

# 3

## ‘Celebrating’ the Female Body in Global Trade: Fashion, Media and Music in Kenya

---

Edward Waswa Kisiang’ani

### Introduction

As we settle our intellectual nerves into the cockpit of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is probably no terminology which attracts so much scholarly attention as globalization. The term may mean many things to many people. Nevertheless, whichever way one looks at it, globalization signifies certain fundamental principles. For example, the rule of multinational corporations and the dwindling powers of national-states could be one factor of globalization. Besides, globalization could also imply a new type of centralized power controlled by the West (Martin 1999). It is an experience in which the world is dominated by powerful nations. Such domination could be financial, social, cultural, political and even technological. Fundamentally, the Internet is the icon of globalization because it not only promotes the continuous domination of world affairs by the rich nations but also creates new frontiers which perpetuate that domination.

The impact of globalization on Africa is without doubt profound. Like many African countries which continue to experience the pressures of global forces, Kenya is still struggling to come to terms with the new developments. The focal point of this study is to interrogate Kenya’s experience with contemporary forms of globalization. Specifically, the study undertakes to highlight how the female body has been constructed in order to fit in and enhance the force of global trade within the country. To accomplish our objective, we have deliberately focused on the diverse but complex representations of the female body in the fields of fashion, media and music.

### Contextualizing the Problem

Our urge to undertake the present research was fuelled by the absence of serious scientific inquiry into the various ways the female body has been constructed and utilized in Kenya's public life. Most of the works on female gender have so far tended to focus on the role of women in such areas as family planning (Ayayo 1991), the environment (Khasiani 1992) as well as politics (Association of African Women for Research and Development 1998). Yet the tendency to overlook the female body as an analytical category has also meant that there is very little understanding of the female gender in Kenya.

Within the perspective of globalization, the female body has undergone varied and sophisticated constructions all over the world. For example, in the South-eastern Asian nation of Thailand, the female body has been effectively constructed and utilized to facilitate the lucrative enterprise of prostitution and tourism (Truong 1990). Here, the organized sex trade affects women at national and international levels. In general, pornography has become an attractive source of money in our world. Catherine Itzin (1992) has made profound efforts to address this question. Raising moral issues, Itzin has attacked the multimillion pound international pornography industry. Further, the author has meticulously explained how the woman's body, in pornographic literature, has been manipulated in order to make millions of pounds in a male-dominated world. Can we, therefore, say that pornography is a significant element in the fashion, media and music industries of Kenya? Closer home, Mbilinyi and Omari (1996) draw examples from Tanzania to demonstrate that, over the years, the female gender has been put in a position of being the docile recipient of the male gender's emotional and physical releases. How, we may ask, have fashion, media and music enhanced the docility of the female gender in Kenya?

In its formal disposition, colonial imperialism tended to alienate its subjects towards Western culture. Evidently, colonialism was itself a form of globalization that psychologically forced the native to adopt Western lifestyles. In *Black Skin White Masks* (Fanon 1970), revolutionary thinker Frantz Fanon offers an anguished and eloquent description of the psychological effects of colonialism on the colonized people, arguing that those who 'recognize themselves in it' (colonialism) will have made the right step forward (Fanon 1970:12). The attainment of political independence in Kenya ushered in a new type of Western hegemony. In its post-independence dispensation, the colonial project transformed itself into some form of mysterious, faceless and anonymous power. At the level of the female gender, this power has manifested itself through the diverse ways the female body has been constructed and utilized so as to promote global commerce. Thus in 'recognizing herself' in global culture, the Kenyan woman has continuously experienced varying constructions of her body along lines defined by the Western

global forces. Frantz Fanon calls this 'psychic alienation'. Our argument in this paper is that the psychic alienation which has developed from globalization has also caused the economic growth of multinational concerns. Other works which do not directly deal with the Kenyan situation but which, nevertheless, emphasize the marginalization of women through the exploitation of their bodies include Hester (1992), Archer and Lloyd (1995) and Jackson (1996). This study has benefited from these and many other works in related fields in an effort to fill the dearth in the literature and politics of the female body in Kenya.

Generally, this study revolves around two fundamental premises. It is, first, our contention that through the avenues of fashion, media and music, the female body has been constructed and utilized to promote global trade in Kenya. Second, the construction and subsequent utilization of the female body in global trade in Kenya has signified the exploitation and inferiorization of the female gender.

However, in order to capture the intricate issues which characterize the study of the female body in the context of global trade, this inquiry has employed a composite methodological approach in its data collection. Both primary and secondary data have been harnessed for the investigation. Primary data has been derived from scheduled interviews that deliberately targeted men and women from specific social groups. For example, we have targeted research university students and members of the Kenyan public who are socially active to the extent that they are variously involved in music, fashion and media activities. Rather than engage in a structured questionnaire, the study has employed the free-discussion approach with respondents so as to harness an engrossing explanation on how the female body in Kenya has been appropriated within the global dimension of trade. More primary data has also been procured from original music tapes and cassettes. Furthermore, primary information has been obtained by watching original film shows, videotapes and television commercials as well as through attending fashion shows, local music performances and cultural displays.

Secondary data, on the other hand, was collected from a wide range of documents available in local libraries as well as on the Internet. Overall, data obtained has been examined through the prism of content and document review analyses. In addition, the final product has been 'panel-beaten' through the theoretical workshop on of the Foucauldian project about power and the human body.

### **Theorizing about the Body and Globalization**

The task of theorizing about the human body remains one of the most critical challenges of contemporary scholarship. Separated from the spirit, the body becomes a useless mass of fat, flesh and bones. However fused with the soul, the human body becomes a crucial site for cultural, intellectual and scientific contestations. Such contestations have the inherent capacity to open up new frontiers

of knowledge for us which may, in turn, provide explanations about some important aspects of human existence.

In theorizing about the human body, I hung on the shoulders of distinguished French thinker, Michel Foucault. Like Friederich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger before him, Foucault undertook to criticize the project of Enlightenment and Modernity. Thus, in a striking critique of modern society, Foucault has argued that the rise of parliamentary institutions and of new conceptions of political liberty was accompanied by a darker counter-movement marked by the emergence of a new and unprecedented discipline directed at the body (Bartky 1990:63). Consequently, more is required of the body now than mere political allegiance or the appropriation of the products of its labour. Indeed, the new discipline invades the body and seeks to regulate its very forces and operations, the economy and efficiency of its movements. However, in regulating the body's operations, the new discipline tends to endanger human freedom too (Flyn 1989:196). Foucault's critique of the disciplinary practices which the modernist project imposes on the human body has an emancipatory agenda. Arguing that life is full of possibilities, Foucault reasons that as part of the experience of freeing itself from the oppressive tendencies of modernity, humanity will one day develop a different economy of bodies and pleasures that provides for greater possibilities and greater freedom (Foucault 1980:159).

Most of the disciplinary practices Foucault describes are tied to peculiarly modern forms of the school, the army, the hospital, the prison and the manufactory; the aim of these disciplines is to increase the utility of the body and to augment its forces. As he observes:

What was then formed was a polity of coercions that act upon a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy' which was also a mechanics of power was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with techniques, the speed and efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile bodies' (Foucault 1979:138).

However, the production of 'docile bodies' necessarily requires that an uninterrupted coercion be directed to the very processes of the bodily activity, not just their result. This micro-physics of power fragments and partitions the body's time, its space, and its movements (Foucault 1979:28). In a school situation, then, a student is enclosed within a classroom and assigned to a desk he cannot leave except with permission to do so. The student must sit upright, feet upon the floor, head erect. He may not slouch or fidget; his animate body is brought into

fixed correlation with the inanimate desk. Thus, a school becomes an instrument which curtails the movement and freedom of the human body.

The modern army, on the hand, operates in similar ways as the school. In the army, every soldier is trained to master certain drills and movements with a sense of urgency and perfection. Foucault summarizes the disciplinary practices the body of a soldier goes through. He says thus:

Bring the weapon forward. In three stages. Raise the rifle with the right hand, bringing it close to the body so as to hold it close to the body so as to hold it perpendicular with the right knee, the end of the barrel at the eye level grasping it with the tight hand, the arm held close to the body at waist height. At the second stage bring the rifle in front of you with the left hand, the barrel in the middle between the two eyes, vertical, the right hand grasping it at the small of the butt, the arm outstretched, the trigger guard resting on the first finger, the left hand at the height of the notch, the thumb lying along the barrel against the moulding. At the third stage.... (Foucault 1979:153)

These 'body-object' articulations of the soldier and his weapons, the student and his desk, affect a coercive link with the apparatus of production. In regimes of power, the body's time is rigidly controlled as its space. The factory whistle and the school bell mark a division of time into discrete and segmented units that are the various activities of the day. However to achieve control of the body in schools and factories, relentless surveillance has to be maintained.

Jeremy Bentham's design for the panopticon, a model prison, captures for Foucault the essence of the disciplinary society. At the peripheral of the panopticon, a circular structure; at the centre, a tower with wide windows that open on the inner side of the ring. The structure on the peripheral is divided into cells each with two divisions, one facing the windows of the tower, the other facing the outside, allowing an effect of back-lighting to make any figure visible within the cell. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy (Foucault 1979:200). Each inmate is alone, shut off from effective communication with his fellows, but constantly visible from the tower. The effect of this is to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power; each inmate becomes a jailer to himself (Foucault 1979:201). This state of conscious and permanent visibility is a sign that tight disciplinary control has got hold on the mind as well. This condition is what Frantz Fanon once referred to as psychic alienation. In the perpetual self-surveillance of the inmate lies the genesis of the celebrated 'individualism' and heightened self-consciousness which are hallmarks of modern times. For Foucault, the structure and effects of the panopticon resonate throughout society. That is

why it is not surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons (Foucault 1979:228).

However, let us pause one moment and go back to the issue of globalization. If globalization entails a type of centralized power controlled by the West, if it is the rule of Western multinationals, if it is the dictatorship of the Western-controlled information super-highway called the Internet then, indeed, globalization has similar characteristics as those of Foucault's school, hospital and prison. Thus, globalization is a type of panopticon which has put Africans on the continent under constant surveillance so that they do not possibly break the rules of Western financial, cultural, political, technological and cultural institutions. Furthermore, the Western panopticon has ensured that even without the direct supervision of Euro-Americans, the daily activities of the African people reflect the automatic functioning of Western power in Africa. Ultimately, then, the power of contemporary globalization has progressively gained access to individuals themselves, to their bodies their gestures and all their daily actions (Dews 1984:17). While punishing and imprisoning their bodies, this power seeks to transform the minds of those individuals who might be tempted to resist it. However the exercise of global power is done through specific institutions and avenues - schools, trade, music, beauty, fashion and media - yet the same power is also faceless, centralized, pervasive and anonymous. Here, the image of the panopticon returns: knowing that he may be observed from the global 'tower' at any time, the African 'inmate' takes over the job of policing him/herself. Hence, the Western gaze which is inscribed in almost every structure and institution of the African social life becomes internalized by the inmate. In this way, globalization produces in Africa what Foucault would call 'self-policing subjects' (Foucault 1979:77). As a result, then, globalization induces in an African a 'state of conscious and permanent visibility' as reflected in the changing constructions of the female body in music, fashion and media.

Foucault's account in *Discipline and Punish* of the disciplinary practices that produce the 'docile bodies' of modernity is a genuine enterprise incorporating a rich theoretical explanation of the ways in which instrumental reason takes hold of the body with a mass of historical detail. Obviously, Foucault's observations are general theoretical guidelines about the human body (both male and female). Yet, in presenting these generalizations, Foucault also commits a serious act of omission. Throughout, he treats the body as if it were one, as if the bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life. Where, we may ask, is Foucault's account of the disciplinary practices which engender the 'docile bodies' of women, bodies more docile than the bodies of men? As Sundra Bartky has correctly observed, 'women like men are subject to many of the disciplinary practices Foucault describes but he is blind to those disciplines

that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine' (Bartky 1990:65). To overlook the forms of subjection that engender the feminine body is to perpetuate the silence and powerlessness of those upon whom these disciplines have been imposed. In this essay, we make an effort to address this hiatus by interrogating the female body in Kenya within the context of global trade. However, before we do this, let us make one fundamental clarification.

We are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine. True, male or female are natural categories but masculinity and femininity are social constructions. Femininity is an artifice, an achievement, 'a mode of enacting and re-enacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of the flesh' (Butler 1990). In what follows, I shall examine those disciplinary practices that produce the body, which in gesture and appearance is recognizably feminine. Furthermore, I will examine these feminine disciplinary practices in the context of global trade and from the basic standpoints of fashion, music and media.

### **Fashion, Trade and the Female Body in Kenya**

Without any clothing material on it, without makeup and without jewellery, the female body remains a natural category. However, the disciplinary practice which has provided clothes for human beings operates on the philosophy that the body is an ornamental surface. As globalization expands its space in Kenya, the ornamentation of the human body has also assumed complex dimensions. Fashion is a crucial medium through which ornamented bodies are produced. At present, both the young and elderly people of Kenya are variously affected by the overwhelming culture of fashion. Across the streets of Kenya's major towns, one can easily notice from the manner of dress how several people are trying to catch up with current trends in fashion and, especially so, trends consistent with contemporary Western cultural dispensations. This tendency is much more pronounced in women than in men.

Evidently, however, Kenya's fashion domain does not end at clothing. In addition to particular shoes, underwear, brassieres, necklaces, earrings, bangles, bracelets and dresses, the female body has to have something more. In the university where I teach, there is an annual ritual called the Culture Week.<sup>1</sup> In the cultural performances of this annual event, it has been observed that beauty and fashion shows are the most popular items of the extravaganza. I asked one female student to explain to me what a fashion show entailed. She said:

It means good trendy shoes; it means a good necklace, if any. It means a matching and a not-so-common good dress. It means fitting earrings and bangles. It also means being sensitive about colours. Hey! You have got to know you are woman. But that is not all, a beauty and fashion show should give the public appropriate female bodies to wear the things I have mentioned.<sup>2</sup>

I was rather surprised by the way in which the above student was committed to detail so as to make her explanations clear to me. Her revelations, however, gave me motivation to interview ten more female students about this sensitive subject of beauty and fashion. Of the ten, two had participated in previous beauty contests in the university. In addition, two girls out of the ten had not only taken part in the previous beauty contests in the university but also competed in the preliminary contests for the Miss World beauty shows in their respective provinces of origin in the country. Four of the girls had never enlisted as models in the fashion and beauty shows anywhere but they said they liked attending beauty shows as part of the audience. The remaining two girls said they had never attended any beauty or fashion shows anywhere. I asked each of these ladies the following questions: What does beauty mean to you? Do you think that you are beautiful? What is the purpose of beauty and fashion shows?

On the first question, all the ten women had similar views about beauty. They concurred that beauty includes good clothes and accessories for a woman. However, good clothes and accessories, they said, should be won by a beautiful body. On the second question, the first six girls felt they were beautiful but of the last four, two thought they were ugly because nobody had ever told them that they were beautiful, while the other two felt that it did not matter to them whether they were beautiful or ugly.

Asked about what beauty and fashion shows were meant for, the first six girls felt they had been exploited especially by men because, they said, after parading their beautiful and well fashioned bodies, they ended up with nothing while multinational companies undertook to use such shows to market their goods, including drinks, sleek motor vehicles, cigarettes and beauty products. For these girls, therefore, beauty shows were avenues for commercial firms to make money. The last four girls intimated that although the idea of beauty and fashion was not bad at all, they thought that girls who attended the shows as models were socially reckless people trying hard to capture the attention of men! To be sure about the views I received from the university girls, I also undertook, though with a few gender modifications, to pose similar questions to some ten randomly-selected young undergraduate men. The modified questions were: What does beauty mean to you; Are you handsome? What is the purpose of beauty and fashion shows?

With regard to the first question, all the ten men, like the women, had the view that beauty involved dress and body. However, they argued that the issue of beauty and fashion was not so important for men as it was for women. Every man, ugly or handsome, they said, would always want a beautiful and attractive woman. Nevertheless, for each of these young men, their, beautiful and attractive woman varied from a slender tall girl, a light complexion lady, a long dark-haired woman to a modestly built lady with generous lips, eyes and fairly big cheekbones. Of the ten men, seven wanted their beautiful women to always wear makeup

while three thought that makeup not only spoiled the natural beauty of women but it also concealed a woman's ugliness. The answers to question two were quite revealing. Six of the men thought they did not know whether they were handsome or ugly, two felt they were handsome, one thought he was average and one felt the question of being ugly or handsome was not important to men.

On the purposes of beauty and fashion shows, the answers were equally interesting. Seven of the above young men thought that these shows were good because they promoted tourism and increased the sales of such industrial goods as whiskies, beauty products, foods, drugs, clothes and electronics. However, two of the ten boys thought that beauty and fashion shows were un-African and were merely meant to exploit already spoiled girls. One boy felt that whether these beauty shows and contests took place or not did not matter to him. This was the same young man who had argued that being ugly or handsome did not really matter for men.

After talking to university students, I also interviewed some lecturers in the university as well as other private citizens. We received various views from both men and women, who expressed diverse views about beauty, women and fashion. Surprisingly, however, all the interviews I carried out from a cross-section of the Kenyan populace seemed to point at certain recurring variables about beauty and women. These variables include clothes, height, skin colour, length of hair, hairstyles, size of the body, size of the breasts, and even age. However, with specific regard to beauty shows and contests, these respondents lamented the rising tendency to appropriate the female body in order to market goods and services in Kenya. What then is the lesson which we can learn from these interviews?

As globalization shrinks the world into a village, and as the Internet dissolves distances and spaces, a new cultural dispensation has been developing with regard to beauty and fashion. Styles of the female figure, the dress and the ornamentation of the body have throughout history varied from culture to culture. However, in a highly globalized world like ours, dictated by neo-liberal tendencies, these diversities are also collapsing into some all-embracing, universal style. The currently fashionable body is taut, small breasted, narrow-hipped and of a slimness bordering on emaciation (Bartky 1990:66). However, since ordinary women normally have quite different body dimensions, they must of course diet.

In the Foucauldian perspective, dieting disciplines the body's hunger; appetite must be monitored at all times and governed by an iron will. Nevertheless, dieting too could involve not just avoiding some foods but also taking some slimming pills and low fat foods.<sup>3</sup> Slimming pills and low fat foods abound in Kenya's leading supermarkets and women buy these products in the hope of achieving an ideal shape. The multinational food chains such as Steers, Unilever and Coca Cola are often ready to take advantage of these demands by the female body so as to sell their products and make profits that run into millions of dollars.

Fundamentally, since the innocent need for the organism for food will not be denied, the body becomes one's enemy. It actually becomes an alien bent on thwarting the disciplinary project. The disciplinary project is meant to bring out an 'ideal body' to fit in certain designer dresses. Among North American women, rates of bulimia and anorexia nervosa are rising by the day (Garner *et al.* 1980). In one study carried out on American college women, it was found that 61 per cent of this category of women had eating disorders (Rockett and McMinn 1990). Although studies are inconclusive in other parts of the world about women's eating habits, it can safely be argued that as globalization consumes the entire world, more and more cases of bulimia and anorexia nervosa will be reported in many Third World countries. Anorexia nervosa which has now become a big threat to the lives of millions of women in the world today is to women of the 21<sup>st</sup> century what hysteria was a few centuries ago. This is because dieting is one discipline imposed upon a body subject to the 'tyranny of slenderness'. It is also a discipline imposed upon a body subject to the tyranny of 'profitable trade' in multinational goods including clothes, drugs and diet foods. Out of the ten young women I interviewed in my university, six were on some sort of diet. Foucault coined the term 'bio-power' to describe this experience through which the body is subjected to certain tyrannies. 'Bio-power', Foucault argues, is a form of power exercised on the body and it carries specifically anatomical and biological aspects. It is exercised over members of the population so that their sexuality and individuality are constituted in certain ways that are connected with national policy, including the machinery of production (Foucault 1980:139). In this way, populations can be adjusted with economic processes. Consequently, what begins as 'bio-power' is transformed into a powerful 'busno-power' which thrives on the various manipulations of the body (Marshall 1995:2)

The second discipline – another form of bio-power – which is supposed to produce beautiful and right-sized bodies is exercise (Chernin 1981). Since men as well as women exercise, it is not always easy, in the case of women, to distinguish what is done for the sake of physical fitness from what is done in obedience to the requirements of femininity. However, with the widespread obsession with weight reduction, one suspects that many women are working out in the health clubs or at the gym with a different aim in mind and in quite a different spirit than the men. A variety of instrument machines are being used in several club houses and gyms in Kenya. Used by both men and women, they include Nautilus machines, rowing machines, motorized exercycles, portable hip and leg cycles, belt massagers, trampolines, tread mills as well as arm and leg pulleys. Depending on the financial status of the owners of these physical fitness centres, a club house or gym could have a few, several or all of the above apparatus. Some of these machines cost thousands of shillings and are beyond the affordability of ordinary people in Kenya. Like men, majority of women register in these clubs paying weekly, monthly

and annual subscriptions. In one such ordinary gym ran by Kenyatta University, Nairobi, subscribers pay up to 100 dollars a year which is a lot of money in Kenya. The more advanced gym in the same university would cost twice as much for members of the teaching staff over the same period. Outside the university, the cost of working out in the gyms and club houses is even three to four times higher than the highly subsidized rates at the campus.

Inside these gyms, one notices separate rooms for women focused on their own programmes. Women have to work towards an 'ideal woman's' body.<sup>4</sup> The 'ideal body' for a woman must be slender, with little fat and firm muscle. The body should be disciplined to accept a size twelve or fourteen dress – an ideal body size of many Western female film stars and models ranging from the Hollywood sex goddess Marilyn Monroe of the 1940s, Jane Fonda of the 1970s and 1980s to Janet Jackson of the 1990s. At the peak of exercising in those gyms, women behave as if some Monroe, Jackson or Fonda were watching them from an invisible tower. Some of the manuals for operating these expensive physical fitness machines show pictures of very slender women working on them. As they struggle to catch up with the dictatorship of the 'ideal sizes' of the body, Kenyan women are now being driven crazy by commercial images of women models exercising on machines. The main beneficiary in the entire process of disciplining the body, through exercising, are the multinational firms selling machines and clothes but the woman's body is the loser because it has to subject itself to impossible disciplines that combine strict diet with exercise.

It then seems to me that disciplining the woman's body to an appropriate size implies also that the woman's body is her own enemy. However, against the backdrop of a bruising battle between the woman and her own body, business people make a kill by marketing and selling their products on the 'battle field'. Inside some gyms and club houses, one also finds diet foods such as club soda and diet coke, as well as wines and spirits, sold at exorbitant prices, almost twice above the ordinary price in the streets. An 'ideal female body' comes at a cost. Evidently, it is from the gyms and club houses that women in Kenya move on to model in fashion houses and to participate in beauty shows.

Yet, for the man in the gym, the emphasis could vary from cutting down body fat and weight to enhancing their muscles as a sign of masculinity. Indeed, the most important difference between men and women in the Kenyan gyms and clubhouses is that men have choices to make on how they want their bodies to look like but women do not. For instance, men have a choice to build muscles, to increase some weight, to reduce weight, to maintain an average body weight with average muscles, but women have only one thing to do: cut weight and reduce body size if they really want to be feminine, attractive and beautiful. Is this not oppressive?

In the gyms, there are classes of exercises meant for women alone. These are designed not to trim or reduce the body's size overall, but to resculpture its various parts on the current model. As M.J. Saffon, an international beauty expert, would say, his twelve basic facial exercises can erase frown lines, smooth the forehead, raise hollow cheeks, banish crow's feet and tighten the muscles under the chin (Saffon 1981). Body sizes given by the Western world have become the universal norm as well as the only option for the Kenyan woman. From the universal West, the female body in Kenya must be disciplined to go through many exercises: exercises to build the breasts and exercises to banish cellulite. There is also 'spot-reducing', an umbrella term that covers dozens of punishing exercises designed to reduce problem areas like thick ankles or 'saddlebag' thighs.<sup>5</sup> However, the very idea of spot-reducing is both scientifically unsound and cruel for it raises expectations in women that can never be realized. This is because the pattern in which fat is deposited is known to be genetically determined.

From the foregoing, we note that it is not only her natural appetite or unreconstructed contours that pose a danger to women. The very expressions of her face can subvert the disciplinary project of bodily perfection. Clearly, in the war against her own body, the multinational and local business firms undertake to market their goods, clothes, foodstuffs and even beauty products. Figure consultants and gym instructors have come to assume the role of military 'commanders' of women cadres fighting against their own bodies. In doing their job, both the figure consultants and gym instructors also market, sometimes unconsciously, intellectual goods in the form of ideas from the West on how to achieve ideal bodies. These 'commanders' are often paid handsomely, anything between 100 and 700 dollars, monthly, in order to psyche women against their own bodies.<sup>6</sup> Without doubt, multinational companies have this tendency to utilize the battleground, in which women are fighting against their bodies, to market various goods and services that do not immediately benefit the woman in the gym. The disciplinary practices which therefore go into the project of beauty and fashion also push the woman's body into Foucault's prison and Bentham's panopticon. We are arguing that it is in the prison and panopticon of globalization that the female body is appropriated and constructed as a site for trade transactions involving local and multinational companies in Kenya.

### **The Female Body and the Media in Kenya**

Media embraces radio, television, newspapers and magazines. Because radio transmission does not show the body of a woman, our study concentrated on television, newspapers and magazines. Television exhibits women's bodies in motion while magazines present still pictures of female bodies.

Mass circulation of women's magazines run articles on dieting in virtually every issue. They also expose images of women with 'ideal sizes and beauty'.

Across the streets of Kenya's major cities which I visited – Nairobi, Eldoret and Kisumu – international sex and fashion publications such as *Vogue*, *Elle*, *She*, *Instyle* and *Claire* among others were commonplace. These magazines are sold at between five to forty-seven dollars and are popular with both men and women.<sup>7</sup> Inside the magazines are not just 'right-sized' women's bodies but advertisements of the accessories, foods, clothes and perfumes that would go into creating a desirable body. For example, in several of these magazines I went through, there were advertisements of ornamented female bodies and of perfumes such as Chanel, Christian Dior, Dune, Cleopatra, Allure and Revlon, among others. Alongside the perfumes were costly chains, bracelets, bangles, earrings, lipstick varieties and whole cocktails of makeup for women. A woman really needs to be very rich to fit in the lifestyle constructed in these magazines (see *Vogue*, *Elle*, *She* and *Cosmopolitan*). All these accessories, perfumes and guidelines on diet are crucial ingredients of the curriculum which goes into the disciplining of a female body.<sup>8</sup> Expensive though these ingredients are, a lot of women try very hard to purchase them, thereby enriching multinational firms. The most interesting aspect of our study was that of the ten women we interviewed about female images in the media, eight of them reported that they had tried to follow guidelines from magazines but failed to achieve their objectives of being right-sized and attractive.<sup>9</sup> However, when asked whether they would abandon those guidelines and stop reading the magazines, six out of the eight women said they would never stop reading the magazines and they would never abandon the task of trying even harder!

In addition, in an effort to domesticate the Western images of the female sexuality, a number of locally prepared magazines have also hit the Kenyan market. Although they advertise very few commercials, the local sex magazines are extremely popular. The list of these publications is long but it includes such titles as *The Whole Apple*, *True Sensation*, *Playgirl*, *Secret Emotions*, *Romance*, *Passions*, *Secret Desire*, *Life Seen* and *Love Dust*. Each of these publications costs about seventy Kenya shillings, which is approximately a dollar. The chief storyline in these magazines is sex and the female body. Both on their covers and in the inside pages, the magazines carry explicit pictures of women. They also carry features on how a woman's body could be appropriated to sexually satisfy herself and her man. Indeed, the publications are sex manuals of sorts, discussing the sensitive parts of female bodies and how men can put those parts to good use. Furthermore, some of the publications glorify infidelity, lesbianism, incest and even homosexuality. Wondering why these magazines were selling products exposing women's bodies and carrying story lines that glamorized infidelity, lesbianism, homosexuality and incest, I undertook to interview three workers (two women and one man) from the *Love Dust* company and three from *Emotions* (one woman and two men).

They accepted to be interviewed on condition that I did not reveal their identity and I gave them my word for that.

Asked why they chose to use pictures nude women in their publications, the six workers from the two companies said their companies were just doing what the West did, namely, commercializing the female body. Second, they also reasoned that the women who posed nude were being paid handsomely.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, these workers did not say how much the women who posed nude were being paid. On infidelity, homosexuality and lesbianism, all the six workers surprisingly referred us to popular American soap operas, then showing on Kenya's television screen, *The Bold and Beautiful*, and *Miami Sands*. The two programmes depict images of female bodies that are partially nude; their storylines are about fashion, intrigue, infidelity and incest. It was at this point that I discovered how deeply Western values had become entrenched in Kenya's public life.

However, the most interesting outcome of my encounter with the workers at Emotions was that once they began to trust me, they showed me American and European sex videotapes involving the female body. For example, I learned that the company had purchased original videos of *Playmates*, *Street Punk*, *Sluts of All Nations* and *Outside Exhibitions*. Each of the videos contained between two to six hours of hot sex including anal. They also highlighted several styles that went into the diverse field of lovemaking. These videos had price tags of 12 to 15 dollars. On the shelves, I too found several sex magazines showing women and men in explicit sexual acts. The magazines included *The Best of Big and Black*, *Players*, *Big Girls* and *Swank* among others.<sup>11</sup> From the foregoing experience, I came to realize two things. First, it was evident that the storylines that I had seen in local sex magazines had appropriated the spirit, content and philosophy of Western sex videotapes, films, and magazines. Secondly, because of that, I learned that, indeed, sex and the female body especially as constructed by the West had become global products. Through videotapes and magazines, the West has continued to sell its ideas about sex and about the female body to countries such as Kenya in exchange for dollars.

We should probably pause for another moment and go back to Foucault. The disciplinary practices which inform the female bodies in magazines (whether local or international) and videotapes are numerous. Visually, female bodies are trained to pose in inviting and alluring ways. They expose their breasts, their genitals and often, they give the impression of sexually starved creatures. For some, their bodies are usually adorned with good hair, good hairstyles, earrings, bangles, chains, lipstick, and nail polish of various colours. These are the disciplinary constructions the female body goes through so that a sex videotape, a sex magazine, or a sexy figure is produced and sold. It is all about money but to get this money, you have to lead women to declare war on their own bodies! By declaring this

war on themselves, women undertake to vigorously reinvent and reconstruct their own bodies so as to fit into the commercial demands of global culture, disseminated from the West.

The discussion on the female body and its significance in global trade in Kenya will not be complete without examining the role of television media. Due to recent political developments in Kenya, many aspects of public life have undergone enormous liberalization. Before the onset of the multi-party political dispensation in the early 1990s, Kenya had only one state-owned television station, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). In the dissemination of information and the delivery of programmes, the station used to operate under strict censorship rules provided by the political establishment. Today, however, several television stations have emerged and are operating competitively besides the national broadcasting service. The stations include the Family T.V, The Kenya Television Network (KTN), the Stellavision Television (STV) the Nation as well as the Citizen television (Daily Nation, October 3, 2002).

Apart from airing their own programmes, these stations (including the KBC), have acquired franchises to broadcast selected programmes from such international and Western-controlled media houses as the Voice of America (VOA), the Cable News Network (CNN) the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Sky News and the German-based DW Television (DW TV). The purpose of television media everywhere in the world is to inform, entertain and provide international space for business. Our research showed that the complex network of local and international television systems thrives, for a greater part, on the appropriation of the female body. Indeed, through the Kenyan television media, two fundamental messages seem to emerge. The first message is sex, and the second is business.

Let us begin with sex. Increasingly, sex is becoming a staple in Kenya's television diet. Because of the institutionalized heterosexuality, a woman must make herself 'object and prey' for a man. In local programmes shown on the KBC such as *Penzi Hatari* (dangerous love affair), *Doa* (blemish) and even *Vituko* (shocking acts), story lines are varied but their major theme is love in its heterosexual disposition. The programmes, usually aired in the evenings, present several women who have clearly undergone the disciplinary project of femininity, ready and willing to be 'consumed' by men. Alongside local programmes, there are also foreign television shows that are now frequent on the KTN, STV, Nation and even KBC stations. For example, one of the leading foreign television shows on the KBC is *The Bold and Beautiful*, an American soap opera that has run on average for three days a week since 1994 and whose story is sex and fashion. The programme glorifies money, infidelity, incest and intrigue while at the same time presenting nude women's bodies. Here, women are also displayed as sex objects to be used

by one powerful man, Ridge Forrester. It is an environment where men exchange women at will. However, the women who are exchanged here are also models and others are highly learned beauties. Yet, when it comes to them dealing with men, these women are all reduced to a common denominator. They are merely sexualized female bodies, manufactured from the disciplinary industry of femininity, ready to succumb to the desires of men. The women of *The Bold and Beautiful* adore makeup, fitness, and fashionable dressing. Similar programmes to *The Bold and Beautiful* include *Miami Sands* and *La Mujer Mi de Vida*, showing on the Nation television channel and featuring alluring female bodies, as well as *The Young and the Restless*, another American soap opera, and the romantic British drama *Days of our Lives* now showing on STV.

In all the above programmes, one notices the manifest disciplinary project of the female body. Notably, however, the extensive measures of bodily transformation are beyond the realization abilities of an average woman in Kenya. Many women in the country are without time and resources to provide themselves with even the minimum of what the disciplinary project of femininity requires: make up, diet, fashionable clothes and the ability to maintain a right-sized and permanently youthful body. More painful to note is the fact that the disciplinary practices of the female body are in themselves a signification of shame. They imply just how much women feel ashamed of their natural bodies. However, as they struggle to meet prevailing standards of body acceptability, poor women have also to bear the burdens of both psychological and economic humiliation.

The commercial benefits of these television programmes in Kenya are enormous. Just before the shows commence, a number of commercials are often aired, advertising several local and international products. For example, in the recent past, *The Bold and Beautiful* as well as *Miami Sands* have been preceded, interlaced and even post-marked by the advertisement of the Russian popular whisky, Smirnoff. In this commercial advertisement, one man who is happily surrounded by gorgeous and partially nude women dancing around him boasts that when he takes Smirnoff, he imagines a beautiful environment surrounded by 'gorgeous babes'. Here 'beautiful', 'right-sized', partially nude and highly ornamented and fit female bodies are paraded where Smirnoff is being advertised for sale! Clearly, we have a socially constructed female body promoting the sale of a multinational product. Indeed, even the partially nude women in this particular advertisement have designer bras and thin-string attires ordered straight from Western European and American fashion houses.

Other products advertised against the backdrop of 'a disciplined female body' include beauty products from the firm Procter and Gamble of the United States ranging from menstrual pads to soaps and cosmetics.<sup>12</sup> Local firms with franchises to manufacture and sell classified foods, body creams, toiletries and

perfumes also advertise their products at the time 'female bodies' programmes are on air. Our purpose here, however, is not to enumerate all the products advertised during the airing of such programmes but to acknowledge that female bodies have been used on television in Kenya as sites and catalysts for the sale of manufactured goods. In this way, local and international firms acknowledge that their sales increase whenever they advertise their products on television and, especially so, when the advertisements appear before the presentation of sexy television programmes.<sup>13</sup>

We have already signified that in the regime of institutionalized heterosexuality, a woman has to make herself 'object and prey' for a man. It is for him that her eyes are limpid pools and her cheeks baby smooth (Beauvoir 1968:642). In contemporary patriarchal culture, a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women. They stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment. Woman, in this case, lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal other. Talking of patriarchy again, one might note that most of the multinational firms are patriarchal in form. They have the 'toughness' and the muscular ruthlessness towards business; they are masculine; they are macho. This is probably the reason they parade female bodies to sell their products. It gives them a chance to demonstrate male domination.

### **Music and the Female Body**

Increasingly, music has become a multi-million global business enterprise all over the world. The Kenyan people have also maintained enormous interest in local and international music despite the serious economic problems facing their country. Generally, there are two fundamental music avenues upon which one can analyse the construction of the female body in Kenya. These are the local and the international passageways.

The local music scene embodies several dimensions. We have for example the official schools and colleges' music festivals, the ordinary entertainers who have taken music as a career, as well as the church choirs. However, at the international level, the Kenyan public has been continually exposed to the music of renowned artistes from both the rest of the African continent and the rest of the world. Comparatively, American and Western European music seems to be more popular than any other variant which has ever penetrated the local scene. In our research, we found out that seven out of ten university and college students would prefer to listen and dance to Western music than to any other music from other parts of the world. Probably, the reason for this imbalance lies in the fact that compared to the rest of the world, the West has had more resources to aggressively market their music and thus globalize the world from a Euro-American perspective.

Our chief concern in this research, however, was not the various categories of music played in Kenya. Our aim was to investigate how the female body was constructed at various musical levels. Furthermore, we undertook to investigate the relevance of such construction to global trade. In the national schools and colleges music festival held in Nairobi during the month of August 2002, we picked out three recurring features that seemed crucial to this study. First was the way female bodies were adorned and constructed. Second was the way that the body was utilized in song and dance and third, the way some commercial firms undertook to market their goods at the various music avenues.

With regard to the construction of the female body, in the festivals the girls tended to sport different forms of ornamentation including the donning of beads around their necks and waistlines, the dyeing of hair, the use of several matching colours to decorate finger nails as well as parts of their stomachs and the deliberate exposure of certain parts of their bodies such as the back and areas around their stomachs and waists. Generally, the girl tied pieces of clothes to conceal the breasts (or was it to announce the spot where their breasts resided?) Indeed, we watched a variety of dancing groups working hard to win trophies. The songs were of different themes including those on marriage, drugs, alcoholism, diseases and leadership. However, throughout the songs, we observed that were the men were to be blamed because the women always seemed helpless, for instance, when it came to bad marriages. This too applied to diseases, bad leadership and drugs. Indirectly, by blaming men for all the ills of society, the dancers also signified that men, not women, were the chief controllers of human life. There was no presentation which gave a woman a dominating role, yet the songs came from the body of a woman. When it came to dancing, two features were generally noted. One, most of the girls smiled as they danced even in instances where it required that they frown or show moods of sadness. As they danced, secondly, there was an emphasis on belly dancing which was cheered by the audience! One man we talked to, Charles Omondi, explained that belly dancing had received cheers from the audience because it represented the sexual virility of a woman.<sup>14</sup>

As if to celebrate the objectification of the female body as a sex machine meant to add pleasure to a man's life, and as if to approve of the demeaning messages about women in the music hall, the multinational beverage firm Coca Cola had a busy time selling various brands of its drinks at prices that were about 40 per cent above the normal price in the shops.<sup>15</sup> Various brands of soaps and foodstuffs manufactured by the East African Industries, a subsidiary of the London-based Unilever Company, were also being sold at inflated prices. It thus dawned on us that the dominating tendencies of globalization had now invaded the female body and was using the disciplined body – disciplined by specific

dancing styles, disciplined by ornamentation, dress and smile – to market multinational products without even considering whether or not the music festivals were 'inferiorizing' or 'superiorizing' the woman gender. Ornamental female bodies, dancing in provocative ways, are also commonplace in Kenyan night clubs as well as in places where commercial music entertainers go to sing. Such avenues of entertainment sold whiskies, soft drinks and cigarettes to celebrate the derogation of the female body.

The music of international artistes, we realized, was everywhere on television, video tapes as well as on cassette tapes.<sup>16</sup> Over the past ten years, Kenya has played host to several international music artistes and groups like Kool and the Gang, Shaggy, Kofi Olomide, Le General Defao, Aurlus Mabele of the Loketo beat, Brenda Fassie, Kanda Bongoman of the Kwasa Kwasa beat as well as Tshala Muana of the famed muswati belly-dancing style. There are many African, especially Congolese, musicians who have not yet visited Kenya but whose music is very popular in the country. Through television and internet connections, the music of prominent Euro-American musicians such as Dolly Parton, Celine Dion, Christina Aguilera, Janet Jackson, Rod Stewart, Bryan Adams, Robert Kelly, Whitney Houston and Michael Bolton, among others, has penetrated both the public and private spheres of the Kenyan people.

In investigating the diverse constructions of the female body through music, we sampled a number of music videos. They include Janet Jackson's Rhythm 1814, Love Cannot Do Without You and It Is On You. We also examined Shaggy's It Was Not Me; Dolly Parton's Just Because I Am a Woman, and Bryan Adam's Everything I Do I Do It For You. From the rest of Africa, we picked up videotapes from Kanda Bongoman's Yesu Kristo, and Inde Moni, Aurlus Mabele's Embargo, Kofi Olomine's Andrada, and Loi, Defao's Anrie and Nadine, Brenda Fassie's Vuli Ndlela and Mimeza as well as Zaiko Langa Langa's Poison.

The videotapes from African musicians produced music which had some very critical commonalities. Whether one is talking about Defao, Koffi Olomide or Aurlus Mabele, one should appreciate that most of the Congolese musicians produced hard-hitting tunes which also elicited rigorous dancing. In every case, women's bodies were ornamented and they were deliberately dressed to produce sex appeal. Often, women dancers got introduced into the dancing floor once the songs climaxed into pitched beats. To these beats, the girls danced their hearts out, gyrating, wriggling and shaking their waists, throwing kisses and inviting the male audience to move closer to their 'electronic' waists. They also smiled and danced to rehearsed steps and body movements. The environmental settings of each song were, however, different. In some cases, songs were set in high-class houses or compounds showing expensive tastes: curtains, sleek vehicles, couches and swimming pools. The girls danced in designer costumes, thin-string vests,

bras, very short trousers and no shoes. The hair was dyed with golden glosses. Their fingernails were long and coated with distinctive colours; lipsticks and general makeup were important features of the dancers' overall outlook. In general, as one finishes watching Loi or Andrada, one also notices that the spectre goes beyond mere entertainment. It is international business.

To produce music and sell it well, you need a disciplined and practised female body. Consequently, you will sell the music but other global firms will also benefit through the marketing of their goods. As a result, a single music video becomes a complicated diversity. Music videotapes of the above artistes could sell for 15 to 25 dollars, but the ultimate value of the tape should surely include the expanded commercial space of the audience. During the viewing of the tape, the consumers too have opportunities to see not just the music but also the designer chains, motor vehicles, earrings and clothes. Furthermore, the videotapes help to market different designs of Western houses and compounds; designs of curtains and cutlery, furniture, beds and all that goes into interior decorations and furnishing. More importantly, powerful music companies such as Virgin Records, Sony Records, Epic, Polygram Polydor and Motown, among others, get their share of profits in the entire enterprise because they are profoundly responsible for the successful careers, worldwide, of most of the big names in the music industry. All these things are achieved at a high cost to the female body, a body which has been constructed and produced by certain disciplinary practices.

Although in such video shows the man's body undergoes similar disciplinary processes, in almost all of these productions several themes are often collapsed into the subject matter of love. Notably, a male singer is presented adoring a woman's body, her movements and her general appeal. It ends up with some form of heterosexual love in which the man will finally use the female body to satisfy his desires. One can easily see that the narrow identification of a woman with sexuality and the body does little to raise her status. In the case of these video tapes of the African musicians, it is Kofi Olomide, Defao and Kanda Bongoman who are the real heroes of the public audience.

In a recent African music concert held in one of Nairobi's leading restaurants, I asked ten randomly selected women and men attending the show to name some of the women who routinely dance in Koffi Olomide's, Defao's and Arlus Mabele's videos. The respondents admitted that they loved the music of these Congolese artistes and that they liked the way the women danced but they did not remember the women's names. Yet, all the respondents knew Olomide, Defao and Mabele! It was at this point that I came to grips with the reality that, in fact, the music videos we have discussed above were avenues to 'celebrate' the 'triviality' of the woman's mind. By adoring their bodies, men forget the women's names and thus underline their insignificance. By privileging the 'disciplined' body

over the woman herself, we actually celebrate the loss of the female identity. Yet this loss of identity, as well as the general trivialization of the woman's mind, all combine to establish an important site upon which global goods are marketed.<sup>17</sup> True, even the most adored female bodies complain routinely of their situation in ways that reveal an implicit understanding that there is something demeaning in the kind of attention they receive (Bartky 1990:173). Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Farrah Fawcett, Whitney Houston, Virginia Marsden, Oprah Winfrey, Jane Fonda and many others have all wanted passionately to become actresses – artistes and not just sex objects to be exploited.

While the African woman in African music videos is possibly size 14 and 16, a few like Brenda Fassie of South Africa could be size 12. In the Euro-American world, most women music artistes, including the dancers, struggle to cut their body size to twelve. An example is Janet Jackson and Dolly Parton.<sup>18</sup> They work hard in gyms but a number of them fail to get to size 12 and remain at size 14. It all depends on how far one can go with the disciplining project of diet and exercise. In our research, we looked at one track *Love Cannot Do Without You* from Janet Jackson's videotape, *Rhythm 1814*. In this production, the small-sized Janet Jackson sings as she adores the gigantic body of a man she loves, telling him that she could not do without him. The man never answers back but merely dramatizes his power of muscle and protection to Janet Jackson. The issue, however, which concerned us so much in this videotape, was the dwarfing of Janet Jackson by such a gigantic man. In the other American music videos we watched, whether they were those of Celine Dion, Whitney Houston, or even Michael Bolton, among others, the woman had to be physically dwarfed by the man both in body size and in weight.

The lessons we gathered from these videotapes were quite instructive. Femininity had become something in which virtually every woman is required to participate. Further, the precise nurture of the criteria by which women are judged, not only the inescapability of judgement itself, reflects gross imbalances in the social power of sexes that do not mark the relationship of artists and their audiences. An aesthetic femininity, for example, that mandates fragility (as in Janet Jackson's case above) and lack of muscular strength produces female bodies that can offer little resistance to physical or even commercial abuse. It is of course true that the current fitness movement has permitted women to develop more muscular strength and endurance than was previously allowed; indeed, images of women have begun to appear in the mass media that seem to eroticise this new masculinity. Nevertheless in Kenya, as in America, a woman may by no means develop more muscular strength than her partner. The bride who would tenderly carry her groom across the threshold is a figure of comedy not romance!

However, against the backdrop of this 'weak' and 'disciplined' female body, the videos have backgrounds of opulence graced by designer houses, vehicles and compounds. In addition, inside the houses are tables serving food from McDonald's.<sup>19</sup> More importantly, the dresses worn by the female body are designer outfits complete with accessories. Some are tight-fitting, emphasizing the protruding breasts and buttocks while others can barely cover the body of the female dancer and singer. The males, whether in the audience or on the stage, wear oversize trousers and T-shirts as a sign of domination, authority and control. There is a difference between a female body and male one. These designs are now all over Kenya. College girls imitate the fashion styles of the 'disciplined' female bodies of American music icons but the boys have to dress like American basketball celebrities such as Michael Jordan or like music composers and performers such as Shaggy and Robert Kelly. These young Kenyan men have disciplined their bodies in this manner in order to perpetuate their domination of woman. In this study, we argue that behind the inferiorization of the female body through the prism of music, multinational companies undertake to sell oversize T-shirts, big Nike-type shoes, and oversize trousers for men.<sup>20</sup> Designer firms too sell tight-fitting wares to women. In Kenya, both men and women who cannot afford new outfits from America buy used ones. The idea is that against the backdrop of multinational profits, music has been appropriated to 'inferiorize' the female body.

At the beginning of this chapter, we intimated that globalization signifies a new type of centralized power controlled by the West. To a larger extent, this power is often administered through financial, social, technical, cultural, political and commercial domains. However, because the same power is ubiquitous and faceless, it affects Westerners in very peculiar and drastic ways. From the above discussion, it is undeniable that bodies of Western women have been exploited not just by men but also by Western multinational companies. As has been demonstrated through fashion, media and music, Kenyan women have been victims of similar forms of domination and exploitation not just by men but also by the Western multinational firms.

However, a number of observations would be in order in this regard. First, unlike the past forms of globalization, the current variants of globalization are mainly driven by the capitalist principals of profit-making. Thus, regardless of whether or not one is looking at Euro-America, Africa or Asia, one has to appreciate the fact that although women's bodies were dominated and controlled by men during the pre-modern era, such control and domination were not ruthlessly commercialized in ways that would match present practices.

Which brings us to another fundamental observation. In this era when female bodies are highly commercialized, the West often has the last laugh at the bank. Through the Western-controlled multinational corporations, as well as scientific/technological programs, the powerful nations of the West have been able to take

home most of the huge profits which emanate from the intricate exploitation of women's bodies all over the world. Clearly, when a Western European woman's body is exploited through the avenues of fashion, media and music, she knows that such exploitation is being done within her culture and by people from her own economic environment, where her social identity is not distorted. Secondly, she also knows that profits made from such exploitation will never leave European countries but will be used to improve the quality of life in her own society.

However, the same cannot be said about an African woman living in Kenya. Like many African countries, Kenya exists in a fairly depressing and unequal relationship with the West. Living in the perpetual condition of 'otherness', Africans have been unable to dismantle forms of knowledge and economic practices that have condemned them to the demeaning status of supporting the development of Western economies in the midst of the continent's abject poverty. Evidently, African economies are controlled and dominated by the Western multinational companies such as Unilever and Coca Cola. These same companies are at the centre of practices which facilitate the exploitation and domination of the female body in Kenya. Hence, much of the profit which accrues out of the exploitation of the Kenyan female body (and indeed the African woman's body across the continent) finds its way back into the Western economies while the quality of life in Africa keeps deteriorating by the day. Furthermore, much of the construction of the female body in Kenya and in many parts of Africa follows the cultural principles of the West. As a result, what the African woman witnesses is not just her exploitation and domination but also her loss of cultural identity. These issues are cardinal in understanding the differences which separate the exploitation of the female body in Africa and the exploitation of the female body in Europe and America.

### Conclusion

It was the objective of this paper to interrogate the female body within the context of global trade in Kenya. Globalization, we argued, may mean many things to many people: the rule of multinational corporations, the dwindling powers of nation-states, the emergence of a new type of centralized power controlled by the West and the dictatorship of the Western-controlled information superhighway called the Internet.

Focusing on the female body, we have demonstrated how Kenya is confronted by the challenges posed by global forces. Specifically, and with particular reference to the domains of fashion and beauty, the platform of media and the arena of music, this study has explored the various ways in which the female body has been reproduced and reconstructed so as to provide a major boost to global trade.

Borrowing heavily from the ideas of French theoretician Michel Foucault, our study has illustrated that modern society has established certain institutions which

have become disciplining agents of the human body. Including schools, armies, prisons, media and fashion houses, such institutions have created rules which seek to regulate the economy, operations and efficiency of the body and its movements. However once the rules have been internalized by recipients, those enslaving institutions do not need to be always physically present to oversee the body's disciplinary practices.

The institutions have the perpetual effect of creating, in the human mind, a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power to the extent that the affected human being becomes his or her own body's jailer. We signified that, like schools and hospitals or the panopticon, globalization has similar effects on the human body. Global forces fiercely convey cultural goods that dictate the ideal body size, its beauty, its fashion, its makeup, its movements and its use to the extent that the owner of the body begins reproducing these disciplinary practices on him or herself as if he or she were being watched by someone from the global tower. In the end, the power exerted against the body is everywhere around and about but also anonymous.

Applied to the male body, we have shown that global power tends to 'superiorize' the man's body but when exerted on the female body it tends to inferiorize it. The study has established that it is against the backdrop of the 'superiorization' of the male body, on the one hand, and the inferiorization of the female body, on the other, through media, music and fashion that multinational corporations tend to market and sell their numerous products including magazines, perfumes, music tapes, cigarettes, foodstuffs, body creams, soaps, drinks and designer clothes. We have in conclusion sustained the argument that the marketing and sale of these products in Kenya is one fundamental way in which globalization celebrates the 'inferiorization' of the female body that has undergone the disciplinary practices of Foucault.

## Notes

1. The author is a lecturer in the Department of History, Archaeology and Political Studies at Kenyatta University, Nairobi.
2. Interview with Loise Wanjiku, a third year Education student at Kenyatta University.
3. On the Kenyan market, for example, there are several variants of the slimming drug, Reductamin. Developed in America and now licensed for use in the European Union and the rest of the world, Reductamin combines all the three weight loss methods in one diet pill. First the pill reduces one's appetite and second, it makes one feel full even if one has no food in one's stomach. Third, the pill speeds up one's metabolism so that one's body actually burns up more calories, with accelerated speed, than is normally the case.
4. Interview with Jasmine Kweyu, an attendant at the Kenyatta University gym.
5. Interview with Abdul Mukasa, a physical trainer at Chipukizi Clubhouse, Nairobi.
6. Interview with James Mugo, a junior instructor at the gym and swimming pool owned by the Sirikwa Hotel in the town of Eldoret.

7. The cover price of the November 2001 issue of Elle is £3.50 which is about US \$5. However, the October 2002 issue of Vanity Fair costs \$47, while the Instyle issue of the same month costs \$42.50.
8. In the March 2002 issue of Marie Claire, one comes across various advertisements for Revlon lipstick, Revlon perfumes and designer women's shoes manufactured by the famous Italian company, Salvatore Ferragami. Diamond chains and woollen outfits for women are advertised in the Elle issue of November 2001. In the She issue of March 2002 a body lotion from the Paris-based company Clarins Paris is also advertised. All these products are expensive, costing up to \$600, but they are part and parcel of the ingredients which go into the disciplining processes of the female body.
9. This interview targeted women working in three beauty and fashion houses in Nairobi, Judith Mumo, Elizabeth Kimulu and Grace Indusa.
10. Interview with employees of Love Dust and Emotions who use the pseudonyms of Sly, Maggie Tass, Stephane, Gibby and Rust.
11. In the Best of Big Black, for example, emphasis was put on naked women bodies bearing big breasts. In Players, however, the focus was on nude female bodies with a lot of makeup and body accessories. The magazine too shows explicit pictures of women's bodies absorbing the sexual releases of men. Again Big Girls and Swank are all about big breasts.
12. In Kenya the popular brand name for the Procter and Gamble menstrual pads for women is Always.
13. Interview with Jackson Muchiri, a sales representative with Kenya Wine Agencies which also markets the various brands of Smirnoff Whiskey. A 700ml Smirnoff whiskey bottle costs about \$12.
14. Charles Omondi, a music teacher from Sirikaru secondary school.
15. The normal price of the 300ml bottle of Coca Cola drink is twenty shillings. During the festivals, the same bottle went for twenty five and thirty shillings.
16. A non-pirated cassette tape carrying the music of international artistes costs between two and three dollars. However, an original videotape would go for \$10 at the lowest and \$25 at the highest
17. Once a woman loses her proper identity through these disciplinary practices, she becomes a worthless object represented only by her body parts and the movements those body parts make.
18. Some musicians such as Dolly Parton wear wigs to create the false impression that they have very attractive, sexy hair. Several female musicians including Parton have also undergone breast implants to maintain upright, youthful but big breasts.
19. McDonald's is one of America's leading food chains. It is also one of the leading food chains in the world.
20. A good Nike-type T-shirt costs \$10 to \$15 in Kenya. However, a modest Nike-type pair of shoes could cost up to \$25. Women's outfits are even more expensive.

## Bibliography

### *Books and Articles*

Association of African Women for Research and Development, 1998, 'The Kenya Chapter', Women's Political Leadership, Nairobi: AAWORD.

- Archer J. and B. Lloyd, 1995, *Sex and Gender*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ayayo A. and B.C. Ocholla, 1991, *The Spirit of the Nation*, Nairobi: Shirikon Publishers.
- Beauvoir de, S., 1968, *The Second Sex*, New York: Bantam Books.
- Bartky, S.L., 1990, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in Phenomenology of Oppression*, New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J., 1990, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge.
- Cheah, Phen, 1996, 'Mattering' in *Diacritics* 26.1.
- Chernin, Kim, 1981, *The Obsession: Reflections on the Tyranny of Slenderness*, New York: Harper and Row.
- Dews, P., 1984, 'Power and Subjectivity in Foucault', in *New Left Review* No 144, March – April.
- Fanon, F., 1970, *Black Skin, White Masks*, London: Paladin.
- Flyn, T.R., 1989, 'Symposium Papers: Foucault and the Politics of Postmodernity', Vol. 23, Issue 2.
- Foucault, M., 1979, *Discipline and Punish*, New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M., 1980, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, New York: Pantheon.
- Garner, D.M., P.E. Garfinkel *et al*, 1980, 'Cultural Expectations of Thinness in Women', *Psychology Report*, 47, pp. 483-491.
- Hester, M., 1992, *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches, A Study of the Dynamics of Male Domination*, London: Routledge.
- Itzin, C., 1992, 'Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Liberties', New York: O.U.P
- Jackson, S., 1996, *Feminism and Sexuality*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Khasiani, S.A., 1992, 'Groundwork: African Women as Environmental Managers', Nairobi: African Centre for Technology Studies.
- Marshall, J.D., 1995, 'Foucault and Neo-Liberalism: Bio power and Busno-power' in *Philosophy of Education*.
- Martin, Mary C., Gentry J.W., 1997, 'Stuck in the Model Trap: Effects of Beautiful Models in Ads on Female Pre-Adolescents and Adolescents', in *Journal of Advertising* 262, pp. 19-33.
- Martin, R., 1999, 'Globalization? The Dependencies of a Question', *Social Text* 17.3.
- Mbilinyi, D. and Omari, C., 1996, *Gender Relations and Women's Images in Media*, Dar-es-Salaam: Dar-es-Salaam University Press.
- Saffon, M.J., 1981, 'The 15-Minute-A-Day Natural Face Lift', New York: Warner Books.
- Truong, Thanh-Dam, 1990, *Sex, Money and Morality: Prostitution and Tourism in South-East Asia*, London: Zed Book Limited.
- Rockett, G. and K. McMinn, 1990, 'You can never be too Rich or too Thin: How advertisement influences Body Image', in *Journal of College Student Development*, 31 pp. 278.
- Silvestre, B. in Peterson, B., 1986, 'Some correlates of the thin standard of Bodily Attractiveness for women', in *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 5, 5, pp. 895-905.

### **Magazines**

- Big Girls, London, March 2002
- The Big and Black, London, issue I/II, June 2000
- Cosmopolitan, Cape Town, March 2002
- Cosmopolitan, London, November 2002
- Daily Nation, Nairobi, October 3 2002

Elle, London, August 2002  
 GQ, Pretoria, October 2001  
 GQ, Pretoria, London, August 2002  
 Honey, New York, March 2002  
 Instyle, New York, January 2002  
 Life, Nairobi, April 2002  
 Marie Claire, Johannesburg, September 2001.  
 Marie Claire, New York, January 2002  
 She, London, June 2002  
 Swank, July 2000  
 Players, Los Angeles, July 2000  
 Vogue, London, September 2002

### **Music Videotapes**

Adams, Bryan, Everything I Do I Do It For You. (brian.adam.com)  
 Bongoman, Kanda, Inde Moni, Yesu Kristo (www.kenyaweb.com, buildafrica.org)  
 Bolton Michael, Soul Provider. (www.getmusic.com, www.mbolton.com)  
 Dion Celine, All Because Of You (www.Celine.net, members.aol.com)  
 Defao, Le Generale, Anrie, Nadine. (www.africasounds.com, defaoin.htm)  
 Fassie, Brenda, Vuli Ndlela (www.afromix.org, brenda\_fassie  
 Houston, Whitney, How Will I Know, I Wanna Dance With Somebody (whitney-  
 houston.com, Justwhitney.com)  
 Jackson, Janet, Rhythm, 1814, Love Cannot Do Without You (Janet\_Jackson.com)  
 Mabele, Arlus, Embargo (www.marchafalk.iwebland.com., my\_cd.html)  
 Nkolo Mboka Poison (www.thepothole.com)  
 Olomide, Koffi, Andrada, Loi (Koff.html, kenyapage.com)  
 Parton, Dolly, Just Because I'm a Woman (dolly.html)

### **Soap Operas**

Miami Sands (www.geocities.com., miamisands.html)  
 La Mujer de mi vida (Javico.tripod; www.zinema.com; www.todacine.com)  
 The Young And The Restless (www.cbs.com, daytime/yr).

### **Oral Respondents**

- (a) Eleven female university students, ten male university students, fifteen university lecturers (eight female, seven male), eighteen private citizens, six employees of Love Dust and Emotion magazines, ten young male and female music lovers at the Florida 2000 club music extravaganza in Nairobi.
- (b) (i) Charles Omondi  
 (ii) Jasmine Kweyu  
 (iii) Loise Wanjiku  
 (iv) Abdul Mukasa  
 (v) James Mugo  
 (vi) Jackson Muchiri

