INTERROGATING MASCULINITIES IN SELECTED KENYAN POPULAR FICTION

By
ANTONY MUKASA MATE

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Declaration

I declare that *Interrogating Masculinities in Selected Kenyan Popular Fiction*, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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A.M. MATE                             DATE
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Abstract

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By

Antony Mukasa Mate

The purpose of this study is to examine the presentation of masculinity in selected popular works. The novels under discussion include: Henry ole Kulet’s *To Become a Man* (1972), Yusuf Dawood’s *One Life Too Many* (1991), Peter Kimani’s *Before the Rooster Crows* (2002) and David Maillu’s *Man from Machakos* (2010). The writers are representative of a diversity of Kenyan ethnicities: Dawood (Asian-African), while the rest comprise Kenyan men of black descent though different ethnicities. The study attempts to interrogate the various strands of masculinity in Kenyan society as presented in the selected works. The study also seeks to investigate how different men negotiate/manifest their masculinity in different settings. It also interrogates factors and trends that shape and influence masculine behaviour in the selected texts. The study also explores the ramifications of various manifestations of masculinity on the family. The study adopts masculinities theory as the theoretical framework. The theory is applied in the interpretation of issues that relate to this study.
Key Terms:
Masculinity, Gender, Patriarchy, Feminism, Popular works, Hegemony, Subordinate, Patriarchy, Gender Construction.
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Chapter One
The Problem, Research Goals and Conceptual Foundation

Issues of gender have been on the centre stage globally for many years. Initial major concerns on gender have focused more on the subjugation of women. However, recent gender studies have also included men. Thus there has been an emerging field of men and masculinities worldwide to address the issues affecting men. Scholars worldwide have begun addressing this issue; Connell (1995; 2002), Kimmel (1987), Messner (1992) and Seidler (2010) in the West. In the Caribbean, scholars like Lewis (2009) and Reddock (2004) have extensively interrogated Caribbean masculinities.

Various scholars have strived to explain why studies on masculinities have been put on the periphery while there has been a proliferation of studies on women. Crous (2005) points out that the proliferation of an interest in issues pertaining to men and the role within a new genderised perspective on society necessitated the need for studies in masculinities. He notes that gender studies that focused on women’s issues have now expanded to include all facets of gender inquiry, including masculinity. Unfortunately, studies on masculinities have not been given considerable focus. Chow (2003) argues that gender studies should include both men and women, so as better to understand the gender dynamics in the society. She notes that: “Gender is relational and social: hence the focus of gender is not on women per se but on power relations between women and men…” (446). Therefore, gender issues also concern men.
In Africa, there has been much advocacy on the rights of women as a vulnerable group. However, men’s concerns have been left on the periphery. Silberschmidt (2001) justifies this assertion by affirming that: “While the impact of socioeconomic change on women’s lives in East Africa has been widely documented, such documentation does not exist of men’s lives” (657). Silberschmidt came up with this conclusion after she undertook a study that sought to investigate the disempowerment of many men in rural and urban East Africa. Kabaji (2008) concurs with Silberschmidt’s assertion when he posits that:

Gender relations are constructed in terms of the relations of power and dominance that determine the opportunities and circumstances of both men and women. Nevertheless, gender research in Africa has tended to focus only on women. This skewed attention has given rise to the popular but fallacious attitude that gender issues are synonymous with women issues. (34)

Lahoucine and Morell (2005) argue that African feminism and womanism, while departing from Western feminism, have largely ignored African men and masculinity. Onyango (2007) argues that: “for a long time gender studies have predominantly targeted women in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is of course a truism that gender is both about femininities and masculinities” (1). He justifies the need to include masculinities as part of gender studies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Silberschmidt (2001) explains that patriarchal structures and stereotyped notions of gender hide the increasing disempowerment of many men in rural and urban East Africa (657). She notes that disempowerment is caused by high levels of unemployment and poverty, leading to the inability of men to meet the cultural expectations of normative masculinity. There is also the question of women’s empowerment which is a challenge to the traditional male hegemony. Her study calls for more research in this region to correct the fallacy that all men in Africa enjoy patriarchal
privilege. This image of masculinised African societies is evident in African literature. Fornchingong (2006) study of gender narratives in African literature corroborates this assertion:

Male writers like Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, and Cyprain Ekwensi in their literary mass are accused of condoning patriarchy, are deeply entrenched in a macho conviviality and a one dimensional and minimalised presentation of women who are demoted and assume peripheral roles. Their penchant to portray an androcentric narrative is at variance with the female gender that are (sic) trivialized through practices like patriarchy, tradition, culture, gender socialization process, marriage and domestic enslavement. (135)

Female writers like Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Ba, Bessie Head and Ama Ata Aidoo struggle to deconstruct this masculine order in their writings. Patriarchy is an ideology that perpetuates hegemonic masculinity. Onyango (2008) defines hegemonic masculinity as “the dominant form of masculinity that influences boy’s and men’s understanding of how they have to act in order to be acceptably male and that this dominant male is associated with heterosexuality, toughness, power, authority, competitiveness and subordination of gay men” (247). It is the socially and culturally exalted form of being a “real man” (5). Kimmel et al (2005) explain that the hegemonic image of masculinity is constructed often through articulation of difference with the “others”. The “other” are the racial, sexual and gender minorities. Racial minorities are like the blacks in a colonial context. Sexual minorities are the homosexuals, while gender minorities are women. He explains that hegemonic masculinity is homophobic. Therefore, homosexual men impose certain boundaries and use their power to maintain it. Thus men and women who do not confirm to heterosexuality are vilified. Kimmel et al (2005) argue that dominant races created an ideal hegemonic masculinity against a screen of “others”, whose masculinity was devalued. Hence hegemonic and subaltern emerged in mutual but unequal interaction in a gendered social and economic order (4). Ratele (2001) in discussing power
relations in society also notes that the main nexus of social power is determined by gender, class and heterosexual masculinity. An interrogation of these two binaries (hegemonic and subordinate) is pertinent in the examination of masculinities in this study. These categories arise because of dynamic power relations in society where men exuding hegemonic masculinity dominate other men and women.

Kimmel et al (2005) affirm that gender categories affect all members in the society, because gender is not a property of individuals but a process of institution. Thus an examination of different cultures is paramount to understanding the masculinities of men from different races and communities. Connell (2002) contends that men suffer domination and subordination because of the quest to exude hegemonic masculinity which cannot be fully attained.

Scott (1998) explains that studies on masculinities have been neglected by critics because they encroach on the province of women studies. Morell (1998) argues that the dominance of men in many facets of society has resulted in issues on men and masculinities been assumed. Brod (1987) observes that more research has tended to focus on women because of the discrimination the female gender has experienced in the past from their male counterparts. He notes that on the other hand, studies on men have been neglected because they are perceived as a backlash against feminism. Flood (1990) observes that studies on masculinities have not been given prominence in gender studies like women’s issues because of the past narrative, that all men benefit from sexism and that the dominant patriarchal society operates in men’s interests. Hearn and David
(1990) posit that studies on men and masculinities need not to be shunned at the expense of feminist studies because of the dangers of reification, essentialism, and reductionism that arise when using such categories as ‘women’ and ‘men’, ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ (8-9).

This study limits the scope to Kenya because East Africa is also diverse. Hence, interrogating East African masculinity might be problematic. Makokha (2011) observes that the region has fragmented masculinities. Therefore, by limiting the scope, the study ensures there is some validity by avoiding a study of variations of masculinity that are infinite. The study also focuses on writers who have not received much criticism. This is in order to understand new perspectives in Kenyan literature. Henry Rufus ole Kulet is a Kenyan writer whose novels have extensively dwelt on the life of the Maasai community. As the leading writer from his community, Ole Kulet, has portrayed the clash between the western values and Maasai culture. The writer has depicted a society facing a transition that it has deeply resisted. Mwangi (1990) laments that despite the Maasai community being prominent worldwide for its cultural resistance; it’s most prominent writer, Ole Kulet, has not received enough critical acclaim. Mwangi explains that critics have inimically suppressed texts from some ethnic communities (like the minority Maasai) and by authors emanating from “cultural” and intellectual margins of Kenya. This study concurs with Mwangi’s supposition and seeks to celebrate the work of this ignored author.

Yusuf Kodowala Dawood is a prolific Kenyan author with eleven works of literature to his name. Dawood straddles between the medical world and creative writing. Most of his works borrow heavily from his medical profession and can loosely be classified as medical fiction. This
aspect of borrowing from the medical profession is a recurring motif in *One Life Too Many*. The author has artistically incorporated his medical profession into the literary world. The study interrogates the life of the main protagonist, Sydney Walker through the eyes of his personal doctor, Dr Hyder. The setting of the text oscillates mostly between the hospital and Sydney Walker’s residence. Odari (2003) hails Dawood for his ability to intertwine the characters in his literary works with his medical profession. She asserts that: “Dawood’s ability to weave out creative real life stories based on his professional life as a surgeon distinguishes him as one of the greatest storytellers of our time” (12). Odari’s assertion aptly captures Dawood’s artistic mastery evident in *One Life Too Many*.

Karanja (2013) labels Dawood as an immigrant writer and one of the most prolific contemporary writers in Kenya. He notes that Dawood is Asian by birth, European by education and marriage, and finally Kenyan by Nationalisation. The author was born in India and later undertook his primary and secondary education in Pakistan. He proceeded to England for his tertiary education where he got married before settling in Kenya. Thus based on his background, Dawood, can authoritatively depict white expatriate experience in colonial and post-colonial Kenya. Moreover, as an immigrant author of Asian origin, Dawood’s work provides a literary lens through which the outside world conceives the colonial and post-colonial Kenyan multi-cultural and multi-racial society. Unfortunately, despite writing many works, Dawood has not received the praise he deserves. Nevertheless, his major deviation of exploring other races, namely Africans and Whites as major protagonists, distinguishes him as a brilliant writer who deserves more critical attention.
Before the Rooster Crows is a poignant exploration of the life of Muriuki, a village dweller in pursuit of this cherished desire: a lucrative job and Mumbi his childhood girlfriend. However, his dream of prosperity in the metropolis does not come to pass. The young man oscillates between a turbulent relationship and economic strain due to joblessness. He tragically ends up in court, arrested for the murder of a white man who killed his prostitute girlfriend.

Kurtz (1998) describes David Maillu as one of the most productive but also controversial contemporary Kenyan writers. Maillu was labeled by critics as the master of Kenyan “popular literature” that dealt with love, romance and sex. The writer’s controversy stems from the fact that he was able to candidly tackle issues of sexuality in the changing socio-cultural environment in Kenya. Maillu’s books such as After 4:30 (1971) and My Dear Bottle (1973) were considered by critics as promoting immorality in society. The novels depicted aspects such as prostitution and alcoholism. However, the study argues that Maillu’s novels are a clear representation of the challenges in the post-colonial urban Kenyan society. Wanjala (1980) perceives Maillu’s work as a representation of immorality and adoption of western styles, which are detached from Kenyan society. For instance, the protagonist in My Dear Bottle is an emasculated man in a dysfunctional marriage. He cannot fulfill his breadwinning roles because of poverty. He turns to alcoholism and extra-marital sex as forms of escapism from his miseries. The novel warns of the dangers of sexual promiscuity with the advent of HIV/AIDS. Man from Machackos depicts the life of a young man called Kivindyo, who opts to stay in the village rather than migrate to the city. Kivindyo decides to stay in the village despite many young men migrating to the city to look for
employment. The young man lives in a society that has high expectations of men of his age. The city, the face of modernity and urbanisation promises better prospects, compared to the poverty in the village. Kivindyo’s decision comes to haunt him later when he loses his girlfriend to a classmate called Justus. His state of joblessness puts him at a disadvantaged position. Mbeleete elopes with Justus to the city leaving Kivindyo in a depressive state. She prefers an employed man. However, the young man later redeems himself through his father’s help. Kivindyo resolves to become a man by working with what is at his disposal. He decides to invest in the village by initiating several projects. The projects later succeed propelling Kivindyo to a heroic status among the villagers. The city migrants, Justus and Mbeleete, return to the village in a desolate state and are rescued by Kivindyo.

Kenya is a country of diverse ethnicities and races. Therefore, the study will attempt to interrogate masculinities among several of these races and communities. This is in line with Morell’s (2001) assertion that within any society multiple masculinities exist, reflecting factors like race, class, age, religious affiliation and geographical location. Consalvo (2003) also notes that masculinities are stratified and have hierarchies in terms of race, class and sexual orientation. Henry ole Kulet’s To Become a Man (1972) focuses on the life of the Maasai man during the pre-colonial period. Yusuf Dawood’s novel One Life Too Many (1991) depicts the life of a white expatriate man in Kenya (white masculinity) during the colonial and post-colonial period. Peter Kimani’s Before the Rooster Crows (2002) dwells on the life of a black man in an urbanised setting after independence. David Maillu’s Man from Machakos (2007) depicts the life of a black man in a rural setting in post-colonial Kenya. The study of multiple masculinities also
brings to fore the fluidity of masculinity and also the essence that it is socially constructed rather than natural.

This study also dwells on Kenyan “popular literature”, a field that has not been given the criticism it deserves. This is despite the former addressing very pertinent issues affecting the contemporary society. “Popular literature” is informed by immediate socio-economic, political and cultural changes in Kenyan society. It is characterised by popular modes like romance, detective stories and adventure. This genre has been strongly influenced by popular culture. Popular culture refers to folk beliefs and practices shared among a population. This popular culture is widespread and liked by many people. “Popular literature” is famous because it reflects the wishes, culture and desire of the masses. It is a reflection of the society we live in, and is mostly depicted in the mass media. Popular culture entails the music we listen to, the movies we watch, the clothes we wear. Thus it involves many aspects of the society we live in. The above characteristics illustrate that popular culture encompasses so many aspects. Englert (2005) gives a better definition of this problematic term. He points out that: “A more positive definition could probably point at the relative openness of popular culture - openness in the sense that entry barriers are relatively low and access to it not overtly institutionalized” (6). This study focuses on the literary aspect of “popular literature”. It narrows down to what Englert (2005) categorises as the artistic cultural expression of popular culture through literary genres. The study limits itself to interrogating popular fiction. Hence popular literary works are sold out in large quantities because they avoid intense formal artistry and tangled plots. Moreover, they deviate more from convention and focus on invention. Gikandi and Mwangi (2007) aver that popular fiction
consists of many scenes and motifs adopted from radio, disco, popular magazines, television and pubs. Kurtz (1993) notes that popular texts are characterised by shallow characters, simple plot, dialogue that moves along with a frantic pace and plenty of fast action which he also calls spit-fire action. He also adds that most of these texts have an urban setting that deal exclusively with the vagaries of city life. Newel (2002) also points out that popular culture is non-elite, unofficial and urban. However, Englert (2005) argues that popular culture should not be limited to the urban sphere. He explains that with the advent of technology, the gap between the rural and urban is decreasing. Englert’s supposition points on the need for critical analysis of popular literature in both rural and urban settings which this study undertakes.

Gikandi and Mwangi (2007) give a detailed analysis of the emergence of “popular” literature in the East African literary canon. They explain that “popular literature” entered the East African literary discourse during colonialism. Elspeth Huxley, a white Kenyan novelist, was directed to by the leadership to examine the need for literature that would reach a general readership. She recommended the formation of the East African literary bureau to produce “popular literature” for the whole East African region in English and local languages. Books published during that period dealt with explorers, adventures, biographies, politics, health, and history. They had an African setting and were in simple English. Gikandi and Mwangi (2007) observe that in the 1970s, the term “popular literature” elicited heated debates. “Popular literature” depicted outcasts as characters or what Kurtz (1993) labels as “socially marginalised” characters. The outcasts included prostitutes and alcoholics in mostly urban areas who practiced debauchery and prostitution. Thus, the term “popular literature” became synonymous with pornographic and
literature with no serious message. This is an assertion this thesis seeks to disapprove. Kurtz (1998) also asserts that “popular literature” has an important significance in society. He opines it “offers imaginative descriptions of social reality and prescriptions for the ills they present” (8). The writers focus on issues such as sexuality, prostitution, alcoholism and urbanisation. Hence there “was” a view that “popular literature” has no utilitarian value. Kurtz (1993) explains that the term “popular literature” was perceived to be pejorative. David Mailu’s works were even banned in Tanzania because of being too sexually explicit. Heinemann publishers even refused to publish popular literary texts. However, the study contends that the writers were exposing the underlying social problems and degeneration of Kenyan society. Gikandi and Mwangi (2007) note that popular texts attracted wide readership because of the explicit description of sex and urban debauchery. Critics argued that popular literature is a category of writing by writers outside the university literature departments. This is because the themes and style of popular writers deviate from that of writers who established East African literary canon in the independence era. The latter were products of East African premier Universities-Makerere University in Kampala, The University of Dar es Salaam and the University of Nairobi. Criticism arose because “popular literature” writers had broken away from the mainstream themes on nationalism. Renowned literary critic Chris Wanjala (1980) points out that such works were not serious literature. He posits that “popular literature” is an imitation of western lifestyles. Wanjala castigates “popular literature” which he views as not being a true representation of authentic African culture. He believes it had been contaminated by negative western values. Wanjala describes “popular literature” as “trashy and scabrous imitation of brothel and low life especially yarnd for the low-brow reader in this country” (135). However, critics like Barber (1997) argue that popular literary forms need to be accepted as new forms of expressions that should be
adopted without such biases and assumptions. She tries to define popular literature in the African context as neither fully traditional nor modern. Barber’s definition clearly illustrates that African “popular literature” is influenced by different cultures. Newell (2002) also opposes critics who perceive popular fiction in Africa as an imitation of American culture. She explains that the critics should concentrate on the function of the novel. Newel argues that “popular literature” is not a rigid but very dynamic and susceptible to many changes. Newel and Barber’s assertions explain why “popular literature” received a lot of opposition in East Africa. A critic like Wanjala compares this new form of writing with the first generation of East African writers. The latter mainly focused on themes such as Nationalism, Colonialism and Neocolonialism. Kurtz (1993) aptly labels such writing “committed literature”. He observes out that during that period, there was the view that a writer’s role should be commitment to nation building. He further explains that a writer is expected to be an activist and solely focus on “committed literature”. Kurtz surmises that despite the criticism, “popular literature” texts have become very popular. Publishing houses that initially rejected popular texts like Heinemann, accepted them under their Spear Book series. Nevertheless, “popular literature” has still not received enough critical acclaim. Kurtz (1993), in a criticism of Meja Mwangi’s works, notes that the latter’s popular adventure texts have been ignored, compared to his serious urban novels. Mungai (2008) also derided the negative perception that “popular literature” has elicited from academics in Africa. He notes that there has been an impression that popular culture is an inferior culture. Englert (2005) observes that: “Popular culture has long been regarded as unworthy subject of study” (1). This thesis seeks to correct these misconceptions by illustrating the utilitarian value of “popular literature”, through analysis of the selected works. This study interrogates the selected popular works with Pawling’s (1984) assertion about the importance of context, when studying popular
literature. He argues that “popular literature” should be examined within a specific social, cultural and historical context. Nevertheless, the study does not dwell so much on the politics of “popular literature” but focuses on the key aspects of masculinity in the selected popular texts.

**Statement of the problem**
Diverse masculinities exist in Africa. This study attempts to interrogate masculinity in selected Kenyan popular fiction.

**Objectives of the Study**
1. Interrogate the various strands of masculinity in the Kenyan society as presented in the selected works.
2. Investigate how different men negotiate/manifest their masculinity in different settings.
3. Interrogate factors and trends that shape and influence masculine behaviour in the selected texts.
4. Interrogate the ramifications of various manifestations of masculinity on the family.

**Research Questions**
1. Are there various strands of masculinity in Kenyan society?
2. Do different men negotiate their masculinity differently in Kenyan society?
3. Are there factors and trends that shape masculine behaviour in the selected works?
4. Are there ramifications on the family resulting from various strands of masculinity?
**Research Assumptions**

1. There are various strands of masculinities in Kenyan society.

2. Different men negotiate their masculinity differently in Kenyan society.

3. There are factors and trends that shape masculine behaviour in the selected texts.

4. There are various ramifications of various manifestations of masculinity on the family.

**Justification for the Study**

An examination of critical works in Kenyan literature reveals that little has been written on men and masculinity, especially in popular literature. This is despite the emergent interest in Kenyan society on issues about men. There has even been the recent formation of an organisation that is meant to look after the rights of men called *Maendeleo ya Wanaume* (Development of the Men). The group was founded by Ndiritu Njoka in the year 2007. The organisation’s agenda is to protect and fight for the rights of men. The group seeks to safeguard the men’s traditional dominant position which in some way has been weakened by the emancipation of women. Kenya has been having a single similar organisation that fights for the rights of women. It was formed in 1952.

In the media, programmes such as *Mentality* on television and *Man Talk* in the *Saturday Nation* newspaper that deal with issues affecting Kenyan men have also become common. These discussions have been heightened by the increase in dysfunctional families in Kenyan society. Hence, this emerging issue on the changing status of masculinity among Kenyan men needs to be
addressed. Moreover, there has been less criticism of “popular literature”. Therefore, this study seeks to open up new frontiers on the reflection of masculinity and gender issues in Kenyan literature. Furthermore, the selected texts have not received any criticism concerning this pertinent issue of masculinity.

**Literature Review**

In Kenyan literature, there have been few studies on masculinity. Much criticism has centered on the marginalisation of women in literary texts. Review of related literature attempts to highlight this lacuna. This study’s review of literature is based on Connell’s (2000: 28) assertion that masculinity should not be perceived as one universal entity but a configuration of gender practices negotiated in time, ideology and culture.

Makokha (2010) interrogates Asian African masculinities in Moyes Vassanji’s *The In-Between World of Vikram* (2003) and *No New Land* (1991). Makokha observes that Asian-African Identities; masculinities included, are always located in-between the White identities and Black identities, reflecting the multiracial nature of many societies in countries such as Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (17). Makokha further asserts that the experiences of manhood and masculinities among Asian-Africans is always shown to be affected by the masculinities of the Whites or the Blacks in East Africa in a negative manner. Makokha limits his scope to the Asian-African masculinities. However, this study seeks to further his scope by looking at black and white masculinities in Kenya.
Onyango (2007) investigates masculinities in Kiswahili children’s literature in Kenya. He interrogates the physical, social, economic and political manifestations of masculinities in selected children’s book. Onyango attempts to demonstrate that power and ideological aspects of masculinities take root during childhood. He argues that gender scholarship has focused more on adults and ignored children, yet childhood is an important phase in life. Onyango limits his scope to masculinities in children’s literature but this study focuses on masculinities in adult literature.

Odhiambo (2007) investigates sexual anxieties and rampant masculinities in post-colonial literature. He deduces that there was a transformation in the masculinised behaviour of African men after independence. He notes that the independence era in the 1960s unleashed freedoms and liberties. The men who were seen as conquerors of the colonial establishment transferred this masculinised mentality into the social fabric. For instance, urban working men indulged in many sexual exploits. This study supports Odhiambo’s assertion that masculinity as the unmarked gender has remained invisible in many contexts. This supposition justifies the need for more critical focus in the area. Odhiambo’s study is quite relevant because it also interrogates black masculinity in post-colonial Kenyan society though in different texts from this study.

Muhomah (2005) examines versions of masculinity in selected Kenyan popular romantic fiction. She interrogates how masculinity is constructed around issues of monogamy, fatherhood and wealth. Muhomah’s study focuses on one genre of popular art: romantic fiction in selected texts.
The study seeks to go further by examining masculinity in other Kenyan popular texts. It does not limit itself to romantic fiction.

Jackson and Balaji (2012) argue that masculinity globally should not be limited to western notions of masculinity, because what makes a man is determined by his culture. This assertion is insightful to this study as it seeks to deconstruct the narrow perspective of viewing masculinities through western lenses alone.

Gilmore (1990) explores masculinity cross-culturally. He reveals that masculinity is strongly embedded in a community’s culture and it begins in the socialisation of young men. Thus it has to be an achieved status that is expected to include toughness, aggression, stoicism and sexuality. This study is quite insightful considering that it also sought to highlight that masculinity is fluid and not static; thus, men in different cultures express masculinity differently.

Orelus (2009) interrogates black masculinity in a racial, socio-historical and post-colonial context. He undertakes his study through interviewing groups of black men from different cultures and countries such as the Caribbean, Africa, Latin America and African-American. According to his research, inequalities such as racism, colonialism, and sexism have a negative effect on black men in Africa and the diaspora. Orelus’s study is insightful because this study also investigates the life of men from different races in Kenya, who have also experienced colonialism and migration.
Chitando and Nontando (2009) investigate the relationship between AIDS in Africa, religion and masculinity. According to the two scholars, neglecting issues on men and masculinities with more attention on groups such as women and children has led to the men being the vulnerable group. This study is insightful as it will help answer the question whether such marginalisation exists in the selected works.

Mwangi (2004) explores masculinity and nationalism in East African hip-hop music. He investigates how hip-hop music employs masculinity as a trope in grounding an elusive East African identity. Mwangi demonstrates that the music is quite sexualised is haunted by images of hegemonic masculinity. Mwangi limits his research to hip-hop music whereas this study goes further by interrogating masculinity in selected popular literature texts.

Izugbara (2015) examines the nexus between masculinity and poverty in two urban Kenyan slums. He seeks to find out the poor men’s construction and performance of masculinity in relation to poverty. Izugbara argues that there is construction of multiple masculinities by the men who strive to achieve the ideal hegemonic masculinity. He argues that masculinity is greatly affected by social and economic circumstances. Izugbara’s study is quite insightful because this study also investigates masculinity among the urban poor in Peter Kimani’s Before the Rooster Crows.
Granqvist (2006) examines hegemonic masculinity as presented in a collection of novels under the Spear book brand. His study focuses on post-colonial masculinities in Nairobi. Granqvist argues that factors such as colonialism and globalisation have had a strong impact on the changing faces of masculinity among Kenyan men of different races. He argues that Kenyan men are in a masculine crisis. Granqvist limits his study to the urban post-colonial setup but this study goes further by also interrogating post-colonial rural masculinity.

Kabaji (2008) investigates masculinity and ritual violence in the Luhya bullfighting contest. The Luhya are a community in Kenya that occupies the Western County. Kabaji study seeks to present a critical analysis of the game in order to uncover the overt and covert features that point out to the hidden masculine desires, values, ideals and aspirations of the Luhya. Kabaji argues that the bulls act as male proxies that outdo each other in violent competition as the owners observe in full satisfaction. Kabaji’s study limits itself to the Luhya community while this study goes further by exploring masculinity among other Kenyan communities.

Brown et al (2005) explore the link between masculinity, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in Namibia. The study focuses on both the urban and rural parts of the country. Brown et al argue that there are various notions of masculinity that are influenced by culture and education (formal and informal). They further explain that power dynamics between men and women have a strong influence in the former’s construction of masculinity. Brown et al point out that there is a direct
linkage between notions of masculinity and HIV/AIDS. This research is quite insightful because this thesis also dwells on masculinity in rural and urban areas though in a different setting.

Murangiri (2005) interrogates the social construction of masculinity among the Chuka through the circumcision ritual. The Chuka are a sub-tribe of the Meru Community in Kenya. She explains that circumcision ritual has a very powerful influence in the construction of masculinity among the Chuka men. It is perceived as the path to hegemonic masculinity. The study is quite insightful because this thesis also focuses on masculinity among other communities in Kenya like the Maasai who also revere this ritual.

Simiyu (2011) investigates masculinity among university students. She explains that patriarchy has lost some of its authority because of changing gender dynamics that have led to women’s empowerment. Simiyu also notes that there are multiple masculinities among men and that they are not static but evolving. Simiyu’s study brings to fore the malleability of masculinities. This thesis goes further by exploring masculinities of young people in different settings.

Karekia (2005) in her study of Yusuf Dawood’s two novels *Off My Chest* and *No Strings Attached*, focuses on the doctor character in these two works. She notes that Dawood’s writings enable one to understand the Kenyan colonial and post-colonial experience. It is an assertion with which the thesis concurs and will be explored further. Moreover, Karekia studies Dawood’s
works as autobiographies. He seeks to interrogate the explicit and implicit world of the doctor. However, this study focused on masculinity in Dawood’s work.

Njoya (2009) investigates the status of Kenyan men in the contemporary society. She argues that there is a crisis of masculinity in the Kenyan society. Njoya challenges men to offer an alternative aspect of manhood and leadership because of the numerous flaws among them. She is particularly critical of the trend of dysfunctional families where men abandon their families. The study also examines violence against women. Njoya’s study gives a more general analysis of Kenyan men, whoever this study limits the scope to specific Kenyan men.

**Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts masculinity theory for the analysis of the given texts. Masculinity theory stems from a recent movement known as gender studies. Gender studies were greatly influenced by feminist criticism. It sought to address the question of fair representation of all genders.

Connell (1995) explains that ignorance about issues about men is what led to the study of masculinities. She posits that women liberation movements of the 1970s prompted her to have interest in masculinities because these movements were challenging patriarchy. These movements had a great influence on literature. They led to a new approach of analysing literature called feminist criticism.
Feminist criticism focuses on how women can liberate themselves from a male dominated society. It denotes that most cultures are inherently patriarchal. Tyson (1990) avers that feminist criticism focuses on the way literature and other culture productions reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women. De Beauvoir (1949) observes that society is male because social and political power is in the hands of men. The feminist critics argue that women writers have been excluded from the traditional literary canon. Tyson (1990) explains that feminist critics compare the number of male writers to women and note that the latter are underrepresented. Feminist critics also argue that there are elements of misogyny in works by male writers. Thus such movements mean changes in the lives of men.

Tyson (1990) gives a clear chronology of the development of the waves of the feminist movement. He observes that the first wave began in the late 1700 to early 1900. It was led by activists such as Susan Bronwell, Mary Wollstonecraft and Victoria Woodhull. Wollstonecraft advocates for the right of women to access education because they play an important role in society. She also criticises the objectification of women and calls for equality between sexes. Bronwell is at the forefront of the women’s suffrage movement that leads to the right of women to vote. Tyson posits that the second wave of feminism began in the early 1960 to the late 1970s. It advocated for equal working conditions in America through movements such as the National Organization of Women (NOW) formed in 1966. Tyson notes that writers like Simone de Beauvoir and Elaine Showalter “established the groundwork for the dissemination of feminist theories dove-tailed with the American Civil Rights Movement” (91). The third wave of feminism began in the early 1990s to the present period. Tyson explains that this wave concerns
itself with both gender and race relations and focuses on marginalised populations. He gives an example of African-American writer, Alice Walker and Julia Kristeva. Walker focuses on the position of the black woman in a racial society while Kristeva writings interrogate marginalised Chinese women.

The above illustrations explain the great strides women have made in fighting for their rights. However, men who were perceived to be dominant also have their own challenges that have not yet been documented. Therefore, a gender study seeks to address the question of fair representation among all genders. It tries to deconstruct past feminist ideas in the manner which gender was discussed.

Gender studies disputes binaries established by many feminist scholars such as a superior masculine and inferior feminine (Ritcher 1998, 1433: 1434). It is interested in the breakdown of such binaries that had been propagated by the sex role theory used by early feminists. The sex role theory is more concerned with the biological than the social construction of gender. It was used by early feminists who attempted to explain the difference between men and women. Sex role theory analyses the construction of gender by basing on the biological features of men and women. This aspect limited the theory because gender is socially constructed through everyday interaction between men and women. It is not a fixed aspect as it is ever evolving. Moreover, characteristics of masculine such as active and powerful while feminine-passive and marginalised were not applicable because of changing roles in society. For instance some
activities that were deemed masculine like piloting have been embraced by women. Furthermore, many women have joined the work force, moving away from the traditional care giver role of staying at home. On the other, hand, some men are staying at home and taking care of the children as their spouses go to work. Leach (1994) posits that: “Unlike the biological state of maleness, masculinity is a gender identity constructed socially, historically. It is the cultural interpretation of maleness, learnt through participation in society and its institutions” (36). Leach’s observation affirms that masculinity is a social construction.

Leach’s asserts that masculinity is constructed through everyday performance. Butler (1990) espoused the concept of “performativity”, viewed gender as “a human construct enacted by a vast repetition of social activities” (14). She argues that gender is deeply rooted in the social relations between men and women. Butler further notes that because gender is a social construction, the dominant forces in the society will subordinate the “other” because of unequal power structures. Butler argues that the oppressed in such societies have a right to emancipate themselves from these shackles of gender oppression. Allwood (1998) adjudges that: “the sex role theory and the social construction of gender were pivotal points for developing research on masculinity and femininity” (77).

Griffith (2002) explains that many people perceive gender criticism as focused on women, because there has been less focus on masculinity studies, when discussing gender. Griffith argues for the need to have a balanced study of both men and women because gender studies seek to
have a fair representation of both sexes. However, he acknowledges that “Gender criticism, perhaps because it is so new, remains a nebulous, difficult-to-define-approach to the study of literature” (23). He notes that many people associate gender criticism with women because there has been less focus on masculinity studies when discussing gender. Furthermore, it aims to deconstruct past feminist ideas in the manner which gender was discussed.

Morell (1987) posits that masculinities studies led to gender studies to incorporate both men and women. Connell (1995) explains that ignorance on issues about men prompted research on men and masculinities (xii). Connell avers that there are multiple masculinities. She identifies four types of masculinities namely: hegemonic, subordinate normative and non-normative. She asserts that men position themselves in relation to women and other men in relation to hegemonic standards (21). Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity equates manliness with power and control. It “is associated with toughness, competitiveness, determination, self-sufficiency, aggression, success and subordination of women” (94). She demonstrates how men in the subordination of women use gender as a concept of power. She labels this power “patriarchal dividend”, whereby being a man “is a source of power and authority” (76). However, she argues that not all men share this power equally and that not all men exploit women. According to Connell, men who do not oppress women practise complicit or normative masculinity. Such men connect with hegemonic masculinity but do not fully represent it, and neither are they subordinate or marginalised.
Connell also examines masculinities in terms of the relationship between men. She argues that while men oppress women, some men dominate and subordinate other men. Subordinate masculinity characterises men who are marginalised in terms of race, class, gender and ethnicity. For example the African-Americans in the United States and the blacks in former Apartheid South Africa faced discrimination because of their race. However, it is important to emphasise that many years after the civil rights movement and end of Apartheid, the two communities are still marginalised economically. Thus most men in both communities still exhibit subordinate masculinity. Non-normative masculinities (marginal) refer to men who relate to a particular behaviour different from the dominant hegemonic masculinity. Non-normative masculinities, like homosexual behaviour, for instance, face considerable resistance. Thus such men are categorised by the dominant masculinities as not being “straight”.

Kimmel et al (2005) argue that masculinities have to be examined within specific cultural contexts. Hence this study also examines subordinate masculinities in specific Kenyan cultural contexts. Connell explains that people or races that exhibit hegemonic masculinity create cultural prescriptions of what it means to be a real man. She points out that masculinities are fluid and should not be considered as belonging in a fixed way to any group of men. Ouzgane and Morell (2005) also concur with Connell’s supposition when they explain that when studying African masculinities, one should start from a position of diversity because the variations are infinite.
Connell also asserts that masculinities are socially and historically constructed. She further notes that in a society masculine power is interrelated with existing inequalities such as racism, class stratification, colonialism and other systems of oppression. Leach (1994) also corroborates Connell’s supposition, when he explains that masculinities are constructed socially, historically and politically, and interpreted from a cultural perspective. He argues that masculinity is a cultural ideology that defines the appropriate rule that men must fulfill.

Methodology
The study adopts qualitative research methodology. Myers (2009) argues that qualitative research is the most effective method of analysing cultural and social phenomena as is concerned with understanding people and the social contexts in which they live. The principal point of reference is the selected texts. The study requires a library research mainly due to its textual nature. Purposive sampling is adopted in this research because it allows the thesis to adopt novels in Kenya that aptly captures the subject of the study. The study involves a close reading of the selected texts.

Secondly, secondary data from relevant journals, critical works on masculinity, dissertations and any relevant material relating to the area of study are examined. Extensive Internet research especially for theoretical review is also conducted. Due to the link between literature and society, the thesis also reviews books, newspaper articles and journals which have information on the socio-cultural and economic aspects of Kenyan society. This is vital in providing the context or the background of the different men in Kenyan society.
The information gathered from the primary texts and secondary data is read, analysed and compiled and the thesis draws conclusions from the findings based on the study’s objectives.

**Organisation of the study**

This dissertation is structured into five chapters. Chapter One deals with the introduction to the study. It delineates the problem of the study, objectives and captures the scope and delimitation of the study. It also presents the theoretical framework, justification as well as the methodology of the study. In the following chapters, the study interrogates the various strands of masculinities in the Kenyan society from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial period. In Chapter Two, the study discusses pre-colonial Kenyan masculinity. It considers how traditional Kenyan men negotiate their masculinities before Colonialism, and the change that comes with the new missionary education. The study analyses the various factors and trends that influence masculine behaviour during the pre-colonial period like gender and culture. The chapter also analyses the influence of the manifestations of different masculinities on the family. Chapter Three discusses white masculinities in colonial and post-colonial Kenya. It explores how white men negotiate their masculinities during these periods and factors that influenced and shaped white masculinities in Kenya. The chapter also discusses the influence of white masculinity on the family. Chapter Four focuses on black post-colonial masculinity in the metropolis. It explains the changing trend in black masculinities after attainment of self-rule. The chapter concerns the life of a black Kenyan man migrating from the rural area to the town. Chapter Five focuses on rural masculinity. Finally, Chapter Six is a recap of the major findings of the study.
Chapter Two

Masculinity in Henry ole Kulet’s To Become a Man

Philip (2006) argues that in post-modern cultural discourse, the individual is socially constructed. As such, the only reality that is known is the one that is created. He therefore categorises masculinity and femininity as social constructs created for the individual as set rules that define the latter. The study interrogates masculinity in a supposedly pre-colonial and colonial Kenyan Maasai society with Philip’s assertion in mind. It highlights the strong influence of culture on the masculinity of the main protagonist, Leshao. Through the character of Leshao, Kulet critiques both traditional Kenyan notions of masculinity and modern, western values (modern masculinity brought by the missionaries through education). Leshao epitomises counter-hegemonic forces to the dominant mode of traditional masculinity.

The section aims to revisit the early forms of masculinity in the early black Kenyan society before Christianity and colonialism. Key to the section is to understand how the pre-colonial and colonial Kenyan black man negotiated his masculinity during these two dispensations. Was there any conflict in the various ideas of masculinity? The study reaffirms that the two key ideas of masculinity the section will be analysing are traditional masculinity (indigenous) and masculinity brought by the missionaries. Indigenous (traditional) masculinity is defined by tribal and group practices. On the other hand, the new version of masculinity is strongly influenced by Christian and western beliefs. This study argues that the latter is in a constant struggle with traditional masculinity for space within the Maasai socio-cultural context. The struggle originates in the clash between traditional, indigenous values and exogenous, western values as a result of colonialism. Hauff (2003) aptly captures the clash of these two very divergent cultures when she
argues that despite the Maasai proving to be resilient, their culture is still very much threatened by industrialization and globalization (3). The emergent forms of masculinities bring to fore the idea that masculinities are not static but fluid. Moreover, they are socially and historically constructed. The section analysis provides the thesis with a clear chronological interpretation of masculinity in Kenyan society. Connell cited in Donaldson (1993) points out that hegemonic masculinity is confirmed in fatherhood. However, Donaldson argues that the parenting by men seems to go against Connell’s supposition. The argument by the two scholars necessitates the need to investigate the relationship between sons and fathers in the text.

During the pre-colonial period, communities in Kenya had no interaction with the Western or Arab world. Hence they were strictly following their cultures which were still relatively uncorrupted or unsullied. The study focuses on Henry ole Kulet’s *To Become a Man*. The setting of the novel is in the Maasai community during the pre-colonial and colonial period.

**The Gendered Social, Historical and Cultural Context of Maasai Masculinity**

Henry ole Kulet centers his work during two periods. During the first period, missionaries set up centers and try to venture into the interior of Kenya. The second period is when Kenya has become a British protectorate. In both periods, the Maasai community experiences a rapid transition from a traditional society to a modern society.

Ngugi wa thiongo (1972) opines that literature cannot be separated from socio-historical processes. According to Ngugi, a writer’s work cannot be divorced from his/her history of the society he/she lives in. Hence, a brief analysis of Maasai history and cultural life will give a clear
understanding to the type of masculinity that Henry ole Kulet’s characters in *To Become a Man* experience. Hawthorne (1989) explains the importance of context when interrogating literary works. She argues that all literature is symptomatic of cultural, social and political circumstances. This study contends that the socio-historical factors affecting Kenya as a nation has an influence on the masculinity of the Maasai. An analysis of Henry ole Kulet’s text is also built on the premise that writers’ works reflect their societies. Writers do not write in a vacuum, but are influenced by the societies that surround them.

Hauff (2003) affirms that the Maasai are one of the most celebrated tribes in Africa. The Maasai are a pastoralist group living in Southern Kenya and Northern Tanzania for over 2500 years. They live communally and rely on their herds for subsistence (Mgabe, Perkin, & Schofield, 1992: 354). Otieno *et al* (1977) explain that the Maasai dominated large parts of East Africa during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. According these scholars, the Maasai are a brave and warlike community. Their warriors carry long spears, shields of hide and clubs. The Maasai warriors are known as ‘morans’. Morans are trained from youth to show extreme courage in the face of danger; whether against man or wild animals. The morans are even required to hunt and kill lions as a sign of honour. The morans exhibit and practise hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1995) explains that hegemonic masculinity is associated with toughness, competitiveness, determination, self- sufficiency, aggression and success. The moran age-set can be described as the epitome of Maasai masculinity which alludes to Connell’s definition of hegemonic masculinity. Ndagala (1992) points out that the period of moranhood is the proudest time in Masaai culture. He avers that the morans’ main duties include looking after cattle and protecting people and livestock from raiders and wild animals. They also track down lost or stolen animals.
In *To Become a Man* when Leshao and his friend are suspected of stealing a neighbour’s lamb, morans are sent to track them down. The morans instill serious punishment on the young boy:

… His shout was not only for the ears of the four men. Sixteen others appeared from all directions and even frightened to some extent the four men. The newcomers were morans. Leshao felt a sort of weakness he had not expected before in his knees. He was confused and did not know what to do … The morans knocked Leshao down without talking to him. One held his left leg and, raising it high off the ground, beat him severely on the buttocks, ribs, back and thighs. The boy shouted, cried and pleaded to them to have mercy on him, but in vain. When one moran was tired of beating, he gave the leg to the next-the rest laughed at the shouts, wriggling and cries of the boy, giving directions as to where the next stroke should fall. Some of them were completely merciless; they hit Leshao on the head. When the four senior men were satisfied that the boy had had enough for the time being, they all ran towards the morans pleading ‘Tapala.Tapala.Tapala.’ The beating was stopped. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 24)

The punishment on Leshao is even sanctioned by the elders, which explains the important status of the moran in the Maasai community. Galaty (1983) describes moranship as one of the most important age set among the Maasai. He notes that the Maasai have a very important ceremony called Eunoto that helps in the transition of the moran from junior Maasai warriorhood to senior warriorhood. Galaty explains that this ceremony is considered one of the most sacred rituals of the Maasai culture. Moranship is the period when the young men are strong and can proudly exert their masculinity.

Galatay (1983) observes that morans are regarded very highly on issues pertaining to sexuality. There is a strong relationship between masculinity and virility. Many different societies relate sexual potency with masculinity. Chitonda and Chirangoma (2012), in describing the link
between sexual potency and masculinity, note that the link between masculinities and (hetero) sexual performance is deep seated. They argue that the “becoming” of most men is defined in terms of the first sexual encounter with a woman. It foregrounds the narrative that explains the notion of conquest (6). Connell (2004) asserts that many men experience social pressure to behave in a domineering and aggressive sexually aggressive manner. Coast (2007), describing sexuality among the Maasai, explains that the morans are regarded as the epitome of virility. He explains that the morans get access to many young unmarried girls called *entito*. However, these young girls rarely become marriage partners. Saitoti (1980) also notes that after initiation, morans are allowed to engage in sexual relations with initiated (circumcised) women (55). In Henry ole Kulet’s *To Become a Man*, Leshao is socialised to achieve this warrior hood status after circumcision:

Life in the manyatta was simple. All one was required to do was to adhere to the rules and regulations of moranship. One was not allowed to walk alone, eat alone, eat meat when women were watching, sleep with circumcised women or show disrespect towards nominated leaders. Courage, of course, was essential for the defense of one’s name and village. If one was found to be a coward, he (sic) was continually provoked by everyone. Even though Leshao still thought of going back to town, he enjoyed eating meat with the rest of the morans in the forest. He also enjoyed the killing of lions, and once he showed great courage when he offered to await the lion while the others charged from the rear. The lion had become a menace to the villagers, for it used to kill donkeys outside the village in the evening … (Ole Kulet, 1972: 110)

The Maasai are known as the cattle people as they prize livestock above most other things. The strong attachment they have to cattle is clearly illuminated through Leshao’s father, Kerea ole Merresho. When the old man loses a lot of cattle, he really feels emasculated, as described by his son, Leshao:
… it seemed as if the implication that his son stole because of hunger had hurt him badly. He became a very quiet old man. Leshao looked at him with pity. He recalled in his mind the good old days when his father used to boast in the midst of other elders mentioning the colour, the size and the form of the horns of his cattle. His father was now a very, very poor old man who, if invited to a beer party, did not dare sit in the front row of elders reserved for those of rank and riches. At times he did not go at all because of the shame. He knew he could go around Maasailand to all the elders of his clan to beg for a calf from each of them but he was a proud old man and begging was a word he hated. He had often declared publicly that it was better for a man to die a decent death in poverty than to beg and to die when people did not give any more. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 34)

This is when Leshao had been accused of stealing a neighbour’s sheep. The family is experiencing a lot of misery because of poverty. To the Maasai, cattle have a symbolic significance beside the social, political and economic significance. Cattle are used to symbolise the presence of God on earth and the Maasai rarely slaughter their cattle unless there is a ritual (Cattle People, 1998: 1). Thus the consumption of meat is restricted to important ceremonies. The Maasai believe that all cattle on earth belong to them and cattle raids are not a crime (Cattle People, 1998). In an internal monologue, Kerea ole Merresho, Leshao’s father, reveals the strong attachment Maasai have to cattle. According to the old man, the Maasai believe that all cattle are rightfully theirs:

The boy must go on cattle raids. Why is a man born? In order to bring back his right: the cattle which belong to him which are currently owned by gentiles. They must be brought. The gentiles can eat the leaves. The cattle are ours.’… All the Maasai should sit on a hill and discuss them. It should be made compulsory that before a moran becomes an elder, he must have gone on three or four successful cattle raids. Surely that would be a good idea. If they go to school, no Maasai would question going to school. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 72)
Hauff (2003) explains that cattle are the most important aspect of Maasai culture and livelihood. He pinpoints that cattle are used in rituals and ceremonies. Furthermore, cattle are used to maintain relationships within families and between different clans. It is therefore true to argue that cattle are instrumental in the construction of the masculinity of a Maasai man. The strong attachment between cattle and the Maasai is further exemplified through Leshao’s father, Kerea ole Merresho. The old man would fall into depression whenever one of his cattle became sick:

Leshao’s father was a hard-working old man. When he had had many cattle and one of them got sick, he could hardly drink or eat anything. In fact, Leshao’s mother used to say the old man loved the cattle more than he loved his son. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 16)

Moreover, a man’s cattle belong to his clan because the Maasai are a patrilineal society, whereby clan membership is inherited from the father.

The transition from tradition to modernity has several ramifications on the Maasai society’s masculinities. There is a clash of two types of masculinities, traditional and modern. The Maasai traditional culture propagates an ideal form of hegemonic masculinity. This culturally exalted mode of masculinity is quite challenging to most men who cannot fulfill these public expectations. Nonetheless, they have to struggle so as to be accepted as “real men” by the patriarchal society. The patriarchal society wields a lot of power and there is a strong peer influence among men of different age-sets among the Maasai. The study agrees with Donaldson (1993) argument about the performance of hegemonic masculinity:
The public face of hegemonic masculinity, the argument goes, is not necessarily even what powerful men are, but is what sustains their power, and is what large numbers of men are motivated to support because it benefits them. What most men support is not necessarily what they are. (1)

Donaldson’s supposition infers that most men practice hegemonic masculinity so as to wield power over other men and women. However, men struggle to maintain that power. The biggest disadvantage for men, who want to express a divergent form of masculinity from the dominant mode, is the strong Maasai communal set-up. Hence there is a lot of policing for the enactment of these traditional masculine roles. The new version of masculinity introduced by the missionaries which is an anti-thesis of traditional masculinity is perceived (by the Maasai patriarchal society), as effeminate and subservient, compared to the traditional masculinity. The gate keepers of traditional masculinity (elders) enforce their “ideal” version of masculinity through cultural practices and groups of young warriors called Morans. Jackson (2002) aptly labels that diversion from the ideal masculine norms as “laddishness” (adopting “feminine attributes”).

The protagonist, Leshao, in To Become a Man, is torn between traditional Maasai masculinity and western concepts of masculinity. The father, a traditionalist, wants his son to go on raids so as to bring home more cattle. The father’s herd has decreased because he sold some cattle to enable Leshao go to school, the latter’s refusal to go for raids is an influence of western values that perceive raids as criminal acts. The Maasai value cattle very much. Hence one’s wealth is measured according to the number of cattle in one’s herd. Homewood and Rodgers (1991) explain the importance of cattle to the Maasai:

Cattle are the structural backbone behind many important stages in life. For instance, they
determine the age at which males marry. Men need to be independent and own a good size of herd before they are able to establish their own domestic group. (48)

Leshao’s father blames the son for the poverty that has engulfed the family. The old man believes that that his eldest son has also brought dishonour to the family having acquired the tag of a coward who cannot go on cattle raids. Western values have influenced the school going Leshao, but the father will hear none of it. The father had sent the son to school after the missionaries had promised him that education would bring him more cattle. The father’s anger increases because Leshao’s age mates who never went to school have gone on many raids and brought many cattle to their fathers. On the other hand, Leshao still goes to school forcing the father to part with more cattle and yet the fruits do not seem to be forthcoming. The father is in a dilemma: the new culture that emphasises education as a tool of empowerment and the old order that values cattle ownership and raids.

The old man is of the opinion that Leshao is the cause of his misery as the former has lost status because of poverty. According to Omalla (1981) riches played a great part in becoming a man of respect in traditional African societies. He explains that it was generally believed that something is wrong with a person who only possesses few cattle. Moreover, the Leshao who emerges from school is a changed young man who despises cattle raids as archaic. He detests a very strong element of traditional Maasai masculinity. This really irritates the father. This traditional community still upholds traditional aspects of wealth creation and the issue of empowerment through education is still very alien. These two emerging perspectives of masculinities result in the clash between father and son. The father is a traditional Maasai man who is really entrenched in his culture. Mwangi (1990) notes the Maasai community is reputed to be one of the most
positively impervious to cultural hegemony. He argues that the community has resisted western value systems to retain a deep respect for their pre-colonial mores.

**Rebellion or Revolution: Masculinities and Cultural Conflict**

The section explores a society in transition, and the changing faces of masculinities among the Maasai, through the life of the young protagonist Leshao. The young man struggles to understand “real manhood” as he is torn between exogenous western values and the traditional Maasai (mis)conceptions of masculinities. The section will seek to find out whether Leshao’s “liberating” masculinities can break the shackles of traditional Maasai masculinity.

Hauff’s (2003) assertion that the Maasai have resiliently struggled to maintain their culture points to the Herculean task Leshao faces. As the analysis proceeds, it is important to put into consideration Barker and Ricardo’s (2005) supposition that:

> A gender analysis of young men must take into account the plurality of masculinities in sub-Saharan Africa. Versions of manhood in Africa are: (i) socially constructed; (ii) fluid over time and in different settings; and (iii) plural. There is no typical young man in sub-Saharan Africa and no single version of manhood. There are numerous African masculinities, urban and rural and changing historically, including versions of manhood associated with war, or being warriors and others associated with farming or cattle herding. There are indigenous definitions and versions of manhood, defined by tribal and ethnic group practices, and newer versions of manhood shaped by Islam and Christianity, and by Western influences, including the global media. (5)

The above point is pertinent because Leshao is forced to negotiate different forms of masculinities in different contexts. These masculinities among his Maasai community are centered on cattle and pastoral culture, which influence the socio-economic forces in the community, and consequently influence male identities. These masculinities are socially
constructed by the society he lives in. This aspect reinforces Butler’s (1990) earlier observation about the social construction of gender. Men also dominate other men through parameters that are socially constructed. The most dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic, which has been inculcated in his culture. Morell (2001) argues that privileges and power are enjoyed by the people who keep the mores of a particular culture. On the other hand, others who have alternative masculinities are not considered “real men”. Culture is one structure that holds so much power that an individual may not evade it. Leshao’s community espouses a form of hegemonic masculinity to which an individual is forced to confirm. Young Leshao and another convert called Stefano, find themselves in this predicament. This dissent has ramifications.

In the first chapters of To Become a Man, the missionaries have started setting up schools. However, most of the people are not willing to send their children there. Leshao, is among the few young people who have joined school. The missionaries are trying to penetrate into the interior of the country: “Leshao was one of the herds boys, different from the rest in that he had gone to school. He still had one term to go…” (4). The father sends his son reluctantly after Leshao promises to bring more wealth to the family after finishing school, and also after the mother intervenes. During this period, most young Maasai men are joining moranship. These young men will later go for cattle raids. Such raids if successful bring a lot of cattle which is the main a source of wealth. Leshao’s father is in a dilemma and is not sure if the decision to send his son to school was right:

The old man had thought if the eight years a boy went to school were to train him to become a better moran, then the whole training was a failure since the ones who did not go to school made the best morans. The old man was very annoyed at
those boys who left school, not because he valued school more than he valued his skin sandals, but because their return cast doubt upon the promises his son often made to him, saying that as soon as he completed school he would be employed and would make him rich. His son’s promises had once been backed by Reverend Walker (whom the Maasai simply called ‘Waka’). (Ole Kulet, 1972: 17)

Leshao’s father is in a society in transition. Initially, upward mobility was through cattle raids and the acquisition of cattle. However, with the coming of the missionaries and colonialists, education is now slowly becoming the tool for upward mobility, albeit with many challenges. Education is struggling to replace moranship and cattle raids in the social construction of Maasai masculinity. This brings to fore the malleability of masculinities. Maasai masculinities are not static but susceptible to change. An elder, Ole Nkipida, is one person who despite being a Maasai has embraced this change. He tries to convince Leshao’s father that it is wise to embrace change because society is in transition. However, Leshao’s father, Kerea ole Merresho will hear none of it:

‘I wish you had gone around as I did and seen how the other young Maasai boys have progressed. They have bought better cattle than the ones we have. We should let our boys be like them. Let us not hinder them. You might not see the truth of it now, but I am telling you, we are being left behind by other villages because of encouraging our boys to join moranship, let alone cattle raids because they are becoming out of date and —’

‘Stop, stop! If you were born a coward, you do not expect to convince others to be cowards. Are you not, ole Nkipida? Haven’t you seen young boys of our village become rich overnight just by going on cattle raids? Look at Kitika, a boy who did not know how to blow his nose recently. How many cows did he bring? Did he get even a scratch? What about Kereto? Weren’t you in the village when everybody left it to go and admire the heifers he brought? ... My son will go on cattle raids or he ceases to be my son. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 76)

Education is perceived as a form of escapism from “real Maasai manhood” by the traditionalists like Leshao’s father. According to the traditionalists, education is a kind of a shortcut that avoids rigours that characterise true moranship like bravery, risk, violence and has “feminized” Maasai
men. That is why Leshao’s father has the temerity to call a fellow elder a coward. The cowardly tag is a big insult especially in a community socialised into warriorhood. The conflict between the two opposing masculinities is evident and education is a catalyst for change. Though ole Nkipida tries to convince Leshao’s father, Leshao’s father is very adamant that his son will never go to school. In fact, Leshao’s late mother is the one who convinces the old man to allow the young boy to attend school. Leshao’s late mother, despite not being schooled, was quite logical. She had seen the benefits other families that had send their children to school:

‘My husband’, she had called him politely,
‘Yes’.
‘The other families seem to be prospering after sending their families to school
What are you trying to tell me?’, he had asked roughly, ‘I do not like people who beat about the bush. Speak your mind, woman.’
‘I was suggesting, ‘she had said in a soft voice,’ if it met your consent, that we send Leshao to school and -’
Woman! This is my home. It is not ours. It is mine. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 4)

Unlike the father, Leshao’s mother is open-minded and she does not mind Leshao trying something new. However, in this society, the voice of the woman is not given much space. This scenario corroborates Spivak’s (1988) argument about that the voice of the subaltern (in this instance, women in the Maasai male dominated society) is never given space. Spivak asks the key question whether the subaltern can speak. She asserts that the voice and space of the subaltern is subjugated in the dominant discourse consciously or unconsciously. For instance, Leshao’s father seems to have changed his mind about his son attending school, but does not want it to appear as if it was because of the mother.

De Beauvoir (1949) rightly defines Kerea ole Merresho’s perception of women. She explains
that humanity is male and defines the female as the “other”. Giele (1978) also concurs with Beauvoir when he explains that stereotypical masculinity is portrayed as normal, natural and universal in many societies. Thus, how Kerea ole Merresho behaves against women is sanctioned by the society. Leshao’s father, Kerea ole Merresho, accepts, though he intimates clearly that her mother did not influence his decision. Kerea ole Merresho is socialised in a highly patriarchal society that believes that women should live in terror of men. After all, the man is the “head” of the home and decision making solely belong to him. These are societal constructs advocated by a male dominated society. The negation of women as the subordinate “other” is very much perpetuated by the men like Kerea ole Merresho, who are mostly the leaders of these societies. To Leshao’s father, the female’s place is the kitchen and not in major decision making. Hence, women should play subsidiary roles and are accorded very low status.

Apart from being obstinate, the father exhibits excessive hegemonic masculinity. This is ironic given the circumstances in which he finds himself in, that is, an impoverished and disempowered member of the masculinist society whose values he so pathetically clings to. Kerea ole Merresho is an archetypal patriarchal man who is very domineering. He is also chauvinistic and cannot call Leshao’s mother by her name, but calls her “woman”. Kerea ole Merresho’s character has led to many women running away from his home. He is unable to find another woman who can tolerate his patriarchal oppression like Leshao’s late mother. The narrator describes Leshao’s father’s obstinate pride and dictatorial tendencies: “From the time he was old enough to know who his father was, he had found him a dictator in his own home. Leshao knew that it was because of that dictatorship that his stepmothers had run away from his father” (4). It is the study’s contention that Kerea ole Merresho is used as an archetype by the author to represent
male perceptions of the female gender in the Maasai culture. Leshao does not approve of his father’s draconian behaviour. His tone reveals contempt. The young boy is suffering from paranoia that is endemic in the household. The paranoia is caused by his father who has created an environment of fear and intimidation for the young boy. Ole Merresho’s notion of creating such an environment is to “harden up” the young man. This is skewed masculinised cultural socialisation. Seidler (2010) notes that in many societies, men are taught at early ages not to display emotions: “young boys learn to disassociate themselves from their experience at an early age” (113). He further argues that boys learn, at an early age, strategies of denial because they are not supposed to acknowledge the hurts they feel. According to Seidler, if a young boy falls on the ground, he learns to minimise the experience by saying it was nothing. Thus, despite the pressure from society and his father, young Leshao is expected to take these experiences in stoic dignity.

Leshao’s father, Ole Merresho also has a very low opinion of women. Leshao’s father’s subordination of women is a depiction of Maasai culture. Talle (1988) contends that the Maasai are a male dominated society and women are subordinate in all aspects of cultural. He points out that the Maasai culture promotes male dominance and subordination of women through customs such as clitoridectomy (female circumcision) and forced marriages. Talle further explains that among the Maasai, girls are married in their teens within a year of circumcision. In contrast, males wait several years after circumcision because they have to increase the size of their herds of cattle. Furthermore, women are regarded as social minors and their procreative resources are beneficial to elders in the age-grade system through bride wealth transactions. Moreover, male circumcision is regarded very highly compared to female circumcision. Male circumcision is
surrounded by a considerable celebration, while female circumcision is a low key event. Hence the old man is simply perpetuating Maasai culture in his treatment of women. The males in this society are using culture to maintain and reinforce patriarchal privileges. Messner (2004) observes that patriarchy (an ideology that privileges particularly old men) is a global phenomenon. Thus, patriarchy is not limited to the Maasai but extends to many societies worldwide. Messner further asserts that the biological fact of being male places men in privileged positions.

Oppression and subordination of women is one of the major ideas and practices of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995). Connell also explains that it is a culturally idealized form of masculinity. No wonder men like Leshao’s father who might be termed as the gatekeepers will go at any length to maintain it. Leshao’s father has the audacity to call his wife “woman”. It is an implication that the mother in this context is very subordinate and should understand her position. Decision making belongs to the man of the house in this patriarchal society.

In *To Become a Man*, Leshao is the main focaliser of the novel’s action of the novel. Hence, the young boy is the central character through which the author communicates his ideas. Through Leshao, Ole Kulet communicates the important role parents play in the lives of their children. Gikandi (1987) avers that characters in any novel function consciously or otherwise as instruments of authorial perspective. Thus, Ole Kulet is implicitly criticising Ole Merresho’s aspect of “manliness” that portends great danger to his son. The reason for this is because children model their behaviour by observing their parents. Milner (1980) states that:
“Observation of aggressive models increases the probability that the observers will behave in an aggressive manner…” (37). Leshao’s father represents parents who, despite having a good intention, become negative role models to their children. Leshao may emulate that aspect of discriminating against women. Goodman (2005) asserts that both strengths and failings in grown-ups are acquired during childhood. He further explains that children are keen observers of character, especially of their parents. Concurring with Goodman’s supposition, Mugubi (2010) opines that: “Children are generally vulnerable to their parents. They can be abused physically; they can be manipulated psychologically and emotionally and thus made or broken by their parental figures” (65). Unfortunately, the father is the only parent Leshao has. Thus, Ole Kulet implicitly seems to castigate some extreme forms of masculinity like that exhibited by Kerea ole Merresho. According to the author, these versions of masculinity as espoused by Kerea ole Merresho, can sometimes be detrimental to society. For instance, after the demise of Leshao’s mother, no woman can stay with the father. Consequently, young Leshao is the one who suffers very much. He is forced to live in a struggling single parent family:

Leshao walked to the village slowly. Women looked at him with sad eyes. Some spat when they saw blood on his sheet. Small children were told how a boy without a mother was beaten mercilessly, and they cried. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 33)

Apart from discrimination against women, the society in the novel is still resisting change. In this traditional society, a young man has to fulfill certain conditions before he becomes a “man”. One of the most profound concerns of the writer in this text is the treatment of the young man Leshao. He has to undergo major challenges so as to try to fit in a highly masculinised society. Connell (1995) explains that hegemonic masculinity is constructed through difficult negotiations. Leshao
and the father are victims of a dominant discourse in the strong Maasai patriarchal society. That is why the father is under pressure to make sure Leshao joins the raids and abandons school. Lorber (1994) argues that individual decision on gender-role expectations are mostly outweighed by societal expectations:

My concept of gender differs from previous conceptualizations in that I do not locate it in individual or in interpersonal relations, although the construction and maintenance of gender are manifest in personal identities and in social interactions. Rather I see gender as an institution that establishes patterns of expectation for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, and is built into the major social organizations of society, such as the economy, ideology, the family and politics. (28-29)

Lorber’s observation explains the predicament Leshao finds himself in. His individual will does not count much. His father and society expects him to follow the pattern previous Maasai men have followed. If the young man takes a different course it seems that he will be shunned. It is rather unfortunate that Leshao cannot ignore these societal forces. Omalla (1981) explains that among the Maasai, anyone who declined to go to war or raid cattle was considered a coward. Moreover, the so called “cowards” were not grouped with other men, but instead they were rejected. Leshao’s father, in a dialogue with the young man, reveals this:

Your grandfather feared to go on raids and I only inherited ten cows from him. But my grandfather was brave. He fought alone and brought cattle everybody admired. Your grandfather saw them all go without increasing any. I wish I was not his son. ‘But my son, what disturbs my heart is that you bear a resemblance to him. Your age-group have (sic) brought to their fathers and to themselves riches while you yourself continue to be a big pipe draining my wealth away. You keep on saying that you are about to complete school which you will never do. Imagine the length of time you have taken. You went there while Seurr’s son was suckling. He is now as big as you are and he has already gone in two cattle raids… (Ole
Leshao’s father’s tone reveals bitterness for the son who has not fulfilled the Maasai cultural concept of an ideal man. To the father, the son’s character reeks of cowardice. The symbol of the she-goat is an implication that Leshao has been feminised by the modern form of masculinity - transited from hegemonic to subordinate masculinity. Nurse (qtd. in Reddock, 2004) asserts that historically, subordinate masculinities have been constructed and represented as effeminate and infantile to distinguish them from hegemonic forms (5). The study argues that Ole Merresho is using Leshao as a pawn to vent his frustrations. The old man blames his son for their poverty. Leshao has the onerous burden of solving a generational problem because of his male gender. He is next in line to carry the family lineage.

The study reiterates that wealth among the Maasai was categorised in terms of cattle. The more cattle one had the more he/she was considered important. It is also important to point out that the Maasai dominated large parts of East Africa during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries (Odhiambo et al, 1987). They were a very fierce war-like community, and hence conducted many raids on their neighbours. In fact, the expansions were curtailed by the British colonialists. Considering that masculinity is a hegemonic ideology, men who had less cattle or none felt emasculated and were perceived by society to be subordinate-lesser men. The two areas that the father feels has put his family towards a subordinate role (subordinate masculinity) are cowardice and lack of wealth: wealth in terms of cattle brought from raids; cowardice implies the fear of going on raids. Omalla (1981) posits that communities such as the Maasai really
demanded courage during wartime. They would not initiate a boy until he showed bravery as a warrior. Furthermore, anyone who feared to go to war or raid cattle was considered a coward (1). Cowards were not grouped with other men; instead, they were rejected and even punished severely. To Leshao’s father, his old man drove them from a position of hegemonic masculinity to subordinate masculinity because of fearing cattle raids, hence subsequent reductions of cattle. This explains why the old man is adamant that Leshao must go on cattle raids in this new dispensation.

Imms (2000) explains that: “Sociological theories represent masculinity as an investment in male-dominated historical and cultural social power structures” (1). Thus Leshao is held hostage by the cultural dynamics in his Maasai community that he has to fulfill. By virtue of his gender, the young man cannot escape the rigorous rituals so as to make him an ideal “man”. Through an examination of the intricate interaction of culture and gender, the study will show how the two influence masculinity through the life of Leshao. Foucault (1977), when theorising about gender and power, argued that power is located in the social structures such as social institutions that hold society together as opposed to individuals. Leshao is amidst these social forces that do not consider his individuality. The protagonist strives to escape from this traditional dominant notion of masculinity, to the western notions of masculinity. The young man believes that the traditional modes of masculinity are outdated. The dialogue between Mbulung (Leshao’s friend) and Leshao reveals the two contrasting masculinities in the text that are in conflict. Mbulung wants to follow the old order, traditional masculinity, while Leshao does not want to do so. Leshao has embraced the new masculinity brought by the missionaries albeit with a lot of challenges:
‘No. not me. With me, I am a Maasai. I have to fulfill what a man has to fulfill. I want to be circumcised, become a moran, go to Enjure, Olemaiyo and Embika … ’
‘You mean you will go on cattle raids?’
‘Surely, Yes. Do you mean you don’t want to go’”?
‘Not me’
‘Is that why you don’t want to become a moran’?
‘It is one reason. Another reason is that I do not see the benefit of moranship. It used to be important when the morans were guarding the weaker people from the intruders. They are no longer serving this purpose. The government has soldiers who are doing this. All that is left for them to do is to go on cattle raids.’
‘But the raids are very important. They bring wealth to our people. They are not evil. They have been there since the creation of Tungani.’
‘But our country is developing. We have to do away with the customs which do not benefit us. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 81-82)

In the dialogue between the two young boys, Ole Kulet employs what Simon Gikandi (1987) calls “a balance of paradigms” (137). The traditional and the new version of masculinity are interrogated through the contrasting views of the two characters. Traditional masculinity as represented by Mbulung and the new masculinity represented by Leshao. The author employs the two differing perspectives to illustrate the place of masculinity within the changing cultural landscape. Mbulung disparages the new version of masculinity. To Leshao, traditional masculinity is outdated. However, to Mbulung this is the epicenter of the Maasai; and cannot be whisked away. It is what makes a Maasai man: moranship, cattle raids and circumcision. Moreover, this form of asserting masculinity has been there for many generations.

Leshao’s father, apart from insisting that his son goes on raids, also wants him to get circumcised. The old man’s dialogue with the son explains the significance of circumcision among the Maasai community:
Then breathing through his mouth, he continued. ‘I said, the founder said “You cannot remove an inner joint of meat before removing the top one” because as you know, there is no property of an uncircumcised man. He is a child no matter how big he is. If today you were circumcised, you would not have taken the blue bowl to go and beg for posho. It would have been a great abomination. But aren’t you as old as Kitika who does not beg? His mother milks the cows he brought in the last raid. Aren’t you as old as Kereto? When the old man was arrested because of Kodi, didn’t he sell the ox Kereto brought in the last raid? ‘I am removing the outer joint which is my only concern. You can die of poverty after that if you want, or you can still go round with your blue bowl begging from helpless mothers who never go on raid. (Ole Kulet, 1972:15)

The old man is preparing Leshao for circumcision and believes that maybe after the ritual, the young man would go on raids. Ole Merresho is an embodiment of a typical Maasai man who has not been influenced by outside cultures. He is the voice of tradition while Leshao is the voice of change. Take for instance the old man’s speech in an elders’ meeting when his son had been accused of stealing Ole Sembe’s goat:

… Let me give you the counsel of men who are circumcised. You want to hear the second? Elders. Old age is glory. Is this ole Sembe who dares we can fight? Who does not know that ole Sembe was an osuaji when we were ilmurran? Are the times he carried my shield countable? Anyway, I assure you elders, I cannot fight now. My time has passed, but let this fool know, whether I am poor or rich, I will never live to see a person putting his finger into my nostril.’… Didn’t the founder say “The chest of a man- a circumcised man - is like a dangerous bush … (Ole Kulet, 1972: 32)

According to Leshao’s father, uncircumcised men are the ones who borrow. On the other hand, circumcised people epitomise courage. This is a societal construct in the sense that circumcision prepares a man to move from subordinate masculinity to hegemonic masculinity. Hence the old man expects circumcision to move Leshao from subordinate masculinity (associated with cowardice, marginalisation and not owning property) to hegemonic masculinity, which means
owning property, courage and going on raids. To Leshao’s father, the young man is an antithesis of an ideal man. Moreover, according to the Maasai, it is not any type of circumcision; but it must be traditional circumcision. The idea of going to hospital for this rite is really looked down upon. In fact, it is perceived as an act of cowardice. When Leshao’s father gets information that the young man wants to go to hospital for circumcision, he becomes so angry:

To come to the point, I have been fearing that your quietness might be cowardice, cowardice of the knife and you might do what the idiot son of Pushka did. If you did that you would not live to see the next sun, not if Kerea ole Merresho lived. I cannot imagine my son going to hospital, as if sick, just for the mere cutting of the penis … I have been waiting and I have waited for long. Today when I told you that you would accompany the other young men on the raid, I expected you to tell me you were not yet circumcised.’(Ole Kulet, 1972: 14)

The study contends that some of these prototypes of the ideal man are twisted and distorted to suit a particular group of people. The idea that it is only circumcised people who own property is an apt case in point. Such an idea puts a lot of social pressure on men who do not own property. Unfortunately, such men live in these societies. Thus, social pressure is imposed on young people like Leshao to conform to societal masculine expectations. Leshao by virtue of not being circumcised would not dare meet morans: “The boy’s heart beat quickly. He knew that if those were morans they would beat him severely. Big uncircumcised boys don’t see eye to eye with the morans.” (22). Circumcision is meant to prepare young men to be tough and bold. These masculine expectations are geared towards hegemonic masculinity.

Leshao points out clearly that the traditional period is over. Hence, the Maasai man has to be dynamic and change with the times. Protections by the morans and going on cattle raids have become obsolete. However, this harsh reality is not going down well with the traditionalists like
Leshao’s father, who are keen on maintaining their culture. Leshao’s uncle Meteurr, another traditionalist, echoes this sentiment when he advises the young man to heed the father’s order:

‘Listen, my son. I know your father is currently occupied by thoughts of poverty which you helped to bring him. When he seats you, he expects you to deputise for him in family affairs. He expects you to lead the family when he sleeps. I do not say it is bad to be employed, as that is what every young boy who has gone to school wants today … When you become a moran, join others. Go on cattle raids and bring back cattle, at least twenty, and leave them with the old man. You can then go and look for a job. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 52-53)

Leshao’s uncle, Meteurr, just like the father, believes that circumcision will transform Leshao into a moran, so that he can join in cattle raids.

This study argues that in traditional Maasai culture, hegemonic masculinity is based on the hyper-masculine ideal of the warrior and cattle raider. Leshao’s father is among the elders of the community and is transmitting the dominant culture to his son. The old man fails to understand that times are changing, and society is in a form of transition. The old order that held society together is under threat from foreign intrusion. Colonialism has crept into the society and people are now required to pay taxes called “kodi”. This new order favours the families with more cattle acquired through cattle raids (wealth). Leshao’s father had been rich but suddenly became poor. His brother, Meteurr, exclaims that: “Poverty has struck my brother. He no longer has the hundreds of cattle he once had” (p.65).

Kerea ole Merresho argues that begging is only done by helpless mothers who never go on raids. This is a “stereotype” against women. In another instance when Ole Merresho is hungry and food
is brought to her by a young woman who was a neighbour, he speaks to her very rudely. The old man demeans the woman because of her gender:

When the young woman who owned the hut brought the milk, Kerea ole Merresho refused to drink. He even refused to admit that he was the one who had sent his brother to beg.
‘When one is hungry and feel slike(sic) begging, let him beg on his own without implicating someone else in the begging,’ he had said.
‘But you sent me.’
‘Not I.’
‘You did.’
‘Argue with me and you will see.’
‘Just drink the milk,’ the lady said soothingly.
‘Who told you I was hungry?’ Kerea had asked angrily… (Ole Kulet, 1972: 51)

Connell (1995) perceives masculinity in terms of relationship between men and women through the filter of power. She demonstrates how men in the subordination of women use gender as a concept of power like Kerea ole Merresho. Ole Merresho can be categorised as a male “chauvinist”.

Ironically, Ole Merresho’s nature and character is culturally praised in the Maasai culture. For instance, Leshao’s father beats up a man sent to force Leshao to go back to school. The incident has causes a lot of pandemonium in the village. Leshao arrives home to find plenty of tension: “At the gate, he saw a score of men standing. They were variously armed: some with spears, some with clubs, and some with bows …” (83). The old man is so worked up that he threatens to take up arms himself and fight the white man who wants his son back to school. He retorts angrily despite pleas from the elders to calm down. What had contributed to this conflict is the white man’s messenger called Stefano Malon (a Maasai converted to Christianity), who had
exaggerated the white man’s message by adding threats to the old man (84). The messenger had told Ole Merresho that if Leshao never went back to school, the white man would send “askaris” (policemen) to arrest the old man. These threats had worked up the old man. His reactions can be related to the culture of the Maasai man. Threats and intimidations are not to be tolerated:

But the old man was not of the type to be threatened. Without talking to Stefano or warning him of what was to happen to him, he sprang up from where he was seated and jumped high into the air with his stick raised above his head. Then he brought it down full force to Stefano’s shoulder. Before Stefano knew what was happening, the old man had cudgeled him several times. But Stefano was not the fighting type. Reverend Walker’s teachings had softened him. Instead of striking back, the women heard him say, ‘The Lord said, if one strikes your right cheek give him your left cheek too.’ (Ole Kulet, 1972: 84)

This incident highlights the clash between the modern and traditional masculinity. Leshao’s father Ole Merresho, behaves in a typical traditional Maasai manly way. As expected, he aggressively confronts the visitor after being threatened. Not reacting would have been perceived by the traditional society, as an act of cowardice. Kerea ole Merresho is one very proud man who would never want to appear weak. On the other hand, Stefano is caught in between the two masculinities. The traditional Maasai masculinity in which he was so strongly socialised that advocates aggression, and modern masculinity, taught by the white missionaries that preaches restraint. The missionaries’ notion of masculinity is based on the Bible, particularly Jesus’. It abhors violence. Nevertheless, the study opines that Stefano is struggling to discard the traditional Maasai masculinity. Traditional masculinity is quite evident by the way he initially approaches the old man. He adds threatening words to the initial message. Stefano really struggles not to react when he faces Ole Merresho’s wrath. Stefano is not his usual self. His
retaliation is governed by the notions of masculinity based on the Bible that he has inculcated at the mission centre. This is a man in crisis. In fact, the villagers are so stunned and disappointed in him that they remain perplexed. The elders who represent true Maasai traditional masculinity in a dialogue reveal this disappointment in Stefano:

As the episode was narrated, one of the elders could not help but add his own moral. ‘Surely there is stupidity in being a black Olashumpia.’
‘There is no doubt about that,’ the other agreed. ‘I knew Malon very well. We were together in moranship and he was a brave man.’
‘I knew him too,’ the other put in. ‘I can remember when our manyatta fought their manyatta. When his men retreated he knelt down and refused to move. Men of his clan who were of our manyatta defended him and a fight broke out again within our manyatta. I am indeed surprised how Waka has tamed him. They recalled many instances in which Malon had proved himself a great warrior. Leshao listened quietly, feeling pity for him. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 85)

“Olashumpia” refers to the new Maasai converts who have embraced Christianity. Waka refers to the white man. Leshao feels pity for Malon. Leshao and Malon are both caught between traditional Maasai masculinity that is so much rooted in their culture, and western notions of masculinity that they have recently acquired, after their interaction with missionaries at the mission centre. Despite trying to discard the traditional masculinity for the new form, it still haunts them and they cannot easily discard it. The duo’s (Malon and Leshao) position as counter-hegemonic forces comes with considerable alienation. Abandoning traditional masculinity comes with consequences and repercussions. For instance, the cowardly tag Malon now wears in the village is a very strong challenge to his masculinity. It is a symbol of emasculation in this war-like community. Malon’s scenario is even worse because he is assaulted before women: “The elders then knew what had happened. They split themselves into two groups. One beat the
woman away from the scene …” (85). The mistreatment of women by the elders reiterates the study’s earlier point that the Maasai culture is chauvinistic.

Leshao’s pity for Malon can also be attributed to the type of patriarchal socialisation that the former has been socialised. He knows that Malon should have reacted. This type of patriarchal socialisation which lays a lot emphasis in strength and bravado is called machismo. It is a type of masculinity that dwells on the repudiation of all attributes that display any sign of “weakness” or “femininity”. Hence, Stefano’s reaction strongly opposes this socially dominant form of machismo. Stefano restrains himself, thus, losing face before the elders. The elders are the bearers of this aggressive form of masculinity. They are what Donaldson (1993) calls “weavers of the fabric of hegemony” (11). He argues that such people regulate, manage gender regimes and interpret gender relations. Malon’s ego and self esteem is really dented in the village. Stefano’s aggression against the old man might have brought serious consequences. His reaction, though “cowardly”, was a wise decision. The Morans might have assaulted or even killed him. After he is assaulted by the old man: “Two men approached him and asked him to leave the village for his own safety” (85). Stefano has been assaulted without reacting, and he has been told to leave for his own safety. The price of subverting “real manhood” can sometimes be very costly and painful. Leshao also has to flee the village rather than go on a cattle raid. His “cowardly” act turns him into an outcast like Malon. The town which is the centre of modernity becomes his place of refuge. Leshao encounters a new version of masculinity, whereby the construction of masculinity is not pegged on the number of cattle one has, but education and employment. Nevertheless, just like Malon, the traditional aggressive and violent masculinity is still part of him. He beats up a guard who prevents him from meeting Walker, the missionary.
Leshao was enraged. His actions were sharp and quick. He grabbed a piece of wood which lay on the ground and jumped at the man, hitting him thrice on the head. The man grabbed him and they both struggled. Leshao was stronger and in the next moment the man was on the ground and Leshao was hitting him hard on his head. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 125)

Though Leshao has passed through the mission centre, he finds it hard to discard the warrior hood moran mentality he was socialised into. Unlike Malon, he cannot restrain himself when provoked. This part of Christian masculinity of forgiveness and tolerance becomes a thing of the past in this new moran initiate. Leshao’s violent nature forces him to miss an opportunity to see Rev Walker and secure a job. He is instantly dismissed by the enraged reverend “I have no work for a fighter,’ Walker shouted back” (126). In the village, Leshao would have been a hero through his actions but in the city he is a villain. Leshao’s actions quite clearly depict the challenge of totally discarding traditional forms of masculinity. The reverend even reminds Leshao of his father’s actions when the former had sent Malon “The other time I sent Stefano to come and see you and your father assaulted him and now you come and assault Jeremia at my home.” (126) Walker’s reference to that earlier incident, brings to fore the important role fathers play in the construction of their progenies’ masculinities. Leshao father is a poor role model and the son has imbibed that violent nature. The fact that missionary education has not changed the young man, makes the study conclude that Kerea ole Merresho is a failed patriarch. Leshao’s violent masculinity jeopardises the young man’s stay in the city because everybody refuses to employ him:

For the following two months Leshao wandered from office to office first, then from shop to shop, then from hotel to hotel, and finally from home to home. But wherever he went, prospective employers turned him down saying they were not prepared to employ a person who fought with his would-be workmates. (Ole
Leshao’s transition to modern masculinity suffers more when his host, Pushka chases him out of the house because Leshao seems to have become a burden. The young man cannot believe it. This new urban masculinity does not really entertain communalism and inter-dependence. Leshao’s violent nature haunts him again when he refuses to leave Pushkin’s house and is later arrested by the police. The arrest is quite humiliating to the young moran whose masculinity is dented when he does not fight back:

> The third policeman came forward and slapped him on the face. It was the first time since he had been circumcised that a man had slapped him. At first he thought of revenge and he took one step toward his sword, but he quickly weighed the situation and gave up the idea. (Ole Kulet, 1972: 129)

Leshao’s failed masculinity in the city and subsequent return back to the village is quite humiliating to him. The young man is an outcast in both traditional and western masculinity. The tag of cowardice is too painful for a Maasai moran to bear. Leshao cannot fathom the subordinate tag that he will have to live with. The town was the place of escape from what he considered as outdated masculine practices like cattle raids. However, modern masculinity seems to have rejected him. Leshao’s father even opts to leave the village because of the shame that the son had deserted moranship. This situation forces Leshao to strive to redeem his wounded masculinity. He decides to turn to the traditional form of redemption; cattle raids. This is the only way that the young man feels he can gain respect from the father: “The raid was re-organised that night to allow Leshao to join” (131). Unfortunately, the raid is not successful. Leshao loses a leg and is later taken to court and sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment. Though Leshao suffers the agonising pain and incarceration, his masculinity is “redeemed”. The action re-unites him with
the father. The young man has paid the price of manhood in a traditional perspective thus becoming a hero in the village but a prisoner in the modern set-up. Ole Kulet’s text explains the clash of two masculinities in a society in transition. Leshao’s hybrid type of masculinity does not seem to work.

Conclusion

Henry ole Kulet’s text *To Become a Man* has effectively depicted masculinity in a transitional Maasai community. The study has established that the dominant form of masculinity in the pre-colonial Maasai community is traditional hegemonic masculinity. It is a form of masculinity constructed in a dominant, aggressive and violent manner. Characters (Malon and Leshao) who attempt to subvert this dominant form of masculinity face considerable resistance. The societal forces that perpetuate the old traditional masculinity resist vehemently. The moderates like Ole Nkipida and Leshao’s mother, who embrace change, are also shunned. It seems clear to argue that change especially cultural does not come easily. The study argues that culture is used as a vehicle to propagate masculinist sexual ideologies by agents like the traditional Maasai patriarchal society. The group uses culture to perpetuate the narrative of traditional masculinity as the ideal form of masculinity. The traditional masculinity in this chapter clearly fits into Donaldson’s (1993) description of hegemonic masculinity. Donaldson argues that hegemonic masculinity can be negated, challenged, renounced, imposed, constructed with difficulty, modernised but not necessary enjoyed. He further argues that this form of masculinity that passes itself as natural can harm, deform, deny but not necessarily satisfy. The study agrees with Donaldson that this form of Maasai traditional masculinity propagates cultural ideals that do not correspond to the real personalities of most men. On the other hand, the new modern version of
masculinity brought by the missionaries seems to borrow heavily from the teachings of Christ. It can be categorised as a form of Christian masculinity that negates hegemonic attributes of masculinity such as aggression and violence. It espouses values such as forgiveness and non-violence which are categorised by most patriarchal societies as subordinate. The study also examined the relationship between father and son. This was quite pertinent because sons construct their masculinity by observing fathers who are their role models and fathers use family as a site of confirming their masculinity. Leshao’s father seems to have failed in this role, because he creates a strong wedge between himself and his son because of high handedness. The old man’s chauvinistic tendencies also result to a dysfunctional family in his homestead. He ends up becoming a failed patriarch with an impersonal relationship with his son and other members of the society. Though poverty plays a role on his personality coupled with societal expectations, much of his weakness emanates from imbibing a rigid version of Maasai traditional hyper-masculinity. The section dealt mostly with masculinity in the pre-colonial and colonial Kenyan society. The next chapter interrogates white masculinity during the colonial and post-colonial period. It specifically focuses on Yusuf Dawood’s text *One Life Too Many.*
Chapter Three

White Masculinity in Yusuf Dawood’s One Life Too Many

Segal (1990) points out that glorification or celebration of white manhood depends on parallel subordination of both women and non-whites. Kimmel cited in Kimmel et al (2005) also notes that hegemonic masculinity was created against a screen of “Others” whose masculinity was problematised and devalued. He points out that hegemonic and subordinate masculinity emerged in mutual but unequal interaction in a gendered, social and economic order (4). This section interrogates white masculinity in the colonial and post-colonial Kenyan society with Segal and Kimmel’s assertions in mind. Segal’s and Kimmel’s postulations refer to white masculinity as hegemonic in comparison to other racial male masculinities that are categorised as subordinate masculinities.

This section focuses on the life of British expatriate, Sydney Walker, in One Life Too Many. The study contends that the author uses Walker’s life as a microcosm of British expatriate life in Kenya. The key questions the section seeks to address are: How do the British men negotiate their masculinity in relation to fellow white men, to women and to African men in the colonial and post-colonial Kenyan society? Is there a conflict between these two paradigms? The study investigates the individual and group’s construct and performance of masculinities. It is important to analyse individual and group masculinities because masculinity is not a static entity. Connell (1995) underscores the importance of looking beyond the group construct of masculinity when she notes that individual males develop their own definition of masculinity that is predicated upon the social construction of maleness, and personal attributes of the individual
Nevertheless, as noted earlier in Ole Kulet’s *To Become a Man*, variation from the societal construction of maleness comes with considerable resistance from the individual’s patriarchal society. However, the study cannot also discard the group social construct of masculinity because individuals cannot live in isolation. Leach concurs with this supposition when he defines masculinity as “the cultural interpretation of maleness, learnt through participation in society and its institutions” (36). The individual cannot avoid the social institutions that construct masculinity. The study also seeks to assess the shift of power from whites to blacks. There is a close correlation between masculinity and power. What are the ramifications on white masculinity after the loss of political power? Hence, the study will seek to analyse whether the changing historical processes have led to the construction and expression of new masculinities in the text.

Kimmel *et al* (2005) argue that there are many lenses through which masculinity can be viewed. Thus the study’s analysis of white masculinity in Dawood’s *One Life Too Many* is pegged on two main critical axes: race and gender. The study argues that race and gender are interdependent in the text. Connell (2005) concurs with this supposition when she argues that while analysing colonialism and post-colonialism, race, gender and class are not distinct realms of experience, but rather exist in relation to each other. Therefore, apart from analysing the relationship between the white man and the black Other, prominence will also be given to the connection between race, gender and masculinity as well as the female presence in relation to white masculinity. The study will investigate Sydney’s manifestations of masculinity from two vantage points: public and the domestic sphere. Kimmel *et al* (2005) label these two spheres as public and domestic...
patriarchy because they are male dominated. The public sphere entail institutions that men engage with to make a living, or power structures such as a country’s leadership and economy. Men mostly compete with other men, to dominate these public power structures, because the gendering of most of these institutions is skewed against women. The domestic level entails the relationship between the main protagonist and his family and any other male-female relationship. The study argues that men’s power is manifested differently in these two categories though each influences the other. The chapter will also illustrate the centrality of white masculinity in Dawood’s *One Life Too Many*, and its interplay with race. It will begin with a general introduction, followed by a detailed examination of the masculinity of the white male protagonist in the text in relation to other characters.

**Whiteness and Masculinity**

It is important to understand the concept of whiteness and how it relates to masculinity. Such background information, will enable the study to critically analyse white masculinity in Dawood’s *One Life Too Many*. While discussing colonialism in Africa and the concept of whiteness, Steyn (2001) argues that:

> The nature of the whiteness of the colonial project was that it constituted itself as infallible, as the only version of reality, the ‘master narrative’, the framework from within which all other versions of reality, narratives, were interpreted. This was achieved in large by the naturalization of the colonial order of things, disassociating it from the social and economic, and locating it in the endogenous characteristics of the groups. The effect that this had, however, was to mark the dominated as deviant from a norm that was ‘naturally’ located in the dominant positionality. When the dominated are thus marked the dominating position is unmarked, allowing freedom and greater possibilities, and simultaneously setting itself up as normal, positioned beyond any obligation to explain itself. (21)
Steyn’s assertion clearly points out how colonialists in Africa perpetuated whiteness as the ideal concept of race above all other races. The other races were perceived as subordinate. Thus, the white characters in Dawood’s novel arrived in colonial Kenya with this superiority complex fallacy in their mind: they were the “superior” race, and had come to civilize the “dark continent”. The superiority complex narrative was justified by the political and economic domination of the whites over the non-white races during colonialism. That is how the notion of hegemonic masculinity became associated with whiteness. Bederman (1996) concurs with Steyn when he points out that the connection between manhood and whiteness became particularly strong during the late 19th century, when white Americans elevated whiteness to manly ideals. White Americans have a strong historical connection with Britain because America was once a British colony. A large group of White Britons (English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish) migrated and settled in America permanently. Thus a large section of white men from the two countries share a common ancestry. Steyn points out that white Americans connected male power to racial dominance through the discourse of “civilization”. Bederman explains that by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as white middle-class men actively worked to reinforce male power, their race seemed to become a factor central to their gender. He explains that the white men repeatedly resorted to the idea of “civilization” in order to explain male supremacy in terms of white racial dominance and conversely, white supremacy in terms of masculine power. Bederman further points out that white Americans contrasted civilised white men with other dark skinned men, depicting the former as paragons of manly superiority. Frankenberg (1997) while discussing about the notion of white superiority, notes that the salient features of whiteness is its invisibility. The study contends that white men had to prove their superior manhood in comparison to other races because of these perceptions. Hegemonic masculinity was the ideal form of manhood
among the white men while the other races were perceived to be having subordinate masculinity. Many white men in other parts of the world adopted these notions of white superiority over other races. For instance, Sydney Walker arrives in colonial Kenya with this skewed civilisation mentality:

For a few years, I knocked round India and Malaysia, but somehow the call from Africa was strong. Looking at the map of this Dark Continent, I somehow fancied it. It conjured up in my mind the image of a sleeping elephant which was soon going to wake up, trumpet and charge. I first went to West Africa but found the humidity, the heat and the squalor a bit trying. I then set my eyes east and finally came to Nairobi. (Dawood, 1991: 7)

Sydney arrives in Kenya with an imperialistic and colonial attitude of white superiority. To the young man, Africa is a new frontier for white dominance. This superiority can further be deduced in his assertion that: “Kenya was a virgin country in full bloom waiting for suitors to propose, pillage and produce” (6). Sydney’s depiction of Africa is what Spilka (1990) describes as “unabashedly masculinist and distinctly colonial” (235). Sydney’s tone can also be described as boisterous, domineering and misogynist. The young British immigrant has imbibed vestiges of British colonial masculinity. Sydney alludes to Kenya metaphorically as a virgin. Sydney and his imperial society represent the phallus. Segal (2001) avers that the phallus is a symbol of male sexuality and power. The symbolic act of breaking Kenya’s virginity using the phallus is in the white man’s hand-political and economic power. The study can also draw parallels between Kenya as a colonised state and women as a colonised sex. Sydney asserts that: “Kenya was a virgin Country in full bloom waiting for suitors to propose, pillage and produce” (6). Sydney’s reference to Kenya as a virgin ready to be pillaged is sexist. Thus, the intrusion of Sydney’s
colonial society into Kenya can be alluded to as a sexual encounter between a man and a woman. The act might not be physical but it has psychological connotations of subjugation of a weaker party. Hence, the conquering does not only pertain to the colonies but also the women.

While discussing the link between whiteness and masculinity, Segal posits that hegemonic masculinity, whiteness and heterosexuality have traditionally been defined in opposition to feminine, non-normative and non-white forms of masculinity. The study interrogates Segal’s assertion by analysing the relationship of the white protagonist Sydney Walker with the female characters on one hand and the black Other on the other hand. Prominence will be given to the power relations in these relationships. Connell (1995) expounds more about hegemonies in relation to other subordinate masculinities. She explains that hegemonies are only likely to be established if they are linked with some form of institutional power. Colonialism in Kenya meant that institutional power and resources were in the hands of the British. Hence, other races, especially the marginalised blacks were on the periphery. Moreover, strong patriarchal structures within the British colonial society meant that women were also sidelined. This is quite evident in the relationship between Sydney Walker and his wife, Anna, which is explored later in this section.

The protagonist, Sydney Walker’s earlier life mirrors what Webster (1999) calls attributes of imperial masculine heroism. These attributes are love for adventure, independence, strength, resourcefulness, resilience, aggression, toughness, courage and competition. For instance, he is
very excited about going to the Second World War. Furthermore, Sydney is eager to explore new environments. The Second World War seemed to be a testing ground for Sydney’s young masculinity. Sydney’s wife, Anna, reveals this to Dr. Hyder during a dialogue between the two:

Both our parents were heart broken when the war broke out and Sydney who was poised to enter university was called up. I had seen him up from a rough small boy into a handsome young man. His masculinity sprouted through his whiskers, his voice broke and his lips acquired a rapier sexuality under a sharp trimmed moustache … He was so excited at the prospect of fighting a war to defend his country. Patriotism and his youthful galvanism, coupled with his athletic attributes made him a fine specimen for the purpose … He joined the RAF and fought in the Battle of Britain. By the account he gave us on his short leave periods, I could see that he treated the war as great fun with the enemy line to be penetrated and its soldiers put to death. I don’t think he understood the deeper implication of a war to defend freedom and democracy. To him it was a playground, this time with real guns to wield and real people to kill. (Dawood, 1991: 18)

Many Britons feel proud to fight for their country. However, to the young Sydney, this war is a platform to explore his youthful masculinity. The patriotic spirit of defending and fighting for the motherland is not the young man’s biggest reason for joining the war; it is the adventure of facing and overcoming a tough “manly” challenge, which is a form of self initiation to masculinity.

**Socio-Historical Context of Colonial Kenyan Society**

Though the text is a fictionalised narrative, reference to the socio-historical context of the colonial Kenyan social stratum is relevant. It is important to understand the position the protagonist, Sydney Walker, finds himself in when he arrives in Kenya. That position has a
strong influence in his construction of masculinity. Masculinity cannot be separated from the social, political and economic facets of a society.

Leech (1994) supports this assertion when he argues that masculinity is constructed socially, historically and politically. Connell (1995) also explains that masculinities are socially and historically constructed. She explains that dominant groups that practice hegemonic masculinity ensure that subordinate masculinities acknowledge and support their power. In this chapter, it is argued that writers are not simply confined to describing the world, real or imaginary; rather they give rise to renewed performances. Hence, readers play an active role to explore other new possibilities and do not merely read from a historical perspective. Thus, the fictionalised construction aided by a historical perspective assists in the interrogation of different dimensions of masculinities.

Just as in other colonised societies, masculinities in Kenya were forged in the heat of colonialism and the struggle against British rule. For instance, the decolonisation process enacted by the post-colonial black regime and its effect on white masculinity cannot be overlooked. In the context of Dawood’s novel, the hegemonic groups are the British while the subordinate groups are the blacks, women and Asians. Connell also points out that masculine power is interrelated with existing inequalities such as racism, class stratification, colonialism and other systems of oppression, which are evident in society today. During the colonial period (Kenya under British rule), the British by virtue of their race and nationality enjoy immense benefits and privileges.
The protagonist, Sydney Walker, in a dialogue with Dr Hyder, nostalgically remembers these
good moments:

In the late fifties and early sixties, Kenya society was like a three-tiered cake …
On the top was the icing and the cream of political power and agricultural haven.
This tier historically belonged to the British with political advantages acquired
through colonial machinery and prime agricultural land owned by the settlers …
In the middle were the nuts and marzipan made up of shopkeepers and
incumbents of jobs in the commercial sector and middle grade civil service. These
were mainly Asians from the Indian sub-continent. Finally, there was the bottom
tier, the base, mainly flour kneaded with a little butter, the indigenous population,
supporting the whole supra-structure and getting an increasing burden in return …
By a strange quirk of birth, I belonged to the top tier! (Dawood, 1991: 6)

Walker, an expatriate British immigrant, descriptively analyses the stratification of the colonial
Kenyan society. The protagonist uses the symbolism of the cake to distinguish the various races
and the privileges they enjoyed. The British were the dominant group by virtue of their political
position and economic power. Sydney’s symbolic description of the power stratification levels
brings to fore Gramsci’s (1988) description of hegemony. Gramsci, who coined the term, argued
that the bourgeoisie promote a particular culture as a superstructure to control the base capital. In
our case, the bourgeoisie are the British while the base consists of Asians followed by the blacks.
Gramsci’s argument corroborates Connell’s (1995) position that gendered relations in institutions
and social struggles are controlled by power dominant groups that practice hegemonic
masculinity to ensure that subordinate groups acknowledge their power. Thus characters like
Sydney Walker have an illusion that they belong to the top tier because of their race and
economic might. No wonder he feels lucky to have been born white: Sydney attests to these
privileges he enjoyed by virtue of his race:
Life was wonderful in many ways. Opportunities to make money abounded, booze was inexpensive and girls were in plenty. Life was easy with a loyal servile labour force, low taxes, enormous profit margins, non-existent union power, capitalistic oriented government policy, an expanding economy and a virtual monopoly. (Dawood, 1991: 7)

Various historians have interrogated the British colonial ideology in Kenya and the ramifications on other races. Okoth (2006) in describing the British occupation of Kenya posits that the whole edifice of colonialism is the illusion of superiority. Okoth’s analysis corroborates Sydney Walker’s assertion of being lucky to be born white during the colonial period. Nonetheless, it is the study’s contention this is a social construction. In describing the colonial settlers in East Africa, Rotberg (1965) enumerates the power the British enjoyed over other races. He explains that the justice system favoured the whites. Therefore, few courts convicted whites in cases involving African plaintiffs. Whites also used whips to control their African employees and neighbours. Ochieng (1990) also concurs with Rotberg on the extreme power enjoyed by the British white settlers in Kenya. He notes that there was appropriation of African land by the British colonial government which was given to the white settlers. He further explains that Africans were required to undertake compulsory labour, and were taxed heavily. This heavy taxation was to force the Africans to offer their labour to white employers.

Hence the colonial government created an environment that favoured white settlement in Kenya at the expense of other races, especially the African natives. That is why young white men like Walker, migrated fast to this paradise that had plenty of opportunities. Ochieng clearly delineates Sydney walker’s observation, why Indians were in the middle tier. He explains that the
colonialists encouraged Indians who were building the railway (referred to as “coolies”, though the term has a negative racial connotation and can be considered pejorative) to undertake trade in newly established urban centers along the railway line. The colonial government encouraged the “dukawallahs” (Indian businessmen) to flourish and penetrate inside Kenya. On the other hand, the Africans experienced economic subjugation. Ratiele (2004) elaborates that masculinity is not only about male things, but it also constructs the social reality of institutions and identities. This explains why white men like Sydney Walker straddle the “dark” continent buoyed by their “superiority” status. However, with the advent of independence in Kenya, white British men’s power diminishes. In contrast, a few black Kenyan men who occupy the new ruling class suddenly acquire power. This shift in power has an impact on the masculinity of the two sets of men. This change in masculinity brings to fore Morrell’s (2001) position that masculinity is not static. He argues that men challenge hegemonic masculinity and reconstitute it. The study will now analyse this shift in power and the ramification on British white men in relation to both the black Other and the female.

“Reversal of Fortunes”: Diminishing White Power and the Rising Black Other

Reversal of fortune means that the British who were at the apex of leadership, were replaced by a clique of black elite after independence.

In the aftermath of colonialism, British men in Kenya lost some of their privileged positions because of loss of political and economic power. Power shifted to the blacks though it was controlled by a few elite. The turn of events brought a lot of anxiety and uncertainty especially among the whites, who had controlled political and economic power for many years. They were
not sure about their future and the backlash they would get from the people they had subjugated for many years. Many white settlers had made Kenya their home and invested heavily in the country. During the independence period, the first President Jomo Kenyatta, stated that there would be no revenge against the white settlers. Nevertheless, many settlers opted to go back to Britain, while others migrated to South Africa. The protagonist, Sydney Walker, belongs to the whites who heeded the presidential call to remain and develop the country.

This shift in power has ramifications for the masculinity of British men in Kenya. Connell (1995) explains that there is a direct link between masculinity and power. She adjudges that gendered relationships in institutions and social struggles are controlled by power. Thus, with the shifting political power, the relationship between the dominant white man and the black Other changes. The whites have now become subservient to a small clique of black elite who control the country. One beneficiary who epitomises the new black power is Charles Gethi:

*Uhuru* not only meant the transfer of political power, but also a change of faces in government offices, shops, hotels, schools and private firms. Charles Gethi was a natural beneficiary of this march of history. Before the year was out, delicate negotiations over the matter of buying out white farmers found Charles Gethi at the centre of things in London. In time, he became a director of seventy-six companies and in the annual Kenya book he was mentioned as a candidate for inclusion in the Guinness book of records. He was made the chairman of an exclusive club which before independence, had been reserved for whites. It tickled his fancy to be seated at the head of the board table every month to discuss the affairs of the club to which he had not been allowed entry a few months before. (Dawood, 1991: 27)
Charles recalls his earlier subordinate role and is quite elated by the new changes of fortune. Subordinate masculinities have now become hegemonic. Charles’ privileged position is a result of coming from a wealthy family, which enabled him get a good education in London, and also deep connections in the ruling government. He is the chairman of the board of directors at Kenya Hotels and Lodges, a group of companies that have invested in the booming tourism industry in Kenya and abroad. The shift of power brings a lot of anxiety among the white people who have enjoyed dominance for long, and are uncertain about the future. This tension is best brought out in a dialogue between Charles and an octogenarian British lady:

This particular evening, Charles Gethi stood sipping his whisky on the rocks while an elderly woman was moaning to him saying that after fifty years in her beloved Kenya, at the age of seventy-five, she was immigrating to South Africa.

“I don’t want to be raped by savages,” she said

Charles Gethi looked at the old scarecrow and replied,

“That is hardly likely.” Then to mollify her he added,

“The leaders of this country do not propose to form a gangster government. We will not allow the disruption of law and order. After all it is our interest to make sure that people do not grab everything. If we encourage free things, the hungry and the poor will turn on their own kith and kin when the expatriates and foreigners have been relieved of their possessions. The taste in the mouth would be too sweet to spare us. (Dawood, 1991: 26)

The lady has stayed in Kenya her whole life and had never anticipated loss of white power. She is an archetypical colonial lady who still holds notions of white superiority and black inferiority. She also holds the stereotypical view of black men as rapists out to violate white women. Such stereotypes were perpetuated by the colonialists at the height of the Mau Mau rebellion. The old lady bemoans that the shifting power would lead to the suffering of white people. She is uncertain about the political transition. She is of the notion that the new black leadership would
seek revenge for the suppression they received during colonial rule. However, Charles, who with his few elite group are the face of the “Kenyanisation” project, assures her of peace and no victimization. “Kenyanisation” was a project meant to empower and ensure Kenyans were able to occupy the positions left by the British after independence, especially in the civil service.

Charles’ new found power enables him to interact with the whites at a very personal level. As part of the new black elite, he is among the people who call the shots in terms of running the new country’s economy. It is during this interaction that he comes across Sydney Walker. Charles is looking for a man to run their chain of hotels and he is immediately drawn to Sydney as a possible candidate. The interaction between the two men can be analysed in the perspective of a male – male relationship. In analysing the relationship between males, Sedgwick (1985) observes that in some instances of male interactions, there is stiff competition for dominance and fear of subordination. According to Sedgwick, such interactions are characterised by power struggles as each party seeks to dominate the other. Sedgwick’s analysis aptly describes the relationship between Charles Gethi and Sydney Walker. In their first meeting, Sydney has already created a strong physical presence that speaks much about his personality. He epitomises power which is clearly illustrated by the strong presence he has in the room. Sydney’s strong presence ruffles and distracts Charles:

As Charles spoke to the terrified woman, his eyes rested on a debonair man standing at the other end of the room, holding the women around him spellbound with his savagely handsome face, and the men tethered to the ground by his disarming boyish smile which flashed across his face as he paused, apparently to find a right phrase to complete the sentence. (Dawood, 1991: 26)
Charles is immediately impressed by Sydney yet they have not yet interacted. Sydney Walker possesses a strong masculine presence which is complemented by his strong physical attributes. He uses that physical power to contest space among men and sway women. Sydney exudes this power by the way he carries himself around confidently. Charles Gethi admits that Sydney’s presence has an impact on him. The attraction is not sexual, but rather on the power that Sydney exudes over other people. Charles who also relishes power is excited by the influence that this stranger has on other people. It is a power he also craves and has begun tasting. Hence, that attraction is all about competition. Messner (2001) notes that men are taught to be homophobic and competitive, but not to express their emotions. Most men are homophobic because heterosexuality in most societies is perceived to be the normative mode in gender relations, while homosexuality is categorized as non-normative. Thus many men are socialised in societies that perpetuate these gender relations. Messner’s supposition is quite evident when Charles Gethi invites Sydney for an interview at his office. Apart from the occasion being used to seal a job deal, Charles uses this opportunity to exert his power and authority. It is a replication of the earlier scene. However, this time round, it is Sydney who experiences this power. At the entrance of the office, Sydney is welcomed by an English secretary. This is quite symbolic in the sense that power is now in the hands of the black men and the white people are now subservient. The black man is now the employer not the employee. The study reiterates that race and masculinity are interlinked. Black men in power like Charles are still striving to assert their once subordinated masculinity as hegemonic which is not really easy:

Less than fifteen minutes of the expose and Sydney Walker found himself overpowered by the man, his ideas and his enthusiasm. His insurance work seemed to be shrinking rapidly and in its place wide new vistas were looming. Charles made his projects vibrate and pulsate. There were promises of success, a
quick rise up the ladder and a world that looked like an Oyster. (Dawood, 1991: 29)

Sydney who is the face of white power in Kenya is struggling in his insurance business. Charles, the black man, has come to his rescue. In a twist of events, the servant has become the master. Charles is a cunning character who wants to take advantage of Sydney’s race and expertise to help his companies succeed abroad. Despite the independence of many African countries, economic power still rested in the hands of the white people. Thus, Charles is aware that putting Sydney as the face of his companies would easily help him trade with foreign European and American companies. However, Sydney later finds out this ploy, that he is being used as a decoy. He divulges his disappointment to Doctor Hyder: “Much as I was happy to be so privileged, I knew I was being used.” Sydney Walker sounded bitter, “a white face in the delegation was necessary to lure white tourists” (88).

The indigenisation project in the post-colonial Kenyan state has broken the status quo of the British men. Sydney Walker points out the numerous challenges facing an expatriate in the new postcolonial dispensation. The administration of the new black elite is riddled with a lot of corruption. They are also striving to assert their new found power. The “Kenyanisation” bureau is formed to make sure that economic power falls into the hands of the Kenyans. Unfortunately, that power falls into the hands of few black people with the majority still living in poverty. Sydney Walker explains the predicament the expatriates find themselves in the new order:

And then we have to suck up to everyone in the immigration department, in the “Kenyanisation” bureau, in the Ministry of labour. We dare not cross anybody’s
path even in the interest of efficiency. God knows which big man he is related to. (Dawood, 1991: 51)

They have to pay corrupt officials in the government for them to survive in business and also stay in the country comfortably as immigrants. Corruption and nepotism are very rife in the new independent state. The few ruling black elite and their henchmen enrich themselves at the expense of developing the country. Consequently, the country becomes stratified among the blacks. This stratification leads to a minority black elite exuding hegemonic masculinity and a majority subjugated class exhibiting subordinate masculinity.

Despite the ‘Kenyanisation’ project, the new black elite are aware they still need skilled labour. Fortunately for men like Walker, this skilled labour can only be found among the educated and experienced British. Most of the black people are illiterate and the few educated ones like Charles are not enough. Sydney picks the job and becomes the director. He steers the company to great heights. Sydney dedicates all his energy and time to the company. During this period of success, Charles and Walker have a very good working relationship. In fact, they appear to be close friends. However, Sedgwick’s (1985) assertion that most male friendship is based on mutual interest comes into play. Charles is aware that Sydney’s expertise is paramount to his success. He is only interested in Sydney in as far as the latter can make the company rake in more profits. It is a friendship of convenience. After Sydney has given his best to the company, which is now in a stable financial position, Charles wants to get rid of his “good friend”.
Charles Gethi is hypocritical and sarcastic. He wants to appear to be thankful and considerate about Sydney’s wellbeing, yet he wants to fire him. Charles uses a lame excuse of justifying that there was pressure from the government to employ blacks. He tells Walker that private companies were also under pressure to employ Kenyans. This is laughable because there are still very few blacks with the skills to play Sydney’s role. Moreover, the pressure is mostly in the public sector, especially the civil service. Charles is not being sincere. After Sydney works hard to renew his permit by obtaining citizenship, Charles now makes sure that Sydney’s contract is not renewed by the board. He even has the temerity to call Sydney a paper citizen: “paper citizenship is no passport to eternal employment” (114). Charles Gethi refuses to renew Sydney’s work permit and wants to get rid of him. This is very traumatizing because Sydney is being denied his source of livelihood. Men experience a lot of duress when they do not have a source of livelihood because of the breadwinner role that is expected of them. Though it is a social construction that is perpetuated by the society, it carries a lot of impact in their construction of masculinity. Lewis (2009) observes that men, who are jobless, experience an irrational fear of redundancy, and a feeling of inadequacy. That feeling is caused by the fear of not meeting the breadwinner’s role. Lewis surmises Sydney Walker’s situation. Sydney’s situation represents the loss of white power. He is an emasculated man whose diminishing masculinity has shattered him. He is in a dilemma because he can neither stay in Kenya nor go back to England. Sydney’s race which was an earlier advantage during the colonial period has now become his Achilles heel. He laments his predicament to his doctor friend who has faithfully stood beside the family in good and bad times:

… been out of England so long I would be lost there. Anyway, I had come to believe I am a permanent fixture here”. He looked hard at his watch: “In over two
decades since the war, the empire has disintegrated. There are not many places for us to go. (Dawood, 1991: 90)

Sydney feels alienated and rootless from his adopted “home”. The earlier promise of paradise has sadly turned to refuge and disillusionment. Despite working hard as an expatriate to lift the standards of his adopted Country, Sydney is betrayed by the new black power. He reveals his frustration to Dr Hyder:

I think I have been conned, “Sydney said as he commenced on his first double whisky on the rocks.

“I have been double-crossed, “Sydney added

… Sydney now elaborated. “How would you feel it after giving the best years of your life to a company, which as a result has become highly successful, you were told one fine morning that you had to go because your work permit had expired and could not be renewed?”

“I have been used,” Sydney concluded. (Dawood, 1991: 89)

Sydney’s frustration is a result of reversal of power. The whites no longer enjoy the earlier benefits they had because of a new political order. The few black elites who now control the apparatus of power become the dominant masculinity. To assert their dominance, these black men have to create difficult conditions for the former dominant power (whites) so that the latter can acknowledge them. It is a case of a once subordinate masculinity positioning itself in the new power order. The new black power seems to want to remind the whites that the former are now the dominant force. The once white dominant culture (hegemony) should now take a subservient position. Sydney Walker clearly outlines this antagonism between the white expatriates and the new black leaders to Dr Hyder: … “This is my home now. And even if I want to go back to England, I don’t want to be sent off like this …” (89). However, despite the
hostility against white expatriates black power is still very fragile. The fragility comes about because the whites are still a dominant force, despite losing political power. The whites still dominate the economic power and expertise that the new nation cannot easily do away with. Thus men like Charles Gethi who epitomise the new black elite perceive white men like Sydney Walker as a threat but also useful. Nonetheless, Charles and his ilk are aware that getting rid of the whites immediately can be catastrophic to the economy of the new nation. Walker comes to the realisation that the earlier privileges enjoyed by the British because of colonialism are over in the new post-colonial dispensation. Sydney’s life is a true representation of the crumbling of the empire. His attempt to fight for his place in the new Kenyan society through the renewal of the permit is a clear statement that the old order is over. He confesses to Dr Hyder about his predicament in the “new” country that now perceives him as a stranger:

In one’s own country, empire building also leads to empire retaining. In a developing country one has to work harder. The conditions are so vastly different, full of frustrations, not in frequently inimical and sometimes downright treacherous. And at the end of it all, there is always the threat of the permit not being renewed and the empire being pulled away from under your very feet. (Dawood, 1991: 45)

Sydney’s frustration at work affects his family life. It is therefore important to analyse his family life through his interaction with the female Other. The female Other include Sydney’s former wife, Anna and girlfriend Patricia. The two women strongly influence Sydney Walker’s masculinity. This explains the nexus between masculinity and femininity. Masculinity is strongly influenced by femininity. Connell (1995), when explaining about the notion of multiple masculinities, argues that men position themselves in relation to women and other men in relation to hegemonic standards. Focus on the family is important because it is an institution by
means of which men assert their masculinity. Moreover, many patriarchal societies use the family as a measure of masculinity.

**“Sowing Wild Oats”: British White Masculinity and the female Other**

In this section, the study analyses masculinities of Dawood’s white male characters in their interaction with the female Other. The two women that will be analysed are both white. The study seeks to find out if Dawood’s male characters reinforce or resist the notion of a weak feminine gender. Focus is on the relationship between Sydney Walker and the two women in his life: Anna and Patricia. Anna is Walker’s estranged wife whom he divorces later while Patricia is Sydney’s lover. The study seeks to find out if Dawood’s British white male characters treat women fairly or they not.

From the onset of the text, there is the objectification of women as sex tools that can be haggled over. Take for instance when Sydney nostalgically remembers “the good old colonial days.” He reminisces about how the men would dish out women among themselves: “The evening started with dancing and inevitably ended with pairing up. Men threw car keys on the central table and women with closed eyes picked them up. It seemed the fairest way of settling the matter” (7). The thesis contends that the women have been portrayed as objects of sexual gratification by the men. Women are symbols used by the men to affirm their masculinity. Sex is the arena in which the men test their virility. Walker is caught by bouts of guilt when he tries to retract his statement in a dialogue with Dr Hyder: “I must put the record straight in case you get an impression that we were just boozing and screwing,” (9). He does not want to appear misogynistic, but the die has already been cast. Sydney’s turnabout is caused by the fear of appearing uncivillised; after all, he
is a British expatriate who is expected to exude British gentility. The gentility is just a façade. Butler (2005) truly captures this scenario by explaining that men are not men because of what they are, but what they do. Sydney’s same apologist attitude is re-enacted in another scene in the description of his employee and later lover, Patricia:

Patricia was sent to tackle the job. When Sydney interviewed her, he saw she was blonde. When she started working for him, he realized that she was not a dumb blonde. She had loads of personality. She carried her tall figure gracefully. Her long shapely legs ran up to small dainty hips and her thin waist rose to her pointed upright breasts. She had a long neck and a face which had good features in the right proportion. Her thin lips, dimple on her chin, sharp pointed nose, high cheek bones, large blue eyes, long eyelashes and a narrow forehead, all combined to give her face a special beauty … But her physical attributes were only the first impression. They were secondary to her secretarial competence. (Dawood, 1991: 70)

The study argues that Sydney Walker perpetuates this masculinist objectification of women. Walker puts more emphasis on Patricia’s physical attributes, which seem to hold more sway in her getting the job than her intellect. She is more of an object of admiration to be judged by the male dominated world. Sydney’s first impression of the stereotypical dumb blonde reaffirms the masculinity notions on the female Other. He had already dismissed Patricia as incompetent based on pre-conceived misconception that is mostly perpetuated by the dominant male patriarchal society about blondes. The study argues that Patricia is judged more harshly at the interview panel because of her female gender. She is perceived in two fronts; Patricia the qualified client, and the woman. Unfortunately, the latter holds more weight in her employment in this patriarchal society. Her physical attributes are given more impetus and the study concludes that is what really impresses the boss to be: Sydney Walker. Men like Sydney take advantage of their social
position as employees to gain sexual favours. Just after the interview, within a few days, instead of a professional relationship an intimate relation develops:

During those weeks things moved fast. The debonair, tall, dark, handsome Sydney with his black curly hair and the very attractive, tall, slim Patricia with her blonde hair and blue eyes fell into each others arm … Patricia had liked Sydney Walker from the time he had hired her. She found his masculinity and mannerism irresistible. (Dawood, 1991: 71)

Though the study can blame men like Sydney for taking advantage of women, some women like Patricia also cement the mind/body notion. They sanction this patriarchal order that perceives them as sex objects. Patricia does not resist, but rather falls into the trap. In fact, she seems to enjoy her entrapment. It is as if that is what she was expecting. To Patricia, it seems that her manipulative physical body is what has given her the job. Moreover, the study can argue that the men enact a public demonstration of their heterosexual virility as heroic. Sydney has the audacity to move around in public with Patricia even though he is married. This behaviour irritates Anna very much yet her husband does not care. Anna confesses to Dr Hyder her disgust with Sydney’s behavior. She bemoans that she is so disgusted and embarrassed (83). However, other men seem not to see the problem with Sydney’s sexual exploits. What he is doing is a “man’s thing” according to his boss, Charles Gethi who is not amused: “I knew Sydney would one day adapt himself to our polygamous system” (38). Sydney seems to be enjoying the whole spectacle. It is a new conquering ground that massages his male macho ego. He has a feeling of triumph: “It was inevitable that he should compare her with Anna. They were poles apart … The contrast aroused in him a warm response” (70).
Anna is the face of British feminine dignity and nobility in the text. She remains faithful to her husband even after a divorce and unfaithfulness from the latter. Fanon (1967) explains that the body of the white woman is associated with “white civilization and dignity” (45). Though the dignity, as is evident in Anna’s case, comes with a heavy price. During Sydney’s earlier explorations outside Britain, he would leave Anna behind. This was during their early courtship period. Anna confides to Dr Hyder of her husband’s earlier unfaithfulness:

Every time he came back I saw more changes in him. It was obvious to me that he was not leading a chaste life. He was too much of a man to deprive himself of pleasures that must have come to him more easily. But he never made advances to me beyond the limits of normal decency. Somehow I sensed that while he was sowing wild oats in foreign territories, he wanted to preserve me on a pedestal.

(Dawood, 1991: 20)

Anna’s sentiments point out to her subjugated position. She is very much aware of the sexual exploits of her husband to be, but she can do very little because it is “a man’s thing”. She is resigned to the idea that despite the irritation, she has to bear with it. After all, to her (Anna), it is the “nature” of men. Marriage to Anna serves as a plethora of injustices, yet she has really struggled to cement the relationship. Newton and Deborah (1985) define such a marriage as an intersection of multiple oppression. Anna loses both a baby and a husband despite her innocence. Against this backdrop of immorality, Sydney also loses another child with Patricia who aborts after getting information that Sydney had a child with Anna. Patricia candidly confesses to Sydney: “I went straight back to the doctor and asked him to take it out” (77). Ironically, Sydney still has the audacity to blame Anna for the loss of the two children. He even uses it as a justification for his divorce with her. The women are in a very subservient position. In this British patriarchal system, the female other is always to blame in a relationship. Sydney reveals
her irritation for Anna to Dr Hyder: “She has killed two of my children and my love for her has
dried up.”(81). He does not admit blame yet he is the cause of all the problems. Sydney’s
calendar of exercising his phallic power is sanctioned by the dominant patriarchal society. Segal
(2001) argues that society tends to sustain the symbolic power of the phallus. Therefore, men’s
wrong behaviour toward women is tolerated. According to Sydney, Anna is the good girl who
should be preserved as wife material, yet the former still had the liberty to explore other affairs
outside their marriage. Lemer (1997) explains the predicament of white women in the colonised
territories. He posits white men in colonies subjugated white women as an important mechanism
of maintaining racial dominance. The white men fronted the notion of ‘protection’ of the
‘vulnerable’ and ‘precious’ white woman from the black Other. The protection was to ensure the
continuation of a superior race. Thus, there is considerate sexual policing of the women. Take for
instance the relationship between Sydney Walker and Anna. When they migrate and settle in
Kenya after their marriage in England, Sydney provides Anna with all the material things she
needs. He does not expect her to work but stay at home and only socialise with other expatriate
wives at their homes. Sydney thinks he has fulfilled his breadwinner’s role as the traditional
dominant male and Anna, the dutiful wife. Anna is trapped in the cultural norms of British
gentility that requires women to be chaste and honourable. Anna is not domesticated at home like
the typical African woman. She even has a house help called Mutua. However, her bone of
contention is that she plays a very minimal role in her husband’s life. She stays home as a trophy
woman to be pampered with whatever she asks for. However, Sydney forgets the emotional
aspect, and as the typical “man”, he gets bored with his traditional wife and starts having an
affair. This is the reward of Anna’s dutifulness: unfaithfulness by the man she loves. Anna
posits:
I know and yet I feel so bitter, “Anna complained. “To support him as his crutch when he was struggling to make a success of his life and to be discarded when we are both ready to enjoy the fruits of our labour, that seems the ultimate betrayal. (Dawood, 1991: 80)

Anna attempts to commit suicide by taking an overdose of tranquilizers because of Sydney’s immorality. She even loses their daughter: “Overnight the untamed Tania succumbed to her seizures and died” (60). Ironically, Sydney blames Anna for his unfaithfulness: “I will get my priorities right and hopefully Anna will revert back to what she was, a nice wholesome English girl without expatriate hang-ups and colonial claustrophobia” (51). The couple never reconcile and they later divorce, with Sydney settling with the younger Patricia. However, life is not a bed of roses with Patricia who has an affair with a younger man named Joe Brindley:

In Nairobi, Patricia and Joe made the most of their freedom. Sydney’s absence kept them locked in each other’s arms. They had to keep out of the public eye and the servants’ gaze. Joe’s flat in Mimosa Court came very handy. Everyday after work Joe arrived at Lavington, stayed there for drinks and dinner and then took Patricia to his flat and brought her back home before midnight. Sydney’s overseas calls usually came just before 12 Nairobi time, so as not to disturb Patricia’s beauty sleep. (Dawood, 1991: 109)

Joe is a young expatriate lawyer who has just migrated to Kenya. He has been sent away by his father who is of the opinion that the young man might not “grow up” at home. The father wants to instill in the young man aspects of British manhood. Joe’s father’s act is reminiscent to that of Leshao’s father in To Become a Man, who also wanted to instill in the young man Maasai masculinity by initiating him, and pressuring the young man to join cattle raids. Kanitkar (1994) describes how young British boys were expected to forge their manhood during the period of British imperialism:
Within the frame of British imperialism, manhood is achieved through the enactment of rites that ‘separated them [boys] from home and the familiar, most particularly from their mothers’ care and influence, where they, ‘were to suffer the dominance of older boys with authority over them’ and they ‘were expected to stand on their own feet until the time came for them to exercise authority and power in their turn. (184)

He shares similar traits with the younger Sydney Walker in terms of sexual escapades in the colonial country. It is part of the imperial adventure. Webster (1999) in comparing British men at home and abroad, notes that the men at home were devoid of adventure unlike their counterparts in foreign lands. However, there are also generational differences between the two men. Sydney epitomises the old generation white male from colonial times, while Joe is the young modernised urbanised macho man full of virility. Hence there is a struggle between the old and new British masculinity. The struggle pitting the two masculinities is over the feminine Other. The issue of virility among the two men seems to be the yardstick. The dialogue between Patricia and Joe reveals this:

How do I rate in comparison to your regular?” Joe Brindley could not conceal his crude curiosity.

“He is marvelous when he is really with me,” Patricia replied as she caressed his back.

“Unfortunately half the time his mind is on his company and at other times he is too drunk to concentrate on me.”

“Mind you, “Joe said as he tickled the side of Patricia’s sole “You are being a bit unfair comparing him with me, a carefree young bachelor.” (Dawood, 1991: 108)

The odds seem to be against Sydney Walker who seems to be losing his phallic power because of age. His virility is being compared to that of a young energetic man who is carefree and does not
carry many burdens. In contrast, Sydney is so stressed both at the company and his social life that he has resorted to drinking. Sydney’s loss is double-edged. The new black leaders led by Gethi dismiss him from a job to which he has given his best. The man had even sacrificed his relationships because of the company. This sacrifice culminates in his divorce and the loss of two children. Sydney feels like a total failure. He reflects on the paradox of his life: “Sydney lay there immobile and inscrutable. A man can’t have everything, he thought, that seemed to the law of nature … he needed more than one feeling to satiate his love. Tania had touched a new cord in his seething emotions” (61). Tania is Sydney’s daughter who dies because of the overdose of drugs that Anna had taken. Sydney feels that the loss of his children and lack of a stable family are two of the most devastating misfortunes to have befallen him. Thus, Sydney fails in this important role and society is ready to judge him harshly. He has gone against the socially constructed norm that successful man needs to have a stable family. On the other hand, there is betrayal from Patricia his lover who opts to have an affair with the younger Joe. Moreover, the two (Patricia and Joe) plot to disinherit Sydney of all his benefits. To Sydney, the centre cannot hold anymore as things have really fallen apart. Nonetheless, this thesis contends that British patriarchal society is what has created Sydney Walker’s personality. His heroic “exploits” later come to haunt him.

Patricia fights against patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. She uses her sexuality to assert herself between two antagonistic men. Patricia’s behaviour brings to the fore Foucault’s (1976) assertion that power is exercised in multiple and complex ways not limited to the oppressor or oppressed. In this section’s case, the oppressed (subordinate female) is exercising power over the
dominant male using sexuality. Butler (1990) also argues that women play an active role in the construction of their identities and challenge dominant representations. Patricia has deconstructed the image of the subservient dutiful white woman as earlier represented by Anna. She is aggressive and ready to use all means to get whatever she wants. Furthermore, she has challenged the patriarch of white British colonial masculinity into submission. Sydney’s later action of driving himself recklessly to his death bed because of rejection from Anna represents that challenge. When Sydney finds out, he is very upset. His pride cannot allow another man to go this far into his territory. He finds out the plot and rewrites his will, bequeathing all his property to his former wife Anna and a certain percentage to his faithful servant Mutua. When Patricia refuses to go on holiday with him instead preferring to stay with Joe, the final cast is made. Sydney dies in a road accident caused by his reckless driving:

He had just passed Emali township on his right and was approaching the bridge. His rage, his humiliation, a feeling of betrayal both by his company and his wife, all seemed to taunt him. Sydney’s fury and anguish erupted in his right foot which he kept plastered down on the accelerator … The Mercedes had gone over the railings and lay on its roof. (Dawood, 1991: 136)

Sydney Walker’s demise can have several interpretations. It portends the end of British colonial dominance in Kenya. On the other hand, it signifies the challenge to the white British patriarchy by the female Other. Though white patriarchy has not really crumbled, the female voice has occupied a space that had initially been cordoned off. Take for instance, the case of Anna, Sydney’s former wife who had relocated to Britain after the acrimonious divorce. After Sydney’s accident, he requests her presence. Sydney, the archetypical British male, has finally acknowledged the important role of the female Other. It is a sort of female emancipation. The
subaltern can finally be acknowledged. The study argues that the author seems to propagate the notion of gender complementation. Sydney also bequeath a big chunk of his property to his ex-wife to the surprise of his former lover and current wife Patricia. Though Sydney’s contempt for women was not extreme, he had some misogynistic tendencies especially against his wife Anna.

**Conclusion**

This section has clearly delineated the life of the British expatriate arrival in Kenya during and after colonialism. The dwindling white man’s fortune in the Kenyan post-colonial state has had serious deleterious effects to his masculinity as well as his family life. The “Africanisation” project that led to loss of power coupled with failed marriages have been quite detrimental to Sydney’s stature in a society that he once dominated. The archetypical British male represented by Sydney Walker opts to exit the stage rather than succumb to this new force that challenges his masculinity. However, Sydney Walker’s death brings many questions to the fore. Is it escapism? Does the author imply that when the dominant masculine force in society (hegemonic) faces possibility of subordination, exiting the stage rather than confronting the new order becomes the solution? The study argues that Sydney’s death and his evident resistance to the new dispensations do not augur well to the shifting masculine terrain in society. The section also reveals that masculinity in Kenya is not a homogenous and monolithic category. It debunks the notion of masculinity in Kenya and Africa in general as only a black man’s affair. It thus recognizes the diversity of race and culture within Kenya. Furthermore, it concurs with Makokha’s (2011) assertion that studies on different cultures within East Africa unite the national cultures in the wake of strong globalisation processes. The second section focused on masculinity in traditional African society (pre-colonial period), while this one focused on white
masculinity during the colonial and post-colonial period. Thus the next section, so as to have a chronological sequence, will focus on urban masculinity in the post-colonial Kenyan society. It will specifically limit itself to Peter Kiman’s *Before the Rooster Crows*. The section will analyse how the black Kenyan man adopts to this new dispensation. Focus will be more on the ordinary Kenyan man rather than the few elite black men like Charles Gethi, who took over leadership and privileged positions in society. The study’s justification of selecting this group is on the ground that they are the majority in the society. Hence, they are a better representation of the life of men in Kenyan society.
Chapter Four

Post-colonial Black Masculinity in the Metropolis: Peter Kimani’s *Before the Rooster Crows*.

This section interrogates post-colonial black masculinities in Peter Kimani’s *Before the Rooster Crows*. Carton (2001) and Everett, (2000) aver that urban masculinity compared with rural masculinity is not strictly governed by traditional norms. They argue that there are new urbanite youths who strive to create a new status of manhood and masculinity by defining themselves violently against their fathers and authority. There is an outright rejection of family and fathers. The study seeks to interrogate Carton and Everett’s assertion through analysis of urban masculinity in Peter Kimani’s *Before the Rooster Crows* (2002). The section interrogates this new form of urban masculinity through the life of the main protagonist, Muriuki’s life in the city. A crucial strand that the study will explore is the relationship between the protagonist and the female Other, the effect of turbulent relationships on the male protagonist’s feelings and emotions.

The setting of the novel gives a clear picture of the post-colonial Kenyan society. *Before the Rooster Crows* is set in the urban center. The novel implicitly explores how masculinity is negotiated in the city by the main protagonist, Muriuki. In this section, masculinity in urban Kenya is the metropolitan. Thus masculinity manifested there is a symbol of the superior west, while rural Kenya represents the inferior east. The rural areas represent a traditional form of masculinity.
Re (Historicizing) Post-colonial Kenyan Black Masculinity.

It is not possible to talk about post-colonial black masculinity in Kenya without understanding the social-historical context. A brief analysis of Kenyan history enables the studies have a clear understanding of the emergent masculinities in post-colonial Kenya, hegemonic and subordinate. Moreover, it will enable the study explore the binary positions of victim/victimizer and oppressor/oppressed that exist in the text. These dichotomies exist because of unequal power relations in the emerging black Kenyan post-colonial society. Self in the context represents the privileged new black elite whose manifestation of masculinity is hegemonic. They dominate the masses politically, socially and economically. On the other hand, the Other are the downtrodden black masses in the lower society stratum (the subaltern-women are also included). As earlier stated in the analysis of One Life Too Many, the minority black elite (represented by Charles Gethi) acquired hegemonic masculinity after they took over power from the departing British. The protagonist in Before the Rooster Crows, Muriuki is part of the oppressed masses-the subaltern and manifests subordinate masculinity.

The study argues that history has a strong influence on people’s lives. Thus writers focus on the social-political conditions of a certain period to explain the conditions of their characters. Nussbaum (2008) asserts that: “All human emotions are in part about the past, and bear the traces of a history that is at once commonly human, socially constructed and idiosyncratic” (177). Silverman (1992) also argues that some men, especially in the post-colonial world, inherit historical conditions which involve historical trauma.
Keith Nurse (qtd. in Reddock, 2003) observes that historically, subordinate masculinities have been constructed and represented as effeminate and infantile to distinguish them from hegemonic forms (5). A close analysis of the life of Muriuki in Before the Rooster Crows will give a clear depiction of Nurse’s argument. Muriuki in Before the Rooster Crows, inherits many challenges because of being on the wrong side of history, a history that privileges a few individuals. He is categorised by the patriarchal society as effeminate and infantile.

Muriuki’s rural area is located in central Kenya. This was the epicenter and hotbed of resistance against the British colonial rule in colonial Kenya. The majority of the Mau Mau freedom fighters came from this area. The grabbing of land and detention of Mau Mau fighters by the British caused the considerable disempowerment of men. The men that were detained lost their lands which were given to the loyalists especially the home guards. Their families were forced into reserves. This disempowerment led to the emasculation of many men who could not provide for their families. In fact many women were left in the homesteads to fend for the families as the men hid or joined the revolt. This led to a shift in gender roles with women heading the households. This trend is still very common in contemporary Kenya in the Central region.

After independence and the exit of the British, former home guards and collaborators who worked for the British, acquired these lands. These home guards had the privilege of being close to the British. The home guards and their families easily acquired colonial education and filled the leadership positions in the new government. This dispossession of land and oppression led to
the beginning of the Mau Mau revolt. The few ruling elite exude hegemonic masculinity because of political and economic might, while the rest of the majority citizens that include are categorized as subordinate masculinities. The latter are economically and socially disempowered because of poverty. In the figure of Muriuki, Kimani presents the reality of disempowered men.

Muriuki opts to migrate from the rural, undeveloped world to the urban developed world. The city is his center, the face of western civilization and development. Indeed, it is Muriuki’s dream to exit from rural poverty. Disillusionment with the rural life hastens his departure to the “place of his dreams”:

His sense of anguish was worsened by the beckoning Gichagi nightlife that he could ill-afford: the appetizing mitura nesting on the sizzling brazier in butcheries, the baked cakes that snuggled on the shops’ glass displays, the nicely wrapped lollipops. When he visited the shops on errands and watched other youths indulge in what to him was the ultimate indulgence, Muriuki cursed all the way. More curses were cast when he knocked his toes on the rock-out cropping that dotted the uneven Gichagi tracks. (Kimani, 2002: 10)

The post-colonial Kenyan society is already demarcated. The class divide between the few rich and the majority poor is very large. Poverty levels are highest in the rural areas. Hence, Muriuki’s reason for migration cannot be criticised. Fanon (1986) explains that none of us is outside the psychic and social structures that define some human being as superior and others as inferior. He argues that as human beings, we are all embedded and formed within them.

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1 *Gichagi* means “village” in the Kikuyu language.
2 *Mitura* is a delicacy among the Kikuyu made from “cow intestines.”
According to Fanon, stratification is found in all human societies though in varied forms, such as race, class or even gender.

Moreover, Muriuki’s migration to the city is inevitable because he is the only man left in his family. Muriuki’s mother is a widow and also a peasant farmer. The village does not seem to provide any means of feeding his expectant family:

Muriuki looked at the expectant faces of his sisters and brothers and felt weak at the mighty challenge before him. They looked up to him as their redeemer; as their guiding light. In a sense, he was their father too for their old man died long time ago. Muriuki was then a young boy, even too young to understand that his father had passed on. And when he became of age, he never asked his mother. He hadn’t asked her yet. He had vague fears that that would be like opening an old wound. He felt in his heart a sincere desire to help his family. He would do everything possible and see to it that their life of misery would be improved. (Kimani, 2002: 4)

Muriuki’s story can be seen as alluding to that of Christ and his most loved apostle Simon Peter in the Bible. Muriuki has been labeled as the redeemer of the family. Simon Peter had promised to stand by Christ till death. However, he denied the messiah after the rooster crowed thrice. This suggests that Muriuki is a Simon Peter figure who abandons the master (family) at the most crucial time. Thus Muriuki has to fulfill the role of the absent father. This is the dominant type of masculinity he is expected to fulfill as the designated “patriarch” and eldest son in the homestead. The pressure to fulfill that hegemonic form of masculinity emanates from the family, community and eventually country. That is the price of being a man in a patriarchal society. Kabesh (2013) argues that masculinity as an identity is gained not just from the family or individual’s predisposition, but much more critically from wider social structures that includes
language, social economic and cultural institutions (5). Muriuki’s society therefore expects him to take up the mantle of feeding his family as the man. Unfortunately, he is disempowered economically. Silberschmidt (2001), earlier assertion on the disempowerment of black men in East Africa captures Muriuki’s predicament. Silberschmidt notes that social economic change has left men with a patriarchal ideology bereft of its legitimising activities. The study concurs with her. For example, young Muriuki is under considerable pressure. He is expected to meet the expectations of a large family that has pinned its hope on him as the “Man”. His social value, esteem and identity depend on meeting responsibilities that do not belong to him. Muriuki is still a very young man whose major objective would probably be to look for a job, enjoy the pleasures of life and later on look for a wife. The stark reality of carrying a family burden without any source of income is quite traumatising to his young masculinity.

Silberschmidt (2001) argues that power in the patriarchal system resides precisely in the fact that male authority requires a material base (657). As earlier noted after the loss of Sydney Walker’s job and his subsequent emasculated state, work plays an important role in the construction of masculinity. Muriuki faces a similar predicament. His current state of helplessness will definitely dent his masculine ego. He will perceive himself as being less of a man. Migration to the city thus becomes the only hope for his redemption. On the other hand, the study can also argue that migration is a form of escapism from the high expectations. Societal pressure in the city is less because there is less interaction with his family and peers. Migration is an imagined gateway to temporary freedom. In the urban centers there is less “policing” of these traditional roles.
The Price of Manhood

Muriuki’s life epitomises that of the majority, Kenyan poor who inherited poverty caused by colonialism and poor governance after independence. When Muriuki migrates to the city, he encounters a new form of masculinity, one different from the one in the village. The young man is torn between two forces of masculinity, traditional masculinity and the new form of urban masculinity. The challenge is how he attempts to reconcile the two forms of masculinity.

Muriuki is also a victim of two very powerful forces: the traditional society, which expects him to perform his patriarchal duties without considering his current poverty (traditional masculinity), and the new forces (modernity) both internal and external that control the new independent country. Lindsay and Miescher (2003) commenting on the crisis of masculinity after the end of colonialism note that:

The decline of the nation-state and the end of colonialism also marks the concomitant historical crisis of the values it represented, chiefly masculine authority founded and embodied in patriarchal family, compulsory heterosexuality, and the exchange of women all articulated in the crucible of imperial masculinity. (28)

Men like Muriuki find themselves engulfed by the post-independence slump of the 1960s in many African countries. Men could no longer find work in the cities. Rather than stay jobless in the rural area, Muriuki still opts to search for a job in the hostile city:

He marveled at what he was seeing, and decided he was very lucky to be in the city. The core of sophistication. (sic)The source of all that is good and dignified … He stood to admire the powerful engines that roared down the road, and instantly envied those behind the wheels. In his mind, he imagined how he would
drive one such car one day. He would ride to Gichagi and hoot and wave to passers-by and give lifts to those he knew. He would drive his family. (Kimani, 2002: 19)

Young Muriuki is living in an illusion. He believes that the city unlike the village will give him riches. He is ever eager to restore his “manly” esteem back in the village. That is why he looks forward to confirming to the village he has made it. The quest for wealth is not only for Muriuki’s own comfort, but a confirmation that he has passed the test of true “manhood”. He is very optimistic:

But he need not worry, he consoled himself. As long as he tried hard enough, everything was possible and within reach. Doors would be opened if he knocked hard enough; prayers would be answered if he prayed earnestly. Then there was Mumbi waiting for him. He was glad to be in the city. (Kimani, 2002: 20)

Mumbi is Muriuki’s childhood sweetheart who migrates to the city before he does. Just like Muriuki, the village poverty and disillusionment make her look for better fortunes in the city: “Mumbi had fled from the uncertain life much earlier. Her departure from Gichagi for the unknown was sudden; not even Muriuki her friend and confidant for many years got wind of it” (10). However, the unfortunate bit is that the migrants’ fate (Muriuki and Mumbi) is beyond their control. There are other external forces that Muriuki and Mumbi cannot control despite their hard work and enthusiasm. Lindsay and Meischer (2003) describe these external forces that are quite predominant in the third world:

The challenges of development in the third world are vast and have become greater with globalization and the spread of free-Market ideology. The gap between the First and Third world is getting larger, but of equal concern is the growing stratification of the Third World populations as the poor get poorer and new middle class often associated with the apparatuses of state get richer. (99)
There are a lot of societal expectations that weigh down on Muriuki because of his male gender. These expectations emanate from the traditions in African set up. Silberschmidt (2001) notes that aspects of masculinity that have roots in the pre-colonial African are still valued in the post-colonial era (53). She lists some of the aspects of what a respectful and good man should do in traditional African cultures. The man should be able to take care of his family, educate his children, pay fees, marry many wives and get many children. Furthermore, he is supposed to assist the community (communalism). Take for instance the burden Muriuki shoulders to provide for his siblings and mother. There is immense pressure on him to fulfill these societal expectations. The young man is quite optimistic that the city can help him cement his “manhood” so as to take his “rightful respectable position in his village. Muriuki’s return to the village is pegged on achieving these “unwritten” societal standards. However, striving to achieve these qualities of an ideal African man comes with a big price. Friedriken (2000) commentary best illustrates Muriuki’s situation. Friedriken asserts that:

Traditional ordering of relations between genders and generations based on hierarchy and authority is now largely history, and more clearly so in towns than in the countryside. A moral ordering in this area survives, however, as societal memory as scattered practices, particularly important in relation to reproductive strategies, and most of all with poor urban youth, as an absence and a yearning. Poor families have less opportunities of substituting old orders with new ones because of situation of instability and lack of material and immaterial resources. (221)

Economic independence becomes Muriuki’s first priority. He begins job hunting. This is after he is disappointed by Mumbi (his lover) who lives in the city. The young man begins to encounter the new urban masculinity that depends on survival, individualism and stoicism. Muriuki initially
enters the city with anticipation that Mumbi is warmly waiting for him. His anxiety is evident in the vehicle. Muriuki still carries the traditional rural spirit of hospitality:

Muriuki squeezed into a seat, clutching his paper bag carefully. A rusty speaker coughed to life; and belted a song Muriuki could not quite place. “We are going … Heaven knows, we are going …we know we are! … went the song, Muriuki liked the prophetic tone of the words. He was going, too, he told himself. Heaven knew he was in his way to see Mumbi! How delighted she would be, he mused. She would be pleasantly surprised. (Kimani, 2002: 21)

The song symbolises Muriuki’s dreams and aspirations. He is travelling to achieve success and unite with his childhood sweetheart. The song gives him hope of divine intervention in his pursuit despite the challenging circumstances. The city is Muriuki’s Canaan as he escapes from the village wilderness. Unfortunately, to Muriuki’s rude shock, the city is filled with callous and inhuman individuals. Individualism is the order of the day. Muriuki is roughed up when he eats in a hotel and cannot pay. The young man falls short of money after he parts with some coins to assist a beggar. However, the explanation to the hotel owner is received with a lot of sarcasm. In the city, sympathy is not a common norm. Violence is meted on Muriuki ferociously:

“That bloke has eaten to his fill and now says he shouldn’t pay because he gave his money to a beggar!” the cashier exclaimed.

“Is it true?” Simba hissed. By now, everyone was listening attentively to the unfolding saga. Even the draught players had stopped their game.

“What does he think this is?” one posed. “A home for the destitute?”

“or a church?” Another contributed … Suggestions then poured in on what should be done to him.

“Strip him naked and keep his clothes” “ Beat some sense into his head.” “detain him for the night” “ Let him bring his beggar friend and confirm his story.” “Tickle his ribs till he vomits all the food.” The last one elicited laughter as did the next one, “Make him peel a sack of potatoes, then let him feed on the peel.” Suddenly, Simba grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and threw quick heavy punches to his belly, followed by a mighty kick that made him stagger through the
doorway, knocking his head on the lower frame. A loud applause greeted his exit. (Kimani, 2002: 27)

The nuances of the dialogue by the men in the room depict a new type of city masculinity. Violence is cherished. The men have been hardened by a life of disillusionment because of urban poverty. Muruiki’s entrance and situation is kind of catharsis for them. His constant ridiculing and embarrassment serves as an outlet for them to vent their own frustrations. Moreover, urban capitalism has exalted money above everything else. Materialism has seeped into the societal fabric and replaced traditional values of humanity like kindness or sympathy. Hence lack of money is a disaster as Muriuki finds out. It is also the study’s contention that most of these men have also not lived up to the ideals of a “real man” and thus have low self esteem. They are emasculated men. Thus violence is the language they understand. It is the only way they can assert their masculinity. Society has rejected them as losers or “lesser men”. The traditional norms of hospitality have disappeared. Violence is their relative response to the loss of power. Xaba cited in Morell (2001) tries to explain the new form of urban masculinity when commenting about masculinity and urban violence in South Africa’s poor neighbourhoods (especially black neighbourhoods). He points out that during socialisation, young urban boys are initiated into gang cultures that stress on violent behaviour. Herald (1999) argues that manhood is synonymous with violence. However, this equation of masculinity with violence can be contested. Herald argues that such violence in Africa emerged from the traditional socialisation of warrior hood and the fear of being called a coward. Amin MaMa cited in Alexander and Mohanty (1997) opines that violence in the third world is a direct legacy of colonialism. However, as the thesis argues earlier, it is not only colonialism but also poor post-colonial leadership. This leads to disillusionment in the new political order. Colonialism has an influence,
but it cannot be entirely blamed. After some time in the city, Muriuki later reflects on this new sense of urban masculinity “His brief experience in the city had taught him that Gichuka was a complicated place to live in and required shrewd minds to interpret every situation” (42). He is now aware that unlike in the village, city life needs a different kind of approach, a self interested individual masculinity.

Apart from the humiliation Muriuki receives from being beaten up by fellow men, he is also embarrassed when he finds Mumbi with another man. Muriuki shared a fire with the watchman while keeping watch of Mumbi’s apartment overnight with the watchman waiting for the former’s return but only to be disappointed. Mumbi comes late in the night with a man oblivious that her childhood sweetheart was waiting for her. This situation hurts Muriuki more than the physical violence meted on him. His virility is challenged. Sex is a powerful tool used by men to assert their sexuality. Thus the loss of a girlfriend to another man heralds disempowerment and symbolic emasculation. Muriuki’s childhood lover and soon to “be” wife has the temerity to move with another man:

The early morning light found two forlorn figures reclining over what a few hours earlier had been a blazing fire. Now the fire had gone out and replaced by cold ash. Muriuki had not uttered a word since Mumbi passed before his very eyes, bringing along with her a man. He just hid his head in shame and wept. After all he had gone through to be with her, this was a disappointing anti-climax. He had attempted, to storm Mumbi’s house and flush her out and demand an explanation. But the askari had prevailed upon him. “Never jump into conclusions,” he had warned him. “That woman might disown you, she could even call you a thief.” Muriuki could not imagine Mumbi betraying him, but had he not witnessed it all?

“And who to knows,” the askari added. “Maybe that’s the man who pays her rent. In any case, he could be a dangerous man. Could be carrying a knife or a gun.” At
the thought of more violence, Muriuki had cringed, crouched near the fire and sobbed silently. (Kimani, 2002: 31)

The thought of a man crying is not very common. It clearly depicts the type of pain Muriuki has gone through. Men in many societies are socialised at an early age to resist any element of showing weakness (Seidler, 1999). Muriuki’s situation is reminiscent to that of the protagonist Sydney Walker in One Life Too Many. The reality of being emasculated by fellow men is too much for both men to cope with. Though unlike Sydney Walker who opts to commit suicide, Muriuki moves on with stoic dignity:

Tears burnt in his eyes and he unsuccessfully tried to fight them back. A church bell tolled in the distance, as if to remind him that what he really needed was some prayers...He had a new resolve when he rose. He dusted his clothes and ruffled through his hair. He wet his fingers and wiped his eyes. Then he walked on...But there was no turning back. He had to move on. Mumbi had betrayed him and he had to forget her. He wanted to put the widest distance between himself and her. (Kimani, 2002: 32)

Silberschmidt (2001) posits that disempowered men in East Africa sometimes use multi-partnered or extra-marital sexual relations to boost their masculinity and low self-esteem (666). Muriuki’s emasculation or frustration is further heightened by his low socio-economic status. Muriuki becomes aware that he cannot maintain Mumbi in the city when he is jobless. The watchman, who is quite a realist, candidly tells Muriuki that Mumbi’s companion is economically better off than Muriuki. In a nutshell, in the struggle for Mumbi, it was inevitable that Muriuki was bound to lose. Muriuki is hurt because of having to be subordinate to a fellow man. Connell (1995) explains that the most ideal form of masculinity emphasised in most patriarchal societies is hegemonic. Hegemonic masculinity puts a lot of emphasis on dominance. Muriuki is forced to a subordinate type of masculinity that wounds his ego.
Muriuki feels helpless, inadequate and of low self-esteem, because he has no control over Mumbi. Silberschmidt notes that a man’s honor, reputation, ego and masculinity are severely affected if he cannot control his wife. Although Mumbi is not Muriuki’s wife, they are planning to get married. Silberschmidt further argues that a man’s code of honour is associated with an agency or self-defense against encroachment from the outside, and men are projected into an active role, the role of controller and aggressor (660). Connell (1995) also concurs when she argues that most notions of masculinity are closely associated with virility, sexuality, potency, fertility and male honor. The askari, a fellow man who is old empathises with Muriuki. Due to his advanced age and long stay in the city, he has seen it all:

He sincerely pitied Muriuki, but this was a tragedy that knew no age or race. Broken hearts littered life’s road. Some were smashed beyond repair; others shelled but in fact, just enough to feel the pain and reel from hurt. Love, he mused, was like measles – it never failed to strike, once in a lifetime. He could empathise with Muriuki. Perhaps it was a love that sprouted early and was due to bloom. Now it had been snuffed out. But these were the ways of the world, he philosophized. Love remained elusive to the end. It could be lost in drunken brawls in dingy pubs; it could even be lost to a moneyed man. Muriuki lost his to Gichuka. (Kimani, 2002: 33)

Muriuki has lost a physical and psychological battle that can be perceived from a sexual perspective. The idea of a man sleeping with his lover is too much for him. That is why Muriuki is tempted to burst into Mumbi’s house and fight Gichuka. Despite Muriuki’s resolve to forget about Mumbi and move on, the contest will surely not end there. Muriuki has to try to get back Mumbi to reassert his lost masculinity. Conquering Mumbi sexually again is an act of redemption that he must fulfill. Moving forward and forgetting is just a psychological
consolation. Kimmel (1987) explains that sexual performance is one of the crucial arenas in which masculinity is socially constructed and enacted. He further points out that performance failure can challenge the essence of masculinity and comfort in men with the possibility that they are not “real” men. However, Muriuki’s loss of virility is not in the sense of physical sexual contact, but is rather, psychological. Bourdieu (1998) commenting on the link between sexuality, violence and masculinity argues that the erect phallus represents the dynamic vitality fundamental to sexuality and procreation. He points out that men are prisoners and victims of their role as the dominating sex. Bourdieu’s observation further explains Muriuki’s disappointment and humiliation.

Muriuki’s short stay in the city reveals to him that city life is not easy. Furthermore, there is a new brand of masculinity that is being forcefully imposed on him. To be a man in the city requires financial power, aggression and strong will-power. Muriuki strives to get a job. Linden Lewis (2003) explains the importance of work in the construction of masculinity. She opines that men perhaps more than women, have tended to define their gender identity in part, through work. Thus, Muriuki has to strive to find work. Moreover, the instance of finding his girlfriend with a well endowed man also pushes him to work hard and get a job. “Love” in the city, unlike in rural areas, was fully pegged on financial stability. Muriuki’s village love which is quite genuine might not work around the city. It is a period of economic capitalism where money is what matters in all facets of life existence. This is Muriuki’s second urban masculine initiation. One had to fight for love through financial stability. Unfortunately, landing on a job is also very difficult. Muriuki is nearly arrested when he goes to look for a job in a restaurant:
Appetizing aromas wafted from the café and the pangs of hunger were reactivated. This was the sort of place that he would have visited if he had money he mused … his thoughts were cut short by the shuffling feet, delicately balancing a tray of food and drinks in his hands. When halfway into the room, he saw Muriuki and his tray crashed. Instinctively, Muriuki ran to help him but this prompted the waiter to shout for help, yelling at Muriuki not to touch him. Panic gripped Muriuki and he retreated quickly… Maybe people would mistake him for a thief and beat him before he could explain anything. Dazed with fear, he dashed to the door and tried the lock. But, alas! The door could not open … He was trapped! As the man’s shouts for help grew loud a thought flashed in his mind. Like an angry animal, he charged at the glass door, splintering it into pieces. A gaping hole was left in the middle. (Kimani, 2002: 41)

The new socialisation aspect of manhood that is so entrenched in on the “provider ideology” seems very difficult for Muriuki to achieve. Muriuki’s experience gives a candid view of the Kenyan post-colonial independence state. There is high unemployment or underemployment in the sense that the casual work that is available provides an income that does not help one survive. Silberschmidt observes that in Kenya after independence, the minimum wage only provided the barest essential for a single man (661). Muriuki does not seem to get a job anywhere. In fact, jobseekers are perceived as intruders:

He tried a government office. These were the people who were well-versed with the vagaries of the city and the desperation of job seekers.

“Unataka nini?” 3 a helmeted man in blue uniform asked curtly. Before Muriuki could reply, the watchman swung his rungu4 menancily and showed him the door. He retreated fast. He suspected that the watchman would use this weapon with the least provocation, and he did not wait to have his good leg dislocated. (Kimani, 2002: 42)

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3 Unataka nini is a Swahili word that means “what do you want?”

4 Rungu means “club(wooden stick)” in Swahili.
Job seekers are perceived as intruders in government organisations which ironically are supposed to assist them. Instead of the guard politely telling him there were no vacancies, he threatens to beat Muriuki up. That is why individuals like Mumbi who are employed as barmaids have to supplement their income, by engaging in prostitution to survive. Women can no longer depend on men to provide for them. Muriuki is jobless and bills need to be paid. The traditional role of the woman as the care giver and man as the provider is greatly challenged in the city. His girl Mumbi, has to survive, to pay her bills. She opts to become a barmaid because of lack of any other available job. It is a job riddled with a lot of challenges. Take for instance Mumbi’s first day at work as a barmaid; she experiences a lot of mistreatment:

Mumbi was too confused to say anything. She just smiled and hoped that the whole rite was a joke by inebriated women. Nonetheless, she was overwhelmed by the reception, which was crowned by the opening of a beer that was splashed on her, then passed to her to sip and pass on to her new friends and family. Mumbi was later introduced to the hotel’s manager, whose name was Michuki. Tall and gaunt, he wore a cap with the fez turned round. He held her hand longer than was necessary when she greeted him and slapped her back when she turned. She disliked him instantly. (Kimani, 2002: 40)

The hotel manager displays an aspect of misogyny. The act of instantly trying to seduce Mumbi and slapping her behind is lack of respect. He views Mumbi as an object. This is another instance of patriarchal urban masculinity: little respect for women.

“Encounter with the Female Matador”: Reversed Roles
Muriuki starts undergoing depression caused by economic marginalisation and lack of self-esteem. Erickson (1980) argues that emasculated men undergo what is called an acute identity crisis. According to Erickson, this occurs because the self-image of these men does not correspond to the social reality. The self image refers what a man is required to be by the society.
Society expects men to be financially stable and perform the breadwinning role. Unfortunately, most men like Muriuki cannot meet these expectations in a society characterised by inequality. Then there are the new reversed gender roles caused by women becoming increasingly economically independent. This definitely becomes a threat to the male honour and ego. Saunders (2005) while discussing the men’s perceptions of masculinity in modern society, notes that as roles of men begin to change, many males start experiencing a lot of ambiguity about their roles (38). Muriuki experiences this when he lands a job at the company of Miriam, an independent woman. The lady named Mrembo is economically independent and does not need a man to provide for her. She wants to use Muriuki as a sex tool. She further wants to domesticate him which Mies cited in Silberschmidt calls “housewifization” of men. This new test to the desperate Muriuki puts him in a dilemma. Does he stand up to his ideals as a “real man” or submit to this economically independent woman? This dilemma puts Muriuki in a predicament. What happens when the hunter becomes the hunted; will society vilify him? These are the thoughts that run in Muriuki’s mind when he meets this daring woman. Miriam entices Muriuki with the promise of a better life if he would succumb to her will. She employs Muriuki as a messenger. Nevertheless, the conditions are quite challenging to this traditional African man. Muriuki is expected to go and sexually satisfy the boss at her home. That is his new additional job description:

“Not quite” Mrembo chose her words carefully. “You will have some obligations of course. We shall be living as man and wife.”

Muriuki was silent once again, trying to digest the news. “Living as man and wife means you shall have some obligations to me —— as your wife …! Mrembo

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5 The term “housewifization” implies that men have been confined to domestic chores that were earlier reserved for women.
giggled … “What could he say?” that he had agreed to be “kept” by a woman – as people in the village said of a man who lived of a woman? A woman whom he was not married to … Beyond this voice, he heard another one that sounded less harsh. It urged him to be sober in his judgment and realize what he stood to gain if he took up the offer – all the comforts he could enjoy if he stayed on; the warm bath in the big pool, the delicious food, the beautiful woman … Why he hadn’t looked at it that way, he wondered. But what about his conscience? Another voice demanded. “A tainted conscience “, answered the first voice, “Is a small price to pay for happiness.” (Kimani, 2002: 61)

Muriuki’s struggle emanates from a cultural socialisation process that expects men to be assertive and women passive. Interestingly, in this instance, the woman is the aggressor and controller using her financial might. Muriuki wonders whether to sacrifice his male honour. Silbesrchmidt argues that economically independent women represent an active and threatening power to male identity, social value and honor. Miriam possesses two additional powers over Muriuki; her sexuality and economic power and control. Finally, Muriuki’s masculinity triumphs. He rejects Miriam’s overtures. This corroborates Connell’s (1995) assertion that masculinity is so valued, so prized that one must always guard against losing it. Swart and Morell cited in Lindsay and Miescher (2003) also note that the power of men over women is a foundation of their masculinity. All these factors come into play as Muriuki rejects Miriam’s “noble” rescue package:

His thoughts then drifted to a different line; he would be scandalised once his charade leaked out. He saw the shocked face of his mother as his young siblings watched the mother weeping, without comprehending why. Body heaving. Weeping. Weeping over him… he unconsciously started to shake his head. “Get out! “ Mrembo said in a savage whisper. “I said, get out!” her voice was rising. “Out! Out! Out of my house!” it was now a shout. “I’ve never seen a greater fool. Foolish enough to disappoint a woman ….” (Kimani, 2002: 62)
By Muriuki not succumbing to Mrembo is a win for masculinity. If the author would have allowed Muriuki to succumb, it would implicitly also imply that masculinity has fully crumbled under women’s reversed roles. Lewis supports the notion of discarding the traditional gender roles. She notes that: “the reality is that the old order has essentially run its course” (10). According to Lewis, men must come to reality that women can no longer stay at home as traditional homemakers. However, the patriarchal societies represented by men like Muriuki fiercely resist such a change.

**Masculinity as a Tragic Mode.**

After abandoning his adventure with Miriam Mrembo, Muriuki is determined to acquire a decent job. The price of manhood is bitter but worth. Subordination by a female gender with all the necessities has to be shunned. Seidler (1992) captures Muriuki’s situation when he argues that masculinity has to be constantly reasserted in the continuous denial of “femininity” or feminine qualities. Though still poor, Muriuki is very proud of his triumph over a very tempting scenario. He nearly gives in to a “weaker” feminine character just because of his poverty. He moves on and continues looking for a job. However, the jobs available to an uneducated person are quite challenging. They are high risk jobs. Muriuki arrives at a construction site and inquires about a job. The scenario is quite frightening as revealed by the dialogue between Muriuki and the security officer guarding the site:

“I’m looking for a job.”

“Right on time! He exclaimed.

“What?” “I said you just arrived at the right time” he said, then went on to explain, “See that crowd there,” he pointed out at the milling crowd. “They’re watching a man who just dropped dead. Fell off the crane.” “happens everyday” the askari was saying,” and we need immediate replacement. You know, work must go on. Let the dead bury the dead.” Muriuki was scared. He did not want to
die. What would happen to his family if he died? “Got some papers?” He shook his head again. “And what sort of jobseeker are you? Without some papers, how are we ever going to know if you have received your pay? Or notify your people when you drop dead?”

“Potea!” he waved him away. (Kimani, 2002: 72)

This scene gives a clear picture of the struggles of the low income earners in the city. The rates of unemployment are high while the available jobs have low earnings and are very risky. Death is a very frequent occurrence. In fact, it seems that the life of many of those individuals does not really have any significance. After all, there are so many jobless people waiting for a similar job. This callousness in the post-colonial Kenyan urban society enumerates how class stratification and materialism has lowered the value of human life. The watchman’s confession that death was a normal occurrence at the work place clearly indicates that the rich owners of the company do not care. There are no safety measures out there to safeguard the life of the low class. The workers at that construction site are in a fatalistic state. They have resigned to their fate. Muriuki feels that despite his desperation, life had not taken him to that hopeless state. He is still optimistic that a bright future lies ahead. Moreover, there is a lot of expectation from the family back in the village. Muriuki does not want to disappoint them.

Muriuki later re-unites with Mumbi. This is a victory he has been longing for after watching Mumbi move away with another man. It is a moment of restoration to his bruised masculinity. Muriuki’s pride and ego had never healed from that earlier embarrassment. This is quite evident in his high spirits after the re-union: “She reeled off with mirth and he joined in. When he fell

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6 *Potea* is a Swahili name that means “go away”.

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asleep, Muriuki was still smiling, happy and at peace with the world” (92). However, the happiness is short-lived. Muriuki’s lack of employment comes back to haunt him. Their future with Mumbi can only be guaranteed if there is financial security. This situation returns Muriuki to his earlier emasculated state. It makes him feel less of a man. He cannot take care of his woman. Mumbi opts to return back to her old profession, prostitution. The arrival of American soldiers at the coast turns out to be her best opportunity:

She did not answer but instead pushed the paper across to him. Muriuki glanced at the big bold letters that were in the front page of the National News. HERE AT LAST! It announced.

Below the headlines was a picture of a giant ship with scores of men disembarking … Muriuki looked up. He could not connect the news and Mumbi’s passive mood. “What’s all this?” Muriuki asked, openly confused. “This is our future” Mumbi muttered and Muriuki looked at her, dumbfounded. (Kimani, 2003: 93)

Muriuki’s world seems to be crumbling again. His girlfriend has the temerity to celebrate her return to prostitution. Muriuki is unable to stop her because he is economically powerless. This bruises his ego further. The woman Muriuki loves has to succumb to immorality because he does not have a job. Mumbi pegs their future in sleeping with other men. This situation creates an anti-climax in the reunion:

“… We can make a fortune if I pull my last job,” She said in a plain voice. For long time, Muriuki was silent. When he got the full meaning of her words, he buried his face in his hands and gently shook his head, unable to believe it. Unable to believe words from his love; the woman he considered his future, now she was contemplating returning to her old trade. He did not wish to open his eyes and see her face, so he just covered his face and kept quiet. (Kimani, 2002: 94)
Mumbi’s words though candid are quite painful to Muriuki. They completely dent his self-esteem and ego. He cannot man up to fight for his woman. Indirectly the blame shifts to him. Mumbi explains that she wants to slide back to prostitution to uplift the life of her man. The implication is quite clear that the man has failed to play his role. Muriuki’s economic marginalisation is his Achilles heel. It is a situation that constantly comes back to haunt him. He is in a state of helplessness as he cannot fulfill his breadwinning role. However, the societal structure does not understand. The society (represented by Mumbi and Muriuki’s family back home) expect Muriuki to play his traditional roles. His situation makes him have no control over Mumbi. Muriuki loses his power whereby he cannot make a decision for Mumbi. Silberschmidt (1992) asserts that men’s control over women is an important social index for their masculine reputation. Muriuki is now losing his woman to other strange men who have just entered the country with dollars. He has struggled to mend the relationship through many challenges but it still does not work. Muriuki’s masculinity is further demeaned when he is forced to accompany Mumbi to meet her foreign client in Mombasa:

Like a small boy accompanying his mother to the market, he trudged along, following in her footsteps. He had suggested he be left behind, but she resisted. She said she needed him by her side. Again the magic in her melted his hesitations and he obliged. It’s like he is under a spell. (Kimani, 2002: 95)

The comparison to a small boy gives a detailed description of Muriuki’s emasculated state. Muriuki is beside her lover but he is very insecure. Muriuki’s fears come to pass when he is unable to prevent Mumbi’s tragic death in the hands of her white client:

The bottle landed on Mumbi’s head with a deafening sound splintering into hundreds of fragments. Hands shaking and trance ——like, the man took a piece of the broken glass and mutilated the unconscious body further. Muriuki watched
all this paralyzed with fear and disbelief. Was this a dream? He rubbed his eyes again, unbelieving. When the man was through with his ritual, he quickly slipped into his clothes ransacked the room. He looked under the mattress but found nothing, then rummaged through the drawers and frisked clothes … He paused to take a sweep round the room then moved towards the inter-connecting door. Muriuki froze; had the man seen him? He heard the lock turn, but it was locked. When a blue eye met his, peeping through the keyhole, he passed out. (Kimani, 2002: 109)

Mumbi is killed when she demands money from her client who is hesitant to pay. Muriuki who had followed Mumbi is forced to watch this grotesque scene through a key hole. He is so shocked that he is unable to react. The death of his lover in the hands of another man shatters his masculinity further. His powerless state pricks his conscience. He has failed his protector role. Mumbi had earlier told Muriuki that the latter was his shield. The pangs of guilt coupled with jobless frustration increase the pent-up anger in the young man.

Muriuki’s later revenge heralds another scenario. He symbolically re-asserts his lost masculinity. How does a man kill his woman in front of him? His conscience does not seem to settle until he reasserts his revenge. Muriuki’s manhood has been wounded again. His helplessness exposed. This makes Muriuki have tormenting questions whether he was a real man. Tragedy further befalls him when he is accused of the murder of Mumbi and held in solitary confinement. Muriuki is later freed and the white sailor arrested for Mumbi’s murder. Despite being released, guilty Muriuki’s conscience is not settled. Revenge is what is ringing in his mind:

By the time he neared the bathroom, he was shaking so terribly that he could barely compose himself. He was terrified at the prospect of meeting that giant of a man. As he went through those steps, a voice inside him asked some questions that made him calm a bit: You watched your girl killed, witnessed the killer walk free, and all you can do now is shake with fear? What kind of man are you?
The voice went on: *She cried out for you, but you were too afraid. She even called out your name, yet you turned your back on her. You just watched from a distance, from the safety of a locked door, and now you want to run away... What kind of man are you.* (Kimani, 2002: 142)

The acquittal of Mumbi’s murderer emboldens Muriuki to avenge. The killer is left off the hook and charged a mere five hundred shillings. Muriuki trails Desertstorm to his resort at the coast and confronts him. This is the moment of Muriuki’s redemption. He feels he needs to salvage his “wounded manhood”. The confrontation between the two men is very dramatic. The nuances of this confrontation reveal the clash of two antagonist masculinities, hegemonic (Desertstorm) and subordinate (Muriuki). There is a lot of suspense which heightens the tense mood:

> But percolating just above the anger was the unspoken fear which was now dared him to defy it. What kind of man are you? In death, they have cheapened her life and degraded her memory. It is you who promised to love her forever?

The bathroom door burst open and Muriuki and Desertstorm met face to face. This time there was no keyhole. No door to separate them. They stared into each other’s face. Man to man. Eye to eye. The blue eye looked at the black eye. Blue eye remembered the black eye. Black eye remembered the blue eye. They exchanged hateful glares. Murderous stares. Muriuki stared back, and through his gaze, images of Mumbi’s last moments flashed before him. He could see her tossing in bed in pain as burns were administered on her body. He saw the monster lift the bottle, but rather than put guard on his head to avoid the fatal blow, Muriuki grabbed Desertstorm’s hand. (Kimani, 2002: 142)

Muriuki has imbibed the culture of the tough guy machismo from his interaction with the men in the city. Such a type of masculinity propagates that violence begets violence. This is not the same innocent Muriuki who had come from the village. Though Muriuki does not engage in gratuitous violence, he is forced by circumstances. Justice Harkman’s action of acquitting Desertstorm also impels Muriuki to commit the crime. It is also a case of poetic justice. Muriuki finally kills Desertstorm and is arrested “MAN KILLS TO REVENGE SLAIN LOVER,
screamed the National news in its banner written in the papers” (Kimani, 2002: 142). Muriuki is driven by paranoia of failure as a man, while Desertstorm is out to save his life. Muriuki’s actions are probably driven by depressive disorder. According to Balcom (1998), the condition occurs when a person’s actions are driven by strong emotions rather than reason. Muriuki is not a murderer but a tragic character.

Though Muriuki is arrested, Desertstorm’s death is a triumph that massages his wounded ego. It symbolically represents his reassertion of his masculinity. Unfortunately, the masculinity is reasserted through a vice. Emasculated men like Muriuki are sometimes forced to use vices to vent out their frustration on the patriarchal order that perpetuates dominance.

**Conclusion**

Kimani’s *Before the Rooster Crows*, ends up on a fatalistic note. Muriuki is unable to transit from rural masculinity to urban masculinity. The family visits Muriuki in prison, an action that reminds him of his unfulfilled patriarchal breadwinning role. This meeting is quite painful to Muriuki because it is a clear reminder of his failed masculinity. Providence to his family was Muriuki’s major objective of leaving the village. It was the ultimate test of his masculinity. Nonetheless, his tragic fall is caused by the hegemonic masculine expectations heaped on him by his family and the strong patriarchal society, despite his subordinate position. Moreover, there is a strong element of Christian morality and masculinity in the text. Just like the biblical Christ, Muriuki is a scapegoat sacrificed for the sins of his community. He strives to live a life governed by morals and old values of traditional masculinity. Nevertheless, the strong forces of the new urban masculinity and pressure from family members, girlfriend and society cause him to adopt a
new hyper masculine nature. The title of the text *Before the Rooster Crows*, alludes to Simon Peter’s guilt after betraying Jesus. The presence of the family at the prison is a reminder to Muriuki, of his earlier unfulfilled promise. It is just like when the rooster crowed to remind Peter of his promise not to betray Christ. Thus the family’s presence at the prison is a reminder to Muriuki of his betrayal. Muriuki’s later knowledge about his late father, a leader of the Mau Mau and later national hero further gives him more torment. Just as he failed to live up to his departed father’s role as breadwinner for the family, so he is unable to fulfill the community and nation’s expectations that he be a heroic figure like his father. Hence he seems to fail masculine ideals at all levels. The next section seeks to interrogate rural masculinity in David Maillu’s *Man from Machackos*. It aims to explore how the protagonist, Kivindyo negotiates between rural and modern masculinity.
Chapter Five

Breaking Barriers: Post-Colonial Rural Masculinity in David Maillu’s Man from Machackos

The section’s arguments are based on Niehaus’s (2000) assertion that among many third world youths, two realities exist: an urban, modern reality and a predominant and traditional reality. He argues that they exist side by side and can operate simultaneously. Muriuki’s stay in the city ends up tragically. He does not fulfill his earlier expectations. It debunks the idea that the metropolis is the “ideal point” of achieving hegemonic masculinity. Muriuki’s experience brings to fore the question of young people’s quest for empowerment from a subordinate masculine position, while facing a traditional and modern reality.

The protagonist in Man from Machackos, Kivindyo also faces Muriuki’s predicament. He is in a dilemma of whether to migrate to the city that is the “epitome of progress”, or stay in the rural area. Just like Muriuki’s situation, Kivindyo comes from a poor background. The key question the section will seek to understand is whether Maillu’s exploration of rural and urban masculinities reinforces, refutes or gives an alternative to Kimani’s perspective on the two types of masculinities.

In David Maillu’s Man from Machakos, the protagonist Kivindyo opts to stay in the village and eke out a living. Through him, the study interrogates rural masculinity. The key questions the study will seek to answer are: how do men in the rural areas construct their masculinity? What type of masculinity is prevalent in the rural areas? And how is it different from urban
masculinity? The section will also seek to understand the writer’s view on the effect of migration (rural-urban and vice versa) on masculinity. How do men in the rural areas relate among themselves and to women?

A Famished Existence
In *Man from Machakos*, Kivindyo resists the allure of moving to the metropolis. Most of the young men were leaving the village for the city in search of employment. He adopts what Said (1978) calls a new state of mind that post-colonial societies should follow. Said argues that post-colonial societies should think a new and discard previous beliefs and thinking. Said opines that post-colonial societies need to explore the world from a different vantage place. They should strive to move away from the culture and norms of the former colonial masters. Said perceived the world from the centre/periphery dichotomy. The centre which Said categorises as the Occident is depicted as ordered and rational, whereas the Orient was seen as chaotic and irrational. Said asserts that the relationship between the Occident and Orient is characterised by quest for power and domination. He describes the Orient as Europe’s cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other (9). Hall (1992) explains that the Occident represents western civilization that is urbanised, capitalistic, industrialized and secular (278). According to Said, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (11). This study adopts Said’s postulation that the concept of Orientalism can have several interpretations which are interdependent (10). The city is the centre of Western culture (Occident) while the village represents the traditional African culture
Orient). Kivindyo, unlike Muriuki in *Before the Rooster Crows*, has a paradigm shift from the notion that you have to move to the center (heart of western civilisation: Nairobi), in order to flourish. He opts to stick to the village.

The setting of the text is in Machakos, a county that borders Nairobi. It is a rural town. Kivindyo aspires to be a soldier. He plans to join a recruitment drive being conducted in his home district. The recruitment exercise is in a town, the centre of urban masculinity.

There was a military–recruit selection taking place at Machakos town that day. The selection would bring together candidates from the entire Machakos district. Late arrivals for the parade would not even qualify to get to the selection ground. Lateness would be perceived as number one proof that the candidate was not fit for service in the army. (Maillu, 2007: 2)

Like many men, Kivindyo wants the job to secure him his future. With a job, he would comfortably play his breadwinning role. Moreover, he is sure of consolidating his love to his childhood sweetheart Mbeleete. The job is the security:

Although Mbeleete was still a school girl doing her form three class, he thought she deserved the promise of something big. Getting a job in the army would open a guaranteed door for their eventful marriage. (Maillu, 2007: 2)

Kivindyo’s dreams and aspirations bring to fore the importance of work in the construction of masculinity. As noted earlier in *Before the Rooster Crows*, unemployment is Muriuki’s biggest impediment. A stable job with a good income is security to a man. It enhances his self esteem in relation to the female gender and the society as a whole. Take for instance Kivindyo’s girlfriend, Mbeleete, when she is approached by Kivindyo’s rival, Justus. Mbeleete loved Kivindyo but she is not sure of their future:
She wasn’t looking for a man to bear her back to the forest, but one to bear her from the woods to the open. Modern life needed money not mere words. He who loves you with money loves you better than he who loves you with mere words. Kivindyo was asking her to sacrifice her life for him. (Maillu, 2007: 49)

Though the relationship between the two is in the village, Mbeleete’s perspective of love has a strong influence from modernity and is a version of urban masculinity. It is important to understand the relationship between masculinity and femininity. Women have a strong influence on how men construct their masculinity. Mbeleete is one of the motivating factors that drives Kivindyo’s quest for a better life. She is a yardstick to which he measures his masculinity. Mumbi, Muriuki’s girlfriend in Before the Rooster Crows, also plays a similar role. In fact, she is the driving force that leads to Muriuki’s tragic end. Kivindyo seeks to find Mbeleete’s approval of whether he is a real man. However, just like Muriuki in Peter Kimani’s Before the Rooster Crows, the ghost of unemployment shrouds his ambitions. Kivindyo fails the interview in his bid to join the armed forces. It really devastates him:

He nearly collapsed when the last list was read out just before five o’clock and his name was omitted. He couldn’t believe it. He felt devastated, destroyed, obliterated from the meaning of life. Over the other side of the field stood four officers helping each other in announcing the owners of the certificates to be collected. He had hardly any energy left for walking to collect his papers. The sun of his world had set and darkness had risen to cover him. He thought the only thing left for him was his mother’s sweet potato in his pocket waiting for him to eat it. (Maillu, 2007: 18)

Kivindyo’s situation and his reaction depicts the challenges of being a man in the society. He is now aware that his status in society will be lowered. After all, he is not man enough to sustain himself, family and girlfriend. Furthermore, the poverty levels in his home further propound the emasculation. Kivindyo’s situation epitomises the large challenge of many youths in many post
colonial societies. Morrell cited in Miescher and Lindsey (2003) observes that young people in post-colonial third world countries are numerically the largest, and arguably the most significant political constituency. Unfortunately, they are the group most subject to the scourges of unemployment, most vulnerable to AIDS and most likely to be involved in wars (102). Thus this large constituent is forced to take a subaltern position in society. The young men end up manifesting subordinate masculinity. Moreover, most policies in most third world countries like Kenya are also skewed against women and the youth. For instance in Kenya, wealth is owned by a few individual families who have been in power since independence. Moreover, leadership positions are mostly controlled by many old people who have had the opportunity to plunder wealth since independence. These old people dictate the politics of the day because they have the economic might. Majority of the youths are hired as gang leaders and guards during campaigns. Hence, with the absence of employment, most of these youths are easily manipulated. The new constitution that was promulgated in Kenya had talked of a third of representative positions in all leadership positions going to the youth and women and disabled. However, this is a pipe dream. The youths in third world countries, like Muriuki in *Before the Rooster Crows* and Kivindyo have turned out to be what Frantz Fanon (1963) called the “Wretched of the earth”. Kivindyo’s observation and self reflection after the interview concurs with the thesis analyses:

The mass of the unemployed young people he had seen the previous day haunted him. He wondered how many unemployed people there were in Akamba land. The candidates were only from Machakos District. None from Makueni, Kitui and Mwingi Districts? Would each district bring similar number of candidates? What had gone wrong that there were so many unemployed people? What was God saying about it? It was seen as if the incident of the interview had been used to unfold to him the rural reality. Now he understood why there were many old and young drunkards wherever you passed. Young men still in their twenties had given up hope and sought escape through local brews with some of them trotting about in worn out clothes, and carrying walking sticks like old men. They adorned uncombed hair
and some of them went for days without washing their faces. The yellow coating on their teeth was a reminder that they had not been brushed for ages. And girls lurked in every corner for a deal which might lead to marriage or financial support. Uncalled for pregnancies and births punctuated the village. Frustrated husbands beat their wives hoping to kick misfortune out of their lives cursing, “Get out of my life and carry your puppies with you.” (Maillu, 2007: 20)

The above village poverty and disillusion clearly explains why Kivindyo is downcast after missing a job. The job was supposed to propel him from the penury that surrounded him. Kivindyo’s misery is further compounded by the realisation that his childhood friend and rival to Mbeleete, Justus, has secured a job. The thought of going back to the hopeless village environment completely shatters him. Unlike Muriuki in Before the Rooster Crows, who opts to move to the city, Kivindyo has no alternative. After missing the military job, he completely shuns the city. The picture of emasculated young men and women coupled with the harsh urban masculinity that is quite segregative scares him off.

This mass unemployment of men has serious ramification on the family. The men’s position as the head of the home is very difficult to maintain. Thus, there is a high rise of dysfunctional families because of absent fathers and single mothers. Even the families that are together, the father cannot act as a role model to his sons. He is disempowered and does not have the traditional family authority. Alcoholism has also become the means of escape from responsibility. The women are also desperate to cling to a relationship for sustainability. The traditional provider role of the men is under threat. Inability to take care of these families lowers their self esteem. That is why they chase away the women. The children who are compared to puppies (a derogatory reference) highlight the burden that the men want to avoid. Puppies signify an unnecessary burden on the family. The importance of children who cement the family has
been lowered. Instead of being a blessing, they are a burden because of rural poverty. Unfortunately, the burden is carried by the mother. Eventually, the children, especially boys, grow up without male role models to look up to. The mothers act as the fathers. It is a situation reminiscent in the Caribbean and in the United States, especially among the African-Caribbean and African-American families. Caribbean writer, George Lamming, in his seminal work *In the Castle of My Skin*, aptly used the term “my mother who fathered me”\(^7\) to describe such families. The men are no longer bound to the families as they did in the past. Nonetheless, by escaping responsibility, they also lose status. This is because marriage and a stable family is quite the core entity in traditional masculinity. The old men like Kivindyo’s father, who are the face of the old order and custodians of traditional patriarchal masculinity, strive to direct their sons who are confronted by the new wave of post-colonial masculinity. Mentorship becomes pertinent to these pessimistic and emasculated young men. Though Kivindyo’s father is not employed because of losing a leg, his perception on the role of the man as the head of the family is still intact. The old patriarch still upholds the old traditions, and is of opinion that despite the challenges of modernity, men still need to play their old traditional roles. He strives to make sure that his son asserts this traditional patriarchal masculinity despite not being employed. This is clearly evident in the advice to his son, Kivindyo about the importance of family among the Akamba:

> “Now you need a wife.” That was that was written on the faces of his parents too is in accordance with the Akamba thinking that only when a man marries, he becomes a full man. He had heard his father repeatedly say: a man and his wife are like twins, and the hiding care of the Mukamba is his family. (Maillu, 2007: 29)

\(^7\) The weak and absent father is a predominant motif in many Caribbean literary works.
Silberschmidt (1992) also notes that aspects of masculinity that have roots in the pre-colonial are still highly valued in the post-colonial society: the male as the head of the household, decision maker and controller of the wealth (53). The challenge arises when there is no wealth like in Kivindyo’s situation. Does the man become less of a man? Kivindyo is aware of this and panics that he might lose Mbeleete, his childhood sweetheart “That was why a job in the army … was so crucial. Since morning he had been wondering how to keep Mbeleete in his hands” (21). Competition for women seems to be an area that men really aim to assert their dominance. Lewis (2007) describes the strong influence of femininity on masculinity:

Masculinity has so much to do with men’s relationships to women. There is a sense in which men in society collectively define masculinity for themselves but they are always cognizant of the way women influence the trajectory of their identity, validating it, interrogating it or rebuffing some or all aspects of its practice. In short, women help to shape the general terrain of masculinity at some level. At the level of perfomativity, therefore, masculinity has as much to do with seeking the approval of men, as it is to do with obtaining the approval of women. (6)

The dominance of men over women is an aspect of hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, there is the dominance of men over other men through competition of the female gender. This rivalry has serious ramifications on men as earlier depicted in Before the Rooster Crows through the main protagonist, Muriuki and Sydney Walker in One Life Too Many. Kivindyo competes for the same girl, Mbeleete, with his former schoolmate, Justus. The competition emanates from an earlier rivalry in school “This was Justus Mwaka’s third attempt to get Mbeleete since the burial of Mbeleete’s father. He had tried twice but had failed to deliver the words he had to her.” (21). It is a competition that is cherished by men. It gauges whose masculinity is stronger. No man wants to be categorised as a subordinate masculinity. That is why character like Sydney Walker in One Life Too Many, and Muriuki in Before the Rooster Crows, sacrifice their lives to maintain their
“manly” dignity. The idea of a fellow man taking their women is too painful for them to bear. Sydney Walker commits suicide while Muriuki ends up in jail for killing the man who abused and killed his woman, Mumbi. Kivindyo is in as similar situation. His rival Justus Mwaka is in a favourable position. He has secured a job in Nairobi while Kivindyo is jobless. Therefore, Justus has a stronger bargaining chip in their competition for Mbeleete. Justus is not afraid to brag about his new status to the jobless Kivindyo:

Mwaka received the question with a smile, rubbed his hands together as if in preparation to damage Kivindyo. And indeed he damaged him by saying “All along I have been telling you I will get a job before you!” He put it in his usual joking tone but Kivindyo got it right away the friend was not making a joke then he echoed “You have got a job in Nairobi.” (Maillu, 2007: 31)

The blow is too painful for Kivindyo to bear. More misery is piled on Kivindyo when Justus buoyed by his new job, disappears with Kivindyo’s girlfriend Mbeleete. This loss completely ruins Kivindyo’s self esteem:

Mbeleete had left him stranded in the jungle of life. He had lost her to Justus. The two had eloped and Justus delivered the message in a note saying “Kivindyo stop following and looking for Mbeleete because you will never see her again in your life. Mbeleete is now my wife and this time, you must accept that I have beaten you fair and square.” Yes it was a well calculated and fatal blow. Kivindyo felt devastated. He pitied himself. He was never prepared for anything like that. It was the first time in his life that he fought with the thought of suicide. Fate had taken away the only thing that got him inspiration to live on. It was unlike the loss he had experienced when he had failed the army interview. It was something that cut through his soul. (Maillu, 2007: 54)

Kivindyo is psychologically and physically shattered. How can he stand before fellow men when his woman has been snatched by another man because of Kivindyo’s inadequacy? Apart from the failure to fulfill the breadwinning role, there is also the perceived loss of virility. Questions are
bound to arise about Kivindyo’s sexual performance. Connell (1995) explains that masculinity is closely associated with virility, sexuality, potency, fertility and male honour. Kivindyo’s honour is under attack. The notion of being perceived as a subordinate masculinity is too painful to bear. Justus’ chest thumping and bold confession adds further salt to the injured wound. He seems to confirm to Kivindyo that the latter is not man enough. After all, he has snatched Kivindyo’s woman from under his nose. Kivindyo’s self pity heralds a low turning point in his life. The thought of committing suicide is a sign of disillusionment and failure. Kivindyo’s disappointment is because of symbolically losing his prized masculinity which, as Connell opines, is very much guarded by men.

Seidler (1991) notes that masculinity is constantly reasserted in the continuous denial of femininity or feminine qualities. Hence Kivindyo needs to reassert his “wounded” masculinity to be able to remain mentally and psychologically sound. He is in need of an activity that will help him exercise domination to revitalise his former self.

**Behave like a “Real Man”: The Father Figure and Construction of Masculinity.**

Society has placed men to be victims of their role as the dominant sex. Disempowered men like Kivindyo become outcasts. This is quite evident in his state after Mbeleete’s loss:

> The days that followed this terrible loss made him feel a loser in every aspect. He had no more energy left in him. He couldn’t touch his bamboo trumpet and there was nobody to listen to his songs. (Maillu, 2007: 55)

The patriarchal ideology of dominance heaps a lot of strain on men who cannot fulfill their prescribed social roles because of socio-economic circumstances entailed by increasing poverty.
The young man is downcast. He is inconsolable. The important role that a father figure plays in a young man’s, is evident during Kivindyo’s tribulations. Mweleli, Kivindyo’s father empathises with his son, even though he criticises him:

The old man knew Kivindyo had become spiritually wounded. He cared about his son and could therefore, not ignore the condition he was in. His philosophical outlook of life had it that spiritual lameness, when it occurs, is only perceived by a few people. The old man was aware that some people can suffer permanent damage and that, in their thinking people only recognized physical lameness. (Maillu, 2007: 55)

Kivindyo’s father who is quite old understands his son’s duress and predicament. He is aware that the young man’s spirits needed to be uplifted. As the patriarch in the house, the old man takes upon the responsibility of rescuing his son. Unlike the mother who adopts a very sympathetic tone, the old man approaches Kivindyo in a more masculine manner. His tone is firm and aggressive. It is an engagement between men. The father engages Kivindyo in what can be termed as “man talk”. What is implicit in the dialogue is that the old man seems to tell Kivindyo to stop an effeminate attitude. Mourning about a woman, according to the old man, is very demeaning:

… From tomorrow onwards, your mother and I don’t want to hear your crying voice. We don’t want to see your tears. If we have to see your tears, then those might be tears of laughter,” The old man gave his wife a moment to voice out the matter of her soul. She delivered her views in a down-to-earth-earth manner… Finally, he returned to his son and said “I want you to stop being childish and become a model of that fast vanishing nobility. Hold it firmly and in turn, it will take care of you … Son, you are a seed of that fineness. I want you to go out and plant that seed in the Akamba soil. A good name starts from your own home.”

His son sounded his apprehension, “father, I don’t know how to do that.” The old man retorted, “Then get out of my house, go and continue bleating for Mbeleete. When you die your family will bury you in Akamba soil.” He had a second thought then said, “Father, I will try.” “That’s what I wanted to hear, thank you for placing your confidence in me.” (Maillu, 2007: 66)
The contrasting approach by the wife and husband to Kivindyo’s situation clearly outlines the traditionally masculine and feminine approach to different situations. Though the old man feels sorry for his son, he wants Kivindyo to “man up”. He feels Kivindyo should be brave enough and the latter’s outward expression of emotions is a sign of weakness. According to the father, Kivindyo has to put his misfortune behind and face the world like a man. This is the African traditional socialisation of warrior-hood. It can be categorised as warrior talk:

“Absolute courage. You become the king of your own life. You become a man who can stand up against whatever challenge. What I’ve been seeing in you is a boy who’s frightened by the loud sounds of the world. I see a boy who sheds tears because a girl has refused your hand in marriage. In you I see a boy who’s lost in the forest of his own making. Kivindyo I am ashamed of you! D’ you know that?” Kivindyo felt hit and remained silent “You’re neither a fully initiated man nor a true Mukamba.” (Maillu, 2007: 61)

Kivindyo’s father’s firm warrior talk is meant to make the young man come out of his self pity. The old man wants Kivindyo to shed his victimhood mentality. By invoking the issue of cowardice and circumcision, Kivindyo’s father seems to remind his son that the latter has lost the ideals of what makes a man. Lewis (2007) explains that it is through language of discourse that men speak to each other in ways that are quite intriguing. The old man is aware that Kivindyo reminiscing about the past may not help the latter. In fact, it exacerbates the depression. Kivindyo is stung by his father’s remarks. The old man’s dismissal of his son as a coward is intentional. It is meant to challenge Kivindyo to recover quickly and move on. This aggressive type of dialogue is used among men to communicate conflicting issues without entering into conflict. It is important to emphasise that these are societal constructions created for the female and male gender by the dominant patriarchal society. The father, a traditionalist, assesses
Kivindyo’s situation and reprimands the son not to accept to stay in that subordinate form of masculinity. That is why he accuses him of being a boy, not fully initiated and a coward. These descriptions cause a lot of pain in Kivindyo because his father questions the former’s masculinity. It is a challenge to his reputation and honour which has already received a lot of bruising. Lewis aptly captures this dialogue between father and son by noting that men talk to each other in a harsher tone, and do not get close to each other because of the spectra of homophobia, (4). The father’s talk also makes Kivindyo conscious of his own masculinity.

Kivindyo’s father, as the keeper of the Akamba traditional norms, is shaping Kivindyo’s masculinity. Kivindyo has no choice but to accept his father’s advice if he wants to gain the respect of the community. The old man behaves like Leshao’s father in Ole Kulet’s To Become a Man. Both men are custodians of their community’s patriarchal structures which they want to instill in their sons. It is quite evident from the two texts that fathers play a very important role in the construction of their sons’ masculinities. Kivindyo’s father seeks to avert what Palmer (2005) calls a masculine crisis. According to Palmer, this is the aversion of male gender transgression. Kivindyo’s father seeks to prevent the so called “feminization” of his first born child who seems to be deviating from the normative masculinity. To Kivindyo’s father, the young man is an antithesis of an ideal man. The young man does not have qualities of hegemonic masculinity; toughness, competitiveness, determination, self sufficiency, aggression and success because the old man wonders how a fully bloodied Kamba man can shed tears over a woman. To the old man, such weakness should not be tolerated. That is why he is very angry and uses a very harsh tone in their dialogue. Kivindyo’s father’s reaction towards his own son emanates from the former’s socialisation in a gendered society. According to the old man, manliness is associated
with power and control which his son does not want to pursue. Hence, he feels he has a duty to increase the social pressure so that his son can conform to the ideal masculine traits.

There is a clash of two divergent masculinities. The father espouses a traditional hegemonic masculinity while Kivindyo’s type of masculinity is subordinate as it entails “feminine qualities” of being “too emotional”, “giving up” and “compromising”. The two different forms of masculinity coupled with a generation gap, seem to be creating an antagonism between father and son:

Son, the worst thing you can do in the course of your life is to live with as stranger you call yourself. Are you with me?”
“Yes father, I am.”
“No, you are not! The body is with your father and mother here, but the spirit is somewhere wondering in the wilderness. If you were a real man and a true Mukamba, surely you would have gone far with your life.”
After a long silence of getting what he thought was a form of beating, Kivindyo defended himself. “I would have gone far if I had got a job. How far can you go these days when you have no job?”
“Son, you are not worth living if you can say that.”
“It’s a fact father.”
“If you take your goods to the market and they are not bought, whom would you blame?” (Maillus, 2007: 64)

There is tension between father and son in this dialogue. The father seems to suggest that Kivindyo is responsible for his own fortunes. On the other hand, the son seems to point out to the father that the poverty has been caused by factors beyond the latter’s control. Gilmore (1990) aptly describes the predicament of emasculated men like Kivindyo. He points out that in many

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8 Mukamba is a word coined from the Akamba community from Kenya. It means a person who comes from this community that has mostly inhabited a very dry part of Kenya. The community has settled in the upper eastern part of the country which is very arid. It experiences erratic rainfall and depends a lot on relief food.
human societies, there exists a pressured form of manhood that requires men to perform and succeed in the social struggle for scarce resources. The old man represents the pressures that Gilmore talks about. The old man is a product of traditional masculinity that is encompassed in his culture. However, what he fails to understand is that Kivindyo lives in a different dispensation. In the olden days, resources were in plenty and land would be handed down from the father to the son. Men would enjoy resources by virtue of their gender. Unfortunately, such patriarchal dividends cannot be enjoyed with the contemporary scarcity of resources in post-colonial Kenya.

Lewis (2007) avers that masculinity, apart from being a hegemonic ideology, is also a practice that facilitates access to power, privilege and valued resources. However, men like Kivindyo who have no access to this power might not enjoy these privileges. That is why Kivindyo feels quite challenged by his father talk, but does not seem to know how he would overcome his deficit. Instead of the old man giving him a solution, he challenges his son to quit and go back to his earlier depressive state. The old man wants Kivindyo to rise up to the new challenge. Kivindyo therefore knows he has no choice. He has to man up and move out from his subordinate role. He has to acquire power through all means.

Kivindyo has to overcome his marginalisation. He has to strive to achieve the ideal hegemonic state. Lewis argues that it is this element of power which is the core of masculinity. According to Lewis, this quest for power makes men to be resilient and adjust to new challenges and crises. Hence, Kivindyo is able to move from his subordinate state because masculinity is not fixed. The challenge is how he will be able to achieve that higher status with no source of income.
Kivindyo’s unemployment becomes unsettling to his performance of masculinity. Kivindyo’s father epitomises the society that Kivindyo lives in. Though the old man has a noble intention to spur the son from his loss and self pity, the tone is quite commanding. He judges Kivindyo too harshly, and expects the son to assert hegemonic masculinity against so many odds:

Son, tell me, what you have been producing for the market?”
“I’ve succeeded in getting educated.”
“For what? Take any of your mother’s gourds and fill it with anything — that’s exactly what your school has done with you. You have been used as a mere container. If what has been put in that container so far hasn’t been useful in getting you what you want, what is it for then? For making you cry tears for Mbeleete? What other people have failed to tell you but which I must tell you tonight son, is that you you’ve not been worth Mbeleete. She has shown you what you are worth. It’s not what your mother has just told you that Mbeleete is not worth you. You are worth a bow and arrows together with this stool. Don’t sell emptiness to the world and expect the world to spend its earning buying your emptiness.”
“Father, I’m not finished yet.”
“That’s a starting point son, but you have already told me to a certain extent you are finished.” (Maillu, 2007: 70)

The nuances of this conversation portray the character of Kivindyo’s father. He is rigid and firm like Leshao’s father in Ole Kulet’s To Become a Man. Moreover, he is also irrational. Kivindyo’s father is a typical African patriarch whose word is law. Any question or differing opinion is termed as dissent. Note that the mother is present but her opinion does not count much. For instance, her insistence on blaming Mbeleete for Kivindyo’s misfortune is dismissed by the old man. In fact, she is mostly silent and her presence is just to confirm the old man’s word “Mother of Kivindyo d’you forget that quickly?” She laughed (64). In the whole conversation, the mother takes a very submissive position. She is mostly silent. The mother laughs but does not intrude in the conversation:
He thought about his mother. She had kept absolutely silent the previous night as the old man bequeathed his spiritual estate to his son. Now he wondered what his mother had thought about the subject. However at the end of it she had appeared satisfied and inspired. (Maillu, 2007: 70)

Kivindyo’s latest distress over Mbeleete seems also to have irritated her. The mother does not approve of her son’s misery being brought by the mourning of the loss of a woman. Like the father, the mother is also part of the strong patriarchal socialisation. Kivindyo’s opinion will count less because he is facing a formidable force of the two closest people in his life. On the other hand, the study contends that the reprimanding is double edged. It provokes the young man into action. Kivindyo is initiated into the world of masculinity in manly manner, the hard way. His father does not spare his words. The old man is categorical that Kivindyo has an alternative of striving to be an ideal man or stick to his current subordinate role. Though the first cultural configuration of masculinity is not easy to achieve, he has no option. Kivindyo would not dare lose the respect of his father. Kivindyo experiences a similar power that forces Muriuki in Before the Roster Crows to avenge the death of his girlfriend Mumbi. It is a matter of honour. Kivindyo’s mind is disturbed because he is experiencing intra-masculine conflict. Intra-masculine conflict happens when what is expected of men by virtue of their gender is not what is attained. However, the question that bothers Kivindyo is how to emancipate himself from rural poverty. Seeking for employment in the city becomes out of question. He feels that the city is a place of his emasculation. The young man finds himself in a big dilemma. He has to think out hard how to succeed in the village:

He had been born and brought up in a village plagued by desperation. It was a village without hope, without anything to celebrate. He hoped that at the end of the education tunnel there would be light. Instead there was none, and if any, it
was too dim to make any sense. He lived to remember the desperation of the youth at that interview parade. (Maillu, 2007: 72)

Nonetheless, after the conversation with his father Kivindyo is symbolically baptised with a new form of masculinity. His mind completely has a paradigm shift from the earlier victim mentality. Kivindyo is ready to rise against all odds through serious introspection and action:

Over a week after the old man’s admonition, Kivindyo hadn’t yet found his feet in his new world. In a way he felt and feared that his father had thrown and forced him to land into a world where, upon alighting, he was totally a foreigner. For, everywhere he looked there were new things to learn, new voices to listen, new questions to answer, new idioms, new parables and indeed strange appearances and challenges. Perhaps it was time for him to take full stock of his life and bearing. Time to let his spirit go out to explore his frontiers for him to see where he could fit and where he couldn’t fit. (Maillu, 2007: 71)

Unlike Muriuki, in Before the Rooster Crows, who sticks in the city despite being jobless, Kivindyo opts to set his future foundation in the village. This is a very radical move coming from a young man. He seems to want to go against the odds. Success in the village seems impossible. Kivindyo’s decision receives a lot of opposition. Kivindyo’s friend turned foe, Justus, who had snatched his girlfriend taunts him. Justus had migrated to the city and is surprised that Kivindyo has decided to stick in the village. Justus is the face of urban masculinity while Kivindyo represents rural masculinity:

Justus left but dissatisfied with his performance. He should have used a harsher language to hit at Kivindyo. But he was happy to find out that, finally Kivindyo had given up going out for progressive employment and decided to become a villager. He wouldn’t be surprised if from tomorrow someone brought news to him that Kivindyo had got married to a semi-illiterate girl or one of those many single mothers bleating out for any man to marry them. (Maillu, 2007: 86)
Justus’ form of masculinity is the “ideal” form that many young people aspire to have; hence the shift from the village to the towns. However, these young men like Justus and Muriuki discover that urban masculinity is quite challenging. It is a façade; that is why Justus constantly taunts Kivindyo without deriving satisfaction. He admires Kivindyo’s rural masculinity but his “manly” pride cannot allow him to show it. Nevertheless, despite the pessimism from people like Justus, Kivindyo does not despair. He decides to invest in agriculture. This is a wise decision. That is the best investment in the rural areas. This is because of large tracts of land and a ready urban market. He gets capital from selling trees that he had converted to timber. He also becomes a carpenter and even makes an artificial leg for his disabled father. Nevertheless, Kivindyo’s biggest achievement is changing the mindset of rural people that there is nothing productive that would come from the village:

Perhaps the most remarkable thing that happened to Kyevaluki people was their gradual change of attitude about the environment. By the third year, Kivindyo was selling thousands of seedlings. Kyevaluki face was changing fast. People had taken more interest in farming and Kakawa market had become farmers market place … Kivindyo could no longer believe what was happening and what had become of the hitherto poor Kyevaluki location. Naturally, people expected him to brag for having pioneered such progress. But that was not Kivindyo. Instead, he appeared to enjoy a reclusive life. In a way, he felt somehow uncomfortable frequenting the bustling Kakawa market. (Maillu, 2007: 126/127)

An old man confirms our argument when he comments about Kivindyo’s success and laments about the city:

Would Kivindyo have made his father the leg if he had gone to the city? That’s not a city but a monster. How many parents have been abandoned by their
children because the children have been swallowed by the monster… (Maillu, 2007: 102).

Kivindyo’s success in the village contradicts the notion that one has to move to the metropolis to succeed. Kivindyo’s honesty brought forth by the rural values of honesty also contributes to his success. He picks money belonging to a stranger and returns to the owner:

Mrs Munuka broke into tears when she received the money. Her husband tried to comfort her. “God is great and he uses his great people to save others.” When she had got over the storm she asked most seriously “Mr Kivindyo, why did you do this to us?”

“Because it was your money.”

The couple was perplexed beyond words. How? It was their first time to witness such impeccable honesty. It would remain fresh in their minds for a long time to come. (Maillu, 2007: 112)

The husband of the woman who had lost the money is a top government official. The couple is so impressed with the young man’s honesty that they decide to support his projects. Kivindyo resists the couple’s idea of finding him a job in the city. He implores the couple to assist reduce the village penury. The Manuka’s heed Kivindyo’s request and open up an employment bureau in the village. They put Kivindyo in charge. The bureau charges a small fee and helps a lot in alleviating rural unemployment. The recruitment personnel are sent to work in the city. The employment bureau becomes so successful. When Kivindyo succeeds, the woman who had jilted him, Mbeleete moves back to the village from the city. She returns to the village after her marriage fails. Ironically, she wants Kivindyo to assist her get a job. Mbeleete now admires Kivindyo who is now stable economically:

Mbeleete had finally decided to bring her children home to live with their grandmother while she looked for a job. She had long heard of Kivindyo’s office and could have come earlier for registration. But the thought of presenting herself
to him would be a great torture … In spite of the embarrassment, Mbeleete felt so
relieved to have met her old boyfriend. He had talked so meekly, so
sympathetically that she went home feeling healed somewhat. She took home the
fear that because of that old grudge, he may refuse to assist her. (Maillu, 2007:
130/131)

Mbeleete’s sudden attraction to the now popular Kivindyo points out the strong relationship
between masculinity, femininity and financial security. It also reiterates Lewis (2007) earlier
assertion on the importance of work in the construction of masculinity. To Mbeleete, Kivindyo
now has the qualities of a husband because he can comfortably provide. Kivindyo can
comfortably play the breadwinning role. In fact there is a big conflict between Mbeleete and her
young sister when the Mbeleete discovers that the latter has become Kivindyo’s girlfriend. The
Mbeleete that had abandoned the emasculated (subordinate masculinity) Kivindyo for Justus,
now fights for the dominant Kivindyo (hegemonic). She abandons Justus in his current
subordinate position.

The author seems to be propagating for a rural masculinity that borrows more from modernity,
but does not necessarily migration to the city. The author implicitly communicates this through
the success of Kivindyo and failure of his rival, Justus. Justus’ brand of urban masculinity ends
up in a fatalistic state like that of Muriuki in Before the Rooster Crows. Justus returns to the
village in a sorry state: “The new Justus was recovered from the city human forest in a pathetic
condition where he had decided to drink his way to destruction” (147). Justus relocates back to
the village and is in fact given a job by Kivindyo “Kivindyo invites Justus to take a part time job
at the Man from Machakos Office” (148). The relocation of the proud urbanite Justus and
subsequent employment by former foe Kivindyo also explains the contrast between rural and
urban masculinity. Unlike urban masculinity that is build on pride hatred, competition and individualism, rural masculinity has a face of humanity. No one would have expected Kivindyo to employ the man who had demeaned his masculinity by taking his girl. Kivindyo has internalised the traditional human virtues through the mentorship of the father who emphasizes on the need for one to behave like a true “Mukamba”. On the other hand Justus has imbibed a new brand of urban masculinity because of socialisation in a city that completely repudiates traditional values. Justus is heartless and behaves like a sadist whose happiness seems to be pegged on Kivindyo’s failure. He also seems to like violence because he taunts Kivindyo, so that the latter can be provoked to fight or verbally abuse him. Justus has inculcated an element of urban masculinity similar to that of the men in Before the Rooster Crows, who assaulted Muriuki after he failed to pay his eating bill. The study also argues that there is an element of Christian masculinity in the text. Just like in Before the Rooster Crows, where Muriuki failed to save his family, Kivindyo takes a similar role in Man from Machackos. He is the redeemer of the disillusioned village men. The young man receives a Christ like fame after coming up with innovations that lift the poor village from poverty. Apart from the money and projects, there are the traditional values of humility, forgiveness and kindness that Kivindyo upholds which are very similar to the Christian values.

Conclusion
Kivindyo goes against the common misconception that the metropolis is the heart and future of success. He opts to empower himself from the periphery (village). Kivindyo reasserts his bruised masculinity within the village. This is quite surprising because many young people epitomised by Justus and Muriuki in Before the Rooster Crows, perceive the city as the point of redeeming
them from their emasculated state. Kivindyo not only reverts to old fashioned traditionalism and patriarchy but makes use of modern scientific and environmentally sound farming methods. This is a new paradigm shift from the normal trend. It is a hybrid form of masculinity. Kivindyo adopts the good things of modernity while also keeping the good things of the traditional Akamba culture. For instance, he markets the Akamba honesty and reliability. Kivindyo also discards the bad things of modernity and traditionalism.
Chapter Six

Summary of Major Findings

This thesis set to examine masculinity in selected Kenyan popular fiction. It sought to find out how masculinity influenced the lives of different men in different socio-cultural contexts and periods. The study has examined literary works by four Kenyan writers whose literary works have not been given enough critical acclaim despite making a major contribution to Kenyan literature. These works include novels whose settings are during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. The writers studied in this work were: Henry ole Kulet, Yusuf Dawood, Peter Kimani and David Maillu. The study focused on analysis of selected works: To Become a Man; One Life Too Many; Before the Rooster Crows and Man from Machackos. The study’s uniqueness is that it is the first work that examines masculinity in selected Kenyan popular fiction that cuts across race and ethnic divide. It thus gives a clear picture of the diversity or plural masculinities in the Kenyan society that boasts of a multi-racial and multi-cultural population. Kenya’s population is composed of a majority indigenous African community, immigrant communities from South Asia and Arab peninsula as well as a minority white population who are either expatriates working in the country or descendants of the former British colonial masters.

The study adopted masculinity as the theoretical framework to interrogate masculinity in the selected Kenyan texts. This dissertation is composed of five sections that form the body of analysis. One of the objectives was to interrogate the various strands of masculinity in the Kenyan society as depicted in our selected texts. Kenya being a country of diverse races and
communities, the study strived to explore masculinity that was a representation of the Kenyan nation from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial period. In Chapter two, the study limited its scope to investigating masculinity in the Maasai community during the pre-colonial and colonial period. It focused on Henry ole Kulet’s novel *To Become a Man*. The study found out that there were two types of masculinity that were manifested in the Maasai society during the pre-colonial and colonial period. There is traditional (indigenous) masculinity that was deeply rooted in traditional African patriarchy. It was defined by tribal and group practices of the Maasai community. On the other hand, there is a modern masculinity influenced by Christian and western beliefs. There is a clash between the two types of masculinities because of the differing values each represented. The new version of masculinity contests for space in the rigid Maasai socio-cultural context that is deeply rooted in traditional masculinity. The adoption of the new version of masculinity by some members of the community like the main protagonist Leshao (who is a representation of the youth) and old men like Ole Nkipida (who is a representation of the elders who are custodians of culture) point out that masculinity is not static but fluid. It was established that the Maasai community, like many other African communities, is patriarchal and therefore the traditional culture perpetuates the values of a dominant ideology that can be categorised as hegemonic masculinity. This type of masculinity is perceived as the correct norm that each member of the male constituency is supposed to uphold. There is a lot of opposition to any member who seems to subvert or contest this dominant masculine ideology by the gate keepers of the patriarchal order (the morans and elders). The new version of masculinity adopted from Christianity and colonialism becomes the platform for contesting the dominant ideology. To the adherents of the hegemonic traditional masculinity (Leshao’s father), this new form of masculinity is a subordinate form that should not be tolerated. The clash of the two types of
masculinities points out that masculinity is largely influenced by a community’s culture, socio-economic and historical conditions of that period. For instance, the strong attachment between Maasai warriorhood and cattle raids which have a strong influence on Maasai masculinity.

The issue of wealth is also an important element in the construction of masculinity in the pre-colonial society. In general, the study confirms the strong influence of work and wealth in the construction of masculinity. These two important factors are used by men to contest their masculinity. The men who do not work or do not have wealth are categorised as exhibiting subordinate masculinities and are often isolated by the society in both the pre-colonial and post-colonial societies. The new version of masculinity brought by the missionaries carries a lot of Christian teachings and can be categorised as Christian masculinity. It clashes with the traditional form of masculinity because it advocates for perceived effeminate attributes such as forgiveness and non-violence which is a complete contrast to the traditional Maasai warrior hood that glorifies attributes such as aggression, retaliation and courage. This new version of Christian masculinity is also evident in the post-colonial texts that the study dwelt on namely Peter Kimani’s *Before the Rooster Crows* and David Maillu’s *Man from Machackos*. The main protagonists Muriuki and Kivindyo show attributes of this form of masculinity though they adopt other versions of masculinity because masculinity is not static but fluid. Hence education and religion become agents which the missionaries used to subvert the dominant traditional patriarchal ideology in both pre-colonial and post-colonial Kenyan society. Such men who adopt this new type of masculinity become ostracised by the society. It was also established that this version of traditional Maasai masculinity also subordinates women. Being a hegemonic
ideology, it perceives the female gender as a subordinate masculinity. Thus females are lumped up with other “weaklings” in the society such as the poor, cowards (people who refuse to go on raids) and the Christian converts (subordinate masculinities).

The study also explored British masculinity in the colonial and post-colonial Kenyan society and the shifting power relations. This is quite relevant because the British had a very strong influence in the creation of the Kenyan nation as the former colonial powers. There is also a strong connection between race and masculinity. During colonialism, the whites enjoyed hegemonic masculinity by virtue of controlling the political, economic structures of the society. However, with the emergence of Kenya as an independent state, the shift of power from the British to the few black elite affects white masculinity. The whites epitomised by British expatriate Sydney Walker, find themselves at a subordinate position to the few black elite who control power. The black elite are represented by men like Charles Gethi. The strong influence of work as an important element in the construction of masculinities is quite evident. Loss of work is closely related to the fear of men not to be able to perform their breadwinning role and a consequent subordinate loss of power and status. Thus loss of power has a strong effect on the white man’s masculinity as well as his family. The study concludes that the family is a site in which men reaffirm their masculinity. Loss of power leads to men feeling emasculated and can therefore not manage their families well. It therefore establishes the centrality of a stable marriage, family and children as major fulfillment of both black and white masculinity in both traditional and modern societies. The study has shown the strong influence women have over men; masculinity is very much dependent on femininity. It also points out the strong patriarchal structures in British and
Maasai societies. Women in both societies occupy a subordinate position. The British women just like their Maasai counterparts are meant to undertake the housekeeping and child rearing roles while the men perform the breadwinning role (the case of Anna and Sydney). Nevertheless, some women use the family as the forum in which male hegemonic ideology is contested and subverted. An example is Patricia who opts to have another relationship yet he is married to Sydney. Women like Patricia contest the patriarchal privilege that men give themselves of having multiple relations. This subversion of patriarchy is also evident in post-colonial Kenyan black society through Mrembo in Before the Rooster Crows. Just like Sydney Walker in One Life Too Many, men like Muriuki in Before the Rooster Crows, fiercely contest and reject these shifting gender roles. Sydney’s suicide is a symbol of resistance to the subordinate power subverting the dominant ideology. On the other hand, Muriuki opts to physically resist Mrembo’s advance. This clearly highlights that gender role reversal in most patriarchal societies still very much resisted. The study also establishes that post-colonial Kenyan black society was torn between two dominant masculinities, traditional rural masculinity and emerging urban masculinity. Traditional masculinity as mentioned elsewhere is governed by strong traditional norms. On the other hand, urban masculinity is more rebellious and it seeks to go against traditional masculinity. It is strongly influenced by the socio-economic nature of the post-colonial Kenyan society that is full of disparities between the few rich people and a majority poor. This breeds a group of men who are violent, self-centered and inhuman because of the harsh urban life. The study also finds that in urban centers, there is less adherence to traditional values of communalism. Hence urban masculinity is quite self-centered and individualistic.
The fluidity of masculinity is also evident because some men leave the village while manifesting rural masculinity but they end up adopting forms of urban masculinity when they reach the metropolis. Most of these men are forced to migrate to the towns due to poverty and inability to fulfill their breadwinning roles. Nevertheless, these men find it difficult to adapt to urban masculinity. They end up being emasculated, disillusioned and fatalistic (Justus in *Man from Machackos* and Muriuki in *Before the Rooster Crows*). This supposition clearly outlines that socio-economic factors have a strong influence on masculinity. Though there is also the hybrid form of masculinity that combines both types of masculinities (rural and urban). The study establishes that this synthesis that brings the good and left the bad from both rural and urban masculinities is more suitable in a society in transition like post-colonial Kenyan society. It also finds that men are under considerate pressure both from their families and wider society to achieve hegemonic masculinity which is very idealistic. This pressure has ramifications for most of the men succumbing to pressure and ending up in a fatalistic state rather than be categorised as subordinate masculinities. The study also notes that most men strive to reassert their masculinity after perceived failure. The reassertion can either be positive like that of Kivindyo in *Man from Machackos* or tragic like that of Sydney Walker in *One Life Too Many* or Muriuki in *Before the Rooster Crows*.

After presenting the findings of this study, it is now appropriate to make a few suggestions on further research in masculinity studies. As the study discovered in Chapter One there is still little criticism of masculinity in Kenyan literature, hence one can undertake a study in the works of many upcoming and mainstream writers. One can undertake a comparative study on the
presentation of masculinity by a female and male writer. One can also study the presentation of masculinity in Kenyan folklore.
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