

## WILLIAM E. MKUFYA'S LATEST NOVEL *UA LA FARAJA*: A COMMITMENT TO THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. Introduction

The bilingual<sup>2</sup> Tanzanian writer William Eliezer Mkufya was born on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1953 in Tanga region. In 1977 he gained his BSc in Chemistry and Botany at the University of Dar es Salaam and continued his education in Dar es Salaam and in Budapest (Hungary). He has worked as a biochemist, schoolteacher, glass factory production manager, farmer, executive secretary of the Book Development Council of Tanzania, and currently is the editor in chief in a publishing company (Mangrove Publishers).<sup>3</sup>

### 2. Mkufya as a novelist

Mkufya is a self-trained writer as he had a scientific education. He is, however, a well-read author who built up his literary background on a great many African, Anglo-American, French, Russian, German, Greek and other novelists, poets and philosophers. He writes novels, poetry and children's fiction both in Kiswahili and in English; until now he has published four novels and twelve storybooks for children.

He started his literary career publishing two interesting novels in English: *The Wicked Walk* (1977), translated by himself into Swahili as *Kizazi hiki* (1980), and *The Dilemma* (1982).

*The Wicked Walk* (1977) is the story of a middle-age prostitute, Maria, and her beautiful daughter Nancy, a secondary school student, who live in a dreary area of Dar es Salaam. The mother-child relationship is difficult, not only because of the generation conflict, but also because both of them dislike what they see in each other. Maria tries in vain to prevent Nancy from following her steps. In fact, the girl is seduced by the money of the manager Magege although she is in love with the young worker Deo who wants to marry her in spite of the milieu she comes from. She gets pregnant, but under pressure from Magege and with his help decides for the abortion and after the illegal operation she dies from haemorrhage. Hearing this notice, her mother hangs herself.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented at the 18<sup>th</sup> Swahili Kolloquium, Bayreuth, 6-8 May 2004.

<sup>2</sup> He is a 'bilingual' writer in the sense that he writes novels both in English and in Kiswahili. He also translates from English to Kiswahili and vice versa.

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to William E. Mkufya for this information.

Maria is a complex character, torn by conflicting feelings towards her daughter. On the one hand she is dominated by the sense of rejection as the girl reminds her of her sin – an incestuous intercourse with her brother (without themselves being aware of their kinship). On the other hand she loves her daughter deeply and keeps on prostituting herself in order to maintain her at school, as she wishes a better life for her.

Nancy, instead, is a typical schoolgirl who sells her body to a *sugar daddy* in order to have some extra money; she does not need to do it for surviving. In her first sentimental approaches to Deo she is shy and reserved, but she changes very soon. From the moment she accepts Magege's proposal, her shyness and innocence disappear, she becomes bold and insolent; her character undergoes a transformation, a degenerative process towards corruption. She gets trapped by her thirst of money and ultimately succumbs.

The second novel, *The Dilemma* (1982), is focussed on the conflictual relation of a modern couple, Ernest, an elderly widower, and a much younger woman, Maryam. Their troublesome story, narrated from two different points of view, ends in a tragedy.

Ernest narrates his version in prison after having killed Maryam's lover Rashid. He presents himself as an experienced and sedate man with intellectual interests, who disdains his wife's preferred pastimes. In fact he is a moralist of the old school, considering Maryam his property since he has married her; he is irritated mostly because, by her adultery, she has made a fool of him, and does not regret in the least what he did.

In the second part Maryam narrates how her parents forced her to abandon the only man she ever loved – her sweetheart Rashid, and compelled her to marry Ernest. She does not repent for the adultery, but rather for having consented to marry Ernest, without love, only to better the economic situation of her parents and of herself.

Comparing *The Dilemma* to *The Wicked Walk*, we see that in both novels the female characters are doomed to death: two of them – Maryam and Maria – kill themselves whereas Nancy's death is a consequence of the abortion. Rather than condemning his heroines, however, Mkufya seems to emphasize their being victims.

The third of Mkufya's works, *Ziraili na Zirani* (1999), which won the best manuscript award of TEPUSA (Technical Publications in Africa)<sup>4</sup> for 1999, has been written first in Swahili and then translated by the author into English with the title *Pilgrims from Hell*<sup>5</sup>. This postmodernist work narrates an apocalyptic conflict arisen in Hell – a rebellion against God, organized by famous atheists of history like Voltaire, Marx and Lenin, in which the hero Zirani takes part. This invented character, a sturdy African, after his death goes to Hell where

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<sup>4</sup> This short-lived company, founded by a group of publishers, businessmen and librarians, was involved in the diffusion of technical and literary books in Tanzania and has a merit in promoting Swahili literature. It organized every year a Book festival (*Tamasha la vitabu*) coupled with a competition for the best literary manuscript. Mkufya won this prize twice.

<sup>5</sup> The English version has not been published yet.

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he meets a group of materialists – philosophers and scientists of the past as well as recent revolutionaries – who prepare a war against the Heavenly City with the intention to establish a better, more human religion. Heavenly hosts are led by the archangels Michael, Gabriel and Asrael (i.e. Ziraili). After a bloody fight, narrated in an epic mood, with many details, Zirani succeeds in reaching the divine throne and smashing it, but this sacrilegious act has an unexpected, tremendous effect: it sets off a nuclear catastrophe which completely destroys the Earth, and even the rebellious souls of the Hell are burnt out. In the final scene the angels and the devils together discuss which planet should be chosen to create a new and better world, and which roles shall they assume, that means whose turn is it to be a villain this time. Ultimately God's voice is heard and all prostrate themselves in adoration.

Rather than grouping his characters according to their religion, Mkufya divides them in believers and unbelievers, defenders and detractors of the Faith. Ultimately he evidences that to fight the religion (and hence God) even in the name of the most noble principles only destroys the creation, without harming the Creator.

In the large fresco of the Hell peopled with numerous historical personalities, the author shows off his remarkable erudition, as he mentions not only famous names of the world history, but also minor or peculiar personages like Jan Hus, Arnaldo da Brescia or Giuseppe Mazzini. His work shows many signs of intertextuality; it contains extracts of poetry as well as quotations by other Anglophone authors (such as Christopher Okigbo, Ayi Kwei Armah or T. S. Eliot). The style is quite refined but not involving.

### **3. *Ua la Faraja***

I have discussed in some length Mkufya's previous works in order to make evident the similarities and the differences from the novel I am going to analyse. *Ua la Faraja* ('The flower of consolation') won the TEPUSA best manuscript award in 2001 and was published in 2004. It is supposed to be the first part of the trilogy *Maua* ('Flowers') in which the author commits himself to the fight against the plague of AIDS in the context of the existentialist philosophy.<sup>6</sup> In more than 400 pages he presents several persons affected by this frightening disease and even if no one recovers his or her health, the author does not sink into pessimism, but presents a sign of hope, or rather 'a flower of consolation'.

#### **3.1. Form and content**

The novel is structured into four parts and an epilogue (*Hofu* 'Fear', *Majuto* 'Regret', *Faraja* 'Consolation, Relief', *Buriani* 'Farewell', *Hitimisho* 'Conclusion'), each subdivided into several chapters. The setting, like in his two English novels, is Dar es Salaam, and precisely one of its quarters, Tandika, where most characters live and amuse themselves. The author is

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<sup>6</sup> The other two will be *Maua nyikani* ('Flowers in the wilderness') and *Ua limenyauka* ('A faded flower'). I am grateful for this information to Lutz Diegner who interviewed the author. Cf. Mkufya 2005 [published in this volume].

an acute observer. He presents a kaleidoscope of typical inhabitants of Dar es Salaam, portraying their everyday life with their problems and leisure, describing their meals and meticulously enumerating the bottles of beer they drink at Malaika Bar, their favourite place.

### 3.1.1. Characters

The novel features many characters. There are so many that they are listed at the beginning like in a play (cf. ULF: VI)<sup>7</sup>. Basically, however, the story develops round the family of Ngoma and their neighbour Omolo. Ngoma is a depraved and violent man who contracted AIDS from one of his mistresses and in turn has infected his wife Tabu. After the initial dismay, Tabu accepts serenely her seropositivity first and illness later, supported by the love of her children, her sister Grace and other relatives and friends as well as of the caring doctor Hans. Her husband, on the other hand, changes his perverse life becoming a fervid Muslim, but does not change his violent temper. He breaks with his children and repudiates his wife because of her returning to Christianity. Thus, in the last stage of the illness, he finds himself alone, only assisted by his neighbour Omolo. At the last moment, however, Omolo succeeds in making peace between him and his family.

There are several female characters, and four of them have a prominent role. Asha, the owner of a hotel, and Queen, a brilliant lawyer, both Ngoma's mistresses, lead a promiscuous life and hence die from AIDS. The author makes it clear that it is their way of life that has caused their death.

Queen, a beautiful and successful woman, is the first character to be taken ill; we meet her at the beginning of the novel with the first symptoms and as the news spreads throughout the neighbourhood, her lovers, including Ngoma, are panic-stricken. Four months later she is terminally ill. The author depicts grimly her decay.

*Queen alikuwa amedhoofu sana. Mashavu yalikuwa yamebonyea, kifua kimesinyaa na ngozi yake ilikuwa imepauka na kuwa kavu kama mtu aliyekuwa kwenye mavumbi. (ULF: 157) [...] Fizi zilikuwa nyekundu mno, zenye dalili za vidonda. Lile tabasamu la uzuri alilokuwa nalo zamani sasa lilikuwa limegeuka kuwa la kutisha. (ULF: 158) [...] Unene wote uliomba umbile zuri ulikwishasinyaa, amekuwa mweusi, weusi usiovutia. Ilikuwa kama nuru ya mwili wake imeingia giza. Sehemu zake za siri zilitoa harufu kali kutokana na vidonda vilivyoshambulia nje na ndani. (ULF: 166f)*

Queen had become very weak. Her cheeks were hollow, her breast withered, her skin was shrivelled, dry and looked dusty. [...] Her gums were bright red, with visible sores. The beautiful smile she used to have, had become a frightening grin. [...] The softness of her body that made her so attractive, had withered and her complexion had become a dull, unattractive black. It was as if the light in her body had been turned out. Her private parts stank for the sores which had spread not only outside but also inside her body.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Here and in the following, citations from *Ua la Faraja* are given as 'ULF'.

<sup>8</sup> All translations are mine.

Queen does not wait to die of her illness: she kills herself.

*“Kwani maisha ni nini hasa? Kuishi miaka mia na kuishi miaka hamsini kuna tofauti gani? Au, mimi ninayekufa leo na yule atakayekufa miaka mitano au ishirini baadaye, tuna tofauti gani? [...] Eti mtu anapotaka kujiua watu wanamkataza, akikamatwa anaadhibiwa kifungo gerezani! Si upuuzi tu! Mimi sioni tofauti yoyote kati ya kuwepo na kutokuwepo...”* (ULF: 158f.)

“Why, what is life, after all? What is the difference between living one hundred years and living fifty years? Or, what is the difference between me dying today and that one dying five or twenty years later? [...] If somebody wants to kill himself, people try and prevent him and if he's caught in the act, he is put in prison! What a nonsense! I don't see any difference between being and non being.”

After four years, it is Asha's turn to get terminally ill. She also is portrayed in her decay.

*Katika miaka ile ulikuwa msimu wa wanaume kupenda wanawake wanene, wenye matako makubwa na kifua kilichojaa maziwa. Asha alikuwa na kila sifa ya umbile hilo. (ULF: 16) Omolo alishtuka sana kuona jinsi Asha alivyopwaya na kukonda. Hakuwa Asha yule aliyemzoea, mwenye matako manene, maziwa yaliyofura na mabega yaliyokuwa imara. (ULF: 314)*

Those were the years when men preferred plump women with large buttocks and ample bosoms. Asha used to be exactly like that. [...] Omolo was shocked on seeing how much weight Asha had lost and how thin she had become. It was not the Asha he used to know, with her heavy buttocks, her breasts bursting out of her dress and her firm shoulders.

Before dying, Asha, a widow of a rich Australian, leaves all her property to the orphans whose parents died from AIDS in order to redeem herself.

The novel features also two virtuous sisters, Tabu and Grace. Tabu, too, succumbs to the illness: in Mkufya's typology of terminally ill persons, she represents an innocent victim.

Grace is a private secretary of Omolo, an accountant in a factory of tinned fish. She is a truly positive character, an ideal woman: modern, but of sound principles, sincere, kind-hearted, faithful and uncompromising. She clings tenaciously to her love for Omolo even if he does not want to be more than a friend to her.

*Omolo alikuwa kijana wa Kijaluo, mrefu kiasi. Hakuwa mnene ila mwili wake ulionyesha kuwa na afya na nguvu nyingi. Kila wakati alionyesha kuwa ni mwenye kupenda kutenda jambo kwa jitihada. [...] Pengine, kilichowavutia Pendo na Chiku ilikuwa sura yake iliyokuwa na umbo la mraba kama tofali na mwanya mkubwa au pengo la taya la chini ambalo watu wa kabila lake huwa nalo kutokana na kung'olewa meno utotoni. (ULF: 11)*

Omolo was a young Luo man of average height. He was not fat, but his body appeared full of health and strength. He always tried to do things with diligence. [...] Perhaps what Pendo and Chiku [two barmaids] found attractive was his face, as square as a brick, with a large gap in the lower jaw like the people of his tribe get once their front teeth are extracted in their childhood.

Omolo is a curious character. A restrained type of man, honest, helpful and sober, in good financial standing but without wasting his money on beer and women, in short with a lot of



virtues and no vices, apparently he is too good to be true. Nothing upsets his quiet and dull daily routine, no conflicts, no problems. The only thrill is a mild suspect of having contracted AIDS because of one sexual intercourse with Queen, but the doubt will be finally dispelled. And yet he cannot be dismissed as a literary hero. Omolo is defined on the blurb as an existentialist (*mwenye itikadi ya kidhanaishi*) and, in fact, his ideas about the uselessness of life are very much like those of Kezilahabi's Kazimoto (in *Kichwamaji*).

*Omolo alikerwa mno na mawazo kwamba yambidi ale, anywe, avae, alale, na ili aweze kufanya hivyo vyote, alilazimika kupika, kufua nguo na mashuka na kujiandalia chakula. Mawazo yote yaliyomwekea ulazima wa kutenda jambo yalimuudhi kama lile wazo la mama yake kwamba alilazimika kuwa na mke. "Mke wa nini?" alijiuliza. Hakuona haja ya kuzaa watoto wala haja ya kuishi na mtu, eti kwa makusudi ya kupikiwa na kutunziwa nyumba; au kwa kutoshelezwa haja za kimwili. "Haja gani?" Mawazo ya kuwa na watoto yalimwogofya kama wazo la kuwa na mtu aliyeitwa mke. (ULF: 26)*

Omolo was greatly annoyed at the thought that he had to eat, drink, dress, sleep, and in order to be able to do all this he had to cook, to wash his clothes and bed sheets and to prepare his food. All the thoughts about the need to do something disturbed him and so did his mother's idea that he should have a wife. "A wife, what for?" he asked himself. He did not feel any need to have children or live with somebody only to get somebody to cook for him and look after him, as people say, or to satisfy his carnal needs. "What needs?" The idea of having children frightened him as much as the idea of having a wife.

And, again:

*"Ndio nini sasa?" alijiuliza.*

*Omolo alipenda sana kujiuliza swali hili akimaanisha: faida ya maisha ni nini? Kwa nini mtu ahangaike kufanya kazi ili apate pesa, akishazipata azitumie ziishe; kisha atafute nyingine nazo ziishe? Kuna manufaa gani au raha gani ya ajabu, iliyowafanya watu wayahangaikie maisha? Alishangaa kwa nini hata yule mwenye maisha ya shida anapougua na kukaribia kifo, hafurahii kwisha kwa shida zake akifa, bali huhangaika kujitibu ili apone halafu aendelee na shida zake! (ULF: 30)*

"What for?" he asked himself.

Omolo really liked to ask himself that question which meant: what do we live for? Why should a man take the trouble to work in order to get money, and once he gets it, he'll spend it all? Then he will look for more only to finish it too, why is that so? What kind of reward could ever induce people to care for their lives? He wondered why even a man who has had a hard life, when he is ill and approaching death, is not happy that his problems will end when he dies. Instead he worries and takes medication in order to recover and then continue with his hardship.

Dr. Hans takes up Omolo's favourite question *Ndio nini sasa?*<sup>9</sup> giving it another sense:

*"Unakimbilia nini Omolo? Unahangaikia nini katika maisha, ikiwa furaha za maisha yenyewe huzitaki. Unasema unakimbilia ofisini. Ukifanya kazi unatafuta nini? Mshahara au kumtumikia mwajiri wako? Bila shaka unatafuta mshahara.*

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<sup>9</sup> This expression (lit. 'What is it now?' that I translated freely as 'What for?') occurs very often in spoken language.

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*Unatafuta pesa! Ukishazipata unazitumiaje? Je, wewe ni hodari wa kula vizuri? Je, wewe ni hodari wa kunywa vizuri? Je, wewe ni hodari wa kwenda kuona sinema nzuri na kusikiliza miziki mitamu? Siyo kweli! Grace aliniambia habari zako. Unaishi tu almuradi unaishi. Ndiyo nini sasa?" (ULF: 349f.)*

"Where are you running to, Omolo? Why are you worrying about life, if you don't want the joys of life? You say you are running to the office. When you work, what are you after? A salary? Serving your employer? There is no doubt you are after a salary. You want money! When you get it, how do you use it? Do you care for good food? Do you care for good drinks? Do you care for a good film or good music? No, you don't: that's the truth! Grace told me about you. You only live as long as you live. What for?"

Omolo's malaise is almost as deep as Kazimoto's. He takes no interest in anything, feels no joy, pleasure or love, nor anger or hate. He suppressed all feelings many years before after having lost his parents and now he is frozen inside, as it were.

*Hakupenda kuwaona watu wakihuzunika jambo. Kwake, huzuni ilikuwa hisia inayokereketa, asiyoitaka imguse tena baada ya kungusa huko nyuma. Huzuni ilimkumbusha machungu makali ya utotoni ambayo hakupenda kuyaona tena, kwake au kwa wengine. (ULF: 172)*

He did not like to see people in grief. To him, grief was a feeling he had done with in the past and didn't want to feel again. Grief reminded him of the great sorrow that he experienced in his childhood and he did not want to go through it, or to see other people going through it, ever again.

Though always kind and helpful, he never gets emotionally involved; he is unwilling or unable to establish sincere friendly relations and least of all a love affair. For six years he turns down the love of his secretary Grace. Ultimately he gives in, thanks to the insistence of his friend Doctor Hans, and marries her. But his malaise is not yet defeated. The birth of their baby, instead of joy, provokes in him fear and bewilderment.

### 3.1.2. Time

The story is situated in the present; the only date, towards the end of the book, is "200..." (ULF: 367). However, many time references like *ilikuwa siku ya Jumamosi* ('it was Saturday'), *siku ya Jumatatu ya mwezi Machi* ('on a Monday in March'), *ilikuwa imekwishatimia saa kumi na moja jioni* ('it was already five o'clock in the afternoon') or *siku tatu baadaye, mchana* ('three days after, at noon') punctuate the flow of the narration and separate the episodes. The whole narrative takes six or seven years. It begins with the news of Queen's illness; the second part occurs four months later and closes with Queen's death and with Tabu's confirmed seropositivity; in the third part, four years later, it is Ngoma and Asha who die. After two more years, in the fourth part, it is Tabu's turn to die. The epilogue, however, closes more optimistically with the birth of Grace's and Omolo's baby.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Omolo himself is not (yet?) able to enjoy this birth.

3.1.3. Message

The author displays a sound knowledge of all phases of AIDS which he describes vividly, with a great naturalism, not avoiding even the most unpleasant aspects of the terminal stages of the illness like bad smells, sweating, blood coughing, or diarrhoea.

The story is narrated quietly, as if he wanted to present AIDS as a normal illness and not as a frightful tragedy. He avoids dramatic situations and conflicts, describing instead commonplace actions such as the daily chore and merrymaking but also medical treatment and funerals. The potentially most powerful scenes, e.g. the quarrel of Ngoma's brothers for the inheritance, are not enacted but the events are only related afterwards.

Even the tragic essence is blended with optimism. Mkufya's message to seropositive persons is that with appropriate medical treatment they may live ten or more years before the first symptoms appear. And to the healthy ones – to take care. In fact, much space is devoted to the discussions and overt moralizing: the author takes his commitment seriously and drives his point home straight out. Especially Dr. Hans, the author's mouthpiece, insists on safe and responsible sexual relations.

*“Nilichelewa kuoa, ila sikuwa mchovu kama wewe, nilipenda kufurahi. Starehe ndizo zimenifanya nichelewe kuchagua mpenzi. Kila mwanamke niliyezoeana naye alivutiwa na mimi kwa sababu nilipenda kwenda nao kila mahali: sinema, dansini, kwenye sherehe... Mshahara wangu wote niliumaliza kwenye starehe!”*

*“Ulikuwa mwasherati!” Omolo alimsuta.*

*“Hapana! Wasichana niliowazoea waliheshimu sana miili yao. Wazo la ngono kabla ya ndoa halikuwepo...”*

*“Usiseme uongo!” Omolo alimkatisha na kuzidi kumsuta, “Ulikuwa mzinzi.”*

*“Kweli! Sisemi hayo kwa sababu ya kuwa kwenye hii ofisi ya nasaha kwa wagonjwa wa UKIMWI. Hapana. Ni kweli, ujana wangu niliufurahia sana, lakini siyo katika ngono. Ila tulipenda sana kusimulia habari zake na kusoma vitabu vinavyoihusu, kama hiki...” Dkt. Hans akaonyesha kile kitabu alichokuwa anasoma [Kama Sutra]. (ULF: 352)*

*“I married late, but not because I was indolent like you, it's just that I wanted to enjoy myself. I was having a good time and so I was in no hurry of choosing a wife. It wasn't difficult for me to find new women. I used to take them to the cinema, to dances, to parties... I used to spend my whole salary on that!”*

*“You were a depraved man!” Omolo accused him.*

*“No! The girls I used to go out with took good care of themselves. There was no idea of sex before marriage ...”*

*“Don't tell lies!” Omolo interrupted him and went on with his accusation, “You were perverse.”*

*“It's true! I'm not saying so because my job is giving advice to those suffering from AIDS. No. It's true, I had a lot of fun in my youth, but sex wasn't part of it. We did like to read and discuss books about it, like this one...” Dr. Hans showed the book he was reading [Kama Sutra].*

The author has a message of hope even for terminally ill persons: as long as they have children, they will not disappear. The only way of continuing after death is to perpetuate



one's progeny, handing over to the young generations the bulk of our experience and traditions. A person who has lost his traditions lacks his humanity, his *utu*, he is only a zombie.

*“Watu sharti tuzoe kusherehekea kifo kama tunavyosherehekea uzazi kwa sababu zote ni hatua za lazima na za muhimu katika huo mduara wa uhai. Mtu hufa, lakini kizazi kipo daima. La muhimu ni kuhakikisha kwamba yale tunayojifunza katika maisha tuyarithishe kwenye vizazi vyetu katika majando, mafunzo ya maadili na elimu ya watoto. Taifa la wapumbavu wasiokamilisha jando lao ni lile litakaloruhusu washenzi toka nchi za mbali kuingilia na kuvuruga maadili, imani, miiko na elimu ya watoto wao. Utu wa mtu ni ukamilifu wa jadi yake. Mtu asiye na jadi ni ndondochoa...” “Au msukule!” (ULF: 415)*

“People should get used to celebrate death as we celebrate birth because both are necessary and important steps in the circle of life. Man dies, but he leaves his offspring behind. What is important is to make sure we hand over to our children what we have learnt in our life, in circumcision rites, good manners and school education. Only a nation of stupid people who did not complete their circumcision rites can allow foreigners from afar to interfere with and upset their traditional ethics, their beliefs, their taboos and upbringing of children. Humanity lies in a man's following his traditions wholeheartedly. A person with no traditions is like somebody who has been bewitched...” “Or a zombie!”

### 3.2. Linguistic features

Worth mentioning is the language: quite surprisingly, the novel has an imprimatur of BAKITA<sup>11</sup> (National Swahili Council). This enables us to see what is now considered to be a Standard Swahili. The Kenyan word for television is there in both spelling variants, *luninga* and *runinga*, as well as some colloquialisms such as *kasheshe* (‘mess’), *mavituz* (‘sexual affairs’)<sup>12</sup>, *babu kubwa* (‘of high quality’ or ‘enormous/a lot of’) etc., always in direct speech.

Besides, there are at least two words that I could not find in any Swahili dictionary: *ndondochoa* and *msukule*. I was told by Bw. Abedi Tandika that *ndondochoa* is a bewitched person<sup>13</sup>, whereas *msukule* is a sort of zombie, i.e. someone who is believed to be dead but instead he works secretly for a witch or a wizard. In some areas of Tanzania, on the other hand, the meaning of *ndondochoa* is similar to that given above for *msukule*. In fact, in the novelette *Sikuwa Ndondochoa* by Augustine L. Nnimbo (1987), the author explains this term as follows:

*Wafanya biashara wengi sana huamini kuwa katika shughuli zao huwa na mafanikio mengi wakiwatumia Ndondochoa. Hii ni imani fulani kuwa mtu hufanywa kama amekufa na huzikwa kivuli au wengine huita kivuli hicho*

<sup>11</sup> *Lugha iliyotumika katika kitabu hiki imethibitishwa kuwa ni sanifu na Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa kwa cheti la Ithibati Nambari 115 kilichotolewa tarehe 23/08/2004. (ULF: IV)*

<sup>12</sup> It is possible to affix to certain Swahili nouns like *jambo* ‘affair’, *toto* ‘big child’, or *vitu* ‘things’, the English plural suffix, sometimes together with the Swahili prefix MA-. All these nouns are used with a delicate or offensive connotation, hence *mpenda totoz* ‘paedophile’, *majamboz/ mavituz* ‘sexual affairs’.

<sup>13</sup> But Sauda Barwani in a private letter (22/04/2005) writes: *Maana ya ndondochoa ni marogo au uchawi ambayo mtu anapelekwa nyumbani kwake na hasa ni mnyama kama panya au paka. (‘The meaning of ndondochoa is a charm or magic sent to somebody’s house, in particular an animal like a mouse or a cat.’)*

*mgomba. Kisha binadamu asilia hugeuzwa katika hali inayoitwa Ndondocha, kwa manufaa mbalimbali. Ndondocha haonekani ila kwa dawa maalum kwa watu wenye uwezo huo au watu hao huitwa watu waliokomaa.* (Nnimbo 1987: 3)

Many traders believe they can improve their business if they use a Ndondocha. They think it is possible to make people believe that a person is dead by burying what they call his shadow or a banana plant. Then the real person is turned into a Ndondocha to serve various purposes. A Ndondocha is invisible, unless a particular charm used by those who have a special power and who are therefore called ‘full-grown people’.

Perhaps the difference between the two is that a *ndondocha* is a sort of lucky charm, a talisman as it were, whereas a *msukule* must work for his master<sup>14</sup>.

As for grammar, the most striking feature is the occurrence of several examples of the diminutive class 12:

*Ngoma alizua ka-tabia ka kuanza kuwafundisha wenzake maadili mema na kujifanya mcha-Mungu.* (ULF: 121)

Ngoma had the trivial habit of preaching high moral standards to his friends and he claimed he was a God fearing person.

[...] *kisha akachukua kanyanya kadogo kutoka kwenye tenga.* (ULF: 147)

[...] then she took a small tomato from the basket.

[...] *eti kwa hako katalaka kake...* (ULF: 265)

[...] he says, because of his miserable divorce [...]

*Tabu akacheka, huku akimpiga ka-kofi shavuni* (ULF: 277)

Tabu laughed and gave him a light stroke on the cheek

As may be seen, the class 12 is used both with a diminutive and derogatory meaning.

#### 4. Conclusion

After his experimental work *Ziraili na Zirani*, Mkufya returns with *Ua la Faraja* to the realistic novel, assuming the traditional role of a teacher. Although his main concern is to convey a message explaining how to face the calamity that is affecting Africa more severely than any other part of the world, he has achieved it with an anti-melodramatic approach and with great skill. Probably not wanting to take the risk of being misunderstood, he produced an ‘easy’, very readable and involving text, but at the same time a fine piece of work. Therefore we are looking forward to Mkufya publishing the other two novels of the trilogy.

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<sup>14</sup> Euphrase Kezilahabi in *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo* (1975) uses the term *kizuu* for a ‘working zombie’.

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