

Analyzing the Impact of Slavery on the Construction of Self and Gender Identities in M. S. Mohamed's Novels

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to analyze and evaluate the impact of slavery on the mapping and construction of self and gender identities in Mohamed S. Mohamed *Kiu* (1972) and *Nyota ya Rehema* (1976). The study will use a composite approach comprising New Historicism, Gender Criticism and Stylistics. New Historicism helped to situate and map the works analyzed in relation to particular Zanzibarian epochs. Gender criticism was expended in interrogating how women and men in feudal Zanzibarian society related with each other at all levels of social interaction and the impact on their self and gender identities. Finally, stylistics was used to interrogate and evaluate the dominant structural and stylistic features of the choice texts and their impact on the study topic. The study was guided by two hypotheses, viz, that in feudal Zanzibarian society, racialism and the dominant ideologies (patriarchy and Islam), impacted negatively on self and gender identities of both female and male members of society. Secondly, this study contends that, the stylistic devices used in each one of the choice texts, were important in delineating the mapping and construction of self and gender identities.

Key Words: *Gender, Slavery, Identity, Novel*

Introduction

What is the impact of slavery on the mapping and construction of self and gender in the narrative fictions of Mohamed S. Mohamed and especially *Kiu* (1972) and *Nyota ya Rehema* (1976). How did racialism and feudal social structure impact on the identities of both female and male members of Zanzibarian society. How do the structural features and especially characterization and dominant stylistic features employed by the writer in each of the choice texts help or impact on the mapping and construction of self and gender identities?

This paper is guided by the interdisciplinary interaction between gender criticism, new historicism and stylistics. These are the theories we intend to use to discuss the chosen narrative works of fiction. "Gender" is a term that refers to the relations between women and men in society and which are socially determined. Gender has now been accepted as an area of academic research in literary studies as in other disciplines (Meena, 1992; Stratton, 1994; Davies, 1994; Oyewumi, 1997).

Gender criticism emanates from feminism. It is a method of literary analysis that strives to use objective methods to interrogate how artists – male and female – accord equal recognition to female and male identities. In essence, this approach tries to bridge the gap between the extreme natures of patriarchy and feminism (Wasamba, 2002; Swaleh, 2011) in discussing self and gender identities in literary works.

New historicism will be used to place the two novels under analysis in specific Zanzibarian historical periods. This approach will afford us a tool with which to interrogate the complex intertextual relationships in each work rather than assume each text is an individual writer's creative genius (Bressler, 1999). This view is emphasized by Booker (1996) who insists that it is not right to separate literary texts from their historical and social contexts, since the texts themselves are a product of complex "social exchanges" or "negotiations". Therefore, this view will afford this paper a way to interrogate the interaction between literature and society and especially the historical forces within which the literature under review was produced. This is clearly explained by Hawthorn (1996) when he says,

literary works are most fruitfully read in the illuminating contexts of the historical forces which contributed to their birth and the historically conditioned, and changing circumstances of their subsequent life.

Finally, stylistics will be a useful tool with which the topic of the study will be undertaken. Leech and Short (1981:10) contend that style “refers to the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose”. Though style is applicable to both spoken and written, both literary and non-literary language, our concern will be particularly related to written literary texts in the novel genre. The dominant stylistic devices analyzed in this paper are metaphors, symbols and symbolism, irony, imagery and characterization as an important structural aspect and which impacted significantly on the study topic.

The two novels that will be analyzed are set in Zanzibarian society, either in feudal, post-slavery and emerging capitalism after British colonial rule. The dominant ideologies are Islam and patriarchy working closely with traditional culture and racism. Patriarchy and Islam are used by the ruling class both as a moral and legal code to give legitimacy to their rule. The majority of the people live in slave-like conditions and are denied settings conducive for the construction of self and gender identities.

The choice texts reveal an unprecedented social, economic, political and gender disparity based on race, gender and class. *Kiu* (1972) is largely based in post-feudal Zanzibarian society (probably in the early years of independence), while *Nyota ya Rehema* (1976), is set in feudal society when Arab plantation economy was the driving force of the island state.

This is the background against which the impact of slavery on the mapping and construction of self and gender identities and what structural and stylistic features the novelist expends to arrive at his desired objectives will be discussed.

Metaphorization of Identity in *Kiu* (1972)

Kiu, Mohamed S. Mohamed's first novel, used metaphor in collaboration with characterization to map and construct self and gender identities in post-colonial Zanzibarian society. Though the impact of slavery is at the core of this paper, it can be argued that the social fabric and relations prevailing in pre-revolution Zanzibar were akin to those of the plantation-slavery era (Jabir (1977:184). The Arab ruling class had amassed so much wealth that their presence and influence was felt even after independence and the 1964 revolution. Africans still languished in poverty, in slave-like conditions, with low self-esteem, lacking the confidence (and maybe the means) to construct positive self and gender identities. The social disparity created by plantation slavery had literally created numerous and disparate ‘thirsts’ (cravings) for different things amongst different people according to their race, class and gender. This is the setting of *Kiu* (1972). The writer uses the word ‘*kiu*’ to metaphorize the construction of self and gender identities in the interaction between the main female and male characters in this particular narrative fiction.

The meaning of a surface statement is the one that leads to the comprehension of the meaning of a metaphor. This essentially involves imagery as Mooij (1976:23) explains,

Meaning with regard to metaphor involves imagery and classification of this meaning by language about the metaphor, involves reference to this imagery.

The metaphor of ‘thirst’ in the novel is used to buttress the themes of the construction of self and gender identities. At the centre of this negotiation are Mwinyi, a rich Arab whose thirst for Bahati exposes him to Idi, his driver's greed, conceit, slyness and cruelty. As the three characters interact in their quest to quench their different thirsts, they would have constructed positive self and gender identities. However, this is not to be since fate, had already destined that of the three players, it is only Idi who accomplishes his mission despite constructing a negative identity for himself. Mzee Mwinyi and Bahati are so completely blinded by their love so much that their ‘thirsts’ are the cause of their deaths and hence, the identities they so wished to construct, are averted or even inverted.

Mzee Mwinyi: A Paragon of Feudalism and Racism

Given Mzee Mwinyi's background (an Arab), it is only natural that he has inherited the worldview, attitude and identity of his race which has to be asserted by whatever means at whatever cost. This is the reason his male ego prodded him to believe the world was at his feet. This is why he believed "*lau kuwa alichotaka kingenunulika kwa fedha, bila shaka angezikwangua zote alizokuwa nazo*" (p.2-3) (If what he desired had a price tag, he would have given all his wealth to acquire it). This is the price he is ready to pay to quench his thirst for Bahati.

In this sense we can argue that Mwinyi craved for an identity that can only be acquired once Bahati had become his- at his feet, in his house, his to do whatever his frail body desired. In some sense Mwinyi has "thingified" Bahati. Mwinyi's wealth and social status have deprived Bahati her humanity to become a "thing" that would accord him the identity of a winner- was he not a member of the elite race and the wealthiest of all the island's dwellers? Were the Arabs not the landlords whom the poor and landless blacks obeyed and worked for till they fell down exhausted? Were they not the owners of the islands and all that were on it?

The writer uses irony and sarcasm to draw Mwinyi's image as he limped on his walking stick on his way to Bahati's residence "*uchovu ulimfanya kukokota miguu kulikoyapa mawe nafasi ya kumchuna ngozi vidole*" (p.4). (Exhaustion made him drag his feet which gave the stones the opportunity to scratch the skin of his toes). Mwinyi's hunger and thirst for Bahati's love is vividly told in this image:

*Akijua sasa mapenzi ni nguvu zilizozidi nguvu;
ni machozi; ni mhanga; ni ukiwa; ni upweke;
ni unyonge na maonevu; ni kutaka ukakosa* (p.5).

Now he understands that love is the force of
all forces; it is tearful; it is a sacrifice; it is loneliness;
it is sadness; it is poverty and punishment; it is to
want and be un wanted.

Mwinyi is driven by his wealth, an over-inflated ego, male egoism and ironically, genuine love for Bahati that he has vowed to do everything to win her love. Despite his higher social status (being an immensely rich Arab), and a descendant of the sultans who ruled not only Zanzibar but Pemba, Kilwa, Mafia and the other tiny islands and the 16-mile coastal strip, feels his identity will only be complete only when he puts his jewel (Bahati) on his crown. One sympathises with Mzee Mwinyi when Idi brings him Bahati's photo. "*Kwa ghafla, Mwinyi akaivamia na kuisogeza machoni*" (p.10). (Suddenly Mwinyi pounced on it and placed it before his eyes). To him, nothing could compare to that photo in the whole wide world.

Mwinyi's thirst for Bahati is so great that he showers her with money-twenty thousand to buy a house. He was giving his all to own the beautiful Bahati, the "thing" that tormented his heart and soul, day and night. Bahati seems to be challenging his identity, the Arab patriarch whose heritage had taught him to acquire whatever his heart desired. However, this was not to be. After fleecing him off his money to his heart's content, Idi gets married to Bahati and forgets his employer whom he avoids like he had the plague. "*Alikuja kurudisha gari tu, hakujia jambo jingine*" (p.89). (He only came to return the car, not for anything else).

Mwinyi dies a lonely and heart-broken man; alone in his big house, save for his faithful househelp (slave), Mwajuma. Mwinyi's only blood relation –his daughter Rehema – is in Europe for her studies. The identity Mwinyi so craved for and which he believed he would acquire on winning Bahati's love, is averted albeit, he dies like a person who had not been born to walk the surface of the earth. Ironically, his only relative is away in Europe, trying to construct an identity any educated African Arab would be unlucky to acquire or construct for herself- an alienated, educated, orphan.

Idi as a Symbol of Male Egoism and Selfishness

Idi is Mzee Mwinyi's driver and Bahati's boyfriend. From the time we meet him, we get to understand he is an ambitious and cunning man out to create a niche for himself and be identified as a rich man amongst the cream of society. He only has one goal in life- to fleece his boss Mwinyi by using the gullible Bahati who has sold her heart and soul to this egoistic and ruthless man whose other name is selfishness. Idi's actions are informed by the cut-throat economy that dawns after the collapse of plantation slavery and colonialism. He is a person who believes, the wealthy of society must have acquired their wealth illicitly. Idi's thirst is for Mwinyi's wealth and Bahati's trust. "*Lakini mimi nimekueleza kuwa huu ni mpango tu. Ukikubali tutatajirika mimi na wewe kisha tuoane tustarehe* (p. 14). (But I have already told you this is nothing but a plan. If you agree, we will become rich, get married and live happily ever after).

Idi's quest is to be rich, have a beautiful housewife and a number of mistresses. He believes that the likes of Mzee Mwinyi, his boss are where they are and have what they have because they stole (p.15). Moreover, "*ana mifedha mingi asiyokuwa na kazi nayo, na kupewa kitu bure siyo kuiba... mpenzi, hebu, fuata ninayokwambia ili nasi tupate kuoana tustarehe kama watu*" (p.15-16). (He has lots of money for which he has no use, and to be given for free is not theft...My love, please do as I bid so that eventually, we get married and live happily like people of class).

After acquiring Mwinyi's money through Bahati, he gets married to Bahati hurriedly. This is what he had desired; to marry an innocent, naïve and gullible woman like Bahati. Now his identity is complete – he is wealthy, a man of class and means, free to do as his evil heart so willed. Being a former servant himself, he makes sure his house was not lacking in servants at his beck and call. The identity he had set out to construct for himself is not to be- it is inverted. The writer's description of his interaction with his servants confirms his subverted identity,

Kulikuwa na watumishi watatu... mmoja alikuwa msafisha nyumba... wa pili ni wa bustani, gari na uwanja; wa tatu ni mjongeza vilivyombali: sokoni, madukani, na mwinginemo (p.97)

There were three servants... one took care of the house...
the second was for the garden, the car and compound;
The third was to bring near what was far: market shops and elsewhere.

It is informing that in the same way that Mwinyi desires to possess Bahati (and hence thingifying her), so does Idi. Bahati's sentiment as she lay in bed recuperating after falling down the stairs trying to help her drunken husband Idi, summarizes Idi's newly- acquired identity:

...Hakuwemo moyoni mwa Idi tangu zamani- kuwa yeye ni chombo tu cha Idi... kuishi na mume mwenye kiburi, ubinafsi, ukaidi na utovu wa huruma...(p.117-8).

...She wasn't in Idi's heart at all from the beginning-
She was only a tool to Idi... to live with an arrogant, selfish, rude and cruel husband.

Bahati: A Victim of Patriarchal Machinations

Bahati is Bi. Cheusi's and Jaku's daughter. Her quest for a self and gender identity is rather ambiguous- in her heart of hearts, she desires to be identified as an honest, hard working young woman in spite of her difficult social position. On the other hand, there is the need to do as Idi compelled her so that she does not lose the love of her life. At the beginning Bahati seems content with her identity and social status. "*Mimi sina haja na mali ya mtu natosheka na umaskini wangu*" (p.16). ("I do not want anyone's wealth. I am contented with my poverty").

However, Bahati's devil and undoing, is her love for Idi. This is the reason why at the beginning she is not only reluctant and hesitant to go to Mzee Mwinyi's residence and pretend she liked him, her longing for Idi takes the better of her. She misses Idi and "*mara ya mwanzo katika maisha yake aliuhi umaskini*" (p.28) (She longed for Idi and for the first time in her life, she felt poor). After three days, the frail figure of Bahati is seen running towards Idi's house,

*Hakuweza kuishi bila Idi. Lazima arejee kwa
Idi, amwangukie, amsihi, amwombe msamaha,
amhakikishie mapenzi yake na utiifu wake,
amwambie kuwa yu tayari kushirikiana naye
kwa lolote atakalotaka, lolote!* (p.31).

She could not live without Idi. She must go back to Idi,
Fall at his feet, beg him, ask him for his forgiveness,
and tell him she was ready to cooperate with him
in whatever he wished, anything!

Thus Bahati not only sells her heart, body and soul for Idi's love, but her self esteem, her chastity, her freedom and identity too. In this sense, Bahati not only perpetuates her person's oppression by negating her identity, but the female gender's as well. It is informing that at the back of her mind, Bahati knows Idi only wanted to use her, but her naivety gets the better of her. The metaphor of thirst, is quite apt for Bahati's feelings for Idi, albeit contrary to reason and her mother's words of caution: "*Utakuja lia kilio cha mbwa mdomo juu, na mimi niko hapa*". (p.26) (Some day you will cry with your mouth wide open like a dog, and I will be here to witness it).

Bahati's adolescent age, is another reason she is easily controlled by Idi. It may also be she is thrilled by Idi's constantly showering her with gifts like clothing and cheap jewellery. But it can also be argued that she had a slave-like mentality and demeanor, borne of the overwhelming power of patriarchy, tradition and the fatalistic attitude the society's poor adopted in life. Not even Islamic teachings could impart her with the decency to preserve her chastity, her physical, mental and spiritual serfdom. "*Ah mwanangu we, umepata kuona wapi mambo kama hayo kufanywa na mtu Isilamu?*" (p.25) (*Oh my daughter, where did you see a muslim undertake such things?*)

Apparently, there is some kind of contestation in Bahati's life- whether to conform and loose Idi or to rebel and continue seeing him which is against both religious and societal expectation. Should she surrender herself to the identity prescribed by her tradition, religion and patriarchy and risk losing Idi forever? Should she rebel against tradition and religion and continue being Idi's lover and become his accomplice in stealing from Mzee Mwinyi?

The fact is that, "*Bahati na mamake walikuwa wamekwisha lemaa katika umaskini*" (p.28). (Bahati and her mother had completely been disabled by poverty). Could this partly explain Bahati's decision to be part of Idi's plan? But then one may pause to ask, where was her conscience? Is this the way she was brought up? Is whatever identity prescribed any inferior to the one she wishes to assert by helping Idi steal from Mwinyi? It is paradoxical that Bahati does not blame her relationship with Idi for her woes- being lonely, neglected despite being Idi's wife. The writer tells us,

*Ikiwa yuko mkosa katika mashaka yale, basi
ni yeye mwenyewe, si Idi. Na yeye si mkosa,
bali ni mpenda aliyeona chongo kengeza. Na
mapenzi ni upofu, kukosa kwake ni ajali.
na ajali hailaumiwi.* (p. 119).

If there was a culprit in those tribulations,
it was her own self, not Idi. And she had not
erred, she loved and instead of a one eyed man,
she saw a squinted one. And to love is to be blind,
her errors, are accidents. And accidents are not blamed.

This image constructs a metaphor for Bahati's condition- her self imposed identity; her servitude, her being "other" by choice. The identity she set out to assert by marrying Idi, is averted. In fact she would have been better off had she opted to retain the old fashioned, traditional, prescribed identity. Finally, Bahati makes the ultimate decision- she is now ready to leave Idi and be her own person. She asks Idi for a divorce. This is the only way and avenue through which she would regain (salvage) her positive, traditional self and gender identity of an obedient daughter, homely, God fearing young Muslim woman. Though it is not explicit (it can only be inferred), Idi must have killed Bahati since in his letter, he had asked her to meet him at Kinarani (p.157). After bidding farewell to her mother as she went to meet Idi, "*Bahati hakuonekana tena*". (p.159). (Bahati was never seen ever again).

Bi. Cheusi , Kidawa and Tatu as Symbols of Traditional and Patriarchal Condemnation

Cheusi is Bahati's mother and Jaku's wife while Tatu and Kidawa are Bahati's peers and former 'madrassah' mates. Kidawa is married to Makame while Tatu's husband is Ali. Through these women, the writer metaphorizes the self and gender identities by alluding to the power of cultural practices, religion and patriarchy. It can also be safely argued that religion has greatly directed and affected the three demeanors. The fact that the dominant religion would not allow them to 'rebel', furthers their oppression both at the individual and gender levels. Meszaros (1989:10) says ideology is a specific kind of social consciousness that

...it is surmountable in class societies. Its stubborn objectively constituted (and constantly reconstituted) as the inescapable consciousness of class societies, concerned with the articulation of values and strategies that aim at controlling the social metabolism under all its major aspects.

Foremost, Bi. Cheusi is an epitome of stereotypical female inferiority and servitude. She symbolizes the structure of tradition, religion and patriarchy and its impact on the female gender's identity. Despite her position, she is a hardworking woman whose petty trade kept hers and Bahati's boat afloat in the turbulent sea that is their life. This is her portrayal.

Cheusi alizibeba kazi zote za nyumba. Usiku alisukuma maandazi na mikate ya biashara; huanzia mapema wakati kelele huko nje kwa majirani zake wakizungumza hata kelele zikipungua... (p.29).

Cheusi carried all the house's responsibilities on her shoulders. At night she would make mandazi and pancakes to sell; she would start early when neighbours were noisy till their voices fade away...

It is apparent that Cheusi had surrendered herself to the identity imposed upon her by tradition and religion; her economic status had been determined long before by the Arab feudal system and the consequent British capitalism. She has completely surrendered herself to defeat.

Bi. Cheusi is in a dilemma of sorts or could we argue that like Bahati, there is contestation in her life between traditionalism and modernism? Is it for a lack of a patriarch in her life, she is unable to choose between being a good mother and a friend to her daughter and being liberal with her and hence, 'spoiling' her? This is the relationship we witness between mother and daughter, throughout the novel. Bi Cheusi fails miserably as her daughter's female sex – role model. To some extent, this is symptomatic of post-slavery societies-individuals (and more so female members), forever languish in poverty and are unable to break loose the chains of servitude and patriarchal interpellation and condemnation. This is the reason Bi. Cheusi seems to be perpetually carrying a heavy load on her person. This being the case, she is a submissive and timid person and is unable to construct a positive self or gender identity.

Further, Bi. Cheusi seems to be bitter with tradition and patriarchy- she blames the two ideologies for giving her a husband and an identity as a wife and a mother, but robs her of her husband. She feels

incomplete and this could be the reason she so suspects Idi in her words, “*Huyo Idi wako, nikwambie hana kukutaka, hana chochote. Anayemtaka mwanamke humwoa. Yeye anataka akuchezee na halafu akutupilie mbali, apite akikucheka.*” (p. 26). (That Idi of yours is not interested in you at all. Whoever wants a woman, gets married to her. All he wants is to toy with you, discard you then be on his way laughing).

It appears like the women in *Kiu* are condemned by the relics of the feudal structure and slavery era (which were essentially masculine). Their status and identity seem to be ambiguous; emanating from the conflict or antagonism between tradition and patriarchy. This is the reason we see Bi. Cheusi in a dilemma, she has no self-esteem, status or identity- all have been obliterated by the absence of husband Jaku (patriarch) and her inability to offer female sex-role orientation to Bahati, her daughter.

Kidawa's and Tatu's conditions are not any different from Cheusi's and Bahati's. Kidawa's husband is a drunk who has shunned his social responsibility of being provider to his wife. The identity prescribed by tradition and religion, has been inverted. No wonder Kidawa is confused. “*Kitu kinachonikera ni wivu wake tu... Sasa hivi sijui kama hayuko darini anatusikiza.*” (p. 68) (“What infuriates me is his jealousy... I am not sure if he is not in the upper floor right now listening to us.”) This buttresses our earlier argument that the male gender in this work, have “thingified” women. In this sense, marriage becomes an institution that obliterates woman's identity completely and renders her an object of man's use, abuse and control.

On the other hand, Tatu's husband is “*mume jina tu, sijui njaa yake, sijui shibe yake, wala sijui matembezi yake.*” (p. 71) (A husband in name only; I don't know when he is hungry, when he has eaten, I don't know his whereabouts”). This translates into men who have made the institution of marriage into slavery. The main characters in this novel, disappear once they succeed in enticing women into marriage. Consequently, women become housekeepers, house-helps, forever hidden in the home, their private space. On the other hand, the men become free beings on getting married; their space, the public to do as their evil hearts desired. In this sense, women have no self or gender identities since it is obliterated. Before marriage they are under their father's (the patriarch's) watch and control and on matters related to marriage, the iron and unrelenting hold of their husbands. Tradition, religion and patriarchy rule over women completely and absolutely rendering them objects and items of pleasure and leisure for male gender- despite their being other, in man's world.

Fate as a Symbol of Gender Identity in *Nyota ya Rehema* (1976)

Unlike *Kiu*, *Nyota ya Rehema* is set in feudal Zanzibar when the colour of an individual's skin, was an important ingredient in determining their destiny. In this work, the writer is out to show that Rehema, the main female character, is segregated, oppressed and forever relegated to the identity of a serf, with no education, no permanent abode, no social class and above all else, no rights whatsoever- not even to inherit her mother's land given by her father. The very opening pages of the novel indicate and foretell the novel's thematic trust,

“*Baba, baba, wakulima wamekuja...*”

“*Ah, vizuri,*” *alisema kuwaambia wakulima wapatao darizeni walioleta gunia na vipeto vya mazao yao, zawadi kwa bwana shamba.* (p. 1).

“Father, father, the peasants have arrived. “Ah, good,” he said to the peasants who numbered about a dozen who had brought sacks of their produce as presents to the landlord.”

It is informing that Salma, Fuad's little daughter seems to understand the father's and peasants' relationship. However, Salma and Samir are Adila's children. Adila is Fuad's second wife. His first wife Aziza (Rehema's mother) is relegated to the servants' quarters since she bore a coloured (black) child when both she, Aziza and Fuad are Arab in descent. This is the foundation upon which fate as a symbol of self and gender identity in this novel will be discussed.

Fuad as a Symbol of Feudal and Patriarchal Order

Fuad is a rich man of Arab descent- the ruling feudal class. He is the son to Mzee Salum “*ambaye ndiye mchumi wa mali aliyoikuta Fuad.*” (p. 7). (It is him who produced the wealth that Fuad has inherited). For being an Arab, Fuad has also inherited the identity of the race, the wealth and lifestyle of the elite class. It is worth noting that Fuad as a person, is not evil but lives according to the identity prescribed and inherent in the Arab ruling class. But to some extent, he was a show-off (could his youth have something to do with it?). we read, Fuad

... *hakuwa mtu wa Mungu wala hakuwa mtu wa shetani ... Akiwatoza kodi masikini za Mungu Ili awepe sadaka masikini za Mungu, ili roho yake ifurahi.* (p. 6)

... he was not a man of God or of the devil ... He would receive land rent from God's poor to give alms to God's poor, so his heart may be glad.

Despite the irony inherent in this quotation, Fuad is intent upon living up to this inherited identity; this paradox of stealing from the poor to give to the poor seems to confirm the above quotation. However, he seems to also inherit the cruelty and unassuming attitude of the feudal lords and patriarchs of yesteryears- that of disregarding their responsibilities as husbands and parents. This is the reason, “*Fuad alishindwa, alishindwa kabisa kabisa, kumpa mkewe Aziza haki yake, ile haki hasa ya mke kwa mumewe*” (p.6). (Fuad could not, he completely could not give his wife Aziza her right, that right of a wife from her husband).

On meeting Adila, he falls in love with her and gets married to her. “*Kwa maamuru ya Mungu , mimi... nimeoa mke mwingine*” (p.18). (“According to Almighty God's orders, I have... I have married another wife). It is apparent that Mzee Salim's death was destined to completely revolutionize Fuad's life; not for the better, but for worse, especially on marrying Adila. The identity he inherits, is inverted; he is out to assert a new one- by first disregarding Aziza his first wife and his daughter Rehema (Rahma), and surrendering totally and completely to Adila's every whim.

When Rehema is born, Fuad disowns her as soon as he lays his eyes on her “*Huyu ni mtoto wako peke yako*” (p.15). (“This child is yours alone”). Fuad's sudden change of attitude towards Aziza emanates from two factors, i.e., he had just found Adila and “*Fuad alikuwa kamezwa na Adila*”. (p.7) (Fuad had been mesmerized by Adila). Secondly, Rehema “... *hakikufikia nusu ya weupe wake yeye wa manjano, licha ya weupe wa Fuad wa wekundu*” (p.15). (She was not half her yellowish-white colour, let alone Fuad's reddish –white colour). This confirms a historical fact, that the colour of one's skin from birth determined their identity, their status, their class and their social standing. However, these two factors are the reasons Fuad's identity starts to take a negative path.

It is ironical that Rehema whom Fuad disowns because of her complexion, has in fact genetically inherited her great grandmother's physical features. Rehema's grandmother, on seeing her granddaughter remarks, “*Sura ya marehemu mama yangu*” (p.19). (“The face of my late mother). Hence, Fuad had made a big mistake for suspecting Rehema was not his child. In this sense, Fuad's attitude, is an epitome of Zanzibarian feudal society then; a person's self identity as they came into this world was determined by the colour of their skin. Other identities were dependent on other factors. So Rehema's colour symbolizes this state of affairs.

Fuad's attitude and character seems to be in conflict - there is contestation between the need to adhere to his prescribed identity (an Arab feudal lord/landowner) and the wish to be a good husband ,father and Muslim adherent. According to Bikiza, Rehema's benefactor, “*Sikupata kuona mtu karimu kuliko Fuadi, lakini kawezwa tu na mitishamba*” (p.85). (I have never seen a more generous person than Fuadi but he has been bewitched). We can safely argue that Fuad is torn between asserting his group identity (his inherited wealth, status and race) and his positive self identity which requires him to be a good Muslim, a responsible husband, father and human being.

We conclude that Fuad's identity is tarnished specifically because of his unequal treatment of his wives Aziza and Adila, his refusal to accept Rehema as his child from childhood and above all else, being unable to take control of his life after getting married to Adila. However, he seems to salvage a bit of positive self and gender identity when he readily gives Rehema the Ramwe farm “*Bila shaka*

Ramwe ni yako na mama yako, ndivyo nilivyokusudia" (p.84). ("Without doubt Ramwe farm is yours and your mother's, as I intended).

Rehema as a Symbol of Racial and Class Discrimination

Rehema (born Rahma) is daughter to Aziza and Fuad. Though her name literally means "beneficent" or "blessings", it is ironic that her life symbolizes the discrimination, oppression and segregation. She suffers throughout, emanating from the dominant class and the misfortune of being born of dark complexion when her parents are Arabs. This is the reason her name changes from "*Rahma*" Arabic pronunciation to "*Rehema*" (p.2) Swahili pronunciation.

Though the very title of the novel literally means "Rehema's star/fate", it would be wrong to believe all her tribulations are the will of God (and of course this is what the feudal ruling class would want the poor to believe). It is ironical that from birth, her being black and female seems to compound her problems. She does not inherit her parents identities (elite Arabs), she and her mother are denied this. Her mother, suffers because the patriarch (Fuad) has found a more interesting toy (Adila). Could the writer be alluding to the fact that in the quest and struggle to construct self and gender identities, women are their own worst enemies? Is it that the women in this novel perpetuate their own persons and gender's oppression? Given Aziza's and Rehema's predicament –that they are forced to change their familial, social and economic status because of Adila (Fuad's second wife), we are tempted to think along those lines. "*Na Fuad alikuwa kamezwa na Adila*" (p.7). (And Fuad had been mesmerized by Adila).

In contrast to her half siblings- Salma and Samir- Rehema does not go to school. Salma attends Royal School while Samir is Europe educated. This is the fate that Fuad and Adila, decide for her and her mother Aziza. Aziza eventually dies from heartache and the trauma of being neglected by the only man she loved- Fuad Salim. This translates into the stereotypical view that woman's identity, is dependent upon a husband's, father's or ancestors as the case seems to be in this novel.

When her mother dies, Rehema's identity becomes that of an apprentice worker at her father's home at Mbiju. "*Cheo chake mtumishi wa watumishi*" (p.22). (Her title servant of servants). Rehema works till her hands develop scales. She is despised, insulted and imprisoned. She could not dare venture outside the Mbiju castle. In this sense, Rehema is a slave in her own home-with no self or gender identity. Finally, she decides she had had enough and runs away "*kutafuta chochote kile atachokipata: maisha au mauti*" (p.22) (To look for whatever would come her way: life or death). Her physically distancing herself from her home at Mbiju, translates into her refusal to have an identity that was detrimental to her as a person and young woman. She refuses this prescribed identity. She rebels and runs away-symbolizing her decision to chart a new path and hence, construct her own self and gender identity. We see this kind of 'physical distancing' in Clara Momanyi's short story '*Ngome ya Nafsi*' (Naseko) and the novel *Tumaini* (Tumaini).

After running blindly in the farmlands, Rehema is badly hurt; a lone peasant in the person of Sulubu rescues her, takes care of her without demanding anything from her. After four days Rehema recuperates, thanks Sulubu and leaves for Mwembeshomari where she meets Kidawa. She luckily finds a job as a babysitter at Mr. Mansuri and Rozi's residence as she continued to live with her benefactor Kidawa and her room mates Ruzuna and Chiku at Topea.

Like Rehema, the three girls are all victims of the discriminative racial system- they are poor and uneducated. This is the reason they engage in the dehumanizing and evil trade of the flesh. These girls find parallels in S.A. Mohamed's Zaina, Bi. Time, Bi. Mboga, Masika and Mwatima (*Tata za Asumini*) and Ambiyi and Njeri in John Habwe's *Maumbile si Huja*.

Rehema tries her best not to be enticed into prostitution but it would seem fate had already decided for her. Mansuri her employer, introduces her to illicit sexual relations by giving her all manner of gifts till Rozi catches them red-handed and almost kills Rehema. In this instance, Rehema's identity changes for worse- she is no longer the innocent and bitter village girl. She is now knowledgeable about the parasitical relations between women and men; she knows men are gullible and benefactors at the same time. After some years, she realizes that it was only Sulubu of all men she had met, who had helped her in time of need without asking for recompense.

After finding Sulubu, Rehema acquires a new identity- that of an honest, hardworking young wife. She and Sulubu work hard on their Ramwe farm and soon it flourishes. It is symbolic of the end to parasitism and the unity of purpose of the down-trodden, when Sulubu and Rehema get married (p.113). Soon after, Rehema gives birth to a baby boy who resembled Fuad (Rehema's father). The child "*alikuwa Fuad. Mweupe, mwenye singa, macho manene, pua iliyosimama, na midomo myembamba*" (p.119). (Was Fuad. White, with soft hair, large eyes, a sharply-pointed nose and thin lips). It is ironical that Rehema names him Fuad.

The couple's woes do not cease; no sooner do they turn the Ramwe farm into a productive enterprise, than Karim (Salma's husband), collaborates with the Ramwe administration and takes their farm by devious means. They give up the farm, buy another at Pakani, work tirelessly and turn it into a beautiful, productive land. Karim had squandered Salma's inheritance from Fuad and contemplates taking the farm by deceit too. This is the reason Salma muses, "*Ah, maskini yule Rehema! Nyota yake haikuwa na nuru tangu alipozaliwa*" (p.165). ("Oh, poor Rehema! Her star has never been bright since she was born").

However, Sulubu was tired of these injustices and he kills Karim as he came to inspect their farm (with a view to grab it) (p.167). Sulubu escapes the hangman's noose by the skin of his teeth- a coup d'état by the armed forces takes place. This allows Sulubu and Rehema settle peacefully on their farm and start to construct positive self and gender identities for themselves. Salma comes to ask for forgiveness from Rehema for atrocities committed by Fuad their father and Karim, Salma's husband. Rehema forgives her and the two are reconciled. In this sense, despite Rehema not inheriting her parents' identities, she constructs a positive self and gender identity - she is a hardworking young woman, a good wife and mother and above all else, a free human being free to choose her own destiny. The fact that Salma leaves for Europe to join Samir, symbolizes the death of the oppressive feudal social structure in Zanzibar.

Karim as a Symbol of Feudal and Patriarchal Order

Karim is Rehema's step-sister's husband. Though he appears late in the novel, he is an epitome of the feudal system's injustices perpetrated against the poor of society and women- especially young women and wives. He gets married to Salma when Rehema was in Topea. Rehema attended the wedding and saw "*uso wa nduguye Salma umeinama katika veli, karibu yake kijana mmoja jamali...*" (p.70-1) (The face of her sister Salma was visible under the veil and close to her, was a handsome young man...).

Karim's name literally means 'generous', no wonder he is a spendthrift; a gambler and a cruel man. This is the identity this brother in law to Rehema constructs for himself. He uses and abuse Salma's genuine love for him to fleece her of all her inheritance. He is a manipulator; the reason "*urithi was Salma uliingia mikononi mwa mumewe*" (p.131). (Salma's inheritance fell into her husband's hands).

As the days pass, so does Karim's thirst for more heightens. Salma is forced to steal from her mother to give her husband (p.127). After Fuad's death, Karim fakes documents and succeeds in taking away Rehema's Ramwe farm. After that, his insatiable thirst for more drives him to want Rehema's and Sulubu's Pakani farm. The reason "*Raha yenyewe Pakani imo katika jimbo la sahibu yangu mmoja!*" (p.164) ("And the good thing is that Pakani is in one of my friend's county!").

But the identity Karim so desires to construct for himself through legal, illegal, deceitful, fraudulent and sheer force, ends tragically. As he and his accomplices go to take measurements of Pakani farm, Sulubu had had enough of this poor man attitude that God will intervene on their behalf. "*Shshap! Vipande viwili...*" (p.167). ("*Shshap! Two pieces...*"). That is how Karim's thirst for illicitly acquired wealth come to an end- in the same way Simba (Sulubu's dog) dies, so does Karim- both for being parasites. Karim's demeanor as a character is like Idi's in Kiu, who fleeces Mzee Mwinyi through Bahati then kills her when she demanded for her share of the spoils. The identity of the rich and lavishly- living man that Karim so wanted to construct for himself, is inverted. In its place, he dies like a destructive animal killed by a poor farmer in defense of his hard earned farm and its produce.

Sulubu as a Symbol of the Poor Peoples Resilience and Unity

Sulubu is one of the most powerful characters in the novel symbolizing the resilience of the poor peasants and other down trodden of Zanzibarian society. Sulubu Nguvumali is a gentle, mature, calculative, observant, hardworking man who has a sense of humour. We first meet him when he rescues Rehema when she gets hurt while running away from her father's home at Mbiju. In spite of Rehema's ripe and enticing body, Sulubu's maturity and genuine care and love for fellow human beings is revealed. He nurses Rehema for four days like a professional physician without showing any lustful feelings (p.25-7).

That Sulubu is a persevering young man is confirmed by the fact that he lives all alone at Mwembeshomari- just him and his dog, Simba. When Rehema asks him the way to town he readily accompany's her to Mwembeshomari without asking for anything in return.

When the landlord at Mwembeshomari recalls the piece of land Sulubu had rented, he acquires a job as a coconut cracker in Bwana Salimu's farm. That he is a gentleman, is the fact that he does not let down Rehema when she asks him to come live with her in Ramwe. "*Sawa tu Pimdogo Reema; shauri yako tu Pimdogo Reema*" (p.95). (It's okay Bi. Reema, it's as you say Miss Reema). Sulubu and Rehema work so hard that "*Punde si punde bonde na aridhi yote iliyomo shamba la Rehema ilijaa kijani kilichonawiri*" (p.106). (Soon enough the valley and all the land that was Rehema's farm flooded a deep green colour).

That Sulubu is a symbol of the resilience of the poor masses, is the way he deals with his dog Simba after he becomes a chicken eater. This also symbolizes that the Rehemas and Sulubus of this society were now ready to construct new self and gender identities for themselves. They are now tired of identities imposed upon them by history and its baggage of inequality at the levels of social, economic and political interaction. "*Sulubu alinyanyuka kwa ghadhabu, akalenga panga lake sawa na Simba aliyekuwa kalala uwanjani... kiwiliwili chake kikafyatuka pande mbili aridhini*" (p.118). (Sulubu stood up infuriated and aimed his machete at Simba who lay on the ground... it's body twitched on the ground in two pieces).

Sulubu's no nonsense side comes to the fore when Rehema's brother-in-law attempts to use fraudulent means to take their newly acquired Pakani farm like he did the Ramwe one. Sulubu "*daima alikuwa yumo kazini, au akijitayarisha kwa kazi. Mamluki wa kazi!*" (p.153). (was always working or getting ready for work. A mercenary of work!). Karim was the last oppressor and parasite Sulubu was to deal with in the same way he had dealt with his Simba, the dog. And Karim "*ah, maskini, alikuwa keshazoea kula mali ya watu. Maradhi kama hayo hayasikii dawa.*" (p.167). (Oh, poor him, he had become used to take other people's property. Such a disease is incurable). Luckily, Sulubu was at hand to make sure Karim would never ever be anyone's worry as from that day." "*Shshap! Vipande viwili...*" (p.167). ("Shshap! Two pieces..."). That is how Sulubu deals Karim the permanent blow he should have been dealt long ago.

Sulubu is lucky to escape the hangman's noose when revolutionary soldiers took over the government. At the beginning of the story, Sulubu's identity is that of a reserved, poor peasant, forever at the mercy of the ruthless landlords and corrupt government officials like Karim. However as the story ends, he is a hero, a revolutionary whose actions, to all intents and purposes, had raised the consciousness of a whole nation. It is because of him the poor peasants could now stand up and together declare, " enough is enough".

Conclusion

The two novels analyzed, deal with the impact of slavery on the mapping and construction of self and gender identities in feudal and post-colonial Zanzibarian society. Kiu (1972), uses metaphor in its explication of self and gender identities emanating from the interaction between women and men in day to day activities. On the other hand, Nyota ya Rehema (1976) uses symbols and symbolism as the main devices through which self and gender identities are discussed. In this regard, the main female and male characters were analyzed with regard to how their interaction delineates the mapping and construction of self and gender identities in the different settings.

It was found out that in *Kiu*, set in post-colonial Zanzibarian society, the impact of the past social, economic and political structures continued to have a bearing on the direction taken in construction of self and gender identities. The writer metaphorizes the different self and gender identities different characters aspire to assert as 'thirsts'. Mzee Mwinyi is representative of the feudal society which still seem to hang ominously over the heads of the society's poor and oppressed like Bahati, Bi. Cheusi, Tatu and Kidawa. This is the reason Mwinyi, is the very symbol of feudalism and racial discrimination in the novel. We see how Mwinyi's thirst for Bahati's love is metaphorized and impacts quite a lot on the discussion of self and gender identities. Idi symbolizes male egoism while Bahati is a victim of patriarchal machinations and Bi. Cheusi, Kidawa and Tatu are the symbols of traditional and patriarchal condemnation- forever relegated to "otherness" for being poor women.

In *Nyota ya Rehema* (1976), the concept of fate, is used to symbolize how self and gender identities are constructed in this society bearing very close resemblance to feudal Zanzibar. In this sense, Fuad bin Salim (Salum) symbolizes the feudal and patriarchal order. Despite the fact that he inherits wealth, social class and identity, all these suffer because of his second wife's wiles. He neglects his first wife Aziza and daughter, Rehema (Rahma). Rehema the protagonist in the novel, is a symbol of the racial, gender and class discrimination that the masses suffered in feudal Zanzibarian society. Karim, Rehema's brother-in-law symbolizes social and gender injustices meted to the poor in that era. We see him oppress his wife emotionally and for neglecting his responsibilities as a husband. He steals all of Salma's inheritance and then takes away Rehema's Ramwe farm fraudulently. But when he attempts to grab Rehema's Pakani farm by deceit and forged documents, Sulubu kills him. Sulubu symbolizes the poor people's resilience, their perseverance and unity of purpose. Through him, the writer is able to clearly delineate the poor people's social, economic and political conditions. All of his actions point at the atrocities committed against them at the societal, economic and political arenas. His killing of Karim symbolizes the termination of oppressive and tyrannical rule and the construction of positive self and gender identities for themselves as a free people, in a free land.

The hypotheses that guided this paper were confirmed. It was found out that in feudal Zanzibarian society, racialism and the dominant ideologies- patriarchy, Islam and culture- impacted much more negatively on the self and gender identities of female characters than their male counterparts- Bahati, Bi. Cheusi, Kidawa and Tatu (*Kiu*) and Rehema, Salma, Chiku, Ruzuna and Kidawa (*Nyota ya Rehema*).

The second hypothesis was also confirmed, viz, the structural and major stylistic features used in each one of the novels were important in delineating the mapping and construction of self and gender identities. The writer uses the metaphor of 'thirst' variously in *Kiu* to delineate the different thirsts (identities) and needs different characters have and whether or not they assert or fulfil them. In *Nyota ya Rehema*, the writer uses symbols and symbolism extensively. For both novels, these stylistic features went a long way in delineating how the topic was handled.

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