

INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY SWAHILI NOVEL: EUPHRASE KEZILAHABI'S *NAGONA* AND WILLIAM E. MKUFYA'S *ZIRAILI NA ZIRANI*¹

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1. Introduction

This paper deals with intertextuality in two contemporary Swahili novels: Euphrase Kezilahabi's *Nagona* (1987/1990) and William E. Mkufya's *Ziraili na Zirani* (1999). It is a first approach to intertextual relations between these two novels. My aim is to show how the contemporary Swahili novel has further opened up its scope to universal questions of mankind.

2. The novels under discussion

In the following I am going to present in brief the plot and some basic features of these two novels in order to facilitate the understanding of the following analysis.

*Nagona*² is Kezilahabi's most complex work, and has generated a discussion about its classification. The main point in this discussion is whether or not it should be classified under the novel genre (cf. Bertoncini 1996, 1999 & 2000; Gromov 1998; Chenou 1997, Wamitila 1991, 1999 & 2003, Mbatiah 1998 & 2001, Khamis 2003).³ It was published in very small

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² 'Nagona' is a woman's name. Khamis (2005: 91) translates the title of the novel as 'The Insight'. The meaning of 'Nagona' is quite complex; I will briefly discuss some of its aspects in section 3.4. For literary translation into any language, however, I propose to just leave the name as it is, thus preserving the full range of its complex meaning.

³ Without engaging in this discussion, these are the positions held in brief: Bertoncini-Zúbková (1996: 147) classifies *Nagona* and its sequel *Mzingile* (1991) as 'post-modern novels' whereas Gromov (1998: 78) agrees just with the notion of post-modernism, holding that the works belong to "some kind of synthetic genre". Wamitila (1991: 61, 63; 1997: 15, 16 & 1998: 80), Mungah (1999: e.g. 1 & title), Diegner (2002: 44-46) and Rettova (2004: 49) use 'novella' as a working term. Furthermore Mbatiah (2001: 7), in opposition to Madumulla (1991: 24-25), suggests to classify the two works as *dhidirwaya* ('anti-novel'; termed *riwaya kinzani* by Wamitila 2003: 184). Wamitila (1999: 38; 43) adds the term 'polymorphic novels' to the discussion, whereas in his recent dictionary of literary terms (Wamitila 2003: 185; 179; 181) he categorizes *Nagona* and *Mzingile* as *riwaya mpya* (new novel), *riwaya changamano* (complex novel) and *riwaya ya kimajaribio* (experimental novel), respectively. Bertoncini-Zúbková (1999: 42 & 2000: 143) has called them 'récits allegoriques' (allegorical narratives). As the aim of this paper is a literary analysis concentrating on thematic, 'novel' is employed as a working term (cf. the similar usage in Chenou 1997: 363f. & Khamis 2005: 91; 103). Khamis (2003: 78f., 89f.) points out that a pluralistic understanding of the term 'novel' could solve the (supposed) problem of genre.

numbers in 1987 and again in 1990.⁴ It has been conceived as the first part of a trilogy. Up to now, only the second part, *Mzingile* ('Labyrinth'), has been published.⁵

Nagona describes the journey of an unnamed male protagonist through strangely abandoned landscapes and his surrealistic experience. He encounters several well-known philosophers, including Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, sitting in a circle and talking to their souls which they have spit into their hands (cf. N III 13-17).⁶ The protagonist then learns about a mysterious gazelle, and starts following its tracks (cf. N V 25). In order to catch it, he has to master tasks that seem to be unsolvable. He succeeds with the help of four old men who all have extraordinary or supernatural powers (cf. N V 25-34), but finally he fails to get hold of the gazelle who happens to be a beautiful woman (cf. N V 34-38). In chapter eight, a literary ego – the reader does not know whether it is the protagonist or not – confesses all sins of the last two centuries that humankind is responsible for to an increasingly irritated priest (cf. N VIII 47-52). Then there is the long-awaited big "Dance of the Great Confession". During this dancing competition of philosophers, psychologists, revolutionaries and lunatics, the protagonist dances in the group of lunatics (cf. N IX 57-61). In the end of the novel a girl named *Nagona* is born, and the protagonist follows her (cf. N X 62).

With *Nagona*, Kezilahabi leaves the realistic paradigm of his writings to set out for new shores (cf. e.g. Wamitila 1991: 62; Gromov 1996: 149; Mbatiah 1998: 1; Bertoncini 1999: 42; Khamis 2001: 120; Diegner 2002: 45). *Nagona* is written in a puzzling style between realism and hallucination. It is settled beyond space and time, and lacks characters that are easy to identify. Evidently, some of its main influences are Kezilahabi's studies of philosophy from Ancient Greece to the 20th century, and psychology.⁷ These references and allusions to philosophy and psychology have been artistically interwoven with the story of a young man hunting for a gazelle, which is derived from oral literature of Kezilahabi's home island Ukerewe (cf. Kezilahabi [2003] in Diegner [forthcoming]).

The second work, *Ziraili na Zirani*⁸, is a novel written in the style of an epic. William E. Mkufya started working on it in 1981 (cf. Mkufya 2005: 37 [published in this volume]), and it

⁴ The first edition was published by Educational *Services Centre*, Dar es Salaam. In 1990 the second edition was published by Dar es Salaam University Press. The latter publishing house intends to publish a new edition of *Nagona* and *Mzingile* (Kezilahabi: p.c., November 2004).

⁵ Euphrase Kezilahabi. 1991. *Mzingile*. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press. 70 pp. ISBN 9976-60-011-9. – Kezilahabi is still planning to write the third part of the trilogy. He told me that he has already created this third part in mind, but hasn't found yet the time to put it on paper. Cf. Kezilahabi [2003] in Diegner [forthcoming].

⁶ In the following, citations from the novels will be given as e.g. N II 12 (Kezilahabi. ²1990. *Nagona*: chapter 2, page 12), or ZZ *Dhahara* 145 (Mkufya. 1999. *Ziraili na Zirani*: chapter named *Dhahara*, sub-section III, page 145). Thus, the usage of Roman numbers refers to the chapters in *Nagona*, and does not relate to the sub-sections of each chapter in *Ziraili na Zirani*.

⁷ For a philosophical approach to *Nagona* and *Mzingile* as works containing 'Afrophone Philosophy', interlinking the novels with Kezilahabi's PhD thesis "African Philosophy and the Problem of Literary Interpretation" (1985), cf. Rettová 2004.

⁸ Although *Ziraili* is the Swahilized version of *Asrael*, I propose a translation practice similar to the case of *Nagona*: The title of the novel should be translated as 'Ziraili and Zirani', cf. Khamis (2005: 91) who has translated it as 'Angel of Death and Zirani'.

was finally published in 1999. Dwelling on its literary role models, which are Dante's *Divina Commedia* (1312-1321) and Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1658-1665), it describes the battle over religion. Religious believers, supported by angels, fight against non-believers or materialists, who are collaborating with the devils. *Ziraili* is the angel of death whose task is to bring the souls of dead human beings to heaven. His adversary *Zirani* is a history teacher who has lost his faith and decides to fight against religion. He is driven by the spirit of enlightenment, represented by thinkers and philosophers like Voltaire, Diderot and Russell. The exhaustive list of fighters on both sides takes the reader on a rough ride through the history of mainly European philosophy,⁹ different world religions and political personalities (cf. Mkufya 2003).¹⁰ In the end, *Zirani* and his battle group of materialists come to know that their victory is in vain. The human puzzle of not being able to know whether God exists or not remains unsolved.

The epic character of Mkufya's novel is created by the frequent interference of recited poems and songs (cf. e.g. *ZZ Matukio* 5; *ZZ Mbingu* 10; 12; 15 & *ZZ Mtingisho wa Vita* 187-189; 194-196; 200-201; 205-206).¹¹ On the thematic level we find typical epic motifs like battle, heaven, hell, angels, devils, etc. (cf. some of the chapter titles). *Ziraili na Zirani* takes the reader on a fantastic journey between heaven, paradise and hell, with several excursions to the historical and contemporary malices and catastrophes on earth.¹² It confronts us with the question of religion, and calls for a re-thinking of both Christianity and Islam from a specific African point of view.

In the following section I will define what kind of intertextuality I am going to analyse.

3. Intertextuality in *Nagona* and *Ziraili na Zirani*

Intertextuality essentially means that there is no isolated text (cf. Aczel 2004: 299-301; Allen 2000: 1-7; Bossinade 94-103). Basic assumptions of Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality serve as background matrix to this paper. The central idea of Kristeva's intertextuality theory is that every text is constituted "by a mosaic of citations, every text is absorption and transformation of another text" (Kristeva 1972: 348). Thus, intertextuality becomes a characteristic

⁹ For a philosophical approach interlinking Mkufya's novel and Leibniz' notion of "The best of all possible worlds" cf. Rettová 2005 [published in this volume].

¹⁰ Due to the abundance of historical personalities in the novel, the author has set up a glossary of 24 pages which also includes place names and other terms, that will be published within the next edition of *Ziraili na Zirani*, cf. Mkufya 2003.

¹¹ Cf. the following exhaustive list of poems and songs in *Ziraili na Zirani*: *Matukio* 5; *Mbingu* 10; 12; 15; *Ziraili* 28; *Zirani* 42-43; 52; *Motoni* 90-92; 109-110; *Duniani (I)* 133-135; *Mzingo wa Vita* 145; 153; 156-157; 178; 183-184; *Mtingisho wa Vita* 187-189; 194-196; 200-201; 205-206; *Kiama* 212-218; 221-223; 226.

¹² Cf. e.g. the historical reference to the Crusades and the Jihad in the expositional chapter where three characters living in Baghdad, Rome and Jerusalem in the year 1099 are referred to (Cf. *ZZ Matukio* 1-8).

One example of a contemporary malice is the frightening episode about the (imaginary) island Nguu near (the real island) Mafia. The island Nguu is bought by an international company, which officially just breeds chicken and cattle there. Secretly, the company has established a second subterranean farm where hundreds of drugged and de-brained human victims are held like animals for organ traffic purposes, cf. *ZZ Duniani (I)* 126-129.

of every text, and is not limited to intentional references or conscious allusions to other texts. With Kristeva, auctorial intention is marginalized; her theory replaces intersubjectivity by intertextuality (cf. Aczel 2004: 300). Thus, there is a change in how literary theory and practice perceive intertextuality, and what status it is attributed to. Intertextuality is no longer a mere descriptive umbrella term for conventional types of relations between texts. Instead it means, in an extensive and ontological sense, a qualitative relationship between any kinds of meaningful expressions. This makes intertextuality part of a broader and more radical theoretical project, which intends to undermine conventional concepts in literary studies, especially the auctorial intention, as well as the unity and autonomy of a work of art (Aczel 2004: 299).

Concerning the character of the two novels under discussion, the title of this article might be a little misleading. Both novels offer a great variety of intertextuality, as they mention a lot of philosophical and religious texts like, for example, the works of Epicurus, Schopenhauer or Nietzsche, as well as the Bible and the Qur'an. Furthermore, there are interesting intertextual links of both novels as a whole to other works, like in Mkufya's case the obvious inspiration drawn from Dante and Milton, the hidden reference to Shaaban Robert's *Kufikirika* (1967 [1946]),¹³ and the obvious thematic similarity to Farouk Topan's play *Aliyeonja Pepo* (1973).¹⁴ However, the above mentioned aspects are not the focus of this paper, as they would require a meticulous research of its own.¹⁵

Instead, this paper will present intertextual links or relations between *Nagona* and *Ziraili na Zirani* that are found on the thematic level. The approach here is to bring out certain thematic relations between these two works as *texts*. Here I want to concentrate on some key issues that characterize these novels and give them their specific features. Both Kezilahabi and Mkufya deal with the achievements of modern European philosophy, and they both present an existentialist view of life. They criticise religion and present their viewpoints of the role of thinking and truth.

¹³ The ironic reference to Shaaban Robert's utopian novel is represented by an anagram which uses the palindrome technique (reading a word from its last letter to its first): 'Akirikifuk', derived from 'Kufikirika'. It is referred to several times in the novel as an acronym for heaven in the sense of paradise (as something imaginary). We find its introduction in *Dhahara* 59: At the entrance gate to heaven, there is a sign saying 'Akirikifuk'. The narrator himself gives several hints to its dissolution (cf. *Dhahara* 82, *Motoni* 92, *Mzingo wa Vita* 170, *Kiama* 223), the most obvious being a remark about reading backwards in the dark (cf. *Motoni* 92).

¹⁴ Farouk Topan's play portrays with great irony the protagonist Juma Hamisi's experience in paradise. His soul has been taken there by Asrael, the angel of death, who took him for the British pub owner John Houghton. In the end, instead of being re-installed on earth as John Houghton in England, Juma Hamisi prefers to get back in the body of a fishmarket cat who lives in his native town of Bagamoyo. Remains the following question that is making him anxious: "*Huyo paka mwenyewe ni paka dume au paka jike?*" ("This cat, is it a male or a female?"; Topan¹1980: 22).

¹⁵ Another traditional field of interest in intertextuality studies is neither the topic of this paper: the question of influence, i. e. in our case to relate the literary and philosophical works which Kezilahabi and Mkufya have read to their novels. Besides that, Kezilahabi's *Nagona* has not influenced Mkufya in writing *Ziraili na Zirani*, as by the time of writing he had not yet read *Nagona*. Cf. Mkufya 2005: 57.

3.1. European Philosophy

In both novels the reader is confronted with European philosophers. In *Nagona* we find Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche, joined by Darwin and Freud sitting in a circle. They have spit out their souls and hold them in their hands. They have been told to discuss with them in order to purify them. When they finally fail because their souls are washed away by a river stream, they are told to leave. Surprisingly, they cheer their new freedom (cf. N III 13-17).

The text portrays these philosophers with substantial irony: although these *askari wa mwanga* ('soldiers of light') have been searching for truth throughout their lives, they have not succeeded in purifying their souls. Furthermore, they have not felt free. The meaning underlying this image can be read twofold: First, it is to call for a re-consideration and re-evaluation of the contribution of these philosophers. The second meaning is to stress the limits of philosophy as a means of approaching truth, and, as a means of cleaning one's soul, which means becoming a better human being (cf. Diegner [forthcoming]).

In *Ziraili na Zirani*, the reader is provided with a long list of philosophers who have criticised or questioned religion, starting with Zeno and Epicurus, and ending with Russell and Sartre. The reader is taken on a rough ride through the history of mainly European philosophy, stressing the contribution of philosophers whose series starts with the epoch of the Enlightenment.

However, these accounts in *Ziraili na Zirani* are not limited to European philosophers. Unlike in Kezilahabi's novel, where the reader is just provided with unnamed revolutionaries, Mkufya's novel also presents historical personalities from all over the world who have tried to put political ideas into practice, like Lenin, Ho Chi Minh, and Allende. Furthermore, the African part in history is represented by thinkers and leaders like Kinjeketile, Cabral, Nkrumah, Neto, and Dedan Kimathi.

In the next section I will deal with the general underlying philosophy in these two novels.

3.2. Existentialism

Apart from the different approach to the contribution and status of European philosophy, there is a striking resemblance in the general underlying philosophy of these two novels, which can be labelled as existentialism.

A fundamental element of existentialist philosophy is the assumption that the inevitability of death is the human being's biggest intellectual and moral challenge. Mortality as the inevitable *conditio humana* generates the questioning of the meaning of life. In a next step, the border between life and death becomes flexible.

Consequently, we find the following statement by an old man in *Nagona*:

Ia. “*Nilianza kufa tangu siku niliyozaliwa.*” (N IV 21)

Ib. “I started dying since the day I was born.” (*Translation L.D.*)¹⁶

This dissolution of the strict dichotomy ‘life – death’ can also be found in *Ziraili na Zirani*. When Ziraili’s hunt for Zirani’s soul is described, the narratorial voice gives the following comment:

IIa. *Kanuni ya uhai ni kufa. Kichipuacho tumboni mwa mwanamke sharti kiishi, kife, kisha kivunde na kugeuka kuwa udongo.* (ZZ *Zirani* 53f.)

IIb. The rule of being alive is dying. What sprouts in a woman’s belly has to live, die, and then rot and turn into soil.

Mkufya himself told me in our interview why in his existentialist thinking this insight is crucial, and what he thinks it should mean for us.

IIIa. “*Sasa la muhimu ni kuweza kuukubali na kuustahamili ukweli kwamba tunakufa. [...] Ng’ombe hajutii kuwepo kwake, hajutii kuendelea kulishwa na mwanadamu halafu atiwe kisu naye, auliwe, anyanganywe maziwa yake na mtoto wake, halafu anaenda kuuzwa huko. Hajutii. Tatizo la mwanadamu ni ile reflective consciousness, ile kujua, kujitambua na kujidadisi. Tumeshajitambua. Kwa hiyo we have the challenge.*” (Interview with Mkufya, January 2004; Mkufya 2005: 43f.)

IIIb. “Now the important thing is to be able to accept and tolerate the truth that we are dying. [...] A cow does not regret its existence, it does not regret to be continuously fed by a human being and then being stabbed with a knife by it, being killed, being stolen its milk and its calf, which is then being sold somewhere. The problem of the human being is that reflective consciousness, it is this knowing, becoming conscious and reflecting. We have already become conscious of ourselves. Therefore we have the challenge.”

In the next section, I am going to look more closely at criticism of religion in these two novels.

3.3. Criticism of religion

Nagona provides the outline of criticism of religion which is elaborated in the following novel *Mzingile*. In the very first chapter we find a symbolic scene where the protagonist finds a mummified male corpse holding both Bible and Qur’an in his hands (cf. N I 3). As we go on reading, we see that Kezilahabi’s novel is actually concentrating on criticism concerning representatives and practices of the Christian faith, but not on criticism of the Christian religion as such.¹⁷ Thus the priest in chapter one is portrayed as a notorious drunkard (cf. N I 4-6), though confession itself remains an important element or tool of trying to build a new humankind. The latter aspect becomes evident in chapter eight, which entirely consists of a confession of all sins of humankind (cf. N VIII 47-52).

¹⁶ In the following, all translations are mine (L.D.).

¹⁷ The criticism of representatives and practices of religion can be read as a general one (including Islam and other religions) but concentrating on Christianity.

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In *Ziraili na Zirani*, however, criticism and rejection of religion is the paramount element on the thematic level. In the chapter named *Dhahara*, the narrator quotes ‘Mzee Wolta’, the Swahilized name of the French philosopher Voltaire, saying:

IVa. “*Ama Mungu ana uwezo wa kuzuia uovu na mateso ya dunia lakini hataki, hivyo ana nia mbaya kwa binadamu, au duniani upo uovu, mateso na uonevu, lakini Mungu hawezi kuuzuia, kwa hivyo si muweza wa yote.*” (ZZ *Dhahara* 74)

IVb. “Either God has the power to prevent the evil and agony of the world but he does not want to, so he has a bad intention for the human being, or there is evil, agony and spite in the world, but God cannot prevent it, so he is not almighty.”

It is interesting to note that despite all this criticism found throughout the novel, in the end we find the protagonist Zirani, overwhelmed and frightened by his own victory, calling for God (cf. ZZ *Kiama* 224).

In the last section of my analysis I am going to expose the role thinking (*kufikiri*) and truth play in these two novels.

3.4. Thinking and truth

The importance of thinking¹⁸ and truth reveals itself in the solution to the mystery of what is meant by ‘Nagona’. In one of the dialogues between the grandfather and the protagonist the latter comes to ask:

Va. “*Lakini babu, huyu Nagona ni nani?*”

“*Utamwona, na utakapomwona utashangaa kwa nini ulikuwa humwoni maana daima yu karibu nawe. Muhimu ni kufikiri, utashi na nia.*” (N VII 44)

Vb. “But, grandfather, who is this Nagona?”

“You will see her, and when you will see her you will be surprised why you were not seeing her because she is always near you. Important is thinking, will and intention.”

The mysterious ‘Nagona’ is to be read on at least two different levels. On the first level, it is the name of the constantly escaping gazelle that turns out to be a beautiful woman. On the second level, ‘Nagona’ reveals itself as a symbol for insight and truth. Insight and truth in Kezilahabian thought can only be reached by thinking. However, truth always remains fragmentary. Thus, the crucial aspect of truth is not to give up the search for it. Kezilahabi himself relates this thinking to how he sees his role as an author, and what we are going to expect from the third part completing his trilogy.

VIa. “[...] *tunaianza katika Nagona na kuiendeleza katika Mzingile [...] ‘Nagona’ ndiyo ni dhana yenyewe, na kuna watu ambao walihusika katika kutafuta huo ukweli. Na mwishoni mwa Mzingile tunaona huu mzunguko tena. Unaanza mahali pamoja lakini unaishia pale pale tena huko mwishoni kuutafuta huo ukweli. Na hapo ndipo tunapofikia hatua kwamba ukweli ni kitu ambacho hatuwezi*

¹⁸ The term ‘thinking’ is a translation from ‘*kufikiri*’. The gerund ‘thinking’ (and not ‘thought’) is deliberately used here, as I consider it to be an adequate representation of the philosophical notion of thinking as an active and self-actualizing process.

kukishika mikononi mwetu. Kwa hiyo tutaendelea nacho tu kukitafuta katika uandishi wetu wa kifasihi. Na hapo nilipo siwezi kutoa jibu kamili kwa sababu bado naendelea na wazo la kutafuta huo ukweli. Na katika kitabu kitakachofuata kutakuwa na mwendelezo zaidi.” (Interview with Kezilahabi, October 2003; cf. Kezilahabi [2003] in Diegner [forthcoming])

VIb. “[...] we initiate it in *Nagona*, and further develop it in *Mzingile* [...] ‘Nagona’ is an idea itself, and there are people who were involved in the search for this truth. And at the end of *Mzingile* we see this circular structure again. It starts in one place but it ends right there again at the end with searching for this truth. And that is where we reach the stage that truth is something that we cannot take hold of with our hands. Therefore we will just go on searching for it in our literary writing. And here where I am I cannot give a complete answer because I am still going on with the thought of searching for this truth. And in the following book there will be further development.”¹⁹

In *Ziraili na Zirani*, the protagonist Zirani in his spirit of enlightenment calls human mankind to think again and anew the principles of religion. One indicator is the very name of the protagonist, ‘Fikirini Zirani’, meaning ‘think and reject’ (2nd person plural imperative). In the tradition of enlightenment thinking, Mkufya’s novel sets a clear dichotomy between ‘thinking’ and ‘believing’. That is why the materialists fighting against the idea of heaven and paradise say:

VIIa. “*Sisi wafuasi wa kambi ya Dhahara tumekula kiapo cha kuiondosha hiyo dhana ya pepo. Tumeamua kuwafuta malaika na kiti chao cha utupu kutoka kwenye busara ya binadamu. Twakusudia kupiga vita dini na kurudisha heshima ya tafakuri ya wanadamu kama zama za Zeno na Epikuru.*” (ZZ *Dhahara* 63)

VIIb. “We the supporters of the Dhahara camp have sworn an oath to remove this idea of paradise. We have decided to wipe the angels and their throne of emptiness off human reason. We intend to fight religion and to bring back the honour of human thinking like it was in the times of Zeno and Epicurus.”

On the other hand, with Mkufya, thinking as the characteristic of the human being is part of its tragedy: the human being has the ability to think, but it takes a long time to gain wisdom from it. When it succeeds in gaining some wisdom death is already near. In a second step, Mkufya connects this fact with the religious notion of ‘sin’ and, accordingly, the perception of all human beings as ‘sinners’.

VIIIa. [...] *mwili umepewa akili, lakini akili hii inahitaji elimu na muda wa kuto-sha kuweza kujenga busara ya kuzitawala tamaa, kuielekeza hiari na hatimaye kushindana na dhambi. [...] muda wa uhai wa binadamu ni mdogo mno kuipata elimu hii na kujenga hekima inayostahili kuikomaza akili yake. Jamii ambazo watu wake hufa na umri mfupi huathirika zaidi na unyonge huo wa hiari, hivyo huonekana kuwa vitovu vya dhambi.* (ZZ *Zirani* 52)

VIIIb. [...] the body has been given a mind, but this mind needs education and enough time to build the wisdom to control the desires, to orientate the will and finally to struggle against sin. [...] human lifetime is too short to get this education and to build the due prudence to mature its mind. Societies whose members die at

¹⁹ I would like to thank Alena Rettová for her very valuable comments on “‘Nagona’ ni dhana yenyewe”. For a more detailed reading of the literary motif ‘Nagona’ and its underlying concept cf. Diegner [forthcoming].

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young age are more affected by this weakness of will, therefore they appear as the centres of sin.

Despite this aspect of futility, thinking is a crucial element in Mkufya's literary agenda as it is in Kezilahabi's.

4. Conclusion

After having tried to point out some of the intertextual links between these two novels that are found on the thematic level, I would like to conclude that these parallels derive from the similar literary and philosophic approach both Kezilahabi and Mkufya have. Their impetus is the search for truth. Whereas Kezilahabi limits himself to describing this search and consciously leaves both the truth itself and the frequently puzzled reader in the dark, Mkufya's aim is to shed light on truth in a materialistic sense, which explains his rather didactic attitude. What they have in common is their call upon mankind to think and re-think themselves and everything they know. For Kezilahabi, true thinking will lead to truth, while truth itself remains a *telos*, whereas Mkufya calls for a second enlightenment to end conflicts caused by religion.

On a larger scale, *Nagona* and *Ziraili na Zirani* show how the contemporary Swahili novel has left behind the limited scope of dealing with problems of East African societies and has opened up its view to general and universal questions of mankind.

By doing so, writers and readers of other literatures are invited to discover what the contemporary Swahili novel has to tell the world.

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