

In the eyes of the male beholder: Language use as male inscription of the female body in film, Literature, and Facebook

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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of the inscription of the female body, and the way language used by men for such inscription shows distinct difference on women compared to that used on men. Using different film clips, literary pieces, and Facebook walls, the paper looks at the social inscription of the female body and argues that such state of affairs has made the constitution of the body of woman in the media, so plastic that through language use it can be molded the way the director, writer, and the Facebook friends (read male friends) deem fit, and it is turned into a text written upon it and from which it is not discernible as a social being but just an article. Indeed, “popular” inscription of the female body in the media in general and in Tollywood films, Swahili literary pieces, and ‘friendly’ exchanges and comments on Facebook walls in particular, impose literal, figurative and interpretative outlook that sells the films and literary works, as it amplifies female body inscription while condemning such a body to lust and ridicule.

Key words: facebook, female body, film, language use, literature, male inscription.

Introduction

The film industry in Tanzania, popularly referred to as Tollywood, has had wide quantitative strides. Similar to her sisters Nollywood, Bollywood, and other “woods”, Tollywood has, currently, a very big supply of films whose repeated themes and motifs vary from broken hearts and jealousies in love affairs, family conflicts, some limited political innuendos, magic, to evangelical cure-for-all *deus-ex-machina*. In all these, the ones that deal with love affairs appear most on television in Tanzania and in East Africa in general, and they are the ones whose actors and, especially, actresses don the front pages of popular fast-selling magazines.



The picture above is an example of one of the daily tabloids that sell simply by practicing female body inscription.¹ Such tabloids are scandal mongers that will go to all distances to "catch" mostly the Tollywood film actresses in different night club scenes, take their photographs, even when such persons are unwilling to be photographed, and print them on front pages for all to see. Asked why they do so, one tabloid owner who did not want his name to appear on print, proudly answered that in doing so they teach the rest of the society not to behave that way, but also they are able to sell tens of thousands of copies of such tabloids. Thus, in effect, the bodies of the Tollywood actresses are doubly inscribed and doubly sold – both in the tabloids and the films in which they act.

The present paper examines how, in Tollywood films, in literary works, and on friends' walls in Facebook, language use of the metaphor of the inscription of the female body and, thus, the accruing constitution and description of the ideal female body are imprinted and emphasized. As Michel Foucault (1990) and Elizabeth Grosz (1995) would have aptly put it, the female body can no longer be regarded as a fixed, concrete substance that is pre-cultural given. Indeed, when the former wrote that "nothing in man not even his body – is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men"² he quickly added a footnote that the constancy of cultural inscription is a "single drama" that acts on the body³. It is this single drama on the female body that the present paper is examining.

The concept of the inscription of the female body, and the way language operates differently on women compared to men, originates from French feminist literary

¹ The words read: "SHAME TO JOHARI! She is caught at 3:00 am, totally drunk and almost naked." Johari is one of the famous actresses and co-owner of JR Company that produces Tollywood films.

² The word "man" in Foucault's statement, itself the result of the masculinist world-view, must be read as "a person" or "a human being."

theory of the 1970s that overspilled to other regions up to as recent as the 1990s and beyond. Particular awareness was on language and meaning produced by such language – be it direct or implied. The theorists concluded that language had, in effect, been developed and turned into an unquestionably male territory and dominion whose worldview is from the male eyes.

In examining the social inscription of the female body in Tollywood films, selected Swahili literary pieces, and in Facebook exchanges and comments, the paper observes how such inscription is, especially in the first illustration, engineered by the market forces and cash economy that determine gender relations in a commoditized world. In examining different film clips, literary pieces, and Facebook walls the paper argues that such state of affairs has made the constitution of the body of woman in the media, so plastic that it can be molded the way the director, author, and the Facebook friends deem fit, turning it into a text written upon it and from which it is not distinct as a social being but just a pleasure, satiating doll. Indeed, “popular” inscription of the female body in the media in general and in Tollywood films, Swahili literary pieces, and “friendly” exchanges and comments on Facebook walls in particular, impose literal, figurative and interpretative outlook that sells the films and literary works, as it amplifies female body inscription while condemning such a body to lust and ridicule.

The second and last part of the paper examines the above vis-à-vis the characteristics of popular culture, showing how Tollywood films and Facebook exchanges have come to form the modern Tanzanian, and, perhaps, African youth’s popular e-cultural outlook that strives to define and give identity to such youth.

The Tollywood films, Swahili literary works, and Facebook Walls demonstrate the relationship between the language of visual arts, the written word, and Facebook exchanges and the female body through the unmistakable ways in which the female body is inscribed. This shall be evidenced in the discussion of the film, literary pieces, and Facebook samples that follow.

Oprah on a Hot Sunday

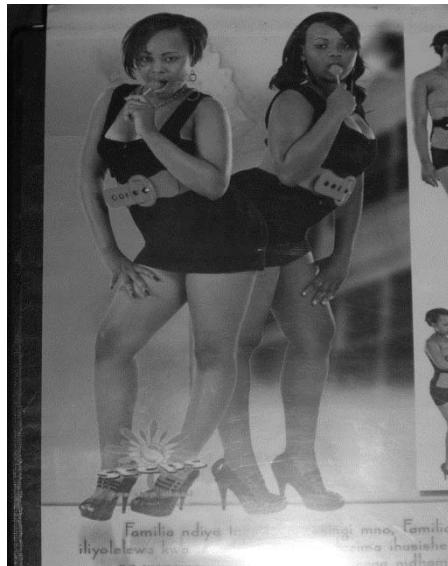
Oprah on a Hot Sunday is among the very first Tollywood films that got to be very famous, and it actually made the three main actors and actress – Steven Kanumba, Ray Kigosi and Irene Uwoya, what they are today. It even resulted into actress Irene Uwoya being sought after and finally getting married to Ndikumana - a Rwandan soccer star. Anyway, that is a different love story that we are not going to deal with in the present enterprise.

In short, the film begins in a village where Dominic (acted by Ray Kigosi) has gone for a visit, and where he discovers his long-time childhood friend, Alfred (acted by Steven Kanumba) who is un-employed and quite sickly as he coughs almost continually. Ray, who is married to Oprah (acted by Irene Uwoya), invites Alfred to visit and even stay with his family in the city of Dar es Salaam while looking for a job. Alfred agrees and soon joins Dominic and Oprah in the city. In the meantime, Alfred has let out to his friend, Dominic, the secret of his illness, that he is HIV positive. Then trouble begins. Dominic, who is quite busy with his work, helps Alfred to find some work. As each of them goes to work, Alfred comes back to the house where Oprah is, and pretty soon he begins a love affair with Oprah who seductively entices him into it.

The house help Milcker (acted by Violet Nestory) finds out about this affair, and as Oprah realizes that the house help has discovered the affair, she makes sure that the girl is fired. Tearfully, Milcker leaves the home, but not without leaving behind a detailed letter to Dominic, secretly tugged behind a wall painting, explaining the real reasons for her being fired. As Dominic gets hold of the letter, he is enraged, and the series of events finally lead to the running away of Alfred and Oprah to Zanzibar. Ultimately Dominic gets to know the whereabouts of the two and follows them. In the meantime the two lovers have quarreled over the misuse and squandering of the money that Oprah had taken from her husband's company. As chance would have it, just as Oprah is leaving she sees Dominic in town, and she ducks away from him as she decides to go back to where Alfred is, only to find that, a little while ago, the latter had been shot dead in the house. Oprah runs away and boards a boat to Dar es Salaam where she finds Dominic who had come back home earlier from Zanzibar too. Oprah notices a yellow scarf lying on a table, a scarf that Alfred had been very fond of in Zanzibar, and it dawns on her that it is Dominic who had actually shot Alfred. Soon the police appear and they arrest Oprah who tearfully whispers her last words to her husband saying that she knows that it is Dominic who had killed Alfred, and that she was ready to bear the cross since she loves him very much and she knows that she is the cause of all that had happened. The police then take her away. And there the film ends.

In short that is the storyline of *Oprah on a Hot Sunday*. It is quite an interesting film in the sense that in spite of the fact that it is Alfred who actually starts seducing Oprah by bringing her flowers and a birthday card, gradually Oprah takes over by adorning very short dresses and enticing Alfred into a passionate love affair. From this moment on, the director treats the main female character as the principal culprit in whatever has gone wrong. This stance does not differ much from what happens in two other Tollywood films, namely *Family Tears* and *Family Disaster*. Predictably it is the temptresses in the main female characters

of the two films that cause tears and disaster in the families. In *Family Disaster*,⁴ for example, two orphaned teenage girls Juliet (played by the ever popular and scandal-ridden Elizabeth Michael), and Judith (acted by Diana Rose Kimaro) who live with their uncle Mjomba (acted by Vincent Kigosi) go on a love rampage, changing lovers from fellow students, their teachers, businessmen, etc for no apparent reason other than money and, mostly, mere lust.



Elizabeth Michael (left) as Juliet and Diana Rose Kimaro (right) as Judith in the front cover of the film, *Family Disaster*

In order for their adventures to bear fruits, both actresses have to adorn tiny miniskirts and cleavage-enhancing gadgets that will attract the inscription of their young bodies by lustful men who are enticed into careless and callous love affairs. Finally one of the girls, Juliet, contracts HIV/AIDS and the film ends melodramatically as the sick girl reflects and moralizes over her past life.

In these three sample Tollywood films, the directors have made sure that most of the scenes in which the female characters appear, such characters are half or almost fully naked while their male counterparts/partners are almost always fully dressed, even in lovemaking scenes. The same happens in other Tollywood films such as in *Pretty Girl*⁵ in which one very beautiful girl (acted by none other than Irene Uwoya) entices the male members of one family into hurried love affairs in

⁴ A Vincent Kigosi Film directed by Vincent Kigosi.

⁵ A Vincent Kigosi Film directed by Vincent Kigosi.

order to lure them to death so as to avenge what had happened to her family in the past.



Cover page of Pretty Girl. Note the contrast in the dressing code between the male actors in full suits and the actress

The same stance can be seen in *Deception*⁶ where a housewife (acted by Rose Ndauka) enters into different love affairs that include her husband (acted by Patcho Mwamba) and a young college student (Steven Kanumba); and in *Dent Mapepe*⁷ in which, similar to what happens in *Family Disaster*, one female teenage student (acted by Salama Yahya) creates havoc as she takes adventure into triple love affairs that end with regrets on her part.



The Cover of Dent Mapepe

⁶ A Kanumba the Great Film directed by Steven Kanumba.

⁷ A Sas "O' Entertainment film.

Female Body Inscription in Swahili Literature

The concept of female body inscription has of recent resurfaced in the analysis of gender-related literary and other artistic works. In recent Kiswahili literary discourse there has been interest in the subject especially pioneered by Muhammed Seif Khatib in his Ph.D. dissertation titled “*Chanjo za Matakwa ya Mwanamume Katika Mwili wa Mwanamke: Ulinganisho wa Ushairi wa Muyaka bin Haji na Shaaban Robert*” (lit. The Pain Infliction Caused by Men’s Desires on the Body of a Woman: A Comparison of the Poetry of Muyaka bin Haji and that of Shaaban Robert”).⁸ Khatib has chosen the word “*Chanjo*” which, in Kiswahili, implies some pain-causing act of cutting or splitting something into pieces. On this he says:

*Neno chanjo limetumiwa kwa sababu linaleta hisia kali zaidi ya **kukata, kutoja, kupasua na kupenya** ndani ya mwili wa mwanamke na kuacha athari ya kudumu akilini mwake. Kwa mfano, kwa mujibu wa Grosz, maneno **waridi, tufaha, paka, punda, kuku mwitu** ama **baa la mkahawani** yanapotumiwa na washairi huakisi wanawake na kusimama kama vibandiko tu vinavyomuathiri mwanamke kwa namna mbalimbali.*

(The Word “chanjo” has been used since it touches on much more deeper feeling of **cutting, incising, opening up, and deeply penetrating** into woman’s body while leaving permanent effects in her mind. For example, according to Grozs, when such words like **rose, apple, cat, donkey, and fowl...**are used by poets to portray women, they just act as labels that affect women in different ways)

The author has then gone on to select those poems of the two poets that best portray their lust towards woman’s body. Among them is ‘*Ua Manga*’ by Muyaka bin Haji in which one of the stanzas goes as follows:

*Ai ua langu jema, la **manga ua la manga,**
Si **mbuda si mkuvuma, si la mkadi si munga,**
Nimepewa ni Karima, Rabi pweke mwenye anga,
Kulisifu hilipanga, ni kuwa mwangu moyoni. (Abdulaziz, 1967:218)*

Very roughly translated the poem goes as follows :

⁸ The present author happens to have been the External Examiner for Khatib’s Ph.D dissertation.

(My flower is nice, my Arabian flower
It is not a simple *mbuda*, *mkuvuma* or *mkadi* flower,
It has been given to me by God, God the Creator
I have decided to praise it, and keep it in my heart)

It is very common to find in oral and written Kiswahili poems, certainly in, especially, many Taarab⁹ numbers, a reference to flowers when talking about women, and quite often too, such reference is to the actual nakedness of a woman.

While in Kiswahili poetry, the inscription of the female body is hidden in metaphors and imageries, in Kiswahili prose the inscription is openly expressed. Whenever an author describes a female character, more often than not, such author will go into the details of the physical appearance of such character as opposed to when a description of a male character is given. Examples abound, but here we site only four for the purposes of our discussion. The first is taken from a very popular novel, *Rosa Mistika*, by one of the celebrated Kiswahili authors, E. Kezilahabi. This novel portrays the lives of Zakaria and Regina's family, focusing on Rosa, the first born in the family. The author depicts the way the strict upbringing of Rosa and her siblings takes its toll on Rosa's future life as she seeks to compensate for the lost opportunities to deal with men. Dissipation, careless and callous love life ends with Rosa's suicide. In a way, the following description of Rosa and Rosa's younger sister, Flora, seems to be intended by the author, to prove that, as per her father's words and contentions at the end of the novel, compared to Flora who has undergone the same upbringing, Rosa has been a weak person through and through:

⁹ Taarab, also called Tarabu or just Tarab, is Zanzibar's and Eastern African coastal most popular music. Taarab is popularly known as Swahili festivities music, since its musicians and its performance are an essential part of multi-day festivities such as weddings. This music genre is influenced by music from a mixture of other cultures that originate from the historical presence of Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East and, to a little extent, Europe. This genre's pioneering female artist, Siti Binti Saad (1880-1950), is credited to have given Taarab the prominence that has increased over time. Siti sang in midst of predominantly male artists, and the peak of her career was from 1928 to her death in 1950, during which she is credited to have recorded more than 150 long-playing numbers in India. She set the pace for more women singers in what had been regarded as a purely male music and performances.

Rosa alikuwa msichana mzuri, mrefu kiasi, mnyenyeketu na mnyamavu. Kama akienda kuoga kisimani utamwona kabla ya kuvua nguo anaanza kuangalia huku na huko, huvua, huoga upesiupesi, huvaa, huchukua maji na kurudi nyumbani. Alikuwa hapendi kuangaliwa kwa muda mrefu. Ukimwangalia machoni huinamisha kichwa.

Flora akienda kuoga huijangaliaangalia kwa muda mrefu kabla ya kuoga. Hutazama matiti yake ambayo sasa yalikuwa yanaanza kuwa makubwa; huijipapasapapasa kwa mikono kutoka mgongoni mpaka pale matako yanapotelemkia; halafu tena huijangaliaangalia. Hata kama amemaliza kuoga, hungoja mpaka juu limkaushe ndipo avae.

[Rosa was a beautiful girl, slightly tall, kind, and quiet. Whenever she went to take a bath at the well you would see her, before taking her clothes off, looking this and that way; then she would take her clothes off, bathe quickly, put her clothes on, and then fetch water home. She did not like people to look at her for a long time. When gazed at she would look down.

When Flora went for a bath, she would look herself over before bathing. She would look at her breasts that were now getting to be big; she would then caress herself with her hands, starting from her backside until where her buttocks protruded, and then she would look at herself over and over again. Even when she had completed bathing, she would wait until the sun had dried her body well then she would put her clothes on ...]

In the above description one notices that, notwithstanding the intended contrast between the two characters, still the author has focused on the details of Flora's body that would have otherwise not been necessary to give.

Similar and even more intense descriptions of the female body can be seen in many other prose works of Kiswahili literature. For example, Shaaban Robert, considered as the father of Kiswahili literature, had the following description of his late wife in his biographical accounts:

Sura yake ilikuwa jamali, kwa kimo cha kadiri. Uso ulikuwa mviringo wa yai, nywele nyeusi za kushuka, paji pana, nyusi za upindi, macho mazuri yaliyokuwa na tazamo juu ya kila kitu, kope za kitana, masikio ya kingo yasiyopitwa na sauti ndogo, meno ya mwanya yaliyojipanga vizuri mithili ya lulu katika chaza, ulimi wa fasaha na maneno ya kiada yaliyotawaliwa kila wakati, midomo ya imara isiyokwisha tabasamu, sauti pole na tamko kama wimbo, kidevu cha mfuto katikati yake palikuwa na kidimbwi kigogo, shingo kama mnara ambayo juu yake palitota kichwa cha

mawazo mengi, chini ya shingo mabega yalikuwa kama matawi ya maua, kifua cha madaha, mikono ya mbinu, tumbo jembamba, miundi ya kunyoka na miguu ya mvungu. Uzuri wake ulikuwa kamili. Kwa tabia alikuwa mwaminifu na mfano wa kuiga katika nyumba.(1996:4)

[Her appearance was a mark of gracious beauty, with normal height. She had an egg-shaped, round face, long black hair, a wide forehead, bow-shaped eyebrows, beautiful eyes that saw each and everything; comb-like eyelashes, alert ears that never missed even a whisper, teeth with a beautiful gap, and which were well-arranged like pearls in an oyster, fluent and elegant tongue that spoke carefully-chosen words, full-blown lips that had a never-ending smile, a quiet voice that always sounded like a melodious song; a well-shaped and dimpled chin, a neck like a minaret on which grew a head full of ideas; under her neck were shoulders that resembled the branches of flower plants; a gracious and well-poised chest, double-jointed hands, a thin waist, well-shaped legs. Her beauty was faultless. Conduct-wise she was a faithful example to be emulated in a home.]

Mbunda Msokile, in his short story “Nyota ya Chiku” gives the following description of a female character that relies heavily on her body parts too:

Miguu yake ya kuchonga, ilibeba kiwiliwili cha mwili mwororo bila wasiwas. Mara pale miguu yake ilipoishia , kiuno cha ubapa na kinene kidogo kilikuwa kimebeta kwa nyuma, utadhani cha mbuni, ngede wa fahari katika mbuga za Afrika! Tumbo lake lililokuwa limeteremka kwa chini kidogo halikuwa kubwa!..Aidha lilituna kwa mbele kidogo..Mabega yake ya kadiri yalining'iniza mikono ya mbinu huku katikati ya mabega hayo kukiwa kumehifadhiwa kifua chembamba chenyе kubeba titi changa na chonge zilizotuna na kuwachungulia vijana wa kila aina, wenyе kustahili na wale wasiostahili. Lakini wote waliziona. Utadhani titi hizo zilikuwa zikiwakonyeza! Na vijana wasiviyokuwa na dogo, wakawa wanamtania na kumbeza ana titi chonge kama mdomo wa kuku..Shingo lake fupi kidogo ilibeba kichwa kikubwa kiasi chenyе busara kidogo na nywele titit... (p. 150)

[Her well-structured legs confidently carried a trunk of a very soft body. Where the legs ended there was a flat and slightly busty waist that protruded at the back, looking like that of an ostrich – the glorious bird in Africa's animal parks! Her tummy that slightly skated downwards was not big. It slightly protruded to the front. Her hands were double jointed hang from her medium sized shoulders in between which a finely-set chest carried young and firm breasts that protruded and peeped at young men

of various types – the worthy and unworthy ones. However, they all saw them. It was as if the tits were winking at them. And, as is wont with young men, they teased her that she had tits that looked like a hen's mouth. Her short neck carried a slightly big head that had very little wisdom and a lot of black hair...]

It is interesting to note how the two authors have spent a lot of space describing the body parts of their female characters, and how, finally, they touch on the conducts of such characters just in passing. Msokile states in a very short sentence, that the character whose body he has used many sentences to describe, had "a slightly big head that had very little wisdom". This is not very different from Shaaban Robert's description of her late wife as he uses 9 lines to describe her bodily beauty and just one line to talk about her conduct which was "a faithful example to be emulated in a home.

As seen from the examples given above, and as is typical in most Swahili fiction authored by male writers, the preoccupation with the beauty of the woman is expressed, among other terms, in biological/botanical, geological, and astronomical imageries that focus on her body. She is compared to different flowers such as the rose and the screw pine; and to different jewels such as the pearl and emerald, and also to different stars, notably the Venus.

If we agree that all our ways and systems of thinking and understanding are not natural as such but specific human constructs that are determined by various social and historical facts, then the inscription inflicted upon the female body in the films and literary pieces that we have cited above, is a human construct through the directors' and authors' eyes. It is as if the directors and the authors (save for Shaaban Robert, to some extent) have all turned into the Adam role model as they blame it all on the Eves of this world - women.

In a way, the above inscriptions of the female characters in Tollywood and in Swahili literary pieces are an interpretation of reductive, masculine construction of the female body through the eyes of the Tollywood film director, the literary author, and, as we shall see below, the Facebook male commentator. Through the repeated image of the physical aspects of the female body that one obtains from such sources, categories of what a woman is supposed to be are established and stamped. Her sexuality and markers of sex are made to represent the stable point of reference for her definition and her being. In other words, these representations of physical identity serve as the points from which the perspectives of what being a woman means and are shaped. The identity formation emphasizes and limits itself to the morphology of the sexed body; and this, in turn constructs the overall cultural inscription of woman.

Thus, through these female characters the female body is reductively and even seductively represented. All these are done through a patriarchal “language” that constructs and defines the female body in masculine terms. While Margaret Atwood has talked about “out of the body, onto the page”, we can deliberate on the way the language of Tollywood, Swahili literature, and Facebook takes ideas and outlooks out of the female body onto the screens, pages and e-walls. This language does not only interpret but it also constructs and inscribes meaning to the female body.

Female Body Inscription on Facebook Walls in Tanzania

Facebook has become one of the most common and popular public spaces and social forums. It is especially fashionable with the youth so much so that, as we explain later in this paper, it has turned into youth’s popular e-culture. It is in Facebook that members will make friends from all over the world, **sometimes** exchanging serious social, economic and political views and commentaries, but **most of the time** just socializing and exchanging greetings and even petty news, comments and appreciative remarks. The present author joined Facebook for about three or so months and continuously followed, and some of the times remotely participated in, the discussions and commentaries, especially those aimed at female pictures/photos generously supplied by the Facebook female members themselves.

For obvious reasons, in the following sampled data taken from Facebook walls,¹⁰ the actual names of wall owners and commentators have been removed. The rough translation given in the second column is the author’s, although youth language can be pretty tricky since some of it is a slang that is better understood by the youth themselves.¹¹

¹⁰ This sample data is part of a major work that is being prepared by the present author on e-culture and youth identity formation in East Africa.

¹¹ I am most thankful to my graduate assistants at the University of Dar es Salaam and at Saint Augustine University of Tanzania who have been helping me out with most of this slang that is unfamiliar to old age.

WALL I

Commentator1: Hiyo ya ulimi nje nimeipenda	I like the one (picture) with your tongue sticking out
Commentator 2:Toto jicho na lips zako nimependa!	Baby, I like your eyes and lips
Commentator 3:Cute body	Cute body
Commentator 4: Mpango mzima!	Wholesomely beautiful
Commentator 4: Mtoto una hatali wewe! Si mchezo lazima waje.	You are dangerously beautiful
Wall Owner: Asanteni nyote!	Thank you all!
Commentator 5: Sina la kusema!	I have no words to express my feelings
Commentator 4: Tigo uulizi!	You can't ask for more (buttocks) ¹²
Commentator 6: Upo juu	You are 1 st class.
Commentator 4:Taalabu ipo	The nice "behind" is there.
Commentator 7:Nyc pics	Nice pictures
Commentator 8:Yaelekea unaelewa umuhimu wa hiyo kitu hapo nyu!!	You seem to know the value of your "behind"
Commentator8: Picha zote style moja. mugongomugongo	All pictures focus on one style: showing the nice behind.
Wall Owner: Wee x naawe!	You X!!!
Wall Owner: Wengine wanatafuta mpaka kwa wachina, langu originally kwa nn nisiringe?	Others do create buttocks that are artificially enhanced by use of Chinese medicine, but mine is original, why should I not be proud of it?
Commentator 9:Heri uringe.	You deserve to show it off!
Commentator 8:Nimekusoma mama, hongera kwa kujaliwa muonoko.	I get you "mama". Congratulations for the beautiful appearance
Commentator 10: Nice booty	Nice booty
Commentator 11: Yaaaani kila kitu fine....labda.....visivyoonekana....	Everything is sooooo fine, save for what we do not see...
Commentator 21: unapendeza Mungu akupe nguvu uzidi kupendeza mamaa wa X	You are looking good! God bless you so that you look mamaa wa X

¹² Somehow, and for whatever reasons, the behind of a person, especially female person, is referred to as Tigo, which is a name for one of the cell phone companies.

		more beautiful my friend from X!
Commentator 22:	ww mkali!	You are smashing, you are something!
Commentator 23:	Kwa kweli kama mungu anaumba ww kapitiliza,siku hiyo alikuwa hajachoka ndo aliamka,hujakimbia vipimo,hahahaha:-)))	In truth, if God is the creator, He overspent His time on you; and He must have woken up very early on the day that He created you.

WALL II

Commentator 1:Nice picture X.	Nice picture X
Commentator 2:Big up ma dear upo juu km mwashok	Big up my dear. Beautiful and classy like an Ashok tree.
Commentator 3:X mpe mm big up coz ametenda hilo jina haki	Give your mom a big up because your name matches with your beauty
Commentator 4:Loo afanaleki vile njo tng ultumie vizuri	????
Commentator 5:Nice picture, nice figure, nice body!	Nice picture, nice figure, nice body!
Commentator 6:Mmmmmmh!	Mmmmmmh!
Commentator 7:Baaaaaaaaasi!! Kam nick mnj	This is it! Beautiful like Nick Minaj
Commentator 8:Hivi unatokea kijiji gani mdada?	Which village do you come from sister?
Commentator 9:Dah we waukweli kiukwel kweli nimedata nawako ukweli X we mzur kwel tena iv una bf coz am ready 2 do ytever u tell me nambie ukwel coz huu ndo wangu ukwel toka kwangu moyon	Wow! This is real beauty! I am mesmerized by your beauty. Do you have a boyfriend; because I am ready to do whatever you tell me? Tell me the truth because what I have just said is the truth from my heart.
Commentator 10: unapendeza Mungu akupe nguvu uzidi kupendeza mamaa wa X	You are looking good! God bless you so that you look more beautiful my friend from X!
Commentator 11: ww mkali!	You are smashing, you are something!
Wall Owner: Asanteni nyote jamani!	Thank you all
Commentator 12: Kwa kweli kama mungu anaumba ww	In truth, if God is the creator, He overspent His time on you;

kapitiliza,siku hiyo alikuwa hajachoka ndo aliamka,hujakimbia vipimo,hahahaha:-))	and He must have woken up very early on the day that He created you.
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WALL III

Commentator 1:Umependeza	You are looking good!
Commentator 2:Hayo macho ya kungu au ya kawaida tu?	Are those eyes natural or a result of an aphrodisiac?
Commentator 3:Nina nyumba Masaki, nitauba nikupe. Au nikurithishe kabisa?	I have a house in Masaki. I will sell it and give you the money. Or should I make you inherit it immediately?
Wall Owner: Wee nirithishe ss hv! Au wongo?	Let me inherit it right away! Or are you lying?
Commentator 3: Hakyanani, naapa!	I swear it is true!
Commentator 4: Tuonane wap bby! Hilo jimwili jaman!	Where can we meet baby? That voluptuous body of yours, oh my!
Commentator 5:Hv hawa masela hawajui ww waif wangu?	Hey, do these lusty men know that you are my wife??
Commentator 6: Wow! Big up mdada	Wow! Big up sister!
Wall Owner: Wajameni jamani! Asanteni. Mpaka ninablush sasa!	Oh my! Oh my! Thank you all. Now I am blushing!

As seen from the above sample e-walls, just like in the Tollywood movies and Swahili literary pieces, woman is represented through commentaries whose patriarchal “language” focuses and defines her principally through her body or body parts. Language is how we perceive and define the world around us. However, that perception and definition may lead us to see the world as a fixed entity, in which case then, our language may, in this instance, treat the female body as fixed. However, since language is unstable and NOT fixed, so are the results of the perceptions and definitions accruing from it.

The perceptions that one gets from the sampled Facebook walls regarding female body seem to be fixed in so far as they are given by male commentators. The masculinist text then gives us the interpretation and perception of female body through inscription of the same body. Body parts such as lips, eyes, buttocks, the face and so on are repeatedly used in the inscription so much so that ultimately, the fixed image that one gets of such a body is reduced to some parts considered to constitute a sexy outlook.

Even when commentaries use metaphors, such as the one that mentions the *ashok tree* and the house in Masaki;¹³ and others that compare the body to different flowers (the rose is particularly popular), fruits (mostly apple) and birds such as the peacock,¹⁴ they do not go beyond the body since they ultimately bring our focus onto the body that is supposedly as tall and slim like the referred tree, smells as nice as the rose, tastes as sweet as the apple, and generally looks as beautiful as a peacock. Even where one would have expected to see authentic representation of female body by Facebook female members, one gets disappointed by such members, whose readiness to generously supply the Facebook members with such provocative pictures, and whose reactions to the inscription done by their male friends is, strangely, an assertion and acceptance of the inscription.

At the instances cited from Tollywood, Swahili Literature and Facebook walls, then, woman is reduced to “things” rather than a wholesome being. We are made not to see her as a person, but rather as either a combination of body parts that attract the lusts of men; or as things outside her that connote beauty in the eyes of men.

Female Body Inscription as Part of Popular Culture

In the examination of the theme of the inscription of the female body vis-à-vis Tollywood, literary works, and Facebook, one is, necessarily, looking at popular culture and questions of identity. These issues link popular culture with power and, invariably, the aspects of production and consumption of such culture. It would be quite instructive to see how the character of popular culture changes and creates new identities since this kind of culture has a role in the articulation and maintenance of such identities.

The examples that we have drawn from various facets of popular Tollywood, literature, and Facebook e-culture for illustration have proved to be an all set medium through which people, especially the youth, express their hopes, aspirations, fears, indignation and, sometimes, a reflection of the way they mold public opinion. It would, thus, be very interesting indeed to discuss these and

¹³ Masaki is one of the posh areas in Tanzania’s capital city, Dar es Salaam, where a house can cost lots of money.

¹⁴ Incidentally and ironically, in the bird world the most beautiful are male birds compared to female ones.

other issues side by side with those of **national culture** in the face of the global forest that the world has turned into, and which has, for all purposes and intents, given birth and continues to nurture, especially, Tollywood and Facebook cultures.

While in an earlier paper I had argued that it is not very correct to separate “high” and “popular” culture as is so prone to modern bourgeois cultural criticism, a separation whose proponents share the blindness of the object of cultural criticism, the questions as to what popular culture is, and to whom such culture is popular are still very pertinent. One may need to ask one further question: *By what means is that culture popular, and to what end?* If one of the most popular trends among the youth in Tanzania is in Tollywood and Facebook, to what end is such a trend? In the same earlier paper I had drawn some conclusions on popular literature thus: *Popular literature deals with emotions while standard literature concerns itself with the intellect*, and I had added a footnote that this conclusion and approach would then be extended to all other sub-fields, including music and film. Inversely therefore, one may say that *popular culture such as the one obtained from Tollywood movies, literary pieces, and Facebook commentaries that inscribe female body deals with emotions while standard culture concerns itself with the intellect*. It would seem to us that the second type of culture is obtained from what have been termed *Swaliwood* films¹⁵ (coined from *Swahili*, which is the national language and lingua franca of Tanzania and Eastern Africa). These are those films that are not particularly of the nature that we are referring to in this paper. Such are the films that are featured and screened in such cultural events like the ever-popular Zanzibar International Film Festival held annually in Zanzibar, Tanzania.

Yet, others may view popular culture from purely anti elitist and pro-masses outlook. In which case then, the term “popular culture” turns into an ideological tool rather than just a theoretical concept. The stance of this approach is that popular culture must be viewed from the crucial point of what the people/masses want as opposed to what they consume because nothing else is available or just because forces opposed to their development claim they want and must consume it. Basically, this kind of viewpoint relates to the approach of popular culture in terms of power and ideological relations. Tollywood, literary pieces,

¹⁵ For the interested reader visit the following website that provides information on non-Tollywood films which seem to be part of the so-called standard culture visit the following site:
http://www.mfdtanzania.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&layout=category&task=category&id=10&Itemid=151

and, to some extent, Facebook walls that inscribe woman's body can, thus, be viewed as part of decadent, bourgeois culture that satiates the lusts of the body while blunting the realms of intellect.

The clashes in values, beliefs etc. that occur in such cultural settings of Tollywood, literature, and Facebook call for more research and discussion. It may be argued, however, that there are four observations with regard to popular culture such as the one obtained from the sources that we have used in this paper to illustrated female body inscription that may shed light on a better understanding of the Tollywood, literary, and Facebook female body inscription syndrome. First, such popular culture implies contemporaneous expressions of the cultural industrial products manifested by the masses or groups that represent the masses in contrast to elitist culture. Second, popular culture elicits and invokes historical conditions that are designated by mass communication, mass production and mass participation. Thirdly, popular culture alludes to or could intimate a challenge to accepted norms and beliefs that would dictate the superiority of "high" culture. Fourthly, popular culture can imply and signify all those acts that are done behind the backs of the powers that be, or even in front of such powers, in different, veiled forms such as in satire. These points emphasize the fact that cultural production and its ensuing theory and criticism have social bases that serve as social tests. New social conditions and developments do, in turn, produce fresh approaches to the identity of a given society or community around which those changes have taken place. All these involve an examination of the social conditions that beget popular culture, conditions that overlap between the aesthetic and the historical and are used as modifiers of an otherwise relatively constant human development process. Here then, are issues of the formation of cultural production such as that of Tollywood films and literary works; its consumption and reproduction. It is from such dimensions that the character of popular arts and culture is determined. Such character provides alternative and sometimes complementary ways of interpreting different social forces and avails a better understanding of popular arts and culture – Tollywood films, Swahili literary works, and Facebook walls included.

The above, then, calls for an examination of the different and differing issues of globalization and cultural conflicts. One may begin with the argument that the media can easily transmit Tollywood films and Facebook messages as a form of entertainment. And, since one of the characteristic features of the so-called globalized world is the dominance of the media, it becomes very important to discuss cultural production vis-à-vis the media; for, indeed the emergence of such cultural invention is intimately linked with the increasing dominance of the powerful media and communication companies, most of them controlled directly

or indirectly by the West. It may even be that Tollywood and Facebook have emerged as a popular form of an alternative means of communication between and among, mostly, the youth as part of the forms of their cultural assertiveness and whereby the youth group is necessarily reproducing itself under the repressive era of globalization.

On another plane, the flourishing of Tollywood films and literary pieces of the inclination cited above, may as well be a manifestation of “the language of commodities”, if one may borrow Karl Marx’s terminology. Here is where articles of utility, even mental, aesthetic efficacy, turn into commodities as they become products of the labor of private investment over and above the common labor of society. Through free expression of opinion channeled via the Tollywood movies and literary works, the actors, actresses and writers are now selling their labor power as commodity to the capitalist market attaining some value in monetary terms coupled with popularity.

What the present author had warned against in an earlier paper may apply here yet again. It had been insisted that we must guard against viewing culture as a product of specific interest groups to which its phenomena are assigned. It is important to translate the general social process and tendencies expressed in such circumstances through which our criticism turns into an examination of *the whole* rather than just *part of the whole*. That is why the phenomenon that we have examined with regard to Tollywood, literature, and Facebook must be seen as a convergence of very different interests and methods determined by time and space.

Cultural industries, that include literary and artistic products are, by and large, categories of history that reflect a given people’s sense and sensibility at a given time in their social evolution. The new trends in Tollywood and Facebook call for some critical understanding of this development as a contradictory process. There is, in this, the tension between the national and the universal – indeed, the national and the hegemonic western. In this tension are reflected the revolutionary and the reactionary aspects of popular culture – Tollywood, literary works, and Facebook walls included. In which case then, the revolutionary moment of popular culture must necessarily be looked at vis-à-vis the reactionary moment of populist culture.

Conclusion

Before we end this paper, let us give a slightly long quotation by Elizabeth Grosz (1985, p. 72):

Bodies have become the objects of intense cultural, philosophical, and feminist fascination within a remarkably short period of time. It seems as though 1980s culture exploded around a celebration of the body (-beautiful):...the gym...body piercing, dance culture...Even the appeal of the Internet and cyberspace are part of the eighties' heritage that we will have to acknowledge, rethink, and work through. While presenting itself as a celebration of the body and its pleasures, this fascination bears witness to a profound, if unacknowledged and un-discussed, hatred and resentment of the body. The preferred body was one under control...the body transcending itself into the infinity of cyberspace.

This quotation does not only sum some of the ideas that have been discussed in the present paper, but it also provokes further discussion on the topic of the politics of the body, especially female body. The most interesting point that Grosz makes is on what she calls “unacknowledged and un-discussed, hatred and resentment of the body.” This, in turn, raises a disturbing question: Could it be that the act of the male focus on the beauty of some parts of the female body, and its open acceptance by female audiences, is, in actual fact, a rejection of the female body itself?

On another plane, while the e-graffiti obtained from Facebook walls may seem to be a negative treatment of female body, there may come a time when this public space will be used in a revolutionary manner, as it happened recently in the ousting of the regimes in Tunisia and in Egypt. How to harness such a popular public space among the youth into a constructive tool that will no longer be used as a vehicle for female body inscription is a subject for a separate paper.

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