



From Feminine Men to Masculine Women.

Masculinities in two Swahili novels

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This paper intends to look at and address the perceptions of Masculinities in the Swahili novel focusing on the ways in which men are fashioned, represented and how ultimately literature has been used to perpetuate male stereotypes. I will focus my paper on the concept of Masculinity in Tanzanian literature and specifically in Kiswahili novels post 1970.

Gender study in the world and specifically Sub-Saharan Africa is a relatively new phenomenon, beginning to develop as a serious academic discourse about thirty years ago, but in this short expanse of time there have already been massive leaps in shedding light on the struggles of gender inequalities in societies predominantly governed by men. However, research has principally been conducted from a women centred view point; as the underprivileged half of society they have taken the reins to bring light to their struggles. I, however, believe to truly understand the gender roles within society one must address the concept of masculinities, as well as femininities, as one cannot exist without the other: but as of yet far less critical analysis has arisen surrounding masculinity. I shall use critical sociological research to establish the key concepts of masculinity and uncover what the major expectations and portrayals are in a male dominated society. I will then analyse the male characters in selected Swahili novels, such as Kazimoto in Euraphrase Kezilahabi's 'Kichwamaji', to see what varieties of masculinity are present and thematic in the literature. I also hope to examine if the portrayal of men vary as shifts in politics and society alter and if the main characters or indeed the peripheral characters demonstrate the dominant forms of male expectation. Ultimately I seek to determine if the masculinities present correlate with the stereotypes and key concepts that I have presented in my theory or if they shed new light on the perceptions of men in East Africa.