Abstract – Human communities are largely socialized through art to operate within the limits of ideologies. The form of art Abagusii have for eons used to socialize their populace into subjects of different ideologies is oral poetry hence, the perfect choice by this study to investigate femininity as one of the ideologies in the Abagusii cosmos. The choice of oral poetry as a vehicle for studying femininity among the Gusii is informed by the fact that this genre is that it is the oldest and most versatile genres of orature and one which has had a long and intimate relationship with human communities globally. This paper thus examines the Gusii oral poems as a semiotic system with encoded signs which embody the Gusii feminine ideology. The objective of the paper is to establish the construction and nature of the Gusii feminine ideology and its efficacy in shaping social relationships within Abagusii as a social entity. In the analysis of the sampled oral poems, this paper uses a conceptual framework developed from the Chandler (1995) strands of semiotics in which he argues that a culture produces signs and attributes meanings to them. The tenets of semiosis are then linked to the sociological literary theory strands by Rosenblatt (1978) in which he argues that literature mirrors protocols of the society which produces it and serves given social purposes. Finally, strands from the two literary theories of semiotics and sociological theories are further interlinked with the Althusserian (1989) and Eagleton (1976)’s tenets of Marxism in which they argue that art is a product of a specific historical epoch and its purpose is to be an Ideological State Apparatuses which interpellates people into becoming subjects of given ideologies. This paper has adopted the analytical study design. Secondary data was obtained from the review of published works and primary data was the textual analysis of Gusii oral poems collected from the Abagusii resource persons and libraries. The sampling of data and resource persons was both purposive and through snowballing. The study is significant in the sense that it contributes towards celebrating the role of oral poetry as a vehicle for enabling humans to perceive themselves, their environment and their world in ways unique to themselves and enhancing of intercultural relations as well as forms a basis for related studies.

Keywords: Abagusii, Femininity, Ideology, cultural signs, Oral poetry, Perceptions, Interpellation

Introduction
Historically, Ochieng’s (1974), has posited that Abagusii also known as the Kisii are a Bantu speaking community currently occupying the South West portion of the Kenyan highlands; in the administrative twin counties of Nyamira and Kisii. Abagusii speak Ekegusii language. They recognize a common ancestor named Mogusii, hence a common ancestry and a common ideological heritage. The community is divided into seven clans and are neighbours to communities of unrelated language families except the Abakuria. These communities are the Nilotic-speaking Luo to the North, West, and to the South West; the Nilo-Hamitic Kipsigis to the East, and the Nilo-Hamitic Maasai to the South East. Finally, to the South, are the Kuria (Abatende), whose language is mutually intelligible with Ekegusii.

Abagusii, just like any human community world over, operate within the precincts of specified ideologies. These ideologies are inculcated into the mindsets of Abagusii through various avenues and more often than not, through oral poetry, the oldest of the genres studied in literature (Habib 2005) and one which has had an intimate relationship with the human societies for eons. Abagusii as a distinct community perform and listen to their verbal arts and in the process of doing so, they engage in the process of perceiving themselves and their cosmos in a way that is unique to them. In the process of performing and consuming their oral poetry, they construct an ideological cosmos which defines their socio-cultural identities and limits. Equally, as they perform, they get “interp ellated” into aligning their thinking and mannerisms according to the dictates of their own society, hence, the intention of this study to investigate the Gusii Feminine Ideology as constructed by the community’s oral poetry.
Reviewed Works

The grounding of this study has started with the reviewing of classical theoreticians such as Plato and Aristotle before engaging more recent critical works. The classical thinkers have averred that the relationship between oral poetry and ideology has provided ground for intellectually protracted discourses and has remained at the heart of many societies. In this regard, oral poetry was and is still at the centre of people’s lives and through it, communities have continued to construct and review their worlds in regard to changing times. For this reason, this analysis anchors itself on the premise that the Gusii feminine ideology is a conscious social construct of their conscious actions and it is a reflection of their wishes as is artistically embodied in their oral poetry.

Plato (in Habib 2005), has said that literary works expose images and that through those images, man is cast as chained deep within the recess of a cave. According to him, humans are bound, so their vision is restricted. This study intimates that what binds people and restricts their vision are the various ideologies which are constructed and inculcated into their minds. Ultimately, people’s perceptions of their world are conditioned (bound) to subscribe to the specific ideologies as they are constructed through their oral poetry. One of the ideologies that can bind people is the feminine ideology, the one which this paper examines in relation to Abagusii. Plato (in Habib 2005) further avers that education through oral poetry is most sovereign. This is because more than anything else, rhythm and harmony when combined, they find their way to the innermost soul of an individual and take strongest hold upon it. He further says that ideology operates and continues to operate by its formal expression rather than by its explicit content; thus, making oral poetry a powerful force in moulding public opinion. This is because oral poetry has got inbuilt ability to present arguments coherently and persuasively. These are profound insights to the study of poetry, hence, this study’s analysis of Gusii oral poetry and documentation of the community’s feminine ideology.

The Pan-Hellenist movement (Habib 2005) suggested that truths such as myths are social constructs enacted through oral poetry. Soyinka (1976) posits that a myth is a primal phenomenon which is an embodiment of nature and cosmic principles. In the Gusii context, this study points out that myths are instituted to explain the relevance of Abagusii’s customs, to control and regulate their moral and social behaviour as well as protect and enhance their traditions and beliefs. To this point, this study posits that ideology is a form of social control hence, the investigation of the nature of the Gusii feminine ideology by this study.

In Poetics, Aristotle (in Habib 2005) has stated that from childhood, men have an “instinct” for imitation. He affirms that human beings rely on imitation to learn and that through this process they infer the nature of each object. Therefore, for Aristotle, imitation is both a mode of learning which is associated with pleasure. He further postulates that philosophical mindsets and universal truths (ideologies) are espoused by poetry. These views by Aristotle are echoed by Ngugi (1978) who correctly states that literature results from conscious actions of men in society as the society gives it impetus and direction. Therefore, because poetry is imitative in nature, it is through the study of this imitative human actions as embodied in oral poetry of Abagusii that their feminine ideology is best comprehended.

Finnegan (1970) has analyzed the literariness and social functions of various genres of verbal arts. Among the genres analyzed by her study are songs sung by and for children. While taking cognizance of her classification of various sub-genres of African oral poetry, this study has considered the content and specific characteristics of Gusii oral poetry. Of particular significance is Finnegan’s assertion that oral texts carry the basic features of literariness and can therefore be analyzed as literary texts. This study has borrowed these general views and henceforth directed them towards the analysis of oral poems of Abagusii as semiotic signs which construct for Abagusii their feminine ideology.

Ngara (1990), has looked at poetry as an artistic production and a medium of human consciousness through which human conception of religion, politics, morality and science is deeply influenced. This basically are people’s ideologies. He further singles out categories of ideology which are products of a crucial understanding of poetry. They are: The dominant ideology, the authorial ideology and the aesthetic ideology. In regard to the dominant ideology, he avers that these are the beliefs, assumptions and sets of values that inform the thoughts and actions of people. If poetry is a medium for constructing human consciousness, then this study posits that oral poetry of Abagusii midwives the community’s consciousness in regard to the construction of their feminine ideology.
Alembi (1991) has stated that various communities adhere to their specific norms and cultural values which are preserved and conveyed by their oral poetry. This, he says, is a utilitarian dimension of oral poetry. This view echoes Ngugi’s (1978) assertion in regard to the sociological significance of literature. This means that oral poetry shapes and directs people’s attitudes to their daily struggles with nature, daily struggles with the community and the daily struggles with their souls and selves. In this respect, this study has grounded its choice of oral poetry of Abagusii as a vehicle for studying the feminine ideology of the community. The effects of this genre are enormous since these oral poems are prescriptive products of the Gusii community whose intentions are to produce grounded and or specific responses from Abagusii people who compose, perform and consume them.

Kichamu and Odaga (1982) have noted that many communities throughout Africa have oral poems which form important parts in the lives and thinking of people. The two have further celebrated that oral poetry is about people’s conditions of life hence, they embody the history, philosophy, beliefs and wisdom of the people who produce it. Whereas these views are plausible, they are general to the analysis of oral poetry. This study has borrowed from their approach to move further and demonstrate that the oral poetry of the Gusii community generates ideas whose tenacity is to direct the relationships of Abagusii in their world.

In the foregoing, borrowing a leaf from the classical studies through to the recent ones, this study has analysed Gusii oral poetry bearing that these poems are culture based, they are bearers of cultural signs and artefacts which in turn embody different aspects of the Gusii ideology, femininity being one of them.

Statement of the Problem
The timelessness and versatility of oral poetry makes it a powerful vehicle for human socialization. It greatly influences people’s perceptions of realities of life. It is therefore this inbuilt ability of oral poetry to construct and influence perceptions of reality that has compelled this study’s choice of it to study the nature of femininity in regard to it being one of the Gusii ideologies. The question then is: to what extent then is the oral poetry of the Gusii shaping the community’s feminine ideology? Secondly, Alabi (1998) has expounded that literatures with patriarchal orientation cryptically hail women into being “virtuous women”, while men are abrasive in character. The next question this study tackles is; could the oral poetry of the Gusii people, the poetry they so much enjoy be training Gusii women into being subjects of feelings of inadequacy, feelings of silent frustration and low self-esteem? The observation that a community could be celebrating a gender biasness thus forms the basis upon which this study was undertaken.

Research Methodology
This study has adopted an analytical research design. It has limited itself to a textual analysis of ten oral poems, this being the thirty percent of Gusii oral poems purposively collected and sampled from a large population of Gusii oral poems bearing the feminine ideology. They were purposively collected during a field research in the Kisii and Nyamira Counties of Western Kenya. In addition, various contemporary and seasoned oral poets and resource persons were through purposive and snowball methods contacted and interviewed and recorded. Observing and listening to the discourses of those engaged in the performances of the texts equally helped the study to infer some of the feminine meanings constructed and conveyed by the sampled oral poems. Lastly, library research and online accessing of information was handy.

Femininity in Gusii oral Poetry
Femininity has variously been viewed as a set of attributes, behaviours and roles generally associated with girls and women. Femininity as a social ideology is socially constructed. The overall characteristics of femininity are not universally identical but to some extent, patterns such as gentleness, empathy, sensitivity, caring, sweetness, compassion, tolerance, nurturance, deference and humility are foregrounded in regard to femininity. Goffman (1959) has argued that women are socialized to present themselves as precious, ornamental and fragile, uninstructed in and ill-suited for anything requiring muscular exertion and to project shyness, reserve and a display of frailty, fear and incompetence. These traits vary depending on location and context, and are influenced by a variety of social and cultural factors. Butler (1990) has echoed these sentiments by theorizing that gender is not fixed or inherent but is rather a socially defined set of practices and traits that have, over time, grown to become labelled as feminine or masculine.
Feminine Traits in Gusii Oral Poetry
This discussion starts off with analysis of parts of a Gusii oral poem titled Nyagetwoni.

**Ekonde seito nkaigwa nyancha abergete**
While at home I heard

**Onchong’a ominto nkaigwa nyancha abergete!**
Onchong’a has drowned in the lake

**Nyagetwoni akabutora egetinge**
Nyagetwoni has cut leg ring

**Kalutora egetinge Onchong’a kare moyo**
Cut leg ring yet Onchong’a is alive

In a synopsis, the conflict rests on the basis that a woman; Nyagetwoni- (stereotype) has initiated a divorce process (cutting off her leg ring) in a Gusii patriarchal culture. Such a process, the study infers, can only be initiated by men. Her “shameful, nefarious and rebellious” action has driven her husband – Onchong’a into committing suicide. Nyagetwoni is a Gusii cultural sign of feminine rebellion while Onchong’a is a Gusii cultural sign whose signified is the Gusii macho man – The proud and imperious emissary of Gusii’s patriarchal culture. The stereotyping of the biological female in the above oral poem is to construct and interpellate the sociological female into becoming coy and silent.

In the context of this study, stereotyping is a form of discrimination of the female gender deployed by their male counterparts to maintain their social control over them. Stereotyping is a form of labeling whose target is to stigmatize the targeted group and finally dissuade and derail them from achieving their objectives in life. The stereotyping of the female gender (Nyagetwoni) in Gusii oral poetry is a harsh verdict of having been found guilty of driving Onchong’a into his premature death. No hearing of her side of the story as to what compels her to initiate a divorce process. This appears to be a form of intimidation towards the female gender and its projected result is to maim abrasiveness in females hence, construct a tolerant female who cannot question the largesse accorded to the male gender in the Gusii patriarchal culture.

Still in the verse above, the woman commits a sacrilege when she openly expresses her dissatisfaction in a marriage and opts to bolt out. Therefore, Nyagetwoni (the headstrong females in Gusii world) the condemnation directed towards females with similar thinking among the Gusii community is socially designed to produce a mellow female who should dare not question even that which offends her emotions directly. She is to be gentle and tolerant even in the face of what hurts her.

The above sentiments of this study are further amplified when the semiotic signs in the oral poem below (Egetinkinye Ekeng’aiini – Clever bird) are interpreted within the Gusii cultural context.

**Egetinkinye ekeng'aiini**
Little clever bird

**Kerigia Oboundi kia'gache**
Finds a safe place to build

**Embura egotwa gese!**
When it rains, it enters

**Gese mu'nywe**
To shelter in its own home

**Minura egotwa gese mu'nywe!**
When it rains, it shelters

**Cheng'ende chikarangwe**
To enjoy fried beans

**Korwa Nyakongo**
From Nyakongo market

**Onwana bw'omonda.tagochiria**
A rich person’s child cannot enjoy them!

**Tagochiria mwana bw'omonda.tagochiria**
Beans not enjoyed by the rich

**Ing'ererie orotambe**
Get me a long fishing line

**ong'e nduserie abanto roche**
For fishing humans

**Oreweng'e ne enggu ruwareire!**
The shorter one ends at the bank

**Ing'ende Kwalusera omongoando,**
To clean up the garden

**Omengo ndiyeni kebariri**
A garden with red soils

**Omoiseke omomwamu nyakebwato ogotira**
Dark lady with big thigh

**Komonyene chimiri namorach**
Owner of cattle has noticed her

**Namorache baha- monyene chimiri**
He has spotted her

**Ing'ererie chimiri ntanger nyakebwato**
From roaming at the Manga Escarpment

**Tanya kona gotira emanga.**
The dark lady with heavy thigh

**Omoiseke omomwamu nyakebwato**
Restlessly walking up

**Okenya gotira**

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The subject matter of the oral poem above, *Nyakebwato* – a Gusii cultural sign for a mature woman and ripe for marriage, has a social need. Her restlessness - *Kona gotira emanga* - roaming up and down the Manga Escarpment is the need – the need to get engaged in a heterosexual relationship that can lead into a marriage. Curiously, her socio – cultural ability to eloquently voice her intentions have been muted in the poem. From the onset of the poem, she is socialized to take up a mellow and passive trait in regard to the initiating of heterosexual relations. This should be understood from the perspective that humans have the power of the word to state and express their emotions state their intentions. She is made an object – coy and her movements up and down the Manga escarpment are signs of emotional restlessness but she cannot voice her concerns. Apparently, the poem intimates that she is in need of a male companion for a relationship but her voice is muted by the oral poem. She is constructed to exhibit traits of gentleness and silence as she awaits to be told to do what she already plans to execute. In essence, the female gender is being interpellated into passivity in the whole process of forming heterosexual relations, and to a larger extent, in taking the lead role in anything.

The patriarchal ideology which is cryptically responsible for constructing femininity in Gusii oral poetry is amplified in the poem above when it projects the male as the one to initiate the heterosexual relationship that the female is so much in need of. *Komonyene chimorii namoroche* – The owner of cows (a man) has seen her.

In the four lines above, the persona, obviously a man, is using dowry (*Chimori*) to fish out *Nyakebwato* from her maiden home. The sign of a fish being pulled out of water constructs images of being coerced, though one is willing but not wanting to openly show and talk about her intentions. It thus can be deduced that the oral poem here constructs a coy female, one with a lackadaisical trait in her character.

Further into the construction of a subdued femininity in the Gusii world in the verse below, from an oral poem titled *Amache Nyambiriato*.

The verse above is kind of sarcastic. It mocks the careless and aimless movements of a woman just like it is the case with *Nyakebwato* in the poem *Egetinkinye Ekeng'aiini* whose sections have been analyzed in the section above. In these two oral poems, there is the portraiture of a gender that requires to be contained in the Gusii cosmos. Visiting friends and relations isn’t bad but the going from one homestead to another within the same locality (*siomia siomia*) is injurious to good neighbourliness. It is undignified and nefarious more so given that her mission is to find out what types of foodstuffs have been prepared. These two signs are further amplified in the verse below; equally extracted from the oral poem titled *Egetinkinye Ekeng’aiini*.

The case with *Nyakebwato* in the poem *Egetinkinye Ekeng’aiini* whose sections have been analyzed in the section above. In these two oral poems, there is the portraiture of a gender that requires to be contained in the Gusii cosmos. Visiting friends and relations isn’t bad but the going from one homestead to another within the same locality (*siomia siomia*) is injurious to good neighbourliness. It is undignified and nefarious more so given that her mission is to find out what types of foodstuffs have been prepared. These two signs are further amplified in the verse below; equally extracted from the oral poem titled *Egetinkinye Ekeng’aiini*.
This sign of a vagrant woman in the oral poem titled *Amache Nyambiriato*, just like that of *Gechemba* in the verse above is to construct a social—culturally mellow (confined) woman who is interpellated to be coy and occupy the innermost orbit of the Gusii world. In the two verses above, it is stereotyped that the female gender possesses an innate instinct to cause discomfort in the Gusii world. *Gechemba* is a threat to Sarange’s marriage just like *Omokungu Siomia siomia*—vagrant woman is projected to be a threat to the spirit of good and tranquil neighbourliness. As intimated earlier in this discussion, stereotyping is a form of labeling whose target is to stigmatize an individual or a targeted group and finally dissuade and derail them from achieving their objectives in life. When the oral poems discussed in this part of this study grace Gusii social functions and practices, the recipients—women are socially interpellated into the female gender which is to remain humble, mellow, passive, sensitive lest derogatory epithets like *siomia siomia*, *Nyaketwoni*, *Nyagetwoni* and others be tagged on them.

Still on the same argument, it is worth noting that gossip, a negative tag and for this matter a stereotype has been attributed to *Gechemba*. *Gechemba* is a cultural sign for a constructed female character which signifies limited intelligence and the destructive nature of the mature but unmarried women in the Gusii world. Whereas the sign *Omoiseke Gechemba kore omogenki*—Gechemba the lady gossiper, *Obere mino tochha kongenkeza Sarange*—Stay at your home and avoid coming to my place to negatively influence (Swahili—*Kuchochua*) Sarange, it conversely constructs the man in the Gusii environment as a wise person. Such are the stereotypes that the same feminine ideology deploys in assigning feminine gender roles as discussed below.

If the female gender is socialized to stay at home, it is a social construction geared towards constructing a coy and mellow female. In the case of the poem quoted above, marriages are threatened in case the female is allowed to have a voice. It is the position of this discussion that marriage is a microcosm for the socio-cultural harmony. Therefore, if *Gechemba’s* freedom of expression is a threat to marriage, on a wider scale the implication is that if the feminine gender is granted freedom of expression and association, then the social harmony and integration of the Gusii community is in jeopardy. Consequently, it is thus clear that the oral poetry of the Abagusii constructs a feminine ideology which silences its girl—child, hence, a gender that is tender.

### Feminine Roles in Gusii Oral Poetry

Femininity in Gusii cosmos goes beyond character traits and emerges strongly in the area of gender roles assigned to the female gender. These gender roles are designed and assigned to justify the gender stereotypes, some of which have been discussed above. Gender stereotypes influence traditional feminine occupations, resulting in microaggression toward women who break traditional gender roles like is the case with *Nyagetwoni* above. In regard to the roles of the female gender, this study starts off its discussion with the analysis of a section of one of the Gusii initiation oral poems locally known as *Esimbore*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tamotoma roche,</th>
<th>Should not send him to fetch water!</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tamotoma rochee!</td>
<td>Should not send him to fetch water!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taas nyeni taas nyenii!</td>
<td>Should not send him to pluck vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tachia koringa tachia korgaa!</td>
<td>Should not cook meals</td>
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Initiation marks a transition from childhood to adulthood. Consequently, this study takes the position that oral poems performed during such cultural festivals are laden with strictness of meanings in regard to what is expected of one in the life of adulthood. The verse above from an initiation oral poem of Abagusii a semiotic command to women (mothers of initiates) not to ask their sons; now men, to perform certain tasks such as fetching water from streams and plucking vegetable leaves. The sociological implication here is that these are household—related jobs which in this case should be undertaken by the females. This is a reinforcement of the stereotype that women are frail, fragile and tender and therefore should be restricted into performing household chores duties of fetching water, plucking vegetable leaves and cooking. Definitely, this is a domineering and subjugating construction of patriarchy which is keen on restricting women to domestic works as the male gender explores the world yonder where new ideas emanate.

Further into the construction and portraiture of feminine roles as part of the feminine ideology of Abagusii is the verse below from an oral poem titled: *Obori bwa Baba*—Mama’s Finer Millet

| Obe e-e sabiri kumba!     | Kindly Sabiri, bend |
Just like the verses analyzed above, the content in the verse above is grounded on stereotypes meant to subjugate the female gender. The names of the individuals being praised for being hard working – Sabiri, Joyce Bwari, Joyce Nyairo are all feminine names. The part of interest for this study is the kind of job they are being praised for having accomplished. It is the tilling of land. This is great contrast to the ownership of livestock which has been assigned to the male gender in the oral poem titled *Egetinkinye Ekeng‘aini*, whose parts have been foregrounded in the discussion above. The stereotype here is that members of the female gender have greater manual dexterity hence they have been socialized into being subjects of a feminine ideology to which they have to be active in their role of tilling the land.

Other than the roles of being domestic workers and farm tillers, the feminine ideology of Abagusii has been constructed by the community’s oral poetry to see to it that the female are happy as wives, midwives, and child bearers. This is amplified the lines below taken from an oral poem celebrated by Abagusii:

Goko okorire buya
Aharete egeita
Orenge moka abaisia
Obeire moka abamura

Granny has done well,
She is going to pass through the cattle pen!
She was a wife to uninitiated boys,
Now she is a wife for initiated men

In the above lines, a young lady is being praised, definitely after initiation, to become a wife of initiated men. Equally, in the poem *Egetinkinye Ekeng‘aini*, see below:

Omoiseke Gechemba kore omogenki
Obere mino tocha kongenkera Sarange
Ing‘ererie ekerori nyakobugeria ---
Nario Sarange atachi ande!

Gecemba the gossip
Stay away from inciting Sarange
Hand me a flute to play
So, that Sarange doesn’t leave

There is Sarange, a wife who is praised for being dormant and contented with her social position as a wife. In these two cases, it is evident that the Gusii oral poetry constructs a feminine ideology in which social patterns create domination and suppression. In this regard, femininity as an ideology of Abagusii is constructed in such a manner that the females are relegated into the roles motherhood because they are caring and can nurture lives.

The other prominent role that is constructed and assigned to the female gender according to the oral poetry of Abagusii is the role of the female being social workers. The oral poem whose parts are quoted below is performed alongside other praise poems in weddings and or in related occasions. Studying the verse below will reveal a concerted effort to mute the feminine voice and construct a mellow female who is subjugated into the subordinate role of entertainment and therefore being socialized into becoming a social worker.

Moite buya konyatundo Nyarisinange
Nyieria buya konyatundo Nyarisinangee –
Tuma buya konyatundo Nyarisinangge –
Sina buya konyatundo Nyarisinangge –
Chenchia buya konyatundo Nyarisinangge –
Eee! Nyatundo Nyarisinange Kwani Onchuru

Dance like Nyadundo of Sinange
Smile like Nyadundo of Sinange
Jump like Nyadundo of Sinange
Pinch like Nyadundo of Sinange
Dance like Nyadundo of Sinange
Nyadundo of Sinange greet Onchuru

Nyadundo stands for short and beautiful woman who hails from a region called Sinange. This oral poem constructs a scenario in which it is the womenfolk who should be at the forefront in the entertainment of those attending social functions. The refrain above, interrogated with keenness, reveals a construction of a social environment in which a gender which celebrates an oral poem which curtails its freedom of expression. The point is; the refrain
directs them into dancing, smiling and jumping; mere physical actions which are meant for the entertainment and gratification of the eyes of the spectators, in this case, most probably men.

As the poem instructs the woman to jump, dance and smile, it is the postulation of this study that the intent of this poem together with other is to construct a feminine ideology which socializes the female gender into taking up the roles receptionists, housekeeping, salespersons and such like gender roles which demand that one should either be dancing, smiling or jumping up to please others. In reality, in more than one respect, these feminine roles are subordinate to those assigned to the male gender. In essence, these social femininities slowly glorify the retributive macho position of men and slowly but steadily, it stereotypes and stigmatizes the trickery and any sense of brainwork which can aid the female gender in working out their own emancipation. Ultimately, the image of the female gender as constructed is that of a feminine entity that is coy, whose voice is muted but her actions are quite visible.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Femininity as a part of a community’s social ideology is an elaborate subject that cannot be fully covered in such a brief discussion. This paper covers just a section of the Gusii feminine ideology. This study has examined Gusii oral poetry and has documented here in some of the traits and stereotypes that are cryptically embedded in these poems. Equally, while establishing the construction of femininity in Gusii oral poetry, this study has established some of the roles which these poems have assigned the female gender. They are roles derived largely from feminine stereotypes. They include household chores, manual works, social works among others. Therefore, it is the submission of this paper that not all has been covered in regard to the portraiture of femininity in Gusii oral poetry. Therefore, further investigation into this rich area of the Gusii oral poetry is recommended.

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APPENDIX – GUSII ORAL POEMS

KONDE SEITO
Ekonde seito nkaiwa nyancha abenegete
Onchong’a ominto nkaiwa nyancha abenegete
Nyagewoni akabutora eginge
Kabutora eginge Onchong’a kare moyo
Bwabokire! Bwabokire obwanchani
Bori bwa kare, bori bwakare obwanchani
Bwabokire, bwabokire obwanchani
Tema naende, tema naende torore
Yaye abana baiuto – ee kwania Obino
Ase rituko buna riarero!! Ooh!
Aye Onchong’a agatanga ekworo
Eee kwani Obino

WHILE AT HOME
While home, I heard He’s drowned
Onchong’a has drowned in Lake
Nyagerwoni had cut her legring
Cut legring yet Onchong’a was alive
Real love has been rekindled
Love of the old times is alive
Real love has been rekindled
Try once again, let’s see
Ohh! Our children, greet Obino
On a day such as this one
Onchong’a thought only of himself
Ooh yes, greetings to Obino

KONYATUNDO NYAR’SINANGE
Moite buya konyatundo Nyarisinange
Nyieria buya konyatundo Nyarisinange –
Tuma buya konyatundo Nyarisinange –
Suna buya konyatundo Nyarisinange –
Chenchia buya konyatundo Nyarisinange –
Eee! Nyatundo Nyarisinange Kwani Onchuru

LIKE THE BEAUTY OF SINANGE
Dance like Nyadundo of Sinange
Smile like Nyadundo of Sinange
Jump like Nyadundo of Sinange
Pinch like Nyadundo of Sinange
Dance like Nyadundo of Sinange
Nyadundo of Sinange greet Onchuru

ESIMBORE
Baisia bake bororo bwabarire!
Isemokami oirir mboro chiaito;
Barwane Sigisi, barwane Sigisi!
Barwane bosoba, barwane Bosoba!
Baisia bake e-e-e, bororo bwabarire
Isono ria ng’ina, isono ria ng’ina,
Oboya bwa ng’ina, oboya bwa ng’ina,
Baisia bake teta ng’ina, teta ng’ina!
Baisia bake bororo bwabarire

ESIMBORE -
Goko okorire buya
Abarete egeita
Oreno moka abaisia
Obere moka abamura
Igesora na igesora,
Togeorema amaboba
Simbore yaito yarure rogoro
Nyambegera moka Asago
Oirire ehisono biaito
Ochire kogekera!

FEMALE CIRCUMCISION SONG.
Granny has done well,
She is going to pass through the cattle pen!
She was a wife to uninitiated boys,
Now she is a wife for initiated boys,
After harvest, after harvest,
We shall cultivate our second crops
Our esimbore song has come from up yonder,
Nyambegera, the wife of Asago,
Has taken our clitoris
And has gone to roast them!

EGETINKINYE EKENG’AINI
Egetinkinye ekeng’aini
Keriga Oboundi kigache
Embura egotwa gesoe!
Geso mwayne
Mbura egotwa gesoe mwayne!
Ching’ende chikarangwe
Korwa Nyakongo

CLEVER BIRD
Little clever bird
Finds a safe place to build
When it rains, it enters
To shelter in its own home
When it rains, it shelters
To enjoy fried beans
From Nyakongo market
Omwana bw’omonda tagochiria
Tagochiria mwana bw’omonda tagochiria
Beans not enjoyed by the rich

Ing’ererie orotambe
ong’e nduserie abanto roche
Orweng’e ne engegu rwaereire!
Ing’ende Kwabusera omogondo,
Omogondo nyakieni kebariri
To clean up the garden
A garden with red soils

Omoiseke omomwanu nyakebwato ogotira
Komonyene chimori namoroche
Namoroche baba- monyene chimori
Ing’ererie chimori ntangere nyakebwato
Tanya kona gotira emanga.
Omoiseke omomwanu nyakebwato
Okonya gotira
Komonyene chimori namoroche
Dark lady with big thigh
Owner of cattle has noticed her
He has spotted her
Hand me cows to prevent her
From roaming at the Manga Escarpment
The dark lady with heavy thigh
Restlessly walking up
The calves’ owner has seen her Monyene chimorii
The owner of calves has seen her
Give me cows
To prevent Nyakebwato
From moving aimlessly on Manga

Ekerandi Kio Omong’ina
Ekerandi kiomong’ina
Egesero-a, egeseraa aigwanane
Egesero kiomwana,
Egeseraa, egeseraa, aigwanane
Egeteni kiomogaka ---

Ekerandi kiomong’ina
The grandmother’s guard
Let all be at peace
The hide meant for the baby
Let all live together in peace
Father’s three-legged stool

Ekerandi kiomong’ina
Onsinsi nakana ensarera nse,
Onsinsi akarera
Nyakieni tonkeria

Onsinsi I refuse the line of gossipers
Onsinsi wept
The beautiful one do not refuse Ntaba Mogirango `Ndindindi!
I’m not from Mugirango
Oh yes, you’ve cost me, let me down not
Has cost me a long journey

Omoiseke Nyakiieni Kebariri
Kera na ngweta
Mwaira engero geita
Kerama aero Nyando
Bengi tene Nyarere
Mwaira engero geita
Kirimaero nyando.

Noraire?
E- baba omwana atacha
Antebia ebaba rigereria
Irongo tuki chinge kemonyoncho,
Kunya! Kerebi
Moka masuti ogocha

Passing near Kerama
You’ve taken the dance at the gate
Kerama near Nyando
Bengi tena Nyarere
You’ve taken the dance to the gate
Kirima oero Nyando
Are you asleep?
Hey mum, the child hasn’t come
Tells me mammy, just have a look
Inside the ceiling,
Kunya, Kerebi
When Masuti’s wife comes,
Gotorigia engangangarayo.
Ebinde bia amagoro, engangarayo
Tee engangangarayo
Mokamosomba korera mariga
Omoiseke nyakieni keberiri
Otigire ekieni Bobaracho
Otigire ekieni Kebararche,
Nga’i abamura baratere
Eee ng’ai torachie, ee ng’ai torarare
Abang’ina baboria boira
Abamura gaki takona korera
Korera nyoko na iso,
Moiseke nyoko bisira,

OBORI BWA BABA
Obori bwa baba ekende
Ee ekende obori bwa baba,
Obori bwa baba ekende,
Ekeende baba omotengera nyangueso
Ndindindi! Ndindindi ndindindi!
Amaembe a baba amatengoro
Ee amatengoro amemba a baba!
A-amaembe a baba amatengoro,
Amatengoro baba omotengera nyangueso
Ndindindi! Ndindindi ndindindi.

MOTHER’S FINGER MILLET
Grandmother’s finger millet has done well
Grandmother’s millet has yielded well
Grandmother’s millet has yielded well
Great harvest as grandma dances to locusts
Ndindindi! Ndindindi ndindindi
Grandmother’s sorghum has yielded well
The sorghum has yielded well
The sorghum has yielded well
Great harvest as grandma dances to locusts
Ndindindi! Ndindindi ndindindi

AMACHE NYABIRIATO
Amache Nyambiriatoo ee baba
Amache nyambiriatoo amache nobochege agiteirwe
Nobochege agiteirwe ee baba, nobochege
Agiteirwe amache nyamototoka egocha enywe,

WATERS AT NYAMBIRIATO
The water at Nyambiriatoo
Is fenced off---
to keep off intruders
So that Nyamototika drinks it

One who to knows our ways,
He should go to Nyamataro
Nyamataro praises our ways
Nyamataro, praises our ways
At Borangi side of the ridge,
Shields are in plenty
They are so many of them
shields are never scarce
I’ve got no cows
I’ve no cows, well is fenced
To keep off intruders
Fenced, to keep away thieves
The waters at Nyambiriatoo

MOGOTU MOGA TEBITI – MOGOTU- DAVID’S WIFE
Moga tebiti, Mogotu mogatebiti ee!
Moga tebiti mokungu akaimokia omoro ee!
Akaimokia omoro agende goita tebeti
Bikundo okorera, kogicha ntayetee omorwa,
Ntayietee omonwa rka monwa chibesa.

Mokanyandondi, Moraa mokanyandondi ee!
Mogotu, David’s Wife
Mogotu took a machette
To murder David
Bikundo is weeping
Bikundo regrets having ben born

Moraa, Nyandondi’s wife
Mokanyandondi mokungu akaimokia omoro- ee! A woman took a machette
Akaimokia omoro agende goita Nyandondi Took a machette to murder Nyandondi
Bikundo okorera kogicha ntayiete omorwa Bikundo weeps, I never burnt my mouth