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# ASPECTS OF ORATURE IN SELECTED GIKUYU POP SONGS

BY

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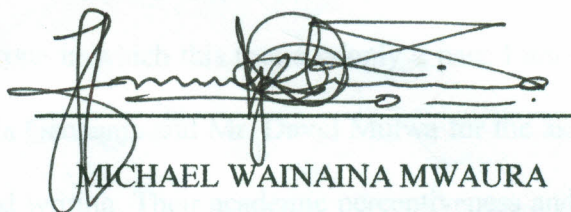
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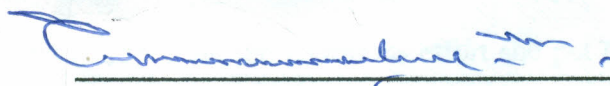
### Declaration

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

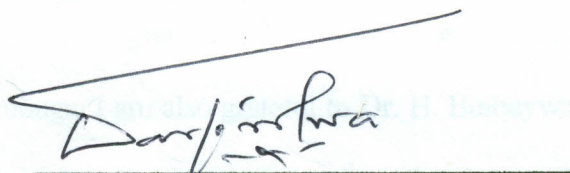


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This thesis has been submitted with our approval as University supervisors.



DR. MUIGAI WA GACHANJA



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-For My Mother-

A fountain of humility, patience and selflessness,

Through which she gave me life,

By which she taught me how to live it,

For which "her children arise up and call her blessed ..."

Prov. 31:28

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### **Abstract**

This study is premised on the notion that Orature is dynamic and that it adapts to changing historical and social realities mediating that reality based on keen observation and interpretation of phenomena. By taking cognizance of this, we sought to investigate the relationship that exists between Orature and forms of contemporary verbal expression particularly the pop song. Our task was to investigate how, why and with what effect aspects of Gikuyu orature have been reappropriated in the Gikuyu popular song.

Aspects of orature, delineated as texts, style, technique and function have been identified in twenty Gikuyu popular songs and discussed in terms of their artistic, aesthetic and communicative significance. The process of change on the Gikuyu orature forms and ways in which these traditional oral forms adapt themselves to the new modes of thought through the pop song are also discussed.

The study demonstrates that, while operating in contemporary situations and committed to, though sometimes limited by, contemporary imperatives, popular music is firmly tethered to a recognisable body of artistic resources in orature which serves as its inspiration and guide. In showing the crucial role that orature occupies in the Gikuyu popular song, this study has in effect reaffirmed the dynamism of orature forms and thus refuted the popular notion that orature forms are disappearing. In addition, this study demonstrates that, popular song is neither a departure nor necessarily a corruption of the traditional folk forms; rather than corrupting orature, the popular song breathes new life into it so that orature becomes relevant and potent in the contemporary society.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The term orature in this study means the traditional African literature, which exists in the African indigenous languages and is related to the traditional society. The literary nature of orature has been given by Bukenya and Nandwa (1984:1) when they say that it can be defined as:

those utterances, whether spoken, recited or sung whose composition and performance exhibit to an appreciable degree the artistic characteristics of accurate observation, vivid imagination and ingenious expression.

The parameters of orature can thus be delineated in the above all encompassing definition. 'Utterance' refers to orature texts which Bukenya, Wa-Gachanja and Nandwa (1997:41) categorise into three broad genres. These are narrative, short form and poetry. The texts can further be divided into various sub-genres. For the purposes of this study we will concentrate on the following sub-genre of Gikuyu orature: myth, proverb, poetry, popular sayings, names, riddles, curses and other stylised forms.

The idea of 'accurate observation' indicates that orature makes important observations and comments about people in a particular society, at a particular place and time for particular purposes. This leads us to the issue of context and function of orature. While the idea of "vivid imagination" points to the creative nature of orature, "Ingenious expression" refers to the style and techniques from which orature gets its artistic and aesthetic appeal.

In this study we are going to use the term 'aspects' to refer to the texts of the genres listed above, context, function, style and techniques in orature.

Two issues about orature are pertinent to this study. First, there has been concern over the fact that orature is on the decline. From her study of the Kamba folksong, Kieti (1989) arguably notes:

as other oral literature in Ukambani, Mwali is fast disappearing. Myali (sic) can only be sung and explained to researchers today by people above the age of forty. Unless research is done soon, the knowledge of Myali will disappear in a few decades (P.10).

In his study of the Gikuyu folktale, Wa-Gachanja also notes:

The traditional story telling sessions have certainly been affected by the socio-economic changes and by the modern communication systems. Whereas storytelling in the traditional society was a major form of entertainment, the radio, the television, the movies and books now provide other sources of entertainment and they are replacing the traditional forms of entertainment, especially in cities (1987:18-19).

Kabaji (1991) in his Masters dissertation entitled The Maragoli Folktale: Its Meaning and Aesthetics echoes similar sentiments as the three studies mentioned.

Secondly, as all other forms of social expression, orature is dynamic. Orature forms carry with them certain characteristics which endow them with dynamism. These include "ways of mediating reality based on keen observation and interpretation of phenomena" (Mugo 1994: XVII). Thus, changing historical and social realities give rise

to characteristic forms of verbal expression which seek to reflect and interpret new phenomena.

It is the "new phenomena", created by the rupture within the African indigenous history and way of life through the colonial experience, that gave rise to the popular song. The term popular song in this study refers to those secular songs associated with the modern African societies; songs which reflect the post colonial realities of urbanisation and modernisation. These songs are generally performed by professionals who lack formal training and usually do not take an intellectual view of their work. Perhaps the most important and distinguishing feature of the popular song is its close relationship with the electronic mass media. Popular song, as we are employing the term, goes hand in hand with the media, is disseminated primarily through the electronic media and is embedded in a music industry based on marketing of recordings on a mass commodity basis. The songs studied are those composed by Gikuyu artists, in Gikuyu language, and by implication for an audience that is conversant with the Gikuyu language.

While we appreciate the fact orature has been on the decline, musicologists assert that the rise of pop music has been "the most significant event in twentieth century music" (Manuel 1988:V). Popular song has special importance as a socio-cultural phenomenon, for it embodies and expresses the social identities which emerge as products of urbanisation and modernisation against the background of traditional systems. The rise of this form of song in Kenya was occasioned by the socio-historical and cultural changes in colonial and post-colonial era. Thus, neither the traditional 'folk' forms of

expression, nor the imported western styles could fully express the changing social identity. Rather, this apparently new type of song sprung up. It syncretised, reinterpreted old and new elements of orature in a distinctive literary expression.

The evolution of Gikuyu popular song must then be seen as paralleling the evolution of the Kenya societies in general and the Gikuyu community in particular. The community inhabits the peri-urban districts to the North and West of Nairobi city. Like most other communities, the Gikuyu were affected in all aspects of life by urbanisation and modernisation. The popular song is therefore one of the most important genres of verbal art in the contemporary Gikuyu society as it plays a crucial role in depicting problems of a contemporary nature. More importantly, apart from reflecting social economic and cultural realities of the contemporary Gikuyu community, the popular song shows a genuine attempt by the artists to "recapture and perpetuate the oral traditions of the people themselves" (Wanjala - ed., 1973:43).

The recognition of the relationship between the ubiquitous Gikuyu pop song and the moribund orature, forms the basis of this study. This study foregrounds and characterises this relationship by analysing twenty selected Gikuyu pop songs. Metaphorically, our study is an in-depth investigation whose thesis is that, by borrowing aspects of Gikuyu orature, the Gikuyu pop song is an interesting case of new wine in old bottles.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

As we shall show in our literature review, there is a lacuna in literary study as regards the relationship between the pop song and orature. While the decline in prevalence and function of orature has been of great concern to scholars and researchers alike, little critical attention has been given to the emergent forms of verbal art, particularly the pop song. Even when researchers focus on the pop song, it is studied for its intrinsic literary value and little, if anything, is done to link it to the traditional oral forms. The recognition that literature is dynamic necessitates research to investigate the link that may exist between orature and the popular song. Moreover, since orature is a vast reservoir of artistic material, we have to understand how contemporary artists have reappropriated this material in their modern compositions. While the use of orature in contemporary written works has been used as criteria of evaluating such works, the pop song has hardly benefited from such a critical perspective.

In a nutshell the problem of this study was to find out how and why and with what effect aspects from Gikuyu orature have been rechannelled and reappropriated in the Gikuyu pop song.

Specifically the questions that this study seeks to answer are: What is the kinship between the Gikuyu pop song and Gikuyu orature? What aspects of Gikuyu orature have been incorporated into the songs? Why have the aspects been used? How have the Gikuyu pop singers manipulated orature to enhance the artistic and aesthetic value and

qualities of their songs? How has Gikuyu orature influenced the portrayal of a contemporary world view in the songs?

## **1.2 Research Assumption**

This research was guided by the assumption that the Gikuyu pop song borrows from all the genres of orature.

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study seeks to:

- (a) Demonstrate how the Gikuyu orature has influenced the Gikuyu pop song.
- (b) Show how the Kinship between Gikuyu orature and the Gikuyu pop song accounts for the literary art in the Gikuyu pop song.
- (c) Demonstrate the dynamism of Gikuyu orature showing how its aspects have been reappropriated in the contemporary pop song.
- (d) Identify the process of change in Gikuyu orature forms and show how these traditional oral forms adapt themselves to new modes of thought through the pop song.

#### 1.4 Justification and Significance of the Study

Several factors necessitated the undertaking of a study of this nature. Firstly, the relationship between orature and contemporary African literature cannot be over emphasised. However, this issue has not been specifically investigated, and as such the assumption that Gikuyu pop song borrows heavily from the Gikuyu orature has not been validated. This study is important in investigating the latter claim.

Previous research on Gikuyu orature right from the beginning of the missionary era has centred on "traditional material" and mostly the narrative. In his well known study of the Gikuyu folktale, Wa-Gachanja (1987) gives a general survey of the vast material that has been collected on Gikuyu orature. He also notes that there has been a tendency to assume "that traditional oral literature remains traditional and is passed from generation to generation without any changes whatsoever" (Wa-Gachanja 1987:8). Were that the case, as Wa-Gachanja correctly notes, traditional material would have no relevance today. Whereas we acknowledge the relevance of this material today, no studies have been done to show how "traditional material" has been adopted to the contemporary verbal art, specifically the pop song. Consequently as Okumba Miruka has noted, this has perpetuated "the stereotyped treatment of oral literature as belonging to the past" (Miruka 1994:96). This study has therefore been motivated by the obvious need to investigate the link between orature and the pop song.

This study is also crucial in reacting to the calls of literary alarmists who have sounded the death knell for traditional African Literature. By demonstrating the central role that orature occupies in the Gikuyu pop song, this work will be significant to literary scholars in understanding and appreciating the dynamism that arises from a mixture of traditional orality and contemporary creativity. By using the pop-song's relationship with orature as a criterion of assessing the pop song, this study provides a foundation for researchers interested in the trends of the pop song. We also hope that the findings of this thesis will contribute to the study of African literature in general.

### **1.5 Literature Review**

By reviewing available literature we have been able to establish that a study similar to this one has not been done before. However, to crystallise our study, we surveyed opinions, approaches and prevailing attitudes towards the relationship between orature and contemporary African literature.

The centrality of tradition in the study of literature has been stressed by T.S. Eliot in his essay "Tradition and the individual Talent," Eliot contends that contemporary artists must be studied in relation to the established literary traditions of the societies they create for. He asserts that no poet or artist of any art has his complete meaning alone. He further argues that the significance or appreciation of any artist "is the appreciation of his relation to dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone, you must see him for contrast and comparison among the dead" (P.15) Eliot sees the procuring and

development of a consciousness of the past as central in evaluating the worthiness of literary art. This study is grounded on this rationale.

There are writers who regard the popular song as an entity that is basically a departure and necessarily a corruption of the traditional 'folk' forms. Kemoli (1989) and Kieti (1989) perpetuate this notion. These are basically scholars who view the evolution of African society from its traditional set up to its modern day constitution as a big blow to the traditional facets of literary expression.

Kieti (1989) argues that modern man is alienated from his community's cultural traditions. Kieti then goes on to wrongly equate the apparent disappearance of traditionally authentic texts and contexts to the demise of oral literature.

Kemoli (1989) in an essay entitled "Oral literature at the crossroads," decries the fact that oral literature has been sidelined in present day Africa. He reiterates the same position espoused in an earlier essay entitled "Ethnomusicology - a factor in the Preservation of Cultural Heritage," in which he argues that the African is on the verge of being totally alienated from his own culture. With the growth of the metropolitan city, "the African has gradually been torn away from his aesthetic, his 'original' aesthetic" (P.1)

Advancing such approaches to oral literature shows failure to appreciate the fact that culture is dynamic rather than static, and that cultural values change in line with the socio-economic changes in the society. This study thus seeks to demonstrate that the

pop song is not a reflection of cultural alienation, but an important genre in perpetuating and preserving the aesthetic and authentic beauty of orature.

Studies by Mokitimi (1982) Gakuo (1994) and Mahugu (1990) are important to our study in that they recognise, albeit in passing, the existence of a relationship between orature and the popular song.

In her research into the Lifela Tsa Litssamaea Naha, the Sesotho miners oral poetry, Mokitimi (1982) notes that, there are similarities in style and form of the traditional heroic praise poetry and this contemporary miners poetry. She writes:

this poetry is a new kind of oral poetry given birth to by the economic, social and political period of the immigrant miners labour system. It has flourished in a modified form of the traditional oral poetry (P.149).

Although she declares her intention to discuss some of the aspects of Lifela Tsa Litssamaea Naha poetry, which are common in traditional genres, she only touches on the opening and closing formula, which she observes has been borrowed from narratives, riddles and traditional praise poetry (P.150).

Gakuo (1994) also acknowledges that Gikuyu pop singers borrow from Gikuyu orature. However the issue is mentioned in just a paragraph and no effort is made to investigate this claim.

Mahugu (1990) is also important to our study in that she recognises the indebtedness of the composers of the Agikuyu songs of independence to Gikuyu orature. She notes that composers "adopted the traditional narrative techniques of dialogue, rhetoric and query-response forms" (P.274). Rhythm was also found to have been borrowed largely from traditional Gikuyu song-dances.

By examining the relationship between Gikuyu orature and the Gikuyu pop song, this study seeks to specifically investigate the observation of these researchers.

As regards studies that have been done on the relationship between written African literature and orature, Okpehwo (1983), Chinweizu and others (1980) and Amateshe (1979) deserve special mention.

Okpehwo (1983) not only analyses some modern African writers and their use of orature, but also provides a theoretical approach for characterising the relationship between modern African literature and orature. His is quite a comprehensive study, although it concentrates on written literature. As such, the theoretical approach given in the work will be instrumental in formulating a theoretical framework for this project (see section on theoretical framework).

Chinweizu et al. (1980) and Amateshe (1979) are of importance to this study since they recognise that the relationship between contemporary literature and orature, can be used as criteria to evaluate the literary value of contemporary artists.

In Towards the Decolonization of African Literature Chinweizu et al., launch into fierce polemic against writers like Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark and Christopher Okigbo, whom they accuse of leaving the simple artistic delivery of orature for obscurantist and elitist compositions, influenced by western literary traditions. The authors recognise "the existence of a palpable and recognised indigenous tradition as a resource of model for contemporary African artists to work from" (P.159). For artists who have left the resources of indigenous African artistic traditions, they dismiss their compositions as "Waste work! Waste work! Abominable waste work!" (P.182). In the text, the authors' whole argument is that any meaningful Afro-Centric literature should be rooted in the African orature. It is upon this kind of reasoning that our study is conceived. Amateshe (1979) advances a similar kind of argument for the East African situation.

In his dissertation The Social Function of Poetry in Underdeveloped society: An East African Experience, Amateshe agrees with Ngugi that:

the poets (for example David Rubadiri, Jānathan Kariara, Sam Mbure, Jared Angira, Richard Nturu) like their counterparts in fiction have not in the past sufficiently explored the technical resources of the oral traditions or realised that these can revitalise their poetry and enable them to move in a different direction (Ngugi 1972).

On this criterion, Amateshe regards those poets as "anti-social" (1979:23). He notes that Okot P'Bitek's success derives from the oral poetic influence in his written works (P.22). He also stresses the importance of the oral poet in providing an alternative to the alienated modern elitist poet. Our study shows how Gikuyu popular musicians have "explored the technical resources of (Gikuyu) oral traditions."

After reviewing works done by musicologists we found similar perspectives with those found in literary circles viz. those who lament that cultural forms of expression are about to disappear, and those who recognise a relationship between traditional and popular contemporary songs but do not investigate further.

Lomax (1978) has expressed the fear that the inability of traditional cultures to maintain their musical integrity and distinctiveness against the onslaught of western pop would lead to a cultural grey out. In Folksong Style and Culture, Lomax raises the spectre of centuries old communication structures being swept off the board and of oral traditions being forgotten, such that, whole cultures are left with a sense of belonging nowhere and losing cultural roots, thus becoming alienated.

While we may understand this concern, Lomax not only looks at the folksong in isolation from other traditional genres, but also paints an "all is lost", scenario which is not quite accurate. Aspects of oral traditions, as this study seeks to demonstrate, are still present in the contemporary oral expression and specifically the pop song.

In this respect, Roberts (1972) is significant to this study in that he recognises the influence of traditional forms of the folksong on the popular music in Africa and the Diaspora. In his study of modern urban popular styles in Africa, he has discussed what he calls the neo-African forms of music in America, Haiti, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Trinidad. Of particular importance to this study is his assertion that in Africa

highlife lyrics, like all African pop lyrics deal with, beside love, - subjects similar to those of traditional music. There are songs of praise and insult, topical songs, and a very popular formula, especially in Nigeria that makes use of traditional proverbs to weave new lyrics... indeed one of the points about highlife is that the groups continued to combine constant renewal of contact with traditional material... (Roberts 1972:250)

Though Robert's work is centred on music and not literary works, it helps to validate the claim made by literary scholars on the importance of the relationship between the pop song and oral traditional materials.

## **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

This study called for a theoretical framework that would help in understanding how pop singers have tried to appropriate or rechannel those aspects which orature has put at their disposal. We also needed to account for the use of these aspects by explaining why they are used and with what effect. The implication here is that the study required the use of an interdisciplinary approach.

We have thus used the Okpehwo Creative approach to myth-making in analysing the relationship between orature and the pop song.

In this approach Okpehwo (1983) asserts:

the relationship between tradition and modernity depends in a fundamental way on the amount of creative freedom which the writer [or singer] is willing to assume in handling the material deriving from the creative history of his people (P.215).

His approach traces the relationship of contemporary African literature to orature, on a continuum with four contiguous segments. In the first segment -tradition preserved,-we see an attempt to preserve the virtues of the oral tradition. The artist then reveals the lowest level of mythic imagination. The artists loyalty to the oral tradition restricts his making imaginative changes to the material borrowed.

In the second segment, tradition observed, the artist has a greater degree of creative license. The artist does not hesitate "to broaden the ideological scope of the local traditions by marrying them with concepts and motifs taken from the western liberal and theological traditions" (P.217). "But while we may see the artists as winning new frontiers for the oral traditions", Okpehwo notes, "his achievement can more usefully be seen within the context of that tradition than of modern efforts in creativity".

In the third segment, tradition refined, the presence of the contemporary socio-political scene is overwhelming. Here the writer takes leave of the orature material in its old forms, because he is more attached to the more contemporary models of creativity:

and with this imaginative licence goes a new temperament, suited to the painful socio-political climate: the urge to please, which is the work of traditional performer, now gives way to the constraint to disturb the conscience of the reader/audience, so that he may be enlisted in the painful duty to change society (P.128).

The inadequacies of oral tradition are more fully highlighted in the last segment, tradition revised. The artists take leave of the oral traditions and the prejudices they

embody and create a new myth for an undifferentiated ethnicity in the contemporary society, "bestowing on the new myth a character as prospective as the old myth was wistful" (P.218). Here the fancy is at its freest.

Okpewho's approach is relevant to our study as it allows us to explain the creative manipulation that has gone into the texts of orature which have been used in the pop songs. This approach also enables us to account for the changes in the extra-textual elements of function and context. The approach is our first and most important step towards explaining the relationship between Gikuyu orature and the pop song. Psychoanalysis is the second approach we have used in this study. Freud viewed art as a privileged means of attaining instinctual pleasure. In order to achieve this end, without suffering fear or guilt, the censor in the conscious mind has to be caught unawares. Folklorists like Allan Dundes and Bruno Bettelheim have demonstrated the centrality of folklore in getting an audience to share in the "instinctual pleasure" without interference from the conscious censor. Dundes, for instance, demonstrates the centrality of psychoanalysis in the study of folklore when he writes:

It is my contention that much of the meaning of folkloristic fantasy is unconscious. 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. Man needs such mechanism. That is why there will always be new folklore being created to take care of new anxieties" (Dundes 1980:36)

Dundes goes on to assert that "if folklore did not provide a socially sanctioned outlet for projection, it would almost cease to exist" (P.59). We have thus used psychoanalysis to account for the meaning of the material that the pop musicians have borrowed from orature. This approach will also help us to examine how orature enables the pop singer to symbolise and thus appeal to the masses.

We have also used the stylistic approach in addition to the previous two. Stylistics has the goal of explaining the relationship between language and the artistic function. It

aims at specifying, describing and evaluating language, and accounting for the way language is used in a particular context. The short forms in orature achieve their artistic value and aesthetics through formulaic patterning of sounds, words and sentence structure. Finnegan (1970) refers to these forms as 'stylised forms'. By using stylistics we are able to account for the process of change in these 'stylised' short forms in linguistic terms. Stylistics also enables us to describe the process of management of language which gives rise to these forms and their literary and communicative impact on the pop song.

### **1.7 Methodology**

This study was carried out in four phases;

- (a) Collection of songs.
- (b) Selection of a sample.
- (c) Transcription and Translation.
- (d) Identification, description and explication of aspects of orature.

The process began by collection of over a hundred recorded songs. Previous knowledge of the Gikuyu popular music was used to identify several musicians whose songs were purchased. Many well known Gikuyu musicians have music stores in Nairobi, a fact that made the collection of the songs easier than we previously thought. It was however necessary to collect songs from the not very well known musicians. The Presidential Commission of Music was approached for assistance in this regard. When this assistance was not forthcoming, the little known musicians were picked by sampling private collections. When the collection was completed, there were over one hundred and fifty songs from about twenty five musicians.

The selection of the sample was purposively done by listening to the collected songs several times. Songs which combined several aspects of orature were given priority. During the process of listening and selecting, it became apparent that some songs were

responses to the other songs, while others were questions to other songs. In some cases we had both the questions and responses to particular songs in the collection, but in some cases it necessitated that we go back to the music stores to look for songs directly linked to those that we already had. In a case where such variously related compositions were selected, all songs were considered to be one text, identified by a cardinal number, while the individual songs were considered to be parts of the text and were assigned lower case alphabets a, b, c, ... This put the number of individual songs at twenty seven while the texts remained twenty.

The third phase was that of transcription and translation. The transcription was done by listening to the songs on tape and transcribing them on paper. The transcribed texts were then translated freely. This is not to say that using free translation solved all difficulties in this regard. We were aware that direct translation would obscure meaning in the songs and make the English translation virtually meaningless since English and Gikuyu do not share grammatical structures. Again we were aware that relying on free translation with an over-emphasis on 'meaning' would have completely corrupted the poetic nature of the songs in the Gikuyu originals. Therefore in the translation we aimed at striking a balance and sought to retain meaning in the English translation while preserving as much poetic feel of the Gikuyu originals as possible. However, since this study required a very accurate representation of meaning, the Gikuyu originals were kept close to mind when doing analysis.

There were, nevertheless, those expressions especially proverbs whose meaning and poetic nature seemed to be lost through translation. Thus, when such expressions are used in the main body of the study, both the Gikuyu version and English translation are given, if only "to provide those who are fluent in the two languages a chance to evaluate our attempts to translate the poetic and the metaphorical" (Wa-Gachanja, 1987:22).

The final phase was that of identification, description and explication of the aspects of orature in the songs. Aspects of orature were identified in terms of texts, style, technique, and function. We also discussed these aspects to show how they have been

reappropriated in the pop songs and with what effect. We used our foreknowledge of the Gikuyu orature to identify and account for these aspects. Occasionally it became necessary to seek clarification especially as appertains cultural and specialised traditional terms in Gikuyu language. In this phase, analysis of the aspects of orature was supplemented by library materials. The materials were helpful in both, the description of the characteristics of the aspects of interest to this study and reference for matters related to Gikuyu ethnography and culture. The materials included books and studies done on Gikuyu culture from available sources.

### **1.8 Scope and Limitations**

For the purpose of having an exhaustive analysis, this study analyses only twenty texts. The study concentrates on the lyrics of the songs and is not concerned with the description of the "musical" aspects of the texts. Although there are vast numbers of very well known Gikuyu pop musicians, this study consciously includes songs from musicians who might not be very well known, but whose compositions incorporate Gikuyu orature to an appreciable degree.

As noted earlier, we were aware that one of the limitations of the study would be the loss of meaning through translations. We thus kept the Gikuyu original very close to mind when analysing the songs since this study requires an accurate interpretation of meaning. It was also not possible to sample all the Gikuyu pop songs and therefore many songs were left out. However, we hope that the findings of this study are generalisable, and it will open up the area for further research.

## 1.9 Definition of Terms

### Artist/Speaker:

In composition of songs the composer creates "an artificial personality for a transient event" (Vulliamy and Lee, 1982:69). This personality can be equated to the poetic *persona* in written poetry. This Persona may be the representation of the composer's ego or a dramatic character in the poetry/song. But "the persona is, in a word, a poet. Not the poet who actually wrote the poem, but the poet who is dramatically, portrayed as reciting the poem [Singing the song]" (Scher 1992:179). This persona will be referred to as 'speaker' in this study. The composer, or the 'actual' singer, who strictly speaking, uses the 'speaker' as a vehicle for artistic expression, will be referred to as 'artist' in this study. The real names of the artists will be occasionally used.

'You', (in quotes) will refer to the second person, who is the speaker's referent.

We will draw the readers attention to 'You' when it refers to the audience or listener; either explicitly or implicitly, through the extension of the 'You' defined above.

### Contemporary Imperative :

This is a term we have adapted from Okpewho (1983). It refers to the wide-ranging psycho-social patterns and principles of modern society, that inform the contemporary artists' world view, and impacts on the way the artists deal with the resources of orature in their works.

### Genre:

There are groups or categories of Oral Literature material which are classified together because of their similarity in style of delivery, form or subject.

**Orature :**

This is a relatively new term which means "Oral Literature". The word was coined by scholars at Makerere in 1976 because, for semantic reasons, they were uneasy with the term Oral Literature. The term as applied in this study is discussed on Page 1. In addition to this definition, the terms folklore, oral literature, (Oral) tradition and folk art, as used by other writers quoted in this study, will be taken to mean 'Orature' as defined for this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.0. TEXTS AND THEIR ARTISTIC SIGNIFICANCE

In this chapter, we shall identify the texts of orature that have been used in the sampled songs. We shall show the artistic significance of these texts. This significance will be seen in the light of how the contemporary imperative has influenced the artists' use of the texts. We shall attempt a detailed description of the texts and where necessary give detailed background information. The texts we shall examine are myth, riddles, proverbs and folksongs.

#### 2.1. Myth

We are going to use the term 'myth' to broadly encompass the narrative tradition. Thus, under this title we shall discuss texts arising from narrative accounts of events which happened in the distant sacred past related to the time of creation, legends, fables and ogre tales.

The Gikuyu myth of creation is the concern of the song Airitu A Gikuyu.(1) The artists recount the story as it exists in the community. The song starts with a prologue which is recited rather than sung, which is a summarised form of the story:

This is the story of a man called Gikuyu and his wife Mumbi, who were staying at *Mukurweini-wa-Nyagathanga*. They were given ten\* girls by *Mwene-Nyaga* (God) and those girls are the origin of the nine clans of the Agikuyu.

The opening places this piece within the Gikuyu Oral narrative tradition. Although the account is contained in a song, the artist opens with the *phrase* "*Ruru ni rugano...*" (This is the story...). The names of the first parents of the tribe are given in this prologue and also in Stanza 1. The rest of the song is a recounting of the names of the daughters of Gikuyu; Wanjiru, Wangeci, Wairimu, Wamuyu, Nyambura, Wangari, Wacera, Wanjiku, Wangui, Waithera. From these names we can be able to reconstruct the nine clans. These have been given by Gathigira (1933) and Kenyatta (1938) as: *Anjiru, Aitherandu, Airimu, Aicakamuyu, Ethaga, Angare, Aceera, Anjiku, Angoi, and Ambui*.

The song also traces the closeness of the Gikuyu community to the cohesiveness of this original family. This is demonstrated in lines 4, 16, and 23 which are repetitions of the clause,

'They lived in harmony'.

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\*The artist says there were ten girls but gives nine clans, a clan from the descendants of each girl. The apparent inconsistency can be explained by the fact that the Gikuyu believe that giving the exact number of family members is a bad omen. Thus the number is usually given as ten to avoid bad luck (Gathigira 1933:1)

The song also attributes Gikuyu agriculturalism to the orientation of the original man as demonstrated in stanza 3.

That man loved farming,  
And keeping sheep and goats  
He used to work hard and to sweat  
So as to get a good harvest.

It is at this juncture that we notice the Christian theological orientation as a contemporary imperative that affects the artist's re-creation of the Gikuyu story.

In lines 11 and 12 the artist says:

He used to work hard and sweat  
So as to get a good harvest.

This has its parallel in the Biblical account of creation, where the first man is cursed by God in Genesis 3:19; "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread ..."

There is seemingly an attempt by the artist to marry concepts from accounts deriving from the two different traditions. This can be seen in the wider context, where the artist tries to impress upon the contemporary Gikuyu community that they should be grateful to Gikuyu and Mumbi as the originators of the tribe line 17-19. The parallel drawn between the two accounts can be interpreted as an effort to justify this 'indebtedness' by showing that there is no much difference between the two accounts. It is thus obvious that the artist attempts to make the traditional mythological account relevant to the present day Gikuyu by creating parallels between this traditional account and the one from Christian mythology.

The contemporary audience is likely to appreciate oral tradition only if it is presented in a way that does not contradict the Christian dogma. The artist thus takes advantage of the well established Christian beliefs to re-introduce the myth

to the people who may have abandoned it in the course of acquiring new beliefs. But in re-introducing the traditional account by incorporating it with motifs from the contemporary Christian society, the artist unwittingly revises the whole concept of 'work' as presented in Christian mythology. While Christian mythology presents work as a consequence of sin and thus a curse of retribution from God, 'work' (in the song) is presented as man's voluntarily favoured activity e.g. in line 9:- 'That man loved farming'. Thus, according to the song, man 'sweats' in labour because he loves it, and not because of a divine curse. The artist's attempt to incorporate contemporary motifs in a traditional text results in his revising the contemporary Christian outlook to work.

Mucoke Maganjo (Return to the Original Homestead) Song 11, is another song that uses the Gikuyu story of creation to communicate its message. Line 17-20 says:

Gikuyu and Mumbi  
As we buried them  
Their will was, house of Mumbi  
We stay in harmony.

The artist is not interested in preserving the story in its entirety, but his desire is to use the materials drawn from the oral tradition to make certain appeals to the contemporary society. He thus traces the basis of social cohesion and harmony to the wishes of the 'original' parents. Gikuyu mythology obligates that kinsmen should love one another and live in harmony with one another. The whole theme of the song as demonstrated by the title is that the community should go back to

the old traditions where they would find meaning in togetherness. The artist laments the demise of the communal feelings, and therefore the disregard of the edict by the first parents. In the song, the artist makes an effort to remind the audience about the demands which tradition makes on contemporary consciousness. In a world where people lack togetherness, the artist feels that there is a danger of the Gikuyu society landing itself into a curse if it follows the divisive ways of the world:

The will of Gikuyu, kinsmen,  
 You forgot  
 You turned money into your God  
 If you ignore my call, House of Mumbi  
 Urging you to return to the Original  
 homestead  
 You will destroy each other  
 Including your children.

The artist sees the salvation of the community in a concerted effort to return to the old traditions established by Gikuyu and Mumbi. Though he does not recount the myth word for word, the artist is conscious that it contains some timeless virtues which would give the contemporary society a true sense of community and togetherness in their search for selfhood in a difficult and

changing world. The artist suggests that the contemporary society is steeped in dangerous individualism because it has forgotten the virtues of the oral tradition as he says:

This grouping and this other one,  
What is their origin?  
With so much hate  
And hearts with intense greed.  
Hitherto, if a bean fell down  
We would share it among ourselves.  
But yesterday and the day before,  
Have been forgotten.

He thus recommends that people go back to the 'original homestead' established by Gikuyu and Mumbi and recapture the "yesterday and the day before". The above stanza is a call to the contemporary society to strive towards preserving the old virtues of social cohesion and harmony.

While the artist does not hesitate to prescribe a remedy from traditional mythology for the maladies of contemporary society, he also extends this remedy to incorporate existing moral codes from Christianity.

Lines 49-56 gives us this extension, when he says:

Gikuyu I tell you,  
 Heed my call or ignore,  
 For it is your greed,  
 That is leading you to your grave  
 Those commandments of God,  
 Never play with them;  
 Love your neighbour,  
 Just as you love yourself.

The last two lines can be traced to the Bible as part of what Jesus gave as the greatest commandment of all:

You shall love the Lord your God with all  
 your heart, and with all your soul and  
 with all your strength and your neighbour  
 as yourself... (Lk 10:27).

The same commandment is found in the Old Testament (Lev. 19:18). Here the artist feels the need to incorporate elements of the contemporary civilization in a song where he is advocating a return to the virtues of the oral tradition. He thus feels that precepts of modern Christianity are compatible with the wisdom of orature and thus feels no contradiction in juxtaposing the two. He sees the progress of the contemporary society as pegged to that of the society's appreciation of moral guidelines derived from both the oral tradition and the contemporary Christian moral code.

In Mitugo ya Gikuyu song 26 (The customs of the Gikuyu) the myth is again invoked primarily because of its implications in the transmission of customs.

The song is a reply to Ciuria Cia Ndichu, Song 2a (Questions from Ndichu). In song 2(a) Nduru had asked Kamaru questions regarding the Gikuyu customs. In his answer, Kamaru begins by calling upon certain persons:

Rugwiti son-of-Njeri, come  
 But do not come alone  
 I want a council comprising of nine elders  
 As I answer Nduru's questions  
 And nine women  
 Who are past child-bearing age  
 And representatives from the nine clans  
 Kabete and Metumi in full.

We see the symbolic number nine in Gikuyu mythology, and also the traditional ritual circumstances where we have old men and women as participants in the performance. In such traditional ritual circumstances among the Agikuyu, special people were selected to participate. These must be

the elders who have outlived their more worldly desires and can now be believed to have only the consideration of the welfare of the community at heart: if women are to be permitted, they must be only those who have passed child-bearing age, for they are considered to be immune from worldly mischief and are now mothers, not of individuals, but of the community...' (Kenyatta 1938, 244-45).

Kamaru is careful to observe these traditional ritual circumstances regarding the participants. To understand why Kamaru has done this, we need to expound on the link between the clans of Gikuyu mythology and the Gikuyu culture.

As long as the family was small, Kenyatta explains, the family of Gikuyu and Mumbi lived together, with their parents acting as the heads of the family. After the death of the original parents,

they continued to live as one family group. But as the number of members of each individual family group multiplied, it was found impossible to live together and to follow the system of classificatory nomenclature without forming more family sets and clans. It was then decided that each of the nine daughters should call together all her descendants and form a separate clan under her name. (Kenyatta, 1938:5).

All the clans together formed the present day 'Gikuyu tribe' under the banner *Ruriri rwa Mbari ya Mumbi* - (The Nation of Mumbi's lineage). Of particular importance is the fact that each clan settled in its own place and established its own social system, as Gathigira explains:

Each clan had its own land tenure system and its own rules to govern its own social-economic affairs independent of other clans [Translated from Gikuyu] Gathigira 1933:2).

Gathigira goes further to explain the importance of *Njama ya Muhiriga*. (The clans governing Council) who were the custodians of the clans heritage. He explains that members of this council possess power and authority over the clan.

This then brings us to the reason why Kamaru so meticulously observes the traditional ritual circumstances while giving answers regarding Gikuyu customs to Nduru. Gikuyu as an ethnic group comprises all the clans of Gikuyu mythology, and therefore he would need the presence of representatives from

each clan to satisfactorily answer questions that concern the whole Gikuyu people. This observation has several implications in the context of this song.

First, in his question, Nduru has insinuated that Kamaru prides himself in being very knowledgeable in Gikuyu tribal customs. Lines 1-4 are very eloquent in that regard:

Rugwiti son-of-Njeri, allow me to ask this man a question  
 Kamaru son-of-Wanjiru who claims to be very knowledgeable.  
 Kamaru, son-of-Wanjiru, brace yourself so that you can receive my  
 questions and respond, About the Gikuyu customs, because you tell me  
 you know a lot.

Kamaru proves that he is aware of the origins of these customs by observing the ritual circumstances of Gikuyu mythology. In taking Nduru's challenge, he uses the relationships between Gikuyu myth and Gikuyu culture to demonstrate his mastery of what he claims to know.

Secondly, Kamaru uses Gikuyu mythology to authenticate and legitimise the information that he gives in his answers to Nduru's questions. The implied presence of the representatives of the clans suggest that Kamaru is not about to court misrepresentation of information. To ensure that the information is authentic, and thus legitimising his answers, he invokes the presence of the custodians of each clan's customs. This is Kamaru's way of saying that his information is sanctioned by the ethnic experts. He is thus able to safeguard his position as a revered oral artist, especially to those who may have heard Nduru challenging him. The audience of course expects the oral artist to know his trade

and to know it well. Thus when Nduru challenges Kamaru in the manner in which he does in the song, Kamaru's position is in danger, and by demonstrating his mastery of Gikuyu mythology and its implications to the Gikuyu customs, he boosts his stature as an oral artist of formidable acumen.

Thirdly, Kamaru upholds the traditional instruction through which oral traditions are passed from generation to generation. In his challenge, Nduru reminds Kamaru of his own claim that he (Kamaru) was brought up by his grand-mother, from whom he received traditional instruction. Nduru asks him to answer him 'as you claim to have been given traditional instruction by your grand-mother'. In line 8, he tells him: "Prepare a goat for sacrifice, Kamaru, the-one-who-was-brought-up-by-his-grandmother". Nduru can be seen to be challenging the very methods of traditional instruction. Kamaru's demonstration of his mastery of the oral traditions, in effect, demonstrates the effectiveness of the instruction given by his grandmother, thus upholding the integrity of oral instruction.

Kamaru's answer to Nduru, is thus a good illustration of how myth has been used to authenticate information, legitimise a composition and boost an artistic view. The value of oral instruction is also preserved in Kamaru's song.

Kuuma Ndemi na Mathathi song 9, (From *Ndemi* and *Mathathi*) uses the Gikuyu myth as a reference point from which the artist advocates social and cultural change. The artist advocates change from traditionalism to modernism. The

mythical legend of *Ndemi* and *Mathathi* is well known in the Gikuyu community, at least by those interested in Gikuyu Orature. As Kenyatta says:

Any Gikuyu child who is not corrupted by detribalisation is able to record in his mind the whole history and origin of the Gikuyu people through the medium of such names as *Agu*, *Ndemi* and *Mathathi* etc. who were initiated hundreds of years ago. Kenyatta 1938:135).

This shows that the mythical-legend of *Ndemi* and *Mathathi* has come down the generations through Oral instruction. To understand the dynamics advocated in the song From Ndemi and Mathathi, it is necessary to briefly elucidate on who these legendary figures were. Gikuyu mythology, as recorded by Kenyatta (1938), has it that once upon a time, there was a king in Gikuyuland named Gikuyu. Gikuyu is said to have been a grandson of Gikuyu, the founder of the tribe. His rule was said to have been tyrannical and he prevented people from cultivating land as he commanded that all able bodied men should join his army and be ready to move with their families at any time and whenever he chose. But soon people grew tired of wandering from place to place and finally decided to settle down. The people approached the king with the request that they should be let to cultivate and establish permanent homes. When the request was rejected, the people were very indignant, and in desperation, revolted against the king. The generation which carried out the revolt was called *Iregi* which means 'the revolters'. The next generation which started cultivation was given the name *Ndemi* and was followed by *Mathathi*. There was then need to establish a strong institution of young men who could work a clearing bushes for farming and also defending the tribe against external aggression. To ensure that these

young men were always strong and fit, they were frequently given feasts - *Irugo* - singular *Kirugu*.

This clearly establishes the background from Orature against which the song is composed. The speaker says that he is not asking for a *Kirugu* - the feast that made young men strong in service to the tribe - but he is asking for education because:

The respectable patriots today  
Their sword is education.

Here the artist is emphasizing the point that society has changed. He shows that education is the defining factor and that things have changed from the traditions set by *Ndemi* and *Mathathi*. The speaker points out in lines 10-12 that bulls and goats for giving feasts are on the decrease. Again, he emphasizes that the feasts are not necessary because we do not need the traditional warriors, but educated men. Thus in the refrain, which is the repeated part of the song, the speaker asks the parents for education, for he understands education as the only way to prosperity in modern society.

Thus, the artist in Kuuma Ndemi na Mathathi revises the oral tradition as it existed, and only uses it to press a point about the changing trends and the need to redefine our values in the face of modernity.

Uthoni wa Kanyenyaini song 18 (The wedding negotiations at Kanyenyaini) uses Gikuyu mythology in communicating its message. The song is a dialogue

between a man and a delegation that he had taken with him for marriage negotiations with his in-laws-to-be at Kenyenyaini. The man (Musaimo) seems to have backed out of the deal, and the delegation feels let down. Musaimo however, gives various reasons for his not being keen on the deal any more. The reasons are based on the realisation that the father of the girl is a traditionalist and demanded some traditional offerings which Musaimo considers unobtainable. The delegation insists that he should go on with the arrangements telling him in lines 32-33:

You will wed this one the traditional way  
She is not like the ones you pick anyhow  
like *ugali*.

They go on to remind Musaimo in lines 34-36 that he had not even enquired about the clan to which the girl belongs, an oversight which the delegation considers serious.

The mytho-cultural implications here are important. As Gathigira explains, intermarriage between clans in the traditional Gikuyu community was strictly sanctioned by customs. He explains that marriage into the clan from another clan had to be probed by the Council of Elders.

Someone from another clan cannot give birth to children for a given clan and if a child is born into the clan by a member of another clan, there has to be enough guarantees that the child will be governed by the conventions of the clan he has been born in (Gathigira 1933:8).

The delegation in the song tells Musaimo that they suspect that the girl's father is:

a *Mumbui* (clan)  
of the *Marigu* lineage  
From the *Kihiu mwiri* age-group  
Who do not entertain nonsense.

When taboos and practices regarding clanism are introduced, Musaimo decides to take advantage of the situation to show why it is impossible for him to go on with the negotiations. He says:

I hope she is not a *Mwithaga*  
Because my clan does not marry from the  
*Mwithaga* clan.  
Especially from the *Iregi* lineage  
Or even the *Icagitumbi* lineage.

At that juncture the delegation takes a turn which results in revising the whole Gikuyu mytho-cultural orientation as they say in lines 44-47.

Even the Europeans are still living  
And they are not governed by clans  
Love is love, clanism notwithstanding  
And love obligates you to wed her.

We hereby find that the oral tradition has been completely revised. The world view of the delegation changes as they reject the constraints of the Gikuyu mytho-cultural conventions. In dealing with wisdom deriving from Gikuyu mythology, the singer engages in a programmatic rejection of the constraints of orature, when he finds it does not suit the vision of the contemporary society where one is free to fulfill their wishes and desires. The world view of the liberal

Western culture is thus embraced as the epitome of a society, untethered by mytho-cultural obligations.

Imagery from myth that relates to Gikuyu ritual has been used in Nyakaringiti (The-Blanket-Woman). In lines 23-33 the speaker says:

You are like the ants  
 Your occupation is just eating  
 From morning  
 Your mouth is at work  
 You are like a *Ndamathia*  
 You can't even walk straight.  
 You can't even cook.  
 There is no way,  
 I can cook for myself  
 While you are sleeping  
 I have refused completely.

The *Ndamathia* used in this song is of mythological significance in Gikuyuland. Kenyatta (1938) describes the *Ndamathia* a sacred monster which is believed to have lived in rivers. A National totem'. (p. 326) The *Ndamathia* was an important creature in the *Itwika* ceremony, a ceremony which marked the transition of rulership from one generation to another. The role of this totem was narrated to Kenyatta, as he says, by his grandfather, Kungu Wa Magana, who supposedly took an important part in the last *Itwika* ceremony, performed between 1890-1898; and also from an in-law, Kaambo Wa Gethuku, "Who sounded the ceremonial horn during the same celebration in Ng'enda, a section of Kiambu District" (Kenyatta 1938:190).

In order to make the *Itwika* inviolable, it was necessary to get the tail hair of this mysterious monster. It was enticed out of the waters by very strong magic, and Kenyatta's description gives a rough idea of the size and shape of the monster:

In a short time the *Ndamathia* protruded its long neck, the sounds of the ceremonial horn enticed the big creature and it started to follow the man and the child. At the same time, it began to lick the ground on which the medicine-water had been sprinkled by the child. It took some hours before the tail of the *Ndamathia* came out of the water for the creature was very long (its length is compared with that of the rainbow and the people believed that it was the *Ndamathia* which caused the rainbow to appear in the sky) (Kenyatta 1938:191).

When the tail came out, some men would pull as many hairs as possible from the tail with which to conduct the ceremony. This account thus places the *Ndamathia* in the realm of Gikuyu ritualistic myth. From the image of this creature as depicted in the popular mythical accounts\*, and Kenyatta's apparently 'authentic' account, some properties can be isolated which can help to account for the artistic impact of this creature in the song Nyakaringiti.

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\*Popular mythical accounts of the 'Ndamathia' exist in Gikuyuland to this day. For instance, I heard of the existence of the creature early in my childhood. It was said to inhabit an underground water body near my school and it was said that it came out rarely. The size of the creature depended on the imagination of the 'story teller' although all agreed it was "a very big animal". During the dry season when the supply of water to my home is irregular (which can be attributed to anything from rationing to power failure), I have heard women say that it is the 'Ndamathia' which has turned in its underground abode and obstructed the source. Again, its physical appearance and size range from the enormous to the fantastic.

First, it is a very big animal, but its actual size depends on how far one can stretch their imagination. Secondly the creature does nothing but eat and sleep and thirdly it rarely comes out of its lair and is only enticed out of it with much difficulty. The song in which this creature is used is critical of a woman who has similar characteristics to those of a *Ndamathia*. The speaker is complaining that the woman does nothing all day apart from eat and sleep (*Ndamathia* characteristics) and has therefore grown very big. It is left to the listener to determine how big the woman has grown because the analogy to the *Ndamathia* represents a concept of 'bigness' which allows each individual listener to stretch their imagination as much as possible. Again the woman can never be enticed out of her lair under the eaves of the granary and therefore, the speaker has decided to send her back to her parents. The imagery of the mythical creature is therefore very accurate in that it helps the artist to foreground these unique characteristics of the woman in question.

The image of the ogre has been used in the song Irimu ria Nyambugi, 4, (The ogre called *Nyambu*gi). The subject of the song is the characteristics of a certain man, whom the speaker likens to those of the ogre. The *Nyambu*gi is a particular ogre in Gikuyu ogre stories, whose characteristics the artist expertly manipulates to achieve the desired artistic effect. We shall isolate these characteristics from a story in which this ogre occurs. The story is summarised below.

Once upon a time an ogre turned itself into a handsome young man, courted and married a girl, and took her to the land of the ogres. The girl was mistreated and wished so much to go back to her home. The only way she could get there was with the help of a magical feather that grew on the head of that ogre. The girl

stayed with the ogre until she had the opportunity to pluck this feather, which guided her towards her home. But when the ogre woke up and discovered that the girl had fled with the feather he started pursuing her. When other ogres would ask the girl where she was running to, she would reply in a song;

*Naungeithirie, Notangeithirie*  
*Tiwe Ngeneire*  
*Ngeneire mugo (rima) wa Irimu,*  
*Ugwitwo gituku ugwitwo Nyambugi.*

He who greets me, or he who doesn't greet me  
 I have no pleasure in them.  
 I take pleasure with the great ogre  
 Which is called *Gituku*, which is called *Nyambugi*.

She would move on, only to meet another ogre that would ask again:

*Mwari mwari wathii ku,*  
 (Young girl Young girl where are you going)

and the young girl would repeat the same song after which the ogre would leave her alone and say:

*Hi, wiwa Nyambugi ungiurio nu,*  
 (Well, if you are Nyambugi's visitor, who would dare stop you).

Singing thus, the girl was able to traverse the land of the ogres and find her way home again.\*

Several characteristics about the ogre from this story are evident and we shall see how these help the artist make his point in the song. First, the ogre disguises himself so as to court and marry the girl. The parallel to this in the song can be

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\*This is a summary of the story as told to me by my father who gave me the story when I enquired from him what the ogre called *Nyambugi* was all about. There are however other variations of the story. For such a variation the reader may see the story entitled "The woman with a wound on her leg" collected by Muthoni, J. in Kikuyu, Lari- appearing in Adagala and Kabira, 1985 pp. 11-15.

seen when the speaker says:

... Your ugliness  
Can only be compared to that of the Ogre  
called *Nyambugi*

and then in line 7 and 9,

You should be grateful to water,  
Because it's the one that makes you look presentable.

Here the ugliness of the 'you' is compared to that of the ogre and water is seen as the agent that makes it possible for 'you' to disguise himself. Secondly, the ogre had a magical feather, which made the girl tolerate him and which the girl desperately needed.

In the song a parallel is also drawn between 'You' and the ogre in this regard when the speaker says:

Even if you see women following you  
It's because you have a lot of money.  
And not because you are handsome.

Thirdly, the girl in the story is shown as being desperate and therefore she stayed married to the ogre because she did not have any other choice. Again parallels can be drawn between this and lines 16-19 in the song where the speaker says:

I also heard another ugly woman saying,  
She will become your companion so that  
She can keep flies off your face.  
When you are given porridge and she will take water,  
For he who does not have any property cannot choose.

It is shown in the song that girls follow the 'You' because they need money, just like the girl needed the feather from the ogre, and that the desperate condition of the women in the song forces them to keep company / friendship with 'You' just like in the story. So the artist is able to reveal the true character of the 'You' in the song, by comparing him to the ogre. He criticizes men who brag about their social elevated status and also claim popularity women. He notes that it's because of their money and the desperation of the women that these women move with them. Like the girl in the story, this song is a reminder to these rich men that girls move with them because of material benefits, not because of any particular attractive qualities in the men themselves.

There is a relationship between the last stanza of the song and the situation of *Wagaciari* in the popular Gikuyu ogre tale. The ogre came into the compound of a man who had gone smithing and started mistreating the pregnant wife. It is said that the ogre would cook and eat giving *Wagaciari* nothing or leftovers. This situation is close to what we see in the last stanza of the song quoted above. The man in the song takes porridge while the companion takes water. The greed of the man, which in line 12 and 13 is compared to that of a hyena, forces the girl decide to eat the leftovers or poor quality food while in the company of the man. The image of the greedy hyena and the equally greedy and cruel ogre are effectively used to depict the ugly, greedy 'You' of the song. Using such images and concepts from the narrative tradition, the artist is able to ridicule greedy, rich men, to whom helpless girls flock for material benefits.

Yarwano song 20 (The bleating one) also uses the image of the hyena from narratives to communicate its message. The song is about a man who has discovered that his wife has been cheating on him all along. He had always thought that his wife was an innocent, morally upright individual, because she would always make a point of acting righteous when they were together. She would only reveal her true colours in the absence of the speaker. To depict this situation he says:

While I believed that I-was-in-antelope - business  
I was actually in-the-hyena-business.

Here the innocence of the antelope is used to depict the situation of the speaker, prior to discovering that the woman was a pretender. Now that he has discovered that the woman is immoral and a pretender, he calls it 'hyena-business'. This represents his conceptualisation of the woman's evil life which can only be compared to the hyena of the oral narratives. The artist also supplements this imagery from orature with the Christian imagery so as to reinforce his point and make it understandable to a contemporary Christian audience, which is presumably conversant with Christian mythology. To depict the same two-sidedness of the woman, he says in lines 52-53.

While I thought it's Jesus who is on the cross.  
It is actually a thief who is on the cross.

The statement depicts how the woman has managed to cheat the speaker about her true character. To represent this two-sidedness, the artist draws from both Orature and contemporary christian teachings.

## 2.2. Riddles

Many literary writers have tried to define the riddle in many ways. Akivaga and Odaga (1982) define the riddle as "short sayings intended to make one use his wits in unravelling a hidden meaning" (P.113). Nandwa and Bukenya (1983) define a riddle as "a word puzzle in which an object or situation is referred to in unusual figurative terms, and one is expected to discover the meaning in literal terms of what is meant". From these definitions we can isolate the characteristics of riddles as "shortness" and "figurativeness". They are also formulaic and referential. A definition that includes all these characteristics and therefore one that we are going to adopt in this study is given by Miruka (1994):

A riddle as such is a short oral puzzle which presents peculiar characteristics of a concept, whether these characteristics are physical, behavioural or habitual and requires the unravelling of the concealed literal reference. (Miruka 1994:2).

Miruka goes on to explain that the content of a riddle is "situations or objects" and that its style is "figurative language and formulaic expression". We are thus going to examine the use of riddles as both a textual and a stylistic resource. The texts of riddles that are used in the songs will be discussed in the present chapter under 'Texts' and then the formulaic expression will be discussed in a later chapter.

Ndathii uu Ndathii uu song 12 ( I Criss Cross here and there, then Criss Cross here and there) is a song whose title and refrain draw from the Gikuyu riddle which goes:

Challenge: I criss cross here and there,  
 Then criss cross here and there.  
 Response: The hunter's pathways

The speaker uses the riddle to describe his busy life. He says that he is always moving up and down, to and from, while looking for money and a long lost lover. He uses the riddle to summarise his wandering life when he says in line 13 that he has been following "the hunter's pathways". The artist has removed the riddle from sheer riddling and has used it to describe his busy life. We notice that the general challenge - response style has been dropped and the speaker utters both parts of this riddle himself. The riddle avails the speaker the artistic image of a hunter, which the speaker uses to describe his busy life. This image is in several ways particularly accurate for the situation that the singer would like to depict. In the song, the speaker describes himself as a person who has been in constant search. Apart from the actual situation of searching, he is also a very anxious person, living in expectation and hope that one day he would meet his long lost lover. The song is thus a song of triumph in that he has finally found the lover and can at least settle down. Thus his life is depicted like that of a hunter, which is that of searching, wrought with danger and anxieties. The hunter's life also reaches a climax when he finally gets game and has something to show for his wandering. As Finnegan points out, hunters' songs are songs of triumph and recollection, praise and celebration after a kill. This can be equated with this song Ndathii uu Ndathii uu which depicts a man venting his anxieties, and a man who is thrilled by meeting the one person he has been looking for. The man can now rest once the 'hunted' woman agrees to settle down with him.

This riddle can also be seen in terms of modern life. The speaker's life can be used as a prototype of the modern man. Where the traditional hunter went to the forest to look for game, the modern man is always up and down 'while looking for money' (line 14). The riddle thus enables the artist to compare the traditional economic activities with modern ones. The image of the traditional hunter has been preserved by the use of the riddle to represent the concept of socio-economic activity in modern life.

In Nyakaringiti song 14 (The-blanket-Woman) a new riddle is coined from the analysis of the events narrated in the song. The speaker in the song is complaining about his wife whose laziness has become legendary in the village. He complains that the woman is so lazy that she has become a topic for the evening gatherings in people's homes. The artist recreates the traditional context of riddling, that is, around the evening fire and then gives the new riddle that is based on the lazy woman:

Challenge: Who is the-blanket -woman?  
 Response: That is Gacheru's wife.

The woman has earned the name 'the-blanket-woman' because of her lazy behaviour of sleeping under the eaves of the granary with a blanket every day, as

the speaker says:

Because of spending the day  
 Outside with a blanket  
 You have become a topic for stories  
 In the village  
 You are the topic of evening gatherings  
 You have even been baptized  
 The-blanket-woman  
 You are used as a riddling topic  
 (Question:) Who is the-blanket-woman  
 The answer is well known  
 The-blanket-woman is Gacheru's wife.

As evidenced in our definition, that riddles refer to short oral puzzles which presents peculiar physical, behavioural or habitual characteristics, the extraordinarily lazy woman provides just the right situation for riddling. The conditions in which the speaker describes a woman who is so lazy that every morning she wakes up, eats, then takes a blanket and sleeps all day under the eaves of a granary, presents the said "peculiar behavioural and habitual characteristics" which are just the material that riddles are made of. The artist is thus aware of the peculiar capability of riddles to present peculiar behaviours and characteristics, and thus goes ahead to formulate a riddle, to show the peculiarity of the behaviour that he seeks to criticise and ridicule in the song. He does not feel bound by previous texts that would reflect the same situation (or by lack of such texts) - he formulates his own. Thus while the riddling concept is borrowed from orature, it is refined by the artist's own imagination and creativity by giving a text that would best represent the peculiarities of the situation he endeavours to depict.

### 2.3. Proverbs

Our working definition of a "proverb" is derived from the Gikuyu concept of *Thimo*-which means sayings, adages, slogans and idioms. We are going to refer to all the brief statements which have hidden meaning and accepted and used by the Agikuyu as *Thimo* expressions of truth and wisdom as "proverbs".

The Agikuyu attribute the use of proverbs to 'wisdom' as evidenced by several proverbs like *Ciunagwo rukomo, kiemenyi akamenya ikiuuno* (When conversation is done in proverbs, the intelligent one knows what is being said) or *Mundu mugu ndari mihere ya uhoru*. (A wise person can easily be communicated to). Like in many other African societies, the use of proverbs is a revered art in Gikuyu verbal expression.

Nketia (1958) makes a statement about the use of proverbs in modern Ghana which can equally be said to aptly describe the use of proverbs in modern Gikuyu society, especially their use by popular musicians.

The value of the proverb ... does not lie in what it reveals of the thoughts of the past. For the poet of today, or indeed the speaker who is some sort of an artist in the use of words [the popular musician], the proverb is a model of compressed or forceful language. In addition to drawing on it for its words of wisdom, he takes interest in its verbal techniques, its selection of words, its use of comparison as a method of statement and so on... This approach to proverbs which is evident in the speech of people who are regarded as accomplished speakers or poets of a sort makes the proverb not only a body of short statements build up over the years and which reflect the thoughts and the insights (of the people) into problems of life, but also a technique of verbal expression which is greatly appreciated (p. 21).

This statement is justifiable for our study not only on the basis of the vast numbers of proverbs used in the popular songs, but also because of the ways in which the artists draw on them as words of wisdom and as ‘models of compressed or forceful language’.

In Mitugo ya Gikuyu song 2b (The customs of the Gikuyu) the artist chooses to embellish his language with proverbs not only for the sake of making it appealing but also to communicate forcefully and effectively. In this song, Kamaru is answering questions from Nduru concerning the customs of the Agikuyu. Kamaru feels that Nduru is challenging him on rather obvious matters (as far as he [Kamaru] is concerned) and to make the point he says in lines 9-13:

Nduru son-of-Gathoni, come.  
 And come like an elder,  
 And you will realise  
 That you are looking for a neck-bell,  
 which is on your own chest.

A neck-bell makes a lot of noise while one is moving around, and it is highly unlikely that one will be looking for it while it is on ones neck. The neckbell was also put on an animal, either a goat or a cow, that was the leader of the herd. It made a lot of noise, and therefore it would be impossible for someone to miss it, if they were looking for it. Kamaru thus uses this saying “you are looking for a neckbell which is on your chest” to tell Nduru that he is looking for something which is so easily found –that is- the Gikuyu customs, which are obvious. Since

the neck-bell is also used for location, Kamaru implies that it should not be difficult for someone to locate the Gikuyu customs. While Kamaru would have used plain language to tell Nduru the same thing, he opts to use this saying which makes his language aesthetically more appealing. He pushes this further in lines 75-76 when he says:

To ask is not to demonstrate foolishness  
But Nduru has picked on an empty maize cob.

Here Kamaru implies that Nduru, by challenging him on a rather obvious topic, will not gain much by the challenge. If Nduru had hoped to corner him, as the tone of his questions in song 2(a) may well suggest, then he would be disappointed as Kamaru is very well prepared for the challenge. Therefore Nduru "has picked on an empty maize comb".

Waigoko, in Waigoko song 19, is said to have wasted his arrows on *Ngima* when the *Nguyo* were still in the bush (line 11). *Nguyo*, the colobus monkey, is a valued species of the ape family by the Agikuyu because of its beauty. Again the beautiful fur on its head is used to make a beautiful headdress called *gituku* which is worn in ceremonies and important occasions. Thus the colobus monkey has a higher value as opposed to *Ngima* which is but just a common monkey. The character, Waigoko is being ridiculed by the use of this saying, because he is a senior bachelor, who apparently wasted his youth doing useless things. He is also known to have a bad reputation as the speaker says:

Shame on you Waigoko,  
 Who doesn't know you?  
 Your mannerisms are not smooth.

In spite of his reputation, Waigoko wants to marry a young girl - the speaker in the song-without her consent. The young girl uses this proverb to tell Waigoko that he wasted his chances and spoilt his reputation, not knowing that beautiful women (represented by *Nguyo*) would be available later. These same women would reject him on account of his bad behaviour.

In Gathangaraiti Song 3, proverbs are also used to present the dilemma of missed chances, and the need to accept adverse reality in order to deal with life. The proverbs are also used to express a sense of regret and to advice the listener on the need to lead a responsible life. The song depicts the life of a family of nine girls who are orphaned early in life. All the girls get four children each out of wedlock with the exception of the speaker who has three. Due to the hardships that befall the members of this enlarged family, they scatter, and the speaker becomes a barmaid, where she has to persevere abuses and arrogance from patrons. In the song, she is addressing these arrogant and fussy patrons and telling them not to take her for a fool, as she is persevering because of her children as, "when it misses with the arrow, it does not pierce with the feathers". This proverb is used to describe the situation of the speaker regarding the defaults of her past. She was not able to make it in life from childhood because of misfortunes, and therefore cannot expect to sit down and hope things will improve while actually her chances are greatly hampered. This proverb is used

by the speaker to show the effects of her own family's breakdown, and her attempts to provide for her own children despite the odds. It is juxtaposed with another proverb "When a goat gives birth to a malformed lamb, it has to suckle it". This proverb is again used to depict her unplanned family - malformed lamb - and the fact that that family has to be fed - suckled. This demonstrates the speaker's acceptance of the difficult position in which she finds herself. She defends her harassed position as a barmaid by using these two proverbs which enable the listener to identify with her predicament. Again the two proverbs show a sense of regret. The speaker is regretting that she has made several irreversible false starts in life - "missed with the arrow", - with disastrous results, suggested by the idea of a "malformed lamb." The disastrous results as given in the song are a life of hardship since she has to support three "fatherless" children by doing degrading jobs. The speaker is impressing upon the need to be serious in life and taking responsibility for one's life from the onset, making the right moves, that is, "pierce with the arrow" because if one misses then "the feathers" would not help one. Second chances in life are rare and second best is not good enough.

In Irimu ria Nyambugi Song 4 (The Ogre called *Nyambugi*) an ugly girl resigns herself to mistreatment by a rich arrogant man and defends her position by giving the proverb, "He who does not have any property cannot choose". This proverb conveys the message that the person using it is very helpless and will do anything to earn a living. This is why the person has decided to be with the ugly

man - the 'You' in the song – in spite of his arrogance, because she is in no position to choose otherwise.

In Kaba Kuhoya Ngai Song 5 (d) (The best alternative is to rely on God), the speaker seeks to defend his position against the views of his colleagues by the use of proverbs. In Kaba Gicagi Song 5(b), (The best alternative is to return to the rural village), the speaker thinks that life in Nairobi is very tough and decides to leave Nairobi for the rural village. Then in Kaba Nairobi Song 5c (It is better to stay in Nairobi) the speaker disagrees with the proposition that the village is better, and argues that Nairobi is best. Seeing that this is a situation of potential or latent conflict, the speaker in Song 5d Kaba Kuhoya Ngai uses proverbs to justify a position where he disagrees with both views and resigns himself to divine intervention. The speaker suggests that people should pray about their situations, and that each should devise his own way of survival and not rely on other people's perception of the problem at hand. He says that each individual should solve their problems their own way because "*Mwaka wa hiti Nduri Muhuyanwo rigi*" - (people should not borrow each others door, during the season of marauding hyenas). The proverb is quite apt for this particular situation because , it impresses on the point that during problems - "the season of marauding hyenas" - one should not rely on another's means of solving problems - "borrowing someone else's door", because every other person also needs to lock their doors. The point here is that problems of modern life, for example, problems in song 5 (a) and (b) occasioned by urbanization, should be solved individually. individuals should come up with their own solutions without

bothering others or without expecting others to follow their method. The speaker in song 5(d) argues that though life in Nairobi is hard, and it might take its toll on one, one should not mistake these setbacks with total failure as "*Kuhoha ti kuma*", (Withering does not necessarily imply drying up). He uses the proverb to show that there is hope after a minor setback and that people should not despair when they encounter such setbacks. He insinuates that people who have given up on Nairobi may have been too hasty in their decision, forgetting that there are always chances of survival. This line of thought is further boosted by the proverb "*Utamerithitie ndatigaga kuhandu*" - (He whose plants have not sprouted does not tire of planting). He impresses on the need for persistence in the face of adversity because success will be forthcoming in the long run. The speaker thus uses proverbs to persuasively argue his case in this debate.

Proverbs have also been used to summarise the materials of whole texts in some songs. In Kamuingi Koyaga ndiri - (The public is able to lift a mortar), the title is a proverb which summarises the subject matter of the song, which is a call to Kenyans to work together. The traditional mortar that was used for pounding grain was very heavy and it would be impossible for anyone to lift it alone. But it is easy to lift it when people are many. The proverb is thus advocating for unity, as unity is strength. The theme of the song, which is a unity call to all Kenyans to come together in the task of nation building, is carried in this proverb, which is the song's *leit motif*. Working together will guarantee self-sufficiency and sovereignty as "*Kinya kiri itina nikio kiigaga*" (A calabash which has a stable bottom can remain upright). This proverb is used to

summarize the effects of concerted national effort, which would give the country a stable foundation on which it can 'remain upright'.

Yarwario Song 20 (The-bleating-one) is the title of a song whose subject matter revolves around this proverbial title. The title is a shortened form of the proverb *Mburi ya Rwanio ikuaga ona Rwanio*, - (The congenital-bleating goat, lives and dies bleating). The proverb provides the theme of the song, which is criticism of a lover who is never satisfied. Stanza one gives the speaker's decision to leave the woman and uses the imagery of the congenitally bleating goat to explain the reason:

This is because I have realised that you  
will never be satisfied,  
Even if you are given *mithunga*, *miungu*  
and *Kahurura*  
*Mikengeria* and *Mirio*  
You can never be satisfied,  
For you are the congenital bleating goat  
That lives and dies bleating.

Here the speaker declares that the woman cannot be satisfied even if she were given the best. The mentioned plants are known to be the best for feeding goats. But even when it is given these delicacies, the congenital bleating goat cannot stop bleating. This imagery is used to foreground the woman's inability to get satisfied. The proverb is repeated in nearly every other stanza to summarise the characteristics of the woman. The proverb helps the speaker to succinctly put his point across. When he thinks he has provided everything for the girl and goes out of his way to make the girl comfortable, the woman is seen patronizing bars in the speaker's absence, and in the company of the speaker's male friends. It is

instructive on the part of the speaker that the same friends had warned her about that girl:

Yet I had been warned by my friends  
That you never get satisfied,  
They had told me "son-of-Wairimu  
Be careful, you are headed for the fire"  
But I concluded that they were just jealous.

The speaker has learnt the hard way. He has tried to talk to the girl as he says in lines 57-60:

How do you feel when I am persuading you like a  
small baby and telling you to stop this behaviour  
and yet you are not my relative or my clansman.  
And I always tell you that a good wife should  
have good manners.

But even after talking to her, she does not seem to change. The speaker has thus concluded that the woman's problem is congenital and nothing can be done about it. He even expands the goat image to encompass other animals in the effort to show that the woman's problem cannot be rectified, as he says in line 62 to 65:

It is evident that a goat will always eat *Miriyo*  
And a hen will always scratch the ground  
A cat will always eat mice  
And a congenital-bleating-goat will live  
and die bleating.

This proverb enables the artist to portray a situation that cannot be rectified. There is a tacit conclusion that the woman's problem is congenital, and that nothing can be done about it, just as nothing can be done to quieten a congenital-bleating-goat.

In Mwana-Mwihoki Song 17 (b) (The-hopeful-child) proverbs are used to justify virtue and to make people wary of exploitation. The speaker is narrating events in his life and says that he lives from hand to mouth, but lives on hope and hardwork because '*Mwana uri kio Ndangiria Mai*' (A hardworking child cannot feed on faeces). He is elevating the virtue of hardwork and shows that if one works hard, one cannot be forced into such degrading situations like feeding on faeces.

In the same song, he advises that one should be wary of exploiters when he says:

My comrades, this world is tough, watch out,  
The exploitation that is there needs to be taken seriously  
Be careful so that you don't become a bridge  
... Watch out so that a clever person does not  
use your walking stick and later call you a fool.

The artist has used the Gikuyu proverb which says *Muti wa Kirimu wimiragia na ungi* (The walking stick that belongs to a fool is utilised by the wise person), to warn against exploiters. He explains this further by using the image of a bridge, and warns people to be wary of becoming bridges where other people pass through and yet they themselves do not benefit.

By analysing the use of proverbs in different songs, we are able to demonstrate how proverbs are used to portray changing thought forms. For instance proverbs have been used to revise the communal world view of the traditional society. Kenyatta in his Facing Mount Kenya is very categorical about the communal obligations in Gikuyu traditional life. He says:

According to Gikuyu ways of thinking, nobody is an isolated individual - Or rather his uniqueness is a secondary fact about him. First and foremost he is several people's relative and several people's contemporary. His life is founded on this fact spiritually and economically, just as much as biologically; the work he does everyday is determined by it, and it is the basis of his sense of moral responsibility and social obligations (Kenyatta 1938: 309).

In the contemporary scene, individual needs are taking precedence over communal ones. But there are songs which still appeal to the communal consciousness and calls people to collective existence. This communal spirit is depicted in songs like Kamuingi koyaga Ndiri Song 6 (The public is able to lift the mortar). But the individual spirit, when it is so strong, calls for revision of such thinking. For instance, the artist in Rambi Rambi cia Ndichu Song 15 (Condolences to Ndichu) shows this tendency towards revising the communal spirit as espoused in the oral tradition. He revises the proverb that says *Ya utari hinya iruagwo na kanua* (The fight of a weak person is fought with the mouth). This proverb advises one in trouble and one who needs help, to call out for help - *kuga mbu* - so that other people can come and help out. But in Rambi Rambi Cia Ndichu the speaker advises Ndichu that he should not call out. As he says:

Do not call for help  
Because the calls for help  
Elicit no response nowadays.

Yet the speaker hastens to inform Ndichu:

It is a secret I have sneaked in for you.

The speaker advises that the calls (*mbu*) these days are not answered and then says that he is only 'sneaking' in a word. The question arises why he is not very

confident to tell Ndichu openly that people are individualistic, and that he should not expect any help from them. From the context of the song there are several explanations for this. First the song is a dirge - it is a song meant for consoling Ndichu upon the death of his grandmother. Traditionally, it is not expedient to make 'radical' or 'inflammatory' statements in such a situation. The mourning period is supposed to be a time to make peace and extend goodwill to others rather than accuse people of being uncooperative and of other vices.

Secondly we are informed that the bereaved, Ndichu, was brought up by his grandmother and was given traditional instruction. It is therefore very likely that the bereaved was given instruction that underscored the communal spirit among the people. As Kenyatta says, "Gikuyu boys and girls naturally learnt tribal traditions and moral values from their parents and grandparents, so that they grew up with a simple family allegiance through which they came to understand their duties to the rest of the world" (1938:313).

The speaker is aware that the bereaved was brought up by the grandmother and "learnt tribal traditions and moral values" from her, - traditions and values that emphasized on communal existence. He therefore knows that giving any contrary advice is not expected, and consequently calls such advice 'sneaking in a word'. Then, as the speaker puts it, "there is no son of your father who would come to your aid". This can be taken to broadly mean that kinsmen no longer care about each other. But strictly speaking, this statement has deeper implications in that polygamy no longer exists, and therefore, we do not

commonly talk of *muru-wa-thoguo* in contemporary society, but we talk of *muru-wa-nyukwa* that is, "the son of your mother". The term *muru-wa-thoguo* - "the son of your father" - is used for one's half-brothers, who were a common phenomena in the traditional polygamous homes. The half-brothers were considered as ones' brothers, and they were obligated to help one in case of difficulties. In the contemporary scene, half-brothers do not exist, save for very isolated cases - and again one's brothers, whether half or not, are not obligated to help one. Thus within these contemporary imperatives, the speaker revises the proverb that encourages one to call out (*kuga mbu*), by suggesting that such calls are useless for they are never answered. It is within this context that the speaker 'sneaks in' a word, warning the bereaved against expecting help from a society that will not give it. The speaker goes on to use a common proverb "*Ni rwa nyariri wiringie*" meaning - The river is only knee deep, you should cross by yourself. This is a call to the bereaved to be self reliant. Again, the statement that "the river is only knee deep" is supposed to be reassuring, in that one can safely cross a river that is knee deep as opposed to a flooding one. The message here is that life is manageable and that the bereaved is capable of making it - 'crossing' - without the help from a community that won't give it anyway. The use of this proverb in this song can be contrasted to the use of the same proverb in Reke tumanwo Song 16 (Let us part). The tone of this song is very harsh. The speaker in the song does not feel obligated by the communal consciousness. He wants to live an individual life. In the song, the speaker declares his parting with the 'You', and shows that he cares less about any bonds that might obligate him to a communal existence, as he says in lines 1-7:

Today I have said 'Let us part'  
 Even if you are my relative, let us part,  
 Whoever was being provided for by the other,  
 Should start providing for themselves,  
 The time for exploitation is now over  
 Let each person cross the river by themselves  
 Its only knee deep.

In the previous song, (Rambi Rambi Cia Ndichu) we saw that the speaker starts with the part of the proverb that reassures about the manageability of the 'crossing' the river i.e "**the river is only knee deep**, you can cross by yourself". In this song (Reka Tumanwo) the speaker starts with 'crossing the river' that is, "**cross the river by yourself**, its only knee deep" and the idea of the river being manageable is only an after thought. Here the speaker gets rid of any feelings of an obligation to help the other. The speaker in this song is determined to sever the relationship, and cares less about the difficulties that this poses to the other-signified by the depth of the river. The river actually may not be knee deep, but judging from the way the proverb is put in this song, this is besides the point. The point is that the addressee should cross by themselves the best way they know how, for as the speaker says in lines 3 and 4 'Whoever was being provided for by the other/should start providing for themselves'. The usage of the proverb in these two songs therefore demonstrates how proverbs have been used to portray changing world views in the contemporary society.

The song Ndumiriri kuri Mwathani Song 13, (A message to God) also uses proverbs to revise the traditional concept that advocated reverence for old age. In traditional society, age was revered and old men and women were seen as

sages and very important assets in the society. For instance, elders were the custodians of society's morals and history, and in the Gikuyu society, elders were the governors and also took part in religious rituals. However, in this song, Ndumiriri kuri Mwathani, the artist questions why young men should die and leave old men around:

And you old man, who is on a walking stick,  
What has your 30 year old son left you  
around to do.

The artist makes a plea to God that he should reveal to these old men that when their time has passed they should 'go' and leave the world to young men. Here he uses the proverb "*Gutiri ingiruma keru*" - (There is no hero who achieves fame twice). His message is that an old man is useless in the contemporary society, and thus the old should not linger around for too long because "the young men need space". The artist gives his analogy and says that he is singing to fend for himself and his family and build the country. As soon as he clocks eighty, he should die and leave the world to the young men. He uses the proverb "*Wathi Wathira Wongagirwo ungi*" - (When one cannot be steady due to old age, a steady replacement is needed). The artist gives these proverbs to question the old belief that old people are assets in society. He shows that the contemporary society needs young energetic people and not old men and women like in the traditional society. Due to contemporary imperatives, the old men and women do not occupy the same position in contemporary society, like in the traditional society. The artist is however aware of the controversial message he is delivering, despite his backing it up with traditional proverbs. He says:

There are those who will hear this song  
And say that the son-of-Wairimu has gone mad.

He then defends his radical approach by claiming that he has been sent by God.

The full import of this claim is discussed in Chapter Four.

#### 2.4. Songs and Chants

Waigoko Song 19, is an illustration of a song text that has been picked from Gikuyu Orature. The introduction of the song places it within the context of Gikuyu orature as the speaker calls the addressee, '*Wakiri*'. This is a term that was used in the traditional society to address one's sponsor or *Mutiri* during the circumcision ceremony. The song is from a girl to her 'sponsor'. In the song the speaker is complaining about her father, who is forcing her to be married to 'Waigoko' - another traditional name for a senior bachelor. The girl has on her part sworn never to accede to such an engagement.

The first three stanzas are more or less the same ones in the traditional version<sup>\*</sup>, but the contemporary scene is introduced in the third stanza when the speaker says:

These are not the olden days.  
Girls have better understanding.

---

<sup>\*</sup> I learnt this traditional version in my primary school days. The traditionality of the text was also confirmed to me by several individuals who included my mother who was only too glad to sing the song for me.

She goes on to warn Waigoko about his methods:

Please do not talk to me about wealth  
My love is not on retail for money.

The traditional context of the song has been presented, but some ideas and references to the present society gives the song some contemporary appeal. As a song of protest, it is very effective in portraying the contemporary scene where girls feel free to choose their own mates.

Gathangaraiti Song 3, uses the traditional religious chant. The speaker starts by redefining the context of the song in the first stanza when she says:

My friends  
I am not singing  
Neither am I preaching  
This is a chant of repentance I am offering.

The speaker warns the listener that she is not 'singing' and claims to be offering a "chant of repentance". We can easily understand the kind of chant that she intends to deliver, in the refrain, when we come across the traditional religious Gikuyu chant - "*Thai thathaiya Ngai*". In this refrain, it is evident that the artist has borrowed from Gikuyu Orature. The other stanzas in the song are explaining the circumstances that have evoked this chant.

The speaker uses the religious chant from the Gikuyu oral traditions because she apparently understands the nature of her problem in ways that very closely

resemble the traditional conceptualization of a curse. She says that her problems are a result of evil committed by a person whom she does not even know. The consequences of this evil is that she has been cursed to roam the earth like an ostracised Buffalo. She thus feels that she can only be helped by the traditional approach to matters regarding curses, and thus resorts to the traditional religious chant.

In this chapter we have identified different texts of orature that have been used in the songs sampled and demonstrated their artistic significance. The chapter shows that popular music has significantly reappropriated texts from orature for different purposes and with an impressive degree of artistic success. In the next chapter we are going to find out what styles and techniques have been used by the musicians from orature. We are also going to see how the electronic media context has affected the styles and techniques borrowed from orature.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 STYLE, TECHNIQUES AND CONTEXT

Just as artists in the popular music scene reappropriate texts from orature in their compositions we would expect them to also reappropriate styles and techniques from orature. It should be remembered that popular music is closely related to the electronic media. It reaches its audience largely through the radio, or the music industry based on marketing of recordings on a mass commodity basis. Therefore it is imperative that we see the style and techniques of delivery of the popular song vis a vis the electronic media.

The issue of performance and audience is also very important in Orature. As Finnegan says, the audience "is often directly involved in the actualization and creation of a piece of oral literature ... There is no escape for the artist from a face to face confrontation with his audience" (Finnegan 1970:10).

Because the electronic media makes it possible for the popular musician to perform without a "face to face confrontation with his audience", there has been skepticism about the value of popular music as a communicative art form.

Jacques Attali in Noise: The Political Economy of Music, suggests that "in the present era of the electronic media each spectator [listener] has a solitary relation

with the material object, the consumption of music is individualised ... the network is no longer a form of sociality, an opportunity for spectators to communicate" (Attali 1985:35).

Allan Bloom is even more pessimistic about the communicative value of popular music in the context of the electronic media. Taking as the symbol of our era "a 13 year old boy, sitting in the living room of his family home, doing his Maths assignment while wearing his walkman headphones or watching MTV", he laments that Western civilization in the electronic media context culminates in

a pubescent child whose body throbs with orgasmic rhythms; whose feelings are made inarticulate in hymns to the joy of onanism or the killing of parents, whose ambition is to win fame and wealth in imitating the drag queen who makes the music. In short his life is made into a non-stop commercially packaged masturbational fantasy... As long as [he] has the walkman on, he cannot hear what the Great tradition has to say. (Bloom 1987: 74-5).

While we recognise that the electronic media context imposes some restrictions in the way popular songs communicate to the intended audience, we cannot uncritically accept the above views (which might be the case in the western pop scene). This is because we recognise that the African popular artists are presumably influenced by the communicative nature of Orature, 'the Great tradition' which they draw from, a tradition which lays a big premium on communication and interaction. There should be a communicative aspect that the songs derive from styles and techniques that Orature puts at the disposal of the

popular artists. We shall thus endeavor to show that a person listening to the popular songs is not 'isolated and alienated from the contemporary society' but is connected to it, because far from being 'a solitary occupation', the consumption of this music is an interactive activity, guaranteed to be so by the resources of Orature from which the artists draw. We are thus going to discuss how styles and techniques preserve the communicative nature of Orature in the sampled songs in the media context. These styles and techniques include dialogue, call and response, question and answer forms, opening and closing formulae, here not listed in any preferred order.

### **3.1 Opening and Closing Formula**

The use of opening and closing formula in Orature is emphasized by Finnegan when she says, "about opening and closing formulas we do know a great deal - in various forms these are common in all areas of Africa ... they occur too frequently to need detailed description" (Finnegan 1970: 379).

This being a common and important aspect of Orature, we proceed to discuss how popular musicians use it in their songs.

These formulae serve several purposes in any performance. Opening formulae are used to introduce the genre, or type of piece in a genre; to introduce the performer and to call the attention of a particular or a generalised audience to the performance. The formula may also give the purpose of the performance, and/or

ask for permission from the audience for the performer to start the piece. The closing formula is used to signify the end of a performance. It may involve a question, a challenge, a maxim, or a proverb summarising the performance. A brief exposition on the moral of the performance may also be given.

These aspects have been reappropriated in the popular songs sampled. It is also one way in which the artists preserve the interactive nature of Orature in their songs.

Airitu a Gikuyu (1) (The Gikuyu girls) opens with an introduction that is used in folktales - 'This is the story of a man...'. This is an appropriate way of opening the song because the song is essentially a reproduction of the Gikuyu myth of creation. In essence, the artist is inviting the listener to listen to the story.

Gathangaraiti (3) starts by directly addressing the listeners and letting them know the purpose of the piece:

My friends I am not singing,  
Neither am I preaching,  
This is a chant of repentance  
I am offering...

In Ciuria cia Nduru 2a. (Nduru's Questions) the artist opens by asking one of his fellow artists, Rugwiti, to allow him to ask a question(s) to Kamaru, another artist. In the reply to these questions Kamaru's Mitugo ya Gikuyu 2b - (The customs of the Gikuyu), starts by calling on the same artist Rugwiti, and elders from the nine clans of the Agikuyu. By their opening strategy, the artists give

the impression that they are not addressing an assumed audience, but specific individuals whom they deem to be stake holders in the issues at hand and also all other individuals who would be listening to the performance.

In Kimathi (8) which is a song about the legendary Kimathi of the Mau Mau movement, C.D.M Kiratu opens his song like a story when he says, "One day there were heavy rains..." This puts the song in the narrative genre and prepares the audience to 'receive' a story. The artist predictably goes ahead to narrate the Kimathi story.

In Ndumiriri kuri Mwathani, (13) (A message to God) the artist opens by stating the purpose of the piece, that is;

This is a message to God.

The same happens with Rambi Rambi Cia Ndichu 15 (Condolences to Ndichu) where in the opening we are given the purpose of the song when the artist says:

I am not singing  
But I am sending a message of condolences  
To Ndichu and the Gakunga family.

These opening strategies are very important in that they prepare the audience for the performance.

In Mwana Mwihoki (The-hopeful-child) song 17 (b) the artist starts by introducing himself, then goes on to give the purpose of the piece.

It is me, the son-of-Wairimu, I am back,  
 To give my profuse gratitude  
 To all those who took pity on me...  
 When they heard me singing...

Here the artist identifies himself with a previous situation - "when they heard me singing" and addresses specific individuals i.e. "those who took pity on me."

Several songs, like Gikuyu folktales end with a proverb to summarise the lesson, the situation or the moral of the song.

Gathangaraiti (3) ends with a proverb "When it gives birth to a malformed lamb, it has to suckle it". This is a summary of the speaker's view on the events narrated in the song - where the speaker and her siblings get children out of wedlock which lands them in tough circumstances. The proverb is a way of saying that these tough circumstances have to be persevered and surmounted.

Muraikio riiko ni D.K. - (D.K. is leading you into fire) - 5(e) closes with a proverb urging the parties that might not be comfortable with the speaker's assertion that the rural village is better than town life, to disagree with him, but to do so peacefully. As he says "*Mbara ya arume iruagwo na mataathi*", (The Fight of elders is fought with the *Mataathi*). The *Mataathi* were special ceremonial leaves carried by Elders in the traditional society to designate their high office whose duty was among other things to settle disputes amicably.

Yarwanio (The-bleating-one) Song 20, ends with a proverb that summarises the impossible character of a woman who can never be satisfied. The speaker has concluded that the woman's problem is congenital and therefore she can only be equated with the proverbial congenital bleating - goat, which can never be satisfied but lives and dies bleating.

Kimathi Song 8, is an example of a song that closes with an explicit espousal of the lesson to be learnt from the song. After giving the good and admirable qualities of Kimathi in the song, the speaker ends with the statement "let this narrative be a lesson for all".

Thina uri o Ngoro - (Woes are in ones heart) Song 17(a) ends in the fashion of dilemma stories. The speaker who has had a very unfruitful stay in Nairobi, wants to go home but he is in a dilemma because he has nothing to take home with him. He is thus appealing to well wishers who are listening to the song to get him a girl who can accompany him to the village, thus solving his dilemma for him. As in dilemma stories, the audience is expected to provide a solution to the problem posed in the dilemma.

### **3.2. Responses and Answers**

The call and response structure is another aspect of technique in Orature that has been skillfully and productively reappropriated in the popular songs. Related to

this is the antiphonal structure which has been employed in Uthoni wa Kanyenyaini (The wedding negotiations at Kanyenyaini) Song 18. The song is a dialogue between Musaimo and a delegation that had gone to accompany him to his marriage negotiations at Kanyenyaini. The delegation feels let down by the man whom they had gone to represent in the negotiations as it seems to them that he (Musaimo) has backed off. Musaimo on his part cites several reasons why he is not comfortable with the whole issue of marrying the girl, and the song centers around the dialogue between the delegation and Musaimo, as the former try to impress on the latter that the negotiations should be followed up and completed despite the apparent difficulties.

The most impressive application of this call and response structure is in the series of songs numbers 5a to 5e. In the first song 5 (a) the speaker calls upon all his friends - other popular musicians-to a farewell party in his house. He intends to leave Nairobi for his rural home, for he has been in Nairobi for ten years, and yet he has not made any progress economically or socially. In the subsequent song, 5(b), he has already reached the rural home and warns his friends about town life and suggests that they should look for alternatives in the villages. Then D.K., one of the artists that the speaker in song 5(a) and (b) has been addressing himself to, responds, and rejects the call to seek an alternative to town life. In his song, Kaba Nairobi, - (It is better to remain in Nairobi), 5(c), he questions the rationale for leaving Nairobi for the rural home, and gives personal and social-economic reasons. The speaker in Kaba Nairobi concludes that the call to leave Nairobi is neither wise nor sincere. In song 5(d) another artist responds to this

exchange between the artists in 5(a) & (b) and 5(c) and starts by saying:

You Kiratu and D.K.  
 You have got me really confused  
 Because both of you are my friends  
 And I respect both of you.  
 Kiratu is saying that the village is best,  
 And D.K. claims Nairobi is the best,  
 Myself, Ruguiti, I will remain steady with the rosary  
 For God's case has no appeal.

Ruguiti then goes on to argue that both choices are necessarily not right or wrong, and that such choices depend on one's preference and position. He is of the opinion that any activity that can earn one a living is worth pursuing, and therefore people should stick to whichever place suits them economically. Again, all the positions and calls to this and that alternative, elicit a response from yet another artist, Kamaru, who puts his view in the song Muraikio riko ni D.K., - (D.K. is leading you into fire), 5e. In this song, he not only supports the village crusaders, but also questions the sincerity of D.K's assertion that town life is better.

In this exchange we find that the call and response method has been refined, and is no longer the stereotyped repetitive structure in the traditional folksongs. In the popular song, it has been infused with the contemporary imperatives of democracy and free choice. Thus the artists are free to respond to issues in different ways, and this gives rise to a very healthy debate on their part, as they explore the pros and cons of town life vis a vis rural life. Again the refinement of this call and response structure shows the contemporary scenario of

ideological differences, where there are no simple answers to issues that concern modernization and urbanization in the African context. The call and response has been adapted to the contemporary scenario with an imaginative skill and a democratic temperament that makes it a very exciting technique.

The technique has also been refined by the media reality. For instance the singers in the above exchange would definitely have composed the same song with these different calls and responses. But the issue of copyright ownership, marketing and production makes it expedient for each call and each response by a particular artist, to be a song by itself. As Okpewho notes in Myth in Africa, much of that pursuit of novelty that we see in the culture of print [and electronic media] is dictated by commercial considerations (Okpewho 1983:157).

Again this call and response method preserves the aspect of the immediacy of the audience, which is a marked feature of Orature. In the performance of the songs, the vivid presence of an audience is so dramatically exploited in the situation where they (the artists) have to argue/debate among themselves.

The question and answer technique is also used to good effect in the songs. This technique is overtly recognisable in riddles. The technique, as it is used in riddling has been used in He Kigacwa (Give me a prize) - Song 7. However, the technique here is used to encompass a longer and a much more far-reaching text than the "short forms" prevalent in riddling (For issues regarding the form of the riddle see discussion on riddles in Chapter 2). The speaker in the song has

challenged an 'elder' to identify the causes of his (elder's) failure in life. This is the first part of this 'riddle'. The elder is unable to explain the course of his failure. When this happens in a riddle i.e., when one is unable to give an answer, he is asked to give a prize, so that the person who had posed the riddle can give him the answer. In the song the speaker is asking this 'elder' to give him a prize so that he can tell him the answer, i.e. why he is a failure in life. Thus the first three stanzas in the song start with 'Give me a prize'. Apparently the speaker is given a prize to provide the answers because in the subsequent stanzas, he goes on to explain to the elder what has gone wrong in life and thus completing the riddle. Thus the riddling technique has been expanded by the artist to encompass complex contemporary issues and thus takes a more complex form than it did in the traditional 'short' riddles.

The question and answer format has also been used in Ciuria Cia Ndichu - (Ndichu's Questions) 2a, which contains questions; and Mitugo ya Agikuyu - (The Gikuyu customs) 2b, which contains the questions' answers. Nduru in song 2a wants to know several issues regarding the traditional Gikuyu customs from Kamaru, then Kamaru gives him the answer in song 2b. Again we see the media context separating the questions from the answers probably due to production and marketing implications.

In Thina uri o Ngoro- (Woes are in ones heart) Song 17(a), the speaker calls upon the audience to help him solve a personal dilemma. In this song he laments about his wretched condition and calls upon his listeners to explain to him what

his wretchedness can be attributed to. Towards the end of the song, he calls upon men and women of goodwill to find him a girl whom he can go with up-country to visit his family.

Mwana Mwihoki (The-hopeful-child), Song 17(b) is a sequel to Thina uri o Ngoro, where the speaker is talking about the responses that he received after singing Thina .... In Mwana Mwihoki he tells how various people responded to his dilemma, and he starts by thanking a one Kanyoro son-of-Wanjiku, who got him a girl to take up-country. Regarding the appeal to some clever person to explain to him the cause of his woes, he says that the response was overwhelming. Surprisingly many of the respondents - whom he says wrote to him - wondered why he (the speaker) is complaining about life since they feel that being a bachelor, he has nothing to worry about in life. They feel that he should take life easily because he has not even reached the age of problems.

This sequel to the first song shows that the artist is sharply aware of an audience and tries to incorporate them in his song.

### **3.3. Occasion and Performance**

Orature depends on performance in a certain occasion for transmission.

As Finnegan correctly notes:

there is no mystery about the first and most basic characteristic of oral literature even though it is constantly overlooked in collections and analysis. This is the significance of performance in oral literature. This goes beyond a mere matter of definition for the nature of the performance itself can make important contribution to the impact of the particular literary form being exhibited (Finnegan, 1970:2).

Thus the artist must not only be heard to 'say' something, but must actually 'do'. It may be assumed that because the popular artists mostly perform in the electronic media context, then the 'doing' aspect cannot be captured. But by manipulating the verbal aspects at their disposal, the popular musicians are able to recreate a situation where performance or 'doing' is evident.

Role playing is one way in which the oral artist 'performs' his piece. In song 2(a) and 2(b) role playing has been expertly evoked to foreground the performative aspect of Orature.

In song 2(a) Kaba Kuinuka, the artist invokes an occasion where he invites his friends to bid them farewell as he has decided to leave the town for his rural village. In the last stanza, the performative language of bidding farewell is used when he says:

Town dwellers, I wish you the best,  
 We will be seeing each other on the  
 Limuru route,  
 Kamaru my friend, bye bye,  
 And you Rugwiti see you in Limuru  
 D.K., my boy and Joseph Kaisha  
 We will be seeing each other when I come visiting  
 And you Ndung'u, who drives the bus to Limuru  
 Make sure you take me to Njeri, my mother.

This stanza gives the impression that the speaker is actually leaving and the occasion where he is saying his valedictions to his friends is vivid.

After saying farewell to his friends, we then hear the same speaker in Kaba Gicagi narrating the events of his arrival home. He starts by addressing his mother:

Mother, I would rather do manual work,  
So that I can get food and clothes  
Rather than you see me brought here dead  
or be brought in handcuffs.

He goes on to relate the debacle related to his arrival home and his wretched situation. The listener is able to visualise the unfolding of events by following this 'performative' verbal rendering of the song.

In Mitugo ya Gikuyu (The customs of the Gikuyu) song 2B, Kamaru pushes this performative-verbal rendering to higher levels with great success. In this song he is answering questions on the Gikuyu customs asked by Nduru.

Kamaru starts by calling around him an audience that includes other artists, elders from the Gikuyu community and Nduru, the enquirer. Thus, he makes the answering an occasion where several stake holders have assembled to listen to his answers. He has created a vivid picture of an audience in the mind of the listener, and then goes ahead to use performatives in the song which shows that he is performing in front of the assembled stakeholders. In lines 18-19 he tells

Nduru, “a person who is cursed **take** the Gikuyu customs”. Considering that Nduru is in the audience, the word ‘take’ which in Gikuyu could mean ‘receive’, portrays a situation of ‘passing on’ the custom regarding cursed persons to Nduru. The idea of a performance is very well portrayed in the same stanza when he says:

Tell me what curse this is?  
I prescribe a remedy in your hearing.

The idea of spontaneity is clear and the listener can experience the presence of the singer and when he comes to the issue of sacrifices, the performative scenario is even more vivid, as he says:

There are so many sacrifices.  
And each special sacrifice has its own goat,  
Which goat shall I offer for sacrifice?  
As sacrificing this one is so easy  
I wouldn't even take snuff (hesitate)  
Before I am through.  
Is it for installing a home?  
Or is it a birth sacrifice?  
Or is it for reincarnation or appeasement?  
(Whatever it is for)  
Place the sacrificial animal here and  
watch me perform the sacrifice.

This stanza gives the impression that the speaker is preparing to perform a sacrifice. He goes on to describe the process of carrying out the various sacrifices. He also goes into details of the sacrificing and distribution of the goat used in concluding marriage ceremonies.

Again the use of performative expressions is impressive:

For that sacrifice which concludes  
 marriage ceremonies  
***put the animal down here and watch***  
*Githuri, Muthiori, Mutura*  
***Will go to the visitor of the brides father***

*Ngerima, mutiri* and *Kagiri*,  
 Are for the brides father,  
 The liver will go to the woman  
 And the mouth is for both men and women  
*Kiiga* and *Mahuri*.  
***I am going to give to the young men***  
 And lastly  
 The tongue will be shared by the one  
 who got circumcised with the bride's father.

From the manipulation of the verbal-rendering, it is clear that Kamaru is performing the sacrifice in front of his audience and distributing the parts of the goat.

Again in lines 91-94, the artist uses this performative verbal rendering when he says:

Bring that bee-hive,  
 And I am going to cock it as you watch.  
 As I put the *hengero* (Lid) and *ithigo* (fastener)

Although Kamaru is operating in a context that does not allow him "a face to face" contact with the audience, he is able through manipulation of verbal aspects to invoke an occasion of performance which preserves the performative aspect of orature. It is thus clear that the artists in popular music preserve the performative aspect of orature as a quality of primary importance and a mode of

aesthetic expression. Whereas orature loses its performative aspects on a written paper, the same aspect is preserved in pop songs.

It is thus evident from the foregoing that even within the constraints of the electronic media, popular musicians have skillfully reappropriated the styles and techniques of orature to enhance the artistic quality, interactiveness and aesthetic appeal of their songs. The electronic media context does not rob the songs their interactive and communicative impact as some critics of the contemporary popular song would have us believe. In their reappropriating the styles and techniques of orature, namely, opening and closing formula, questions and answer forms, call and response forms and involving occasion and performative aspects in the songs, the songs become highly interactive and communicative. The artists borrow from orature to make their productions meaningful and appealing. We would therefore dismiss the skeptics of the popular song, who claim that this form of verbal expression is a form of alienation and that it isolates the listeners from the artist. On the strength of the above analysis, we concur with the views of Shuhei Hosokawa, who rejects the ideas of the forementioned skeptics (for example, Attali and Bloom) who hold the opinion that "with industrialization and urbanization especially in recent decades, people loose that healthy relationship with the environment, become alienated and turn into [a] crowd suffering from uncommunicability" (Hosakawa 1984:165). Other skeptics, as explained in the introduction, that is, Kieti (1989) and Kemoli (1989) who see the popular song as a form of alienation, have their arguments flying in the face of the evidence of our analysis.

Someone listening to the popular songs through the radio or from a cassette tape is not isolated or alienated from the creative world, because the artists utilise the interactive techniques from orature, which are audience/listener sensitive. Far from being a solitary/alienative occupation, the consumption of this music is a highly sociable and interactive activity in the contemporary electronic 'soundscape', - to borrow Scher's term.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 FUNCTIONS

The importance of the functions of orature cannot be over-emphasized. The idea that orature has a utilitarian role requires that we look at it purely for its practical aims as

William Bascom says:

For the folk, the functions of folklore are now more important than their form and origin ... the folk do care about function. They feel they know and like folklore for what it can do, whether it be for putting children to sleep at night or for passing the time on a job involving repetitious mechanical drudgery. (Quoted in Dundes, 1965: 278).

The hesitation to acknowledge the popular song as a meaningful contemporary verbal art may be attributed to the failure to recognize how the functions of orature are preserved in the popular songs. In this chapter, we are going to demonstrate how the Gikuyu popular song reappropriates and perpetuates the functions of orature.

### 4.1 Didacticism

The didactic value of orature has been preserved in the pop songs and by reappropriating the didacticism of orature in their songs, the singers should be seen as people who are trying to teach and impart moral lessons. By extension the listeners are expected to take these lessons and learn from the incidents in the songs.

In Kaba Kuinuka (Its better to go back to the rural home) song 5 (a), the speaker narrates his experiences in Nairobi and traces his wretchedness to town life. He narrates how he has wasted ten years in Nairobi and finally goes home with nothing. He uses his experience to warn his contemporaries:

Now see how hopeless I am,  
 I have no house and no wife,  
 This is the mess that town life got me into  
 So my friends do take care.  
 Whatever one gets  
 One would better divide it.  
 And eat one piece and save the other,  
 Had I known that when I was in town,  
 I wouldn't be tolerating the humiliation of  
 Staying in my mother's house.

The speaker is using his experiences in the song to 'teach' the listeners what he himself did not know. He expects that the listeners will learn from the events of the song.

He Kigacwa (Give me a prize) Song 7, is another song whose didactic purpose comes out forcefully. The speaker wants a prize so that he can enlighten the 'elder' on why his homestead has been destroyed. The elder seems unable to understand why his homestead has become derelict and the speaker offers to educate him. The speaker goes on to give him the cause of his family breakdown, and advises him on the steps to take to reverse this process and rebuild a strong home.

In Kimathi song 8, the artist uses the story of Kimathi, the legendary freedom fighter, for didactic purposes. He portrays Kimathi as a hardworking patriot who lived and died for his country. He uses his life as a challenge to the listeners when he says:

Let this story be a lesson for all

The artist has portrayed Kimathi as a man who was greatly respected for the love of his country. He also portrays him as clever and brave. These are the qualities he would like his listeners to attain by emulating Kimathi.

The experiences of the speaker in the songs Thina uri o ngoro and Mwana mwihoki, 17 (a) & (b) should be noted for their didactic value. In Thina uri o ngoro - (Woes are in one's heart), the speaker laments about the friends he has in Nairobi when he says:

And the friends in Nairobi are very cunning  
 They are not real friends but exploiters  
 When I work to get myself at least ten shillings  
 They come asking me to buy them tea,  
 While their hundred-shilling - bills are safe  
 in their pockets.  
 They incessantly talk about buying plots  
 Yet when I think of myself  
 I have absolutely nothing left.

In the sequel to this song Mwana mwihoki - (The-hopeful-child), the speaker does not relent in exposing the exploitative relationships that exist in Nairobi. He says:

Yet the earning that is there these days!  
 There are those who earn while others are spectating,  
 And others like the son-of-Wairimu  
 They work for others,  
 When I get a hundred shillings and want to save  
 They bring me logs, telling me to help  
 them to carry them,  
 Donations, contributions and borrowers,  
 It is true that the one who farms is not  
 the one who harvests,  
 Mine are eaten while I watch and I am  
 left with nothing  
 Just swallowing saliva  
 God please help The-hopeful-child.

The artist hopes to teach his listener to be wary of exploitative friends. He has used his own example to show people the wily ways of the world. Stanza five is forceful in its didactic polemic:

My comrades this world is tough, watch out  
 The exploitation that is there needs to be taken seriously  
 Be careful so that you do not become a bridge  
 where people cross over  
 For your bones will collapse  
 And yet you get nothing  
 Be careful not to carry somebody else's donkey  
 Watch out dear brother  
 So that a clever person does not use your walking stick  
 And later call you a fool  
 They say that when a string has been used to remove  
 a maize cob from the calabash,  
 It has no more use and it can be thrown into the fire.  
 Watch out so that you do not fall into the same category  
 With The-hopeful-child.

The artist, after giving his experiences at the hands of the exploiters in Nairobi, uses this as the basis to educate his listeners so that they do not fall in the same predicament.

While the didactic statements are geared towards giving listeners survival tactics in the contemporary world, the didacticism in the songs is in line with the functions of orature.

## 4.2 Social Critique

There are several ways in which the popular songs preserve the function of exacting social pressure and control, as found in orature.

A good example of this is Mucoke Maganjo - (Return to the old homestead), Song 11. The artist is protesting against the individualism that has infiltrated the contemporary society. He is pressurizing the society to return to the age old homestead (traditional society), where people worked together and were mindful of each other's welfare. He uses both the traditional myth and Christian precepts in putting pressure on individuals to recognize the value of unity. In the song, he protests against hatred and jealousy. He uses the Gikuyu expression popularized by Ngugi in his writings that "If a bean falls down, we share it among ourselves". The singer goes further to protest against the values of capitalism which are propagated by a money economy. He laments the selfishness and greed of the capitalist set-up where people are less concerned if not actually happy at the plight of others. The antagonistic social classes are the concern of the artist when he says:

You smear ochre  
 While I smear ashes  
 While you lead Kibata  
 I lead Ngucu

The classes are here signified by the juxtaposition of words denoting items and occasions of differing value. Ochre, the red soil used for cosmetic purposes is juxtaposed with the valueless ashes - which signifies misery and poverty. In the contemporary society the 'haves' smear ochre, while the 'have nots' smear ashes. Again, the two types of dances, *Kibata*, and *Ngucu* are also juxtaposed to portray class differences. *Kibata* is a colourful dance by the young Gikuyu warriors presenting themselves as ready to take part in battle in the traditional set up. Conversely, *Ngucu* is a children's dance "which comes after these youngsters have broken away from their mothers' apron strings, when they join clamorous crowds on noisy squares and cross-roads during moonlight evenings" (Senoga-zake, 1983: 17). The two dances signify the chasm that exist between the social classes and therefore lack of harmony in their activities. In his protest against this kind of social-stratification, the artist contends that Gikuyu and Mumbi, who are the doyen of Gikuyu lifestyle, advocated for a just system where equity would prevail, but now inequalities are the order of the day. He admonishes that such a system of inequalities breeds hostility and rivalry, greed and cut throat competition. He puts pressure on individuals who are comfortable in such a scenario by reminding them:

You will pass away,  
But money will remain.

In Kuuma Ndemi na Mathathi - (From *Ndemi* and *Mathathi*), Song 9, the artist puts pressure on parents to educate their children as that is the only way they would hope to improve their lot in today's world. In this song, the artist demonstrates the changing value systems and shows how the economic base of the Gikuyu community has changed from agriculture in the traditional society, to education in the contemporary one. He says

that in the past, the system that had been set up by the *Ndemi* and *Mathathi* generations was based on land. But things have changed these days and

I now ask for education  
 Respectable patriots today  
 Their sword is education  
 I do not wish for anything else.

Thus Kamaru, the artist, impresses upon the society the need to educate their children.

In Nyakaringiti - (The-blanket-woman), Song 14, the artist criticises laziness. The song is ridiculing a lazy wife who sleeps the whole day instead of applying herself to some meaningful undertaking. The song describes how this woman's laziness has tickled the villagers, making her a topic of gossip and ridicule:

Because of spending the day  
 Outside with a blanket  
 You have become a topic for narratives  
 You have even been baptised,  
 The-blanket-woman  
 You are used as a riddling topic  
 Question:- Who is the-blanket-woman.  
 The answer is well known  
 The blanket woman is Gaceru's wife.

Here we see how the artist has used the song to explain people's attitude towards laziness and thus ridicule the lazy woman. The name "*Nyakaringiti*" is a name that the woman has acquired for herself because of her undesirable behaviour. The name in this song is used to ridicule deviant behaviour.

Waigoko Song 19, is another piece where an individual with deviant behaviour is ridiculed. The song is about a girl complaining to her sponsor about the father's plans to

marry her to an old ugly bachelor. The girl is protesting this arrangement and in her protest ridicules Waigoko and the deviant behaviour:

Shame on you Waigoko,  
 Who doesn't know you  
 You wasted your arrows with *Ngima*  
 Don't you know that the *Nguyo*  
 are still in the bush  
 You may go for divination, or drink poison.  
 But you will never see me in your house.

The girl protests against an archaic approach to courtship, where girls were forced to get married to men they did not want. She argues that this is the enlightened era and girls know their rights when she says:

These are not the olden days  
 Girls know better.

In line with the concept of orature a social critique is the role that the songs play in social approval for those who conform to the socially accepted norms. Orature had certain "praise names" and also there were praise songs intended to reward or show approval of those who conform to prevailing social values.

In Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri - (The public can lift the mortar), song 6, the singer impresses upon the society the need to work together and to give oneself selflessly for the good of the nation. In this light the singer praises those who selflessly worked for the independence of this country:

We give many thanks to the leaders  
 And the public together,  
 Because you nurtured the flag  
 With your blood and sweat,  
 So that when we see it flying  
 we say this is the new Kenya  
 Let's work together.

The freedom fighters are also praised in the songs Kimathi Song 8, and Mohetwo me Mungwaja Song 10. The artists are showing approval by praising the freedom fighters for upholding the coveted virtues of courage and selflessness.

In Mwana-Mwihoki - (The-hopeful-child) Song 17 (b), the artist uses this praise name to show approval for the virtues of handwork and optimism. "The hopeful child" is a name that the speaker adopts when he changes his attitude towards life and starts being optimistic and industrious:

... I have decided to inform you  
 that I am still alive  
 Because an active child will  
 never eat faeces  
 The one thing that I have been  
 feeding on is hope  
 And hence changed my name  
 I am now called 'The-hopeful-child'.

In the previous song - Thina uri o ngoro we had met the speaker as a man with many woes and more than enough reason to give up on life. This change of attitude signified by the change of name, teaches the listener to cultivate an attitude of positive expectancy about what will happen in future regardless of what has occurred in the past.

This song Mwana Mwihoki also incorporates chants of praise and gratitude to all who showed concern when they heard the same singer singing Thina uri o ngoro 17 (a). In

this previous song, he had enumerated his woes and had appealed for help from well-wishers:

I am sending out an SOS to my friends  
 Who still have a human heart  
 To get me a girl,  
 That I can take to my mother in Nyahururu.

In Mwana Mwihoki the speaker is full of praises to all those who responded to his call, especially a one Kanyoro son-of-Wanjiku , who went out of his way to get him a girl.

The speaker is also full of praises to other people who were kind enough to help him in other ways as he says:

Thuita, the father of Kabui, you are like my father  
 And the family of Cirus' father;  
 May you be blessed,  
 For you saw how I was suffering alone  
 And took care of me,  
 When you noticed my determination...

It is clear from the above analysis that the song approves of handwork, kindness and concern for the less fortunate, and it's a song of praise to those who uphold those social virtues.

Ndumiriri kuri Mwachani - (A message to God) Song 13, is another song that teaches people not to waste their youth, if they expect respect and reverence in old age. In the song, the speaker wonders what old men are doing in the world when they were unable to make any headway in their youth. The speaker chastises such old men and suggests

that they should pass on and give the youth some space. The speaker seems to suggest that respect and reverence would not come to one just because one is old. If one never made anything of themselves when they were young, they should expect nothing in old age but scorn. While in times past reverence for old age was automatic, the message in this song is that such reverence in modern times should be earned by a good track record without which one would be labeled a failure. Consequently one would better get out of the way for the youth to have a chance to prove themselves. Pushing this kind of thinking further, old people who want to compete for space with the young are seen as a threat to a full life for the youth. This is more because if the youth are not able to make any headway, due to competition and hinderance from such old people, they likewise risk the chance of being scorned in their old age. The message here is that one should use their youth wisely because one's wasted youth will snowball into a series of wasted youths from one generation to another.

### 4.3 Projection and Rationalisation

Orature is also important in the role it plays in social projection. It provides a forum for one to say things that one would not say in normal circumstances. It also provides one "with rationalization when the institutions and conventions (of society) are challenged and questioned, to suggest that he be content with things as they are, and to provide him with a compensatory escape from the hardships, the inequalities and the injustices of everyday life" (Dundes, 1965: 278).

The popular song appropriates these important functions of orature. Several songs are sanctions that allow the artists to say things that cannot be said in ordinary social intercourse, while others are rationalizations judging from the way they evaluate social phenomena. They thus offer the artists and their listeners sanctioned methods of expressing themselves.

In Irimu ria Nyambugi - (The Ogre called Nyambu)gi), Song 4, the speaker castigates another individual whom he describes as very ugly and likens him to an ogre. In ordinary usage, such references can only be termed as abusive and against social propriety and decorum. It is only through orature, in this case popular songs, that one is able to use such language without offending other members of society. On the same point, the message of Reke Tumanuo - (let us part) - Song 16, and the language used, are all disagreeable. The language that the speaker uses would be termed as uncouth and uncivilised in normal conversation. The speaker starts by breaking all social ties with

'You' and describes their foregoing relationship as exploitative and regrettable. He tells 'You' that if only he had power he would beat her thoroughly. He accuses 'You' of forcing him to "live in an abyss of darkness" where:

you torment me like Lazarus and the rich man  
And I live on leftovers.

He goes on to declare the death of their friendship and tells 'You':

Let our friendship henceforth die  
Be selling to me whatever you have been giving to me.  
So that you will realise that you are not God,  
And our parting cannot cause the collapsing of heavens and the earth.

He goes on to declare 'You' a traitor when he says:

You are like Judas who betrayed Jesus  
And sold him for 30 pence.

The language, tone and the message of this song are very harsh and obviously disagreeable in everyday usage. Yet it is interesting to note that this song became an instant popular hit, and the expression Reke Tumanwo (let us part) was adopted as a common folk cliché in Gikuyuland. Through projection and identification, the listeners were able to identify with the message of the song, a message that they would be hard put to express in every day conversation. The song gave them an outlet for unacceptable and otherwise offensive feelings, thoughts, and expressions that they cannot verbalise in normal circumstances.

Ndumiriri Kuri Mwathani (A message to God) Song 13, is another piece that utilises the song context to pass on unacceptable/controversial messages. In the song, the speaker wonders what old men and women are doing in the world when young people are dying. His images are rather unorthodox, especially when he says that the death of a young person is just like slaughtering a young chick and leaving an old cock which cannot even crow, and whose meat is so hard that it cannot be eaten. He continues:

And you oldman who is on a walking stick  
 What has your 30 year old son left you  
 around to do?  
 Yet you couldn't do much when you were young.  
 And all your youth was wasted for nothing  
 Stop wandering here and there,  
 This is our time  
 My message to God is that he should give you  
 knowledge,  
 When you have led your chance you pass away  
 For one cannot have two chances.

This is definitely a stance that is very explosive. It is highly unlikely that anyone would have the courage to ask old men and women such questions on their face and advance such thinking in their hearing. But the context of the song gives the artist the license to advance such 'anti-social' messages, which would not be expressed in normal circumstances.

Like orature, the popular song is a vehicle through which people can adopt rationalizations as compensatory escape from hardships, inequalities and injustices of everyday life.

In Gathangaraiti Song 3, the speaker is in hardships. As she says, she came from a family of nine girls and each has four children out of wedlock. Neither the mothers nor the children are educated. The song is a plea to God to help the speaker and her children. The song provides a release from hardships through projection. Again, in the song, the singer rationalises about her undignified job at the bar when she says:

When you see me in the bar, selling beer to you,  
And you use foul language with insults and fussing,  
Do not say I am stupid when I tolerate you,  
It is not my wish, I just have to work to feed  
my children.

The rationalisation in the song are the ones that make life bearable for the speaker and the listeners who may be in the same predicament. The song is an outlet for inner feelings, thoughts and hopes.

In Kaba Kuhoya Ngai - (The best alternative is to pray) Song 5(d), the speaker is aware of the hardships of townlife and those of rural life. Others (Song 5a & b) have questioned the wisdom of staying in town, while others (Song 5c) have declared that it is foolhardy for anyone to attempt to come out of there. The speaker in the song, being aware of the complexities of the contentious issue, rationalises by declaring that he will just pray - this is the best alternative! He says he will go anywhere he can find money, be it the rural area or urban area. On close scrutiny, we find that this is simply a way of rationalising because, as he says, he goes home to the rural area in the evening and goes to work in Nairobi in the morning. This song is his way of rationalising away his

situation, since he belongs to both worlds and cannot make a decision to forgo one for the other as the speakers in 5(a & b) and 5(c) have done.

It is also instructive to note how the artists have reappropriated proverbs from orature in projection and rationalisation of circumstances emanating from imperatives of the contemporary set-up. In Gathangaraiti for instance, the singer uses two proverbs to explain her position "When it misses with the arrow it cannot pierce with a feather" and "when it gives birth to a malformed lamb it has to suckle it! These proverbs are used to rationalise the girls position. These proverbs can thus be seen as forms of escape from the haunting memories of missed chances on the side of the speaker. The impression that the girl has been forced into hardships by circumstances is escapist, because she was perfectly capable of steering off this course in life and resist temptations that made her give birth to those 'fatherless' children. Thus this is a way of 'crying over split milk' and blaming nature in a manner suggesting that nature inevitably created the circumstances under which 'the milk spilt'.

In Kaba Kuhoya Ngai, the song quoted above, the speaker uses a repertoire of proverbs which help him justify his position since he cannot make a decision either for or against rural or town life. He uses the proverb "There can be no borrowing each other's door during the season of hyenas", to rationalise his position. He also goes on to say "every falcon knows its resting place" to show that he is not in a position to follow anyone's advice as to where he should live however sensible such advice may be.

#### 4.4 Cultural and Historical Record

Orature was important as a form of cultural and historical record. This is another function that the popular song has preserved. The popular song serves as an important record of culture and contemporary history. It also serves the purpose of validation and preservation of culture.

These are very central functions of orature as Bascom says in his essay "Four Functions of Folklore":

The recording of folklore gives further leads for the investigation of the content of culture, ensuring that important cultural details are not overlooked ... it may offer clues to the past events and to archaic customs no longer in actual practice although not to the degree assumed by cultural evolutionists. It may provide a means of getting at esoteric features of culture which cannot be approached in any other way; it reveals the effective elements of culture such as attitudes, values and cultural goals and may verbalise these in a form which needs only to be translated and quoted as evidence of a consensus of opinion (Quoted in Dundes, 1965: 285).

The quotation gives an accurate summary of the degree in which the popular song functions as an expression of cultural record, and also the purpose it serves in validation and preservation of culture.

Airitu a Gikuyu (The Gikuyu Girls), Song 1, can be "quoted as evidence of a consensus of opinion" regarding Gikuyu communal origin. The song has given the Gikuyu myth of origin in accurate detail. It gives the origin of the nine clans of the Agikuyu, by giving

the names of the nine daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi, the original parents of the Agikuyu.

The popular song also "offers clues to archaic customs no longer in actual practice" and "ensures that important cultural details are not overlooked." This is evident in Kamaru's Mitugo ya Agikuyu - (The customs of the Agikuyu), Song 2(b). In this song Kamaru explores the gamut of the Agikuyu cultural life from sacrifices, birth, marriage and cleansing ceremonies, Gikuyu architecture, the customary talents of different clans, the names of Gikuyu objects and artifacts, Gikuyu dances and Agikuyu clothing, cosmetics and ornaments. He goes into Gikuyu administrative institutions, governance and the role of the clans and the age groups in politics.

The songs also go into validation of the Gikuyu culture. They, for instance, show the indebtedness of the present generation to the traditional culture and history. For instance in Airitu a Gikuyu - quoted above, the speaker says:

My friends, we should be grateful to Gikuyu  
And his wife Mumbi  
Because they are our origin.

The same sentiments are echoed by Kamaru in Mucope Maganjo (Go back to the old homestead) - Song 11, where he advises the contemporary society to go back to the old customs established by Gikuyu and Mumbi.

The songs are also significant as historical record in the contemporary society. Apart from cultural record, history, especially the history of the freedom struggle is well

reflected in the songs. Even in the present era where the print media presumably is important and efficient in recording history, the musicians preserve the function of orature in orally recording a peoples' history. In Kimathi Song 8, and Mohetwo me Mugwaja - (Seven of them had been jailed) - Song 10, the Kenyan freedom struggle has been recorded. These songs give glimpses of the freedom struggle and also give the names of some key players in the struggle. There is a tendency, however, by the oral artists to add fanciful play to the historical materials they record, so that eventually historical accounts attain mythical qualities. This evidently happens in the song Kimathi where the artist does not hesitate to embellish the story with some fanciful imagination, making the story of Kimathi a mythical legend in the version of orature. He says:

One day there were heavy rains.  
 In a small village in Nyeri  
 And in Wachiuri's homestead,  
 A boy child was born  
 Kimathi grew of age  
 Being clever and brave,  
 A good club comes from its origin.

The idea of 'heavy rains' is an attempt to associate Kimathi's birth with some sort of supernatural providence. Again the basic qualities of wisdom and courage are foregrounded. We thus notice the fanciful play associated with orature's attempt to recreate the lives of mythic heroes. Thus while the print media may portray the true 'historical' Kimathi, the pop musician gives in to the urge in oral artists to embellish historical accounts with fanciful play.

It is this quality of orature that the artist reappropriates with good aesthetic effect. The fanciful play makes the account more appealing than bare historical facts.

#### 4.5 Religious Expression

The functions of orature in religious expression has also been reappropriated in the popular song. Finnegan gives religious expression as an important role of the oral poet when she says:

Another interpretation of the role of the oral poets has been put forward by some scholars: namely that the poet is essentially and always a seer, a prophet who reveals what is hidden through the divine inspiration and communication with the spirits (Finnegan, 1977: 208).

Nora Chadwick is a leading exponent of this view and her explanation in Poetry and Prophecy, is worth quoting at length in order to fully appreciate the centrality of this role

She says:

The fundamental elements of the prophetic function seems to have been everywhere the same. Everywhere the gift of poetry is inseparable from divine inspiration. Everywhere this inspiration carries with it knowledge - whether of the past, in the form of history and genealogy, and of the future in the form of the prophetic utterance in the narrower sense. Always this knowledge is uttered in poetry which is accompanied by music, whether of song or instrumental music. Music is everywhere the medium of communication with spirits. Invariably, we find that the poet and the seer attributes his inspiration to contact with the supernatural powers and his mood during prophetic utterances is exalted and remote from that of his normal existence. Generally, we find that there is a recognised process in vogue by which the prophetic mood can be induced at will. The lofty claims of the poet and the seer are universally admitted, and he himself holds a high status wherever he is found (Chadwick, 1942: 14).

We find that this view is appropriated in the song Ndumiriri Kuri Mwathani - (A message to God), Song 13. The artist sees himself as a mediator between the people and God. In the song, he claims to be delivering a message from God as well as interceding on behalf of the people. He is praying so that God can save the young generation from

diseases and pestilences. Also he is directing the young generation to the divine origin of their woes:

Yet you my agemates  
 Have prepared the cane,  
 Which God is using to punish you,  
 For you have gone contrary to his commandments  
 And in your waywardness infuriated him.

He advises the young generation to keep the commandments of God so that God can take pity on them. He acknowledges that when many people will hear the song, they will claim that he, a pop musician, has gone mad:

There are those who will hear this song  
 And say that the son-of-Wairimu has gone mad.

He is aware that the message of the song is not in line with the expectations of people as regards a popular musician. The singer also denies that he is preaching, and claims divine visitation when he says:

My wish is not to preach,  
 It is only that I have been sent by God,  
 To give you a word of life.

Thus this song can only be seen in the context given by Chadwick, where the oral poet "attributes his inspiration to contact with supernatural powers, and his mood during prophetic utterance is exalted and remote from that of his normal existence". The mood of the artist in this song, about which he claims divine inspiration is remote from that of a common pop musician. Thus, the artist's claims here that the message should not be seen as an aberration from his 'normal' existence as a popular musician, but that it should

be seen in the context of a seer, under divine inspiration to deliver "a word of life" from God. In the song, the role of the oral artist as divinely inspired is observed.

#### **4.6 Entertainment**

In the clamour for meaning and literary significance, we are wont to forget orature's function in entertaining the folk. On the other hand, the entertaining musical aspect of popular music may be emphasized at the expense of its artistic significance. While we appreciate that 'musicality' is a source of entertainment in the popular song, we should highlight the entertaining aspects of drama and spectacle, which are largely reappropriated from orature. As Okpewho notes, drama and spectacle as a source of entertainment in contemporary works show "a close attachment to the oral narrative style". (1983: 182). When oral narrators use this style, "the description of character and scenes" Okpewho continues, "shows a sense of detail, everything being put to impress the outlines in our minds and to affect us as deeply as possible". We take pleasure in the antics of the hare, laugh at the folly of the hyena, and are amazed at the cruelty of the ogre. The scenes in oral narratives do not only teach, they amuse as well as amaze. The popular musicians have reappropriated this entertaining aspect of 'amusement' and 'amazement' by incorporating drama and spectacle in their compositions. However, they do not use fictional characters or situations in mythical worlds as in oral narratives, but they use common people in common situations, and present us with entertaining scenes that amuse us. In as far as they stick to reality in presenting drama and spectacle in their

songs, the musicians have refined this aspect of entertainment from orature to suit contemporary setting.

In Kaba Kuinuka and Kaba Gicagi - songs 5 (a&b) the artist presents us with the drama of his going back home after ten years in Nairobi. As we know from the songs, he is going home because he has not been able to make any headway in life. Yet he says that when people heard that he was coming home from town, they all came to meet him. He says that even the village girls had come with ropes so that they could help him carry all his property which he had accumulated in Nairobi. It was quite a scene when the speaker alighted at the bus stop with only a small briefcase and "one kilogram of sugar for my mother". The sense of spectacle is captured when the speaker depicts the stunned reaction of the villagers, where some laughed, and yet others cried at his situation.

Nyakaringiti Song 14, is another song that entertains by the piece of dramatic action it represents. We are shown a woman, who wakes up in the morning, eats, takes a blanket, and sleeps all day under the eaves of a granary. She only comes out of her lair to eat - food which has been cooked by the husband. The woman is said to be very cunning, and always succeeds in getting money from her husband by feigning illness. She tells people that she has really 'sat' on her husband. The events of the song depict the "sat on husband" in a moment of revelation, when he says enough is enough and sends the 'cunning' woman packing. A similar scenario is depicted in Yarwanio Song 20. Here the man is the victim of a rather overactive woman. He courts this woman against the advice of his friends. He gets so serious with the relationship that he practically "closes and

discards" all the files of his former girl friends. The woman of course promises that she is worth all that. The man is safe in the knowledge that he has acquired a good wife in spite of what his 'jealous' friends were saying about her. Yet this woman goes out carousing with the man's friends (the same friends who had warned him), when the man is not around. When she goes out with the speaker, the woman cannot even touch beer but when the speaker is not there, she drinks the whole night with the other men. The sense of drama is heightened when the man says that his friends have been laughing when they see him walking around, being very contented with the wife beside him. He says:

When I walk around with you,  
I am never at peace,  
As people laughingly greet me 'Hi, the son-of-Wairimu',  
They have evidently been laughing at me  
When they see me being very proud of you,  
And then remember the things-they-do-behind-my-back,  
with you.

The situation reminds one of the numerous situations in orature, when the hyena is duped into thinking that it is having the best deal, while all the time it looks quite stupid to the audience and of course to the animal that has duped it.

The sense of entertaining drama and spectacle also comes out very forcefully in Thina uri o Ngoro and Mwana Mwihoki Songs 17 (a) & (b). The speaker in the songs is narrating incidences in his life that make him a wretched being. He says that one of his main problems in life is that his mother is old and toothless. He had once saved by putting coins in a safe, dramatically referred to as '*ona kaba Ngue*' - (I would rather die). This shows the determination of the speaker to save enough to buy teeth for the mother -

he would sooner die than use that money. Unfortunately, his friends go to a cafe and eat chicken - a delicacy - and say that he should foot the bill. He goes to the safe and uses the money (that he would have sooner died than used), to pay for the indulgences of his friends. To make matters worse, those same friends do have their own money - 'Hundred shilling bills' as he puts it, - and incessantly talk of buying plots. He is left penniless with a toothless mother "singing halleluya".

Yet his woes are not over. He asks kind-hearted individuals to get him a girl whom he can marry. One kind-hearted Kanyoro-wa-Wanyiku as narrated in Mwana Mwihoki, got him a girl, whom he took as a wife in an effort to show the mother that he is not doing badly in Nairobi. Unfortunately, the mother was not impressed because the girl:

Unfortunately did not have the front teeth,  
When my mother saw her she became furious.  
And her point of departure was  
Who will get teeth first, her or the girl.

For all the efforts and those of his friends, the speaker has nothing much to show as he says:

So we took her back to her home  
And I have ever since been in the wilderness  
A-hopeful-child

While the songs dramatically portray the lives of the folk, the sense of spectacle is achieved by the foregrounding of the unusual. Peculiar situations are highlighted with descriptive clarity so that they can be noticed and appreciated in terms of their

entertaining value. Like the escapades of the fictional characters in orature, the popular songs have their own brand of drama and spectacle which make them very entertaining.

The discussion above confirms that the functions of orature have been preserved in the popular song.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5.0 CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Gikuyu popular song reappropriates aspects from orature, particularly Gikuyu orature for artistic and aesthetic purposes. We have identified and discussed texts from Gikuyu myth, riddles, proverbs and songs which have been reappropriated in the songs for different purposes and to diverse effects. Myth helps the popular musicians to denote the indebtedness of the contemporary society to the cultural beliefs, practices and customs of the traditional society. Myth also helps them to express the need for the contemporary society to uphold their cultural heritage, a heritage which has come down to them from generation to generation, and which is coming to the contemporary society through the popular song. Myths also provide imageries, which the musicians use in artistically presenting social-economic phenomena in the contemporary society. Proverbs from orature also enable the musicians to explain, debate, teach, inform, rationalise and express themselves with pithiness and cogency. Riddles and songs from orature enable the artist to recreate contemporary reality in both artistic and culturally authentic terms.

We have also seen that the styles and techniques of orature enable the singer to make their art highly interactive and communicative. Contrary to the view that the electronic media alienates the audience and makes art uncommunicative and alienative, the stylistic resources from orature make it possible for musicians to maintain an immediacy of audience which is a celebrated aspect of orature. As shown in this study, the popular

musicians have not lost the sharp awareness of the audience; rather they keep it as an active force in their compositions.

As far as the function of the popular songs is concerned, we have shown that the functions of orature have been preserved in the songs. Our analysis has shown that these songs should not be seen in terms of cheap amusement and/or lacking in substantial functional contribution. Their undisputable role in educating, criticising, encouraging and entertaining society must be appreciated and accorded due value.

Thus our study has demonstrated that though working in contemporary situations and committed to and sometimes limited by the contemporary imperatives, popular music is firmly tethered to a recognizable body of artistic resources in orature, which serves as its inspiration and guide. The artists by implication revere this oral tradition and use it as a basis for recommendations and comments on contemporary life and for proposals for contemporary action.

It should be remembered that this study was also a reaction to those who hold the view that traditional African literature is dying. In demonstrating the central role that orature occupies in the Gikuyu pop song, we have in effect demonstrated the dynamism of orature and thus put to rest the fear that orature is dying. On the same plane, this study lays to rest the arguments by some scholars, for example Kieti (1989) and Kemoli (1989) who insist that the popular song is a departure and necessarily a corruption of traditional folk forms. This study has demonstrated that the songs do not corrupt orature but they

actually breathe new life into it so that it becomes relevant and potent in contemporary society.

The investigations of this study strongly reaffirm our initial thesis that "by borrowing aspects of Gikuyu orature, the Gikuyu pop song is an interesting case of new wine in old bottles".

### **5.1 Recommendations for Further study**

As this study has consistently demonstrated, the magnitude with which popular music reappropriates aspects from orature has been under-estimated in the past. The findings of this study show that this hitherto ignored area needs to be taken seriously in oral literature scholarship. This endeavour can take various directions. First, this type of study may be duplicated using artists and songs which have not been sampled in this study. The same kind of study can be done with music from other ethnic communities to show the extent to which popular musicians from other communities rely on orature in their compositions. Comparative studies in this area would be very fruitful. These could compare popular musicians who rely on orature, and those who do not, and show the artistic significance of using orature materials as opposed to not using it. Studies would also compare songs from African musicians who use orature and songs with similar themes from western popular musicians. Such comparative studies would conclusively appraise the value of orature material in contemporary verbal expression. They would

further demonstrate the ability of this African traditional art to transcend the time barrier and claim its place in modern art.

Apart from the issue of its link with orature, popular music as an entity needs serious attention. More studies taking such innovative perspectives should be carried out especially on the Gikuyu pop song. It seems pretty absurd to us that such a vast genre of literature can be given such scanty attention in a society that is proselytizing the virtues of indigenous art forms. It is clear from the findings of this thesis that orature has been adopted to the contemporary verbal expression, specifically the pop song. This in turn asserts the primacy of orature per se in appreciating contemporary African literature. While written literature in Africa, which arguably alienates the masses, thrives in the institutions of learning and the universities, the masses continue to create and appreciate verbal art in the form of pop songs which are greatly influenced by the African traditional literary heritage. It is thus undisputable that the pop song is truly a "home grown" art form. Interestingly, in the recent past, those who have been involved in written literature in higher institutions of learning have been involved in a clamour to revive literary activity in indigenous languages in an endeavour to make written literature a home grown art form which is relevant to the masses. Notably, one of the proponents of this clamour is the doyen of written African literature in English, Ngugi Wa Thion'go. In his publications, Decolonizing the Mind and Moving the Centre, he is particularly incensed by the fact that African writers have in the past been 'haranguing' the masses in foreign languages in the print media. He goes on to argue that both the language and the (print) media are alien to the majority of Africans who are either semi-

literate or illiterate. The findings of this thesis suggest that while the African intellectuals in the literary circles were haranguing the masses in foreign languages in the print media, the illiterate but orate masses have maintained a potent oral-aural genre of literary expression in the form of the popular song. As shown, this genre heavily utilises the resources of orature to communicate and address issues of contemporary concern. Thus this genre fulfils the pressing Ngugian need "for a renaissance of Kenyan culture which would be achieved by going to the roots of its being in the lives and languages of the people" (Thion'go, 1981: 61). On the basis of these findings then, we are compelled to assert that any genuine efforts to recapture the essence of African literature should lay emphasis on the popular song as a people's genre. More studies should thus be carried out as regards the popular song so as to help literary scholars map out ways of developing an unalienated African literature which is relevant and accessible to all across the literacy barriers. It is our conviction that, judging from the success achieved by the pop song through reappropriating aspects of orature to address contemporary issues, the pop song genre may yet teach the greatest African writers and scholars the simplest lesson: **Charity begins at home.**

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

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1. **AIRITU A GIKUYU by Mwangi Ndaiga and Chege**

Ruru ni rugano, rwa muthuri umwe wetagwo Gikuyu, na mutumia wake Mumbi,  
 Nao maikaraga Mukurweini wa Nyagathanga,  
 Ni maheirwo airitu ikumi ni Mwene Nyaga,  
 Airitu acio nio kihumo kia mihiriga iria ya Gikuyu kenda muiyuru

Muthuri umwe wetagwo Gikuyu  
 Niahikirie mutumia mwega,  
 Akimuciarira airitu ikumi  
 Magiikara mendaine

Gikuyu niaciarire Wanjiru  
 Gikuyu niaciarire Wangeci  
 Gikuyu niaciarire Wanjiru  
 Na agiciara Wamuyu

Muthuri ucio niendete kurima,  
 Ona kuriithia mburi nyingi,  
 Arutaga wira na thithino niguu one magetha.  
 Gikuyu niaciarire Nyambura  
 Gikuyu niaciarire Wangari  
 Gikuyu niaciarire Waceera  
 Magiikara mendaine.

Gikuyu arata akwa  
 Nitucokerie Gikuyu ngatho  
 Na mutumia wake ti Mumbi  
 Nio kihumo gitu

Gikuyu niaciarire Wanjiku  
 Gikuyu niaciarire Wangui  
 Gikuyu niaciarire Waithera  
 Magiikara mendaine

1. **THE GIKUYU GIRLS**

This is the story of a man called Gikuyu and his wife Mumbi  
 Who were staying at the Mukurwe ini wa Nyagathanga.  
 They were given ten girls by the God  
 And those girls are the origin of the nine clans of the Agikuyu.

1 One man called Gikuyu,  
 Had a good wife  
 Who gave birth to ten girls,  
 And they lived in harmony.

5 Gikuyu begot Wanjiru,  
Gikuyu begot Wangeci,  
Gikuyu begot Wairimu,  
And he begot Wamuyu.

10 That man loved farming  
And keeping sheep and goats,  
He used to work hard and to sweat  
So as to get a good harvest.

15 Gikuyu begot Nyambura  
Gikuyu begot Wangari,  
Gikuyu begot Wacera,  
And they lived in harmony.

My friends, we should be grateful to Gikuyu,  
And his wife Mumbi  
Because they are our origin.

20 Gikuyu begot Wanjiku,  
Gikuyu begot Wangui,  
Gikuyu begot Waithera,  
And they lived in harmony.

2a. **CIURIA CIA NDURU by Lawrence Nduru**

10 Rugwiti wa Njeri njitikiria njurie mundu uyu kiuria.  
Kamaru wa Wanjiru kamenya mianya kanya ka ndeto x2  
Kamaru wa Wanjiru wihotore ngurie unjokerie,  
Mitugo ya Gikuyu tondu unjiraga ui muno x2

Mundu uri na thahu mutugo wa Gikuyu  
Twire atahikagio na miti mihiriga iigana,  
Ningi utwire o muti ritwa riaguo murererwo gwa cuwe.  
Tuthinjire mburi Kamaru murererwo gwa ucuwe,  
Uturingire maringa na umete maritwa ma gikuyu.  
Na mbere ya uguo utwire kiga na mahuri ni ciau (x2)

Nyumba ya mugikuyu twire ni ya rumu cigana  
Na utwire maritwa na utwire ingurikiro niha  
Na ningi unjire nguniko ya mwatu uria itagwo  
Mihiriga ni kenda akorwo niukiui  
Twire muhiriga wi girima uria uiyo muno  
Na muhiriga ni uriku uria uhuhaga mbura x2

15 Taheana uhoru wa githere na cururi na thira,  
Na ngumi iri oho, na githuma, na itimu ria nduthu

Utuire o kimwe kimwe bata wakio tondu we ni ukiui (x2)  
 Njama yanaigwo ni atumia bata wayo niuriku  
 Magongona mayo, ningi yainagwo thiku cigana.  
 Ii tondu ugitiwiraga niwahoyaga cuguo kirira x2

Marika ni meri, Wa- Mbiro na Maina  
 Nake wakamatimu uria mucongoco utwire nuu  
 Muthuru na mwengu, na nguo ya ngoro na rigicu  
 Nguo ikaigana cia muhiki mwega wa Gikuyu.  
 Na utwire thabuni na mai maria mahuraga nguo icio x2

## 2(a) QUESTIONS FROM NDURU

- 1 Rugwiti son-of-Njeri allow me to ask this man a question.  
 Kamaru son-of-Wanjiru who claims to be very knowledgeable  
 Kamaru son of Wanjiru, brace yourself so that you can receive my questions and  
 respond,  
 About the customs of the Agikuyu, because you tell me you know a lot.
- 5 In the Gikuyu custom, how was a cursed person purified?  
 How many types of herbs were used? Tell us the name of each,  
 For you tell us you were brought up by your grandmother.  
 Prepare a goat for sacrifice Kamaru the-one-who-was-brought-up-by-his-grandmother.  
 Divide it accordingly, and then tell us *kiga na mahuri* belonged to who.
- 10 How many rooms does the Gikuyu house have?  
 Give us the names and tell us where is *Ingurikiro*,  
 And then tell me the name of a beehive's lid.  
 There are nine clans if you really know,  
 Tell us the famous ones that are well known,
- 15 Which is the clan in which the rainmakers belonged?  
 Tell us about *githere*, and *cururi* and *thira*  
 And include *ngumi*, and *githuma* and *itimu ri Nduthu*.  
 And tell us the use of each because you claim to know.  
 What was the purpose of the women's dance?
- 20 What were its rites, and what was its duration?  
 As you claim to have been given traditional instruction by your grandmother.  
 There are two age-sets, *Mbiro* and *Maina*,  
 Who was *Kamatimu muria mucongoco*?  
*Muthuru* and *mwengu* and the chest dress and rigicu,  
 25 So tell us the detergent that was used to wash those clothes.

(2b.) MITUGO YA GIKUYU by Joseph Kamaru

Rugwiti wa Njeri uka na ndugoke uri wiki,  
 Ngwenda athuri kenda ngicokia ciuria ici cia Nduru,  
 Atumia kenda matuite maciara,  
 Mathingira kenda Kabete na Metumi irungii.

Nduru wa Gathoni giuke nauke ta muthuri,  
 Nigetha witikie uracaria nguri na irio Ngoro,  
 Kuga uguo ti kuga, Gikuyu nikiri mwarimu,  
 Mukomania mwaki utari thenya ndaninaga ndogo.

Mundu uri na thahu, kioye mutugo wa gikuyu,  
 Ndahikio ni nyingi, kuringana na thahu wa mundu,  
 Thahu uyu ni uriku ndahikanie muigwe  
 Nongiciarwo nago, miti imwe niyaigagwo iteti.

Ngukigweta yothe, Mutei, Mukenia, Muthakwa,  
 Mugumo, Mukura na Muu na Irengeria mweru  
 Ndahika wariganiire kiria giatigara,  
 No kirago ngingo, ndahikio Gikuyu ikaigana.

Magongona maingi, o mburi na igongona riayo,  
 Ndirathinja iriku, neno ndingiminyuira mbaki?  
 Guthondeka mucii kana ni ya guciara mwana?  
 Mariuka na ihaki, Ngurario ni iitwo thi muigwe.

Nduru wa Gathoni ke ngwire gaka ni kaguai  
 Guthondeka mucii, mburi ino ndiariagwo niangi,  
 Na ya kuguraria, miige haha wone,  
 Githuri, muthiori, mutura, cia mugendi waithe.

Ngerima mutiri, kagiri, ni ka mwene mucii,  
 Ini ria atumia na muromo niwao na athuri,  
 Kiiga na mahuri ngunengera anake,  
 Rurimi kurikia rurio ni muui na ithe.

Nyumba ya Gikuyu thikiriria, kweru ni kwa mburi,  
 Kiriri kia airitu, na thegi tukaiga irio hiu,  
 Ruri ninguga ngu, na mai na bengi ya mwatu,  
 Yekiragwo nyama na uuki, na njua cia itonga.

Kweru imurikiro, mutumia guthecwo gicinga,  
 No kanua araringa, na mwana ndangirekia nyondo,  
 Ruri rwari igweta, niundu wa kwihithwo ni itharia,  
 Na kwari kibacaini, kia ndurume Njega cia muthuuri.

Kuria ti gukiga,no Nduru niakunyite itari,  
Mihiriga kenda Gikuyu ithegeni riri nda,  
Njiru iitu noyo,urogi ukirite rithathi,  
Tungietire hiti,ciokaga ikahana ta mburi.

Na Mwithaga niungi,muhuhi wa mbura,  
Niarumaga hungu kana mbwe igakua itari nguthe,  
Ndikugweta yothe Muceera gita kiari giake,  
Niekwahura irigu muramba na ngoro irio iguru

Mwatu uyu niurehwo ngunike oriu ukionaga,  
Njikire hengero na ithigo,nguniko icio irume,  
Njama ya atumia,kurira makihoya mburi,  
Na ciaigana ineo Mwangi magathinjire mbura.

Njama ya atumia kwari mburi ya kuharagania,  
Macoke mekirwo ngwaro matu mbura igatheca thi,  
Nguo ciao rehe ndiihake maguta,  
Ndiihake thiriga thabuni wokire na comba.

Ngumi yakwa ya iti githuma ni ngo ya kwigita,  
Thira ni waihii irua ni ria ruciu noke,  
Itimu niriri kwi mura na nduthu,  
Muti gatagati itharaita rigetika itimu.

Githere, cururi, gicango migathi na hang'i,  
Gicoco gia ciero na icuhi cia gwikira ciara,  
Macio ni mathaga na andu anja,  
Nyarurunga iri oho ona wanyua mbaki,  
Ngukuinia witikire ikinya.

Marika ni meeri na nduika akorwo nduciui,  
Mwangi ,Irungu, Iregi na Ndemi na Maina mukuru,  
Kamaru muciare ni Mwangi,uthamaki ni wao,  
Nayo Ndemi ikiura gitumi ni mathirwo ni aka.

Mundu utari kiama Kamatimu muria mucongoco,  
Mitugo ya Gikuyu athuri tukurara haha  
Nyumba nimwakiigua Gikuyu gitiri mwarimu,  
Tonde korwo ari ho Kamaru ndathomithia comba

## **2(b) THE CUSTOMS OF THE GIKUYU**

1 Rugwiti Son-of-Njeri come  
And don't come alone  
I want nine wise elders  
As I answer Nduru's questions,

5 Plus nine women,  
 Who are past child bearing age  
 Representing the nine clans,  
 Kabete and Metumi in full.  
 You may come, Nduru son of Gathoni  
 10 And come like an elder,  
 And you will realize,  
 That you look for a neck-bell,  
 Which is on your own chest,  
 When I say that, I do not mean,  
 15 We have a teacher of Gikuyu  
 A blower of fire with no gap in mouth  
 Does not curtail the smoke.  
  
 A person who is cursed,  
 Take the Gikuyu custom,  
 20 There are many purifying rites,  
 Depending on the nature of the curse,  
 Tell me what curse this is?  
 I prescribe the remedy and in your hearing  
 If it is hereditary,  
 25 Special twigs were fixed  
 On the bed's side  
  
 I will enumerate all of them,  
*Mutei, Mukenia, Muthakwa,*  
*Mugumo, Mukura, and Muu,*  
 30 And *Irengeria mweru,*  
 A rite which was forgotten,  
 Was put round the neck  
 Those are the Gikuyu purification rites.  
  
 There are so many sacrifices,  
 35 And each special sacrifice with its goat  
 Which goat shall I offer for sacrifice?  
 As sacrificing this one is so easy  
 That I cannot even take snuff before I am through  
 One for installing a home?  
 40 Or is it a birth sacrifice?  
 Or is it for re-incarnation or appeasement  
 Place the sacrificial animal here and watch me perform the sacrifice  
  
 Nduru, son Gathoni look,  
 This is *Kaguai*,  
 45 In installing a home,  
 The sacrificial meat was not eaten by outsiders,  
 For that sacrifice which concludes marriage ceremonies,  
 Place the animal here and watch,  
*Githuri, Muthiori, Mutura*

50 Will go to the visitor of the bride's father.  
*Ngerima, Mutiri and Kagiri,*  
 Are for the bride's father,  
 The liver will go to the women,  
 And the mouth is for both men and women,  
 55 *Kiiga* and lungs  
 I give to the young-men,  
 The tongue lastly,  
 100 Is eaten by one who got circumcised with the bride's father.

As for the house of Gikuyu people, listen,  
 60 *Kwero* is for goats,  
*Kiriri* is the girls' room,  
 105 And *thegi*, we keep ready food there,  
 I will place firewood in *Ruri*,  
 Plus water and it is the bank of the hive,  
 65 You would also find meat and honey,  
 And the rich-men's new produce.

*Kwero-imurikiro*  
 Is where a woman is hit with a burning wood,  
 She can only smack  
 70 Yet her baby cannot release the breast,  
*Ruri* was famous  
 For adulterers hid themselves there,  
 115 There was also a *kibaca*,  
 Where the man kept his best rams.

75 To ask is not to demonstrate foolishness  
 125 But Nduru has picked on an empty maizecob,  
 The nine clans of Gikuyu,  
 And *ithiegeni* clan is also present,  
 My clan *Njiru* is the one,  
 80 Whose poison is like a bullet,  
 Incase we summoned hyenas,  
 135 These would come and be as tame as a goat.

*Mwithaga* is another clan,  
 They were the rainmakers,  
 85 He would curse a crow or a fox,  
 140 And it would fall dead without being hit,  
 I will not list all of them,  
*Mucera* was famous for archery,  
 He could pick the bananas, with an arrow  
 90 Leaving the stem upright and the heart intact.

Bring that bee-hive,  
 I cork it as you watch,

I put the *hengero* (lid) and the fastener (*ithigo*)  
 To fasten those lids,  
 95 A band of women cries out,  
 Asking for goats,  
 When they are given enough,  
 Mwangi takes some to sacrifice for rain.

The band of women  
 100 Had a goat to close the ceremony,  
 that would be put earings,  
 And rain would fall,  
 Bring their clothing,  
 I smear them with oil,  
 105 I smear them with ochre,  
 For soap is a colonial introduction.

My *ngumi* (weapon) made of sticks,  
*Githuma* is a shield of defence,  
*Thira* (Javeline) belongs to small-boys,  
 110 For their circumcision ceremony is almost due,  
 Here is a spear,  
 It has a hide and a head,  
 A stem (stick) in the middle,  
 And the weapon becomes a spear.

115 *Githere, cururi Gicango,*  
 Necklace and *hang'i,*  
*Gicoco* for the thigh,  
 Those are ornaments,  
 For women  
 120 *Nyarurung'a* is also part and parcel,  
 Even if you take snuff,  
 I will swing you till you follow my step.

There are two generations,  
 125 Plus those falling in between (the generations),  
*Mwangi, Irungu, Iregi,*  
*Ndemi and Maina-mukuru,*  
 Kamaru of the Mwangi generation,  
 The throne belongs to them,  
 130 *Ndemi* no longer exists  
 Because women ruled over them.

A man who has not taken any oath,  
 That disgusting home-guard,  
 The customs of the Agikuyu,  
 135 We cannot exhaust even if we stay-over-night,  
 The house of Mumbi you have heard,

That Gikuyu has no teacher,  
 If there was a vacancy,  
 I, Kamaru can teach the Europeans,  
 140 For if there was, a teacher,  
 You would have heard my voice.

3. **GATHANGARAITI by Queen Jane**

Arata nii ti kuina na ndiri muhunja,  
 Ni mugire wa uheri nii ndirauga  
 Mahitia uyu titoria ugagwo kanitha  
 Ni kuhera ndira hera ni undu wa mahitia ii  
 Mekirwo ni mundu itoi nginya gugituika nii  
 Ndure thiururukaga thi ta mbogo ya nduiki.

Gathangaraiti wui watuhe mutino,  
 Ii wui Ngai baba utuiguire ii  
 Thai tha thaiya Ngai tuohere mahitia

Twaciaritwo turi ikumi airitu ni kenda,  
 Hindi imwe kwari ng'aragu ya gathangaraiti,  
 Twaturagio ni kabiaru ka mutu wa mianga  
 Riria ringi ni mai ta *radiator* ya ngari ii,  
 Ni ukuona uria turarira niundu wa kuhuta wui  
 Baba eitiire thingira utuku twi toro

Baba witu aingira irima mutino ukigua nja,  
 Aanake a itura magitua ni mona kiwanja,  
 Kioho kia mieri kenda o mundu na mwana,  
 Tukiiyuria ciana mucii ukihuana gicagi, ii  
 Nagutiri wathomire nginya ciana citu ui,  
 Witeithie ni rwa nyariri tukihurunjuka

Umuthi uyu ndiraina ndi wa ciana ithatu  
 Ni nii munyinyi aria akuru gutiri utari inya,  
 Mucii wa airitu kenda o mundu ciana inya  
 Na gutire ona omwe ui mumuciari ii  
 Nguria hihi ni kurogwo kana ni mutino wui  
 I thai tha thaiya Ngai tuohere mahitia.

Riria ukuona ndi kirabu ngikwenderia cuba,  
 Waragia miario mibuthu nairumi nanguthi,  
 Ndukoige ni gukiga wona ngiririirie,  
 Na tikwenda ni wira ciana cione ugoco ii,  
 Yahitia na migwi ndiri yakiratha nacio wui  
 Yaciara uuru yerirwo nonginya yongithie

3 GATHANGARAITI By Queen Jane

1 My friends,  
 I am not singing,  
 Neither am I preaching,  
 This is a chant of repentance I am offering,  
 5 Yet this is not like the one said in church,  
 I am actually repenting for wrongs  
 Done by someone I do not even know,  
 Yet it came to pass that,  
 I am cursed to roam the earth,  
 10 Like a herdless buffalo.

*Gathangaraiti wui* you have bestowed a curse on us  
 Oh God our father have mercy on us.  
*Thai Thathaiya Ngai* forgive us our wrongs.

We are ten in my family and nine of us are girls.  
 15 There was a time when there was a *Gathangaraiti* famine  
 We lived on thin cassava porridge,  
 And other times we thrived on water like a vehicle's radiator,  
 After seeing the way we were crying because of hunger,  
 Our father committed suicide one fateful night.  
 20 As soon as our father was buried,  
 A curse befell our compound,  
 The boys in the village made our home their playing ground,  
 A nine month jail term,  
 And each of us got a baby, and filled the homestead with children  
 25 None of the children or us got educated,  
 Each had to help themselves, and we dispersed.

Today as I sing I have three children,  
 I am the youngest,  
 All the old ones have four each,  
 30 A home with nine girls, each with four children  
 I wonder whether we have been bewitched or cursed,  
*Thai Tha tha iya Ngai* forgive us our wrongs.

When you see me in the bar selling beer to you,  
 And you use foul language with insults and fussing,  
 35 Do not say I am stupid when I tolerate you,  
 It is not my wish, I have to work to feed my children,  
 When it misses with the arrow it doesn't shoot with them (feathers)  
 Even if it gives birth to a malformed child it has to suckle it.

**4. IRIMU RIA NYAMBUGI by Lawrence Nduru**

Koruo ucong'i ni murimu wee ungituraga thibitari  
Tonde ucon'gi waku uhana ta irimu riria ria Nyambugi x2

Ona gutuika ndiri ndona, muka wa kweru niguu uhana  
Cokagiria mai ngatho tondu nimo magutheyuraga x2

Tonde wonaga ukiendwo ni ahiki tiguthakara ni iruta inene.  
Onayo hiti ti munyaka eri nigukoroka nikiyo itararagira x2

Yakora mukwa mumu ndingitiga, kana kiaraini no kuona ikoro  
Ndiraiguire makubatithitie nu wanyonera mundu wa iruta inene x2

Ndiraiguire Njongi imwe ikiuga mwithiaga nayo igakuhuraga ngi  
Wareherwo ucuru ikanyua mai mundu utari giake ndari ngoro x2

**4 THE OGRE CALLED NYAMBUGI by Lawrence Nduru**

1 If ugliness were a disease,  
You would have been admitted in a hospital.  
Because your ugliness,  
Can only be compared to that of the Ogre called Nyambugi x2

5 Even if I have never seen *muka wa kweru*,  
That is the way you look like,  
You should be grateful to water,  
Because its the one that makes you look presentable

10 Even if you see women following you,  
It's because you give a lot of money,  
And not because you are handsome  
Even the hyena comes across food by greed not by luck x2

15 It (hyena) cannot even leave a dry strapping  
And won't hesitate to eat from a rubbish heap x2  
I heard them calling you "The-one-who-gives-big-money"  
I also heard another ugly woman saying,  
She will become your companion so that she can keep flies off your face,  
When you are given porridge, she will take water  
For he who does not have any property cannot choose x2.

**5(a) KABA KUINUKA BY C.D.M. Kiratu**

Arata akwa ndamuria muri inyuothe  
Mugoka gwaka Jumapili  
Nindamuria mutikanatire

Mugoka ndimugire uhuro

Miaka ikumi riu iri guthira  
Kuma riria ndokire tauni  
Iiya wakwa ati nduraga wira  
Ndingikwira wui njikite atia

Niheagwo ngageria kugaya mbeca  
Ni cia mboga kana ni cia mutu  
Ndihe nyumba kana ngure nguo,  
Ithabu riu wui ni rianema.  
Na tauni tondu kuri andu aingi  
Wui wui ngwire andu nieri  
Nikuri wokire guthukuma  
Na nikuri warehire aria angi.

Nikio ndoiga ni kaba kuinuka  
Tondu mbeca wui cia tauni  
Ndaciihoka ngagurana nacio  
Nguona ta ngutura itari muka x2

Hinya wa arume uragira kuingi  
Ndoima tauni uria ndokire kuo  
Andu a tauni mugitigwo na wega,  
Tuonanagire rutiini cia Limuru  
Kamaru witu ndugitigwo na wega  
Rugwiti nawe tuonanage Limuru  
D.K. boy, na Joseph Kaisha,  
Tuonanagei riria ndoka gucera  
Ndereba Ndungu wa mbathi cia Limuru  
Utigirire nindona maitu Njeri x2

**5(a) ITS BETTER TO GO BACK TO MY RURAL HOME (PT1)**

1 I am inviting all of my friends,  
Would you please come to my place on Sunday,  
Please do not fail to come for  
I want to bid you farewell

5 Ten years have elapsed since I came to Nairobi ,  
I have been thinking that I am working,  
Yet I cannot tell you what I have achieved.

10 I do get money and try to budget,  
Will I buy vegetables or will I buy flour,  
Will I pay the rent or buy clothes,  
But I do not make any headways.

Here in town, there are many people,  
But actually there are only two types,  
Those who came to work and those who brought the others.

15 That is why I have decided,  
Its better to go back to my rural home,  
Because if I hope to save in town and get myself a wife,  
Chances are that I will die a bachelor.

20 Mens efforts are wasted in may ways  
I have left town in the same condition I came in,  
So town-dwellers, I wish you the best,  
We will be seeing each other on the Limuru route,  
Kamaru my friend, bye bye,  
And you Rugwiti, see you in Limuru,  
D.K. my boy and Joseph Kaisha,  
We will see each other when I come to visit,  
And Ndungu, who drives the bus to Limuru,  
Make sure you take me to Njeri my mother x2

**5b**                    **KABA GICAGI by C.D.M. Kiratu**

**1st voice:**        Kaba Nyairobi kwi minyuire na migarurire.

**2nd voice:**        Wee kaba gicagi kwi makua na mariuka

Handu ha ngaiyiruo na *Wheelbarrow*  
Niindaugire ni kaba kuinuka  
Murigite ni ainukage tene  
Nii tauni ndarehete aria angi

Maitu kaba nimagie mabuti mucii  
Ngonaga irio na nguo cia mwiri  
Gukira ukanyona ndehetwo ndi kiimba  
Kana njuke njohetwo mabingu

Nandakinya muici wa Limuru  
Wui andu aingi nimanjetereire  
Angi moragie Kiratu i niuyu  
Utangiiyuria nyama i mukuha

Kuri airitu mokite na mikwa  
Ui uguo makinguithie indo  
Iria ndanakigura miaka iyo ikumi  
Kuona uriru wui ti gukura

Kuri maririre na angi magitheka  
Riria nii ndamerire ati  
Mirigo yakwa ii no gathanduku

Na cukari kiro imwe ya maitu

Riu kione ni kana cokera wandu  
Ndiri nyumba ndiri mutumia  
Ngero taiyo ndagerirwo ndi tauni  
Arata akwa mwimenyagirire

Kiria mundu ona kaba agakienyurania  
Kenyu akaria nako kenyu akaiga  
Ingioi uguo riria ndature tauni  
Ndingirakumwo nyumba ya maitu.

Ningi kaba nimagie mabuti mucii  
Nangona irio na nguo cia mwiri  
Gukira ukanyona ndehetwo ndi kiimba  
Kana njuke njohetwo mabingu  
Ningucaria kariko imwe ya gicagi  
Twarie naithe ndikagie okahora  
Kwahoteka ningakimwitira uhiki  
No gicagi ngarutwo na nguri.

**5(b) THE BEST ALTERNATIVE IS TO RETURN TO THE RURAL VILLAGE**

**1st voice:** It's better to stay in Nairobi, there are many ways of earning a living.  
**2nd voice:** No, no, the village is better, where survival is guaranteed.

To avoid a situation where I will be taken home in a wheelbarrow,  
I have decided to go back to the village,  
He who has not found anything goes home early.  
Because here in Nairobi  
5 It seems I had brought other people.

Mother, I would rather do manual work,  
So that I can get food and clothes  
Rather than be brought here dead,  
Or be brought in handcuffs.

10 When I arrived home in Limuru,  
Many people were waiting for me,  
Others were wondering  
"Is this the Kiratu who looks extremely thin."

15 Some girls had come with ropes.  
So that they can help me carry my belongings,  
The ones I had supposedly bought over the last ten years,  
One needs not be old to see wonders.

20 There are some people who cried,  
While others laughed, when I told them  
"All I have is this miserable suitcase,  
And one kilogramme of sugar for my mother."

25 Now see how hopeless I am,  
I have no house and no wife,  
This is the mess that town life got me into  
So my friends, do take care.

30 Whatever one gets,  
One would better divide it  
And eat one piece and save the other,  
Had I known that when I was in town,  
I wouldn't be tolerating the humiliations of  
Staying in my mother's house.

35 I would rather do manual work,  
And get food and clothing,  
Rather than be brought home dead,  
Or be brought in handcuffs.

I will look for a village wench,  
And talk to the father so that I can have her  
Perhaps I will invite all of you to a wedding,  
But I will never again leave the village.

**5(c) KABA NAIROBI by DANIEL KAMAU**

Mbara ya ahuri a ngita mwaingirira yaki,  
Tonde muohania mirigo mburungo  
Mwarumirira Kiratu mena Kamaru  
Na ahuri a ngita ni a maundu maingi

Henio muinuke matigwo megangarite  
No nii Nairobi ngakunjwo na rua  
Nii ndingiinuka ngaconorithie maitu witu  
Na ari mandathi ngahuruo ni ciana

Ndahura mbica maitu acokete gicegu  
Akaruta mburi akendia iguru riakwa  
Njoke nyinuke ngamwire maitu nindoka  
Moko matheri mamukagirwo ku

Maitu aturaga ahumbirite njaga na ruhi  
Aikariire njun'gwa acuthiriirie thome  
Mwihoko wake ningwambata na giciko  
Nari tuboco agacuthe gikangu

Ningagwo ni tha ngarira ndaririkana  
 Ciugo cioimire kanua gakwa mwene  
 Nderire maitu Nairobi ngoima na utonga  
 Ningi muthii ndoimbikaga irigu  
 We urakiinuka wona mundu urathii gwitu  
 Nindaguthaitha maitu athie akageithio  
 Ndakae kwirwo nduire guku itari wira  
 Tumana akerwo ngambata *December*

Kuri hindi imwe ndunganaga na munyaka  
 Wa kibarua ngona gia kuoha njoka  
 Ngatua na ngoro mithenya yothe ti kiumia  
 Kenyu na kenyu cioyanagira nda  
 Tondw twakirwo ni kaba kuinuka andu aitu  
 Naya Nairobi nguria yakiirwo aa  
 Twainuka ithuothe Nairobi itiguo uguo  
 Utonga wothe wa Kenya uriumaga ku  
 Nikio ndakiuga wa kuinuka niainuke  
 Guku ngarutwo ta thangari mugunda.

**5(c) IT'S BETTER TO STAY IN NAIROBI by Daniel Kamau**

1 Why are you interfering with musician's disagreements  
 Now that you have taken your luggage  
 And followed *Kiratu* and *Kamaru*  
 And musicians are unpredictable  
 It's up to you if you agree to be cheated  
 While they are left in Nairobi having fun  
 But as for me I will come out of Nairobi wrapped in a skin  
 But I cannot go home to shame my mother  
 Without anything the children can eat

10 I am recalling my mother going to the shed  
 And selling goats because of me  
 And then I go home and tell her I have come  
 Where are empty hands welcomed  
 My mother has all along covered her nakedness with her palms

15 Seated on a stool watching the gate  
 Hoping that I will come with something

I become sympathetic when I remember  
 All the words that came from my own mouth  
 When I told my mother that I will come home from Nairobi a rich man

20 And a man on a journey does not put a banana in the fire  
 Whoever is going home go and greet my mother  
 And don't tell her that I don't have a job  
 Just tell her I will come up in December

- Sometimes I get lucky  
 25 And I get a manual job and get something to eat  
 And then I say all days are not a Sunday  
 Bit and bit mix in the stomach  
 And now that we are being told to go back home  
 Who will be left in Nairobi  
 30 If we go away and leave Nairobi empty  
 Who will build this country  
 That is why I have said those who want to go can do so  
 But for myself I will be plucked from Nairobi like couch grass.

**5(d). KABA KUHOYA NGAI by Francis Rugwiti**

- 1 Kiratu mwina D.K.  
 Ni mutumite ndigwo ni wa gwika  
 Nakio gitumi inyueri muri arata akwa  
 Ii na hatiri itahete gitio.
- 5 Kiratu aroiga ni kaba kuinuka,  
 D.K. akoiga ni kaba Nairobi,  
 Na nii Rugwiti nguma na ruthario,  
 Uge wa Ngai nduri mugaruri.
- 10 Ni kio ndoiga ni kaba kuhoya ngai,  
 Haria ngoragwo nii ti handu horu  
 Ni nyinukaga gwitu Banana hwai-ini  
 Na rucini ngaroka wira- ini
- 11 Mwaka wa hiti nduri muhoyanwo rigi  
 Ngari ino yakwa niyo ndihokete  
 Ndaruta wira na kio ngariganirwo ni thina  
 Nindamuthaitha kuhoha ti kuma
- Tutiri akuru gutiriukiaga nongi  
 Ngoro na maitho ithui turi andu a Ngai  
 Thina ni muingi na ni maita maingi  
 15 Na tutingioya mukanda twiite  
 Nii Rugwiti ndiri na ruti yakwa  
 Thiaga guothe kuria ingionera kindu  
 Wira ini wothe mundu acaragia mbeca  
 Utamerithitie ndatigaga kuhanda.
- 20 Gutiri ngware itoi kimamo kiayo,  
 Kiratu witu tuonanage Limuru  
 D.K nawe tuonanage wiraini  
 Kamaru nawe tuonanage studio.

30 Wakinya mucii C.D.M. Kiratu  
Rima na hinya wendie mboga Limuru x2

**5(d) THE REASONABLE ALTERNATIVE IS TO RELY ON GOD by Rugwiti**

1 You Kiratu and D.K.,  
You have really got me confused,  
Because both of you are my friends,  
And I respect both of you.

5 Kiratu is saying that the village is best,  
And D.K. claims Nairobi is the best,  
Myself Rugwiti I will remain steady with the rosary  
For God's case has no appeal.

10 So I say its better to pray,  
For where I work is not so badly off  
I do go home to Banana in the evening,  
And report for work in the morning.  
People do not borrow each other's door during the season of hyenas

15 I do have a lot of hope with my job,  
If I work hard I forget my problems,  
Please remember that withering is not the same as drying up.

20 There is no day which is similar to the other,  
We are all God's creatures  
And therefore give many different problems  
And one cannot commit suicide.

25 I Rugwiti do not have my own means of survival,  
I go anywhere where I can get something,  
And in all jobs, we are all looking for money  
And he whose plants have not sprouted never tires of planting.  
There is no *ngware* that does not know where it lives,  
So, my friend Kiratu let us meet in Limuru,  
And for you D.K. let's meet at the work place,  
And for you Kamaru let's meet at the studio,  
And when you reach home Kiratu,  
Work hard on the farm and sell cabbages in Limuru.

**5e. MURAIKIO RIIKO NI D.K. by Joseph Kamaru**

Riria Kiratu oigire niakuinuka,  
D.K akiuga, ni kaba Nairobi,

Rugwiti akiuga akuuma na ruthario,  
Ninii Kamaru ngutuithania ciira.

Riria mukuina muriganiirwo ati,  
Gutiri muini uriagwo ni ukuru,  
Nguigua Kaisha ni muiye mugambo na,  
D.K. akoiga onakaba Nairobi.

Nii ninyinukaga njuma na kiumia,  
Ngakundio mata ni cucu na guka,  
Na maitu akoiga,  
Ti umwe kana eeri morite Nairobi.

Nii ndiroiga ati Nairobi nikuuru no,  
Kaba gicagi kia njuma na kiumia,  
Tonde mwaka oyu thakame ni nyinyi,  
Ngonwo ni maitu akamenya ndio muoyo.

Muraikio riiko ni D.K. wa Maria,  
Na ngari yake ndamihituka Juja,  
Akuite ngwaci na turee cia matumbi,  
Kaba gicagi kiri maundu maingi.

Rugwiti akoiga omete na ruthario,  
Nagiuka wira atigaga akama ng'ombe,  
Gutiri utoi mucara no Nairobi,  
Mugiikio riiko, Kamaru ndiri nainyui,  
Na nokio ndoiga ningutuithania ndaraja  
Mbara ya arume iruagwo na matathi.

**5(e) D.K IS LEADING YOU INTO FIRE**

1 When Kiratu resolved home is best,  
D.K. said Nairobi is best,  
Rugwiti declared he will stick to the rosary,  
It is me Kamaru passing judgement.

5 When you sing you forget that,  
No musician dies because of age,  
Kaisha's voice has been strained  
Yet D.K. insists Nairobi is best.

10 I usually visit home during the weekend,  
To be blessed with my grandparents saliva,  
And my mother says,  
Not just one or two people have wasted life in Nairobi

I am not implying Nairobi is not good but,  
 A weekend at home is better,  
 15 For this has been a year of little blood,  
 So that my mother can ascertain that I am alive.

D.K. son of Maria is leading you into fire,  
 But I have passed his car at Juja,  
 5 Carrying sweet-potatoes and trays of eggs,  
 20 Home is best because it has a diversity.

Rugwiti said that he will stick to the rosary,  
 Yet he milks his cows before he comes to work,  
 We know that Nairobi is a source of salary,  
 In case you are dipped into fire,  
 25 Kamaru I distance myself,  
 That's why I have come to reconcile these people,  
 For the war of men is fought with green leaves.

**6. KAMUINGI KOYAGA NDIRI by Wilfred Ndirangu and Wagatonye**

Kamuingi koyaga ndiri, Kenya njeru  
 Murimi tiwe murii  
 Reke tucokie ngatho ni wira wa bururi uyu  
 20 Tunyitane turi hamwe  
 Kamuingi koyaga ndiri  
 Twitike harambee.

Kenyatta niaroigire Kenya njeru  
 Kiguta na muici na muthukia wa thayu  
 Matikaheyo uhuruko

Mwito niuyu kuma ndemi na mathathi tene,  
 Twetika harambee tuguthondeka Kenya,  
 Iri utonga na gikeno,  
 Na tunine uthini mirimu na kwaga umenyoo

Ngombe itionagwo ni ithayo Kenya njeru  
 Nakio kinya kiri itina nikio kiigaga

Ngatho nikuri atongoria  
 Na muingi hamwe  
 Nithakame yanyu na thithino yanyu  
 Tumionage ikiriruka tukoiga,  
 Ni Kenya njeru twitike harambee

**6                    THE PUBLIC IS ABLE TO LIFT A MORTAR**

1            The public is able to lift a mortar, new Kenya,  
 He who cultivates is not necessarily the one who eats  
 Let us give thanks for our country.

5                            Let's join together,  
                               A crowd is able to lift a mortar  
                               Let us accept harambee.

Kenyatta said, New Kenya,  
 The lazy one, the thief and the inciter,  
 Should not be given a chance.

10           From *Ndemi* and *Mathathi*,  
 When we accept to work together,  
 We will make a rich and happy country  
 And eliminate poverty, disease and ignorance.

15           Cows cannot be got by lazy people,  
 And a calabash with a bottom can remain upright.

                              We give thanks to the leaders,  
 And the public together,  
 Because you nurtured the flag  
 With your blood and sweat  
 20           So that when we see it flying,  
 We say this is the New Kenya, lets work together.

**7.                    HE KIGACWA by Joseph Kamaru**

Muthuri,  
 Ni ukuhe ngerenwa,  
 Ngwire haria wateire ikinya  
 Muthuri,  
 Niukuhe ngerenwa,  
 Ngwire haria wateire ikinya  
 Tondumucii,  
 Watuikire iganjo,  
 Na ciana irakuona ikarira,  
 Tondumucii,  
 Urikumera cong'e,  
 Na ciana irakuona ikarira.

Na baba,  
 Ni ukuhe ngerenwa,  
 Ngwire haria watigire ukuru,  
 Na baba,

Ni ukuhe ngerenwa  
 Ngwire haria watigire ukuru,  
 We muthuri,  
 Ngerenwa na ihenya,  
 Mucii waku utanaitika ndungu,  
 Muthuri,  
 Kigacwa na ihenya,  
 Mucii waku utanombwo ni njuki.

Muthuri,  
 Ni ukuhe ngerenwa,  
 Kuiru nguraro ni kuimbirwo,  
 Muthuri,  
 Ni ukuhe ngerenwa,  
 Kuiru nguraro nikuimbirwo  
 Kamaru,  
 Ndirenda kigacwa,  
 Ngwire haria wateire makinya,  
 Kamaru,  
 Ni ukuhe kigacwa,  
 Ngwire haria wateire njuguma.

Nguyu ino,  
 Irikwaga muringi,  
 Nikio ciana ikurorete iguru,  
 Nguyo ino,  
 Irikwaga muringi,  
 Nikio ciana ikurorete iguru,  
 Muthuri,  
 Cokia mucii nguo,  
 Thakame yaku irikuheha,  
 Muthuri,  
 Curia nguri ngingo,  
 Ciana ciaku ciorere ukuru.

Waingatire,  
 Mutahi wa mai,  
 Niundu wakairitu ga cukuru  
 Waingatire,  
 Mutahi wa mai,  
 Niundu wa kairitu ga cukuru,  
 Na waingata  
 Muhei wa ucuru,  
 Ukiuraga thungo ciari mwere,  
 Na waingata ciana ciothe mucii,  
 Nikio ndutu ciayiura maguru,

Waingatire,  
 Nyukwa ari mugima,

Ugiita njohi ya muhiriga,  
 Waingatire,  
 Nyukwa ari mugima,  
 Ugiita njohi ya muhiriga,  
 Na waingata,  
 Ihii iri na nderu,  
 Muringiti ukagurirwo nuu?  
 Na waingata,  
 Ihii iri na nderu,  
 Nguria nuu ugakunyita mutwe.

Muthuri,  
 Maria twiroreire,  
 Tugocoka gugwita humbeke  
 Muthuri,  
 Maria twiroreire,  
 Tugocoka gugwita humbeke  
 Muthuri,  
 Cokereria mucii,  
 Tonduru riu werekeire irima,  
 Muthuri,  
 Tungatira ciana,  
 Nigetha wongererwo matuku.

## 7. GIVE ME A PRIZE

1 Old man  
 Give me a prize,  
 I tell you where you lost it,  
 Old man  
 5 Give me a prize,  
 I tell you where you lost it,  
 Because your home,  
 Is now a wilderness,  
 And children break-down when they see you,  
 10 Because your home  
 Is over-grown with weeds,  
 And children cry at your sight.

Oh father,  
 Give me a prize,  
 I tell you where you abandoned your wisdom  
 15 Oh father,  
 Give a green-light,  
 I tell you where you abandoned your wisdom,  
 Hey old man  
 The green-light faster,  
 20 Before your home is brought down by weevils  
 Hey old man,

The prize faster,  
Before bees inhabit your home.

25 Old man,  
Give me a prize,  
To underate a sore is self-destruction,  
Old man,

30 Give me a prize,  
To underate a sore is self-destruction,  
Kamaru,  
I want a prize,  
So that I tell you where you lost your step,  
I want a prize  
So that I tell you where you lost-your step.

35 This Nguyu tree,  
Has no-one to hit it,  
That is why children are looking up at you,  
This Nguyu tree,  
Has no one to hit it,  
40 That is why children are looking up at you  
Old man,  
Re-dress your home,  
Your blood is gone,  
Old man  
45 Fix a warning bell around your neck,  
So that you children can block your old age.

You threw out,  
The-one-who-fetches-water,  
In favour of a school girl  
50 You threw out,  
The-one-who-fetches-water,  
In favour of a school-girl,  
You threw out,  
The-one-who-provides-gruel,  
55 And broke the millet gourd  
And you threw out  
All children from home,  
That is why jiggers are numerous in your feet.

**8. KIMATHI by C.D.M. Kiratu**

Muthenya umwe ni kwaurire mbura nene  
Itura inyinyi kuu mwena wa Nyeri,  
Wa kwa muthuri wetagwo Wachiuri,  
10 Ni gwa ciarirwo kana ga kahii

Njahi ikirio na gukiugwo ithano,  
Cia kahii, gakirathimwo,  
Gakirwo konge na makai meri.

Nayo nyakinyua iria yakiri ho,  
Ikiuga kungu Kimathi ni akinya  
Gutiri woi ati kahii kau,  
Gagakua gakiruirira tiri witu  
Kimathi niakurire na akiigana  
Ari na ugi na ucamba muingi  
Njuguma njega yumaga o ikuriro

Nikweriruo ati Ndegwa ikurundwo,  
Ti itheru andu aitu ndiregaga ruoro  
Kimathi nianytirwo agiikio njera  
Emuohe moko hamwe na maguru  
Thungu cia muonaga ikahiuria mitwe  
Ikoiga atuirwo, atuirwo, narua,  
Cia menya uria acionetie nganga mbute.

Tondu wa kuga ati ni tukwiyatha,  
Nitwekiriirwo watho wa wihuge,  
Na tondu wa kwenda ruriri rwao  
Andu makiirutira kwigitira  
Kimathi niatongoririe ita ciitu  
Atari na guoya, ni mamwendete,  
Mamwitaga Field Marshall Kimathi.

Matigaga aciari ao,  
Magatiga aria mendete,  
Miciini, nikwenda bururi witu.  
Reke rugano ruru  
Rutuike ta kionereria,  
Kanini ona kanene.

## 8. KIMATHI by C.D.M Kiratu

1 One day there were heavy rains,  
In a small village in Nyeri,  
And in Wachiuri's homestead,  
A boy child was born  
5 Black beans were eaten,  
And the five ululations said,  
To welcome and bless the boy,  
As the mother suckled him.

10 And the old women who were there,  
Sang welcoming songs

Saying Kimathi has arrived,  
 Little did they know that the boy  
 Will die fighting for our land.  
 Kimathi grew of age,  
 15 Being very clever and brave,  
 A good club comes from its origin.

It is said that when a bull has been floored,  
 It cannot refuse to be tethered  
 Kimathi was arrested and put in jail.  
 20 With his legs and hands in cuffs.  
 When Europeans saw him they said,  
 Sentence him fast, sentence him fast,  
 For they knew how he had made their life difficult.

Because he had said that we should be free,  
 25 They put the country under a state of Emergency.  
 And because they love their country,  
 People volunteered to defend themselves,  
 Kimathi led our armies,  
 Without reservations, and they loved him,  
 30 They used to call him *Field Marshall Kimathi*

They used to leave their parents  
 They used to leave their loved ones,  
 Because they loved our country.  
 Let this narrative be a lesson for all

## 9. KUUMA NDEMI NA MATHATHI by Joseph Kamaru

Kuuma Ndemi na Mathathi,  
 Ndiri ndaguitia kirugu  
 Nikio ndagwitia githomo,  
 Njamba cia bata thiku ici,  
 Kari kao no githomo  
 Ndiri kindu kingi ngwenda.

Maitu, baba  
 No githomo ngwenda  
 Ithayo niiri ciona ng'ombe?

Ndegwa riu gutituire,  
 Thenge noiranyihanyiha,  
 Ndiri kirugu ngugwitia,  
 Njamba cia bata umuthi,  
 Ciothe riu niciunganite,  
 Niguu magitiri andu

Kai we wagite gwiciria,  
 Umwe wohe itimu na ngo,  
 Waiyia ndukanareke ithii,  
 Njamba ya bata Kimathi,  
 Mwega wa nyumba ya Mumbi.  
 Njomo niatuite ngiri

Andu aitu bururi uyu witu,  
 Muigue watangiirwo na ita,  
 Ni andu mari itimu na ngo,  
 Kuuma ndemi na mathathi,  
 Ndiri ndaguitia kirugu,  
 Nikio ndagwitia Githomo.

9. **FROM NDEMI AND MATHATHI**

1 From *Ndemi* and *Mathathi*,  
 I have never asked you for a feast,  
 I now ask for education,  
 Respectable patriots today,  
 5 Their sword is education,  
 I do not wish for any thing else.

My mother, my father,  
 It is only education I want,  
 Have the lazy ever owned cattle?

Bulls no longer live,  
 He-goats are getting extinct,  
 I do not want any herd,  
 Respectable patriots today,  
 Have now come together,  
 15 So as to defend man.

Why are you not thinking?  
 Of picking the spear and the shield,  
 Do not let "them" go, son of my mother,  
 10 Kimathi, a patriot of respect,  
 A good son of the House of Mumbi,  
 Jomo has broken the fence.

This country my people,  
 Was defended with war,  
 By people armed with shields and spears,  
 25 Since *Ndemi* and *Mathathi*,  
 I haven't asked for a herd,  
 I now ask for education

**10. MOHETWO ME MUGWANJA by P. Nganga**

Tutikariganirwo ni wira  
Tutikariganirwo ni wira uria Dedan Kimathi atigire aruta x2

Monganite me othe arui a mbara  
Monganite mari othe Kimathi,  
Waruhiu Itote na General China x2

Atongoria makiohwo othe a Kenya  
Atongoria makiohwo mohetwo me mungwaja  
Atandatu makiinuka Jomo agitigwo Lodwar x2

Niacokire akirekio Kenyatta  
Niacokire akirekio agiuka kuruta ciana  
Ciake ukombo ini x2

Kahora, kahora, kahora, kahora, kahora muthuri  
Tondu wa kiruta ciana ciaku ukombo ini x2

**10 SEVEN OF THEM HAD BEEN JAILED**

1 We will never forget, the hard job,  
We will never forget, the hard job,  
That Dedan Kimathi did for us.

5 All the freedom fighters had come together,  
All the freedom fighters had come together,  
*Kimathi, Waruhiu Itote alias General China.*

All the leaders of Kenya had been jailed,  
All the seven leaders had been jailed  
Six were released and Jomo was left in Lodwar.

10 He was later released,  
Kenyatta was later released, and he came to  
Free his children from slavery.

Steadily, steadily, steadily, steadily, steadily old man  
Because of freeing your children from slavery.

**11. MUCOKE MAGANJO by Joseph Kamaru**

Andu-aitu ngurira ui,  
Na ndingiona mwoi,

Ndageria kuuga mbu,  
 Nyumba ndiri mwitiki,  
 Ndahuha kihuni,  
 Gutiri urehugura,  
 Noguthii marathii  
 Maitu na niekuiiire

Andu aitu mwandiga ui  
 Nangimwitaga,  
 Na Gutiri mundu,  
 Utari utuku wake,  
 Waringa nguyu umuthi,  
 Ruciu menya niungi,  
 Wanduta rubora,  
 Nanii ngakuruta rwaku.

Gikuyu na mumbi,  
 Ngwire tukimathika,  
 Matigire moiga,  
 Nyumba iitu twendane na  
 Wehaka thiriga  
 Nanii ndihake muhu,  
 Ugikuya kibata,  
 Nanii nguyage nguru.  
 Mugayu uyu Gikuyu,  
 Nguria uumite naku?  
 Na rumena ruingi,  
 Na uiru wa ngoro,  
 Na mboco yagwa thi,  
 Nitwenyuranage  
 Hindi ya ira na iyo,  
 Iri kuriganira.

Ndiramaka muno,  
 Ndona muhutataniire,  
 Uyu ari na ngingo,  
 Na uri-ungi ikengeto,  
 Na ti kindu kingi,  
 Niundu was uiru wa mbea,  
 Ugathikwo ui nii ngwire,  
 Utige ikirio.

Wendi wa Gikuyu,  
 Nyumba ni mwariganiirwo,  
 Mugitua ati mbea ui  
 Nicio Ngai wanyu,  
 Mwarega kunjiigua,  
 Nyumba muchoke maganjo,  
 Mugukiriana ngwire,

Nginya ciana cianyu.  
 Gikuyu ngumaira,  
 Muigue kana muikare,  
 Tond uiru wanyu,  
 Niguo ukumuikia irima,  
 Mathani ma Ngai  
 Ti maguthakirwo,  
 Enda mundu uria ungi,  
 Oo ta uria wiendete.

Wanyonera Njambi,  
 Maitu Wanjiru mugeithie,  
 Nomwire ndirio Kenya,  
 Nii ngiria waya,  
 Ciatheya mwaki,  
 Nyambe hutatire riiko,  
 Tond muhia mbara  
 Niuria uri riko.

## 11. GO BACK TO THE ORIGINAL HOME-STEAD

1 I cry my people,  
 Yet no one soothes me,  
 When I call out for help house of Mumbi,  
 No one answers my scream,  
 5 I try to whistle,  
 Yet no-one turns back,  
 Everyone is walking away,  
 And it is night-fall.

You have left me my people,  
 10 Not heeding to my call,  
 Yet not a single being,  
 Who doesn't have his night,  
 If you hit the *Nguyu* tree today,  
 Tomorrow it is someone else,  
 15 If you pick a bee-sting out of my body,  
 I will pick a spear out of your flesh.

Gikuyu and Mumbi  
 As we buried them,  
 Their will was, house of Mumbi,  
 20 We stay in harmony  
 You smear ochre,  
 While I smear ashes,  
 While you lead *Kibata*,  
 25 I lead *Ngucu*.

This grouping and this other one,

What is their origin?  
 With so much hate,  
 And hearts intense greed,  
 30 Hitherto, if a bean fell down,  
 We would share it amongst ourselves,  
 But yesterday and the day before,  
 Have been forgotten.

I feel extremely worried, when I see,  
 35 Your backs turned to each other,  
 This one a bony chicken neck,  
 And the other with sweet "insides"  
 The sole source is,  
 Greed for wealth,  
 40 You will pass away,  
 But money will remain,

The will of Gikuyu, kinsmen,  
 You forgot,  
 You turned money,  
 45 Into your God,  
 If you ignore my call, House of Mumbi,  
 You will destroy each other,  
 And your children perish.

Gikuyu I tell you,  
 50 Heed to my call or ignore,  
 For it is your greed,  
 That is leading you to your grave,  
 These commandments of God,  
 Never play with them,  
 55 Love your neighbour,  
 Just as you love yourselves.

In case you meet Njambi,  
 Wanjiru my mother, greet her,  
 Tell her that I am still in Kenya,  
 60 Still on the guitar wires,  
 Incase they heat up,  
 I will turn my back to the fire,  
 For one who burns his legs,  
 Is one at it's side.

**12. NDATHII UU NDATHII UU by Simon Kihara**

Wathire atia mwendwa we ugikindiga  
 Nyondo iria cia arume itari iria  
 Na mirimu miingi itari kihonia ii  
 Ngiyuria hihi niukanjokerera ndari

Kana woigire karothea mbiri ndari;  
 Ngoro yakwa ituiire na miagago  
 Na ngunyiriri cia wendo mwihoko;  
 Ngikuinira nyonaga ta twinawe ii  
 Ni thengio kwi Ngai uria watuonithania  
 Tondu nduire na mihan'go ndihurukaga

Ndathii uu ndathii uu  
 Nduire njira cia utegi  
 Na mihang'o miingi ta ya gaturu  
 Ngietha mbecha ndio mihang'oini yaku  
 Ndari ii, itikira mwendwa we tuturanie x2

Murimu uyu wa wendo ni murimu,  
 Urutaga hungu iguru ikagua thi,  
 Watumire menwo ii ni gucaria ii  
 Ngarorwo uuru no ngoiga mwathani arogocwo,  
 Ngihana ta ndakuire murigo wa mehia  
 Ngoro nyingi munyendi itiri thathi,

Tigana na muingi uyu wa gathagu.  
 Uyu ni muniko nduthuranagia ii  
*My dear* ngwenda umenye guthekio ti kwendwo,  
 Iraro igiri ni marika meri,  
 Gakiyoha niko koi uria kariina,  
 Ndakwendire itari nganja nawe,  
 Nikio ukuigua ngiuga tuturanie ii  
 Ciiraniro cia wendo na cio ikinye  
 Murimu uyu wa wendo naguo uhone x2

12

**I CRISS CROSS HERE AND THERE THEN CRISS  
 CROSS HERE AND THERE by Simon Kihara**

- 1 How did you go and leave me my darling,  
 Like the male breasts which have no milk.  
 And many diseases without cure,  
 Wondering if you will ever come back to me,  
 5 Or may be you decided never to,  
 I have been very worried  
 And anxious because of love's anxiety  
 When I sing for you, I feel as if you are with me  
 Thanks to God who has made us meet  
 10 Because I am always on the move, never taking a rest.

I criss cross here and there  
 Then criss cross here and there  
 I have been following the hunters pathways.

While looking for money, I am also looking for you  
Please, consent so that we can live together.

This love-disease is quite a disease,  
Which can bring down a hawk in mid air,  
I am now hated because I am always searching  
But when (they) look at me badly I say "Praise the Lord"  
20 Its like I am encumbered by (a burden of) sins  
Many hearts have no feelings (soup)  
Forget about (this) *Gathagu's* crowd

Please do realise that those who laugh with you do not necessarily like you.  
Two lodgings imply two age groups.  
25 When the singer prepares for the dance,  
They know how (they) are going to dance.  
I loved you without having any doubts,  
That is why you hear me saying we live together  
So that the promises of love can be fulfilled  
30 And this love disease can be cured.

**13. NDUMIRIRI KURI MWATHANI by Albert Gacheru**

Ino ni ndumiriri ngutuma kuri mwathani,  
Ngai baba mumbi wa thi  
Jehovah kihoti mothe,  
Njamba nyinyi iri guthira na mirimu na mitino,  
Ingi itari iragia micii ingi igatiga ngenge,  
Ngai baba ndakuhoya angikoruo tuhititie,  
Uturekere mahitia tutikanacoka ringi,  
Woigire mundu akuhoya agwatiirie ngoro thiini  
Niukamuhe twakuhoya Ngai baba tuhe thayu.

Rimwe ningagwo ni tha mwanake wa 25,  
O hindi a rigithatha agakinywo ni kirori,  
Agatiga mutumia na kana ka rukenge,  
Na ndari nginya kihuri ona kieha matituirie,  
Riu ni ihera riigana atia hari mwana munyinyi  
Na hari wa miaka eite ura kimirwo kimitu,  
Na ta guthinja gacui utige gicogoo gikuru  
Gitangihota gukuga kiumu nyama itingirika

Ti mahitia ndira kuruta Ngai baba ndaguthaitha,  
Ni gutirihwo ni unyinyi na withi ukiurira thi,  
Njamba nyingi ndagitari matereba na makanga,  
Aini nginyagia arimi mari guthira mari ethi  
Notaguthinja kamwati utige ndurume gicegu,  
Rika riakwa ndamuthaitha, tuturie maru tuhoe

Tuthaithe ngai waiguru atuohere mahitia maitu,  
Atuhe matuku maingi tukamba kurera ciana.

We muthuri uria mukuru urathii na mutirima  
Muruguo wa miaka 30 agutiga wikage atia,  
Waremirwo wi munyinyi withi waku ukiurira thi,  
Ndutige kuhahatiria, gaka ni kahinda gaitu  
Ndumiriri kwi mwathani, nguria amuhe umenyo  
Muundu aruma riake agathii, gutiri ingiruma keri,  
Niguo mumo wone warii tuhote gwaka bururi  
Njamba nyinyi ni yeriruo ndicayaga mahuria-ini.

Nainyui mumo a rika riakwa nimwetuiriire ruthanju,  
Mukarakaria mwathani ni undu wa waganu wanyu,  
Mugitwendiaa mawathi mukiuna mothe,  
Nigetha Ngai atuohere nituhingiei mawathi  
Wa mbere Ngai no umwe ndukahoe mihianano  
Wagatatu na wa kana wa ithano tia muciaru  
Ndukorage, ndugatharie na wa inyanya ndukanaiye,  
Tiga kigenyo wa ikumi ndukeriririe indo ciene

Ni kuri mekuigua ruru mone wamaitu niekuhunjia,  
Moige mwana wa Wairimu ati niareketie raini,  
Na tikwenda ni gutumwo ndumitwo nii mwathani,  
Ndi muhe kiugo kia muoyo itana kinywo ni kirori,  
Kahinda karia ndi muoyo ndi mwithi na ndina mai,  
Nyone mutu na thurari muringiti na gacati  
Na ndakomeria manana njehere ndigire mumo,  
Tonde wathi uri gukura wendaga kuongererwo ungi.

**13**

**A MESSAGE TO GOD by Albert Gacheru**

1 This is a message that I am sending to the Lord,  
God the father, creator of earth,  
Jehovah the Almighty,  
Young men are being decimated by diseases and accidents  
5 Others who don't even have families,  
While others leave young babies,  
God our father, I pray, forgive us our sins  
We have repented,  
For you said that whoever prays sincerely,  
10 And with conviction in their heart,  
You will grant them their wishes,  
God, we pray you for peaceful life.

Sometimes I get sympathetic when a 25 years old man,

15 Is run over by a lorry,  
 Just after he has had his first born.  
 And leaves a wife and a newborn baby,  
 Without any means of survival,  
 What kind of suffering is this, to the small baby,  
 And yet there is an Eighty year old,  
 20 Who can only feed on mashed potatoes.  
 Its like slaughtering a young chick,  
 And leave an old cock that cannot even crow,  
 Whose meat is so dry that it cannot even be eaten.

25 I am not pinpointing errors on your part, Dear God,  
 But I am saddened by youth and energy being wasted,  
 Young men, doctors, drivers, touts,  
 Singers and farmers are being decimated,  
 It's like slaughtering a lamb  
 And leave an old ram in the paddock  
 My age-mates, let's go down on our knees and pray,  
 30 And persuade God to forgive us,  
 And persuade God to forgive us,  
 And gives us long life so that we can bring up our children.

35 And you old man, who is on a walking stick  
 What has your 30 year old son left you around to do,  
 Yet you couldn't do anything when you were young  
 And all your youth has wasted for nothing,  
 Stop wandering here and there, this is our time,  
 My message to God is that he should give you knowledge,  
 40 When you have had your chance, you should pass on,  
 For no one can have two chances,  
 So that you create space for the young to build the nation,  
 A young cock cannot fail to perform properly.  
 And you my agemates,  
 You have prepared the cane  
 Which God is using to punish you.  
 For you have gone contrary to the commandments,  
 And in your waywardness infuriated Him.  
 So that God can forgive us, we should keep the commandments;  
 The first, there is only one God, do not worship idols.  
 The third and fourth and fifth respect your parents.  
 Do not kill, do not commit adultery and the eighth  
 do not steal.  
 Do not bear false witness and do not covet.

There are those who will hear this song.  
 And say that the son-of-Wairimu has gone mad,  
 My wish is not to preach,  
 Its only that I have been sent by God,  
 To bring you a word of life.

Before I am run over by a lorry.  
 When I am alive, young and energetic,  
 I get flour, trousers, blanket and a shirt.  
 And when I clock eighty, I leave  
 And leave the world to the youth  
 Because when one cannot be steady due to old age,  
 A steady replacement is needed.

14

**NYAKARINGITI by Albert Gacheru**

Mutumia wa kwa nindoka nindoka  
 Nandoka ndimundu murakaru  
 Ndikwenda ciuria  
 Nii ndinoka ciira  
 Tigwakwa ringi  
 Uritindaga toro  
 Githakuini ikumbi  
 Na muringiti ii  
 Nindarega, Na ni Ndarega biu

Nyakaringiti Nyakaringiti, Nyakaringiti  
 Umuthi ukuria mucii

Nigutindaga  
 Na muringiti nja  
 Watuikire rugano  
 Itura-ini wee,  
 Niwe unyihagia hwai  
 Ukibatithio ritwa  
 Nyakaringiti,  
 Ugwatanagio Ndai  
 Nyakaringiti nuu  
 Macokio ni tosha,  
 Nyakaringiti ni Muka wa Gacheru.

Watuikire gathua  
 Wira waku nokuria  
 Kumagia kiroko  
 Kanua no tabu  
 Ukihana ndamathia  
 Uthiage ukienyukaga  
 Nginya kuruga  
 Ndungihota kuruga  
 Gutiri undu ungiuka  
 Ndirugagire ii  
 Nawe uri o toro  
 Nii ni ndarega biu.

Wiganagira andu

Uria wangomeire  
 Ningi ukimenya  
 Haria wui nguagira  
 Ati ngoro yakwa  
 Ni iria iri tha  
 Ukienda mbia  
 Ukoiga wi muruaru  
 Ningagwo ni tha,  
 Ngakune iria urenda  
 No riu ndari  
 Kirim u nikioghiga

Mwenda kioe tuindo,  
 Turia tugukonii  
 Na karingiti  
 Kau wihumbagira  
 Ni kaba ugithii  
 Ugakomere mbere  
 Waigania toro  
 Murata niukangora  
 Na tondu ndikwenda  
 Tucokanirie ii  
 Oha mirigo  
 Mwendwa gutanatuka

14 **THE-BLANKET-WOMAN by Albert Gacheru**

1 My wife, I have come, here I am.  
 I have come being an angry person,  
 I do not want to be asked questions,  
 I have not come for a case  
 5 You can't go on spending the day asleep  
 Here in my house,  
 Under the eaves of the barn  
 With a blanket  
 I have refused, I have refused totally.

10 The-blanket-woman, The-blanket-woman, The-blanket-woman  
 Today you will go back to your home  
 Because of spending the day  
 Outside with a blanket  
 You have become a topic for stories  
 15 In the village,  
 You are the topic of evening gathering,  
 You have even been baptized  
 The-blanket-woman.  
 You are used as a riddling topic,  
 20 (Question)Who is the-blanket-woman,

The answer is well known  
The-blanket-woman is Gaceru's wife.

25 You are like the ants,  
Your occupation is just eating  
From morning,  
Your mouth is at work,  
You are like a *Ndamathia*  
You can't even walk straight  
30 You can't even cook,  
There is no way  
I can cook for myself  
While you are sleeping  
I have refused completely.

35 You boast to people  
Telling them how you have suppressed me,  
And then you discovered,  
My weak point  
That my heart is soft  
So that when you want money,  
40 You tell me that you are sick,  
I then get sympathetic  
And give you the amount you want  
But now, your fool is enlightened.

45 My love, take the belongings  
That belong to you,  
And the blanket  
Which you use for sleeping  
It's preferable that you leave  
And sleep elsewhere,  
50 When you've had enough sleep,  
My dear you will come back to me  
And because I don't want an exchange  
Take your belongings and leave before its dark.

15 **RAMBI RAMBI CIA NDICHU by Joseph Kamaru**

Tikuina nguina,  
Ni rambi rambi ngutuma,  
Kuri Ndichu na mbari ya Gakunga,  
Ngai amuninire kieha,  
Na amurathime,  
Maciara maku we Ndichu,  
Marotherema.

Ndichu muriu

Tiga kumaka niundu,  
Murererwo gwo cuwe,  
Nioi maingi,  
Kinya oguo ukinyite,  
We Ndichu muriu,  
Kinandu kia mucii,  
Menyerera maguta.

Ndichu muriu,  
Warerirwo ni cuguo,  
Winyitie mugoto nawe,  
Urihe thiiri,  
Gutire yui guciara,  
Itoi kwongithia  
Iri kahii nonginya,  
Ikaharwo mutwe.

Ndukoige mbu,  
Cia riu itiitikagwo,  
Gutiri muru wathoguo,  
Ukoima na njira,  
Ni kiugo ndakuiyira,  
We Ndichu muriu,  
Ni rwayariri wiringie,  
Kana utoboke.

Mwanake oyu,  
Onawe tiga gwicokia,  
Tukwaria cia Ndichu umuthi,  
Ciaku ruciu,  
Niaingi mahana tawe,  
Ciana cia ndigwa,  
Iri kahii no nginya,  
Ikaaharwo mutwe,

Muiritu uyu,  
Riu uri mutumia,  
Mitugo ya teenager, miugire uhoro  
Kuma umuthi uri wa mbari ya Gakunga  
Wa mburi na ti wa thia kindiria mucii

15

**CONDOLENCES TO NDICHU by Joseph Kamaru**

1 I am not singing for its sake,  
I am sending condolences,  
To Ndichu and the *Gakunga* family,  
Let God lessen your sorrow,  
5 And bless you,

Let your offsprings Ndichu,  
Prosper and multiply.

Ndichu young man,  
You were brought up by your grandmother,  
10 So tighten your belt and pay that debt,  
One brought up by his grandmother is well informed,  
Do not change your step Ndichu my son,  
Your home's ram tail,  
Take care of its fat.  
15 One that knows how to give birth,  
Knows how to breastfeed,  
Every home that has a boy,  
A head must be roasted there.

Do not call out  
20 Because the calls nowadays are never responded to  
Not a single brother,  
Will answer from your relations,  
It is a secret I have given you,  
Hey, Ndichu young-man,  
25 It's only knee deep, you can cross by yourself

Oh young-man,  
Do not sulk,  
For today it is Ndichu, next is you,  
So many share your suffering,  
Children without parents,  
Every home that has a boy,  
A head must be roasted there.

16 And you young-woman,  
You are now married,  
Those teenage characteristics,  
Say good-bye to them,  
From today you belong to the Gakunga family,  
Married with goats not with antelopes,  
So be stable in this home.

**16** REKE TUMANWO by Peter Kigia

Umuthi ndoiga reke tumanwo  
10 Akorwo wi witu, reke tumanwo  
Uria uturio ni ungi  
Riu niетеithie  
Ihinda ria muriano riu ni ithiru  
Mundu eringie ni rwa nyariri



15. When I try to come out you push me back  
 You torment me like the rich man and Lazarus  
 And I thrive on leftovers  
 While it is said I got mentally retarded in childhood

20. Let our friendship come to an end  
 Be selling to me whatever you have been giving to me  
 So that you will know that you are not God  
 Our parting will not cause the collapsing of  
 The heavens and the earth

25. I am now speaking in new languages  
 You shouldn't think that I am mad  
 But I reiterate that I don't trust you  
 You are like Judas who betrayed Jesus  
 And sold him for 30 pences

**17(a). THINA URI O NGORO by Albert Gacheru**

Ii kweri githi arata uria kwerirwo,  
 Nama tuigananagio ni mibuto,  
 Gitumi nii Gacheru wa Wairimu,  
 Ninjiguite na ningi ni nyonete,  
 Tondungicemania ngithii bara ii,  
 Wone ndimurungaru nginyua, begi  
 Ungicoka umake muno ukigituka,  
 Gutiri undu njukaga thina uri o ngoro, wui.

Na tanii ona mwanyona ndiithikiire,  
 Na ringi ngikanyuka ngingo iri iguru  
 Nimenyaga oro wega maitu witu,  
 Ni muku na ndari na magego,  
 Indi ndaikia mukari onaka kaba ngue,  
 Ikihinga cia magego maitu agikirwo,  
 Ndaigua ndetirwo mbiru kwa muriithi ii,  
 Arata mariire nguku moiga ati ndihio,  
 Mikari ya magego igagithira, na nii  
 Ngatigwo o uguo thina urio ngoro wui.

Nao arata Nairobi ni nguna thi,  
 Gutituiwandugu no muriano,  
 Ndaruta kibarua nyone riiru ii  
 Arata no kugurania gura cai,  
 Na ciao cia magana iri o mihuko, ii  
 Na ngano cia kugura tumigunda,  
 Ndacoka ndatarania thiini wakwa ii,  
 Ndiri kingi wanyina ona iri ihoro,

Na riiru ni kuigira Ngai baba,  
Nyinage *halleluyah* thina urio Ngoro wui.

**Kai andu aitu ti itheru ndina thina ii**  
Mundu mugi andarire kai ndarogirwo,  
Nanondagiciarirwo ta andu aria angi-ii,  
Mitugo mikindiru ota gakindiri,  
Miario miega wa mami thenga twarie ii,  
Na githomo ndinakio nama kiaiguru,  
Na muhura ndukiri woima ngingo ii  
Nguria hihi kai ndagiotire ndiri  
Na aciari akwa no nii ma mehokete, ii  
Na nduireo na mwihoko thina uri o ngoro

Tondu nii wa Wairimu ninguinuka ii  
Kieha giakwa ni kiria nguinuka nakio,  
Na tuiritu Nairobi wui-i-iai  
Tuoigire ati nii ndiri kindu ingioywo,  
Ngutuma rambi rambi kuri arata  
Aria matuirie ngoro ya umundu,  
Manjethere nyaruku ya gicagi ii  
Niguo ngainuka nayo oro Nyahururu,  
Na mumiiguithie wega inyui arata a kwa ii  
Ndikanariganirwo thina uri o Ngoro, niguo.

**17(a)                    WOES ARE IN ONES HEART by Albert Gacheru**

1        Oh, my friends, It's really true,  
          What was said, that it's wearing trousers  
          that makes us seem equal,  
          I have heard and I have also seen,  
          If we meet while I am walking in the streets,  
5        And you will see me walking upright,  
          You would be very surprised to realise,  
          That I am so helpless, as woes are in ones heart.

          Even when you saw me being unhappy,  
          And other times walking majestically,  
10        I know very well that my mother is old  
          And that she does not have teeth,  
          But when I put money in 'I would better die',  
          So that I can get enough for the teeth,  
          I am given a bill from Muriithi's,  
15        Where they claim that chicken has been eaten, and I should pay,  
          The money I had saved for teeth,  
          Just goes like that,  
          And I am left helpless, with woes in my heart.

          And my friends in Nairobi are very cunning,

20 They are no real friends just exploiters,  
 When I work to get ten shillings,  
 They come asking me to buy them tea,  
 And their hundred shillings bills are in their pockets  
 They incessantly talk about buying plots  
 25 Yet when I think of myself,  
 I have absolutely nothing left,  
 Yet I wanted to save the ten bob  
 So that God can bless it,  
 I am now singing hallelujah  
 30 Woes are in one's heart.

Comrades, I am seriously in trouble,  
 Can a clever person tell me whether I am cursed,  
 Yet I was born like all the others,  
 And I have had good manners all along.  
 35 I never talk ill of anybody  
 And I have good education,  
 And I am always in trouble  
 I wonder, did I use a mortar for firewood.  
 Yet my parents are relying on me,  
 40 And I have lived on empty hope,  
 Woes are in ones heart.

Now, son of Wairimu, myself,  
 I will go to my rural home,  
 I am saddened because I have nothing to take with me,  
 45 Because girls in Nairobi, *wui-i-iyai*,  
 Said I do not have anything to offer,  
 I am sending out an *SOS* to my friends  
 Who still have a human heart.  
 To get me a village wench,  
 50 So that I can go with her to Nyahururu,  
 And please let her understand my friends,  
 So that she may never forget,  
 That woes are in ones heart.

**17(b)**

**MWANA MWIHOKI by Albert Gacheru**

Ni nii ucio wa Wairimu nindacoka iii  
 Njokie ngatho nyingi ma ya gicicin'ga,  
 Kuri aria manyitirwo ni tha nyingi iii,  
 Nginya ingi itari iria riria maiguire,  
 Ngiina thina uri o ngoro na tu biru iii  
 Twa nguku ndarihaga kwa Muriithi;  
 Ndoiga ndimumenyithie nduire o muoyo ii,  
 Tonde mwana uri kio ndangiria mai,  
 Kindu nduire ndiaga no mwihoko iii,

Na ritwa ngigarura ngitwo mwana mwihoki

Thengiu nene ta njata ya kiwarii ii,  
 Njokie kuri Kanyoro ii wa Wanjiku,  
 Ni anjetheire nyaruku ya ngiridi ii,  
 Tiga ndiari magego ii ma mitheko,  
 Maitu riria amionire akihiuhia ii,  
 Akiuga uguo gutingithii hatironia,  
 Kiuria giake giatarii mwana wakwa ii,  
 Ithui nii na nyaruku nuu ukwambirirwo,  
 Nyaruku tukiinukia ngitigwo uguo  
 Nduire weru uri njogu mwana mwihoki wui.

Nindumiirwo marua ni arata aingi ii,  
 Makiuria Wa-Wairimu uriagwo niki,  
 Nginyagia muka nduri mundu witu ii,  
 Kana ciana urarera rekia ruthia,  
 Mugaga muriareri, U-i-yiya ii  
 Mutari mwakirera ii ciana nene,  
 Aciari muringiti ciana bithi ii  
 Kuma ndi miaka ikumi na mugwanja,  
 Kaba guciara urere na uthomithie  
 Ngai baba teithagia mwana mwihoki wui.

Nario ithukuma wui ri thiku ici ii  
 Nikuri athukumi na eroreri,  
 Nangi ta Wa-Wairimu ui-i-iyia ii  
 Niguthukumagira andu aria angi,  
 Ndona igana ngiciria hithe handu ii,  
 Ngareherwo migogo ndeithia haha,  
 Mihothi na maruta na mikombo iii,  
 Kweri kweri murimi tiwe murii,  
 Iriagwo ngionaga ngatigwo uguo  
 Na nii meragie o mata  
 Mwana mwihoki wui.

Andu aitu thi ni nditu mumihuge ii,  
 Muriano uria uri kuo ndukwenda itheru,  
 Menyerera wa mami ndukanae ii,  
 Gutuika gataraca ga kuringirwo,  
 Mahindi ugocokane na ume uguo ii,  
 Menya ndukanakue ndigiri yene,  
 Mugi etirimie waku witwo nongwe ii,  
 Rurigi rwi kuruta mucakwe kinya,  
 Rutiri bata ringi ruikio riko ii,  
 Menya ndukanatukie mwana mwihoki, wui.

Kuri mekuigua ruru moe thimbu ii,  
 Moige ati wa Wairimu niithui aratema,

Ni haku wicuranie uigitwo haa ii,  
 Thino gutiri kionje gitari mwene,  
 Thuita ithe wa Kabui we wi baba ii,  
 Na mbari ya ithe wa Ciru murorathimwo,  
 Mwonire ngiria thina ngaga muoi ii,  
 Mwona uria ndina kio mukinjukiria,  
 Ona ngue kana thikwo nduikie tiiri ii  
 Ndikanariganirwo thina urio ngoro niguo.

**17(b)****THE-HOPEFUL-CHILD by Albert Gacheru**

1 It is me the son-of-Wairimu, I am back  
 To give my profuse gratitudes,  
 To all those who took pity on me,  
 Even others who gave milkless ones,  
 5 When they heard me singing, that  
 Woes are in one's heart  
 And about the bills I was paying at Muriithi's.  
 I have decided to inform you that I am still alive,  
 Because an active child will never eat faeces,  
 10 The one thing I have been eating since, is hope,  
 And I also changed my name,  
 I am now called The-hopeful-child.

I give a-big-thanks like the evening star,  
 To Kanyoro son-of-Wanjiku,  
 15 Who got me a wench  
 Who unfortunately did not have the front teeth,  
 When my mother saw her she became furious,  
 And her point of departure was  
 Who will get teeth first her or the girl  
 So we took her back to her home,  
 20 And I have since been in this wilderness  
 A-hopeful- child.

I have received letters from many friends,  
 Asking "son-of-Wairimu" what is your problem,  
 You don't even have a wife comrade,  
 25 Or even kids that you are providing for  
 So where do you get those woes from?"  
 You say you provide for children,  
 But you don't know how it feels to provide for big children  
 Blankets for the parents, and school fees for children,  
 30 Like I have done since I was seventeen.  
 Its easier to give birth to your own,  
 And provide for them and educate them  
 God the father please help The-hopeful-child.

- Yet the earning that is there these days,  
 35 They are those who earn while others are just spectators  
 Yet others like the son-of-Wairimu *wui-i-iya ii*  
 They work for others,  
 When I get a hundred shillings and want to save,  
 They bring me logs, telling me to help them to carry them,  
 40 Donations, and contributions and borrowers  
 It is true that he who farms is not the one who eats,  
 It is eaten while I watch  
 And I am left with nothing just swallowing saliva,  
 God please help The-hopeful-child.
- 45 My comrades, this world is tough, watch out,  
 The exploitation that is there needs to be taken seriously,  
 Be careful so that you don't become a bridge,  
 Where people cross over for your bones will collapse, and yet you will get nothing,  
 Be careful not to carry someone else's donkey.  
 50 Watch out my dear brother so that a clever one does not use your walking stick and later  
 call you a fool,  
 When a string removes a maize cob from the calabash,  
 It has no use and is thrown into the fire,  
 Watch out so that you do not fall in the same category with the The-hopeful-child.
- There are some who will hear this song  
 And say "the Son-of-Wairimu is castigating us,"  
 55 It is up to you to decide where you belong  
 In this world every handicapped person has an owner,  
 Thuita The-father-of Kabui - you are my father,  
 And the family of The-father-of-Ciru may you be blessed,  
 For you saw how I was suffering alone,  
 60 And took care of me, when you noticed my determination,  
 Even if I die and get buried and turn into soil  
 I will never forget that woes are in one's heart.

**18. UTHONI WA KANYENYAINI by Simon Kihara**

- Kiama:** Reka tukurie Musaimo,  
 Watutuma Kanyenyaini  
 Tukugirire kairitu  
 Watuconore niki?
- Musaimo:** Nima ti kumuconora,  
 Ndonire nii ndingihota,  
 Indo icio ciothe iretio  
 Ni ithe wa kairitu kau
- Kiama:** Kwaria ma wa hahurirwo  
 Ni itu na gutiari mbura  
 Muthuri ucio oiga ninoru,

Kai akiugite igithijwo?

Kindu kia mbere twerirwo  
Utware mwati na harika,  
Na kinya giake mbaki  
Ucoke urumiririe njohi

**Musaimo:**

Nguria nii njohi ya njurio  
Na igua ithui tutituragia  
Nii no ndimutwarire,  
Maendeleo anyue igiri

**Kiama:**

Ndwonete we niukurwona,  
Nakenyina mumuciari  
Ngoi iria muiritu atuire  
Nayo nonginya ugitware,

Kuria wira ni kuruta,  
Nyamikwa yari ya ucuwe  
Muiritu ariithirie mbia  
Na hangi no nginya urihe

**Musaimo:**

Ona kaba airitu ariu,  
Matiri na miracirie,  
Ithe agutha cuba igiri  
Agatuiru mata githuri,

**Kiama:**

Uyu ekugurwo gi tene  
Ti aria mwoyaga ta ngima,  
Ningi ndwambite kumenya  
Ni wa muhiriga uriku

Twaiguire ithe ni Mumbui  
Ati wa mbari ya Marigu  
Rika ni wa kihui mwiri  
Matihakagwo macuru

**Musaimo:**

Nguria hihi ni Mwithaga  
Na ethaga tutiguraga  
Ona wa mbari ya Iregi  
Ona kana ica gitumbi

**Kiama:**

Athungu no maturaga  
Na matiri mihiriga  
Kiugo ni wendo ni wendo  
Ukumugura umugure.

Wi mungu mwoina mburi yene kuguru

We timuiritu wendaga  
Twarutaga wa gitati

**Musaimo:**

Ndi kumureti down  
Ngwihika niguo twonane  
Na ithe wa kairitu kau  
Njigwe nii ndikaneragwo

**Kiama:**

Mukinyire uri mwana u cio  
Ona ngari ni kunyakwo  
Musaimo watigwo niko  
Niukarira na uturirie

**18**

**THE WEDDING NEGOTIATIONS AT KANYENYAINI**  
**by Simon Kihara**

**Delegation:**

1 Let us ask you Musaimo  
Why did you embarrass us  
That time when you sent us to Kanyenyaini  
To get you a bride?

**Musaimo:**

5 I didn't mean to embarrass you,  
I realised that I wouldn't be able  
To give all those things,  
That the girl's father was asking for,

**Delegation:**

10 The truth is you got agitated  
By the clouds, and yet there was no rain,  
And again, when that man said that it is fat,  
He didn't mean that it should be slaughtered.

**Delegation:**

15 The first thing, we were told that you should take  
A young he goat and a she goat,  
And his snuff box and traditional brew.

**Musaimo:**

And I am wondering where I will get traditional brew  
And there is no sugarcane remaining in my place.  
Can't I just take him to Maendeleo (bar)  
Where he can take two bottles (of beer)

**Delegati on:**

20 You have not seen anything yet,  
As her own mother  
Wants the *Ngoi* that the girl tore

When you take on a task,  
You should be able to undertake it,  
25 The giant size *kiondo*  
Which belonged to the grandmother,

And which was eaten by rats because of that girl,  
And earlings must be given

**Musaimo:**

30 It's better to marry the modern girls,  
Who don't have those dowry complications,  
When her father takes two bottles,  
He spits on his chest.

**Delegation:**

35 You will wed this one the traditional way  
She is not like the ones you pick anyhow like *ugali*,  
And in any case you hadn't first enquired,  
To which clan she belongs to.  
We suspect the father is a *Mumbui*  
Of the *Marigu* lineage  
From the *Kihiu-Mwiri* age-group  
40 Who do not entertain nonsense

**Musaimo**

I hope she is not a *Mwithaga*  
Because my clan does not marry  
From the *Mwithaga* clan,  
Especially from the *Iregi* lineage  
45 Or even the *Icagitumbi* lineage.

**Delegation:**

Even the Europeans are living,  
and they have no clans  
love is love clanism notwithstanding,  
And love obligates you to wed her  
50 It seems like you were not serious,  
you only wanted to make amends  
after impregnating her,  
You were seriously not interested in the girl  
You were disturbing us for nothing.

**Musaimo:**

55 I am not going to let you people down,  
I will make haste and have audience with the father  
So that I can hear first hand.

**Delegation:**

60 That girl has a gait that resembles that of a leopard,  
If this one leaves you Musaimo,  
you will cry and also make us cry.

17. WAIGOKO by Wilfred Ndirangu and M. Wagatonye

Wakiri nduke na ndukoe  
Baba araraga akinuma.  
Akiningiriria Waigoko mundu uri nderu githuri.  
Nani ngoiga karothea, yake ndikamihuha mwaki

Gwake ndakaguithia ciakwa, na ngahikio niuria twendaine

Conoka Waigoko, nuu utakui  
 Mitugo yaku timinyoroku  
 Wateire migwi yaku na ngima,  
 Kai utamenyaga nguyo iri githaka  
 Nduthii ugaikie mbugu kana  
 Ukanyue ngunga  
 Gwaku nii nduukanyona.

Nindikitie gwicariria kamwanake kamonyokio  
 Karinumaga ngakira ngainamia maitho ta ngari  
 Ngainamia maitho ta Ngari kana n'gondu ikuria nyeki  
 Yaguithurira ndiri migwi ona ndiri githegenywa

Riu ti riria ria tene airitu ni atheru maitho,  
 Kwaria ma niguo urata uture,  
 Gwaku ndiga komia rwaru,  
 Kanyoni Kanja na ruoya rwako  
 Nii ndi na mwendwa wakwa  
 Nii ndukunynira utonga wendo wakwa ndiendagia mbeca x2

**17. WAIGOKO by Wilfred Ndirangu and Wagatonye**

Wakiri come and do not take  
 My father abuses me every night,  
 Persuading me to get married to Waigoko  
 Someone with a bearded chest  
 But I have said "Never,"  
 And resolved never to light a fire in his house  
 I will never go to his home,  
 For I will get married to my lover;

Shame on you Waigoko  
 Who doesn't know your mannerisms are not smooth,  
 You wasted your arrows with *Ngima*  
 Don't you know that the *ngunyo* are still in the bush  
 You may go for divination, or drink poison  
 But you will never see me in your house.

I have already found for myself  
 A gentle young man,  
 Who even when he insults me,  
 I will just keep quiet and bow my face  
 Like a leopard or a goat that is grazing.  
 That which one selected for oneself  
 Does not have spikes or a bitter part.

These are not the olden days  
 Girls have better understanding,  
 Let me be frank with you to safeguard friendship,  
 I will never sleep in your place.  
 Let every weaverbird carry its feather,  
 I have my own lover,  
 Please don't talk to me about riches,  
 My love is not on retail for money.

### 19. YARUANIO by Albert Gacheru

Mwendwa nii ninginyitwo nginya nigutua ciira  
 Ngona ni kaba wendo witu urio ni ciura,  
 Na ngatoboka riu ndiwithambe uriganire  
 Mutukanio wa wendo naguo unyume kiongo,  
 Gitumi ninyonete nduri hindi ukaiganira  
 Ona uheo mathunga na miungu na kahurura  
 Mikengeria na mirio ya mwaro ndungiiganira  
 We wi mburi ya rwanio iria ikuaga ona rwanio x2

Kai wariganiirwo ni haria twarutanirie  
 Na mhitwa iria yothe twehitire tukiuga,  
 Ati gutiri muundu ugakimani riaungi  
 Nanii tuiritu twakwa tuothe ngihura karamu  
 File ciothe cia wendo ngihinga na ngirikia  
 Ngiambiriria gukuina ta mburi na migunda  
 Githi na mwena uriaungi utuire ungimanagiria  
 We kweri wi ya rwanio iria ikuaga ona rwanio x2

Nanonderitwo ni arata ati we nduiganagira,  
 Nangerwo wa Wairimu menya kwiikia riko,  
 Nanii ngitua ni uiru maraigua ni undu waku  
 Githi ni moi muka mweru niari magambo  
 Ati ingithii thabari, we ni wona kamweke  
 Ga kuraraga kirabu, na arume mugikunda  
 Nguria nikiiwagaga kiu nii itakuheaga  
 Kweri kweri ya rwanio ikuaga ona rwanio x2

We mwendwa watukirie mbathi ya muthubari,  
 Ni kaba muthubari tondu ni uri stage,  
 We uhana matatu nduri handu utangioya,  
 Wa Kamiti, Huruma, Dodora bei ya bathi,  
 Tungitwarana nawe ndithiaga na thayu,  
 Ni kugeithagio ni andu wa-wairimu magatheka  
 Githi ni guthekerera mona ngitia nawe  
 Macoka maririkana uria mangimanagiria, x2

Tungithii handu nawe, ngwire unyue kamucuba,  
 Ugaga ndungikunda ona nduri wakunda,  
 Njugage wi kirumi ati kanyuaga ou wothe  
 Nagithi wi ngari mwenda no ukanyua thakame,  
 Ngiuga ni Jesu mwambe githi ni muici mwambe;  
 Ngiuga ni wa mathia githi ni wa mahiti  
 Riria itarihomunyuaga na arume mugacunga,  
 Na riria ndiho mwendwa we thingi maria x2

Nguria uiguaga atia riria we nguguthaitha,  
 Ota mwana wa itumbi ngakaira utige mwango  
 Na nduriwitu mwendwa kana wandira ciitu,  
 Ngakwira muka mwega niugie mitugo miega,  
 Kweri mburi ya gicenji nonginya irie miriyo,  
 Kweri nguku ya gicenji monginya ihurie kiara.  
 Nayo nguku ya gicenji nonginya ihurie kiara,  
 Kweri nyau ya gicenji no nginya iri ria mbia  
 Nayo mburi ya rwanio ikuaga ona rwanio x2

### **THE-BLEATING-ONE by Albert Gacheru**

- 1 I have been forced to come to the conclusion,  
 That our love can go to the frogs,  
 And I get into the river and wash it off me and forget it,  
 So that the intricacies of love can get out of my head.
- 5 This is because I have realised that you will never be satisfied,  
 Even if you are given *mithunga*, *minugu* and *Kahurura*, *Mikengeria* and *Mirio*,  
 You can never be satisfied,  
 For you are the-habitual-bleating-goat,  
 That lives and dies bleating.
- 10 Have you forgotten the way we started,  
 And the promises we exchanged and said,  
 That no one will do-things-behind-the-other's-back.  
 And I got rid of all my girls,  
 I closed and finished with all the love files
- 15 And started praising you like goats and land.  
 Little did I know that on your part  
 You have been doing-things-behind-my-back.  
 You are truly the- habitual-bleating-goat  
 That lives and dies bleating.
- 20 Yet I had been warned by my friends,  
 that you never get satisfied,  
 They had told me son-of-Wairimu,  
 Be careful you are headed for the fire,  
 But I concluded that they are just jealous.
- 25 Yet they knew that a new wife is bad news.

When I go on a safari, you get a chance,  
 To go to the pub and drink with other men  
 I wonder what it is that you don't have,  
 That which I cannot give you  
 30 You truly are the-habitual-bleating-goat,  
 That lives and dies bleating.

You are like the city bus,  
 But the city bus is better because it only  
 stops at designated bus stops,  
 35 You are actually like a matatu,  
 You can pick up passengers anywhere,  
 From *Kamiti, Huruma, Dandora*, at the  
 Same fare with the city bus  
 When I walk around with you,  
 I am never at peace,  
 40 As people greet me "Hi! son-of-Wairimu" and laugh  
 They have evidently been laughing at me  
 When they see me being so proud of you  
 And then remember the things-they-do-behind-my-back with you.

When I go with you somewhere,  
 45 And I tell you to take a bottle of beer,  
 You tell me you can't take alcohol and have never taken,  
 And so I have always believed that you can't drink,  
 Yet you are a leopard you can even drink blood.  
 While I believe its Jesus who is on the cross,  
 50 Its actually a thief, who's on the cross,  
 While I believe that its-antelope-business  
 Its actually hyena-business.  
 When I am not there you drink the night away  
 And when I am there you are the virgin Mary.

55 How do you feel when I am persuading you,  
 Like a small baby and tell you to stop this behaviour  
 And yet you are not my relative or my clansman,  
 And I always tell you a good wife should have good manners,  
 It is evident that a non exotic goat will always eat *miriyo*,  
 60 And a non exotic hen will always scratch the ground,  
 A non exotic cat will always eat mice  
 And a habitual-bleating-goat will live and die bleating.