

TEGENI MASIKIO: COMPOSING EAST AFRICAN REALITIES THROUGH YOUNG EYES

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At times creative writing has been employed by Tanzanians in order to demonstrate the progress of African peoples and to reflect the changes, or lack of them, in this society. Popular songs are another continually vibrant medium of intellectual exchange which appeal to various sectors of the Tanzanian populace. Such oral and written works, directed as they are to local and intra-national audiences, are most often created in the Swahili language. The relatively young age of Tanzania's population, with nearly 65 percent of the population under 25 years of age¹ has brought about a situation in which this young and dynamic population is increasingly seeing their voice and interests represented in literary and aural/oral works. What are the themes and strategies utilized by such songwriters and literary artists and what are their trajectories of dissemination, consumption and activation within Tanzanian social contexts?

Literature and creative expression

A large part of the history of "African" literature has been concerned with the creation of creative writing in European languages and forms. The works of writers such as Chinua Achebe, Leopold Sédar Sengor and Wole Soyinka still occupy pride of place in considerations of African creative talents and have even generated their own libraries of theoretical justification for such strategies of linguistic and formal "borrowings" as well as counter-arguments by authors such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Okot p'Bitek. It is in no way my intention to disparage the historical and contemporary value of such works in the formulation of literary and philosophical traditions within Tanzania, East Africa and the African continent as well as its numerous diasporic communities spread throughout the globe. When teaching in Kakamega in Kenya, for example, I was impressed by the profound impact which reading the novel *Things Fall Apart* had upon my sophomore students at Tiriki Secondary School. The undeniable relevance of the circumstances of Okonkwo and his struggle to the daily realities of life in rural western Kenya made the novel a powerful and eye-opening read.

This paper will focus, however, upon the work of African verbal artists and musicians from Tanzania in order to investigate and explain the nature of their texts in non-European languages. The novels of Euphrase Kezilahabi will be explored in conjunction with songs by Caz-T, in order to understand the ways in which exchanges continue to be carried out between parties interested in projecting their messages into more localized contexts where they will resonate more sharply. What can an analysis of such works tell us about the manner in which African cultural tropes and realities can be meaningfully expressed through forms and languages which lie outside of the purview of "African literature" as codified and even reified by

¹ CIA the World Factbook.

international and intercontinental practices of publication, dissemination and consumption? In turn, what do the positions of these creative artists as “young” members of Tanzanian society as defined by social conventions have to do with the success and importance of their work as part of the socio-cultural continuum of Tanzanian postcolonial reality? ² Finally, what are the implications of this type of comparative approach across genres for the study of African literature in general and in the particular case of Tanzanian expression?

For millennia members of African communities have been interacting with and carrying on conversations with those of their societies as well as other Africans from outside of what they would define as their own groups. The best examples of these artistic discourses have been and continue to be both intellectually stimulating and aesthetically pleasing and as a result have embedded themselves in the day to day activities of African peoples in essential ways. As a function of the recent history of the African continent, however, many of these expressive realities have been undervalued or shamelessly exploited by political figures who cynically saw in them a way to legitimize themselves and their governments such as in the cases of Daniel Arap Moi or Mobutu Sese Sekou.³

Through all of this, however, indigenous expressive forms have continued to demonstrate their relevance and potency with regard to the lives of a large percentage of Africans⁴. The fact that such works are more often than not created in popular forms and languages distinct from what the majority of Europeans and citizens of the United States of America are familiar with makes them commodities impenetrable to such publics. As Kenyan author Parselelo Kantai has noted, often people from outside of Kenya, because of the nature of these expressive forms, are unable to “enter in” and take part in such discussions⁵. The manner in which such works of literary and musical creativity carry messages which are relevant to their audiences makes them relevant philosophical and manifestly practical tools which are used on a day to day basis in order to articulate and negotiate the changing landscape of Tanzanian soci-

² It is worth noting that despite the chronological difference between the dates of birth of Euphrase Kezilahabi and Caz-T (Kezilahabi born in 1944 and Caz-T, as far as I can tell sometime in the late 1970s or early 1980s) *Rosa Mistika*, Kezilahabi’s most controversial novel was written, so the story goes, in part before he himself had finished his studies although it was not published until 1971. Thus both men were responding to and articulating the realities of the “younger” generation of *vijana* (unmarried young men) rather than *wazee* (elders).

³ See for example Ingrid Björkman’s study *Mother, Sing For Me: People’s Theatre in Kenya* (1989) in which the author on pages 49 and 50 provides evidence of the manner in which the Moi regime repeatedly exploited the power of music and song in order to foment a positive image of its actions despite the violent and exploitative nature of its actual practices. Graeme Ewen’s account of the life and times of Franco Luambo Makiadi in his masterful *Congo Colossus: The Life and Legacy of Franco & OK Jazz* (1994) does a likewise though job of exploring and explaining the manner in which this artist, possibly the most universally important African composer and singer of popular music in the twentieth century in terms of his diffusion and impact throughout the continent, was appropriated and utilized by the dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Sekou in order to consolidate and repeatedly legitimate his unbridled excesses.

⁴ See Bob W. White. *Rumba Rules: The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu’s Zaire*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008; and Mwenda Ntarangwi, *Gender, Performance, & Identity: Understanding Swahili Cultural Realities Through Songs*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2003.

⁵ Parselelo Kantai, Interview with Aaron Rosenberg. *The African Beat*. Voice of America, Washington, D.C. 24 Feb. 2007.

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ety. While Euphrase Kezilahabi is renowned for the philosophical profundity of his novels and, to a lesser extent, his poetry, I will argue below, following the reasoning of scholars such as Vincent Barry⁶, that the songs of performing artists such as Caz-T also contain philosophical thinking which makes such musical works of importance to their listeners.⁷

Euphrase Kezilahabi and the Tanzanian novel

Euphrase Kezilahabi is possibly the most famous living writer in Swahili. His productivity extends across a number of genres such as poetry, essays and criticism, and prose fiction. If Shaaban Robert, who is credited with establishing modern Swahili literature, was associated with the independence movement in Tanganyika and Zanzibar (later the Republic of Tanzania), then Kezilahabi could be described as his successor. Robert is best known for his poetic works, many of which were created in forms of expression such as the epic poems known as *tenzi* which are complexly rhymed with both set stanza divisions and internal as well as external rhyme. Kezilahabi, by contrast, was one of the first poets in Swahili to work with blank verse and free Swahili poetry from traditions that limited the creative potential of words themselves by subordinating this to systems of rhyme (*vina*) and meter (*wizani*). His collections such as *Karibu Ndani* or “Come on in” (1988) and *Kichomi* or “Stabbing Pains” published in the mid to late 1970s are testaments to the power and beauty of this poetry. Kezilahabi is best known, however, for his lengthy prose works which can be linked to traditions of the “novel” as it developed through European and Japanese traditions. In this respect his work seems to be opposed to that of Robert who is best known for his poetic works. As Abdilatif Abdalla clarifies, Robert

alielemea zaidi kwenye utanzu wa ushairi. Ndiyo hata mpaka siku hizi humu mwetu Afrika ya Mashariki ukilitaja jina lake tu fikira ya kwanza itakayomjia mtu ni kumnasibiha na mashairi kwanza, halafu ndiyo akumbuke kuwa pia alipata kuandika hadithi na insha. (1975: x).

was much more inclined toward his poetry. That is why, even today in East Africa if you mention his name, the first thought that will occur to a person is to recall his poetic works first; only later will he or she remember that he also wrote narrative fiction and essays.⁸

Kezilahabi got his start in writing long fiction and the novella *Rosa Mistika* or “The Mystic Rose” which was published in 1971 remains his most widely disseminated work, even being adopted as a textbook in Tanzanian secondary schools. Despite its harsh, portrayal of the exploitation of women in postcolonial Tanzania the text is fondly remembered by former secondary school students, women included. In this novel as well as *Kichwamaji* or “Empty-

⁶ Barry, Vincent. *Philosophical Thinking about Death and Dying*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2007.

⁷ In distinction to various orthodox views of “philosophy” as an exclusively “western genre” (a view expressed by a colleague at one of my academic presentations here in Mexico), Barry Vincent has stated that “[p]hilosophical thinking strives to go beyond the common place to see what is not readily apparent, to think seriously about what most people unquestioningly accept, to conceive of possibilities and alternatives to what is thought obvious. Philosophical thinking aims for knowledge with understanding. (2007: 4)

⁸ All translations are by the author.

Headed,” the novel ends with the suicide of the protagonist. In the case of Rosa it is as a result of eating ground glass and in the case of Kazimoto, the protagonist of *Kichwamaji*, he shoots himself. In keeping with Kezilahabi’s Existentialist if not Nihilist leanings both characters come to a realization of the meaninglessness of life as well as their own excruciating suffering as a result of their inability to integrate themselves into society.

Whereas *Rosa Mistika* deals with the exploitation and self-destruction of a young woman, *Kichwamaji* deals with the fate of the men who choose to exploit such women. By the novel’s conclusion Kazimoto and his lifetime friend Manase have come to the realization that as a result of their adulterous relationships with the same prostitute named “Pili” or “the second” they have both contracted and passed on to their wives a disease which means their death both literally and figuratively. Literally as we see the declining health of Manase and his wife Salima who are approaching their grave, and figuratively in their monstrous son who has contracted the disease and therefore is cursed to go through life carrying an elephantine head, surely preventing him from having children and carrying on the family line. In the case of Kazimoto his wife Sabina gives birth to a stillborn boy and it is implied that further attempts to have children will result in the same.

The novel starts off with a circuitous description of the life of Kazimoto which, due to its sequential and compartmentalized nature, appears to border upon a picaresque plot. This lengthy introduction, however, which leads up to the explosive revelations in the novel’s final pages, is necessary for various reasons. For one thing, it allows us to develop an attachment to Kazimoto and to witness his development and maturation into a productive member of society. We should bear in mind his position as a secondary school teacher in a country whose first president was himself a teacher and in fact adopted the sobriquet *mwalimu* or “teacher” after becoming president. That he also tries to get his philandering ways under control also serves as a measure of his maturation and his ability to integrate himself into Tanzanian society as well as the rural families that he and his wife have left behind. In fact he and his brother-in-law’s efforts to finance tractor cultivation of all of the families’ fields brings them even closer together than before. All of this makes Kazimoto’s situation at the end of the novel more painful and makes us focus upon his death as a tragedy. The fact that Kazimoto himself narrates the novel (up to his death on the penultimate page) reinforces the close association that we feel as readers with him.

That the novel is written in a realistic style and in an accessible standard version of Swahili also contributes to the manner in which a Tanzanian reader would find the book comprehensible. In his later novels such as *Nagona* and *Mzingile*, which followed the political novels *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo* and *Gamba la Nyoka*, Kezilahabi abandoned this realistic and chronological plot development in favor of a disjointed, supernatural and allegorical narrative mode described by Said Khamis as “fragmented” (2003: 79) This is not to say, however, that *Kichwamaji* does not contain profound commentary on a variety of concrete and philosophical topics. One of the recurrent and most important philosophical notions discussed in the

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novel is the meaning and constant presence of death. The most obvious example of this comes near the novel's conclusion when Manase and Kazimoto are having a discussion. It is here that the host tells Kazimoto that:

Ukweli ni kwamba sisi wanadamu tunakufa pole pole. Watu wengi wanafikiri kwamba kifo kinakuja mara moja. Hili ni jambo la uwongo. Tangu mwanadamu anapozaliwa anaanza kufa pole pole ingawa yeye anajiona yu sawa. Siku zake zinakatwa moja moja. Kaburi ni hatua yetu ya mwisho tu. Kazimoto, tunapoishi tunakufa pole pole, kwa hiyo kufa ni kuishi. (206)

The truth is that every one of us human beings is in a gradual state of dying. Most people think that death is a sudden affair but that's not true at all. From the time a person is born they have already started dying even though they feel fine. Their days are being shaved away one at a time. The tumbling into the grave is simply the last stage in this process. Kazimoto, we die bit by bit while still alive, so in a way dying is our way of life.

The meaninglessness of life is brought forward through philosophical discourse before it is made apparent through the fate to which both Manase and Kazimoto consign themselves. Kazimoto's epiphanous realization of this reality, together with other factors, draw him toward the ominous and fatal conclusion that life is not only meaningless but miserable. Prior to shooting himself in the head he leaves the following note behind:

Nimejiua. Siwezi kuendelea kuzaa kizazi kibaya. Pia sikuona tofauti kati yangu na mdudu au mnyama. Akili! Akili! Akili ni nini? Pia nikiwa duniani sikupata kukutana hata siku moja na mtu anayeamini kwamba kuna Mungu. Watu wanaoogopa kufa na kwenda motoni hao nimewaona, tena wengi sana. (217)

I have taken my own life. I can't keep giving birth to rotten offspring. Nor could I see any difference between myself and an insect or any other animal. Moreover, in all my days on earth I never met anyone who truly believed in God though I certainly met many who were afraid of dying and going to Hell.

Such references to death and the ultimate futility of human existence are a theme developed throughout Kezilahabi's works, and arguably throughout his poetry as well. Studies by scholars such as Kyallo Wadi Wamitila (1999) and Lutz Diegner (2005) have established the nature and extent of Kezilahabi's involvement with existentialist philosophy and his development of what he calls "African Philosophy" (1985)⁹. They have also demonstrated the manner in which concepts expressed through Kezilahabi's works have gone on to influence other Tanzanian authors writing in Swahili such as William E. Mkufya.

Although Kezilahabi has aged since the publication of his first literary work nearly forty years ago I would like here to emphasize the philosophical nature of his work that has remained consistent since *Rosa Mistika*. The youthful intensity of that first novel certainly did make it objectionable to a section of Tanzanian postcolonial society. To a great extent this was due to the fact that they did not know how to process its overt and graphic depiction and rejection of both unbridled patriarchy and the wounds which it inflicts, literally and metaphor-

⁹ An interesting counterpoint to Julius Nyerere's concept of "African Socialism" or *Harambee* as expressed through and after the 1967 *Azimio la Arusha* or Arusha Declaration.

ically, upon beneficiaries and victims alike. Undoubtedly the experiences which Kezilahabi went through as a secondary school student were fresh enough in his mind while writing (he was after all, writing the novel as a secondary school student) that he could express them with the necessary angst to make them seem real, especially to those of his own *rika*, or generation. We can see clearly from an analysis of Kezilahabi's early writing and his development over the course of three and a half decades that young authors in Tanzania have been taking advantage of indigenous languages such as Swahili in order to craft complex works within literary forms modeled upon western forms of expression. That these works articulate and problematize philosophical conceptions at the level of high art and thought contradicts statements made within the walls of El Colegio de México itself. It has been proposed there that there is no such thing as philosophy on the African continent due to the fact that philosophy is "a western genre"¹⁰. This is, of course, an extremely narrow vision of philosophy itself even as it is conventionally conceived in western scholarship where a variety of generic forms are used to express philosophical thought. As Barry Vincent demonstrates in *Philosophical Thinking about Death and Dying* (2007), philosophy is more a mode of thought and is therefore found in a variety of genres, languages and societies throughout the globe.

It is with this in mind that I would like to briefly mention another form, or rather constellation of forms of youthful expression in Tanzania which has produced a great many weighty works which deal with topics germane to the lived experience of young people.

Music and popular cultural aspirations in Tanzania

In a wide range of styles or *mitindo* as they are called in Tanzania, performing artists, predominantly young and male but not always, have been calling out to one another and to their publics to explore the joys and tragedies of their lives. That not all of these artists are "young" is clear from even a perfunctory glance at the rosters of groups such as Orchestra DDC Mlimani Park, or Msondo Ngoma, previously known as Juwata Jazz, both of which have been around for nearly fifty years. In the last twenty years or so, however, a style of music known as Bongo Flava has been gaining ground in Tanzania. This is a type of youth music that can be linked to hip hop as produced in the United States as well as elsewhere in Africa. Certainly not every song that comes out of the minds and mouths of Bongo Flava artists is a work of art worthy of attention and study, any more than every novel or poem produced in Tanzania, Africa, or elsewhere in the globe merits such consideration. There are, however, many artists who are producing songs which speak, or rather sing, to the Tanzanian population in general and to young people in particular about the problems which they confront on a daily basis. Such names as Professor Jay, (the late) Mr. Ebbo, TMK Wanaume, and others come to mind.

As Alex Perullo and John Fenn (2003) have pointed out, language use is an essential defining element in Tanzanian hip hop and is often the dividing line between serious and socially

¹⁰ Anonymous. 2009. Commentary at presentation of paper *Conversaciones con la muerte en África y México* by Aaron L. Rosenberg, August 10th. El Colegio de México.

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relevant songs and music for partying and self-promotion. The latter variety of songs is linked to the English language and with the imitation of western styles. We can see once again that Tanzanian youth have made deliberate choices in their selection of language and form in order to make the works meaningful in organic ways.

Although the work of any of the artists mentioned above could be used to demonstrate the aspects of profundity and relevance referred to, most of them have in fact been dealt with by myself or other scholars (see Perullo 2012, Rosenberg 2011a, Ntarangwi 2009). In the present study I would like to focus upon two songs by the artist Caz-T from his album *Tega Sikio* (npd). The first of these is the title track from the album which translates into English roughly as “listen up” or “pay attention.”

Tega Sikio

Kiitikio

tega sikio
sikia nachokwambia
kaa kitako
jaribu kutulia
unapokwenda rafiki angalia
ukidharau utafunzwa na dunia
ukidharau
iheshimu hii dunia
ukidharau
utafunzwa na dunia
ukidharau utafunzwa na dunia

Ubeti wa kwanza

sikio la kufa
halisikii dawa
hii ishu mzito jamaa
usilete mzaha
we endelea kuleta madharau
washikaji kibao
tumeshawasahau
unajifanya bingwa
wa mademu wazuri
mbio zako zitaishia kwenye kaburi

[...]

mshikaji
mi naona unacheza
usawa huu
sio wa kuenda pyua letha¹¹

[...]

washikaji maisha
tunayahatarisha
hivi starehe nyingine zimekwisha

Listen Up

Chorus

listen up
pay attention to what I'm going to tell you
take a seat
and try to keep focused
wherever you're going my friend take care
arrogance is punished in this world
if you are arrogant
you must be respectful of this world
if you cling to arrogance
this world will teach you the hard way
if you are arrogant the world will give you
bitter lessons.

First verse

the ear of a dying man
is unaffected by any cure
this is a serious problem my friends
don't try to act like a smart ass
go ahead and keep acting up
many of our friends
have died and been forgotten
you act like God's gift
to beautiful women
all of your impatience will land you in the
grave
[...]
my friend
it looks to me like you're playing with fire
in this business
you can't go in skin to skin
[...]
my friends our lives
are in danger
many pleasures have come to an end

¹¹ Anglicism – pure leather.

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<i>hebu jaribu nikushiriki michezo</i>	let me include you in the music
<i>ili kupunguza</i>	so that you cut down
<i>mawazo ya ngono</i>	on your obsession with sex
<i>ipo siku mtakumbuka maneno</i>	the day will come when you recall my words
[...]	[...]

This is the first verse and chorus of a much longer composition which goes on to exhort the listeners to take stock of the dangers of irresponsible and unprotected sex, and the sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS included, which are cutting down a significant portion of Tanzania's population in their prime.

The dangers of unprotected sex with multiple partners explored here clearly resonate with Kezilahabi's first two novels as explained above albeit with an emphasis on AIDS rather than the mysterious STD and self-destruction described in *Kichwamaji* and *Rosa Mistika* respectively. That this is a problem which effects young people disproportionately makes the song of importance to people of the singer's own age. The song's lyrics are also delivered in colloquial Swahili with borrowings from English such as "pure leather," and "issue." Such a linguistic choice, in addition to the formal choice of hip hop music along the lines of Bongo Flava clarifies the target audience and validates their experiences and gives voice to their vision of reality, a vision often excluded from conventional forms of discourse. Ntarangwi explains the importance of hip hop forms such as Bongo Flava in the following terms:

Hip hop is then a forum through which East African youth, often left out of important socio-economic and political commentaries and decision-making processes, attain agency that enables them to variably shape their lives and participate in raising public awareness and consciousness to social and political issues while also appropriating it for their own economic and political gain. (2009: 3)

While the song *Tega Sikio* speaks about sex and promiscuity while directing these comments and criticisms most directly to young people, the song *Sina Imani* or "I have no faith" deals with political issues from the perspective of Tanzanian youth in opposition to the interests of the older generation or *wazee*.

<i>Sina Imani</i>	I Have No Faith
<u><i>Kiitikio</i></u>	<u>Chorus</u>
<i>sina imani na mwakilishi bungeni</i>	I have no faith in our representative in parliament
<i>vijana matatizo yenu hebu nipeni</i>	all of you young people [instead] should bring your problems to me

The song starts off with Caz-T presenting himself as the legitimate voice of his community or *jamii*. This is a frequent strategy of Tanzanian singers and especially with Bongo Flava artists. They adopt such a stance due to their young age and the fact that their music seems to be rejecting many of the iconic styles of popular music such as *muziki wa dansi* (see Graebner 2000) which has a longer history in Tanzania and is thus associated more closely in the minds of many Tanzanians with indigenous postcolonial identity.

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The crisis of authority which artists such as Caz-T experience due to their position in hierarchies of legitimation in terms both musical and social is resolved through an appeal to conceptions of artists in general, and performing artists in particular, as responsible members of society who serve a valuable function. Such ideas are frequently expressed by other prominent Bongo Flava artists. Afande Sele in his song “Darubini Kali” or “High-Powered Binoculars” presents an attempt to establish the legitimacy referred to above. The importance of the song is underlined by the debate which it has engendered. An illustrative example is the blog on Vijana FM where an anonymous commentator identifying him or herself as “Bahati” posted the following observation:

Msanii Afande Sele alipataga kutunga wimbo ulioitwa “Darubini Kali,” ambao ulimwongezea umaarufu hadi kumsaidia kushinda tuzo ya Mfalme wa Rhymes. Nyimbo [sic] ya “Darubini Kali”, ilizungumzia mambo mbalimbali ya jamii. Nyimbo hiyo pia ilifanikiwa kuonyesha uhusiano kati ya kazi ya sanaa, mfano sasa Bongo Flava, na jamii inayozungukwa nayo. Katika maneno yake [...], Afande alisema, “mimi ni msanii, mimi ni kioo cha jamii”, hivyo kujenga hoja kuwa sanaa ni chombo ambacho kinatumia fasihi kuyaweka bayana matatizo yaliyomo ndani ya jamii zetu. Hivyo basi, leo hii ninadiriki kusema bongo flava inakibarua kikubwa cha kuzungumzia maswala ya jamii ya sisi vijana. Sanaa hii inatoa moja kati ya nafasi chache ambazo vijana tunazo kuelezea na kujadili matatizo yetu. (Bahati 2011)

The artist Afande Sele composed the song “High-Powered Binoculars” which made him famous to the point that he won the King of Rhyme competition. The song talks about various pressing social issues. It also manages to demonstrate the links between the performing arts, in this case Bongo Flava, and the communities in which such expression is produced. Within the lyrics Afande states that “I am an artist, society’s mirror,” with the intention of clarifying that artistic expression uses literary expression in order to lay bare the problems in our society. As a result today I am writing this in order to emphasize that Bongo Flava music has a right and a responsibility to discuss issues of relevance to us as the community of young people. This artistic outlet represents one of the few avenues at our disposal through which we can explain and debate our problems.

Such notions are eloquently and forcefully expressed in *Sina Imani* where Caz-T explains the predicament, in which the youth of Tanzania find themselves, as follows:

<i>vijana wanazagaa mitaani kama siafu</i>	young people are just wandering about in the streets like ants
<i>tatizo ni kwamba wazee hawataki kustafu</i>	the problem is that the old folks don't want to retire
<i>nionavyo mimi wanatuishia stimu</i>	it looks to me like they just want to wear us down
<i>watu wanazurura wakati wanazo elimu</i>	there are people killing time with their degrees in hand
<i>hivi kwa nini maofisini wanang'ang'ania?</i>	so why are they clinging so grimly to their positions?
<i>wako madarakani toka sisi tunazaliwa</i>	they've been in power since we were born
<i>wanachotaka wao wafe wakiwa kazini</i>	it looks like they want to die behind their desks

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wanasahau ya kwamba vijana wapo juani they've forgotten that there are
young people baking in the sun

As the song progresses Caz-T develops a more wide-ranging critique of Tanzanian postcolonial politicians and societies which exposes the abuse of power for personal gain and the failure of the *ujamaa* or collective villagization plan instituted following the Arusha Declaration. It is here that the singer asks the following question:

<i>mnavikumbuka vijiji vya ujamaa?</i>	do you remember the <i>ujamaa</i> vil- lages?
<i>leo hii vyote jamaa, vimechakaa utaona huruma watu walivyochoka</i>	today they are all in ruins and your heart will break for the exhausted people that you see
<i>enyi wazee hamkumbuki mlipotoka?</i>	don't you old folks remember where you came from?
<i>mnabadili magari ya kila aina kijijini chenu mnashindwa chimba kisima</i>	you change cars like shirts but can't find the means to dig a well in your home village
<i>unawakataza vijana wasije mjini</i>	you forbid the youth from migrat- ing to cities
<i>hivi ni nani anayetaka [ku]kaa porini?</i>	but who do you think wants to live in the bush?
<i>hospitali zenyewe mpaka uende mjini wa akina mama wanazalia watoto njiani</i>	even hospitals are only in the cities and women give birth to their chil- dren on the highway
<i>mpaka leo hawajapata umeme</i>	villagers don't even have electricity up to today
<i>kama mmeshindwa basi si msemi!</i>	if you can't handle the job then you should just admit it!

Such a condemnation flies in the face of systems of respect, deference and metaphorical speech or *mafumbo* that characterize interactions in Tanzanian communities especially in contexts where younger individuals address their elders and those with positions of authority.

Such tactics are used in order to reduce the possibility of overt confrontation between the speaker and the addressee and are widespread throughout Eastern and Central Africa. In the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo this type of address is made wide use of in popular music and is known as *mbwakela*, a term roughly equivalent to the Swahili term *mafumbo* mentioned above. Lubangi Muniania describes *mbwakela* as “a phrase, a couple of sentences, even a whole song where you say something insulting or critical without it being easily understood. It is coded language, a secret discourse that goes on under the noses of tyrants and oppressors or a clever way to attack your rivals.” (Muniani 2006) Muniani also goes on to explain that this tactic is employed by citizens of the Congo where there is a sense that, as a result of their lengthy and ongoing oppression, “nobody listens to us.” Thus one might expect that such tactics would be employed by Tanzanian youth, especially when taking into consideration the complex systems of communication and esteem that are often employed in both conversation and written discourse.

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In the case of Caz-T's lyrics, however, this is not so as the open attacks in the above lyrics make clear. Although I would shrink from describing Caz-T's commentaries as explicitly "existentialist" in the way that such a label has been applied to Kezilahabi's works, I do feel that there is a strong, if not obvious component of profound thought combined with knowledge (see Vincent Barry's definition of philosophy above) which places such songs in a meaningful relation to the literary works of Kezilahabi. One crucial aspect of this lies in the critical if not accusatory tone which all of the works dealt with here have in common. Caz-T, in much the same way as Kezilahabi, holds up for scrutiny the prejudices and dysfunctional forms of discrimination which bind their society, young and old to what in their opinion constitutes a flawed trajectory in need of rectification.

These accusations in turn resonate powerfully with the notions expressed, and the manner in which these ideas are represented in the prose works of Euphrase Kezilahabi. The writer's first novel, *Rosa Mistika* represents an exploration of the enduring and harmful legacy of patriarchy and the twisted ways in which gendered power has come to be exercised in Tanzania. I have elsewhere discussed in detail the ambivalent manner in which Kezilahabi deals with the destructive nature of male domination of women (Rosenberg 2011b). As I pointed out in a comparison between Kezilahabi's *Rosa Mistika* and the novel *Parched Earth* (2001) published by the Tanzanian author Elieshi Lema, there is a strong contrast between the "nihilistic [...] self-destructive exploits" (2011b: 48) of the protagonist of *Rosa Mistika* and the relative contentment which Lema's protagonist manages to find for herself in the face of so many oppressive and repressive forces in her life. It can be argued that Kezilahabi's portrayal of the descent into the maelstrom of the young promiscuous Rosa reaffirms society's damning image of women as dangerous sexual forces of nature. At the same time, however, the equally depraved portrait of Rosa's father and the vast majority of the men that she is with throughout the novel demonstrates that in large part the fault for her behavior lies in the nature and severity of the controls placed upon her by those who have power over her, especially her father and her lovers.

The author's disenchantment with postcolonial politics in Tanzania are also forcefully expressed in the novels *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo* (1975) or "The World is a Mess" and *Gamba la Nyoka* (1979) or "The Skin of a Snake" both of which openly criticize the failure of African Socialism and the *ujamaa* villagization process. Both novels were originally published in the period from the 1970s through the 1980s when the first president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, was still firmly in control of Tanzanian politics and these accounts by Kezilahabi therefore represent bold statements in opposition to the ruling party and its founding leader, no mean feat given the status of Nyerere and socialist ideas in Tanzania at the time. Even more caustic was the play which he wrote *Kaptula la Marx* which, although it had been circulating in an unofficial version since 1979 was not published until 1999 (Diegner 2002: 45). This undoubtedly is a result of the fact that the play is an attack on Nyerere and his policies and that the

author felt it prudent to wait until Nyerere had stepped down from power in order to avoid the possibility of any serious negative repercussions that he might be subjected to.

Caz-T's songs are no less polemical and, given the medium in which they are created and disseminated they are ideally placed to activate both thought and action regarding such tendentious issues. As performative texts their style and mode of delivery provide an invasive form of commentary which in many ways is capable of forcing itself upon its listeners. This is true when listeners may find themselves the hapless witnesses to such music while in the street or in the public transport vehicle or *daladala* which crowd the streets of cities throughout the Tanzanian Republic. It is more so when Caz-T's fans go out and purchase his music and sit down, individually or in groups to listen seriously to what he has to say or even go so far as to attend his concerts where they can actually take a part in enacting his commentaries by participating in the singing of such songs. The unification through song into which such Bongo Flava commentaries are converted thus allows for the critical and philosophical thoughts of these young men and women to be legitimated through their rearticulation in a public arena defined by youthful aesthetics.

Comparative strategies

What becomes obvious when we put the songs of Caz-T and the literary works of Euphrase Kezilahabi side by side is the socio-political import and artistic merit of these works and the likely extent to which their youth at the time of their composition lead to the aggressive, even reckless, intensity of their messages and their willingness to confront both the problems of their day and the individuals and groups which they feel are responsible for these deficiencies. The intention of this study is not to demonstrate the superiority of oral/aural forms of expression nor that of Swahili as opposed to English or other European languages. It is not my desire to promote the idea that the expression of young writers and singers in Tanzania and Africa more generally is inherently more important or worthy of study than that of their older counterparts. At the same time, however, any survey of the field will reveal that literary studies as they relate to Africa are still predominantly focused upon works in European languages that are created in ostensibly "western" forms.

It is therefore my desire to at least momentarily invert these paradigms and hierarchies in order to draw attention to the consequence of other types of "texts" in the definition of social realities and identities through indigenous means of expression. The productivity of young artists may be of paramount importance due to the types of interventions which they are willing to undertake. The definitions which they articulate are, as often as not, predicated upon radical reinterpretations if not reformulations of the lived reality of Tanzanian experience both historically and in terms of their contemporary circumstances. As individuals who frequently have the least invested in the maintenance of the *status quo* they are therefore ideally placed to recognize and transform those aspects of their societies which are obstructive to their welfare and, possibly, to that of society as a whole in consideration of what they see their roles

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within it to be. If, as Terrence Ranger has pointed out, traditions in Africa can and have been invented in the colonial past (1975, 1983), this is a clear demonstration of the fact that such young artists, through the powerful discourses which they wield, can reinvent such patterns of self -imagination and can therefore reinvent themselves and their environment according to their new models of custom and praxis.

These tendencies, combined with the masterful command of linguistic and artistic codes within these varied forms of expression make such works worthy of careful and detailed investigation: investigation which can provide insight into the shifting nature of African societies generally and that of Tanzania in particular in terms of such young and dynamic populations in this new century.

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