In the Shadow of the Sheraton: imagining localities in global spaces in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
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At Play in a Field of Hyenas:  
Not exactly the ‘Comforts of Home’

No sun will shine in my day to day  
The high yellow moon won't come out to play  
I say, Darkness has covered my life, and has changed the day into night  
Where is this love to be found?  
I would say that life must be somewhere to be found  
Instead of concrete jungle  
Man you've got to do your best  

No chains around my feet, but I'm not free  
I know I am bound here in captivity  
Never known happiness, never know what sweet caress is  
Well, I'm always laughing like a clown  
I say, I've got to pick myself up off the ground  
Instead of concrete jungle.  
Pollution, illusion, confusion

— Concrete Jungle, Bob Marley
It should be clear by now that most of the young people with whom I worked were highly mobile. Given this, it should hardly be surprising that during the time of my research I often found it difficult to maintain long-term, continuous contact with many of those who agreed to help me with my work. Sometimes I thought I could establish meaningful ties with an individual only to discover that he or she had disappeared from the city just as we were beginning to become comfortable with one another. People were always coming and going between city and village, work and home, and between freedom and imprisonment. A few even made the epic journey from life to death, never to return again. It would be possible to argue that those with whom I worked were among the most transient and marginal people in the city. Yet, once I returned from Tanzania and began looking closely at my field notes, and examining them through a theoretical lens focused on understanding transience, I discovered the degree to which the young men and women I came to know were continually struggling to carve out niches in the city that they could call home, niches of semi-permanence where they could fashion a dream of belonging and locality and the possibility of staying put. It seemed as if living on the edge, sleeping in the streets, and hustling from meal to meal encouraged the development of a certain desire for the security that one gains from being part of localized social networks. That people living in highly transient circumstances should strive for a sense of locality and belonging should not seem terribly surprising, but the truth is I was hardly aware of this desire when I was conducting my research. Caught up in the romance of street life, I was unable to recognize how desperate most people were to develop networks of human and spatial relations that would ease anxieties about being alone in the world.

In the previous chapter, I suggested that it was only through recognizing these networks and working through them that I was able to conduct my research. Although, it would certainly have been possible to work with individuals not connected to one another, in the end, it turned out that the people with whom I chose to work most closely all knew one another to varying degrees and most of them could be traced through Maskani, once again illustrating the importance of the role of place for the establishment and reinforcement of social relations.

In this chapter I would first like to present a somewhat binary model of space and housing in Dar es Salaam as a reflection of views held by many residents of the city. I say "somewhat binary" because there were many exceptions to the binary model I present. Dar es Salaam is not a city strictly divided along class lines, though it is increasingly becoming so. This is especially so in areas where new construction is taking place. The split that exists between wealthy and poor neighborhoods of Dar es Salaam, between what people call Uzunguni and Uswahilini, is essential for understanding the relationship between the way people think about spatial relations and power.

Secondly, I take a step away from Maskani to a place where some Wamaskani lived and where others would often visit when searching for some of the
things that street life could not provide for them. Not all of those I worked with slept at Maskani and, even among those who did, it was not uncommon for them to have attempted to establish some sort of domestic permanency in the past. The area of the city I focus my attention on in this chapter is known as Uwanja wa Fisi, or the Field of Hyenas, a place where several of the young men and women with whom I worked had lived either prior to or during the period of my research. The section focuses on one particular household in Uwanja wa Fisi where I conducted the majority of my in-depth interviews. This choice of focus is deliberate, as I want to emphasize the importance of domesticity and familial ties for those with whom I worked. Spencer, the young man who is the head of this household, worked hard to provide suitable shelter for his own family and, at various times, a place of refuge for young men trying to make it in the city, including several from Maskani.

The last sections of the chapter deal with some introductory thoughts on leisure and play, pleasure and desire, themes that will be further explored in the remainder of the book. For, if Maskani (and maskanis in general) served as a locus of labor and work activities, Uwanja wa Fisi (and Uswahilini in general) served as a locus of play and pleasure. Most significantly, this chapter takes a closer look at the relationship between transactional sex and AIDS. The link between pleasure and death is explored in the final section through a story about the death of a young woman named Rehema who had lived and worked in Uwanja wa Fisi.

**Uzunguni: Safety through segregation**

Uswahilini literally means the place of the Swahili peoples. Uswahilini or Uswazi,² as it is also known, refers to the densely populated areas of Dar es Salaam where the majority of the city’s residents live. Most of Dar es Salaam is at or below sea level and the lowest lying areas of the city, those that are most prone to flash flooding, have become the domain of the poor and working classes. Those with enough money opt for more expensive real estate above the flood plains. The areas of the city marked by a slightly higher elevation or distanced enough from the city’s waterways are sometimes colloquially referred to as Uzunguni, or the place of the Europeans, though the majority of the people living in such areas are African (Fig. 7.1).

Historically, the wealthier areas of the city have been located along the coast north of the city.
Oyster Bay, the most posh suburb located on the Msasani Peninsula, is also the oldest area of the city reserved for those with the most money and the most power. During colonialism it was an enclave reserved for Europeans, but shortly after independence much of the area was taken over by the new political and economic leaders of Tanzania. It is difficult to know who owns the beautiful seafront properties today, but most are rented by wealthy expatriates or foreigners. Oyster Bay and the Msasani Peninsula as a whole are known as Uzunguni. The slow northern expansion of the wealthy suburbs, and the slow inland spread of Uswahilini are spatial manifestations of the changes that have come about in conjunction with liberalization. Mikocheni, Kawe and Mbezi Beach, all benefiting from the cooling breezes the sea has to offer, are currently sites of large-scale construction with new, beautiful gated houses seemingly going up everyday. There is a lot of disagreement as to whether there is in fact more money in Tanzania since the introduction of liberalization policies, or whether it is just that people are no longer afraid of spending it conspicuously. Many say that Tanzanians were afraid to build ostentatious houses while Nyerere was alive, that they were afraid he would show up at their houses personally and demand to know how they had gotten such resources in a poor country like Tanzania. It seems that any lingering restraint that might have existed following the collapse of socialism has completely disappeared since the time of his death.

Nyerere himself lived in a moderately sized house on the border between Msasani (the old Uzunguni) and Mikocheni (the new Uzunguni), more commonly referred to as Mwalimu or Butiama (Nyerere's home village). During his residency there he had invited refugees from Mozambique to settle in the undeveloped areas around his house, but when I visited Tanzania in 2002, only two and a half years after his death, all of the makeshift housing they had built had been razed. In most cases, the land had been owned by powerful Tanzanians who were afraid to develop it as long as Nyerere was alive. Once he was out of the way they felt free to either sell it off or begin construction of obscenely large houses. Western-style shopping centers have also sprouted up in the area, with modern grocery stores, video rental shops, and fitness centers within walking distance of Nyerere's former house. It could be said, however, that the destruction of a local market that had employed well over a hundred people was, perhaps, the greatest insult to his memory. The market along with the drive-in cinema, located just down the road from Nyerere's house, were leveled to make room for the new behemoth American Embassy complex, built to replace the one destroyed by the 1998 bombings that were allegedly orchestrated by Osama bin Laden. It seems that efforts to re-order Dar es Salaam space, especially in regards to housing, have been stepped up since Nyerere's passing and, as a result, it has become increasingly difficult for people without money and power to live in places like "Butiama" that were once considered a refuge.

Much has been made in social science literature in recent years regarding the proliferation of gated communities and the privatization of public space,
both of which seem to be an unfortunate side effect of increasing economic liberalization and democratization. All over the world real differences in income between those who have and those who do not have been increasingly contributing to deep-seated fears among the wealthy. In response, many of them are choosing to put bars on their windows, gates around their houses, and guards at their doors. Caldeira argues, “in fact, democratization may have helped to accelerate the building of walls and the deterioration of public space. This does not, however, occur in the simplistic way some right wing politicians want us to believe it does: that democracy creates disorder and crime and therefore generates the need for walls. If democracy gave rise to walls, it was because the democratization process was unexpectedly deep” (2000:321-2). This was so in the sense that people who were in the past “kept in their place” by oppressive state measures are now permitted to move about more freely. In the case of Tanzania, this holds true in regards to movement within the nation in general but, more significantly, movement to and within Dar es Salaam where the greatest number of gated houses is being built. Many upper and middle class Tanzanians I interviewed expressed a growing fear of thieves, a fear they invoked in order to justify the walls around their houses, as well as their preference for driving (or being driven in) large four-wheel-drive vehicles instead of taking public transportation. They see Dar es Salaam’s burgeoning traffic problem as a fact of life they must accept given the current circumstances.

Following Caldeira I would like to suggest that “[f]ences, bars and walls are essential in the city today, not only for security and segregation, but also for aesthetic and status reasons” (2000:291). Gated housing and secured dwellings have a long history on the Swahili coast. This history must be taken into account if one wishes to understand such aesthetic preferences. Perhaps the most clear-cut example to be considered is the Swahili-style door, massive and intricately carved, and long the status symbol of choice for wealthy Swahili traders and merchants (Fig. 7.2) (Nooter 1984). These doors, today a readily employed sign of coastal heritage, are still being commissioned by, and installed in, tourist hotels and renovated buildings in tourist areas of the country as part of a cultural package that promises to make visitors feel like a sultan, though more pared-down versions are still employed in more modest thresholds as well (Fig. 7.3). Notions regarding the securing of one’s domestic space are also influenced by predominant Islamic beliefs related to the home as the central domain of a private sphere created to shield and protect women from public view. The preference for creating a secluded space for women, either behind a door or behind a veil, does exist on a moderate scale in Dar es Salaam, but such seclusion is recognized as a privilege primarily accorded to women whose husbands or fathers have enough money to afford them both the luxury of secluded dwellings and the luxury of not having to work in public. The fences, bars and walls that increasingly typify private spaces of the wealthy in Dar es Salaam today as contemporary manifestations of the Swahili door and a centuries-long tradi-

Figure 7.2 Swahili-style door (20th Century). Stone Town, Zanzibar. (2000)

Figure 7.3 A less elaborately decorated Swahili-style door located Uswahilini near Uwanja was Fisi. Dar es Salaam. (2000)
tion of female seclusion are gendered in many ways.\(^4\)

This last point was reinforced for me when I first heard the song "Mtoto wa Geti Kali" by the rap group Gangwe Mobb (gangwe is slang for gangster). Mtoto means child, but also refers to a beautiful young woman, while Geti Kali refers to an imposing gate (Fig. 7.4, 7.5). The song attempts to capture the essence of popular desires for schoolgirls who come from wealthy families. Their relative seclusion leads to them being imagined as more innocent and pure but, perhaps more importantly, also as being less likely to be infected with HIV than women living in Uswahilini. Ironically, there is a counter belief that these same girls are also more likely to fall victim to their desire for expensive gifts and end up offering sex to wealthy men who offer them presents, a practice that places them in a high-risk category in regard to HIV exposure. This situation seems to present a confounding paradox for some young men who continue to express desire for a "mtoto wa geti kali," while recognizing that they could hardly hope to be her only lover given their own precarious financial situations. Illustrating one of the dangers of living in a society where disinformation is more the rule than the exception, one young man explained to me how he believed that all the newspaper reports stating high HIV infection rates among schoolgirls were false, having been fabricated by those in power so that they could keep the schoolgirls for their own enjoyment. He seemed quite proud of himself for figuring this out on his own despite all the evidence to the contrary. One only needs to position oneself near a schoolyard or bus stand at the end of the school day to witness the number of young girls stepping into Mercedes and Land Rovers belonging to men other than their fathers to witness the degree to which this reasoning seems true (Fig. 7.6).\(^5\)

Caldeira’s contention that walls and fences are in many ways reflections of status and aesthetics, as well as fear, suspicion and segregation is well taken, but, in the case of Dar es Salaam, I believe such barriers also reflect seclusion, desire, and fantasy connected to both women and wealth. People in Dar es Salaam build walls to protect themselves from thieves, as they claim, but also to protect their daughters from mingling with men of the less “respectable” classes and, while some do send their drivers to pick up their daughters from school, others knowingly look the other way when their daughters opt for a lift from one of their more “respectable” neighbors regardless of the respectability of his intentions.

Most of those undertaking new construction in the wealthy suburbs of Dar es Salaam...
today would be considered *nouveau riche*, while those who comprised the so-called “respectable” classes in the past continue to reside in modest houses in the parts of the city specifically developed for the official workers of the city (Upanga, Kariokoo, Magomeni, Ilala, Kinondoni and Kijitonyama). Over the past several years there has been much rebuilding and remodeling in these parts of the city, but nothing on the scale of what one might see in Mikocheni or Kawe. There has also been a great deal of construction of more modest houses in new suburbs near the airport to the northwest of the city where it is still possible for people with a moderate income to buy a piece of land. Passing through these areas, one is struck by the sheer number of cement building blocks lining the roadsides and the number of people busy at work building new houses.5

**Uswahilini: Home for the masses**

The greatest growth, however, has taken place in Uswahilini where every piece of land, regardless of how precariously situated, is considered prime real estate among those with minimal resources and maximal desire for a place to call home. Perched on the edge of rivers and on the sides of steep hills with the ground sometimes visibly eroding out from under them, the houses in Uswahilini are an engineering wonder. Most are simple Swahili-style houses with six rooms —three on each side of a central passageway running front to back— with a small courtyard in the back. Individual families rent one or more rooms from the owner of the house. Everyone living on the premises shares the passage and courtyard, primarily reserved for domestic tasks like cooking and laundry. Close living quarters, combined

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5. Figure 7.5: Angus Calder’s map of his neighborhood in Uzunguni. Note the prevalence of spiked gates. Uswahilini B, Dar es Salaam. (2000)
with the fact that one rarely chooses one's neighbors, often leads to tense social situations. Gossip and rumor prevail, and one feels constantly under observation. Most of the women who live in Uswahilini spend much of their time there, taking care of their children, cooking food for their families, and keeping their households in order. Many are also engaged in some sort of income-generating activity from their homes, while most of the men who live in Uswahilini attempt to find ways to earn money outside.

In general, there are very few jobs in Uswahilini. Many of the young men with whom I spoke who live in Uswahilini and work in other parts of the city found it difficult to spend more than a couple of days there without leaving. They often reported feeling oppressed by the endless arguing among neighbors and the need to escape the confines to search for a degree of privacy. Although there are more than enough ways to express the desire for privacy in Kiswahili, the contemporary demands for it are such that at least two expressions have been recently incorporated from English into popular speech. “Don’t Spy My Life,” is a phrase one may hear in response to unwelcome advice or see painted on the back of a local bus (Fig. 7.6). In addition, the English verb “mind” has been readily appropriated into Kiswahili in the phrase, “usimindi,” “you should not mind,” or more appropriately, “mind your own business” (Fig. 7.7).

It is possible to drive to Uswahilini but not if one really wants to enter. Uswahilini begins at the edge of the tarmac road where people step out of the bus and are forced to enter a world the automobile has yet to conquer. To get inside (ndanindani) it is necessary to travel by foot along the hundreds of winding paths that pass between the thousands of houses scattered throughout the valleys of the city, each one apparently constructed in accordance to the whims of its owner. Once again the trope of walking and poetics can be invoked. When I walked in Uswahilini I was almost always escorted. The verb kusindikiza, usually used to describe the act of escorting a departing guest part of the way home, was often used by those who guided me through their neighborhoods. Some would go out of their way to direct me along the straightest and cleanest paths, while others would draw my attention to crumbling foundations and open sewers, sheepishly apologizing, laughing, or inviting me to comment. One of my most chal-

Figure 7.6 “Students these days...” cartoon given to me by someone at Maskani (artist unidentified). The student on the left says “Yesterday at the disco I left with a Japanese “buzi” who didn’t give me any money.” The other says, “I don’t even have five cents, my boyfriend hasn’t given me anything for two days now.” A “buzi” is slang for a man to be taken advantage of. A discussion of this term is provided in Chapter Eight. Dar es Salaam. (2000)
lenging excursions occurred when a friend and I asked a group of young Maasai guards for directions to a shortcut through my own neighborhood. Our guide led us down paths and across streams I had failed to observe in the year I had lived in the area. We struggled to keep up as he leaped from rock to rock and I began to realize how gentle my escorts from Maskani had been with me. When he reached his destination, a Maasai maskani in the middle of my neighborhood, the first young man delivered me and my companion to a friend, telling him to take us the rest of the way. Instead, the friend found two young women who took us the rest of the way, all the while tempting us with the beautiful beadwork they had for sale.

Observing my various escorts I was often struck by how different the city looked depending on whose footsteps I was following. I began to see how the act of moving from home to work and back again was like composing a poem. People move quickly but carefully, weaving along footpaths, past market stands, along riverbeds, sidestepping the ubiquitous children, all intent on running about and having fun in seeming indifference to their surroundings. One is assaulted by sights, sounds, and smells on all sides, resulting in a multi-sensorial experience often difficult to put into words—listening to the sizzle of potatoes as they hit the hot grease of a fryer, and not smelling the humanity of the countless open sewers one is forced to cross over every day, while keeping one's eyes on the rolling hips of a young woman as she walks while effortlessly carrying a bucket of water on her head and composing a cartographic poem of her own.

In “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Other,” Timothy Mitchell (1995:305) writes of the frustration encountered by European writers and photographers visiting the Middle East in the nineteenth century. Longing to understand the labyrinth of streets characteristic of so many Middle Eastern cities, they were constantly at work seeking out a “point of view,” which would allow them to
look down on and order the city spaces they encountered. They almost uniformly commented on the seeming disorder and chaos they encountered, and they gazed at Middle Eastern cities with the same totalizing intentions as the voyeurs who de Certeau critiques (1984:93). It is only through walking that one is able to begin to comprehend the labyrinths of streets and paths in Uswahilini. Efforts to find a vantage point, whether literally or figuratively, will necessarily prove fruitless for it is impossible to fathom the consciously contestatory order of things from above.

A certain air of amusement and incredulity always marked the conversations I had with people about Uswahilini. Uswahilini is imagined as a place where ordinary rules of order and discipline do not apply, where the world is turned on its end. Life becomes carnivalesque and seemingly anything can happen. It is even possible to find a mini-Sheraton in Uswahilini (Fig. 7.9). Humor, laughter and irony are the most powerful weapons for coming to grips with what Bakhtin calls “the eternal incomplete unfinished nature of being” (1984). Uswahilini is this way, but it is only so because people celebrate and embrace the resistances that such spaces embody. Through their appreciation and imagination they actively contribute to the creation and continuation of alternative readings (and writings) of space.

In 2002 I had the opportunity to commission a series of paintings from Hassani “Mwanyiro” Mwanga, a 21-year-old Tingatinga artist who came to Dar es Salaam in 1995 from Kilosa in Morogoro. The first painting I bought from him illustrated a panoramic view of daily life in Dar es Salaam transposed onto a map of Africa (Fig 7.10). Intrigued and wanting to hear more about his views of space and mapping, I struck up a conversation with him. I told him about my research interests and we agreed that he would paint three more pictures for me, one representing “Bongo,” which I suggested might become the cover of my book if it was good enough (Fig. 7.11), one representing “Uswahilini” (Fig. 7.12), and the last one “Uzunguni.” Unfortunately, I departed before he could complete the third in the series, but I was more than pleased with the others he painted. Mwanyiro’s “view” of the city is exceptionally broad. Looking at his paintings, it is difficult to find a focus. The eye is forced to wander across the canvas, delightfully discovering amusing representations of the minutia of everyday life. This style, already markedly present in his representations of “Africa” and of “Bongo,” is intensified in “Uswahilini,” a subject, which he assured me he had never before been asked to paint. When com-
missioning the paintings, I had encouraged him to “map” the city as he saw fit. He delivered “Uswahilini” with particular pride, pointing out all the details—such as the women braiding each other’s hair and the rocks holding down the tin roofs—to ensure I would not miss them. Mwanyiro’s painting illustrates the joy in their lives rather than focusing on poverty and suffering. His representation is, by far, the best I have encountered. The painting illustrates the way life flows in Uswahilini, encouraging the eye to walk across the canvas in the same way a pedestrian might make his way through the labyrinths he has so expertly configured. Schoolgirls jump rope, one of them revealing her panties, while a group of men gather to drink Kibuku (a thick millet beer) and talk. People wash their clothes, prepare their dinners, and go about their shopping, all in public, while the houses all remain shuttered, illustrating the dominant desire for privacy in the domestic sphere.

Caldeira discusses the way that *favelas*, a Brazilian equivalent to Uswahilini, become private enclaves where “only residents and acquaintances venture in” (2000:310). Although she criticizes the increasing privatization of space in general, it is possible to see from her argument that there are also advantages to be gained by encouraging spatial relations that are exclusionary. Simply put, as threatening as Uswahilini may feel to outsiders, those who live there gain a certain degree of security from knowing that outsiders will rarely venture in. Many of the stories I heard during my research indicated that hiding from the police, or from anyone else for that matter, is relatively easy in Uswahilini. Most pursuers would not only not know where to search, but more importantly they would not know how. Yet, negotiating the spaces of Uswahilini can also pose problems for its residents. As Harvey argues, despite there being unbridled freedom in certain urban spaces, too many people also lose their way in the labyrinth of the city. He cautions that it is “when we lose our grasp on the grammar of urban life that violence takes over” (1990:5-6). The poetics of Uswahilini can change rapidly and are often complex, making it that much easier to lose one’s “grasp on the grammar” of the city. Despite my general optimism regarding the possibilities and potential for contestatory social spaces like those found in places like Uswahilini, the story I have chosen to present below might best be read as a cautionary tale serving to warn against the dangers of “misreading” the city. I tell it because, despite its commonness, it is quite exceptional to me, and also because I think it illustrates the importance of social relations and locality for those living in Uswahilini. Before turning to that, however, I would first like to introduce the Field of Hyenas, a part of Uswahilini central to the lives of many of the young men from Maskani.
Finding Uwanja wa Fisi

If one follows the low lying river valleys, or mabondeni, out from the center of Dar es Salaam to the surrounding suburbs of Uswahilini, you will eventually end up in the Tandale section of the city; and where Tandale meets Manzese, one will find what is perhaps the most notorious piece of real estate in all of Tanzania: Uwanja wa Fisi, or the Field of Hyenas (Fig. 7.13). According to long-time residents of the area, the place received its name in an innocuous enough fashion. Before the city of Dar es Salaam began its slow expansion through the river valleys the area was part of the surrounding bush and known as a place where hyenas preferred to congregate in the night. The hyena, however, is also a rich symbol; its unusual behavior and appearance imbue it with a potential that encourages even the most unimaginative of minds to impose significance on the beast’s very being (Roberts 1995:75). Many in Tanzania believe that witches ride hyenas, holding tightly to their bellies as they fly through the night sky. Athumani, one of the car washers from Maskani, laughed uncomfortably as he described the way hyenas will follow a man in the bush for days waiting for the fingers to fall from his dangling hands. This story, highlighting the hyena’s unusual combination of patience and voraciousness was told to me so that I might understand similar qualities said to be exhibited by residents of Uwanja wa Fisi. Though Athumani did not live in Uwanjani, he, like many of the other young men from Maskani, did frequent its guest houses, gambling halls, drug dens, and video parlors whenever he had some extra money in his pocket and yearned for fun and pleasure.

Visiting Uwanja wa Fisi one is first struck by how small everything is for a place with such a big reputation. By coincidence, my first visit there was on the last day of the month when many employees receive their pay. Tens of men were lined up outside of the many guesthouses where prostitutes rented rooms. It was the middle of the day and many of those awaiting their turn to be with the lady of their choice were night guards, young Maasai warriors dressed in their distinctive red cloths, beadwork and braids. I was disappointed to find out that this spectacle could only be enjoyed once a month on payday. Many of the guest houses along with bars and video parlors are positioned around the open field that gives Uwanjani its name and serves as a sort of public square-cum-red light district for those living in the area. In the center, numerous vendors usually set up tables to sell raw meat, mostly left over bits and organ meat that, I was told, would have “fallen off the back” of delivery trucks, or would have been reclaimed from condemned meat that failed to meet health code requirements. The air in and around the square is usually thick with flies, while the smell of blood mixing with that of home-brewed alcohol is truly unique. Those who escorted me to Uwanja wa Fisi the first time were tense, not really knowing what to expect. They could have saved their worries, however, for despite its reputation and the fact that this
part of the city was probably the least likely to receive \textit{wazungu} visitors, most people noted my presence with only mild curiosity and amusement, giving the impression that nothing would be considered too surprising for those living near Uwanjani. The only problems we ever encountered were from men intoxicated to the point of belligerence, incidences that were more likely to occur later in the day. It was primarily for this reason that we rarely stayed in Uwanjani after nightfall. I did not want to be harassed, and even less did I want those who were with me to be placed in uncomfortable situations.

I was first taken to Uwanjani by Maatata, a young man from Arusha. I knew him first as a car washer from Maskani. When I met him, I assumed he was a "street child," sleeping and hustling to make a living in the streets of Dar es Salaam. As it turns out, Maatata and a couple of other young men from Arusha were among the first to begin washing cars around the time the Sheraton opened in the mid-nineties. Although there were no formal leaders per se at Maskani, at the age of eighteen Maatata had become a street corner elder. Even so, his behavior was hardly above reproach.

He was nicknamed Mjela, or jailbird, in dubious honor of the years he had spent in the juvenile detention center less than a ten-minute walk from Maskani. His crime of choice, it was said, was petty thievery; his illegal activities, no doubt, contributed to a personal history best described as that of a transient. Since the age of thirteen, Maatata has been constantly on the move among his home village in Kilimanjaro Region and the cities of Arusha and Dar es Salaam. When things would get "too hot" in one place, he would move on to the next, giving both local authorities and the victims of his crimes time to forget his transgressions. Since much of his thievery in Dar es Salaam targeted members of the expatriate communities and tourists in Arusha, often it was just a matter of waiting until the person who was attempting to press charges left Tanzania. Every once in a while though, he would steal from the wrong person or brag too loudly about his exploits. When he was sent to the juvenile detention center he had just come to Dar es Salaam and had not yet established the social networks he had by the time I met him, networks that would most likely have served to warn and protect him when the police came looking, providing him with places to hide out until they lost interest, and bail money when he was unfortunate enough to

![Figure 7.13 Map of Uwanj wa Fisi as drawn by Dixon. Though I find it hard to believe, he insists this is all a visitor would need to find his or her way to the elusive heart of Uswa\textipa{h}ilini. Dar es Salaam. (2002)](image)
Not Exactly the ‘Comforts of Home’

get caught. Although I met Maatata at Maskani where he worked, the majority of his Dar es Salaam social ties included people who lived and worked in Uwanja wa Fisi. Maatata felt that it was important for my research that I know that he had on two separate occasions during his years in Dar es Salaam attempted to establish a permanent domestic base in Uwanjani with two different young women. As I have stated, most of those I met were adamant about not being seen as street children and Maatata was not an exception. I believe that, apart from wanting me to know what a crazy place it was, this was why he wanted me to see his home. Uwanja wa Fisi’s reputation fit neatly with his, and there was always a degree of bravado surrounding conversations pertaining to it. Of the young men at Maskani, he was the only one with enough daring to suggest that I should go to Uwanja wa Fisi. Most of the others were incredulous when they heard I was considering it and several refused to be involved in helping to orchestrate it. Most of them, however, only visited Uwanja for purposes of pleasure, while Maatata had actually lived there. For him, Uwanja wa Fisi was more than its reputation, it was home.

Most of those at Maskani whom I asked to discuss Uwanja wa Fisi said that it was the place they went to in search of sterehe, a word associated with pleasure and enjoyment. Mostly they spoke about the women there and their experiences with them, but stories about bangi, gongo (locally brewed drink with a high alcohol content and low price), and violence also figured heavily. Though none of them spoke very respectfully about the women with whom they were involved at Uwanja, some were more interested in establishing more long-term relations with them than others. I never had the opportunity to interview Maatata about Uwanja wa Fisi but our informal discussions suggested that his views were similar to those expressed by Dixon, another young man from Maskani who had also made efforts to establish serious relationships with women there. Dixon offered his views during a group interview in which the other car washers were bragging about their various adventures and conquests in Uwanja.

When I asked the car washers to talk to me about Uwanja wa Fisi it was Athumani who began.

People go to Uwanja wa Fisi for sterehe. Some people live there, while others just visit. They go for gongo and bangi, but mostly for women. Sometimes they go for “short time,” and sometimes they find a woman and settle down for a while.¹³ For a long time I never went there. I heard stories about it all the time though. Mjela used to go every day to see his girlfriend. The first time I went there it was with him. We went to their place and she cooked for us, then we went to see a video. Afterwards I met a girl who I had sex with but I didn’t spend the night with her. I returned to Maskani to sleep. Once I had a girl there named Hilda who I thought about setting up something more permanent with. I paid for her
guesthouse and spent two weeks with her. I realized I could never stay permanently there, though, because there are too many thieves. One night when we were sleeping at the Nyota guesthouse we were awoken by the police. They pulled us out of bed and arrested us for loitering. I was released later and my girlfriend was already out of jail. She told me she was let go after promising to meet the chief of police later to have sex with him. She agreed on the condition that he would let me free too. I didn’t know about the arrangement and paid him a bribe as well. I was only 15 at the time and didn’t know much about life but I had to wonder what kind of guesthouse allows the police to raid the rooms of customers who have already paid. I knew I hadn’t done anything wrong but I was afraid of being sent to Segerea, so I paid the bribe. I was released from jail around eleven in the morning and my girlfriend was supposed to meet the police chief at one. She didn’t go though. I was angry so I went back to the guesthouse and demanded my money back. The manager would only give me bus fare to the city so I came here to Maskani and borrowed enough money to rent another room. By the time I got back to Uwanjani there was a big fight going on. I ducked into a video parlor to wait until things calmed down. When I came out I rented a room and went to find my girlfriend. When I finally caught up with her she was with another man. That’s when I realized she was really a prostitute (malaya) and that I could never trust her. She asked me what I expected her to do for food and a place to sleep when I was gone. Since then I’ve never gotten attached to a woman from Uwanja. All they want is money. You need to pay for food, beer, food the next day, and for a room if you want to keep a girlfriend. It costs at least 5000 Tsh., which is what I can make at Maskani on a good day. Mostly I only go there now to visit friends and only once in a while for sterehe. It’s too expensive and it’s too easy to ruin your life there . . . drugs, thieves, etc. Women try to manipulate men into supporting them but if you’re smart you only go there when you want sex. You pay for your time and don’t get caught up in a relationship where you have to pay for everything.

As Athumani finished to nods of agreement from the other young men gathered around, Dixon replied with his take on Uwanja.14

Uwanja is a place where you can get girls to fuck easily, can get gongo or any other illegal brew. Some people do go there just to fuck but that isn’t most people. Most have women there who they have set up house with (mchumba).15 They make an arrangement with a woman who agrees not to settle down with any other boyfriend. She may still sleep with other men for money though. It’s not true that women are only interested in trying to take advantage of men. When I go home at night it’s just like any other guy who goes home to his girlfriend at the end of the day. We spend the whole night together and we stay together whether or not I have money. Men like you (meaning Athumani) who pay a woman for sex are
Not Exactly the 'Comforts of Home'

like someone who buys a watch from a Machinga. You have no idea what you are getting. You pay her and of course she tries to take advantage of you but you should know that she might use that money to support her boyfriend. My girlfriend used the money she made off of her customers to buy me new shoes when mine were stolen. I've lived in Uwanja when things were really bad for me and I had no money. I don't always have to give money to my women. Sometimes it's based on love. The first night I was with Esther a friend of mine came in while we were having sex and asked to borrow my new Adidas shoes. Later he was arrested while wearing them and they were stolen while he was in jail. When I woke up I didn't have any shoes or money. Esther bought me a new pair and gave me money to get back into town. She told me that she really cared about me and asked me to stay with her. I told her I would only do it if she stuck by me in good times and bad. We were together for six months before I had to go back to Arusha for my father's funeral. She was very supportive while I was mourning and I missed her while I was gone. I came back early and surprised her. She had already made plans to sleep with a customer that evening but she made him take her to another room. She kept our room when I was away and we ended up staying together again after I got back. The only problems we ever have are because she likes to say bad things about me when we are in a disagreement. When she gets angry she talks to everyone but me. She can't keep her mouth shut.

I found a certain beauty in the earnestness expressed by those like Maatata and Dixon who struggled to create what they imagined as lives of normalcy despite the daily hardships they faced. Domestic unions like those serially formed between Dixon and Esther and between Maatata and his girlfriends at Uwanjani would usually last a couple of months, but some would stretch over several years, sometimes resulting in marriages, children, and the building of homes. They usually entailed joint rental of a room in a house, purchase of a stove and utensils for cooking, and an agreement among partners that each would help the other to make ends meet economically. Although men are expected to provide most of the economic support in these situations, while women are expected to cook, clean, and provide a certain degree of what Luise White (1990) calls "the comforts of home," women would routinely help out with the economic running of the household as well. Although their money was almost always gained through sex work, all of the women I spoke with were adamant that they would never allow their boyfriends to see them with a client. The young men would no doubt know where the money came from —most of them having been clients themselves at one time— but they would never have to be confronted with it.

When I went to Uwanjani the first time in the company of Maatata he had, unbeknownst to me, agreed with Mbelwa that I should extend my research activities to include working there. He had arranged for me to meet with Esther who, at the time, was his girlfriend (this was before her and Dixon
moved in together) and a few of her fellow sex workers who were also based in Uwanjani. I am still amazed at the courage and honesty of someone willing to say, "this is my girlfriend, she's a prostitute, you should interview her." Esther proved to be of great help in assisting me to establish research networks in Uwanja wa Fisi. She told horrific stories beautifully, constantly reminding me of the aesthetics of communication. She first introduced me to some of her female friends, several of whom either had been or would soon be involved with men from Maskani. She encouraged them to be open and forthcoming with me but, while most of them made an effort, none were as eloquent as she was. In time, I began meeting regularly with Esther and Zamoyoni, one of her friends. Several of the other women she introduced me to were no longer to be found in Uwanjani, having either moved to another part of Dar es Salaam or returned to their family homes.

Esther was born in Butiama —the same village as Nyerere— but she had not lived there very long. Following her mother's death, her father, who lived in Dar es Salaam, took her to live with her grandmother near Dodoma but, after she was treated badly there, she decided to come to Dar es Salaam. Mid-way through my research period, however, Esther disappeared. The story I heard from Dixon, who was her boyfriend by then, was that her father, a former soldier, had heard what she was up to and had come to the guesthouse where she was staying to retrieve her. To prove his love for her, he humiliated her by publicly, beating her before dragging her back to a home she had chosen to run away from. Dixon did not know how to reach her nor did anyone else I asked in Uwanja. From what I could gather, no one cared to know. I was surprised rather by their seeming indifference but I supposed they were used to people coming and going. She would either be back, or she would not. For the time being, however, she was not of much help to her former neighbors. Nor, as a few enterprising young women reminded me, was she of much help for my research.

Like so many of the people I worked to establish ties with, Esther was gone. I should like to add that by this time Maatata had left Dar es Salaam as well. He had returned to his maskani in Arusha when things became "too hot" for him in Dar es Salaam, but I occasionally received news about him from others who moved between our Dar es Salaam Maskani and the one in Arusha. Not long afterwards, Dixon, too, ended up in Segerea prison for thievery, and his friends from Maskani were torturously letting him sit. In their minds, he had gone too far and even my offer to pay his bail was rebuffed. His actions had brought too much unwanted police attention to Maskani of late and some people seemed to feel he had forgotten the importance of friendship. Some argued that he would only learn his lesson by serving out his sentence in the harsh conditions of Segerea. It was rumored that he had refused to give up his shoes (the shoes that Esther bought for him?), which was the price the police demanded for his freedom. All the other young men who were initially picked up with him were set free when their girlfriends paid bribes to the police on their behalf. But Esther, Dixon's girlfriend, was gone
Not Exactly the 'Comforts of Home'

Dixon’s story is a heartbreaking one, as are the stories of those whose lives with whom his is entwined. I was witness to several serious arguments between Esther and Dixon but I am convinced they loved each other. They did their best to make meaningful lives for themselves and to provide comfort to one another, but it was not enough. I suspect that their paths will cross again and perhaps love will finally win out. But I remain doubtful of that outcome. It seems to me that there are too many forces conspiring against it. Their stories illustrate how difficult it is for even those with the best intentions to stay in touch with one another, to maintain contact. Dixon and Maatata were practically best friends but with Dixon in prison and Maatata on the run from the law, they were no longer in contact either. Fortunately for me, the ties in Uwanja wa Fisi that Mbelwa and I had established through Maatata, Esther, and Dixon, were extensive and flexible enough to allow us to continue our regular visits there. Never before had I understood better the importance of putting down roots regardless of how transient one might imagine oneself to be. If these three friends are ever to find one another again I would guess it would be at Maskani or Uwanja wa Fisi through the networks of friends and acquaintances they shared.

My Brothers’ Keeper

Although I had originally intended to focus research in Uwanja wa Fisi around the lives of young women who provided female companionship to men from Maskani, the task of maintaining long-term contact with any one of these women proved too difficult for me. A young man named Spencer, who lived together with his two brothers in a small house they had inherited from their parents, was, however, kind enough to invite us to conduct our interviews with his friends in the courtyard of his home, which also served as a gathering point for those wishing to smoke and buy cannabis from Spencer. I had first met him through Maatata on the evening of our first visit. As our mutual friends at Maskani had refused to come with us to Uwanjani, Maatata sought out some of his close friends there to walk with us in the night. Spencer, I eventually came to find out, had many ties and much power at Uwanja wa Fisi and was a natural choice for providing protection. When I left Uwanjani that first evening, Spencer was among those who escorted me to the bus stand on the main road. He was in his mid-twenties and had already been taking care of his younger brother for several years. When we first met he explained that his mother, father, and stepmother had all died in rapid succession, but it was not until several months later that he felt comfortable enough to tell us that they had all died of AIDS. In addition to his younger brother, he also looked after his older brother, Abu, who, though not using drugs at the time of our research, had previously been addicted to heroin. It was largely through Spencer’s efforts that he was able to quit. Spencer and Abu were
part of the original discussion group we formed at Uwanjani. Also included were Haji, another young man living in Uwanja wa Fisi who helped Spencer in his various business endeavors, Esther and her friend Zamoyoni. Of the original five, only Spencer and Abu were able to work with us throughout the entire research period. Esther was taken away by her father and Zamoyoni disappeared without a trace. Like Dixon, Haji, too, was jailed for thievery.

At first I was frustrated that I was unable to work closely with a group of young women at Uwanjani. I have now come to realize how fortunate I was to be able to work with a family like Spencer’s that could boast of some stability in this area of the city so defined by transience. As people living in a place where so many others visited in search of sterehe or lived only temporarily, they were witnesses to the eternal mobility of those central to my research, and more importantly, they had managed to create a home in a place where most were afraid even to visit. It was through my visits to this home, then, that I came to realize how important locality, belonging and relations were for those living on the margins of Dar es Salaam society. I also came to see how difficult it was to achieve and maintain such stability when economic circumstances were eternally uncertain. Spencer’s case was classic in many ways. He had inherited his father’s small plot of land, which certainly helped fulfill his desire to create a home for his brothers, but it was not enough to provide him with the income necessary to feed and clothe them, nor to pay for his younger brother’s school fees. Following his parents’ deaths he gave up his job transporting merchandise with his three-wheeled cycle and cart. He began selling oranges and cassava to save enough capital to open a small path-side eating establishment not far from his front door. These endeavors allowed him to be closer to home to look after his brothers but did not meet his economic needs.

In an effort to provide for his brothers properly, to pay school fees, medical fees and run a proper household, Spencer began supplementing his income through the regular sale of cannabis. For several years now he has been buying it in bulk, several puli, or handfuls, at a time. He divides the puli into kete, cigarette-size packages that he sells along with rolling papers for 100 shillings a piece. He also sells ready-made cannabis cigarettes and would sometimes rapidly roll thirty or so at the beginning of our interviews. He would tuck these under his kofia (an embroidered Muslim prayer cap) before stashing the remains of the cannabis in one of his several ingenious hiding places. By doing this, he would have enough ready to sell during our conversations and would not have to worry about being further bothered by the impatient customers who would inevitably continue to flow through the door. Most would buy two packets and roll their own jumbo joints rather than buy the ready-made ones, sit down in the courtyard where we were talking, and begin smoking. Some would join in the conversations, but most just listened and gawked in confusion, wondering, I imagine, as I often did, how I had gotten access to such a place.
The Policing of Thieves, the Thieving of Police

According to Spencer, Uwanja wa Fisi has only been called that since the mid-1990s when its notoriousness began to grow. At that time the number of prostitutes, nyama choma (grilled meat) and gongo establishments also grew in Uwanjani. The reputation of the place has now spread throughout the country, and many young people who choose to move to the city in search of employment and a good time come to Uwanjani first. They often go through their money faster than they expected and when they ask their new acquaintances about the best way to make more, they are quickly introduced to the world of thievery. Thieves abound in Uwanja, and many people believe it is the safest place to hide from the police in the city. In recent years, the local Tandale police have responded to the rise in thievery with a rise in corruption, by targeting innocent people for arrest. Most people say that though harassment has increased, the number of robberies has not gone down at all. The police routinely pick up young people hanging around maskanis and in guesthouses and threaten to charge them with loitering if they refuse to pay a minimal bribe and inform on thieves. Spencer and the others we talked to at Uwanjani reported that police harassment had dramatically increased in recent years and that it made little difference whether one was committing a crime or not.

Since so many people who live in Uwanja are engaged in marginally illegal activities like selling cannabis, gongo, or prostitution, they are fairly easily coerced into becoming police informants in exchange for being permitted to continue operating their businesses without going to jail. When people talk about hyenas they often use the word mpambe, a term used to describe someone or something that benefits from associating with someone or something else in a position of power. Hyenas are said to have an mpambe relationship with lions, stealing their food and eating it. Similar comparisons are made between police and petty criminals, though in such comparisons it is not always clear who is playing the role of the hyena and who is playing the role of the lion. Spencer admitted that he had been a police informant for years and that, as a result, many of his neighbors did not like him. He reported being on good terms with the chief of the local police station, a man thoroughly despised by nearly everyone interviewed. The Tandale police station is characterized as being the most corrupt in Dar es Salaam, forcing the residents of the area to go to other police stations when they wish to press legitimate charges against someone. Even filing a charge costs money in Tandale, as does any attempt to get someone to follow up on the charges. Many people described police activities with the word mradi, or project, associating bribery with any other money making scheme. Routine and petty harassment was the norm. All officers were expected to collect bribes that would be split among everyone all the way up to the police chief. Several of those we interviewed reported seeing this with their own eyes.

It is no surprise that most of the police in Tandale are hated and that, when
an opportunity presents itself to retaliate, people actively pursue it. I heard several stories of police being beaten up in local drinking establishments when they became too drunk to defend themselves. A story that Ester told me, however, stands out. A uniformed police officer was beaten by a crowd in broad daylight after attempting to solicit a bribe from a thief already under attack from the crowd. The police officer had intervened, no doubt saving the thief's life, but when the crowd realized he did not intend to pursue and arrest the thief they began beating both of them.

The beating and burning of thieves in Tanzania is not uncommon, and I have had the unfortunate opportunity to witness such occurrences on several occasions. The mob mentality that ensues on such occasions is truly horrifying. As Esther chillingly observed, people with almost no money for food and other basic necessities will quickly hand over whatever cash they happen to have when a collection is made is for kerosene to douse on an accused thief. People I have met who have participated in such beatings defend themselves by claiming that they are left with no other recourse given that police will most likely refrain from prosecuting a thief if they are offered even the smallest of bribes. I found such thinking particularly frightening given that it was often presented to me by those who were itinerant thieves themselves.

Police are also commonly demand sexual favors from the women they arrest as was made evident in the example offered above from Athumani. Esther offered the following in a discussion about police harassment:

Police use their position to force women to have sex with them. Sometimes they make women who can't pay bribes with money pay with their bodies. Other times they may just ask a woman outright for sex and if she refuses they threaten to arrest her, to bring charges against her. They often go after bar girls, gongo sellers and mama ntilie (food vendors) because they are easy to target. Because they are engaged in illegal activities it is easy for the police to harass them. They harass the people who work in the places where the police go every day to eat and drink. The police do terrible things to women once they are in jail too. I've seen them threaten girls who refuse to confess, telling them they will be put in a cell with male prisoners. Sometimes they force women to undress and stand in front of male jail cells. Once when I was being held in jail I watched them beat a young girl to make her confess that she stole money from her stepmother. The girl said she only did it to pay for school supplies and that it was money her father had left for her anyway. The police didn't care though. They just kept beating her. Everything they do is for money. The law has become blind. They don't attempt to bring justice, to represent the truth. I've seen them dividing up the money they've collected through bribes at the end of their shift. It's based on hierarchy and those at the top get the most money.

From this example, it is clear that police commonly target women who are
working informally in bars and eating establishments, telling them they will be arrested if they refuse to sleep with them. Women who engage in sex work, who in many circumstances also work as bar girls and/or gongo sellers, are in precarious positions, as many of them have boyfriends who are known thieves. When the police want to reach a thief, they will often put pressure on his girlfriend. In this no-win situation women are forced to choose between turning in their boyfriends or being sexually abused by the police.

Trust, Transactional Sex and Domestic Unions

Despite dangers of police harassment in Uwanja wa Fisi, not to mention more generalized threats of violence and disease, every day women make the decision to sell their bodies to earn money to support themselves and those closest to them. Most of those engaging in transactional sex whom I interviewed did not identify themselves as prostitutes, even though everyone around them did. Different words are used in Kiswahili to refer to different types of transactional sex.\(^{19}\) Malaya is the word most readily translated as prostitute and is used to refer to women (and sometimes men) who openly engage in prostitution. The words most often used in Uwanja was Fisi and at Maskani were \textit{chaguda} and \textit{dada poa}.\(^{20}\) A more lengthy discussion on these terms is offered in the next chapter but it is important to note that while these terms certainly implied engagement in transactional sex, they also implied that it was only undertaken out of necessity, as a way of making ends meet. Most of the women who engaged in transactional sex in Uwanja wa Fisi also had boyfriends, though it was often suggested by men from Uwanja and Maskani that they were only able to establish such relationships with thieves and people who did not otherwise have a home. Young men with minimal resources were considered more likely to accept that their girlfriends also slept with other men for money because they knew they could not afford to support a woman on their own. Despite this inability, however, they still desired some semblance of domesticity and thus sought out women who would be willing to support themselves and to accept a man with very little money as a boyfriend. Through such an arrangement, the women are able to gain some degree of respectability and the men a place they can call home, even if only temporarily.

There were others engaged in transactional sex living in Uwanjani who did identify themselves as prostitutes, but as they were not the women with whom most of the young men I worked with formed domestic unions, I did not focus my attention on them during my research. Most of those with whom I did speak, however, came to Dar es Salaam specifically for the purpose of being a prostitute and saving money. As in many other cities in eastern Africa, many of them were Bahaya women from around the Bukoba region of the country (e.g., Kaijage 1993, Kamazima 1995, Swantz 1985, White 1990). Bukoba is also the informal name given to the street in Tandale where they live and work. Though they openly acknowledge their profession
and charge relatively low fees for sex (500 shillings, or about 75 US cents), they are respected as the only group of prostitutes who consistently insist that every customer uses a condom. Most other women involved in transactional sex rarely insisted on condoms, though this was not because they lacked information.

All of those I interviewed on the subject demonstrated in-depth knowledge of the ways HIV could be contracted and prevented. Everyone I spoke with in Uwanja wa Fisi stated they had had the opportunity to observe public health demonstrations on sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, and condoms that were regularly organized by various NGOs operating in Dar es Salaam. Both male and female condoms were readily and cheaply available and information on how to use them was in abundance. It was not unusual to see Salama Condoms posters plastered to the walls on guesthouse rooms and dispenser-size boxes of condoms in women's rooms. All of the women I interviewed reported using condoms regularly with paying customers, but only rarely with boyfriends. Of course, most of their boyfriends had been at one time customers and, as far as I could ascertain, the choice to cease using condoms was never tied to the gaining of evidence that they were free from infection.

Several of the young women reported a desire to become pregnant by their boyfriends with the hope that it would cement the bonds between them. Many women seemed to see pregnancy as one of the only ways to escape the stigma that marked their lives in Uwanja wa Fisi. For them, it would not have made sense to use condoms even in instances when their partners might have suggested it. Since many men reported they were more likely to marry a woman only after she had a child by him and had proved that she was fertile, the line of thinking of the young women in Uwanjani seemed to make perfect sense. The only hitch, of course, was the great risk of HIV exposure. Sheldrake (2002) has suggested that young people may choose not to use condoms as a way of demonstrating their trust for one another. The young men in Dar es Salaam with whom she worked reported they would only use condoms with women they did not trust, women whom they believed were likely to be engaged in sexual relations with other men. Those with whom I worked, however, knew their girlfriends had other lovers, if only in the form of customers. Yet, they also reported not using condoms with whom women they had set up house. For them, it seemed that not using condoms signaled the special quality of their relations with individual women. Their girlfriends may have had to resort to sex work to support themselves (and their boyfriends) but they were expected to do so discretely and to use condoms. The boyfriends trusted the women to protect them both from AIDS despite evidence that such trust was not deserved.

Though none of those with whom I worked had ever taken an AIDS test, many reported having contracted various sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), both from prostitutes and from their girlfriends, illustrating that the trust had been broken on both sides. In cases where a man or woman knows
who was responsible for infecting him or her, he or she will most likely
denounce the other in public. It seems the shame is not so much in having
these diseases but in having so dishonorably passed it on to someone with
whom a bond of trust had been established. Haji explained to me how he
had once contracted gonorrhea from the woman he was living with. Not
knowing what it was, he explained the symptoms to a friend who diagnosed
him and sent him to a doctor. The doctor explained that although gonorrhea
was treatable, HIV was not and that they were both transmitted in the same
way. He said that his friends had tried to warn him that his girlfriend was
sleeping around but that at the time he trusted her more than them. When
he got sick he realized she had broken his trust and left her. He also made
sure that all of his friends knew that she was untrustworthy by publicly
extolling her lack of virtue. Esther suggested that often women do not know
they are infected as the signs are less visible in females but said that in
many cases a woman will not tell her boyfriend even if she does know for fear
of being publicly humiliated and of losing future customers. She said that
women also talk about the untrustworthiness of men who pass on STDs, but
that they do it more secretly rather than risking a public confrontation. She
thought this might be because they want to keep their own infection a secret,
again for fear of scaring away customers.

I was inclined to interpret the choices made by many of the young women
in Uwanja wa Fisi in empathetic terms, recognizing the difficulties they faced
as a result of being economically dependent on men while being disconnect-
ed from their families. Others who have conducted research among young
marginalized women in urban Tanzania uniformly argue that sex work is the
only option many of them have for earning money (e.g., Kamazima 1995,
It is also the most profitable. One study suggested that young women were
likely to make four to five times as much money through sex work as young
men working in the streets (Masawe 2000:11). This seems excessive in
regards to those from Maskani (who seem to be comparatively better off that
a lot of other young men struggling to get by in the streets) and Uwanja wa
Fisi (where the woman seem to make less than commercial sex workers who
target customers in the city center) who were involved in this study. Many of
the young men who were the customers and partners of the women in
Uwanja, however, seemed to think most of the women were motivated by
excess desire for material goods (tamaa, see next chapter). There was def-
initely a degree of resentment toward them based on the belief that they were
making money “freely” (ya bure), without recourse to the types of hard phys-
ical labor most of the men claimed to engage in. As a result, most of them
did not think the women deserved much sympathy. They quickly countered
any economic arguments I might put forward in defense of the young women,
arguing that had they been willing to settle for less material wealth, they
would have been able to establish a permanent monogamous relationship
with a man. Instead, the young women constantly demanded new clothes,
shoes, and make-up from their boyfriends, and the longer they were in Uwanja the greater their desires and demands became. The men pointed out that many of the young women working in Uwanja were actually from good families and had chosen to come to Dar es Salaam in search of quick money and good times. Some had originally come with the intention of saving money to start a business of their own, but most would eventually decide to spend their money on beauty aids and clothing intended to make them look more appealing and to increase the amount of money they might earn.

Though women tried to save money they would usually spend it on beautifying themselves in order to attract better customers who could pay more. This cycle never ends, however, and life in Uwanja is hard, aging people fast. Most women who end up there leave within a few months, either ill, pregnant, or disheartened. Some settle into more permanent relationships, while others return to their home villages. It is primarily for these reasons that long-term residents of Uwanja wa Fisi reported rarely seeing anyone die from AIDS in their midst. Most people would leave long before beginning to exhibit signs of infection. In most cases, AIDS deaths only reached Uwanjani by word of mouth, though in some cases it was suspected that certain people had been infected. A story I heard in various versions on several different occasions was about a young woman who agreed to take a large sum of money (45,000 Tsh, or about 50 USD) from a man who was visibly sick and suspected of having AIDS in exchange for having unprotected sex with him. Afterwards, other women spread rumors about her and, when they would get angry with her, they would publicly accuse her of having AIDS, both shaming her and greatly reducing her earning potential. She eventually decided to leave Uwanjani, but maintained contact with a few friends there, one of whom brought news of her AIDS-related death a few years later after she had been with numerous other men from other parts of the city, the last of whom was an army officer notorious for his promiscuity.

Most of the young men I worked with seemed to think that they would be able to determine which women were HIV positive based on their appearance and their character (tabia). Those with excessive tamaa, appearing too thin or too desperate would be immediately suspected. It is believed that when people become sick they begin to lose weight rapidly, a condition they will commonly try to conceal by wearing several layers of clothing. Thus women dressed in this manner were often suspected of having AIDS. Likewise women who spent too much time in bars drinking alcohol were not to be trusted as most agreed that women were much easier to cajole into having unprotected sex when they were drunk. They would carefully choose the woman they decided to establish domestic relations with based on their observations of her behavior and character combined with information obtained from friends and neighbors who knew her. The young men felt they were greatly reducing their risk of contracting HIV in this way. Such a logic, while always argued convincingly, is faulty on numerous accounts, but most men (and women, for that matter) seemed to feel that they had no other recourse. In
their minds it was impossible to know for sure if someone had AIDS. At the
time of my research, very few people were being tested for HIV, and most
agreed that they would not trust anyone who reported having tested negative
anyway.²³ None of those I worked with ever developed symptoms related to
HIV; however, many of them did contract other STDs in the time I have known
them, illustrating that their calculations regarding who is and who is not a
safe partner were frequently wrong.

One method of reducing risk employed by young men like Spencer, his broth­
er Abu, and Maatata was to establish semi-monogamous domestic relations
with women who had just come to Uwanja wa Fisi from the rural areas of
Tanzania. It is believed that such women have better manners, will work
harder around the house, have yet to be spoiled by city life, have less tamaa
and much less chance of being HIV positive. In most cases, they would stay
with such women for several months until they became “used to life in the
city” (kuzoea) and began demanding gifts and money. When this happened
they would quickly be replaced by another recent migrant to the city eager for
the security of domesticity. As the supply of women was seemingly endless,
they argued, it seemed a fairly good way of ensuring their own health.

For the most part, people are able to avoid dwelling on the subject of AIDS
in Uwanja wa Fisi, and in Dar es Salaam in general, because they convince
themselves that their social ties are sufficient to allow them to determine
who might already be infected. When I pressed them, something I rarely did,
most would admit that they had in all likelihood been exposed to HIV. In such
instances people usually resort to religious discourses, believing only God
can protect them from HIV. On one occasion Esther told me that she thought
God must be protecting people in Uwanja wa Fisi from AIDS. “If God brings
AIDS to Uwanja,” she said, “all of us girls will be finished.” I conclude this
chapter with a story that forced many of those with whom I worked at both
Uwanja wa Fisi and at Maskani to confront the likelihood that they might have
been exposed to HIV. I would guess that, like Esther, more than a few of them
were hoping God was on their side.

The Story of Rehema²⁴

I discovered only during the last formal interview of my dissertation research
that several of the young men I worked with at Maskani and in Uwanja wa Fisi
had been directly exposed to HIV. On a certain level, I had already realized
this, but I, too, had been trying to convince myself that, through their exten­
sive social networks, they might have been successful so far in determining
who had AIDS and, also, that they had been miraculously lucky. Like them, I
simply found it too difficult to live with the obvious likelihood that my friends
had either already been infected or would soon be and that, as a result, they
would likely die in the coming years. I did not actually attend this interview,
but listened to the audiotapes later with Mbelwa, who had conducted it at
Uwanja wa Fisi in my absence. I should point out that this was highly unusu-
al. In the entire time I was in Tanzania there were only two occasions when I was not present during interviews and I continue to wonder to what degree my absence that day made a difference in peoples’ willingness to discuss AIDS in such an open and unguarded way.

On most Friday afternoons Mbelwa and I would visit Uwanjani together to greet our friends and to conduct and record semi-formal interviews. The evening after this particular interview, I met with Mbelwa and a few other friends from Maskani for drinks at Macheni, a local bar. The place is renowned for its evening burlesque shows and that evening was no less carnivalesque than usual. Mbelwa filled me in on the gist of the interview shortly after his arrival and as I quickly began making connections in my head, I could hardly contain my tears. A couple of weeks later when we finally listened to the tapes and discussed them at length, we found that they opened wounds that had barely healed for us. The tapes confirmed what Mbelwa had told me.

On that day when he arrived at Uwanja wa Fisi to conduct the interview on my behalf, he found people strangely reflective. Formally in attendance were Spencer and Abu, Haji who had recently been released from jail, and a young man named Adam who joined the group to replace Esther when she was taken away by her father. There were also several others gathered together for the purpose of informal mourning. News had just come that afternoon that Rehema, a girl who used to live and work in the area, had swallowed a handful of chloroquin tablets, taking her own life to escape the shame of AIDS when she began showing physical symptoms of the disease.  

She had left Uwanja wa Fisi about a year earlier when rumors started spreading that she had been with a man who had AIDS, but a good friend of hers who still lived in Uwanjani had kept in contact with her and had brought news of her death that day. Adam, one of the young men who regularly participated in our group discussions in Uwanja had been her boyfriend in 1998, which he
claims was prior to the time she was infected. He repeatedly insisted that he had been with her when she first came to Uwanjani but I could not help but wonder whom he was trying to convince. Mbelwa told me that Adam seemed stunned throughout the interview, perhaps coming to grips with his own mortality, or perhaps just realizing what a close call it had been for him.

It was commonly known that at one time Rehema had been Maatata's girlfriend too. At the time of her death he was in Arusha hiding from the police. She also regularly had sex with Dixon, who was in jail at the time of her death, and several other young men from Maskani. She was reportedly a kind and beautiful girl. On hearing the story from Mbelwa, I recognized Rehema's name at once. On different occasions I had heard at least three different boys talk about Rehema as a girl who seemed to hold a special place in their hearts. Though she was a prostitute, she had always accorded her boyfriends the greatest respect and made sure that they never came into contact with her clients. From what I understand, she was also a good cook and would not hesitate to invite her boyfriend's friends for food, creating a relaxing and enjoyable home environment.

I never had the opportunity to meet Rehema as she had already left Uwanjani by the time I started working there. The night I heard about her death, however, I mourned not only for her, but also for those whom I knew to be in similarly impossible situations. From that day forward, I began to envision a tree in my head with branches connecting so many of the young men and women who befriended me to probable death, the roots of which were simultaneously too complex to imagine and too common to ignore.

Although AIDS was obviously central to the discussion that day, those present in the interview were less upset about what she died of (AIDS), or how she died (a lonely suicide), than they were about the fact that no one knew her last name, where she came from, or even what religion she was. Since many young women change their names when they come to the city, the first name Rehema did not necessarily mean she was Muslim. The essence of the problem was that no one knew how to bury her properly. Her body had been lying in the morgue at Muhimbili hospital for two days already and it was now assumed that she was going to be buried by the city in a pauper's grave. For the young men at Uwanjani that day, this seemed to bring home just how marginal their existence in Dar es Salaam was. It showed them the transient existence their lifestyles produced and the meaninglessness that marked their lives and deaths. How relevant is the cause or mode of one's death when one's identity is effaced by insignificance in all the ways usually considered important? Without a home, a family, a community, how can one live? How can one die? Among many of the people I knew, individual status is constituted by the number and quality of social ties one has. If one's worth at death is best measured by such relational connections, then by most accounts Rehema was worthless. But she had been someone's girlfriend, someone's friend, someone else's fictive cousin. Had my friends at Uwanjani known where she was from, they would have raised enough money between
them to send her body back home, or at least to send a message about her death. I know I would have contributed to such a fund.

The tone of the discussion that day was highly reflective. It was nearly impossible for anyone present to deny the similarities between Rehema’s situation and their own. In facing her death, they were also facing their own. Although all the signs were there before, it was not until this interview that I realized how strong the connections were between AIDS and death in the minds of many Tanzanians. In many ways they are synonymous. Popular songs, city murals, dramatic performances on stage, as well as TV, repeatedly lamented *UKIMWI ni Kifo*, “AIDS is death” (Fig. 7.14). I had always thought of this as a metaphorical expression most likely invented by some public health official as a reworking of the Silence = Death slogan made famous by artist and AIDS activist Keith Haring in the United States. On that day I began to see just how real the equation was for most people. In many people’s minds, the inevitability of AIDS was as real as the inevitability of death. The fact that so many of them struggled to fashion meaningful lives in the face of such knowledge, I believe, shows the strength and determination of their character more than their ignorance or denial.

One of the reasons that Rehema’s story became so significant for me is that it brought me face to face with my own denial about the mortality of people with whom I was working, people who had become my friends. At times, I found it difficult to continue working and building close relationships among people with such uncertain futures. A few days before I left, Shida, a young food vendor from Maskani who had worked closely with us, laughingly teased me saying, “when you come back, we’ll all be dead.” Between the time we recorded the story of Rehema’s death and the time I left Tanzania, Mbelwa and I had already become increasingly aware of the likelihood of this uncomfortable vision of the future, but as he repeatedly reminded me, “at least you get to leave, I have to stay here and watch all of my friends die.” The last few weeks comprised the most difficult period of my research but I think in many ways it was also the most productive. It was only after several challenging discussions that Mbelwa and I began to comprehend just how difficult the reality was that we had been asking people to face. Not only were we asking them to confront their own deaths —a task that is difficult enough— but we were also asking them to confront the possible meaninglessness of their deaths. Young, marginal and on the move, most had fractured their ties with their birth communities and were still avidly pursuing new relational ties. My own discomfort regarding the probable deaths of those I came to know could be explained by saying that death is always an uncomfortable thing to face, but I think there was something else at stake as well. To a certain extent, I think, I resented their deaths. I wanted to establish lifelong friendships with those who cared enough to help me, and it was difficult to accept how short a time “life-long” could be. Had I been unable or unwilling to look closely at the causes of my own emotional discomfort, I undoubtedly would have missed this all-important fact in understanding how denial
— the bane of AIDS prevention and treatment — continues to function, not in spite of the unbounded evidence that “AIDS is Death,” but precisely because of it. AIDS, taking the lives of so many young people, tearing families asunder, and wiping out entire generations denies the potency of relations, denies the power of locality. It unsettles. It uproots.

The roots laid by those I came to know were rarely deep, but they were extensive. Like the roots of mangroves that once clogged the harbor of Dar es Salaam, they take hold where they can, adding shape to an otherwise continually shifting landscape, wandering endlessly in search of life, occasionally, but relentlessly, popping their heads up for air. Their very entanglement requires them to support one another in an effort to survive. But above all, they must remain focused on their own survival.

notes

1 I believe a comparison between more recent and older geographies of exclusion in Dar es Salaam (by older I mean colonial) would prove interesting for future research.
2 Several people told me that Uswazi, literally meaning the place of the Swazi peoples, is an allusion to the densely populated areas found in South African townships.
4 See Askew (1999) for a historical discussion of gender and the Swahili home. See also Bujra (1977:29-30) and Strobel (1979).
5 For a closer examination of the sexual activities of school girls see Mgalla, et al (1997). Close to 13% of school girls in this study reported that their first sexual experience was with an adult male and close to half reported being harassed by an adult male, 9.4% by a teacher. Interestingly, however, the vast majority reported first sexual encounters with school-age boys and also reported that school-age boys were most likely to harass them.
6 Because of the building boom there is also a great deal of employment available for young men in these areas who work as builders. Thus, the cinder blocks that line the roads and pathways in these parts of town are often referred to as “briefcases.”
7 There are, in fact, numerous Maasai maskani in Dar es Salaam, though Maasai usually refer to such gathering places as Iiloipi. For more on Maasai in Dar es Salaam see May (2002, 2003).
8 Tingatinga is a form of popular painting produced primarily, though not exclusively for tourist consumption. Artist Edward Tingatinga, after whom the style is named, first developed the style in 1972. Out of his small workshop grew a thriving cooperative that is still operational today (Mwansanga 1998, Mwidadi and Chilamboni 1998). Hassani Mwanyiro is one of approximately 150 artists who sell their work from stalls lining the road that leads to the entrance of the cooperative.
Mabondeni literally means “in the valleys,” and is used along with Uswahilini and Uswazi to designate the least desirable places in the city to live. Health, as well as aesthetic reasons are routinely offered as justifications for not wanting to live there. Since the areas are low lying there is often standing water to contend with and the increase in mosquitoes and malaria that comes along with it.

Tripp, who also conducted research in Manzese reports that, “Manzese has a reputation throughout Dar es Salaam, especially among people who do not live there, as a place bustling with activity, especially illicit activities. . . . Outsiders fear Manzese because it is said that most of the criminals in the city live there. Nonresidents also talk about ‘Radio Manzese’ as the rumor mill of the city. Yet there is little to distinguish Manzese from Buguruni, Temeke, or any other part of the city. To its inhabitants, Manzese is an area of mostly hard-working and respectable citizens” (1997:39).

Several sources supported the notion that Uwanja wa Fisi was a place favored by hyenas in the past, though most agree that the name did become popular until the mid 1990s as the area increasingly became associated with criminality.

Uwanjani is the locative form of Uwanja, and was one of the words most commonly used to refer to Uwanja wa Fisi. I use the two interchangeably in this chapter.

“Short time” is the expression used to describe transactional sex that entails sex only. Though I asked several times how long “short time” would last I was always rather prosaically told that “every person has his own time.”

As the nodding heads of those who were listening to Athumani’s story might indicate, most young men I interviewed agreed with the view that women were only interested in money and that without it, men were destined to remain alone. Similar observations have been reported by Tadele (n.d.) in regard to Ethiopian street youth.

In the past, mchumba mainly was used to refer to a fiancée. Today it is used to describe any semi-serious relationship with a woman, in the same way one might expect the word girlfriend to be used.

Though he reported that he only began selling cannabis regularly to support his brothers in the recent past, at another time he reported that he had spent over thirteen years as a dealer, and consequently had thirteen years of experience negotiating with police to ensure his freedom.

Large quantities of cannabis are sold this way every day in Dar es Salaam. On one occasion I was invited to observe activities in one of the main cannabis markets, which was located in an open field near the city center. Enormous bales were being cut into smaller parcels with machetes. These were wrapped in brown paper then stuffed into the backpacks and plastic bags that dealers brought with them. Market times and sites change constantly but are easy enough to locate for those seriously interested in buying.

The Tandale police station opened in 1995 just prior to the national elec-
tion. It was opened as part of the 1993 initiative sponsored by then-Minister of Internal Affairs, Augustine Mrema, to increase the number of local police posts with community collected funds. Though few residents of Tandale contributed to this fund, the state provided funds for the building of the station. Residents of Tandale with whom I spoke suggested that prior to the opening of the station there was a great deal of crime in the area but that crime has not diminished since its opening. Before 1995 the closest police station was in Magomeni and there was little police harassment in Tandale. The irony of this is that Mrema, who eventually broke away from CCM and ran for president in 2000, is most famed for fighting corruption. A great majority of the young men I asked reported voting for Mrema in the 2000 elections. Generally, people see his initiative to open more police stations and an initiative he sponsored in the late 1980s to encourage the development of a nationwide neighborhood watch program (sungusungu) as constructive efforts in the fight against crime. Those I interviewed in Tandale seemed to think that the reason the experiment had failed there was that the police station was initially built without the support of the local community.

For an extensive overview of the various terms used in Dar es Salaam see Kamazima (1995). See White (1990) on prostitution in Nairobi and Bujra (1977) for comparative purposes.

Chagudoa is a type of small spotted fish and it was a term originally used to refer to young boys working in the fish market who were willing to do anything to make a little money. Now it is almost exclusively used to refer to women who are engaged in low-profit sex work. Dada poa literally means 'cool sister.' Those working at Maskani seemed to think this was a more polite term to refer to sex workers.

It is worth noting that they were often critical of these shows. They were often described as distasteful and embarrassing. More than one interviewee reported leaving such shows early because they found it inappropriate to discuss AIDS and sex in mixed company.

Mgalla and Pool (1996) present similar data from their research among female bar workers in northwest Tanzania, though they also examine men's reasons for not using condoms. Ng'weshemi et al. (1995) present supporting data from the same reason, however, that suggest men are more likely to use condoms with women whom the suspect of being sex workers. See also Pool et al. (1996).

Late in 2001 efforts were stepped up by both the Tanzanian state and various NGOs to encourage testing in Tanzania, after preliminary evidence suggested that it was one of the most important reasons for lowered HIV infection rates in neighboring Uganda. When I returned to Tanzania in 2002, many more people were talking about the possibility of testing, though none of those I worked with had seriously considered it.

Rehema was not the name she was known by in Dar es Salaam. I use a pseudonym here to protect the memory of a young woman whom I have never had the privilege of meeting.
Chloroquin tablets are a common treatment for malaria and readily available over the counter in Dar es Salaam pharmacies. Suicide was not an uncommon choice among those inflicted with AIDS and the use of chloroquin seemed to be particularly popular among young women. This may be so because most young women readily recognize excessive chloroquin ingestion as a way of inducing abortion and ending unwanted pregnancies (see Kamazima 1995:52, Tesha 2000:120, and Mpangile et al. 1993). Unfortunately, the line between inducing abortion and inducing maternal death is a thin one and young women often make mistakes.

Tesha reports that this is not uncommon among young women who engage in sex work in Dar es Salaam. “They bear different identities in order to hide their actual names . . . We have witnessed the unfortunate ones being buried by the city officials after failing to trace their families . . . some have both Christian and Moslem names, it is hard to judge their religious denomination when such sad events occur” (2000:10). Also see Kilonzo and Hogan (1999) for an examination of the way mourning practices have been affected by the AIDS epidemic in Tanzania.