

Children's Roles and Representation in Mohamed Suleiman Mohamed's Novels (*Kiu And Nyota Ya Rehema*) And Euphrase Kezilahabi's (*Rosa Mistika And Kichwa Maji*)

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Abstract: In life, literature is very important due the roles that it plays. Literature entertains, educates, warns, corrects and emphasizes on good morals. This presentation highlights the children's roles in the novels written by Mohamed and Kezilahabi. These are *Kiu, Nyota ya Rehema, Rosa Mistika and Kichwa Maji*. This presentation shows the roles played by young children and the older ones too. The theory of realism was used in this research. The Progressive Class in France founded this theory. Among the founders were people like Balzac, Stendhal and Flaubert. A library-based design was used to generate data. The generated data was analysed using the qualitative design. This study showed that children characters are given bad roles to play in the novels studied.

Keywords: young children, Mohamed and Kezilahabi, qualitative design, qualitative design.

DISCUSSION

The modern Kiswahili novel started gaining its popularity in the 19th century. The coming of the European made a great progress in written literature. Among the first people to write the Kiswahili, oral literature folktales were Velten [1] and Buttner [2]. They did this using Latin writings, which they later published and used them for teaching in primary schools. The establishment of Kiswahili Board of Standardisation encouraged people to write more Kiswahili stories books. As from 1940s, the novel was revolving around Kiswahili oral literature. Most of them were based on oral literature format.

The Kiswahili novels have tackled various themes depending on the period they were written. For instance, those that were written between 1950s and 1960s were controlled by fantasy and the themes were religion, culture, morals and family. Good examples are the novels written by Shabaan Robert (*Kusadikika and Kufirika*). The writer to inform the society about their rights could not use these novels. Towards the end of 1960s, 1970s and in the early 1980s novels on realism played a big role in Kiswahili literature. This is because most of the elites claimed that though the East African countries had gained independence, leaders betrayed of their own countries. The 1970s writers used their works to educate their societies about their rights. Mohamed [14] says that writers be guided by realism when writing

on literature. Wamitila [4] and Ngugi [5] had the same idea when they said that literature works should portray the daily happenings of the society.

Among the novels that started dealing with the cultural conflicts due to socio-economic status were; M.S Mohamed (*Kiu and Nyota ya Rehema*) [5] [6] and E. Kezilahabi (*Rosa Mistika and Kichwa Maji*) [7] [8]. These writers concentrated in realism because they wanted to inform people about their rights. Moreover, this is the time when the East Africa countries had their independence. Later on there are those novels that started writing about politics in the East African countries.

In the study of children's literature, there is partiality when it comes to give children roles to play in literature. This comes out clearly, when people Jett and Masland [9] claim that boys are given the roles of protecting and restoring while the girls are given the roles of just taking care. Same claims were made by Fox [10] when he said that girls are portrayed as people who should be loved, typical and that they accept everything as well a depending on others. Boys on the other hand are given power, can take adventure, and are self-reliant.

As far as this presentation is concerned, the way Tanzanian children were represented in the 1970s has not been studied. Therefore, there was a need to

investigate the role of children in these books. This is because Ndung'o [11] supports that literature does not just emerge from a vacuum, literature emerges from a specific society of a specific time. Literature is a product of a given society. It is used as a mirror to reflect aspects of life of the concerned society. The main aim of this presentation was to analyse the roles of children in four novels. These are *Nyota ya Rehema* [6], *Kiu* [5], *Rosa Mistika*[7] and *Kichwa Maji*[8]. Mohamed and Kezilahabi wrote those novels in the 1970s. This was the period of modernism according to history of literature; a period when various human rights were valued. Novel has now entered post modernism. The objective was to show clearly the roles played by children in the modern selected novels in Kiswahili. The theoretical framework used in this presentation was the theory of realism.

According to Ntarangwi [12], this theory was founded in the 19th century. The Progressive Class in France founded it. Among the founders were people like Balzac, Stendhal and Flaubert. Later on there came other elites who advocated for this theory. These were, Maxim Gorky, Thomas Mann, Romain Rolland, Hegel and Georg Luckacs [13]. This paper used Georg Luckacs [13] stand that a writer using theory should portray characters, situations and scenery the way they are. Generally, realism was based on writing about the real life of human beings in a society.

Pillars of Realism Theory

There are eight pillars in realism theory. These are as follows:

1. Literature should tell the truth of the life of human beings in a society. The writer is supposed to write about what he sees and not as he wishes.
2. Art must be honest in showing the real situation. This means that the writer should not exaggerate.
3. Art should be taken as a mirror to reflect real life of human beings in their environment.
4. The writer is supposed to do a research on what he/she is supposed to write in advance.
5. The writer should consider petty issues as they help to build up bigger ones.
6. The characters must be portrayed the way they are in the society. For example, the characters should not be portrayed as very rich or very weak as there are difficulties in life.
7. The writer should use original scenery and develop it to its natural state.
8. The writer must be creative in his/her work in order to give it special style. This means that it should be different from the work of other writers.

The collected data from this study was analysed depending on the issues that came up. This research highlighted the roles played by children in the modern Kiswahili novels. Ntarangwi [12] says that a writer is expected to portray characters, situations and sceneries that are acceptable and believable in his/her society. The issues that arose are well-organised and discussed using examples from the analysed texts to prove the results of this study and to evaluate its theme.

Looking at the objective on the roles played by children in the modern Kiswahili novels, the results proved those roles. The word 'roles' in this study shows the actions done by children characters to satisfy their needs. These actions could be bad ones or good ones. Children play various roles in the analysed novels. These roles are looking for resources through any means. These means are prostitution, digging, preparing and selling traditional beer and theft. Other roles are taking care of their siblings, learning and fetching water.

Looking for resources

Some of the children characters in the analysed novels decided to use queer means to acquire their needs. Their financial status forced them to do so. In this paper, the queer ways that were used to acquire resource are as follows:

1. Prostitution

As concerns this presentation, prostitution is a role because children are forced by circumstances bad-economic status pushed them to participate in prostitution. Prostitution was divided into four parts depending on the four novels that were analysed.

In *Kichwa Maji* [8], Kalia brother to Kazimoto, holds Vumilia's waist without fear. When Vumilia tries to warn him, he only says that she is his in law and therefore to him it was okay. Kalia is a very young boy but because his brother Kazimoto always goes with him to pick Vumilia (girl friend to Kazimoto) from their house, Kalia thinks that it's normal for boys and girls to have sex whenever they so wish. Kazimoto used to spend several nights with Vumilia in a house, which they shared, with Kalia. This spoiled Kalia because he started raping women and young girls.

Were it is not Kazimoto may be Kalia could not engage himself in prostitution. He was nicknamed "nunda mla watu". "nunda" means a wild cat, so they meant that Kalia was behaving like a wild cat which could eat people. The writer wanted to inform the readers that sometimes the behaviour of elder siblings could affect their younger siblings. Therefore, it is the parents' responsibility to know their children. Prostitution was not only practiced between young people but also between adults and children. In this novel, we find Tegemea an old woman having sexual

affairs with Kalia. Tegemea demanded for money from Kalia and this forced Kalia to steal money from his brother and father to pay Tegemea.

Due to prostitution, Kalia was killed. He raped a small girl and the whole village attacked him. His elder brother Kazimoto says that he is the one who killed Kalia. By this, he meant that he was doing bad things before his younger brother without hiding and he copied his bad ways.

Another character in this novel who decided to practice prostitution was Vumilia. Vumilia was Tegemea's daughter. Vumilia was born outside wedlock. Her mother was a prostitute since she was a young girl. When Vumilia wanted to know who her biological father was, her mother could not tell her. Therefore, she also decided to become a prostitute. This almost cost her life one day when two young men in the name of having sex with them gave her some money. After getting the money, she wanted to run away but those men caught her and they wanted to strangle her but Moyokonde who later married her saved her.

In *Rosa Mistika* [7], Rosa started prostitution when she was in secondary school. This prostitution was carried on between old men and schoolgirls. While in the primary school, Rosa and her sisters were overprotected by their father who could not allow them to talk with anybody more especially men. When Rosa joined high school, she had all the freedom and she really wasted a lot of time with men. This made her to face many consequences. For example, she aborted severally and at one time, she was almost losing her life. She lost her friends; this is because they could not continue maintaining their relationship when they witnessed her actions. They went as far as calling her "the lab" meaning that whoever wanted her sexually she was always available. Finally, due to her prostitution, she missed a husband and she decided to kill herself.

In the *Nyota ya Rehema* [6], prostitution was also practiced between adults and young children. Rehema who is the main character in this novel had no one to depend on as her mother had died and her father had rejected her due to her skin colour. She joined other young girls who were practising prostitution. These were Ruzuna, Chiku and Kidawa. These girls had a small room, which they had hired, and every girl could bring her man friend there in turns. Although these girls pretended to be friends, they hated one another in their hearts as they were trying to gain favour from men. They created rivalry between men. This study discovered that these girls' prostitution came due to their economic status. They wanted money for their upkeep. However, they could have looked for money using other means but they did not.

Bahati a character in *Kiu* [5] was forced to take part in prostitution by Idi. He wanted her to have sex with Mwinyi and old man so that they could get money from him. Although Idi tells Bahati that it was a mere plan, he really meant it. He had promised to marry Bahati if only she accepted to have an affair with Mwinyi. This clearly shows that Idi did not actually love Bahati. He only wants to use her to get money from Mwinyi. This is because it is difficult for a man to tell his lover to have sex with another man. Bahati on the other hand obeyed Idi's request just in the name of pleasing him.

2. Digging

In the novel of *Rosa Mistika* [7], Rosa and her sisters were forced to dig a whole acre of land trying to get cassava for selling. Rosa wanted some money to use while at school but her parents could not provide her with some, so she was forced to dig out the cassava in order to sell and get that money. Actually, one acre of land is a big area, which should not be dug by young children as it was done in this novel. Rosa's sisters were stopped from going to school so that they could assist her. This really affected their future life, as they did not value education very much. Flora, Rosa's sister did not worry when she failed her GCE examination. The parents of these children denied them their rights of attending school every day. The writer has used the children's situation in this novel to inform the readers that many children in the East Africa countries are forced to do difficult work by their parents. In other words, parents ought to take seriously issues concerning the education of their children.

3. Preparing and selling traditional beer.

Children characters in the novel of *Rosa Mistika* [7] are given the roles of preparing food and beer. This is true because her mother for cooking good Ugali is praising Flora. Apart from preparing food, they also prepared traditional beer. Rosa did not enjoy this work; she was only forced by circumstances. She wanted money to spend on her school items. Her father could not produce this money. Her mother makes quick decisions of brewing beer so that they could sell it and get some money to buy the required items.

As it was their tradition, people used to go and take beer at the homestead where it was brewed. Therefore, when people went to drink beer at Rosa's home, most of them became drunkards and started urinating all over. This portrayed a bad picture as Rosa's younger sisters Stella and Honarata see some men urinating on the flowers, and on the wall of their house. Rosa's younger siblings were denied a right of attending school that day as they were forced to stay at home to fetch water and clean utensils which were being used. Their participation in preparation of beer made them to start taking beer. For instance, Rosa liked to take beer. This comes out clearly, when the writer says that;

...she intended to entertain herself slightly to forget the misfortune, which had attacked her. Rose entered the green bar...while taking a bottle 'Kilimanjaro' in happiness... (p. 42).

The misfortune the writer is talking about is all about an abortion, which Rosa had had. She decided to take beer to forget all that had happened to her. Taking beer was not a solution as she convinced herself. This is because after becoming sober, she could go back to her thoughts.

Rosa was not afraid of taking beer in front of her younger sister Flora. In fact, taking beer became part of their lives. We are told that;

Flora took beer but in small amounts,...Rosa drunk without control ..initially she could drink seven bottles of beer. Rosa alone finished the second bottle (p.84).

In *Nyota ya Rehema* [6], consumption of beer is a normal thing. Three girls, Chiku, Ruzuna and Kidawa sweet-talked Rehema to accept to take beer. This comes out clearly, when they tell Rehema to taste just a little beer to experience happiness. The message the writer wants to pass to his readers is that, friends sometimes bring about drinking of beer.

4. Theft

In the novel of *Kichwa Maji* [8] cases of theft occurred several times. This father once caned Kalia when he collected a fifty-shilling note from the floor of their sitting room. Disciplining a child is not wrong but Kalia's father waited until the time he stole and started beating him.

Kalia used to steal money to take to Tegemea (a sugar mummy). Actually, he used to steal money to give to Tegemea because he used to have love affairs with her. The writer says:

The fifty shillings I brought you one day, I was really beaten by my father when he discovered...The other fifty shillings I was given by my brother was the last money to give you. Nowadays it is difficult to get money (p.108-109).

From the above quote, it shows clearly that theft occurred severally. Kalia was forced by circumstances to engage himself in theft cases. Tegemea could not have sex with him before he paid. Therefore, being small and an uneducated boy, the only way he could get money was through stealing from his brother and father.

In *Kiu* [5], there is indirect theft, which does not come out clearly. This happens when Idi plans to use Bahati to get money from Mwinyi. When Bahati threatens Idi, their relationship ended when he wanted

her to have sex with Mwinyi, Idi does not disclose to her that they are stealing because he is not saying it directly. Idi says;

...but I have just told you that this is only a plan. If you accept it we shall be rich and finally we shall marry and live happily. Why should we leave that man's money? Do not you see how easy it is to get it? (p.14)

The words "if you accept" mean that if Bahati accepts to pretend that she loves Mwinyi and have sex with him, they would get his money and benefit a lot. This is theft because Idi had bad intentions though he used sweet words. The writer wanted people to know that there is a possibility of grown-ups or rich people misusing girls to gain wealth.

5. Taking care of their sibling

In the novel of *Rosa Mistika* [7] after Rosa and both of her parents passing on, her sister Flora takes the responsibility of taking care of her siblings. This was after their relatives inherited everything that was left behind apart from the children. It is clear that the government was not ready to take care of the orphans. This study found out that the society members in this novel were very selfish. Flora was very responsible because she decided to take care of her siblings after their parents' death.

6. Learning

Children in the novel of *Rosa Mistika* [7] were taken to school although not all parents saw the need of doing it. We are told that when Rosa was fifteen years old. She was in standard seven. Children were ready to learn but their parents were not serious about their children's education. This is because we are told that; His neighbours said that he was more interested in beer than his children's education; he had not given even a single penny to pay for their school fees.

As far as the above quote is concerned, it is a clear indication that children were going to school but their father was not bothering himself as he was only giving beer first priority. We are told that Flora learned up to fourth form though she failed her examination. Most likely her failure was due to lack of knowledge of the importance of education. In *Kichwa Maji* [8], children went to school but not all succeeded. Some dropped out of school due to one reason or the other. Rukia is forced to drop out of school due to pregnancy. Rukia was not ready to drop out of school. She was only forced by circumstances. However, some went to school and they came out successfully. For example, Manase and Kazimoto learned up to the university level and they were lucky to get jobs.

In *Nyota ya Rehema* [6], Salma and Samir the step siblings to Rehema were taken to high cost schools. Their parents were financially able. Just like it is today that rich people are able to take their children to good

schools. Although they schooled in high cost school, most likely they were not very clever. This is because the writer shows us that when Salma was a grown-up, she was not employed she was only a homemaker.

7. Fetching water

Rehema in the novel of *Nyota ya Rehema* [6] decided to run away from her father's home. On the way, she met some youths fetching water. Fetching water is not bad for the children but we are told that the surroundings were not favourable for them. This is because the well was dark inside and there was a lot of vegetation growing at the sides of the well. This was dangerous as they could even fall in it or even be bitten by dangerous animals like snakes. In *Rosa Mistika*, children also fetched water, which was to be used to prepare the traditional beer. They did this to meet their needs but not because they chose to do it.

Summary

It is hoped that the findings of this paper will benefit several people. The findings will help people to know more about realism issues. The results will give ideal contribution to the writers and readers of literature works. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) will also benefit, as it is responsible for selecting and approving the books to be used in schools. Lastly, the government and non-governmental organisations will also benefit from this paper. The results of this study showed that children play both negative and positive roles in the analysed novels. The negative ones are those that made people look down on them. These were prostitution, theft, digging, preparing and selling traditional beer. The positive role they played was learning. It was discovered that the economic status of their society forced them to play those roles. There is need for upcoming researchers to investigate this study more. They can compare and contrast roles played by children in the novels of the 20th and 21st centuries. In doing this, they will investigate whether the theory of realism is still used by writers.

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