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 the oldest and most versatile genres of literature 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 Apparatus 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 “interpellated” 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 still is 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 mindsets. 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 cuta legring

**Kabutora 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’ai* – Clever bird) are interpreted within the Gusii cultural context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egetinkinye ekeng’aini</th>
<th>Little clever bird</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kerigia Oboundi kiaigache</td>
<td>Finds a safe place to build</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embura egotwa gesoe!</td>
<td>When it rains, it enters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gezoe muze</td>
<td>To shelter in its own home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mlura egotwa gesoe muve!</td>
<td>When it rains, it shelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chingende chikarangwe</td>
<td>To enjoy fried beans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korwa Nyakongo</td>
<td>From Nyakongo market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omwana bw’omonda tagochiria</td>
<td>A rich person’s child cannot enjoy them!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagochiria mwana bw’omonda tagochiria</td>
<td>Beans not enjoyed by the rich</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ing’ererie oratambe</th>
<th>Get me a long fishing line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ong’e ndaverie abanto roche</td>
<td>For fishing humans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orweng’e ne enggu ruwure!</td>
<td>The shorter one ends at the bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ing’eriele Kafuluera omogondo,</td>
<td>To clean up the garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omogondo nyakieni kebariri</td>
<td>A garden with red soils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omoiseke omomwanu nyakebwato ogotira</td>
<td>Dark lady with big thigh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Komonyene chimori namoroche</td>
<td>Owner of cattle has noticed her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namoroche baba- monyene chimori</td>
<td>He has spotted her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ing’ererie chimori ntangere nyakebwato ogotira</td>
<td>From roaming at the Manga Escarpment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya kona gotira omanga.</td>
<td>The dark lady with heavy thigh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omoiseke omomwanu nyakebwato</td>
<td>Restlessly walking up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okonya gotira</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The calves’ owner has seen her

The owner of calves has seen her

To prevent Nyakebwato

From moving aimlessly on Manga

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 chimori namoroche – The owner of cows (a man) is 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’aini whose sections have been analyzed in the section above. 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’aini whose sections have been analyzed in the section above.
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 *Omkungu Siomia* *siomia* – vagrant woman is projected to be a threat to the spirit of good and tranquil neighbourliness. As intimated earlier in this discussion, stereotypes are 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*, *Nyakelwato*, *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* kwa omogenki – Gechemba the lady gossiper, *Obere mino tocha kongenker* 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*.

*Tamotoma roche,* Should not send him to fetch water!  
*Tamotoma rochee!* Should not send him to fetch water!  
*Taa nyeni taa nyenii!* Should not send him to pluck vegetables  
*Tachia koruga tachia korugaa!* Should not cook meals

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 in the life of adulthood. The verse above from an initiation oral poem of Abagusii a semiotic command to women (mothers ofinitiates) 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 buwa Baba* – Mama’s Finer Millet

*Obe e-e-e sabiri kumba!* Kindly Sabiri, bend
Kumbata mogondo are! She is tilling the farm
Obe e-e e buna abakoro! Like women of the old
Kumbata mogondo are Tilling like women of the old
Obe e-e Choisi bwari! Joyce Bwari
Kumbata mogondo are She is tilling the farm
Obe e-e Choisi Nyairo! Hail Joyce Nyairo
Kumbata mogondo are She is tilling the land

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 hardworking — 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 childbearers. This is amplified the lines below taken from an oral poem celebrated by Abagusii:

Goko okorire buya Granny has done well,
Aharete egeita She is going to pass through the cattle pen!
Orenge moka abaisia She was a wife to uninitiated boys,
Obeire moka abamura 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 Gechemba the gossip
Obere mino tocha kongenkeru Sarange — Stay away from inciting Sarange
Ing’ererie ekerori nyakobugeria — Hand me a flute to play
Nario Sarange atachi ande! 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 Dance like Nyadundo of Sinange
Nyieria buya konyatundo Nyarisinange — Smile like Nyadundo of Sinange
Tuma buya konyatundo Nyarisinange — Jump like Nyadundo of Sinange
Sina buya konyatundo Nyarisinange — Pinch like Nyadundo of Sinange
Chenchia buya konyatundo Nyarisinange — Dance like Nyadundo of Sinange
Eee! Nyatundo Nyarisinange Kwani Onchuru 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 SEI TO
While at home

Ekonde seito nkaigwa nyancha abenegete
While home, I heard He's drowned
Onchong’a ominto nkaigwa nyancha abenegete
Nyagerwoni had cut her legring
Nyagwoni akabutora egetinge
Cut legring yet Onchong’a was alive
Bwabokire! Bwabokire obwanchani
Real love has been rekindled
Bori bwa ka re, bori bwakare obwanchani
Try once again, let’s see
Bwabokire, bwabokire obwanchani
Ohh! Our children, greet Obino
Nyagetwoni akabutora egetinge
Onchong’a thought only of himself
Bwabokire! Bwabokire obwanchani
On a day such as this one

LIKE THE BEAUTY OF SINANGE

Moite buya konyatundo Nyarisinange
Dance like Nyadundo of Sinange
Nyieria buya konyatundo Nyarisinange
Smile like Nyadundo of Sinange
Suna buya konyatundo Nyarisinange
Jump like Nyadundo of Sinange
Chenchiya buya konyatundo Nyarisinange
Dance like Nyadundo of Sinange

LIKE THE BEAUTY OF SINANGE

Moite buya konyatundo Nyarisinange
Dance like Nyadundo of Sinange
Nyieria buya konyatundo Nyarisinange
Smile like Nyadundo of Sinange
Suna buya konyatundo Nyarisinange
Jump like Nyadundo of Sinange
Chenchiya buya konyatundo Nyarisinange
Dance like Nyadundo of Sinange

ESIMBORE

Baisia bake bororo bwabarire!
Uncircumcised little boys have felt pain!
Isemokami oirire mboro chiaito;
The circumciser has taken our penis;
Batureirwe itimo na nguba mhibo.
He has made them a spear and a hard shield.
Barwane Sigisi, barwane Sigisi!
Fight the Kipsigis! Fight the kipsigis!
Barwane bosoba, barwane Bosoba!
Fight the Abasuba, fight the Abasuba!
Baisia bake e-e-e, bororo bwabarire
Uncircumcised little boys have had pain!
Iso no ria ng’ina, isono ria ng’ina,
Mother’s clitoris, mother’s clitoris,
Oboya bwa ng’in, oboya bwa ng’in,
Mother’s pubic hair, mother’s pubic hair,
Baisia bake tita ng’ina, teta ng’ina!
Uncircumcised little boys, copulate with mother!
Baisia bake bororo bwabarire
Uncircumcised little boys have had pain!

ESIMBORE

Goko okorire buya
Granny has done well,
Abarete egeita
She is going to pass through the cattle pen!
Orenge moka abaisia
She was a wife to uninitiated boys,
Obeire moka abamura
Now she is a wife for initiated boys,
Igesora na ige sora,
After harvest, after harvest,
Tote gorevere amaboba
We shall cultivate our second crops
Simbore yaito yarure rogoro
Our esimbores song has come from up yonder,
Nyambegera moka Asago
Nyambegera, the wife of Asago,
Oirire ebisono biaito
Has taken our clitoris
Ochire kogekera!
And has gone to roast them!

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EGETINKINYE EKENG’AINI

Egetinkinye ekeng’aini
Little clever bird
Keriga Oboundi kiagache
Finds a safe place to build
Embura egetwa gesoe!
When it rains, it enters
Gesoe mwaye
To shelter in its own home
Mbura egetwa gesoe mwaye!
When it rains, it shelters
Ching’ende chikarangwe
To enjoy fried beans
Korwa Nyakong
From Nyakongo market
Omwana bw’omonda tagochiria
Tagochiria mwana bw’omonda tagochiria Beans not enjoyed by the rich

Ing’ererie orotambe
ong’e ndusere abanto roche
Orweng’e ne engegu rwatreire!
Ing’ende Kwabusera omogondo,
Omgondo nyakieni kebariri

Get me a long fishing line
For fishing humans
The shorter one ends at the bank
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

Omoiseke Gechemba kore omogenki
Obere mino tocha kongenkeri Sarange –
Ing’ererie ekorori nyakobugeria ---
Nario Sarange atachi ande!

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

EKERANDI KIO OMONG’INA
Ekerandi kiomong’ina
Egesero-a, egeseraa aigwanane
Egesero kiomwana,
Egeseraa, egeseraa, aigwanane
Egeteni kiomogaka ---

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

Okirigiti osangara,
Ooo yaye!
Onsinisi nakana ensarera nse,
Onsinisi akarera
Nyakieni tonkeria

Okirigiti the son of Onsangare
Ohh yes
Onsinisi I refuse the line of gossipers
Onsinisi 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 NYAKIENI KEBARIRI
Kerama ngweta
Mwaira engero geita
Kerama eero Nyando
Bengi tene Nyarere
Mwaira engero geita
Kirimaero nyando.
Noraire?
E- baba omwana atacha
Antebia ebaba rigereria
Irongo tuki chinge kiomonyoncho,
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 engangarayayo.
Ebinde bia amagoro, engangarayayo
Tee engangarayayo
Mokamosomba korera mariga
Omoiseke nyakieni keberiri
Otigire ekieni Bobaracho
Otigire ekieni Kebarache,
Nga’i abamura baratare
Eee ng’ai torachie, ee ng’ai torarare
Abang’ina baboria boira
Abamura gaki takona korera
Korera nyoko na iso,
Moiseke nyoko bisira,

To look for us
And foot steps engangarayayo
Tee engangarayayo
The wife of Mosomba weeps
The girl with the brown complexion
Has left the complexion at Bobaracho
Has left her complexion at Kebarate
Where will men take their walk to?
Where shall we go to?
Old women are asking daily
Young men stop weeping
Stop crying for mother and father’s help
The girl, the mother to Bisira

OBORI BWA Baba
Obori bwa baba ekeande
Ee ekeande obori bwa baba,
Obori bwa baba ekeande,
Ekeande baba omotengera nyangueso
Ndindindi! Ndindindi ndindindi!
Amaembe a baba amatogoro
Ee amatogoro amemba a baba!
A amaemba a baba amatogoro,
Amatogoro baba omotengera nyangueso
Ndindindi! Ndindindi ndindindi.

Obori bwa baba ekeande
Ee ekeande obori bwa baba,
Obori bwa baba ekeande,
Ekeande baba omotengera nyangueso
Ndindindi! Ndindindi ndindindi!
Amaembe a baba amatogoro
Ee amatogoro amemba a baba!
A amaemba a baba amatogoro,
Amatogoro 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 nyamotokina egocha enywe,

Amaembe a baba amatogoro
Ee amatogoro amemba a baba!
A amaemba a baba amatogoro,
Amatogoro baba omotengera nyangueso
Ndindindi! Ndindindi ndindindi.

WATERS AT NYAMBIRIATO
The water at Nyambiriatoo
Is fenced off---
to keep off intruders
So that Nyamotika 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 tebetti
Bikundo okorera, kogicha ntayete omonwa,
Ntayete omonwa nka 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 ntayite omorwa  Bikundo weeps, I never burnt my mouth