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PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY AND MODERNITY AS DETERMINANTS OF MASCULINITY PERFOMANCE IN "KICHWA MAJI"

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how patriarchal ideology and modernity determine and influence the performance of masculinity in Euphrase Kezilahabi's *Kichwa Maji.* The article argues that various circumstances determine and influence men's masculinity in the novel. Robert Connell's theory of masculinity assists in reading and analysing male and female characters in *Kichwa Maji*. The analysis affirms that the novel portrays masculinity as a socio-cultural construct, which changes according to circumstances. The novel shows that this construct is deeply connected with individuals' ideologies such as traditional patriarchal and Western ideologies. The novel depicts a deep-seated confrontation between the older and younger generation influenced by the two different ideologies. In the novel, the characters reveal that the traditional set-up determines the men's masculinity as individuals cannot construct masculine identities outside the socially sanctioned patriarchal codes of conduct. The novel also shows that education and position of privilege influence and determine the construction of masculinity. Through characterisation, the novel builds a case that, although society constructs masculinity in certain ways, masculinity is not a fixed but fluid construct as the men in the story hold multiple and often conflicting masculine positions.

INTRODUCTION

Kichwa Maji (Water Head) is one of Euphrase Kezilahabi's numerous Kiswahili literary works. The novel focuses on the Tanzanian society and reflects the tension that exists between the younger and the older generation. Characters like Mafuru, Kabenga, Tuza and Rukia's mother represent older generation while Kazimoto, Manase and Salima represent the younger generation. In the novel, Kezilahabi reveals a confrontation between traditional, old, values and modern behaviours, and juxtaposes traditional and modern gender attitudes throughout the story. The novel indicates that, while the older generation holds rigid patriarchal codes, the younger generation embraces a fluid masculine

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construction that seems too complex to suit masculine expectations in a hegemonic patriarchal society. The characterisation in *Kichwa Maji* demonstrates that masculinity is a series of shifting and fluid subject rather than a fixed and static one.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Robert Connell's (1995) notions of masculinity and patriarchal ideology guide the reading and analysis of male characters in *Kichwa Maji.* According to Connell (1995), masculinity is "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (p.77). In Connell's views, the patriarchal system is characterised by power, dominance, hierarchy, and competition. Patriarchy is, therefore, a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. However, it does not imply that women are either powerless completely or deprived of their rights, influence, and resources.

Furthermore, Connell (1995) treats gender as a social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do. He asserts that these social practices "are not fixed character types but 'configurations of practice' generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships" (Connell 1995, p.81). For him, gender occupies a position in given patterns of gender relations, a contestable position. In other words, gender performance can differ according to gender relations in particular social settings such as traditional and modern settings in our case.

Informed by Connell's (1995) line of thought, this article examines the treatment of masculinity in *Kichwa Maji* as a fluid subject. It pays attention to how Kezilahabi's male characters in *Kichwa Maji* varyingly perform their masculinity determined by modern and traditional social settings, and how they perform their masculine performances within definite structures of patriarchy. In this article, modernity denotes all those cultural practices associated with Western culture. They include Western forms of education, Christianity, gender equity, human rights and dignity, freedom of choice and urban life. Tradition, on the other hand, designates all those cultural practices associated with rural life, such as ethnic and kinship loyalties, observation of traditional customs such as circumcision and burial rites, traditional marriage and conventional gender roles. The article terms retrogressive masculinity as a masculine performance that causes disruption in *Kichwa Maji* while progressive masculinity is a masculine performance that conforms to societal norms and ethos.

MEN IN KICHWA MAJI'S PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

Kezilahabi portrays a complex representation of masculinities as he demonstrates both rigid and traditional representations of masculinities and fluid male figurations in *Kichwa Maji*. The rigid representation emerges through the characterisation of Mafuru, Kabenga and other old men bent on maintaining the traditional values of the community. In fact, the portrayal of these characters indicate that masculinity is far from being about domination and sexual prowess; it is rather about self-discipline, virtue, a control of the passions and a willingness to sacrifice for the family and home. The real man in the novel is an admirable and respectable to the family, elders and society, and is ready to face death threats and stand for his convictions.

Kezilahabi also portrays a group of characters that represent a new generation in the mould of Manase, Salima, Kazimoto, Kalia and Sabina. Through these characters, Kezilahabi displays a modern ideology that is in contrast with the hegemonic traditional patriarchal ideology. Both male and female characters that constitute the younger generation seem liberated from the constraints of traditional masculinity. In fact, the younger generation in the novel violate traditional patriarchal norms expected to construct a traditional 'ideal' masculinity.

Modernity, Western education and leadership position are among the factors that seemingly influence and determine the imagination and construction of younger generation's masculinity in *Kichwa Maji*. From his characterisation of a younger generation, Kezilahabi describes how Western education transforms young men from traditional to modern life and gives them access to social power that validates their masculinity. Consequently, the portrayals of male characters reveals how difference in ideologies (traditional and modern) compete and create tension and misunderstandings between the younger and older generations.

At the beginning of the novel, Kazimoto is a young man who performs masculinity that seems to be a legitimate one in a traditional society. When Kazimoto returns home for holiday, he learns from his sister and his mother that his father is not home because he went to consult men who can deal with invisible people that have been threatening his family. They explain to him how the situation at their home is very fearful, frightening and threatening (pp.27-30). Despite the frightening information, Kazimoto assumes his patriarchal traditional role and attempts to protect his family against the threatening situation in the village. He says: *"….Niliona kwamba kazi kubwa inayonikabili sasa…ni kufikiria njia ya kuwakomesha watu hawa* (Kezilahabi, 1974, p.36). (….I thought that the big task before me is to find a way of stopping these people). As opposed to his father, Kazimoto decides to confront their enemies by himself. He says: "...*Mimi nitajaribu kuwapiga!… Lakini kwa nini waje kwetu tu? Sijui nifanye jambo gani niweze*₂₉

kuwakomesha!" (Kezilahabi, 2008, p.30). (...I will try to fight them! However, why should this only happen to us? What can I do to stop them?)

The two different approaches the father and Kazimoto opt for and their contrasting portrayals indicate that their philosophies differ based on their experiences. Kazimoto's education that he acquires from the University of Dar es Salaam (pp.5, 49) serves as an influential tool in questioning the traditional beliefs of his father. This suggests that exposure to the modern world has given Kazimoto a new experience that makes him treat superstition as a questionable subject.

Kazimoto's disbelief in traditional ideologies such as superstition drives him to express his masculinity by daring to protect his family during his father's absence. The decision to protect his family encourages him to exercise his patriarchal authority as he declares that he has to protect his family because he is the only man who can do it: *"Mara moja nilitoka nje na shuka yangu pamoja na panga maana mimi ndiye mwanamume peke yangu niliyekuwa nikitegemewa* (Kezilahabi 1974, p. 30). (I had to go out immediately clad in a bedsheet, holding a machete because I was the only man they depended on).

Kazimoto walks around at midnight and runs to his mother's house with a machete when he hears his mother and sister screaming. He is determined to fight the fearful, invisible beings to free his family from fear and ensure that they live happily. His determination and self-realisation of his responsibility as a man in the family drives him to perform his masculinity. Kazimoto's masculine performance in this case reflects an ideal masculinity that conforms to traditional norms discussed earlier in this article. His expression of bravery and ability to protect his family epitomises an ideal young man who performs his masculinity by sacrificing his life for the general good of his family.

In this incident, Kezilahabi also shows the enhancement of patriarchal ideology though the male gender using Kazimoto and his father's masculine performances. Both Kazimoto and his father struggle to protect their family: women and children. Although they use different approaches, their actions demonstrate their assumptions that a woman needs a man to protect her. Moreover, the gender stereotypes are reinforced in the same scenario through the traits of Kazimoto, his mother and sister. Kazimoto's mother and his sister are visibly frightened of the unknown enemies. Their scream in their room: "We are dying!" make Kazimoto jump out with a machete to fend off the enemies (p.30). This depiction indicates courage and firmness of the males in patriarchal community and their role as protectors. They exhibit strong and brave traits whereas the female exhibit weakness and cowardice. The depiction of the image of females is a stereotypical as female characters are emotional, lacking courage and confidence.

Kezilahabi illustrates further the issue of the reinforcement of gender stereotype through the portrayal of Kazimoto and his mother. He declares to his mother that he is a grown up man and does not want to be questioned about his whereabouts. Kazimoto is bothered by his mother's concern and becomes angry when he thinks that she still treats him like a child (p.64). Kazimoto's attitude makes him subscribe to patriarchal values attributable to the machoism of males in his treatment of his mother. He does not regard his mother as an older person who can question him but rather sees her as a woman who has no right to interrogate a man's morals. This situation demonstrates a relationship that follows the hegemonic pattern of the patriarchal son and a docile submissive mother who is subordinated to the laws of a patriarchal society. Yet, the same seemingly headstrong Kazimoto becomes passive and subservient before his father and asks for forgiveness when he warns him about his errant behaviour (p.66). This reaction contracts with the scolding and ignoring of his mother when she raises a similar concern and care for him.

Kazimoto's begging for forgiveness from his father indicates that his performance of masculinity lacks the approval of elders in his society. The disapproval of such masculinity becomes apparent when the two elders, Kazimoto's father and Kabenga, instil morals in Kazimoto (p.66), who remind him of his adulthood and how he is expected to behave as a grown-up man (p.66). This affirms the male elders' position in determining the behaviour of individuals in a patriarchal society. Kazimoto cannot perform his masculinity outside hegemonic patriarchal norms.

Kichwa Maji reveals also that, despite the young men's seemingly grown-up status, the parents' position, power and ownership rights determine their children's life. This is illustrated further when Kabenga and Mafuru arrange and negotiate the bride price for Sabina, Kazimoto's fiancée. Kabenga arranges it for his daughter and Mafuru negotiates on behalf of his son. Together, they settle the issue without involving their children (p.42). This description validates the fact that (male) parents occupy hegemonic patriarchal position that enables them to make decisions for their progeny.

Furthermore, Kabenga exposes how parents occupy hegemonic patriarchal positions and their imposition of such hegemonic patriarchal ideology on the modern generation. Kabenga promotes patriarchal values of marriage through his son-in-law and his daughter. He directs his daughter to behave in her marriage and impresses on her on the importance of respecting her husband. He also instructs his son-in-law to discipline his daughter when she misbehaves. In this case, Kabenga initiates Kazimoto into the traditions of performing his masculinity as a married man. Kabenga instructs his daughter thusly: "*Wewe binti yangu, nimekuoza kwa huyu bwana…Bwana'ko*

akikupiga kofi kidogo usimtoroke na kukimbilia kwangu. Umesikia?"
(Kezilahabi 1974*, p.152). (My daughter, I have married you to this man…If
your husband slaps you a bit, do not run away to take refuge in my home.
Have you heard me?)

Kabenga's instruction to his son-in-law enables the reader to see
hegemonic patriarchal males' prejudice, particularly with regard to women. In
Kabenga's patriarchal thinking, women need subordination to male authority—
he thinks men are always superior and powerful. This implies that Kabenga
considers a real man to be one who punishes his wife when she misbehaves
and an adorable woman to be one who keeps quiet when punished. In this
context, marriage is an institution that determines women's life in a patriarchal
society. In other words, hegemonic patriarchal ideology sanctions and
legitimises men's performance of masculinity.

Kezilahabi demonstrates further the fate of a woman in a patriarchal
society and the instability of gender through the depiction of Tegemea's
marriage life (p.93). Patriarchal males do not recognise Tegemea despite
performing male duties of providing for and protecting her family. As a single
and independent woman, Tegemea suggests that women can create wealth,
make provisions, offer protection and exhibit strength just as males. However,
this position changes immediately when she decides to live under a man's
custody. As a result, Kabenga forces Tegemea to follow his orders. When she
refuses to do so, he threatens and punishes her (p.134). For instance, when
she refuses to continue working in the field, he assaults her: "*Umeolewa ama
hukuolewa? Wewe sasa ni mke wangu nafanya nitakavyo! Alikemea
Kabenga…Alipomkaribia alimpiga makofi bila kusema lolote.* (Kezilahabi
1974, p. 134). (Are you married or not? You are now my wife and I do what I
want! Kabenga rebuked her… Upon getting closer to her, he slapped her
without saying a word). This depiction shows that marriage is an institution by
which the hegemonic patriarchal society undermines any probable feminine
rebellion. Kabenga epitomises the tyrannical patriarchal system that
entrenches intimidation and subordination of women.

CHALLENGES OF MODERNITY IN A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

The patriarchal system that Kabenga and Mafuru epitomise undergoes a test
at the hand of the young generation whose masculinity is determined by
modern social standards. Kazimoto, Manase, Salima and Sabina represent a
younger generation that undermines traditional gender norms as they consider
them worthless social constructs. These characters show that modernity,
education, technology and money influence youth to undermine and subvert
the traditional conventions of gender. They become so prominent in their
modern life that they abandon traditional views of gender roles and social
norms.

Kezilahabi illustrates this situation through how Manase and Salima conduct their domestic life in their marriage. Manase and his wife in their big modern house receive Kazimoto as their guest. Traditionally, Salima, as a wife, is expected to prepare some food for the guest to eat but she ignores her gender role and goes to practice driving instead (p.119). When Salima returns she complains about a cook being late. Later see an old man comes in and begs for pardon as he has arrived late. Salima does not listen; she yells at him and intimidates him for his mistake. When the old man tries to defend himself in a polite way (that his wife is admitted to hospital and he had to take care of her before coming to work), Salima pays no attention and threatens to deduct part of his salary as a punishment. She directs him on what to prepare for the family and the guests and goes back to the living room to entertain guests with pep talk (p.125).

This episode affirms Connell's (2005) argument that hegemonic masculinity extends beyond the essentialist perspective. According to Connell (2005), many hierarchically organised masculinities exist in any one place where men and women are, whether in public, at the playground or political party. Connell's argument is contrary to the essentialists' hypothesis, which views males as homogeneous in their roles as boys and men. In the above scene, Salima rejects the role of a traditional patriarchal woman as she plays a masculine role: she employs a male to cook for the family. She defines herself as boss in the house and controls men and the family's schedule. Ignoring cooking and favouring driving portrays her as a modern woman who rejects conventional gender roles. This depiction challenges the stereotypical notion of portraying males as oppressors and females as the oppressed beings or males as providers and females as receivers. In the narrative, Salima pays the old man a wage.

Moreover, Salima's mistreating of an old man who was taking care of his sick wife brings in an interesting contrast of masculinity performance between the two generations. Whereas the old man seems to perform his masculine gender roles with humility and understanding, as he plays his role as a responsible ideal husband, Salima presents herself as a hostile, aggressive and a cruel woman. Kezilahabi's portrayal of the cook reveals that in a traditional setting, marriage is a bond that holds a man responsible for his actions. A responsible married man should care and provide for his wife and family. On the other hand, the novel reveals that a modern marriage is an institution that ignores conventional morals, as a man remains silent even when his wife violates ideal norms. Indeed, Manase does not intervene and stop Salima from intimidating the cook, despite his being old enough to be their father.

This portrayal underlines the point of masculinity being a mutable construct. Manase breaks away from a conventional masculine male and

provides Salima with a space that makes her ignore feminine gender roles and opt for driving. This space gives her confidence to question and mistreat the old man and to hold a conversation with men on equal terms. Manase's passive attitude towards Salima's behaviour and neglect of conventional gender roles questions his essential masculine status as a husband.

Not surprisingly, Salima's performance is not praised by the society because it does not conform to societal norms. For example, Kazimoto's self-reflection shows how such a performance ruins the relationship between the elders and the young generation. He muses: "*… niliona wazee wetu wakitukimbia… wakituogopa. Nilianza kujiuliza kama tulikuwa hatuna lolote la kutegemea kutoka kwa wazee wetu isipokuwa kuwafanya wapishi, kuwatisha na kuwakaripia*" (Kezilahabi 1974, p. 120). (...I saw our elders fleeing away from us…becoming afraid of us. I asked myself whether we had nothing we could learn from them rather than make them cooks, threaten and scorn them). Kazimoto's reflection exposes the ills of masculinity that is performed by the modern generation in *Kichwa Maji*. His reflection envisions the danger of such a masculine performance, particularly for the disruption it causes in society. The danger of the young generation's masculinity is illustrated further through the conversation of Manase, Kazimoto and Salima. In their discussion on how the parents, older brothers and sisters play a role in youth's behaviour, Kazimoto admits to influencing his young brother's behaviour that eventually led to his death. He says:

> *Mimi ninasema hivi kwa sababu nimeona mdogo wangu akiuawa kwa sababu ya kufuata matendo yangu mabaya…nilikuwa nunda mla watu… Nilikuwa bado sijafikiria kwamba ubaya wangu uliweza kuleta maafa kwa mwanadamu mwingine na kwa taifa zima, pia kwa wajukuu wetu. Matendo huigika kwa urahisi hasa matendo mabaya* (Kezilahabi, 1974, pp. 129-130).
> I am saying this because I have seen my young brother being killed because of following my bad behaviour…. I used to be a man-eating beast…I never thought that my bad behaviour could bring disaster to another human being and the whole nation, even our young children. Evil actions are easily imitated.

Kazimoto's confession suggests that an ideal man should not perform retrogressive masculinity because it ruins not only his generation but also the future generation and his entire society.

In addition, Kezilahabi's portrayal of young men raises another fundamental issue that seems to reveal the double effect of the masculinity performed by the modern generation in *Kichwa Maji*. His depiction indicates that not only do the retrogressive performances damage the 'other', women and the vulnerable, but also the performers, that is, men who perform their

masculinity retrogressively. The characterisation of Manase, Salima, Kazimoto and Sabina reveals that, as modern man enslaves himself in modern ways of living, he ends up with a deteriorating marriage, loss of hope and eventually death.

This argument is advanced through the depiction of Kazimoto's second visit to Manase with his wife. During this visit, a different situation evolves at Manase's house. The modern house is no longer attractive; Manase and Salima both look tired, sick, bony and weak. They look depressed, indicating a miserable life (p.184). The major talk during the second visit is fear and death, which suggests that he is about to give up on life (p.185). Looking at the wall pictures, Kazimoto and Manase talk about how Africans have embraced Western ideologies, their impact and how fear brings confusion to Africans (p.188). They also discuss the negative effects of indecency in marriages such as HIV/AIDS infection (p.190). Manase explains how his cheating behaviour with Pili, a barmaid, has brought shame and tragedy into his marriage (p.192). Sabina, Kazimoto's wife, collapses when Manase mentions Pili because Pili used to have an affair with Kazimoto (p.192). In this scenario, Manase ends the conversation by admitting that the world is rotten in men's hands (p.193). Manase's confession and regret exposes the effect of men engaging in multiple sexual relations as a way of displaying their masculinity. In this case, a man pays a high price for such indiscretion as it ultimately diminishes him.

The discussion and Manase's confession validate the impact of such masculinity on the young men and the society. Through Manase and Kazimoto's malicious performances, Kezilahabi implicates modernity in a retrogressive performance of masculinity. Such a performance is discouraged by encouraging patriarchal ideal masculinity through Kazimoto's questioning of the values of the old generation in their modern life. Kazimoto fails to understand the value and positive contribution of the modern generation in their society despite being a modern man himself (pp.129-130). He considers the whole position of modern people to be seriously illegitimate. Thus, the young men's modernity becomes discredited and undermined by the ill-mannered behaviour and disorientation.

Manase's characterisation also illustrates how Western education and position of privilege enforce construction of retrogressive masculinity. Kezilahabi depicts him as a District Commissioner (DC) who uses his education and privilege of power to perform retrogressive masculinity over those who need his assistance. He confronts an old man who comes into his office carrying his walking stick in his hand. Instead of listening to this old man, he shouts at him, calling him stupid and pushes him out. The situation embarrasses and confuses the old man (pp.2-3). In the same scenario, Manase humiliates and harasses Kazimoto, his age-mates and schoolmate,

who lives in the same village. He ridicules and kicks the two men out of his office claiming that they do not respect his position (pp.3-4).

The dramatization of the DC's performance of masculinity over the old man and Kazimoto affirms Connell's (1987) concept of "male power". Connell argues that at times male power can be removed by the practice of "hegemonic" or "hierarchical" masculinities, forms of masculinity that can "marginalize and dominate not only women, but also other men". In the above depiction, Kezilahabi illustrates how the DC emasculates Kazimoto and the old man by imposing his power over them.

Furthermore, this depiction explains the notion of intra-gender masculinity whereby men mistreat other men to ensure the perpetuation of dominant masculinity. It affirms Connell's (1987) concept of hegemonic masculinity. According to Connell, Hegemonic masculinity constructs a hierarchy of masculinities, whereby some remain more "socially central, or more associated with authority and social power" (Connell & Messerchmidt, 2005, p.846). *Kichwa Maji* affirms the above views as we witness the confrontation between the DC and the old man who represent the older and younger generations. This confrontation involves psychological intimidation as the old man becomes confused and frustrated after being harassed by the DC. Through the depiction of Kazimoto and the old man, the novel affirms that "Masculinities are configurations of practice that are constructed, unfold, and change through time, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell and Messerchmidt, 2005, p.836).

The performance of intra-male gender masculinity that is apparent through the DC's treatment of the old man and Manase succinctly magnifies a rethinking and imagining of masculinity beyond the essentialists' notion of gender or from a stereotypical perspective.

Kichwa Maji illustrates further that masculinities are not essences that individuals innately have. Rather, they occur in social relations where issues of power exist at the level of practice and structure. Both the old men and young men disapprove of the DC's leadership style, as they imagine the destructions it can cause to the society. We learn of the societal disapproval of the DC's performance of masculinity through Kazimoto's self-reflection. Kazimoto believes that such a performance creates a gap between old men and young men. His worry about the impact of this gap is expressed by his confusion, revealed through his statement:

> *Moyo wangu ulivurugika kwa mchanganyiko wa hasira na huzuni nilipoona mzee akikimbia serikali yake. Mzee alipokuwa akitoka nje sikuona kitu kingine isipokuwa kwamba wazee walikuwa wakitukimbia. Uhusiano kati yao nasi ulikuwa ukikatika. Niliona wazazi*

> *wakiwakimbia watoto wao ambao sasa walikuwa kama*
> *simba…kweli niliona wazee wakitupa mgongo* (Kezilahabi, 1974,
> p.3).
>
> My heart was moved by a mixture of anger and pity when I saw
> the old man running away from his government. When the old man
> walked out, I saw nothing but old men running away from us
> (young men). The relationship between us was being
> disconnected. I saw the parents running from their children who
> were now like lions to them. Truly, I saw the old men turning their
> backs on us.

Kazimoto's self-reflection equates the young generation to a 'lion', suggesting the extent of the power the young men possess and its threatening manifestations. Their power is, however, has dire consequences as 'the old men's turning their back' against them, which can disrupt the social harmony that is supposed to exist between the old and new generations. Kezilahabi's portrayal affirms Connell's view on how individual's masculinity has to be determined by the society: "The patterns of conduct that our society defines as masculinity may be seen in the lives of individuals, but they also have an existence beyond the individual. Masculinities are defined in culture and sustained in institutions" (Connell, 2002, p.11). This argument is apparent in the portrayal of Manase, the DC whose performance is not approved by the society as it does not conform to the values of the ideal society.

Manase's style of performing masculinity is totally rejected by the society because of its negative effects in the community. His father, Kabenga, likens him to a mad man because of his performances. As the DC, Manase mistreats Kazimoto and denies him the right to get a job in his office because of their past misunderstanding activated by Manase's brutality of raping and humiliating Kazimoto's sister, Rukia, in his house. He kicks her out of his house and forces her to go back to the village after learning that she is pregnant. This forces Rukia to drop out of secondary school (pp.19-20). She then becomes frustrated, depressed and eventually dies (p.83). Her future had been completely ruined by Manase. Although Manase abused and raped Kazimoto's sister, he does not admit responsibility; instead punishes Kazimoto for questioning him about his brutal and inhuman acts over his sister (pp.6-7). Manase's father does not approve of such behaviour. He expresses his disappointment to Kazimoto and asks for forgiveness on his son's behalf (p.26).

Kezilahabi highlights further the effect of a performance of masculinity that harms the society through the depiction of Rukia's mother lamenting over the malicious deeds that Manase performs over her daughter. Her cry expresses her resentment and worries about young men's behaviour (p.37). It is a condemnation of young men's retrogressive performance of masculinity

in society. The worst part of such a performance emerges through the premature death of Rukia that shocks her mother, hence leading her early death. The death of Kazimoto's mother and sister astound the neighbourhood and frustrate Kazimoto and his father. Kazimoto's frustration is revealed through the epithet that he intends to inscribe on the graves of his mother and sister. He muses thus: "*Hapa wamelazwa Mama na bintiye Rukia sababu ya ugonjwa mpya uliozuka. Ugonjwa usiotibika. Watoto wa Dunia, Ogopeni!* (Kezilahabi, 1974, p.86). (Here lies Mother and Daughter because of a new disease. The disease that cannot be cured. Children of the world, watch out!)

Kazimoto's message and the death of Rukia and her mother is a vivid evidence of the negative impact of retrogressive masculinity the young men were performing. His message explains the impact of the hegemonic masculinity that sanctions negative masculinity, which maintains the status quo as men assume they have a right to intimidate, exploit and subordinate women. Kezilahabi's elimination of women is a call for critical scrutiny of the destruction caused by retrogressive masculinity that paradoxically affects both men and women. The deaths of Rukia and her mother drive Kazimoto and his father mad. Kazimoto decides to punish Manase's family by burning their house for causing the death of his mother and sister (p.86-88). Kazimoto therefore, expresses his anger and anxiety through destructive performance of masculine that brings tragedy in society.

Through Kazimoto's self-reflection, Kezilahabi discloses the contradiction between his performance of masculinity and his thinking as a modern man. Kazimoto, who seems to be upset by Manase's negative masculine performance directed at the old man and his sister, which also eventually leads to his mother's death, condemns his (Manase's) offensiveness and negative performances and cautions about the impact of modernity on the young generation. He describes it as a disease that is "dangerous and cannot be cured" (p.86). On the other hand, Kazimoto contradicts himself when he mistreats Vumilia. This contradiction indicates that masculinity should be considered an adjustable and fluid concept, as opposed to the more static disposition of biology. Kazimoto exploits and abuses Vumilia several times and even abandons her completely after marrying Sabina. He ruins her life as Vumilia complains about her future being totally destroyed (p.166).

Another evidence of Kazimoto's contradicting personality is apparent through his confession when he admits that he has influenced his young brother with his mischievous behaviour (pp.72-3). In his confession, Kazimoto acts as a foil for his brother's behaviour. It is Kazimoto's regular visit to Vumilia, with his young brother, that leads him (Kalia) to rape a village girl (p.80). The abusive and malicious behaviour that his young brother learns from him affects not only the small girl but also her family and the whole

society. Kezilahabi demonstrates how the society condemns such an act through the reaction of the villagers to Kalia's heinous act. He depicts the image of furious villagers hunting down Kalia and stabbing him to death. The villagers are happy when his body is found floating in the river (p.114). The killing of Kalia signifies a total rejection of retrogressive masculinity in society and the traditional elders' rejection of retrogressive masculinity and endorsement of progressive masculinity.

Moreover, Kazimoto's illicit affair with Pili, a barmaid, also marks another contradiction of his performance as this relationship brings tragedy into his family (p.156-9). Kazimoto realises that his tryst with Pili infects him, his wife and ultimately their child. The death of his child poses a challenge and he considers himself a coward for killing his son. His shameful behaviour and guilt lead him to commit suicide. Before he kills himself, he declares that he has to do it because his existence may pollute the next generation (p.195). As such, Kazimoto emasculates himself by committing suicide. He punishes himself because of his disastrous actions. In this case, Kazimoto fails to perform a role of an ideal husband and father.

Through Kazimoto, the protagonist and a foil character in *Kichwa Maji,* Kezilahabi uses self-reflexive introspection to create a distinction between young men who totally perform their masculinity retrogressively such as Manase and those who demonstrate a more complex masculine performance. Kazimoto's self-reflection marks his guilty conscience on the impact of retrogressive masculinity; he questions himself, his place and the younger generation's place in society, the directives of the society, or the implications of societal decisions have upon others. However, he appears to contradict himself when he behaves retrogressively. This contradiction insinuates the elusive status and ambivalence in the performance of masculinity.

CONCLUSION
Kezilahabi's presentation of male and female characters reveals how the traditional set-up and modernity influence and determine the construction of masculinities in *Kichwa Maji*. The novel portrays old men performing their masculinity by instilling their ideologies into young men, whose strategies in coping within the traditional context reveals new forms of masculinities differ from the traditional ones. It reveals how young men's performances of masculinities, causes competition and tension among and between them. From the representation of the characters, the novel shows how young generation's masculinity has superseded traditional authority effectively as it tries to undermine the control of old men in their own community. *Kichwa Maji* also reveals that individuals cannot construct masculine identities outside the patriarchal codes of conduct. The competition, tensions and contradictions that result from the performance of masculinities by the two generations suggest a societal rejection of the retrogressive masculinity because of its 39

dangerous implication. It also calls for a societal transformation of the patriarchal system and its dominating and subordinating ideology that exploits and intimidates vulnerable men and women. Overall, the article argues that masculinity is a social construct whose extant is not static but putatively fluid.

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