

Abstract

This study analyses the nature and characteristics of modern Gĩkũyũ romance patterns and the postcolonial factors that influence, affect and complicate them. The source of data for this investigation is a selection of popular Gĩkũyũ songs that were produced after independence in the 1960s to the present day. Although a number of scholars have conducted research on popular music in Kenya, the focus has been on evolutionary developments such as instrumentation, cross-cultural integration, the functional dimension of song, hybridity and intertextuality. Thematic focus has been on political content and gender perspectives depicted in the genre but little or no attention has been given to the assessment of the nature and characteristics of Gĩkũyũ romance patterns in postcolonial Kenya. There are three objectives guiding the analysis that include evaluation of the literary devices that describe the nature and characteristics of Gĩkũyũ romance in the selected songs, investigating how cultural evolution and change have contributed to the construction of modern Gĩkũyũ romance and assessing how postcolonial economic ideology and growth of technology influences the construction of modern Gĩkũyũ romance. The research is guided by three strands of postcolonial theory for the analysis of the selected songs. Three precepts of narratology have also been employed as analytical techniques of synthesizing the content of the selected songs. The study has used qualitative research design and purposive sampling. Participant observation was conducted during the researcher's interaction with the consumers of popular songs during live show performances in selected entertainment arenas. The interaction was facilitated by a set of questions prepared for oral answers by the consumers during the show. Chapter one, chapter two and chapter three contains the introduction and background information for the study, the existing gap of interest to the study, the justification, literature review, methodology and the theoretical choices guiding the study. Chapter four is an evaluation of the compositional literary features of style that constitute the stories of the songs. It also provides a brief synopsis of each of the selected songs. The evaluation has established that there are two romance patterns inherent in Gĩkũyũ culture presented in the selected songs. There is a positive romance pattern of satisfaction and a negated mode referred to in the study as tragi-romance that causes emotional trauma. Chapter five is an assessment of the implications of cultural evolution on the construction of modern Gĩkũyũ romance revealing that various cultural factors have contributed to the construction of modern Gĩkũyũ romance. Chapter six is an analysis of the role of postcolonial economic ideology and technology on the construction of the romance showing how various postcolonial factors such as cultural and economic evolution, change and transition as well as the growth of technology affects, influences and complicates modern Gĩkũyũ romance. Chapter seven is a summary of the findings, the conclusions drawn from the findings and the suggestions made for further research. The findings of this study extend the existing research approaches in the reading of the popular song by providing a new way of analysing a single referent such as romance. The findings also contribute to our understanding of the nature and characteristics of Gĩkũyũ romance structures and the postcolonial factors that affect, influence and complicate these structures.