THE MANIPULATIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CRIMINALS AND THEIR WOMEN IN JOHN KIRIAMITI’S FICTION

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DECLARATION

This research report is my own original work and has not been submitted for examination or the award of a degree in any other university.

Signature………………               Date………………

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Dr. Tom Odhiambo
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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the memory of my late parents, Joseph and Monica Munene who made me into who I am today. To my loving sisters, Lucy, Juliet, Grace, Pollet and my brothers for their encouragement while in college. To my loving daughter Angela Nyawira I am forever grateful for your tolerance and understanding you offered me during this study.
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ABSTRACT

This study examines how John Kiriamiti in his novels *My Life in Crime* and *My Life with a Criminal: Milly’s Story* has presented man manipulating the women in the lives of criminals. It also seeks to explore the love triangles the criminals have in the fiction studied have with several women. It highlights the factors that frustrate such relationships. The novelist’ presentations suggest that though they undergo a lot of difficulties with the criminals, the women actually are manipulated by these criminals. Zollo’s encounters with Nyambiu and later with Juliet, help him steer away from the criminal activities. The study suggests that however badly treated they may be, women can actually change the lives of the criminals for better.
CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Background to the study

1.1 Introduction

This study examines how John Kiriamiti, has presented the manipulative relationship between women and criminals. In his fiction, Kiriamiti demonstrates the unique and complex aspects of the dilemma of unfulfilling lives of women married to criminals. Traditionally, the woman has been associated with duties such as house work, giving birth, raring children and submission to the husband sexually. Kiriamiti has used women to portray the plight of women in Kenya. He uses women to criticize oppressive forces and to celebrate woman’s social contributions as they live with criminals. Today’s woman has generally been educated and has moved to a different level and thus, is manipulated by man in the lives of criminals and so need for the study.

My interest in Kiriamiti’s novels is motivated by the emergence of recent scholarship in popular arts in Africa in general and particularly the study of the popular fiction in Kenya. From the late 1970s to date, there has been an alternative focus in literary studies with a shift of attention from the monopoly of the so called “serious” works of art to those of the popular genre. In Kenya, works by writers such as Charles Mangua, Mwangi Ruheni, Meja Mwangi, David G. Maillu, Carolyne Adalla, Omondi Mak’Ollo among others have been appreciated in and incorporated into literary circles unlike in the past when such writings were judged as mere “deflation of literary value” (Lindfors, 1990:51).
There is a need to study ‘popular’ fiction as the publishing of the popular novel continues to broaden. It is this interest in the urban popular novel that leads me to look at the works of John Kiriamiti. These works are popular because of their subject matter and aesthetics. Some of the texts he has authored are *Son of Fate* (1994), written after Kiriamiti received hundreds of letters from fans and a good number of friends including three authors advising him to try (his) hand in fiction (Preface, *Son of Fate*). The sequel to *Son of Fate*, *The Sinister Trophy* (1999), was written purportedly on request by readers and reviewers of *Son of Fate* in Kenyan newspapers, (Preface, *The Sinister Trophy*).

Kiriamiti is among the most published popular authors in the Spear Book series of the East African Educational Publishers. This is according to an interview I conducted with him on phone in December, 2012. In that interview, he said that he had established a consistent pattern of publishing after every five years since the publication of his first novel in 1984. Kiriamiti’s other novels were published in 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004r. He has written three novels broadly based on his life whilst the other two are ‘pure’ fiction. Though *My Life with a Criminal: Milly’s Story* (1989) is supposed to be Milly’s writings, [he claimed so in an interview] Kiriamiti acknowledged having written the novel. Mwangi Gicheru acknowledges Kiriamiti’s writing especially the novel *My Life in Crime* (*Daily Nation*) as he has this to say;

Then there is John Kiriamiti of *My Life in Crime* fame. When he came from prison, we had not known each other, but he looked for me saying I had inspired him. At some point I let him run this place for six months and he was very popular with waiters and patrons.
John Baptista Wanjoji Kiriamiti was born on 14\textsuperscript{th} February 1950 in Thuita Village, Kamacharia Location, then Murang’a District, in Central Kenya, today’s Murang’a County. He is the second born of the nine children born to the late Albert and Ann Kiriamiti. He pursued his primary education at the local primary school known as Thuita School. Having passed his Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) exams, he became one of the first nine African students to join the then pre-dominantly-white populated Prince of Wales School, now Nairobi School. He became a day scholar but towards the end of his last term as a Form One student, he was expelled because of participating in and leading a students’ strike. Kiriamiti told me in an interview on 6\textsuperscript{th} June 2013 that he wrote about a strike in his novel for convenience. The truth is that he fought a white student who discriminated against black students, according to him in the interview.

Even after his parents’ attempt to take him back to school at Murang’a, he still sneaked back to Nairobi after stealing 600 shillings that belonged to his father. Thereafter, he became a street urchin, as a pickpocket. By the age of 20, he was already a known robber, and on the Kenya police ‘most wanted persons’ list. After a robbery in Naivasha and a long car chase, he was arrested and jailed. It is while at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison and Naivasha Maximum Prison that he started writing his autobiographical novels. After prison, he embarked on fiction writing.

Today, he is a farmer, a philanthropist and social reformer who rehabilitates street children and ex-thieves in his Murang’a rural home. On several occasions he has been invited to colleges and police academies to give lectures on crime. On the 1\textsuperscript{st} of February 2014, he was interviewed on a programme on the Inooro Kikuyu Radio
Kiriamiti is an editor of his newspaper *The Sharpener*, which he established after the government’s ban on the Gikuyu version *Inooro* in 1995. *Inooro* means a sharpener in Gikuyu and was a Catholic magazine whose past issues were banned by the Moi government in February 1995 on grounds of sedition. He is also writing other crime fiction such as the ‘Abduction Squad’, his sixth novel, which he says is with the publishers and will be in the market in 2014. Another novel he is working on is ‘City Carjackers’, which will be his seventh novel. This novel is based on interviews with criminals serving jail terms, who have been recruited by state agents to commit crimes.

**1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The study looks at man manipulating the women in the lives of criminals. Crime literature depicts men who, due to poverty, peer pressure, poor parentage and love for adventure, find themselves entrenched in criminal activities. To them money and sex are all that matters and the women whom they encounter in their lives are meant to be objects to fulfill their desires. These women do not however take themselves as such. Little research has been done on how fiction (re)presents manipulative relationship between criminal men and their women lovers or relatives. The society condemns women associated with or related to criminals yet these women help the criminals to some kind of self-discovery or even reformation. This study aims at illustrating that man can manipulate the women in the lives of criminals but such women act as initiators of change in the lives of the women and the larger society. Through the study of Kiriamiti’s *My Life in Crime* (1984) and *My Life with a Criminal: Milly’s Story* (1998), the study investigates the challenges women encounter while living with
criminals and how they overcome them with a bid of changing the criminals into acceptable members of the society.

1.2 Objectives

i. Identify the various stylistic strategies used by John Kiriamiti to represent the manipulative relationship between criminal men and their women lovers;

ii. Identify the social roles played by women married to criminals as presented in literature.

1.3 Hypothesis

i. Kiriamiti uses specific styles to talk about women the ways in which criminal men manipulate their women lovers;

ii. Women who are married to criminals play specific social roles.

1.4 Scope and Limitation

I limit myself to analyze John Kiriamiti’s My Life in Crime (1984) and My Life with a Criminal: Milly’s Story (1989) by examining how through these novels the writer depicts man manipulating the women in the lives of criminals. My research has also benefited from secondary materials such as e-journals to enable me get the required information.

1.5 Justification

Studying about man manipulating the women in the lives of criminals is of scholarly importance as it depicts women not only as sexual objects but also very innovative in relationships with men of questionable moral character. The research also highlights issues that depict women beyond a married life and how they handle issues in cases where there is no partner or misfortunes occur in life such as when one’s husband
goes into exile or is imprisoned. Kiriamiti is a leading writer in his own respect of his experiences in crime, prison and outside crime. The study therefore aims at finding out how Kiriamiti portrays man manipulating the women in the lives of criminals.

1.6 Literature Review

In this section I subjected what has been written about man manipulating the women in My Life in Crime and My Life with a Criminal to a critical and evaluative review and demonstrated that the men manipulate the women in the lives of criminals. I explored what critics have examined and what they have not and the possible impact of the texts in pushing for the acceptance of women’s roles in society.

The greatest part of criticism on Kiriamiti’s works centered on crime and not on the manipulation of women. Issues pertaining to crime need to be addressed to give them new perspectives. There are a few works that I came across before and during my research on Kiriamiti. However, I realized that most critics tend to read Kiriamiti’s novels alongside Charles Mangua or Meja Mwangi because they are mostly concerned with either issues of modernity or simply the Kenyan urban novel and not the criminal or even Kiriamiti as a crime writer. Such critics include among others Jacqueline K Isiaho (2011), Odari Masumi (2009), Tom Odhiambo (2007), Janeffer Beatrice Mutungi Musangi (2007) and Rodger Kurtz (1998).

Jacqueline K Isiaho is one of the critics who have written on women roles in the society in her MA dissertation on Kiswahili fiction. Isiaho has written “Taswira ya Mwanamke Katika Riwaya za Said Mohamed”. This critic has examined how Kiswahili novelists tend to portray different roles which emanate from women’s roles in society. Isiaho’s study looks at the portrayal of women characters in Said
Mohamed’s three novels: *Asali Chungu* (1977), *Utengano* (1980), *Kiza Katika Nuru* (1988). My study looks at man manipulating the women in *My Life in Crime* and *My Life with a Criminal*. Very few studies have been carried out on the subject of women manipulation by man in the two novels. That is why my research will contribute to the wealth of knowledge on research by previous critics and seek to bridge the gap of knowledge about the author.

On the other hand, Masumi Odari’s PhD thesis deals with cruelty in the form of physical abuse. Odari investigates cruelty in the form of physical abuse in *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens. Though Nancy belongs to Fagin’s criminal group, she is kind and has motherly tenderness for Oliver like Nyambiu in *My Life with a Criminal: Milly’s Story* who minds Zollo’s welfare whenever he is in problems.

Tom Odhiambo is another critic who has identified ‘juvenile delinquency’ and ‘violence’ as some of the common themes in Kiriamiti’s fiction as set in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. He looks at crime and violence in post-colonial Kenyan fiction as a result of the failure of the post-colonial Kenyan state to include these young men and women into the society. He has also written on “manhood” and “violence” which feature in Kiriamiti’s careers. His other research related to my work include: “The City as a Maker of Modernity in Postcolonial Kenyan Popular fiction”, “*My Life in Crime: Crime and the Complexities of Urban Identity in Kenya*”. The above works are different from my research because none has tackled how men manipulate the women in the lives of criminals.
The other critic of Kiriamiti’s novels, My Life in Crime and My Life in Prison is Jennifer Beatrice Mutungi Musangi. In her dissertation “A Walk through the Criminal’s City: John Kiriamiti’s My Life in Crime and My Life in Prison”, she has examined this author’s use of the criminal figure in the (re)-presentation of the city and urban space. Secondly, the study examines Kiriamiti’s (re)construction of the fictional criminal figure as a hero through the principles of crime thriller. In the examination of Kiriamiti’s representation of the urban space, this study digs into the various zones in which the criminal undertakes his daily activities like the bar, certain neighborhoods and the prison. Finally, the study examines the use of stereotypes, as forming part of the discourses that order the urban space in Kiriamiti’s crime writing.

As far as I’m concerned, the men in the two novels meet the women not in the rural areas but in the urban areas where they make friends for different interests.

Roger Kurtz (2005) in his survey of Kenyan literature reveals that writers have dealt with a wide range of themes and established that “the use of the urban space to imagine a multi-ethnic city has permeated most writings.” For Kurtz these writers presented “a city with many faces and imagine the cities opportunities, struggles and multiplicity” (156). This study, however, explores the spaces that the characters operate in. My research thus focuses on how the writer presents man manipulating the women in the life of the protagonist through the space of the city life of Nairobi and Bukavu and to some extent rural Kenya and Congo. Kurtz’s works enriches my work because it acts as sign post for my research.
Kiriamiti is a leading writer in his own respect and that is why this study carries out a critical analysis and seeks to bridge that gap. He also writes out of experience in crime, prison and outside crime.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This research is guided by psychoanalytic, formalist and feminist literary theories. Psychoanalytic literary theory is a perspective that has helped me to explore what motivates the behavior of characters. In the two novels, *My Life in Crime* and *My Life with a Criminal*, there are cases of illegal brewing and sale of beer, acquisition of illegal firearms used to commit crime, corruption, fights, love relationships, robberies and so on. The psychoanalytic literary theory has guided me in investigating the causes of the above behaviour especially the love affairs between Zollo and Milly, Hellene, Elizabeth, Suzy and Linda.

According to Sigmud Freud, the pioneer of psychoanalysis theory in Peter Barry’s *Beginning theory* “a person’s unconscious, desires force their way to the conscious state. The suppressed unresolved conflicts, fantasies and wishful thinking inevitably make themselves known through our so-called mistakes of speech or actions” (98). Kiriamiti presents his thoughts through the character of Zollo and his colleagues who are also criminals by putting down in writing what he does with and to the women associates and what they too undergo. This theory helped me to analyze the way female characters such as Nyambiu, Hellene, Elizabeth, Wangari and Njeri react towards the criminal in Zollo, also known as Ngure, and why they do so. For example, what gets into Hellene’s mind so that even after being jilted by Ngure, she continues to search for him? In *My Life with a Criminal*, Nyambiu on the other hand,
almost yields in making love with Zollo even after he had pushed her out of his life and insulting her (135).

Freudian interpretation, then, is of interest to literary critics, because it helps the reader to understand the behavior of a character. Freud, in *Beginning Theory*, states that

… psychoanalytic criticism is a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature. Psychoanalysis itself is a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorder by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind’. The classic method of doing this is to get the patient to talk freely, in such a way that the repressed fears and conflicts which are causing the problems are brought into the conscious mind and openly faced, rather than remaining ‘buried’ in the unconscious (96).

Thus, by expressing his experiencies in writing, this acted as catharsis in Kiriamiti’s life and today he is able to cope with life as he rehabilitates criminals.

According to Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory*, the main reason is that the unconscious, like the novel, cannot speak directly and explicitly but does so through images, symbols and metaphors. Literature, too, is not involved in making direct explicit statements about life rather it shows and expresses experience through metaphors, imagery, symbolism and so on. However, because the ‘statements’ made are not explicit, then, there is an inevitable ‘judgemental’ element involved, and in consequence, psychoanalytic interpretations of literature are often controversial (102).
The above argument is useful in this study for understanding and analyzing Kiriamiti’s work. The theory helped me to understand the motivation of the characters; that is to say, it enabled me to understand the unexplainable actions and attitudes that spring from defense mechanisms against what society might not approve.

The formalist theoretical approach focuses on the literariness of a text. It enabled me analyze, interpret and evaluate the language of the text. This follows the objective of analyzing the stylistic choices the author has made in presenting man manipulating the women in the lives of criminals. The approach focuses on structural elements of a work such as language and structure. Formalist critics offer intense examinations of the relationship between form and meaning in a work of art. From a close textual reading the emphasis is on the arrangement of the work. Of interest to my research are the styles like irony, symbolism, satire, and figurative language. The formalistic approach allows this study the freedom to interpret the stylistic components of the two novels by decoding these components in search of how the writer has used them to highlight what the characters experience.

Formalism benefits this study because it attempts to define a literary work in terms of its form and structure which in other words is its ‘literariness’. Formalism has two major branches: The Russian formalism with notable critics like Vladimir Propp and later on New Criticism whose major proponents include T.S Eliot, Cleanth Brooks, F.R Leavis, and Allen Tate. I was guided by the insights of the critic Ivor Armstrong Richards in *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1959), who belongs to formalist approach to practical criticism and argues that a theory in criticism must offer both a
theory of ‘value’ and a theory of communication. Richards’ arguments are based on the assumption that poems or literature communicate value grounded in the reconciliation of conflicting ‘impulses’ in the experience of the poet (46). This helps the study draw close scrutiny to the text with the aim of accounting for the use of style through identifying the themes and what the writer is saying and the meaning that is communicated.

Henry Indangasi, in *Stylistics* says that Richards championed the need to put the literary text at the center of the inquiry. In other words, the term ‘practical criticism’ was being counterpoised to ‘theoretical criticism’ (17). This research thus adapts the strand of formalism that advocates for the accounting of the use of style through identifying the themes and what the writer is saying and the meaning that is communicated. According to Charles Bressler in *An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, “… a theoretical and practical gap occurs between the theory and practices of those trained and living in the West and the subaltern writers living and writing in non-Western cultures”. This perspective has guided me in analyzing Kiriamiti’s novels where he has used raw and candid language to present man manipulating the women in his life.

The feminist approach examines the ways in which society reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women. Feminists do not deny the biological differences between men and women. In fact, they celebrate such differences as physical body size, shape and body chemistry. However, they do not agree that these physiological differences make men naturally superior in terms of intellect, logic, courage or decision making. They thus distinguish between the terms
‘sex’ and ‘gender’. They further argue that the belief that men are superior to women has been used to maintain male monopoly of positions of economic, political and social power. That is to say that the inferior position occupied by women has been culturally, not biologically produced.

Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) insists that women must see themselves as autonomous beings. Women, she maintains, must reject the societal construct that men are the subjects or the absolete and women are the Other. Embedded in this erroneous statement is the assumption that men have the power to control the dominant discourse and the power to define cultural terms and roles. Accordingly, women must define themselves, articulate their own social constructs of what it means to be a woman, and reject being labeled as the Other. No wonder Nyambiu, Elizabeth, Hellene, Linda, Dr Mbogo and even Njeri are all working. This theory informs my study in that the men portrayed in the texts are given a superior role and take it upon themselves to manipulate the women in their lives. It should however be noted that some of the women attempt to assert themselves and in so doing manage to change the criminals.

1.8 Research Methodology

The research was carried out through a close textual reading of the two selected primary texts. In order to identify the style used by the writer in his depiction of man manipulating women in the lives of criminals in the novels, I examined the way in which the writer develops the characters who define themselves and are proactive in dealing with problems that affect their life. I conducted library research on books about women and criminals, and accessed online databases to get scholarly journals on critics of Kiriamiti’s novels. Newspaper articles written by those who interviewed
the author were also references in my study. I conducted a face to face interview with
the author in an attempt to answer how Kiriamiti has depicted man manipulating the
women in the lives of criminals in his novels as he endeavors to explain why he
presents his characters in a particular way. For example, he depicts Nyambiu’s mother
as an illicit brewer, Njeri as a prostitute, Elizabeth and Hellene as daughters of rich
Greeks and Nyambiu who is naïve and he introduces her to matters of sex and grows
to a mature woman.

1.9 Chapter Outline

In Chapter One, I give an introduction to the project, the statement of the problem, the
objectives, hypotheses, justification, literature review, theoretical framework, and the
methodology. Chapter Two outlines the strategies, stylistic choices and stereotypes
used by Kiriamiti in his narratives about women and how they affect them. Chapter
three then examines how man manipulates the women in the lives of criminals by
mediating through parenting, marriage, motherhood, career and prostitution. The
chapter further highlights how love and romance have become a platform through
which race relations are presented in Kenya and abroad by Kiriamiti. The conclusion
summarizes how love, intimacy, double dealing, lust and prostitution manifest
themselves in society as depicted by the writer. The findings then demonstrate that
man can manipulate women roles in the lives of criminals irrespective of their class
and race and that love has no boundaries.
CHAPTER TWO

**Styles of presenting stereotypes about women**

**2.0 Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss how Kiriamiti in his novels *My Life in Crime* and *My Life with a Criminal: Milly’s Story*, has used textual strategies to present man manipulating the women in the lives of criminals. The two novels are set in 1984 and 1989 respectively. The stories revolve around the romance and friendship between Zollo and Nyambi, Hellene, Elizabeth and Suzy Njeri. Nyambi and families are supportive of their relationship while Hellene’s family is against Ngure’s (Zollo’s) affair with their daughter. Elizabeth’s family would want their daughter married officially. Suzy Njeri has only friends who are bar attendants and prostitutes who are Zollo’s associates in crime and support her relationship. The novels portray love relationships, social and religious roles.

It is on the basis of the basis of the ‘love’ between Zollo and the women that I examine how the writer explains the social causes of the relationships. I also explore how thematic concerns are used in the novel to present love stories and interrogate what happens when women of different races fall in love with a criminal. Addressing these issues has inevitably led me to critique the way in which Kiriamiti presents his characters as stereotypes and how they are affected through friendship.

The study also explores how the writer constantly resists the advice given by his wife to desist from stealing and when he cannot stop, he fears arrest and runs away to Congo where he meets other women whom he befriends. Zollo’s relationship with Nyambi sours when he is arrested and finally imprisoned and after some years
Nyambiu gets another lover. Ngure (Zollo) ends up leaving Hellene and Elizabeth pregnant and they have to rear their children as single parents. In addition, I have examined the prevailing racial discrimination as presented in one of the novels, *My Life in Crime*.

*My Life in Crime* and *My Life with a Criminal* present a story about a secondary school girl who falls in love with a criminal called Jack Zollo. The novels are a narration of the couple’s experiences through courtship and their “come we stay” marriage. Nyambiu’s mother is not opposed to the relationship and she is the one who gives her daughter permission to move into Zollo’s house as his wife. In the beginning life is good until Zollo leaves Nyambiu in Kenya while she is pregnant and runs away as a fugitive to Congo. Nyambiu fears losing her job and thus terminates the pregnancy. When Zollo comes back from Congo, Nyambiu insists on a wedding but on the eve of the wedding, Zollo is arrested because of his involvement in robbery at a bank in Naivasha. He is jailed and leaves Nyambiu behind confused by the whole scenario.

The story is narrated in a tone of urgency. As Nyambiu makes adjustments to her life and redefines her identity, her life is just like that of any other woman in Kenya. As a young girl, Nyambiu suffers because of family disagreements like any other child in such a situation would have. She is brought up by a single parent, goes to school where she meets friends who are already in love relationships and later while she is in Form 4, she meets Zollo when he returns to her the bus pass which she had lost on her way to school. From this time a relationship develops between the two beginning with lunches. After completing school, Nyambiu gets a job and the relationship continues.
Nyambiu later moves into Zollo’s house. As their relationship grows, Zollo’s sister, Connie, cautions him to stop being a thief. When he is finally arrested and imprisoned, Nyambiu is left very disillusioned. This relationship can thus be regarded as an allegory of the community. When Zollo and his many lovers fail to unite in matrimony, it may be seen symbolically as the failure of the society to bring the two genders together; that is, a good Nyambiu and a robber Zollo.

In *My Life in Crime*, Kiriamiti also presents a multiracial community of women who are Ngure’s lovers. These are the Greek women Hellene, Stephano the millionaire’s daughters (115), and Elizabeth Makarios who is his secretary (122). Linda the Congolese banker (109) is also in love with Ngure. In Bukavu, businessmen are also multi-racial. For example, there are Indians, Kikuyus, Greeks plus the natives who co-exist peacefully. It is only when Ngure impregnates the two Greek girls that there is tension between him and the girls and their families. Nevertheless, the natives, Indians, and the Greeks are civil towards one another and only oppose each other when there is possibility of a love relationship. This may suggest that the people are guarding their community boundaries because a relationship with a person who is regarded as the ‘other’ from a different community is bound to break these boundaries. The writer probably highlights tensions between Greeks and the Kenyans because the Kenyan, Ngure, has interfered with their ‘children’s’ lives. They are pregnant and Ngure has also escaped with Stephano’s money.

During the period of Zolo’s life with Nyambiu, letters were the most common way of communication before the emergence of modern technology. Nyambiu writes to Zollo to warn him not to show her mother that there is a relationship between him and her.
and the anxiety to see him as stated in *My Life with a Criminal* (18). Zollo writes to Nyambiu on the judgment day and confesses his wrongs towards her. He also asks her to have another man for a husband. Is this not ironical? Gikuyu tradition and the Bible allow one to remarry only after the death of the partner. But Zollo gives Nyambiu the go ahead to enter another marriage (118-119). Just as Zollo writes a letter to Nyambiu telling her to marry another man, Elizabeth also in *My Life in Crime* writes to Zollo warning him that she will commit suicide if he does not marry her (139).

At the end of the novel *My Life with a Criminal*, in trying to get Zollo back after prison, Nyambiu is disappointed because he already has another woman and Nyambiu has another man whom she is also not ready to leave just as Zollo is not ready to abandon Jackline Mbogo the doctor, his lover after prison (146). What Zollo writes in the letter and what he ends up doing break Nyambiu’s heart. The saying “Wendo munene ndukinyaga” meaning “Great love does not end up well” (119) helps to capture the mood of fear that befalls Nyambiu when Zollo introduces another woman as his wife.

Kiriamiti too has presented all Zollo’s and Ngure’s lovers as united with him through ‘love’: Nyambiu, Suzy, Linda, Hellene, Elizabeth and ‘Dr’. Mbogo. (Mbogo is not a doctor but a clinical officer and the author has used the title hyperbolically. He has had a sexual relationship with each of them. Thus, they all ‘belong’ to him irrespective of distance. Three of the women have sons with him. The sons of Elizabeth and Hellene are in the same school studying law and are great friends.
When Nyambiu’s mother gives Zollo permission to take her daughter as a wife, she presents a girl who has come of age which traditionally signifies her readiness for marriage. However, in this case, Wangari gives away her daughter contrary to culture. The Gikuyu community is patriarchal meaning that it is Nyambiu’s father who ought to hand her over in marriage. Since he’s not there, Wangari plays the role of both the mother and father. This is on condition that the lovers will have a formal wedding later as written in *My Life with a Criminal*, 29. When Wangari acts against culture, one wonders if the author is not suggesting metaphorically that this is the cause of the marriage not succeeding.

Unlike Nyambiu’s school friends who express their sexual relationships with men, she remains a virgin despite having been friends with Zollo for a long time during their courtship. Nyambiu maintains her chastity to the joy of her mother. To Nyambiu’s generation, however, coming of age means being “laid by men”. They cannot imagine her living alone without a man (5-6). This change with the young girls signifies a creation of a new ‘trend’ or ‘invented traditions’ to use Terrence Ranger’s words which refers to neo-traditions (247).

Education in Kiriamiti’s novels is portrayed as an important component especially on Nyambiu’s part. She gets a job with East African Airways after finishing Form 4 and she is even promoted after the exam results are out when she passes well. As Nyambiu states,

> When the results came out, I was promoted and got a pay rise as well as being confirmed as a permanent employee. The East African Airways service vehicle then began picking me up for work every morning. My performance had really paid off (24).
It is because of education that Nyambiu goes to a teacher training college later with the help of her mother-in-law, whilst Zollo is in prison. The education and training empowers her financially such that she is able to take care of her son, herself and later a daughter. The Greek girls that Zollo relates to in Congo are working because they are educated. For example, Elizabeth is Stephano’s secretary and Hellene is working in her father’s business. Linda could not be a banker without proper education. At the end of *My Life with a Criminal*, Zollo introduces his friend as, “… she’s Doctor Mbogo”, speaking with a touch of pride (146). Were it not for education, he would not be speaking proudly. He feels elevated to have a ‘doctor’ as his wife. This also accentuates the collective importance attached to education. Getting married to an educated woman and more so to a ‘doctor’ metaphorically presents his entry into modernity.

The spaces provided by education allow Zollo to meet the different women whom he relates with including those from different races and social classes. Zollo, for example, negotiates with Nyambiu that he no longer has time for her because he has another woman who is a doctor. Nyambiu too has another man whom she is intending to marry despite her love for Zollo whom in *My Life with a Criminal*, she calls “lover boy” (142). This love portrays the optimism that foreshadows Nyambiu’s future of getting married after Zollo has left her. Nyambiu resigns to her fate and decides to go home (147) to await her lover. Anthony is not a bad man but Nyambiu hopes to have her ‘lover boy’ back. The tone set by the narrator is that of despair and highlights the helplessness of Nyambiu in the face of Zollo and his lover, ‘Doctor Mbogo.’ Nyambiu’s chances of becoming Zollo’s wife are minimal because introducing another woman proves that he will never choose Nyambiu again. Nyambiu’s
relationship with the other man shows that her affair with Zollo is bound to fail in whatever space they are in. Tension even builds between Nyambiu and Mbogo because of Zollo. For example, Mbogo tells Nyambiu,

I am a jealous lady Miriam. Just excuse me. This husband of mine is very slippery. He hardly gets out of my sight. I wouldn’t allow that: every lady I meet seems to have a go at him. Can’t allow it (146).

Nyambiu does not take it lightly because to her, Mbogo should know Nyambiu is the first woman in Zollo’s life. It is ironical as she talked to herself: “… Does she think at his age he hasn’t had other women? Doesn’t that show how little she knows about Jack?” (146).

Finally Jack does not marry her either as learned through an interview with the author. The conflict between Nyambiu and Mbogo leaves Zollo protecting his new found love by ignoring Nyambiu and dancing with her despite Nyambiu’s presence. This is caused by the distance that is created by the time when Zollo is in prison when he orders Nyambiu never to go to prison to see him again and to find a man for herself. In order to achieve a peaceful coexistence between the three parties, negotiations have to be conducted. Mbogo and Zollo continue dancing while Nyambiu is left questioning herself about the man she is in love with. This implies that there is no hope of having Zollo back. She thus resigns and gets a taxi to go home. The tone set by the narrator is that of despair and highlights helplessness.

I have discussed how despite the prevailing tension between Nyambiu and Mbogo because of Zollo, tends to depict jealous. Let me now turn to Nyambiu and Zollo’s relationship. Their social context is that of a non-criminal woman and the other a
prisoner. Nyambiu looks at Zollo optimistically unlike he who conveys fear of wasting the beauty’s time as she awaits for him for twenty eight years. Zollo views the relationship as troubled. He acknowledges that being in prison and especially for the long period he has been sentenced makes him see that the relationship will be unsuccessful. Zollo, thus, is aware of the obstacles Nyambiu will face when he leaves prison. For example, adjusting to live with somebody who is a criminal, a stranger like and that Nyambiu will not love him.

Kiriamiti, however, seems to suggest that this apparent misgiving in Zollo that Nyambiu will not still love him is false. This is because when Zollo visits her, despite having another lover, Nyambiu responds positively to his love by kissing him passionately. I guess, had, the son not interrupted, she would have yielded to making love. Had Zollo not insisted on Nyambiu getting another lover, she would have waited for him. This story also creates a sense of unity which is in line with the author’s strategy of using a story within a story, where the main story gives room for another story to be told as a frame for comparison. Nyambiu’s influence on the criminal in Zollo is that despite having told Nyambiu to look for another lover, he knows the good she has done for him and her understanding nature.

The study has indicated that love relationships experience multiple realities. How do I view many relations in a changing environment? There is a notable way in which activities of the city affect man manipulating the women in the lives of criminals in the novels. Individuals, for example, betray each other for love. Nyambiu betrays Zollo by marrying Antony and Zollo goes for Doctor Mbogo. In the novel *My Life in Crime*, Zollo exaggerates Nyambiu’s behavior while he is in remand awaiting
sentence. He states: “As she went, she almost tore herself into pieces” (231). On the other hand, Nyambiu’s mother Salome Wangari, after waiting for years to have her daughter married in church, is devastated. What about Zollo’s mother? Invitation of friends and relatives, preparations which have worn her out makes her feel very low. And Connie, Zollo’s sister, who is very anxious to have her brother wed after seeing Nyambiu grow into a deep relationship with him and worse still for her as one of the maids! It devastates her. What about Linda whose luxurious life Ngure just terminates especially being taken to work in the morning, collected for lunch and evening? Hellene and Elizabeth must have been disappointed when they learn about Ngure’s escape with their father’s and boss’s money respectively and especially because of their pregnancies. In *My Life in Prison* Hellene tells Kiriamiti,

... It saved my life. When I knew you had run away, I decided to kill myself. I bought some tablets intending to take an overdose. Daddy realized I was mad about you and, taking that advantage, convinced me you did all that because you loved me too. He convinced me you’d come back for me, John. Like a fool, I believed you would come back, so I waited patiently, month after month, imagining how I would hold you when you came back to me. By the time I gave up expecting you, I was nursing a baby boy. Looking at him has always reminded me of you (222).

What Hellene has said above is not enough and she goes further to express her anger about Kiriamiti,

“I had to hate you, John. Imagine the disappointment you gave me. How could you leave me suffering all that shame? And why did you have to tell dad about it in the first place? I think I hated you for that” (222).
I have looked at how Kiriamiti has used social relationships, multiracial affairs, tension and education to present man’s manipulation of the women in the lives of criminals. Next I examine the strategies that Kiriamiti uses to present man manipulating the women in the lives of criminals.

2.1 Strategies used to present women with criminals

Kiriamiti has used literary strategies to present man manipulating women in the lives of criminals. The author has made distinct and deliberate choices of style as a way of representing the many realities in relationships. Some of the strategies include roles of women through space and locality where Kiriamiti explores the public and private setting that the individuals operate in. That is his relationships in the urban and in the rural set up both in Kenya and Congo; writing on religion, symbolic use of letters as a means of inner expression of friendship, rethinking women manipulation and stereotypes. These socially produced constructions, according to Anderson (1983) are based on imagination. That is prejudice and discrimination about the different women Zollo also Ngure meets as his lovers or those he meets in bars as prostitutes. Below is an analysis of different strategies which show how man manipulates women in the lives of criminals.

2.2 Space and locality

The author has used both urban and rural spaces to capture man’s manipulation of women as they deal with criminals. Within this setting, Kiriamiti looks at how individuals are faced with boundaries that are erected by criminals. These barriers may be physical, social and economic. They are psychological barriers which are portrayed in public and private settings that the individuals’ operates in. Michel
Foucault (1980) explores space in terms of social relationships between people and within groups of people. He comments that,

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at the moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of network that connects points and intersects with its own skein (22).

This seems to suggest that people will inevitably meet because the present technological developments in the world have made interaction possible. According to Nancy Duncan, “individuals interact and experience different spaces depending on their gender and other identities.” She argues that public places are usually considered places that large numbers of people occupy and carry out their businesses and other interactions in an ‘acceptable’ manner, while private spaces involve privacy, intimacy, comfort, a sense of freedom and liberation (128), public site “is not just a site for state politics and regulations nor is it limited to the market place or economy. It is also the site of oppositional social movements …where state and its power are open to challenge” (130).

2.2.1 Urban space

Kiriamiti has used the urban setting as a technique to present the woman who interacts with the criminal in Zollo in Kenya also known as Ngure while in Congo and has to be shaped. Kiriamiti’s novels are set in Kenya and Congo urban centers, at Nairobi and Bukavu respectively. These two major towns provide urban settings where the women meet with Zollo and Ngure respectively. For example, Ngara High school gate where Zollo meets Nyambiu is an urban setting. It is from this meeting
that a relationship develops. The two continue meeting in public settings such as Terrace Hotel where Nyambiu will learn what sort of a character Zollo is. Once he starts a fight, it will continue and won’t stop, *My Life with a Criminal* (59). It is only Nyambiu who stops him and he complies.

While in Bukavu, Zollo finds Linda at a bus stop. This is another urban setting. He stops his vehicle and he offers to carry her where he strikes a deal with her. They have to get Zollo’s luggage from the hotel and move in to her house. Through interaction Zollo appreciate Linda and vice versa and so is Nyambui. Linda interact with Ngure and both appreciate and respect each other, strangers as they are.

Nyambiu and Zollo’s relationship does not raise any opposition and is appreciated by Connie, Zollo’s sister and even his mother. Nyambiu is even assisted by her mother-in-law who stays with her child as she goes to a teacher training college. The members of the community who will participate in Zollo and Nyambiu’s marriage will benefit once Nyambiu finishes college as a teacher. Another situation where Nyambiu relates with criminals is in her house. Though in a private surrounding, there are many people who are sharing their loot and Nyambiu takes her position on the periphery, listening to the men. She enjoys entertaining them as she learns their actual characters. In the novel *My Life with a Criminal* she has this to say about them, “They had faces which announced danger yet they were not dangerous. They were people who looked like they could put up a fight if someone provoked them” (36). This is ironical because even after realizing who these people are she still has a heart for them. She says,
I wanted them to stay till supper time and I would make something special. Somehow I felt that they were Jack’s protection, especially against the man who had talked to me on the phone. This thought alone made me warm towards them (36).

Another incident that takes place in an urban setting is when Zollo, Ndung’u and Njoroge are on their way to Congo. After their stop over at Nakuru, Ndung’u and Njoroge indulge in drinking with the girls they meet at Amigos Hotel. It is as a result of this meeting with the girls that they fight police officers. They are arrested. Zollo escapes narrowly and the duo is left behind to answer charges of different crimes they have committed. Had they avoided the women, their journey to Congo would have progressed. By examining the language used at the bar by Njoroge and Ndung’u towards the girls reveals urban sentiments and opinions about the girls who have a lot of influence on these criminals. The girls are labeled prostitutes. This is a stereotype made visible by the use of the word ‘prostitute’ in the sentence found in My Life in Crime: “Someone is bringing us a hell of a lot of trouble because of a mere prostitute” (104).

The word prostitute is not only derogatory but also oppressive and divisive. It shows that men have assigned meaning to the female body and by this word have an immediate discoursal hold over it. The description of these girls by Njoroge and Ndung’u as prostitutes is violent by nature. The writer uses a language that invokes animal imagery. Even when the insult does not change the girls, it leads the duo into problems with their police boyfriends. Yet still one can argue that from the incidences that appear in Kiriamiti’s novels women have been presented as having vital roles in the lives of criminals in the urban space.
2.2.2 The private setting

Private setting is that setting away from urban setting that an individual has. It is use in the novels points to the different points of view that Kiriamiti adopts in his narratives. He depicts his characters as appropriating the private places available to them to articulate their grievances. These narratives allow for a perspective: that is through framing a part of Nyambiu’s story as a journey entry.

When Kiriamiti manipulates the women in his novels, he uses the narrative voice of Nyambiu and that of the narrator and this gives both of them the freedom to tell their own stories. The dialogues on the other hand present the voices of the other female characters and their roles in the lives of the criminals. In the novel *My Life with a Criminal*, Nyambiu, in the first chapter locates her where about. She is in secondary school at Ngara Girls High school and in Form 4. She is concerned with her studies and does not want to indulge in relationships with men. Just then, Zollo appears in her life. Falling in love with Zollo makes her realize who she is. Here Nyambiu represents herself since it allows for the ‘I’ narration. She tells her own story by giving eye witness accounts of her observations and her reactions as she relates with Zollo the criminal. The narrator uses the present tense to show the immediacy of the events. It also suggests authenticity and an element of her feelings towards Zollo. Her love for Zollo was sincere and not false.

In the novel, Nyambiu accounts for her emerging from the naïve girl to one exposed to love through the change of friends. Initially, her friends are her classmates and in the process of their going out for lunch she encounters a man who will change her life. The man introduces lunches, outings in cars and the idea of love which Nyambiu
longs to hear (16). Zollo makes Nyambiu shy when he tells her, “You have a nice voice, Nyambiu, I like it. It makes me love you” (15). This makes Nyambiu’s heart to start racing. This is what she has been longing for over the last two days (since they met). She is ready for a relationship unlike when her classmates are teasing her (5-6).

According to Nancy Duncan in *Problematizing Gendered Spaces: Public versus Private Space* (2009), “Renegotiating Gender and sexuality in public space involves privacy, intimacy, comfort, a sense of freedom and liberation” (128).

Nyambiu takes note of what happens around her and even has Zollo visiting her home where she serves him beer. “Jack was the first person and only person I served” (17) and this is to her mother’s surprise since she did not involve her children in her business. This erects a boundary between Nyambiu and men. Immediately the mother arrives, Nyambiu leaves for her room. She has no say in having Zollo go to her room and has to comply by leaving the beer house and also to avoid her mother confirming her suspicions that there is something between the two. Controlling Nyambiu from the men drinkers creates boundaries that define who she is. Being in the beer selling room is an act of indirect rebellion and presents an opportunity for the mother to know she has an issue. The mother thus asks Nyambiu, “Did you leave almost everything you had here?” (8). This is because Nyambiu appears in the room after every other ten minutes. Nyambiu and Zollo continue meeting in private until they move to Zollo’s house as husband and wife.

### 2.3 Religion

Kiriamiti portrays religion as playing an important role in the relationship of the women and the criminals. I get to see the relationship between Zollo and Nyambiu as portrayed in Nyambiu’s letter. The idea of going to church provides a socio-cultural
environment for them to meet. In the name of going to church, Nyambiu intends to meet Zollo who however does not turn up. Nyambiu’s thoughts about Zollo while she is in the church make her not to receive the body of Christ. Receiving the sacrament requires sanctity in body, soul and mind. This presents the role religion plays in the life of Nyambiu. She cannot joke with the sacrament as she knows her preoccupation in thoughts about Zollo.

Nyambiu’s mother does not attend church but as an ideal parent, introduces her daughter to Christianity by taking her to a Catholic Priest for baptism (1) and later she is confirmed by a Bishop, meaning she is a firm Catholic. Wangari is a brewer of illicit beer though she insists on her daughter solemnizing her wedding in church. This shows how, despite being a brewer, she is still a believer in Christianity and wants her children to remain in the church. This is what she calls to wed. Just as the Wangaris are Catholics so are the Kiriamitis. The Kiriamitis are both primary school teachers and firm Christians. Nyambiu is a devout believer and even at times insists Zollo attends church. She even takes her mother-in-law and sister-in-law to church when they visit her house. The two families thus share the same religion though at first Nyambiu attends an unspecified church. In the letter she writes to Zollo, she tells him that “On Sundays I go to a church of my choice…at St. Peter’s Clavers” (18). This is a Catholic Church as well. Religion therefore seems to help the two families relate well. Nyambiu’s world view is completely changed by religion. It is on several occasions when her husband is in problems that she prays for him. It does not matter how long it takes for a prayer to be answered because finally what she prays for is accomplished when he is pushed by his wife the ex-nun to stop stealing completely and turns to other sources of livelihood of farming and writing. He states in an article in the Daily
Nation, “What saved me was my wife, Julian. She’s the reason I changed completely he says, admitting that he used to take his future wife out on date in stolen cars, but she didn’t know at the time”.

Since Christianity is supposed to make people equal and teaches about love. It has no boundaries. Religion then plays a major role in women such as Nyambiu and Julian in the life of Zollo.

2.4 Symbolic use of letters

Kiriamiti uses letters in both *My Life in Crime* and *My Life with a Criminal*. The use of letters serves to project love. For example, in *My Life with a Criminal* Nyambiu writes to Zollo (18). This is after she misses a chance to discuss their relationship when Zollo visits her at their home. When the mother gets home, Nyambiu has to leave the beer selling room where Zollo is seated as he enjoys his beer. Nyambiu cannot fool her mother over their relationship and since she cannot go to the room, she decides to write him a letter so that as Nyambiu puts it, “to go with me in his heart” (18). The following day is a Saturday and Nyambiu would be able to see Zollo until the following Monday. So, Nyambiu chooses to write and express her gratitude towards his visit and to request him to meet her on Sunday at St. Peters Clavers. It is mandatory to give Zollo the note as he leaves so that he reads what she feels about him.

Eight months after Zollo meets Nyambiu, he writes her a success card which makes her heart go raving. It is beautiful, expensive and with a message she had never read, “…It is only your best performance that will tell me I never interfered with your
school life only that alone will erase the guilty conscience in me. My fate depends on your performance…” (19–20).

This part of the success card is a foreshadow of the part Zollo will play towards Nyambiu’s life who in turn performs extremely well so that later in life, he takes her as a wife and takes the role of a woman, wife, cook, cleaner of clothes, prays for him when he is in problems, guides and counsels because of his roguish life, visits him at the police custody, pleads with him to stop stealing, defends him from those talking evil of him, a mother of his son and so on.

In the novel *My Life with a Criminal*, Zollo writes Nyambiu a letter which is delivered to her by a policeman on the sentencing day. In this letter he expresses to Nyambiu what he has always denied “… I am a born criminal…we would be inclined to believe this.” He also expresses his wish towards her life. It is however ironical to tell her “… let me not be the last” (118 -119). On the day she is taken by Zollo to his house as wife, she states that “…this home which was to be mine till death did us part?” (29) Nyambiu has provided Zollo the necessary love such that he also acknowledges that “The greatest loss I’ll live to remember is you.” (119). Though Zollo is not sincere when he tells her “… you are the first and last. Quoting from the Bible you love, ‘Alfa and Omega’ (119). It is sarcastic because Zollo does not live to his word. At the end of the novel, Zollo chooses to love another woman, ‘Doctor’ JacquelineMbogo. This portrays a lie considering what he had previously told Nyambiu.

This is characteristic of people in love. Nyambiu is no longer near Zollo and they are far apart. Despite the distance, Nyambiu still has a place for Zollo even if she has
another lover who only comes into her life after nine years since Zollo’s imprisonment. She only gets the lover because of Zollo’s persistence on her to get another man while he is in prison. This change of love life for Nyambiu and Zollo affirms what he states, “wendo Munene ndukinyaga” (Great love does not end up well). Nyambiu sincerely loves Zollo and affirms that he makes her grow from a virgin to a woman, that is from A to B. Despite this love, finally, Nyambiu and Zollo’s love does end badly because he leaves her for Jacqueline Mbogo and though she too falls in love with another man, who is the father of her daughter.

Friendships form love in the city and urban setting and are strengthened by women like Nyambiu, Hellene, Elizabeth and Njeri who are either working in offices or are prostitutes. The women are from different countries and races and Zollo loves all of them and treats each according to attitude. Through the letters each woman writes, they express what they think of their relationship with criminal in Zollo. For example, Nyambiu writes to him that she cannot wait until Monday to see him (18). Although she waits for him for several hours, he does not turn up.

In the novel *My Life in Crime*, Elizabeth writes to Ngure expressing her love and what may befall him if he does not do as she wishes (139). This gives Ngure an opportunity to think of how to leave Congo. He robs his boss Mr. Stephano. Ngure’s pretense of understanding, acceptability and compatibility are features common in friendships that go beyond race. These are universal features of friendship. They are effectively brought out by the use of the letters. After reading the letters, Ngure as an individual is affected. Thus, after the letter from Elizabeth, Ngure’s mind only thinks of how to leave Congo as soon as possible though it is not his initial intentions. Instead of
finding love and friendship in the letter, it instead triggers a quick escape, living
Elizabeth and Hellene with his unborn children.

2.5 Rethinking women’s roles

In representing women’s roles in the lives of criminals, Kiriamiti does not ignore that
the characters are likely to be influenced by their locality. For example, one person
who influences Nyambiu’s life is Salome Wangari, her mother who lives in Nairobi as
an illicit beer brewer. Separated from her husband, she brews illicit beer to earn a
livelihood since she has children to look after. It is in this city environment that
Nyambiu is brought up and attends school. While in school, Nyambiu’s classmates
discuss boyfriends as they cross–examine her. Kiriamiti here presents a situation
where the writer manipulates the woman in the lives of the criminals. In the novel My
Life with a Criminal, Wanja’s main concern is whether Nyambiu “…has ever been
laid” (5). At a closer look, Njambi, who is Nyambiu’s classmate, decides to chip in by
telling Penny to ask a direct question because Nyambiu’s answer only causes
laughter. Sex issues are discussed by age mates and the idea of having time for such
makes Nyambiu to tell Njambi to have her boyfriend plus what she would bring her.
“Let him not waste his calories for nothing. Why don’t you have the two of them
yourself?” (5)

Nyambiu feels these girls are too unfair to her because she states that she would not
get any sleep if she dreamt of having a boyfriend (6). These girls want to initiate
Nyambiu to their clique but she is not ready. Her main purpose in life is to work on
her typing lessons, classwork and private studies. It is not until her final year in
secondary school that Nyambiu encounters Zollo who decides to trace her to the
school gate where they meet as stated in My Life in Crime (43). This encounter shapes
Nyambiu and Zollo’s lives as each influences the other adversely. Nyambiu’s relationship with Zollo alters her life both at home and school because at home, she is always in happy moods as in *My Life with a Criminal* (10) and at school, after sitting for her final exam, she attains a First Division (23).

Romanticizing this relationship plays a major role in Nyambiu taking care of her lover. When she moves to his house, she has to do his housekeeping and wash his clothes which used to be taken to the drycleaners as she states in *My Life with a Criminal* (32). Zollo too states in *My Life in Crime* (49),

> Life in my apartment in Wood Street soon after Mirriam shifted in changed. Everything was re-arranged. The kitchen for one came to constant use. The sofas got covers …Since that time I was never without a packet of cigarettes. (49)

Nyambiu is working with East African Airways even before she moves with Zollo to his house. So, money is not an issue to her though Zollo often buys her expensive dresses and gives her part of the loot to take to the bank. The issue of money is not raised and so Nyambiu’s affair with Zollo is based on love (16). Zollo expresses his love for Nyambiu which makes her very happy. It only arises at the beginning of the novel (1), where the narrator explains why Wangari, Nyambiu’s mother sends her husband away. His work is only to drink and violently claim for food he does not provide for. When he becomes a burden to her, Wangari “decides to call it quits with this ‘symbol’ of a husband and try life on her own” (2). Unlike her parents who do not portray any signs of love, Nyambiu’s relationship with Zollo is based on seemingly mutual love and friendship. This young generation is very different from the older generation.
The wedding ceremony that never takes place presents an opportunity for the author to portray the view of the old generation against that of the young. The old generation insists on a wedding whilst the young simply claim they are already married. For example, Wangari insists on Nyambiu and Zollo getting married when they are already living as husband and wife. This is something that worries Nyambiu more than anything else. Her biggest worry is not keeping their word to Wangari, her mother as they had promised. Nyambiu states,

It was about nine months now since I moved into his house. Things had started taking a new shape. We had promised mom that we would prepare for a wedding when we saved enough money. She had started insisting that we keep our promise, but looking at Jack I could tell that there was nothing like that on his mind. Things were bad on my side for I realized that I was pregnant (78-79).

Zollo is not for the wedding but for marriage. According to him, moving in to his house with Nyambiu is what matters. It is marriage but according to Wangari, her joy is when her daughter marries in church. Through a dialogue the two discuss on the two issues: marriage and wedding as highlighted in My Life in Crime,

..., we have to marry... during my leave, we should have a wedding.”

‘Well, marrying is one thing and a wedding ceremony is another, I told her. ‘Do you mean you just want us to marry or to have a wedding ceremony?’

‘I mean I want a ceremonious wedding, following my mother’s wishes, and it is my duty to have her wishes carried out as long as I live (222).

Zollo and Nyambiu have contrasting ideas concerning the two ideals of a wedding and marriage and when Zollo finally yields to the marriage, it does not succeed.
Other than Nyambiu, Zollo’s mother, Ann Wanjiru and his sister Connie have also asked Zollo to wed. Connie has even made it a song whenever she meets him. Despite finally agreeing to have the wedding and arrangements made, Zollo is arrested on the eve of the wedding. Thus, Nyambiu is married but never wedded. This has a negative impact on the love between Zollo and Nyambiu since they will part for many years and though Nyambiu tries to keep the fire burning by regularly visiting Zollo in prison, he discourages her and finally tells her to remarry. Nyambiu at first is hurt by this suggestion but in the end she yields and gets a lover. This breaks the love between Zollo and Nyambiu which they previously had vowed to retain till death parted them (29). The initial reluctance by Zollo not to wed Nyambiu is a manifestation of his devious nature considering he comes to love someone else later on even after calling Nyambiu his first and last.

As far as Zollo’s women friends are concerned, they are all working and so earning some money. They work in offices, banks, bars or as illicit beer brewers. For example, Nyambiu is working with East African Airways, Linda is a banker, Elizabeth a secretary, Hellene in an office in her fathers’ business, and Suzy Njeri is a bar attendant. The idea of working women portrays economic development in a modern capitalistic world. The women therefore are now taking the initiative to change their history of oppression under modern circumstances, which also dictates that the woman should use what they have earned to better themselves. For instance, in the novel My Life with a Criminal, Stephano makes his children to earn their own living, “The millionaire, who was their father always told them to make sure each earned his own dollar, and that they should not sit idle to capitalize on his gains. They were earning their dollars alright, but in their father’s business!” (126).
Linda houses Zollo in the first two months after arriving in Congo before he gets a job. She too supports herself through her earnings. On the other hand, after finishing Form 4 and the typing course Nyambiu gets employed by the East African Airways. Later when Zollo is imprisoned, with the help of her mother-in-law, she goes to a teacher training college and qualifies as a teacher.

Nyambiu’s mother, Salome Wangari, brews illicit beer to earn a living for the upkeep of her children and herself. She therefore has to make ends meet after sending her husband away. The illicit brew fetches good money and she is able to rent an extra room for her daughters next to her bar. She can also afford to pay for her children’s school fees and the typing lessons that Nyambiu attends in the evenings and on Saturdays.

Zollo’s mother, Ann Wanjiru, is a teacher at their rural home. She teaches in a school around home while her husband in a school far away from home except during the holidays. She can afford a good livelihood for her children. Her husband, Zollo reveals that he teaches in a school forty miles away from home as Zollo says in *My Life in Crime* (93). Elizabeth too works for the Greek millionaire as a secretary at Bukavu. She lives with her parents and she can afford to provide education for her son in Britain even after being deserted by the father of her son as presented in *My Life in Prison* (223). Connie is the other woman mentioned in the novels. She is a teacher and can afford a fairly good livelihood from her earnings.

Suzy Njeri is another of Zollo’s woman friends who is a prostitute. She also informs and entertains men like Zollo as he states in *My Life in Crime*, “There was a girl
called Suzy Njeri, whose work was to do the beds in the empty rooms, who used to suck me of a few pounds and I used to ride her whenever I felt like it” (178).

Since Njeri cannot manage life from her little pay, she has to supplement it by engaging in other businesses and no wonder she practices prostitution to earn an extra coin.

2.6 Stereotypes of women

A stereotype according to Stroebe and Insko (1989) is “a set of beliefs about personal attributes of a group of people” (5). This, Stroebe and Insko argue, is a neutral and reasonable definition of stereotypes because over the years the term has gained certain negative connotations to mean biased perceptions of persons and groups (1989:5). Although this argument may be valid and indeed useful for the present study, the fact that more often than not stereotypes tend to form the basis for prejudice and discriminate against ‘out-groups’ cannot be disputed (Mutungi, 2008: 81). Prejudice can be defined as a negative attitude towards a group or persons which is as a result of any stereotyping which in essence associates members of a particular group with predominantly negative attributes. In a study of the Kenya winning film Dangerous Affair, Sippala (2004) claims that “stereotypes operate on a pendulum where societal attitudes are not necessarily fixed but they are built on widely held beliefs and prejudices in society” (30). Once these beliefs and prejudices are circulated in the society Sipilla says, “they tend to construct and reinforce certain perceptions about people or situations” (30). It is these perceptions that eventually lead to negative stereotyping of those that do not belong to a particular group in that social set up.

Race and tribal differences tend to lead to the stereotypical casting of people in cities and towns. Kiriamiti, as a writer, reinforces certain familiar discourses on women and
the criminal utilize these stereotypes as he cruise through the city space. The women in Kiriamiti’s novels are stereotyped in form and content. The woman is the one who is cheated sexually. For example, Nyambiu’s mother is married and then separated, Nyambiu at the school gate is infatuated with Zollo, so are the ladies in Congo like Linda, Hellene and Elizabeth and Suzy Njeri at Kagondo Bar. According to John Reilly, “Stereotypes or characters cast from a predictable mold shaped by popular expectations, have a natural home in popular literature, which re-sounds with images and abbreviate thoughts that make up the common consciousness of a culture or one of its subdivisions” (1999:429).

The stereotyped character is important in Kiriamiti’s crime and mystery writing because Reilly claims he sets up expectations or even suspicions in the mind of the reader (1999:430). That is, the reader knows what to expect from such a stereotyped character even before they plunge themselves into action. In a study on the representation of the Greek stereotype in Congo, Ojwang (2005) observes that in stereotypical representation, the subjects are well-known before they are actually encountered so that once they are encountered they are only slotted into already scripted roles (6).

In Kiriamiti’s novels the stereotyped female characters are expected to take up certain roles before they actually take them and even their performance in those roles is predetermined depending on what stereotypical traits are in circulation. For example, when Zollo meets Linda waiting for a bus and he gives her a lift, even before the lady does anything for Zollo, the reader is persuaded to slot Linda as a loose woman out for gains from him because of the stereotype established about women My Life in
In a study on the relationship between sexual differences and social behavior Eagly (1987) observes that many gender and ethnic/racial stereotypes are actually shaped by the social roles that people from different groups take when intergroup contact occurs (15). For example, any contact with a beautiful lady in these novels means laying her. Zollo cannot see anything else in a woman other than the sex that she can give him. Altman looks at such behaviors in Global Sex as, “…the development of a sense of identity and assertion among people who come together through a common sexuality or (as in the case of sex workers) a shared relationship to the economy of sex” (75).

In Kenya, stereotypes are one of the most ubiquitous popular attitudes whether in reality or in fiction. The most enduring and perhaps widespread of all being the tribal stereotypes in which certain attributes are associated with particular tribes. For example, the Kikuyu tribe is said to love money which is realized either through work. In Kiriamiti’s novels, the Kikuyu women in My Life in Crime, Wangari is seen brewing illicit beer for money, Njeri is prostituting for money and Wambui in Congo is busy making money through trade. Connie is working as a teacher, Wanjiru as a teacher, Nyambiu is working with East African Airways, Wangari as an illicit beer brewer, Linda as a banker, Elizabeth as a secretary and Hellene is working in her fathers business. This confirms what Bhabha says that “stereotype …is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always in place and already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated” (1994: 66).

Racial prejudice is also presented by Kiriamiti in his novels. He lies to the two Greek women, Hellene and Elizabeth: Hellene is aware of Elizabeth’s friendship with Ngure
and still goes ahead to befriend him. The novelist presents these women as naïve.

Homi Bhabha says the following in the location of culture,

> A stereotype is a supplication because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (that the negation of the other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations. (1994: 75)

Female stereotypes are another aspect featured by Kiriamiti in his two novels. When women come into the criminal’s life, they are there for his (mis)use. In fact, women are used as ‘status symbols’ that define the kind of man one is, notes Musangi in her thesis (2008: 98). When Zollo moves in with Wanjau, making this his first home in Nairobi, he feels that he has become a ‘big man’. “It was a very nice room and I enjoyed the time I stayed in it. I was now becoming my own boss and depending on myself bringing women home whenever I felt like it,” *My Life in Crime* (14).

Throughout the texts, women are described in terms of physical beauty. This is often a stereotype of women as figures that depict overt beauty yet ignored about the intricacies of the world in which they live. For instance, Nyambiu in Kiriamiti’s novels is said by Zollo in *My Life in Crime*. The photo in Nyambiu’s student bus pass, is what really drives Zollo to go look for her. (44). On meeting Milly, Zollo says,

> …One thing I have just forgotten to tell you is that when I saw this girl, I realized her whole beauty, she was the most attractive girl in all the groups that I had set my eyes on that day. She was about seventeen, with bright intelligent eyes, and a structure that matched her five feet four. When she smiled, it was then that she showed her whole beauty. I liked the way she spoke in English, and the way she stole glances at me
when I was not looking at her. On the way to the hotel, I felt for sure that I had at last met my Hellen of Troy. This girl looked feminine (44).

The language used to describe Nyambiu focuses on her physical beauty not only in the above description but throughout the two novels.

The novelist also presents any woman who goes to the bar as a prostitute, justifying her being sexually harassed by the men. For instance when Zollo asks Nyambiu to find him at Terrace Hotel so that they can go and visit her mother, she is harassed by two men who take her for a prostitute. The men even create a story about their having spent money on her and her denial to keep her part of the bargain. In the novel *My Life with a Criminal* one of the men quips, “Any woman coming to a bar without her husband is a whore. Who can claim her? She is for me, you, and anyone else who feels like it” (56). After the insults, Zollo has to rescue his ‘wife’ and fights the men until somebody has to request Nyambiu to stop Zollo from fighting.

However, most of the stereotypes discussed in Kiriamit’s novels are instances of cross-racial miscommunications. In certain situations they serve to provide answers about the women actions towards shaping the criminals and also assist communicating love for the man they all love.
CHAPTER THREE

Mediating Women’s Roles

This chapter looks at the representation of women’s roles through marriage, love, friendship, sex and prostitution in Kiriamiti’s writing. It examines the marriage between Zollo and Nyambiu. A reading of Kiriamiti’s *My Life in Crime* and *My Life with a Criminal* reveals how the two individuals view relationships and how it is also viewed by other characters in the two novels. The chapter also looks at love relations that are presented by the author when in Congo and Kenya.

The story about Nyambui and Zollo is a tragic romance. The two meet one day at school gate as Zollo bring Nyambui her bus pass. Their meeting leads to a friendship and to a love relationship. Nyambui is in form 4 by this time and goes through her studies well. After school she gets a job with East African airways. It is at this time that their relationship grows with their constant outings in stolen cars. Zollo visits Nyambui’s home and later he invites his friend Mwangi to tell Nyambiui’s mother of his intention to marry her. Her mother has no problem and four months later after the discussion, she allows her daughter to move in with Zollo as his wife. After their marriage, several significant changes occur in Nyambiu’s life. She learns that Zollo’s office is a bar with loud music and noise, and he is not a salesman but a criminal who even has a gun and bullets. She also discovers that he earns his money by robbing other people. Through marrying a criminal, Nyambiu metaphorically crosses the borderline that robs her of her innocence through an association with criminals. Zollo’s arrest and jailing, signifies the breaking of their relationship.
Kiriamiti’s novels, use words like marriage, love, friendship, sex and prostitution as psychological categories to describe the different girls Zollo meets. For instance when he meets Nyambiu for the first time, he says in My Life in Crime: On the way to the hotel, I felt for sure that I had at last met my Hellen of Troy. This girl looked feminine (44). According to Greek mythology, Hellen of Troy was considered the most beautiful woman in the world. A whole war, one which lasted for ten years, was fought over her.

In Congo, when Miss Makarios is asked by the millionaire to show Ngure around, while seated in Hirji’s hotel, he describes the lady just like others, “…as beautiful as Hellen of Troy, who caused the Trojan war, if she ever existed” (123). When he meets Hellene he says, “She was as beautiful and as sexy as Cleopatra, if she too ever existed, and she had offered all of herself and all that combination to me, a criminal on the run” (143). Through these repeated descriptions, the narrator portrays his involvements with the girls whom he befriends, falls in love with and engages in sex. He however only marries Nyambiu as he jilts the two Greeks. As far as ‘Dr.’ Mbogo is concerned, she is not married since the criminal in him is still very life and he is out to exploit the lady sexually and to frustrate Nyambiu at the end of the novel (a personal interview).

As far as race is concerned, Ngure has no problem about relating with the Greeks until he impregnates them. Race, according to Kwame Antony Appiah in In my Father’s House, entails the possession of certain traits and dispositions (10). The extrinsic features become important in race. Karamaiko is opposed to Zollo’s affairs with his sister. Once Hellene and Miss Makarios realize their condition, each threatens him
with suicide and since he cannot marry all of them, he decides to run away from Congo.

Susan Njeri is the main character involved with a criminal who is a prostitute. However, it is not by choice but circumstances. She cannot get a better job and the only one that is handy is prostitution and adopts it as a lifestyle choice.

By writing about women who shape the lives of criminals, Kirimiti captures contemporary Kenya and Congo societies respectively. Such love relations are evident in Congo when Zollo ditches Linda because of Hellene and Elizabeth. Kiriamiti shows that he has no time for Linda who though a banker can not meet the standards of the Greek ladies. Their families are rich and do not have demands like those of Linda. Linda has to be driven to work in the morning, collected for lunch and taken back then picked up in the evening. On the other hand, Elizabeth and Hellene are from families where there are vehicles to take them to work. Once Ngure starts living with the Stephanos he begins to admire Hellene. In My Life in Crime, Ngure even says, “I had started admiring this Hellene, but I did not want to show it. I know how to approach such girls” (120). Zollo is only out for sexual satisfaction from these girls. He is not ready to marry them, even as he lies to each one of them that he would marry them.

Stereotypes about women in the novels My Life in Crime and My Life with a Criminal present a character contrasts. For instance, Nyambi is educated, has good job and is married to Zollo while Njeri, who is also educated, cannot get a job and is a prostitute who flirts with same man. Wangari on the other hand solves her marital problems by
sending her husband away while Nyambiu does not. She tolerates the criminal in Zollo until he is imprisoned. She gets a friend after nine years of Zollo’s imprisonment.

On the other hand, Wangari value marriage and that is why she plays the role of both the husband and mother of the family. She provides the children with the basics, negotiates Nyambiu’s marriage, mind her daughter’s chastity and so on. When Nyambiu is finally married by Zollo, at first she enjoys marriage life to the full. When she moves in with Zollo she says,

My heart was racing like a horse as Jack opened the door to his house. He stood aside to let me enter the home which was to be mine from then till death did us part. I felt different. I felt I now belonged to someone other than mom or dad. I felt owned and completely belonging to Jack. I felt a different responsibility for this home from what I felt in mom’s home. I started imagining raising my children here in the company of Jack as their father. I was so overwhelmed I could not talk (29).

The words ‘I felt’ are repeated in every sentence in the above paragraph to emphasize Nyambiu’s joy of getting married. She feels owned, belonging, responsible and even overwhelmed by the idea of raising their children with a father as opposed to her fatherless background. As a married woman, Nyambiu will now do his housekeeping (32) and perform her conjugal duties. She says that after looking at herself in the mirror, it announced something to her, telling her that she is no longer a virgin and happy she had lost her virginity to Jack. Meaning she is happy that she is now a married woman.
In marriage, Nyambiu is concerned with those who visit their house. When she enters their house and meets strange men, she is surprised and they are filled with fear apart from Zollo who introduces them to Nyambiu. He tells them, “This is my wife,” Jack said and turned to me… “Everything is quite okay. I’ll explain later,” I told him … (35).

Such a dialogue between the couple helps them come to communicate about the strangers and Nyambiu’s coming home early. Zollo also goes ahead to tell his friends to go on with sharing their loot as Nyambiu is okay being in the house (35). For the first time, as a married woman, Nyambiu learns the truth about the man she is married to. Nyambiu goes ahead to entertain the visitors by making tea. Since this is the first time to receive visitors, she even makes up her mind to make something special for their supper as she feels they are Zollo’s protection. This is protection especially from the man who has talked to her on phone and this thought alone makes her warm towards them (36).

Nyambiu as a wife is also concerned with the husband’s movements. She is worried about the fact that he did not turn up the previous night. Although she does not want him leaving the house, this gives her the opportunity to understand him as she realizes the truth about him especially from the dialogue with the man in the telephone conversation whom initially she takes as insane. Through a flash back, Nyambiu suspects the man to have been right (37).

Nyambiu is also a protective wife. As a married woman, she is afraid that Zollo will get himself into trouble if he goes out (39). She has a chance to study the psychology
of her husband as a terrorist. Despite that, she still takes him as her good old and loving husband. Both love each other and thus the dual protection for the other. Nyambiu does not want Zollo going out again and warns him about being hurt. She is defensive and tells Zollo not to go out as she knows he is going to fight the man who had previously talked to her on phone. She tells him,

“But dear, you must learn to forgive and forget. The telephone man did not know who he was talking to. May be he meant to be good to me”

“What is wrong, then, in letting him know who he was talking to? You are the only valuable thing in my life, Milly, and any one playing about with might as well be committing suicide, you know.”

“Please Jack, please, learn to forgive and forget.” (40)

Nyambiu pleads with her husband until he changes his mind. He stays in the house. Later Zollo calls her and responds as an obligation of duty. In marriage, obedience is very important. Nyambiu stops what she is doing in the kitchen to attend to Zollo (42). Through a conversation that follows, Nyambiu’s protective technique towards her husband is portrayed as a way of dissuading him from going out. Through a negotiation, Zollo wins and goes out (44).

In marriage, when a partner is in trouble, through instinct, the other is always aware. Thus when Zollo participates in crime, Nyambiu becomes restless at her work place and has to leave. Her instinct seems always right and she is convinced that her husband is in trouble when the radio announces a robbery and the following day the same story is in the newspapers. In such situations, Nyambiu suffers a lot and cannot even work and has to lie at the office so that she leaves for home. She attempts to persuade Zollo to try and stop being what he already is: a violent robber (48).
Again, it is only one’s partner in marriage who can ransack their house because they have the freedom and time. Nyambiu does it and comes across the bullets and attempts to convince the hard-hearted criminal what they are though he completely denies, thus fooling each other. Finally, they settle and Nyambiu change to another topic about both of them going to visit her mother. Zollo remembers the promise and asks his wife to join him later at Terrace Hotel so that they go for the visit. It is important to pay their mother a visit. As she goes to Terrace Hotel, some men attack her and Zollo takes the opportunity to defend his wife. He fights the attacker and nobody can stop him apart from his wife.

In marriage, joy or sadness is meant for both people. When Zollo is in trouble, Nyambiu is disturbed. She dreams and later prays for him. He enters the house as she continues beseeching the Lord. She is an intercessor and through these prayers, Zollo escape from his trouble though he does not realize. In their discussion and disagreements, Nyambiu affirms Zollo’s involvement in the robbery as she gets him red-handed with money on the bed (67). Nyambiu can only look at the evils brought to man by money such as murder, robbery, prostitution: conmen and con women.

In marriage, partners protect each other. It is not only Zollo who protects Nyambiu from attacks but Nyambiu also protects Zollo from the police. When she meets Captain with the police on their way to their house Captain is not ready to disclose his friend’s whereabouts and so is Nyambiu when she parts company with the cops, she has to half run and half walk to protect Zollo from arrest (71).
In marriage, one partner raises the mood of the other. When Zollo tries to raise Nyambiu’s moods, she is scared as she knows what is outside there waiting for Zollo who is not bothered. She says he is so relaxed and says,

I looked at him just as a mother looks at an innocent baby and without intending it, I put my arms akimbo, to look at this ignorant “Son of Fate.” He looked straight in my eyes and winked; sometimes he was like a baby. He also seemed to feel protected in my hands and my presence always seemed to give him inspiration of some kind (72-3).

In using the similes in the above passage, the author presents the innocence of Zollo while Nyambiu is worried. On realizing Zollo’s innocence Nyambiu stops worrying, also joins in laughing without a cause and both behaved and even felt like school children (74).

Nyambiu goes on to report about the predicaments that have befallen Captain and like a good accomplice Zollo goes immediately to rescue him. Nyambiu and Zollo should establish a family. Unfortunately, Nyambiu decides to abort when she conceives as a result of Zollo’s staying in the house for six months as he hides (79). Instead of their marriage being a foundation of the family, it does not. This is not the only abortion in their marriage. But just before Zollo and Nyambui’s wedding and establish their family-Nyambiu is expectant-Zollo is arrested on the eve of their wedding day. Finally, while Zollo is in prison, Nyambiu bears a son. When she visits him in prison and she gives him some money, “he claimed I needed every penny I earned, now that I had no one else to support me and I had a child.” (123). When Zollo Nyambiu grows up, he quizzes his mother over his name. He cannot imagine his mother having been married and he is called by his mother’s name. Even when she tries to bring in her
friend as his father, he brushes him off and states, “The man who comes can’t be my
dad. Why is he so black and I am so brown? I was told by Aunt that he isn’t my
father. That is why I don’t use his name (124). Zollo Junior only settles when he is
told where the father is—in prison, and Nyambi has to explain what prison is.

As far as the union of the two extended families where Zollo and Nyambi belong,
there is nothing mentioned by the author concerning their meeting. May be they
intended to meet at the aborted wedding. And what the author portrays of the spouses
is that they should be good role models of their families. Nyambi comes from a
broken marriage where she has no role model despite being brought up by an illicit
beer brewer. Zollo on the other hand is a criminal, a robber. He has parents whom he
does not emulate. Both are teachers and are presented as having a successful
marriage. He takes his own cause of life contrary to societal expectations.

Like a good woman, even after Zollo goes to prison and often tells Nyambi to
remarry, she does not because she feels and sees him as her only future (123). She
elaborates, “But from which ever angle I observed things, I saw him as my only
future. I wanted him to live in my memory and I was glad I was able to keep him with
me even in his absence (123).

It was after nine years that Nyambi stops going to visit her husband in prison. But
even then, Zollo had scolded her about taking her son with her to prison at Naivasha.
This leaves her with the responsibility of explaining to her son about a non-existent
father who does not understand. When father and son finally share a talk, she is
happy.
Despite having had a child with another man, Nyambiu still loves her first husband. When he leaves prison and pays her a visit, she cries in the bedroom as she goes to attend to her daughter. This is because she feels like she has betrayed Zollo by having a child with another man. Nyambiu says that

…I started it all over again, weeping. He had…I hated myself for not being patient enough. At times I felt I should have him for all that. He had insisted that I find someone else, as he too didn’t except to see the outside of the prison walls that soon

In Nyambiu’s opinion, it is her daughter who has caused her all the problems. She recalls the good times she had with Zollo and reminds him of one thing that spoils him, that is stealing. By her study of Zollo’s body language and through a dialogue, Zollo enquires what she is about to tell him. The dialogue leads to each one of them learning about the new other. They are no longer who they used to be before prison. What continues is blame-shifting. Zollo commands Nyambiu to go to where he is seated. Nyambiu has some reservations though she obeys. This shows that she is still in love. Nyambiu is in a dilemma: “having two husbands, both of whom I loved” (134). She moves towards him and is pulled by the love she had for him before. Were it not for the child, Nyambiu would have opted for Zollo than her new lover. But Zollo is full of bitterness and will not forgive Nyambiu. An attempt to reconcile fails and Zollo tells Nyambiu “The heart is willing, dear Milly, but the spirit is protesting. Have you felt like that? (138). Whatever method they try, their marriage cannot be reconciled and is bound to fail. Despite Nyambiu’s use of their son as bait, Zollo declines the reconciliation. Zollo denies his son a father and tells Nyambiu he is her son, and she should make him understand that (139). Despite having begotten the boy in marriage with Zollo, Nyambiu has no option but to swallow the bitter pill. She
cannot comprehend what is happening in her life and will only come to a consensus at the end of novel when she realizes she cannot have Zollo back as he already has another woman (146).

Another person who mediates women roles through marriage is Connie Wanjiku, Zollo’s sister. She is a teacher and already married. Wanjiku has not seen her brother since he left home at the age of fifteen. When Wanjiku goes to her house with her brother, he has an opportunity of seeing photos taken during her wedding. As a married woman, she thinks positively about her brother and since she realizes Zollo is a criminal she advises him to marry so that he can make good use of the money he steals. Otherwise he spent it on prostitutes. In the novel *My Life in Crime* he narrates:

> The problem with me was that with all the cash I had, I did not buy a thing I could live to remember. Instead, I spent it on beer, from this bar to the other, making sure that every prostitute looked my way. Within a short time I was known almost everywhere beer was sold, and within the same period the cops … My sister Connie always asked me to look for a girl to stay with so that she could be saving whatever I got but I had never came across one that attracted me. One thing I wasn’t going to do was to stay with a termagant. She’d have me arrested so as to get the house. I have known many do that. Connie would introduce me to several of her girlfriends but none attracted me. Some were teachers she had known, some were secretaries in various offices and the like But I never felt like loving any of them though I went around well with whoever she introduced me to. I would sometimes go home from town and find two or three girls waiting for me. I have been referee of several showdowns by my girls when they met at my house and each claimed me for a husband (42).
From the above passage, Wanjiku tries all she can to have her brother marry so that his wife can at least make use of the loot. It is ironical that Zollo is not ready to take any girl even Wanjiku’s friends as he does not know their character. Later, when he meets Nyambiu, he introduces her to his sister. When time comes for Zollo to wed, Wanjiku, Zollo’s sister helped a lot in the preparations (222).

In mediating women roles through love, Kiriamiti presents Nyambiu and Zollo’s love relationship as a very important aspect in the two novels. It is love at first sight. Nyambiu falls for Zollo when she meets him. She elaborate,

> On that day, I met Jack. He had brought me my bus pass, which I had dropped on the way to the bus stop that morning.

> Even though my friends always insisted that I accompany them and their boyfriends for lunch, when Jack invited me, I felt reluctant to ask them along. I wanted him all to myself. Strangely, I felt attracted to him and I didn’t want to share his lunch with my friends. He was the only man I had ever admired so far and I wanted to be closed to him.

> … I knew that my life had changed. Jack Zollo had walked into my life and unknowingly changed it completely. I wondered if he was aware of the effect he had on me; an effect even I couldn’t understand (7 -8).

Nyambiu’s feelings towards Zollo presents love. Previously, Nyambiu’s classmates have tried to initiate her into love relationships and she resisted. When she meets Zollo, her love life changes and class work too. On sitting for her monthly exams, in her last two papers, she scores top marks. This means that the affair not only affects her mentally, physically but also psychologically. This is because as Nyambiu walks home, she thinks about Zollo. At home too everyone notices her extraordinary happy
mood. Nyambiu does not love Zollo for monetary gain “...I liked him because I believed he was made for me” (12).

Zollo also loves Nyambiu. Love is two way. It is an intense affection for another arising out of personal ties. It is affection and tenderness based on admiration. It is a deep tender ineffable feeling of affection and solitude towards a person, such as that arising from recognition of attractive qualities or a sense of underlying oneness (>http://www.loveisrespect.org). Zollo expresses his love by telling Nyambiu, “I see I love you” to which she replies, “Thank you.” Zollo asks her, “For?” and she replies to him, “Loving me. I just can’t believe it. Why didn’t you tell me before?” Zollo tells her “…and let me tell you Milly you are the first girl I have ever loved… I hardly do it” (16).

Nyambiu extends her love for Zollo such that when he visits her home, she serves him with beer which she cannot do to any other customer. She explains this saying, “Jack was the first and only person I served” (17).

Love drives Nyambiu risk going to the beer room now that her boy has come. She cannot stay out since she feels protected. When her mother comes back, Nyambiu cannot stay in the beer room and neither can she talk to Zollo. She opts to write him a letter which he does not respond to. Zollo’s love for Nyambiu acts as a catharsis to her brain. She can think and reason rationally. When she writes her final exams she is eager to get the results and when they get out, she discovers that she has passed with a first Division. This earns her a dress, a wrist watch and a pair of shoes from Zollo.
Such an appreciation, she thinks could only come from a lover whom she describes as, “innocent and good-looking, understanding, respectful, patient and loving” (24).

The duo’s love relation develops and grows as they continue meeting and going out to town on weekends. This makes them become more intimate until Nyambiu moves into Zollo’s house. Using a biblical allusion, Nyambiu says, Zollo’s house is to be her home “till death did us part” (29) portraying her wish that nothing will separate them till death. At home, Nyambiu now takes over the role of a lover and a wife. “I was to do his house keeping (32).

Love is further expressed by these lovers in the following dialogue:

“You know what makes you so nice?” he asked me when we got a break.

“I don’t, tell me please, Jack?

“You came into my life just when I needed you badly. You are always punctual in my life, always turning up on scheduler”

“And what else? Tell me something else. Anything else to make me feel I am all yours.”

“Yes, there is another very important thing which I think I have told you before. I mean…there is no need of repeating, is there?

“Tell me again, even a hundred times. I’ll want to hear it…”

“You came into my life when I needed you badly. God meant you to be a gift …His gift to me, a gift I’ll never let go of, and believe me, Milly, nothing will take you away from me, I won’t allow it.”

“I am overjoyed to hear that, Jack. You have never spoken such sweet words before. I don’t know what I can say about it.”(49).
Lovers use such words for each other. Kiriamiti goes further to explain what it entails to protect a lover. When Nyambiu is attacked by drank men at the Terrace Hotel, Zollo comes out strongly to protect her by beating the two men. Nyambiu says that “Jack looked murderous” (58). Playing with his beauty who he takes long to get- his Hellen of Troy-will make one to suffer the consequences. It is only Nyambiu who can stop him from fighting.

Nyambiu also through instinct can tell when Zollo is in problems. Due to the attachment, Nyambiu prays for him. She understands her partner and she imagines what it would mean to lose him. Thus, praying for him to be protected. She dreams about Zollo in problems and the following day reads the same from the papers, as a gesture of love (63, 89), she prays.

Nyambiu’s sixth sense tells her when Zollo is about to land into problems. When they are at Kony Pot Restaurant, Nyambiu senses danger and requests Zollo to leave the place but he gives it a deaf ear. Nyambiu writes “Darling let’s go I don’t like this place and I can see you are not having fun” (65). When he is arrested Nyambiu is affected by being separated from her husband. He however manages to run away from the cells.

When Zollo gets back to his home with Nyambiu after he escapes, she attends to him but later on Nyambiu advises him to “stay indoors until they forget about him” (79). This is because as a lover she already has studied and understood his strengths and weaknesses. As they discuss about their wedding, Zollo expresses his love for her, ‘Look here Nyambiu, you know without my telling you of my affection for you’ (79).
Earlier, Zollo had confessed the following to Nyambiu that, “… the more I stayed with her the more I loved her. There surely must have been something she did to me to make me love her to that extent. Miti shamba, for instance, or am I becoming a bit superstitious?” (62)

The pair’s love cannot be questioned as each confesses. When Zollo decides to move away from Kenya, he shares the secret with his beloved wife. Nyambiu in the novel *My Life with a Criminal* meets Captain with policemen as they go to search for Zollo. After escaping their net, Nyambiu hurries home very first to rescue her husband.

When Nyambiu realizes her lover might be killed in his frequent bank robberies, and Zollo asks her to get him a job, Nyambiu readily tells him to bring her a certificate to get him one. She has concern for him. When Captain informs Nyambiu of Zollo’s arrest and she goes to see him at the police station, the police discuss with her about Zollo. She defends him and answers everything positively about him despite being told by the cops to forget about him in Kiswahili language, “Mama tafuta mwingine. Huyu si wako tena” (97). Nyambiu hate the policemen for being malicious, but this does not stop her from loving Zollo even though he is a thief. During the reading of Zollo’s charges at the court, Nyambiu is there and despite what she hears about him, she does not disown him but instead cries because she cannot imagine a life without Zollo for two weeks. Not even her mother can provide such love as Zollo’s because she breaks into tears and no one could comfort her, not even her mother (100).
Zollo escapes from the cells and Nyambiu has to be secretive and has to keep her husband “a fugitive in hiding” (103). During this time of hiding, she conceives and has to confide her fears and joys in Zollo. She tells him:

“Jack, I am pregnant. Mom is also nagging me about the wedding we had promised her. I have thought about this problem for a very long time and the more I think about it the more the solution eludes me. I have considered your situation and seeing that you have to stay indoors shows me that it is risky or rather impossible for the wedding to be carried out. And here is mom telling me about it every day and as you know, I cannot tell her the truth. I also have that shock that I got when you were arrested. I think it was at that time when I realized how easily I could lose you. I am worried, dear, about what would happen to me if you were imprisoned while I am expecting a baby. You have got away with it twice and each time you get away, you worsen she situation. The third time might be the worst if it happens to come (104).”

She shares the information with her partner and Zollo finally has to leave Nyambiu in Kenya as he takes refuge in Congo for some time. Nyambiu cannot help cry out of love. She explains, “Since I met this man, I guess I had cried and wept more times than when I was a baby, only, it was because of this thing the world felt better to name “LOVE.” (109). She even pleads with Zollo not to have other women while he is away since she is the jealous type. She is told the same by ‘Dr’. Mbogo at the end of the novel.

Finally Zollo cannot escape the police forever and he is at last arrested. Nyambiu visits him at the police station as she is not “…going to leave him for the wolves. I am going to stick to him till he realized he had messed me up and regretted it the rest of his life” (116).
Despite being a robber, Nyambiu states,

But funny enough I never regretted meeting him. He was mine and the only one I could bring myself to love. I never saw beyond him. And I wasn’t wrong, he was the only one whose love would be termed genuine, that is as far as I was concerned.’’ She even imagines saving him and how he will ask her”…to bring a gun to the law courts so that he could use it to escape. I swear I would have done it. … I would have done worse than that if it meant having him back to myself (117 -118).

Instead of rescuing Zollo from the police cells, she receives a letter from him which expresses his greatest loss. “The greatest loss I’ll live to remember is you. To me, you are the first and last. Quoting the Bible you love, “Alfa and Omega” (119). From this quotation Nyambiu and Zollo’s love is genuine. In an interview with the author, to date he still meets her and if a reverse would be made, he would go for her. There is still room for her in his life. Even after telling Nyambiu to get another lover in the letter and Nyambiu waiting for nine years, getting a child with another man, when he ‘leaves prison and visits her, she is ready for a reunion. Zollo tells her, “You are the same Milly. Good-looking and lovable.” Even after Nyambiu getting a child while Zollo is in prison with another man, he has a positive complement. He tells her in My Life with a Criminal, “You are the same Milly. Good-looking and lovable” (133).

When Zollo is jailed, Nyambiu suffers a lot and cannot imagine all her love going down the drain. She comes to terms with his jailing and visits him in prison and twice takes his son with her: once as a baby and at eight years old. They part as husband and wife in her house but Nyambiu meets him the last time at her younger sisters’ pre-wedding when she can no longer tolerate Zollo and ‘Dr.’ Mbogo’s frustrations who tells Nyambiu,
I am a jealous lady Miriam. Just excuse me. This husband of mine is very slippery. He hardly gets out of my sight. I wouldn’t allow that; every lady I meet seems to have a go at him. Can’t allow it. (146)

What sends her away is the couple’s dancing as Nyambiu watches them and each waving goodbye at her.

Ngure’s relationship with the Stephanos grows and all of them want Ngure’s company very much though Karamaikos, their elder brother does not give them a chance. It is during these outings that an affair develops between Ngure and Hellene as he says,

Then things started happening. Hellene had fallen in love with me and I knew it. I had also fallen in love with her but I tried as much as I could not to show it. She would leave her office every time we agreed upon and we would both go to a private room in Hirjis hotel. Our love grew so deep that she suggested we would marry (129).

Like all women, she too is jealous of Ngure having an affair with Elizabeth. She says, “…she claimed that she knew I was having an affair with her father’s secretary and if I did not stop it, she would take further steps. She frames her warning thus, “If you don’t stop the affair between you and Miss Makarios, I’ll do a thing you’ll regret for as long as you live” (130). All these threats are there because of love. Hellene does not want any love competition between Elizabeth and her over Ngure. While Hellene is warning Ngure over his love relationship with Elizabeth on the other hand, Karamaikos warn Ngure about his sister. He claims Hellene is always around when
they go out with their girlfriends and this does not impress him. So he asks Ngure for a favour, that is, to leave Hellene alone.

The love triangle involving Ngure, Hellene and Elizabeth will not end up well. Just as Hellene is not happy with Ngure courting Elizabeth so is Karamaikos about his sister. Hellene too does not want Ngure going out with her elder brother. While Karamaikos is protecting his sister, Hellene does not want her brother interfering with her love affair with Ngure. This is a tricky situation for Ngure as he says:

Well, a terrible coincidence, Hellene warning me against going out regularly with Karamaikos in search of dames, then Karamaikos warning me against a love affair between me and Hellene! Yet, it was not possible to meet their demands if I left Hellene alone as her brother suggested, there was sure to be trouble. If I dropped the connection between me and Karamaikos, he would have me sacked and then Hellene would be a name in the past. If my boss came to know the whole thing, then there would even be more trouble for all, according to Karamaikos theory. Then worst of all, there was Elizabeth who had just come up with a proposal that it was high time we get married. If she too realized that I was a two-sided sword, she would sure cook up something nasty (130-131).

Despite the problems stated above surrounding him, Ngure, does not end his relationship with Hellene. Instead of going out during the evening in Hellene’s company they start sneaking away during the day. Their love is further cemented when they secretly make love. According to Ngure, “She would leave her room at night when everyone else was asleep and came to spend the rest of the hours with me. During the day, we would pretend that we were not interested in each other, but our eyes would never stay for a minute without meeting” (131). Despite the caution by
Karamiakos, Hellene and Ngure continue with their love affair. Karamaikos is wise and can foresee the danger his sister is engaging herself in with this stranger who their family has accommodated.

Elizabeth is also in the love saga. Having had a love affair with Ngure for about four months since he arrived seven months ago, she feels her love for Ngure has reached a breaking point. But when she calls Ngure one Sunday, it is Hellene who picks the call and in return connects Ngure. This brings more problems between her and Ngure as she has already cautioned him about the affair. Hellene is hurt as she delivers the message and he can hear the anger in her voice. When Ngure gets to Elizabeth’s home, there are no signs of trouble until she delivers her worries since she does not know how the lover will respond. She reports verbatim that she is in the family way and tells him the consequences. Her biggest worry is not even the job but her parents’ reaction since she is an only child. She explains to him,

‘Albert, dear, I am in the family way and if we do not marry soon, I’ll lose my job. Anyway, the job does not matter much but the thing that is worrying me is when my parents come to Know of it. They have gone into a lot of trouble over me and if I end up this way, it will be a real shame to them. Shame I cannot stand. Now, I want you to make your decision quickly, you have kept me waiting for a very long time and I can’t wait any longer. My parents already know about you and I am sure that if you tell them, there will be no objection about our getting married. But if they realize how I am and you haven’t told them you want to have me, I can’t stand it. I’d rather not live and I mean every word of it’ (132).

Through vivid description of Elizabeth’s fears, the criminal in Ngure has to act very fast since he is not ready for marriage while in the diaspora. Ngure is a fugitive and so
he lies to Elizabeth that he has also been thinking about it and Elizabeth to give him
three weeks to prepare. He even assures her not to worry because within a month from
then, he would marry her.

The idea of race is introduced by Ngure. “Race”, according to Albert Memmi, dates
back to the fifteenth century and derives from the Latin word “ratio” which means
“chronological Order,” (184) “Race” is today understood as a collection of biological
and psychological characteristic that link the ancestors of a certain group with the
cotemporary group in a single line of descent. In In My Father’s House, Kwame
Antony Appiah examines race as entailing the possession of certain traits and
dispositions (16). The extrinsic features become important in race. There are the
physical features of inheritance like the differences in skin color that members of a
particular race have. Ngure view Elizabeth from a color perspective now that she is
Greek. As he had earlier posited, “Criminals move with the current if you don’t
know” (121). After manipulating Miss Makarios she gives him a hot kiss for the pack
of lies. She threatens to commit suicide if Ngure does not marry her. Before this threat
sinks in Ngure’s head, Elizabeth sends him a letter alerting him about his loss of
affection for her. Elizabeth is presented as a real racist. She states that she has been
relating with a ‘nigger from space’. She is the nigger. While she was relating with
him, did she not realize who he was?

Ngure has been misusing Elizabeth for selfish gains and when she writes him a
threating letter, it triggers his brain and he thinks of leaving Congo within the next
seventy two hours. As if Elizabeth’s letter is not enough torture, in the evening, when
Ngure undresses and smokes, Helenne, as usual steals into his room. This makes
Ngure happy. She does it after getting herself sexually fulfilled and she is ready to pour her predicaments to her mate. She starts with a flashback about running away from Congo to Kenya to get married. She gives a story similar to Elizabeth’s suggesting that Ngure should pull her out of the distress that he put her into. She too is expectant and wants a solution from Ngure. Hellene also threatens to pull herself out of her problem if he cannot. She informs him that she is there early enough so that she knows her fate. Kiriamiti presents Ngure as a wreck and at the same time crafty. Reckless in the sense that he ought to bear in mind that he is a fugitive and should be disciplined while in the diaspora. Crafty because he manages to manipulate the two Greek girls yet they know he has an affair with each. With the pack of lies he has told the two girls, Ngure has to leave Congo the soonest possible to escape the mess as he is already married in Kenya. His pretense in loving is for selfish gains. And unlike Nyambui in Kenya who cannot imagine parting with Zollo at the end of the novel *My Life with a Criminal*, the Greeks have nothing of the sort. They just realize he is gone and do not see him again though Helenne meets him in Kenya after many years. He realizes that he loved her. Ngure, through a flashback in the novel *My Life in Prison* says,

... Yes there were times when I wished a particular moment would last forever, like when I met Hellene and realized she had badly fallen in love with me and I with her, despite who she was a Greek millionaire’s daughter. Yes, some people are capable of undying love. Hellene... but even after she knew I was a crook she still loved me (216).

Why is Hellene a victim of circumstances? She is the type that is locked in the house, has no freedom to interact with other young people and thus, when Ngure comes into their home, she has an opportunity of meeting him and they become ‘lovers.’ When
her love is at a climax, Ngure runs away leaving her pregnant. She however does not give up and comes to Kenya severally looking for Ngure. This is after she reads the novel *My Life in Crime* and realizes who is the author and its content. She does not rest and makes Kenya her favorite destination in search of Ngure. When she finally meets him at the bank, she recognizes him and her greetings are thus in the novel *My Life in Prison*: “When I stretched my hand to take hers, that was not enough for her. She was reaching for my whole body, arms open wide to take me, her lips searching for my cheek, then my lips…” (218). Through a dialogue, she reveals having come to Kenya three times and buying the novel three months ago from London. Hellene’s main concern on her repeated trips to Kenya is for a purpose:

Hellene said, “I have come to Kenya three times, hoping to see you. I wasn’t surprised when I saw you. I believed that one day I would. But I was excited, I have always wanted to see you again because, despite what you did, I still loved you. I tried to reach you through the address you had carelessly left behind but all in vain. When I read your book, I knew why you never replied. I wanted to pay you a visit in prison but I was not sure I would be allowed in…” (221).

From the above paragraph, Hellene is still in love with Ngure despite what he has done to her and the Stephano’s family. Her endless trips to Kenya portray genuine love. Hellene writes to him and even imagines visiting him in prison. There is no pretense that Hellene loves Ngure. Hellene narrates how she decides to kill herself by taking an overdose of tablets because of the pain of being cheated on. Stephano, Hellene’s father, has to intervene and convince her that Ngure has ran away because he loves her and that he would go to Congo for her. Her father is an ideal parent who manages to settle his daughter and provide her with the necessary love and comfort.
After the dialogue Hellene’s love for Ngure is rekindled. Ngure says, “I could see her love for me flowing back” (223). Hellene in turn tells Ngure, “I do not think you have any love in you, John. I do not think you know what it is like to love somebody deeply” (223). Despite spending two days with her, Ngure admits, “she wasn’t meant for me and I wasn’t meant for her” (224).

Friendship is another aspect used by Kiriamiti to mediate women roles in the lives of criminals. The women who are friends with the protagonist are Nyambiu, Linda, Hellene and Elizabeth. In both *My Life in Crime* and *My Life with a Criminal* is story about Nyambiu and other ladies meeting Zollo. Nyambiu treats Zollo as her friend and these relations later develop into love relations. Nyambiu one day loses her bus pass and Zollo picks it. In the novel *My Life in Crime*, Zollo states,

*Inside is a photo of a girl which made my heart beat exceed by one or two. For no reason at all I felt I liked the owner and I saw that she was doing her final year in the school. The name was Miriam Nyambiu. I had nothing else to do that day but to go and booze. So I decided I would go and take that bus pass to her, not forgetting to introduce myself.*

*At about quarter past twelve that day, I was standing at the gate of Sharda High School waiting for the girls to pass by me so that I could pick her out, and if she consented, take her out for lunch* (43).

That is exactly what happens and although Nyambiu almost ignores Zollo, it is when he shows her the pass that she smiles. This opens a dialogue and subsequent lunch outings. In Zollo’s description, he states how subsequent visits to her home located at Heshima Road, Bahati, opposite Marrison Primary School leads them “to become very intimate friends” (44). It is not because of money or company cars that Zollo
drives which attracts Nyambiu but love at first sight. This friendship contributes to Nyambiu passing her exams. It is through a friend that Zollo requests Nyambiu’s mother for a hand in marriage of her daughter. It is because of this friendship that Wangari, who previously had not allowed anyone get near her daughter’s room, leads Zollo and his friend, Joseph Mwangi, to their room. In turn, when the entire Wangari’s family falls sick, it is Zollo who comes to their rescue by calling an ambulance to take them to the hospital. Food poisoning by maids is a phenomenon that is presented by the author as an entry point for Wangari “consents to Zollo living with Milly, if he wants to and prepare the rest later” (48).

Zollo shares his loot with Nyambiu which she takes to the bank. It is what Nyambiu has taken to the Bank of Baroda when Zollo and the other criminals raid. Later Zollo is arrested and as a friend, Nyambiu has to go to the central police cells to see him, and as usual takes him some food. When Zollo escapes from the cells, his friend Nyambiu is very happy to have him back in the house. Friends are also ready to defend each other in times of need. For example, in My Life in Crime when Nyambiu does not go to work for two days, Zollo is ready to call at Nyambiu’s work place and lie that she is unwell. This kind of friendship which is ready to do anything for the other is special (77). The friendship is extended in the house where Nyambiu prepares an enjoyable heavy lunch. She is a good cook (78).

Apart from sharing her pain, Kiriamiti presents Nyambiu telling Zollo what she feels as her best inheritance and her mothers’ greatest favor. So she tells Zollo:

“I want us to wed Jack. We can’t stay this way any longer. My mother is also pressing me about it. I know if we don’t marry soon, one of these days we will both
regret it. I might be in the family way and might very easily lose my job. I guess you already know I can’t lose it if I am Mrs. somebody. I want you to think about it before you think of anything else. I haven’t met your parents yet. If by bad luck now you were imprisoned, where could I go? I am always telling my mother that I know your parents and I hate repeating the lie. Consider that before everything else” (79).

By reminding him about the wedding she is highlighting the responsibilities of a friend.

To cement their friendship before he leaves Kenya, Nyambiu requests Zollo to go to their home at Murang’a and bring to her his youngest brother and sister (81). Nyambiu wants to take responsibility of a married woman by caring for Zollo’s siblings. Zollo, on the other hand, as a married man, also ensures he communicates with his wife and his mother by writing to each twice.

There is a social aspect presented by Zollo concerning friendship with his wife. After coming from Congo, he feels bad because he has not bought Nyambiu anything. He says, “One thing I had learned was that if you wanted your wife or your girlfriend to be faithful to you always, you had to buy a present, every now and then, no matter how small it was a present, and you would then count on her to wish to be near you every minute, she’d love you more than her own eyes” (169-170). When friends exchange gifts there is a building of confidence and contentment. Nyambiu, if presented with a gift by Zollo, will appreciate him and Zollo will feel to have done something great. When Zollo does not take the present home after losing all the robbed money, he feels sick and swears, “Had I carried my gun that day, I would have staged a hold-up on my own, rather than go home empty-handed the way I did” (172).
Human beings are social and when all is not well, they can sense. That is why on the morning of 4th November 1970, (199) all goes wrong. Nyambiu can notice Zollo’s restlessness and ask him if he is sick. Despite his denial, Nyambiu can notice that all is not well and as an intimate friend she tells him, “If you do something she regards silly, she will jolly well tell you it is silly” (200). Friends are there to share joys and pains. Thus Nyambiu shares her condition with Zollo. She is expectant and the reason she has asked for a month’s leave so that she can wed. If she does not wed officially, she will lose her job. Through a dialogue, each try to convince the other what it means to wed and to marry. Zollo tells Nyambiu, “Well marrying is one thing and a wedding ceremony is another. Do you mean you just want us to marry or to have a wedding ceremony?” as Nyambiu replies him, “I mean I want a ceremonious wedding, following my mother’s wishes, and it is my duty to have her wishes carried out as long as I live” (222).

The need to have a wedding or to marry is a major controversy between Zollo and Nyambiu because each understands either word from a different perspective. Zollo finally has to yield to Nyambiu’s wishes of having a wedding ceremony. It is unfortunate that the wedding does not take place as Zollo is arrested on the eve of the wedding day. In the novel My Life in Crime, after Zollo is arrested, Nyambiu goes to see him at the police cells accompanied by friends and relatives. While everyone else talked she remained silent. Zollo says about her, “As soon as she saw me in remand uniform, which is exactly the same as the one worn by first degree murderers, she started crying” (231). Nyambiu expresses pity towards Zollo by crying for fifteen minutes. This portrays the pain she goes through as she has to part with her friend.
Zollo also expresses concern for Nyambiu when he tells her to get married to somebody else. He can’t imagine her waiting for him for twenty years while in prison. Using a hyperbole, Kiriamiti states Nyambiu’s reaction from what Zollo tells her: “As she went, she almost tore herself into pieces” (231). Nyambiu’s reaction presents her imagination without her friend. She cannot guess how it will feel without Zollo. Nyambiu is not anybody else friend but Zollo’s and telling her “if you want to get married to somebody else, you may go ahead and do it” (231), hurt her. Her interest is not that ‘somebody’ else but him and no wonder she almost tears her clothes.

Despite what Zolo tells Nyambiu, she does not fail to turn up at the court on the day of the hearing. She is amongst the people he sees in the packed court despite “noticing the hatred which was written all over Nyambiu’s face as each witness pointed at me as one of the people who robbed the bank” (232). Nyambiu has all this bitterness especially after recalling her warning and pleading with Zollo to stop stealing without success.

In *My Life with a Criminal*, while in prison, Nyambiu tells of how she maintains their friendship and makes several trips to Naivasha prison to see Zollo. Nyambiu’s love for him is genuine because despite her pregnancy, she does not fail to visit him. She says of how she even “persuades a prison officer to smuggle in some money for him (123). This is because Nyambiu “want him to be happy and to know that she was up to that time with him in memory” (123). To confirm her faithfulness Nyambiu takes “his son to visit him twice when the baby was two years and when he was eight” (123). Nyambiu present Zollo’s character and compares it to that of his son who asked her questions which stung like a bee (123).
After Zollo’s persistence of not being visited by Nyambiu and that she should find someone to marry her, she finally gives in and three years later when he is released from prison he pays her a visit. The year is 1980. His going to visit her portrays that they are still friends and nothing much has changed. Unfortunately for Nyambiu, she has already had a child with another man. This does not augur very well with Zollo. Nyambiu makes the observation that “there was some bitterness in his voice, face, and even his smile looked phony to me” (131). Despite the bitterness, he still cannot fail to see something good in her. He tells her that “You are the same Milly. Good looking and lovable” (133). He appreciates her. This leads to a series of events that almost make Nyambiu to yield for sex with Zollo were it not for the rude intervention of their son. After the happy reunion of father and son, the parents have a dialogue which only leaves Nyambiu a devastated woman who wishes that she had at least a last glimpse of him. This is when Zollo gets invited to Nyambiu’s younger sister’s pre-wedding. During this function, Nyambiu tries to restore this friendship by dancing with Zollo but not without the rude intervention of Dr. Mbogo, who makes her leave to and forget about Zollo.

According to Dennis Altman in *Global Sex*, prostitution is another term for ‘sex worker’ which is a deliberate play to demystify the category of “prostitute”. He further clarifies that the terms ‘sex work’ and ‘sex worker’ have been coined by sex workers themselves to redefine commercial sex, not as the social or psychological characteristic of a class of women, but as an income generating activity or form of employment for women and men (101). Further the book goes on to say one of the most eloquent statements that:
The “prostitute is rarely used to refer to an occupational group of women earning their livelihood through providing sexual services, rather it is deployed as a descriptive term denoting a homogenized category, usually of women, which poses threats to public health, sexual morality, social stability and civic order (101).

In the novel *My Life in Crime*, Kiriamiti presents prostitution as another major aspect in mediating the roles of women through Suzy Njeri and other women who are used by both the criminals and the police officers as informants. After a robbery, the criminals lavish their money on alcohol and prostitutes. For example, Zollo acknowledges that “The problems with me was that with all the cash I had, I did not buy a thing I could live to remember, instead, I spent it on beer, from this bar to the other, making sure that every prostitute looked my way. Within a short time, I was known almost everywhere beer was sold, and within the same period the cops had come to know me by name” (42). According to Graebner, bars are important to the prostitutes not only for sale of beer but also because

… (b)ars are the normal context of prostitution …One of the main reasons for men to frequent bars is to find a woman for the night. The transaction is usually effected via food and drink, that is the man has to buy the drinks in many cases also a meal, in the morning the woman might get an extra payment, yet this is not obligatory. By paying for food and drink the man buys his right to sleep with a woman (1992:139-140).

In both, alcohol and sex seem important to the urbanite in the Kenyan urban novel and perhaps the sole reason for which most men frequent bars, what makes the criminal’s use of the bar distinct? What is it that the reader does not know about the bar that Kiriamiti’s writing unravels? Apart from the criminals who know each other, the only other people who know what they do are the prostitutes who are also known by the
criminals. For example “Githenji knew Kamande’s prostitute but going to tell her that Kamande had been killed would mean asking for a hell of a lot of problems” (59). Thus, other than sharing the loot with the prostitutes, the criminals bought them beer and it is through such situations that the prostitutes share in turn. With the death of Kamande,

Rumour was flying from this to that corner of the town that we had shot Kamande so as to get his share. Whoever had told them we were the ones in the job I did not know for sure but I had a rough idea that it was probably Kamande’s girl who of course knew Githenji and what he did for a living (61).

The prostitutes also play the role of directing criminals to where their friends are. So when Zollo goes to Small World Club, there is a prostitute waiting for him to direct him to the place where captain’s party was. Thereafter, Zollo says,

“We reached the room and we were welcome pleasantly. There were nine people around the table. Women outnumbered men by one. I knew three of the men and I knew four of the girls. The other two were strangers to me. All the girls there were prostitutes of course. Two of them were barmaids, and two were some of those who were always going out to town in search of men. The men I knew were all criminals. As for the one I didn’t know, I later came to know that he was an accountant in a certain bank in Nairobi. I knew then why the party had taken place. The man who looked like a cop was a sergeant in the army. This is an odd combination anyway. Captain and a friend of his were the party bosses. I could see by the way these whores were behaving that they had been instructed to give those visitors a good time (65).

When the police informant gets at the table where they are seated, fellow prostitutes are ready to ask her if she can’t remember Zollo. ‘This one, don’t you remember him,
he passed us at the door at Bamboo Night Club last night’ (65). The woman is happy to meet Zollo and expresses her joy as she had longed to see him. These prostitutes know how to play around the psychology of the criminals such that even when Zollo’s instinct tells him the girl is not out for good, “one prostitutes assures him that she was a common prostitute, the other said she worked in a certain bar in Jerusalem, and the third said that she sold Ambi perfumes” (66). Meaning none of them is sure of whom she is. Despite Nyambu’s uneasiness, Zollo cannot read between the lines and he is caught unaware.

When Zollo can no longer continue living in Nairobi, he takes two of his friends with him on a journey to Congo. While at Nakuru, they settle in Amigo’s Hotel. Zollo, on arrival, is very tired and is taken to sleep by a maid on each side and a man behind. Ndung’u and Njoroge are neither tired nor sleepy and instead drink with the prostitutes. When Zollo wakes up, he finds them “…. surrounded by prostitutes on a certain table near a corner” (99). It is these girls who end up landing them into problems. Just as Zollo states earlier that prostitutes and criminals are alike (66), these prostitutes, who are friends with cops, have been drinking with criminals and when their cop friends come, the prostitute go to them. Njoroge cannot imagine losing one of them after spending so much on her. The three criminals leave the bar and go to Tours Night Club and the cops follow them. The cops makes sure the criminals land into problems again with Zollo escaping and leaving the friends behind just because of prostitutes as Njoroge states earlier. “Someone is bringing us a hell of a lot of trouble because of a mere prostitute” (104). Ngure does not stop the habit of looking for prostitutes when he is in Bakavu. This means that “Male prostitution is prostitution and is probably more widespread than is often recognized” (110) as
Dennis Altman says. This is true of Ngure and Karamaikos who “When not on duty we would go out to night clubs in Bukavu town to seduce white and black girls” (129).

Back in Kenya and at Nairobi, Zollo starts to frequent his old joints especially Kagondo Bar where Suzy Njeri works. He comments about her, “Her main work is to do beds in the empty rooms, who used to suck me of a few pounds and I used to ride whenever I felt like it” (178). Graebner, 1992, affirms what Kiriamiti says as he states that Suzy’s work at Kagondo Bar is to make beds in the empty rooms but also doubles up as Zollo’s object of sexual gratification whenever he wants as long as he can buy her beer and pay a few pounds for services rendered. According to Altman,

Culturally, too, the image associated with male and female prostitution are rather different while the female is seen as either a victim or as glamorous but a moral…the male hustler is often depicted as predatory or violent, …Against this there is a tendency to portray male prostitution in poorer countries as involving a certain level of reciprocal “fun,” even when the underlying inequalities are recognized (110).

In this respect, only Njeri is seen in prostitution but according the above, Zollo too is. Altman affirms this and says “Male prostitution is probably more widespread than is often recognized” (110). Zollo even wants to disassociate himself from her and dehumanize her when he says in My Life in Crime “…I have a permanent one-way traffic to follow and not a hundred and one way traffic like you Suzy” (178). Njeri is not a prostitute by making. From an interview with the author, he says that though educated, she cannot get a better job and the only one at hand is working in a bar where the likes of Zollo misuse her in a hope to earn an extra coin (179). She also gets
free beer as Zollo says, “…and tell Suzy to go into number 14 and take my share of beer. Those guys there can’t give me what she does” (185).

At Kagondo Bar, other than drinking, Zollo and his accomplice meet to negotiate how to carry out their raids. Njeri can detect Zollo’s sweating despite the weather. She tells him, ‘You don’t seem to be yourself right now, sweating in such weather. You must have swallowed something disagreeable, something nasty’ (190). Once Zollo realizes that Njeri can tell all is not well, he stereotypes her through a dialogue,

‘Okay baby, get going immediately! We have things to discuss. There are very many things that women should not know or hear being talked about. So don’t hang around after closing the door behind you.’

She stood by the door and said, ‘I am going alright, but I would like to see you before you go. I’ll be downstairs.’

‘Don’t worry baby, wherever you’ll be, I’ll make sure I see you before I go’.

She turned, got hold of the handle, turned it slowly and after opening the door, she swung her buttocks provocatively and then closed the door behind her (190).

Njeri will not forget her appointment with Zollo. So after their meeting, Zollo descends the stairs and says, “On the ground floor I saw Suzy serving a customer and when she saw me, she came to me, took hold of my arm and led me to a lonely corner. When we were through, I told her to go and see what remained in our room and we parted” (195). This proves right what Altman says, ‘Indeed, despite the economic significance, prostitution remains largely unanalyzed as a business rather than a moral phenomenon’ (111).

The last time Njeri sees Zollo is on Thursday at twelve o’clock as he says,
‘I stepped into Kagondo Bar and I ordered for lunch. As it was brought, Suzy saw me and came to sit with me at table. She said she would pay for the lunch and I was glad once again because she saved my only pound from getting ‘broken’. She readily knew how to bait me and knew the times when I was broke though I tried to hide it’ (197).

In this case, Altman would describe the likes of Njeri thus “…sex work is often the most available means of survival for those who are marginalized because of industrialization, migration, family breakdowns, the collapse of welfare, and so forth, although there are more middle-class sex workers” (112).

3.1 Representations of biases and accommodation in women

By writing about black and white women, Kiriamiti captures contemporary Kenya and Congo which accommodates different classes of women. Such classes are evident at Nairobi where different women operate in different aspect of life. There are women like Salome Wangari who is an illicit brewer. This woman does this work to make ends meet in life. She is separated from her husband who is a drunkard. To provide for her children and prevent them suffering from poverty and lack of education, food, clothes and shelter, she looks for a source of income.

Nyambi, the protagonist in the novel *My Life with a Criminal* is educated, composed and independent. She is working with the East Africa Airways and contrasts her mother who is presented as an illicit brewer and harsh. After educating her daughter, all what Wangari wants of Nyambi is to get wedded and the daughter feels it is an obligation. Even when Zollo tries to convince her otherwise, that she is married and it is what matters, she does not agree and she will only settle for a wedding which fails at the eleventh hour. Through reminiscence Nyambi says of her mother, “She didn’t
give me peace; it was as if her two day imprisonment had told her something might happen to her before she could witness the official marriage of her daughter. This was a promise Jack and I had given her and time had passed, without any of us telling her how far we had gone with the arrangements” (103).

Kiriamiti looks at the Congolese and Greek women in Congo out to be used for sexual exploitation. They are presented as engaging in intimate relationships of mutual love and respect. For example, in *My Life in Crime*, N'gure repeats the simile that Elizabeth is as beautiful as Helen of Troy, who caused the Trojan war, if she ever existed (123). This is a repeated phrase that he has used to describe all his lovers. The narrator here has observed that the Greek is superior and he considers her beautiful. The description is meant to signify biological superiority of other Greek women who might look as splendid as Elizabeth. Apart from Elizabeth, the other lady who matches her is Hellene whose profile is favorably described to make her more appealing than Linda the Congolese. Linda is used by N'gure to satisfy his sexual hunger (125).

N’gure adores the two Greek girls and ensures that he enjoys life with each to the full. Unfortunately, Hellene is jealous and does not want him to continue his affairs with Elizabeth. She threatens doing a thing N’gure will regret for as long as he lives (130). She is selfish and unfortunately does not know what is already prevailing in Elizabeth’s mind. She has already proposed for marriage. She imagines the shame she will bring to her parents as an only child and N’gure, on the other hand, has nowhere to take her. This is what provokes N’gure’s mind and he starts to contemplate leaving Congo (133). The worst is pinned in N’gure’s mind when Elizabeth writes and threatens him. I can explain her attitude as that of a racist especially when she defines
Ngure as a nigger from space (139). The big question is, had she not realized this when she gave herself to him? Elizabeth makes Ngure look like an outsider meant to insult and degrade him. Thus, unfit to have a relationship with her.

Hellene’s revelation that she is expectant again worsens Ngure’s thoughts. Hellene is another girl in the family way and a daughter to Ngure’s boss. This adds Ngure’s burden twice as heavy as the first one (141). When Hellene initially cautions Ngure, he should have been warned of the dangers that lay ahead of him as he dealt with the two girls who are crying for his blood (141). Ngure cheats each of them and promises marriage. Since he cannot marry any of them, he cannot defend his behavior towards them. He decides to escape, steals from his boss and leaves the two girls carrying their pregnancies.

Kiriamiti presents Ngure as deceptive and a thief. He manages to double-deal the two Greek girls and takes advantage of their ignorance concerning their affair with each. He misuses the women for sexual gain with an excuse that he would marry them within the shortest time possible. For example, he promises Hellene to save her from any distress and even feigning gladness for her being pregnant (141). “It is that which wins Hellene’s confidence and accepts Ngure’s lies by pulling him to herself and after kissing him shortly, tells him, ‘I knew I could rely on you. I really don’t know what I would do without you’ (141).

Ngure’s character as a masquerader is presented by the author. The girls do not even bother learning who he is. They fall in love with him for his facial appearance and background, that he is a son of a V. I. P., who is the chairman of a political party in
Kenya and accused of conspiring to overthrow the government. They run away to Congo where his father leaves him with his intimate friend (124). The girls love for a stranger makes them to suffer. May be had Hellene listened to her brothers’ council could be the story would have been different. Although Karamaikos realizes what is going on between Ngure and his sister, he warns Ngure and tells him to stick to Elizabeth (130) but he does not. I do not encounter Karamaikos reaction when he learns the truth about his ‘friend’ in relation to the sisters’ pregnancy as this is not written in any of Kiriamiti’s novels.

Nyambiu at the ends of the novel *My Life with a Criminal* is stigmatized by the idea that she cannot get Zollo back to herself as he already has another woman. No wonder she hails a taxi and leaves (148). After prison and reforming, Zollo and Nyambiu meet quite often. He also meets his son and his daughters often ask him to take their half-brother home. In an interview, Kiriamiti says that he has a lot of reservations about this issue since his wife, Juliet, does not like the idea of bringing the only son home. On the other hand, Nyambiu, at the end of the novel can only survive on the love and understanding of Tonny who lives with her to date. Kiriamiti therefore offers a contrast of the love Nyambiu has for Zollo and Tonny. She feels Zollo is not like Tonny. She realizes that from the start of their relationship, Zollo confirms his love for her many times until the time he insists on her not going to see him in prison and to get another man for marriage. She commits the worst crime in her life and regrets having fallen in love with Tonny because this is what makes Zollo not to have her after he leaves prison. Zollo junior does not also approve of Tonny and he does not accept him as his father. He even asks his mother not to open for Tonny. This is confirmed in a dialogue with his mother,
“Mum, do not open for Tonny. My dad won’t be happy if he meets him here”.

“I’ll open for him, prepare a cup of tea for him and then ask him to go. Do not misbehave, son. Please be kind to him”.

“But dad won’t like it, mum. I am going to tell him …”

Please, go back to your studies and leave this to me (140).

Finally, Nyambiu and her son suffer patriarchal oppression from Zollo despite his son getting excited on seeing him (136). Zollo Junior has a very strong bond for his father and this explains his mother’s reason for insisting to renew her relationship with Zollo. Kiriamiti therefore, offers a contrast of genuine love and what it is not between Nyambiu and Zollo. Nyambiu feels Zollo’s love is not like that of any other man. Right from the start, she feels a special love for him. The irony is that Zollo does not feel the same way towards Nyambiu because at the end of the novel, he openly leaves her to go and dance with his new fiancee, Jackline Mbogo.

The representation of Tonny as a suitable person for Nyambiu is seen in her character when she leaves her sister’s party after getting disappointed. She has this to herself as she goes away, “The uncouth, ruthless, irresponsible and stupid Jack Zollo. Who does he think he is? Isn’t he, after all a criminal? Who can reform that bastard, anyway? The man-eater. To hell with him!” (147)

She describes Zollo using a metaphor, ‘the man-eater.’ This description portrays Zollo as a dangerous man whom she can no longer trust. She is dehumanized when ‘Dr’.Mbogo gets Zollo from her and she is told that “every lady I meet seems to have a go at him. Can’t allow it” (146). This triggers Nyambiu’s mind and leads to her departure from the party, a very frustrated woman.
Kiriamiti presents the need to remain patient if one is determined. Had Nyambiu done this, after staying for nine years waiting for Zollo, she could not lose him to someone else. The child she gets with Tonny is one major reason she cannot get Zollo back. This is a lesson to the society to strive for determination if one wants success and to achieve what one has always desired.

3.2 Strategies for presentation of educated and uneducated women

Kiriamiti has presented educated and uneducated women on issues such as social space, writing about love, the body and sexuality.

3.2.1 Social space

In the first chapter of this study, Kiriamiti has used space that is both urban and private. He uses social space to exploit how his characters live. For example, he brings out how the women characters constantly define their belonging in their societies. Activities such as illicit brewing and prostitution belong to the social space which allow interaction of people from different backgrounds. Kiriamiti has presented characters like Wangari and Njeri who are as a result of social contact. According to Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, space is not an inert, neutral, and a pre-existing given, but rather an on-going production of spatial relations. Lefebvre puts emphasis on the social production of space (73). Lefebvre develops what he calls “a conceptual triad” in explaining how space is produced: Business enables characters like Zollo, Wangari and Nyambiu to interact in the space of illicit brewing and drinking. Due to their different social backgrounds, they present a social reality. Illicit beer drinking robs Wangari of her husband to prostitutes. Initially, he comes home drunk every day and he cannot provide for the family. Finally, Wangari is forced by
circumstances to send him away. This not only robs her of a husband but also a father to their children like Nyambiu and her sister as stated in My Life with a Criminal.

In the days when he was living with us, dad was a terrible drunkard. He only came home drunk to claim for food violently-food he hadn’t bought. He used to sleep out so often that it became difficult to know whether he had spent the night in a police cell, in a lodging with a hag or out in the cold in a drunken stupor.

Believe me, none of this ever bothered my dad, not even the fact that our door often remained unlocked throughout the night, so that he would have easy entry whatever hour he came home.

When I was about five years old, my mother couldn’t tolerate my dad any longer. He had become a burden. She decided to call it quits with this ‘symbol’ of a husband and try life on her own (1-2).

This leads Wangari to look for an alternative to provide for the basics of her children which is illicit beer brewing and different men who keep coming in and out of her room (1). This is direct prostitution that Wangari engages in and this does not pay any respect from her big daughter.

Through marriage to Nyambiu, Zollo becomes a kin. As a kin, he offers financial and medical help to Nyambiu’s family as Kiriamiti told me in an interview. Money given to Nyambiu by Zollo is taken to her mother and when the entire family is sick, Zollo takes the trouble of having them taken to hospital for treatment My Life in Crime (47-48). Here Zollo is seen as those few sons’-in-law who mind about their mother-in-laws, and a rare gesture.
Nyambiu appreciates Zollo’s love when he accepts her for a lover, compared to what her classmates are offering her. She considers herself lucky when Zollo appears from the blues and realizes he is “handsome and smartly dressed and certainly no comparison with the boys we were used to. This one, even to my friends, was a beauty” (7) as Nyambiu says in My Life with a Criminal. She has an opportunity to compare the ‘boys’ with the ‘new’ man. When Zollo marries Nyambiu, he is also ready to wed her to fulfill the wishes of her mother, Wangari. His participation in the arrangements until the last moments when he is arrested portrays that he is ready to redefine space that is accommodative. While in Congo, Zollo ventures beyond tribe and race by befriending Linda, a Congolese woman, Hirji Shah, an Indian and the Greek families. In My Life in Crime Ngure says, “They all regard him as one of them especially the Stephano’s who take him as a son and a brother” (122).

Finally when Zollo is arrested and he is to be taken to court, the entire family from both sides and ‘best man’ attend the hearing to witness to the charges he is accused of (232). The outcome of the family support is meant to present oneness. The mixing of these people presents social space.

3.2.2 Space versus Role

At the end of the novel My Life with a Criminal, as far as Nyambiu is concerned, social space also include time to heal. Nyambiu requires the space to recover emotionally from Zollo’s rejection. The healing from her past will come from a withdrawal. This is a private space. Her relationship with Tonny results in her being ditched by Zollo. She decides to wear a mask and assume nothing has happened and asks him after prison to rekindle their relationship despite having a child with another man. She admits not to love Tonny and only lives with him because she has to stay
with him (135). By wearing a mask, Nyambiu thinks Zollo will change his attitude towards her but he refuses. She too hide the pain in her as she is disillusioned because her love for Zollo is supposed to quell all her problems, yet in the end he even frustrates her the more. To survive the disillusionment, she decides to request Zollo to attend her sisters’ pre-wedding party so that she can have her last with him. This too turns out to a terrible situation because Zollo brings with him a lady he claims to be his future wife. Since ‘Dr’. Mbogo will not allow Nyambiu to dance with Zollo, Nyambiu has to leave the party and through a saying she states, she cannot have any pride in a borrowed dress as the owner can ask for it any time (145).

Nyambiu provides space for her to narrate observed surrounding from her own point of view. She relies on what she observes and hears from Zollo and Dr. Mbogo and this is what makes her to withdraw from the party and leave. At the end of the novel, Nyambiu leaves a frustrated and disillusioned woman and says that “anyone thinking of the future is a dreamer. I was a dreamer. I had put too much attention on my future and ended up weeping myself dry” (148).

3.2.3 Writing about love

The relationship between Zollo and Nyambiu is based on love. It is what can be called love at first sight. Zolo describes Nyamiu as Hellen of Troy (44). It is because of love that they interact through courtship until the time Nyambiu moves to live with Zollo. Nyambiu’s mother wants to affirm that her daughter loves Zollo (26-7). Nyambiu’s expression for her husband’s love does not waver even when she finds him sharing robbed money with his friends. Despite this, in My Life with a Criminal, she still regards him as her good old loving husband (39). Nyambiu acknowledges her love for Zollo irrespective of his short comings.
Kiriamiti, through a dialogue has both Nyambiu and Zollo express romantic words and it is ironical what Zollo tells Nyambiu since he does not keep to his words,

“You come into my life just when I need you badly. You are always punctual in my life, always turning up on schedule.”

...

“Tell me again, even a hundred times. I’ll want to hear it …”

“You came into my life when I needed you badly. God meant you to be a gift …His gift to me, a gift I’ll never let go of, and believe me Milly, nothing will take you away from me, I won’t allow it.”

“I am overjoyed to hear that, Jack. You have never spoken such sweet words before. I don’t know what I can say about it” (49).

These romantic words express the ‘sweet nothing’ each want to hear. It is absurd because irrespective of the above romantic words, Zollo harass Nyambiu verbally while in prison until she stops visiting him and gets herself another lover as Zollo desires.

Zollo expresses his love for Nyambiu by protecting her. When Charles and Sam take Nyambiu for a prostitute, Zollo uses the physical space available to express his love by fighting the two and it is not until Nyambiu is asked to stop him when he obeys (55-6). Nyambiu’s intervention becomes a social space for the two men to realize what love can do. Though they have stigmatized her, she is the same person who saves them from Zollo (59). Nyambiu on the other hand portrays a proactive woman. When the police follow Nyambiu so that they may arrest Zollo, she hides and runs home to warn him about them. It is because of love that she lies to the police officers and runs home to report her findings to Zollo (72). As revealed through Nyambiu, she
acknowledges her love for Zollo and does not regret meeting him since his love is genuine (117). In the same vain, the writer presents Zollo looking for his former wife after he leaves prison and she expresses her love for him. Using the son to persuade him to stay, she feels the boy will do well in his CPE exam and anticipate for quality results if his father is within. Nyambiu truly loves Zollo and calls him ‘lover boy’ (142). This motif is used to present the character of Zollo.

Kiriamiti uses love to tell Nyambiu and Zollo’s story. In these comparative novels, *My Life in Crime* and *My Life with a Criminal* the heroine and the hero have the ability for wider presentation. Nyambiu and Zollo are used as characters in deep love who grow to marry and each present their own experience as a wife of a criminal and a criminal. They live a life where Nyambiu has to tolerate Zollo as a criminal. Courtship and marriage are used to highlight their intimacy and the role of Nyambiu in the criminal Zollo. The love of Nyambiu for Zollo acknowledges that an individual cannot succeed in carrying out his activities without assistance and support. Through their love, they face their quest courageously. Nyambiu, for example, finds Zollo’s adventures in robbery frustrating since she does not know whether he will get home or not. This disillusiones her and at the same time makes her happy when he comes to her defense. She realizes Zollo’s strength and calmness even when in problems and he quite often manages to escape.

This brings me to the question, “Does Zollo truly love Nyambiu as she does?” The love story presents the role a woman in the life of a criminal when there is genuine love. Nyambiu does not waver whereas Zollo does. While in prison Zollo gives Nyambiu permission to marry. Kiriamiti presents Nyambiu as a very patient lady and
still loves Zollo until nine years are over. Later, she does not get a child with Tony out of love but due to Zollo’s insistence that she gets a man to marry her and this makes her to regret later. Nyambiu admits that her first love for Zollo remains. Nyambiu is presented as beautiful, passionate, bright and loving. These characteristics make her to be loved by Zollo. He needs her undivided love and attention and in turn needs his love and protection. The way the two characters are presented by Kiriamiti gives them a loving outlook. For example, in *My Life with a Criminal* Zollo says about Nyambiu, “I have loved you all that time. I have dreamt of you always. Your memories helped me to lead a clean, life in prison” (134). Nyambiu reciprocates by saying about Zollo, “…Jack’s love had no comparison. I felt his stare pulling me. That had happened some years back … But I still love you, you, Jack, I swear I do” (134 – 5).

Nyambiu is presented positively by Kiriamiti and so is Zollo. For example, he is a very sensitive lover who describes Nyambiu as Hellen of Troy. Zollo is attractive too as he is described by Nyambiu as young, handsome and smart (7) and this is how he appears to her, the first time they meet. He is described as loving in the novel and Nyambiu’s first lover and later husband. As a robber, he buys Nyambiu presents and gives her some of the money to bank and to buy household items. When Zollo is arrested and jailed, Nyambiu is still interested in her husband who sarcastically keeps telling her to get another man and marry. Nyambiu does not and even when Zollo is ruthless because of taking their son to see him, she still loves him.

On the judgement day when Zollo is arrested, Nyambiu expresses her love for Zollo in *My Life with a Criminal* as “the only one I could bring myself to love … the only one whose love would be termed genuine …and can bring a gun to the law courts so
that he could use it to escape. I swear I would have done it” (117). Despite Zollo being described as dangerous, Nyambiu feels she must protect him as her lover. Zollo’s final defeat strengthens Nyambiu’s love for him, makes her remain faithful and brings family members closer. For example, Zollo’s mother stays with Zollo Junior while his mother goes to a teacher training college. When Zollo is released from prison, through a dialogue, Nyambiu reveals her relationship with Tonny and her reaction when Zollo appears. Tension builds up between the two at first but they later share love which is disrupted by the appearance of their son and they have to cut short their romance.

Hellene too loves Ngure and no wonder keeps visiting Kenya where she finally meets him. Love knows no bounds and necessity knows no law. Despite being a Greek millionaire’s daughter who already know Ngure as thief, she does not hesitate to cement their love further by spending two days together (My Life in Prison, 224).

3.2.4 The body and sexuality

Kiriamiti presents Nyambiu as Hellen of Troy and she looks feminine. By maintaining her chastity, Nyambiu symbolically gains control of her body, freedom and free will to love. This presents the importance of discourse on sexuality in the novel that is multifaceted; as a private or public affair. In the novel My Life in Crime, Kiriamiti describes Nyambiu’s (44) and Elizabeth’s (123) beauty as that of Hellene of Troy who caused the Trojan war. This presentation compels the reader to visualize the unique beauty where a whole war, one which lasted for ten years, was fought over her. This literary description of these two ladies makes them appear lovable and therefore possible to have a relationship with Zollo, also known as Ngure. Thus, the writer uses the characters’ bodies and sexuality.
At the end of the novel *My Life with a Criminal*, Nyambiu is presented as lonely, desperate, isolated, alienated and disillusioned. She cannot forget Zollo’s love because their intimacy is beyond her thought. She cannot contemplate her life without him and it makes her feel lonely. She hails a taxi to be away from Zollos’ (148).

From the day Nyambiu moves to Zollo’s house she is expected to have a fulfilling sexual relationship though she remains a virgin throughout their courtship and she confesses this to her mother (28). Zollo does not involve Nyambiu in sexuality matters until he gets her legally as a wife (30). This is also the time when her body responds to him with passion. She does not resist and asks him to take her somewhere to rest. “Please hurry” (30). This denotes her surrender to Zollo as a wife ready to enjoy her womanhood.

Kiriamiti uses sex as fantasy. Zollo turns to sex for escape and to make him happy. After a robbery, Nyambiu is always on his back and to distract her, he takes her to bed for sex to stop her from questioning. Pleasure from sex is determined by various factors which lead to pleasures of the body. Dennis Altman in *Global Sex* says, “…sexuality around the enhancement of male pleasure above female, but it is rare to find culture where the reverse is true…The provision of male sexual pleasure is part of sexual regimes in societies marked by imperative to produce…satisfying male “desire” through the services, in both the corporeal and fantasy realms of women” (5). When Zollo escapes from the police chase, Nyambiu gets him in the house, he smiles at her and turns to sex. She confesses how he takes her from class ‘A,’ the class of virgins, to class ‘B’ of the married (83). When Nyambiu responds to Zollo’s advances, he manages to stick into the house as he hides. This leads to Nyambiu
becoming pregnant, she is meant to procreate and is ready to provide her body for
sexual satisfaction (106). Kiriamiti presents Nyambiu’s desire to be nurtured and
taken care of by a man who responds both physically and emotionally. After prison,
Zollo provides the body contact and Nyambiu almost gives in to sex but she is
disrupted and this gives her some power over the man.
CONCLUSION

This study highlighted how women work with criminals. The author of the two novels *My Life in Crime* and *My Life with a Criminal* presents same issues related to Zollo as he is presented in different relationships of love, intimacy, lust and prostitution. The love relationships are presented as fulfilling among Nyambiu, Hellene, Elizabeth and Suzy Njeri freely. Zollo and Nyambiu recount the experiences with the ‘loved’ ones freely.

In the 21st century writers are changing due to diverse interrelationships and the society that has emerged is cosmopolitan. Thus, love negotiations are within Kenya and the diaspora (Congo). The plot of the two novels reveals similarities in storyline. One is presented by the protagonist, Zollo in *My Life in Crime* and other by Nyambiu in *My Life with a Criminal*. In the first novel, Kiriamiti presents his own life as Zollo and his encounter with Nyambiu, Elizabeth, Hellene and Njeri. In the second novel, Kiriamiti presents Nyambiu’s story and her encounter with Zollo, their marriage and their last meeting when they part company. In the two novels, Zollo and Nyambiu’s love relationship is supported by Wangari, Nyambiu’s mother, Connie, Zollo’s sister and Wanjiru, Zollo’s mother. The protagonists’ relationship survives until Zollo is imprisoned. For the next nine years, Nyambiu cannot stand Zollo’s frustrations until she gets another man by the name of Tonny. In *My Life in Crime*, the story ends with Zollo in prison while *My Life with a Criminal* ends with Zollo ditching Nyambiu. After prison, Zollo goes for Dr. Mbogo who too is ditched and he marries an ex-nun. Through description, Nyambiu presents her love for Zollo even after getting involved with Tonny. After nine years she is stigmatized when Zollo rejects her and she has to learn to overcome this.
Hellene and Elizabeth are no exception and each react in their own ways. For example, Elizabeth marries another man while Hellene chooses to remain single as she educates her son. She makes frequent visits to Kenya in search of Ngure and finally meets him in a bank which provides an opportunity to tell Ngure what she has known about him and her future prospects. Kiriamiti uses space to present views of the women characters on their relationships that they embrace. In the two countries the relationships are juxtaposed to present love, intimacy, lust and prostitution. Nyambiu’s relationship with Zollo is presented a success until his imprisonment.

Kiriamiti uses a raw and candid language to present the Kikuyu, the Congo and Greek communities to be understood by the reader. English is the major language used to present the relationships and roles. The use of English as a unifying factor helps Zollo to communicate with the women and acceptance of each other irrespective of race. English language is used to express love and bring the ladies close to the ‘lover boy’ to achieve for these characters. English is used in the daily conversation with afew Kiswahili and Kikuyu words and expressions used in My Life with a Criminal such as “wendo Munene ndukinyaga”(119) (Great love does not end up well), “Mama, tafuta mwingine, Huyu si wako tena. Ulinjua lini?” (97), “Ngoma ici igutura ituthumburaga. Na no ruriri ruitu” (87). (These devils will harass us forever. And they are our people).

Kiriamiti also depicts Zollo’s character in the two novels to create accommodating relationships and present characters found in the society. How women present themselves and behave or their feminism in the novels is of great concern since it directly influences Zollo’s behavior. It is through the eyes of characters like Zollo that
women are attracted to. When Nyambiu meets Zollo she is not aware of what he is other than what he tells her; that he is a salesman and she only realizes he is a robber later. Kiriamiti portrays what Kenyan community is comprised of and unlike when the novels are written, women are police informers and prostitutes, today they are also involved in robbery. Nyambiu presents Kenyan women who relate with criminals and some are even recruited to the job. Women from Congo are a representation too of those who fall in love with strangers and are left suffering their own consequences like Linda, Hellen and Elizabeth just like it occurred between Akinyi and Chinendu in a recent episode in our country.

Aduke Adebayo (2010), in her inaugural lecture entitled The Nature and Functions of Literature: The Comparatist’s Perspective, convincingly enunciates and exemplifies the tenets and utilitarian functions of Comparative Literature. To her:

> The advantage of studying and practicing Comparative Literature, the comparatists gain a better understanding of the phenomenon called Literature. We are able to appreciate the unity and universality of mankind through Literature. Any national literature therefore becomes a part of a larger whole. Any national literature therefore becomes a more balanced view, a truer perspective than is possible from the isolated analysis of a single national literature, however rich in itself (32).

In My Life in Crime, the narrator presents the novel from a masculine point of view and does not have a lot about Nyambiu and in My Life with a Criminal the narrator is a woman who presents Zollo as he is and what she does to him until he is imprisoned. Each of these narrators presents what roles women either in Kenya or Congo in the lives of criminals. Near the end of My Life with a Criminal when Nyambiu presents her affection towards Zollo, he turns the offer down though she lusts for him. She
tries to negotiate for a reunion using the initial friendship that they had before he went to prison which Zollo declines. Unlike Nyambiu, once Zollo meets Hellene, he spends two days with her, stereotyping women as easy goers though he brings the two lovers together.

Understanding women therefore helps in understanding issues that relate to them and thus men who are criminals. Women are created in the societies which collectively construct what they expect a man to be irrespective of culture and thus, enhancing love relationships. In the two novels, the protagonists go out of their way to seek relationships with different women and a man. Zollo goes out of the way in Kenya and has a prostitute who entertains him in the bar. While in the diaspora, at first he has Linda whom he dumps and goes for Elizabeth and Hellene. Hellene is cautioned by her brother but she does not listen. She is aware of Zollo’s love relationship with Elizabeth and despite this, they secretly continue to meet. He leaves the two ladies pregnant and escapes with Stephano’s money.

Kiriamiti romanticizes his characters and therefore provides a positive image against the stereotypes. Though his major plot is crime, he also constructs it in such a way that it fits into the romantic genre. Zollo’s outgoing nature makes him meet Nyambiu at the school gate, Hellene in her home, Elizabeth her at work place and Njeri at the bar. All these are areas that provide space for romance possible.

The author presents the idea that there are no boundaries created by love, intimacy, lust, and prostitution in Kenya but in Congo, Karamaikos does not want any affair between his sister and Ngure. Boundary creation dictates who can be included in a
relationship and who cannot. It is evident that characters take advantage of their social stereotypes to achieve their personal gains. The women characters define themselves according to situations they find themselves in. They belong to different social classes, educated and uneducated and no wonder they are able to live with Zollo/ Ngure at their own discretion. Most of the women are intimately involved with Zollo. In the two novels, the protagonist goes out to seek love, lust and friendship outside the defined areas. Zollo goes to Congo and out of lust gets Linda, Hellene and Elizabeth for personal gain. In Kenya he has Nyambiu as a wife and Njeri who is a prostitute whom he uses as a substitute. Hellene, Linda and Elizabeth though they have accepted diversity in race, they resist boundaries created to keep people together. This suggests that unity is achieved and Ngure gets a job and presents people’s willingness to co-exists and tolerate each other. Nyambiu’s tolerance of Zollo proves how women are ready to accommodate criminals whom they live with and later turn them to people of good use in the community.
WORKS CITED


… Telephone Interview. 9th December 2012.

… Personal Interview. 6th June 2013.

… Inooro Kikuyu Radio Station interview. 1st February 2014


APPENDIX 1

Interview between Kiriamiti and me on phone on 9th December 2012
Question: Hallo, I’m Bancy and a student at the University of Nairobi and I have an interest in writing a thesis on your works. Please can you comment about the sale of your writing.
Answer: Thank you for your interest. Well, to comment about my novels, without bragging, my novels belong to the popular novels in the Spear Books Series of the East Africa Education Publishers. Also according to the East Africa Education Publishers Book catalogue my novels are the most published.
Question: Since you started writing how often do you release your novels?
Answer: I have established a consistent pattern of publishing a novel after every five years since writing my first novel in 1984.
APPENDIX 2

Personal interview with Kiriamiti on 6th June 2013 held at Murang’a Mukawa

Question: Hallo and how are you? I’m Bancy the same student who had a telephone interview with you in December last year. I appreciated your contribution to my assignment which I had to write then and this motivated me to have further studies in your works. Once again I have several questions and comments I would like answered and clarified.

Answer: I’m Wanjohi son of Kiriamiti and the author of several novels in the market. I also appreciate your interest in my novels and I’m ready to assist you in what you want.

Question: My questions are a continuation of what I asked you last year. To begin with, as I read the novel My Life with a Criminal: Milly’s Story (1989), I hear your voice and not Milly’s. Clarify as to who wrote novel.

Answer: The sincerity about the novel is that I wrote it and wanted my readers to believe that it was Milly’s writing though the likes of you always question.

Question: As a Form One student, how did you make it in leading a strike at Nairobi School as written by Mutungi in her thesis and in one of your novels My Life in Crime?

Answer: As a writer, sometimes one has to use hyperboles. The truth is that I beat a white student for consistently discriminating on black students (by then, the school was dominated by white).

Question: At the end of the novel My Life in Crime a Dr. Mbogo is presented as one of your lovers and she takes the place of Nyambiu. What had she specialized in and how did you win her?

Answer: In fact Mbogo was not a doctor. She was a clinical officer and I had to use the title to demean Nyambiu.

Question: How come finally you did not marry Dr. Mbogo and instead married a nun?

Answer: The criminal in me was still there. I was looking for a woman who would match Nyambiu and Mbogo was not
Question: For how long did you stay in prison?
Answer: I stayed in prison for twenty eight years.

Question: In the novel *My Life in Crime*, you stated that you stayed in prison for twenty years. Why is the contrast?
Answer: I stayed in prison for twenty eight years and not what is written. Publishers make errors.

Question: Comment about the aborted wedding.
Answer: I longed for the occasion which had to take place at Murang’a in a Catholic Church near our home and it is unfortunate it never took place.

Question: Did you know why Susy Njeri was in prostitution?
Answer: Though an educated girl, Njeri opted for what was available.

Question: In the novel *My Life in Crime*, you have expressed love for Nyambiu. If life was reversed, would you go for her or for Julian?
Answer: To be sincere, I still meet her to date and it is true that if life would be reversed, I would go Nyambiu.

Question: As far as the Kikuyu community is concerned, a male child is very important in a family. What are your prospects on your only son, Zollo Junior?
Answer: My son is a matatu driver and I often meet him. His half-sisters are also aware of their only brother and often ask me to bring him home. Unfortunately, I can’t because Juliet my wife is not for the idea.

Question: In the two novels, *My Life in Crime* and *My Life with a Criminal*, you have not mentioned about the payment of dowry to Nyambiu’s mother. Why?
Answer: I did not pay any dowry for Nyambiu. I used to give Nyambiu some money to take to her mother. Again, when the entire family fell sick, I spent some money on them and her mother appreciated.