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Re-storing agency to the woman in the city: an analysis of Monica Genya's Links of a chain, The wrong kind of girl and The other side of love

Waichigo, Grace Wanjiru

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Chapter One

Introduction

This research investigates how Monica Genya depicts the 'good-time girl' in a constantly changing post colonial Kenya. Studies on the representation of women in African literature until recently oscillated between the 'prostitute figure' and the 'Mother Africa' trope. I read Monica Genya's *Links of a Chain, The Wrong Kind of Girl* and *The Other Side of Love* with the intention of analysing how the author presents the single woman as the good-time girl, thus acknowledging more complex characterization employed by authors when writing about the woman in African literature. There have been few studies done on the good-time girl in African literary scholarship.

The term good-time girl has been used rather loosely, and sometimes refers to the figure as prostitute. This research seeks to determine whether there is any difference between the two figures, and to thus answer the question of who the good-time girl really is and how she differs from the prostitue. This research therefore looks at how the single woman, packaged as the good-time girl by Genya, provides an alternative representation of women in cities. My main concern is to understand the diference between the prostitute, and the good-time girl how Genya employs the good-time girl as a symbol of the empowered single woman in the city. I will therefore endeavor to trace the achievements as well as the limitations of the good-time girl in urban spaces, as they struggle to assert their independence, especially when engaging in romance.

My argument is that Monica Genya is part of a new wave of female writers in Kenya who are keen to represent the successful, middle class, educated, single female adult inhabitant of cities and towns of whom Everjoice Win and Andrea Cornwall (2005)[1] argue have been absent, not only from feminist research, but also from male-authored fiction. In comparison to most male authors of popular fiction of the 70s and 80s like Charles Mangua and Meja Mwangi[2] who were preoccupied with the "underbelly" of the city and wrote about life in the urban slum, the restlessness and hopelessness of educated youth as well as their struggle to survive and enjoy the pleasures of everyday life, Genya celebrates the high life experienced in the cities and towns across Kenya. She acknowledges and celebrates the financial and economic freedom and empowerment enjoyed by single women in cities and towns throughout Kenya. She also complicates the re-presentation of female characters in African literature.

East African Educational Publishers' Spear Books Series, whose novels are primarily directed at the cosmopolitan reader, published Monica Genya's three books. The Spear Book Series was fashioned by Heinemann in Kenya, in order to compete against the popularity of American novels, such as those authored by James Hadley Chase, which were popular in Kenya (Raoul Granqvist 1992). Writers of popular fiction like Charles Mangua, David Maillu, John Kiriamiti, Wahome Mutai, and Carolyne Adalla among others were among those published by the Spear Books Publishers (Lindfors 1996). Genya's first novel *Links of*

[1] As quoted by Andrea Cornwall, "Introduction" in *Readings in Gender and African Literature* pg 4
[2] Charles Mangua is the author of the novel *"Son of a Woman"* and its sequel *"Son of a woman in Mombasa."* He has published several other books, but of interest to this research are the above novels, which made their mark in popular fiction in Kenya. Meja Mwangi is the author of *"Going Down River Road"* and *"Cockroach Dance"* among eleven other books.

a Chain was published in 1996, while *The Wrong Kind of Girl* and *The Other Side of Love* were both published in 2004.

When analyzing the characteristics of popular literature in Africa, Karin Barber's (1997) defined it as an "area of exploitation". This then makes it a space for experimentation with various themes and styles of writing. It is a site used by female writers to address issues of gender, romance, sex and identity. Popular fiction has therefore become a space where inequalities are addressed, and where people invent ways to grapple with their struggles, as well as express their yearning for a better lifestyle.

Stephanie Newell (2002) takes the analysis further by suggesting that writers of popular fiction use the romance genre to comment on gender issues. She rightly observes that gender "seems to be an essential, primary lens, through which popular novelists [and critics] filter their interpretations of society" (6). This has lead critics like Lars Johansson (1992), among others, to look at prostitution as a metaphor of the political state of African nations, which was/is often loaded with corruption. Newell's view of the romance genre as a tool used by writers to challenge established social practices is therefore, what is relevant to this research. She argues that it is too simplistic to link the negative representation of the emancipated woman in most male-authored texts to her economic empowerment, though this is not to say that it should be ignored. Rather, it is the marital status of the women, mostly single women, that provokes the fault finding mission of male-authored texts of popular fiction, thus the invention of motifs and labels to control and contain her. As already implied in the opening paragraph of this research the presentation of women in African literature oscillated broadly

between two extremes: the Mother Africa trope and the prostitute. This has further developed into representations of the "ideal" woman versus the wicked woman in urban spaces. With regard to such labeling Florence Stratton (1994) writes:

> Whether she was elevated to the status of a goddess or reduced to the level of a prostitute, the designation is degrading, *for he does the naming* whereas her experience as a woman is trivialized and distorted….her person and her story are shaped to meet the requirements of his vision. (123)

Stratton intimates that the naming and the categorizing of women was according to the specification of the male view of the woman and served to reinforce his vision. Simply stated, the representation of the woman was/is all about the man. By employing the romance genre, women writers such as Genya thus find it convenient to use romantic tropes as a platform to engage with writers and critics in correcting the distorted and shallow image of the good-time girl.

Florence Stratton (1994) has noted the silent spaces that African female writers occupy, and attributes it to the masculinity of the canon that works to trivialise the contribution of female writers, as well as the multiple forms of oppression that the African woman experiences. Of importance to this research is Stratton's view on the stereotypical representation of women by most male authors. Though she does acknowledge that there has been a revision of the presentation of women in post-independent Africa, she concedes that most male writers oscillate between two extremes in their representation of female characters; the pure and virtuous and the wicked rebel in need of chastising, hence female writers have a

responsibility to correct such images. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1987) describes the two major responsibilities of a female writer as that of: "telling the story about being a woman and describing society and reality from a woman's perspective". Ogundipe-Leslie is also responding to the stereotypical representation of women in male-authored texts, which she feels limits women's potentiality as well as their role in development.

By analyzing the relationship between the man and the woman in the text, this research will determine how the writer uses romance to centralize the good-time girl in African literary scholarship. As Bryce (1997) and Newell (2001) rightly observe, African romance fiction usually has fundamental didactic functions. For example, although Genya seems to be concerned with describing romance before marriage, she places emphasis on commitment by both partners, and the grounding of sexual relations on emotional connection. She thus places romance within a modern setting and (re) defines the rules of engagement, and at the same time (re) drafts the story of the good-time girl in cities and towns. She attempts to shutter stereotypes that prescribe gender roles, thus foregrounding the need for gender equality in romance. As Bryce explains, "romantic love [then] becomes a trope for the desire for change both personal and social…a testing ground for new ideas, new permutations and new constructions of gendered identity" (1997; 122). Though the female voice is sturdy, Genya does not undermine the role of the man in a relationship, as well as in society. She seems more concerned with gender complementarily, and is keen to avoid the lenses of conflict in her novels, even when she projects the inequality of gender, by quickly providing solutions. For example, while the male characters in the text are portrayed as authorial figures their "conservative configurations" are emphasized and they are seen to be supportive of their

partners by engaging, for instance in household chores.[3] Women on the other hand are encouraged to be opinionated and financially independent. The males are constantly urged to re-examine their view of feminine and masculine roles, thus foregrounding equality between the genders.

This research however, draws more on Newell's (2000) contribution to the discourse of feminism and the representation of women in male-authored texts. While she does echo the concerns of most feminist scholars on the need to (re)draft images of women in male authored texts, when analysing female authored texts, she argues that by simply contrasting such texts to male authored texts, scholars fail to appreciate the "currents of *complicity*, conformity, reaction and *radicalism*" (my emphasis: 38), found in female authored romance novels. I emphasize on these two issues to foreground the fact that women writers like Genya are simply providing variability of opinion, while applying the same textual strategies and characterisation as their male counterparts, what Newell refers to as "difference of view" (2000: 28-44): whereby writers employ pedestrian characters, yet offer different perspectives.

For example, Genya employs single women in cities and towns who are popularly described as good-time girls in most Kenyan fiction, but presents them as symbols of empowered women. This then implies that female writers of romance like Genya, are reading gender narratives in male-authored fiction, and responding to them not from the margins which would identify them as the "other" but rather from within by "taking up commonly acknowledged interpretive positions and exploring the flipside of male authored narratives,

[3] The male protagonists in her texts are described to be financially stable, with some holding positions of power politically.

[thus] offering alternative realities" (39). Newell's argument further places writers like Genya in local[4] positions within which their reaction and "radicalism" ironically implies "complicity" and conformity since they are simply in conversation with male writers by virtue of the fact that they employ the same characters but offer a different perspective by re-appropriating them, as will be explained in detail in the proceeding chapters.

Writing the good-time girl in cities and towns

In my research, at least at this stage, I have found no scholarly work done on the novels. However, a short review done by James Gibbs (1997) describes the novel *Links of a Chain* as being overwhelmed by Americanism. He writes: "There is minimal reference to the deprivation of the Kenyan masses, or the political system in which the nation is seeking a place. Genya's Nairobi stands beside the Hudson".[5] Gibbs seems to believe in a single story of Kenya; the story of a country characterised by endless poverty and national disillusionment. His review obfuscates the broader landscape of cities and towns in Kenya, and clouds discourses that present cities and towns as sites of agency and development. The reality is that not all Kenyans are poor, there are those who are financially successful, dwelling in developed parts of the cities and towns, and the everyday living of such individuals also form narratives. Genya's novels also present cities and towns in Kenya as transnational spaces, where change is constantly negotiated, due to the social movements, and these movements alter gender relations. This then implies that Nairobi, like most cities and towns across the globe, has traits that are not unique to the country. Genya offers her readers an alternative view of the city and its inhabitants, one that is not characterized by

[4] I use the local to imply the geographical and cultural space of the author.
[5] James Gibbs *World Literature Today*. Spring, 1997

disillusionment, and describes it as a space that provides agency for the good-time girl. She therefore further expresses the role good-time girls play in national development as career women.

Genya therefore restores agency to the women by positioning women centrally in her texts and (re) drafting their experiences, empowering the woman, usually stereotypically presented in male-authored popular fiction as the good-time girl. The good-time girl is a figure that has been spoken for as she observes from the margins. Therefore, by centralising the marginal, Genya forces the imagined reader to rethink the marginality of the good-time girl and appreciate more complex representations of women in African literature. Thus echoing the words of her predecessor Grace Ogot that "women themselves should take charge of the construction of their identities, rigid social, cultural and traditional constructs notwithstanding."[6]

The author seems to be testing the waters with regards to romance and the display of romantic love with the novel *Links of a Chain* and Gibbs (1997) commends her for "exercising restrain when developing the sexual experiences between the two main protagonists," by not vividly describing the erotic scenes. His argument is in line with patriarchal beliefs that confine issues of female sexuality to the private, a problem that I will address shortly. Nonetheless, Genya confidently delves into the deep end of the pool of

[6]Sophie Macharia *(Re) constructing women's identities in Kenyan fiction: the case of Grace Ogot* Phd Thesis: University of the Witwatersrand, 2004 pg 3

sexual discourses in her next two novels: *The Wrong Kind of Girl* and *The Other Side of Love.*

The ubiquitous presentation of women as "wicked" or "good" have their grounding on the sexuality of women, and how they choose to explore and express it. Schipper Mineke (1987) discusses how male heritage influences the representation of women by male writers of African literature. In any society, the relations between male and female is unofficially (if not officially) prescribed, and individuals who deviate from what is considered to be the norm are more often than not stigmatized, especially if the deviations challenge the power of the dominant group. This stigmatization is evident in the works of the male authors such as Meja Mwangi, and the only solution according to Schipper is for women to "pick up their pens and express their own ideas about women in African society, and thus correct or compliment the one-sidedness of certain perspectives" (49). This is what Genya attempts to explore in her novels, by focusing on the good-time girl in the city and town who unapologetically refuses to ascribe to the patriarchal definitions of the "ideal woman."

The positive view of the ideal woman has always been associated with the "tender virgin of the virtuous maternal character" (Mineke Schipper 1987: 40) who was/is always contrasted to the wicked woman who explores her sexuality. Thus proving that in a patriarchal system, the woman's sexuality was owned by the man, and was meant mainly for his pleasure, as well as for reproductive purposes. Female writers like Genya use romance in popular fiction as a site for resistance and revisions of such controlling images of women in society. Popular fiction then becomes a site of social commentary as well as a space for (re) working pedestrian

identities. This is in line with Newell's description of popular fiction as usually containing "ubiquitous character types and plots (re) worked with each re-usage by authors" (2002: 5).

Genya's novels present what is unofficially private in the woman's life. She describes women who are confident in their bodies, and do not shy away from expressing their sexual desires and the pleasure they derive from their bodies, thus using sexuality to restore agency to the good-time girl. She problematises the very stereotypes that have defined the African woman in the city, by placing emphasis on the female body and her sexuality. With the *Wrong Kind of Girl* the author draws attention to a woman who is victimised and branded a prostitute because of her style of dressing, regardless of the fact that she is a neurosurgeon. Sasha, who is the main protagonist, is invited to visit her friend's family in Nyeri. However, on arrival, her style of dressing which exposes her body, makes her friend's brother Tom think she is a prostitute, and immediately asks her to leave, and the parents are generally unsure about her.

The writer's description at the beginning of the story courts controversy: "she saw a long legged girl in a pair of provocative white shorts, white sandals that showed off her perfectly pedicured feet, a white vest that ended quite suddenly above her midriff" (2). As the story develops, it becomes obvious that Genya has embarked on a journey to describe the single woman popularly presented as the good-time girl. Tom thinks he can figure out women and can distinguish a prostitute from a "good" woman simply by her outward appearance. He criticizes Sasha's dressing and calls her a whore and a money monger. He assumes Sasha is unintelligent even when she tries to clarify her profession as a doctor. Sasha on the other hand holds her head up and refuses to define herself by such stereotypes. She does not change

her dressing or her idea of having fun, which included alcoholic drinking and dancing, "She knew her worth and was not worried that a lot of people questioned her choice…. supreme self-confidence had taken years to build" (5). By emphasizing her dressing Genya draws attention to the female body as a site of agency and not objectification.

When discussing the body and sexuality as sites for power contestation in a patriarchal system, Pumla Gqola (2005) writes:

> There have *always* been continuums and complications through which to tattoo, perform and shape our bodies in relation to sexuality. Attention to expressions and contestations of femininities and masculinities, what counts as acceptable, sexy, amusing and/or frightening makes this obvious. For inventiveness, play, resistance and other activities have always characterized these spaces. (4)

In line with Gqola's views, Genya focuses on the dressing of the female body, as well as the sexual pleasure inherent in the female body to contest phallocratic discourses that police the female body. Further to this, Gqola's argument facilitates the tracking and positioning of the developments and achievements of gender and feminist studies in its campaign of rescuing female sexuality from patriarchal claws especially if compared to earlier scholars and critics of Africa literature such as Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1987) among others. Such that the concern is not simply the lack of female writers, or correcting the representation of women in most male authored texts, the concern now is how to complicate the presentation of women

(and men) in texts even as they are being empowered by authors, and engage in more complex images and discourses when expressing femininities and masculinities.

For instance, Gqola's words embrace the expression and exploration of the body in relation to sexuality. A decade earlier Asenath Bole Odaga[7] criticized the sexual overtones generously explored in popular literature. Odaga considers the expression of sexuality as a private concern, and while her concern is an attempt to rescue the negative images of women found in texts, it nevertheless silences the choice of the woman to express her sexuality as a writer, thereby denying them agency. Genya, on the other hand, embraces sexuality by exploring the pleasure derived from the body, and re-fashioning it as a site of agency for the good-time girl.

Monica Genya's writings therefore serve two purposes: she responds to critics of popular literature like Asenath Bole Odaga who initially described it as "serving little or no good purpose, since it is mostly on sex, and tends to have as its heroes men and women who are actually anti-progress, mediocre, who lack imagination, ideals, initiative and positive goals in life."[8] Genya shows concern for the identity of single women by locating them at the site of resistance and thus revising of the representation of women. Culture is never static and migration of ideas, images, as well as persons have allowed for cultural dynamism. Genya restores agency to the good-time girl by describing them as independent women who are confident in their body, and do not shy away from expressing their pleasures. She also responds to earlier male writers of popular fiction, who were mainly one dimensional in the

[7]Adeola James *In Their Own Voices: African Women Writers Talk.* London: James Curry, 1990
[8] Roger Kurtz *Urban Obsession, Urban fears: The Post Colonial Kenyan Novel* Oxford: James Curry, 1998 pg 96

representation of the good-time girl in cities and towns, by presenting sexuality as part of power struggle between genders.

Genya also criticizes the valorization of stereotypes, and the banal and often shallow representation of good-time girls. These are the very stereotypes that Ogundipe-Leslie claims to have lead to the "compounding of historical and sociological falsification, all to the end of frightening women into quietude" (68). She directly addresses the reader in the pretext of the novel *The Wrong Kind of Girl,* "It's a love of many lessons for other characters in the story, and many lessons too, for you, the reader." Genya uses romance both as a thematic and a stylistic strategy. Most male written popular fiction highly misrepresents female characters, especially in towns and cities often assigning them an almost homogenous identity. They tend to erect binarisms and straight jacket the female figures in urban spaces into good and bad, moral and immoral, without acknowledging the complexities that these binaries overlook. Through her main protagonists Genya addresses these complexities presenting the good-time girl, in romantic and unromantic relations with both genders as well as the woman's perspective of the self. This she does by placing the good-time girl centrally within society, and composing new meaning out of the already familiar representation.

As noted by critics such as Roger Kurtz (2000), the city in Kenyan popular fiction was mainly depicted as a male space described using female tropes, "a seductress, who traps and degrades the African male. Like the city, the women are mainly concerned with the appearances of money they are parasite they are prostitutes" (108). This was the banal representation of women found in the works of such authors as Charles Mangua and Meja

Mwangi just to mention a few male writers of popular fiction, which has lead to the two famous romantic formulae for the single woman; "the prostitute tale and the good-time girl." However, there has been little concern by authors, scholars and critics to analyze the two figures in an attempt to determine their differences and/or similarities.

Research undertaken by Luise White (1990) and Janet Burja (1975, 2005) traces the beginning of prostitution in the city and towns around Kenya, and offers a fresh perspective to prostitution, not only in Nairobi, but also in other towns around Kenya. White and Burja study prostitution in colonial Kenya as a function of wage labor, and further describe the economic rewards the women acquire from transactional sexual relations, to the point where women became the first permanent residents of Nairobi, though the population of men was higher. Around the country, these women were the providers for their fathers, mothers and siblings, making prostitution a space for agency. However, since prostitution challenged the patriarchal order of things where a woman's sexuality was owned by the father, or by the husband, the stigma associated with prostitution served to marginalize these women, thus the banal and subjective representation of prostitutes in the city. Their research helps us differentiate between the good-time girl and the prostitute, a problem that is also echoed by Nici Nelson (1996).

In her analysis, the representation of both men and women by eleven different Kenyan male authors Nici Nelson (1996) rightly argues that the wicked city woman features in most, if not all of the texts. However, of interest to this research is Nelson's observation that, "prostitutes were not distinguished from 'good-time girls' who just love the high life of town and drink

and dance in bars" (147). In most cases, the good-time girl was simply branded a prostitute. Nelson explains that "wicked women" are those women who enjoyed drinking and dancing, whose aim is to entice and entrap men through their sexual attraction, regardless of their profession. However, this analysis serves to contain women by prescribing appropriate behavior and policing their sexuality. Nelson does acknowledge alternative representation of urban women by some male authors, but acknowledges that such representations are usually measured against male standards. For example, *Son of a Woman in Mombasa* by Charles Mangua presents the reader with such a character. Tonia is able to earn respect from the main protagonist in the text because of her ability to be the ideal woman, one who is able to provide for her family financially, as well as doing all the housework.

However, such a representation of a woman is through the male lenses, where Tonia's 'goodness' is defined by what Dodge views as the ideal woman, one who is able to do all the house work as well as engage in formal employment. Genya offers her readers an alternative view, by foregrounding the woman's perception of the 'self', whereby she gazes at herself and narrates her story. It is important to acknowledge that there are writers like Grace Ogot, Majorie Oludhe and Margaret Ogola, who have provided alternative views of the woman in the city, describing the city as a site for agency for women, mainly in terms of economic and self-empowerment. However, there are also other female writers like Carolyne Adalla (1993) and Rosemarie Owino (1975) who describe single women as victims of life in the city. Adalla and Owino, like most male writers of popular fiction of the 70's and 80's in Kenya use the prosaic representation of female characters as money-driven individuals, and as victims of their misplaced ambition.

Rachael Spronx (2005) carried research on female sexuality in Nairobi and was able to determine that there were new interpretations of love among young women, with emphasis being on the "value of companionship, equality and sexual satisfaction for women, rather than reproduction and ethnic compatibility" (267). The women, according to Spronx, viewed their financial and sexual independence as very important for their self-esteem and identity. However, one of the major setbacks for Spronx was lack of literature on women's sexual lives in Nairobi. Most studies focus on prostitution (See Luise White 1990; Jane Bryce 2000) or studies of sexuality in relation to health (See Agnes Muriungi 2005). Sponx writes, "Sexuality tends to be used in an instrumental and self-evident way, with the emphasis being placed on the more problematic aspects of women's sexuality as not just complex but above all flawed. There is hardly any literature on female pleasure, on the relation between emotional involvement and sex…or on female agency instead of lack of control" (269).

Therefore, by foregrounding the body and the sexuality of women and exploring their desires and pleasures, Genya draws attention to the "legacy of scrutiny, objectification and violation of women's body."[9] She also carries the debate further by reflecting on the ambivalence women face when they preoccupy themselves with their bodies as their source of power and self-esteem. This is especially evident in her novel *The Wrong Kind of Girl.* Sasha the protagonist describes herself as ugly because she considers herself fat. Though the writer does not inform the reader of her character's actual weight, she describes Sasha as a confident and assertive woman only after she had lost the weight. This is what Gills (2007) describes as

[9] Desiree Lewis "The Conceptual Art of Berni Searle" in *Agenda.* 50, 2002

the schizophrenia of women where "confident expressions of girl power sit alongside reports of epidemic levels of anorexia."[10] Genya thus seems to be sending conflicting messages to the reader, especially since she states that the book is meant to inform its readers.

Theoretical Framework

This research draws its argument mainly from gender and sexuality studies. I argue that sexuality can be used to address the politics of power and gender. Feminist scholars like Makuchi Abbenyi (1997) argues that women's pleasure or lack of it, has been a problematic issue, which many assume should not be addressed publicly. Scholars tend to sideline the women and focus on men's loutishness and patriarchy when addressing women's representation as victims. However, more than simply correcting the image of the prostitute and the mother Africa trope (and overlooking the good-time girl), female writers continue to offer more dynamic and more complex representations of women, by focusing more on their bodies and sexuality. Makuchi's analysis are important to this research because she argues that women writers can and do use women's bodies and sexuality to reshape gender relations. For example, in her analysis of Calixthe Beyala's novel *Tanga (1988)*, she argues that "women's bodies can be written into the cultural text for mass consumption, and bring out how women's bodies and sexuality then become sites of *power struggle* where discourses of pleasure, domination and exploitation can and do converge" (my emphasis, 1997: 151). This research aims to accentuate how the author contests androcentrism, by emphasizing on the body, sexual desires and pleasures of the good-time girls.

[10] Sara Mills *Language and Sexism* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008

Dennis Altman's (2001) study of sexuality on the framework of globalization is also relevant to this research because it explains the differences in sexual relations in a traditional society and a modern society,[11] which is characterised by trans-nationalism. Altman argues that trans-nationalism alters the way sexuality is "understood, experienced and regulated" (1). Thus patriarchal traditions, for example those that confine sexual relations to the private, as well as controlled women's sexuality for man's pleasure, are constantly negotiated in transnational spaces. Simone de Beauvoir's (1979) philosophical analysis of women as the second sex has also been explored extensively in this research. She highlights the challenges women who perceive themselves as emancipated from phallocratic systems face. Her arguments help trace the achievements as well as the setbacks experienced by Genya in her attempt to centralized and empower the good-time girl.

Feminist scholars like Florence Stratton (1988) Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1987) and Carole Boyce Davies (1986) just to mention a few, discuss the masculinity of the traditional canon, which promotes male writers and male critics, and further excludes images of women by women. They argue that the representation of women in male authored texts oscillates between the "Mother Africa trope" and the "wicked woman", and even when the woman was represented as an agent of change in post-colonial Africa, the fact remains that it is the male who was performing the naming, and telling of the female experience. Thus female writers were confronted with stereotypical images of women in male authored texts, and charged with the responsibility of correcting them. Feminist scholars attribute the late entry of women

[11] This research recognises Altman's definition of a traditional society to mean the society that existed in pre-industrial times.

writers in the African literary sphere to the sexist nature of colonialism which gave priority to the African male when it came to the provision of formal education, as well as the sex role variance typical to most African societies. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1987) further outlines the layered form of oppression that the African woman experiences, and the responsibilities of the female writer. She emphasizes on the significance of correcting the "mother Africa trope" and "prostitute tale" found in male-authored tale, which, she argues, fetters the female's perception of the self, by endearing the woman to pigeonhole herself to patriarchally prescribed stereotypes that distinguishes a benevolent women from a malevolent one. Female authors like Genya address this by presenting more complex representations of female characters, and "defining [them] from the point of view of what they *have* and *do* with their lives, rather than the point of view of what they *lack* or must *not do*" (Makuchi & Abbenyi 1997: 6).

On the other hand, African feminist scholars like Filomina Steady (1987) and Molara Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) emphasize on complementarity and co-operation between men and women, a concept that Genya insists on in her texts. Ogundipe-Leslie for example, is of the opinion that women's perceptions of themselves and of their desires are influenced by their relationships with men. When outlining what distinguishes Western feminism from African feminism Obioma Nnaemeka writes, "African feminism resists the exclusion of men from women's issues; on the contrary, it invites men as partners in problem solving and social change" (2005: 35). However, she further cautions against 'unexamined exaggeration of gender complementarity' which obscure existent and subtle gender inequalities. What is evident among such African feminist scholars is the recognition of the role of the man in relation to the woman.

Antony Giddens (1992) analysis of romance in a modern society has also been used in this research to espouse how Genya engages with romance while re-writing the story of the good-time girl, and creating depth in the figure. Giddens' arguments shed light on how romance has been employed by the author to challenge a phallocratic system and thus advance gender equality, as opposed to discourses of domination and subordination.

Methodology

Much of my analysis is done against the background of popular fiction in Kenya, with specific focus on the representation of the good-time girl. Genya emphasizes on the single woman, financially empowered, living in the city and town, but it is especially in her two recent novels *The Wrong Kind of Girl* and *The Other Side of Love* that she employs the good-time girl trope, resisting patriarchal definitions of good and wicked women, and presenting the reader with more complex characterisation of women in fiction.

This study relies heavily on character analysis in order to unveil the processes through which women strive to express their desires and pleasures in their quest to embrace their independence and empowerment, and yet ironically continue to cage themselves. For example, the female characters in Genya's novel's *The Wrong Kind of Girl* and *The Other Side of Love* strive to present themselves as independent empowered women. Yet in their quest for love, they ironically control their body, as well as their emotional desires, in order

to be recognised by the man. They rely on the very stereotypes and myths that limit women, to manipulate the men into recognising their love for them.

This research, as already fore grounded, also makes reference to other authors of both popular and "serious" fiction, focusing on their representation of the woman in cities and towns, with specific attention to how they police female sexuality. I will further make reference to scholars and critics who engage in discourses of gender, romance and sexuality, mainly in relation to the good-time girl. The study further draws from studies of sexuality in Africa in order to locate Genya's effort and contribution to gender and feminist studies.

The research consists of three main chapters and a conclusion that merges and summarizes the discussions. The second chapter introduces the good-time girl. It determines why the good-time girl is labeled as such, by describing her activities in the cities and towns. It attempts to establish if and how the good-time girl differs from the prostitute, and how she relates with fellow women and men within the cities and towns.

As already established, with the exception of *Links of a Chain,* Genya's novels belong to the romance genre. Even within *Links of a Chain* there are romantic nuances. The third chapter is more concerned with the performance of romance by the good-time girl. The discussion will highlight how the author attempts to employ the performance of romance to restore agency to the woman. I will conclude the chapter by discussing how the performance of romance, as

presented by the author, vacates the very agency she tries to re-store to the good-time girl. This chapter serves as an introduction to the fourth chapter.

The fourth chapter discusses the performance of sexuality by the good-time girl as she engages in romantic, heterosexual relations. The chapter traces the history of sexuality in Africa in order to locate Genya's contribution to studies of gender and sexuality. It further examines how the female characters in Genya's texts explore and express their sexuality, and how the author employs the female body and the erotic as sites of agency for the good-time girl. I will conclude by summarizing the discussions. I will highlight the success, as well as the loopholes, as presented by the author while employing romantic love and sexuality as platforms for the empowerment of the good-time girl. I will also emphasize on the need for more studies on single women in cities and town.

Chapter Two

"Let the world know we are out to misbehave": Re-configuring the good-time girl

It has become something of common place in African literature to discuss the representation of women in cities and towns as prostitutes or generally as wicked women in need of chastising. Popular writings by Kenyan male authors, such as David Maillu and Meja Mwangi have been heavily criticized by African feminist scholars for their sexual overtones when describing the woman in the city, where "the women are shown as being sensual, oversexed and perverted."[12] Female critics like Ama Ata Aidoo (1986) among others have complained of the binary and popular representation of female characters, either as 'bad' or 'good' according to the standards set by a patriarchal system. [13]

The wicked woman trope has also been exploited metaphorically to signify the disillusionment of African (Kenyan) nationalism, as well as to signify the vices of urbanisation and development. The wicked woman in the city is often popularly referred to by scholars and critics as either the prostitute or the good-time girl. Gender studies of fiction and culture in Kenya have responded to the representation of the wicked woman with the aim of restoring agency to female characters. (Colomba Muriungi: 2003, Florence Stratton: 1994, Luise White: 1992, Janet Burja: 1975). While there has been extensive research and scholarship done to rescue the prostitute from morality discourses, the good-time girl has been further marginalized and overlooked even by scholars of gender and feminism in

[12] Karin Barber, *African popular culture*. International African Institute. London 1997pg 119
[13] See Flora Nwapa "Women and Creative Writing in Africa in *Sisterhood Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora* (ed) by Obioma Nnaemeka pg 89-99

African literature. This research therefore raises and attempts to answer pertinent questions generally overlooked when analysing the representation of female characters in literature and thus present more complex representations. Who is the good-time girl? Is she different from the prostitute figure? What does she symbolise/represent?

This chapter therefore aims to define and describe the good-time girl by tracing her everyday living in cities and towns. I will further describe how the author employs the good-time girl figure to represent the empowered single woman in cities and towns, a concept that forms the basis of this research. My analysis will naturally delve into her performance of sexuality. However, at this stage, I will refrain from addressing the good-time girl's performance of sexuality in detail and will only discuss sexuality with the aim of differentiating the good-time girl from the prostitute figure.

Drawing from the history of African traditional cultures, the place of the woman has always been secondary to that of the man. This may be due to the fact that the woman's role was mostly ascribed rather than achieved. She was secondary to the man as a leader, a wife, a daughter and a sister. The identity of the woman was further defined through the man first as a daughter, then as a wife. A woman lived in her parental home till the day she got married, where the woman now recognised the husband as the head of the house. Thus the identity of the woman was constantly tied to that of another. However, Genya presents us with a different figure of the woman, one who is not bound inextricably to such institutions as marriage or kinship, but rather establishes her own familial ties in the form of friendship. She presents the imagined reader with the single woman living in cities and towns whose identity

is not tied up to a man either as a father, a husband or a guardian. Genya therefore presents the good-time girl as a single woman.

The independence of these single women is further reinforced by the fact that they are financially empowered. As already argued, traditionally, men are viewed as the bread winners and the protectors of the households. Granted women were/are known to engage in small income generating activities such as farming, either to directly provide food for the family or to supplement the husbands earning. However, with colonisation and modernisation which saw the introduction of the cash system and tax payment, women were forced into full-time formal employment. Scholars have determined that while it was the men who first migrated into cities and towns, women later followed to join their husbands, and for those whose husbands had abandoned them, they went in search for greener pastures and better futures for their children. Further, with the introduction of tax payment and cash system, single women also migrated to towns to support their families back in the rural homes, in addition to fending for themselves (Kenneth Lindsay: 1973, Louise White: 1990). However, while in towns and cities, these single women find themselves free from the gaze of the family and community. Therefore, the discovery of their own identity is no longer tied to the traditional communal and phallocratic forces; they acquire the space for self-exploration and discovery. This, coupled with their financial independence, leads to the perception of towns and cities as places of freedom and emancipation for women. Genya chooses to centralise such women in her texts: women whose identity are not yet tied to men through marriage, and are also away from the traditional phallocratic communal gaze.

Financial empowerment for these single women in cities and towns is not a guarantee, and Genya highlights these challenges, which are mainly, though not wholly, patriarchal. These single women are therefore presented as constantly negotiating their independence and empowerment in a society which remains mainly phallocratic, as they continue to search for and maintain their independence. For example, even within urban centres, gender and sex continue to influence division of labour. Genya makes reference to such inequalities in her novel *Links of a Chain.* Susan Njuma is described as one of the very few women tough enough to climb the ladder of power in the Bureau of Investigative Operations (B.I.O), yet despite her qualifications and achievements, she is constantly underestimated by men in her profession on account of her sex and gender. Christopher Mathenge, popularly known as *Chain* in the novel admits to Susan, "I never thought a woman could be included at the B.I.O at all...I always thought that they were unstable and unreliable...I guess it was a sort of prejudice I had which I tried to hide" (55-56). Chain's confession suggests that despite the current levels of exposure and empowerment in socities, there are still certain professions that are viewed fit for a woman, while others are perceived as just too challenging. Sasha also finds herself in the same predicament in *The Wrong Kind of Girl.* She explains that it has taken her years to gain respect in the medical field as a woman, especially from men of the older generation. However, the fact that good-time girls, as presented by Genya, seem able to prevail over such stereotypes and perceptions are references of the changing status of young, single women within the public sphere. By emphasizing on the working status of these single women, Genya not only restores agency to the single woman, but she also foregrounds her role in national development. This freedom minimizes, if not eliminates, the dependency on men, as is the case in most patriachal cultures.

However, being a single woman who is financially empowered does not automatically render one to be a good-time girl, especially when compared to representations of single women by other authors. Magaret Ogola's novel *I Swear by Apollo,* for example, presents us with Vera, a single woman, financially independent but one who cannot be described as a good-time girl. Just like the single girl in Genya's novels, Vera has a stable, well-paying job and is highly respected in her profession. She therefore also has the freedom of movement within the city and towns. Nonetheless, in spite of her perceived empowerment, her movement within the city as well as her performance of sexuality endears her as an ideal woman. This then leads to the question how does a single woman become a good-time girl?

Going back to the history of popular culture in Kenya and its use of the good-time girl figure, one becomes acutely aware of the negative connotations associated with the figure. The good-time girl is a figure used loosely by both writers and critics/scholars of African literature to describe the woman with supposedly wayward "mannerisms": the wicked woman. The Macmillan online dictionary defines the good-time girl as "a young woman whose main interest is to enjoy life and have fun, especially in a way that is not *moral*" (my emphasis).[14] The urban dictionary on the other hand offers several meanings of the phrase. It could refer to a prostitute; "a professional at work", or a "cheap dumb blonde" who easily offers sex during her leisure time.[15] The above definitions are representative of the ambiguity associated the figure. Be that as it may, these definitions help pin-point two crucial elements: the everyday living of the good-time girl, particularly her activities during her leisure time, and how she chooses to explore/enjoy her sexuality.

[14] http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/american/good-time-girl accessed 18th May 2010 12.47 pm
[15] http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=good%20time%20girl accessed 18th May 2010 1 05 pm

As already affirmed, Genya chooses to centralize the single woman in her texts. Their single status signifies that they are not tied down to wifely and/or motherly duties and their presence is therefore not restricted to the home. Their financial independence further allows them freedom of movement. Their financial stability affords them the pleasure and luxury to engage in such leisure activities as alcoholic drinking and dancing in clubs. They move freely because of their financial stability. Drinking is traditionally aligned to masculine images, more so drinking in public spaces such as clubs. Admittedly, modernisation and the gradual though biased erosion of patriarchal cultures and traditions have seen women in Africa engaging in alcoholic drinking and dancing in public spaces initially viewed masculine. However, iniquitous gender relations are continuously reinvented. For example, in a bid to embrace change, as well as capitalise on it, there have been new kinds of alcoholic beverages that have been assigned feminine images. This can be interpreted as a culture re-invented to categorise drinking choices and patterns according to gender and sex. There are also certain night clubs that have been assigned masculine images, in which the presence of a woman in such clubs renders her "immoral": a wicked or a dangerous woman.

Genya's female characters are seen engaging in activities such as drinking and dancing in clubs. Such women have been historically documented in African literature as wicked/immoral women and shallow, by both male and female writers and critics. The act of alcoholic drinking and dancing in public spaces such as clubs can be well appreciated when analysed against an oppressive historical background, and in order to appreciate Genya presentation of the good-time girl it is important to make specific reference to such a history.

For example, the man has always had the privilege of public "exhibiting" even from the tender age. Consider one of Simone de Beauvoir's explanations of the penis envy concept. She compares the boy's process of urinating to that of the girl. The girl "is required to crouch, uncover herself, and therefore *hide*: a shameful and inconvenient procedure" (my emphasis: 1979: 301). This emphasizes timidity and consertiveness. The boys on the other hand are known to have urinating games, competing on who can shoot the furthest. Beauvoir explains, "every stream of water in the air seems like a miracle a *defiance of gravity*: to direct, to govern it, is to win a small victory over the laws of nature.....the small boy here finds a daily amusement that is denied the sister" (my emphasis 1979: 301,302).

This research is interested in the opportunity to experiment accorded to the boy and the excitement associated the privilege of "exhibiting". This concept extends to the socialisation of women in phallocratic societies and cultures. From an early age the boy is encouraged to explore, to defy nature and question limitations, "his apprentice in life consists of free movement towards the outside world" (Beauvoir 1979: 307) thus his occupation and control of public spaces such as night clubs. The girl on the other hand is controlled, constrained and encouraged to respect limits. This explains the androcentric prescribed behaviour of women in both public and private spaces, timidity and conservativeness is commended. This is the history that most male writers of popular fiction in Kenya draw on. However, Genya presents the reader with *her*-story, documenting and clarifying the story of good-time girl, a story that has been taken for granted if not overlooked by both writers and critics of Africa literature. In more recent times, single young women are increasingly being seen in such public spaces and night clubs, engaging in alcoholic drinking and dancing during their leisure time. Therefore, while the good-time girl figure may have been used to morally chastise such women, Genya

appropriates her to symbolise the milestones achieved in the campaign of the empowerment of the African woman, and her rescue from binary discourses especially in popular fiction.

Sasha's words "let the world know we are going out to misbehave" (24), draws reference to patriarchal cultures and opinions that dictate the behaviour of women in Africa confining her to the private. "Going out to misbehave", suggests that the good-time girls are "moving out" defying traditional phalloractic limits initially impressed on them and defiantly engaging in that which society perceives to be unbecoming of a proper woman, in this case a single woman. Their choice to engage in the activities described above is evidence of the nature and extent of their independence. Instead of chastising these women, Genya seems to embrace the good-time girls thus giving them agency.

Writers such as Charles Mangua, Carolline Adalla and David Maillu present the imagined readers with such questions as; why does the single woman choose to remain "single" her financial independence not withstanding? Why is she not at home, but rather out drinking and dancing? Why does she choose to engage in sexual relations before marriage? These are what distinguish an "ideal" woman from a good-time girl in a phallocratic society; an "ideal" woman should willingly confine herself even as she embraces her empowerment.

However, Genya seems to present a situation where women have free will, and a right to exercise their choice as opposed to ascribing to lifestyles hugely loaded with patriarchal influences. Such that these women do not ascribe to prescribed traditions for a source of

identity, or for a sense of belonging, rather they form new families in towns and cities in the form of friendship (as I will discuss in detail later) and yet this does not condemn them as failures but elevates them as empowered single women. Therefore, Genya records and clarifies the story of the good-time girl, centralising and locating her in African literature. The choice to embrace the good-time girl figure thus becomes one of the indices of evaluating social change especially with regards to the status of single women in cities and towns.

I have so far made reference to traditional cultures and practices that do not make provision for the good-time girl, and further ascribe the woman's role to the private. It would be misleading to build my arguments on the assumptions that writers of popular fictions such as Mangua and Adalla are solely guided by the same traditions that modelled our grandmothers and grandfathers. It is important to acknowledge that, colonisation and later on modernisation brought with it its own definition of the "ideal" woman. Therefore, while embracing the changes brought about by modernisation and recognising the need to empower the woman, the characteristics of the "ideal" woman in Africa have been altered. Charles Mangua in his novel S*on of a Woman in Mombassa* describes the "ideal" woman in the city and towns as one who is able to balance her stereotypically and traditionally prescribed role in the home as well as provide for the family financially. John Kariamiti's autobiographical novel *My Life in Crime* compliments Millie the main protagonist's girlfriend for her undying devotion to a one man as well as her ability to be a good woman by providing for the family financially as well as emotionally. In other words, these women did not "inconvenience" the man, by suggesting a change in gender roles within private spaces especially in terms of familial and sexual relations. Such women represent the "ideal" empowered women in cities and towns. This kind of woman is what Sarah Stevens (2003) describes as the "new woman". She is the

woman who represents the "positive aspects of modernity" and is the ideal woman because she is revealed as "balanced" in the sense that her private life (her role in the family) is not inconvenienced by her public life (as a career woman).

Magaret Ogola provides a clearer description of a woman, in her novel, *River and the Source* as well as its sequel *I Swear by Apollo.* Though the women in the texts are seen as being actively involved in the public life, they are also described as the pillars of the family. Their role in the family as wives and mothers is emphasized if not centralised, thus the women are either seen working in their professions, or at home. Their movement in limited to the work place and the family. They symbolise the educated and empowered woman, who is aware of the opresseive history of the African woman and her rights, but is also wise enough to exercise contraint. Sarah Stevens eloquently describes her as, "representing the new social, political and economic possibilities for women" (2003: 87). When such women are compared to the good-time girls such as those presented in Genya's novels, the complexity of the empowered woman in African urban spaces is unveiled.

Wandia, the main protagonist in Ogola's *I Swear by Apollo* is described as a highly intelligent woman, respected in her profession as a doctor as well as a lecturer. She is also described as a nurturing woman, full of words of wisdom. At home, she is the pillar of the family, knowing the feeling of every child as well as those of her husband, and is always ready to supply strength when needed. Her ability to balance her career with the family makes her the ideal woman, the new woman as described by Stevens (2003). However, the new woman in African literature is contained while valorised, because while she does advocate for the

social, political and economic empowerment of women she is ideal by virtue of the fact that her sexuality is controlled through marriage, and her presence within the family institution remains centralised. Thus her independence is "disciplined", and it is for this reason that she is seen to be representing the positive aspects of a modernised society. The good-time girl on the other hand is perceived to be dangerous and is sometimes referred to as a "whore" not because of her financial status, but rather because of her single status, her lack of "visible" familial ties, and her choice to explore and enjoy her sexuality. Sasha as presented in *The Wrong Kind of Girl* is a good example. She is a single woman with no familial ties in the city, exploring her freedom of movement even into nightclubs, enjoying her alcoholic drinks, exploring and enjoying her sexuality. Thus comparing the two figures as presented in African literature the "ideal woman", is only ideal, by virtue of her marital status and her choice to remain bound to one man sexually and emotionally. She is therefore different from the good-time girl, who, though is financially empowered and actively participates in the public sphere, her presence within the family unit is not seen and her sexuality is not bound to one man and contained within the marriage institution. In this sense, then she ceases to be the ideal woman. There is therefore a continuous reinvention of binary characterisations and representations of women, which end up facilitating the very phallocratic culture that feminists campaign to eliminate.

Sarah Stevens (2003) further differentiates the "new woman" from whom she refers to as the "modern girl" by describing the latter as the 'femme fatale' in cities; what this research also calls the good-time girl. In her analysis of selected author's in China described as decadent due to their objectification of the female characters described as the "modern girl", Sarah Stevens asserts that the "modern girl" has been objectified and subjugated in order to

"express male disillusionment in modernity" (2003: 83). The same applies to most Kenyan writers. Take for example the works of such authors as Meja Mwangi, Charles Mangua and David Maillu, the male protagonists in most of their texts are portrayed not only as victims of corrupt nation states (national disillusionment), which by extend hinders their financial as well as personal empowerment, but they are also depicted as casualties of selfish women, out to snatch the few and only pennies they posses, and for the women formally employed, they are condemned in the texts for drinking and dancing with their bosses.

However, what Genya elaborates in her novels is the other side of the good-time girl. She employs the same characters vilified in most male authored popular fiction, but re-appropriates them. She does not refute her lifestyle; the good-time girl as presented by Genya enjoys her alcoholic drink and dancing in public clubs, she is also not shy of exploring and enjoying her sexuality. She is seen in the bars and clubs with her male and female friends. She is seen as enjoying her body and is not bogged down by familial or marital duties. She also enjoys the company of men sexually and non-sexually. In this sense Genya gives voice to the good-time girls in cities and towns by documenting *her*-story, while at same time broadening the spaces inhibited by the empowered woman, beyond the home, office and marriage institution.

The good-time girl versus the prostitute

In my discussions so far, I have alluded to the good-time girls' performance of sexuality. The good-time girl is the single woman interested in self expression especially in terms of her sexuality, and views it as facet that can be employed to achieve gender egalitarianism. She is

constant pursuit of understanding herself and acquiring control of her sexuality. Taking another example from the female characters described in Magaret Ogola's text *The River and the Source* as single women in cities and towns, Becky one of the female characters, is described as an air hostess who is preoccupied with her physical beauty and does not shy away from exploring her sexuality with different male partners within as well as outside the marriage institution. However, Ogola describes her as an unhappy woman, she ends up living as a single mother of two following her divorce, and eventually dies after succumbing to infections worsened by HIV/AIDS virus. Vera, her sister, on the other hand is described as a highly intellectual single woman, who chooses a life of celibacy, having committed herself to the church, and leads a fulfilling, satisfying and successful life as a single woman. Their mother on the other hand, is described as a strong woman, financially independent, and committed to the family. Interestingly, despite the fact that she suspects her husband of engaging in extra marital affairs, she not only chooses to remain in the marriage, but she also remains silent, never confronting her husband and the author seems to commend her for this.[16] There is thus an emphasis on commitment to one man before and after marriage, and a life of celibacy if a woman chooses to remain single. Therefore, the need if not obsession to control the African woman's sexuality is evident even among those who describe themselves as empowered women.

There is a need to complicate this. Though Genya's stories revolve around the female characters' struggle to find and maintain their love to specific men, the author does make reference, to other prior sexual and romantic relationships that the women engaged in. This is

[16] This research does not question her choice to remain in the marriage, but rather the author's choice to silence her.

clearly seen in the novel, *The Wrong Kind of Girl.* Sasha describes her failed romance with Brian, a man she fell in love with while in college. Alex[andra] on the other hand marries the wrong man, who drives her to attempt suicide. However, she finds the strength to divorce the man, and falls in love with Bobby, a man five years her junior. Genya does therefore highlight the desire for love, and even foregrounds the need for commitment by both partners. However, she suggests that this should not be at any cost. She therefore, refuses to tag a woman's sexual exploration to only one man. Thus the question is, if the good-time girl is free to explore and enjoy her sexuality outside marital boundaries, and if her sexuality is not tied to a single man, how is she different from the prostitute?

As already established, there has been little attempt to differentiate the prostitute figure from the good-time girl and in Africa literature scholarship, the two figures are notoriously used interchangeably to describe the wicked women in the cities and towns. Having described the good-time girl, it is necessary for us to determine how she differs from the prostitute figure, thus defining her in African literary scholarship. Genya presents her imagined readers with several pointers in her characterisation of the women in her texts as well as through dialogue. Luise White's (1990) study of prostitution among women in colonial Kenya provides us with the framework of what constitutes the services provided by a prostitute, the underlying factor being the exchange of not only sexual services but also of "wifely" duties for mainly money or other material gains from the man. There is thus some form of economic gain achieved by the prostitute. For example, when Tony accuses Sasha of being a prostitute in Genya's novel *The Wrong Kind of Girl*, he draws attention to the way she uses her body to gain attention from the men and to get their money. He tells her "I may have mistaken you for a whore from a sleazy discotheque but after spending some time with you I soon realised that you were too

smart and too ambitious to sell that delectable body for nickels and dimes. You're out for bigger money, aren't you" (51). He thus foregrounds the aim of prostitution as the acquisition of money for the pleasurable services provided.

In capitalist societies where most, if not all, social relations are mediated by money, "prostitution becomes merely one expression of exploitative social relations; it was thus an economic as well as a social phenomenon."[17] It is in this light that this research views prostitution as characteristic of capitalism in Africa and a means of survival for women. However, this does not necessarily imply that they are victims (although there are those who would choose to describe themselves as such), it also means that they are players in a capitalist system, and this makes them agents of their own providence. As service providers, women who engaged in prostitution, depended on the men as clients. However, the good-time girl as presented by Genya, is able to enjoy drink and dance as well as enjoy the company of men sexually and non-sexually, without solely depending on the man's financial power. The above are simply social and recreational activities that the single woman engages in after work, for her own pleasure. On the other hand prostitution is a paid occupation, a form of economic activity explored by both men and women.

[17] Janet M. Bujra, 'Women Entrepreneurs of Early Nairobi' in *Readings in Gender in Africa* ed Andrea Cornwall, London: The International African Institute, 2005
Bujra showed that while the women may have been forced into prostitution by economic factors, they were able to find their independence and freedom from exploitation by transforming sexual relations into sale of service. She also avoided addressing the morality aspect, and noted that much of the literature on the subject "failed to locate prostitution as a social phenomenon with social implications".

The success of the prostitutes as further emphasized by Colomba Muriungi (2003), depends on their ability to have multiple sexual relations that cater for their financial needs. Though Colomba Muriungi describes prostitution as a form of romance when analysing Macgoye and Genda-Idowu's works, I contend that romance for the prostitute is for financial gains as opposed to romantic love. I do agree with Colomba that the women acquire some measure of emotional satisfaction, but this is not necessarily as a result of sexual relations with the men, but rather it is from the economic gain, which is the main goal of the prostitutes. As already stated, prostitutes not only provide sexual services for the man, they also at times provide wifely duties, they listen to the man talk, and cook a few meals for him over a period of time, however, these are not displays of romantic love but are rather part of the transaction. Affection as described by Majorie Macgoye was "easy come easy go" (Colomba Muriungi: 63) depending on the profits made, meaning that the display of affection was important for the women as long as she was paid for displaying it. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the prostitutes cannot or do not engage in romantic and sexual relations for personal pleasure. To the extent that she does not expect or receive any form of payment for sex, then she is not acting in her occupation as a prostitute

There are other forms of sexual engagement between men and women, such as sexual relations as a means of supporting a lifestyle; a source of extra income. For example in the novel *Links of a Chain* when describing one of the male character's lifestyle Genya writes,

> His girls were usually hard and demanding and more after his pocket-book than anything else. But they knew how to give a man a good time. They expected to be

taken to the best discos, movie theatres and restaurants but they understood that they were expected to pay for it. (111)

The women being discussed here are university students, who prefer men who could afford to provide the kind of luxuries they want. This, they repay with sexual favours. Tony description of a prostitute in *The Wrong Kind of Girl* further emphasizes this point. He describes a prostitute who is shrewder, one who uses "her sexuality to *scheme* and *seduce* her way to riches" (52). Whether the sexual favours were pleasurable for the girls, or simply a service provided to ensure access to certain material benefits is something debatable and wholly subjective. However, the fact that they provide sexual services in return for material gains foregrounds some form of material transaction, and this is what has been referred to as" transactional sex." Mark Hunter (2002) discusses transactional sex when studying the "materiality of everyday sex" in South African townships and slums. It is difficult to clearly differentiate between prostitution and transactional sex, since both are described principally in material terms. However, Mark Hunter[18] provides characteristics that define transactional sex, two of which are important to this research: those who engage in transactional sex often have multiple partners and the giving of gifts cash or other commodities is underscored. Like prostitution, these women engage in transactional sex in order to access the power as well as the resources needed to acquire certain material benefits even from those they claim to love.

[18] Mark Hunter further divides transactional sex into sex for subsistence and sex for consumption, where the former involves the provision of subsistence and is important for the survival of women; the latter involves the provision of consumer goods like cell phones or the latest fashionable clothes. Most of these women are employed in local factories or are students, and though they have multiple partners, the relationship usually lasts for longer than just one night. There are those who engage in prostitution as a form of part-time work thus providing extra income, but as opposed to prostitution those who engage in transactional sex are described as "girlfriends and/or boyfriends and not prostitutes and/or clients" (101) and the women may demand sexual satisfaction from the men. This is another area yet to be explored by scholars and critics when analysing the complexity of the good-time girl.

The above analysis of prostitution is necessary to differentiate the prostitute figure from the good-time girl. The performance of sexuality is one of the attributes that differentiated the "ideal" woman from the wicked woman (the good-time girl and the prostitute) whereby sexuality for the "ideal" woman is confined within the marriage institution or celibacy. Therefore, the choice of the single woman to explore her sexuality brands her as either a prostitute and/or a good-time girl,, hence the need to problematize this

Simone de Beauvoir (1979) complicates the use of sex in categorising "good women" from prostitutes. For example, she sees no difference between the prostitute and the married woman, because for both "the sexual act is a service; one is hired for life by one man, the other has several clients who pay her by the piece" (569). Beauvoir's observation does prove that while prostitutes have multiple partners, married women and good-time girls may demand exclusivity.[19] One of the questions Genya's female characters ask of the men they have romantic and sexual relations with is whether they are romantically or otherwise involved with another woman at that particular time. This exclusivity at that particular moment is described by Genya as important to the good-time girls. Therefore, though the good-time girls as presented by Genya may have had sexual relations with different partners, of importance to keep in mind is that this does not necessarily occur at the same period. At the moment they are invoved sexually with one man, they demand exclusivity, nonetheless, they are described as moving on and becoming involved with other men sexually when they

[19] However, this does not mean that all good-time girls demand exclusivity when engaging in sexual relations. There are women who engage in sex with multiple partners simply for pleasure. On the other hand, this research limits itself to Genya's characterisation of the good-time girls where the good-time girls demand exclusivity from her partner.

feel inconvenienced by their partners. However, I feel that Simone de Beauvoir's statement quoted above fails to factor in the value of the sexual and emotional pleasure derived by the women. For the prostitute, personal sexual satisfaction may not be important, but for the good-time girl sexual satisfaction is an important factor.

What I am therefore suggesting is that, though those who engage in prostitution can be good-time girls as well, being a good-time girl does not automatically render a woman a prostitute; there is a difference between the two figures. The good-time girl is a label coined with the aim of controlling and chastising the woman, and more importantly the single woman in cities and towns who is courageous enough to exercise her right to engage in drink, dance and whose sexual performance is not forever bound to one man. However, Genya does not reject the label, but rather re-appropriates it, using it to re-write the narrative of the good-time girl as is shown with titles such as *The Wrong Kind of Girl* as well as the characterisation of the female characters especially in her last two novels.

More than simply suggesting the differences between the two figures, Genya portrays the good-time girls as publicly rejecting prostitute figure.[20] Drawing an example from the novel *The Wrong Kind of Girl* Tony gives his definition of a prostitute after having sexual relations with her, he tells Sasha "you may not charge for your favours in cash, but you expect payment from men. That makes you a whore, my darling, and I have no intention of having any sort of relationship with a whore" (107). Tony's accusations draw hostility from Sasha. Prior to this, Sasha had angrily warned him, if you say the word "whore" or "prostitute" one

[20] At this point to is important for state that this research does not morally judge prostitution. It does recognise that prostitution has been employed women to secure their "independence"

more time I will punch the lights out of you" (39). It is therefore clear that though Sasha considers herself an independent woman, and is further presented by the author as unafraid to explore and enjoy her sexuality, she objects being associated with the prostitute.

The hostility drawn from Sasha because of being constantly referred to as a prostitute, paints the negativity associated with prostitution even among those referred to as good-time girls. Sasha shares a passionate kiss with Tony on the first night they meet, and has sexual relations with him on the second day, but she does not consider herself a prostitute. She is deeply offended and constantly questions Tony if she has ever asked him for any form of payment. It seems important that the author makes the reader understand that the pleasure Sasha derives from the sexual relationship, was what was of value to Sasha. More to this, the author would have the reader understand the emotional involvement (at least for the woman) during the sexual performance as well as after. The next morning Sasha attempts to discuss their sexual relations the previous night, she tells Tony, "I did not expect to find myself alone in your bed when I woke up this morning" (105). She finds it difficult to reconcile her pleasurable feelings the previous night to Tony's hostility in the morning and insists on an explanation. Consider the following dialogue between the two:

> "Well you do not seem like the amorous young man I went to bed with last night," [Sasha] laughed nervously, hoping to raise a smile from him.
>
> "Last night was a mistake," he said firmly, completely catching her off guard. "One that I will never repeat, I assure you."

> "Last night when we made love and you assured me that it was the most wonderful experience in your life. You told me I was the most wonderful person you had ever met. What could possibly have happened between then and now to make you change your mind so drastically?"
>
> "Nothing happened, except that I was so consumed with lust for you that I had forgotten what kind of a woman you are. Well, I got what I wanted and if it is any consolation, you are the best lay I've ever had...I have no intention of having any sort of relationship with a whore."
>
> She shook her head and turned away from him. "Why are you doing this to me?" Her voice filled with pain....
>
> "Stop prostituting yourself to every rich man you come across." (106, 107)

I quote extensively from the text in order to relay not only the verbal, but also the emotions as captured by the author. Sasha tries to convey both her physical and emotional pleasure experienced through her sexual encounter with Tony. This, she does in order to disassociate herself from the prostitute figure. There is a tag of war between the two characters and the dividing line is the term prostitution. Therefore, Genya uses this dialogue to further differentiate the prostitute figure from the good-time girl. By displaying Sasha's emotional involvement before, during and after sex, the author is making a deliberate effort to make "honest" of Sasha's intentions, thereby further drawing the line between the prostitute and the good-time girl. However, the Genya presentation of the good-time girls voices the silences and gaps when analyzing the representation of women in African literature. She clarifies the characteristics of the good-time girl figure and centralizes her presence in African literature

by differenciating her from the prostitute figure, while elaborating on her struggle as she wrestles to defend her empowerment.

Solidarity and friendship for survival

The everyday living of the good-time girl is punctuated by episodes that espouse gender inequalities. Sasha's words, which form the title of this chapter, suggests that these good-time girls are aware of the negative nuances presented by choice to engage in that which society had/has rendered deviant (at least for the single woman). It is for this reason that Genya emphasizes on the value of friendship and solidarity among the good-time girls; friendship provides a sense of belonging.[21] The lack of the conventional familial ties in the cities paves way to the formation of friendship and solidarity especially between the good-time girls. Friendship and solidarity for these single women can be viewed as a substitute for the conventional family. Solidarity between these single women is centralised in all the three novels, to such an extent that it is seen as possessing healing powers, as well as to having the ability to influence romantic heterosexual relationship between characters in the novel. Female solidarity and friendship is conveyed as an emotional pillar for the good-time girls, as well as a shaper of self-identity and esteem. It is also through solidarity and friendship that the imagined reader becomes aware of phallocratic nuances even in societies and cultures which claim to be liberal such as those presented in Genya's novels.

[21] This should not be misconstrued to mean that friendship between married women is not equally important. See Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter, Wanjiku Kabira's A letter to Mariama Ba.

In *The Other Side of Love* when Anna confides in Mokami about her unsatisfying relationship with Paul Wahome, a well known politician, Mokami immediately effects changes in their relationship. Due to his political status, Paul Wahome is afraid of making it known that he is dating a woman of Asian origins. Anna's love for Paul sees her keep the relationship a secret for years, only communicating with him, when he feels it is comfortable and safe for him to do so. It is after confiding in her friend, that the reader becomes aware of Anna's unhappiness in the relationship as well as her inability to communicate her desire and thoughts to Paul. Mokami not only offers a listening ear and an understanding heart to her friend, she becomes actively involved in her friends relationship. In an argument Mokami lashes out at Paul, foregrounding the power she has over their relationship, "You think Anna doesn't have friends? Well you are wrong. I'm here now. And I am going to do everything in my power to make sure she leaves you. Because I know that she's special and she deserves a lot more than someone like you" (68). Mokami becomes a protector of her friend's emotions as well as a campaigner of her friend's worth. She encourages her friends to talk about her feelings and sets the ball rolling by confronting the man. Friendship and solidarity is thus seen as having such power that it influences the women's romantic relations with the men.

The power Mokami holds is in the intimacy of her friendship with Anna, as well as the history they share together. Mokami and Anna grew up together as close childhood friends and engaged in many adventures together. Genya takes time to explore and explain the history of their friendship as opposed to their familial ties, thus establishing the depth of their friendship. This intimacy and bond between the good-time girls is described as priceless in the text. When Paul clarifies that his intention is not to make Anna choose between her friendship with Mokami and their relationship, but rather to separate the two, Anna remains

adamant, that the two cannot be separated. He explains, “I never asked you to choose between us. All I said was that I didn’t want her to be privy to our secrets” (69). Anna replies, “Well she is, so you might as well do your worst” (69). Sharing seems an important element, and is viewed as a support system for these women especially when engaging with phallocracy. The women not only share their feelings and experiences, they also defend and protect each other. Friendship thus becomes a form of family for the good-time girls.

A similar situation is found in the novel, *The Wrong Kind of Girl.* Chris brings Sasha along to a family get-together in order to make Alicia jealous. However upon arrival, Sasha changes, and instead befriends Alicia to the point that again she influences her relationship with Chris. Solidarity between women in this text is unique because contrary to the friendship between Mokami and Anna in *The Other Side of Love*, these women have no shared history together having known each other for a few hours; but they take to each other as if they have been friends for years. Judith Butler (2006) voiced the infamous question when addressing the solidarity of women as valorised in most feminist discourses, “is there some commonality among women that pre-exists their oppression, or do women have a bond by virtue of their oppression alone” (5)? There are some commonalities that pre-exist oppression that also facilitate friendship, location in terms of occupied space being an example. The friendship between Anna and Mokami as presented in *The Other Side of Love* is facilitated by their proximity to each other while they were children as neighbours. However, their friendship is solidified by their childhood experiences within a shared space. In the novel they are seen reminiscing of their childhood escapades, and these experiences which gradually become histories cement their friendship. They thus share a history as good-time girl’s which in this case was not oppressive.

On the other hand though, Genya draws attention and seems to emphasize on a history which was mainly oppressive for the good-time girls. When Sasha introduces herself to Alicia, she notices her confusion and hurt, she describes her as "pretty in a-little-girl-lost kind of way, [and] was totally unaware of her assets and lacked self-confidence" (15). This image of Alicia reminds Sasha of her childhood experiences, as a shy girl, unaware of her beauty and also lacking in self-esteem. She "remembered what that felt like and there and then resolved to help Alicia out" (15). Alex on other hand is a divorced woman who has had a painful experience with a man who crushed her self-esteem to the point that she attempted suicide. She also lashes out at her brother Chris for hurting Alicia; she explains "I spent a good part of my life with a man who took every opportunity to make me feel I wasn't good enough to be with him. I'll be damned if I'll stand by and let my own little brother become that same man" (74). Just like Sasha, Alex's personal experience cements the solidarity between the three girls, this solidarity slowly develops into friendship. The three girls are drawn together by certain experiences in their lives, which were oppressive. Though the women's experiences are at different stages in their lives, Alicia's current predicament forces the women recall a memory, that evokes emotions which ultimately endear the women to sympathise with Alicia and this forms the basis of their solidarity.

However, on a more collective background, good-time girls occupy a space of shared oppression both textually and contextually. They have been used as chastising figures by authors of popular fiction, and they have been ignored and marginalized by scholars of gender and feminism in African literature, sometimes mistakenly analysed as prostitutes.

Further, if popular fiction describes the realities of society, then the representation of good-time girls by both authors and scholars of African literature is representative of the reality of the history of oppression and marginalisation experienced by the good-time girl in modern African societies.

Genya employs female solidarity to centralise the presence of the good-time girls in African literature and their "uniqueness" both in textually and contextually. Therefore, placing my reactions and arguments within the framework of the representation of good-time girls in African fiction, it is in order to claim that the good-time girls can only be described as victims of an oppressive history. Nonetheless, Genya's choice to apply "difference of view" whereby she uses the same censured figure, without altering her "unique" distinguishing features that earned her the label "good-time girl", expresses the sentiment that victimhood and agency are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Further, friendship and solidarity even among good-time girls is not "blind," and is seen to exist only under certain codes of conduct. The animosity between Delores and Mokami in the novel, *The Other Side of Love* foregrounds this. After pretending to have had intimate sexual relations with Jordan by drugging him and later on pregnancy, Delores was able to disrupt the wedding between Mokami and Jordan. The author paints and ugly and depressing picture of Delores to symbolise the importance of sisterhood. She describes her as aged, as well as barren, a woman obsessed with one man and who makes it her goal in life to have him regardless of how many other women she hurts. A single woman/good-time girl with no friends of her own and with no one who wants to be associated with her. Yet, despite this,

Mokami insists on talking to Delores, in order to understand her as well her actions. In this sense then, one can rightly argue that Genya institutionalises solidarity between good-time girls in cities and towns because while there is neither friendship nor solidarity between the two women, the talk between the two women is seen as important, for it is only after their private conversation in which Mokami gets to understand the very woman responsible for her emotional pain that she is able to fully believe in Jordan again.

Genya also explores friendship beyond a single gender and sex. In *The Wrong Kind of Girl,* Chris and Sasha are described as very good friends. They go out for dinner together, they party and they even drink together, yet, they have no" sexual chemistry" (3) between them. The relationship between men and women in this case is not of a sexual nature, but rather it is simply for friendship's sake. Sasha confides in her friend Chris about the challenges she faces as a female doctor, and Chris is seen as constantly encouraging her. Just like the friendship between the women, Sasha shares intimate feelings and thoughts with Chris. She manages to show that relationship between sexes and genders does not necessary have to be grounded on intimate sexual relations. Such friendship can be interpreted as a deliberate effort by the author to destroy not only the traditional chains but also the stereotypical chains that police relationships between genders, further giving agency to the good-time girl seen in clubs and restaurants with men. She thus, attempts to ease the "sexual tension" usually assigned to discussions of gender relations in urban spaces. Friendship is thus presented as a life boat for those struggling against the strong wave of phallocratic waters.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to define the good-time girl as presented by Monica Genya.. I have outlined the everyday living of the good-time girl by emphasising on her financial status as presented by the author, and her relations with men and women. I have further broadly differenciated the good-time girl from the prostitute figure. To achieve this I have described prostitution as explained by different scholars, and compared this to Genya's presentations of the good-time girl. I have argued that while prostitution is an economic transaction in which the goal of the prostitute is economic gain, the good-time girl is interested in personal sexual and sometimes emotional pleasure. I have attempted to show how the author employs dialogue to differentiate between the two figures, without engaging in morality discources.This research further acknowledges that inspite of the perceived status of the good-time girl as an empowered and independent woman she continues to struggle with phallocracy even in liberal societies, hence the need for solidarity and friendship.

This is in line with my argument that there is a need to further complicate the presentation of the "independent" and empowered woman in African literature. Cheryl Hendricks and Desiree Lewis (1994) argue for a "new and broader goals, more encompassing more emancipatory ways of thinking about transforming [women's] lives" (63). In the spirit of correcting and reconstructing female identities, good-time girls in Africa provide one more platform for engaging in gender and feminist discourses. Granted these (re) constructions are processes often met with contestations even within women themselves. In the following chapters I will highlight some of these contestations and limitations

Chapter Three

Romance for Gender (In) Equality

"Romantic love can be seen as an active and radical engagement with the "maleness" of modern society."

-Antony Giddens 1992

When defining and describing the good-time girl in the previous chapter, it was imperative to differentiate her from the prostitute figure. This we did to establish that there is indeed a gap in the scholarship of the representation of the wicked woman in cities and towns, such that, while there have been numerous attempts by scholars of gender and feminism to define, describe and redeem the prostitute, the good-time girl has either been overlooked, lost in scholarship or discussed in the shadow of the prostitution. Genya chooses to present the good-time girl using the romance template. Therefore, in our quest to understand the good-time girl as presented by the author it is important to analyse her performance of romance before delving in her performance of sexuality.

In the preceding chapter, we discussed the everyday living of single women in cities and towns as well as determined why she is often presented as the good-time girl figure. Genya's attempt to centralise the good-time girl frequently maligned in the erudition of female figures in African literature, suggests her effort to empower her. This chapter aims to discuss how these women popularly represented as good-time girls engage in romance and the focus will be on the performance of romantic love by the good-time girl. The intention is to articulate how the author employs romance for gender equality, thereby presenting the good-time girl

as an empowered figure. This chapter therefore discusses how the good-time girls deal with the very stereotypes that led to the creation of the figure as they engage in romantic heterosexual relations. While discussing her performance of romance this chapter further exposes the differences between the prostitute and the good-time girl On the other hand, while appreciating Genya's efforts, I conclude by highlighting the inequalities misunderstood as well as silenced when employing romance as a platform of agency for the good-time girl.

Genya's texts partake of popular romance templates where boy meets girl, there is a strong attraction and conflict that tests their love, and the stories culminate in the typical happy ending; love prevails. She borrows heavily from the conventional formula of Western romance novels but localizes it. Western novels such as *Mills and Boons* potray young beautiful vulnerable women, usually from poor backgrounds, and rich, handsome, uncontrollable, rough men who are strongly attracted to each other. They have to overcome some sort of adversity, but in the end their love ensures a happy ending.

African romance writers employ romance to present complex female characters and correct stereotypical presentations of women in literature. Grace Ogot, for example, uses romance in her novel *The Strange Bride (1989),* to complicate gender relations by engaging with patriarchal traditional cultures and stereotypes that cage women. Genya uses romance to amplify the story of the good-time girl and contest stereotypes that continue impede her empowerment. She employs romance to investigate and narrate the everyday living of the good-time girl and to espouse on changes in gender relations in urban spaces. Her novels are set in modern urban centres, and explore the constant negotiations between young women

who consider themselves empowered, and young men who have been moulded by cultures which are largely patriarchal. The characters are seen constantly negotiating their personalities and beliefs, as they try to accommodate their new found romantic love. These good-time girls are seen demanding and negotiating for gender equality in their romantic relationships prior to marriage.

Antony Gidden's (1992) words quoted above makes reference to how single women in urban spaces are employing romance for female empowerment and gender equality. Giddens is discussing how romance in modern day Europe has been employed by women to achieve gender equality. His analysis is based on popular literature that centralises women and his prime focus is on sex and intimacies where he observes that women are becoming more concerned with the language of romance, and use it as one of the platforms on which they explore their sexuality, regardless of whether they are married or not. In fact, Giddens asserts that the prospect of marriage is no longer as important as it used to be; the language of "saving themselves for marriage" is admired but not common as it used to be.

Drawing from the history of the traditional canonical literature as well as popular literature in Kenya and around the continent, one can understand Genya's emphasis on the need to elaborate on the performance of romance. Take for example, Ngugi wa Thiongo's description of the performance of romantic love between Mumbi and Gikonyo in his novel *A Grain of Wheat*. Though romance in this case is presented in the rural setting, it helps frame the traditional and androcentric perception of the role of women as they engage in romance. Mumbi is introduced to the imagined reader as a single woman with a strong personality,

highly intelligent and defiant, yet when Ngugi eventually describes Mumbi's romantic passion it is in relation to the man not the self. He writes "she knew the man's power as his limbs fixed her helpless on the ground" (90). At this point Ngugi's aim is to describe the intimate emotional as well as sexual connection between Mumbi and Gikonyo, the imagined reader is led to understand that Mumbi's strength is in her ability to understand the power of the man and to use her "woman's strength" to give "life back to the man" as Ngugi poetically frames it. Throughout the novel Mumbi is presented as a pillar to the men she associates with.

Therefore, the woman's strength and passion as represented by Mumbi, is in her ability to provide emotional support to the men around her; to give life to those around her. Several questions then arise; who then is to nurture the woman? Who is to give strength to the woman? Genya problematises this by voicing the concerns and needs of the good-time girl, by demanding recognition as well as sexual and emotional equality prior to marriage. This implies women are becoming more and more interested in the art of romance, the performance of sexuality, and they apply this as a platform to insist on equality as they engage in heterosexual romance. The woman's strength as presented by Genya is not in her ability to give life back to the man, nor is it in her ability to surrender to the man, but rather it is in her ability to voice her emotions and demand "equality" prior to marriage without being stigmatised.

This equality also involves the explorations of emotions: feelings and desires by the men to the women. Genya emphasizes on this without "emasculating" the men, as stereotypes hold. For instance, the male characters in Genya's texts are presented as leaders in their own

professions, yet they are seen communicating their fears as well as love to the women, despite the fact that they are not bound by marriage. A close reading of Genya's work elucidates how writers can employ romance to amend social perception of good-time girls in cities and towns, and at the same time destroy the phallocentric conventions that differentiates the "good" woman from the good-time girl.

Narrowing it down to specificities, one way Genya attempts to restore agency to the good-time girl when performing romance is by trivialising stereotypes (the same stereotypes that led to the use of the term "good-time girl" in African literature). Genya directly engages with stereotypes when narrating the romantic relationship between Tony and Sasha in *The Wrong Kind of Girl*. When Tony first meets Sasha, he makes no attempt to hide his disgust. It appears that Tony has certain standards and expectations that he requires from "proper women", and Sasha's physical appearance as well as her lifestyle falls short of his expectations. As the story develops, it slowly becomes evident that there is a strong attraction that moves beyond pure lust between Sasha and Tony. In an effort to prove this to the reader, Tony is seen giving Sasha advice on how to become an independent "good" woman, by advising her to stop enjoying the company of men and to dress "appropriately".

Tony finds Sasha style of dressing to be too provocative for the "ideal" independent woman. He is further uncomfortable when Sasha and her new found female friends decide to dress "seductively" and go into a night club alone (without the company of men) to engage in alcoholic drinking and dancing as this seems to suggest that they are interested in gaining men's attention. It is for this reason that he follows the girls to the club; to keep an eye over

them or to “protect them” and probably their reputation. At this stage, though Tony is emotionally and sexually attracted to Sasha, he still relies on his stereotypical perception of single women who dress and “act” like Sasha. Further to this, Tony has a hard time accepting non-romantic heterosexual relationships between women and men, and thus does not trust the friendship between Sasha and his brother. He sees Sasha talking to other men in the night club and assumes she is prostituting herself. He finds it difficult to believe her profession as a doctor, because of her provocative dressing and her love for partying. He lashes out at her, demanding that she leaves the house, and warns her against corrupting other women. He calls her a “whore” out to rob hard working men. Then when he seems in control of his anger, he pleads with her to change her lifestyle if they are to have a relationship, stating that he is even willing to educate her if she so wishes. Tony and Sasha hence represent the two extremes; Tony embraces patriarchal beliefs which prescribe the behavour of women, Sasha on the other hand rejects such prescriptions. She is the good-time girl.

As a result, Tony’s strong beliefs in such stereotypes make it difficult for the two to have a relationship despite the fact that they are attracted to each other. Tony restricts himself to phallocentric descriptions of the “ideal” woman, and refuses to see Sasha as one because her lifestyle falls short; the good-time girl has always been described as a vain woman. The relationship between Sasha and Tony, as described in the novel is therefore loaded with tension and uncertainty because they are not on an equal footing. Tony’s desire is to change Sasha to become the “ideal” woman, and Sasha is seen as constantly trying to defend her self-identity. Sasha is consequently required to restrain herself and re-create her identity in order to be more appealing to a man who seems to be molded by a patrichal system. In this case, equality in the relationship becomes elusive, and the good-time girl is seen struggling to

protect her identity in a society which remains tolerant to phallocratic outbursts as presented by Tony.

In an effort to explain romance in a modern society, Antony Giddens (1991) describes the ideal relationship as a "pure relationship": a relationship based on sexual and emotional equality. To achieve this Giddens calls for a shared sense of mutual self-disclosure in a couple; this involves sexual and emotional self-exploration. Emotional equality involves the expression of intimate feelings and pleasures derived from companionship, what Giddens refers to as mutual self-disclosure which ensures trust in the relationship.

Though Gidden's work has been heavily criticized for its reliance on therapeutic discourses (with regard to the process of mutual self-disclosure, where the couple are required to open up to each other, withholding no secrets),[22] his analysis of heterosexual relations in modern societies sheds light to processes of re-structuring of gender order and advancing gender equality in romance. For example, the process of self-disclosure in romantic relations results in women and men becoming more vocal of their sexual and emotional desires as they engage in romance even before marriage. When presenting gender relations within the romance template Genya emphasizes on emotional as well as sexual equality. I will discuss the latter in detail in the preceding chapter. In relation to emotional equality, Genya explores the emotions of not only the woman but also the man. Genya here welcomes Antony Giddens (1992) definition of pure relationship as a relationship based on emotional equality, and

[22] Granted there are scholars who have argued that a total lack of secret could lead to boredom. See George Simmel in Wolff, 1950.

employs it as a site for attaining gender equality. This betrays a sense of awareness and empowerment, hence establishing some depth in the good-time girl.

Whether it is possible to achieve total self-disclosure in a relationship is debatable, however this research acknowledges that some degree of self-disclosure or a shared sense of equal self-disclosure from both partners is important and contributes to an equal footing in the relationship. A shared sense of emotional equality as presented by Genya is seen as being so important without which the relationship crumbles and this differentiates the good-time girl from the prostitute. Take for example, Alex's relationship with her ex-husband as described in *The Wrong Kind of Girl.* Chris confides to Sasha that Alex, his sister, was never physically abused by the ex-husband but "he was much better in putting her down emotionally [by] convincing her that she was worthless and that nobody could ever love her" (7). Though Alex in this case was a married woman (while this research is more concerned with performance romantic love prior to marriage), the lack of reciprocity of love and expression of emotion through a shared sense of mutual self-disclosure lead to her attempted suicide and divorce. Through consistent and emotional battery, Alex lost self-identity and self-esteem to the point of depression.

Alex's case is used to emphasize the importance of insisting on a shared sense of emotional equality prior to marriage, especially if compared to the relationship between Anna and Paul in *The Other Side of Love.* Anna is described as a woman who patiently perseveres in a "secret" relationship for three years with Paul Wahome because of his political status. She can only be with him when he wants to, and they cannot be seen in public together. She has

to endure images of the man she loves attend public functions with other women. Though she is not happy with the conditions of her relationship she persists in it because as she confides in her friend Mokami, she loves the man. In this case, her romantic love for Paul Wahome obscures the inequality in the relationship, and forces Anna into "oppression" in the sense that her emotional needs are deemed secondary to Paul's political ambitions. Lack of a shared sense of emotional equality suggested by Anna's inability to communicate her feeling to Paul as well as Paul's further suppression of her feelings through threats, makes their relationship unstable. Anna confides in her friend "I do love him, but I cannot live like this anymore, something has to change" (86). It is only after Anna feels that her emotional needs are met, which is when she finally opens up to Paul, who also express his fears as well as his love both privately and publicly that the relationship is mended. Therefore, while developing the good-time girl figure in her novels, Genya emphasizes on the need for the woman to experience a shared sense of emotional equality as she engages in heterosexual romance, thus creating a sense of profoundness in the figure popularly described as frivolous and skin deep. Giddens further explains:

> The radicalising possibilities of the transformation of intimacy are very real. Some have claimed that intimacy can be oppressive, and clearly this maybe so if it is regarded as a demand for constant emotional closeness. Seen, however, as a *transactional negotiation* of personal ties by equals, it appears in a completely different light. (my emphasis, Giddens 1992: 3)

This is the type of equality demanded by the good-time girl in Genya's novels. It is only after she is viewed as an equal by her male partner, that the two can engage in processes of negotiation and achieve a shared sense of emotional equality. Sasha and Tony's relationship is marred by conflict because of Tony's persistence on imposing his patriarchal and stereotypical beliefs on Sasha, thereby demanding to change her lifestyle, which is her identity, to suit his needs. Genya calculatively engages with the romance template to complicate the good-time girl figure, intimating that her participating in activities such as alcoholic drinking and dancing in night clubs, her provocative dressing, and her choice to enjoy heterosexual relations sexually and non sexually, does not warrant the negative representation and analysis she has been accorded her by authors and scholars of African literature, thereby assigning her voice and documenting the intricacy of her-story. Consequently, it is in order to infer that while the representation good-time girls in most male authors popular and canonical literature, describe them as vain, money obsessed creatures, Genya applies romance to smoothen out such rough representations and establish some depth in the figure.

Authors such as Meja Mwangi and Charles Mangua privilege the male experience at the expense of the good-time girl, Genya on the other hand insists on narrating her-story, whereby the good-time girl, is seen demanding to communicate her emotional desires and concerns, and the man is seen as responding to her needs, as opposed to acting on an already predetermined androcentric manner. Genya is careful, insisting on the concept of "gender equality" even while rescuing the good-time girl by presenting her as also voicing the man's emotional concerns, thereby leading to a negotiating process between the two, as opposed to having dominating and suppressed emotions and desires. In so doing the good-time girl

ceases to be gazed at as a threat or a dangerous wicked woman popularly found in cities and towns. Gidden's words best explain Genya's efforts as an author in re-configuring the good-time girl. He writes:

> Where large areas of a person's life are no longer set by pre-existing patterns and habits [which are androcentric], the individual is continually obliged to negotiate lifestyle options. Moreover, such choices are not just external of marginal aspects of the individual's attitudes, but define who the individual 'is'. *In other words lifestyle choices are constitutive of the reflexive narrative of the self*. (my words & emphasis, Giddens 1992: 75)

Thus the attempt to change the good-time girl, as Tony desires, results in the loss of her self-identity, and further stifles the woman. The struggle of the good-time girl to defend her identity is complicated by the fact that though she exists in a modern society, the patriarchal history of this society cannot be ignored. The old does not change instantaneously and evenly, therefore, though old phallocratic tendencies may be explained as slowly diminishing (this does not mean that they no longer exist), new ones are continuously reinvented, and the good-time girl continues to grapple with them even as she engages in romance in a society that describes itself as modern and liberal. While trying to address such inequalities, Giddens attempts to offer a denouement when he writes:

> A pure relationship is one in which *external criteria* have been dissolved: the relationship exists solely on whatever that relationship can deliver. In the context of pure relationship trust can be mobilised only by a process of mutual self-disclosure. (my emphasis 1991: 6)

However, external factors such as cultural belief and stereotypes can neither be ignored nor trivialised, as implied by Gidden's words. Single women described as good-time girls in cities and towns exist in a society which was and in many ways remains largely patriachal. External factors determine the socialization process of an individual and thus influence the shaping of identity. For example, Tony's attraction to Sasha cannot be ignored; however he constantly has to struggle with his patriarchal perceptions of the ideal women as defined by stereotypes because he has been raised and moulded in largely patriachal society. Therefore, Tony's perceptions of himself, as well as others is influenced by external factors such as culture (which in this case is patriarchal that defines a good-time girl as a wicked woman; a prostitute), his identity is naturally shaped by patriachal beliefs and this affects how he relates to Sasha.

Good-time girls in Africa exist in a society loaded with patriarchal tendancies, their choice and ability to reject such tendancies is what makes them empowered (empowerment, at least for the African woman in African literature, is acquired and reactionary not natural), hence the disapproving gaze from those using patriarchal lences. As a single woman with knowledge of her self-identity (which she confesses took years to grasp), Sasha's lifestyle is reflective of the self. Therefore, her refusal to change, and her need to defend herself and her

choices, is an attempt to protect and remain in control of her self-identity. The tension between Sasha and Tony shows that despite dialogue and mutual self-disclosure, inequalities still persist by re-inventing themselves in new forms that are sometimes difficult to detect (as I will show when discussing romance for gender inequality later), thus making a pure-relationship difficult to exist in any society. This complicate the representation of the good-time girl because not only are her sexual desires explored, but her emotional desires are also foregrounded as she struggles to defend her identity as an empowered woman, thus creating depth in the figure.

The good-time girl has to constantly battle with negative perceptions, even as she embraces her "independence". Genya questions the "maleness" in cities and towns that dictate how women should conduct their everyday living. This "maleness" is packaged in the form of stereotypes and continues to re-invent itself even as societies become more and more liberal. Unless stereotypical perceptions of "ideal" women and good-time girls are revised, equality cannot be achieved.

The author's concerns naturally extend to gender-prescribed roles in heterosexual romantic relationships that emphasized on the servitude role of women. When describing "the woman in love", Simone de Beauvoir expressed the need of the woman to serve the man "for in responding to the lover's demands the woman will feel that she is necessary; she will be integrated into his existence, she will share his worth" (1979: 660). Beauvoir's analysis provides us with the androcentric history of most societies, where the woman took pleasure in serving the man, "she cooks choice dishes for him and arranges a little nest for him where he

can be at home; she looks after his clothes....such traits are found in every woman in love" (660). The good-time girl is presented not as wanting to integrate into the man's existence but to maintain her existence and identity while negotiating with the man. Therefore, Genya clarifies the need to abolish such descriptions, and present more eloborate characterization of women.

For example, in the novel *The Wrong Kind of Girl,* Tony is seen spending a lot of time in Sasha house. Once, he even comes home early and prepares dinner for Sasha, and in the morning, he is seen preparing breakfast for her. In T*he Other Side of Love* Jordan, a successful farmer, is described organising picnics, as well as preparing dinner and breakfast for Mokami. Genya deliberately employs the figure of the financially empowered man, performing household chores. In the previous chapter, I highlighted the "ideal" woman as presented in male authored texts such as Charles Mangua's *Son of a Woman in Mombassa,* where the main protagonist, Dodge Kiunyu is seen complimenting his wife for not neglecting her role in the kitchen, even though she is financially independent. Beauvoir (1979) is in agreement with this when describing the predicament of the independent woman. She argues that while such a woman is economically empowered, there remains certain social elements that impede the attainment of full independence equal to that of the man. Since most, if not all women suffer from a patriarchal history, and as stated old does not change evenly, the independent woman continues to battle with her own "inner equilibrium". She is moulded by a history that has conditioned women as nurturers and care takers, making the woman comfortable in this identity. It is for this reason the economically independent woman, as presented by such authors, insists on maintaining her identity in the home, as a wife and as a mother. This is the identity documented by most authors of Africa literature in Kenya as the

ideal modern woman. Magaret Ogola's (1995, 2002) presentation of women in her texts as already discussed are good examples, where though the women are perceived as politically, socially and economically empowered, their role as nurturers and home makers is not comprised with their newly achieved status. The good-time girl is represented as being too individualistic, concerned with only herself and in this sense then she ceases to be the "ideal" woman.

Genya employs romance to embrace social, cultural and economic changes that have altered the economies of love and intimacies to the point that they have become sites of agency for the good-time girl. Romantic relations as described by James Dowd and Nicole Pallotta (2000) "may prove to be a source of happiness and companionship, or the medium for sexual and emotional expression" (553). It is the latter that is of interest to this research for it is through this expression of emotions and sexuality that this research analyses gender relations creating depth in the good-time girl figure, differentiating her from the prostitute and locating her in studies of gender and feminism in African literature. The choice of the good-time girl not only to engage in romance but demand for a shared sense of equality outside marital boundaries is focalised, thereby also providing a more contemporary description of romance. Her novels therefore contribute to cultural reservoirs by becoming resources of contemporary engagement in romance.

As already briefly discussed, Genya chooses to present the good-time girl as a career woman. Therefore, equality is also seen as important in terms of financial status. Both the man and the woman in a romantic heterosexual relationship in Genya's novels are workers as well as

consumers of free enterprise. The financial independence of the woman prior to marriage seems imperative to Genya, so important is this independence that Genya presents it as one of the indentifying marks of an empowered single woman. Consider how she describes Sasha the good-time girl in her novel, *The wrong Kind of Girl:*

> She had the highest success rate of anyone in the private hospital where she was training, and she was proud of herself. Her reputation [as a neurosurgeon] was steadily growing as one of most gifted surgeons in the business, and her peers frequently sought her out for consultations. She knew her worth. (5)

The good-time girls are seen as not only having stable careers, but as leaders and /or experts in their professions. The women's economic footing has no relation to the men, or their romantic relationship. They do not depend on them financially, nor do they depend on them to secure their careers. Her economic independence is kept separate from the relationship she has with the man. Genya stresses on the need to maintain the financial independence in her own right, not by virtue of her relations with men. Financial independence presents a better platform when demanding equality, and negotiation. Of importance to further note is that the women's economic stability also seems to be important to the man. Finding it hard to believe that Sasha is a neurosurgeon, because of his stereotypical perceptions of women, Tony advices Sasha, "if you had a career and some sort of purpose in life, you wouldn't have to rely on a man for anything" (60). Genya depicts financial independence among single women not as a threat to the man, but rather as a desirable quality.

Therefore, engaging in romance by the good-time girl is not a purely emotional process as the western Cinderella stories and romance found in Mills and Boons would have the imagined reader believe. James Dowd's and Nicole Pallotta's (2000) words best capture Genya's intentions in describing romantic love as "a significant undertaking, an investment in future well-being, *that must be approached carefully and rationally*" (552). Compatibility based on emotional and financial equality, are unapologetically presented by the author as important elements in romantic engagements with the good-time girl. Dowd's and Pallotta's words can be used to explain Genya's intentions when she presents men and women in heterosexual romantic relationships as "coequals in both the economic sense and in the agentic sense of being an active shaper of the story's trajectory rather than passive receiver of what the world or other characters deliver" (567).

Inequalities in Romance

The relationship between romantic love and power in a patriarchal system is one that Simone de Beauvoir, goes to great lengths to explain. She summarizes the relationship between the two with the following words:

> On the day when it will be possible for a woman to love not in her weakness but in her strength, not to escape herself but to find herself, not to abase herself but to assert herself- on that day love will become for her as for man, a source of life and not of mortal danger. (1979: 679)

This equality Beauvoir acknowledges is only possible with economic and social equality, and it is this that Genya tries to capture. Yet as already highlighted, despite economic equality the independent woman continues to battle with her identity in society. With economic independence should come social recognition and respect, and it is the latter that Genya seems to demand at least for the good-time girl and employs the romance genre as a platform. Nevertheless as positive as the strides discussed above are, other serious challenges continue to enable an androcentric system; challenges that have either been misunderstood or trivialised by the author. Hence, despite Genya's commendable efforts in re-telling the story of the good-time girl using romance, a closer reading of her texts reveals that much more of her creative energy goes into sugar-coating gender inequalities as opposed to transforming an unequal gender order. For instance, there are some elements that continue to abase the good-time girl in her pursuit and performance of romantic love. Taking a closer look at the romantic heterosexual relationship in the novels one cannot help but wonder why the good-time girls insist on maintaining a relationship even when they are inconvenienced by it. Nici Nelson (1996) noted the same "weakness" in her study of popular fiction in Kenya. Physical, psychological or emotional abuse do not seem important to most authors of popular fiction in Kenya, "women should and often do stick to the men" they claim to love (Nici Nelson 1996: 153).

Perhaps this depicts the enduring nature of love as well as the resilience and the "strength" of the woman, but does it not also pose a danger to the empowerment of the woman? Does the enduring nature of love as valorised in the texts and the resilience of the good-time girl in love, not become a form of subjection for the woman? Does it not evacuate agency in the moment that it is reclaimed? It is in this light that I argue that the structure of romance

extensively employed by many female writers ironically assimilate into androcentrism, whereby the women are seen enduring numerous emotional challenges, as they wait for the man to declare his love. For example, of importance to note is that the women as presented by Genya do not make their love known to the man until he declares his first. In this case, I argue, Genya further denies the good-time girl agency. This is especially evident in her novel *The Wrong Kind of Girl.* Sasha advises Alicia "men like doing the chasing not the other way round. Alicia should act more aloof and force Chris to come to her" (21). According to Sasha a woman should not make her intentions obvious to a man before he shows his interest in her. Alicia is advised to pretend not to be in love with the man, she has been trying for years to get his attention because "nothing intrigues a man more than the thought that you do not like him" (24).

Thus the power of the good-time girl lies in her ability to repress her feelings in order to impress the man. She has to contain herself as she patiently waits for the man to take initiative. The obvious display of love by the woman to the man, who has not made his intentions known, is described in the text to be repellent to the man. Alicia's change of attitude towards Chris, as advised by Sasha, works almost immediately. She pretends to be interested in another man, and Chris immediately takes notice of Alicia and becomes jealous. Alicia's words capture the irony of the situation, "Here I am in a fantastic outfit, heading towards a country club to meet one man while am madly in love with another and would give anything to be heading in the opposite direction right now" (44).

This act strips the good-time girl of agency, forcing her to act not as she desires, but rather as the man desires, in order for her to gain his attention and ultimately his approval. The manipulation described above, enables the very stereotype that Genya sets out to trivialise, thereby presenting the idea of a fully independent woman as an illusion; what this research calls the caged independent woman. The ability of the woman to hide her feelings, and act aloof in order to capture the attention of the man she loves, as presented by Genya, is ironically the power of the empowered woman. Therefore, despite the economic empowerment and equality, women continue to impede their full empowerment by employing their power to serve beliefs that remain androcentric. The good-time girl thus finds herself caged as she searches for emotional as well as sexual satisfaction from the man.

Sasha is also presented as preoccupied with the man who has shown her nothing but hostility since they first met and continues to do so until the end of the story. After five years as a single woman, why is it that Mokami the main protagonist in the novel, *The Other Side of Love* feels the need to go back to the man who had hurt her five years earlier, by leaving her at the altar and marrying another woman? And why does Anna remain in an unhappy relationship for three years? While this may be the pattern of romance stories, where emotions and feelings are tested, and where there are certain obstacles placed to prove the presence and strength of love, does this not also unveil its weakness? Granted, because of the imperfect nature of humans, there can be no relationship which does not have its own share of tension, but where does one draw the line between the strength as well as the enduring nature of love and the subjugation of women when employing romance?

The conclusion of the novels not only affirms the hope of marriage but also the feeling of completeness. This is especially evident with Genya's last two novels. When Jordan in *The Other Side of Love* finally says the words "I love you" Mokami replies with laughter and tears "I've wanted to hear you say that for so long" (208). Genya's last words in the novel are "Mokami slipped back into Jordans arms. She was home, at last. Where she belonged" (210). There is a sense of "arrival" and completeness, as if from a long tiring journey; a journey in search for confirmation of the man's love, before the good-time girl could express her own love, the final proof that she is not the prostitute. All ends well in the novels when the man declares his love. The woman laughs and cries in joy for she has not loved in vain. This is also captured in the novel *The Wrong Kind of Girl* . When Tony declares his love, everything changes, Sasha forgives him, and welcomes him back. She "flings herself into his arms and sobs as though her heart would break" (256) and it is then that she also declares her love. The good-time girls seem relieved with the man's declaration of his love; short of this, the good-time girl is seen as restless and constantly on an emotional roller coaster, in a quest to find contentment in her love for the man. Therefore, though the good-time girl may be independent in other areas, when she loves and desires to be loved back, but cannot express her love until the man declares his, she stifles her independence.

Going back to the questions raised earlier regarding the dependancy of the women to the men they claim to love; the honour and reputation of the good-time girl as presented by Genya seems to depend on this. As already discussed in the previous chapter, there is a difference between the good-time girl and the prostitute, a difference that seems especially important to Genya's good-time girls. We have also established that the good-time girl does not limit her sexuality to the marital institution. Nonetheless, engaging in sexual relations with the men

without some form of commitment ironically seems to project some form of debasement for the good-time girls in Genya's text. Thus the question: is the good-time girl as empowered as Genya would like her readers to believe? For example, when Tony turns hostile to Sasha after a night of passionate love making, Sasha is emotionally crushed. "Last night.....you told me I was the most wonderful person you had ever met. What could possibly have changed between then and now.....don't you realise you are hurting me?" (106) His admiration seems very important to Sasha. Without it, Sasha describes herself as acting and feeling like a prostitute, a feeling that draws self-disgust. Therefore, these women's persistence to remain close to the men they have had sexual relations with for a period of time and possibly lead into marriage, affirms their honour by differentiating them from the prostitute. His approval and his love even for a short period of time, is the proof needed for Genya's good-time girls to declare that they are not prostitutes. Her perceived independence notwithstanding, it can hence be argued that the good-time girl as presented by Genya continues to struggle to be accepted as the "ideal" woman in a mostly phallocratic society. Once the good-time girls are sexually involved, the author describes them as automatically emotionally involved as well and thus they demand exclusivity; they fall in love. When their feelings are not reciprocated, the pleasure they derived from the moment is erased and the women feel demeaned.

While attempting to understand sexuality in Nairobi, Rachel Spronx (2005) explains that though women approve of sexual relations outside the marriage institution, their sexual reputations remain important. The number of men a woman has sexual relations with is important to the woman, not for personal esteem reasons, but because it communicated to the man whether she is ideal as a wife or she is to be simply one of his many girlfriends. Thus while the woman was free in engage in sexual relations, she was required to repress herself to

remain appealing to men, or as Spronx says, she has to "*manage* her sexual encounters so as to be perceived as a respectable woman" (272). Granted, there is some measure of liberation achieved, considering the history of gender and sexuality in most African cultures, however, oppressive cultures continue to re-invent themselves and the good-time girls as presented by Genya remain caged despite their perceived independence. There is pressure, even for the good-time girl, to control her sexuality in order not to be judged harshly by society and receive the "penalty" of being confused with prostitute figure. Therefore, in her need to save herself and her reputation as a woman, the good-time girl cages herself and denies herself full independence. This argument is informative in espousing the idea presented in the previous chapter where I suggested that in certain ways, such as the above, the good-time girl aspires to be a "new woman" as defined by Sarah Stevens (2003).

Marriage is further implied at the end of the two novels as if to justify the sexual relations before marriage. In this sense, Genya as an author also attempts to reconcile her characters as well as her stories with prescribed modes of sexual engagement which limit the woman's right to employ her sexuality as she chooses. As Beauvoir (1975) argues, beyond the boundaries of commitment and reciprocity of romantic love, women are discouraged from engaging in sexual relations. Love, as presented by Genya, legitimizes a woman's erotic passion and sexual pleasure. Consequently, though Genya engages in discourses of sex outside the marriage institution, she again limits it to the expression of romantic love as opposed to purely sexual pleasure, at least for the good-time girl.

Again Beauvoir words best capture the complexity of the good-time girl. She writes:

> She abandons herself to love first to *save herself;* but the paradox of idolatrous love is that in trying to save herself she *denies herself* utterly in the end. Her feelings gain a mystical dimension; she requires her God to no longer admire her and approve her; she wants to merge with him, to forget herself in his arms. (1979: 660)

The men's declaration of their love to the good-time girls is received as a bequest, and the woman willingly humbles herself before him. She breaks down in tears, expressing her joy in the gift of his love, she emotionally declares her love to him as well, and surrenders herself into his mighty highly sought after approval and love. She has suffered emotionally in her quest to gain his admiration, love and commitment, and to differentiate herself from the prostitute.

Conclusion

I have so far attempted to discuss the performance of romance as a strategy employed by the author to re-configure and ratify the good-time girl as another symbol of empowered women. I have also highlighted how the author engages with romance to disintegrate stereotypes that police and contain women. As a sequel to the previous chapter, these discussions further divorce the good-time girl from the prostitute figure. However, I have further argued that in her overzealous attempt to differentiate between the good-time girl and the prostitute and thus save her, the author re-invents ways of further containing and policing the good-time girl. In her pursuit for romantic love I have highlighted how this love limits the very woman whom Genya wants to present as independent.

Chapter Four

"Being Aware of Your Assets": The Female Body, Pleasure and the Politics of Power

> *"Without a discourse that enables women to step beyond the bounded, limited notions of sexuality as being either tied to reproduction or to the avoidance of disease or violation, we cannot begin to imagine ourselves in new profoundly life-transforming ways. We have to see the cage for what it is – a set of carefully placed bars that keep us locked into suffocating spaces efficiently reproduced by an uncompromising patriarchal system, and often closely patrolled by women from a cross-section of classes and social standing."* Patricia McFadden (2003)

While offering a critique on Genya's novel *Links of a Chain,* James Gibbs (1997) criticizes her for failing to capture the disillusionment of African states, but applauds the author for refraining from explicitly describing the sexual scenes. There are several questions that arise from Gibbs remarks. Why should Genya not describe sexual desire and pleasure in her novels? Is it because she is a woman? Is it because she is African? Or better still, is it because she is both? As already foregrounded women in urban spaces who express their sexuality are described as flawed; thus the presense of the good-time girl figure. However, the performance of sexuality in heterosexual romance has been employed by authors like Genya to advance gender equality and when describing the good-time girls engagement in romance she does delve deeply into the edgy area of the female body, erotics and pleasure in her next two novels *The Wrong Kind of Girl* and *The Other Side of Love.*

This chapter seeks to plunge into the spaces of power and sexual pleasure, where sexual pleasure becomes a site of power contestation in an androcentric system. The aim of the

chapter is to highlight how female sexuality mainly in terms of pleasure has been explored by the author to empower the good-time girl and to locate her in the authorship and scholarship of African literature. Further to this, I will discuss the complexities of employing female sexuality to achieve gender egalitarianism. The aim is not to offer solutions at this stage, but while recognising the author's achievements in employing sexuality to empower the good-time girl, it is important to also highlight the loopholes of this strategy so extensively exploited by her.

Again it is important for us to trace the history of sexuality in scholarship, for us to recognise and appreciate Genya's attempts as well as her achievements in re-configuring the good-time girl. If one is to trace the history of African feminist studies, one of the main preoccupations of African gender and feminist scholars and authors has been the revision of the representation of women in male authored texts. Even in writing the male writer sought to control, contain the woman's sexuality, through chastising and intimidation. Consider for example Achebe's description of what he calls the "final ceremony of confession" (92) as found in his novel *Things Fall Apart.* The bride is placed before the community and her virginity is questioned. She is required to swear that she is indeed a virgin and pure, after which a hen is killed and the groom ushers her to his hut and into his life. The bride's sexuality is put under public scrutiny to be gazed at and judged and where her confessions determine if she was a "good woman" or a "wicked one," implying that sex before marriage was something the woman (not the man) should be ashamed of. The woman in this case does not own her sexuality, she cannot explore it as she wishes because of the communial gaze that forever haunts her decision. Achebe explains;

> they sat is a big circle on the ground and the bride sat in the centren with a hen in her right hand. Uchendu [the father in law] sat by her, holding the ancentral staff of the family. All the other men stood outside the circle, watching. The women watched also. “Remember that if you do not answer truthfully you will suffer or even die at child birth. (2002: 93)

In order to draw approval she surrenders her sexuality not only to the soon to be husband but to the community who are witnesses to her “confession”; a confession which seems to be a matter of life and death. Her need to control her sexuality is not a matter of personal choice, thus essentially she has no control over her sexuality. The role of sex is already pre-determine with the threat of death during childbirth if she is found to be lying. Such performances that publicly display the woman’s sexuality intimidates the woman and humiliates those found not to be virgins. This is adrocentrism in its purest forms. This underscores some of the inequalities that formed the foundation of marriages and these are the “hang-ups” that many male and female writers of both the traditional canon and popular fiction suffer (ed) from as they presented good-time girl in cities and towns.

When discussing sexuality in ancient Greece, Foucault (1979) equates sexual relations to social relations, thereby establishing the relationship between power and sexual pleasure. Though his studies focus mainly on homosexuality, he is able to clarify two aspects that are relevant to this research. He distinguishes the male prostitute from the good time boy and like Luise White (1990) and Janet Burja (2005), he describes the male prostitute to be the boy who receives some form of compensation usually in monetary form. This research agrees with Foucault’s description of the good-time boy as a man simply in pursuit of pleasure. It is

thus in order for such a man to have multiple sexual partners of both gender and sexes without being considered to be a prostitute.[23] The same can be argued of the good-time girl. However, it is Foucault's discussions on the relationship between pleasure, power and gender that are of relevance to this chapter. He writes:

> Pleasure practices were conceptualised using the same categories as those in the field of social rivalries and hierarchies...this suggests that in sexual behaviour there was one role that was intrinsically valorised without question. (1979: 215)

Foucault presents pleasurable practices in a hierarchical order, with the woman being the vassalage. The role valorised is the power of the man to provide sexual pleasure to the woman. This clarifies the history of the woman's role during sexual intercourse, she is presented as passive, her role and experience is deemed secondary to that of the man. In cases where the role of the woman in sexual performance has been explored it has been in terms of her ability to provide pleasure for the man, as well as a site where a man performed his masculinity. Therefore, what Foucault seems to be saying is that the role of the man is always valorised. In most African traditional cultures, the effects of sexual activity for the woman was emphasised not necessarily in terms of pleasure but in terms of reproduction as shown by the narrator in *Things Fall Apart* words, "if you do not answer truthfully you will suffer or even die during child-birth" (2002: 93). In this sense then, the passivity of women in sexual

[23]Focault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. London: Lane, 1979

Foucault argues that in ancient Greece there were no binary distinctions between homosexual love and heterosexual love, because it was not the sex that was important in the relationship, but rather the act of love. It is for this reason that though desire for a person of the same sex was considered different to the desire for a person of a different sex, it was considered natural not something to be tolerated.

relations becomes a problem, it becomes a site where women are further subjugated. Nevertheless, Foucault explains this, he further writes:

> As for the woman's passivity [in sexual relations], it did denote an *inferiority of nature and conditions: but there was no need to criticize it as a behaviour because it was conformity with what nature intended*....[however] everything in the way of sexual behaviour that might cause a man to bear marks of inferiority could only be considered as shameful. (my words & emphasis 1982: 216)

Foucault's words foreground various important facts; one being that the lack of enough discourses that emphasize on the sexual pleasures experienced by women in heterosexual relations should not cause alarm or discontent because it is natural, it is in conformity with nature. The woman's pleasure while engaging in sex according to Foucault is secondary if not irrelevant. Genya engages with such an androcentric history by re-writing her-story, and revising the so called "inferior nature of women" in sexual relation: thereby suggesting that women's passivity is not an act of nature, but lack of agency. She employs the sexuality of women who have popularly been labelled as good-time girls in Kenyan popular fiction and narrates it in such a manner as to accord her agency.

Going back to African literature and its representation of women, it can rightly be concluded that it is when what is perceived to be the natural order of authority is challenged that discontent is voiced, and thus the banal portrayal of the good-time girls in cities and towns.

This is what Genya attempts to address and resolve in her novels. I use the word attempt deliberately, because though Genya achieves some milestones, she also manages to portray the good-time girl as caged, not only in romantic heterosexual relationships as already fore-grounded, but also when explaining the physical and emotional pleasure experienced when engaging in sexual relations as I shall discuss later on in the chapter. When women in cities and towns begin to take control of their sexuality and use it for their own satisfaction (weather as a prostitute or as a good-time girl), they challenge that which is assumed to be the natural order of things, and it is this that some male and female writers of popular fiction criticise. Thus writers and critics of African literature who wish to respond to such ubiquitous presentations of the good-time girl tend to take two paths; they either critique or condemn it, which is what most gender and feminist scholars initially did and still continue to do, or embrace it and offer a different view which is what more recent authors like Genya are undertaking.

Patricia McFadden's (2003) words extensively quoted at the beginning of this chapter draw attention to the fact that most studies of sexuality are more concerned with describing sex as flawed, by analysing sex under the auspices of health, morality or entrepreneurship. Majorie MacGoye's novels such as *Victoria and Murder in Majengo* attempt to rescue the prostitute figure. Her other novel *Chira* explores sex in relation to health. With regard to sex and morality, the trite representation of good-time girls in male authored fiction as well as some female authored fiction, is aimed at providing the imagined reader with lessons in morality, whereby the good-time girl in the city is described as rebellious, immoral and wicked when she explores her sexuality. Buchi Emecheta's novel, *The Joys of Motherhood* describes the

role of sex for the woman to be that of reproduction. Thus the question that is least addressed is the pleasure women experience from their bodies.

Sexual pleasure as experienced by women is a discourse that Patricia McFadden (2003) argues will enable women to step beyond the "bounded, limited notions." Pumla Gqola (2005) emphasizes the need to broaden the scope of scholarship while engaging in discourses of the body and sexuality. She voices her concerns over scholars who still insist on examining the body and sexuality in Africa under the "lenses of pathology and the broken" (4), in the name of engaging in "more appropriate" discussions. Studies of sexuality in Africa tend to be concerned with the control of disease, or lack of morality, as opposed to pleasurable sites. It is explored in terms of the need to contain it, as opposed to it being seen as agency. Such perceptions lead to the under-development of gender and feminist scholarship in Africa.

For example, where there have been attempts to discuss sexual pleasures and choices it is mainly in terms of discouraging traditional practises such as female genital mutilation, or in relation to more "contemporary" sexual orientations like homosexuality. Calixthe Beyala *Tu t'appelleras Tanga* (1988) and *Yvonne Vera Butterfly Burning* (2000) for example discuss sex and the female body in relation to violence as well as lesbianism. Louise McNay (2000) argues that the emphasis on studies of homosexuality implies that heterosexuality is unproblematic, leading to under theorisation of heterosexuality especially in relation to sexual pleasure. Juliana Makuchi (1997) on the other hand considers it offensive and inconsiderate to focus on female sexuality in terms of sexual pleasure in Africa, because of the existence of

the cruel act of "female circumcision" is some parts of Africa, an act that has robbed and continues to rob women of their sexual pleasure for life.

Despite the above concerns, the intimate relationship between sex and power is evident from the persistent need of society (in this case African society) to manage sexuality. Debates on sexuality even within feminist discourses are explored around androcentric prescribed rules of engagement, in the name of preservation of culture. For example even within feminist discourses, lesbianism was initially met with scepticism among African feminist scholars. Juliana Makuchi (1997) describes a conference held in 1991 where African women refused to discuss lesbianism because it was simply not an "African problem." It is only recently that lesbianism has begun being given intellectual recognition.

As McFadden further argues "feminist ideas and political instincts are being muffled; feminist energies and agencies are being stifled by patriarchal sexual discourses that are [considered more] appropriate and restructure our debates about sexuality and lifestyle" (2003). Therefore even among those who describe themselves as feminist, there are those who develop their debates along phallocratic lines, thus leading to what I choose to describe as caged independent women; those who profess freedom and empowerment, and still employ patriarchal tools to suppress those who "step beyond the bonded limited notions of sexuality." Admittedly, recent scholarship of gender and sexuality in African literature has focussed on women's sexual pleasure as a site for agency.

Traditional and patriarchal culture brands the public and sometimes even private displays of pleasure women derive from their bodies a taboo.[24] It often critiques women who openly display their sexuality in the form of dressing and who choose to explore their sexuality beyond the limits prescribed by a phallocratic system. Genya takes time to explain the pleasures the good-time girls derive from their bodies, without portraying it as flawed, as I shall attempt to prove.

The most socially approved framework of sexual activity is within the marriage institution, Genya's choice to centralise the good-time girl is a deliberate attempt to question cultures and institutions that patrolled and repressed female expression of sexuality and pleasure. The fact that these women engage in sexual activity outside the institution of marriage is what draws the "negative" branding. As explained by Christopher and Susan Sprecher (2000), "because sex and marriage are legally and morally linked, marital sex is generally not viewed as a social problem or phenomenon likely to lead to negative outcomes" (1001), however it is sexual activity outside the marriage institution that leads to women being branded as prostitutes and good-time girls. This is one of the major dilemmas faced by young women in Kenya and around the continent. For example, while researching on sexuality in Nairobi, Rachel Spronx (2005) explains that women are torn between the binary definitions of a good woman and a wicked woman, as well as the moral codes associated with women engaging in sexual activities outside the marriage institution. She writes, "All the women spoken to

[24] However, it is important to note that while most African societies are patriarchal, not all repress the display of pleasures enjoyed by women. When responding to McFadden essay on "Sexual Pleasure as a Feminist Choice" Charmaine Pereira (2003) cautions against the assumption of a universal suppression of female sexualities and provides examples of African communities like the Laobe women in Senegal who taught about sexuality as well as produced and distributed articles on the erotics. However, this chapter is developed on the background of popular fiction in Kenya, which is known to have a history of banal representation of good-time girls as sexual sites that lack depth and agency as proved in the introduction.

recounted that they perceived becoming sexually active as part of becoming a woman while, on the other hand, they were apprehensive about it because of the belief that proper women should abstain from sex until marriage" (271).

It is worth quoting so extensively from various scholars when discussing female sexuality in Africa, to espouse on the complexity of the study of female sexuality especially in Africa. It also helps to acknowledge and comprehend the advances made by women in the scholarship of gender, feminism and sexuality, as well as appreciate Genya's extensive use of female sexuality for agency for the good-time girl. Genya foregrounds the good-time girl's sexuality by emphasizing on the two areas: dressing and sexual pleasure.

In her novel *The Wrong Kind of Girl w*hen Sasha asks Tony what is it about her that makes him dislike her, Tony replies, "I can't stand the way you use your sexuality to get what you want in life" (51). Taking into consideration that Tony had only met Sasha a few minutes before, the question is; what is it thus suggested is that Sasha was using her sexuality to personal gains? Sasha is described as dressing in "a pair of dangerously provocative white shorts, white sandals that showed off her perfectly pedicured feet, a white vest that ended quite suddenly above her midriff and a tiny flamboyant, scarlet bolero jacket that matched the scarf in her hair" (2). It is therefore in order to assume that it is Sasha manner of dressing that sat uncomfortably with Tony, and that suggested the use of her sexuality to manipulate men. After calling Sasha a "prostitute from Florida 2000 discoteque or some other sleazy disco" (13), Tony further advices Sasha, "if you do not want people to mistake you for a prostitute then you shouldn't dress like one" (57).

The politics of dressing is one that Genya addresses rather religiously in all her three novels. As the story progresses the reader is made aware that such thoughts as those voiced by Tony are not new to Sasha, thus the statement "she knew her worth and was not worried that a lot of people questioned her choice of clothes" (5). When Sasha manages to convince the two women she had just met to have a "girls' night out" she implores them to dress seductively, in what Genya describes as "eye-catching outfits" (36) that exposed their provocative body curves, which they proudly flaunted. She tells Alicia, "by the time I am done with you, you will be the sexiest woman in town" (24). The persistence on "eye-catching" outfits regardless of the labelling they receive has been employed by Genya to affirm their independence. The aim is not to simply attract attention, but rather the choice of dressing in spite of criticism is seen as a public statement of the women's esteem. The good-time girl is further complicated by elaborating on her intricacies; she is not a prostitute, neither is she "dumb". She is aware of the implications of her choice of lifestyle in a system which remains largely androcentric, but this does not restrain her from exercising her free will.

When Sasha silently appraises Alicia, she comes to the conclusion that she is totally "unaware of her assets and lacked self-confidence" (15). Genya here proposes the importance of self-gaze, the ability of the woman to gaze at her inner-self as well as at her body and elicit pleasure. She describes the female body as an "asset", thus drawing attention to its value and the need for the woman to "invest in it". Genya indirectly engages in discourses of commodification of the female body. Again, she re-appropriates the female body expressing it as an asset, not in the economic sense, but as a source of esteem and thus asserting the need

for women to invest in their bodies; taking pleasure in its sight and the feelings experienced by it.

This she does by insisting on the need for the woman to explore and acknowledge the pleasure derived from and experienced by her body. The body then becomes a site power for the women, and the constant self-gaze as well as the spectacular dressing is employed by the author as both public and private acknowledgement of their empowerment. So important is this body that it is linked to the woman's ability to achieve self-confidence as well as self-identity. The art of spectacular and provocative dressing therefore goes deeper than simply the display of "assets". Mokami's demeanour as a beautiful, curvaceous and sexy woman in the novel *The Other Side of Love,* can be contrasted to that of Delores. Delores mannerism and attitude in life is presented by the author as having influenced her personal appearance. It is because of Delores that Mokami and Jordan were not able to marry on their first attempt. Using lies and deceit Delores was able to lure Jordan into marrying her, leaving a dejected Mokami alone at the altar. Her negative personality and attitude to life is reflected by her physical appearance to such an extent that even glamorous dressing does not convey any beauty.

> Her long blond hair once the envy of every girl in town was lank and lusterless. Her complexion, usually rich, was nor frighteningly colourless. Even the makeup she wore could not conceal her pinched, unhealthy-looking skin. She had lost weight, but it did not suit her. Her long black sheath of a dress hung loosely on her body, and there was almost no sign of sexy vivacious girl. (11)

Delores, negative personality and attitude towards life as well as her mean streak robs her of her beauty, such that despite the glamorous and provocative dressing she still lacks beauty, because the "girl inside" lacks beauty. The author's description of Delores physical appreance is reflective of her lack of inner beauty. Alicia raises this concern in the novel *The Wrong Kind of Girl,* when she question Sasha if Chris is only now giving her attention because of the dressing. Sasha explains, "Dresses can make you look like a different person, but you are still the same girl inside. I think your attitude towards him is making him re-think his attitude towards you" (43).

Self-confidence is described in the novels to be very important to the women. This confidence is partly achieved by the women being aware of their "assets" which in this case is the body. However, Genya does not limit this to the physical appearance, but makes reference to the "girl inside" implying that self-identity is important for these single women. It is this knowledge of the self and the esteem that comes with it coupled with the dressing, that makes the good-time girls in Genya's novels stand out.

However, Alicia's concerns quoted above, raise the inevitable question of the male gaze. Is the male gaze a form of compliment or an objectification of the female body, enhanced by the clothing? This is a question that cannot be ignored, when analysing Genya's texts. Mokami in *The Other Side of Love* also makes reference to women being treated as sex objects. She explains "women nowadays do not want to be told they're the object of a man's lust, even if it is true" (111). Though Mokami says this in jest the author indirectly makes reference to the objectification of female bodies. In her analysis of the social life of the woman Simone de

Beauvoir complicates dressing as a statement for the independent woman. She suggests that the art of dressing by the woman is to satisfy the man's desires. She argues:

> The purpose of fashion is not to reveal [the woman] as an independent individual, but rather to offer her as prey for male desires; thus society is not seeking to further her projects but to thwart them...but when she has once accepted her vocation as *sexual object*, she enjoys adorning herself. (my emphasis 1949: 543)

Beauvoir suggests that fashion, in the form of dressing, does not signify the woman's independence and empowerment; rather it subjects her to the male gaze, thus becoming a "prey for male desire". The intricate relation between sexuality and power is therefore complicated by sexism. However, sex-positive feminists like Amy Wilkins (2004) offer alternative perspectives, by suggesting that display of sexuality is one of the means used by women to destabilize the passive notion of female sexuality. On the other hand, there are those like Beauvoir, who caution that sexual and sexist are closely intertwined, thus making "the task of determining women's agency complex" (Amy Wilkins 332).

Consider this scenario as explained by the author. When Sasha, Alicia and Alexandra in *The Wrong Kind of Girl* walk into the club dressed seductively, the girls react differently to the male gaze. "Sasha took it all in one stride and did not think anything of it – having been used to stop conversations with her presence- but the two girls were a bit self-conscious" (45). Comparing this to the gaze from the men the women seem to love, one was gawking while

the other was glowering, the women seemed comfortable with the reaction. They embrace and even glow under the gaze. Genya explains; "everyone heard Chris' sharp intake of breath as he took an involuntary step towards her [Alicia]. She walked sensuously as if towards him and then moved right past his outstretched arms..." (37). The nervous self-conscious woman suddenly changes. The male gaze in this case builds Alicia's confidence, she welcomes it and is seen as enjoying it. This seems to compliment Beauvoir's analysis of the independent woman, where she further argues the "woman, therefore, can only take when she makes herself prey" (1979: 698).

Granted, the line between sexy and sexism is difficult to untwine. The friends gawking and glowering is not considered sexist by the female characters because they approve of it, and more importantly they trust the men. However, the male gaze in the club is either something to be ignored for those women strong enough to do so, or to make them uncomfortable for those not used to it, because the thoughts of the men are not known, they are strangers and thus cannot be trusted. In this sense then, Beauvoir is right; the good-time girl's dressing is associated with the the male's desire, but her choice to dress as such regardless of the male gaze implies that the good-time girl is seeking to re-claim control of her own sexuality, and subverting it for her own pleasure. Alicia does take pleasure in the male gaze, however, this should not overshadow the fact she also enjoys the sight of herself in the glamorous seductive outfit, not necessarily because it attracts the attention of the men, but because she simply takes pleasure in the image of herself. This does not make her a victim; rather it gives her some degree of agency. Consider Genya's presentation of Mokami in her novel *The Other Side of Love:*

> In the ladies, [Mokami] *stared* at her reflection for a long time. She *noticed* the startled-looking wide brown eyes looking anxiously back at her, her slim elegant rose gracefully atop her astoundingly curvaceous body...her floor-length sleeveless black dress outlined her hour-glass figure...it hugged every inch of her body, from her full breasts to her tiny waist and skimmed over her gently rounded hips. It was slit daringly on the right side of her hip, and drew a lot of attention whenever she took a step... She was *pleased* with the resulting cheekbones and the size six dresses she was able to fit into. She no longer looked naive or trusting. In fact she looked a bit predatory and that suited her just fine. (5)

What this suggests is that the glamorous and provocative dressing, as presented by Genya, is not important for male recognition, and rather it is the indentifying mark of a confident woman in control of her own providence. Granted, there are situations where women's dressing was intentionally used to seduce men. What is important to note is that the choice to engage in sexy representation of the self is in itself a pleasurable act for these women. The self-gaze as well as the appreciation of the body as an asset is presented by Genya as being important to the women, not necessarily because of the power it has over the man, but rather on the self as one of the sources of confidence and identity. The pleasure of engaging in fashion does not mean that women have accepted their positions as a "sexual object", as Beauvoir argues, but rather it implies that they have recognised and accepted themselves as sexual being, and this shows some degree of agency. Their ability to embrace and enjoy that as well as express their sexuality points to their degree of independence. The good-time girls

are presented as being constantly aware of their bodies, taking time to look at themselves in the mirror. The image in the mirror adorned with spectacular dressing is a source of pleasure for the good-time girl. In this case the mirror centralizes the importance of the self-gaze and marginalises the male-gaze and communial gaze which has been dominant in African literature. The art of glamorous and spectacular dressing is not a chore for the independent woman, neither does it objectify her, because she does not view herself as a sexual object but rather takes pleasure in the fact that she is a sexual being.

The female body is further explored by Genya as a source of pleasure for the woman when engaging in sexual relations. When analysing Genya's texts, it is difficult to separate physical pleasure from emotional pleasure, because the former seems to be developed on the latter and vice versa. It is for this reason, that the author takes time to emphasize the emotional experience felt by the female characters during and after performing physical acts that emits sexual pleasures. When describing the physical intimacy between a couple in her texts, Genya describes the role played by both the man and the woman that stimulate sexual excitement and pleasure. She takes it further by describing the physical pleasures experienced by both the man and the woman, but interestingly, she takes time to describe the emotional pleasure experienced by the woman, this again she does to differentiate the good-time girl from the prostitute figure. For example in the novel *The Other Side of love* when Jordan kisses Mokami after the five year separation, Genya describes the moment as "a sensuous brushing of lips, hauntingly sweet, but mixed with bittersweet sadness. It drew her into a shaken vortex of emotions. Held her rapt, in total thrall, motionless, deaf and blind" (59).

The kiss is therefore not only for the moment, but also carries with it a history. It forces Mokami to engage with memory, presenting her with a history that left her emotionally scarred. Therefore, though she enjoyed the kiss at the moment, and even responded to it, she also experiences the painful history she shares with the man. It is for this reason that she gets torn between the two conflicting emotions (pleasure and pain) aroused by the kiss. Nonetheless, the kiss emphasizes three important elements in the physical and emotional display of sexuality that are interest to this research, reciprocity and more importantly, desire and pleasure. These are important tenets taking into consideration the history of discourses of gender and sexuality, where women's sexuality in terms of desire and pleasure are under-researched. Charmaine Pereira (2003) frames this perfectly when she writes that "good women do not discuss sexuality in public; by extension, to intervene into discourses of sexuality is to engage in battles that are not for the faint hearted." This is more so because it not only contests misogynist ways of life but more importantly it also raises some weaknesses in heterosexual discourses in African feminist theories. After writing a paper of female sexuality Mumbi Machera (2005) summarizes her arguments with a confession, "I need to state that writing this paper was rather unnerving. Issues of sexuality in Africa, especially when they touch on the pleasurable aspects of sex are rather touchy" (168). Her statement is some sort of appeal to readers, endearing them not to judge her harshly for publicly discussing what in most African cultures has been relegated to the private.

Going back to Foucault's words, quoted earlier, describing the passive nature of women when it comes to sexuality as being natural in the sense that it is "what nature intended", several issues are fore grounded 1) the fact that the woman has desires is not what is being

contested, 2) her right to respond and express her sexual desires as she chooses is what is challenged.

The history of the female's body and more so, the sexual organ in most African cultures is one that discriminates. Publicly expressing the pleasure derived from the female body is worse. Mumbi Machera (2005) argues that in most African communities the female genitalia was viewed as something lewd and dirty. Giving an example of her community the Gikuyu, she argues that from an early age girls were warned not to play with their genitalia, boys on the other hand had urinating contests. Thus "women's potential pleasure from the vagina was purposefully distorted through the process of socialization" (Mumbi Machera 2005: 160). Makhososana Xaba (1994) discusses the names assigned to the girl's genitalia in South African cultures. Women's sexual organs are labelled according to men's perception of them, suggesting the control men have over the female body.[25] Further, male circumcision in most African communities entailed public performances of masculinity, where the whole village recognised the boys transition into manhood; he could now "impregnate a woman". Granted, there are communities which practice female circumcision, but it was not a performance or celebration of femininity, rather it was aimed to controlling and taming the woman for the pleasure of the man.

In most communities, female circumcision was an act performed to reduce sexual pleasure for the woman to discourage her from immoral behaviour, thus making her more suitable for

[25] According to Makhososana Xaba a girls genitalia was named in relation to man's pleasure or detest. It could be used as an insult, on the other hand it would suggest some nice and edible to be consumed for the man's pleasure. This conflicting representation of the female genitalia reflects the complexities women face while performing their sexuality.

marriage. A circumcised woman was believed to give more pleasure to the man as opposed to the uncircumcised one. On the other hand, the woman's transition form a girl to a woman in most African communities was more quiet and gazed upon if not controlled. Both the men and women silently observed her character as well as her physical attributes, more like a rare fruit, waited upon to be ripe. Thus both the male and the female gaze objectified the woman, with the aim of satisfying the man; when she was "ready" she would be married off. Therefore, a woman socialized in a purely phallocratic society is cultured to privilege the male experience even in sexual relations.

What all this suggests is that in a patriarchal society a woman's sexuality was considered something that needed to be controlled and contained by society, as well as a site for masculine performances. With the changes brought about by modernisation and globalisation, the need to control female sexuality has never been more important and this has lead to the binary branding of women into "good women" and "prostitutes and good-time girls". It is a desperate attempt by both male and female authors as well as critics to merge traditions with modernity. It is in this sense that the sexual pleasure becomes political, because though the amatory is largely biological the aftermath is molded by a society which is largely androcentric.

Genya not only rejects the old sexual paradigms she also constructs new ones emphasizing not only on the woman's sexual desire and pleasures, but insisting on the right to express them both privately (between the individuals) and publicly (as she has done as an author) as a form of empowerment. Take for example Sasha's feeling in *The Wrong Kind of Girl* just

before sharing a kiss with Chris. Genya writes, "she desperately want[s] to feel the touch of his lips on hers. She knew it would be a stunning experience. The sense of expectancy was electrifying and she moistened her lips in anticipation" (60). Sasha is aware of her desire and responds to it, Genya on the other hand as an author makes public the woman's thoughts and desires, thus re-writing the story and profundity of the good-time girl figure. As the story develops the two continue to engage in intimate sexual performances. In another instance Sasha informs Chris of her desires, "I need to be with you again, right now, this minute" (224). Taking another example from *The Other Side of Love"* while Mokami and Jordan are making love, Genya explains that "Mokami became aware that her body was melting deliciously in response" and after the last fragile barriers between them were stripped away, she *lifted herself* eagerly to meet him into her all inhibitions gone" (my emphasis 75).

There are several "political" statements that can be read from the above examples. The good-time girl is seen as becoming actively involved in sexual performances by responding both discursively and through her behaviour thus openly displaying her desires and pleasures not only for the satisfaction of other (in this case the man), but more so for the self. Sasha lets her desires known verbally by telling Chris what it is that she wants, thus taking control of her sexuality, by recognising the needs of her body, and articulating how such needs can be satisfied. In this case she is more concerned with the self, as opposed to Chris. While explaining the relationship between sexual pleasure and power Judith Butler (2006) describes the sexist view of sexual performance in heterosexual relation is when the woman exhibits "her womanness in the act of heterosexual coitus in which her subordination becomes her pleasure" (xiv). Though Butler is more concerned with the construction of gender in relation to sexuality, her arguments provide us with a view of how "proper women" are encouraged to

respond to sexual pleasure in a sexist manner. The act of surrendering or by describing the act as surrendering to the man, subjugates the woman, while assigning power to the man. Therefore by describing the woman as welcoming him into her suggests her approval as well as her recognition of her desires. Further Mokami " lifting herself to meet the man" as opposed to surrendering to the man is evidence of the author's deliberate effort to reject the sexualised subordination of the good-time girl.

Genya takes the discussion of gender equality and sexuality further by drawing the man into the debate not as the villain but as a partner. Though we have so far dealt with the pleasure of the female while engaging in sexual relation, we cannot overlook the man. Granted, Genya, spends more time describing the female pleasure, and taking into consideration the history of popular fiction in Kenya, one can understand why. By exploring the desires of the good-time girl, taking documenting how she responds and encouraging her to express herself, Genya attempts to show that this does not emasculate the man. Thus sexuality is not only used in the novels to empower the good-time girl, but also to foreground equality. Take for example the following scene in the novel *The Wrong Kind of Girl:* Sasha tells Chris "I could make you pretty comfortable right now, that is if you let me." To which Chris responds, "I could make you more than comfortable. Shall we find out just how comfortable we can make each other?" (226) There is an urge to please the other while at the same time pleasing the self, Chris takes into consideration Sasha desires, and Sasha reciprocates, it is then that both truly experience pleasure, that is, when there is equality in the performance of sexuality. Thus what the good-time girls in the text seek is not control over the male but rather control over themselves, and more importantly equality without prejudice. The aim is not to dominate, but

rather Genya projects democracy in sexual intimacy, hence espousing the significance of a sense of mutual disclosure.

While analysing the management of desire as presented in *Cosmopolitan* Kathryn McMahon (1990) argues that cosmopolitan ideas of sex in relationship are governed by the "natural order of dominance and subordination" (Carole Pateman 1994: 109). The freedom of female sexual expression in the magazines means the emasculation of the man, thus implying that the two cannot mutually exist. She writes: "If the woman is free to act and negate, then the man, the other, must be reduced to the status of an object, and subordinated. What is offered," she argues, "is a revenge fantasy based on a reversal of relations of domination and subordination" (Kathryn McMahon 1990; 387). However, what romance writers like Genya offer on the other hand is the sexual freedom of the woman that is not achieved through the "unfreedom" of the other. Thus relations of power in terms of sexuality need not to be confined to the "natural order" of dominance, subjugation and passivity. What Genya attempts to present is a situation of sexual equality in heterosexual romance.

However, further to this, there are ambivalences that Genya raises in her novels that have to be explored. These ambivalences, I argue, continue to cage the good-time girl who perceives herself as independent. For example, after Mokami and Jordan "make love", Jordan comments of Mokami response by telling her "you were fantastic. I'd forgotten just how responsive you are" (75). It is Mokami's response to this statement that is of interest. Mokami immediately becomes embarrassed thinking that she had been "a little too responsive" (75), to which Jordan simply replies "Stop that" (75). This is what Brigid Brophy

(1983) talks about when describing women in "invisible cages". Brigid argues that being officially free is different from being psychologically free.[26] What seems more important to Mokami is Jordan's perception of her responsiveness, and so important is this that she quickly forgets her pleasure. She considers her "over-responsiveness" to her desires to be a moment of weakness as a woman. In this case, she is not only thinking about the man, but trying to determine how responsive she should have been, she is also thinking for the man. Beauvoir tries to capture the dilemma of the independent woman. She writes:

> The advantage the man enjoys, which makes itself felt from his childhood, is that his vocation as a human being in no way runs counter to his destiny as a male. Through the identification of the phallus and transcendence, it turns out that his social and spiritual successes endow him with virile prestige. *He is not divided.* Whereas is it required as a woman that in order to realize her femininity [in a phallocratic system: and most societies largely are] she must make herself object and prey, which is to say she must renounce her claims as a sovereign subject. It is this conflict that especially marks the situation of the emancipated woman. (my words and emphasis 1979: 691)

The destiny of the man in an androcentric society enables his transcendence into a superior individual compared to the woman. Despite the fact that the good-time girl perceives herself as an independent empowered woman, the fact that she has been socialised in a society

[26] Brigid argues that though there has been some degree of freedom of expression accorded to women, there has been a change of tactics employed by society to continue to control and contain women. She argues that society now uses the art of persuasion to urge women to remain behind invisible bars despite them being given freedom of expression. She describes persuasion as "the art of launching myths that artificially induce inhibitions" and argues that it is as effective as the law. I further propose that the preoccupation with women to fit within labels further inhibit their performance of the self.

afflicted by an androcentric history and continues to re-invent ways of enabling the affliction in subtle forms, she finds herself caged while struggling to manage conflicting desires as a good-time girl eager to be accepted as an "ideal" woman but at the same time determined to maintain her lifestyle which is her identity.

When Jordan walks out of the bedroom naked, Mokami is shocked, "she wonders how men found it so easy to parade around the house completely in the nude. She could never do it" (77). This leaves the reader questioning why Mokami the woman who takes pleasure in the image of her body while adorned in spectacular dressing and who expresses her desires and pleasures, now found it difficult to look at her own body after sexual relations. She further confesses she is unable to walk in the nude "not even from the shower into her bedroom when she was completely alone in her own house. Inhibitions were hard to shed" (77). The implication here is that it is not only an androcentric system that secretly holds even those women who consider themselves to be independent hostage, but women also limit themselves back because they are not psychologically free, thereby giving agency to the system.

In *The Wrong Kind of Girl w*hen Tony turns hostile to Sasha after having sex with her the previous night, we see the confident Sasha crushed, but of interest to note that her anger and disappointment is not directed at Tony, but to herself. She questions her actions and finds faults in them. It does not occur to her, that Tony was the one on the wrong until much later. Here is how Genya captures her thoughts and feelings:

> She wept harder when she realised just how easy it had been for him to do that. He had barely said a few words and she had fallen into his arms....no wonder he despised her. Her *loose behaviour* would lead anyone into the same conclusion that he had come to- that she was a slut. She was not worth his time, his consideration or his love. (my emphasis 109)

Again Sasha is embarrassed for responding to her desires, or in this case responding too quickly. How long should an "ideal" woman wait before having sexual relations with a man she is attracted to? She disparages herself for acknowledging and responding to her desires because she is desparate to gain approval from the man. The fact that she enjoyed the moment by responding to her desires, is no longer important to her. Tony's opinion of her seems more urgent, and this makes her doubt herself. She further feels inferior to the man, by opting not to be passive but actively responding to her desires and voicing her pleasures. The fact that the man may have been going too fast, or that she has the right to respond as soon as she wishes describes the ambivalences faced by the good-time girls who claim to be independent and empowered. This is what Lees (1993, 29) describes as "walking [on] a narrow line [where] girls must not be seen as too tight or to loose."

Sasha futher describes herself as not always beautiful and confident. She equates not only her beauty, but also her self-esteem, to popular beliefs that fat is ugly. She explains, "you've got to understand, that up until three years ago I was the most unattractive person on the planet. I was really fat and looked a mess all the time; I was shy and had no self-esteem at all" (80). Genya's constant reference to the body, dressing and sexuality encourages women's self-

surveillance of their bodies. However, Genya in this case seems to be struggling with the stereotypes that describe a beautiful woman. The detailed descriptions of beautiful bodies found in all the three novels describe slender curvaceous women; these are the women described as sexy and confident. Therefore, while the preoccupation with the body and dressing to signify female beauty can be seen as a plausible strategy employed by the author to restore agency to the good-time girl, the fixation on the slender female body to project beauty only serves to further limit the woman. However, her efforts to take feminist discussions of empowerment beyond the socio-economic and political discourses, and into the private and uncomfortable terrains of the erotics cannot be overlooked.

Conclusion

Though Genya celebrates active sexuality as a tool employed to resist passivity as explained by Foucault (1979), she also (un) consciously voices the limits that impede women's agency when using sexuality as a platform for women's empowerment. There has always been a preoccupation with the woman's sexuality, when and how it should be performed as well as with whom. When the woman was presented in the mother Africa trope, the role of her sexuality for reproductive purposes was valorised. When presented as the good-time girl in the city and towns, her sexuality was vulgarised.

Going back to African cultures a woman's sexuality is owned by men. As a girl she is taught that sex is acceptable only after marriage. Emphasis is placed on the virginity of the girl, and the father is rewarded if the girl is found "pure" upon marriage. Before and during marriage she is taught of ways to please the husband, after which she is required to procreate,

providing the husband with a lineage. The husband has a right to sexual intercourse. This is the history of sexuality in most African communities not only in Kenya but in Africa. However social changes have enabled changes in the de-construction and re-construction of gender and ideas associated with womanhood as described above. Be that as it may, women continue to formulate ways that reflect conformity to the androcentric norms, perhaps in an attempt to maintain order. Therefore though Genya's good-time girls describe themselves as successful and independent women, they are not immune to the psychological invisible cages, which they unconsciously strive to remain behind, and thus remain caged independent women.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The politics of gender and writing in Africa goes beyond the correction and complicating women's images in texts. As noted by Sophie Macharia (2004) it is not until 1981 (with the publication of Llyod Brown) that analytical attention was accorded to women writers in Africa, and even then East Africa was under represented, with Grace Ogot receiving disparaging criticism. Tom Odhiambo (2001) further problematises the milieu of the marginal status of women writers and their issues when he wrote:

> Even within the so called marginal study areas, where women and gender studies are generally located, there are regions that are scantily represented. (2001: 5)

When critically analyzing works of female writers of fiction in Kenya, most scholars (at least until very recently) focused mostly on the works of Grace Ogot and Majorie MacGoye. In an interview conducted and recorded by Adeola James, Rebeka Njau attributed the domination of the male voice in the literary sphere in East Africa to fear.

> We are not brave enough. We churn out simple things, wondering, 'If I express myself like this, what will people think…if we become courageous enough to come out and write on social and political issues, our voices will be heard. (Adeola James 1990; 107)

There are female writers of popular fiction such as Monica Genya, who employ romance to appropriate the representation of good-time girls, who have been described by Odaga (1990) as oversexed and perverted, and make them the voice of cognition in their novels. This research has attempted to discuss how Genya engages in marginal discourses by centralizing

the female character popularly spoken for and re-appropriating her to symbolize female empowerment. Genya problematizes the concept of resistance, by taking a tangent when addressing the nagging fly called stereotypes that annoyingly buzzes in the ears of scholars of gender and feminism, by employing the very stereotypes that limit women and using them as signifiers of independent women thus portraying them (the stereotypes) as frivolous.

Male writers in East Africa have been notorious for telling the story of the good-time girl in the city. While male writers who try to identify with the traditional canon may not have been as obvious as those of popular fiction in their representation of the woman as coital sites, they still employ certain stereotypes, like equating womanhood to motherhood. However, Monica Genya's fiction can be said to be a response to male and some female authors of popular fictional in Kenya and their degrading images of the woman. She gives voice to the silence of 'disturbing' images that define good-time girls in African literature, as if saying "we are not apologetic of our lifestyle, deal with it!" It is also through such works that a reader is able to glimpse at the behaviour of the masses in society.

While presenting my arguments, I have endeavored to recognize Genya as one of the few writers who have attempted to differentiate the good-time girl from the prostitute figure. I have defined prostitution as women's commercialization of their sexuality. The good-time girl on the other hand, is a term that has been used loosely to "label" women who engage in the pleasures of life such as alcoholic drinking and dancing in public spaces such as clubs and sexual relations outside the marriage institution. However, I have explained that the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive; prostitutes can be good-time girls, but being a good-time

girl does not mean that a woman is a prostitute. This research has therefore, attempted to show, how Genya complicates the representation of women, and at the same time engages with patriarchal labeling of women. She does not reject the figure, she embraces it as suggested by her words "let's show the world that we are out to misbehave," and the title of her novel *The Wrong Kind of Girl*, and simply suggests that these women have the choice and the right to do so. These phrases make reference to the androcentric history of popular fiction as well as traditional canon literature in Kenya and its representation of the good-time girl. Genya engages with such a history by narrating *her*-story, by differentiating good-time girl from the prostitute and locating her identity in gender and feminist studies of African literature.

My assertion in this research is that Genya presents the good-time girl in the cities and towns in such a way that she offers a counter discourse to previous representations, elaborating on the profoundness of the figure. I have compared Genya with authors of both "serious" and popular fiction such as Magaret Ogola, Buchi Emecheta, Majorie MacGoye, Ngugi wa Thiongo, Chinua Achebe, Charles Mangua, and Meja Mwangi to mention but a few. I have discussed the different images of the woman as presented by such writers to emphasize on the unique perspective Genya offers. Comparing Genya to the above writers also traces the process of cultural change especially with regard to sexual performances and gender roles, from traditional societies to more contemporary ones. Granted, the meaning and idea of empowerment differs and changes from generation to generation, and this can be used to excuse Asenath Odaga critique of the good-time girl as lewd and dreadful role models. Nevertheless, there is nothing contradictory despite generational gaps because this is in harmony with the fact that societies are constantly evolving, change being the only constant

element, and the challenges faced by women are still been discovered and contested. The contradictions and connections of scholars of gender and feminism in African literature are a reflection of the changing nature of society and by extent the changing needs of the empowered woman, because as we have established androcentrism also evolves and re-invents itself. What is important to note is that a hegemonic history of the male social class is not refuted regardless of the contradictions in gender and feminist discourses; it is on this level that they are connected. Subsequently, while restoring agency to the good-time girl in cities and towns, Genya embraces the changes brought about by modernization and re-drafts them to re-tell the story of the good-time girl.

Although critics like Gibbs may have condemned Genya for borrowing heavily from Eurocentric traditions, what is important to note is that there are bound to be nuances in the negotiation and interpretations of meaning in such texts, because as stated change is the only constant in society. While women in the 70s and 80s and even early 90s may have viewed such texts as obnoxious with regard to the presentation of women, due to the development and change in culture, young women in the 21st century may view it as a symbol of empowerment of the woman. Thus meaning in the text should be assembled, within particular contexts. "We all speak from a specific position shaped by cultural social, political and personal factors."[27] In her book *Sexual and Textual Politics* Toril Moi (2002) analyses a collection of essays by nine women critics and only two men who offer a critique of male and female authors of the 19th and 20th century. She states that "both sexes come in harsh for criticism for their creation of the 'unreal' female characters."[28] The women writers were

[27] Toril Moi *Sexual and Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* Routledge, 2002
[28] Ibid

viewed as worse than their male counterparts for betraying their own sex, by presenting female characters in their sensual nature. Such observations only serve to limit and contain the woman.

Debates on the representation of women in the works of both male and female authors in Africa literature have been geared mostly toward discourses of victimhood and chastising. The liberated woman, who expresses her emancipation with her dressing, and makeup, is viewed by the masculine nature of society as "immoral' or westernised. Sara Mills (2008) acknowledges the changing status of women, when she argues that while there are critics who may complain of the representation of independent women in texts by men and women authors as bigotry, young woman may view this as a state of self-actualisation for the women, "where forms of sexual behaviour which second wave feminists condemned as exploiting women are now embraced as part of women's empowerment."[29] Emerson Rana (2002) writes of how black women use music as a platform for contesting stereotypical presentations of black women in music videos. One of the ways black women showed resistance is by "speaking-out," and by controlling their own sexuality. She argues that when black female artists present themselves as sexual, they are emancipating themselves from the stereotypes that served to devalue them.

I have further attempted to show how Genya articulates the complexities of the life experienced by the good-time girl as she attempts to re-define the rules of engagement in romantic heterosexual relations, by foregrounding the importance of emotional as well as

[29] Sara Mills, *Language and Sexism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008

sexual equality. Genya chooses to employ the language of romantic love and sexuality to comment on social concerns. This research limits itself to heteronomative discourses, because it is within this framework that the author chooses to explore gender and power. Authors like Genya employ sexuality to engage in discourses of gender equality, whereby she attempts to present good-time girls as owners of their sexuality. She explores the theme of sexuality without indulging in the common discourse of sex in relation to prostitution, disease or violence. While this research does not trivialize these discourses, it does recognize that the sex as an area of physical and emotional pleasure more importantly for the woman is rarely explored by authors as well as critics of fiction in Africa and in this case Kenya. Genya inks out the performativity and empowerment of sexuality by examining the different process experienced by the female body concentrating on the body as a site and source of pleasure not only for the man (the other) but more importantly for the self.

Genya therefore makes extensive use of the female body by moving it beyond cultural surfaces, centralizing the individual (the owner of the body) and assigning her agency over her own body. Grace Musila (2007) describes this as the "meeting point between the individual and discourse" where "discursive practices" are merged with "embodied experience" (50-51). Genya explores the good-time girls' performance of their sexuality, by expressing their desires and pleasure as experienced by their bodies, either as they gaze at themselves or as they engage in intimate sexual relations.

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie stresses the importance of how the woman identifies with the 'self', when she writes:

> Women are shackled by their own negative self-image, by centuries of the interiorization of the ideologies of patriarchy and gender hierarchy…she reacts with fear, dependency complexes and attitudes to please and cajole where more self-assertive actions are needed.[30]

It is this self-image that is (re) defined in Genya's texts, showing the achievement of gender and feminist/womanist scholarship in Africa. The author places emphasis on the importance of the freedom of self for an African woman, by showing that how a woman perceives the self determines the extent of her freedom. For example, for a woman born into patriarchy, self-perceptions can be heavily tainted by both unofficial and official rules that mainstream androcentrism, to the point that the woman exists in a state of 'zombification' as defined by Achille Mbembe.[31] The man remains superior and continues to re-invent laws that police the behaviour of women. The woman on the other and contrives ways of surviving in her inferiority, seeking simple pleasure in subtle displays of rebelliousness, but never radical enough ensure complete abolition of the system; hence, sustainable patriarchy. Like many other female writers before her, Genya attempts to challenge this, by employing the figure lost in the scholarship of gender and feminism in African literature.

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[30] Carole Boyce Davies & Anne Adams Graves (eds) *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature,* (Africa World Press, 1986) pg 8

[31] See Mbembe Achille, "Provisional Notes on the Post Colony," *Africa* 62.1 (1992)
Mbembe explains that relationships in postcolonial Africa cannot only be explained in terms of resistance and absolute domination. He further suggests that this state (of the *commandment* and subject) has been facilitated by the "zombification " of both the state and the subject. The subjects get comfortable in their position and develop unofficial ways of expressing (un) popular opinions, and of surviving.

However, having come from an androcentric history, there are nuances that continue to police even the good-time girls who considers herself empowered. The women find themselves still struggling with androcentric nuances that continue to impede their full independence despite the transition from traditional to modern transnational societies. So engrained is this androcentrism, that even the good-time girl is seen re-inventing norms as she struggles to fit in society; norms that are congruent with the privileging of the man over the woman and thus end up enabling inequalities in gender relations as discussed in the third and fourth chapter of this research. Therefore, though these women are initially seen as contesting phallocracy, they sometimes enable the very system they are out to abolish, and continue to further (un) consciously confine themselves. For instance, Genya's concern to disengage from the ideology of domination and subordination in the empowerment of the good-time girl and the woman in general, sees her ironically enabling the ideology as discussed in the fourth chapter.

For four decades women writers in Kenya have worked to deconstruct the image of women who have been branded as "the other" or "the silent" in stories and novels. These writers continuously appropriate the cultural changes in society and present it as a site for agency, while at the same time addressing the complexity of the challenges women face. Therefore, I conclude by stating that by writing against the background of not only Kenyan but African male and female writing, and centralizing the good-time girl who has either been overlooked or silenced, Genya has made a fundamental literary contribution and it is my hope that this research will enrich studies on gender, women, sexuality and power, as well as provide a platform for further research and debates.

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