normally, the teeth are extracted by their parents at home. They do not cry because doing so would be seen as cowardly, which is a weakness. They are always comforted by teachers and parents and reassured that they are good children who should not cry. In the poem, however, the teacher has to go to hospital to have the tooth removed. This suggests that he is a coward. This is reinforced when the teacher comes to the school crying. He cannot endure the pain. Children counsel and sooth him. They tell him not to cry – because he is a good teacher of children. Behind the narrative poetic flow the children suggest that this fixation can be interminable. Conventionally, it is the role, duty and obligation of the teacher (who is the representative of adults in school) to bring up children in all dimensions: spiritually, emotionally, socially, intellectually and in any other way. Whenever a child is in pain, it is the responsibility of the teacher to counsel or sooth her. By so doing, the teacher helps the child to grow emotionally strong and imbibe personal values such as courage and endurance in conformity with the community.

The perspective here is that the teacher is a subject and the child is an object. According to Freire Paul (1993) and Erickform M. (1966), the teacher has the knowledge and the child is an empty slate on which the teacher imprints knowledge and models it into a particular character. Thus the teacher can manipulate children to conform to his models. He can use children as his vessels to communicate his own thoughts. Poem number 36, which is realized in harmonious melodies and rhythm, completely subverts this view.

In the literary presentation and in performance, the poem depicts children as brave and able to withstand pain. They regard themselves as knowledgeable and qualified enough to counsel other children. Above all, they depict themselves as capable of inspecting and evaluating education and reporting their findings to the affected teacher. These claims are carefully and realistically constructed in the oral poem. It is also important to remember that the poem is realized in a narrative mode. This has the effect of making the audience believe the children since they are only reporting history as it unfolds. This style creates textual credibility. The other significant consideration in terms of style is that the poem uses both the omniscient narrator and the first person plural as points of view. The poem is polyphonic thus providing variety in flavour and perspective. Consequently, it flows as it subverts the well known facts by quietly questioning them.

In the poem, children see themselves as able to receive education and participate in the learning process. This contribution is not just to anyone but to their teacher. The children are making an important point, which Plato in his famous dialogue made: The teacher is not ultimately endowed with all potentials. He can be helped to acquire some by his pupils. As Socrates observed, in the process of education, even the teacher goes through

a process of transformation which is occasioned by what he learns. The teacher in this poem is seen as a mortal being with all the potentials as well as the limitations of humankind. He can also cry as his children do; he can be in pain or in happiness. This poem, therefore, totally deconstructs the conventional image of the traditional teacher who is an invincible creature in the eyes of children.

As we stated earlier, the poem is not only aesthetically appealing but also liberating. The children enjoy the poem because it liberates them from the monotonous existence of a rigid educational system epitomized by the teacher. Poems 72 and 63 also revolve around similar aspects surrounding the feigned virtuous and infallible actions and thoughts of adults within the lenses of the society. The poetics of the content and form of these works of art reveals that children reconstruct the adult world through subversion. We have discussed education as a form of Gikuyu social consciousness within the parameter of oral poetry. Let us now examine how the environment in the poems informs their social consciousness.

4.4 The Environment.

Children are great observers of nature. A close look at their poetry reveals that they make serious and precise comments on their environment. Children appreciate both the physical and social environment. We have already discussed the two aspects as part of the setting of the oral performance of children's poetry. In this section we take a deeper look at the environment as one of the social realities that is captured in the poetry.

In his book, The Child and his Environment in Black Africa, Pierra Erny observes that the African child is exposed to the Islamic tradition, African tradition and Western tradition. Our interpretation is that the African child is no longer truly African in the traditional sense. He has been affected by other influences from other parts of the world. In our case, the Gikuyu child can no longer claim to have knowledge that is restricted to his own social environment. Instead he is exposed to other circumstances outside his immediate place of birth. This has created certain thoughts, images and attitudes that are reflected in children's poetry. A child's environment has a dominant influence on his interaction and expression. Let us examine specific texts to see whether the environment of the Gikuyu child exerts any influence on his poetry and whether this art forms part of his social consciousness.

We begin with poem 34 performed by all schools sampled, titled "pupa," or *Wakaguku*, which is a stage in an insect's development. This poem attests to the Gikuyu child's interest and sense of observation. This is true because this is a minute form of a developing insect that is rarely seen by children. The children discover the pupa when they are playing about with soil. Children observe that the pupa has a habit of moving its head in order to point from one direction to another. In order to involve it in their play and derive some enjoyment, they initiate dialogue with it but pupa only responds through action. They ask it to show them the East, West, North or the South. This sounds straight forward enough. However, the children are launching a satirical attack on those people who do not know where they come from. Sometimes, the insect points to the wrong direction. The truth is that it cannot distinguish any of the four geographical directions. Similarly, there

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are some children who lost. They are just as confused as this insect and do not know where they come from. They do not know their identity or direction. The emphasis here is that lack of identity starts from home. The irony here is that even if the children know that the pupa cannot tell the right direction, they still ask it. This is an epistemological issue. Again in interrogating the pupa, children display their own knowledge thus affirming the adage that if you want to know you should confess ignorance.

Poem number 38, "Mucere" as performed at Gathugu and Gatanga schools, meaning *Rice,* brings us to the children's observation that rice is a delicacy. The subversive element is in the logic. The rice is said to be good (or delicious) because it is eaten with a spoon. This displaces the essence of rice from itself to the spoon, which is symbolic of technology. Here, children are questioning the demands that technology makes on them. Like the poem about the pupa, this poem causes confusion as to the real value of rice. Is it located in itself or in the spoon? It means that children are living in a confused world of confusion where they sing praise to the food called rice while in reality they are celebrating the advent of technology. The question then falls on what is superior; the food (rice) or the technology (spoon). It is a serious matter for small children to be forced to use foreign objects such as spoons in the most basic tasks of feeding themselves. This is a difficult and foreign intrusion that the children seem to protest against by seemingly praising technology. Similarly poem 42 "Githima" meaning *Well* is an intriguing one. A water-well is compared to a piece of cloth. The child says that she bought the well the night before but now it is torn. It has to be repaired. Here, the girls perform this poem to complain about the frequent pollution of the well. They know the

well cannot be repaired and, therefore are calling the adults such as Gitindi, Kimonde and S.K. to take it. Probably they should take the responsibility.

In the most part of the world children are fascinated by birds. Some birds dance or amuse them like "Wakaruguru" (15) meaning the one from the West. This bird flies so high up in the sky that for them to see it, they must have sharp eyesight. They admire its expertise in soaring high like an aeroplane and admire it as forming part of their environment. Subversion is realized when the bird is asked to dance so as to get a wife who has one child. This subverts the earlier admiration. The children are seen as provoking the bird to dance with them as they observe the sky. Underlying this request is that the children are idle.

Songs number 45 and 60 both entitled "Ndutura" meaning doves revolve around children's love for the doves which are peace loving birds. Children admire the dove as a bird because it keeps children company and it sings. In the song 46, the dove is given the attribute of being quiet. The children promise the dove that they will work together "Kamunyonge". Children create harmony with their environment by promising to keep counsel with the doves. But it is the second poem (60) which captures our interest even more. The four doves are said to have perched on a small tree and were singing a sweet song about the sun making children happy. This is a bold statement by children about the value of their environment. Lodged in the praise of the sun and the four doves is the message to the adults that they should not confine children to houses. Children love adventure and appreciate birds and other animals in their environment.

The song "Nu ucio wathuria" meaning "Who is that who has farted?" is indicative of the peer consciousness of the need to keep the environment clean. The song shows that children are capable of discovering and cursing those who pollute the environment without the interference of adults. The peer group is seen as a self-regulating body of children.

Children live in a world that is predominant prescriptive. Whether at home or at school, they are subjected to "do's" and "don'ts" without being told "why" or "why not." Against this backdrop, children try to eke some freedom from poetry. They describe what they have and what they admire within their environment. A study of the tension between conformity to this prescription and children's subversion of the adult values helps us to understand the underlying subtleties. The poem "Onei Mathangu" meaning, *Look at those Leaves*,

ONEI MATHANGU	**LOOK AT THOSE LEAVES**
Onei mathangu maria	Look at those leaves
Marathaka na ruhuho	Playing with the wind
Na ithui nituthake	Let us also play with the wind
Na ruhuho x2	With the wind!

depicts children's interaction with their environment. They observe the wind and its effect on the leaves. It makes the leaves move and the children at once declare that they would like to play with the wind. Although the wind is sometimes destructive, children find it an object of fun. Adults, on the other hand, have no time to play. Quite often the poem is

performed when rain is about to fall. Adults are then too busy trying to avoid being soaked by the rain. They cannot, therefore, appreciate the wind, which is part and parcel of nature, leisure and prosperity! That is the underlying message and the point is economically made by the children. Another song "Maitu" (59) meaning *Mother*, calls upon the mother to come and watch something. The child has noticed something "that shines like the sun" and the mother informs the daughter, Wanjiru; that "that is the moon". This poem demonstrates Gikuyu children's curiosity or enchantment by nature. It also shows how observant children are about day and night because they want to see and know everything. The mother seems to have taken it for granted that the child knew what the moon is. By implication the point is made that children do not condone such attitude.

One of the saddest songs in the sample is "Ndundu" (65) performed at Gatanga hall, meaning *The Owl.* Although Gikuyu children like birds, they do not like the owl. They hate it since it is considered a bad omen. Instead of singing ordinarily, the owl is in the habit of calling its agemates. This cry is associated with misfortune and even death. Therefore, instead of the children singing with the owl, they chase the bird away – to ward off the apparent misfortune. This illustrates the children's consciousness of the belief about the owl. This is contrary to the expectations of adults. Children quietly either directly condemn adult beliefs or use subversion as an avenue for meting their dissatisfaction.

From the foregoing, we can conclude that children seem to associate themselves with small things such as birds. However, this is not always true. In the song "Gathigiriri," meaning *Small Ant*, the persona castigates her mate who looks like an ant for boasting and walking in the middle of the road. Children are conscious of road safety. They understand

the inherent danger one exposes oneself to while walking in the middle of the road. Some imaginative capacity is shown in the persona's threat that she would make a skirt made of gunny bags for the offender – and a belt made of the tail of a rat. These images are bizarre. Such a belt and skirt would be very uncomfortable-enough to teach the offending small girl a lesson. The message is clear, there are roads in the environment and children should steer off the middle of the road, or face dire consequences. That is what children are conscious of and they disseminate the same. The same message is given to the hens to stay around the home or be eaten up. (Paul's hen 84). Children appreciate parental care but within limits.

Within the environment things which look bigger than children for example the elephant, become objects of admiration. However, this position is subverted in the poem "*Njogu ikuuite mwana*" meaning An Elephant which is carrying a baby. When the elephant reaches the top of the hill it calls the baby to "untouch" him. This portrays the behaviour of bigger adults and bigger children who abandon the young ones at their hour of need. The analogy could also refer to the government or society that abandons the individual or his ideas during the hour of need. Children subvert the idea of the marvel of the body size associated with adults. They also assert their understanding about the social consciousness that influence their being. As they progress from childhood to adulthood they are informed by what they observe within their environment.

4.5 Life and Death

A thorough examination of our data reveals that life and death are prominent subjects in Gikuyu children's oral poetry. In this section we continue to conduct critical

analysis of the two related areas with a view of establishing how conformality and subversion entrench the social consciousness in the sampled data.

African oral literature is heavily preoccupied with life and death. These thematic aspects are interwoven with people's experiences. There are rites of passage that start from birth, through initiation and marriage, and finally ending with death. These rites employed by all genres of oral literature. The song is a central tool employed by children to create beauty and meaning in these rites of passage. Good health is so important that it is tied to the daily greetings of both adults and children:

Wi mwega? - Are you well?

The word "well" enquires into the respondents' total wellbeing. Although the word "well" might as well be asking whether the person is "good," greetings are very important among African communities. The following quotation puts it more succinctly:

> People today complain a great deal about the "rudeness" of young people. Yet they do not offer any reasonable solution to the problem. May be oracy and oral literature are parts of the solution. If young people learn to communicate articulately and to appreciate good behaviour through an enjoyable medium, like a good story or a sweet sounding song, they will certainly become responsible members of their societies. (Bukenya, wa Gachanja and Nandwa 8)

Bukenya et al suggest that poetry can reconcile children with the adults. This would indeed reduce stress among children. They also appreciate the therapeutic effects of a sweet sounding song for both the oral artist and the audience. In the frantic world we live

in today, mental health is of special concern. The poetry performed during the right of passage also provides an opportunity for entertainment a stimulus variation strategy. Therefore, we need not emphasise the role of children's oral poetry in making the contemporary world a better place.

The poetry to celebrate the birth of a child ushers in a new member into the community. The child must be fed well and it is not supprising that no wonder a lot of written and oral literature revolves around food. Children have great appetite for food to nurture their physical growth. They therefore compose a lot of oral poetry about food. Food has been the source of conflict and even unity among adults as well as children. No wonder in the sampled poetry children have a lot to say about food and a healthy life.

In the songs children acknowledge that in order to get food that is, maize and beans, and the like, they must work hard. The song Kiguta or *Lazy one* is about adults who eat and sleep and shun work. The message is clear; if one does not want to work then one should not eat. In another song, *Daughter cultivating*, the children criticise the girl for being lazy. Her mother too is accused of giving the children food that is not acceptable to them. Right from the beginning, the children express their social awareness (the expectations of both children and adults). They stress that there are certain virtues which everybody embraces in order to have good food and by implication good health. They expose those members of the community who practice certain vices that undermine the well being of the community. For example, the mother of the lazy girl above gives the daughter's friends caterpillars to eat. This is fooling the children, which they cannot be condoned. Hard work is also stressed in the song Wanjiku Kimukuyu. Wanjiku goes to

steal food and her ears are pulled off meaning that if she wanted food, she should have worked for it. Pulling of the ears alludes that next time she is expected to listen more closely to conformist counsel.

In the oral poetry, children show the awareness of the nutritional value of food. For example, Njahi or black beans are (usually fed to the nursing mothers) of high nutritional value. In the song, the children stress that the black beans should not be stolen from blacksmiths. This is a very important message. It means that even if the food being offered is good, children should be warry of those adults offering the food. Some might behave like the smiths who are believed to be witches.

In the contemporary world children are often lured to danger by people offering such food. They are taken to insecure places, killed or raped. Therefore, children in a subversive role are upstaging the adults and offering indirect counsel to one another through poetry. The song "Little Upright Girl" corroborates this view. The girl is being offered a soda in order to be tricked. The warming is implicit: the mere offer of a soda should sound a warning. Similarly, in *Grace of Muconi* the girl goes to a place where she is offered biscuits. Even when she is satisfied, the biscuits are put into her woven basket and she is expected to carry them. This is what strangers do to unsuspecting children and the performers create this social awareness through poetry. The grandfather is dancing – in spite of his age – and his bones rattle. He is the one who entices girls with biscuits. When she eats he is filled with happiness. He dances as an expression of joy. What happens to Grace is a common fate for many girls and sometimes women in general the world over.

Underlying this performance is the insinuation that contrary to the belief that grandfathers are not only custodians of morality, they are also sometimes sources of evil.

In the poem Matuya meaning *Fruits,* we are shown how fruits are used to mislead children. Fruits are tasty. The persona asks the grandmother to open the door for her. She says she fears she might be eaten by a wild animal. The implication here is that in the quest for the sweet fruits, the young girl has landed herself in trouble. This simple poem has complex symbolic implications.

In his essay, "*Conversation, sayings and food: Verbal sources of material for theatre*", Peter S.O. Amuka discusses coded language associated with food. He notes that meaning operates at different levels depending on the state of socialization of the speakers and the audience.

> And so food stands for a woman – as the latter does for the former. Is she simply an object to be sucked in the name of belief, culture and gender bias? There abound many references to the woman as food: men often refer to one another's girl-friend as *Chiemba* (my food: I "ate" her; I "ate the cow properly" (*nyro achamo dhain'g*.) I see the food metaphor as a playful portrait of sexploitation of the woman. (165)

Although the citation alluded to the Luo culture, what Amuka says is also true of Gikuyu culture. The coded language is not expected to be understood by children. Contrary to this belief, a careful look at the song about fruits above indicates that the children are aware of this coded use of language. For example, fruits could be interpreted to mean actual fruits, enjoyment in general, men or even sex. This interpretation is,

therefore, subverted in that men are the ones who have now become food. We do not know what Amuka would say about men as food ... would it be exploitation of men by women and would this be a realistic depiction? We have the conformity to a tradition and a subversion of the same in the Gikuyu poem above. Food can also be used as an item of trade. In the song "Muiritu Uyu" meaning, This Girl, the child declares that she is leaving Gikuyuland for Kambaland and she will never return. Her main complaint is that food is too expensive in Gikuyuland. She is actually impressing on the audience comprised mainly of girls that when the cost of living gets unmanageable, they should subvert the tradition that ties girls to their homes and look for greener pastures. The poems we have discussed so far have the underlying message that one's health comes first but one must be alert about forms of exploitation that can entangle you in your pursuit for a better life.

In the poem "Man Cultivating", the children ask the owner whether they can exchange sweet-potatoes for sugarcane. Sugarcane is juicy. Children, especially boys, like it so much that they resort to stealing. Consequently, it brings about conflict between children and adults.

Knowledge about food is significant in the community. It prepares children for their adult life. Another cash crop mentioned in the poetry is maize. It is a staple food in Gikuyuland. It is milled for flour or mixed with beans to become "Githeri" or "irio" depending on how it is prepared. In the song "Wahu" which is the name of a girl, the persona tells Wahu to jump over the trench because maize is ready probably for eating. I do not want to introduce Amuka's interpretation but the persona is misleading Wahu and probably telling her that she is ripe. The trench could symbolise the moral ethics that force

and jiggers. Parents are also accused of abandoning their children when they need them most (Elephant 90)

With their creative sense, children blend the quest for food with adventure. They introduce guinea fowl as food but we know that this bird is only hunted, caught and consumed by children particularly boys. The hidden script is that even the parents should be more adventurous in their hunt for food.

Children condemn drugs and all types of alcohol, which are harmful to them. Jamila Njeri-Gatunyu primary emphasises on the critical role that these poems play in creating awareness on the dangers of drug abuse in society. In the poem "Ni muraigua" meaning can you hear? The persona condemns a small boy who is a chain smoker. "He lights one cigarette with another". The boy thinks he is so grown up that he can defy authority. Alcohol is portrayed as causing homes to break up whether taken by men, women or children. These substances can ruin the youth. In the poem "Mukingo" meaning AIDS, children expound on their social consciousness of life threatening substances and behaviour. They appeal to both children and adults to refrain from drugs and irresponsible behaviour. By so doing they are subverting the adult roles and assigning themselves the role of counsellor.

We have discussed life and death from the perspective of food and drinks. Let us now look closely at the data in terms of life and death. Children recognize that life is not for ever … death is part of life. In the poem "Chair" the personas laments the death of their sister. They remember the chair as part of her property. They say she used to sit on the chair and when they see it they cry. The veiled complaint is that older people (adults) are

too much involved in their business and grief to notice that children also suffer grief and mourn. Similarly, in the poem "Gikuu" (death) a number of rhetorical questions are asked by the children. Why does death separate boyfriends and girlfriends? Husbands and wives? Why does death take away very young children? This is a philosophical song that creates awareness of the inevitability of death. The observation that death is really mysterious and enigmatic is highlighted in the last stanza. The children ask death whether it is male or female. They stress that death is merciless. The reference to bride directs an accusing finger to the parents. The poems examine the morbid grief children go through when one of their friends passes away. In a way we can say that the preceding two poems celebrate life. Although they are about death, in a way the children are saying that they are lucky to be alive. Here, the social realities are constructed into fictional expressions, that is, children's oral poetry.

Poetry uplifts children's social consciousness. Through their poetry we are able to determine and appreciate what they are aware of. For example, diseases such as AIDS and other emergent ones are disturbing to children. They are aware that many of their relatives, whether young or old, have died and left their dependants (usually children) helpless. The children are concerned that AIDS is turning the world upside down children being forced to take up the roles of adults; some of the children look after their orphaned siblings. Others fend for themselves. No wonder the emergent disaster has radically shaped children's perception of life and death. They do not only look at death in philosophical terms but also in practical and realistic terms.

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Consequently, in a strongly worded poem, "Uui Aciari" performed at Gathugu primary, meaning *Oh Parents*, children, in no uncertain terms, tell the parents that it is their duty to advise the youth in general. The implication is that parents have abdicated their role. They are reminded that they should not just stand there and watch the youth getting lost. It is the duty of the parents to counsel the youth about alcohol and other substances. They (parents) should furnish the example. This is because when the parents drink and use obscene language in the presence of the youth, the youth copy them. Children should be given appropriate advice to avoid premature death. This matter is recreated and enacted in the poem Mukingo.

Children parody the role played by parents in leading the youth astray. The parents and adults do not ask where the young people are or what they do to earn a living. The parents share and enjoy the fruits of prostitution. They encourage the youth to continue engaging in debauchery. All this leads to the young person dying of HIV/AIDS infection. The children seem to question the parents' complacency and condemn their failure to warn and counsel their sons and daughters. In other words the children subvert the complaint of the adults that the youth are immoral and in turn blame adults for the moral decadence of their children.

It was Socrates who argued that if people applied the right philosophy of life in their experiences, they would be preparing for death. He argued that the object of the mind should always be the good and the beautiful, which go beyond the body in that they do not have to be felt. Socrates associated reason and soul with the mind while the matter and the body were material and incapable of escaping death. From this end the children's poetry

seems to echo the teachings of Socrates as illustrated by Plato in his famous dialogues. Children suggest that adults should uphold higher ideals for the children to emulate. If they follow their hedonistic pursuits such as cravings for intoxicating substances, they will mislead the youth and all might perish. This poses more interesting questions about our social awareness. This questions whether the adults have the right to do what is right, in their estimation, regardless of the criticism from children. This matter generates more questions than answers but leaves our minds stimulated.

The other matter that has come in the course of our analysis is whether the world of fiction corresponds to the realities the children find around them. This study posits that the sampled poetry is informed by children's social reality. It is this reality that is expected to form the basis of their social consciousness.

4.6 Conclusion

We have looked at children's oral poetry as a vehicle through which they capture the social consciousness of the community. This perspective is in a way existential in that man is seen as defiant and outstanding in the way he constructs his world as distinct and aesthetic in its own way. Children discuss topics covering a wide range of human concerns. This is quite clear in th sampled oral poetry. This means that their conception of the world is objectified in their poetry and, in a dialectical manner infused with the social reality. This chapter has illuminated our understanding of the social consciousness of the Gikuyu. We now proceed to Chapter Five which deals with gender disparities and power relations within this social consciousness.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 GENDER AND POWER RELATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to engage an interpretive explication of how conformity and subversion manifest gender ideologies in Gikuyu children's oral poetry. The chapter is divided into three parts: firstly, it examines poetry performed predominantly by boys; secondly, it analyses poetry performed predominantly by girls; and thirdly, it looks at poetry performed by boys and girls together or separately. The word predominantly is employed to signify that in all cases the other gender is not completely absent. Our definition of gender is derived from Watson James a nd Hill Anne's, A Dictionary of Communication and Media Studies:

> Gender: The cultural construction of differences expected in typically "male" or "female" behaviour. Gender differences are thus those between male and female human behaviour, or expectations of male and female behaviour, which arise from culture rather than nature. (74).

The Gikuyu child is brought up in a patriarchal society where gender roles are clearly demarcated. Many Gender studies have focused on gender disparities in Gikuyu communities. The studies have largely concentrated on women as adults but they provide stimulating insights into the influence of gender disparities on children. This study investigates children's oral poetry texts within their cultural contexts, which are the sites where disparities and contrasts power relations, are revealed. It is from the cultural

contexts that meaning is derived and the sites themselves constitute meaning in the children's lives. This is expounded by Dundes thus:

> The context of an item of folklore is the specific social situation in which that particular item is actually employed. It is necessary to distinguish between context and function. Function is essentially an abstraction made on the basis of a number of contexts. Usually, the function is an analysts statement of what (he thinks) the use or purpose of a given genre of folklore is (Dundes 23)

In our case children's oral poetry exploits poetic licence and the inherent textual strategies to stage subversion against the established traditions or thoughts. As we have seen, this is done particularly when children perceive or find themselves marginalized or (under) misrepresented. Children's poetry, therefore, depicts the divergence and depth of their unique experiences. Since the society comprises male and female members, children find themselves caught up in complex gender relations. Poetry then becomes a useful tool of the expression of their feelings.

This chapter is informed by the idea that art is not static but keeps on changing to reflect emergent trends and issues. Children are in the eyes of adults expected to assimilate cultural values including gender values. Some of these are abstract but deeply rooted in the tradition. However, children's oral poetry has a light-hearted way of bringing out these values. Since boys are given dominant roles and preferential treatment, girls insert their voice and authority through subversion of these male values and succeed in avoiding subordination. The underlying function of the poetry is pedagogy. Let us now proceed to

conduct an in-depth textual analysis in order to understand the meaning of the sampled poetry.

5.2 Dilemma, Development, Attitude and Gender Space in the Poetry predominantly performed by Boys

Poem 5, performed at Gathugu and Kibubuti schools, "Kairitu Gaitu" that means "My Sister" is performed by boys to show their attitude towards girls. It refers to the dilemma Gikuyu girls find themselves in if and whenever they indulge in sex before marriage. The tradition does not allow a girl to have pre-marital sex. Therefore, the victim is left to her own devices as a condemned person. The perpetrator of the indiscrete act is at liberty to take or reject the girl. In the current poem he says that he cannot be called a father meaning that he has absconded the responsibility of being the father of the child. The prospective child-mother has to shoulder the burden of providing for the child single-handedly throughout her life. The girl performers are using this poem to subvert the set tradition that favours boys. In camouflage, the girls are complaining about this inequality, which forces girls to shoulder a burden for life in spite of the fact that the boys are equally responsible. Paradoxically, men in the Gikuyu community would be disturbed if they did not see their sons in the company of girls. In striking contrast, they strive to ensure that their daughters remain indoors until they are ready for marriage.

Boys teasing girls through dramatised poetry

From a psychoanalytic perspective man is by sheer anatomy a projection into the world. He is supposed to explore the world and conquer it. The world is seen as outside man. Lottle Tarkka in her essay-"Other World – Symbolism, Dialogue and Gender in Karelian Oral Poetry," discusses the view that man has a monopoly over proto-type knowledge (250). That is clearly demonstrated in this poem. The boy is protected by the knowledge and practice within the tradition. He hides in the biased thicket of tradition that protects his kind. It is this state of affairs that the girl child is protesting against. The irony is that this poem is addressed to girls and creates awareness that they should not play around with boys since they would carry the resultant burden alone. It should also be noted that girls are portrayed as foolish since the victim could have avoided sexual indulgence.

The poem "Kanyoni Ka Miu Miu" (10) The Bird of Miu Miu is also performed by boys and exposes the "weakness" of a girl called "Waceke" meaning slim. This poem can be understood through the psychoanalytical and body theories. As Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott write in their essay, "Sex, Gender and Performing Bodies":

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> Although Foucault is committed to the idea that the body is produced though discursive practices, rather than given by nature, he nonetheless sees "bodies and pleasures" as site of resistance to power, as if they lie outside the social. More importantly, however, this emphasis on bodies and pleasures can obscure forms of power other than those operating through the discursive constitution of sexuality. (19)

In this quotation, Jackson and Scott make salient points about the body and power relations that clarify the song under study. Boys accuse Waceke of having big breasts. It should be noted that for the males a breast is an erogenous zone. It is also a symbol of the gender identity of a girl. It might be seen as a target for male aggression and a medium through which this male violation can be directed. Therefore, from a Freudian perspective the breasts are passive reservoirs of male dominance. From another perspective, breasts portray female fertility. This means that the girls' potency resides in her body. Exploration of the girl's breast is now seen as child abuse since it is treated as "inconsequential bucolic pleasures" (Foucault 31) in the world of this poem. Within the ethnopoetics of the Gikuyu tradition, big breasts for such a small girl suggest (not exclusively though) that the girl has matured before her age. This implies that her problems have multiplied.

The underlying message here is that childhood is an important stage in life and should not be hurried. There is a hint that losing your childhood exposes you to the exploitative adult members of the society. This interpretation can be supported by what has been revealed in other poems. When girls mature too early, they are likely to suffer, like Grace wa Muconi, through exploitation by both young and old men. Most men do not care

to assess the actual age of the seemingly 'big' girls. There is also, a suggestion that a girl's body attracts attention to itself. The poem records what happens when such girls reject advances by men. They are dragged until the "back peels off". This cruel act is a manifestation of gender violence and has no justification. It depicts the mistreatment carried out by men even when the girls are innocent.

Waceke is not responsible for the growth and development of her breasts. She should be left alone. This song also exposes the negative attitude held by men that when a girl's breasts are big then she must be mature and involved in sex. This generalization is based on distorted perceptions. The poem, therefore, rejects gender values that are based on misconceived and distorted male attitude. It is important for us to realize that male violence against infants (who have no breast like Waceke's) has been reported. For this reason mere existence as a woman or man should not be a justification for gender violence.

Men, in contrast, are portrayed as 'hyenas' because they are considered greedy and inconsiderate. In the Gikuyu tradition, men own literally everything while women and girls own nothing (including themselves). This poem makes an implicit appeal to men to change. They are justifiably accused of wanting to take everything from Waceke, including her very self. Referrinng to girls as raw meat is a pun. Raw means fresh but it can also mean uncooked. Both meanings apply here as the girls are too young to be involvedin premarital sex.However they are fresh and according to Mrs. Githuka, the headteacher Gathugu primary, they (girls) should guard against any interference with their "freshness". There is an allusion here that sex would interfere with their freshness.

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Our interpretation is that when man subjects a girl to such violation only on the basis of her being female, he is objectifying a fellow human being. By so doing he has forgotten the Supreme Being that transcends the duality of subjects and objects making all people equal. This means that such acts of violence reduce the worth of man and by extension humanity. Therefore, this poem uses subversion to launch an attack on men who violate women. Conformity to tradition is seen as a subversion of human values. Therefore, the oral poem reconstructs and deconstructs itself to gain a new function, a kind of advocacy for girls. Boys are also involved in the contestation of the gender space. Poem 11 revolves around the politics of space and gender. The girl's name "Cera" in Gikuyu means "roam about." Therefore, the name is polysemic but the subject is gender space. Cera is portrayed as a woman of the world. She has known many places and within the convention of the Gikuyu, a girl who knows many places is not good. This is the traditional interpretation. The insinuation is that Cera likes visiting many places implying that she is a girl of loose morals. This judgment discloses the fact that the community is prejudiced against girls and women. However, it also means that morality is given prominence in the community.

The persona knows that Cera will be impressed if she hears that he has been to Karatina, Kimandi and Nyeri. He says he has been to those places in order to impress and entice the girl. Traditionally, a girl's place is at home or around the compound. Even today, there are men who cannot allow their wives to work away from home. If the woman is posted far from home, she is forced to resign to her fate. In this song, there is also the question of technology: the persona has made a car. Cera is supposed to marvel at this.

The graphic description of places and the marvel of the technology of a Locomotive are set against the prescription that girls remain at home. They have little technological-know how. That is what is mildly being questioned by the persona. The contextual collocation between home and lack of exposure alludes to the idea that women have stagnated while men have explored the world and are, therefore, intelligent. Generally, the persona castigates the community for restricting girls' exposure to knowledge.

5.3 Children's Rights, Violence, Sexuality, Adventure and Gender control in poetry predominantly performed by Girls

Marriage is an important institution that is respected in both the traditional and modern society. However, as will be demonstrated in the poem Waigoko (12), young girls get a raw deal in the process and product of love. The painful reality depicted here is that many men force their daughters into marriage at a very early age. To make the matters worse, girls are not allowed to make their choices. Sometimes girls are forced to leave school to marry old men as we have seen elsewhere in this study. In the poem the persona is constantly being coerced to marry Waigoko who is old and ugly. She demands that she be allowed to marry a man of her choice. Only then will she be able to obey the man and remain within the expectations of the tradition. The poem depicts a common occurrence in Kenya where girls are hurriedly removed from school and forced to marry rich men who are their father's age mates or older. Some non-governmental organizations have been formed in Kenya to rescue such girls. The girls are demanding their say in matters of

dowry. While most Gikuyu people will subscribe to the idea of payment of dowry, they would agree with the girls that they should not be forced into marriage. Above all girls are supposed to understand the role, function and social obligations of the institution before joining it. In this song, children have reversed the roles and are educating their parents on the need to involve them in their own marriage negotiations. They are conscious of what is happening in this age-old institution.

The Gikuyu community expects boys and girls to live in peace with one another. However, this is not always the case. We have already seen that according to the conventional way of thinking within the parameters of tradition, a woman's place is at home. However, market places are associated with women since that is where women and girls buy their provisions to cook for the family. The significance is that markets are full of women and there is no privacy for women to exercise their freedom ... according to men. The other point is that what is bought from the market will tie the woman up in the kitchen keeping her at her place. The poem "Ndathire Ndunyu" (13) as sang by Gatanga pupils,

13. NDATHIRE NDUNYU	**(I WENT TO THE MARKET).**
Ndathire ndunyu,	I went to the market
Kugura tucahi-ii	To buy black beans,
Na tucuri twatuo-ii	And the edges for tying the black beans
Ngiuka ngihagira	I put them on the fire
Kamuira tutherukite-ii	And before they started to boil
Ngithii gucacia tuku	I went to look for firewood,
O kahinda o kau	Then at that exact time,

Wakagurani agiuka	Wakagurani entered,
Ngimwira wakagurani,	I told her, wakagurani,
Ndume nyumba yakwa	Get out of my house,
Akiregarega	He refused,
Ngihuria gicinga ii	I grabbed a torch (burning piece of wood)
Giki kia muhugu ii	The one of the *[1]Muhugu tree
Ngimuhugurania iromo	And turned his lips round

that means *I went to the Market,* is constructed through the narrative poem mode. The facts are simple and clear for the young performer. The tense is simple past. The persona reports that she went to the market to buy black beans to cook. Then she moves on to the next episode – and says that just before the black beans were ready "Wakaruguru" meaning *One Who is from the West* came. It is suggested that Wakaruguru had timed his visit so he could get the food. There is also the hint that this man is like the pupa which does not know the right direction. In the Kanunga version the man who comes is called "Kagurani" meaning *One Who Wants to get Married.* Whatever the case, the woman or girl is confronted with a man who seems to have materialized from nowhere. When the man is asked to leave, he refuses. The Language used here "reveals that the oral text places the audience in a specific gendered and social economic role. The existential presupposition creates a specific discourse situation ..." (Simpson 175), where a male and a female are in

[1]. Muhugu – a type of indegeneous wood that burns well
*2. Wakarugugru – A small black bird that hovers in the sky

competition for space. The lady uses Language to drive the man out. When this fails, she resorts to violence. She uses a glowing piece of firewood and turns the man round. The man responds and the assumption is that he eventually goes away. The poem deconstructs the traditional role where men are the sole providers for women who remain around their homes. The persona goes to the outer world to seek provisions.

There is a stream of didactic reasoning which the persona seems to stress. The poem is an attack on those men who have absconded their traditional responsibility of feeding their families: They wait until their wives come back with food, then prey on them. This is becoming all too common in contemporary society where young and old men hang around trading centers waiting for women to go back home with provisions then they emerge as if from nowhere. Such behavior is discredited here and the poem seems to affirm that women have a right to deny such people food and chase them away. It also reinforce the idea that women are strong and they need not wait to be provided for by men. This underscores gender equity among the contemporary Gikuyu society. This also goes against the traditional practice. The question of dignity of labour is tied to the matter of the subverted gender roles.

Seen from a psychoanalytic perspective, the burning piece of firewood is a phallocentric symbol. The fact that it is a woman who uses it against a male member indicates a woman's potential and competition for gender control. It also drops a hint to the larger audience that women can go to great lengths even to an extent of fitting into the shoes of men in order to assert their authority. Therefore, the poem is about power relations and gender roles as they oscillate around conformity to the tradition, which seems

to be subjected to a form of subversion. This poem is reinforced by "Wakaruguru" (14) meanin, one from the West. The poem discourages those who are always daydreaming and stay "high" in the sky. They do not land or partake to the dance of life. The persona says that the only chance open for Wakaruguru is to dance so that he can win over a girl who has delivered only one child. Although Wakaruguru is a bird that hoovers high up in the sky, here it symbolises young men who spend their time idling about. As has been argued earlier, a girl who has given birth is considered "used goods" and promising Wakaruguru such a girl means you are punishing his indolent behaviour. The idea is that those who remain "high" on any substance would not be acceptable by women. This encourages Gikuyu male youth to be hardworking and down to earth so that they can marry girls of substance. This poem, therefore, encourages harmonious gender relations among children while it assures girls that if they do not behave themselves they would have unwanted children and risk getting married to the old men of this world.

The Gikuyu people have institutionalized matters of sex education and the grandmother is the embodiment of this institution. In the poem "Matuya" (18) meaning fruits, performed by a standard five pupil at Gatunyu primary, the institution of the grandmother as the custodian of the morality of the youth is spelt out.A young girl runs to the grandmother seeking protection from an animal that is coming from the East. The animal is also interested in eating the sweet fruits. In a traditional setting, a child always seeks refuge in the grandmother's home particularly when there are problems at home. Grandmothers and grandfathers are required by custom to offer refuge to the grandchildren unconditionally until matters at home are amicably sorted out. It is interesting that here

only the grandmother is heard. We do not know about the grandfather. The silence about him is telling. It leaves many questions unanswered. What comes out clearly from the poem is that grandmothers are always available for children. The poem is stressing the role of grandparents in maintaining social order. They are supposed to use their superior knowledge and experience to protect children from imminent danger. The "Kaihu" which is a wild animal that threatens the persona's life epitomizes the potential danger. However, the "Kaihu" also symbolizes young and old men who like "eating" the forbidden fruit. From this perspective, we can see that the grandmother has established good rapport with her granddaughter enabling the girl to share her fears with her (granny). Underlying the fruit threat is the subverted fact that too much eating of fruits (again this could be taken to symbolize niceties of life including night outs and dances) can lead to constipation and the eventual death of girlhood. Broadly, the poem could be seen as a nostalgic lamentation of the death of the institution of grandparents. The increasein the number of street children has been attributed to the lack of grandparental intervention in parent/child disputes. The grandmother also enjoined the girls to treasure their virginity.

Quite often the community thinks that only boys are interested in adventure. Most poems performed by girls – or in which girls participate-portray them as victims, Airitu Me Murimo Uria (20) meaning *Girls at the Yonder Range* shows how girls' love for adventure can lure them to evil. The poem is performed as a song in dialogue form. Two parties are engaged in a proposal to steal black peas from the smith. However, good prevails over evil when one party refuses to steal from the smith and insists that each group should stick to its position. Traditionally, it was not common for girls to engage in vices such as stealing.

An enactment of dialogue between two groups of girls from opposite ridges

This sense of adventure is expressed more explicitly in poem 27. "Muiritu Uyu" meaning *this girl* sang at Gatanga primary:

Muiritu uyu umaku na wathii ku,	Girl, where have you come from,
	and where are you going?
Ndathii Ikamba, Gikuyu ndigacoka,	I have gone to Kambaland,
	I will never return to Kikuyuland,
Kundu mbembe ithimagwo na marebe	Where maize is measured with tins
Nacio mboco igathimwo na tuihuri,	And beans are weighed with half
	calabashes
Cimbi curia cimbi curia marinda x2	Shake, shake the skirts x2
Mwarimu witu niahurirwo thurutia,	Our teacher, let people salute for him No ti
iria ya Wagaturu	But not the salute of a squirrel

This poem employs conversational discourse to communicate matters of concern to the persona. The girl is asked where she has come from and where she is going. These are philosophical questions on the metaphysics of becoming. Are we progressing and are we

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focused? The girl responds by stating that she is going to Kambaland and will never go back to Gikuyuland. By so saying she is asserting herself and indicating that she is aware about her movement. She condemns her place of birth – and praises "foreign" land. The persona's complaints are specific; in Gikuyu-land the cost of living is high. Maize and beans are measured or weighed in small quantities unlike Kambaland. Although this is a play song, children touch on the important subject of Economics and the impact of Commerce on the girl child. The girl seems to be running away from a problem. She praises the teacher as a champion almost insinuating that (s)he is the one who has taught her and enabled her to compare life in the two places. However, the image of "Wagaturu" squirrel turns the praise to ridicule. In addition, the girl is celebrating her freedom, which symbolizes the potential for girls to assess their situation and their readiness to access and accept new values at new places. This view subverts the traditional belief that a good girl is married close to her home. Adventure is seen as a path to freedom. The song implies that there is no gender discrimination in Gikuyu community. Girls can also be adventurous as they are searching for freedom.

The community has put in place various organs of gender control. Sometimes this does not work. In the song Wanjiru (50), which we have discussed elsewhere, the girl is asked to come out and get shaved. However, she is defiant. She says that she would come out on condition that she eats a sausage from Gichure. This seemingly innocent poem revolves around meat. In the Gikuyu community slaughtering, serving and eating meat follow an elaborate and highly conventional ritual. There are certain portions of a goat that girls or women are not supposed to eat. Furtehrmore it is a man who decides when a goat is

supposed to be slaughtered and for what reason. Wanjiru cannot get the sausage without a goat being slaughtered. Therefore, her request transgresses the conventions about goat eating. She wants to make a unilateral decision to eat a sausage in defeiance of the meat eating protocol. She is, therefore, infringing on a male domain.

It is obvious that her request cannot be granted at the spur of the moment within the context of the ethno. She is seen as frivolous and naive to dare make her defiant demand known. Women, particularly girls, have little say in this matter. The demand amounts to subversion. She must be controlled. The man called Gicure seems to be confused since he is calling himself and then calling Wanjiru. There is a hint that it is Gicure who has confused Wanjiru. This view corresponds well with the male misconception that women are foolish and cannot make decisions on their own.

This argument is also seen in the poem "Kalucy Gaitu" (58) meaning, our small or tiny Lucy. The mother accuses Lucy of having drunk the baby's milk. Lucy cries and in dialogue she is asked to explain herself. This shows that mothers who are the representatives of adults are in the habit of falsely accusing their daughters. Contingent upon this argument is the feeling that the girl children are supposed to be treated with suspicion even by their own gender. The girl is exposing this unfairness – she brings in Mama Ngina Kenyatta as a refection of the good ladies who she should emulate. Therefore, the question of parenting and gender control of the girl child is emphasized. Mothers are told by the persona to teach by example and avoid tormenting their daughters through with the use of degrading false accusations. The silence about boys might be

interpreted to mean that they are rarely blamed for anything. It could also mean that they are not given space in the text and are consequently neglected

5.4 Disparity, Roles, Obligations and Power in the Poetry performed by both Boys and Girls

The song Girici wa Muconi (6) meaning *Grace of John*, portrays girls as objects to be sexually exploited by men regardless of the age gap. The girl persona complains that the old man one of the girls is supposed to marry has bones which are rattling with old age. She understands that girls are being made old before their time. This is because when you marry a man, you become his age-mate and his elder children who might be older than you will call you "Mother". The language used in this poem is insolent and derogatory towards women. Girls are portrayed as so cheap or foolish that they are enticed with biscuits. Although it is easy to understand that the performers as well as the victims are children, there is an allusion that girls need protection from their brothers. Grace in this poem is accused of being "old," implying that she is no longer a girl. She is no more "marketable" and has been relegated to "used goods" status. This group is of lower status than the virgin girls who are highly prized. When boys perform the poem they ridicule girls for this irresponsible behaviour.

Despite this solemn picture of the exploitation of girls by old and young men like "Muconi" (John) denoting that he is a christian, the girls have fought back by ridiculing the old men who are already spent. The words "Korogocho" meaning rattling and "square" indicate that such men are bent and shapeless. The imagery is of a landscape of serious suffering of girls in the hands of adults, thus subverting the blame and re-directing it to

adults. Traditionally, hard working girls are applauded by society and are often sought after by young men. In the poem "Mwari Ukurima" meaning, *Daughter cultivating* (62) it is clear that lazy women and girls are revited. This is part of this internal gender control. The lazy girl is castigated and the mother is not spared either. The mother is blamed, we understand, for not having taught her daughter to cultivate. Where a girl is not hardworking, the family is bound to suffer starvation for there would not be enough food. Girls and women are supposed to fulfill their gender role of cultivating to provide food for the family.

Besides the question of gender control, the poem is also about generosity. The lazy girl's mother has nothing to offer and asks the visiting girls to roast caterpillars. No doubt the girls are satirizing members of their gender who are incapable of fulfilling their gender roles. It is interesting to note that the poem is addressed to both adults and children. Thus the performers stress equality in matters to do with virtues. The veiled complaint is that some mothers (adults) do not teach virtues to their children. This explains why the girls justify their intervention in the performance of this satirical poem. Boys perform the poem to celebrate preferential treatment accorded to them by the society.

This social control has its roots in the institution of the grandmother. In poem number 71, this institution is questioned by the persona who holds dialogue with the grandmother. The old lady seems to favour boys. In the tradition, contrary to case in the Western world, grandmothers always took up the responsibility of taking care of children. No wonder the children in the poem ask grandmother what she is cooking. The answer given elicits further interrogation by children. One thing is made clear through the

portrayal of grandmother as preferring boys. This is the contemporary situation where societal obligations have been taken lightly and infested with vices such as favouritism. The granny is supposed to treat both boys and girls equally but she has completely ignored her gender. If the grandparents are partial then there will be no justice in gender relations and this would lead to untold suffering in the community. Gender control itself seems to be in a crisis. Subversion is located in that a woman is against girls and against virtues that she is expected to uphold.

Children are always aware of the expected gender roles of the adults. In poem 78 "Hiti" meaning, *Hyena,* the persona uses animal images and symbols to express gender relations. She starts by asking the hyena whether he knows the pain of delivering a child. Although it is not explicit, this important statement is addressed generally to the audience who might not understand the pain women go through in the process of having a child. The rhetorical question should be answered in the negative. They (men) do not know.

The persona accuses the hyena who is symbolic of the greedy men in the society of having eaten her child. The verb "eat" means kill or reduce to nothing. She goes on to accuse the hyena of "breaking the leg" of another; a metaphor implying that the greedy man impregnated the daughter. The four lines of the poem are a preamble to the rest of the poem which is a narrative juxtaposed with expository remarks. The crux of the narrative poem is that Njeri is crying because her children are scattered all over and this is psychologically tearing her apart. She is constantly thinking about them. She has been neglected by both her children and her husband who is the father of her children. She has, therefore, become slim, pulling her neck "like Murugu" (a bird). She seems to have spent

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her life toiling and suffering alone psychologically. In this poem girls are warned against men who behave like scavengers collecting worms indiscriminately. The persona calls the hard working man "Muthuri Ukurima" not to roam about "Kindagiria". This message should go to all men who are implicitly asked to stick to their wives and children. Gender disparity is expressed in that men have the freedom to roam about in total disregard of the feelings of women. Children seem to have lost control presumably because the head of the family is out there exploring the world. Embedded in the theme of gender disparities is the idea that both men and women must work together if the family as an institution has to survive. Since this is not the case, the family is seen as a threatened institution facing imminent collapse. In the song it is in the voice of a female persona that the responsibility of voicing this dread is bestowed. This subverts the traditional requirement that men should spearhead the discussion on matters of the family clan or tribe. This state of affairs is seen as deplorable since it is total reversal of gender roles.

Gender space is highly sexualized in the sampled oral poetry. For example, in the first song "Nyakaratha", the five lines,

Nake muka x2	And the wife x2
Akiye ucuru x2	Will make gruel x2
Naguo ucuru x2	And the gruel x2
Tugakundukia x2	We will drink x2
Kunduuu	Kunduuu ....

Boys and girls celebrating life

Carry heavily loaded sex images that are considered taboo in the community. The word "Muka" which is derogatory and means "One who has come" or outsider refers to a woman … wife. She is the one who is supposed to prepare gruel. The word "akiye" means that she takes the pestle and crashes the maize, which is in a mortar.

The pestle is a phallocentric symbol and the mortal is representative of the female element. This means that "akiye" carries the image of making love while the gruel itself is an erotic symbol in the understanding of the Gikuyu. In the poem therefore, the wife seems to be coming to ignite sexual desires and the community would benefit from the same. This alludes to the fact that the wife will enrich the community by bearing children.

Taking into account that the performers are young boys and girls, we can understand their limitations since sex is a taboo subject. They are transgressing the communal ethics. They project their hidden but acceptable wishes in the poetry and by so doing enjoy themselves. According to Freud (1908, 1919, and 1922), childhood desires, which are repressed in the unconscious state, recur in distorted forms in dreams or works of art. Notable is the fact that the children perform this poem in front of both children and adults. Another observation to be derived from the poem is that a woman is a vessel

through which human kind perpetuate itself. Children fantasize the matter of making love but because the community prohibits, it they live it through artistic expression. In this way they escape condemnation by adults. Probably it is simple to understand where the power of a woman is located particularly if we observe Clarisa Pinacola's words:

> ...women are said to carry Luz de la Vida, the light of life. This light is located, not in a woman's heart, not behind her eyes, but en loss ovaries, in her ovaries, where all the seed stock is laid down before she is born (for men, exploring the deeper ideas of fertility and nature of seed, the cross – gender image is the furry bag, the scrotum. (Pinacola 33)

Although Pinacola is writing about the Mexican woman, her ideas are important to our psychoanalytic interpretation of the question of gender in Gikuyu children's oral poetry. We agree with her that one is a woman from conception and remains so throughout her life unless there is a medical or accidental interference with her being. According to Pinacola, a woman knows herself only as a woman. This ties up this epistemological perspective to the politics of the body. However, the symbols of light and life correspond to the ideas of knowledge and conception. According to Pinacola, a woman's understanding and power are located in her body. The body knows and knows truthfully. As we study the sampled children's oral poetry, we are constantly reminded that the society is eager to control the power and knowledge of the girl child. This attests to the male fear that women might restore power to themselves. The basis of this fear is expressed in an oral narrative that reveals that the Gikuyu community once used to be matriarchal and was headed by a woman despotic ruler called Wangu Wa Makeri. Men wrested power from

women through a clever subterfuge. Therefore, when in the poetry we see a grandmother restraining and informing the girl child about her value and virtue, we realize that women still have power reigning within their being as women. In the poems, grandfathers are portrayed as amorphous and preying on young unsuspecting girls. Therefore, poetry can be seen as a form of social control and expression of the potential restoration of women leadership. Experience from watching the sampled oral poetry indicates that girls and children have sufficient social awareness to advocate for empowerment and equity.

In terms of the body, the ovaries are in competition with "fury bag" which is the scrotum. Pinacola uses the word furry to give manhood an aggressive and violent attribute. The argument is that women, and by extension girls, have the potential power through which "the head seed can be soaked to soften it, to help it break open and thrive" (Pinacola 34). This means that it is a woman who has the crucial control of life. In the sampled poems, the girls state clearly that sex which is the gateway to procreation and fusion of the gender should only be practiced within marriage. That is why in the song Kamithi or Petticoat the girl is asked whether she was married when she was doing the work i.e having sex. Men are depicted as hard and requiring some softening. This perspective is also voiced in the book, The Second Sex where the writer Simone De Beavoir observes that woman ".... is defined and differentiated with reference to men ...she is incidental, the in essential as opposed to the essence. He is subject, he is absolute – she is the other" (De Beavoir xvi). She explains the physical absence and the cognitive perception that makes a woman rate herself low. It is true she is operating from a psychoanalytic tradition and propagating the theory of male envy. However, in the sampled oral poetry the children

reconstruct more acceptable images of the gender differences. The girls show their commitments to hold their dignity as girls whatever the cost. The contemporary reality deconstructs this image. The girls themselves use poetry to show that male aggression can be countered by women as is the case in poem 13 where the girl attacks an indolent, potentially violent man.

NDATHIRE NDUNYU	**(I WENT TO THE MARKET).**
Ndathire ndunyu,	I went to the market
Kugura tucahi-ii	To buy black beans,
Na tucuri twatuo-ii	And the edges for tying the black beans
Ngiuka ngihagira	I put them on the fire
Kamuira tutherukite-ii	And before they started to boil
Ngithii gucacia tuku	I went to look for firewood,
O kahinda o kau	Then at exactly that time,
Wakagurani agiuka	Wakagurani entered,
Ngimwira Wakagurani,	I told her, Wakagurani,
Ndume nyumba yakwa	Get out of my house,
Akiregarega	He refused,
Ngihuria	I grabbed a torch (burning piece of
gicinga ii	wood)
Giki kia muhugu ii	The one of the *[2]Muhugu tree
Ngimuhugurania iromo	And turned his lips round

[2]. Muhugu – a type of indegeneous wood that burns well
*2. Wakarugugru – A small black bird that hovers in the sky

This poem describes a situation where a girl manages to assert herself in difficult circumstances and take control of her situation. It implies that gender roles can be muted or functionally reversed. That some of the poems fail to adhere to the conventional male images and reconstruct their own (poem 15) is an important milestone in the gender assertion of selfhood. This study, therefore, finds that roles which are socially constructed and skewed can as well be socially deconstructed and re-constructed in the opposite direction. It is important for scholars to encourage children to perceive themselves in a more positive and balanced manner.

5.5 Conclusion

This short chapter has forced us to revisit our thinking about theory. From a Marxist tradition, the Gikuyu children could be seen as marginalized people who are engaged in a power struggle for the control of their material base. In this case the children's consciousness is seen to be shaped and influenced by material ideologies and structures. To some extent, this is true particularly in the sense that the male category in these oral poems seems to compete for material control. However, not everything has something to do with the material considerations. There are human feelings, which from the Freudian perspective are located in the mind. An individual's subconscious is filled with secret wishes and tensions among the id, the ego and the super ego. Children are always striving to be in conformity with the tradition, which represents their super ego. However, the realities (ego) and secret desires (id) are difficult to expel from the psyche of

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the children. Therefore, children create their poetry and in it they live the secret lives of their desires and escape the condemnation of the society that demands conformity. In many of the cases we have described in the last four chapters, including this one, children are seen striving to liberate themselves from their psychic domains. The hidden message is that while we might not be perfect, as children we must live our childhood with all its imperfections, disparities and influences. This study therefore deserves a psychoanalytic interpretation. But this is as far as it goes. A deeper examination of specific language and actions in the oral poetry renders itself to a postmodern interpretation. As Jacque Derrida, the major proponent of the deconstruction postulates, there are no firm truths, centers or totalities. While an ethnopoetic examination demands that we see the meaning of the texts within the ethnic community from which they are derived. Deconstruction questions the basis on which these interpretations rest. The sampled children's oral poetry in its subversion seems to question the very basis on which the adult demands are made. Some of the poems deconstruct themselves and provide for multiple interpretations of the same or similar texts. Therefore, even as we conclude this section on gender, we must take stock of the pre-ceeding chapters as far as the theoretical orientations are concerned.

In terms of gender and power relations we must admit as has been exemplified in the oral poems, that there is no total compromise in matters of meaning or practice. We have seen children performing poems that depict their own gender as evil, uninformed or obsolete. Therefore, we cannot say that the girls are advocating for gender equality entirely. The poems have depicted weaknesses of institutions both formal and informal. Home, school and family have been ripped open to reveal their imperfections. Yet children

have celebrated the virtues and condemned the vices in an ethnopoetic conception. These are young people who are grappling with feelings about love and life. They are caught up in a complexity of values and visions. An interpretation can only rest on a specified perspective. For example, the fact that the oral poems depict a girl child who is brutalized, exploited, dehumanized and degraded does not end there. We must look at the loud silences that depict the boy child as neglected as the empty spaces in the texts. The boy child seems not to have a voice in the oral poetry for the girl child has dominated the textual space. This is the feeling of this study as we go to the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is based on the ideas that Gikuyu children's oral poetry artistically dramatizes the dynamics of oral expression and attempts to make the art a rich and vibrant avenue through which children construct and reconstruct themselves. Conformity and subversion are important concepts since the context between the two antithetical ideas translate into a path through which children's perspectives are illuminated. The community has hierarchical structure of authority. Adults occupy a privileged position and children are expected to obey and emulate them. However, children are not always complacent. Instead of upholding the traditions of the community they challenge adults and assert their own claims. Children cannot fight their own battles against adults openly since they would be silenced. They cannot also isolate themselves either since they need the care and protection of responsible adults.

Consequently, they find their solace and security in the subversive expression and celebrations of their childhood in the poetry. Adults, on the other hand, understand children's poetry as an appropriate pedagogical tool that can be used to mould these children into responsible adults. Children contest this conformity and reveal its weakness, thus subverting the very values that they are supposed to maintain.

The Gikuyu children's oral poetry then revolts against the authority vested on adults and children. The children insert their own values, attitudes and perspectives. However, even this bias in the poetry is a kind of veil since children sometimes go beyond borders. They invade the adult territory of taboos and limits and deconstruct the same. Therefore,

this study has visited the artistic sites of conflicts and tensions and conducted an analysis of the social and aesthetic expressions that have enriched children's poetry.

This study is informed by the idea that any literary artists, including the young ones, use language to communicate and express their culture. Culture is not static and every language changes to accommodate cultural dynamics, needs and feelings. There has been a lot of interest and debate about a "return to the source" and Ngugi has submitted that only by a return to the roots of our being in the languages and cultures and heroic histories of the Kenyan people can we rise up to the challenges of facilitating the creation of a Kenyan patriotic national literature and culture (Thiong'o: 1997)

Aesthetics is part and parcel of cultural expression that the study finds entrenched in the sampled children's oral poetry. Therefore, the study has embarked on an investigation of the attributes and strategies of language and determined that they constitute significant literary and aesthetic expression. This has been done through specific identification and analysis of a wide corpus and repertoire that are the focus of our analysis. It has been noted that although the artists are free to make linguistic choices, they are influenced by the social realities that contextualise them. Thoughts and feelings are expressed through language and behavior. The children's attitude and judgment are revealed through language. Therefore, the sampled oral poetry has been found to express diversity and depth of meanings and experiences that are unique to children yet revealing some inconsistency about adults. Indeed, foregrounding, deviation, ambiguity and paradox are examined in view of the variety of the contest between conformity and subversion that confront children.

This study rests on the firm understanding that reliable raw data can only be derived from performance as a primary source. In addition the study has deduced, from the field research conducted, that linguistic choices like the ones we discussed in our previous paragraph are immensely reinforced and clarified by paralinguistic expression in the communicative event we call performance. We concur with Okpewho 1989:1, Dinnwgan 1970:2 and Foley 1995:7 that performance in oral literature gives the genre its distinctive life-line.

We have looked at the spatial, temporal and social concerns in performance. Notable is the observation that performance includes delivery and reception of the oral poetry. On many occasions adult representation forms the audience that receives the poetry. Subversion then becomes a useful tool for cultivation of solidarity among children whose conformity is at variance with that of adults. Subversion also helps the children artists to camouflage and safely launch attacks on adult values. The few adults, who understand children's perspectives or voices in the texts, either reconsider their conformist adult positions or contain their hostility to children's values since they are expressed within poetic license. This study has determined that performance enriches our vision and scope of understanding. It is in performance that we have seen the incongruity in what is said, what is meant and what is understood. The study of performance based on the sampled texts has given us useful insights into the audience and confirmed our expectations that they are entrenched in the dynamics of culture.

At first we were not confident of finding subtle thematic concerns in the children's oral poetry. Our further exploration of the sampled poems revealed that oral poetry is a rich

avenue through which both the traditional and contemporary social consciousness of the Gikuyu is communicated. The oral poetry is a powerful representation of the social discourse of the community. The social issues and concerns reveal the children's world-view within a backdrop of adult values. In the tension between conformity and subversion we identified identity, morality, creativity, beauty and culture as some of the social matters that are subverted to insert and reflect children's perspectives. In a variety of ways the study established that there are instances when adult interests are obscured to give room for the children's.

Some of the children performers were very young. The older ones were not expected to have sufficient exposure to understand and comment on gender matters particularly in areas such as sex, which is a taboo subject among the Gikuyu. Contrary to this expectation, the study was impressed by the breadth and intensity in which children understand gender matters. In the sampled poetry, children have demonstrated their understanding about boys and girls and even men and women in their society. Their expositions and explications about gender within a social environment have reflected the variety, conflicts and reconciliation that are inherent in gender relations. The Gikuyu community seems to have established mechanisms of gender control that have placed the girl child in a subordinate role. A girl's worth is seen as an appendage to a boy or a man. Respect and dignity are further evaluated and influenced by a girl's willingness and ability to submit to the conscience and dictates of the patriarchal order. The sampled poetry abounds with experiences girls have to undergo before they become acceptable to the community. In most cases, the education of the girl is traditionally supposed to induct her

to her gender role. This oral poetry embodies values and ideas that are held, treasured and desired by all members of the community.

When the girl child finds that the values in practice are demeaning and oppressive to her dignity and identity, she resorts to finding ways of expressing her position. These avenues include language and performative strategies entrenched in the social consciousness of the community. Notable are the various loud silences about the boy child. Their absence bears testimony to the fact that the male gender is an endangered species in terms of power relations and gender space.

Interwoven with language and style, performance and social setting, social consciousness and gender and power relations is the important question of theory. Initially, the study considered ethnopoetics as a sole and sufficient theoretical tool for analyzing the data. Thorough library and field research reveals that poetry as work of art is best analysed through several theoretical orientations. Therefore, the study has employed ethnopoetics, deconstruction, hermeneutics and psychoanalysis to critically analyse the data. The study has benefited from Chinua Achebes postulation in Hopes and Impediments:

> … and theories are no more than fictions which help us to make sense of experience and which are subject to confirmation when the explanations are no longer adequate. (143)

Although the study has explored a range of theories and approaches it has arrived at a conclusion that while most theories seem apparently opposed, they at one time or another intersect in the revelation of meaning. In this era of postmodernism we cannot fail to

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recognize that, truths, centers, canons and standpoints are for-ever changing or shifting with time. That, probably, is the only ground on which we base our theoretical approach.

This study has, therefore, been an important journey to an area that today attracts a lot of interest. In this era of human rights and children's rights, it has been rewarding to journey through the minds and experiences of children in the performed oral poetry. We have no doubt that we have achieved the four objectives we sought. We have demonstrated through the critical analysis of the community's oral poetry that language and style express both conformity and subversion, the interaction between performance and the social setting expresses conformity and subversion, social consciousness and pedagogical values that are encapsulated in the art and we have engaged an interpretation of how the two antithetical concepts manifest gender relations.

Having achieved the set objectives, we wish to make the observation and recommendation that the following areas need further exploration by way of research:

- Oral poetry as a social discourse in a rapidly changing world.
- The semantics of the Gikuyu Language as employed in oral poetry.
- Oral poetry as an expression of inter-cultural attitude.
- The role of children in the pedagogy of adults.

Our belief is that this study makes an important contribution to the intertextuality of disciplines within the framework of our objectives. It is hoped that the study will stimulate more interest in children studies. Clear understanding of our childhood helps to shape and enrich our adulthood. Finally, we cannot claim to have written the last word in the study for we know that a road never ends; we only reach our destinations.

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APPENDICES

7.0 POEMS

Gikuyu version	English translation
1. NYAKARATHA	**NYAKARATHA**
Nyakaratha, nyakaratha,	Nyakaratha, nyakaratha,
Niturathane, niturathane.	Let us shoot one another x2
Na wandatha, na wandatha,	And if you shoot me x2
Ngaguthinjira, ngaguthinjira.	I will slaughter for you x2
Nacio nyama, nacio nyama,	And the meat x2
Itwarirwo aturi, itwarirwo aturi.	Be taken to the smiths x2
Nao aturi, nao aturi.	And the smiths x2
Mature tuhiu, mature tuhiu.	Will make knives x2
Natuo tuhiu, natuo tuhiu,	And the knives x2
Tuthece matu, tuthece matu.	Will pierce the clouds x2
Namo matu, namo matu,	And the clouds x2
Makairie mbura, makairie mbura.	Will make rain fall x2
Nayo mbura, nayo mbura.	And the rain x2
Imerie nyeki, imerie nyeki.	Will make grass germinate x2
Nayo nyeki, nayo nyeki,	And the grass x2
Irere njau, irere njau.	will make the calf grow x2
Nayo njau, nayo njau,	And the calf x2
Ikagura muka, ikagura muka.	Will buy a wife x2
Nake muka, nake muka,	And the wife x2

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Akiye ucuru, akiye ucuru.	Will make the gruel x2
Naguo ucuru naguo ucuru,	And the gruel x2
Tugakundukia, tugakundukia,	We will drink
Kunduuuuu.....!	Kunduuuuu!

2. NJERI KOMA	**(NJERI SLEEP)**
Njeri koma	Njeri sleep,
Wakoma ningugwita	If you sleep, I will call you,
Ngurugire ngima ya cukari	And cook stiff porridge made of sugar
Waigua ngita nu ucio uramihura	If you hear the guitar, Who is playing it
Ni Jonisoni, Jonisoni Mwangi	It is Johnson, Johnson Mwangi
No ungimwona, eyohete tai	But if you see him, he has put on a tie
Na kiratu gia	And a pair of shoes of
twerovu thate.	Twelve thirty.

3. CIRU NA MWANGI	**(CIRU AND MWANGI)**
Ciru na Mwangi, matindaga makirira	Ciru and Mwangi keep on crying
Makiuranagia Ciru twarutanire ku,	Asking themselves where did we get each other from?
Twarutanire, mutitu wa Ngai ndeithia	We found each other at the forest of Oh God help me.
Ngiaga munjoi na ngiaga munyumagaria	Where I had nobody to pick me or escort me,
Ndoimagaririo ni cucu wa turukana	I was escorted by the grandmother, of Turkana,

Wari na nyondo ciagambaga korikori	With breasts which sounded korikori,
Naguo mucati wagambaga cerecere	And the checkered skirt sounded cerecere
Ngiheo irio ni ngoma ngiuga ndikuria	I was given food by the devil, I said I was not going to eat
Ngiheo cai ni ngoma ngiuga ndikunyua	I was given tea by the devil, I said I was not going to drink,
Ngirwo kiinuke tutithaithaga ndurika	I was told to go home"we don't sooth proud people"
Kahinda o kau G.K ikihura honi	And at that time , a G.K hooted,
Ngimirugamia ikinjira ndirugamaga	I stopped it, It told me I do not Stand (stop)
Ngithii cukuru ngikora nikwiingirirwo	I went to school, I found they had entered,
Na arutwo meka mathabu	And the children had done arithmetic
Matigairie ingirishi , ngira mwarimu	They had only left English, I told the teacher
Mwarimu nduhure narua	Teacher beat me quickly
Nduhure narua baba ndakae kumenya	Beat me quickly so that my father may not know
Tondu angimenya no hurwo na njurio	If he knows, he will beat me and leaf me hanging up the firewood lark,
Itara, Curio!	Be hang!

4. WAMUCUHA-II	**(OH SWINGER)**
Wamucuha-iii, maii mahia ii	Oh swinger! Water has boiled
Maitika thii	And has spilled over
Na ndikunde iii	And I have not drank
Waciariirwo o hau.	You were born there !

5. KAIRITU GAITU	**(OUR GIRL)**
Kairitu gaitu, ndingikaruma yai	Our girl, I would give her an egg
Ndingikaruma itambite gutherera	I would not bite without having flowed
Na ndatherera njoke njihurie fomu	And when I flow I will fill the form
Mutumia uyu ndirakorire ari na nda	I found this woman with a stomach (pregnant)
Ngicoka guka mwana aranjita baba	when I came the child is calling me father
Cori ndingitwo baba ni mwana	Sorry, I can't be called father by a child
Itaciarite	I have not fathered
Mutumia uyu ucarie maundu meri	you woman chose between two things
Akorwo ti uguo mwana tumuikie kioro	If not we throw the child into the Latrine
Wakwa ndangiikio kioro	Mine cannot be thrown into the latrine
kaba tucoke nake	It is better I go back with the Child.

6. GRICI WA MUCONI	**(GRACE OF MUCONI)**
Ndingihikio ni griciwa muconi	Let me not marry grace of muconi
Ni kairitu kahana gatumia	She is a girl who looks like a woman
Ndathii kundu ngaheo bisikuiti	When I go to a place, I am given biscuits
Na ndahuna ngekirirwo kiondo	And when I get satisfied They are put in a wooven basket
Cucu ndume wone, guka akiina daci	Grandmother come out, and see grandfather dancing,
Korogoco kahana gacikwea.	Korogocho! He is like a square.

7. WANGWARE	**WANGWARE**
Wangware, wangware,	Wangware, wangware
Kururia ciana	pull the children
Tukanyue mai	We drink water
Thiririka –ini.	At the waterfall

8. NDARATHIRE NA RUGURU	**(I WENT TO THE WEST)**
Ndarathire na ruguru	I went to the west
Ndirakora nduru ikomii	I found a squirrel asleep,
Ndiramira nduru ukira	I told it, squirrel, wake up
Ndiuragaga mari toro ii wa !	I don't kill the ones who are asleep
Nayo nduru iranjokeria	And the squirrel answered,

Amba utige kunyuraga	First don't kill me
Nguhe uhoro wa thwariga	I'll tell you about an antelope,
Thwariga iri nyama njega	An antelope has delicious meat,
Na iri mukonde wa ruhui ii wa!	And the cover of panga ii wa!

9. HE HE HE MUNDU NGUTUMA	**I WILL SEND SOMEBODY**
He he mundu ngutuma kana ni marua?	Will I send somebody or is it a letter?
Angeithirie Sami, kamwana kanini	To greet Sammy for me, a young man,
Ka wanjiku mwendwa,	Son of Wanjiku my lover,
Na amwire atiriri sweet marindandi	To tell him beautiful sweet,
Riria wandigire ni ndonire kangi ga guikara nako,	When you left me, I found another to live with me
Nginya Ngai akenda	Until God decides

10. KANYONI KA MIU MIU	**(THE BIRD OF MIU MIU)**
Kanyoni ka miu miu	The bird of miu miu,
Ndatunga Waceke ena nyondo ndungu,	I have met Waceke, with big breasts,
Ngimwira ndiniria,	I told her to cut for me,
Ndingigutiniria,	I can't cut for you,
Niwangururirie,	You pulled me,
mugongo ukiunika,	Until my back peeled off,
Ta wa hiti nguru	Like an old hyena's

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Hiti cia kabete niciakorokire	The hyenas of kabete have become
	very greedy,
Ngutunga Waceke ena nyama njithi	I met Waceke with raw meat,
Ikamwira ndiniria	I told her to cut for me,
Ndingigutiniria	I will not cut for you
Niwangururirie	you dragged me
Mugongo ukiunika	Until my back peeled off,
Ta wa hiti nguru	Like an old hyena's

11. CERA CERA	**(SERAH)**
Cera, Cera, Cera witu	Serah, Our Serah,
Niugoka gwitu wiyonere,	Will come to our place, and see
Ngari yakwa guthondeka,	My car which I have made
Ndarutire Kairo na maguru	I found it at *Cairo having walked
Ngirariria Karatina	and slept at Karatina
Ndakinya kimandi ikirugama	When I reached Kimandi,it stopped
Ikihura honi maita matatu	It hooted three times,
Ikihura ringi igithii Nyiri	It hooted again, and went to Nyeri.

12. WAIGOKO	**WAIGOKO**
Ii wakiri,ii wakiri,	Oh wakiri, Oh wakiri,
Toina karu nguhe uhoro,	Kneel down so that I can tell you

Nguhe uhoro, nguhe uhoro	I tell you the news x2
Baba atindaga akinuma	Father abuses me every day
Akinuma, akinuma	Abusing me x2
Akiningiriria waigoko	Forcing me to marry Waigoko,
Ii waigoko, ii waigoko	Oh waigoko, oh waigoko
Mundu uri nderu githuri	Somebody who has hair on his chest,
Ii githuri, ii githuri	Oh chest, oh chest,
Ndangireka ndiyethere	Can't he let me choose x2
Kamwanake kanyoroku	A young man,
Kanyoroku, kanyoroku	Straight and slender
Karinumaga ngakira	Who will be abusing me But I will keep quiet
Ii ngakira, ii ngakira	Who will make me keep quiet
Ngainamia maitho ta mburi	Look down like a goat
Ii ta mburi, ii ta mburi	Yes like a goat x2
Kana ngondu ikiria nyeki	Or sheep eating grass.

* Cairo – Capital City of Egypt

13. NDATHIRE NDUNYU **(I WENT TO THE MARKET).**

Ndathire ndunyu,	I went to the market
Kugura tucahi-ii	To buy black beans,
Na tucuri twatuo-ii	And the edges for tying the black beans
Ngiuka ngihagira	I put them on the fire
Kamuira tutherukite-ii	And before they started to boil
Ngithii gucacia tuku	I went to look for firewood,
O kahinda o kau	Then at that exact time,
Wakagurani agiuka	Wakagurani entered,
Ngimwira wakagurani,	I told her, wakagurani,
Ndume nyumba yakwa	Get out of my house,
Akiregarega	He refused,
Ngihuria gicinga ii	I grabbed a torch (burning piece of wood)
Giki kia muhugu ii	The one of the *[1]Muhugu tree
Ngimuhugurania iromo	And turned his lips round

14. WAHU	**WAHU**
Wahu, ruga mutaro,	Wahu, jump over the trench,
Na ucokanirie	And jump back,
Mbembe ni nguru	Maize is ready (mature)
Ningukunira	I will harvest for you,

[1]. Muhugu – a type of indegeneous wood that burns well
*2. Wakarugugru – A small black bird that hovers in the sky

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Na nguhihirie	And roast it for you.

15. *[2]WAKARUGURU	**WAKARUGURU**
Wakaruguru, ringa gicukia,	Wakaruguru dance gicukia
Umbe muhiki,	And win a lady,
Wa iciara rimwe,	Of one birth,
Undigithirie mucacaiko	And desist from lamenting to me

16. BIA YAGERA HAHA	**(A RAT HAS PASSED THROUGH HERE)**
Mbia yagera haha- ii ii	A rat has passed through here
Yenja ngwaci haha- ii ii	And has dug a sweet potato here
Yarugira haha- ii ii	And cooked it here
Yariira haha- ii ii	Eaten it here,
Yenja ikwa haha-ii ii	Has dug out yam here,
Yahihiria haha- ii ii	Has roasted them here,
Yarira haha- ii ii	And eaten them here,
Yakinya haha yoiga atiriri- ii	And when it reached here it said
Reke ngarore gathima	Let me check whether my well exists
Karia gakwa kana no gatuire	
Kwe! Kwe! Kwe!	Kwe! Kwe! Kwe!.....

17. *CENGERE CEMA	**(CENGERE CEMA)**
Nicengerecema ii cema uuthi	It is cengerecema yes cema uuthi
Uuthi, uuthi kagira	uuthi, uuthi, kagira
Ii kagira …..kagira nyenje	kagira….agira of cockroach,
Ii nyenje…..nyenje wairi	cockroach…… cockroach wairi
Ii wairi…….wairi urinda	wairi ……wairi who is the stomach
Ii nda……..nda ya mwene	stomach…….stomach of the owner
Ii mwene……..mwene matute	owner ……..owner of the handled
Ii matute ……..matutira thi	The handled…handled on the ground
Ii thi ……thi ya murogi	ground ……ground of witch
Ii murogi …….murogi ciari	witch……witch where they were
Ii ciari …….ciari gatara	Where they were they were in the nest
Ii gatara……gatara hunyu	nest…..nest of vultures
Ii hunyu…….hunyu kinguu	vultures…vultures which are exposed
Ii kinguu…….kinguira iringi	exposed……exposed to another
No ho cioriire,	It is there they got lost.
18. MATUYA	**MATUYA (FRUITS)**
Cucu hingurira	Granny open for me
Ndikario ni kaihu	So that I may not be eaten by a wild animal
Koima naku ?	Where has it come from?

* Cengerecema – A kind of game which is based on play of sounds within a text

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Naitherero	From the west
Kuria ki?	To eat what
Matuya	The fruit
Mari murio?	Are they sweet
Ta uki	Like honey
**Hite, hite, hite, hite	Hite, hite, hite, hite

19. THENYA	**THENYA**
Wanginyira ki?	Why have you stepped on me?
Kwenda ihenya,	For the love of running,
Ii waremwo?	What if you are defeated,
Ngete baba na maitu	I will tell father and mother
Mandugire ngima ya muhia	To cook ugali made of millet,
Wamucuha-ii, mai mahia ii	Oh swinger, water has boiled,
Maitika thii na ndikunde-ii	And has spilled over and I haven't drank,
Waciariirwo oo hau!	You were born right there !

20. AIRITU A MURIMO	**GIRLS FROM YONDER RIDGE**
Airitu a murimo uria, uuii,	Girls from the yonder ridge,
Mutiuke tugatue njahi,	Why don't you come to pick the peas,
Aca, mwene ari kuo,	No! the owner is around.

** Hite – Sound showing surprise

Mukuga ndarikuo ariha,	You say he is not in where is he?
Nyakairu niaranjirire,	Nyakairu told me
Mundu ni akindirie ithenya,	Let a person be contented with what she has,
Na uria ungi akindirie ithenya,	And the other be contented,
Njara cia aturi ni njuru,	The tinsmiths ways are bad,
Wuii,wuiyiiya ,	Wuii wui and again
Na ringi wuiyiiya!	Oh! Oh! Oh! My oh my!

21. NYONI CIA RIERAINI	**BIRDS OF THE UNIVERSE**
Nyoni cia rieraini ni ciinaga	Birds of the universe sing
Mahua ma mugunda makamera	Flowers in the garden grow
Nanii, Naniii ngakena	And I, and I feel joy
Muno ni uhoro ucio	A lot because of that

22. GITIGI	***GITIGI**
Gitigi kia macani,	Gitigi of tea,
Kiuma ikumbi,	Has been to the granary
Kwendia macani,	To sell tea
Gakari ka indindi.	The vehicle of **indindi !

23. ZOOME	**ZOOME**

* Gitigi – A track used for carrying raw tea leaves from the collection points.
** Indindi – Sound made by the tea track

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Zoom, zoom nituthii	Zoome, zoome and away we go,
Tuthii cukuru no kunene	To school and away
Gatagati, zoom, gatagati aundu a Kenya	Central zoome, central nation, central,
Gatagati andu a Kenya	Central, and the people of the nation,
Gatagati, gatagati	Central, central,
Ndathire ndunyu, gatagati, tatagati, gatagati	I went to the market, central, central
Ngigura marigu	I bought some bananas,
Gatagati, gatagati	Central, central
Ngiuga A, B, na C	I said, A, B, and C,
Koguo uri nja ya ithako	So you are out of the game.

24. MAITU	**MY MOTHER**
Maitu witu na wanyu	My mother and your mother
Marahura nguo	were washing the clothes,
Maitu ahe maitu wanyu	My mother gave your mother
Gitama kia nguo	a piece of cloth,
Kiari kia rangi mutune	Which was coloured red…red,
Kwo uguo wi nja yaithako	So you are out of the game.

25. WACIURI	**WACIURI**
Waciuri hingurira mburi, mburi,	Waciuri open for the goats
Waciuri hingurira mburi	Waciuri open for the goats
Waciuri hingurira mburi	Waciuri open for the goats

Tuthii tukariithie , na hau githaka-ini	Let us go to graze in the bush
Twakinya hau githaka-ini, hau,	When we reached at the bush,
Twakinya hau githaka-ini	When we reached at the bush,
Twakinya hau githaka-in	When we reached at the bush,
Mburi ikiguruka ikianjia kuina ndaci.	The goats become mad,
	and began dancing

26. NJOGU	**ELEPHANTS**
Njogu mwathire munyu,	Elephants who went to Munyu
Murokua murothira	May you die and perish
Mwatigire ciana micii-ini ya hiti,	You left the children at the houses of hyena's
Mwana ekurira akerwo kira	A child cries and he is told 'Keep quiet!'
Ningi akarira akerwo kira	And again he is told 'Keep quiet!' Nduthii
ukarume utende.	Go and bite the heel
wa njogu	of an Elephant,
ukiririirie	and sit patiently

27. MUIRITU UYU.	**GIRL**
Muiritu uyu umaku na wathii ku,	Girl, where have you come from,
	and where are you going?
Ndathii ikamba, gikuyu ndigacoka,	I have gone to Kambaland,
	I will never return to Kikuyuland,
Kundu mbembe ithimagwo na marebe	Where maize is weighed with tins

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Nacio mboco igathimwo na tuihuri,	And beans are weighed with half calabashes
Cimbi curia cimbi curia marinda x2	Shake, shake the skirts x2
Mwarimu witu niahurirwo thurutia,	Our teacher, let people salute for him No
ti iria ya Wagaturu	But not the salute of a squirrel

28. HIURIA IRINDA.	**SWING THE SKIRTS**
Hiuria irinda nginya kamithi thiinii x2	Swing the skirt, up to the inside of the pettycoat x2
Ndikuhiuria gakwa ni kagacire x2	I will not swing mine, it has become stained x2
Kagacaga ukiruta wira uriku x2	what work were you doing when it got stained x2
Ndarutaga wira wa ndagitari x2	I was doing the work of a doctor x2
Warutaga kai wari muhiku x2	you were working were you marriedx2
Ti kuhika ni kumateithiriria x2	I was not, but only helping them x2
Wamateithagia we ugateithio nuu x2	You helped them, who will help you?
Ningateithio ni aria ngakora mucii x2	I will be helped by those I will get at Home x2
Ndaga gukora ni ngateithio ni Ngai x2	If I don't find, I will be helped by God.

29. UNGIENDA GUTHOMA	**IF YOU WANT TO READ**
Ungienda guthoma,	If you want to read
Buraimari cukuru	In Primary School
Wambe uthii nasari	First go to nursery school

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Umbe meciria	And build your brain,
Teacher ni mwarimu,	Mwarimu is a teacher
Chair ni giti,	Giti is a chair
Window ni ndirica	Ndirica is a window
Arm ni guoko.	Guoko is an arm.

30. IMWE, IGIRI, ITHATU.	**ONE, TWO, THREE**
Imwe, igiri, ithatu,	One, two, three,
Nindona njuki,	I have seen a bee
Inya, ithano, ithathatu,	Four, five, six
Yatonya mwatu,	It has gone to the hive
Mugwanja, inyanya,	Seven, eight,
O kahinda kau,	just that time
Kenda, ikumi, njuki ikiumbuka.	Nine, ten, the bee flew away.

31. MWARIMU	**TEACHER AT THE HOSPITAL**
Mwalimu witu teacher,	Our teacher (mwarimu) teacher
Niweka weka uru bad,	you have done bad,
Ni kwira ciana, children	For telling children (ciana) children,
Ithii mugunda, garden	To go to the garden,
Ikaiye mbembe maize	To steal maize (mbembe) maize,
Itari na rutha, permission.	without permission (rutha)
	permission.

32. MUTHURI	**TINSMITH**
Muthuri ugutura ii	Tinsmith, smithing
Cangarara ii ca,	Cangarara ii ca
Tura tura narua ii	Smith, smith quickly
Cangarara ii ca,	Cangarara ii ca
Mukaguo niaciara ii	Your wife has delivered
Cangarara ii ca	Cangarara ii ca
Aciarithio ni irimu ii	assisted by the ogre
Cangarara ii ca	Cangarara ii ca
Wagaciairi nduke tuhiuhio ii	just delivered mother, take the body building food,
Cangarara ii ca	Cangarara ii ca
Na warega ngaria ii	and when you refuse, I eat.
Cangarara ii ca	Cangarara ii ca.
33. NGUI	**DOGS**
Ngui cia karathe	The dogs of karathe
Cirathire karathe,	Went to karathe
Iraiya mahindi,	And stole the bone
Nindakufunga cero.	And I have put you in a cell
34. WAKAGUKU	**PUPA**
Wakaguku, kwanyu nina ku,	Pupa where do you come from?

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Nina ruguru,	From the Western side,
Nina itherero.	From the Eastern side

35. GITI	**CHAIR**
Giti giki kia Wacera witu	This chair of our Wacera
Nguona ngarira,	When I see it I cry,
Ndaririkana niakuire ngarira,x2	When I remember she died, I cry x2
Ngutuma Njeri ngarira	I will send Njeri, I cry
Akageithie redi, ngarira,	To greet a lady, I cry
Ngutuma Njoki ngarira	I will send Njoki, I cry
Akageithie huni, ngarira.	To greet the gent, I crys

36. MWARIMU ARI THIBITARI	**TEACHER AT THE HOSPITAL**
Mwarimu akurirwo igego ari thibitari,	The teacher had his tooth removed at the hospital
Agiuka akiriraga cukuru	He/she has come to school crying,
Na ithui tukimwira atiri,	And we told him this,
Tiga kurira,	Don't cry,
tondu wi mwarimu mwega wa ciana,	since you are a good teacher of children,
Na ti ciana cia githumo	And not the children of Kisumu
Kana Nairobi,	or Nairobi,
Ni ciana cia Kibubuti cukuru	But the children of Kibubuti school.

37. WATATA	**WATATA**
Watata watiriri	Wtata watiriri
Nyumba itu ni njega,	Our house is good
Watata watiriri,	Watata watiriri
Ndingicinda itu,	It can't be better than ours
Watata watiriri	Watata watiriri
Tukwenda mundu umwe	We want one person
Watata watiriri	Watata watiriri
Mukwenda uriku,	Who do you want
Watata watiriri	Watata watiriri
Tukwenda Wambui,	We want Wambui
Watata watiriri	Watata watiriri
Mutikimuiyire,	Come for her
Watata watiriri	Watata watiriri
Nitumuiyirite.	We are coming for her

38. MUCERE	**RICE**
Mucere ni mwega	Rice is good since it is eaten
niuriagwo na giciko x2	with a spoon x2
Riria nguria, nengereria giciko x2	When I am about to eat, bring the spoon x2
Na cai ni mwega niunyuagwo na ngirathi x2	And tea is good, it is drank

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	with a glass x2
Riria ngunyua, nengereria ngirathi x2	When I drink, bring me the Glass x2

39. NDABIBI	**CLOVER**
Ndabibi ii, ndabibi	Clover, clover,
Kamutararinga	Following a bee line
Ringa, ringa, wandindi	Play Play Play a violin
Ndi, ndi, ndi, bai	Ndi, Ndi, Ndi, bias
Bai, bai, ngurumi	Bai Bai bending
Ngurumi, ngurumi,	Bending, Bending
Thengeria kaguru kau kamwe.	Remiove your small leg.

40. KARAGITA	**TRACTOR**
Karagita ka muthungu	A tractor of a European
Karathirire maguta,	It ran out of fuel
Karagamba atia	And what noise did it make?
Ciri, Ciri,	Ciri, ciri (sound of money)
No utoge.	You can produce smoke.

41. NDUTU	**JIGGER**
Ndutu wandiire thiage naki?	Jigger, since you infected me, with

	what did you expect me to walk with?
Wandora moko	When you look at my hands,
No matumbi ma ng'age,	You see the jiggers' eggs,
Wandora maguru	When you look at my legs,
No matumbi ma ng'age	You see the eggs of jiggers
Wandora thunu	If you look at the buttocks
No matumbi ma ng'age	Only the eggs of jiggers
Wandora maitho,	When you look at my eyes,
No matumbi ma ng'age.	You see the eggs of jiggers
Wandora matu,	When you at my ears,
No matumbi ma ng'age.	Only the eggs of jiggers,
Wandora maru,	When you look at my knees
No matumbi ma ng'age	Only the eggs of jiggers,
Wandora nyariri,	When you look at my feet,
No matumbi ma ng'age.	It is only the eggs of jiggers

42. GITHIMA	**WELL**
Ndina githima giakwa, giakwa,	I have a well, mine, mine
Ndiragurire hwaii, hwaii,	I bought it yesterday, x2
Na riu ni gituiku tuiku	And now it is torn, torn,
Ngugutwara kwa bundi, bundi,	I will take it to the tailor
Gigekirwo kiraka, raka,	It has been mended, mended,
Gitindi, Kimonde, ecikei twa!s	Gitindi, kimonde, S.K take!

43. RINGA KIUNDURI	**DRINK KIUNDURI**
Ringa kiunduri,	Drink kiunduri (calabash)
ndunyu,	Market
Ndatigiirwo ni Awa,	left to me by my father,
ndunyu,	market.
Na mugendi wa ithe.	And the Mugendi
Ndunyu.	(a drinking vessel)
	of the father, market
44. KAMITHI.	**PETTY COAT**
Kamithi, kamithi, cwa,	Petty coat, petty coat cwa,
Nigatarukire, cwa,	It got torn torn cwa
Gakiaga gutumwo, cwa,	It was not mended cwa
Na uthi mweru, cwa. X 2	With new thread-cwa x2
45. NDUTURA	**D0VE**
Ndutura ireketie kiama ,uummm.	Doves have sent an emissary
Kumeria mbiru ikahata ,uummm	Swallowed fruit and then became choked

Na igacoka gutumiria, uummm	They then put them in their mouths without swallowing
*Kamunyonge, kamunyonge	Kamunyonge, Kamunyonge
Ndutura, kamunyongex2	Dove, Kamunyonge x2
Na kamau, kamunyonge	And Kamau, Kamunyonge
Ndutura ,kamunyongex2	Dove, Kamunyonge x2
Na wambui, kamunyonge	And Wambui, Kamunyonge
Ndutura, kamunyongex2	Dove, Kamunyonge x2
Na wanjiru, kamunyonge	And Wanjiru, Kamunyonge
Ndutura, kamunyongex2	Dove, Kamunyonge x2
Na Waithira, kamunyonge	And Waithira
Ndutura, kamunyongex2	Dove, Kamunyonge x2

46. KONDO	**BASKET**
Nyambaga kondo gakwa ii ii, x2	I start making my basket x2
Wone ngiamba ii, Amba, x2	See me start it, start x2
Nyambaga kondo gakwa ii, x2	I start making my basket x2
Wone ngiamba ii, Amba. x2	See me start it, start x2
Wone ngiambura ii, ngiambura, x2	See me undo it, undo it x2

* Kamunyonge – a word denoting working together, communalism

47. NGUKU	**HEN**
Nguku, nguku, nguku,	Hen, hen, hen,
Ruta mburi ithano	Contribute five goats
Na nii ndute ithano	And I produce five
Tukagure ugimbi,	For us to buy sorghum
Kwa muka muikamba,	From a mkamba (kamba person)
Guku, guku, guku,	Hen, hen, hen
Guku, guku, guku, gu!	Hen, hen, hen.

48. NU UCIO	**WHO IS THAT**
Nu ucio wathuria,	Who is that who has farted
Arotararika,	May he smell,
Ta gitarariki,	like a locust,
Gikiuma mutitu,	Coming from the forest
Kwenja marima,	To dig holes
Ma guthika nyina,	To bury his mother
Karirui huii,	Oh shinny one
Thumbi ya nugu	The crown of a monkey.

49. TURAMU	**THE PENCILS**
Turamu twiri, turamu twiri,	Two pencils, two pencils,

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Ka mwarimu kamwe,	One for the teacher,
Na gakwa.	And mine

50. WANJIRU	**WANJIRU**
Wanjiru ndume wenjwo,	Wanjiru come out to be shaved
Ngenjwo ruciu,	I will be shaved tomorrow
Ndaruma ndundiro,	When I have eaten a sausage of Gicure,
Ya Gicure, Gicure areitai,	Gicure is calling himself and
Ageta wanjiruii,	Then calling Wanjiru
Ndingikamiruma	I will not eat it

51. NGUNYIRI MARA	**SMALL ONE**
Ngunyiri mara ii,	Small pinch, small pinch ii
Twakunyaniire ii,	We pinched together
Ndaikia gakonde riko ii,	Where have I thrown the piece
Gacura, cura ii	For the scavengers,
Kunyukia kabia , kunyu!	Just take take the small rat pinch!

52. ONEI MATHANGU	**LOOK AT THOSE LEAVES**
Onei mathangu maria	Look at those leaves
Marathaka na ruhuho	Playing with the wind
Na ithui nituthake	Let us also play with the wind
Na ruhuho x2	With the wind!

53. MUTHURI UKURIMA	**MAN CULTIVATING**
Muthuri ukurima igwa-ini	Man cultivating in the sugar cane field
Nduke tucenjanie ngwaci	Come and let us exchange sweet potatoes
Yakwa na ya kamande	Mine and Kamande's
Kamande amande yake	Kamande to flatten his
Anjiarire Kairitu	And bear me a girl friend
Ndirwitage humeke	I will be calling "Humeka"
Humeke ii Samweli ii *como.	Humeke !! Samweli, como
54. KANYONI KANJA	**WEAVER BIRD**
Kanyoni ka nja, cwi, cwi,	Birds of outside cwi, cwi
Kanyoni ka nja,	Birds of outside
Gekugwa nja na mitheko,	Falls down with laughter
Ndakoria atiri,cwi,cwi,	When I asked it cwi, cwi
Ndakoria atiri,	When I asked it
Nyamicore watinda ku,	Bright coloured bird where have you been
Ndatinda kairi, **cwi,cwi,	I have been to Kairi

* como – is pun. It means bring
** Cwi cwi – sound made by the small bird

Ndatinda kairi,	I have been to Kairi
Ngiaragania mbirigiti,	Spreading grains to dry
Na mbirigiti,cwi,cwi,	And the grains, cwi, cwi
Na mbirigiti, tutinainukia magoto,	And those grains I did not bring home any
Magua iria-ini,	They fell into the lake
Magua iria-ini gwa cucu wa kamerukia,	They fell into the lake at grandmothers
Meruuu…	Who swallows them - meru…

55. WAKIMUNYA	**WAKIMUNYA**
Wakimunya nondimunya,	The uprooter, I will uproot
Ndaringiire iriuko iroge,	I crossed at a poisioned watering place.
Iriuko iroge no ria Ngai,	A poisioned watering place belongs to God.
Nawe Njoki, hae, hae,	And you Njoki, hae, hae,
Wirikie kuo hae, hae,	Dive there! hae, hae
Wiyethere , hae hae,	And search for, hae hae
Gaku kega, hae, hae,	A handsome good one, hae hae
Na wakona, hae, hae,	And if you find, hae, hae,
Ndugatige, hae, hae,	Don't leave him, hae, hae
Nawe Kamau, hae, hae,	And you Kamau hae, hae,
Wirikie kuo …….	Dive there ---------- etc
Nawe Njeri hae, hae,	And you Njeri----------hae, hae,
Wirikie kuo ……	Dive there----------etc.

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56. MWARIMU	**TEACHER**
Mwarimu John,	Teacher John
Ndona kanyamu,	I have seen a thing
Geka uguo, ii	It did this way !!
Geka uguo, ii	It did this way
Kaingira irima.	And entered into a hole

57. WAKARUCI	**TINY LUCY**
Wakaruci, wakaruci,	Tiny Lucy, Tiny Lucy
Mbura niroira, ii wakaruci,	Rain is falling ii Tiny Lucy
Nitutungiirie ,tu, tu, tutu,	It is about to rain, tu, tu
Nginyite gitende kia mbirira,	I have stepped on a heap of dung,
Utugi wa mbura tu, tu, tu.	The generosity of rain tu, tu, tu.

58. KA LUCY GAITU	**OUR TINY LUCY**
Kalucy gaitu,	Tiny Lucy,
Nuu wakuriria,	Who has made you cry
Githi ti mami,	It is not my mother/mummy
Wanjigirira,	Who has accused me falsely,
Ati ninyuite,	Of drinking milk
Karia ka mwana,	The milk of the baby
Na ndikundite,	But I have not sipped,

Ona kanini,	Even a little.
Nderorire, na gicigio,	I looked at myself, in a mirror
Gia thahabu,	Made of gold,
Ngiona Ngina wa Kenyatta,	And saw Ngina, Wife of Kenyatta
Kimnyore, kimnyore ki!	Kimunyore, kimunyore.

59. MAITU	**MOTHER**
Maitu ndume wone,	Mother come out and see
Unjire niki kiria	And tell me what that is
Kiaraga ta riua	That shines like the sun
Na kiaraga utuku	And it shines at night
Wanjiru uria ni mweri	Wanjiru that is the moon
Na waraga utuku.	And it shines at night.

60. NDUTURA	**DOVES**
Ndutura inya niciombite	Four doves had perched
Handu kamuti-ini	on a small tree
Niciainaga rwimbo rwega	They were singing a nice song,
Rwa gukenia ciana	To make children happy
Uuuuua uuua	Uuu wa, uuu wa,
Uuu wa ii emi	Uuuuuua ii emi

61. WANDUNDU	**WANDUNDU**
Wandundu ii ndume ii	Wandundu ii come out ii!
Wone ii kurima no ngurima x2	And see! me cultivate,x2
Na Kamau ,	And Kamau
Kurima no ngurima	To cultivate I wil cultivate
Na Muthoni,	And Muthoni,
Kurima no ngurima	To cultivate, I will cultivate
Wandundu ii ndume ii	Wandundu, ii come out ii.
Wone ii kurima no ngurima.	You see !! To cultivate, I will cultivate

62. MWARI UKURIMA	**DAUGHTER CULTIVATING**
Mwari ukurima rima uuii	The daughter who is cultivating,
Ukarora iguru ukarora matu-ini x2	You look up, look at the sky, x2
Ta uri na mburi yaku njeru	As if you have your white goat
Uhithitie matu-ini	Which you have kept in the clouds,
Mwathii kwa nyina wa kiguta	You have gone to the mother of the lazy one x2
Uuii murariire ki x2	Oh what did they eat?
Turerirwo tukoine ngu uuii	We were told to fetch firewood.
Tuhihie magua nyiri	To burn the caterpillars
Mwari ukurima rima uuii	Daugher who cultivate, cultivate uu ii,
Ukarora iguru ukarora matu-ini x2	You look up look at the sky,

Ta uri na mburi yaku *njeru	As if you have your new goat
Uhithitie matu-ini.	Kept for you in the clouds.

63. KIGUTA	**THE LAZY ONE**
Kiguta, kiguta	The lazy one, lazy one,
Giikaraga mucii	The lazy one, lazy one,
Kiaria irio, kiahuna	When he eats and get satisfied
Gikahuria muhu	He scratches the ash,
Kiaroka cukuru	When he goes to school
Mwarimu akihura	And the teacher beats him
Tarara tarara gatumbi,	Tarara, tarara, Gatumbi.

64. KANYONI KA NJA	**SMALL BIRD**
Kanyoni ka nja mirima-ini	Small bird in the hills
Kanyoni ka nja mirima-ini x2	Small bird in the hills
Uka, uka kanyoni ka nja mirima-ini	Come, come small bird o the hills
Thia, thia kanyoni ka nja mirima-ini.	Go, go small bird in the hills

65. NDUNDU	**THE OWL**
Kwi *ndundu iragambaga	There is an owl crying
Muti-ini wa mururi uri iria	In themilky mururi tree the
Yetanaga wakiri, muti-ini	The owl was crying to the agemate,

* Njeru – isa pun. It can mean white or new. Both meanings apply here.
* Ndundu, the owl, is a bird of bad omen. Its cry signifies death

Wa **mururi uri iria, ii uri iria	In the tree of the milky mururi, Oh yes it is milky,
Turamira we ndundu ukira	We told it you owl, rise
we withiire wi wika ii wi wika.	go away, alone, Yes, alone.

66. IRIMU	**OGRE**
Ii irimu riariire Warii	Yes the ogre ate
Ni riuke rindie, ii tinii	Let the ogre come and eat me –
Ni marimu angi,	Oh it is not me.
mena Magongorota	There is other ogres with biceps for
marumia njogu	hitting an elephant.
Ta hiukia, kiuma na kingi	Beat them! A bead and another,
Uthengere njira, ndihitukire.	move out of the way, I want to pass.

67. NINGUGA MBU	**I WILL SCREAM**
Ninguga mbu Kiarie,	Kiarie, I will scream
Uu Kiarie	Uuu Kiarie
Ningumiuga ringi	I will scream again
Uuu Kiarie	Uuu Kiarie
Ooii ooii ***thiari iria imuromo	Ooi, ooi comrade (thiari)
Muarii yariirwo ni mundu muka x2	which has a wide mouth was eaten by a woman

** Mururi, A medicinal tree with milky sap used for healing wounds
*** Thiari – Is a pun – meaning either an agemate or a knobkery (rungu)

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68. MAITU NDUGIRA ITUMBI	**MOTHER MAKE AN OMLET**
Maitu ndugira itumbi	Mother make an omlet for me
Kana ungundie iria	or bring milk andmake me sip.
Ndingihota guthoma ndimuhutu	I can't study when I am hungry.
Hingo ciothe no ngima na	Everyday it is ugali and
Muthere wa mbembe	muthere of maize.
Ndingihota guthoma ndimuhutu.	I can't study when I am hungry.
• *muthere –*	*boiled maize.*

69. NINGUIGUA MARURUMI	**I HEAR THUNDER**
Ninguigua marurumi	I hear thunder
Nindaigua marurumi	I hear thunder
Kai we utekuigua	Why don't you?
Mbura nigutataga	Rain was falling lightly
Nii ni ndainuka	I have gone home.

70. NDORIRIO	**I WAS ASKED**
Ndoririo ngutuo kuu x2	I was asked from which side
Ndoririo ngutuo kuu	I would be named . I was asked
Ngutuo kuu ii	From which side I would be named x2.
Ngiuga nduo kwa maitu x2	I asked I should be named from my
Ngiuga nduo kwa maitu	mother's side. I said I should be
Ii kwa maitu ii	named after my mothers sides.

Kwa maitu irigu ikuru x2	It is my mothers.
Kwa maitu irigu ikuru	My mother's is a mature banana.
Irigu ikuru ii	My mother's is a mature banana.
Ndoririo ngutuo kuu x2	A mature banana.
Ndoririo ngutuo kuu	I was asked where to be named.
Ngutuo ku ii	I was asked what to be named.
Nngiuga nduo kwa baba x2	Where will I be named?
Ngiuga nduo kwa baba x2	Where will I be named?
Ngiuga nduo kwa baba	Yes my fathers.
Ii kwa baba ii	My father's place of many
Kwa baba ngwaci nyingi x2	sweet potatoes my father's place
Kwa baba ngwaci nyingi	of many sweet potatoes.
Ngwaci nyingi ii.	Many sweet potatoes.

71. CUCU WA NJOKA	GRANDMOTHER OF THE WORMS
Cucu wa njoka,	Grandmother of the worms
Niki uraruga?	What are you cooking
Ni ngima njeru,	It is white ugali
Mukiria nau?	With whom will you eat?
Ii na Waithaka?	Yes, with Waithaka
Waithaka e toro,	Waithaka is asleep.
Ii ndimukirie	What if I wake him?
Kamau ii	Kamau iii
Wiha mubira?	Where is the ball?
Niuturikire	It got deflated
Tahuhira njone ci ci ci ci	Inflate it for me to see ci, ci, ci, ci!

72. BABA NDWARA CUKURU	FATHER TAKE ME TO SCHOOL
Baba ndwara cukuru,	Father take me to school
Ngarore kahii gaitu	I go to see my small brother
Karari na ngoro igiri	He was undecided
Kumbika kumbi ku !	Cover, cover Ku!

73. NGURIA NJEREIRUO KU?	FROM WHERE AM I LATE?
Nguria njereirwo ku?	Where am I late from? X2
Njereirwo gwitu mucii	I am late from home.
Ni baba na maitu nio	It is my father and mother

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Mekundumite ngagure	who had sent me to buy sugar
Cukari njuke turuge cai	To bring it make tea
Ii mwarimu witu hura	Oh our teacher cane me
Na uthomithie wega	And teach me well!

74. KARAGITA	**A TRACTOR**
Karagita ni keega	A tractor is good
Kari hinya kuri ngombe x2	It is more powerful than cows. X2
Niko kagucagia	It is the one which pulls logs
Mithaiti kiriti x2	Logs from the forests.

75. GATHIGIRIRI	**SMALL ANT**
Gathigiriri tiga ngwitiira bara	Small ant, don't boast on the road,
Ninguguthima cikati ya makunia	I will fit you a shirt made of
Naguo mucibi ni mutingoe wa mbia	gunny bags. And the belt will be a tail of a rat!

76. TONDU TWATHII	**BECAUSE WE HAVE GONE**
Tondu twathii twathii kuu?	Because we have gone
Tondu twathii twathii kuu?	Where have we gone?
Twathii kuuria iria-ini	We have gone to see the sea
Twathii kuria iria-ini	We have gone to see the sea.

77. KAIRITU KARUNGARU	**LITTLE UPRIGHT GIRL**
Kairutu karungaru uka	Litle upright girl come so that
ngutume soda ya guthii	I can send you (on an errand).
Nginyuaga nginyirite meciria	And I will go, following the thinker.
Meciria ni muikamba uringu	The thinker is mkamba.
Ringu cianda x2 nindoka	I have come to fetch vegetables
Gutua nyeni, nyeni cia	Vegetables to eat with ugali
kuria ngima na mutu wa jogoo	And jogoo flour.
78. HITI	**HYENA**
Hiti mwana ari ruuo	Hyena, a child is got with labour.
Na uria wakwa wariire,	And the one of mine you ate.
Na uria ungi ukiuna kuguru	And the other you broke a leg.
Ndathire na ya ruguru	I went to the west and found Njeri
Ngikora Njeri akirira	I asked her, what makes you cry,
Ngimuria ukuririo niki, ni	It is Gichuru who makes me cry.
Gicuru wakwa ukundiria	Gichuru lives in Mwimbi
Gicuru atuire Mwimbi, nani	I also live in Mang'u, pulling
Nduire Mang'u, ona ngucagia	my neck like a murugu, like a
Mukingo, ta *murugu, ta murugu	murugu like a murugu stalking
Ukwenja turima,	Man with a hand cultivate
Muthuri uri njara rima tindagiria	Leave some parts for old men,
Athuri, athuri a Kigumo, no ta	Old men from Kigumo, it is like

* Murugu – a bird with a long neck

Mburi kibindi cia mbarika theri	goats, during the time of mbarika,
Cia mbari ya nduiga ii weru-ini	Grow at the bank of a desert,
Kuria ngiki-ini cia weru mirima	oh hills, hibi nyagitheri's sound
Hibi ya nyagitheri ugambaga	like ndiyu hibi!Comrade Hibi!
Ta **ndiyu wathiomo, Hibi!	

79. IMWE, IGIRI.	**ONE, TWO**
One, two turiandu	One two kneel down
Three, four forana,	Three four Borans
Five, six cindano	Five six needle
Seven eight iitina	Seven eight, it is in the buttocks
Nine, ten tengura	Nine ten remove from the fire
Eleven ,twelve twero twa nguku	Elven twelve a hen's thigh

80. WANJIKU KIMUKUYU	**WANJIKU KIMUKUYU**
Ndaathire, ndaathire kuuna kigwa,	I went to fetch sugarcane
Muthenya wari mbura	On a rainy day,
Ngicoka na mucii	I went back home
ngiita karungari ngimwira	and called Karungari, and asked her
ndugira maguta ma gukunjura moni	to make oil for Me, to unwrap the ears,
moni niigukunjara	the ears will be wrikled
thuu-yi Ngicawe	thuu yi ngicawe,
Wanjiku kumukuyu!	Wanjiku kimukuyu

** Ndiyu – A scarvager bird

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81. RIRIA TUKENETE

Riria tukenete

twendaga kuina,

tungiaga kuina

Twatuika ndigiri,

hihi! hiho! hiho! hiho!

WHEN WE ARE HAPPY

When we are happy

We go singing,

if we don't sing,

We would become donkeys

Hiho, hiho, hiho, hiho!

82. KABUI WITU

Kabui witu, nyitira mwana,

Ndwarire thoguo,

Tunyama tutu, nyuma guthumba,

Kwa muka muiru,

Urutaga ruta, o ta mwana

OUR KABUI

Our Kabui, hold the baby for me

So that I may take to your father

this meat which I had gone to procure

From a black Lady

Who lets of saliva Like a baby.

83. NGURUTA NGWARE KU?

Nguruta ngware ku? x3

Ndwarire mwarimu,

Mwarimu angiruma x3

No gwatuka nderu

WHERE WILL I GET GUINEA FOWL

From where will I get guinea fowl, x3

To take to the teacher

If a teacher eats x3

His beards would crack

Egwatukio niki? x3	Why would it crack? X3
Ni murio wa ngware.	It is because of the deliciousness
	of the guinea fowl.

84. KAGUKU KA PAULU	**PAUL'S HEN**
Kaguku ka Paulu ni kaumire kiaga	Paul's hen came from the henhouse
gagiteng'era na hau kiaga-ini,	It ran there towards the hen house
Paulu agitengera na hau kiaga-ini.	Paul ran towards the henhouse
Koko koko kaguku kau gakiuga,	Koro, koko, the hen said,
Koko koko gakirira na kieha	Koro, koko, it cries sorrowfully
Koko koko na ndigacoka ringi	Koro, koko, I will never do it again

85. WAGACUCU	**SMALL GRANDMOTHER**
Wagacucu, tiga kurira ii	Small grandmother don't cry, yes,
Niurahikirio ii	You got married, yes,
Ni gathuri ii	To a small old man, yes
Koi kurima ii	Who knows how to cultivate
No ungikarora ii	If you look at him
No ungikarora ii	If you look at him
Na urore huko ii	And you look at a mole
No undu umwe !	They are similar.

86. MBURA URA	**RAIN FALL**
Mbura ura ura	Rain fall,

Nguthinjire gategwa	I will slaughter for you a small bull
Ge gwa cucu githaku-ini	Which is at granny's bush
Ni gegukua nikunora	It is about to die of fattness

87. WAKARIRU	**WAKARIRU**
Wakariru cua cua tuthii	Wakariru, move faster, we go
Ii hai huu ii hai huu ii huuiyi	i hai huu ii hai huu ii huuiyi
Wakariru ndiuma	Wakari I didn't want to go
muthii ngu	to fetch fire wood
Ii hai huu ii hai huu ii huuiyi	i hai huu ii hai huu ii huuiyi
Wakariru ndiri muthegani,	I don't have anybody
muthagani	to help to meet me half ways.
Ii hai huu ii hai huu ii huuiyi	i hai huu ii hai huu ii huuiyi
Muthagani wakwa	One who will come for me
ni itugi cia nyumba	Is a pole supporting home
Ii hai huu ii hai huu iii huuiyi	i hai huu ii hai huu iii huuiyi

88. NDUTURA NDUME	**DOVE COME OUT**
Ndutura ndume	Dove come out,
ndume ii ndume x2	come out, yes come out x2
Wambui wa Kamau	Wambui daughter of Kamau,
nindagutuma	I have sent you

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Wira wakwa	To my commund work
wa jumamosi	on Saturday
Wa kuhuraga ngoci	Work of playing ngoci
Iiyi iiyi *ngoci x2	Iyi, iyi ngoci. x2

89. MWARIMU	**TEACHER**
Ndathire gucaria mwarimu	I went looking for our teacher
Witu na ndinamwona	and I didn't get him at home,
Kwao mucii, nderirwo	A was told he had gone to teach
Niathiite guthomithia	At a school in kiriko village
Cukuru ya itura ria kiriko	You have told uncle,
Wera mama wera wera	You have told uncle
Wera na muiko ucoke	with a cooking stick and after that,
Uringe na iteke.	You give it a kick.

90. NJOGU IKUITE MWANA	**ELEPHANT WHICH IS CARRYING A BABY**
Njogu ikuite mwana,	The elephant carrying a baby
Yakinya kirima-ini	When it gets to the hill
Yoigaga mwana ndekia	It was saying,

* Ngoci – a full swinging of the waist that sends the skirt high up to the admiration of other boys and girls.

Mwana ndekia, aii nii	Untouch me you baby,
Mwana ndekia, aii nii	Untouch me you baby,
Mwana ndekia, aii nii	Untouch me you baby,

91. MBIA ITHATU NDUMUMU	**THREE BLIND MICE**
Mbia ithatu ndumumu	Three blind mice,
Mbia ithatu ndumumu	Three blind mice,
Cigutengera	See how they run,
Cigutengera	See how they run,
Imwe yari ya mutumia	One is a female
Igiteng'eria mutumia	they run after a woman
Igiteng'eria mutumia	they run after a woman
Ari na kahiu kagoci	A woman with curved knife,
Gatinagie miting'oe	A knife to cut the tail
Mbia ithatu ndumumu.	Three blind mice.

Drama Festival Poems

GIKUYU VERSION	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
92. CUKURU ITU	**OUR SCHOOL**
Thukuru itu ni njega,	Our school I good-
Twirutaga guthoma wega,	We learn how to read
Mwarimu witu mwega,	And our teacher is good
Aturutaga guthoma wega.	She teachers us how to read properly
Guthoma ni kwega muno,	Reading is very good
Ningi ukamenya mathabu muno,	And you know how to do mathematics
Mundu akohiga muno.	And you become very intelligent
Muthomi mugi mbere,	A bright learner first
Aikagia ritho kabere,	Looks at the future
Akeyonera o kabere,	Andsees earlier enough
Kana he gatithio mbere.	Whether there is a problem
Gaka konagia mundu gatithio,	This shows one a pause
Haria uhoro ukwenda gutithia,	Where a pause is needed
Niguo mundu ndakae gutithia,	So that one doe not pause

Haria uhoro utegutithia.	Where a pause is not needed

93. ONA INGIRUO NUU	**EVEN IF YOU ARE TOLD BY WHO**
Ona ingiruo nuu kana nuu,	Even if I am told by who or who
Ndingitikia biu,	I will not believe fully
Ati urumathi nduri kiuu,	That that the cave is at Kiuu river
Muira wakwa ni Rucuu,	My witness is Rucuu
Uria twathire nake ruguru,	Whom we traveled with to the west
Tugithii kuria thigukuu,	Where we went for a holiday
Twi njira akihingwo kuguru,	On the way he stumbled
Akigwa agithikwo ni rukungu.	And he fell down and was buried in dust

94. NI MURAIGUA?	**ARE YOU LISTENING**
Thi-ino ni ng'onyoku,	This world is crooked
Thi-ino ni yagonyokire,	This world has become crooked
Ni irugwo tondu maria mari kuo,	It should be skipped because of what there is
Ni maritu na nimakararirie,	Is difficult and contrary
Itikagia ta njuguma.	Believe like a club
Ukona kahii,	You see a small boy

gatangiihuria nyama mukuha,	Young with flesh that cannot fill a needle
Gekumundia thigara na ino ingi,	Lights a cigarette with another one
Gakoimia gicoka na,	And feels very strong
gatingieherera mukuru njira.	And will not give elders the way
Ukona kairitu,	You see a small girl
Gegutumwo ni nyina nduka-ini,	She is sent by the mother to the market
Gakamuringira githuri,	She beats her chest
Kia mwena umwe,	On one side
Na gakamuhiuriria thende.	And swings her buttocks at the mother
Ukuona muthuri gitonga,	You see a rich old man
Oimitie nda,	With a big stomach
Egukua kairitu kanini,	He gives a ride to a young girl
Mathii makarie riica,	To go and make merry
Ii maica,	Ii fun
Hau hangi tutigire njau	The rest should be left unspoken

95. KURUKURU NDUMA-INI	***KURU KURU IN THE ARROW ROOTS**
Kurukuru nduma-ini,	Kuru Kuru in the arrow root garden
Aca irabu-ini, nyumba-ini,	Oh no, in the bars, houses
mucii-ini ati ni ihenya,	In the city, hurriedly

* Kuru kuru ndumaini – refers to a sound made by a bird that lives in an arrowroot garden

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Ihenya rinene ria kunana,	Hurry hurry to do naughty things
Gwetha rwimbo runene,	Looking for the big dance
Ati ni ndumburu ya coro,	This Ndobolo of coro
Ni ya coro kana ni ya toro?	Is it for coro or sleep
Ndumburu ithukitie andu mitwe,	Ndobolo has spoilt peoples heads
Munini na munene,	Big and small
Ikamakumbakumba ta ngima,	It has wrapped them up like ugali
Ciana ciroiga, ni itu x3	Children say, it is ours x3
Nao aciari, ni itu x3	Parents say, it is ours x3
Ii natwo tucucu? tutiramenyania.	And the grandmothers, they don'tknow
Tikaba mumburo,	It is better **Mumburo
Handu ha ndumburu ya coro,	Instead of ndobolu of coro
Ni ya coro kana ni ya toro?	Is it for coro or sleep
Ndumburu iraikia andu njuui-ini,	Ndobolo is throwing people into rivers
Cia mawaganu, magatherera,	Of naughtiness, they swim
Makagwa, magakururio ni kiguu,	Fall and are carried away by floods
Kia mukingo,	Of HIV Aids
Uui! Uui!	Uui uui
Iyo niyo ndumburu ya kieha?	Is this Ndobolo of sorrows?
Mutangimenyerera mugarurire ya coro,	If you don't take care and change this Ndobolo

** Mumburo – A dance for young boys

Ikumuringithania imutungumanie,	It hits you and throws you down
Mwiigue mwi biti ithathatu,	You come to and find yourself six feet under
Tiri-ini kwega kwega.	In the soil singing "kwega kwega'
	So stop this Ndobolo of childishness
Gitigei ndumburu ya wana,	We sing in our Gikuyu dances
Tuini gikuyu gitu,	Mm. it is well
Mmm. Niwega	

96. MWATHANI NGAI	**LORD GOD**
Mwathani Ngai ningenaga muno,	Lord God I am happy
Ngicurania we uria utarii,	When I think of who you are
Hii! Kai Ngai ni wa mageganiа ii	Hi! God is magnificent
Taikia maitho miena yothe,	When you look at all sides
Wone mageganiа ma wira wake,	And see the wonders of God
Kuona kahuti karia kanini.	He sees every small leaf
Gathigiriri, na tunyamu	Ants and other animals
twothe twa iruka ciothe.	All of different species
Twothe ni Ngai wa tumbire	All those were made by God
Ngwa riria ikugamba,	Thunder when it roars
Njata riria igukenga,	Starts shining

* Machozi ya 'simba' - Tears of a lion – means changaa

Ciothe ikoragwo,	All of them are cursed
Nikwaga kumucokeria ngatho.	Because they are not thanking him
Baba na mami,	Father and mother
Tondu ni munjiraga thii kanitha ri,	Because you tell me to go to church
Hihi nimuthiaga	Do you go to thank
Gucokeria Ngai wanyu ngatho?	Your God
Baba okira athomage ngathiti,	Father wakes up to read the newspaper
Aikarakara akoiga,	Then after a time he says
Ndathii kurathima wira	I have gone to bless by work
na *machozi ya shimba.	With 'machozi (tears) ya simba'
Ucio nake ni mami okira,	And then my mother wakes up
Athiaga kwa nyina wa Ciru,	Goes to mama ciru
Agacoka akoiga, nogete,	When she comes back she says she's tired
Ona no huruke.	And needs to rest.
Ucio nake ni muiritu,	And then the girl
Arutaga tuwira twake na ihenya,	She does her work in a hurry
Ucio, niathii kuria maica.	And off she goes to make merry
Ni wega	It is well

97. NGARAGU	**FAMINE**
Uui! x2 ng'aragu! x2	Uui x2 Famine x2
Aciari, maria ngima mari oiki,	Parents, have eaten all ugali alone
Makahutia ciana ciao niki?	And their children are hungry
Aciari aa… hunia-I ciana cianyu.	Parents aa, give food to your children
Airitu a cukuru marate mbau,	School girls are throwing off the timber
Makoya magoko,	And have taken the off casts instead
Makagera iria ngananie	And passed through forbidden paths
Magakora, uui! hiti – ati hiti.	And meet, uui hyenas – yes hyenas.
Turi hau.	We are there
Ii airitu makahenererio,	Yes girls are lured
Makahuna----,	And get satisfied
Mieri ke---- kenda,	Ni ---- nine months
Uui! kana kenda.	Uui, when a child is in the stomach
Thigari citiratigia,	Policemen are not leaving
Cihanite hiti wa mutiri gukoroka,	They are like hyenas for their greed
Irarugamia ngari, ikauga------,	They stop cars and say
Wee--- dereva, turenda cai,	You driver, we want tea
Cai mumata wa muhuko,	Thick tea from the pocket

Ati mbeca, kai atari ng'aragu,	Yes money, this is famine
Ng'aragu ya tombo----.	Famine of the brain
It is well	It is well

98. GIKUU	**DEATH**
Gikuu!!! Kai utari tha nama?	Death!! Have you no mercy
Uragia andu niki?	What do you have against people?
Nikii wendaga?	What do you want
Wendaga atia wee---?	What do you want …?
Ukoraga andu mendaine,	You kill those who love one another
Mwanake na muiritu,	A man and a girl
Nama ukomiriria kurenga njira,	And you cut off their way
Ukanuta umwe wao, ugathii nake.	You remove one and go with him/her
Utiagaga ucio ungi na kieha,	You leave the other one in sorrow
Thina wa ngoro na maithori,	Sorrow in the heart and tears
Makhana maai,	Tears like water
Akorwo unyuaga maithori gikuu-ii,	If you drink tears, death
Kai utari wa nyotoka?	Have your thirst never quenched?
Gikuu x 2	Death x2

Ii kana, nako ri, ukoragia ki?	And that little baby, what have you against it
Kana kanini ka rukenge,	And now both baby
Gatari na thahu, gatheru ngoro,	Without sin, pure in heart
Ugakanyita ugathii nako,	You catch her and go with it
Ugatiga nyina na kieha.	You leave her mother in sorrow
Gikuu x 2	Death x2
Ii cucu nake uramuria ki?	And grandmother, what have you against her
Uramunyita urathii nake,	You got hold her and go with her
Uratiga guka na kieha,	And leave grandfather in sorrow
Atari mumurugiri, mumutirithia,	Without anyone to cook for him or companion
Arirugagirwo kamit nuu?	Who will be cooking for him 'mukimo'
Ona gacuru?	And porridge
Gikuu! x 2	Death?
Kai wiendete atia	Why are you so selfish
Umagiriria kuiya muthuri,	You dare to steal a husband
Na mutumia wake magatigana,	Separating him with his wife
Ciana ciao itari na areri,	Their children without anyone to bring them up
Citari na irio, mwihoko na gikeno,	Without food, hope and happiness
Magacitiga ci ciana cia ndigwa.	Leaving them orphans

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Gikuu! x2	Death x2
Wi muthuri kana wi mutumia?	Are you a man or a woman
Tingikuhe kondo kana kamwati---	We give you a goat or a ram
Nigetha ndukangue nii.	So that you don't carry me off
Ni wega	It is well

99. MUKINGO	**HIV AIDS**
Mukingo x 2,	HIV Aids x2
Ni uri tha,	Do you have mercy
Uhenereirie andu ngiri na ngiri,	You have lured thousands and thousands
Na no urakinyirana na aria angi,	You are still going for more
Aciari aitu,	Even our parents
Mareka mauhiki matheru kanithaini,	Are wedding in holy matrimony
Makonia muingi, nimatuika,	And show the crowd that they have become
Kindu kimwe indi ku?	One but how?
Thutha wa mweri umwe,	After one month
Mami akona baba ndaratigia,	Mother see that father is not good
Akanjiriri kwihaka fair,	She starts applying fair & lovely in the face
Hina agekira mini skirt,	And wears mini skirt
Agacuria mbeti kiande,	Throws the bag across her shoulders

Na kiratu ki nguhiuha ngithii ku.	And high heeled shoes
Akoimira tauni.,	She goes to the town
Akona mwene,	She gets a partner
Makanjiriria kuri maica- ii maica,	And they start being merry, merry
Kiro giathira ii,	And when she becomes old
Mukuru agacoka mucii.	She comes back home
Agacokerera baba	She comes back to my father
Agikinya agakora baba	When she comes back she found that father
Niagiire na gacungwa kangi,	Has found a sweet orange
Hindi iyo mami ngingo,	And by this time mother's neck
Igucukite ta big-G.	Is long as a big G
Haro igakiambiriria	Fighting starts
Baba aikia ngundi,	Father throws a punch
Mami akami broken,	Mother blocks it
Nacio ciana cikauga,	And the children say
Uui! kwenda!	Uui Go!
Nita France hindi ya World Cup,	It is likefrance during the world cup
Reke ndigire hau tondu--,	Let me leave it there for
Maingi ni thumu.	Much is poison
Ni wega	It is well

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100. WUI ACIARI

Wuii! X2 aciari aitu,
Mwareka tuure mutwiroreire,
Nawe baba mwnyua, njohi,
Wi munini, ukaragia,
Miario miuru, mbere ya ciana.

Wui! X2 aciari aitu,
Mwaareka tuure mutwiroreire,
Nawe mwanake wanyua bangi,
Wi munini, na niui mwiri waku,
Ni hekaru ya Mwathani.

Wui! X2 aciari aitu,
Mwareka tuure mutuiroreire,
Nawe muiritu ukoiga,
Ndungitaarika wi mugima,
Ugekira mini skirt na mikato,
Ukauga ati ndungitarika – wi mugima,

WUI PARENTS

Wui x2 Our parents
Are we going to get lost while you watch
And you father drinks alcohol
You are young and you speak
Bad words in front of the children

Wui x2 Our parents
Are we going to get lost while you watch
You young man you smoke bang
You are young and you know your body
Is the temple of the Lord

Wui x2 Our parents
Are we going to get lost while you watch
And you girl says
You cannot be advised because you are grown up
You wear a mini skirt and slits
You say you cannot be advised because

Wi mugima!	You are gown up
Ni wega	It is well

101. THIBERO

Ii ni ndai ngumugwatia ii	I will give you a riddle
Kana ni thibero?	Or is it 'thibero'
Ni tondu ndi muhingice,	Because I am stranded
Ni uhoro uyu wanyu.	Because of your behaviour
Kuuma athuri, nginya atumia,	Old men, even women
Anake ona airitu,	Young men and girls
Na ciana iria iraciarwo.	Even the very young being born
Wakirinyaga, wakiri mbiroiru,	God of Kirinyaga, god of Kirimbiroiru
Kai ruriri ruru, rwakigarurirwo niki?	What has trnaformed this society
Nyakiru arehe kimonimoni,	The English men brought English language
Hakiri ikiandanduka.	The brains expanded
Nakio githomo giki kimute,	And this education will lead you astray
Menyai wega ati,	Know very well that
Utakanyuiriire, ndoi ke rita.	Those who have not experienced nothing
Kigira kiri mwene ii gitiagaga,	That things that has an owner is safe

Naguo mwere ii,	And the millet
Ugethagwo ugethawo na ngetho.	Is harvested using a harvester
Athuri mwatuire njohi irio cianyu,	
Inyui nainyui njamba njithi,	And you young men
Ti inyui mukuite mburi tatha,	You are the ones who have cause for alarm
Anake airitu mweyagire kiene biu.	Young men and girls have become irresponsible
Muiritu waheneka biu--,	Young girl you are cheated
Nii ngwendete ota icungwa	I love you just as I love oranges
mweri-ini wa mugaa, nguonaga,	In the hot month (January) I see you
ngoro yakwa igathii mid-term,	My heart goes on mid-term
Itakuonete ona irio itirikaga.	When I don't see you I don't eat
Numaga igacama tiri.	I taste and the food is like soil
Muingi wothe wa kanitha,	All the people in the church
Cokaniririai hamwe,	Please come together
Omundu na nyeki yake,	Everyone to his grazing ground
Ni tondu, ita ritari ndundu,	Because those who are not united
rihuragwo na njuguma imwe.	Are defeated using one club
Kaihu na gaicukuru,	Everybody, everywhere
Tutuohe na ndigimata wega,	The ourselves with strong ropes

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Tugutungatire we Ngai.	In the service of God
Ni wega	It is well

102. MUKINGO	**HIV AIDS**
Ngai x2 mumbi wa iguru na thi,	God x2 Creator of the universe
Uuki nyumba ri,	When you created me
githi to wa njuui,	You know me
Gitoi kimenyaga kierwo.	Those who don't know understand when informed
Murimu murimu muuru ma,	A disease, disease that is very bad
Utari dawa na utari ndagitari,	With no medicine and no doctors
Dawa no gikuu.	The medicine is death
Mukingo x2 woimire naku?	HIV-Aids x2 Where did you come from?
Utari guthurania---,	You don't specialize
Gitonga kana muthini,	Rich or poor
Mukuru kana munini	Old or young
Dawa ri no gikuu.	The medicine is death
Riambere ngiuka,	When you first came here
Thondekete njuiri, nguo njeru,	I had made my hair, new clothes

Na kiratu kia nguhiuha,	And high heels
Ngithii ku?	Where was I going to?
Mukinjira ni ndiratigia,	You told me I was the only one
Aciari akwa,	My parents
Mukinjira ndimurehere nguo,	You told me to bring you new clothes
Ngimwira ndiri wira.	I told you I was not working
Ria keri ngiuka na mutu,	The second time I brought unga
Mukinjira ni wega,	You told me it was good
Na mutinjurie kuria ndaruta,	And you did not ask where I got it from
Mukingenerera ta ndi wira.	You were happy as if I was working
Ria muico, ngiuka hinjite,	Lastly I came when I was very thin
Ndaihitie ngingo,	With a long neck
Ta meretie thambara,	Like I had swallowed a worm
Aciari akwa, mukinjira, pole,	My parents you told me pole sana
Na thii na mbere na wira wakwa.	I continued on with my work
Ri muico ngira andu aitu,	The very last time I tell our people
Njoyai, muthike,	Take me and burry me
Ucio niguo mucara.	That is the payment you and I get

7.I NAMES OF RESPONDENTS

A) CHILDREN

(i) KIBUBUTI PRIMARY SCHOOL

1) Lucy Njeri	Std. 7
2) MaryWaithera	Std. 5
3) Esther Wanjiku	Std. 5
4) Agnes Wangari	Std. 6
6) Peter Ngan'ga	Std. 6
7) Daniel Kamau	Std. 4
8) Fredricak Chogi	Std. 7
9) James Kinuthia	Std.7
10) Joyce Nyokabi	Std. 3
11) Kelvin Ndegwa	Std. 8
12) Peter Kagia	Std. 6
13) Njoroge Earnest	Std. 8
14)Njenga	Std. 3
15)Waweru	Std. 6
16)AnnNjeri	Std. 4
17)Maurine	Std. 8
18) Grace Wambui	Std. 8
19)Masinde	Std 8
20) Kabura Margaret	Std. 8

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(ii) GATUNYU PRIMARY SCHOOL

1) Phylis Njanja	Std. 8
2) Joseph Macharia	Std. 8
3) Samuel Kamau	Std. 7
4) Gibson Irungu	Std. 8
5) Hellen Wanjiru	Std. 7
6) Odhiambo Ngotah	Std. 7
7) RuthMugure	Std. 6
8) Samuel Karanja	Std. 6
9) Francis Ndung'u	Std. 6
10) Nancy Wangui	Std. 6
11) Sophia Njeri	Std. 5
12) Dominic Wanyaga	Std. 5
13) Jemimah Wamathia	Std. 5
14)Jamila Njeru	Std. 5
15) Joseph Mwangi	Std. 4
16) Esther Njeri	Std. 4
17) Faith Muthoni	Std. 4
18) Purity Wanj iru	Std. 4
19) Esther Wangui	Std. 3
20) Peris Wangui	Std. 3

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(iii)GATANGA PRIMARY SCHOOL

1.	Gladys wanjiku	std. 8
2.	Hannah Wanjiru	std. 7
3.	Evans Gateru	std. 8
4.	James Karungu	std. 8
5.	Elijah Kamau	std. 7
6.	Winnie Muthoni	std. 7
7.	Beatrice Wanjiku	std. 6
8.	Grace Withera	std. 6
9.	Eunice Wanjiku	std. 6
10.	Juliah Wambui	std. 5
11 .	Dennis Njoroge	std. 5
12.	Samuel Njenga	std. 4
13 .	Joseph Karanaja	std. 4
14.	Jonah Gichara M.	std. 3
15.	Michel Kimani	std. 3

(iv)GATHUGU PRIMARY SCHOOL

NAME OF PUPIL	CLASS
1. Esther Mbote	8
2. Joy R. Withera	8
3. Naomi Wambui	7
4. Njeri Kungu	8
5. Faith Nduta	5
6. Serah Wambui	6
7. Nyokabi Mbugua	4
8. Irene Njeru	3
9. Maureen Nduta	8
10. Anastasia Wambui	8
11. Zipporah Wangui	7
12. Purity Wambui	7
13. Peter Mbuthia	6
14. Daniel Chege	6
15. Kariuki Ndui	5
16. Daniel Gikonyo	5
17. Peter Kamau	4
18. Benadette Wangui	4
19. Njoki Murigi	3
20. Florence Njeri	3

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B) TEACHERS

(i) KIBUBUTI PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. Mrs Ngigi
2. Mrs Rosemary Njeri Gachomba
3. Mrs. Mbugua
4. Mrs Kamau
5. Mr Macharia
6. Mr Njuki
7. Mrs Mungai
8. Mrs Chege
9. Mrs Jane Mwangi
10. Thomas Njuki Njiru

(ii) GATUNYU PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. Samuel Kimemia
2. Tabitha Murage
3. Macharia Jennifer
4. Beatrice Wanjiku
5. Gladys Mwangi
6. Teresia Mbuthia
7. Njoroge W.
8. Mukundi W.
9. J. Mwangi
10. Maina

(iii)GATANGA PRIMARY SCHOOL

1 . Jane Kuria
2. Geroge Gichohi
3. John Njeru
4. Jane Macharia
5. Margaret Waweru
6. Immaculate W. Mbugua
7. Hellen N. Kigia
8. Christine Mwaura
9. Esther N. Wainaina
10 .LydiaW. Gathinji

(iv) GATHUGU PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. Margaret Githuka
2. John Mukunga
3. Grace Njuguna
4. Rahab Kibuu
5. Margaret Murigi
6. Martin Kuria
7. Alice Ikanyi
8. Alan Njoroge
9. Margaret Gichungu
10. Beth Ngetha

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7.2 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR ADULTS

PART 1

Date of interview_____
School_____
Location_____
Ditrict_____
Occupation_____

1. (a) Which songs/poems did you perform when you were young?

   _____

   _____

   (b) Which ones did you compose yourself and which ones were you taught by others? (Specify)

   _____

   _____

2. The songs/poems seem to be very important to the Gikuyu community? Explain the meaning of the songs.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Do you think these songs/poems can help:

   (c) Children? How?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   (d) Adults? How?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Do you think the children`s and the adults` understanding and interpretation of the messages in these songs/poems agree?.

   Give examples

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5. What disagreement between children and adults` are expressed in these songs/poems

6. How does variation of voice e.g. loudness, whisper, shout; affect the meaning of the song/poem?
(Give title of the song/poem)

7. (A) Do the children understand it when they play roles (representing other people)? In your opinion, how does this affect the meaning and performance of the songs / poems?

(b) Do the children in these poems represent other people in the society?

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7.3 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CHILDREN

PART 1

Date of interview_____

School_____

Location_____

District_____

Gender; boy [ ] girl [ ] (tick one)

Class_____

PART TWO

1. (a). How often do you perform these poems/songs?

_____

_____

_____

_____

(b) Where do you perform them?

_____

_____

2. Of this songs/poems you have performed today:
   (a) Which ones did you compose yourself?

Which ones were you taught by: mother, father, playmates, teachers

_____

_____

_____

_____

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3. What is this song/poem saying?(Title of the poem)

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Do you think this song/ poem can help:
   (i). Children If so how?

_____

_____

_____

_____

   (ii) Adults- If the answer is yes, how?

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. Do you think children and the adults agree on the messages expressed in this song/poem?
   Explain why or why not.

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Think about one of the poems/songs you have just performed and answer the following questions about it
   (ii) Why do children enjoy this song/poem?

_____

_____

(ii) In this poem, the children represent other people in the society. Name the people/person represented by the children.

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. How does the voice (e.g. loud, soft, whisper) affect the meaning and enjoyment of the poem?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7.4 OBSERVATION SCHEDULE FOR RESEARCHERS

Nameof school_____

Date_____

Tick as appropriate

Type of performance

Solo [ ]

Choral [ ]

Para Linguistic features

Gestures [ ]

Posture [ ]

Dramatization

Voice variation

Facial expressions

Other features: Specify

_____

_____

_____

_____

Suprasegmentals

Voice loudness [ ]

Voice length [ ]

Other features of voice: Please specify

_____

_____

_____

Dance [ ]

Circle [ ]

Single file [ ]

Double files [ ]

Participation [ ]

Pupils [ ]

Teachers [ ]

Research Assistants [ ]

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