

# **Sexual Anxieties and Rampant Masculinities in Postcolonial Kenyan Literature**

## **Abstract:**

Postcolonial African society has been characterised as one in transition. Institutions, communities and individuals experienced (and some continue to experience) rapid political, social, economic and cultural changes with differing consequences. The independence era in many African countries, the 1960s, unleashed freedoms and liberties that had been unimaginable to a majority of native Africans during the colonial era. These freedoms changed the nature of the social space and relationships, especially between men and women. As men jostled for and won political positions and power, the public and domestic space became highly masculinised. Men, who were seen as conquerors of the colonial establishment, seemed to transfer this masculinised mentality into the social fabric of the new nation-state in which 'charged' sexuality and virility was projected to 'conquer' their womenfolk. Postcolonial fiction from Kenya seems to suggest that urban working men indulged in hedonistic pursuits, primarily sex as a form of performing their new-found freedom, often to the detriment of their own lives and those of their families. These behaviours reflect the anxieties experienced by individuals when collective and individual freedoms suddenly became available.