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Reimagining Female Marginality: An Intersectional Critique of Gendered Oppression in Selected Akamba Pop

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This study investigates the intersectional oppression of women as depicted in selected Akamba pop songs, utilising Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality. It looks at how gender, class, race, and sexuality come together to construct women in the music genre feel like they don't belong, putting them in a subordinate position to dominant male masculinities. The paper examines themes in songs like Ngemi, Sheila Baby, and Mikorogo to show how Akamba pop music turns women into objects for men to desire and conquer sexually. The analysis also criticises how the balance of cultural and economic power keeps men in charge of women's choices. This study employs an intersectional framework to demonstrate that women in Akamba pop music face oppression not only due to gender but also through racial, ethnic, and class-based structures that sustain their marginalisation. The paper concludes by advocating for a more extensive discourse on the systemic intersectional forces that contribute to female marginalisation, underscoring the necessity to confront these interconnected oppressions within African cultural contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of Akamba pop music offers a rich avenue for examining the intersectionality of gendered oppression within African cultural contexts. This genre, which blends traditional sounds with contemporary pop influences, provides a unique space for exploring how societal norms and power structures are expressed through music. Popular music, as a cultural artefact, serves as both a reflection and an agent of the prevailing social order. Through its lyrics, rhythm, and imagery, it constructs and perpetuates ideologies that shape the way individuals perceive their roles in society.

In this analysis, the key stylistic elements of Akamba pop music are examined to highlight how gender, identity, and power dynamics are communicated. The previous section identified critical stylistic devices, such as oral literary techniques, diction, and the use of first-person narration. These elements serve not only to entertain but also to reinforce the status quo, particularly when it comes to the portrayal of women. As part of a decolonial reading of African music, the present section extends this analysis by investigating the intersectionality of gendered oppression. Using Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality, this study interrogates the positioning of women as subjugated minorities within a patriarchal framework, in opposition to male masculinities. The central concern is to understand how these pop songs place women at the bottom of the social hierarchy, while male power is positioned at the top.

Intersecting Mechanisms of Women's Oppression in Akamba Pop Music: A Thematic Analysis

This section illustrates how the female minority is discriminated against by male masculinities using thematic concerns as benchmarked by Kimberlé

Crenshaw in her mapping of women's discrimination in feminist studies. The premise is that using intersectionality to study African literary studies is a decolonial way of studying African literature since it investigates the unique experiences of black women as depicted in Africa. It diversifies the way we understand unique experiences and challenges as they exist in a correlated manner. Using intersectionality helps map the locations that define multiple instances where masculinities claim superiority over the female minority.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, in “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Colour,” identifies and explains three different forms of intersectionality to describe the violence that women experience, Structural, Political, and Representational intersectionality (1245). In this study, representational intersectionality aids in understanding the multi-layered oppression women face as victims of domestic and national exclusion.

This chapter, therefore, studies pop music by delineating women as the less privileged group as positioned in opposition to male masculinities. It theorises that it's crucial to disambiguate how patriarchy constructs women in gender, ethnicity, and class dichotomies. The discussion begins with women's identities and subjectivity as displayed in the Akamba pop songs.

Gendered Identities and Subjectivity in Akamba Pop: The Role of Male Gaze and Patriarchal Constructs

The experience of African women places them within their unique historical and cultural contexts, which define how their different identities intersect and work together to restrict or give access to their agency. After breaking down these intersections, we can find areas of commonality between women

based on shared experiences without losing the integrity of their stories. For instance, in the Akamba pop songs, women's identities are defined mainly by men, which suppresses their noble character.

In defining how their agency is subdued, we theorise that the male gaze facilitates women's

identity crisis, and thus their recognition is at the mercy of male dominance. To illustrate how gendered oppression reduces women to objects of male power, we consider Ken Wa Maria's *Ngemi*. The song details how a moneyed man uses his male privilege and money to coerce a beautiful girl into submitting to his love proposition. Ken sings;

*Návíká Kibwezi nièndà úkwíà nyíè ní nōníè
ngèthé Nákúlyà*

*Múng'èng'è àmbiùè yítàwā Ngémi Namísísyà
méthò nyíè nēwíè kwéí vètà.*

*Ítwíké yákwà túkékáá máúndù Kéthwá nō
mbésà níthōōsyà ngáli syí ítátú Nissan,
Wánzánzé, nà Starlet núndú wá Ngémi*

*Ná mbésà syáémá níéndá kwà áwé Mwìngí,
Ngúni Múváká nōné
nínéndáná nínà Ngémi*

On arriving at Kibwezi, I told you I saw a girl, and upon enquiring from Mung'eng'e, I was interested when I saw her eyes. She told me her name was Ngemi When I looked her in the eye, I developed a desire L1.

That she becomes mine, we do things together L2. If money is needed, I will sell my three cars, Nissan, Wanzanze, and Starlet, because of Ngemi. Moreover, if money fails, I will consult wizards and 'wise men' from Mwingi-Nguni until we fall in Love with Ngemi. L4 & 5

In this song, Ngemi is given the identity of a flashy object, "Ngemi." She is a sparkling gem that the male desires drools over. She is labelled as a sexual trophy as a way of stratification. As a subservient to the male order, Ngemi is positioned as the Other. Therefore, her purpose is suppressed by the male gaze. Her agency as a woman collapses under the weight of cultural and subjective discrimination that defines Ngemi from a sexual perspective, which is an affront to her freedom. The male admirer vows to win her by splashing money and using love charms. The following lines posit;

If money is needed, I will sell my three cars, Nissan, Wanzanze, and Starlet, because of Ngemi. Moreover, if money fails, I will consult wizards and 'wise men' from Mwingi Nguni until we fall in Love with Ngemi. (L 4&5)

The quote above illustrates how the gendered inscription of her body binds Ngemi; she is a subject of patriarchy, not free to determine her worth, which leads the singer to place a "love bounty" on her.

Secondly, Ngemi is suppressed by the traditional cultural gaze that wants to control her.

Ngemi's pursuer offers to sell his esteemed cars to fund his "love endeavour." If that does not work, he will employ love charms solicited from Kitui. In this construction, we locate the instances of restricting levels of gender oppression.

Ngemi is powerless against a money man who uses his class status to force a love affair. If that offers a challenge and resistance from her, he intends to hypnotise Ngemi using witchcraft. In this scenario, Ngemi's will or choice is controlled by the invocation of love charms and the financial might wielded by the man. The chauvinist display orchestrated by the male pursuer means that women exist in the shadow of men's economic and cultural dominance. As observed in the following lines;

"When I looked her in the eye, I developed a desire" L2

"That she becomes mine, we do things together", L3

Ngemi's selfhood disjoints with the duality of the African culture and gendered relations that construct women as subordinates of male power. In this scenario, *Ngemi's* social hierarchy exists at the bottom as exercised in the class and gender intersections wedged upon her female agency. Inferiority is inscribed upon the female body by the privileged male admirer, who carries authority over *Ngemi* by using the pervasive cultural practice of invoking love charms to make *Ngemi* docile and cooperative to her pursuer. Therefore, the song displays *Ngemi* as a minority group outside the community's discriminatory culture. On the other hand, the "feminine power" under the placard of *Ngemi's* beauty is dimmed by dual oppression

against her female agency as subdued by the "love conquest" declared upon her.

The sexual definition of the female minority creates categories equated to sexual trophies whose identity is placed at the lower social strata. In this placement, the feminine agency is restricted to freedom of sexual liberty, class, and power status. Therefore, male masculinity has control of the female body and registers its power through identity construction; *Ngemi* is seen as a sexual trophy that the artist covets. Through the power to name and describe, the male voice delineates the female body as its subject; for instance, we consider *Miss Musembi*

<i>Vè mwàlímú úmwē jírànī nīmwendāā</i>	I will stalk and snatch you so I get pleased L1
<i>nīmwonāā āvitūkitē ngèw'à itòm ó</i>	I know I am committing a crime, but my tribespeople
<i>Níkúlāsýā Miss Mūsēmbì ng'úmyā</i>	forgive me L3
<i>nākū Wē Mwalimu múthényā wākū</i>	When I see her, I feel pumped with desire L4
<i>nóūkāvīkā</i>	I always ask myself, "Miss
<i>Ngùekúngīē nā ngíkútēsā nīwē</i>	Musembi, when will I have you"?
<i>múyó</i>	L5
<i>Ngwivithilē kālā kāsīlā wīsīlāā</i>	
<i>nīkwithiwā mwūtū wá Mūsēmbì ng'wèndā</i>	
<i>múnō</i>	

In the above song, the male artist implores *Miss Musembi* as a sexual trophy he seeks to hunt down and feistily "feast upon her." His devious agenda erodes *Miss Musembi's* teacher frame and creates the prostitute's identity. The construed representation of *Miss Musembi* is a ploy to objectify and stifle her identity by sexualising her body. In this sexist scenario, the social hierarchical domination of females as objects and male masculinity as the beholder exemplifies the gendered relations stifling feminine agency.

Sexual violence demeans and forces the male desire over *Miss Musembi*. The artist justifies his actions by saying that society (patriarchy) will understand his deeds through a lame apology: "I know I am committing a crime; please forgive me." Through the forceful sexual act, the artist seeks to trample

Miss Musembi's femininity, thus establishing his power over her body. By invoking his phallic power over her body, the artist aims to taint *Miss Musembi's* image as a provider of knowledge to that of a sexual chattel or subaltern.

Additionally, *Miss Musembi* is portrayed with sexual appraisals instead of appreciation as a dignified human being. Through sexual chides, she is ogled and harassed by the lewd praises that dissect her feminine essence over any other justified human attribute. Therefore, tying a woman's identity to a man signifies that she has to sleep with the male pursuer, a scheme that stifles her agency.

The placement of women as equal to lowly stratified groups in society is constructed through political allegory in the song *Kindu ni Mwitilye*. In this song, the artist allegorises political oppression using

gender subversion in the identity construction of the female minority. The song explains the language of seduction as a snaring ploy used to execute political gains at the expense of the gullible electorate.

In the song, the artist, through the gender parable, outlines the identity construction of the oppressed versus the oppressor. Using the language of seduction as an allegory to the Kenyan political discourse, the song constructs the feminine identity as equated to the oppressed voter, blindfolded by empty promises packaged in seductive rhetoric. Language stratification in the song illustrates the dialogic orientation of language, as argued by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel*. In this case, we consider Bakhtin's averment of "primordial dialogism of discourse" (275).

The language of seduction in this song points to an ideological grounding that constructs the suppression of the female minority. The "thing" discussed in the song refers to the vagina, which in political optics is the voter. The identity of the female minority thus represents electoral interference through bribery schemes similar to wooing women for the "thing." In this polarised context, the sexual discourse as a statement of displaying love and affection to a young lady can also extend as an epic rejoinder to the political discourse.

"It matters how you ask for the thing", L1

"You receive according to your borrowing prowess", L2

"Eyes attract according to how they blink" L4

The sexual discourse in this song employs candid, hyperbolic promises that seek to secure the ultimate reward of sex from a female target. In contrast, the political discourse contextualises sex as a riot act and a mark of authority by the political class wedged upon the masses. In these intersections of languages, we situate the vilification of women in the dialogic essence. The duality of language that cuts across the sexual-political discourses helps

trace the representational intersectionality in democratic leadership, gender, and class stratification.

The female figure is discriminated against at the levels of representation in the democratic space through the undignified and gendered placement at the bottom of decision-making. The political class plans to penetrate the hearts of the gullible voter through seductive promises, similar to the cunning words of a male who tries to woo a female into a sexual romp.

After acquiring the "thing," the man triumphs, but the woman has to bear with pregnancy, just like when a politician dupes the electorate to vote him in, only to disappear after winning elections. "It matters the way you ask for the thing" connotes the deceptive ways politicians use to get votes. The "thing" here represents the image of the voter whom the politician woos, but once he gets into office, he abandons serving those who elected him. The female minority, represented by the vagina imagery or "the thing," allegorizes the voter oppression by the politicians who abandon their people once elections are over. The election exercise is constructed as a "wild sexual act," meaning the voter and the politician part ways once it's done, and the latter has no accountability.

Therefore, the artist constructs political ascendancy as similar to a man making love to a woman, and the former disappears after she gets pregnant. In this context, "the thing" is the voter being abandoned after voting since his vote was bought, as the line says, it matters how you ask for the thing." Women's participation remains low in political circles since they are equally disadvantaged as those who vote. Therefore, the political power is often male, while the mutilated female body represents the oppressed electoral masses.

Kindu ni Mwitilye is a derogatory way of democracy that seeks to entrench corruption through buying votes and election malpractices. The act of seducing a woman alludes to the sexing of the electorate, a

romanticisation of political discourse. Thus, to gain good electoral representation, voters must first conquer a woman's body to liberate themselves from rogue politicians who don't have their interests at heart. In this development, dual marginalisation is seen through the oppressed voter struggling to assert power over the politician above him in the social-economic hierarchy and the sexual-political repudiation that impinges on good governance. As observed in the following song discussed above, the binaries of oppression illustrate women's identities as converging at the axis of female inferiority, low social status, and political discrimination.

Gendered Representation and Commodification: A Baudrillardian Analysis of Female Objectification

To articulate the representation of African women through Intersectional identities necessitates de-marginalising the contexts of their definition. Social stratification often places women at the bottom as the other. This section analyses the representation and signification of female minorities as constructed in Akamba pop music. In "Women and Men in the Media," Margaret Gallagher argues that one problem is the juxtaposition of 'positive' and 'negative' portrayals of women; however, vaguely, these definitions entail adopting a certain norm against which images are judged (12).

*Túikínā ndānsí Mākútānō nínāā Mbāsù
Nōnīē ngēthē yāthāndikā yīilyé Mūsūngú
Ngāsēng'a kwānī Mākútānō kō kwīthāā āsūngù
Ngātúmā Mbāsú āchūngúsē māūmāā nākú
Mbāsú ākāmbiā Mākútānō kūyīngwā āsūngù éiwè ní ngēthē syívākāā mííō*

As we staged a performance in Makutano, I saw a lady looking at a white L1
I wondered whether, in Makutano, those young women have bleached their skins L4
The products are "Mikorogo," L5, Dangerous chemicals L6

Gender inequality is revealed through the simulations derived from the Mikorogo practice. Firstly, the deceptive simulacra of *Mikorogo* paints an inferiorized female trying to survive in the low socio-economic setting. To bridge the gap in this

In *Modern criticism and theory*, David Lodge and Nigel Wood observe that for Jean Baudrillard, the reality of an image and its signage is usually a process that is always simulating rather than representing (404). He adds, "Whereas representation tries to absorb simulation by interpreting it as false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as a simulacrum" (405). As delineated in the previous chapter, the commodification of women in the Akamba pop genre is multi-layered.

The Mikorogo representation signifies the decapitation of femininity or the erosion of female value. The simulation created by *Mikorogo*'s deceptive ideology is revealed through a series of simulations. The *Mikorogo* skin lightening is an example of the escalation of the reality of beauty. She is a victim of proliferated beauty trends that destroy her value.

For instance, in the song *Mikorogo* by Ken wa Maria, the bleached female *Mikorogo* offers a series of representations that connote several significations. The first impression is the bleached image of a beautiful woman using camouflaged attraction as bait to woo potential male suitors. The study considers the following song;

bottom stratum, the skin lightening procedure serves as a simulation towards bridging the class divide. This impression suggests that the bleached identity attempts to scale the social ladder by

acquiring a higher social status through the skin-lightening procedure.

The bloated beauty fractures her identity through the symbolic value of an object of desire and an advertising agent of Western cosmetics. She is an exploited female minority whose use-value is swapped with the exchange value to determine her worth. Through the bleaching process, the female body is a variable whose exchange value appreciates to serve the interest of the capitalist demands. In contrast, her use-value depreciates through exposure to harmful substances that bloat her identity. White is perceived as beautiful and sexy, while black is viewed as ugly and non-attractive.

The bleached body illustrates an overt ploy to address the gendered inferiority occasioned by colourism. Yoked by multiple oppressive influences, the female body thus suffers from the White dilemma. As argued by Christopher Charles in “Skin Bleaching Oppression and Resistance,” who posits, “Colourism influences the behaviour of some Blacks because they are miseducated to believe that the standard for beauty, status, intelligence, moral integrity, progress, enlightenment and so on are determined by Whites and their culture” (4).

The bleaching process thus seeks to mask the multi-layered injustices done to the female through an artificial representation. In this deceptive Simucrala, the artificialness of the bleached body (Mikorogo) is thus comparable to the dubious material production in a market economy. The strategy is to flood the market with counterfeits for quick profits, which is detrimental to the consumer. The bleached body is injured and subjugated by the macho-capitalism demands, oppressing women by invoking patriarchal beauty standards. By practising the bleaching process, the female minority is conditioned to serve the interests of the male desire. The bleaching process sexualises the body by creating artificial attraction. The *Mkorogo* practice alters the perception of reality and is a pervasive

survival strategy that dents the subtle female agency.

Signification is the meaning-making process that signifies the gendered representation of the female minority. For instance, some of the songs under study offer the representation of gender with certain shades of meanings that exalt the male order while demeaning femininity. Songs like *Kindu ni Mwitilye*, *Miss Musembi*, *Sheila baby*, and *Kutomba* portray the female body through the lens of their reproductive organs as markers of gender. Referring to women as sexual objects of pleasure amounts to gender trolling.

Ncube and Yemri, in “Discrimination against female politicians in social media,” highlight the gender-trolling dictum and argue that women’s voices are silenced through the sexual overtones’ men use towards women. They borrow the term Gender trolling from Karla Mantilla in her book *Gender Trolling*, who avers that,

Gender trolling has much in common with offline women-targeting, such as sexual harassment in the workplace and street harassment. In these arenas, as is the case with gender trolling the harassment is about patrolling gender boundaries and using insults hate, and threats of violence and/ or rape to ensure that women and girls are either kept out of, play subservient arenas (568).

As remarked above, women’s vilification is based on the sex narrative. Women’s freedoms and values as professionals are silenced in this gendered regard. For instance, Miss Musembi is trolled through the sexual depiction as slut, yet she is a teacher. For the male desire Miss Musembi’s “vagina” is a symbol of pleasure, but for the woman, it is an important part of motherhood. Women are attacked in all social spheres, whether formal or informal.

Gender, Ethnicity, and Class: Intersections of Patriarchal Control in Akamba Pop Music

This section examines how the female body is discriminated against by the sexist, class, and ethnic

hierarchies above it. The argument is that the female minority is positioned in areas around sex, class, and ethnicity. In her efforts to discuss intersectionality based on gender and race, Amanda Gouws, in “Empowering Women for Gender Equity Feminist intersectionality and the matrix of domination in South Africa,” says

At the same time, as boundaries among identity categories are fluid and permeable, the experience of African women’s sexual violation leads to a certain essentialisation of racial identity. Amanda argues that what started the #feesmustfall campaign was the intersection of race, class, and gender, with students mobilising around their class interests and the interests of outsourced workers. In this campaign, class identity was foregrounded but revealed its intersection with race and gender. (25)

Amanda further explains that mutual solidarity developed between outsourced workers (mostly women) and students as the less privileged groups in society. African women suffer from patriarchal oppression, racialised labour exploitation, and ethnic bias in everyday encounters. In these systemic areas of oppression, women’s agency must overcome the hurdles that compel them to the bottom strata. Through the construct of the female body, Ken wa Maria exposes how male privilege creates interlocking segregation of women. In analysing *Sheila Baby*, we locate how gendered constructions have exclusionary social realities. The song details the case of a young and poor girl impregnated by a rich musician.

Ken wa Maria’s ‘*Sheila Baby*’ song presents the construction of subdued femininity. The song

details how teenage pregnancy is an injustice to the female body since it domesticates women using phallic power. Luce Irigaray avers, “Women do not exist as women but as mothers of sons.” In this symbolic and restrictive space, sex indifference limits female opportunities and freedom since women must submit to men through sex. By having coitus with a woman, the phallic power is permanently inscribed into the female’s life.

He seeks sex with *Sheila* by riding on her gullibility and poverty under the guise that no affirmative action will be taken against him. *Sheila*’s feminine agency is powerless against the male gaze that wants her to become a mother at a young age. The imposition to have a baby disrupts her life by domesticating her into forced motherhood when the singer posts.

“I aim to impregnate you to bear me a kid so that when you get married, you will see me in the kid” L 3

Through the adoption of supervision of her femininity, *Sheila* is neglected and left to suffer the burden of parenthood. In this unfortunate development, *Sheila* is a victim of gendered injustice who represents the social realities that exist in society. Sheila is domesticated and traditionally bound by being forced to be a mother when the father chooses not to be part of the family, as illustrated in the following line. The male gaze creates an intricate web of discrimination against the female body. For instance, Katombi says in his song ‘*Kutomba*’ that when he plays his guitar, all women fall prey to sex. He sings;

Syáná nò kútòmbá áká nò kútòmbá áúmè nò kútòmbá kwí
kìsínká útúkù

Wòná námíkòlyá kítúō
múmányáé àkà nò kútòmbá nà kísínká útúkú

Mbású ní kísínká kívyú kìná mwákí úká wé wíyónéé sōlō
íkúkúñwā tē ikúvévā

Men, women, and children are having sex during kisinga’s performance at night. L3

When I hang it around the shoulder, just know that the burning log of fire will burn all night long. We shall have sex. L4

Katombi, in the above song, is a chauvinist who believes that women are sex toys, and therefore, he believes that women can never deny him sex when he plays his guitar. The artist presents women as weak, frail, and sexual. Again, as a male artist whose power status is above the female admirers, he identifies his females as frozen in the restrictive level of gender and class that places women in the base roles such as slave queens, secret lovers, and girlfriends.

Katombi, in his *Kutumba* rendition, represents the oppositional sexual differences that mutilate feminine power through phallocentrism. The artist uses a sexual discourse to show male dominance as the legitimising authority that conquers the female body to submission. The artist labels women as sluts craving his attention. In this increased feminine libido, the unconscious feminine essence attempts to thwart the sexual inferiority inscribed upon her body. Lodge and Wood, in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, argue that for Sigmund Freud,

There is only one libido, and its essence is male; the inscription of sexual difference begins only with a phallic phase, which both boys and girls go through. Until then, the girl has been a sort of little boy: the genital organisation of the infantile libido is articulated by the equivalence activity/masculinity; the vagina has not yet been ‘discovered’ (267). Freud argues that the phallus is a projection into the world and a symbol of dominance that gives men the ability to conquer “a territory” through their enhanced libido, whereas the nondevelopment of the vagina is a bleak prognosis of severed feminine power. Katombi brags that his burning log of fire can “burn” throughout the night to project his power over his women, as posited in the following line;

When I hang it around my shoulder, I know that the burning log of fire will burn all night long. We shall have sex. Line 3&4.

Through assigned social roles, the female body is deemed inferior to the men, which necessitates it to have a fantasised psychic attempt to stage a

“gendered coup” The attempt to establish power over the men thus creates the elaboration of how sexuality is en-joined with privilege that constitutes an ideological grounding that dictates the gendered relations. For instance, Katombi uses the images of the guitar and the burning log of fire to show his mastery of lovemaking.

“Bazu am the burning log of fire, come and see the master soloist who plays the guitar skilfully at night.” L 2

“When I have my guitar, women whine the log of fire is burning” L 5

The masculine symbol of the guitar deconstructs the powerful and mythic dominance that naturalises male power. The female body constituted as the Other creates new masculinities and femininities to represent new prototypes of class structures as imagined in the reinvented social hierarchies. For instance, the song *Serro* by a female artist vehemently presents the proclaiming power over the masculine world.

Serro outlines a love story between Syombua and Kasyoki where gender roles are shifted. For instance, *Serro*’s love song *Kasyoki wa Mitumba* depicts female self-expression and reversed masculinity as an indicator of an awakened gender. Men accept women as equals, as evident in the lyrics of this song, where a female takes the patriarchal role of seducing men. *Syombua* hopes to win over *Kasyoki* as she plastered him with love expressions.

habari Kasyoki wa mitumba (how are you Kasyoki) *mimi kwa mayina ni Syombua* (I am Syombua) *nimekua nikikucheki kwa mda* (I have been admiring you for long) *My ndear Kasyoki* (my dear Kasyoki) Come, I tell you something. About the way I feel, I love you, my *ndear Kasyoki my ndear Kasyoki*, come and love me my Kasyoki, I love you.

As depicted in the above song, *Serro* constructs feminine sexual pleasure as the bridge to upping the

liminal female libido. Her thrust that it is the female figure that makes a move to seduce Kasyoki informs the female bid to identify with the masculine economy characterised by purchasing power and influence. It attempts to represent females as equal to males and allows a shift in male roles for decades to women. This shows the gains of feminism since the first wave in the nineteenth century, which gave women suffrage rights to the age of the internet.

Another song that seems to be a rejoinder to the diminished masculinities is Katombi's rendition of the *Slay Queen*. In the song, the prototype female of the slay queen uses illusionary power to challenge the male order.

In the song, the slay queen represents the urbane female who strives to position herself as an ideal female in a competitive environment fueled by the capitalistic gaze. Her quest to look sophisticated renders her feminine essence unrecognisable as she seeks to offer her femininity to the highest bidder. Therefore, the slay queen is a gender category that aims to overcome subalternity. In "Gender Ideology and Identity in Humorous Social Media Memes", Victoria O. Gbadegesin analyses the gender category of the slay queen from the lens of othering. Gbadegesin believes that the female character labelled as a slay queen is a dependent character, "presenting the female gender as dependents who need men for sexual satisfaction but dump them after using them for the said purpose." (535).

To usurp the dependent identity, the persona described by Serro turns to depict an illusionary stretch of femininity; she portrays the slay queen as a "Macho woman" who seduces men. She uses her body to posture and simulate a phantasmagoric feminine essence that drools men into submission.

Intersectionality tackles racial/ ethnic discrimination and pursues the inquiry into the cultural and racial construction of Africa in works of literature and ethnographies by focusing on the history of Britain's first African colony. Kidiatu Kanneh, in *African Identities: Race, Nation and*

Culture in Ethnography, Pan Africanism and Black Literatures, discusses how the late-twentieth-century literary texts engage with cultural interlocutions and history concerning Africa. Kanneh exposes the narratives of the difficulties of representing or defining inevitable historical and textual complicities underlying the location and legitimization of otherness (4).

From the focus on the intense physicality of the African Landscape, massively alive, massively secretive, to the repeated invocation of an African history without narrative structure, 'A Bend in the River' deliberately writes itself against and alongside Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), which represents what becomes a sustained metaphorical reference on Naipaul's text: Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world when vegetation rioted on the earth, and the trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest (2)

The African continent is a multicultural society with diverse socio-realities. As captured by Kanneh, the rigidity of the African continent is traceable from the different cultural ethnographies that symbolise the impenetrable jungle. The ethnic complexity, therefore, becomes a flashpoint of otherness as far as cultural alienation is concerned. The cultural constructions serve as identity markers and structurally create discrimination avenues amongst the African people; Ken Wa Maria's *'Mukorea'* details how ethnicity constructs femininity as a subclass of culture to degrade the feminine essence.

This socio-political and mixed ethnical identity is depicted in the song 'Mukorea' by Wamaria. Ken constructs a female minority through the example of a hybrid Korean and Maasai woman. He talks and channels his debate on identifying himself with the mixed identity; he says he wants him to have sexual intercourse to initiate her into his community, since, for the biracial woman to be accepted in the lover's community.

(Kamba), She must first overcome the cultural stereotypes associated with her identity. She is labelled as dangerous by the ethnic profiling of a mixed-race woman, as the singer posits.

“I fear her Kungfu and the Maasai rage after I strike my spear”, L4.

Ken Wa Maria wants and desires to have an affair with this girl because she has a mixed identity. It implies that Africans continue to see themselves as inferior to whites because of colour. Through sexual intercourse with the biracial woman, he plots to bridge the social and racial identity with his lover’s

mixed race. He thinks of opting for a spell to puzzle and bewilder the father and mother of the girl so that they may not be angry at him after he finally impregnates their daughter. Through music, these pop artists circumnavigate the theme of sexual placement in their societies, where men and women are viewed differently in their roles and positions. Ken wa Maria, in his song ‘*Kavaluku*,’ uses gender binaries by invoking the oral rendition of the Kamba community. The song employs the images of animals to capture the power structures in the class hierarchies in the contemporary lieu of the African family setup.

*Kāvālúkú kēiwē nī Nzōú úyū nī ùsī múlúkú
ndúkātātē kúingā tā Nzōú
ndúkātawāwē ní kíw’ú
kāvālúkú kēiwē nzōú ndúkātātē úndiá kitāēká
nyìè ngúlísē múōngō
ndíkātawāwē ní kíw’ú (ní wìsī nōkàsāmū kàníni
nāwē nzōú ní strong
kāvālúkú kēiwē ní nzōú àmbá úlisàngúinjē Nā
māvīkā kēiwē Nzōú ònāwāi ñúndù wèèkã (bure
tu)*

The elephant told the hare that this was a big river L1
Do not cross like the elephants to avoid being swept
by the water L2

The elephant told the hare to climb on his back so that
he may help her cross the river L6

The hare and elephant crossed successfully L8 After
they crossed the river successfully, the hare insulted
the elephant (L9)

Using the parable of marriage, the artist uses the structural dichotomies of power *Nzōú* (male) and *Kāvālúkú* (female), to expose the social stratification in the Kamba social hierarchical system. The female body is spawned as an inferior, docile identity and cannot chart its life independently. It is through marriage that guidance and assistance are given to women. Therefore, through its vested power, the male order uses marriage as a ground to perpetrate oppression on *Kāvālúkú*. Upon self-emancipation, *Kāvālúkú* decides to abandon her marriage to *Nzōú*. The breakaway from oppression gives *Kavaluku* the chance to acquire back her freedom.

The man /husband uses marriage to facilitate his power over a woman. Therefore, the song deconstructs marriage as a social stratifying institution that discriminates against women based on gendered relations. Ken wa Maria, for instance,

in his song ‘*kavaluku*,’ political alienation and class are featured. The song diligently uncovers the unfathomable misery faced by the less fortunate and women. However, Ken exposes the underlying societal evils and atrocities. Ken uses gender categories as a code to communicate the issues affecting society.

The *Kavaluku* is perceived as the less privileged, the less fortunate, the Other, and the oppressed peasant. On the other hand, *Nzou* is of higher status and privilege, as connotated by this masculine portrait. In connotation, the ‘elephants’, upon assisting the ‘hares’, surmise and seek to manipulate them like objects. In the exemplification above, after successfully crossing the river, the hare degrades the elephant and tells him that he has done nothing of significance, indicating that the woman (hare) has broken the shackles of confinement that bind her to oppression. The severing of ties after crossing the

river connotes women gaining liberation by walking away from abusive husbands who pelt them with abuse.

Conclusion: Expanding the Discourse on Female Subjugation in Akamba Pop Music

The intersectional analysis of Akamba pop music reveals the complex and multifaceted oppression faced by women in this genre. The analysis of songs such as *Ngemi*, *Sheila Baby*, and *Mikorogo* demonstrates how women are objectified, commodified, and subordinated by intersecting systems of gender, class, and ethnicity. These songs provide a window into the ways in which patriarchy, capitalism, and racialised power structures intersect to shape the lives of women, limiting their agency and freedom.

By applying Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality, this paper has illuminated the ways in which women's oppression is not a singular, isolated phenomenon but a confluence of multiple forms of discrimination. The representation of women as sexual objects, stripped of autonomy and agency, serves to reinforce the patriarchal, capitalist, and racialised systems that govern their lives. This analysis calls for a broader, more inclusive discourse on the intersectional nature of female subjugation, urging a deeper examination of how race, gender, class, and ethnicity intersect to perpetuate the marginalisation of women in African popular culture.

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