

**THE IMAGE OF WATER
IN THE POETRY OF
EUPHRASE KEZILAHABI**

STUDIA ORIENTALIA 118

THE IMAGE OF WATER
IN THE POETRY OF
EUPHRASE KEZILAHABI

KATRIINA RANNE



Helsinki 2016

The Image of Water in the Poetry of Euphrase Kezilahabi

Katriina Ranne

Studia Orientalia, vol. 118

Copyright © 2016 by the Finnish Oriental Society

Editor

Lotta Aunio

Co-Editor

Sari Nieminen

Advisory Editorial Board

Axel Fleisch (*African Studies*)

Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila (*Arabic and Islamic Studies*)

Tapani Harviainen (*Semitic Studies*)

Arvi Hurskainen (*African Studies*)

Juha Janhunen (*Altaic and East Asian Studies*)

Hannu Juusola (*Middle Eastern and Semitic Studies*)

Klaus Karttunen (*South Asian Studies*)

Kaj Öhrnberg (*Arabic and Islamic Studies*)

Heikki Palva (*Arabic Linguistics*)

Asko Parpola (*South Asian Studies*)

Simo Parpola (*Assyriology*)

Rein Raud (*Japanese Studies*)

Saana Svärd (*Assyriology*)

Jaana Toivari-Viitala (*Egyptology*)

Typesetting

Lotta Aunio

Sari Nieminen

ISSN 0039-3282

ISBN 978-951-9380-90-2

Picaset Oy

Helsinki 2016

CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xi
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Untouched water	1
1.2 Kezilahabi and his splash in poetry.....	4
1.3 Traditional or traditionalist, modern or modernist	8
1.4 Kezilahabi's works	10
1.5 Dividing waters	13
1.6 Flowing lines and memories.....	16
1.7 Research questions	21
2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	25
2.1 Image: Reaching to the skies feet on the ground	25
2.2 Matter, deeper than language	29
2.3 Infinite shades of experience	34
2.4 Tsur's continuums of fluidity-coherence	40
2.5 Listening to the palpable.....	43
2.6 Expressive sound underneath phonemes	47
2.7 Sensing images and imagining senses.....	53
2.8 Conclusions.....	57
3. THE IMAGE OF WATER IN TRADITIONAL SWAHILI POETRY	59
3.1 Water from Allah	60
3.1.1 Pouring with blessing	62
3.1.2 The Purified Prophet	68

3.1.3 Rivers that wash sins out.....	72
3.1.4 The World will dry up	76
3.1.5 Streams of fire and blood.....	80
3.2 Water of people.....	87
3.2.1 Raging waves, vain foam	90
3.2.2 MajiMaji, ‘WaterWater’	95
3.2.3 Swimming and sailing in love	98
3.2.4 Blend of water and erotic.....	101
3.3 Conclusions.....	109
4. THE IMAGE OF WATER IN MODERN SWAHILI POETRY	113
4.1 New streams	114
4.1.1 High, fast, strong.....	114
4.1.2 Unswimmable world.....	117
4.1.3 The One above the waters.....	119
4.1.4 Goodness to bathe in.....	122
4.1.5 Currents of life	124
4.1.6 Sensual streams	129
4.2 Conclusions	132
5. THE IMAGE OF WATER IN KEZILAHABI’S WORKS.....	135
5.1 Water-imbued world view	135
5.1.1 Drops of goodness	135
5.1.2 Obstacles and dependence	138
5.1.3 Might that drowns.....	141
5.1.4 Over-flooding threat.....	146
5.2 Water as mind	149
5.2.1 Water as image of creativity	149
5.2.2 Immersions in subconsciousness	153
5.2.3 A Nightmare in water	157
5.2.4 Steamed into hallucination.....	160

5.3 Liquid ethics	165
5.3.1 Through water into purity	165
5.3.2 Washing the past	170
5.3.3 Judges within water	174
5.3.4 Drowning and destroying	176
5.3.5 Poisoned purity	180
5.3.6 Watering with blood	182
5.4 Conclusions	186
6. THE IMAGE OF WATER IN CONSTRUCTING THE IDEA OF LIFE IN KEZILAHABI'S POETRY	189
6.1 Concepts of time and life	189
6.2 Concepts of life in Swahili	193
6.3. Maisha: Life-span and the world	196
6.3.1. Water as life-span	196
6.3.2 Water as life in the world	197
6.4 Uhai: Being alive	202
6.4.1 Dew, touch of life	203
6.4.2 Drinking the finite elixir	205
6.5 Uzima: Vitality	211
6.6 Desire and procreation	212
6.7 Death	219
6.7.1 Drying – dying	219
6.7.2 Being dead – being dry	222
6.8 Conclusions: Catch of the submersion	224
REFERENCES	229
Primary sources	229
Secondary sources	233

APPENDIX 1: Kezilahabi's poems in Swahili and English translations	247
Kichomi.....	248
Jinamizi	248
Upepo wa Wakati.....	250
Mwamba Ziwani	252
Mto Nili.....	254
Mgomba.....	256
Uvuaji wa Samaki Victoria	258
Kichwa na Mwili	260
Mto wa Haki	262
Fungueni Mlango	264
Nenda Ukanywe!.....	266
Tunatazana	268
Karibu Ndani.....	272
Chai ya Jioni	272
Kilio Kijijini	274
Kisima	276
Hii Moja Hadithi.....	278
Dhifa	280
Njia tulopitishwa	280
Mafuriko.....	282
Kuwako.....	284
Marahaba	286
Mtakaso	288
Dikteta	290
Mafuriko Msumbiji 2000.....	292
APPENDIX 2: <i>Oa</i> by Muyaka bin Haji al-Ghassaniy with an English translation	295

PREFACE

This book, which is an edited version of my PhD dissertation (Ranne 2011), researches the image of water in the poetry of Euphrase Kezilahabi (b. 1944), an acknowledged modern Swahili poet writing in free verse. It is the first extensive analysis of a particular image in Kezilahabi's poetry, and contributes to the research on Afrophone philosophies and their connection to literature.

Kezilahabi's water imagery is contextualised in relation to water imagery in both traditional and other modern Swahili poetry. In addition to the three poetry collections of Kezilahabi (1974a; 1988; 2008), the image of water in Kezilahabi's prose and drama is also discussed. The analysis is text-based, but also seeks to connect the literary images to Kezilahabi's theoretical writing, especially to his ideas of "language of being" and "the eternal now". Moreover, reference is frequently made to the interviews that were conducted with Kezilahabi during fieldwork. In the analysis, special emphasis is placed on the way in which sound is employed in production of water imagery, concentrating on the expressiveness of phonemes. The examination of soundscapes draws from Reuven Tsur's cognitive poetics. Other important references include philosopher Gaston Bachelard and the theories of nonconceptualism.

The research argues that concrete images can convey content that is not paraphrasable, and furthermore that material images in literature deserve more research. They are often interpreted only as symbols, ignoring the multiple meaning potentials in concrete imagery. Moreover, an extensive analysis of a particular material image can make the central philosophical ideas concealed in the literature emerge. The research shows how the image of water constructs the idea of life in Kezilahabi's poetry, illustrating different aspects of life and expressing philosophy that draws as well from Kerewe and Swahili cultures as world philosophies and religions, fusing the influences in innovative ways and discussing both topical issues and the ultimate questions of being alive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Knowledge is a bird in a forest: no one on his or her own can ever catch it.
(Ewe oral tradition)

My research has been supported in numerous and varying ways. They range from a linguist showing me different audio wave patterns on the screen while the little room is filled by the stream of Somali poetry, to a Tanzanian friend using all possible and impossible connections in helping (and succeeding) to find the phone number of a mysteriously disappeared interviewee, and to many scholarships. I have been privileged to be able to focus on the research when staying in five different countries – United Kingdom, Tanzania, Sweden, Finland, and France – working in inspiring environments; and thanks to today’s networks, many of the people I have got to know have helped me further the research even from thousands of kilometres away.

The biggest thanks belong to two wonderful Czech women. First of them is my supervisor Alena Rettová, who has guided the whole process with careful criticism and reassuring support. Her advice has often been condensed in short and to-the-point comments, of which my favourite is: “Just stage your own paradigm shift.” The other Czech “godmother” of my dissertation is Regina Dundelova, a dear friend who has helped me in various stages and aspects of the work.

I am grateful for Euphrase Kezilahabi for the interviews and other support. Sincere thanks also belong to colleagues and friends whose feedback and answers to my various questions have been informative and well-argued, and whose encouragement has inspired and made the work lighter. I would like to present special thanks to some of these people, namely: Haji Mohammed Haji, Stella Rwechungura, Martin Orwin, Stefan Sperl, Ida Hadjivayanis, Mahsn Majidy, Lutz Marten, Kyra Levine, Miia Koivu, and Hannah Gibson.

I am also grateful for Abdilatif Abdalla, Abdulaziz Y. Lodhi, William Mkufya, Ahmad Nassir bin Juma Bhalo, Mikhail Gromov, Clarissa Vierke, Farouk Topan, Natalia Frolova, Tiina Sakkos, Graham Furniss, Philip Jaggat, Chege Githiora, Lindiwe Dovey, Lotta Aunio, Risto Marjomaa, Arvi Hurskainen, Rachel Drazek, Kai Kresse, Gudrun Miehe, Alexandre Desrameux, Alexandra Sokolova, Katariina Timonen, Riina Pykäri, Zuhra Said, Inga-Britt Isaksson Faris and everyone else at the Nordic Africa Institute, my Zanzibari host family, and my Finnish family, especially Salla and Risto Ranne.

The project would not have been possible without scholarships. Finnish Cultural Foundation granted me three generous annual scholarships. Aino and Kaarlo Tiisala Foundation, Otto A. Malm's Foundation, and SOAS Alumni funded my university fees. The Jubilee Fund of the University of Helsinki, SOAS Additional Awards, and Nordic Africa Institute covered my fieldwork expenses; Nordic Africa Institute also granted me a three-month research stay in Uppsala, Sweden. A most sincere thank-you for all the support, economic and otherwise.

*Ecoute plus souvent
Les choses que les êtres,
La voix du feu s'entend
Entends la voix de l'eau.*

Listen more often
To things than to beings,
The voice of fire can be understood
Hear the voice of water.

(Birago Diop, Senegal)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Untouched water*

Iba Ndiaye Diadji, a Senegalese professor of aesthetics, sees water as intrinsic to African ontology. He also argues that water is the most important substance to inspire African artists. (Diadji 2003: 273–275) The importance of water can be seen in the poetry of Tanzanian Euphrase Kezilahabi, which is my subject of research. The image of water is present even in Kezilahabi’s non-fictional texts as a way of speaking about poetry: In the preface to his first poetry collection *Kichomi* ‘Twinge, pain’, Kezilahabi (1974a: xiv) describes “nilivyoanza kujitosa katika ushairi” ‘how I started to immerse myself in poetry’.¹ Later he continues that, in order to understand the poems, the reader “lazima apige mbizi” ‘needs to take a dive’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: xv). Correspondingly, Kezilahabi’s poems in *Kichomi*, and also *Karibu Ndani* ‘Welcome inside’ (1988) and *Dhifa* ‘Feast’ (2008), are imbued with images of water.

Water runs through many other African works of literature, too. My interest in the topic started to grow in 2002 when, as a BA student at the University of Helsinki, I read two novels by Zimbabwean writers: *Zenzele: A Letter for my daughter* (Maraire 1996) and *Nervous Conditions* (Dangarembga 1989). I was intrigued by the way in which in both of those novels the image of river has a special, important meaning, and represents childhood. Later I started to catch sight of water everywhere in African literature: in Somali and Swahili poetry, in *Season of Migration to the North* (Salih 1991), in *Nehanda* (Vera 1993), in *Matigari* (Ngũgĩ 1989), in *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe 1994), and in fairy tales; yet I had not heard of any research on the topic. The commonness of the image is understandable, given the continual physiological necessity of water and the presence of it in everyone’s life, and the scarcity of water in many areas of Africa. Water is also a brilliant symbol for literature, for as Ivan Illich (1986: 24) observes, water “has a nearly unlimited ability to carry metaphors”; doing research on the image of water means exploring almost any theme the poems deal with, often down to the muddy bottom.

The water imagery in Kezilahabi’s poetry offered my interest in the topic a new level. I was drawn to explore the great variety of themes that the image of water in

¹ My translation. All the translations (of poems and other texts) from Swahili into English in this work are mine, unless otherwise stated. The dictionary translations from French (and Finnish) are mine as well. In this book the Swahili quotations are in *italics*, their English translations in single quotes, and other quotations in double quotes.

Kezilahabi's works represents, but what makes researching the image in his poetry especially intriguing is the way in which the writer uses it: by fusing the traditional and contemporary, drawing from Kerewe culture,² traditional Swahili literature and world literature, shuttling between the subconscious, dreams or hallucinations and the concrete reality, discussing ethics, and expressing his philosophy of life, all through vivid and illustrative water imagery. Kezilahabi, a conspicuous reformist of Swahili literature, has attracted much academic attention with his prose and created much debate with his free verse poetry, but the debate mostly concentrated on the form; I argue that the imagery in Kezilahabi's poetry has not yet been profoundly analysed, not to mention the image of water in his works.

Most academic disciplines deal with water in some way: there is considerable research on water resource management, environmental issues, water legislation, and some studies on the ritual uses of water from the theological and anthropological points of view. Some anthropologists have argued that the importance and many meanings of water have been neglected by anthropology, because of the practical side: "Human activities which have an obvious utilitarian aspect often fall completely outside the interest of anthropologists occupied with systems of meaning" (Dahl & Megerssa 1990: 21), and it is true that much of the anthropological research on the meaning of water has been carried out only after the argument of Dahl and Megerssa (e.g. Iser 1993; Ingold 2000; Tounouga 2003; Strang 2004). However, the accusation would still be valid in the case of literature research, especially of African literature. To my knowledge, there is no research on the meaning (let alone more specific research of the image, symbol, or metaphor) of water in any African literature. The image of water is not widely researched in other literatures, either.³ The literary research made on Kezilahabi is not an exception, quite the opposite – the researchers do not even mention the image of water, yet in my view it is quite a central image in his works.

2 Kerewe refers to the language and culture of the area, Ukerewe; in English, the term is used without the *ki* prefix, like with Swahili instead of Kiswahili. The term Kerewe however comes into English from Swahili, for in the original language, the island is Bukerebe, and the language is Kikerembe (Kezilahabi 2001: 181); in Swahili the terms are Kikerewe and Ukerewe. Correspondingly, Wakerewe refers to the people; in this book, people are nevertheless referred to with the term Kerewe, and Swahili instead of Waswahili, for as Alamin Mazrui (2007: 13–14) argues, in English, using mere Swahili for the language, people, and culture is the clearest option.

3 I was only able to find a few studies concentrated on water in literature. Kerstin Eksell (1997) has studied the image of water in Arabic *Jahiliya* poetry, in a formalistic way. Donald R. Dickson (1987) has examined water typology in the works of Herbert, Traherne, and Vaughan. Yrjö Oinonen (1945) has researched water nature in the poetry of the early 20th century Finnish writers. The nature imagery in general has nevertheless been researched quite widely.

It can be argued that image is an especially fruitful and significant subject of literary research because it expresses information that could not otherwise be conveyed: it is a picture in words, and a material image can also be seen as a perception or experience in words. As literary researcher Hugh Kenner (1975: 28) puts it, “[a]ny image is by nature more vivid than any statement”. Image as a subject of research has a feature that is of particular advantage when the original language of the poems is unfamiliar to the majority of the public, and the researcher has to translate the poems that are examined: “An image can even be transferred without essential damage into another language. An abstract term often can’t. [...] Because an image introduces a thing rather than a concept, it resists this sort of deformation.” (Kenner 1975: 26) This is the strength of the image of water, as well – water, H₂O, is the same everywhere in the world.

Notwithstanding, the word *maji* in Swahili means a bit more than ‘water’ in English. It is the word for ‘liquid’ (together with the word *majimaji*, which is the reduplicated form of *maji*), and can in general stand for ‘fluid’, ‘moisture’, and ‘damp’. It is also used in the meaning of ‘juice’, for example for the juice of lemon flesh. Besides, *maji* and *majimaji* can be used as adjectives, meaning ‘wet’, ‘damp’. As Johnson in his *A Standard Swahili–English Dictionary* (1939) notes, the word *maji* is “[a]lso used in the sense of being absolutely tired or exhausted, e.g. in a liquid state, i.e. nothing solid left”. In addition to these senses which ‘water’ in English does not share, both *maji* and ‘water’ are used for the body secretions.

Moreover, there are the different environmental factors that for example make pure water a scarcer resource in Tanzania than in the UK. Then again, nuances of this kind are never translated. Translating as such is always bound to lose something; Derrida (2000: 181) talks about idioms being untranslatable, but this can be applied to all language: “As always, the idiom remains irreducible. [...] This idiom is untranslatable, ultimately, even if we translate it.” Yet exploring the somehow universal images in different cultures can nevertheless illuminate the reality and inner worlds of the “imagist”,⁴ especially in the case of images in poetry: as Kezilahabi (1973: 62) argues, poetry can be seen as “the best aspect that reveals the peoples’ deepest feelings”. In this way, despite its perpetual, inevitable imperfectness, translation can greatly further *translatitudo* understanding.

This introduction chapter starts with discussion regarding the historical context of Swahili poetry in which Kezilahabi emerged, and the debate of

4 *Imagists* is a word that was used for a group of American poets in the early 20th century. Some of their aims seem to be shared by Kezilahabi, or at least are fulfilled in his poetry: to show an image, to choose any subject, to use exact words but in the language of common speech, to suggest without telling through complete statements.

modern versus traditional Swahili poetry. After that, Kezilahabi's works are briefly presented, along with a few books by other writers that offer context. This is followed by discussion on the connection of water, both to Kezilahabi and to Swahili poetry in general. Finally, the research questions and the structure of this book are presented.

1.2 Kezilahabi and his splash in poetry

Euphrase Kezilahabi was born on 13 April 1944, in Namagondo, a village on Ukerewe Island in Lake Victoria (Nyanza), Tanzania. Kezilahabi was first educated, at primary and secondary levels, in a mission school near Lake Victoria, in Ukerewe. He received his BA and MA degrees at the University of Dar es Salaam, completing his MA degree in 1976. Later Kezilahabi continued his studies at the University of Wisconsin, in Madison, USA, finishing his second MA in 1982 and his PhD in 1985. Kezilahabi's doctoral dissertation, *African Philosophy and the Problem of Literary Interpretation*, deals with the concepts of being and language, and the possibilities of the emancipation of Africa, from a Marxist point of view; this and some of his other academic works are also referred to in this book.⁵ Nowadays Kezilahabi is working as professor of African literature at the University of Botswana in Gaborone, Botswana.

Swahili poetry is one of the oldest forms of written literature in East Africa,⁶ and it is an object of pride for the Swahili-speaking people. Throughout the centuries, poetry has held a very important role in the society, and it is used on various occasions and for various purposes, ranging from celebrations to political debate that has been pursued through poetry. The prosody of traditional Swahili poetry has rigid rules, and a person who is able to create beautiful poetry according to these rules is esteemed. Traditionally, the Swahili poet has been a Muslim from the Swahili coast, with Swahili as his/her first language.

Against this background, it is understandable that the emergence of a new type of Swahili poets in the 1970s created a furious debate.⁷ Kezilahabi, who was the first African to publish a collection of Swahili poetry in free verse, and other

⁵ I definitely do not see Kezilahabi's theoretical works as the key to his poetry, but it is interesting to examine the theoretical works as well. In any case, the poet and the researcher can be contradictory, but it is not possible to fully separate them, either.

⁶ There are many different estimations of the "birth" of Swahili poetry, as well as the language. Mulokozi & Sengo (1995: 1) date written Swahili poetry to the 11th century; Lodhi, Faris & Lodhi (1974: 1) date the first Swahili poems to the 10th century. The approximations vary greatly, since a language and its literature do not emerge from nothing.

⁷ Mulokozi (1992: 56) regards the year 1969 as the year during which young Swahili poets started to write in free verse.

young modernist poets differed from the traditional Swahili poet in many ways. They did not follow the centuries-old prosody but wrote in free verse; they were university-educated (concentrated at the University of Dar es Salaam), and they did not necessarily have Islamic background,⁸ and often came from inland Tanzania. Consequently, their Swahili was not as strongly influenced by Arabic as the Swahili of traditional poetry, and it had impact from other Bantu languages. Moreover, not only their form but also their topics and use of Swahili were different from the traditional: these new poems often dealt with individualist questions, even taboos, such as suicide.⁹ Farouk Topan (1974a: 186) describes modern Swahili poetry as “constant interaction in the thoughts of the poet between himself as an individual and the world around him”, in contrast to traditional Swahili poets who “seem to have accepted the dictates of their cultures quite happily”.

In the debates on the new type of Swahili poetry, which lasted for years, the fronts of *wanajadi* ‘traditionalists’ and *wanamabadiliko* ‘reformists’ presented very different views of what can be called Swahili poetry and who can write it (see, e.g. Bertoncini-Zúbková 1994a: 205; Mazrui 2007: 45–46). Kezilahabi’s poem *Vipanya* ‘Mice’, published in 1971, as well as other free-verse poems published in magazines after it, were called *mashairi guni* ‘defective poems’ – actually the most categorical ones did not allow even that term, since they did not regard the new type of poetry as *mashairi* ‘poetry’, at all. They were also called *masivina* ‘rhymeless poetry’ (Mulokozi 1989; Njogu & Chimerah 1999: 112). The traditionalists regarded free verse as a thoroughly Western way of writing which Kezilahabi and his likes have adopted from abroad.¹⁰ Even people who welcomed the new trend saw it “obviously influenced by modern English poetry” (Topan 1974a: 176), and since the first poems of *Kichomi* were originally written in English, but trans-

8 Kezilahabi is Christian, as was Crispin Hauli; Ebrahim Hussein is Muslim. A poem of each of these writers was published in Topan’s (1974a) article “Modern Swahili Poetry”. Ebrahim Hussein concentrated later on plays and has never published a poem collection. The late Crispin Hauli did not publish a collection of poems either, but published a play; however, one of Hauli’s poems in English was published in *Poems from East Africa* (1996). Mulokozi (1992: 56) also mentions Kenyan Jared Angira as one of the earliest modernist Swahili poets; Angira has published Swahili poems in literary magazines, but his published poem collections are in English.

9 Kezilahabi’s poem *Kisu Mkononi* ‘A Knife in hand’ depicts a person considering suicide (Kezilahabi 1974a: 13, not included in Appendix 1).

10 This accusation is common in regard to modern African literature in general. According to K.L. Goodwin (1982: ix), for example South African poet Mazisi Kunene sees neo-African literature as rooted more in European than African literature models. Some, such as Tanure Ojaide (1995: 4), acknowledge that the new poetic trends have incorporated old African poetry traditions. Ojaide (1995: 6–8) notes that in the 1970s there began a strong tendency to decolonise African poetry: while in earlier poetry influences from e.g. Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot could be seen, from the 1970s onwards foreign impact was avoided, and poetry was, in the fashion of the time, harnessed to socio-economic liberation.

lated into Swahili by the writer himself, some influence of English free verse poetry seems indisputable.

However, Kezilahabi (interview, 30 Mar. 2009) himself sees his use of free verse based on the free verse poetry in other Bantu languages. It is important to note that free verse has been used in old Swahili poetry as well, for example in lullaby lyrics (Kahigi & Mulokozi 1979: 12–14). Edgar C. Polomé (1967: 226) also remarks that the old *mavugo* wedding songs of Swahili culture do not have rhyme or measure of vocal syllables. Moreover, Kezilahabi (1977: 69) criticises the previous views on Swahili poetry that stress the Arabic influence, and declares: “Badala ya kutazama Uarabuni au Uajemi kuna nini, siku hizi tunatunga mashairi kufuatana na matatizo yetu hapa” ‘Instead of looking at what the Arabic world and Iran have, nowadays we compose poetry following our own entanglement here’. The remark of Arabic world is due to the “Arab myth”: the (Western) researchers credited the rich culture of Swahili people to Arabians, still long after independence of the East African countries (J. De V. Allen 1982: 228; Lodhi 2000: 49).

The question of influences in literature is in a way irrelevant, since all writers are influenced by several people, artistic works and other factors – it is impossible to trace all of them. Moreover, as Rainer Arnold (1973: 69) notes, Swahili is “no more the language of a limited community of coastal towns and villages” but a national language, and today also the lingua franca of the whole East Africa, spoken by more than one hundred million speakers. As the body of the speakers has dramatically changed, it is inevitable that literature in the language will alter considerably as well. Many new mainland writers use their local languages, myths and traditions as a source of inspiration; Kezilahabi draws from Kerewe culture (along with other African and Western literatures). What is more, it has been argued that the traditionalist form of Swahili poetry is connected to the old nobility (e.g. Saleh 1990), so modern, modernist poetry could perhaps be seen acting as a liberator in a deeper sense than just in freeing the rigid poetic form. Kezilahabi’s motivation for this “liberation” can also be linked with his political views: he spent his young adulthood in a strongly Marxist environment.

One of Kezilahabi’s aims, which he declares in his preface to *Kichomi*, is the use of ordinary language: “Jambo ninalotaka kuleta katika ushairi wa Kiswahili ni utumiaji wa lugha ya kawaida; lugha itumiwayo na watu katika mazungumzo yao ya kawaida ya kila siku.” ‘A thing that I want to bring into Swahili poetry is the use of ordinary language; the language that people use in their ordinary, everyday chitchats.’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: xiii) Farouk Topan agrees that Kezilahabi “consciously used ordinary words in Swahili, which was then easy for his readers (for whom Swahili was not a mother-tongue) to understand and appreciate” (Topan, pers. comm. 18 Apr. 2006). Alamin Mazrui (2007: 65) defines

Kezilahabi's position as "a launching of Wordsworth's linguistic revolution in Swahiliphone Africa", and sees it as a transition from the use of poetically established dialects (favoured in traditional Swahili poetry) into poetry written in more generally understood Swahili.

Then again, unlike the majority of people in Swahili-speaking countries, the writers of free verse are highly educated, whereas a majority of conservationist poets have not had Western education, which could be seen to set the free verse poets apart from ordinary Swahili people. Hence Mazrui (1992: 70) and Kimani Njogu (1995: 141) argue that in the Swahili community it is actually the traditionalists who are "people's poets". However, on the level of language, modernist Swahili poetry certainly is much closer to the language that the ordinary (native or non-native) Swahili speaker uses today, and hence does not require from the reader a similar knowledge of Arabic, or familiarity with the dialects of Amu (from Lamu) and Mvita (from Mombasa) that are often used in the classical poetry. As Mazrui (1992: 74–75) points out, the archaisms and lexical contractions in traditional Swahili poetry also pose difficulties for ordinary Swahili readers; but modern poetry is regarded as more difficult in other ways, mainly because of its themes and symbols. According to Farouk Topan (pers. comm. 18 Apr. 2006), Kezilahabi's audience is certainly the educated elite and university students. Topan (pers. comm. 18 Apr. 2006) notes that Kezilahabi's remark of the ordinary language is probably connected to the difference between the mainland and the coast of Tanzania: for example, the classical poems from the coast have references to Qur'anic verses, and people on the mainland found them too Arabicised in other ways as well. Hence as a poet Kezilahabi has probably not escaped delimiting his audience, either, but at least he offers alternatives to the traditional way of writing poetry, and catches an audience that might otherwise have resorted to foreign free verse poetry. As Topan (1974a: 176) presents it, modern Swahili poetry can be seen rather to enrich than endanger the genre.

Kezilahabi's and others' reform of poetry was against a strong combination: a much appreciated, very active way of writing with rigid forms that are determined in detail. As Alamin Mazrui (2007: 45–47) notes, another reason for Swahili poetry being expressly non-flexible for changes is that it was already a written genre, whereas *ngano* 'dialogue poetry', as an oral genre, was transformed into drama without much discussion. However, it can be seen that the fiery battle between traditionalists and modernists has now subdued: one example of this is the emergence of the "intermediate trend", which combines modernist and traditionalist features (Gromov 2009). Recently, modernist poets have used tradition-

alist techniques in their poetry for other purposes than mere mockery,¹¹ and some of the most strongly-opinionated defenders of traditionalist Swahili poetry, such as Kitula King'ei (2000), have also published some poetry in modernist style.

1.3 Traditional or traditionalist, modern or modernist

In this book, the terms “traditional poetry” and “modern poetry” are often used. With “traditional poetry” I mean poetry written in Swahili before the middle of the twentieth century, which can be seen as the beginning of modern Swahili poetry. As Barry Hallen (2006: 275–276) notes, the term “traditional” is problematic. It is often seen to imply a static nature of culture, whereas “modern” is seen as connected to change and openness; in this book the use of the words “traditional” and “modern” intends not to include such implications. Another problem is the implication of two completely different things: as Hallen (2006: 302) puts it, “[t]radition and modernity are not ‘opposed’ (except semiotically), nor are they in ‘conflict’. All this is (bad) metaphorical talk.” Seeing traditional and modern as strict opposites is certainly not possible in Swahili poetry, because some of the old poetry is written in free verse, and some of the recent poetry follows the traditional Swahili prosody; some of the old poetry deals with very “modern” topics and some of the new poetry with “traditional” ones.

In his presentation at the workshop “Swahili Poetry in Performance: Voice-overs and counterpoints on poetic trends and continuities”, on 16 September 2009 in Nairobi, Mikhail Gromov introduced the idea that in addition to “traditional Swahili poetry” and “modern Swahili poetry”, there is a need for the terms “traditionalist Swahili poetry” and “modernist Swahili poetry”. This indeed clarifies the issue: modern, that is to say recently written, Swahili poetry can be either modernist or traditionalist. Moreover, as Gromov (2009) notes, there can also be seen an “intermediate” trend: some poets, such as Crispin Hauli (in Topan 1974a) and Said Ahmed Mohamed (e.g. 1980; 1984; 2002), combine stylistic principles of both traditionalist and modernist Swahili poetry. However, this classification seems to work best with modern poetry: calling centuries-old free-verse poetry “modernist” can be argued to be problematic. In spite of this criticism towards Gromov’s idea, this book seeks to follow his division of modern and traditional, modernist and traditionalist.

¹¹ Gromov (2009) notes that in the 1970s Mulokozi and Kahigi used traditionalist style in their poetry out of “mockery”, to show that they were able to use the traditionalist forms perfectly well; but that poets such as Kezilahabi and Kithaka wa Mberia nowadays employ also traditionalist forms “as living tissue, as stylistic devices which are successfully become [*sic*] part of even modernistic poetic environment”.

Even when modern is separated from modernist and traditional from traditionalist, it is perhaps still questionable whether a certain point in time can be viewed to divide poetry into two historical parts. Nevertheless, some classification is arguably clarifying and justified. In this book, the division into traditional and modern poetry is made because Euphrase Kezilahabi is generally presented as a profoundly modern poet (e.g. Topan 1974a; Bertoncini 1980: 86), and by separating traditional poetry and modern poetry we get two background units for the contextualisation of his poetry. Shaaban Robert, a famous Tanzanian writer (1909–1962), is often considered to be the first modern poet,¹² and also in this book he is the dividing line between the old and the new, being the first one included in the modern poetry.

Importantly, Shaaban Robert has had great influence on Kezilahabi himself: Kezilahabi has written his MA thesis (Kezilahabi 1975) and later a book about the literature of Shaaban Robert (Kezilahabi 1976a). In general, Kezilahabi seems to strongly identify with modern poets and to openly detach himself from traditional Swahili poetry: in some of his poems Kezilahabi shows contempt for traditional(ist) poets and argues for the need of new winds in Swahili poetry.¹³ While for example Shaaban Robert has certainly influenced Kezilahabi, Kezilahabi himself has been influential to many other modern, especially modernist, Swahili poets. He is acknowledged for example in the introduction of Kitula G. King'ei's (2000) introduction to his poem collection *Miale ya Uzalendo* 'Rays of patriotism', where he writes: "Katika diwani yake ya Kichomi (1974), E. Kezilahabi

12 Lambert (1964: 205) notes that Robert is "considered by some the Poet Laureate of modern Swahili"; Bertoncini-Zúbkova (2008: 36) regards Robert as "a link between classical and modern Swahili literature". As an example of the difficulty of separating traditional and modern Swahili poetry, it can be noted that, instead of Shaaban Robert, M.M. Mulokozi (1975: 49) considers Muyaka bin Haji the "Father of Modern Swahili poetry"; Muyaka lived approximately 1776–1840. Mulokozi's outlook is probably influenced by the conception of Muyaka being the first secular Swahili poet; Lyndon Harries (1962: 2) famously states that Muyaka "brought Swahili poetry out of the mosque and into the marketplace". However, there was secular Swahili poetry before Muyaka and during his times (but much of it has not been preserved); moreover, Muyaka also wrote religious poems. Kezilahabi (1983: 149) himself considers the year 1967 as the beginning of modern times, also in regard to literature: *Miaka 1967 hadi leo tunaweza kuuita wakati wa sasa. [...] Washairi wengi walianza kuwa na mtazamo mpya.* 'The years from 1967 until today can be called modern time. [...] Many poets started to have a new outlook.' In contrast, Kezilahabi regards the period 1960–1967 as *miaka ya kuyumbayumba* 'years of swaying' in Swahili poetry, because of the lack of goals after reaching independence; at the end of the decade, increasing research on Swahili poetry and criticism on older research also contributed to the change in poetry (Kezilahabi 1983: 149). Kezilahabi's notion of "new outlook" probably includes a reference to the first free-verse poems written in Swahili around the year 1967.

13 It is often difficult to say whether the criticism applies to traditional or traditionalist poetry; perhaps it foremostly applies only to recently written poetry that follows the traditional prosody and that is traditionalist also in its themes (i.e. traditionalist modern poetry).

amezua mbinu mpya ya ushairi” ‘In his collection of poems *Kichomi*, E. Kezilahabi has invented a new method of poetry’ (1974a: xix).¹⁴

It should be noted that whether traditional or modern, all the analysed poetry in this book is part of “collected poetry”, that is, poetry that can be found in poem collections. The term has been used by Mulokozi and Sengo (1995) and Gromov (2009), and it acknowledges the fact that the majority of both modern and traditional Swahili poetry cannot be found in poem collections: the main part of traditional Swahili poetry has not been preserved to these days, and the main part of modern Swahili poetry is published rather in newspapers and other forums than poem collections. The unprofitability of book publishing, outside the wide school book market, is one of the reasons for the small correspondence of the amount of poetry written and the amount of poetry published. Another factor is perhaps the difference in the nature of poetry between East Africa and Europe: it can be argued that Swahili poetry is a more elemental part of everyday life and the society than poetry in the contemporary West, and that oral poetry has more room and prestige than in today’s Europe.¹⁵

1.4 Kezilahabi’s works

Kezilahabi’s first poem collection, *Kichomi* ‘Twinge, pain’, was published in 1974, and it was the first collection of Swahili poetry in free verse by an African author. K.K. Kahigi and M.M. Mulokozi had published their *Mashairi ya kisasa* ‘Poems of today’ a year earlier (and its preface is dated 1972); but as Elena Bertoncini-Zúbková (pers. comm. 28 Sept. 2011) notes, *Mashairi ya kisasa* is rather a transition than yet free verse – although its poems are not canonical *utenzi* or *shairi*, they have end rhyme. Already the title of Kezilahabi’s *Kichomi* ‘Twinge, pain’ can be regarded as symptomatic: as Mazrui (2007: 67) comments, it “suggests that Kezilahabi was conscious that his collection would provoke the indignation of the conservationists”. Except for one poem written in *shairi* metre, all the poems in *Kichomi* are in free verse, as are the poems in Kezilahabi’s further collections, *Karibu ndani* ‘Welcome inside’ (1988) and *Dhifa* ‘Feast’ (2008).

Kezilahabi’s first novel, *Rosa Mistika* (proper name; 1971), draws from what the writer saw when studying at a boarding school. The novel depicts a girl who has a very strict upbringing and later is confused while facing the freedom of a boarding school – ending up in destructive relationships and being disdained

14 In general, King’ei writes traditionalist poetry, and for a long time opposed modernist Swahili poetry. However, in *Miale ya Uzalendo* there is also one poem in modernist style.

15 Nonetheless, with the relatively recent emergence of poetry slams, the importance of orality in poetry can be seen to have increased in the West, as well.

by the society. Kezilahabi's second novel, *Kichwamaji* 'Hydrocephalus' (1974b), deals with the question of Western education. The university-trained protagonist feels alienated from traditional society, causing a great deal of misery through his irresponsible behaviour. The novel is embedded with existentialist philosophy; Kezilahabi has named for example Camus and Beckett as his influences (Bernander 1977: 49; Bertoncini-Zúbková 1989: 108–109). At the end of the novel, the main character has settled down and married, but does not find a reason to live and consequently commits suicide. Kezilahabi's third novel, *Dunia uwanja wa fujo* 'World, the arena of chaos' (1975) again has existentialist undertones and discusses the question of the alienation of the new educated class, with the historical perspective of Tanzanian Ujamaa socialism. Its protagonist makes an about-face in his life and, after his wild years, settles down as a farmer. After years of hard work however, he faces losing all his estates as a part of Ujamaa reformation. Similarly, Kezilahabi's fourth novel, *Gamba la nyoka* 'Skin of snake' (1979), deals with Ujamaa politics, representing both the perspective of the peasants forced to move to another area, and the view of revolutionary leaders.

Kezilahabi's last two novels, *Nagona* 'proper name' (1990) and *Mzingile* 'Labyrinth' (1991) have also been called novelettes and even anti-novels. They are written in a post-modern, experimental style that fuses fable-like narration, references to various world philosophies and religions, disrupted structure, magical elements, and deep symbolism. Both *Nagona* and *Mzingile* address themes that are present in Kezilahabi's previous works, but in a totally original way. *Nagona* and *Mzingile* are part of a trilogy: in the third book, when he will have time to write it, Kezilahabi aims to combine the post-modern aspects with a more realistic style of his early prose works (interview, 30 Mar. 2009; pers. comm. 10 Oct. 2016). Kezilahabi has also written a play *Kaptula la Marx* 'Marx's shorts' (written in 1979, published in 1999), which is a satire criticising the politics of Ujamaa, and a few short stories.¹⁶

Although most researchers emphasize the Western influence on his works,¹⁷ Kezilahabi himself sees *Nagona* and *Mzingile* especially as drawing heavily from Ukerewe oral literature and traditions. Kezilahabi comes from the same ethnic

16 *Mayai: waziri wa maradhi* 'Mayai: Minister of illnesses' (2004) was published already in 1978 in the newspaper *Mzalendo* ('The Patriot'). Similarly, *Cha mnyonge utakitapika badharami* 'The Food of the wretched you will vomit in public' (1992) was published already in 1985 in *Mzalendo*.
 17 Especially Bertoncini-Zúbková regards Kezilahabi's works as "[c]learly influenced by modern European literature" (2008: 101), and his poetry even as "modelled on European poetry" (1992: 45); she finds Kezilahabi's poems "atypical for Swahili poetry and so comprehensible to the Western mind" (1986: 531). Topan (1974a: 176) notes influence of modern English poetry.

group as Aniceti Kitereza (1896–1981), the writer of the first novel in Kerewe, and is also related to him. Because Kitereza’s massive novel describes a traditional Kerewe society with anthropological detailedness, it offers a good contextual reference. Kezilahabi has also read the book, though only after starting to write himself (Kezilahabi interview, 30 Mar. 2009); but what is important is not the literary influence of the novel but its descriptions of Kerewe culture and world-view. As its title *Mr. Myombekere and His Wife Bugonoka, Their Son Ntulanalwo and Daughter Bulihwali: The Story of an ancient African community* reveals, the novel narrates the story of the life of a Kerewe couple and their children. The lives are followed from the early marriage of the parents to the last years and death of their children, and thus the novel presents more than a full circle of human life, everything from birth to adulthood, marriage, family life, work, illnesses, customs, celebrations, and old age.

Kitereza wrote the novel in 1945 in his mother tongue, Kerewe. Because he could not find a publisher for the original manuscript, he was advised to translate it into Swahili, and decided to do so although he found the job very demanding; consequently, the Swahili version has many shortcomings, which is noted by the translator himself, in parentheses in the middle of the novel: “hatuwezi kuzitaja zote sababu ya shida ya kutojua tafsiri yake katika Kiswahili; safi yake hasa ni katika chimbuko lake la kitabu: Myombekere na Bugonoka (etc.) kwa Kikerebe” ‘we cannot mention all because of the problem of not knowing the translation in Swahili; the exact, proper expression of it is in the original book: Mr. Myombekere and His Wife Bugonoka (etc.) in Kerewe’ (Kitereza 1980: 165). The Swahili translation was however somewhat more successful in the publishing world: Kitereza finished the translation in 1969 and it got published in 1980. In 2002, a grandchild of the author, Gabriel Ruhumbika, translated the Kerewe original into English. Because of the aforementioned shortcomings in the Swahili version, this research mainly refers to the English version of the book.

The image of water occurs frequently in Kitereza’s novel. The importance of water can be seen in many details, for example in the way in which the different months are referred to. “There are twelve months in the whole year which comes and goes out of this sea”, the main character Myombekere says (Kitereza 2002: 308), and many of the months are described with water imagery, for example: “The fifth: Kaboza. What is seen during that month is the daily falling of drizzling rain, of the type called ‘girls-fun-rain’, in which girls play while chanting: ‘Girls, it’s raining, we are getting wet!’” (Kitereza 2002: 310). Many of the sayings in the novel also are water-related, such as “The river always flows through its old bed” (Kitereza 2002: 591) or “The slow boat also lands” (Kitereza 2002: 612). Building a carefully crafted boat is a major event at the end

of the novel (Kitereza 2002: 656–660), and the translator notes that Kerewe people are famous for their superior boat-building skills and fishing techniques (Ruhumbika 2002: xvi). Kitereza’s novel is in many ways a subtle praise of Kerewe culture; it is noteworthy that while Kezilahabi is a reformist and critic of the traditional, Kitereza’s view can be seen expressed by a young character in the book: “I must also admit you our elders really know how to speak and don’t talk anyhow like we young people!” (Kitereza 2002: 562).

Another point of reference for Kezilahabi’s water imagery is Ebrahim N. Hussein’s play *Kinjeketile* ‘proper name’ (1969). The play presents a fictional interpretation of the historical event: Maji Maji Resistance War, in which the Tanzanian soldiers thought they were protected from the bullets of Germans by *maji*, the special water, because a man called Kinjeketile told them so, after being possessed by a spirit, Hongo. Kezilahabi himself regards *Kinjeketile* as influential to the image of water in his works (Kezilahabi’s comment on my presentation, 2 May 2008, at the 21st Swahili Colloquium in Bayreuth). In an interview I made with him, Kezilahabi (26 Mar. 2009) also acknowledged the importance of the play both for him and for Tanzanians in general: “Ni tamthilia ambayo naikumbuka mara nyingi na hilo wazo la maji alivyoliweka Hussein aliweka vizuri. Na pia katika historia ya Watanzania ni hadithi ambayo watu wengi wanaikumbuka ya *Kinjeketile*” ‘It is a play that I often think of, and the idea of water that Hussein uses in it, it is well employed. In the history of Tanzanians, it is also a story that many people remember of *Kinjeketile*.’

1.5 Dividing waters

*Niseme maji ni maji, pengine utaelewa
Ya kunywa ya mfereji, na yanayoogelewa
Ya umande na theluji, ya mvua, mito, maziwa
Asili yake ni hewa, hayapitani umaji*

A stanza of Julius Nyerere’s (1965: 2) poem *Usawa wa Binadamu* ‘Equality of human beings’

I could say that water is water, maybe you will understand
Drinking water, tap water and water for swimming
Water in dew and in snow, in rain, rivers, lakes
Its source is the air, one cannot exceed others’ waterness

The molecular constitution of water is the same everywhere, yet we find that there are very different kinds of water. Water has the ability to move “between oppositional extremes: it may be a roaring flood, or a still pool” (Strang 2004: 59);

this diversity in the nature of water can be seen in the analysis of the image of water in traditional and modern Swahili poetry.

It can be argued that the basic division of different waters is the sorting into the indispensable source of life and the powerful, dangerous masses of water. Into this division one can incorporate sub-divisions, such as the peaceful but soiling water categorised under the dangerous waters. However, water has very many roles and sides, and accordingly it has been classified in numerous ways, most of which leave some aspects out. According to French anthropologist Camille Talkeu Tounouga (2003: 283), African traditions represent three kinds of water: a source of life, an instrument of purification, and a locus for regeneration. All these aspects can be seen as part of the source of life dimension, for in the holistic view references to the spiritual – such as purification – are manifestations of life force.

Iba Ndiaye Diadji's classification incorporates also the purification facet into the source of life aspect. Diadji (2003: 274) divides water into "life-water" and "death-water": "It is life-water when it purifies, it is death-water when it soils." This capability of soiling is not remarked in the other classifications, even though it can be essential in Africa, where about one third of people lack access to clean drinking water. Then again, Diadji's division does not note water's ability to destroy by its mass and movement.

The Bible contains both great quantities and many different varieties of water.¹⁸ Since Kezilahabi is Christian and uses biblical narratives in his poems, the Bible seems to have influenced his way of writing about water.¹⁹ Donald R. Dickson, a professor of English literature, describes the biblical typology of The Old Testament as containing the following categories: the fountain in Eden and the primitive water of the creation of the world (which are seen as connected), the destructive water of the flood and the destructive potential of the deep, the dew of grace, and the sealed fountain of purity. Dickson (1987: 29–79) also notes the idea of dissolution of the universe at the end of time. Already in the Genesis, a division into two rough categories is presented: God separates the waters into two parts: below and above the firmament (Gen. 1: 6–8). On the other hand, since the fountain of Eden (water as a source of life) is connected with the waters

¹⁸ The references to Bible are made to The English Standard Version (2001), which is an essentially literal yet literary translation; it is more literal than The New International Version (2010 or earlier versions) but more readable than The New American Standard Bible (1971).

¹⁹ Kezilahabi even seriously considered studying to become a priest, but decided to choose another career because one of his brothers was theologian, so there was already a priest in the family (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009). – The water imagery in the Qur'an will be referred to in the first part of Chapter 3, in the discussion on traditional Islamic Swahili poetry.

of the creation and thus the deep, that is, the powerful water masses, the two categories are interconnected.

In The New Testament baptism becomes a very important use of water. Although John the Baptist repeatedly refers to Jesus as the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit instead of water (e.g. Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26; John 1:33), Jesus himself is baptised with actual water when the Holy Spirit descends on him (e.g. Mark 1:10). Indeed, Jesus seems to regard both water and spirit as important in baptism: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) In addition to identifying being baptised with the birth process, water is linked to life in the New Testament also in other ways, as for example in Jesus’ declaration: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” (John 7: 37–38)

The following figure (Figure 1) presents my view of how these different classifications of water – the divisions found in the Bible and the ones presented by Diadji (2003) and Tounouga (2003) – could be combined into a comprehensive categorisation of waters. This division is not necessarily found in the traditional or modern Swahili poetry or Kezilahabi’ works; as an illustration of the divisions of water found in secondary literature (presented in this section), it is rather a reference for the analysis. As will be discussed later in this Introduction, images of some other matter than water are also included in the analysis. These images

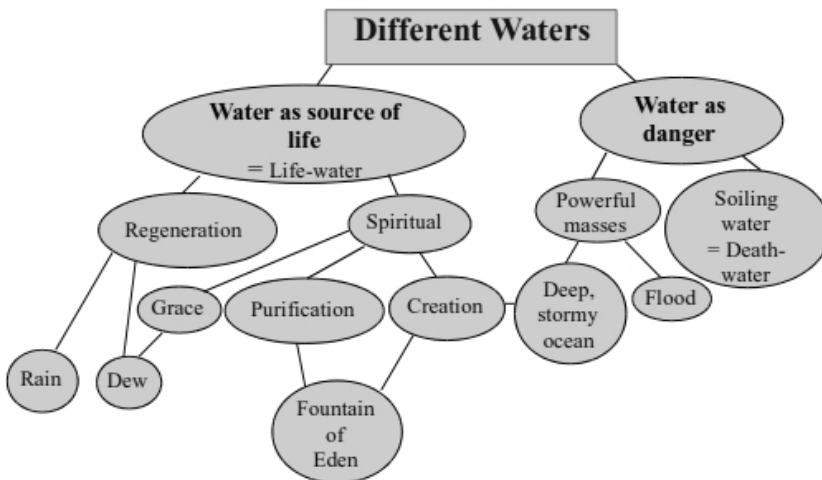


Figure 1 Different waters

either represent the opposite of water, and thus do not belong in the diagram; or they are identified with water, in which case they could possibly be located in the same categorisation as water.

1.6 Flowing lines and memories

For this book, I have translated from Swahili into English the poems of Kezilahabi's three poetry collections that deal with water; the ones that are discussed more closely in this research can be found in Appendix 1 (original ones along with translations), in the same order as in the original collections. Despite the appreciation with which Kezilahabi's production has been received, none of it had yet been published in English when I finished my PhD; in 2015 Annmarie Drury published a selected collection of Kezilahabi's poetry.²⁰ However, *Kichomi* has been translated into Italian, by Bertoncini-Zúbková.²¹

I have made the translations quite literal, so as to serve those readers who have some understanding of Swahili, and on the other hand those interested in linguistics. If the translation is considerably adapted in order to transmit the meaning more fluently, the literal translation can also be found within square brackets. However, the word order is in most cases changed into a more natural word order – Kezilahabi often uses inversion of word order – in order to make the otherwise quite cryptic lines easier to understand. Similarly, the punctuation and the use of conjunctions are generally adapted to the English system. The original Swahili verses are always cited in the book along the translated lines, which enables the reader to examine the auditory dimension of the lines. The system of graphemes is close to the system of phonemes, so it is easy to get the idea of the intended rhythm and sound environment. The stress is on the penultimate syllable in all words (except for a few loan words).

Listening to how the words sound is essential in Swahili even outside poetry: as linguist Abdulaziz Lodhi (2004: 149) notes, ideophones, that is, words and phrases employing sound symbolism, are frequently used in Swahili.²² He also mentions that the use of onomatopoeia, that is, words sounding like the things they represent, is common. Generally the auditory landscape is gentle, for words in Swahili almost always end with a vowel, creating a certain soft flavour. Yet the most important character of Swahili in regard to the smooth nature of the auditory

20 *Stray Truths: Selected poems of Euphrase Kezilahabi*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

21 Translation published in 1987 with the title *Sofferenza*. Napoli: Plural.

22 Ideophones are frequently used in many other African, especially Bantu, languages and literatures, too; see, e.g. Mphande 1992; Irele 1990.

flow of Swahili poetry is perhaps the noun class agreement. Because in most cases the noun class marker comes at the beginning of the word, the consecutive words often start with the same syllable, as for example in *watu wanakimbia* ‘people run’, creating initial rhyme. Sometimes the words rhyme not only in the beginning of the word, but also in other parts, such as in *hivyo ndivyo ilivyo* ‘it is just like this’. Consequently, the rhyming frequency of Swahili is high, making it an excellent language for poetry. As Wamitila (1999: 60) notes, the freeness of word order is another great tool, giving Swahili poetry “a powerful aesthetic value”.

Thus Swahili is a very sonorous and flowing language – just like water – and offers an exceptionally great possibility for the poet to use “auditory imagination”, a term that T.S. Eliot (1975: 118–119) explains as follows: “What I call the ‘auditory imagination’ is the feeling for a syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking in the most primitive and forgotten”. As Eliot describes, the auditory side offers something that the purely semantic aspect cannot express. Although participating in the production of meaning, the auditory dimension also works at a completely different level that is not reducible to the semantic level; this will be discussed in Chapter 2.

There are connections of poetry and water at the level of semantics, too. The word *bahari* means primarily ‘sea’ or ‘ocean’, but is also used as in Swahili literary terminology, either to refer to different types of poetry or the final-line rhyme in *utenzi*.²³ Furthermore, a type of rhymed Swahili poetry is called *mtiririko* ‘gliding’ or ‘trickling’. In this poem category the internal rhymes are similar in the whole text, as are the end rhymes. “The flowing nature of the rhyme is implied by the very name of the category.” (Wamitila 2001: 65) Interestingly, free Swahili verse is sometimes called *ushairi wa mtiririko* ‘poetry of stream’ or ‘flowing poetry’ (Kahigi & Mulokozi 1979: 11). This fits Kezilahabi’s poems, which have both flowing rhythm and plenty of references to water.

Kezilahabi sees that the frequency of the image of water in his poetry is a consequence of his childhood close to water. When asked about the influence of the image of water in the poem *Utenzi wa Vita vya Majimaji* ‘Utenzi of Majimaji War’, he replied: “kimaandishi nafikiri nimeathirika zaidi na hali ya kuishi katika eneo ambalo ni la maji kwa muda mrefu sana, hasa hasa” *Ukerewe* ‘in regard to writing, I think I have been influenced more by living in an area close to water for a very long period, especially in Ukerewe’ (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009). Kezilahabi (interview, 26 Mar. 2009) describes his early relationship to water as a close bond:

23 On the use of the term in Swahili prosody, see p. 151 below. In addition to these senses, *bahari* is also used as a figure of what is of vast extent, what is very extensive, immeasurable.

Mimi ni mzaliwa wa Ukerewe kisiwani katika ziwa Viktoria na huko ndiko nilikokulia kutoka utoto mpaka darasa la tano nilipokwenda kusoma Nyegezi, Mwanza na inabidi uvuke maji. Lakini tangu nikiwa mtoto nilijifunza kuogelea ndani ya ziwa na pia mtoni, na kuna mto ambao umo ndani ya mashairi yangu. Mto unaitwa Nabili na huo mto unatokeza sana katika maandishi yangu, hasa katika mashairi, na huo mto unajulikana sana kisiwani, mto mmojawapo, mto mkubwa sana kuliko mingine yote. Na maji ninayatumia pia katika riwaya ni wazi. [...] Kwa hiyo sisi ni watu wa majini, maji ni kitu cha lazima tunakutana nacho kila siku.

I was born in Ukerewe, in the island in Lake Victoria, and it was there that I grew up from childhood until the fifth grade, when I went to study in Nyegezi, Mwanza, and there you have to cross the water. Since I was a child, I learnt to swim in the lake and the river, too, and there is a river that appears in my poems. The river is called Nabili and it frequently appears in my writing, especially poetry, and that river is very well-known in the island, it is one of the biggest rivers. Clearly I also use water in my novels. [...] So we [people of Ukerewe] are people close to water, and water is a thing with which we necessarily meet every day.

Kezilahabi learnt to swim when he was five or six years old, and he notes that “Ukerewe kila mtu, kila mtoto anajua anaweza kuogelea” ‘in Ukerewe each person, each child knows how to swim’ (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009). The experience of learning to swim is also Kezilahabi’s first memory of water:

Kumbukumbu yangu ya kwanza kuhusu maji labda ni wakati ambapo labda watoto walinisukuma na kunifundisha kuogelea kwenye mto. Sisi unapokuwa mtoto mdogo, watoto wenzako wanakusukuma ndani ya maji halafu unazama kidogo halafu wanakuibua tena, wanakusukuma tena wanakuibua tena. Unaogopa ndio halafu pole pole siku ya pili wanakufanyia tena, siku ya tatu ... baada ya wiki moja unajua kuogelea. [...] Ni mchezo tu, ni kama mchezo, mwishowe unazoea. (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009)

My first memory about water is maybe from the time the children pushed me into water and taught me to swim in the river. When you are a small child [there in Ukerewe], the other children push you in the water, you then sink a bit and they draw you to the surface again, and then they push you again and draw you back to the surface. Yes, you are scared, then a bit by bit, the second day they do that to you again, then the third day ... after one week you know how to swim. [...] It is just a game, like a game, at the end you get used to it.

Bachelard (1983: 163) notes that “The first attempts at swimming provide an opportunity for overcoming a fear.”²⁴ After the initial scariness, swimming seems

24 In the original: “Les premiers exercices de la nage sont l’occasion d’une peur surmontée.” (Bachelard 1942: 219)

to have been a source of joy for Kezilahabi, and correspondingly, Kitereza's novel presents children's swimming as both a pleasure and a useful skill: "Ntulanalwo's favorite pastime became playing in the lake with his friends, since his grandparents' home was near the lakeshore. He played in the lake and learned how to swim and dive, how to somersault in water, how to angle and catch enfuru sardines from the top of rocks in the lake, and how to do other things of that kind in the lake with his playmates." (Kitereza 2002: 445)

While studying and teaching at the University of Dar es Salaam, Kezilahabi lived in the city of Dar es Salaam. However, perhaps a bigger change in environment, also in regard to water, took place when he moved to Wisconsin, USA, for further studies. Although there was a lake (Lake Mendota) nearby, Kezilahabi did not swim there, and during the winters the lake was quite different from Lake Victoria: *kule Wisconsin kulikuwa na baridi sana, ziwa linaganda na watu wanatembea juu ya ziwa* 'in Wisconsin, it was very cold, the lake freezes and people walk on it' (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009). Another significant change in environment was Kezilahabi's move to Botswana: while Kezilahabi (2001: 181) describes Ukerewe as a very fertile island, Botswana is very dry:

Kule ni jangwa, hakuna ziwa kubwa sana, hakuna. Kuna mito na kuna bwawa pale ambalo linatoa maji kwa ajili ya mji mzima, bwawa kubwa, hilo ndilo ambalo nafikiri ndio kama ziwa kwa upande wa Botswana kule [...] lakini maji ni haba kidogo, shauri ni nusu jangwa. (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009)

It is desert, there are no big lakes, no. There are rivers and an artificial pool that brings water for a whole city, a big pool, that I think is like a lake for that side of Botswana [...] but water is quite scarce, maybe half [of the area] is desert.

However, Kezilahabi does not regard the dry environment of Botswana as very influential to his image of drought, but can name other sources of inspiration:

[U]kavu wa Botswana bado haujaniathiri sana katika maandishi yangu, zaidi zaidi ni uhusiano uliopo kati ya Kiswahili na Waarabu ambao sehemu yao kule ni ya jangwa na hilo limeniathiri, ni wazi, pamoja na ukavu ambao unaonekana sehemu za katikati ya Tanzania kama Dodoma na nchi nyingine, ni vitu ambavyo nimeviona wakati nasafiri kwa treni kutoka Mwanza kuja Dar es Salaam. Ila ukifika pale katikati unashangaa hali ya ukavu ambao uko pale. (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009)

The dryness of Botswana has not yet affected much my writing, much more has the relationship that was between Swahili language and the Arabs, whose environment was desert. That has clearly influenced me, together with the drought that you can see in parts of interior Tanzania, like Dodoma and other areas, it is something I have seen when I have travelled by train from Mwanza

to Dar es Salaam. When you reach there in the middle [of the country], you are surprised by the state of drought that is there.

To some extent, moving away from the water-encircled Ukerewe seems to be reflected in Kezilahabi's production: there is a difference between the amount of water in the poems. The biggest difference can be found within the first collection, *Kichomi* (1974a), which is divided into two parts. The first part is named *Mashairi ya Mwanzo* 'First poems'. It has nine poems, five of which have important water images (55.6%); in addition, there is one poem with imagery of drought. The last part, *Fungueni Mlango* 'Open the door', has 33 poems, only two of which significantly use the image of water (6.1%); furthermore, the image of drought appears in three poems. Although the choice of what counts as a significant water (or drought) image may be somewhat subjective, the distinction between the two parts of the first collection is clear. It looks as if the writer's environment, or memories of that environment, had dried during the writing of *Kichomi*, probably in the first years of the 1970s. As the name of the first part suggests and as Kezilahabi in his preface to the collection states, *Mashairi ya Mwanzo* 'First poems' really are chronologically first. This is quite compatible with Euphrase Kezilahabi's personal history: until 1970 he lived by Lake Victoria, and since Kezilahabi published his first poem in 1971, he might well have written some poems before 1970.

In *Karibu Ndani* (1988), four of the 22 poems (18.2%) have important water images, and one of these same poems (*Kisima* 'A Well') also has references to drying. Similarly, in *Dhifa* (2008) seven out of the 53 poems (13.2%) use (important) references to water, and one presents an image of drought. Thus the wateriness of the imagery in the later collections can be situated between the levels of first and second part of *Kichomi*. The frequency of water images in the early poems has not returned, but water references are used much more than during the "dry period" of the latter part of *Kichomi*. During the writing of *Karibu Ndani*, Kezilahabi was living in Dar es Salaam and in Wisconsin, USA from 1982 to 1985. Although Dar es Salaam is situated by the sea and the University of Wisconsin by Lake Mendota, in Kezilahabi's poetry water seems to be foremostly connected with Lake Victoria and River Nabili. Interestingly, all the four poems that use the image of water in *Karibu Ndani* see water in (almost) only a positive light; in *Kichomi* and *Dhifa*, there are also images of dangerous, stormy, and flooding water.

1.7 Research questions

Kezilahabi's works have been quite widely researched, but with emphasis on his novels. Early novels have been researched by Bertoncini-Zúbková (1980; 1986; 1989; 1992; 1996a; 2008), Mulokozi (1983; 1992), Hauner (1984), Mlacha (1987; 1988), Wamitila (1997; 1998), Diegner (2001; 2002; 2007), Garnier (2006), Rehák (2007), Rettová (2007), and Sakkos (2008). The last two of Kezilahabi's novels have attracted a great deal of research: Senkoro (1988b),²⁵ Khamis (2001; 2003), and Diegner (2005) have written on *Nagona*, Mezger (2002) on *Mzingile*, and Wamitila (1991; 1998; 2003b), Mulokozi (1992), Chenou (1997), Gromov (1998), Mbatiah (1998), Rettová (2004; 2007), Khamis (2005), Garnier (2006), and Diegner (2007) on both *Nagona* and *Mzingile*. Interestingly, Mungah (1999) researches the idea of life in these last two novels (see n. 26). Bertoncini-Zúbková (1989; 1994a; 1996b; 2008), Bulcaen (1997), and Wamitila (2000b) discuss Kezilahabi's drama, and Bertoncini-Zúbková (1989; 2004) deals with short stories by Kezilahabi.²⁶

Kezilahabi's poetry has been discussed by Topan (1974a; 1974b), Mulokozi (1975; 1992), Bernander (1977), Saleh (1990), Bertoncini-Zúbková (1989; 1992; 1996b), Mazrui (1992; 2007), Frolova (2001; 2003; 2004), and Acquaviva (2004); however, Kezilahabi's poetry is the main focus of research only in Acquaviva's article and Frolova's works. Moreover, most of these publications on the poetry of Kezilahabi are journal articles, in which the length of the

²⁵ *Nagona* was published in a very small edition already in 1987.

²⁶ Kezilahabi's works have also been discussed (at least) in the following publications, which unfortunately I could not get hold of:

Bertoncini-Zúbková, Elena 1994b. La maladie et la mort dans les œuvres de Kezilahabi [Illness and death in the works of Kezilahabi]. In: J. Bardolph (ed.), *Littérature et maladie en Afrique: Image et fonction de la maladie dans la production littéraire* [Literature and illness in Africa: Image and function of illness in literary production]: 5–26. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Gibbe, A.G. 1982. Baadhi ya Taswira katika Gamba la Nyoka [Some of the images in Gamba la Nyoka]. *Kiswahili* 49/1: 1–8.

Hug, Heinz 2001. Euphrase Kezilahabi: Literat in Swahili. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 254: 32.

Kezilahabi, Euphrase & Heinz Hug 2002. Moderne in afrikanischer Sprache. *Literatur Nachrichten* 72: 9–11.

Msokile, Mbunda 1991. *Uchambuzi na Uhakiki wa Karibu Ndani (E. Kezilahabi)* [Analysis and critic of Karibu Ndani by Euphrase Kezilahabi]. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.

Mungah, Charles Irungu 1999. *Dhana ya maisha katika novela mbili za Euphrase Kezilahabi: Nagona na Mzingile* [The concept of life in two novels of Euphrase Kezilahabi: *Nagona* and *Mzingile*]. Unpublished MA thesis, University of Nairobi.

Rösch, Johann 1986. Auf dem Weg zu einer nationalen Literatur in Tansania: Anmerkungen zum Schaffen von Euphrase Kezilahabi. *Bayreuther Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft* 7: 271–282. Hamburg: Helmut Buske.

medium restricts the possibility for extensive analysis.²⁷ Frolova's postgraduate thesis and PhD dissertation are in Russian, and thus not accessible for most readers.²⁸ Mazrui's 2007 work deals with the language of modern Swahili poetry, not the analysis of the poetry as such.

The importance of images in Kezilahabi's poetry and other works has been mentioned by numerous researchers. Ally Saleh (1990: 89) notes that *picha* 'images' are important in Kezilahabi's poems. Shaaban Ali Kachenje Mlacha (1987: 187) sees that images are "of vital importance in his works in that they portray a style that plays a part in the structure of his novels". Graziella Acquaviva (2004: 69) argues that it is *sitiari na mafumbo* 'the allegories and enigmas', that make Kezilahabi's poetry special. Of specific images, Mlacha (1988) examines the imagery representing conflict, but only in the novels. Mlacha (1987: 189) mentions birds and animals in the novels, and finds it "interesting to note Kezilahabi's use of living things". Likewise, Wamitila (1998: 83) brings up the image of bird in *Kichwamaji*, and argues that it symbolizes life. Interestingly, Senkoro (1988a: 117) notes how the image of bird in Kezilahabi's poem *Nimechoka* 'I am tired', "inadhihirisha wazi falsafa ya maisha yaliyo na mashaka, maisha ambayo chanzo wala mwishowe havijulikani" 'illustrates a philosophy of life of worries, life whose beginning or end is not known'. However, even if the significance of the imagery in Kezilahabi's poetry and its connection to the idea of life is acknowledged, it has not yet been systematically researched. Moreover, to my knowledge, no one has yet even mentioned – let alone researched – the image of water in Kezilahabi's poetry, despite its recurrence. As will be shown in this book, through the analysis of image of water, it is possible to outline and study the idea of life in Kezilahabi's poetry; it can be argued that through a close-reading of other images, other underlying philosophical ideas could be researched.

As with imagery, the auditory aspect of Kezilahabi's poetry has not been adequately researched; indeed, the use of auditory devices in modernist Swahili poetry has, to my knowledge, so far been discussed only by Gromov (2006) in his analysis of Kithaka wa Mberia's poetry. As Gromov (2006) shows, the sound in free verse poetry can be used in quite a different way from traditionalist poetry,

27 While e.g. Topan (1974a) translates and analyses one of Kezilahabi's poems, along with two other poems by modern writers, Bernander (1977: 48) summarises Kezilahabi's *Kichomi* in a sentence: "Political poems, poems about man's aimless wandering, especially the man who bears all the colonial heritage on his shoulders, poems about the great expectations of the new Tanzania."

28 The title of Frolova's PhD dissertation (Moscow, 2004) is *Развитие современной поэзии Восточной Африки на языках суахили и английском (70–90-е гг. XX в.)* [The Evolution of modern East African poetry in Swahili and English (1970s–1990s)]. Her postgraduate thesis (2001) is *Поэтическое творчество Эфраса Кезилахаби* [The Poetry of Euphrase Kezilahabi].

and thus the subject would offer a new perspective. Especially relevant is the use of onomatopoeia, which is frequent in Swahili poetry (both traditional and modern) but which has not yet been much discussed. Furthermore, the connection of sound and meaning, and the role of sound in conveying knowledge that is different from the knowledge transmitted through semantic devices, is an open area of research.

In literary research, images are often studied from the perspective of the concept, for example researching which images are used to express the idea of life. However, it can be argued that this type of research can restrict the view. Firstly, the researcher has already decided which idea is central in the poetry, rather than letting it emerge through the analysis of imagery; and secondly, this research does not appreciate concrete images as such. As Bachelard (1983) and Tsur (2008) argue, images of matter are complex, dense combinations of meaning potentials, and can also work at non-articulate level; interpreting images as a conveyer of a single concept might easily narrow their reading.

This book researches what the image of water represents in Kezilahabi's three poetry collections, *Kichomi* (1974a), *Karibu Ndani* (1988), and *Dhifa* (2008). The analysis is foregrounded by the examination of the image of water in both traditional and modern Swahili poetry, and by the analysis of the image in Kezilahabi's other works of fiction. As the image of water is often connected to the idea of life, a specific emphasis will be given to the way in which water imagery constructs and represents the philosophical idea of life in Kezilahabi's poetry. Throughout the analysis, the use of sound is examined in regard to how water imagery is interwoven with the auditory aspect of the poems.

The subject of analysis is water images of all kind: the images of sea, river, and lake as well as dew, rain, drops, even tears. The image of tea is used in a very similar way as pure water in one poem, and is analysed as well. Similarly, some body liquids, such as semen, are referred to as *maji*, and they are discussed too; often these images also use other water-related references, such as swimming or sailing, and hence they cannot be separated from "pure" water images. Thus the subject of research is more accurately the image of *maji*, not water, in the poetry, for as both Frederick Johnson's *A Standard Swahili-English Dictionary* (1939) and A.C. Madan's *Swahili-English Dictionary* (2000, 1st publ. 1903) summarise, *maji* covers 'water, or what resembles water'.

Some of the poems that are examined closely in this book have only subtle references to water, such as *Chai ya Jioni* 'Evening tea' in *Karibu Ndani*. These poems are included in the research because, even if the direct allusions are scarce, the image of water or a similar liquid is crucial in the poems. Correspondingly, some poems of the collections are not included in the appendix even if they have a clear reference to water. In this case the reference is understandable as such and

does not benefit from the adjacent lines or the whole poem, but creates a separate image. These images of water are discussed in the book by quoting the lines referring to water, and the necessary lines close to them. In most cases the poems left out from the appendix are very long, and the reference(s) to water constitute only a minor part of imagery.

The image of clear lack of water as the intrinsic opposite of water is important for the research, too: the images of dryness are discussed, because they often elaborate the meanings attached to water. In many cases, the poems use the image of blood (or occasionally sand or dust) as the antithesis of water; these poems are also included in the analysis.

The analysis of imagery is text-based, but in the case of Kezilahabi's poetry, reference is frequently made to the two interviews that I had with Kezilahabi in Dar es Salaam in March 2009. The interviews concentrated on Kezilahabi's philosophy, especially his view of the idea of language of Being, and his history with water. When discussing philosophical ideas that are found in fictional texts, it can be argued that even in text-based literary research, having the writer's explicit comments on the topics of discussion as a reference is a great advantage and guidance in contextualisation of the texts.

In the following chapter, the theoretical background and methodology of the research are discussed. The third chapter, "The Image of water in traditional Swahili poetry", gives a context for the research of Kezilahabi's water imagery by presenting my study of the imagery in old Swahili poetry. Correspondingly, the fourth chapter, "The Image of water in modern Swahili poetry", serves to contextualise Kezilahabi's images of water within modern poetry in Swahili. The fifth chapter then focuses on the analysis of images of water in Kezilahabi's fiction, with main emphasis on poetry, but covering his prose and drama works, too. The sixth chapter continues the analysis, now concentrating on the image of water in constructing the idea of life in Kezilahabi's poetry; and as the concluding chapter of the book, this chapter also seeks to draw the findings of the research together. The 22 poems of Kezilahabi with most significant water imagery can be found in the Appendix 1, and one poem by Muyaka, discussed in Chapter 3, in the Appendix 2; original Swahili poems are followed by my translations into English.

2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter begins with a discussion of the term “image” in literary research, and continues with looking at how the three main theoretical points of reference of this research – Gaston Bachelard’s “psychology of imagination”, Reuven Tsur’s cognitive poetics, and nonconceptual philosophy – regard matter (especially the four elements), the base of concrete images, and how their ideas can be connected to Kezilahabi’s own philosophy. Because nonconceptualism is often understood in various ways, its application in this research is elaborated. After that, Tsur’s theory is discussed in greater detail, for while the other theorists mostly offer an approach and support for my general presuppositions, Tsur’s cognitive poetics also provides practical tools for literary analysis. Finally, the importance of sound in poetry is addressed in relation to both earlier literary research, especially to John Shoptaw’s theory of productive reading, and to the theoretical references of this research, with emphasis on Tsur.

2.1 Image: Reaching to the skies feet on the ground

The common use of the term image in literary research goes back to the theory of Hobbes: Hobbes saw sense as the origin of all knowledge, and regarded image as the crucially important, connecting bridge between experience and knowledge (Frazer 1960: 153–154). Although himself a philosopher who was not particularly interested in poetry, Hobbes’s theory had a great impact on literary researchers, and the meaning of the term image was extended to cover any other sense than just sight (Frazer 1960: 154–160). The term image was central in literary criticism from the eighteenth century onwards (Frazer 1960: 155) and can be seen to have been one of the most common literary terms in the 1960s (Frazer 1960: 149).

However, in current literary research, other terms, such as metaphor, are more popular, and the term image is rarely used. In my view that is a pity, for the term has considerable strengths: it covers both symbolic and literal dimensions, and therefore better takes into consideration the many-sided nature of poetic imagery, whereas metaphor, symbol, and other such terms refer too strongly to the symbolic content. Literary researcher W.J.T. Mitchell (1993: 557) notes that image is “a term which designates both metaphor and description, both a purely linguistic relation between words and a referential relation to a nonlinguistic reality, both a rhetorical device and a psychological event”. Similarly, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (2000, emphasis added) summarises

these sides of image well in its definition of the term: “A concrete representation, as in art, literature, or music, *that is expressive or evocative of something else*”. Jean-Jacques Thomas (1987: 497) emphasises the concreteness of images, viewing image “characterized, at the semantic level, by an isotopy of semic features which have to do with ‘concreteness’ and ‘visual representation’”.

When it comes to water in poetry, the literal and concrete dimension is essential. Because of its symbolic power, water is easy to see acting as a metaphor. Metaphor “gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name’, so that it ceases to be airy nothing” (Murry 1975: 8). Water can often be seen as a metaphor, a matter that has dissolved abstract themes into it, but at the same time the concrete side of it is important, too. Ellen Bryan Voigt’s (1991: 254) analysis captures the nature of literary image (as opposed to metaphor or symbol): “The list of opposites is important: concrete rather than abstract; sensation rather than idea; perception rather than concept.” As discussed later in this chapter, the characteristics “concrete”, “sensation”, and “perception” can be regarded as essential to the level of knowledge that is distinguishable from the conceptual.

The multisided nature of image that, to my mind, is the strength of the concept is seen as a weakness by some literary critics. The term has been criticised of being ambiguous (e.g. Frazer 1960), and the fieriest critic of the word “image”, P.N. Furbank (1970), suggests that we drop the term altogether. It is true that the term is used in many different ways, and it breaks down the boundary between literal and symbolic, but that can be seen as desirable. As Mitchell (1993: 557) suggests, the ambiguous use of the term image simply demonstrates the untenability of the figurative-versus-literal language distinction. Moreover, the concept of image captures something particular about the nature of poetry: as Arnold Berleant (1971: 143) notes, referring to Bachelard (1964: 74–77, 86, 88), “poetic language functions as image rather than metaphor [...] as the direct perception of an image and not the conscious analogy by which one understands a metaphor”.

Metaphor is often seen as deeper than image, but Hugh Kenner has an interesting outlook on the matter. He notes that when images are used in a phrase, the phrase is illuminated, and it “exhibits *more meaning, and more definite meaning*, than it did before” (Kenner 1975: 26, original emphasis). When considering terms such as metaphor, simile, or synecdoche, Kenner (1975: 30) observes that all the other terms have a serious hindrance: they draw the attention away from the thing that should be the core of the examination – that which the poet actually wrote. Kenner (1975: 31) brings his viewpoint to a head: “Poetry is the only mode of written communication in which it is normal for all the words to mean what they say.” This is a valuable remark. The reader should not restrict him/herself to the literal meaning, but (s)he should never overlook it, either: the

literal meaning often has many important connotations that are superseded if all the words are interpreted as metaphors.²⁹ In his PhD dissertation on African philosophy and literature, Kezilahabi (1985: 129) refers to Nigerian Atiboroko S.A. Uyovbukerhi's statement, according to which "symbols in African theatre are not 'representative' but are 'the thing itself'". This kind of direct expressiveness is integral in the term image. As will be discussed in this chapter, concrete images can convey simultaneously great amounts of information.

When doing research on Swahili literature, it is important to pay attention to how literary research in Swahili regards the literary terms that are used. In his work *Kamusi ya Fasihi: Istilahi na nadharia* 'Dictionary of literature: terminology and theory' (2003a) K.W. Wamitila discusses the term *taswira* 'image, representation',³⁰ and his definition of the concept also employs the term *picha* 'picture':³¹ "DHANA hii hutumiwa kuelezea neno, kirai au maelezo ambayo yanaunda picha fulani katika akili ya MSOMAJI" "This CONCEPT is used to explain a word, phrase or description that creates a certain picture/image in the mind of the READER' (Wamitila 2003a: 225). The word *picha* is repeatedly used in a way that corresponds with the idea of mental image, while *taswira* seems to refer to the actual words that convey the image in the literary work.

Wamitila groups different images in as many as eleven classes. *Taswira kuu* 'major image' means the most prominent image in the work of literature, closely connected to its themes. *Taswira ya kimsingi* 'base image' stands for an image that is essential for the form of the literary work. *Taswira za harufu/mnuso* 'images of scent' create mental images of scents. *Taswira za kimaelezo* 'describing/explaining images' refer to images that do not have many levels but explain themselves, whereas *taswira za kiishara* 'symbolic images' work similarly to symbols, always carrying another level of meaning. *Taswira za joto* 'images of heat' is an interesting classification that has perhaps been influenced by the physical environment in East Africa: it refers to literary images that make the reader experience heat. *Taswira za mguso* 'images of touch' represent images that can be touched, that is, concrete images, images of matter. *Taswira za mwendo* 'images of movement' create an experience of movement, and correspondingly, *taswira za mwonjo*

29 As Kenner notes, the literal reading is not as easy as metaphor-seeking: "You have cultivated defences against the literal sense of the words, which go into action at the moment you confront an expanse of print. To read poems you must acquire the habit of switching these defences off, and trusting that the words mean what they say." (Kenner 1975: 30, original emphasis)

30 *Dictionnaire Swahili-Français* (Sacleux 1939) defines *taswira* as 'Représentation par le dessin ou la peinture ; plan figuratif ; signalement.' (= Representation by drawing or painting; figurative plan; description.)

31 *Picha*, loan word from English "picture", is not mentioned in *Dictionnaire Swahili-Français* (Sacleux 1939), probably because it was not used at the time.

‘images of taste’ create a taste experience and *taswira za usikivu* ‘images of sound’ create an experience of sound. Finally, *taswira za wingine* ‘images of alterity’ include images of types of people, such as madmen or thieves, that are used to represent certain groups of people. (Wamitila 2003a: 225–227)

Similarly to Wamitila’s usage of the term *picha* ‘picture’, Ruo Kimani Ruo (1989: 81) defines the term in a way that corresponds with definitions of the English concept ‘mental image’: “*picha* – maumbo ya vitu dhahiri yanayojitokeza katika mawazo baada ya kusoma au kusikia neno fulani” ‘image – appearance of manifest things that takes place in the mind after reading or hearing a certain word’. This definition is compatible with my understanding of the concept, especially because *vitu* refers in particular to material objectives, taking into consideration the literal aspect of image. Ruo’s definition of *taswira*, then again, seems to comprehend both the image in the text and the mental image, and their causal relation: *taswira* ‘image, representation’: “*Taswira* – ni kiwakilisho, maono ya kitu katika mawazo kwa kutumia lugha” ‘Image – is representation, perception/appearance of a thing in the thoughts through the use of language’ (Ruo 1989: 84).

F.E.M.K. Senkoro (1988a) uses mostly the term *taswira* ‘image, representation’, but occasionally substitutes it with *picha* ‘picture’, which he seems to use interchangeably (e.g. on pp. 117–118). Before defining the term *taswira* (and the term *ishara* ‘symbol’) Senkoro (1988a: 117) refers to Kezilahabi himself:

Kati ya viegezo vingi vya fani katika ushairi, matumizi ya taswira na ishara ni kigezo muhimu sana. Hata Kezilahabi mwenyewe kakiri katika Utangulizi wa Kichomi juu ya umuhimu wa sifa hii (uk. xiv).

Taswira na ishara katika ushairi ni ule ufundi wa mshairi wa kusawiri hali au dhana anayoiongelea kwa njia inayogusa vionjo mbalimbali vya mtu, huku ikivipa vionjo hivyo umbo kamili akilini.

Of the many literary tools used in poetry, the usage of images and symbols is a very important one. Even Kezilahabi himself acknowledges, in the Preface to *Kichomi*, the importance of this quality (p. xiv).

Image and symbol in poetry are the ability through which the poet depicts a state or idea that (s)he discusses in a way that it touches different senses of people, thus giving the senses a complete form in the mind.

Interestingly, the definition uses the verb *-sawiri*, which means ‘draw, form, design, depict’, showing links to visual images. Similarly to Ruo’s definition of *taswira*, Senkoro’s definition of the term covers both the actual image (in the text) and the mental image (the image reproduced in the mind).

Drawing from both Swahili and Western definitions of the word, my conception of image in poetry is thus:

A word or larger figure that 1) is a literal, concrete reference; it can also be a symbol or a vehicle for a metaphor, but its literal meaning should not be ignored; 2) enables the reproduction in the mind of a sensation produced by perception; 3) cannot be paraphrased.

2.2 Matter, deeper than language

When I began meditating on the concept of beauty of matter, I was immediately struck by the neglect of the *material cause* in aesthetic philosophy. (Bachelard 1983: 2, original emphasis)³²

Literary criticism does not pay enough attention, I feel, to the real elements of images. (Bachelard 1983: 165)³³

The French philosopher and literary researcher Gaston Bachelard draws attention to a rarely-addressed issue: the importance of matter, and the importance of images of matter in literature. I share Bachelard's view of the topic being neglected in both philosophy and literary research, and this book seeks to contribute to increasing understanding of the importance of concrete imagery, especially relating to the natural elements, in poetry.

Bachelard focuses on fundamental matter: the four elements. He has dedicated at least one book to each element: fire, air, earth, and water.³⁴ In *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the imagination of matter* (1983) Bachelard discusses the use of water imagery in poetry while contemplating the element. He declares that his aim in the book is to “take every opportunity to develop a psychology of material imagination” (Bachelard 1983: 112).³⁵ Bachelard notes that with images, psychologists have concentrated on images of form, but that his focus is “images of matter, images that stem *directly from matter*” (Bachelard 1983: 2, original

32 In the original work: “Quand nous avons commencé à méditer sur la notion de beauté de la matière, nous avons tout de suite été frappé de la carence de la *cause matérielle* dans la philosophie esthétique.” (Bachelard 1942: 3)

33 In the original: “La critique littéraire ne donne pas assez d'attention, croyons-nous, aux éléments réels des images.” (Bachelard 1942: 223)

34 *La Psychanalyse du feu* was published in 1938 and the English translation of it, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, in 1964. *L'eau et les rêves, essai sur l'imagination de la matière* was published in 1942 and the English translation of it, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the imagination of matter*, in 1983. *L'air et les songes* was published in 1943, and its English translation *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the imagination of movement* in 1988. *La terre et les rêveries du repos* was published in 1946, and it will be published in English translation in the future by the Dallas Institute. Its companion volume *La terre et les rêveries de la volonté* was published in 1948, and translated into English in 1978 by the title *Earth and Reveries of Will: An Essay on the imagination of matter*.

35 In the original: “de saisir toutes les occasions pour développer la psychologie de l'imagination matérielle” (Bachelard 1942: 152).

emphasis).³⁶ The strength and significance of the images of matter is that they are that from which our mind and literature essentially draw: “The *imaginary* does not find its deep, nutritive roots in *images*; first it needs a closer, more enveloping and material *presence*. Imaginary reality is evoked before being described.”³⁷ (Bachelard 1983: 121, original emphasis)

Bachelard’s understanding of images of matter supports the presented view of the importance of the concrete meaning of images, based on my research of Kezilahabi’s poetry. Bachelard’s (1983: 145) statement expresses the essence of imagery: “For one who truly lives out of the evolutions of material imagination, there is no figurative meaning; all figurative meanings retain a certain amount of sense impressions, a certain matter perceptible to the senses.”³⁸ While the first part of the sentence denies figurative meanings, the end of the sentence elaborates the thought significantly: there are no merely figurative meanings, for all figures also carry their concrete meaning. As previously noted, this multi-dimensionality is the strength of material images: by retaining their concrete side even when understood to refer to abstract ideas, they manage to express more and are more easily understandable than abstract concepts. “Only matter can become charged with multiple impressions and feelings. It is an emotional *good*”,³⁹ Bachelard (1983: 50, original emphasis) notes. His argument is echoed in Reuven Tsur’s (2003: 319) analysis of the strength of material, concrete images:

The word “concrete” is derived from a Latin word meaning “grown together”. In a concrete noun a large number of features are “grown together”. Every such feature is a “meaning potential” of the spatial image. It also holds the potential to combine with other meaning potentials in the context. [...] This efficient coding enables one to manipulate a large amount of information, without overburdening the system, and to move from one potential of the image to another, granting one great flexibility.

As Tsur (2003: 17) observes, despite the complexity of the multiple meanings in a concrete image, the concreteness of it holds everything together: “A single image encoding a variety of meaning units can be regarded as an instance of

³⁶ In the original: “des images de la matière, des images *directes* de la *matière*” (Bachelard 1942: 2).

³⁷ In the original: “*L’imaginaire* ne trouve pas ses racines profondes et nourricières dans les *images*; il a d’abord besoin d’une *présence* plus prochaine, plus enveloppante, plus matérielle. La réalité imaginaire s’évoque avant de se décrire.” (Bachelard 1942: 164)

³⁸ In the original: “Pour qui vit vraiment les évolutions de l’imagination matérielle, il n’y a pas de sens figuré, tous les sens figurés gardent un certain poids de sensibilité, une certaine matière sensible” (Bachelard 1942: 198).

³⁹ In the original: “Seule une matière peut recevoir la charge des impressions et des sentiments multiples. Elle est un *bien* sentimental.” (Bachelard 1942: 71)

the aesthetic principle of ‘unity-in-variety’.” Bachelard (1983: 15) notes that same unity, in regard to water imagery: “A poetics of water, despite the variety of ways in which it is presented to our eyes, is bound to have unity.”⁴⁰

For Bachelard, matter is able to capture and present things in a deeper way than anything else: “Material imagination dramatizes the world in its depths. It finds in the depth of substances all the symbols of inner human life” (Bachelard 1983: 148).⁴¹ Bachelard sees that through nature images, poetry is able to express something profound; he sees images so central to poetry that he calls poetry “a natural and durable synthesis of images” (Bachelard 1983: 183).⁴² Then, using the word metaphor in a context in which it seems interchangeable with the term image,⁴³ Bachelard (1983: 183) declares: “Metaphor, physically inadmissible, psychologically absurd, is, nevertheless, a poetic truth.”⁴⁴ Tsur (2008: 24) seems to have a similar understanding of the special nature of poetry when he states that “[o]ne of the major functions of poetry is to yield a heightened awareness”. Both Bachelard’s and Tsur’s notions can be connected to Euphrase Kezilahabi’s idea of *lugha ya Kuwako* ‘language of Being’, which will now be examined.

In his PhD dissertation, Kezilahabi (1985: 219) argues that Heidegger is right when he says that we have access to the things themselves. Kezilahabi (1985: 137) sees that metalanguage of poetry is able to “reach primordial consciousness and letting being be, in the eternal now”. Although expressed by poetry, this metalanguage is beyond (ordinary) language: in my interview with him (30 Mar. 2009), Kezilahabi noted that *lugha ya Kuwako* [...] *ni kama metalanguage ambayo inakwenda zaidi ya lugha tunayoielewa sisi* ‘language of Being [...] is like a metalanguage that goes beyond the language that we know/understand’. Kezilahabi (1985: 145) agrees with Soyinka’s efforts to “liberate thinking from constrictions of language”, and explicitly argues that “understanding does not rely on articulate language” (Kezilahabi 1985: 230).

Poetry, however, can offer a way to reach this language beyond language: Kezilahabi (1985: 216) defines metaphor as a leap to “primordial truth and

40 In the original: “Une poétique de l’eau, malgré la variété de ses spectacles, est assurée d’une unité.” (Bachelard 1942: 23)

41 In the original: “L’imagination matérielle dramatise le monde en profondeur. Elle trouve dans la profondeur des substances tous les symboles de la vie humaine intime.” (Bachelard 1942: 202)

42 In the original: “une synthèse naturelle et durable d’images” Bachelard 1942: 246).

43 This passage deals with images in poetry, and the cited sentence is connected to the above-quoted description of poetry being synthesis of images; Bachelard is inconsistent in his terminology and references elsewhere, too, and because he explicitly states that his work deals with images, this sentence seems to regard images (which can act as metaphors but do not necessarily do so).

44 In the original: “La métaphore, physiquement inadmissible, psychologiquement insensée, es cependant une vérité poétique.” (Bachelard 1942: 246)

belonging without an intermediary”. Kezilahabi (interview, 30 Mar. 2009) notes that *ushairi umekaribiana sana na Kuwako* ‘poetry has come very close to our Being’, and that *lugha ya ushairi ni lugha ambayo huwezi ukaitenganisha na ubinadamu wenyewe* ‘the language of poetry is a/the language that cannot be separated from humanity itself’. Although in one part of his dissertation he goes as far as arguing that “poetry is the language of Being, and has no recourse to anything else” (Kezilahabi 1985: 232), elsewhere Kezilahabi does not straightforwardly identify the language of poetry with the language of Being. In an interview (30 Mar. 2009) he noted that language of Being is “aina fulani ya lugha ambayo hatuifikii isipokuwa imo ndani kwetu” ‘special type of language that we do not attain unless it is inside us’. Although the language of Being may be seen to exist beyond language(s), Kezilahabi also sees that reaching it in African literature can only be possible through the use of African languages: “The future of African literature [...] is grounded in African languages, for there our Being is housed and concealed” (Kezilahabi 1985: 105–106). Thus his choice of language as an African writer is connected to his philosophical idea of language of Being.

Kezilahabi (1985: 2) sees that by entering into “meditative dialogue with the ‘texts’ under discussion”, it is possible to get closer to the language of Being. Referring to Martin Davies (1983), he also argues that poetic metaphor is “the essential metaphor and is not paraphrasable” (Kezilahabi 1985: 207). This can be seen as connected to Kenner’s and Bachelard’s view of literary image: Kenner’s view of the importance of accepting the words as such and Bachelard’s notion of metaphor being the poetic truth both argue for literary images not being paraphrasable. Importantly, Kezilahabi (interview, 30 Mar. 2009) also connects *lugha ya Kuwako* ‘language of Being’ to experience, noting about this language (in contrast to ordinary, articulatory language): “kwa mfano mimi siwezi kujua kuwa mwanamke ni nini siwezi [...] Mimi si mwanamke na wewe huwezi kujua kuwa mwanamume ni kitu gani” ‘for example I cannot know what it is to be a woman [...] I am not a woman, and you cannot know what it is to be a man’.

The main contrast between ordinary language and language of Being is their finiteness/infinity. While human language is a restricted resource, Kezilahabi (1985: 195) states that “[t]here is always an infinite horizon beyond articulate speech involved in understanding”. Furthermore, when discussing “the horizon of the unsaid”, he argues that metaphors are “an opening up of a new horizon from which another horizon is projected. For this reason, they are open-ended and can infinitely be produced and made present.” (Kezilahabi 1985: 225) Although Kezilahabi is referring to Heidegger’s idea of “horizon of unsaid” (explicitly e.g. on pp. 225–226), his interpretation of it seems to be different – or can be interpreted differently – from the common view of hermeneutical understanding:

In linguistic knowing, the text (or word) is identifiable as a Worldly structure of human construction. In perceptual knowing, the “text” may not be identifiable with the same ease, but it exists, nevertheless, to be disclosed to an appropriate, usually scientific, form of inquiry. [...] Perception, then, has a certain primacy as a form of knowing, for it interprets the meaning of structures usually as yet hidden from the knower. This interpretation, however, needs for its expression the resources of language already possessed by the speaker or reader. In this respect, language is prior to perception. However, at any stage of cultural evolution the limits of perception constitute the frontier between the unconcealment of perceptual horizons, and the as yet concealed “texts” in which these horizons are “held” for understanding (as *Vorhaben*) and interpreted without themselves yet becoming known. In this respect, language waits on the progress of perception. (Heelan 1983: 74–75)

Kezilahabi’s statement “There is always an infinite horizon beyond articulate speech involved in understanding” can be read to imply that understanding does not need articulate language. Thus, opposite to Heelan’s (1983: 74–75) declaration, it can be argued that rather than the other way round, perception waits on the progress of language – or, to be exact, the expression of perception waits on the progress of language, for perceptual understanding does not require conceptual language.

In the analysis of Kezilahabi’s poetry, paying attention to Kezilahabi’s own philosophy offers not only an insider outlook but is also reasonable from a general philosophical point of view. As Kezilahabi (1985: 1) himself states on the very first page of his dissertation: “There is no theory of literary criticism that is not tied to a philosophy, and therefore any use of a literary theory without a lengthy critical inquiry into the philosophical implications that underlie it is inadequate.” Kezilahabi (1985: 2) intercedes for the use of African philosophy, demanding it “move from the penumbra to a sphere of reasonable influence in African literary interpretation”.

What philosopher Barry Hallen states on the importance of Afrophone concepts is given particular attention in this research. Hallen (2006: 251) notes the “several initiatives that emphasize an analytical approach to the understanding of concepts in African languages that may be of philosophical interest”, referring especially to Kwasi Wiredu (1992–1993; 1996; 2004a; 2004b). Hallen (2006: 269) sees *conceptual analysis* as a fruitful method, and argues that through textual analysis, conceptual analysis should identify and specify the meanings of concepts that are internal to an African language. What Hallen (2006: 269–270) sees as especially important is the close interpretation of the analysed text passages and not treating one concept in isolation but seeing the connections and relationships between other concepts. Hallen’s arguments are important in my discussion of

the concepts *uzima*, *ubai*, and *maisha*, all of which can roughly be translated as 'life', in connection to Kezilahabi's poetry in the concluding chapter of the book.

2.3 *Infinite shades of experience*

Philosopher Paul Ricoeur's thoughts about the significance of symbols are also interesting in the case of researching the image of water. Ricoeur (1976: 61) sees symbols (in contrast to metaphors) as presentations that are "bound to the cosmos": sky, earth, air, and water, and therefore not as "a free invention of discourse". This supports the view that the relationship of allusions is in a way universal, in the case of water. Ricoeur (1976: 62) also argues that a symbol brings into a human being's understanding something that is otherwise not possible to fully express through language. This resembles Kenner's (1975: 28) notion of the image's potentiality being beyond the statements and Voigt's (1991: 254) notion that literary image is about perception rather than concept. Both of them can be regarded as connected to the idea of Bachelard's non-paraphrasable poetic truth and Kezilahabi's language of Being that cannot be expressed through ordinary language. Moreover, I intend to show their link to the recent trend of philosophy called *nonconceptualism*.⁴⁵

According to nonconceptualism, there are experiences that are nonconceptual. A classical example is the scale of colours: if you think of a scale of red from purple to orange, there are infinite amount of colours that we can differentiate by eye, but that we cannot name, that is, conceptualise. The concepts we have, for example "deep red", "crimson", "pink", and "orangeish-red", can only capture a very limited amount of these shades. The advocates of nonconceptualism argue that there are several other experiences that cannot be conceptualised: our thoughts are composed of concepts and although contents of concepts are often fine-grained, they are not fine-grained enough for nonconceptual experiences. "Experiences represent the world with a determinacy of detail that goes

45 When talking about the nonconceptual, it is useful to try to define what is meant by the terms "concept" and "conceptual". In this book, they are understood in the way they are generally used in philosophy, not in psychology, for example. However, the terms are defined in several ways in the field of philosophy as well, and as Alex Barber (1998) points out, defining "concept" is tricky, and usually what is defined is actually concept possession, not concept itself: "The pragmatist strategy is to begin by saying what it is to possess, say, the concept cat, and then to say that the concept cat is just whatever it is that someone possesses when they possess the concept cat" (Barber 1998: 65). For the purposes of this research, however, it can be said that concept is a linguistic unit that can be used in active thinking: "It is essential to conceptual capacities, in the demanding sense, that they can be exploited in active thinking, thinking that is open to reflection about its own rational credentials." (McDowell 1994: 47)

beyond any concepts available for use in the experiences”, Michael Tye (2006: 8) summarises the general outlook of nonconceptualism.

In my view, the idea of nonconceptualism articulates something that is crucial to images in poetry. Susanne Langer’s (1957: 93) notion of visual images expresses well the particularity of images:

Visual forms [...] are just as capable of articulation, i.e., of complex combination, as words. But the laws that govern this sort of articulation are altogether different from the laws of syntax that govern language. The most radical difference is that visual forms are not discursive. They do not present their constituents successively, but simultaneously, so the relations determining a visual structure are grasped in one act of vision. Their complexity, consequently, is not limited, as the complexity of discourse is limited, by what the mind can retain from the beginning of an apperceptive act to the end of it.

Ellen Bryant Voigt (1991: 261) compares Langer’s remarks of visual image to literary image, and notes: “The power of an image, in a literary work, derives largely from its own essential paradox – a ‘picture in words’ is a non-discursive articulation rendered through the discursive systems of language”. I argue that this non-discursive complexity is identifiable with the rich, nonconceptual content of experiences. If poetic images are seen as an odd exception to the restrictions of language, they are thus able to convey rich, nonconceptual content.

This idea of richness can be seen as connected to Kezilahabi’s (1985: 195, 225) notion of infinity and open-endedness of language of Being. Since nonconceptualism very often uses the example of colour scales, what is noteworthy is that many African languages, such as Swahili, have very few names for colours: in Swahili, all the other colours than red, black, and white are referred to by names that come from concrete things, such as *kijani* ‘leaves’ (= green). It seems that the concrete reference is regarded as more expressive than abstract colour names; moreover, the amount of abstract colour names is inevitably non-extensive in any language, while through concrete references, at least in theory, any colour shade could be referred to.

Nonconceptualism has created considerable debate and has many critics as well. John McDowell (1994) attacks the school of thought by arguing that perceptive content actually is articulable, namely through demonstrative concepts. He argues that because any shade of a colour can be characterised with the concept “that shade”, the justification for defending the idea of nonconceptual content is not valid. Christopher Peacocke (1998) counterattacks McDowell’s argument by claiming that demonstrative concepts are, in fact, too fine-grained for perceptual content: because the same shade of colour can be referred to both with the concept “that shade” and for example “that red”, the concepts and the perceived content

again do not match.⁴⁶ However, as Sean D. Kelly (2001) demonstrates, Peacocke's defence is as weak as McDowell's attack. Even if the concept "that red" was used of the same wall, for example, it would actually refer to different shades if it was first used in a morning light and then in an evening light: Kelly argues that demonstrative concepts are, as a matter of fact, too coarse-grained, not too fine-grained, for the perceptual knowledge. Thus the idea of experiences being more fine-grained than concepts not only feels intuitively correct, but can be defended.

While criticising Peacocke's defence, Kelly makes crucial observations. He notes that "the important point about perception of properties is twofold: first, that properties are not, as presented in experience, independent of the context in which they are perceived, and second, that properties are not, as presented in experience, independent of the object they are perceived to be a property of" (Kelly 2001: 606). Although these remarks seem almost self-evident and it looks clear that many nonconceptualists have taken them as a premise, Kelly illustrates how they are too important to be overlooked. He continues his argument: "I suspect that Peacocke has believed in these two types of dependencies at various points in his career, though I'm not sure he's ever advocated both simultaneously. I think he should, and I also think that if he does, he will have the resources necessary to block the possible [conceptualists'] responses." (Kelly 2001: 606)

Kelly's notion of a property's dependence on experience itself is especially central in regard to my argument concerning the experience of water. The nonconceptualist idea of property dependence can be connected to Bachelard's idea of matter having "depth of substances" (Bachelard 1983: 148), and not being translatable into a mere figure; "[o]nly matter can become charged with multiple impressions and feelings" (Bachelard 1983: 50). These "multiple impressions and feelings" are dependent on the matter: they cannot be expressed detached from it. Similarly, there can be seen a link to Tsur's (2008: 319) notion on the depth of material images: a concrete image can efficiently represent an enormous number of features. Moreover, all of these concepts can be connected to Kezilahabi's idea of language of Being. Unlike ordinary language, language of Being offers an

46 Michael Tye (2006) also makes the same claim: that demonstrative concepts are actually too fine-grained for nonconceptual content. Tye's train of thought leads him to argue that all nonconceptual content is, after all, coarse-grained. Tye does seem not to consider Kelly's (2001) criticism of Peacocke's claims, and in my view, Tye's argumentation reaches a deadlock: if the whole idea of nonconceptualism is to help us understand content that is too fine-grained to be captured by concepts, it seems both absurd and fruitless to deny the starting point of the nonconceptualism – the fine-grainedness of nonconceptual experiences. If nonconceptual content was, instead, coarse-grained, there would be nothing not capturable by some concepts (demonstrative or otherwise).

unlimited set of features: like matter, it manages to represent something beyond the restrictions of concepts.

My argument is that many, if not all, experiences attached to water – such as drinking water or being immersed in water – are multi-sensory and that the matter to which these experiences connect us, is so essential and meaningful in many ways that we are not able to conceptualise all the dimensions of these experiences, yet we can understand them. Think of being immersed in water. People experience not just the water temperature, the movement or stillness of water and, connected to that, at least some idea of the quantity of the water, the tactile feeling of water against their skin, and possibly the visual and auditory aspects of the water (these can be more easily blocked than the others): people usually report emotions, too – in the cultures where most people know how to swim, swimming is generally considered very pleasant, although especially in some circumstances also very scary.⁴⁷ Scarieness can be more easily explained by either the context (for example swimming in a windy ocean) or the history of the person (for example if he or she has had a near-drowning experience), but the immense pleasure is hard to account for. Perhaps there can be seen links to purification, to subconscious memories of being in the womb, and to many other symbolic meanings of water, but in order to find the experience pleasant, one does not need to think of anything like this.

Consequently, the image of water in literature can express something easily understood by readers, even though the readers' personal attitude towards water can affect the tone of his/her interpretation). This image, thus, can express Bachelard's "multiple impressions and feelings" or Tsur's "large number of features grown together": content which I see as largely unconceptualisable. Nonconceptual content can also be connected to the very idea of literary image: if sense is seen as the origin of knowledge, as Hobbes saw it (Frazer 1960: 153–154), image is what makes knowledge accessible to us. In order to illustrate how the idea of nonconceptualism can be very useful for the research of the image of water in poetry, I will now discuss a few more cases of criticism that nonconceptualism has received, which, like Kelly's discussion on the problems of Peacocke's defence of nonconceptualism, reveal aspects that make my use of the term clearer.

Robert Stalnaker (1998) and Jeff Speaks (2005) both note the different ways in which the term nonconceptual is used. Speaks differentiates two understandings of the concept: absolute nonconceptualism and relative nonconceptualism. According to absolute nonconceptualism, "[a] mental state has absolutely noncon-

⁴⁷ In several cultures of Africa, many people do not swim at all, but for example in Ukerewe swimming is considered a pastime.

ceptual content if and only if that mental state has a different kind of content than do beliefs, thoughts, and so on”, whereas relative nonconceptualism sees that “[a] mental stage of an agent A (at a time t) has relatively nonconceptual content if and only if the content of that mental state includes contents not grasped (possessed) by A at t ” (Speaks 2005: 260). Speaks (2005: 392) notes that all the nonconceptualists seem to accept relative nonconceptualism, while some, notably Peacocke (1992), Martin (1992), and Heck (2000), also agree on absolute nonconceptualism.

After systematically analysing and denying all the arguments that he sees possible to raise for either type of nonconceptualism, Speaks (2005: 388) suggests that we should reformulate the question about nonconceptual content to be: “are there ways that the world is represented in the experience of subjects that those subjects are incapable of believing to be the case or entertaining in thought?” He concludes: “When the question is put this way, I am inclined to think that we should say that there is no such thing as relative nonconceptual content. It seems to me that when I perceive the world as being some way, I am always able to believe that it is that way, or doubt whether it is that way, and so forth.” (Speaks 2005: 388) Assuming that the word “believe” is used in the way Anglo-Saxon philosophy mostly employs it, that is, as a verb introducing articulated (conceptual) content, Speaks is really just rephrasing the question, and nonconceptualists would surely answer: yes, experiences can carry content that is not conceptualisable, that cannot be “entertained in thought”, although it can still be perceived through experience. If the word “believe” is used in another sense, the way in which it is mostly used in ordinary language, the question of “believing” this concept is absurd: if the person can, at least partly, depending on how much (s)he trusts his/her intuition and on how reflective (s)he is, understand or experience something beyond concepts, it can be argued that (s)he can *believe* it – but that does not in any way mean that (s)he can conceptualise it. To use the classical example of a colour scale: it would be absurd to ask a person whether (s)he believes in the colours (s)he sees, and even more absurd to claim that if (s)he does, her experience of seeing actually has purely conceptual content.

Michael Tye (2006), while advocating the idea of (relative) nonconceptualism, touches on a question that requires attention: is nonconceptual content nonconceptual because the person lacks the concepts or because it is not conceptualisable? Tye (2006: 10) simply declares that nonconceptualism of an experience “does not preclude the nonconceptual content of an experience from being the content of a thought of another subject. For what makes the content nonconceptual for subject S is simply the fact that S need not herself have the relevant concepts and thus need not herself be in a position to form the relevant thought.” I partially agree, but I think Tye’s claim can lead to a narrow understanding of nonconcep-

tualism, in which the term can appear to relate just to the quality and quantity of a person's terminology, directing focus for example on educational differences. I would like to question one word in Tye's claim: why are the concepts and the thought "relevant"? Although Tye (2006: 10) continues to assert that "were S to lose the concepts and with them the capacity to have such a thought, that would not preclude her from having the experience, if the content of the experience is nonconceptual", he nevertheless seems to regard nonconceptual content as nothing different from conceptual except for the lack of the concepts. In my view, implying that each time the same experience could be conceptual, if the person had the concepts, misses the point of nonconceptualism: if it was specifically created in order to discuss experiences that are not capturable conceptually, such as the case of infinite colour scales, why neglect its special character?

Stalnaker (1998), on the other hand, argues the exact opposite from Speaks, and differs from Tye's view, too: Stalnaker (1998: 352) sees that although we can "use our own conceptual resources to distinguish the alternative states of the world", all content of different informational states itself is nonconceptual.⁴⁸ I agree with Stalnaker, and I argue that although there are differences in the level at which different people conceptualise their experiences, there are also experiences whose content is not fully conceptualisable for anyone. Moreover, I argue that like reaching a trace of what Bachelard calls "poetic truth" and Kezilahabi "language of Being", nonconceptual experiences in general are capable of creating strong pleasure and other emotions, and a feeling of understanding something beyond concepts.

The idea of the nonconceptual bears similarity to the concept of ineffability, which is used in research of music. Philosophers, especially Diana Raffmann (1993), Stanley Cavell (1976), and Susanne Langer (1957), argue that music is capable of expressing verbally inexpressible knowledge. Raffmann (1993) even uses similar terms as nonconceptualists, arguing that the nuance level of music (the nuances of a musical performance) is too fine-grained for musical grammar. Moreover, Raffmann (1993) argues for the need to acknowledge sensory experience in development of theories, resembling nonconceptualists' demand for

48 Stalnaker's (1998: 344–345) definition of what "information" and "informational state" are: "one thing contains information about another if there are causal and counterfactual dependencies between the states of one and the states of the other. An object contains information about its environment if the object is in some state that it wouldn't be in if the environment weren't a certain way." Informational states can be either conceptual or nonconceptual: e.g. the informational state of a retina is nonconceptual, but when the information is transmitted to the brains, the informational state of the owner of the retina might be conceptual (Stalnaker 1998: 350). Stalnaker (1998: 350) argues that animals, too, have informational states, but that they are very different from the informational states of "an articulate and conceptually sophisticated person".

focus on perceptual knowledge. Similar to the way in which the discussion on nonconceptual concept has so far been limited to visuality, the idea of ineffability has been applied only within the research of music; literary research is yet to explore these ideas, and this research seeks to contribute to discussing the topic in relation to poetry.

2.4 Tsur's continuums of fluidity–coherence

In his review of Reuven Tsur's (1992) monograph *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive? – The Poetic mode of speech perception*, John Shoptaw (1994: 689) defines Tsur's cognitive poetics as “a linguistically informed reception theory in which the poet is replaced by the poem”. This is an accurate description: Tsur indeed focuses on both the poems themselves and on the way readers receive them. I also agree with Shoptaw's presentation of the significance of Tsur's theory: Reuven Tsur is “a subtle and powerful thinker whose attempts to bridge the gaping divides between sound, sense and feeling are original and important” (Shoptaw 1994: 686), and “[m]any readers will find his insights surprising and his methods intriguing in their own right” (Shoptaw 1994: 687); “the originality of his work [...] resonates” (Shoptaw 1994: 692). However, Shoptaw also finds pitfalls, the major one for him being the loss of readability: Shoptaw argues that in order to understand Tsur's works, the reader needs linguistics.⁴⁹ By building his theory on linguistics, Tsur indeed has probably greatly reduced the audibility of his works. This is lamentable. As Shoptaw (1994: 692) puts it, “[o]nce they make the effort, Tsur's reader will find that the cognitive poetic method has changed the way they read poetry”.

Another defect Shoptaw finds in Tsur's work is the narrowness of the analysed material. Tsur discusses poems in several languages, such as English, Hebrew, French, and Hungarian, but as Shoptaw (1994: 690) notes, his choice of languages and poems nevertheless can be seen conservative and canonical. It is noteworthy that in his later works, especially Tsur's main work *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics: Second, expanded and updated edition* (2008), which integrates Tsur's research of twenty-five years and which is the main work referred to in this book, Tsur touches on more languages, for example Japanese. Nevertheless, his main focus can indeed be seen as very canonical and Eurocentric, and this is one of reasons why I argue that applying cognitive poetics to Swahili poetry is signifi-

49 It should be noted that Shoptaw's criticism on readability of Tsur's works concerns this 1992 work which concentrates on sound effects; some parts of Tsur's other works, such as the concepts discussed in this section, do not need as strong linguistic understanding since they do not deal with sound analysis.

cant. Shoptaw (1994: 692) sees that while being very useful, Tsur's theory "limits our own receptivity to his approach"; my aim is to use many of the tools Tsur offers but in order to get a wider approach, combine his theory with the perspectives of Bachelard, nonconceptualism, and Kezilahabi's idea of language of Being.

Reuven Tsur locates cognitive poetics between structural and impressionist criticism. He notes that structural or analytic critics "excel in the *description* of the structure of literary texts, but it is not always clear what the human *significance* is of these texts, or how their perceived effects can be accounted for" (Tsur 2008: 1, original emphasis). Impressionist critics, on the other hand, "indulge in the effects of literary texts, but have difficulties in relating them to their *structures*" (Tsur 2008: 1, original emphasis). Moreover, as Tsur (2008: e.g. 209, 238) stresses, impressionist criticism on the effects is often arbitrary and inconsistent. Cognitive poetics can be seen to serve as a bridge between the structure and the effects in a consistent way; one of the substantial features of Tsur's analyses is their systematic nature.

Before discussing sound in poetry and Tsur's theory of sound analysis, I will present four pairs of concepts that are central in Tsur's cognitive poetics and useful for my analysis of Kezilahabi's poetry. These concept pairs are: convergent and divergent poetry, Poetry of Orientation and Poetry of Disorientation, conclusive and suspensive tone, and levelling and sharpening.

The first concept and its opposite, the division into convergent and divergent poetry, applies as well to content and structure as to atmosphere or tone. Convergent style is "marked by clear-cut shapes, both in content and structure; it is inclined towards definite directions and clear contrasts (prosodic or semantic)". The atmosphere in convergent poems has "certainty, a quality of intellectual control". Divergent style, on the other hand, diverges not only from convergent style but from unity: it is "marked by blurred shapes, both in content and structure; it exhibits general tendencies (rather than definite directions) and blurred contrasts (prosodic or semantic)". The atmosphere, similarly, has uncertainty and "emotional quality". (Tsur 2008: 85) In regard to the analysis of Kezilahabi's water imagery, it is important that Tsur (2008: 85) notes that the tendency of the poem can be emphasised by the choice of images: shapeless matters have different impact from solid-shaped units. Another important aspect of this division is that convergent and divergent should be seen rather as a two ends of a continuum than as an either-or division: "the differences are of degree, shades are gradual, along a spectrum" (Tsur 2008: 85).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Interestingly, Tsur uses here the same illustration as nonconceptualism. As I will later show, Tsur's theory can indeed be connected to nonconceptualism, although through its understanding of poetic mode, rather than through the convergent–divergent continuum.

The second axis Tsur defines is in many aspects similar to the convergent–divergent classification. First, he differentiates two adaptation devices in adapting to changing reality (Tsur applies this to reading poetry): the sudden shift of mental set, which is connected to wit, and the holding of rich pre-categorical information in an active state, which is connected to affect/feeling (Tsur 2008: 10–24). Intriguingly, Tsur (2008: 24) uses terminology of liquids, calling this pre-categorical information “fluid”. Tsur (2008: 24) sees emotions as “information kept in an active state”; he sees them diffuse and involving “series of fine fluctuations”, as opposed to the single shift of wit. Consequently, Tsur (2008: 24) separates two aesthetic modes: Poetry of Orientation and Poetry of Disorientation. Again, Tsur (2008: 59) notes that emotions and thought constitute a spectrum, rather than two separate groups. Although this division deals more with reader response than the previous continuum, in my view, Poetry of Orientation can be seen as connected to convergent style, whereas Poetry of Disorientation can be linked with divergent style; however, Tsur does not mention a connection.

The third concept pair is, again, close to the convergent–divergent differentiation, and similarly to the orientation–disorientation continuum. It is the distinction between conclusive and suspensive tone. Tsur’s example of a very conclusive tone is a logical argument, opposed to, for example, a description of a landscape in impressionist style (Tsur 2008: 106–109). With suspensive tone, it is important to keep in mind both meanings of the word: “(1) ‘to stop for a time [the natural flow of information]’; (2) ‘to keep [the meaning] undetermined’” (Tsur 2008: 106–109). Poetry with suspensive tone both makes the reader stop to linger on a text passage, and has multiple coexisting meanings. Tsur (2008: 107) makes a special point about concrete images, noting that their effects “may be greatly intensified, owing to the fact that a spatio-temporally continuous visual object (1) has a greater number of sensory attributes that one can dwell upon than would be the case, say, for an abstract argument; and (2) has no logical beginning, middle, and [*sic*] end, so as to render the description ‘conclusive’”.

The last concept pair presents two devices that readers use when encountering an ambiguous pattern, something that does not fit in the whole: levelling and sharpening (Tsur 2008: 33–36).⁵¹ If the reader tries to ignore the deviation and concentrate on the uniform part, (s)he is using levelling. If the reader, on the other hand, draws attention to the deviation, (s)he is using sharpening; in rhymed poetry, sharpening is often rewarded when the poem returns to the original pattern, which the reader experiences as a pleasure: “The greater the disturbance

51 Tsur (2008) uses the American spelling “leveling”.

experienced at the deviating line, the greater the gratification achieved at the return to the initial rhyme-scheme.” (Tsur 2008: 34) Tsur sees these devices both as part of the structure of the text and as a device of the perceiving consciousness; the text often allows different approaches. Tsur notes that in addition to personal differences (some personalities do not find it stressful to consider the ambiguities without choosing either device), familiarity with such ambivalence makes a difference: students of literature are inclined to sharpen poetic deviations (Tsur 2008: 35). Tsur’s examples all deal with traditional rhymed poetry; it will be interesting to apply levelling–sharpening approaches to Kezilahabi’s free verse poetry.

2.5 Listening to the palpable

Sound is important in any poetry, but in Swahili poetry the auditory aspect has often been seen to be the most elaborated side of poetry (e.g. Kezilahabi 1977: 62). Before presenting how this research uses Reuven Tsur’s cognitive poetics in analysing the sound of the poems, I will discuss how other researchers, especially John Shoptaw, see the auditory dimension, and how Bachelard sees sound as a crucial aspect of water.

The notability of sound in poetry/language is observed by different fields of research: linguist Edward Stankiewicz (1960: 60) argued already in 1960 that rhyme has “a decisive effect on the development of a theme”. Anthropologist Janis B. Nuckolls (1999) lists a whole set of anthropologists, linguists, and philosophers who have elaborated sound symbolism. Psychology researcher T. Len Holdstock (2000: 186) accentuates the connection of meaning and sound in many African languages: “Much meaning is conveyed through sounds, not only the lowering of consonants or the use of softer consonants, nasals and sibilants, but grunts and similar utterances have significance and elicit appropriate emotional responses.”

However, John Shoptaw (2000: 222) argues that in literature research, the role of sound in poetic meaning is considered “strictly secondary”. Indeed, for example literary researcher Martin Montgomery (1992: 89) claims that only after regarding the meanings and context, which should be given priority, it is good to consider how the sound might support the sense. John Shoptaw (2000: 221–223) sets himself against Montgomery and argues that sound can do more than echo the meaning: it can actually precede it and participate in creating the meaning. I will now discuss Shoptaw’s understanding of “productive reading”, and to show how, in my view, it can be connected to Hugh Kenner’s approach to literary images.

Productive reading is a term that has been used by many critics, for example the New Critics, but as Shoptaw argues, they have not systematically regarded the auditory aspect. Shoptaw’s (2000: 223) argument is that the reader should

ask “not (only) what the poem (a word, line, passage, etc.) means but by what means it [i.e. the meaning] was produced”. Productive reading is analogous to “close reading” in the way in which it pays attention to the smallest particles and enters the poem thoroughly, but Shoptaw’s productive reading acknowledges context more than traditional close reading, seeing a poem “as the product of multiple forces, some of them deriving from the poet (his or her psyche, biography, education, poetics, intention, etc.), others from his or her history, culture, and especially language” (Shoptaw 2000: 221). I find Shoptaw’s understanding of the complexity of factors comprehensive, and appreciate his particular notion of the importance of language.

What I find problematic is Shoptaw’s central concept, that of “cryptography”. The idea of “cryptography” means that poems have “crypt words” that can be read as ordinary words. He suggests that by solving these crypt words the “superficial complexity” of a poem can be turned into “an underlying simplicity” (Shoptaw 2000: 239). Shoptaw (2000: 239) carefully stresses that he does not see cryptography as the “be-all and end-all” but as “a beginning that makes the sounds and literal makeups of words and phrases matter”. However, I argue that in seeing the literal level as something that can be reduced to see “the real content”, Shoptaw in fact does not appreciate the sounds and the literal words. For example, Shoptaw (2000: 226) reads John Ashbery’s expression “long piers of silence” as “long periods of silence”. To my view, this idea is disparaging poetry – if the poet has written “piers”, he primarily means “piers”. Shoptaw’s reading is also completely opposite to Kenner’s arguments that I support. Kenner in particular states, as a counterblow against Shoptaw: “It is unwise, whenever you encounter an unusual expression, to suppose that it is merely a colourful way of saying something commonplace, and then translate it into a commonplace near equivalent. The poet writes down what he means.” (Kenner 1975: 31) Shoptaw’s way of reading has also been criticised by John Vincent (1998), who finds it informative, but restricted.

Shoptaw’s way of reading poetry might fit the type of poetry that Tsur (2008: 10–24) calls Poetry of Orientation: poetry that is based on wit, and whose reading results in a sudden shift of mental set; but it does not work with Poetry of Disorientation, that is poetry that makes the reader to hold a great amount of diverse information active. I agree that, as Shoptaw suggests, the words in poetry can refer to other words and bring to mind more common phrases with similar sounds, and that their entering into the reader’s mind can participate in the interpretation of the poem. It is noteworthy that Shoptaw makes a concession or a clarification: the actual word on the page is not altogether different from the “crypt word”. He notes the “partial presence” of the crypt words in their markers. (Shoptaw 2000: 237) However, Shoptaw’s claim of the “superficial complexity”

and the claim to be able to diminish it by the cryptography reading is in itself superficial. Contrary to Shoptaw's assertion, the participating meanings and allusions in particular show the *complexity* of poetry.

Shoptaw's (2000) evolvment of cryptography as a simplifier of poems trivialises poetry, but his idea of listening carefully to the sonic flavour of poems, taking into consideration the associations they give birth to, and seeing sound as an important participant in the production of meaning, is important in its assurance of the connection of meaning and sound. Kenner's definition of image denies the symbolic aspect of image, but his defence of the essentiality of literal meaning is rare and valuable. Therefore I use Shoptaw's ideas in listening to the auditory dimension, yet without taking the words as cryptographs, and consider the literal interpretation of words in accordance with Kenner, while still paying attention to the possible symbolic allusions.

Furthermore, as contradictory as Shoptaw and Kenner appear, they have something in common. Both read poems very closely and consider the actual words. Kenner grips the literal meaning, but Shoptaw, too, sticks to the words and even prepositions and articles, listening to them as such, tasting the "palpability of their sound in the oral reader's mouth" (Shoptaw 1995: 225). This "palpability" is the key word that connects Shoptaw to Kenner, who expressly advocates the palpable, literal reading. The savouring attitude, appreciating the characters of words, is something this research seeks to share with both Shoptaw and Kenner.

I also find English professor and poet Alberto Rios's concepts of "sonic intensity" and "sonic distance" useful. "Sonic intensity" is a passage that uses sound in an intense way, and often makes the reader pay specific attention to the line(s); it "suggests a lateral, or sideways, movement, rather than simply straightforward movement" (Rios 2001: 34). "Sonic distance", on the contrary, does not draw attention to the language. Actually that may even be avoided: Rios notes that "[i]n this case, sound in the mouth of the reader is exactly what the poet does not want" (Rios 2001: 34). This division is illustrative, since some parts of poetry sonically stand out from the texture much more than others.

It seems that according to Bachelard, water is an element that creates intensity. Bachelard has dedicated the concluding chapter of his work *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the imagination of matter* (1983) to the voices of water. In a similar way that he regards the lack of purely figurative images in poetry (Bachelard 1983: 145), Bachelard emphasises that "the voices of water are hardly metaphoric at all [...] the language of the waters is a direct poetic reality" (Bachelard 1983: 15).⁵² This

52 In the original: "les voix de l'eau sont à peine métaphoriques, que le langage des eaux est une réalité poétique directe" (Bachelard 1942: 22).

idea of directness through sounds resembles Kezilahabi's view of how language of poetry can offer direct access to language of Being. Bachelard (1983: 190) finds the sound of the words closely connected to meaning, stating that "[i]f we could group together all the words with liquid phonemes, then an aquatic scene would naturally emerge".⁵³ He sees that the acoustically liquid nature of some phonemes physically "evokes images of water" (Bachelard 1983: 15).⁵⁴

Bachelard also finds human language in general closely connected to the voice of water: he notes that the name of "liquid consonant" can be seen as more than a mere curiosity (Bachelard 1983: 189), and argues that liquidity is "the very desire of language" (Bachelard 1983: 187).⁵⁵ Bachelard's argument against ignoring the connection of language and water becomes, indeed, a defence for the importance of the sound for meaning:

[S]uch an objection seems to me to be a refusal to feel, in its profound life, the *correspondence* of word and reality. Such an objection reflects a will to reject a whole field of creative imagination: imagination through the spoken word, through *speaking*, the imagination that rejoices muscularity in speaking, speaks with volubility, and increases the psychic volume of a being.⁵⁶ (Bachelard 1983: 189, original emphasis)

Bachelard (1983: 189) sees liquidity as the natural character of language, while creating harshness in language needs conscious, artificial effort. He argues that human language is much more onomatopoeic than is generally understood: that much of language is imitation of sounds found in nature; that language has material sources (Bachelard 1983: 188–193).

Kezilahabi (interview, 30 Mar. 2009) himself comments on the use of sound in his works:

Naweka mkazo katika maneno ya kusikika, mfano "Mkasi unakata kacha kacha". Ni kwamba lugha nyingi za Kibantu zinatumia sana mlilo katika kujieleza, na hata ukisema "Alimpiga" itabidi uongeze kitu fulani, ama "Alimpiga puu" ama "Alimpiga paa". Sasa ile "paa" ndio inaeleza ilikuwa ni mapigo ya namna gani: ukisema "Alimpiga puu" maana yake alitumia fimbo kubwa kumpiga mtu, ukisema

53 In the original: "si l'on pouvait grouper tous les mots à phonemes liquides, on obtiendrait tout naturellement un paysage aquatique" (Bachelard 1942: 255).

54 In the original: "appelle les images de l'eau" (Bachelard 1942: 22).

55 In the original: "le désir même du langage" (Bachelard 1942: 251).

56 In the original: "une telle objection nous semble un refus de sentir, dans sa vie profonde, la *correspondance* du verbe et du réel. Une telle objection est une volonté d'écartier tout un domaine de l'imagination créatrice : l'imagination par la parole, l'imagination par le *parler*, l'imagination qui jouit musculairement de parler, qui parle avec volubilité et qui augmente le volume psychique de l'être." (Bachelard 1942: 253)

“Alimpiga paa” maana yake alitumia vidole tu kama kofi anampiga. Kwa hiyo mlio ndio unasaidia kukueleza.

I put emphasis on onomatopoeic words, for example “Scissors cut *kacha kacha*”. In many Bantu languages sound is used a lot in illustration, and even if you say “He hit him”, it is better you add something, either “He hit him *puu*” or “He hit him *paa*”. That “*paa*” indeed explains what kind of hit it was: if you say “He hit him *puu*” it means he used a big stick to hit a person, whereas if you say “He hit him *paa*” it means he used just fingers, like in slapping him. Thus sound indeed helps to illustrate.

As Kezilahabi’s examples show, the use of sound in literature can express subtleties; although Kezilahabi is able to conceptualise the difference between the sounds *puu* and *paa*, expressing the knowledge through sound is substantially more concise, and it can be argued that some auditively conveyed information could not have been expressed without the sound.

2.6 Expressive sound underneath phonemes

Bachelard offers an interesting philosophical point of departure for the analysis of sound of water images. However, the main theoretical source in my analysis of the auditory aspect of Kezilahabi’s poetry is Reuven Tsur. His theory of cognitive poetics and his own application of it offers, in my view, a detailed and carefully considered methodology for close examination of the impressions of phonemes in poetry. As Shoptaw (1994: 688) notes: “One of the virtues of Tsur’s method is that he takes these impressions seriously, and tries to account for them.”

In order to understand the basis of Tsur’s theory of sound, let us start from the production of articulated speech. Tsur, referring to Polányi 1967 and Liberman et al. 1972, differentiates two organisational levels of it: the level of acoustic cues and the level of phonetic units. Because processing data at the acoustic level takes a great deal of brain capacity,⁵⁷ the information is recoded into the phonetic level. This phonetic level is then recoded again: into the semantic representation, which is the level that is fitting for storage in long-term memory. (Tsur 2008: 6) However, despite the last recoding, we are still able to examine the phonetic level in addition to the semantic level. What is crucial is that the acoustic level is mostly beyond our reach: “Very little, if at all, of the acoustic information remains

⁵⁷ Tsur (2008: 6) quotes Liberman et al. 1972 (without mentioning the page number): “The difference in information rate between the two levels of speech code is staggering. To transmit the signal into acoustic form and in high fidelity costs about 70,000 bits per second; for reasonable intelligibility we need about 40,000 bits per second. [...] By recoding into a phonetic representation, we reduce the cost to less than 40 bits per second, thus effecting a saving of 1,000 times.”

available for direct inspection” (Tsur 2008: 216); this is unavoidable, or there would be no saving of brain capacity. The information is recoded into form that is easy to handle and that still has sufficient variety. However, as the amount of saved capacity illustrates, the acoustic stream has a completely different richness: “There is an open set of infinite noises in the world. But most alphabets contain only twenty-something letters that convey in any language a closed system of about fifty (up to a maximum of 100) speech sounds.” (Tsur 2008: 223) This, again, can be seen to connect with the idea of nonconceptualism: like colour shades, voices comprise an infinite amount of variations which we are in some way able to differentiate but which we cannot conceptualise like phonemes.⁵⁸

All the above concerns speech: non-speech is heard differently, and according to research, people instantly recognise what is speech and what is not: “as soon as the incoming stream of sounds gives the slightest indication that it may be carrying linguistic information, we automatically switch to the speech mode” (Tsur 2008: 219). Now, what Tsur argues is that although the acoustic information is a burden to the speech mode, some of it nevertheless enters consciousness (Tsur 2008: e.g. 220, 234). This is especially relevant in poetry, because “poetic texts require the reader to linger on the *signifiant* for a longer time than do non-poetic texts, before moving on to the *signifie*” (Tsur 2008: 5, original emphasis). There can be seen a connection to Rios’s (2001: 34) idea of sonic intensity. Tsur calls this special mode of listening to poetry *poetic mode*, and it can be located somewhere near speech-mode but a bit towards non-speech mode: in poetic mode the reader is more aware of the rich soundscape behind the phonemes than in ordinary communication. The poetic mode offers the reader richness in a similar way as experiences make nonconceptual content available: “In this way, the closed and limited system of the speech sounds of a language may offer an indefinite number of features to be exploited.” (Tsur 2008: 229)

Tsur (2008: 209) regards expressiveness of speech sounds as fundamental in poetry: “Musicality seems to be the most salient – if not *the* distinctive – property of poetry”, he states. The musicality is pleasant, but it is not just that: through making some of the rich pre-categorical information available to us, it can be seen to connect the readers to nonconceptual experience beyond words, or to language of Being, which Kezilahabi (e.g. 1985: 2, 216, 232) sees as accessible through poetry but not through ordinary language. I find there a link to Bachelard’s (1983: 189) notion of the connection of human language to a richer

⁵⁸ According to Glucksberg and Dank (1975: 40–41; quoted in Tsur 2001), people are able to “discriminate among approximately 1,200 different pitches [...] We are also aware that such stimuli as pitches and colors vary continuously and smoothly along particular dimensions.”

source, the huge variety of natural sounds: “the ear is much more liberal than we suppose; it readily accepts a certain transposition in imitation and is soon imitating the first imitation”.⁵⁹

Tsur (2008: 210) notes that both literary researchers and ordinary readers tend to have strong opinions on the characters of speech sounds: “There is a vast literature on this subject; however, much of it is ad-hoc and arbitrary”. Tsur (2008: 210) refers to Hrushovski’s (1968: 412) view that sounds have certain potentials of expressiveness, and argues that “these general potentials [...] have firm intersubjective foundations on the acoustic, phonetic or phonological level of the sound structure of language”. Because of these different levels, a sound can often have different potentials, which are realised in different contexts. Importantly, the potentials are nevertheless limited, so a sound can generally express a few qualities but not something it does not have the potential of; and the sound pattern can also be neutral, which happens for example when the semantic meaning of the words clashes with the expressive potentials of the phonemes. (Tsur 2008: 211–212) Because of the different potentials, statistical analysis of the expressiveness of phonemes in poetry does not work very well, but most poets seem to exhibit consistency in their use of certain potential of a sound; for example, Tsur (2008: 214) notes that /g/ expresses tenderness in Verlaine’s poetry, but agriness in Hugo’s.⁶⁰

Some phonemes are less double-edged than others: /m, n/ regularly correlate with tenderness, and /k, t/ with aggressive tone (Tsur 2008: 212–214). To explain these characteristics, it should first be considered that /k, t/ are voiceless stops, and /m, n/ sonorants. Double-edged phonemes, such as /d, g/, for their part, resemble both groups but in different ways. To examine this, two concepts are needed: periodicity and continuity.⁶¹ Periodicity means how constant the

59 In the original: “l’oreille est beaucoup plus libérale qu’on ne le suppose, elle veut bien accepter une certaine transposition dans l’imitation, et bientôt elle imite l’imitation première” (Bachelard 1942: 253).

60 The notation /g/ stands for the phoneme. The notation <g> stands for the grapheme, i.e. the appearance of the letter g on the page.

61 In addition to continuity and periodicity, Tsur discusses the importance of the order in which different phonemes are acquired by children. He separates two uses of sound in child language: referential and expressive. Referential is non-emotional use in which phonemes simply convey semantic information, and expressive is emotional use in which the sounds are not yet connected to meaning. Referring to Roman Jakobson (1968), Tsur notes that the sounds that children do not yet properly master, are used as sound gestures and onomatopoeically although they still get replaced in semantic usage. Thus Tsur suggests that the phonemes that children acquire last have been used for the longest time for non-semantic purposes, and consequently, they may carry more emotion than the earlier acquired. (Tsur 2008: 235–237) Tsur (2008: 239) notes that nasal vowels, /ø/ and the phoneme /r/ are among the latest acquisitions; in Swahili, there are no nasal vowels

acoustic waveform of a phoneme is; it describes the sonority of the phoneme. The more periodic phonemes have a recurring waveform, whereas the less periodic phonemes have a changing waveform. Consequently, the more periodic phonemes are heard as tone, and the less periodic as noise. (Tsur 2008: 222) In general, all vowels, semi-vowels, liquids and nasals are periodic sounds, and voiceless consonants are aperiodic. Voiced fricatives can be located between these two groups. (Fry 1970: 35) Continuity, on the other hand, means whether the sound of the word is interrupted or not before the phoneme in question; for example with /t/, the short noise of the sound is preceded by a short pause in the auditory stream,⁶² while with /s/, there is no pause before the sound (Fry 1970: 36). Thus the least continuous phonemes are the most abrupt.

Both continuity and periodicity are scales in which different phonemes can be placed. The scale of periodicity, from the most periodic to the least periodic, is: vowels, liquids & nasals, voiced fricatives, voiced stops, voiceless fricatives, voiceless stops (Tsur 2008: 215). This scale of periodic–aperiodic can, according to Tsur (2008: 215), be connected to the scales of tone–noise, harmonious–non-harmonious, and soft–hard. This, however, is just the scale of periodicity: in the scale of continuity, voiceless fricatives come before voiced stops, that is, they are more continuous. In addition to this, there is a third scale, which Tsur calls the scale of relative encodedness; this means that in the recoding of acoustic information into phonetic information (which was discussed in 2.5 above), some sounds are more encoded than others. Voiceless stops, which are the most encoded, do not carry any pre-categorial sensory information, whereas with the less encoded sounds, some of the pre-categorial auditory information is available. (Tsur 2008: 215–222) The scale of encodedness has the same order as the scale of continuity, starting from the relatively unencoded phonemes (Tsur 2008: 215–216). It can also be seen to represent the scale of tenderness–aggression, for according to Tsur, the sensory richness and flexibility is similar to the emotional flexibility and openness of tender feelings, and opposed to aggression (Tsur 2008: 222).

Tsur does not find the exact order of the phonemes relevant: “what matters is that owing to these conflicting features the sounds are double-edged, and

nor / \emptyset /, but it would be interesting to examine whether the phoneme /r/ can be seen to carry more expressiveness than the other phonemes; possibly the expressiveness of last-acquired phonemes is not restricted to only emotions but could be connected to the powerfulness of expressiveness in water imagery, too. The problem is that the acquisition of phonemes in Swahili has not yet been properly researched; Kamil Ud Deen’s (2005) research is the first study of the acquisition of any eastern Bantu languages, and it focuses on verbal morphology, not phonemes; hence the sounds of the poems are not analysed in regard to the order of acquisition in this book.

62 The short pause is the time when airflow is blocked in the articulatory organs; this is why these sounds are called stops or occlusives.

can be contrasted to the other sounds on each of these features separately” (Tsur 2008: 216). Tsur also notes that due to the two-sidedness of /r/, especially in languages in which it is “rolled”, the phoneme is multiply interrupted, which supersedes its periodic nature. It is noteworthy that in Swahili /r/ has many variants depending on the area and the first language of the speaker, and even within standard Swahili, between individuals and depending on the context. In some cases it also has interchangeability with the phoneme /l/.⁶³

Tsur’s research does not concentrate on just English but covers a variety of languages, and Tsur (1992: 181) argues that the impressions are not language dependent: that a system of phonological universals exists. While there seems to be evidence for this, I would like to note that due to for example the different allophones in languages and their dialects, locating phonemes in the scales might not always be as straightforward as Tsur presents it. Tsur’s scales are nevertheless the basis of the following tables. With them, I present how the phonemes of Swahili can be placed in the scale of periodicity (Table 1) and continuity/encodedness (Table 2).

Tsur does not discuss affricates, but the voiceless affricate /tʃ/ has the same continuity and periodicity as voiceless stops: the occlusion in the beginning of the phoneme makes it similar to voiceless stops in continuity, and the acoustic waveform of /tʃ/ resembles voiceless stops, which makes it similar to them in periodicity. In addition to the standard set of phonemes included in the scales, there are sounds that are perceived as single phonemes by some researchers: namely the prenasalised consonants /mb, mv, nd, nz, nj, ng/. For example Ashton (1964), Hinnebusch and Mirza (1998), and Mwita (2007) argue that some of them are single phonemes; Hinnebusch and Mirza (1998) also show how /mb/ is a single phoneme in some noun classes but not in others. This interesting topic is, however, beyond the scope of this research, and the prenasalised consonants are not included in the scales of periodicity or continuity/encodedness (eg. /m/ and /b/ in /mb/ are counted separately).

Tsur (2008: 228) notes that “certain natural noises have more common features with one speech sound than with some others”; and although he

63 Ashton & Tucker (1942: 95) note that in most Bantu-rooted words with /r/ there is an alternative standardised pronunciation with /l/ and spelling with <l>. According to them, though, most of Swahili words with <r> are loan words, and Ashton & Tucker do not mention anything about interchangeability of /l/ and /r/ in these words. However, many Tanzanian first-language speakers whom I know consistently substitute <r> with <l> in writing (and vice versa), including words that come from Arabic, writing e.g. *habari* ‘news’ as *habali*; they still pronounce the word with /r/. It is also noteworthy that in most Bantu languages (not including Swahili) there is no phonological distinction between the two sounds, and they are often used interchangeably when adopting loan words (Lutz Marten, pers. comm 15 July 2010).

Table 1 Periodicity in Swahili⁶⁴

Most periodic			Least periodic				
Vowels	Semi vowels	Liquids & nasals	Laterals	Voiced fricatives	Voiced stops	Voiceless fricatives	Voiceless stops and affricates
/a, e, i, o, u/	/w, j/	/m, n, ŋ, ɲ, r/	/l/	/v, z, ð, ʃ/	/b, d, g, ʈ/	/f, h, s, θ/	/k, p, t, tʃ/

Table 2 Continuity and encodedness

Most continuous Least encoded			Least continuous Most encoded				
Vowels	Semi vowels	Liquids & nasals	Laterals	Voiced fricatives	Voiceless fricatives	Voiced stops	Voiceless stops and affricates
/a, e, i, o, u/	/w, j/	/m, n, ŋ, ɲ, r/	/l/	/v, z, ð, ʃ/	/f, h, s, θ/	/b, d, g, ʈ/	/k, p, t, tʃ/

does not concentrate on sounds of water,⁶⁵ this notion of his can be seen to support my analysis of the connection of image of water and certain phonemes. Hypothetically, the scale of “wateriness” could be seen as analogous with the continuity/encodedness scale: as a liquid mass, water is continuous, and with its natural sound richness, “wet” sounds can be seen relatively unencoded, which is apparent especially in onomatopoetic water-related verbs that draw attention to the sound of water, for example *-chirizika* ‘stream, gush’. In addition to this, while water can be soft and smooth, it can also be turbulent and

64 The semivowel or approximant /j/ is in Swahili spelled with y, as indeed is the case in English.

/ŋ/ is the velar nasal consonant as in *ng’ombe* ‘cow’.

/ɲ/ is the palatal nasal consonant as in *nyota* ‘star’.

/ð/ is the dental voiced fricative as in *dhambi* ‘sin’; it only occurs in Arabic loanwords.

/ʃ/ is the voiced velar fricative as in *ghali* ‘expensive’; it only occurs in Arabic loanwords.

The voiced palatal occlusive [j] is how coastal Swahili speakers pronounce <j>. Mainland Swahili speakers generally pronounce <j> as an affricate [dʒ]. Although Kezilahabi comes from mainland Tanzania, as a literary researcher and author, he is very familiar with coastal Swahili pronunciation, so the sound analysis of his poetry concentrates on standard pronunciation.

/f/ is the palatal voiceless fricative as in *shamba* ‘field, farm, countryside’.

/θ/ is the voiceless dental fricative as in *thamani* ‘value’; it only occurs in Arabic loanwords.

/tʃ/ is the voiceless palato-alveolar affricate as in *chupa* ‘bottle’.

65 Tsur occasionally mentions observations about water sounds, for example how /s/ can illustrate the roar of the ocean (Tsur 2008: 222), but in general focuses on emotional qualities of sounds.

harsh, so the periodicity scale does not represent “wateriness” of the sounds as well as the continuity/encodedness continuum.

2.7 Sensing images and imagining senses

One of the factors that make image a fascinating topic of research is the fact that it combines the auditory, visual, and mental aspects of poetry. Shoptaw concentrates on the auditory aspect, Kenner on the mental, since he demands that the reader creates a concrete counterpart of the literal images in the poetry (Kenner 1975: 30). Mitchell (1993: 558) sees phonetic images such as rhyme and onomatopoeia as the primary type of images in poetry. He finds the other images secondary and imperfect, and only mentions “mental pictures”, towards which Western poetics in general has certain ambivalence. As Mitchell (1993: 558) presents, mental images have often been seen as private and inaccessible, even random.

However, as previously stated, in the case of water the image that is formed in the mind has a strong connection with the literal content of the word “water”. Despite the small differences in the senses of *maji* and “water” (and the word in other languages), water is a substance that seems to have universal meaning: the words referring to it seem to be understood and used similarly all over the world due to it being a physiological necessity (Dahl & Megerssa 1990: 21). In effect, that may also be true with other images (to which exact degree depends on the image): the timidity of talking about mental images seems often to be due to the limited understanding of the term image. When the literal aspect is taken into account as well, the mental images can be seen to have a strong common base for analysis – at least much stronger than when images are interpreted as pure symbols, always referring to or symbolic of something else. As the physical nature of water is the same everywhere, the image of water can be seen to carry significant uniformity, if the term image is understood as it is defined in *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (1974: 363): “An image is the reproduction in the mind of a sensation produced by a physical perception.” This view is represented also in Ruo’s (1989: 81) and Wamitila’s (2003a: 225–227) usage of the terms *taswira* ‘image, representation’ and *picha* ‘picture, image’, in regard to both the significance of perception and the notion of appearance of mental image.

Another dimension of image that is often overlooked is the visual aspect. Poetry plays with both aurality and visuality. Jacques Derrida (2000: 182–183) notes that it is “necessary to [...] hear and to see them [poems] in their space”; this can be interpreted to emphasise how the visual arrangement of the words, for example spacing and indentation, has a big impact both on reading of poems (“seeing poems in their space”) and on their performance (“hearing poems in their space”).

Even if the auditory aspect can be argued to be more important and usually more closely connected to the content, the visual aspect should not be forgotten; indeed, as visual poetry shows, it can have an elemental role in poetry, too. Poetry uses particular spacing, unusual layout, enjambement, and other (first and foremost) visual ways of emphasising the meaning. Even the rhyme and rhythm – which are central in traditional Swahili poetry – have their visual side; for example, the rhyming words also look like rhyming in many languages, such as Swahili.⁶⁶

Water is an image that connects all the five basic senses: sight, hearing, touch, and even taste and smell.⁶⁷ The rest of the senses – the sense of temperature and the sense of balance – are also present. In poetry, images can only be conveyed through auditory and visual senses, but through them and the content of the words, for example depicting touches and tastes, sensations of other senses can be created in the mind. The main emphasis in this research is the auditory side of the water imagery, because it is the strongest sense used in Kezilahabi's poetry. Despite that, when examining the image of water in his poems, paying some attention to other senses, too, is accounted for, because Kezilahabi has stressed the need to regard, at least at the mental level, all the senses (even if he only mentions four of them).

In his essay on poetry Kezilahabi (1977: 62) argues that Swahili poets have put emphasis on the auditory aspect, but lost regard of other senses. According to Kezilahabi (1976b: 122; 1977: 60), for example the famous traditional poet Abedi Amri has declared that “[s]hairi au utenzi ni wimbo. Hivyo, kama shairi haliimbiki, halina maana.”⁶⁸ ‘Poems are songs. Thus, if poems are not singable, they have no meaning.’⁶⁹ As Kezilahabi (1977: 60) comments on this utterance, [k]ielezo kama hiki mara moja kinaonyesha hatari. Kinarahihisha mno maana ya

66 This is very dependent on the writing system: for example in English many rhyme pairs, such as kite–night, do not look like rhyming, whereas in Arabic the resemblance is eye-catching. It is noteworthy that many languages, such as Somali, use rather alliteration than end-rhymes in their poetry. Moreover, conventions of graphical layout of poems are culture-dependent.

67 Though the ideal drinking water is thought to be tasteless and odourless (as well as colourless), some water, especially sea water, has a distinctive smell and taste (and can be seen to be blue).

68 *Utenzi* and *shairi* are traditional types of poetry. *Utenzi* (plural: *tenzi*) is employed often for writing epic, heroic or didactic poems; the basic form is eight syllables to a line and four lines to a stanza. *Tenzi* can be hundreds of stanzas long. *Shairi* (plural: *mashairi*) can deal with any topic; in this form, there are sixteen syllables to a line and usually four lines in a stanza. *Mashairi* are generally much shorter than *tenzi*. Since these names of poetry types are impossible to translate and in this context they above all represent traditional Swahili poetry, they are here translated as just ‘poems’. However, in general these terms are in this book referred to by their original Swahili names.

69 As Ally Saleh (1990: 87) notes, the accusation of modern free verse being unsingable is actually unfounded: “Na ni nani hasa anayeshikilia kuwa shairi huru haliimbiki?” ‘And who is it precisely that insists that free verse is not possible to be sung?’

shairi. ‘An explanation like this immediately looks dangerous. It cheapens the meaning of poetry too much.’ Indeed, the meaning of poetry is not to be singable, but while Kezilahabi opposes this view, he does not denigrate the value of the auditory aspect and the way in which it can convey meaning. Kezilahabi (1977: 62) argues that poetry can use, and indeed benefits from using, all the senses: “Mshairi anaweza kutuonyesha jambo analotaka kutwambia [*sic*] kupitia hisi zote: kuona, kunusa, kusikia na kugusa. Yote haya yamo mikononi mwake.” ‘The poet can show us the thing (s)he wants to tell by using all the senses: sight, smell, hearing, and tactile sense. All these are in his/her hands.’

Kezilahabi’s list resembles Wamitila’s classification of different images (cf. p. 27–28 above). Importantly, both of them concentrate on perception. The examples Kezilahabi (1977: 62) gives us cover several senses: he notes that the writer “[a]naweza kumfanya msomaji aone picha (images) ya mambo yanayozungumzwa kichwani mwake; anaweza kumsisimua msomaji bila ya kuimba; anaweza kumfanya asikie harufu kama ya damu au beberu” ‘can make the reader see images of things that are discussed, in his/her mind; can excite the reader without singing; can make him/her sense a smell of for example blood or smelly person’. Kezilahabi (1977: 62–63) argues for *kuonyesha* ‘showing’ instead of *kutuambia* ‘telling’, which can be seen as connected to perceptual knowledge.

Kezilahabi’s poems are elaborated in the sonic aspect, but have visual attractiveness as well, and notions of other senses. However, it seems that Kezilahabi in his argument has mixed up the levels. The traditional poetry uses the auditory side at the concrete level, but depicts the other senses, that is, uses them at the level of mind, such as love poetry using the images of odorous fruit and flowers (cf. Knappert 1972). As already noted, poetry is capable of using only auditory and visual senses directly (and visual only if the poetry is written), so it is not possible for Kezilahabi, either, to use the olfactory or tactile senses directly. Then again, if he is arguing for the use of all the senses at the level of depiction (at the level of mind), firstly, to mention the singing of poetry is nonessential and quite misleading – since the sung or otherwise auditively highly polished poems can just as well depict other senses. Secondly, the accusation seems rather unfounded, since as mentioned, the other senses are also traditionally depicted. The call for using all the senses is valuable, but in this way the free verse is not as far from the traditional as Kezilahabi appears to assume.

It seems that Kezilahabi’s criticism of the emphasis on sound is greatly connected to the tradition of rigid prosody. He comments on the issue of the use of sound in Swahili poetry:

Kuna huo mgongano uliopo kati ya ushairi wa Kiswahili na ushairi wa kimapokeo wa watu vijijini: tofauti ni kwamba ushairi wa Kiswahili unaweka mkazo sio tu kwenye sauti lakini pia katika upimaji wa mizani na pia upimaji wa vina ambavyo havimo katika ushairi wa watu wa kawaida katika lugha nyingine za Kibantu.
(Kezilahabi interview, 30 Mar. 2009)

There is this dispute that took place between Swahili poetry and traditional poetry of people from villages: the difference is that Swahili poetry puts emphasis not only on sound but also on counting metre and rhyme, which do not exist in the poetry of ordinary people in other Bantu languages.

Moreover, as noted in section 2.5 above, Kezilahabi (interview, 30 Mar. 2009) agrees that onomatopoeia is important for him. Thus, it appears that Kezilahabi is actually arguing rather for a greater variety of auditory tools in poetry than against the importance of the auditory dimension in poetry.

Kezilahabi also discusses the significance of imagery. Kezilahabi (e.g. 1977: 62) often argues that a good poet is one who is able to show us instead of telling us, and he refers to images also explicitly by saying that he appreciates Shaaban Robert's way of "kulipa maisha shairi lake kwa kutuonyesha picha mbalimbali" 'putting life in his poetry by showing us different images' (Kezilahabi 1976b: 126). In *Kichwamaji*, the novel that was published in the same year as *Kichomi*, Kezilahabi discusses the possibility of interpretation and the new possibilities of the complex images.⁷⁰ The passage deals with visual arts, but the notion is interesting in regard to the images of poetry, too:

Huu ndio uzuri wa uchoraji na upakaji rangi wa siku hizi. Picha moja inaweza kuwa na maelezo elfu au zaidi. Inaweza kuwa na wazo tofauti kwa kila mtazamaji. Ndio kusema picha ya siku hizi haiwezi kutoeleweka; lakini wakati huo huo, mmoja anaweza kuona zaidi ya mwingine.

⁷⁰ An interesting detail sound-wise is that, in addition to the same year of publication, the titles of the works share the first three sounds (*ch* standing for one sound). It is also noteworthy that *kichwamaji* includes the word *maji* 'water'; *kichwa* means 'a head'. According to Abdulaziz Y. Lodhi, the word *kichwamaji* has two meanings: a) a mad, disturbed person b) a person who has been born with a brain injury – 'water in head' (Lodhi, pers. comm. Feb. 2006). A personage called *Kichwamaji* also occurs in the poem *Karibu Ndani* 'Welcome inside', the title poem of the collection (Kezilahabi 1988: 34–37, not included in Appendix 1). Kezilahabi also signed his first ever free verse poem to be published (*Vipanya*) as *Kichwamaji*: "Il titolo ed epiteto del personaggio principale richiama il soprannome con cui Kezilahabi firmò la poesia *Vipanya* ed è a sua volta richiamato dal nome del sacerdote americano, Emptyhead, di *Gamba la nyoka* (Pelle di serpente)." (Vessella 1996) ("The title of the book, which is also the nickname of the main character, resembles the nickname that Kezilahabi used to sign his poem *Vipanya*. Another allusion is the name of the character of the American priest, Emptyhead, in *Gamba la nyoka* "Skin of snake".) (Original emphasis)

This indeed is the beauty of modern drawing and painting. One work of art can have one thousand or more explanations. It can have a different idea for every observer. This indeed is to say that modern works of art cannot be not understood; but at the same time, one can see more [in it] than another. (Kezilahabi 1974b: 208 [qtd. in & tr. Diegner 2002: 65])

Free verse can use visuality in a much deeper sense than bound verse: instead of a rigid form, the physical page is a way of framing the text in a specific way.⁷¹ However, Kezilahabi's arrangement of the lines is very traditional. His way of using visuality seems to partly lie in the appearance of the words, at the level of graphemes,⁷² but more at the level of creating visual images in the reader's mind. S.A.K. Mlacha has remarked the high frequency of the verbs related to seeing in Kezilahabi's prose. The verbs *-tazama* 'look' and *-ona* 'see' are repeated much more often than other verbs, for example those related to hearing (Mlacha 1987: 275). The conclusion that Mlacha (1987: 276) draws from this observation is rather odd – “This frequency [of the verb *-ona*] suggests that there is a higher degree of seeing with the eyes than through the mind” – but the finding indicates that, at the level of description (i.e. mind), Kezilahabi's prose employs a great deal of visual images.

2.8 Conclusions

Image is a more holistic term than metaphor or symbol, and its literal aspect can be seen as its strength, as opposed to its weakness. Literary images have not attracted enough interest in research, when the tendency has been to emphasise the figurative meaning at the price of the concrete meaning. Poetry works on several levels, and through concrete images, can express more than through mere metaphors or symbols: image can reproduce in the mind the understanding that is gained through physical perception.

Gaston Bachelard's and Reuven Tsur's literary theories can be connected to both nonconceptualism and Euphrase Kezilahabi's idea of language of Being: each of these theories carry the idea that there is something that we cannot reach through ordinary language but that can yet be experienced or understood. Bachelard, Tsur, and Kezilahabi argue that poetry can offer a way to attain this “beyond language” content. What is essential in the concept of image is the way in which an image

⁷¹ This applies only to written free verse poetry: oral poetry can only use visuality at the level of mind. The strong history of oral poetry in Swahili literature (since the poems, though written, were traditionally performed by singing or recitation), as well as in Kerewe literature which is predominantly oral, might be one reason for Kezilahabi's tendency to use visuality mostly at the level of mind.

⁷² See an example of *Chai ya Jioni* 'Evening tea' in section 6.4.2 below.

can convey knowledge of sensation, which is not paraphrasable: I argue that it is nonconceptual. The philosophical trend of nonconceptualism has not previously been applied to literature and nonconceptualists have focused on visual perceptions or purely theoretical speculation, but through the concentration on the senses, physical perception and non-paraphrasable content, the theory links up with the aforementioned literary theories and offers an intriguing combination.

Part of the reason why poetry can have such a strong influence on people is its auditory dimension: poetic language makes the rich pre-categorical auditory information more accessible than ordinary language, participating in creating the semantic meanings and expressing sensations and atmospheres. Language, especially poetic language, can also be seen to be connected to water, and the phonemes can possibly be located on a scale of dry–wet, which will offer a systematic approach in the analysis of water imagery in Swahili poetry. Water can thus be seen both as a concept for analysis of poetry (dry–wet language) and poetic image, an element to which language refers. I argue that phonemes can have certain potentiality to express wetness or dryness, and that this can be used in poetry with semantic water images to make them more expressive.

Material images, such as water, are able to carry multiple meanings and emotions, and are easily understood by the reader. If material experience can be regarded as nonconceptual, consequently a literary image of material element can possibly convey nonconceptual content. Thus material images in literature might be the means through which poetry is most able to offer access to nonconceptual understanding.

3. THE IMAGE OF WATER IN TRADITIONAL SWAHILI POETRY

*Atakaye tunga lulu
awe hodari wa mbizi
apataye kufaulu
ni mzamia mvuzi
roho ni bahari tulu*

(Knappert 1979: 194; no Swahili name, 'Stringing pearls')

(S)he who wants to string pearls
must be a skillful diver
(s)he who manages to succeed
is a diver, a fisher
the soul is a vast ocean⁷³

Swahili poets dive in the ocean of soul looking for pearls, and with them they create pearl strings: poems. Some of the carefully strung works of art have been preserved for many centuries. These poems contain numerous images of water, and not only at the figurative level, continuing the identification of water and soul employed in the above-quoted poem. Swahili poems have used aquatic imagery in expressing different ideas and sensations, in different contexts and times. Water imagery can be found in hundreds of years old Islamic hymns as well as in political poetry written during the colonial German East Africa. It is these images of water in traditional Swahili poetry that I will discuss in this chapter.⁷⁴

In 3.1, I will discuss religious water imagery, and in 3.2 mostly non-religious. The division is made based on the type of images, not on the type of poetry they occur in; for example, the war images connected to water in religious poetry are discussed in the group of non-religious images. The Majimaji poetry deals with the uprising that drew symbolism from non-Islamic African religions, but since it is the only type of non-Islamic poetry with religious images, it is discussed with secular poetry. As is the case with the division into traditional and modern, drawing a stark line between Islamic and non-Islamic is impossible: even Majimaji ideology (and consequently, Majimaji poetry) seems to have influ-

⁷³ The verb *-tunga* 'string' (in the first line of the stanza) also means 'compose', and is used generally both about concrete and abstract 'constructing'.

⁷⁴ The use of the terms "traditional" and "modern" is discoursed in the Introduction.

ences from Islam. Furthermore, in Swahili culture the language, way of speaking and way of seeing are often so thoroughly impacted by Islam that “[w]hat may be secular thematically may be religious in ideological orientation” (Mazrui 2007: 88). However, since the emphasis of the research of traditional Swahili poetry has been on the religious (Islamic) poetry,⁷⁵ I find it important to concentrate separately on non-religious (or non-Islamic) water imagery, too. The connections of the two groups will be discussed in the conclusions.

This chapter will provide a basis for locating the water imagery of Kezilahabi’s poetry within Swahili poetry. It constructs a context for later seeing how Kezilahabi’s poetry either 1) uses similar images in similar or different ways to the hundreds-of-years-old tradition of Swahili poetry, 2) departs from it, or 3) both. This chapter, the first dive into the ocean of Swahili poetry, seeks to research what kinds of themes the image of water represents in the traditional Swahili poetry, and how and why it uses the image.

3.1 *Water from Allah*

It is He who sends down water from the sky. (The Qur’an 6:99)⁷⁶

A great part of Swahili poetry is religious, and since the Swahili people have traditionally been Muslims, the old religious Swahili poetry is Islamic. Consequently, the basis of the water imagery of the poems has much in common with the Qur’an. Many of the old written poems, for example *Kitabu Mauludi* ‘Book of Maulid’, are either translations or adaptations from Arabic poems; even the arguably oldest known Swahili poem *Hamziya* is a translation.⁷⁷ Ergo, the

⁷⁵ Jan Knappert, in particular, has seen Swahili poetry as thoroughly Islamic; he notes that the traditional poetry was “entirely Islamic” (Knappert 1971: 5). This view is connected to his understanding of Swahili culture in general; Knappert (1967: 9) states that “Swahili culture is essentially Oriental, not African, in its material as well as in its spiritual aspects.” However, later he seems to have acquired a bit milder view, noting that “the Swahili have created a new culture, Islamic to be sure, but by no means Arabic” (Knappert 1979: xix).

⁷⁶ The references to the Qur’an in this book use mostly the English translation of M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (2005), and occasionally M.H. Shakir’s (1983) translation, as well. A Swahili version of Qur’an is not referred to because the first translation into Swahili was published as late as 1923 (tr. Godfrey Dale). Although some of the discussed poems are not dated, most of them have been written centuries before 1923; hence the composers cannot have read the Swahili translation of Qur’an but probably the original Arabic Qur’an. Even if before the first Swahili translation many people did not understand the meaning of the Qur’anic verses that they memorised (Lacunza-Balda 1997: 97), the poets who were either translating from Arabic or influenced by Arabic poetry/legends naturally were able to read the Qur’an in Arabic.

⁷⁷ *Hamziya* is generally cited to be the oldest surviving (Islamic) Swahili poem (e.g. Knappert 1979: 103; Bertoncini 1987: 15), but as Zhukov (1992: 61) notes, this assumption is “bare of any

relationship between Arabic poetry/Muslim tradition and Swahili poetry has been a subject of considerable discussion. J.W.T. Allen (1971: 434) notes that we should not wrongly understand the fact that a great deal is drawn from the Muslim tradition: “That is inevitable; but what is important is the selection and use of the traditions and the introduction of words and phrases which give the selection made a peculiar feeling.” It can be argued that the translators/adapting poets brought into the Swahili versions their way of narrating, and with it, some imagery unique to their works, including that of water.

Jan Knappert (1979: 117) argues: “The images referring to wind and rain, storm, thunder and monsoons, are purely Swahili. They belong to the Indian Ocean coast, and are not Arabic.”⁷⁸ However, Knappert’s claim is unsupported, for images of wind, rain, storm, thunder, and monsoons can be found in Arabic poetry and the Qur’an as well (e.g. 10:22; 11:42–43; 24:40; 31:32). Many of the water images are clearly drawn from or influenced by the Qur’anic water images; my analysis quite often notes a similar use of water imagery in the Qur’an. Moreover, the water images in traditional Swahili poetry share aspects with the wide collection of Islamic legends and Arabic poetry, and consequently, probably with all the other Islamic poetries of different cultures and languages that have been influenced by the Qur’an and Arabic poetry. Nevertheless, this chapter does not seek to compare water imagery in different Islamic poetries of the world; researching all the influences and similarities or differences would be a complex project that would necessitate specific research dedicated solely to just that question. Even seeing what is specifically Swahili and not directly from the Qur’an, is not the main aim, though reference to the Qur’an is often made if a connection has been found. Above all, the poems discussed are regarded as texts that are important and interesting in and of themselves. Regardless of their influences, these water images are those that can be found in traditional Swahili poetry, they have influenced numerous readers

paleographic support”, which would be needed to be able to really date the old Swahili poems. However, Zhukov (1992: 61) exaggerates the absoluteness of Knappert’s statement: he cites Knappert claiming that Hamziya is “the earliest survived Swahili poem [...] and the first ever recorded”, omitting the crucially extenuating middle part of the sentence (and altering the rest). The whole sentence of Knappert (1979: 103) actually reads: “The Hamziya is the oldest surviving Swahili poem *of the Islamic tradition*, and it *may* well have been the very first ever written.” (My emphasis) Likewise, Bertocini also seems to misread Knappert, or at least does not give other sources that she might have had; she refers to Knappert (1979: 106) and apparently means (1979: 103), but that source does not offer ground for her statement: “Hamziya is not only the first dated text in Swahili, but also the oldest written document in a language south of the equator (except Indonesian languages) that was written by a native scholar.” (Bertocini 1987: 15)

⁷⁸ Even if reference is occasionally made to Knappert’s comments as well, mostly what is referred to is the poems found in his works. For clarity, all of Knappert’s works are placed under the category Primary sources in the bibliography at the end of this book.

and listeners, and they have impacted the Swahili culture and the Swahili people, including Euphrase Kezilahabi.

The poems whose water imagery I discuss in 3.1.1 are (in order of first appearance): *Wimbo Wa Kuzingatia* ‘A Philosophical song’, *Kitabu Mauludi* ‘Book of Maulid’, *Dua ya Kuombea Mvua* ‘Prayer for rain’, *Utendi wa Qiyama* ‘Utendi of the Last Judgement’, *Buruda ya Al-Busiri* ‘The Burda of Al-Busiri’, *Maulidi ya Dali* ‘The Maulid Rhyming in Da’, *Maulidi ya Jambeni* ‘The Maulid of Jambeni’, *Utendi wa Miiraji* ‘Utendi of Miraj’, *Ukawafi wa Miiraji* ‘Ukawafi of Miraj’, *Utendi wa Mikidadi na Mayasa* ‘Utendi of Miqdad and Mayasa’, *Utendi wa Ayubu* ‘Utendi of Job’, *Utenzi wa Nuhu* ‘Utenzi of Noah’, *Utenzi wa Yusufu* ‘Utenzi of Joseph’, *Utenzi wa Yanusi* ‘Utenzi of Jonah’, *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’, *Al-Inkishafi*,⁷⁹ and some untitled poems from Knappert. If the information of the writer and/or the date of composition is known, it is given in the footnotes, along with the information about other editions. Similarly, the verse numbers are mentioned if they were stated in the edition I have used. In this section I will first discuss the “good water” connected to God, Mohammed, and Paradise, and after that the other side of the coin: water and the lack of it as punishment, and the suffering caused by the interchanges in the order of water and other elements.

3.1.1 Pouring with blessing

As the anonymous and undated poem *Wimbo Wa Kuzingatia* ‘A Philosophical song’ expresses, in traditional Islamic Swahili poetry God is seen as both the creator and the controller of the waters:

Nguvu zake kwa dhahiri
Swifa yake ni kadiri
*Ya kufanya mambo pia.*⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Al-Inkishafi means ‘the uncovering’ in Arabic, but because the Swahili poem does not translate the title, the poem is referred to with the original name here, too. Some editors translate the name in their English version: Hichens (1939) uses the title ‘The Soul’s Awakening’ and James de Vere Allen (1977) the title ‘Catechism of a Soul’. In general in this book, with the titles of the poems, literal translations are used. If there is an established English title that is significantly different from the literal, this is mentioned in a footnote.

⁸⁰ In Knappert’s edition the last word in the first line is *dhakiri*, but the word should most probably be *dhahiri* ‘clear’, ‘evident’, ‘well-known’. Knappert’s translation of the word as ‘in evidence’ also suits *dhahiri* perfectly.

[...]
Na bahari yote yake
Hujaa na kurejea.
Ufikiri tiyatini

Na kwa maji visimani
Na kwa jua la mbinguni
Hutuwasha sote pia.⁸¹

(Knappert 2004: 228, my alteration)

His powers are in evidence
 His quality is of omnipotence
 The power to make all things.

[...]
 And all his oceans
 [Tide] rising and lowering.⁸²
 Think about the earth

And about the water in the wells
 And about the sun in the sky
 It shines on us all.

The suggestion to observe the source of water occurs frequently in the Qur'an, for example: "Consider the water you drink – was it you who brought it down from the rain-cloud or We?" (56:68–69).⁸³ Allah has created all the water and Allah is the one who can give water to the ones who need it. At the end of *Kitabu Mauludi* 'Book of Maulid' the poem turns into a prayer for Allah, praying that

81 In Knappert's edition: *Hutowasha sote pia*. *Hutowasha* seems like a typing error: the meaning would be 'you will not light up' or 'you will not switch', which does not fit the context.

82 In addition to high and low tide, this could also refer to waves, and could be translated as 'Coming and returning'. Knappert's translation of this line (*Hujaa na kurejea*) is 'Filling, (emptying) and coming back'. On the other hand, Knappert (1967: 165) translates *maji ya kujaa* (lit. 'water of coming') as 'high tide'. Chacha Nyaigotti Chacha (1988: 109–117) also reads *maji kujaa* as 'high tide'.

83 In this verse the Arabic Qur'an does not use the verb *f-k-r* from which the Swahili verb *-fikiri* 'think', 'consider', 'ponder' comes from, although the verb is used elsewhere in the Qur'an. In addition to thinking, there is advice to see/hear; in English translations of the Qur'an, often the choice of the verb depends on the translator. For example, in the translation by M.H. Shakir (1983) the verse 22:63 is "Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the cloud", whereas in the translation of M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (2005) it is "Have you not considered how God sends water down from the sky". The Arabic verb is *r-'y* 'to see'. Haleem (2001: 37) notes that in the Qur'an, "in discussing water, man's senses, emotions and reason are constantly brought into play". Ingrid Mattson (2008: 43) notes that the recurrence of the advice to think/perceive carries the message that "God is to be approached by a multifaceted perceptive engagement with His creation."

nyingi mivua itujie nyakati zetu ‘many rains would come [down] on us during our times’ (Knappert 1971: 306, verse 118:c).⁸⁴

Water is fundamental for life and therefore highly valued; Knappert (1990: 255) states that “[i]n Africa, water is more precious than any other element”. Consequently, very commonly water is seen as blessing or mercy of Allah, or as containing his mercy. The composer of *Dua ya Kuombea Mvua* ‘Prayer for rain’ pleads: *Utunyesheleze vuwa nyingi yenye rehema* ‘Let a lot of rain with mercy rain on us’ (Knappert 1979: 199).⁸⁵ In *Utendi wa Qiyama* ‘Utendi of the Last Judgement’ the tortured, those who had sinned but repent, beg God: *Turahamu Mola wetu / Kwa mayi haba na kitu* ‘Bless us, our God / With a little bit of water’ (J.W.T Allen 1971: 476, verse 288).⁸⁶ As Muhammad Abdel Haleem (2001: 30) notes, in the Qur’an it is never said that rain “falls” (by itself); it is said that God “brings” or “sends” it down. The same attitude towards rain can be seen in the traditional religious Swahili poems.

In *Buruda ya Al-Busiri* ‘The Burda of Al-Busiri’ God answers Mohammed’s prayer with rain, *wat’u wakangia katika nema* ‘and the people entered blessing/goodness’ (Knappert 1971: 196).⁸⁷ The poem’s image of the rain is a strong and interesting one:

*Kwa wingu la mvua lenye baraka
ukadhanni nt’i yaliposhuka*

84 *Kitabu Mauludi* ‘Book of Maulid’ is one of the many Maulid poems written about the birth of the Prophet Mohammed. Knappert (2004) uses the title ‘The Maulid in Nun’. Knappert’s edition has used three manuscripts, oldest one of which was first published by Dr. Gustav Neuhaus in 1935. The poem is a translation of Barzanji’s poem (in Arabic). (Knappert 1971: 276–277) Knappert (1971: 277) states that it is “one of the oldest and still one of the best of all the Swahili Maulid texts”. – Wishing rain upon people and especially on graves is a very common image in Arabic poetry, see, e.g. Borg 1997: 174–175.

85 In the last stanza of *Dua ya Kuombea Mvua* ‘Prayer for rain’ the composer names himself as Muhiuddini bunu (son of) Shehe, son of Waili, of the Kahtani family (Knappert 1979: 201). He lived in Lamu, Kenya (and also Zanzibar, Tanzania), from 1798 to 1869 (Knappert 1979: 196).

86 *Utendi wa Qiyama* (or: *Utenzi wa Qiyama*) ‘The Last Judgement’ is a description of the Last Day on Earth, of the day when the unbelievers go to Hell and the believers to Paradise. The version used is edited by J.W.T. Allen and published in 1971. The other editions are Sacleux 1939, J.W.T Allen 1945, and Knappert 1967 (in addition to them, Noor [Shariff] 1972 which is same as J.W.T Allen 1971).

87 *Buruda ya Al-Busiri* ‘The Burda of Al-Busiri’ is a translation of the Arabic poem written by Sharafu ‘d-Dini Muhammad bin Sa’idi bin Hammadi bin Muhsini bin Sanhaji bin Hilali as-Sanhaji Al-Busiri (from Egypt) who lived 1212–1296. The poem is a praise of Mohammed. Knappert’s edition is based on two manuscripts, one of which had the name of the translating poet: Sheikh Muhammad ‘Uthman Haji Alekuwako, from Shela, Kenya. It was probably written at some point during the 19th century. (Knappert 1971: 165–167)

*ni mayi ya pwani hutawanyika
au seli kubwa ilo 'adhima.*

(Knappert 1971: 198)

By a blessing rain cloud
you would think when it (the rain) descended
(that it) is water of the coast that gets scattered all over the place
or a big river with greatness.

Knappert (1971: 198) argues that this image is an original Swahili image introduced by the poet who translates from Arabic into Swahili, using the image “of the shores of the Indian Ocean, where, in a torrential rain, the distinction between land and water is lost”.

In addition to water as such being regarded as a blessing, verbs related to water are used with words such as *baraka* ‘blessing, fortune, prosperity’, using concrete predicates with abstract agents or objects. For example in *Kitabu Maulidi* ‘Book of Maulid’ when the poet says that the recited verses *ghaita baraka yetu sote kama mvua* ‘pour down an abundant blessing for all of us like rain’ (Knappert 1971: 308, verse 126:c). The predicate *ghaita*, from the Arabic *ghātha* (or root *gh-y-th*) ‘pour (down) abundant rain’ (Knappert 1971: 308, verse 126:c),⁸⁸ is very strongly connected to water because it does not need a word for rain or water with it, whereas the verb *-nya* (and *-nyesha*) ‘rain’ is used with the noun *mvua* ‘rain’, that is, *-nyesha mvua* ‘rain’.⁸⁹ The line can be understood as referring to rain in two ways: either it sees that the process of pouring of blessing is similar to the process of pouring of rain, or, the blessing itself is compared to water, which is seen as a typical blessing; since the water-related predicative, the first interpretation is more likely.

By applying a concrete verb to an abstract object, the image both holds the idea of (literal) water as a blessing and conveys the intensity of the (abstract) blessing. As Reuven Tsur (2003: 248) notes, through this kind of verb–object combination a “high metaphoric tension” can be created. The choice of verb links the act with the nature of rain in many ways: the direction of the blessing, the invisibility of the sender, the unbrokenness and strength of the act, the lack of boundaries of the material, as well as the ability of the material to descend and pervade virtually any object. Tsur (2003: 247) remarks on the usage of liquid imagery in mystic religious poetry, observing that since drinking and thirst are

88 Instead of English, Knappert offers the French translation ‘verser une pluie abondante’. Knappert’s transcription of the Arabic word is “*ghayyatha*”, so he seems to refer either to *ghātha* or the root *gh-y-th*.

89 The Arabic verb *ghātha* is used in Qur’an e.g. in 31:34 and 42:28.

associated with passionate but passive taking in, they represent well the self-oblivion and abolishing of control typical to religious experiences.

The connection of blessing and water can be found at the linguistic level, too: in Swahili *vua* ‘a rain’ is homonymous with the stem *-vua* ‘fish’ which can also mean ‘save’ (Knappert 1971: 220) and which, according to *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* by Saclex (1939), is in the figurative sense often used about God. Rain and God’s blessings are identified with each other in *Buruda ya Al-Busiri* ‘The burda of Al-Busiri’, both in the original Arabic poem and in the Swahili version by Sheikh Muhammad ‘Uthman Haji Alekuwako:

*Idhinisha wingu la swalawati
lende kwa Mtumi kwa daimati
linye kama vua kila wakati
na wingu lingine la tasilima.*⁹⁰

(Knappert 1971: 220, verse 159)

Allow that a cloud of blessings
goes to the Prophet eternally
may it pour like rain all the time
and another cloud of peace-wishes.

It is noteworthy that the word used for blessings, *swalawati*,⁹¹ sounds similar to the word *samawati* ‘sky’ and rhymes with it. The play of resemblance enhances the connection of the blessings with the image of the cloud.⁹² Furthermore, the image is followed by a complementing image of *wingu lingine la tasilima* ‘another cloud of peace-wishes’, an image added by the translating Swahili poet.

In the same poem a person not wanting water even if (s)he has fever represents a person who does not believe in God:

90 In Knappert’s edition the third line is *lenye kama vua kila wakati*, which can be translated as ‘with/having [something] like water all the time’. As Alena Rettová (pers. comm. 28 May 2008) clarified to me, the word *lenye* ‘with, having’ should probably be *linye* ‘may it rain’; the *-enye* structure is (usually) not used without a noun. The poem was written in Arabic script that has no distinction between *i* and *e*, so there is no certainty which word was intended; but since *linye* is the more likely option, I have changed the transcription in the quotation from Knappert’s.

91 When used referring to people, the word *swalawati* (from Arabic) means prayers, but when used referring to God, it means blessings (Stefan Sperl, pers. comm. 24 Oct. 2008); so the image does not present any “reversed rain cloud” in which rain represented the prayers of people on the Earth going to the Prophet. The word *swalawati* is used also in the Arabic original. Thus Knappert’s (1971: 220) translation of the word as ‘prayers’ is misleading.

92 My reading of hidden references to other words draws from John Shoptaw’s (2000) idea of “lyric cryptography”, discussed in Chapter 2.

*Yito hutukia nuru ya yuwa
lipatapo ndweye kutotambuwa
kanwa halipendi mayo kupowa
aliye muweye hata wa homa.*

(Knappert 1971: 202, verse 104, my alteration)

The eye hates the light of sun
when it gets diseased, it does not perceive it
the mouth does not like to be given water
for the one who is ill even with fever.⁹³

A feverish person hating water can be interpreted to mean that “the organs do not fulfil their normal duty, symbolizing how their owner deviates from his duty of believing in Koran”, as Knappert (1971: 203) reads it. However, the imagery can be seen at the same time to refer to God more directly. Since light is a very common spiritual image (e.g. Tsur 2003), both water and light can be interpreted as the blessing or word of God; the nonbeliever does not let God or God’s words enter him/her, though that is what his/her thirsty soul would really need. The interpretation of a physical illness and the interpretation of a spiritual illness are not incompatible; poetic images are not like reversible figures of which only one interpretation can be seen at a time. When both readings are activated simultaneously, the image of water both has a strong concrete meaning and expresses God’s “water” (blessing, mercy, words), establishing a powerful impression. The image corresponds with the view of Bachelard (1983: 148), who, referring to Claudel (1928–1934) notes that “[e]verything the heart desires can always be reduced to a water figure”, concluding then: “Water, the greatest of desires, is the truly inexhaustible divine gift.”⁹⁴

The image of thirst recurs throughout religious traditional Swahili poetry. In *Dua ya Kuombea Mvua* ‘Prayer for rain’ (Knappert 1979: 199–201) the images of thirst (and water) seem predominantly to be concrete, creating a prayer imploring God to give water on account of drought and heat: *juwa la mtana kula siku lisilo koma* ‘fierce sun every day without ceasing’. On the other hand, with no mixing of abstract subjects and water-related predicates (or vice versa), the whole

93 In Knappert’s edition the second line of the stanza is transcribed as *lipatapo ndweye kutota mbuwa*, and Knappert reads *mbuwa* as *pua* ‘nose’, translating the line as: ‘(as) when it becomes bleared (near) the nose’ (*-tota* can mean ‘become wet’). As Alena Rettová (pers. comm. 11 May 2008) clarified to me, the line should probably read *lipatapo ndweye kutotambuwa*. *Kutotambuwa* is the negative infinitive of *-tambua* ‘perceive, realise, understand’; consequently, the translation of the line is now ‘when it gets diseased, it is does not perceive’.

94 In the original: “Si on creuse la terre, on trouve l’eau [...] L’eau, le plus grand des désirs, est le don divin vraiment inépuisable.” (Bachelard 1942: 203)

poem can be read as a metaphor. Rather than excluding each other, here again the concurrent activation of the readings opens up an image of both a concrete and spiritual drought: *Tuletee vuwa twondolee nyota na juwa* ‘Send us rain (so that you) take away thirst and sun’.

3.1.2 *The Purified Prophet*

Very often the one who is prayed to quench people’s thirst is the Prophet, Mohammed. A poem in praise of Mohammed reminisces how “Ulitoa maji Musutafa mkono wake / Yakiwosha kiu kya jamii sahaba zake” ‘The hand of the Chosen one brought forth water / Quenching the thirst of all his companions’ (Knappert 2004: 306, the composer not mentioned; Knappert’s translation), referring to a legend according to which Mohammed once quenched the thirst of a whole army in a desert: he prayed and after that all the men sucked his fingers (Knappert 2004: 306). This image is the most important water image in Arabic poetry (Stefan Sperl, pers. comm. 24 Oct. 2008).

Occasionally water is identified with blessing so thoroughly that the word “blessing” is omitted: Mohammed “hutumiminia kama seli” ‘pours in us like a stream’ (Knappert 1971: 292, *Kitabu Mauludi* ‘Book of Maulid’). The context (of praising Mohammed’s abstract qualities) and the adverb *kama* ‘like’ confirms that the omitted object of the predicate is not water but either *baraka* ‘blessing’ or some other positive term; Knappert’s translation adds the word “favours” (Knappert 1971: 292). The verb *-mimina* can mean both ‘pour out’, ‘pour into’, and ‘fill’; the last two meanings make the image illustrate the comprehensiveness of the spiritual experience. Moreover, since the object of pouring is omitted, the ‘pouring’ could be read to refer directly to God or Mohammed himself: the divine is poured into us.

Water imagery is connected already to the birth of Mohammed. According to *Maulidi ya Dali* ‘The Maulid rhyming in da’,⁹⁵ when Mohammed was born it rained (Knappert 1971: 118, verse 73). Another Maulid poem, *Maulidi ya Jambeni* ‘The Maulid of Jambeni’ connects the strong rain with the quenching of thirst,⁹⁶ which can be seen both as a metaphor and a purely concrete image:

⁹⁵ *Maulidi ya Dali* ‘The Maulid rhyming in da’, another poem about the birth of Muhammed, is a translation of an Arabic poem written by Muhammad al-Azabi, which again is a versification of Barzanji’s prose version of the Maulid. The Swahili composer/translator of *Maulidi ya Dali* is Muhammad bin ‘Uthman, from Shela, Kenya.

⁹⁶ *Maulidi ya Jambeni* ‘The Maulid of Jambeni’ is again a poem about Muhammed’s birth, written by Mohammed Jambeni. Knappert (1971) uses the title ‘The Nativity of Mohammed According to Moh. Jambeni’.

*Mengi yalikuwa
ziwa la samawa
ya kunywa na kuwa
kwa wetu Nabiya*

(Knappert 1971: 348)

Abundant was
a sky-blue lake
that one could drink
for our Prophet

*mayi chini yaliyongiya,
na habari ikaeneya
mwenyi nyota hana udhiya,
barakaze akaterema.*

the water that came down
and the news spread
so that the thirsty one has no trouble,
sent down his blessing.

The simultaneous activation of the interpretations – water as both spiritual and concrete blessing – emphasises the significance of the birth. As Reuven Tsur (2003: 109) notes, this kind of ambiguity in a poem can generate “an impetuous forward-driving ‘perceptual force’”. The construction *-a samawati* (here shortened to *-a samawa*) generally means ‘azure, sky-blue’, but since it is formed from the word *samawati* ‘sky’, *ziwa la samawa* can be read as ‘a lake of sky’, too. Thus *ziwa la samawa* can be seen referring at the same time both to the great amount of water in the sky and the great amount of water (forming a lake) on the ground, making the image even fuller of water.

Mohammed is thought to have been special since his birth, but before he receives his prophethood, Mohammed’s chest is opened and his sinful human nature is washed away. It is done with the water from the Zamzam well, a holy well located in Mecca. *Utendi wa Miiraji* ‘Utendi of Miraj’ describes how the archangel Gabriel asks for Zamzam water and then performs the washing:⁹⁷

*Mara t’atu kauosha
wasiwasi kaondosha
baadaye kusafisha
moyo wa T’umwa Nabiya.*

(Knappert 1967: 203)

Three times he washed it
removed all anxiety/worries/troubles

⁹⁷ *Utendi wa Miiraji* ‘Utendi of Miraj’ is one of the many Miraj poems dealing with Mohammed’s journey to Heaven. The legend of Miraj is considered very important among Muslims, which can be seen in the many versions of the tale; among the Islamic Swahili poems, only Maulid is more popular than Miraj. In the manuscript Knappert used there was the name Ali wa Salimu, but as well as to the poet, it might refer to the copyist. (Knappert 1967: 201–202) Other versions of *Utendi wa Miiraji* ‘Utendi of Miraj’ are Dammann 1940, Farsi 1965, and Knappert 1964a; however, these are different poems, not just other editions of the same poem (more about these versions in Rettová 2007: 289–291). Knappert 1967 uses the title ‘The Ladder’ in his English translation.

after that he purified/cleaned
the heart of the Prophet.⁹⁸

The Swahili verb *-safisha* can be used both for actual cleaning and abstract purifying. Due to the symbolism commonly attached to the heart, the act of “washing someone’s heart” immediately seems to refer to abstract “washing”. In another Miraj poem, *Ukawafi wa Miiraji* ‘Ukawafi of Miraj’ the narrator does not even mention washing: “wakapasua kifua / nyongo zote ghashi wakazitoa” ‘they cut the breast open and / all the bitterness, deceit they took out’ (Knappert 1971: 242, verse 5).⁹⁹ Nonetheless, equally to the symbolic reading, in *Utendi wa Miiraji* ‘Utendi of Miraj’ the setting with real water (from Zamzam well) supports the palpable, literal interpretation of the washing. In the Qur’an, water and purification are closely connected; it is reminded that God “sent down water from the sky to cleanse you, to remove Satan’s pollution from you, to make your hearts strong and your feet firm” (8:11).

Mohammed becomes the most important prophet. In *Hamziya* his significance is illustrated by the image of ocean:¹⁰⁰ “Iye ni Bahari kwatokele pochofu kima” ‘He is the Ocean where virtually everything is to be found’ (Olali 2004: 371), and it is advised: “Simfananize na kilumbwa Chumwa ya Mola / Yeye ni

98 *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* (Sacleux 1939) translates *wasiwasi*, *waswas* (the first word in the second line) as ‘Trouble de l’esprit, perplexité, hésitation, irrésolution, scrupule’ (= Disorder/trouble of the spirit, perplexity, hesitation, irresolution, scruple) but notes that it comes from Arabic *waswas* ‘inspirer à qqn une chose futile’, ‘suggestion du démon’ (= to inspire someone to do something futile, suggestion of the demon). Knappert (1967: 203) also notes that in the Qur’an (114:5) the word *wasiwasi* is used in the meaning of ‘the temptations of Satan’, from the verb *-waswas* ‘to whisper’. This reading supports the idea of moral purifying.

99 *Ukawafi wa Miiraji* ‘Ukawafi of Miraj’ is the only known Swahili Miraj poem in *ukawafi* metre, and also one of the first Swahili poems ever printed (Knappert 1967: 201). It was first published 1894 by Büttner; the other edition in addition to the one referred to (Knappert 1971) is Knappert 1966. Knappert uses the title ‘The Poem of the Ladder’. – Similarly, in a recent version of a Miraj poem named *Kisa cha Miraji* ‘The Narrative of Miraj’, which is an *utendi* by Kadhi Sheikh Abdulla Saleh Farsi written in 1963 (published in 1965), the description does not mention water: “Alipoamka Jibirilu alipasua / Kifua cha Tumwa taka zote akaondoa” ‘When he woke up, Gabriel cut open / The chest of the Prophet and took away all the filth’ (Farsi 1965: stanza 5). Mohammed’s ascension is described in the Qur’an, as well (53:1–18; also 17:1; 81:19–24). Fazlur Rahman (1989: 93) comments on the concreteness of these descriptions (in the preceding sentence he refers to the image of mosque, but can be regarded to concern the general question of the concreteness of the images, too): “Since the experiences are spiritual in nature, the entities mentioned in these passages obviously cannot be physical, although it must be remembered that when a spiritual experience is of great intensity, where the distance between subject and object is almost completely removed, ‘voices’ are ‘heard’ and ‘figures’ ‘seen’ by the subject and the inner experience takes on a quasi-concrete form.”

100 *Hamziya* is the Swahili version of the Arabic poem *Umm al-Qura*, popularly known as *al-Hamziyya*. The original Arabic poem was written in 13th century by Egyptian poet Muhammad ibn Said al-Busiry, and it describes the life of the Prophet.

Bahari ya zilumbwa zidhimbi tahama” ‘Do not compare other people with the Prophet of God / He is the sea of creatures [who are] little ponds’ (Olali 2004: 372).¹⁰¹ *Buruda ya Al-Busiri* ‘The Burda of Al-Busiri’ uses the images of ocean and rain in a similar way:

*Wote kwa Mtumi wana kiyasi
katika bahari mayi ukusi
au sondo moya ni hilo basi
penye vua k’uu iliyo njema.*

(Knappert 1971: 184)

No-one else equals the Prophet
Others are a drop in the ocean
Or just a sip, no more
Where the rain with goodness pours heavily

According to Knappert (1971: 184), the last line of the stanza means that “Mohammed’s prophetic power and his capacity for giving fertility is compared to a tropical rain on dry land. At the same time his wisdom is compared to beneficial rain.” The image of rain can be seen to comprise these qualities, but it can also be read to include many other virtues. The image of sea or ocean, which Knappert does not mention, seems to be above all a symbol of the immensity of Mohammed’s greatness. However, as parallel images, “ocean” and “rain” reinforce in each other their literal meaning, activating the many connotations that are attached to them. With the help of water imagery, the stanza efficiently conveys different ideas or meanings; it can be read as a multidimensional, dense description – or meditation – of Mohammed’s exquisiteness.

Similarly, the image of water is used of the Qur’an. In an unnamed song, the act of well digging illustrates studying the Qur’an; and it is promised that “mchimba kisima hakatazwi maji” ‘the well digger is not refused water’ (Knappert 1979: 48). In *Buruda ya Al-Busiri* ‘The Burda of Al-Busiri’ waves express the greatness and enormousness of the Qur’an; the image of the (presumably ocean) waves is followed by the image of *jauhari* ‘precious stone’:¹⁰²

*Ni kama mawimbi kwa kwandamana
ndiyo Kuru’ani yake ma’ana*

101 Olali’s translation of the last lines, “Do not compare other people with the Prophet of God. He is like sea and others are like ponds”, adds the word “like” but I argue that the image does not aim to just compare but to identify the Prophet with the ocean.

102 The word *jauhari*, or *johari*, can also mean ‘a valuable thing’ and is often used figuratively, like in *johari ya maisha* ‘the jewel of life’.

*Jauhari zake hushinda tena
tangu kwa uzuri hata kwa kima.*

(Knappert 1971: 200)

It is like the waves in constant succession
this exactly is the meaning of the Koran
its precious stones surpass everything else
with their beauty/goodness as well as their value.

The image of the stones can be seen to extend the image of the ocean: the stones could be part of the ocean, lying on the bottom and being constantly swept by the waves; the stones of an ocean are beautifully polished precisely by the waves. In addition to that, the word *kima* can refer not only to the value but also to the size or extent of the Qur'an, connecting the image of the stones to the idea of vastness which the image of ocean instinctively has launched.

3.1.3 Rivers that wash sins out

In addition to giving water to the other prophets, Mohammed is the one who usually gives water to the people entering Paradise on the day of Resurrection. In the preface of the Swahili version of *Buruda ya Al-Busiri* 'The Burda of Al-Busiri', the poet wishes that on that day Mohammed "[a]ninweshe nami mayi mazuri / ya kunweshwa nyota zote dahari" 'may quench my thirst with good water / that quenches the thirst of all the stars throughout the ages' (Knappert 1971: 170, verse 5). The next line reveals that the 'good water' he is referring to is from *Haudhi yake li Kauthari* 'Mohammed's pond of the river Abundance'. This is one of the four rivers in Paradise, the one in which the repentant sinners are washed before entering the Paradise. Since even Mohammed had to be washed, ordinary human beings are certainly in need of the wash:

*ma'aswi wakenda kwa taghayuri
hwosha nyuso zao zikanawiri
dhambi zikondoka wakawa wema.*

(Knappert 1971: 202, verse 101)

the disobedient go there eagerly
it washes their faces which start to shine
their sins disappear and so they become good.

Utendi wa Miiraji 'Utendi of Miraj', on the other hand, tells that the sinners bathe in the other three rivers in the seventh heaven, and as the result, "wakang'ara wote" 'they all shine' (Knappert 1967: 224). Each river makes them

a bit cleaner so that after the third one they are paper-white (Knappert 1971: 258–260). Thus the people are washed three times, reflecting the three washings of Mohammed’s chest. The bathing on the day of Resurrection can be seen as significant in many ways. The water makes the bathers clean and pure, but it is also closely connected to the resurrection itself. As Anthony H. Johns (2006: 463) notes, in the Qur’an (41:39) “[t]he wonderful effect water has on drought-stricken earth is proof of God’s power to resurrect the dead”, for example in the line: “Another of His signs is this: you see the earth lying desolate, but when We send water down on to it, it stirs and grows. He who gives it life will certainly give life to the dead.”

Besides water, these paradisiacal rivers carry other liquids, too: milk, honey, and wine. The other liquids, which are not found in nature on Earth in such abundance, are mentioned in a very positive tone – and no wonder since they are something that is attached to the best imaginable place. In an unnamed poem about Adam and Eve, Eve describes the wonders of Paradise with admiration: “Muna na miti ya tembo / na maziwa yaso chombo” ‘There are trees of palm-wine / and milk that is not in a jug’ (Knappert 1967: 97). The milk does even have powerful qualities: “anwaye kijaza tumbo / kiu hataizidia” ‘he who drinks it fills his stomach / the thirst will not increase’ (Knappert 1967: 97).

Nonetheless, it is water that has the most precious status among the liquids of Paradise. The descriptions of the sublime perfection and pleasantness of Adam’s and Eve’s life in Paradise include water imagery: “wakendea mito / kuzama kuogelea” ‘they go to the rivers / to dive (and) to swim’ (Knappert 1967: 96). This image of water is connected to the idea of being free of all responsibilities: going to the rivers, Adam and Eve “[m]ithili yao watoto” ‘are similar to children’ (Knappert 1967: 96), another quality expressing the felicity of their setting. In the Qur’an Paradise is constantly referred to as “Gardens graced with flowing streams” (e.g. 2:25; 3:15; 3:136; 3:195; 3:198; 4:13; 4:57; 4:122; 5:12; 5:85; 5:119).¹⁰³

On Earth the water of Zamzam, the holy well whose water was used for the chest washing of Mohammed, represents the water of Paradise and the connection to Mohammed. In *Utendi wa Mikidadi na Mayasa* ‘Utendi of Miqdad and Mayasa’ one of the characters tells Miqdad not to treat a company of Muslim soldiers lightly, because they “ndio wenye Zamzamu” ‘are the ones who have

103 In the translation of M.H. Shakir (1983): “gardens beneath which rivers flow” or “gardens in which rivers flow”. – The image of abundance of milk and water, and interestingly, also blood, is used to illustrate the power of rulers in Arabic poetry (Sperl 1989: 35).

the water of Zamzam' (J.W.T Allen 1971: 302).¹⁰⁴ The purity of water seems to be connected to the religious purity also in the way that it can be altered by the quality of the religious practice of the one who holds the water. It is thought that if a person has neglected the prayers (s)he can contaminate water, too, and should be avoided:

*Musinwe mayi pamoya
yapo kakupa hidaya
na ukinwa ni hizaya
umekhalifu shariya.*

(Knappert 1967: 41; an unnamed poem)

Do not drink water with him/her
even if (s)he gives it to you as a present
and if you drink it is a disgrace
you have transgressed the law.

The water of Paradise is connected to completeness: it carries the ability to make human beings *kamili* 'complete, whole' or *timamu* 'complete, perfect'. In *Utendi wa Qiyama* 'Utendi of the Last Judgement' the repentant sinners bathe in the river *Kauthari* 'Abundance' and come out not only cleaner, but integrated:

*Ngozi zao na lahamu
Mifupa yao na damu
Ikarejea timamu
Na sura ngema ajaa*

(J.W.T Allen 1971: 480)

Their skin and the flesh
their bones and the blood
returned all complete
and their face became beautiful

The word *timamu* 'complete, perfect' is placed at the end of the line making it part of the rhyme, and in addition to the last syllable, the penultimate syllable also

104 *Utendi wa Mikidadi na Mayasa* 'Utendi of Miqdad and Mayasa' was composed by Saidi Abdallah Masudi el Buhry (or: Buhriy, or: Said Abdalla Masud el Buhry, or: Saidi wa Abdalla Masudi) from Pemba, Tanzania. It tells a heroic story of the time when Mohammed lived, drawing freely from history. (J.W.T Allen 1971: 269–270, 368) Other editions of the poem are *Hadithi wa Mikidadi na Mayasa* 'The Story of Miqdad and Mayasa' by Werner 1930–1931 and 1932, and *Utendi wa Mikidadi bin Alasuadi na Mayasa Mkeve* (Mombasa version) by Knappert 1964b (and Bashir 1972, which is same as J.W.T Allen 1971); however, Werner's and Allen's poems can be regarded as two separate poems as they differ greatly from each other.

participates in the rhyme: *ha-mu/da-mu/ma-mu*. This enhances the impression of completeness.

Similarly in *Utendi wa Ayubu* ‘Utendi of Job’ the main character, Job, defines himself as being *khalili* ‘whole’ after being washed.¹⁰⁵ For Job water has the central role in the blessing and healing he receives after his sufferings are over. God talks to him:

<i>Haya ekue mateso Ayubu hunu ni mwiso taka mai osho uso pamwe na muili pia</i>	Now, leave (lit. destroy) the suffering Job, this is the end. Ask for water, and wash your face and your whole body.
<i>Na mai nikwambiao ya papo tini mwa nyao hayo ndiyo yatakao kukupiza ukapoa</i>	And the water of which I tell you about is down here under your feet it is this that will cure you heal you that you become well again
<i>Hiyo ndiyo dawa ako rukudhu maguu yako wala pasina sumbuko mai hapo yatakuya</i>	That exactly is your remedy stretch out your legs and without any trouble the water will be there
[...]	[...]
<i>Guu ukilisukuma yatatoka mai mema yasokuwa ya zisima ya bahari na maziwa</i>	When you push your leg there will appear good water not from the wells nor of sea nor of lakes

(J.W.T Allen 1971: 412)

The same miraculous water episode is referred to in the Qur’an (38:42), too, but in just one line; it is reminded that God said to Job who had suffered: “Stamp your foot! Here is cool water for you to wash in and drink”. In *Utendi wa Ayubu* ‘Utendi of Job’, Job’s recovery with the help of water is described in as many as 12 stanzas (4 of which are quoted above). Both the origin of the water (God, and secondarily, Job’s nearby surroundings with no previous source of water) and its healing abilities are beyond ordinary; hence it might be connected to the water of

105 *Utendi wa Ayubu* ‘Utendi of Job’ tells the tale of the battle between Job and Satan. Another edition of the poem is Werner 1921–1923. The author and the date of composition of are unknown; Werner 1921–1923 originally ascribed it to Umar bin Amini 1835 but was later informed that he was just a copyist, and that the poem “must be at least two hundred years old” (she added this information in a note after her translation went to press; quoted in Parker 1979: 380). If it was at least two hundred years old in 1923, it was written 1723 or before, making it even older than *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’ (oldest manuscript of which is 1728; see p. 78 below).

Paradise, too. Each attribute attached to that water amplifies the intensity of the image: the water is cure, remedy; the water is good.¹⁰⁶

3.1.4 *The World will dry up*

Given all the positive connotations of the image of water in religious traditional Swahili poetry, it seems natural that the lack of water illustrates something very negative. The image of drought is principally connected to the Last Judgement, the day on which everything we have done is revealed, everyone is resurrected, and the pious Muslims will enter Paradise (as will the sinning but remorseful Muslims after being washed, as noted earlier), and the non-believers will enter Hell. Belief in the Last Judgement is a cornerstone of Islam. (Knappert 1967: 243–264) Drought is the very first sign of the approaching Last Day:

*kwa myaka arubaini
pasi mai visimani
inti itakaukia.*

for forty years
without water in the wells:
the earth will dry up.

(Knappert 1967: 245; Knappert's translation)¹⁰⁷

Utendi wa Qiyama 'Utendi of the Last Judgement' emphasizes the reach of the drought on the actual day:

*Itakuwa dumiani
Pasi mayi zisimani
Yote yamekamukiya*

(J.W.T Allen 1971: 442)

106 The belief in the healing power of water is common even among modern-day Muslims. The water from Zamzam well is used for healing the physically ill, as is ordinary water over which verses from Qur'an are recited. Some healing practises involve either writing the verses inside the bowl (before adding water into it) or dissolving verses written with an edible ink into water, and then drinking the water. (Mattson 2008: 159–160) Zamzam water is believed to be able to cure even cancer (Ahmad & Ibrahim 1996: 40–45).

107 Knappert (1967: 243) does not name the poem but tells that is based on the Paris manuscripts of Sacleux in the Collection of Maison Mère des Pères du Saint Esprit, Rue Lhomond, and that Sacleux's version is quite similar to the other version, *Utenzi wa Kiyama* by Hemed bin Abdallah bin Saïdy el-Buhry (n.d.). Hence Knappert's version can be seen as part of his edition of *Utendi wa Qiyama* 'Utendi of the Last Judgement'.

All over the world
 Without water in the wells
 All will dry up

Nevertheless, sometimes the water itself is harmful. *Wimbo Wa Kuzingatia* ‘A Philosophical song’ draws attention to the fact that God has also created “mivua mivulizi” ‘the fierce rain’, and that “[a]metupa na maisha / Yamwelea kutufisha” ‘he has given us life / He can kill us too’ (Knappert 2004: 228–229). The image of the fierce rain is part of the imagery that illustrates the powerlessness of human beings, the idea of us being at the mercy of God.

Often the harmful water is an intended punishment from God. In *Utenzi wa Nuhu* ‘Utenzi of Noah’,¹⁰⁸ of which only fragments have survived, God sends flood to destroy the nonbelievers. He drowns all the people except the ones Noah took into his Ark. Later God takes the water away by his word. (Knappert 1999: 138–139) References to the story of Noah (Nūḥ in the Arabic form) can be found in the Qur’an in several places; the story is not told in a single narrative as in the Bible, but is generally the same.

In *Utenzi wa Yusufu* ‘Utenzi of Joseph’ Joseph is thrown into deep well, and its water presents a danger, but God quickly creates a rock in the middle of the water to save Joseph (Knappert 1999: 159–160).¹⁰⁹ *Utenzi wa Yanusi* (or: *Yunusi*) ‘Utenzi of Jonah’,¹¹⁰ which is also known only fragmentarily, contains a corresponding image: water presents a potential danger, but God miraculously saves the character from the danger, while still keeping him in the water (but out of the direct touch with water, as was the case with Joseph, too). Jonah is thrown overboard and a fish swallows him, but God tells the fish not to eat him but just to keep him in its stomach. The image of water is a combination of danger and rescue, for Jonah has been afraid of getting killed, and while in the water inside the fish, he is safe. (Knappert 1999: 158–159) Both the story of Joseph (Yusuf) and the story of Jonah (Yunus) can be found in the Qur’an.

108 *Utenzi wa Nuhu* ‘Utenzi of Noah’ has no date. It is based on Chapter 11 in the Qur’an, and tells the story of Noah that is in most parts similar to that in the Bible.

109 *Utenzi wa Yusufu* ‘Utenzi of Joseph’ was written by Muhammad Kijuma some time before 1918. It has influences from the Arabic *Qīṣaṣ al-‘anbiyā* (Knappert’s peculiar transcription is *Kisasu ‘l-Anbiya’i*) by al-Tha’labi, and from Persian poetry. (Knappert: 1999: 159–160)

110 *Utenzi wa Yanusi* (or: *Yunusi* – Knappert uses both spellings) ‘Utenzi of Jonah’ is based on Chapter 10 in Qur’an. The date is not known, the composer is probably from Mombasa. Jonah is one of the prophets of Islam. (Knappert 1999: 158–159)

In *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’ the image of ocean is used to describe this world and the ones who are attached to it, the unbelievers:¹¹¹

*Kwa kuwa nyingi jifiri
wakinga kama bahari
kutua mwana tuyuri
uziwani ukyoea.*

So numerous were the hordes
that they resembled an ocean,
on which a small bird alights
swimming on a surface.

(Knappert 1967: 174; Knappert’s translation)

As Knappert (1967: 174) notes, the image of a small bird is clearly the image of Muslims. It can be argued that in addition to the juxtaposition of the numerous unbelievers and a small (and thus brave) group of the followers of Islam, the image of the bird includes the idea of Muslims as above the earthly life, the secular world, only alighting it to fight for Islam. The image of world as ocean can be found also elsewhere in *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’: a spy that has found faith thanks to meeting Mohammed, declares: “Wokoziye hiyatiya kwa mawimbi na miuya” ‘He saved my life from the waves’ (Knappert 1967: 180).

Similarly, in *Al-Inkishafi* water represents this world, something that has its dangers and hardships, and in which it is even not good to concentrate (too much) on doing well with earthly issues which lead away from God:

*Suu ulimwengu bahari tesi,
una matumbawe na mangi masi,
Aurakibuo juwa ni mwasi
kwa kula khasara ukhasiriye.*

(Mulokozi 1999: 84, verse 13)

This world is a stormy sea
it has hidden reefs and many submerged rocks

111 *Chuo cha Herekali* (or: *Utendi wa Herekali*, or: *Utenzi wa Tambuka*) ‘Book of Heraklios’ was composed by Mwengo bin Athumani, from Pate, Kenya. It describes the war of Muslims (led by Mohammed) against the companions of Heraklios, who was a pious Christian emperor. Other editions (than Knappert 1967) are Büttner & Meinhof 1911–1912 and Knappert 1958; 1979; 1983. The oldest manuscript of the poem is dated 1728. – *Chuo cha Herekali* is loosely based on Arabian legends (Knappert 1967: 143); the Arabic descriptions of the battle are in prose form, except for one poem (Knappert 1967: 144). – Zhukov (1992: 60) notes that in the manuscript which Krapft sent to Europe in 1854 the title was *Dshuo dsha Herkal*, of which Zhukov uses the literal English translation ‘A Book about Heraklios’. Knappert (1967; 1979) uses the title ‘The Epic of Heraklios’.

he who rides it, know (that he) is a rebel
 he has done every possible harm.¹¹²

In contrast to the dangerous, wild sea, in the next stanza of the poem the world is compared to “kisima kisicho ombe” ‘a shallow pool/water hole, water pit’. It does not have numerous hidden dangers in the water like the ocean, but it is dangerous to approach because of a bull that attacks people who come near. (Hichens 1939: 56–57) The shallowness reinforces the idea of the vanity of approaching this little amount of water eagerly; to get attacked by a fierce bull just because of wanting to have a little bit of (earthly) water, is certainly foolish.

Life in this world is not everlasting, and human beings should not be misguided by its illusory beauty; in the same poem (*Al-Inkishafi*) a man in a desert realises that the water he thought he saw was only a mirage created by the shining sun:

*Chenda akaona mwako wa yuwa,
 mai alotaka akayatuwa;
 Asifidi yambo ila shakawa,
 ikawa mayuto yasimsiye.*

(Mulokozi 1999: 85, verse 17)

He goes and sees the sunshine,
 the water he wants to take out;
 he does not get anything but troubles,
 his regrets will not cease.

The idea of this world being just a delusion can be found in the Qur’an (24:39; Shakir’s tr. 1983): “And (as for) those who disbelieve, their deeds are like the mirage in a desert, which the thirsty man deems to be water; until when he comes to it he finds it to be naught”.¹¹³

¹¹² *Al-Inkishafi* was written by Sayyid Abdallah bin Ali bin Nasir (or: Sayidi Abudallah) from Pate, Kenya, who lived “during the century c. AD 1720–1820” (Hichens 1939: 9). It is a lament on the decline of Pate. Other editions (than the ones used, Mulokozi 1999; Knappert 1979; Hichens 1939) are Taylor 1915; Werner 1927; R. Allen 1946; Harries 1962; Jahadhmy 1975; J. de V. Allen 1977; Mlamali 1980; Dittemer 2006. As noted earlier, Hichens (1939) uses the title ‘The Soul’s Awakening’ and James de Vere Allen (1977) the title ‘Catechism of a Soul’. – In Hichens’s edition the third line is identical with Mulokozi’s (“Aurakibuo juwa ni mwasi”), but in Knappert’s edition it does not have the word *juwa* ‘know’ but the demonstrative *huyo* ‘that’: “aurakibuo huyo muasi” (Knappert 1979: 130), i.e. ‘he who rides it, that (is a) rebel’. Hichens’s translation of the stanza is poetic rather than literal: ‘Tis as a surging sea, this mortal vale, / of found’ring reef and shoal of ragged shell. / Who rides it, as a tyrant knows it well, / that loseth all to loss man’s hoped-for gain.’ (Hichens 1939: 56–57, verse 13) – Hichens notes that the verse uses a common simile of jagged coral reefs that damage the boats.

¹¹³ In Haleem’s (2005) translation: “But the deeds of those who disbelieve are like a mirage in a desert: the thirsty person thinks there will be water, but when he gets there, he finds only God”.

3.1.5 Streams of fire and blood

Though drought is one of the punishments on the day of Last Judgement, water is conceptualised as another, when it is boilingly hot. The thirsty sinners who beg for water are given a parching drink:

Mayi ya moto makavu
Wakapekewa kwa nguvu
Yakianguka matavu
Maini kuteketeya

(J.W.T Allen 1971: 476, *Utendi wa Qiyama* ‘Utendi of the Last Judgement’, verse 290)

Parching hot water
 They were given by force
 It was scalding their cheeks
 Consuming their bowels

This punishment is frequently mentioned or described in a very similar way in the Qur’an (6:70; 10:4; 18:29; 22:19; 40:72; 44:46–48; 47:15; 55:44; 78:24–25), sometimes near descriptions of refreshing rain given to the believers. It is interesting that the first line of the stanza uses the adjective *-kavu* about water, for *-kavu* means both ‘parched’ and ‘dry’;¹¹⁴ even though ‘parched’ is obviously more relevant in this context, the undertone of ‘dry’ can be argued to be present. Thus the hot water can, paradoxically, be seen as dry, connecting the punishment to the punishment of drought. The parching water is in a way non-water; as Bachelard notes, water as a matter can be identified with coolness, and if water is “embodied coolness” (Bachelard 1983: 32),¹¹⁵ parching water represents the opposite of “real water”.

The recurrent phoneme in the stanza is /k/: it constitutes 12.3% of the phonemes, whereas for example in the “wet” verse 13 of *Al-Inkishafi*, quoted on page 78 above, /k/ composes only 5.6% of the phonemes. Although it is debatable what ratio in regard to phonemes is significant, I argue that this is clearly is. Tsur (2008: 214) considers much smaller differences significant, regarding for example the ratios 1.63% versus 1.07%, 0.96% versus 1.35%, and 7.09 versus 5.76% as significant. While this research applies Tsur’s theory of sound in poems, I am much more hesitant to see significance in such slight differences, and I only discuss differences of greater scale; yet any ratio can naturally be questioned by

114 *Kavu* can also mean ‘barren’, according to *ya Kamusi ya Kiswahili–Kiingereza* (TUKI 2001). *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* (Sacleux 1939) offers similar options: ‘desséché; aride (au pr. et au fig.); rouverin (fer)’ (= sear; arid [lit. or fig.]; burnt [iron]).

115 In the original: “fraîcheur substantifiée” (Bachelard 1942: 46).

a reader that does not find the approach fruitful. However, although the analysis of sound in poetry can always be criticised to be ultimately subjective to some measure, I argue that the phoneme count system can actually offer tools for making sound analysis *less* subjective by tying the impressions and interpretations to something objective: the phonemes in the words, represented by the actual graphemes on the page.

Correspondingly, the often “wet” consonant /s/ does not occur at all in this parching stanza, while in the verse 13 of *Al-Inkishafi* it is used six times (making up 6.7% of the phonemes). Tsur (1992: 9) notes that the phoneme /k/ correlates positively with aggressive poems in a variety of languages; he also finds the phoneme “hard” and “strong” (Tsur 1992: 184). In some Swahili poems (and as observed later, in Kezilahabi’s poems) the phoneme /k/ seems to have the quality of dryness; perhaps this is connected to the appearance of /k/ in the word for dryness: *-kavu* ‘dry’ (adjective), *-kauka* ‘dry’ (verb). The attributes attached to the phonemes are impossible to fully separate from the content and connotations of the words; as Shoptaw (1994: 174) puts it, the words in poetry “come with their feelings and associations attached”.

Even before making the sinners drink the boiling water, they are given a rain of fire. The tortured men are suffering because of heat, and when they see a cloud in the sky, they think they are saved. But:

Likaya likawapita
Matete yakawapata
Na kula walompata
Wakazidi kuumiya

Matete hayo nda moto
Wakazidi mivukuto
Na matoneye mazito
*Wakazidi kuumiya*¹¹⁶

(J.W.T Allen 1971: 468, *Utendi wa Qiyama* ‘Utendi of the Last Judgement’, verses 223–224)

It [the cloud] came to them
 The sparks of fire reached them
 And whoever was touched by them
 Felt the pain more

These sparks of fire
 Their heat increased

116 The spelling of the end of the first line of the second stanza has been corrected, from *ndamoto*.

And their heavy drops
Caused them more pain

Again, the phoneme /s/ is not used even once; instead, the phoneme /z/ occurs four times, and can perhaps be interpreted to enhance the image of the crackling of the fire. In these verses, the phoneme /z/ seems to be used like a harsher version of the phoneme /s/, representing rain that is burning instead of cooling.

This rain is concrete fire, but since the Swahili word *moto* means both ‘fire’ and ‘burning’,¹¹⁷ and *-a moto* means ‘hot’, the image of the boiling water is connected to the idea of fire. It is noteworthy that the water given to drink was not just hot but extremely hot, boiling; but the poem does not use the unambiguous way of saying ‘boiling water’, *maji yachemkayo*, thus holding the connotation of fire.¹¹⁸

In *Buruda ya Al-Busiri* ‘The Burda of Al-Busiri’ water and fire are completely intermingled on the day of Mohammed’s birth, as the punishment for Persians who were worshippers of fire. First both elements are diminished by making the fire mix with the water:

*Moto ukazima kwa sikitiko
ukadarra mayi mayi yaliko
ikawa kishindo na papatiko
mayi kukauka moto kuzima.*

(Knappert 1971: 190, verse 62)

The fire went out with sorrow/regrets
and went in abundance where there was water
there was noise and fluttering/spasms/convulsion
the water dried and fire went out.

The image of the lake water extinguishing the fire resembles the image of Mohammed as water extinguishing fire in *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’:

*u mahalipi Bashiri
mayi mazimisha hari
moto ukawa makaa.*

117 *Moto* has also several other meanings, of which in this context ‘heat’, ‘zeal’, ‘welt’, and ‘flame’ are most relevant.

118 The Qur’an uses both “scalding water”, “seething water” and “boiling water” in this context (and in addition to that, “water like molten metal”, in 18:29).

where are you, Bringer of good tidings?
 the water that extinguishes the heat,
 so that the fire becomes charcoal.

(Knappert 1967: 190; Knappert's translation)

As the result of the mixing of fire and water in *Buruda ya Al-Busiri* 'The Burda of Al-Busiri', the lake dries and the Persians cannot get drinking water anymore. What makes the image extraordinary is the following stanza in which the elements get the characteristics of each other:

*Pale penye moto rutuba yake
 ndipo penye mayi namuna zake
 pale penye mayi harara yake
 hutoa mvuke na kuvuvuma.*

(Knappert 1971: 190, verse 64)

Where there is fire and its moistness/fertility
 that is where the water is
 where there is water, its heat
 emits vapour/steam and roars.

Knappert (1971: 190) notes that the aim of swapping the characteristics of the elements is to confuse the Persians and to dissuade them from worshipping material elements, by showing them that the material things are never permanent. In addition to the connection to the worshipping of the Persians, by making both elements unusable and dangerous, the punishment is also physically fierce. This intermingling of the two elements, water and fire, corresponding with the principle that Bachelard (1983: 95) states: "imaginary combinations unite only two elements, never three. Material imagination unites water and earth; or water and its opposite, fire; or earth and fire".¹¹⁹

In *Utendi wa Miiraji* 'Utendi of Miraj' the elements that are blended as a punishment, are water and blood. When Mohammed is passing through Hell he sees a man swimming in a river of blood. This man is not allowed to come out of the river; heavy stones are put into his throat to keep him there. The punishment is specifically for the greediness with which the man had practised usury; as Knappert notes, the heavy stones symbolise his greed. (Knappert 1967: 211–212) The setting of the river of blood, a liquid that is not only dark but also charged with cultural beliefs and taboos, reinforces the impression of suffering and the

119 In the original: "ces combinaisons imaginaires ne réunissent que deux éléments, jamais trois. L'imagination matérielle unit l'eau à la terre ; elle unit l'eau à son contraire le feu ; elle unit la terre et le feu" (Bachelard 1942: 129).

danger of sinking down.¹²⁰ In addition, the image of blood may also refer to that greediness, “squeezing the blood” out of other people. It is noteworthy that in Islam, eating animal blood is prohibited – making the image of being forced to swim in blood extremely powerful.

In *Ukawafi wa Miiraji* ‘Ukawafi of Miraj’ it is described that Mohammed sees a river of blood with many people:

*Kisha wakenda wakaona mto wa damu
Muna watu ndani wangilia wakila sumu.
Jiburilu kamba: watu sao wala haramu;
Ndio jaza yao wajaziwa kesho Kiyama.*

(Knappert 1971: 248, verse 22)

Then they went and saw a river of blood
There were people in it, they were busy poisoning themselves.
Gabriel said: They are those who eat the forbidden;
This is the reward they will be rewarded with tomorrow on the Resurrection.

The connection of the prohibition of eating blood (in meat), and the punishment of being forced to eat poison in the river, is even stronger here; Knappert (1971: 248) regards this as the “most probable interpretation”. This interpretation can be seen in his translation, since he translates *haramu* as ‘forbidden food’, though the literal translation is just ‘forbidden, prohibited, illegitimate’. Nevertheless, even with the predicate *-la* ‘eat’, the object (*haramu*) can still have a wider meaning than just food. *Haramu* is used of everything unlawful, and the verb *-la* ‘eat, consume, destroy’ can also be used figuratively. On the other hand, the rhyming of the words *damu*, *sumu*, and *haramu* at the end of the lines strengthens the connection of ‘blood’, ‘poison’, and ‘forbidden’.¹²¹ Since the people are in the river of blood when they are described eating poison, the venom might refer to the blood or to some toxin in the blood.

Similarly to the other poems in which blood replaces water, in *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’ that presents an extreme danger. Blood is the image

120 Blood is also an element that often occurs in poetry. Tsur (2003: 247) notes that blood is traditionally regarded as a metonymy for anger (without specifying which traditions he refers to).

121 These words are all loan words from Arabic, but such a great amount of words in traditional Swahili poetry come from Arabic that the choice of these words does not necessarily mean e.g. that *Ukawafi wa Miiraji* ‘Ukawafi of Miraj’ was a translation from Arabic, or that there is some specific meaning in the usage of words taken from Arabic. According to Krumm (1940: 2), in old Swahili poetry half of the words are of foreign (mostly Arabic) origin. The word for water (*maji*), too, is from Arabic *mā*. In modern Swahili, the percentage of Arabic loans is approximately 16.3–20% (Schadeberg 2009: 86).

of implementing judgement, the image of the destruction of the unbelievers. The battlefield turns into a red sea:

*mawimbi yakishishiza
kana maji ya kujaa.*

*Yali mawimbi ya damu
[...]
palio sili hukumu
ya kavu na zilizaa.*

(Knappert 1967: 165–166)

waves were foaming
like the high tide.

They were waves of blood
[...]
there was Judgement
of drought and earthquake.¹²²

The streams of blood are linked to the lack of water, drying of the earth. Drying and dying take place at the same time. It is repeated several times that the blood is acting exactly like water: “Iti iyee wavui / na damu ikinga mai” ‘The earth is filled with bodies [of men], / and blood like water’ (Knappert 1967: 191), “damu ikita mawimbi” ‘the blood streamed in waves’ (Knappert 1967: 196), “mauti yakiyunya / kama matone ya mvua” ‘death drizzled / like drops of rain’ (Knappert 1967: 191). It is noteworthy that, as discussed before, in the previous stanzas of *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’ water represented the unbelievers, the

122 This stanza is very different in different editions (and even within an edition), as are the translations. In Knappert’s 1958 edition the stanza appears twice, as 475 (p. 147) and 871 (p. 169), corresponding to Knappert 1967 (pp. 166 and 188); however, they use different transcription, and are preceded and followed by different stanzas. In Knappert 1967: 166 the last line is “ya kavu na zilizaa”, translated by Knappert as ‘and the dry earth trembled’, but on page 188 “na kaifu zilizaa” is translated by him as ‘it was like an earthquake’. In Büttner & Meinhof’s 1911–1912 edition (stanza 769) the line is “kaavu zilizaa”, and it is translated as ‘das dürre Land wurde fruchtbar’ (= dry land became fruitful); “kavu zilizaa” literally means ‘dry gave birth’ (the second a in kaavu is probably a mistake in transcription; it does not fit the metre). Then again, Knappert 1958: 282 cites another manuscript in which the line is “na ukalifu wa zilzaa”, translated as ‘über die Schwere der Not’ (= on/over the difficulty of lack). – Similarly, in Knappert 1967 the line “palio sili hukumu” on page 166, tr. ‘there where Judgement flowed’ by Knappert, is “patooshile hukumu” on page 188, tr. ‘the judgement arose’ by him; whereas in Büttner & Meinhof’s edition the line is “patoshile hukumu”, and their translation ‘es überstieg den Verstand’ (= it was beyond comprehension). – In Knappert’s edition both of the stanzas that I quote (i.e. also the previous stanza of which the last two lines are quoted) appear twice in the poem, in the same order, suggesting that the poem might have been altered by the reciter. Overall, Büttner & Meinhof’s edition is much shorter.

world. That water seemed to be never-ending; but now all the water has disappeared and the unbelievers are being destroyed by the waves of blood.

The waves are extremely powerful: “kama kufa li bahari / mausha myamba na kaa” ‘like death was the ocean / washing over rocks and reefs’ (Knappert 1967: 189).¹²³ The image appeals to the sense of hearing and the sense of movement: in addition to the already-mentioned trembling of the earth, it is told that “mawimbi yakishishiza / kama mayi ya kuyaa” ‘waves hissed / like the coming water [of high tide]’ (Knappert 1967: 188).¹²⁴ In contrast, the sight is dimmed: “Yali kiza na ghubari / pasi weu kudhihiri” ‘There was darkness and dust, / no apparent/clear space’ (Knappert 1967: 189). The effect of both reducing or destroying the visibility and making the chaotic voices and movements loud and strong, enhances the powerful image of the deadly waves of blood.¹²⁵

In *Utenzi wa Abdirrahmani na Sufiyani* ‘Utenzi of Abdurrahman and Sufian’ the description of war similarly contains several images of waves of blood: “damu ikenda mawimbi” ‘blood flowed in waves’ (R. Allen 1961: 106, verse 887).¹²⁶ Furthermore, as in *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’, the description appeals to aural sense:

*Damu ikenda mikondo
farasi hawana mwendo
kwa siaha na kishindo
na damu kutapakaa*

(R. Allen 1961: 106, verse 895)

123 Knappert’s translation of the line “Kama kufa li bahari” is ‘It was like the shore of the ocean’, which misses out the powerful reference to death.

124 In Knappert 1967: 165 the line is transcribed as “kana maji ya kujaa”; see p. 85 above.

125 In addition, the dust in the air can be seen as connected to the idea of suffocating; either by drowning in blood or breathing the air thick of dust. – As late as 12 years after the decolonisation of Tanzania, Albert S. Gérard (1976: 9) presents *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’ with a very narrow view: “The narrative structure of the African poem exhibits no attempt at aesthetic organization of the material. The telling is rambling and repetitive, and strictly paratactic. Although Bwana Mongo’s humble assertion at the end that he is no poet and is not instructed in the art of poetry (v. 1124) is just a commonplace of Swahili, as it is of Arabic, literary etiquette, its truth in this case is all too glaringly obvious.” As I have presented in this section through the analysis of numerous different water images in *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’, the imagery and narration of the poem are versatile and creative.

126 *Utenzi wa Abdirrahmani na Sufiyani* ‘Utenzi of Abdurrahman and Sufian’ was written by Hemed Abdallah Saidi Abdallah Masudi el Buhry el Hinawy, though he has “presumably incorporated in it some reminiscences of his grandfather’s version and perhaps of the earlier version”; there is another poem with the same name published by Dammann in 1940 but they seem to have no common origin (J.W.T Allen 1961: 3). It deals with the story of a dangerous man called Abdirrahmani and a war of Muslims against infidels who at the end either convert to Islam or die.

Blood flowed in streams
 the horses could not move
 for the loud sighs and noise
 and the blood spreading all over

In addition to several nouns expressing noise in the poem, the narrator addresses the audience of the poem with the imperative *sikia* 'listen, hear'. Even though in Swahili poetry it is often used in the meaning 'Listen to me', as a way to emphasise parts of narration, in the context of many sound descriptions, it can also be seen to refer to the soundscape of the poem:

damu mikondo yenenda
kula upande sikia

Harubu ikakawia
tangu mchana sikia
*hata kiza kikangia*¹²⁷

(R. Allen 1961: 100, verses 834–835)

blood flowed in streams
 on every side, listen

Destruction lingered
 From day, listen
 Till the darkness set in

In addition to 'listen, hear', *-sikia* can also mean 'feel, sense, detect, perceive'; 'understand'; 'pay attention, notice, heed' (and 'obey', which does not fit this context). However, on account of the frequent sound descriptions, it can be read to include the idea of trying to make the audience of the poem to hear the battle, to directly sense the noise of destructive waves of blood.

3.2 *Water of people*

Knappert (1971: 5) states:

Swahili literature is entirely Islamic from its inception in 1728 until the advent of the German administration in 1884. And even after that, up till the present day, Swahili Islamic literature amounts to well over half of the total body of texts produced, counting, of course, not only printed works but also manuscripts in Arabic script [...].

127 Harubu (in the third line) probably means same as *ubarabu*: 'Dévastation, vandalisme, brigandage; dommage, tort, mal causé surtout par méchanceté; [...] depravation' (= Devastation, vandalism, armed robbery; damage, wrong, evilly caused, especially by spite; [...] depravity) (Sacleux 1939).

This statement is erroneous in two ways. Firstly, the year 1728, which is the date of the oldest manuscript of *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’, cannot be seen as the “inception” of Swahili literature: the oldest manuscript that is still available is usually cited to be 1652; Mulokozi and Sengo (1995: 25) even suggest that it can be dated as early as 1532 (although they give no references for evidence). Moreover, Swahili poetry existed before that, too, at least in oral form. Poetry of Fumo Liyongo is estimated to be composed perhaps even before the advent of Islam; estimations vary between seventh century and the beginning of eighteenth century.¹²⁸ As Mulokozi and Sengo (1995: 25) state it: “Kiswahili oral poetry cannot be dated. It comes into being with the advent of Kiswahili-speaking communities.”

Secondly, even though in the Islamic Swahili society religious poems have traditionally been considered more important to preserve, and consequently are more easily available and have got much more scholarly attention, secular poetry from the past centuries has been preserved, too. The view of Swahili poetry being previously totally, and later predominantly, Islamic, has been opposed by Alamin Mazrui (2007) and Ibrahim Noor Shariff (1991) in particular. Shariff (1991: 41) even states:

At every stage of history, the Swahili have produced a far greater volume of secular poetry than of homiletic verse. Even a quick survey of the poetry aired from the broadcasting stations in East Africa, or a glance at the Swahili newspapers – and most papers print whole pages of poetry where the speakers of the language unravel their most profound thoughts – will at once reveal this fact.

One can only try to guess how, by quickly checking two of the many arenas of poetry, at just one (contemporary) stage of history, that “fact” will immediately be revealed. Moreover, Shariff completely ignores Islamic media. The only other supporting evidence he gives for his claim is a reference to the substantial amount of books written in Swahili on Swahili secular verse;¹²⁹ then again, there are quite a few on religious Swahili verse, too.

Shariff, who clearly wants to oppose the view of Knappert, exaggerates Knappert’s statement by leaving out a crucial part of the sentence (even without

128 Some estimates: 8th century (Darroch 1943: 252, quoted in Shariff 1991: 38); 10th century or before (Shariff 1991: 38); 10th century (Nabhany 1987; Mbele 1986: 140, quoted in Mulokozi 1999: 1); 1160–1204 (Chiraghdin 1973: i, quoted in Mulokozi 1999: 1); around 1200 (Hichens, quoted in Knappert 1983); 14th–15th century (Mulokozi 1999: 1–2); around 1600 (Knappert 1983: 167); around 1700 (Neville Chittick, quoted in Knappert 1983).

129 Shariff mentions Hichens (1940), Abedi (1954 [1979]), Robert (1959), Bhalo [Nassir] (1971), Abdala (1975), and Mwinnyihatibu (1977).

marking that the omission is before the full stop). His quotation of Knappert, of the same extract that I quote above, is: “Swahili literature is entirely Islamic from its inception in 1728 until the advent of the German administration in 1884. And even after that, up till the present day.” (Shariff 1991: 42) Shariff’s abruptly truncated quotation gives the false impression that the last sentence refers to the “entirely Islamic” in the preceding sentence. Knappert’s view is not quite that erroneous, but nevertheless misguided (and misleading). Alamin Mazrui (2007: 87–89) analyses reasons for the commonness of that kind of view, and offers two main reasons: the “modal bias” of valuing written literature over oral, and the “racial bias” of valuing Arabic over African.

It is quite impossible to prove the extent of already vanished poems; but while the amount of traditional secular Swahili poetry is perhaps doomed to be a subject of mere guesswork, it is certain that secular poems have existed much before the advent of Germans.¹³⁰ Traditional Swahili poets were Muslims, but not all the poems written by them are religious. Furthermore, even the religious poems can contain imagery that is not religious. This section seeks to uncover the non-Islamic water imagery in traditional Swahili poetry.

The poems to whose images of water I refer in this section are, in order of first appearance: *Kufa kwa Mkwawa* ‘The Death of Mkwawa’, *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’, *Ukuukuu wa Kamba* ‘The Wornness of a rope’, *Ulimwengu Maaluma* ‘The Peculiar world’, *Mwenda Mbizi N’i Kavu* ‘He who dives on the dry ground’, *Utenzi wa Vita vya Maji-Maji* ‘Utenzi of Maji-Maji War’, *Lulu Nipate* ‘May I get a pearl’, *Kiwiji Simba wa Maji* ‘Little fish, the lion of the water’, *Oa* (which is discussed more closely), and *Mwana Manga* ‘Lady Manga’.

The poems span a period of three centuries, from *Mwana Manga* ‘Lady Manga’ written around the beginning of seventeenth century (or perhaps even much earlier), to *Kufa kwa Mkwawa* ‘The Death of Mkwawa’ written in the beginning of twentieth century. The form, length, and style of the poems varies as well. Whereas *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’ and *Utenzi wa Vita vya Maji-Maji* ‘Utenzi of Maji-Maji War’ are epic poems with hundreds of stanzas, *Muyaka*’s poems, for example, are not epic, and may consist of as few as one stanza (at least in the preserved editions). The poems that are referred to are chosen because their water imagery illustrates a theme or themes that seem recurrent in the (non-Islamic) usage of water imagery, irrespective of the type of the

¹³⁰ Mulokozi & Sengo (1995: 25) even claim that the very Swahili manuscript of the oldest date is a secular love poem, *Mwana Manga* by Liyongo. However, although *Mwana Manga* definitely is old, the manuscripts that we know of today are not of the oldest date.

poem. The multifarious choice of poems seeks to get a wide view of different ways in which the image of water is used as a non-Islamic image.

3.2.1 Raging waves, vain foam

Even if non-religious poems do not refer to God, human being is often presented as being at the mercy of something more powerful – the nature, which is often represented by water. The idea of powerful water being outside the control of human beings has been refined into proverbs; for example into the saying *Bahari haiuzwi nonga* ‘The Ocean cannot be vanquished’. That is referred to in the poem *Kufa kwa Mkwawa* ‘The Death of Mkwawa’ (Miehe et al. 2002: 256–277).¹³¹ The poem tells the story of Mkwawa, a man who opposes Germans and is left alone in his fight with no help from fellow citizens: at the end he commits suicide. The parable of playing with the ocean forms the frame tale of the story; the warning against playing with the ocean is given both at the beginning and at the end.

The parable is elaborated in the beginning of the poem (after the formal beginning structure) in as many as ten stanzas, discussing the stupidity of Mkwawa:

*sikilizani habari
yake Mkwawa kabiri,
alishikwa na ghururi
akicheza na bahari.*

*asiwaze kufikiri
bahari kitu kabiri,
muna nyingi hatari
wala mtu hakadiri.*

[...]

*watu wa kale waronga:
“bahari haiuzwi nonga”;
mwa Muinga kaiyinga
azani kitu saghiri.*

(Miehe et al. 2002: 260, verses 28–29 and 32)

Listen to the story
of Mkwawa the Great,
he was full of boasting
as he played with the ocean.

¹³¹ *Kufa kwa Mkwawa* ‘The Death of Mkwawa’ was written by Mwenyi Shomari bin Mwenyi Kambi, from Konduchi, Tanzania. It was edited by Carl Velten and published in 1918 when the poet was still alive. The poem tells the story of Mkwawa, chief of the Hehe people.

He could not imagine
 (that) the ocean is (such) a great/powerful thing,
 in it there are many dangers
 no one knows how many.

[...]

The ancestors said:
 “The ocean cannot be vanquished”;
 the son of Muinga opposed it
 taking it to be a small thing.

Applying Shoptaw’s (2000) idea of crypt words, it is perhaps noteworthy that the word *kabiri* ‘great, exalted’, and in this context referring to the powerfulness, is very similar to the word *kaburi* ‘grave’. Thus the choice of the word for describing the power of the sea might also hint to death: with a subtle change it would be *bahari kitu kaburi* ‘the ocean (is) a thing (of) grave’. The alliterative sound of the used line (with *kabiri*) can make the reader hear the echo of this reading (*kaburi*), too. Similarly, *kabiri* resembles the word *kiburi* ‘pride, arrogance’ (that is also etymologically related to it), which furthermore supports the image of the dangerously proud Mkwawa. The image of sea represents the powerful Germans: their armed strength was something that Mkwawa did not comprehend but tried to vanquish.

Correspondingly, at the end of the poem (before the formal ending) there is strong advice, covering five stanzas, about the need to be afraid of the ocean. The second of the stanzas speaks about death most explicitly:

*nami nawapa hazari,
 msichezee bahari,
 mauti yako fujari
 hufa ukabusuri.*¹³²

(Miehe et al. 2002: 276)

And I give you a warning,
 do not play (with) the sea,
 your death (will be) horrible
 you die seeing it.

Borrowing from the images dealing with the dangerousness of water to human beings, in some poems the image of water is used to illustrate the killing power of human beings. In *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’ the son of El-Kindi, a

132 *Mauti fujari* (in the third line) means *kifo kibaya* ‘bad death’ (Miehe et al. 2002: 276).

killer, is described to be “kiwafisha watu mayi / wasikuweza kwoea” ‘drowning people / who cannot swim’ (Knappert 1967: 169). Dying in war is attached to getting thoroughly wet or being immersed in water in other poems, too: an unnamed song reminds that “Ukicha kutota / Usende mwamboni” ‘If you fear to get drenched / Do not go to the battlefield’ (Knappert 2004: 356). The verb *-tota* can mean ‘be drenched/soaked’, ‘be submerged’, ‘sink’; in any interpretation, the connection to a liquid is strong.¹³³ Given the context of war, the image seems to refer to blood (which is presented as being as plentiful as water).

Nevertheless, the waves of water can be an image of destruction, too. Like the image of ocean waves slashing on corals in *Chuo cha Herekali* ‘Book of Heraklios’, Muyaka bin Haji al-Ghassany’s poem *Ukuukuu wa Kamba* ‘The Wornness of a rope’ starts with an image of the inescapable power of ocean.¹³⁴ Unlike in *Chuo cha Herekali*, the waves are not blood, but otherwise the setting is similar:

Bahari ikichefuka penye mafungu na nyamba
Matumbawe hut’ekuka yakang’oka na maumba
Ni wapi pa kuwaweka wimbi lisije wakumba

(Abdulaziz 1979: 260)

When the sea becomes rough in the sandbanks and reefs
 The newly-formed coral rock breaks off and is then pulled away by the rock fishes
 Where could they be put so that the wave would not take them away

Mohammed H. Abdulaziz (1979: 261) notes that this might refer to a bad situation in a war. Knappert (1979: 155) explains correspondingly that in general “the coral rock surrounded by foaming waves is a common metaphor in Swahili poetry: it symbolises a fierce battle”.

However, since the other images of the poem refer to unavoidable hardships of life, the waves can be read as illustrating hard situations at a general level, too. Muyaka’s water imagery seems to be often connected to the view of the religious water images that present world either as a rough, dangerous sea (full of salt

133 *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* translates *-tota* as ‘1. Être transpercé, mouillé complètement, 2. Être submergé, aller ou couler au fond de l’eau, faire naufrage, 3. Avoir un ou les deux yeux crevés.’ (= 1. To be thoroughly, completely wet/soaked, 2. To be submerged, to go or sink at the bottom of water, to shipwreck, 3. To have one or two eyes pierced.) Similarly, *Kamusi ya Kiswahili–Kiingereza* (TUKI 2001: 324) translates it as ‘to be drenched’, ‘sink in water’.

134 Muyaka bin Haji al-Ghassany from Mombasa, Kenya, lived c.1776–1840, and is one of the most famous Swahili poets. His poetry had a great impact on *shairi* metre (Abdulaziz 1979: ix). In addition to Abdulaziz (1979), verses of Muyaka have been edited by Hichens (1940) and Nassir (1971).

water) or as illusorily full of (fresh)water but ultimately dry. I will illustrate this with two of Muyaka's poems: *Ulimwengu Maaluma* 'The Peculiar world' and *Mwenda Mbizi Nt'i Kavuu* 'He who dives on the dry ground'.

In *Ulimwengu Maaluma* 'The Peculiar world' the narrator states:

*K'ongowea ja mvuno isiyokoma kuvuma
Nda t'okozi na t'okomo tokozi hazijakoma
Simo niyawile simo simwenyi kuteza ngoma
Ulimwengu maaluma, mt'u hajetei nao.*

(Abdulaziz 1979: 170)

Kongowea is the roaring surf that does not cease roaring
It is for aggression and prying, aggression never ceases
I am not in it, I have come out, I do not dance with it
This peculiar world human being should not rely on.

Kongowea refers to Mombasa, and Abdulaziz (1979: 171) states in the footnote that this verse "refers to the unending sedition and squabbles among the different factions in Mombasa". As Muyaka's poems very often are political and discuss topical issues, *Ulimwengu Maaluma* 'The Peculiar world' no doubt can refer to the political games. However, Muyaka is a master of multiple meanings, and the last line of the stanza suggests a wider, more general meaning: this world is chaotic and full of useless rivalry, and should not be the foundation upon which a human being builds his or her life. Even though most of Muyaka's poems are not religious, they have the same view of this world as Islamic Swahili poetry.¹³⁵

The sound environment of *Ulimwengu Maaluma* 'The Peculiar world' participates in creating the image of world as chaotic sea and the poet's retreat from it. In the first two lines the syllable *ko* is used repetitively, occurring six times in just eleven words, creating an impression of the constant rough banging sound: *ko-ko-ko-ko*. There are also six more syllables ending with *o*, namely *go*, *no*, *yo*, *t'o*, *t'o*, and *to*, supporting the noise made by the *kos*. The change in the aural environment on the border of the second and the third line is dramatic. In the last two lines there are no *ko* syllables, and the soundscape is soft: especially the negative forms in the beginning of the third line make a drastic separation from the loud bang of the first two lines, the rough world: *Simo niyawile simo simwenyi* seems to make the last part of the poem swim away from the chaos in smooth, rhythmic but soft strokes.

¹³⁵ The shortness of the poem – it consists of just this stanza – emphasises its strong stand against involving; on the other hand, it is quite possible that the original poem was longer.

The phoneme /k/, which recurs in the first two lines of *Ulimwengu Maaluma* ‘The Peculiar world’, is regarded as predominant in an aggressive tone (Fónagy 1961; Tsur 1992: 9; 2008: 212–214).¹³⁶ The first two lines of *Ulimwengu Maaluma* certainly are aggressive. In addition to the other words expressing aggression, it explicitly uses the word *t’okozi* ‘instigation, aggression, bullying’,¹³⁷ and not only once but twice. In Swahili poems the phoneme /k/ seems to be connected to dryness, too (cf. 3.1.5 above). This might seem quite illogical in the case of the image of a roaring ocean, but paradoxically, the poem can be argued to present the water in the ocean (as an image of the world) as similar to dry ground. The basis for this connection is in the interconnection of the poems *Ulimwengu Maaluma* ‘The Peculiar world’ and *Mwenda Mbizi Nt’i Kavu* ‘He who dives on the dry ground’.

The three-stanza poem *Mwenda Mbizi Nt’i Kavu* ‘He who dives on the dry ground’ (Abdulaziz 1979: 170) does not have any water images, only the both literally and figuratively dry notion as the last line of each stanza, a line that has become a proverb: “Mwenda mbizi nt’i kavu yuatunua usowe” ‘(S)he who dives on the dry ground bruises his/her face’. Nevertheless, both poems illustrate the vanity and problems of this world with the image of water: this world is a dangerous sea, this world is a pool that is dry. In the first image world is presented full of (salt) water, in the second image it lacks (fresh) water, but both poems draw a similar conclusion: do not get involved in this world, do not think you are strong and able to do anything you like. Both poems even have a line starting with the words “Ulimwengu maaluma” ‘(This) peculiar/special world’, followed by similar messages: “(Ulimwengu maaluma) m’tu hajetei nao” ‘(This peculiar world) human being should not rely on’ and “(Ulimwengu maaluma,) nguvu situmile nguvu” ‘(This peculiar world,) do not try to use force’.

In *Mwenda Mbizi Nt’i Kavu* ‘He who dives on the dry ground’ the diver of course is sure there is a lot of water under him/her, otherwise (s)he would not make the dive. But the water (s)he thought (s)he saw is not there, and (s)he ends up hurting him/herself, as does the one relying upon the rough sea. Hence both water images (or, the image of water and the image of dryness) in *Ulimwengu*

136 Fónagy’s data covers poetry in three European languages only: Hungarian, German, and French. Fónagy (1961) links /l/ with tender tone, opposing /r/. If the expressiveness comes from the sound (and not from the visual shape of the grapheme), in Swahili poems /r/ in a poem probably does not express aggression in the same way as in Hungarian, German, and French poems, as the Swahili /r/ is a different sound. – What makes the sound analysis of traditional Swahili poems even more complex is that the elite (in this context, an educated class of people who knew Arabic) pronounced Swahili words differently from other Swahili speakers (Tucker 1946).

137 In standard Swahili the word is *chokozi*.

Maaluma ‘The Peculiar world’ and *Mwenda Mbizi N’i Kavu* ‘He who dives on the dry ground’ can be seen to express the level of danger and vanity in the everyday world. The same theme, presented often with the image of dryness, recurs in other poems of Muyaka, too, for example in *Dunia Mti Mkavu* ‘World is a dry tree’ (Abdulaziz 1979: 63).

3.2.2 *MajiMaji*, ‘WaterWater’

Instead of being a symbol of the dangers of the world or death on the battlefield, in the poems dealing with the Majimaji uprising, water is the image of life. I will discuss the topic with examples from one poem, ‘Utenzi of Maji-Maji war’,¹³⁸ which has been written by Abdul Karim bin Jamaliddini and first published in 1933.¹³⁹ The uprising took place 1905–1907 in southern part of Tanganyika as a rebellion against the Germans’ new strategy of forcing the local populations to work on cotton plantations and other maladministration. It was also a response to the famine resulting from the lack of male contribution to overall livelihood. The consequences of the uprising were catastrophic: it is estimated that 250,000–300,000 local people died. The East African fighters did not possess the weaponry that Germans had, but they believed in the power of special *maji* ‘water’, which was supposed to protect them from bullets. (Miehe et al. 2002: 23–28)

‘Utenzi of Maji-Maji War’ follows the historical events of the uprising and illustrates the ideology of it. It is believed that the bullets would turn into water once they touch the men who have touched the special water:

kabisa hafai woga;
maji haya tumekoga,
risasi haihasiri.

(Miehe et al. 2002: 327, verse 30)

fear has no place at all;
(in) this water we have bathed,
the bullet does not injure.

138 In Miehe et al. (2002) the poem does not have a Swahili name; Whiteley (1957) names it *Utenzi wa Vita vya Maji-Maji* (Miehe et al. 2002: 324), from which I have drawn the English translation.

139 The name of the poet is in some sources spelled as Jamaliddini. The poem has been edited by Lorenz (1933) and Whiteley (1957). The edition by Miehe et al. (2002) follows the orthography used by Lorenz (Miehe et al. 2002: 324).

Kinjikitile, a spiritual authority, and his followers have started the cult,¹⁴⁰ but everyone who joins is allowed – and asked – to spread the water: “nahimiza zangu chupa, / eneza killa bandari!” ‘I emphasise my bottles, / spread (them) every port/harbour!’ (Miehe et al. 2002: 347, verse 208). “Taking the water” is the symbol of joining the movement (Biersteker 1996: 183). It seems that it is also possible to increase the water: “yakipunguwa ongeza! / si kama nawakataza” ‘if it gets less, increase! / it is not that I forbid you’ (Miehe et al. 2002: 351, verse 243). The water is meant for everyone, regardless of position or sex: “watakapo wapeni! / nisiyani nazukuri” ‘give it to everyone who wants it / men and women’, and people of all ages (Miehe et al. 2002: 351, verse 241).

The spreading of water is hence fairly free, but the users of the water have to obey certain taboos. According to historical research, Majimaji ideology gave people a long list of regulations, some of which sound peculiar in the context of the importance of water: for example people were told not to wash. One of the prohibitions was stressed: “Under no circumstances should a soldier who had drunk the maji come into sexual contact with his wife.” (Mapunda & Mpangara 1969: 20) In the poem, however, the regulation apparently concerns only extra-marital affairs:

*Maji haya apataye
kidogo ayagusaye
kabisa asitembee
kwa mume wa isirari!*

(Miehe et al. 2002: 354, verse 269)

Who gets this water
touching it (even) a bit
definitely cannot have a sexual contact
with a secret partner!

Moreover, as Ann Biersteker (1996: 179–187) notes, in the poem the restriction in fact means the prohibition of accepting secretly another political authority.¹⁴¹

140 The cult behind Majimaji has been regarded to be based on traditional African religions; especially G.C.K. Gwassa (2005) regards Koleo (and related Bokero) cults as significant in the uprising. However, later research has opposed the view; as e.g. Thaddeus Sunseri (1997: 242) notes, “[t]here is growing evidence that the water medicine of the movement, far from being rooted in traditional belief systems, was modeled after Christian traditions”. – Miehe et al. (2002) uses the name Kinjikitile, as does Gwassa (1972), Biersteker (1996), and Sunseri (1997), so that version of the name is used in this chapter. Ebrahim Hussein (1969; 1970) uses different spelling in his play *Kinjeketile*.

141 Biersteker’s analysis in *Kujibizana* (1996) is an almost unchanged reproduction of her earlier article on the topic, “The Significance of the Swahili Literary Tradition to Interpretation of Early

The poem also presents a rule for carrying the water: “Msitie machupani! / mchukuwe mitungini!” ‘Do not put it into bottles! / Carry it in clay water pots!’ (Miehe et al. 2002: 351, verse 237) The earthen pitchers can be seen as a connection to the earth, and thus as a way to keep the water “alive”. Gwassa and Iliffe (1967: 10) also note that the water was often kept in bamboo stems that were carried as necklaces.¹⁴²

The water might be thought to be alive and to keep the ones touching it alive, but interestingly, it is also connected to death. The ones who have it fear death no more: “Maji haya yana sifa / anywae hauchi kufa” ‘This water has quality/ reputation / who drinks it does not fear death’ (Miehe et al. 2002: 353, verse 262). But the connection to death goes beyond that:

*Maji haya apataye
kidogo ayagusaye
hutamani ajifiye
moyo kumwingia hari.*

*Fundi ashikaye chupa
moyo wake unatapa
kutamani kujitupa
haonyi nyuma swadiri.*

(Miehe et al. 2002: 329, verse 43)

Who gets this water
who touches it (even) a bit
desires to die
heat enters his heart.

The warrior who grasps the bottle
his heart becomes furious
desires to throw itself/abandon itself
he does not turn back.

Miehe et al. (2002) translates the line “hutamani ajifiye” as ‘is ready to die’, and *hari* as ‘bravery’, but the literal translation (*-tamani* ‘desire, want, long for, crave’; *-jifia* ‘die’, *hari* ‘heat’, ‘fever’) is more radical. Not only is the Majimaji soldier ready to die, brave enough to take the risk; (s)he actually desires to die for his/her people, for the uprising, and is full of zeal. The Majimaji water is paradoxically promised to both keep the people alive and make them desire to die. The deeper meaning seems to be that by removing the fear of death the people do not mind

Twentieth Century Political Poetry” (Biersteker 1990).

¹⁴² The connection to the earth might also be seen in the composition of the special *maji*: in addition to water, it included sorghum grains and maize (Gwassa & Iliffe 1967: 10).

dying, and in a way death disappears: they physically die but do not die the death of which they were previously afraid.

3.2.3 *Swimming and sailing in love*

According to Gaston Bachelard (1983: 12), water is connected to both death and life: water is “a sort of plastic mediator between life and death”.¹⁴³ That connection, which was found in the Majimaji ideology, can be seen in other Swahili poems, too. The poetic hero Liyongo goes to die by a well, kneeling there. Wamitila suggests that Liyongo’s choice of place for his death completes his life: the water in the well can be seen as linked to the water in the womb in which he came to the world.¹⁴⁴

Womb is emphatically a place of water:

*Angalia mwando wako
Maji yao ukangia.*

*Yakaketi matumboni
Masiku arubaini
Na ruhu yako Mannani
Hayatasa kuitia.*

(Knappert 2004: 227, *Wimbo wa Kuzingatia* ‘A Philosophical song’)

Consider your beginning
Their [your parents] water you entered.

It rested inside
For forty days
And God the Creator
Had not yet put your soul in [your body].

According to Islam, the embryo is only flesh without life until the 40th day after the conception (Knappert 2004: 230). The idea of God putting life into the water can be seen as connected to the idea of God creating the human being from water, in Qur’an: “of water pouring forth” (86:6; Shakir’s tr. 1983); “We made every living thing from water” (21:30).¹⁴⁵ Haleem’s (2005) translation of 86:6 seems to imply that the water here refers to semen: “He is created from spurting fluid”.

¹⁴³ In the original: “une sorte de médiateur plastique entre la vie et la mort” (Bachelard 1942: 18).

¹⁴⁴ According to Wamitila (2001: 142), even the word for “womb” and “tomb” is the same, *mji*. However, dictionaries do not link the word *mji* with ‘tomb’. It can mean womb, but also other things such as ‘homestead’ or ‘city’; there are also other words in Swahili for “womb”.

¹⁴⁵ The “We” refers to God: “God uses ‘We’, the plural of majesty, in drawing attention to all these acts [connected to giving water to people]” (Haleem 2001: 31).

The connection of birth and water has perhaps had impact on the commonness of water as an erotic image. Most often it is women that are erotically linked to water.¹⁴⁶ In an unnamed song the lake water represents “public woman” and the well water “private woman”, that is, one’s own wife:

*Maji ya ziwa ya tamu
Hayashindi ya kisima
Ukitaka kuyateka
Uyateke kwa heshima
Jike lisilo mahaba
Kama nguo kuazima.*

(Knappert 2004: 91)

Sweet water of the lake
Does not surpass that from the well
If you want to fetch it
You should fetch it with respect
A female without love
(Is) like a borrowed cloth.

The poet refers to the “public woman” using the word in class 5: *jike* ‘female animal, cow’, instead of *mke* ‘wife’, which is derogatory when used regarding human beings.

The connection of water and woman gives arena to the many comparisons of lovemaking and going into water. In *Lulu Nipate* ‘May I get a pearl’ the poet uses several water-related images about his lovemaking, for example: “Nalipiga mbizi kati ya bahari” ‘I was diving in the middle of the ocean’ (Knappert 2004: 427; composer not mentioned).

Another image is lowering the bucket into a well: “Alitia kisimani / Ndoo maji kuyateka” ‘He inserted into the well / A bucket to fetch water’ (Knappert 2004: 270, unnamed poem). Correspondingly, in *Hayawani* ‘Brute, beast’ the male organ is presented as an animal that needs water (though at the same time it is attached to dry land):

*Nchi kavu hajatoka
Na atokapo majini
Mauti yatamfika.*

[...]
Kwa maji anufaika

¹⁴⁶ The connection is found in other cultures, too: for example in India the rivers are strongly connected to womanhood (Feldhaus 1995).

Kikikamuka tumboni
Ni maji yaturuzika

(Knappert 2004: 429)

It has not left dry land
 And when it leaves the water
 Death will get it.

[...]

In the water it prospers
 When it is squeezed inside the womb
 “Water” trickles out

The poem elaborates the image at length in a figurative way; only the last line confirms what it is about: “Kila mume ana chake” ‘Each man has his own’. It is noteworthy that *maji* can mean more than ‘water’: as both Frederick Johnson’s *A Standard Swahili–English Dictionary* (1939) and A.C. Madan’s *Swahili–English Dictionary* (2000, 1st publ. 1903) summarise, *maji* covers “water, or what resembles water”. Thus *maji* in this context can be regarded to mean seminal fluid; Knappert (2004: 279) argues that *maji* is used in that sense in a poem in which the narrator asks God for a wife using the line: “Nipate chungu kwa mai” ‘May I receive a container for water’,¹⁴⁷ and Harries (1950: 767) notes that in the poem titled *Waji-waji* the word *maji* means ‘semen’. The dry land can be seen as the male body, to which the “little animal” is attached to; it does not leave the dry land, but prospers in the water, which presents the female body.

Swahili people have traditionally been sailors, and sailing has provided imagery for erotic poems as well. This common theme has caused J.W.T. Allen (1971: 130–131) to remark humorously that sailors “seem to think of nothing but seamanship and sex and have time to think out tortuous ways of describing either in terms of the other”. Often the image of harboring a ship is used to present a sexual act: “Nahodha sende kwa kombo / Langoni chingize chombo” ‘Captain do not go astray / Into the harbor lead the vessel’, advises the narrator in an unnamed song (Knappert 2004: 271). The ship can be a male figure, as in the previous song, or a female figure: the young speaker of the poem announces that she does not want an old man, but rather a youngster who knows *kupanda chombo*

¹⁴⁷ However, in the case of that poem I am inclined to disagree with Knappert’s interpretation: since there are no other erotic references in that otherwise religious poem, which mentions water first in the connection of ablution, I read *maji* as water, referring to the Zamzam water that the composer is going to bring back from Mecca (as is the habit of pilgrims). Knappert translates the line as ‘May I receive a container for my water’, adding the possessive pronoun, which suits his interpretation.

‘to board a ship’ (Knappert 2004: 204). The verb *-panda* can mean ‘climb, ascend, mount’; ‘rise’; ‘get upon, ride upon’, thus containing many sexual allusions.

For the seafaring Swahili people, fishing has traditionally provided an important source of income, and fishing is a much-used image in poetry as well. It frequently represents chasing women. In Muyaka’s *Kiwiji Simba wa Maji* ‘Little fish, the lion of the water’ both the chaser and the chased are fish: “Nishikapo nishikile, nyama ndimi mshikaji” ‘When I catch something it is caught, I am the animal who is a catcher’ (Abdulaziz 1979: 316).¹⁴⁸ The narrator continues boasting: “Huzamia maji male, male yasofika mbiji” ‘I dive into deep water, so deep that a boat does not go there’. In the third stanza the meaning (or one of the meanings) of the preying is revealed: “Welelu siwezekani, k’utenepo na wambuji” ‘No one can be more nimble when meeting beautiful women’.

3.2.4 *Blend of water and erotic*

Water and beautiful women are linked also in another poem of Muyaka: *Oa* (Abdulaziz 1979: 182–184), which will now be discussed more closely. The poem (that can be found in Appendix 2 both in the original and translated version) plays with the multiple meanings of the verb *-oa*. The verb can be translated as ‘marry’, ‘see’, and ‘bathe’;¹⁴⁹ and the few, short analyses of the poem in the previous research have concentrated narrowly on the way Muyaka skilfully uses each meaning. Lyndon Harries (1962: 257–258) does not even consider it necessary to publish the whole poem; he states that “[t]he complete poem has six verses, but the first two verses will be enough to show that throughout the poem the poet is concerned with commenting on the three different meanings of the word”. Similarly, Abdulaziz (1979: 183) merely notes: “This is a homonymic verse. The word OA could mean: take a bath, look, or get married. Homonymic verses indicate the poets’ ability at word play.” He also quotes a stanza of the poem in the introduction for the book, noting that the poem “illustrates the homonymic style” (Abdulaziz 1979: 98). In addition to two later-mentioned notes on the interpretation of individual lines, these are his only comments. While Abdulaziz (1979: 97) clearly concentrates on the aspect of wordplay, he concurrently finds it restricting the poems:

148 Ahmad Nassir bin Juma Bhalo (Nassir 1990: 23) uses the name *Simba wa Maji* ‘Lion of water’ when referring to the poem. He notes that the poem is “mfano mzuri wa kujigamba” ‘a good example of [Muyaka’s] self-praise’.

149 In standard Swahili ‘bathe’ is spelled *-oga*, but the form *-oa* is also frequently used in old poetry. The verb *-ogelea* ‘swim’ is derived from the stem *-oga*, and this poem seems to refer to swimming, too, with *-oga*.

A favourite game of Muyaka's is a play on words. In these seemingly "gimmicky" verses, preference is given to the acrobatics of the words with the result that the subject matter loses its full value, and communication is confused.

Similarly, M.M. Mulokozi (1975: 47) also quotes only the first two stanzas,¹⁵⁰ and dedicates only one sentence to the poem; on the other hand, his short notion concentrates on the poem's theme in a comprehensive way, stating that the poem "is about love and marriage".

The poem is about love and marriage, and it is a play on words. But it is more than that. I argue that the poem has full subject value partly *because* of the word play, which is far from "gimmicky". The key for understanding *Oa* is seeing the connection of the different meaning possibilities of *-oa*, and, at least in some cases, reading the word to intend each shade of meaning. The need for multi-layered interpretation of the lines becomes more obvious as the poem proceeds. Otherwise, the individual lines do not accord with each other, and the poem does seem to be merely a witty play on words, each line presenting a different homonymy of *-oa*.¹⁵¹ I argue that the first word of each line, in particular, should be read to include all the three meanings, and that all the 'bathing', 'seeing', and 'marrying' in the poem are linked together.

There are six stanzas in the poem, each having four lines. Except for the last stanza, each line starts with the imperative *Oa* 'Marry'/'See'/'Bathe'. Each stanza uses the word *-oa* in several meanings, as the first stanza shows:

Oa, kwamba u muozi, uzoeleo kuowa,
Oa, mato maolezi, na mboni ukikodowa;
Oa, maji maundazi, meupe kama maziwa,
Oa, Sizi ndizi ndowa. Asokuoa ni yupi?

Oa, in order to be a spouse, who is used to marrying/bathing/seeing,
Oa, with sharp eyes and staring pupils;
Oa, abundant water, white as milk,
Oa, this is just what marriage is. Who is that who does not marry?

The poem seems to be guidance for a person who is getting married (or, who is advised to get married), commencing by addressing the listener: "kwamba u muozi" '(so) that you are a spouse', 'in order for you to be a spouse'.¹⁵² The very

¹⁵⁰ Mulokozi's edition is taken from Harries 1962, though Mulokozi spells some words differently and does not separate the lines into stanzas.

¹⁵¹ *-oa* is not polysemous but homonymous, i.e. the different *-oa* verbs are not etymologically related.

¹⁵² "Kwamba u muozi" could also be translated as 'Because you are the one who gets married'; Abdulaziz (1979: 183) translates it as 'If you are the marrying type'. In general *kwamba* means

first line of the poem reveals the depth of the play with multiple meanings: since the root *-o-* occurs three times (in *Oa*, *muozi*,¹⁵³ and *kuowa*), it is quite evident that it is used with more than one meaning intended (i.e. reading the line as ‘Get married, so that you are a spouse, who is used to getting married’ does not seem very expedient). The last *-owa* (in the infinitive *kuowa*) might refer, for example, to seeing, linking the line with the next one.

The second line can be read to concern solely seeing: ‘with sharp eyes and staring pupils’. On the other hand, because the whole poem plays with the multiple meanings and creates a coherent extended metaphor, even with the most unambiguous uses of *Oa*, the other connotations can be interpreted to be present, or even partially supersede or surpass the most obvious meaning. The second line could thus be read for example as ‘Bathe, (seeing) with sharp eyes and staring pupils’, or, ‘Marry and bathe with sharp eyes and staring pupils’. The soundscape of the poem is coherent, which also enhances the interconnections in the imagery. The prevalent phonemes are /m/ (7.3%, in contrast to e.g. 3.7% in the ‘dry’ *Nenda ukanywe!* ‘Go to drink!’), /z/ (4.7%, in contrast to e.g. 1.8% in *Nenda ukanywe!*), and /o/ (10.1%, in contrast to e.g. 4.1% in *Nenda ukanywe!*).¹⁵⁴ The high amount of /o/ is only partly due to the repetition of the suggestion *Oa!* in the beginning of each line: even when the first word of each line is deducted from the phoneme count, /o/ constitutes as much as 7.5% of the phonemes. In this poem, especially /m/ and /z/ both seem to represent the sound of water: /m/ the soothing side of it, /z/ the movement of it. In the context and as accompanied with the calming phonemes /m/ and /o/, the phoneme /z/ seems relatively smooth. Tsur (e.g. 2008: 222) notes the double-edgedness of the phoneme /s/, and at least in relation to water imagery in Swahili poetry, /z/ seems to be able to represent different and even opposing qualities of water, as well (see pp. 81–82 above on its character in *Utendi wa Qiyama* ‘Utendi of the Last Judgement’).¹⁵⁵

‘that’, ‘in order that’, ‘in order to’. Lyndon Harries (1962: 258) translates the line as ‘Oa, saying that you are a marrying person’.

153 *Muozi* is derived from the stem *-oa*. According to *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* (Sacleux 1939) *mwozi* (of which *muozi* is just an alternative spelling) means ‘celui qui préside à la célébration du mariage, qui marie’ (= the one who presides at the celebration of marriage, (s)he who marries [the couple]), but in the poem *muozi* seems to mean rather the person who gets married.

154 When counting the phonemes of whole poems, the titles are included in the count, but possible footnotes (that Kezilahabi uses in some of his poems) are not, since they do not seem to be integral part of the poems but rather additional, analytical notions.

155 *Oa* is also noteworthy low on the phonemes /l/ and especially /r/: /l/ is used ten times (thus constituting 1.4% of the phonemes) and /r/ only once in the whole poem of 700 phonemes (mere 0.1% of them). However, this seems typical to the soundscape of Muyaka’s poetry: e.g. *Ulimwengu Maaluma* ‘The Peculiar world’ (Abdulaziz 1979: 170) and *Kiwiji Simba wa Maji* ‘Little fish, the lion of the water’ (Abdulaziz 1979: 316) are considerably low on the phonemes

The third line “Oa, maji maundazi, meupe kama maziwa” ‘Oa, abundant water, white as milk’ may seem to contain a peculiar image: white water? In addition to ‘white’, the adjective *-eupe* can also mean ‘clean’, ‘clear’, ‘transparent’, ‘obvious, plain’, ‘pure, righteous’. The translation of Abdulaziz (1979: 183) uses the interpretation of ‘clean’ (or perhaps ‘pure’ in an ethical sense, too): ‘Oa, wash yourself in deep water which is as pure as milk’. However, I find it an implausible comparison: In the first place, there are other, more common words for ‘clean’ than *-eupe*. In addition, there are numerous more relevant (water-related) images than milk to be used as the symbol of cleanness/purity of water, such as fresh spring water. The meanings of ‘clear’ and ‘transparent’ naturally do not fit milk at all. I argue that there are two possibilities for the interpretation.

Firstly, the white water can refer to roiling water that creates white foam, for example in a flooding river; the abundance of the water, mentioned in the beginning of the line, fits well in that image. Secondly, aforementioned, *maji* can also refer to liquids other than water. In the context of marriage and the sensual references later in the poem, the white water can refer to seminal fluid. Because furiously roiling water does not seem a suitable place to suggest for swimming or washing, and because of the already-mentioned other erotic images of the poem, I find this interpretation to be the most probable.

Similarly to the first line, the refrain (the last line of the first stanza, which is repeated at the end of the other stanzas) again uses *-oa* three times: “Oa, Sizi ndizi ndowa. Asokuoa ni yupi?” ‘Oa, this is just what marriage is. Who is that who does not marry?’ It is generally seen to refer to marriage, which can be seen in the translations of Abdulaziz (1979: 183–185) and Harries (1962: 258), as well as in mine. But even when the line is read to talk about marriage, it brings all the meanings of *-oa* together, because of the reference to the preceding lines: the emphasising structure “Sizi ndizi” ‘This exactly is’, ‘This is just what’ stresses that *ndowa* ‘marriage’ refers to all the usages of *-oa* in the preceding lines. The line can be seen to contain witty humour: the actor in the emphasising structure with *ndi-* is generally something clearly identifiable; after all, the structure is used to state that it (or he/she/they etc.) is just the thing/person in question. Contrary to that, this poem, in each stanza, first creates multidimensional, dense imagery playing with the ambiguous word *-oa* in three lines, and then says (seemingly lightly) that *just* this is what marriage is.

/l/ and /r/, as well. One possible explanation is that for Muyaka, the phonemes were considered non-smooth or somehow unpleasant, and thus they would have disturbed the smoothness of the soundscape in Muyaka’s poetry. However, it can be argued that the only sporadic occurrence of /r/ is a feature of the Swahili sound system as such.

The translation of *-oa* as ‘marry’ can be seen as the umbrella interpretation, under which the images of the poem can be divided into two main groups, according to the two other main meanings of the word *-oa*: those related to seeing (*-oa* as ‘see’) and those related to water (*-oa* as ‘bathe’ and ‘swim’). The water-related images include images of swimming, bathing, washing, and sailing; the images of seeing are mostly advice to keep your eyes open and watch beauty. However, these two image groups are closely connected. The second stanza states that “*ndiwe muolezi*” ‘it is you who is the swimmer’,¹⁵⁶ and advises: “*sifumbe maozi [...] uzaze uzazi*” ‘do not close your eyes [...] beget children’.¹⁵⁷ Bearing in mind the commonness of the use of swimming or diving as metaphor of love-making (of man), the combination of ‘swimming’ and ‘begetting children’ does not seem at all random. The advice to keep eyes open can be interpreted to refer to the visual side of erotic pleasure.

The interconnection of swimming/bathing, seeing/watching, and marrying/love-making can be found in the following three stanzas, as well. The third stanza concentrates on youth and beauty, presenting images of “*maji t’imet’imbe*” ‘fresh water from a spring’ and “*wapambe wako*” ‘your well-dressed young girls/bridesmaids’.¹⁵⁸ The fourth stanza similarly recommends marrying an elegant woman, and encourages: “*maji ya kisima yatengenywe na mvuwa*” ‘water of well should be mixed with rain’.¹⁵⁹ That could refer to sexual act; as noted before in this section, well water can represent a woman, whereas rain as spurting liquid could represent a male party.¹⁶⁰

156 The word *muolezi* is not found even in the extensive dictionary of Sacleux (1939), but it can be derived from *-ogelea* ‘bathe’ via *muogelezi*; intervocalic *g* is commonly dropped in some Northern dialects of Swahili (Clarissa Vierke, pers. comm. May 2011). Abdulaziz, too, reads *muolezi* as ‘swimmer’, but Harries (1962: 258) translates it as ‘the marrying one’, similarly to *muozi* in the first stanza.

157 In the edition of Lyndon Harries (1966: 258), *sifumbe* is spelled as *sifunge*, though *-fungu* is generally used only of inanimate objects and *-fumba* of closing body parts. Hichens’s edition (1940: 73) spells the word as *sifumbe*, too.

158 The word *t’imet’imbe* can be seen as derived from the stem *-imba* ‘dig’ (in standard Swahili, *-chimba*). According to *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* (Sacleux 1939), *-timbua mayi* (*mayi* = *maji* ‘water’) means ‘approfondir une fontaine, un puits’ (= to deepen a fountain, a well). Similarly, Abdulaziz (1979: 182) notes that *t’imbet’imbe* = *yenye kufukuliwa* ‘(a place) with digging’ in standard Swahili, and hence refers to “shallow wells or springs”.

159 The subjunctive form is much more lenient than ‘should’; in this case *yatengenywe* means something between ‘may be mixed’ and ‘should be mixed’.

160 Interestingly, in this stanza the gaze is not directed merely at the woman, but the (addressed) man as well: “*ukijitezama, kioo ukichanguwa*” ‘when you look at yourself, when you take the mirror out (from the wall)’. Taking the mirror from the wall might have an erotic connotation, as well; Mark Pendergrast (2003: 113) notes that “Mirrors + humans = sex has been true throughout history”.

The fifth stanza seems to continue the extended metaphor of the third stanza, of water as sex:

Oa, watoka ngamani ulipo ukiifuwa.
Oa, majini ya p'wani umeyakosa ya ziwa.
Oa, ni hizi zamani tulizo tukiambiwa.
Oa! Sizi ndizi ndowa. Asokuoa ni yupi?

Oa, you come from the bilge where you were baling out water.
 Oa, in water of the coast as you don't have water of a lake.
 Oa, these are things that in the past we were told about.
 Oa! This is just what marriage is. Who is that who does not marry?

As Abdulaziz (1979: 185) notes, the second line of the stanza might mean advice to take a bath because of having had sex; "It is obligatory to Muslims to have a ritual bath after intercourse." Indeed, the image of baling water out of the bilge, in the first line, seems a plausible allusion for sex, both due to the image of water coming out of the baler and the similarity of the repeated to-and-fro movement. The second line, then, could be read to contrast women in a similar way as the aforementioned unnamed song in which lake water represents "public woman" and the well water one's own wife (Knappert 2004: 91); in *Oa*, lake water represents the preferable women. At the same time, the lines can also be read to refer concretely to bilging and swimming/bathing; lake water is more suitable for washing oneself and calmer to swim in. However, the third line of the stanza does not seem to refer to water, since baling, swimming or bathing are something that people, especially people of the coast, are familiar with from an early age; it seems unlikely that they would later comment on these activities: "ni hizi zamani tulizo tukiambiwa" 'these are things that in the past we were told about'.

The sixth, and last, stanza differs from the previous stanzas both in structure, rhythm, and content. After the multisided balancing between the images of swimming/bathing, seeing/watching, and marrying/love-making, the focus is now shifted onto the last unit of meaning:

Oa, unoweze nami, unowezao t'akoya
T'akoya saya maumi maumi ya kuumia
Umia nyama za nyemi nyemi za kunyemenyea
Nyea kutombonekea ambonekae ni yupi?

Oa, relax with me, when you relax I will be contented
 You will be contented (with) this pain pain of feeling pain

Feel pain (of) flesh of pleasure pleasure of pleasing
Tickle (that) cannot be seen, who is that who is seen?¹⁶¹

Except for as the very first word of the stanza, the word *-oa* is no longer used. However, *-oa* can be argued to be echoed in the word *t'akoya* 'I will be contented'.¹⁶² the form *-oya* can be used instead of *-oa* (as used in the third stanza). Thus *-oa* can be seen as included in the word *t'akoya*; it has evolved into contentment. The whole stanza depicts the powerful fulfillment of lovemaking: the rhythm participates in creating the orgasmic atmosphere by alliterative, repetitive words and many in-word rhymes: "maumi maumi ya kuumia / Umia nyama za nyemi nyemi za kunyemenyea" 'pain pain of feeling pain / Feel pain (of) flesh of pleasure pleasure of pleasing (or: pleasure pleasure that pleases)'.¹⁶³

It might be noteworthy that the used infinitive form *kuumia* 'to hurt' resembles the word *kuma* 'vagina'.¹⁶³ In Bantu languages the verb *-luma* 'bite' has been historically a metaphor to describe sex; Meinhof (1932: 211) notes that in comparative Bantu literature *-luma* has two meanings: 'bite' and 'have sexual intercourse

161 I find the last line, especially the word *nyea*, hard to interpret; this translation of it is just one working version, and some other possibilities will be discussed on the next page. According to the dictionary of Sacleux (1939), the word is a verb, *-nyea*, but it might be used here as a noun. The root of *-nyea* and *-nyemenyea* 'please' is probably the same: the latter just has more affixes of derivation. Abdulaziz translates the word *nyea* as 'relief', which does fit the context well, but that translation could not be found in the dictionaries. Besides, Abdulaziz's translation of the previous line also uses the word "relief", even though the word *nyea* is not used in that line, showing that his translation is quite freely interpreting. His reading of the third line even seems to turn the positive verb at the end into a negative one, translating it as: 'That all-consuming pain which grips your whole body giving no relief', even though he notes in the footnote that *-nyemenyea* means 'enjoy'. (Abdulaziz 1979: 185)

162 Abdulaziz's (1979: 184–185) translation is 'Oa, relax so that I can rest, and if you make me rest you'll rest', and Abdulaziz notes that *-oya* can mean 'relax' in a dialect. However, there is *k* in the used word, and *-koya* means 'be contented', 'be happy', 'relax'.

163 With the resemblance of the words I mean the similarity (in sound, though also in the graphemic, visual form) which might have been intentional, e.g. when writing *kuumia* the poet might have referred to *kuma*, too. Differing from Shoptaw's idea of "crypt words" that are actually meant to be read as other words, I merely argue that the poet may have wanted (consciously or unconsciously) to refer to other words, in addition to the word (s)he chose to write. I argue that even when not conscious, the resemblance is probably not coincidental, as perhaps nothing in poetry is. This listening to resembling words also tries to consider the topic of the poem; *Oa* certainly has erotic images, so these "hidden" references to more direct, even vulgar, words can plausibly have been alluded to. However, whether these "hidden" words had vulgar or even erotic meaning in the Swahili spoken at Muyaka's time – or whether they were used at all – would need more research.

(of males)'.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, the word *kutombonekea* 'to not be seen' resembles the Swahili verb *kutombana*, which is a vulgar word for 'to have sex'; rather, 'to fuck'. Likewise, the word *nyemi* 'joy, pleasure' sounds similar to the preceding word *nyama* 'meat, flesh'; and the last three syllables of *kunyemenyea* 'to please' create the next word *nyea* 'tickle'. On the other hand the word *maumi*, which is a different form of derivation of the same root as the word *maumivu* 'pain', used twice in the second line, might be seen to resemble *mauti* 'death' (though with the change of consonant, the sound resemblance is not so close). Even if the resemblance to death is not intended, the many references to pain create an image that is not just pleasant, but rather a mixture of pain and pleasure; the third line even starts with the imperative form *Umia* 'Feel pain/be hurt'. The image of *nyea* 'tickle' might help to understand the connection of pain and pleasure: a tickle is caused by stimulating (lightly) pain nerves, and the sensation produces endorphins, making it pleasant.

On the other hand, in addition to 'tickle', the word *nyea* can also mean 'disparaitre, s'évanouir, se perdre de vue' (= disappear, faint, lose [him/her]self out of sight) (Sacleux 1939).¹⁶⁵ This creates another possibility of interpretation: *nyea* could be seen as part of the idea of the following word, that of not being seen (*kutombonekea* 'to not be seen'). Abdulaziz (1979: 184) translates the last line as "Relief that comes unexpected, who can really foresee things", but comments in a footnote that *-mboneka* is the same as *-oneka* in standard Swahili; hence the word in the poem does not refer to active seeing (or foreseeing) but to being seen. To be specific, *kutombonekea* can be read as 'to not be seen, to be or become invisible'; *Nyea* could be the imperative form 'Disappear!' or 'Lose yourself!' Very hypothetically, the line might be read as: 'Disappear! [Love/sex is about] losing oneself, who is that who stays visible?' Hence the image might be connected to what Reuven Tsur (2003: 257) calls "dissolution of the lovers into gestalt-free and thing-free entities suspending the boundaries between self and not-self". Moreover, in concordance with the imagery of *Oa*, Tsur (2003: 233) sees the image of water as one of the most efficient images in conveying this experience in poetry:

164 In the later English version of the (originally German) book, the connection is not as direct: *-luma* is translated as 'bite, stab' or 'cohabit (of the man)'. However, Lutz Marten (pers. comm. 18 June 2008) interprets "beiliegen (vom Manne)" (Meinhof 1932: 211) in this context as 'having sex (of male)'. He also notes that in Northwest and Central Bantu *-luma* can mean 'semen', as well.

165 Sacleux (1939) also notes that *nyege* (a word related to *nyea*) means 'appétits charnels' (= carnal appetites); this could offer a possibility for interpretation.

From the point of view of available verbal techniques, I suggest, abstractions, gases and liquids are among the most prototypical natural symbols in our conceptual system to suggest a state in which the boundaries between objects are suspended.

Even if the last line remains very ambiguous, the poem creates a coherent series of water-related erotic images that resemble the famous poem *Mwana Manga* of Fumo Liyongo, composed around twelfth or thirteenth century. There are some similar images, such as bilge representing the female organ, and both poems end with a description of sexual climax. As shown in this section, rather than just playing with the different meanings of *-oa*, *Oa* is a dense erotic poem that shows how the image of water can be used in creating versatile and illustrative non-religious imagery, too.

3.3 *Conclusions*

In 3.1 “Water from Allah”, I have shown how religious (Islamic) images of water in traditional Swahili poetry illustrate blessing, spiritual thirst, purifying, greatness, becoming complete, dangers, and illusions. I have also demonstrated how the replacement of water with other elements, such as fire or blood, acts as an extreme religious punishment in the poems. The analysis of the imagery shows that even though God gives water on Earth, in the strict sense real water can only be found in Paradise; the water on Earth is just an illusion, a poor imitation or a faint shadow of the real water of God. Within these poems, that real, pure water of God has the power to make human beings whole. Water imagery seems to be something that is able to illustrate this holistic experience and other ideas and spiritual sensations that escape conceptual language, which makes water imagery very useful for poetry dealing with religion.

3.2 “Water of people”, shows how non-Islamic (and mostly non-religious) water images also express dangerousness and the illusory nature of the world, and connect water to both life and death. In addition to those contents that are similar to the religious images, the non-religious poetry often uses water as an erotic image. Whereas in religious poetry, the image of water is used to express spiritual experiences beyond words, the non-religious poetry frequently uses the image when talking about sex, something that is traditionally not spoken about directly. More than being discrete, the image offers erotic poetry a way to express something that also escapes words, something that cannot be fully conceptualised. Similarly, the image of water is frequently used in West African Sufi poetry to represent the nonrepresentable, God, and the whole mystical experience of him (e.g. Johnson 1980: 35). The similarity of erotic and religious

experiences, at least in regard to the level of conceptualisation, can be seen in many literatures in the images that use erotic love as allusion of divine love and faith (and sometimes vice versa). Both erotic and spiritual experiences seem to be able to make human beings feel that they are “on the shore of nothingness” (Tsur 2003: 231–262). Water, as a material that can envelope one within itself and diminish or stir the border between oneself and the water, seems to offer a multisided image for this expression.

The Islamic water images seem to be strictly divided into good and dangerous water. Water as blessing is generally clean freshwater (including rain), and water as danger is the salt water of deep, unknown ocean; even if the ocean is also created by God, it is considered as something to be very careful about, something very worldly and potentially calamitous – freshwater seems to have or at least to be able to have a heavenly aspect. The good water is connected to God, Mohammed, and Paradise, whereas the bad water is just water on Earth. This dichotomy can be found in the Qur’an as well. It is told that God “released the two bodies of flowing water, one sweet and fresh and the other salty and bitter, and put an insurmountable barrier between them” (25:53). Overall, the religious water imagery in traditional Swahili poetry has very much in common with the Qur’an, though it is based also on the surroundings of its composers. For example, the image of river, which occurs in the Qur’an over fifty times, is rarely found in old Swahili poetry except for the descriptions of Paradise; traditional Swahili poetry is expressly poetry of the Swahili coast.

The non-Islamic water images also have the division into good and bad. Seawater represents danger and death, and freshwater represents life: birth and sex, which are naturally linked to one another. Whereas salt water is often an image of danger, with freshwater the *lack* of it represents danger; the salt water of the ocean is massive, uncontrollable, and powerful, while freshwater tends not to move aggressively, quenches thirst, and above all, is essential for life. On the other hand, in the Majimaji poems the image of (fresh)water is connected to both life and death, illustrating the idea of life that includes death as well. Similar to the water of Paradise in the Islamic poems, in Majimaji ideology water has the power to make human beings whole. It is as if the name Majimaji comprehended both *maji ya maisha* ‘water of life’ and *maji ya mauti* ‘water of death’. They are both included, and at the same time, they are the same thing, and can both be abbreviated into just one word: *maji*, thus creating the reduplicative name.

Researching the water images in traditional Swahili poetry has created a point of comparison and contextualisation for the water images in Kezilahabi’s poetry. As a modern poet – Christian, university-educated, with a history of living inland and spending his childhood by Lake Victoria, yet who is familiar with the

old Swahili poetry and culture – it will be interesting to see how Kezilahabi uses the images of water in relation to traditional Swahili poetry. This chapter has raised more questions for the analysis of Kezilahabi's imagery, namely: Does he use aquatic imagery to express nonconceptual experiences, and if so, which experiences? Does he divide water strictly into good and dangerous, and if so, why and how? Does the aural environment participate in creating the images of water, and if so, how? Does blood play a similar role – as the fatal substitute for water?

4. THE IMAGE OF WATER IN MODERN SWAHILI POETRY

After looking at the image of water in traditional poetry, I turn to modern Swahili poetry, with which I mean poetry written in Swahili from 1950s onwards.¹⁶⁶ This chapter will provide another context for locating Euphrase Kezilahabi's water imagery.

Since most of contemporary Swahili poetry is still written in metric form, conventionally formed poems constitute the majority of the poems analysed in this chapter. Of modernist poets, best-known (in addition to Kezilahabi) are K.K. Kahigi and M.M. Mulokozi, Kithaka wa Mberia, and Alamin Mazrui; consequently, their water imagery is included in the analysis. In line with Gromov's (2009) notion of the intermediate trend, some of the analysed poems can be located in between traditionalist and modernist. But the form of the poems is not the focus of this research. While discussing the image of water, the images in free verse poetry are analysed along with the images in metric poetry, concentrating on themes rather than forms. The modern poets whose images of water I refer to in this chapter are, in order of first appearance: Shaaban Robert (1959; 1967;¹⁶⁷ 1991), Alamin Mazrui (1988), Kithaka wa Mberia (1997; 2001; 2007), Said Ahmed Mohamed (1984; 2002), K.K. Kahigi and M.M. Mulokozi (1973; 1976), Abbas Mdungi (2009), Mathias E. Mnyampala (1965; 1967), Haji Chum (1974), Muhammed Seif Khatib (2003), Abdilatif Abdalla (1971), Saadani Abdu Kandoro (1972), and E.A. Uvetie (1976). Hence the poems analysed were published in the fifty years between 1959 and 2009.

Most of the poems discussed can be grouped, first, into lyrical poems; many of them deal with personal emotions or reflections. Some are at the same political and lyrical, for example Mazrui's and Kithaka's poems. The second distinctive group is religious poems, comprised of poems by Mnyampala, Chum, Khatib, and Abdalla. The third group is historical poems, although in the analysed poems

166 The use of terms "modern", "modernist", "traditional", and "traditional" in Swahili poetry is discussed in the Introduction.

167 A quarter of Robert's (1967) *Utenzi wa Vita vya Uhuru* was published in parts in *Mambo Leo*, a Tanzanian newspaper, already during the Second World War: 726 of the 3,000 stanzas were published in the volumes from 20 (1942) to 22 (1944) (Geider 2002: 276). Since other analysed poems of Robert were published after year 1950 and since the poet has often been seen as profoundly modern (e.g. Topan 1974a; Bertocini 1980: 86), the analysis of water imagery in *Utenzi wa Vita vya Uhuru* is placed in this chapter, not in the preceding chapter.

there is only one (long) poem that falls into that category: Shaaban Robert's *Utenzi wa Vita vya Uhuru*. Similarly, the only didactic poem mentioning any kind of water that I found is King'ei's (2000: 91–92) *Maelezo ya Maneno* 'Explanation of words' (cf. n. 180 below). It seems that the image of water is much more frequently used in lyrical and religious poetry than in historical or didactic poetry.¹⁶⁸

4.1 New streams

4.1.1 High, fast, strong

Like in most Swahili poems written before 1950s, in the modern poems water most often presents danger. This is the case especially with heavy rain and ocean. In *Utenzi wa Vita vya Uhuru* 'Utenzi of Freedom War' by Shaaban Robert (1967), the dangers of sea are frequently mentioned: in addition to the enemies in the war that is described, the sea (in which the war takes place) itself is a danger. The poem describes for example: "Bahari ikatishia" 'The sea was frightening' (Robert 1967: 23, stanza 269). And the ocean does cause deaths:

Watu wengi walizama,
[...]

Wingi wa askari,
Ambayo yao makaburi,
Majini yalitokea.

(Robert 1967: 137, stanzas 1643–1644)

Many people drowned
[...]

Many soldiers
Whose graves
Were to be in the water.

Alamin Mazrui's (1988: 30) poem *Kilio cha Afrika* 'The Cry of Africa' uses the image of the all-entombing sea as a symbol of imperial oppression: *Ukitufunika / Kama wimbi la bahari* 'When you cover us / Like waves of ocean'. Similarly, Kithaka wa Mberia's (2001: 33–36) poem *Flora na Wenzake* 'Flora and her

168 I searched for water imagery e.g. in Z.A. Lesso's (1972), G.A. Mhina's (1979), and E.M. Mahimbi's (1981) historical poem collections, and in didactic poems that were found e.g. in collections by Ahmad Nassir (1966; 1971; 1979; 1982) and Shaaban Robert (1952; 1959; 1960; 1968), but did not find any water images. On the other hand, lyrical poetry also constitutes the biggest group in modern Swahili poetry.

friends' compares the situation of a person who is suffocated by accusations of other people, to a drowning sea:

Wimbi la mashtaka bandia
Linamfunika Flora
Na kumziba pumzi
Kama bahari
Ikifunika asiyejua kuogelea

(Kithaka 2001: 34)

The cloud of false accusations
 Covered Flora
 And smothered her breath
 Like the sea
 Burying one who cannot swim

In Said Ahmed Mohamed's (2002: 90) poem *Lo!* 'Oh!' the dangerous, furious sea is connected to evil spirits:

<i>Lo! Bahari 'metuzungukana</i>	<i>roho twatapia</i>
<i>Lo! Kwa mashaka twavuta makasia!</i>	
<i>Lo! 'mepiga myereka</i>	<i>vilio vimeenea</i>
<i>Lo! Kwa gharika tunaogelea!</i>	
<i>Lo! Kuna shetani mzuka</i>	<i>pepo azipulizia</i>
<i>Lo! Hekabeka na si' twawania!</i>	
Oh! The sea has surrounded us	and we fight for life
Oh! With worries we paddle!	
Oh! We are wrestling	the cries spread
Oh! In the flood/calamity we swim! ¹⁶⁹	
Oh! There is a demon, a spirit	blowing the winds/spirits
Oh! Chaos and us, we are fighting!	

The atmosphere of panic is intensified through the use of the injection *Lo!* at the beginning of each line and the heavy use of exclamation marks.

Instead of sea, in the same writer's poem *Wingu* 'Cloud' (2002: 100) the dangerous water is rain. It causes lots of problems: slipperiness, mud, floods, and diseases. Again the chaotic water is connected to demons or spirits: "Waovu wakabarizi kwenye giza wakavuna" 'The evils assembled, in the darkness they harvested'. In K.K. Kahigi & M.M. Mulokozi's (1976: 1-3) poem *Vuteni makasia!*

169 "mepiga myereka" can also mean 'It [the ocean] is wrestling'.

‘Row!’ rain is first hoped for, but as soon as it starts to rain, the downpour shows its destructiveness:

*Wingu gharikale likawatolea –
Maji baridi yakawamwagikia!
Matone kwa ukali yakaanguka,
Na hata bahari ikatetemeka*

(Kahigi & Mulokozi 1976: 3)

The cloud gave its downfall to them –
Cold water poured on them!
Drops fell down hard,
And even the sea trembled

At the end people jump into the sea, but cannot escape one dangerous water by going into another: “kila mmoja akaangamia!” ‘every single one perished!’ (Kahigi & Mulokozi 1976: 3).

Similarly destructive rain is found in the poem titled *Jinamizi* ‘Nightmare’ by Kithaka (2001: 55–58). The poem depicts a dream in which it starts to rain:

*Mvua ilikuja kwa hasira,
Kwa kucha zake ndefu
Ilibujumu ardhi
Na kuacha majeraha*

(Kithaka 2001: 56)

Rain came by rage,
With its long nails
It attacked the earth
And left wounds

The poem combines various negative water references: Due to the rain the earth turns into “bahari ya mawimbi makuu / ya mchanga na vumbi” ‘sea of big waves / of sand and dust’ (Kithaka 2001: 56). Later people are described to be pushed by “bahari ya mashaka” ‘sea of worries’ (Kithaka 2001: 57). Furthermore, tears are described to burst out “kama maji maasi / kutoka mifereji iliopamba” ‘like rebellious water / from bursting canals’ (Kithaka 2001: 57).

In line with ‘rebellious water’, in many poems the sea is presented as almost a feeling entity, a personification. In Abbas Mdungu’s (2009: 35–36) poem titled *Bahari* ‘The Sea’ the proud and stubborn sea can be seen to represent a powerful person or his/her power, which is not everlasting:

*Bahari mama wa shari, watisha unapojaa
Mawimbi yako jeuri, huvuma na kuzomea
Iko siku utarudi*

(Mdungi 2009: 35)

Sea, the mother of anger, you scare when come in [lit. when you become full]
Your arrogant waves roar and mock
There is a day when you ebb

Similarly, Kithaka's (2001: 29–32) poem *Pamela* mentions *ujeuri* 'arrogance' in the context of stormy sea: "Ikakusukasuka kwa ujeuri / Kama mawimbi ya bahari" 'It shakes you arrogantly / Like waves of the sea' (p. 30). Gromov (2006: 118) comments on the use of repetition (in the reduplicative verb *-sukasuka*) and rhyme (*ujeuri – bahari*). Both sonic devices can be seen to make the image more expressive.

The dangerousness of water is based on its force. A related attribute is speed, which is also referred to in poems, especially by Shaaban Robert (1967): "Damu ilikwenda mbio, / Kama maji yashukayo" 'Blood went fast / Like falling water' (p. 63, stanza 749) or "Mavunjiko ya miji, / Yanakwenda kama maji" 'Breakdown of the cities / Went like water' (p. 135, stanza 1613). In addition to powerfulness, speed and destructiveness, Robert's images of rain often include also the idea of multitude. This can be seen in the comparisons of bombs to rain drops: "Bomu zake zilitua, / Kama matone ya mvua" 'Their bombs landed / Like drops of rain' (Robert 1967: 47, stanza 557) or here:

*Hayo mabomu mazito,
[...]
Kulia na kushoto,
Yalishuka kama mvua.*

(Robert 1967: 180, stanza 2158)

These heavy bombs
[...]
To right and left
They fell like rain.

4.1.2 Unswimmable world

With its dangerous record, it is fitting that the ocean often represents the world. Whereas traditional Swahili poetry often just talks about "the sea of the world" in a way that it is a clear symbol, Kahigi & Mulokozi's (1973: 31) poem *Bahari Niliyomo* 'The Sea that I am in' starts with a line which enables the interpretation

that the poem is a description of a dream or hallucination: “Dunia imeyeyuka chini ya miguu yangu” ‘The world has liquefied under my feet’.

From the beginning it is evident that the sea is a bitter place: “Naanza kutapatapa katika bahari chungu / [...] / Chini maji machungu ambayo hayaogeleki” ‘I start to be restless in the bitter sea / [...] / Below [me] bitter water that is not swimmable’. The speaker tries to escape but cannot get out of the world which is interestingly not at all a place of life:

*Nagaagaa, naserereka, tena naanguka,
Nazimia, nafa maji, nazama, a! natoweka
Katika bahari hii jahili inayowaka*

I turn, I flit, then I fall down,
I faint, I drown [lit. ‘die water’], I sink, oh! I disappear
In this rough,¹⁷⁰ burning sea

The death and disappearance in the water can be seen as not being able anymore to oppose the habits of the world, not being able to follow independently one’s own way; the speaker declares “Nimechoka, sitaweza zaidi kuvumilia” ‘I am tired, I cannot endure anymore’. The last line confirms that the sea refers to the world: “Natokomea, namezwa na bahari ya dunia!” ‘I vanish, I am swallowed by the sea of the world!’

The poem’s use of predicates, mostly in the first person *-a*-tense (e.g. *nagaagaa* ‘I turn’), is excessive: many of the quoted lines practically consist of consecutive predicates in that form. The stylistic device enhances the impression of the desperate and impetuous wriggling of the actor of the poem. Whereas in Muyaka’s poem *Ulimwengu Maaluma* ‘The Peculiar world’ (Abdulaziz 1979: 170) the speaker can proudly declare about the sea/world: “Simo niyawile simo simwenyi kuteza ngoma” ‘I am not in it, I have come out, I do not dance with it’, in Kahigi & Mulokozi’s poem there is no other choice. Whether or not (s)he likes it, the speaker of *Bahari Niliyomo* ‘The Sea that I am in’ is inescapably in the world.

With its images of a liquefying world which also dissolves the speaker in it, the poem stands out in its original way of identifying the world with the sea. This is not common; for example Mohamed (2002: 12) states already in the title of his poem the traditional notion: *Maisha yawa bahari* ‘The Life is a sea’. Traditional are also the attributes attached to the world/sea: it is told to be filled with fighting, arrogance, pride and dangers.

¹⁷⁰ The adjective *jahili* means also ‘ignorant [before Mohammed]’, referring to non-Muslims; however, Kahigi and Mulokozi are Christians.

In contrast to stormy sea, in Robert's (1991) *Mapenzi Bora* 'Excellent love' the world is presented as a place with no water at all: "Dunia jangwa la kiu" "The world [is] a desert of thirst' (p. 7). In the poem water is the symbol of God's love, which people are lacking. The view of *Mapenzi Bora* resembles the outlook of traditional Islamic Swahili poems, which present the world as an ultimately dry place (see pp. 93–95); Robert was Muslim as well.

4.1.3 *The One above the waters*

In Mohamed's (1984: 14) poem *Mwanakweli* 'The Truthful one' the world is also a very dry place, because of the torrid sun. The refrain of the poem is "Jua huyo mwanakweli" 'That sun [is] the truthful one',¹⁷¹ and the "truthful one" seems to refer to the famous war hero Mkadamume (or: Mkamandume) who fought against the Portuguese. The poem also has allusions to the Judgement Day, and the sun could perhaps also be seen to represent God who punishes the unbelievers at the end of the world.

The poem starts with a description of extreme drought:

Jua linaposhitadi kuukausha utomvu
Joto lijae shadidi vizima viwe vibovu
Ikaushike biladi na vijiji vipotevu

When the sun persisted to dry the plant sap
 The heat was firm the wells got bad
 The town dried and the stray villages

The notion of "the stray villages" already is a moral comment; the "truthful one" is presented in a contrast to all the other people in the poem.

After the drought in the beginning of the poem, it suddenly starts to rain, but what kind of water:

Mbingu inapotapika maji yake rovurovu
Mafuriko kifunika na mwingi uteketevu

When the sky vomited its drenching water
 Floods were smothering with much destruction

171 The refrain can also be translated as 'Know that truthful one', as *jua* is the imperative form of the verb *-jua* 'know'. This command is common in poems. However, since the rest of the poem refers to the sun, the reading of *jua* as 'know' in the refrain is rather a complimenting interpretation than the primary one.

Even though the floods are ruinous for people, it is told that “Chungu akikaramka kuutafuta wokovu” ‘Black ant rejoices having found salvation’. This enhances the impression of the moral connection of water and people’s behaviour.

In Mazrui’s (1988: 52) poem *Mtabiri* ‘Diviner’ there are even clearer references to the day of the Last Judgement, even though the word “God” is not mentioned in this poem, either. The speaker tells about a diviner, who is looking to the future and sees a frightful vision:

*Wingu la hasira likatufikia kule kule tuliko
Mvua la mauti likatunyeshea kwa mmiminiko
Watu wakaingwa jingi papatiko
Malaika wakakosa lao pumziko*

The cloud of anger reaches us exactly there where we are
The rain of death rains on us by downpour
People are entered by flutter
The angels fail to rest

This vision at the end of poem resembles with descriptions of the Judgement Day in Islamic Swahili poetry.

Whereas a majority of other modern Swahili poets rarely refer to God, Mathias E. Mnyampala has dedicated two whole collections of poems to Biblical stories.¹⁷² In *Namtumaini Mungu Aliye Mwongofu* ‘I trust God who is righteous’ (Mnyampala 1965: 24) the speaker describes the future of the non-believers: Hell.

*Nazo mvua zenye moto,
Nazo pepo zile nzito,
Zitazoleta majuto,
Kuchoma wanaharamu*

With burning rain,
With that heavy wind,
It will bring regrets,
Burn the bastards

Similar to the verses depicting punishing fire in *Utendi wa Qiyama* ‘Utendi of the Last Judgement’, in Mnyampala’s description of the fire of Hell the phoneme /z/ is recurrent. It constitutes 10.8% of the phonemes in this stanza (in contrast to e.g. 1.9% in *Nenda ukanywe!* ‘Go to drink!’). Instead of the Qur’an, this depiction draws from the Bible – similar descriptions of Hell can be found in other religious texts as well, but Mnyampala’s poem collection is entitled *Utenzi wa*

¹⁷² However, most of the poems Mnyampala wrote in total were not religious but often political. There are also many other poets who write about God, for example Abdilatif Abdalla.

Zaburi ‘Utenzi of Psalms’, and Mnyampala was a devout Catholic. The poem can be seen to refer to at least the Psalms 11 and 140; verse 11:6 declares: “Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup” and similarly, verse 140:10 proclaims: “Let burning coals fall upon them! Let them be cast into fire.”

Infernal is also the atmosphere in Mnyampala’s (1965: 34–36) poem titled *Wimbo wa Mfalme Aliyesaidiwa na Mungu Kuwashinda Maadui* ‘The Song of the king who was helped by God to beat the enemies’: “Mawingu katutumuka, / Mvua ya mawe katoka” ‘The clouds rumbled, / Rain of stones came’ (p. 34). It seems that the mention of stones is just symbolic, or then there are different kinds of rain, for later in the poem the speaker is saved from water:

*Maji yakamiminika,
Nchi ikachimbulika,
Kwa nguvu zake Rabuka,
Kwa ukali wa hukumu.*

*Na mkono kakunjua,
Mkono ukaninyanyua,
Majimi kanichopoa*

(Mnyampala 1965: 35)

The water poured out
And land appeared
By the power of God,
By the strength of the rule.

And a hand spread out,
A hand lifted me
And pulled me out of water

The image of a Christian being pulled out from deep waters by God can be seen to refer to many psalms, for example Psalm 18 that mentions of God that “He drew me out of many waters”, or the beginning of Psalm 69 in which the speaker appeals:

Save me, O God!
For the waters have come up to my neck.
I sink in deep mire,
where there is no foothold;
I have come into deep waters,
and the flood sweeps over me.

(Psalm 69:1–2)

In Mnyampala's poems God not only can pull his follower out of the water, but he also can command and control water. *Kumtukuza Mungu Mwenyezi* 'Glorifying Almighty God' (1965: 68–69) describes God's power over water:

*Hata maji ya bahari,
Huyakusanya dhahiri,
Chunguni buyadubiri,
Na vilindi hukasimu.*

(Mnyampala 1965: 68)

Even the water of the sea
Gathers clearly,
In piles it arranges itself,
And deep waters divide.

This poem reflects the Psalms 74 and 78: "It was you who split open the sea by your power" (74:13) and "He divided the sea and led them through; he made the water stand firm like a wall" (78:13).

Similarly in "Yesu aliamuru maji" 'Jesus commanded water' (Mnyampala 1967: 39) it is described how, for God, it is possible to make the water behave in whatever way. In the poem, Jesus first tells the stormy sea to calm down, and then he walks on water "kama vile ardhini" 'like on the ground'. Later he also rescues Peter, who has tried walking on the water as well: yet it is only possible for Jesus. Another water image, as miraculous as these, can be found in *Arusi ya Kana* 'Wedding of Cana' (Mnyampala 1967: 64), in which Jesus turns water into wine.

4.1.4 Goodness to bathe in

As closely as the lack of water and burning water are connected to the Last Judgement and Hell, are the descriptions of refreshing, pure rivers connected to Paradise, both in traditional and modern Swahili poetry. For example Haji Chum's (1974) *Utenzi wa Nushur* 'Utenzi of Resurrection' mentions several times all the four liquids of the paradisiacal rivers: "maji mema na khamri / asali na labania" 'good water and wine / honey and milk' (p. 44). Similarly, in Muhamed Seif Khatib's (2003: 14) poem *Pepo bila Kifo* 'Heaven without death', when explaining why (s)he would like to enter Heaven, the speaker describes:

*Niyanywe maziwa ya uzima,
Na maji baridi ya kisima,
Niuridhiye wangu mtima,
Niburudike.*

I would drink the milk of vitality,
 And cold water of a well,
 I would satisfy my heart,
 I would be refreshed.

In Abdilatif Abdalla's (1971) *Utenzi wa Maisha ya Adamu na Hawaa* 'Utenzi of the life of Adam and Eve' it is presented that the rivers are good not only for drinking, but swimming: Adam and Eve "wakendea mito / Kuzama kuogeleya" 'went to the rivers / To immerse, to swim' (p. 15, stanza 154).

As perhaps reverberated in the image of streams of Paradise, water can be seen as an image of God himself/herself. In Mnyampala's (1965: 100–101) *Mungu Awalinda Watu Wake* 'God protects his people' the speaker praises God: "Uko mto wa rehema" 'You are the river of mercy' (p. 100). In the same writer's poem *Hamu ya Mwamini Aliyehamishwa* 'Desire of an expelled believer' (Mnyampala 1965: 94–95) the thirsty speaker cries also for *rehema* 'mercy' (p. 94). The speaker's longing for water constitutes a central theme of the poem, and it is expressed strongly:

*Kama kuro anolia,
 Maji akijalilia,
 Roho inahitajia,
 Wokovu wako mtamu.*

(Mnyampala 1965: 94)

Like a waterbuck that weeps
 When it cries for water,
 The soul needs
 Your sweet salvation.

These water images also have their equivalent in the Psalms: "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God" (Psalm 42:1), "Oh God [...] my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1), and "I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land" (Psalm 143:6).

While Saadani Abdu Kandoro's (1972: 157–159) poem *Nifumbuliени Ndoto* 'Solve my dream for me' is not itself directly religious, it seems to have a religious view of water. The speaker talks about "Mto wa ajabu nzito, maji yake buruhani" 'River of deep wonder, its water a boon' (p. 158); the word *buhurani* means 'a special gift from God whereby all prayers are answered' (TUKI 2001). It is also mentioned that, thanks to the river, "tutanawiri mwilini" 'our bodies will shine' (TUKI 2001). The verb *-nawiri* 'shine, look healthy' is the same verb used in the Swahili translation of the Qur'an referring to believers who are saved on the Day

of Last Judgement (3:106–107; 80:38). The line “Mto wa neema mto” ‘A river of goodness [is] the river’ is slightly ambiguous in its religiosity: *neema* can be translated with neutral terms such as ‘goodness’ or ‘benefit’, but it is generally used in religious connections.¹⁷³ Some attributes for the water of the great river in the dream of the speaker are secular or neutral; (s)he declares for example that “Unarutubisha mto” ‘The river fertilises’ (Kandoro 1972: 158). However, in the context, even this can be seen in religious terms.

The idea of water as goodness is present also in some poems without any religious tones, like in *Wimbo kabla ya Kulala* ‘Song before sleep’ (Kahigi & Mulokozi 1976: 79–80), which praises the beloved sleeper: “Ewe maji katika kavu jangwa” ‘Oh you, water in a dry desert’. Similarly, in the same writers’ poem *Hadithi ya Babu* ‘The Story of grandfather’ (Kahigi & Mulokozi 1973: 33–36) rain is goodness that is longed for; when there are clouds in the sky, people say: “Ni dalili ya mvua yenye neema” ‘[It] is sign of rain with goodness’ (p. 34). This line can be seen to be an interpretation of the Swahili proverb “Dalili ya mvua ni mawingu” ‘The sign for rain is the clouds’.

An original positive water image can be found in Shaaban Robert’s (1959: 12–13) poem *Woga* ‘Fear’: the refrain is “Woga ni maji naoga ghadhabu ikinijia” ‘Fear is water I bathe with when rage comes into me’. Even though fear is usually not considered positive, the speaker of the poem understands how (s)he can calm down with the help of fear – through wallowing in fear, one can prevent acting on rage. In addition to the rhyme (of the words *woga* ‘fear’ and *naoga* ‘I bathe’), the image of bathing has supposedly been chosen because of the calming character of (bathing) water.¹⁷⁴

4.1.5 Currents of life

Calming, beautiful, and refreshing though it is, water is more than enjoyable – it is a prerequisite for life. This is expressed especially in Kithaka’s poems. In *Mimi, Mto Nairobi* ‘Me, River Nairobi’ (Kithaka 2001: 63) River Nairobi proclaims:

Nikawahudumia
Kwa maji
Kwa uhai

¹⁷³ *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* (Sacleux 1939) translates *neema* as ‘Grâce, surtout dans le sens de faveur divine; faveur, bienfait, avantage accordé à qq; prospérité, abondance accordée par Dieu’ (= grace, especially in the direction of divine favour; favour, benefit, favour granted to somebody; prosperity, abundance granted by God).

¹⁷⁴ This is a poem that Kezilahabi (1976a: 13–14) quotes in his book on Shaaban Robert.

I serve you
With water
With life

Likewise in *Nyanda za Minga* 'Plains of Minga' (Kithaka 2007: 51–52) it is said that rivers can be “dawa ya maisha” ‘medicine of life’ and that they can bring “uhai kutoka milima ya mbali” ‘life from far away mountains’ (p. 51). However, in *Mimi, Mto Nairobi* ‘Me, River Nairobi’ the river complains that its life-giving nature is not appreciated by people: it speaks harshly of “[m]ajirani bila shukrani” ‘the neighbours without gratitude’. Gromov (2006: 121) notes that in the course of the poem, “the distinctly rhymed opening [...] breaks into the unrhymed ending”, emphasising “the helplessness and the grief of a [*sic*] river Nairobi, abused by the city dwellers”. Indeed, the poem emphatically argues against the abuse of the river, or natural waters in general; River Nairobi and freshwater on the whole should be regarded as essential and life-giving, and its pollution will have severe consequences.

In above-quoted *Hamu ya Mwamini Aliyehamishwa* ‘Desire of an expelled believer’ by Mnyampala (1965: 94–95), the speaker tells that (s)he has “kiu ya uzima” ‘thirst for vitality’ (p. 94). In the same writer’s (1963: 66) *Maji ya Uzima* ‘Water of vitality’ God is also the answer for the ‘thirst for vitality’. In the poem, Jesus is quoted as saying that his water offers a lasting solution, unlike the ordinary water:

*Bwana Yesu akasema,
Maji hungelimnyima,
Ungeomba ya uzima,
Nani ningekugawia.*¹⁷⁵

*Kila mnywa haya maji,
Kesho tena tahitaji,
Nchini humu wakaaji,
Kiu hataweshia.*

[...]
*Mito maji ya uzima,
Njoni kwangu kujijia.*

Jesus said,
You would not deny him water,
If you asked for [water] of vitality,
I would distribute to you.

¹⁷⁵ *Nani* (the first word of the last line of the stanza) probably is a typing error, and should be *nami*; I have translated the line as if the word was *nami*.

Every drinker of that [ordinary] water
 Tomorrow again needs it,
 In this country [to] the residents
 It will not quench their thirst

[...]

Rivers of the water of vitality,
 Come to me to come yourselves.

The word *uzima* connects the meanings of ‘life’ and ‘health’. The enigmatic last line can be read to refer to completion of human beings through faith: a view according to which by accepting Jesus/God one can become fully oneself. Another possible reading is that the suggestion addresses the rivers: by flowing to Jesus/God, they are (re)filled with water of vitality. These rivers can also be seen to refer to the rivers of Paradise.

Rain water can also be seen as life: in Kithaka’s *Matone ya Mvua* ‘Drops of rain’ (Kithaka 2001: 73–74) the rain drops are addressed as “mashujaa wa uhai” ‘heroes of life’ (p. 73). It is noteworthy that in six cases out of seven, in these examples the word used for life is *uhai* or *uzima*, not *maisha*. *Uhai* stands for ‘life, existence, the state of being alive’,¹⁷⁶ whereas *maisha* refers to lifetime.¹⁷⁷ Thus the expression with the word “maisha, dawa ya maisha”, can be interpreted to stand for ‘a medicine that helps in life’, not ‘a medicine consisting of life’. On the other hand, the division is not strict, and water is definitely important in *maisha* ‘life(time)’ too. These aspects are illustrated in Kahigi & Mulokozi’s (1973: 32–34) poem *Hadithi ya Babu* ‘The Story of grandfather’:

*Mvua iliendela kunyesho,*¹⁷⁸
Watu waliridhika nayo maisha,
Walilima, walivuna; ni maisha!

[...]

Mto wa maisha ukatiririka!

(Kahigi & Mulokozi 1973: 34)

It continued to rain,
 People were satisfied with their life,¹⁷⁹
 They cultivated, harvested; [it] is life!

[...]

The river of life trickled!

176 *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* (Sacleux 1939) translates *uhai* as ‘Vie, existence, condition de l’être vivant’ (= life, existence, the state of being alive).

177 Discussion on the concepts *maisha*, *uhai*, and *uzima* can be found in Chapter 6 below.

178 Probably a spelling mistake: should be *iliendela* ‘it continued’.

179 The line could also mean: ‘they were satisfied with it [the rain] for their lifetime’.

The image of “river of life” represents the way the course of life is dependent on nature: fields and people need water as essentially as a river. In addition to presenting the indispensability of rain, the image of river trickling illustrates how life is essentially going forward, constantly moving.

Water imagery can also be used to illustrate expressly the life span. In Kahigi & Mulokozi’s (1976: 105–108) poem *Namna tunavyoishi* ‘The Way we live’ the irreversibility of life is compared with the flow of river: *Tunakufa twazaliwa, mto haurudi nyuma* ‘We die we are born, the river does not return back’ (p. 108). It is interesting that the predicates ‘die’ and ‘are born’ are in that order in a line that is talking about the irreversible order of life. By mentioning dying before being born the poem seems to emphasize that it refers to human beings in general: all the time some people die and some are born, which can be seen as the cycle of life; this cycle cannot rotate backwards.

In Mohamed’s (2002: 105–106) poem titled *Mto* ‘The River’ the life of human beings is also identified with the flow of a river, and throughout the poem the speaker keeps asking: *Mto, ewe mto kwa ‘ni hugeuzi njia?’* ‘River, you river, why do you not turn the way?’ The speaker, addressing the river, also mentions several times how the river collects soil and dirt: *Ukagonga kama nyundo ukasomba anuwai* ‘You beat like a hammer, you collect and carry many kinds of things’ (p. 105). This can be seen to refer to the memories and maybe also past mistakes that people carry with them – and also to the way we unavoidably influence the cultural and physical environment we go through. This could be referred to by the lines about the power and dangerousness of the river, too: *Tibutibu na mipindo mto ‘kazidisha ghedhi* ‘Storming in meanders, the river has increased the strong-mindedness/rudeness’ (Mohamed 2002: 105).

The image of the ocean also offers possibilities for illustrating the nature of life. The most-often-used image is changing tides: Robert’s (1959: 41) poem *Maisha Mabadilifu* ‘The Changing life’ starts with the line *Maisha hubadilika, bamvua na maji mafu* ‘Life changes, springtide and low tide’. Kithaka’s (1997: 32) poem *Dau Haliendi!* ‘The Dhow does not go!’, for one, is based on an interesting image that contrasts the idea of one-way life span common in the poems with the image of river. Kithaka’s poem is even constructed in the form of a half-circle, and it begins by declaring:

ingawa
 limo
 mbioni,
 hili
 dau,
 la
 kusafiria
 mamilioni,
 haliendi

even if
 it is
 in hurry,
 this
 dhow
 of
 millions
 passengers,
 it does not go

The reason of the dhow not moving is given in the next lines: “huu / ni / mwendo / duara” ‘this / is / the course / of circle’. The last lines of the poem affirm that it is all about life of people: “wanasafiri / katika / bahari / ya / miaka” ‘they travel / in / the sea / of / years’. Thus the poem can be seen to represent or discuss the cyclic time concept: we think we are moving but actually life continues to be the same – the day returns to night, the seasons follow their cycle, people die and are born.

Connected to the idea of life, water can also illustrate history and memories. In Mohamed’s (1984: 25) poem *Mkimbizi* ‘Refugee’ the speaker laments:

*Nikawa kama mmeya ulong’olewa shambani
 ‘kaachwa kujioteya pahala si maskani
 Paliponyimwa mboleya au maji aridhini*

I was like a plant that is pulled from the field
 I was left to grow in a place that is not home
 Where I was denied fertilizer or water in the ground

Later in the poem the speaker longs for *umande* ‘dew’, *mito* ‘rivers’, and *maziwa* ‘lakes’ that are familiar to him/her.

Similarly, Kithaka’s (2007: 57–58) poem is titled *Mkimbizi* ‘Refugee’, and the speaker, a refugee, also longs for the waters of the past:

*Ninahangaika nimo kwenye mlango wa bahari
Ambamo maji ya ndoto angavu za jana
Yanazozana na mkondo wa uhalisi katili.*

(Kithaka 2007: 58)

I am confused, I am at the door of the sea
Where the water of the clear dream of yesterday
Quarrels with the currents of cruel reality.

In addition to the resemblance of the flow of thoughts or dreams and water, the poem also uses cleverly the idea of different waters; the reader of the poem can easily imagine clear, pure fresh-water being put at a disadvantage by powerful, stormy sea water.

4.1.6 Sensual streams

Even if the image of water representing love or the erotic is not as common in modern Swahili poetry as it is in the traditional, it is used in a few poems. E.A. Uvetie's (1976: 13–14) poem *Majini Nilimozama* 'The Water in which I sank' identifies water with love:

*Nalizama kilindini, hata kina nalipima,
Naliingiwa rohani, penzi likaniandama,
Sisabau maishani, bapo ndiko nimekwama,
Majini nilimozama, daima sitasabau*

(Uvetie 1976: 13)

I drowned in deep water, I even measured the depth,
It entered my breath, love disturbed me,
I will not forget in my life the exact place where I got stuck
The water in which I drowned, I will never forget

The overlapping of water and love is created in a witty way. Although the first line refers to *kilindi* 'deep water', the end of the line makes the reader question whether it actually deals with ordinary water: if someone drowns in water, (s)he would not measure the depth. Then, the second line starts with the word *naliingiwa*, literally 'I was entered', leaving the agent of the predicative open – even if the first line is interpreted as talking about water, the mention of *penzi* 'love' later in the second line forces the reader to balance these two images. This play of two meanings establishes what Tsur (2003: 107) refers to as "two powerful metaphysical puns": two meanings incompatible at first sight are activated; the poem seems to talk about drowning in water, or love.

The third line does not mention love, nor does it mention water; because the previous line has explicitly talked about love, the reader is inclined to assume that as the topic. At the same time the reference to a concrete place – “hapo ndiko nimekwama” ‘the exact place where I got stuck’ – connects the line to the image presented in the first line, drowning in water; and the fourth line strengthens that image with its mention of “Majini nilimozama” ‘The water in which I drowned’. These two competing images, water and love, are not necessarily incompatible, and neither should the image of water be read as a mere concealing way of talking about love: the image of drowning in water can express the experience of deeply loving, drowning in the emotion, so deeply that the experience can perhaps be nearer to literal drowning than what the word *penzi* ‘love’ is able to express. Through interpreting both images concretely, an amalgamation of them can enable a more expressive reading.

The second stanza extends the image of love and brings it to a physical level, starting with the line: “Mapenzi tuliyafanya, bila ya kwenda mrama” ‘We made love, without going off course’ (Uvetie 1976: 13). Even though there are no direct water images in the second stanza, since the expression *-enda mrama* ‘go off course’ is often used of ships, an allusion to water imagery is present. The next line combines ambiguously concrete and abstract levels: “Rohoni yalipopenya, wivu ukatuparama” ‘When it penetrated my soul, we were lacking envy’. Particularly because the previous line has discussed physical love, the concreteness of the verb *-penya* ‘penetrate, pierce’ makes the reader wonder whether *rohoni* ‘in the soul’ really refers only to soul here, or has a suggestive double meaning. The end of the line literally means ‘envy/jealousy was lacking us’ which can be interpreted to mean that they had no reason to be envious as they had each other.

The end of the poem is a more mundane description of the waiting of the lover. It seems that the speaker is a woman, for she mentions that she has been embroidering even when the moon has appeared, and later she talks about starting to grind bulrush millet, wheat, and sorghum plant for her beloved. Although the end of the poem does not apply the image of water in the stanzas themselves, the image is present in the whole poem because each of the eight stanzas ends with the refrain “Majini nilimozama, daima sitasahau” ‘The water in which I drowned, I will never forget’.

Mohamed’s (1984: 48–49) poem *Mpenzi wa Wapenzi* ‘The Lover of lovers’ also uses the image of water to represent love, namely physical love. It is clear that the speaker is a man:

Maji matamu chimbuko yanafufurika
Nilionja titi lako nami katukuka

*Mito na maziwa yako yaloburudika
Nilicheza juu yako nikakarambuka*

(Mohamed 1984: 48)

Fresh water [from] the pit overflows
I tasted your nipple and even I was exalted
Your rivers and lakes that refresh
I danced/played on top of you and then I became firm

Even though he uses the image of water, the speaker leaves little to be guessed or interpreted. Three of the choices of word are interesting, though: Firstly, *maji matamu* is the standard term for ‘freshwater’, but the adjective *tamu* (here in the *ma*-noun class) means ‘sweet’, ‘pleasant’, and ‘gentle’, and these meanings can be seen to be present as undertones in the poem. Secondly, the word *mito* means both ‘rivers’ and ‘pillows, cushions’, and *maziwa* means both ‘lakes’ and ‘breasts’ (and ‘milk’, which is not relevant here) – hence the line plays with double word play.¹⁸⁰ Thirdly, the verb *-burudika* (in *yaloburudika*) not only means ‘refresh’ but also for example ‘entertain’. Hence the third line of the stanza can be read either as ‘your pillows and breasts that entertain’ or ‘your rivers and lakes that refresh’, or as a mixture of these two.

At the end of the following (i.e. seventh) stanza the speaker continues with the image of water: “Baharini kwengineko nilikocharuka / N’naumia mwenzako kwa yalokufika” ‘In a sea elsewhere, where I cause disturbance / I feel pain, your friend, for the things that struck you’ (Mohamed 1984: 48). The verb *-charuka* can again be translated either as ‘take up a habit (with vigour)’, ‘cause disturbance’, or ‘begin mischief’. As seen in the previous chapter, in traditional Swahili poetry the image of well water represented “private women” or “good women”, whereas lake or ocean water stood for “public women”; this seems like an eligible reading here, too. Hence a possible interpretation of the poem is that although the speaker declares to exalt the lover with “freshwater”, he has the habit of getting involved with other women – and then hypocritically lamenting it.

180 King’ei (2000: 91–92) also notes the triple meaning of the word in his poem *Maelezo ya Maneno* ‘Explanation of words’ which, as the title indicates, explains the meanings of some words that have homonyms. The poem belongs to the group of didactic Swahili poems that elucidate the multiple meanings of words. King’ei writes about *maziwa*:

*Neno ZIWA ni matiti, ya mtoto kunyonyesha
Maziwa ni kwa umati, chakula chatamanisha
Mtoni maji hupati, ya ziwa yatakutosha*

(King’ei 2000: 91)

The word *ZIWA* is breasts, for a child to suck
Milk is for the crowd a food that is longed for
In a river water is usually not obtained, [water] of a lake will suffice

4.2 Conclusions

In this chapter I have shown how modern Swahili poems, especially the lyrical and religious ones, use the image of water to illustrate power, dangers, the power of God, God's blessings, goodness, life, and love. The water images in modern Swahili poetry are not unlike the images in traditional poetry, but there can be seen a few small differences. Firstly, in the poems written before the 1950s even heavy rain seems to always be a positive image.¹⁸¹ In contrast to this, in Swahili poems published in the last fifty years, heavy rain is very often a negative image. It is depicted as causing destruction of the earth, floods, slippery mud, and diseases. This change in the image can be connected to the climate change: in the recent past the variability of rainfall in Tanzania, from extreme drought to torrential rains, has increased, causing many problems (e.g. Traerup & Mertz 2009). Thus the strict division of waters into good (clean freshwater, including rain) and dangerous (salt water), found in the traditional Swahili poems, is not clear anymore: rain is fertilising and essential, but also destructive and feared. Correspondingly, the image of water in modern Swahili poetry can be seen to reflect the current concern of the state of the environment, as in the river's appeal against pollution in Kithaka's *Mimi, Mto Nairobi* 'Me, River Nairobi'.

Secondly, as mentioned before, many modern poems do not refer to Islam, and accordingly, in many poems the water imagery is not connected to Islam. In some poems it is, but often the water images are secular (or Christian). In the modern religious poems water still presents God and all the goodness (s)he can give, but there are no direct mentions of water with which God can make human beings whole, nor anything about purifying water of God. Modern religious poems with water images, especially those by Mnyampala, are more recollection of the Biblical or historical events than reflection on the living water of God of today.

Thirdly, the image of blood acting like water seems not to be found in the modern Swahili poems. In some poems, there is a mention of lakes of blood – for example in Mazrui's (1988: 62–63) *Mwapigania Kitu Gani* 'What thing you fight for' it is mentioned that "binadamu akiogelea katika ziwa la damu" 'human being is swimming in a lake of blood' (p. 62) but this and other similar images are concrete descriptions of war, not multi-level images with symbolism

¹⁸¹ Except for in the anonymous and undated poem *Wimbo wa Kuzingatia* 'A Philosophical song' from Knappert (2004: 227–229) in which a cloudburst is presented as a danger; however, although most of the songs in the collection are apparently quite old (Knappert does not tell us any dates, but mentions he has collected Swahili songs since his arrival in East Africa in 1959), because the poem is undated, it can actually have been written in the recent past and thus belong to modern Swahili poems.

like in traditional poems. This can be seen to be connected to the previous point: because Qur'anic descriptions of Last Judgement include descriptions of rivers of blood and because eating blood in meat is prohibited in Islam, the image of water being replaced by blood is such an impressive and oft-used illustration of a religious punishment in traditional Swahili poetry, but absent in modern, more secular Swahili poetry; although the writers of modern Swahili poetry often are Muslims, they do not seem to use Qur'anic imagery even nearly as much as the traditional poets.

Fourthly, while the image of river is rarely found in traditional Swahili poetry, except for in the portrayal of the paradisiacal rivers, in modern Swahili poetry the image of river is frequent. This might be a consequence of the more varied group of writers – in addition to the Swahili coast (on which the ocean and rain are more closely connected to the everyday environment than rivers), they come from all over Tanzania, or for example come from Zanzibar but have lived outside the country, like S.A. Mohamed.

Overall, except for some new adaptations or interpretations of old water images, such as the idea of world as a sea presented with the image of a liquefying world in Kahigi & Mulokozi's (1973: 31) poem *Bahari Niliyomo* 'The Sea that I am in', it seems that the water images in modern Swahili poetry often do not stand out in their originality,¹⁸² and that the image of water is not very central in many of the poems. For modern Swahili poetry, water is not the holy ingredient that makes a human being complete, nor a magical liquid that makes the warrior immortal. Mostly water is considered good because it fertilises, and dangerous because you can drown in it – plain and true.

While the questions raised by the preceding chapter are still valid for the analysis of Kezilahabi's water imagery, this chapter on the image of water in modern Swahili poetry has stirred up some more: What is the image of rain in Kezilahabi's poetry like? Is river a common image for him or not? How much does Kezilahabi's water imagery resemble the imagery found in traditional and modern Swahili poetry?

182 It can be argued that the poems *Majimi Nilimozama* 'The Water in which I sank' (E.A. Uvetie's 1976: 13–14) and *Mpenzi wa Wapenzi* 'The Lover of lovers' (Mohamed 1984: 48–49) also play with the connection of water and the erotic in a fresh way.

5. THE IMAGE OF WATER IN KEZILAHABI'S WORKS

In this chapter I will analyse different images of water in Kezilahabi's works, both poetry and his other fiction: prose and drama. On several occasions, the imagery is compared with water images in the first Kerewe novel, Aniceti Kitereza's *Mr. Myombekere and His Wife Bugonoka, Their Son Ntulanalwo and Daughter Bulihwali: The Story of an ancient African community* (2002; written in 1945). The first section shows how pervasive the image of water is in Kezilahabi's literary characters' and narrators' perception of the world and daily life, and how different dangers are present in their idea of water. In the second section, water images connected to the mind are discussed, starting from the image of water as literary creativity and continuing with different images of subconscious, dreams and dreamlike states. The third section focuses on the imagery that deals with ethical issues: purity, poisoned water, blood and the lack of water.

5.1 *Water-imbued world view*

5.1.1 *Drops of goodness*

"Sisi ni watu wa majini" 'We [people from Ukerewe] are people close to water', Kezilahabi repeated several times during my interviews with him (26 & 30 Mar. 2009). The close connection of people and water is presented in Kezilahabi's works, both implicitly and explicitly. The level of the concrete impact of water on people's lives is apparent especially in the novels; perhaps because in Kezilahabi's prose (before the last two post-modern works) there are a great deal of descriptions of everyday life. In *Rosa Mistika*, the narrator remarks upon the close connection of rural people to nature, showing also how rain is considered a reason to rejoice: "watu wa shamba ni watoto wa jua, mwezi, nyota na mvua. Mtoto gani wa shamba asiyekumbuka wakati ule alipokimbia huko na huku uchi wakati mvua ilipokuwa ikinya?" 'rural people are children of the sun, the moon, stars and rain. Which child of the countryside can not remember the time when (s)he ran around naked when it rained?' (Kezilahabi 1971: 71)

Water has very positive connotations in many of the sayings Kezilahabi uses in his novels. In *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*, Kasala, an old man, illustrates the people who think they can find bliss in this world with a saying: "wanafanana na mlevi aliyeruka mto kabla hajaufikia na kuvunja mguu" 'they resemble the drunkard who jumped into river before he had reached it, and broke his leg' (Kezilahabi

1975: 7–8). Water represents goodness that Kasala sees is not reachable in this world, and we should not think so; this world-view is similar to the Islamic viewpoint, expressed in many Islamic Swahili poems (cf. 3.1.4 above), according to which true happiness is not found in this world. Similarly, water as an illustration of goodness is used in a saying in *Gamba la Nyoka*: the person who gives hope is referred to as “[a]liyeanza kupitisha maji mbele ya midomo mikavu” ‘he who started to present water in front of dry lips’ (Kezilahabi 1979: 30). In *Rosa Mistika*, when it is told that Rosa is praised by all the local boys, it is noted: “Aisifuye mvua imemnyea” ‘He who praises rain, it has rained on him’ (Kezilahabi 1971: 45) – referring to the fact that all those boys know Rosa intimately.

Rain is beyond the control of human beings, and in *Gamba la Nyoka*, this is used as a contrast to the way succeeding in life (or, specifically, in Ujamaa) needs hard work: “Utajiri haunyeshi kama mvua” ‘Richness does not fall down like rain’ (Kezilahabi 1979: 52), and “Mambo hayo yote unayoyalilia yatakuja. Lakini hayatakuja kama mvua. Yatakuja kwa juhudi yetu wenyewe.” ‘All these things you cry for will come. But they will not come like rain. They will come through our own effort.’ (Kezilahabi 1979: 109) Due to being beyond human control, rains are occasionally connected to God: an old man in *Gamba la Nyoka* says “Tuombe Mungu mvua inyeshe mahindi yetu yaote” ‘Let us ask God for rain so that our corn plants grow’ (Kezilahabi 1979: 94). In *Rosa Mistika*, there is also overtly religious water: when Rosa has died, a priest “aliwanyunyizia maji ya baraka” ‘sprinkled blessed water’ on the corpses (Kezilahabi 1971: 94).

Rosa Mistika and *Gamba la Nyoka* exhibit Christian characters and settings, but while both *Nagona* and *Mzingile* have numerous references to Christianity and other religions, their world is above all mystical and mythical. This is reflected in the attitude to water, as well. In *Mzingile*, a man called Kakulu is believed to control the rains; the description of this illustrates also how water is connected to goodness and wealth: “Kakulu akawa mleta mvua. Mwaka huo mavuno yalikuwa mengi, Kakulu akawa mleta mali na utajiri, akajulikana kama mtoaji wa vyote.” ‘Kakulu was the bringer of rain. That year the crop was abundant, so Kakulu was the bringer of property and richness, and was known as the bringer of everything.’ (Kezilahabi 1991: 3) This resembles the way in which in Kitereza’s novel the ruler is the rainmaker of the country, and the translator of the novel remarks in his note that in Kerewe culture, “[t]he king was deemed the supreme rainmaker of the kingdom, and a king who failed to end a long draught by making it rain could be dethroned, as it happened in 1825 with Omukama Ibanda”; Ibanda was grandfather of Kitereza (Ruhumbika 2002: 488).

With some images of rain in Kezilahabi’s works, the role of auditory dimension is emphasised: for example the second chapter of *Rosa Mistika* finishes with a

description of how Rosa's mother covers her children in the bed with an animal's skin, and because the roof is leaking, "matone ya mvua yalicheza patapata juu yao" 'rain drops played *patapata* on/above them' (Kezilahabi 1971: 13). The word *patapata* is entirely onomatopoeic, highlighting the image of the children under the leaking roof, but under the cover that their mother has placed there to protect them. Similarly, in *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo* the sound of rain is carefully depicted, although its meaning is then interestingly denied:

Nje manyunyu ya mvua yalianza kusikika, na ndege wa asubuhi walikuwa wamekwishaanza kuimba nyimbo zao. Nyimbo hizi zenye sauti nyororo na mlio wa mvua ya manyunyu vilileta mchanganyiko wa aina ya pekee masikioni. Lakini yote haya hayakuwa na maana kwa watu waliokuwa wamelala ndani ya nyumba hii, kila mtu chumba chake. (Kezilahabi 1975: 178)

Outside the drizzle of rain started to be audible, and the birds of morning had already started their songs. These soft-voiced songs and the sound of the drizzling rain brought a special kind of combination to the ears. But none of this was meaningful for the persons who slept inside this house, each of them in their own room.

The internal rhyme in both the word *nyororo* 'soft' and *manyunyu* 'drizzle' intensify the acoustic image, as does the alliteration of every word except for genitive particles, in the expression "mlio wa mvua ya manyunyu" 'the sound of the drizzling rain'; the passage can be regarded as sonically intensive (Rios 2001: 34). It makes the reader linger in the acoustic atmosphere, before then drastically detaching from it. The characters referred to in the last sentence, Dennis and Mama Bahati, have had a huge argument in the evening, and that is the reason for them sleeping in separate rooms. By creating a detailed image of the soundscape of the morning, the reader feels (s)he is present in the house, and by contrasting the soundscape to the thoughts of the characters, it is emphasised how blocked the atmosphere and the situation is.

Kezilahabi seems to often focus on the voices of birds, especially in the morning, as in the quotation above. Correspondingly, in Kitereza's novel, auditory dimension is most apparent in the descriptions of the break of dawn (see Kitereza 2002: 122).

Onomatopoeic expressions and ideophones are heavily used, some also in water-related expressions, such as in the description of stormy rain: "the rain as well as the storm began to relent. At that very instant lightning flashed: *myee!* followed at once with the rumble of thunder: *gingiri*, and everybody in the house was thrown to the ground: *ligiti!*" (Kitereza 2002: 60). In *Dhifa*, Kezilahabi (2008) uses similar

style of inserting merely onomatopoeic expressions in his poems. One poem in the collection even consists almost entirely of these expressions:

Pa!

Pa! Pa! Pa!

(*Kimya*)

Pa!

(Kezilahabi 2008: 60, not included in Appendix 1)

Pa!

Pa! Pa! Pa!

(Silence)

Pa!

As the last poem of the collection, the style perhaps prefigures an even stronger emphasis on the sound in the future poetry of Kezilahabi, similar to the way in which Kezilahabi's latests novels have drawn extensively from Kerewe oral literature.

5.1.2 *Obstacles and dependence*

Although water is often presented as a source of joy in Kezilahabi's works, it is also frequently depicted to cause problems. Kezilahabi expresses the twofold nature of rain in his novel *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*: "Mmoja anapokimbia asipigwe na mvua mwingine analilia tone la maji" 'While one runs in order not to be caught by rain, another cries for a drop of water' (Kezilahabi 1975: 21). The same two-sidedness of water is presented in the poem *Sisi kwa sisi* 'Together' / 'Each Other' (Kezilahabi 1988: 19, not included in Appendix 1):¹⁸³ first there is too little water in the desert, then too much in the rainforest. In an interview, Kezilahabi commented on the nature of water: "Ni wazi hapa kuna mawazo ya aina mbili, kuna mawazo ya ni maji na ukavu, jangwa, halafu kuna maji na hatari za kifo hasa katika ziwa na bahari. Vyote hivi viwili vinakutanishwa katika kitu: kinaitwa mvua." 'It is clear there are two kinds of ideas [of water], the idea of water and drought, desert, and then water and danger of death, especially in a lake and the ocean. Both these two meet in one thing: rain.' (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009)

In *Kaptula la Marx*, the image of water is used as a representation of the hindrance that there is in achieving equality: when the characters of the play ask

¹⁸³ The title of the poem is very hard to translate, since the poem plays with the double meaning of the repeated line *Sisi kwa sisi tukilana* 'When we are eating together/eating each other'.

directions to a country called *Usawa* 'Equality', a giant describes how the way there is full of obstacles: "Kutoka jangwani mtaingia tena bondeni chini kwa chini hadi baharini. Hakuna mitumbwi wala ngalawa. Mtaogelea, ingawa kuna papa wengi. Mkishavuka [...]" 'From the desert you will again go into the valley and right down until the sea. There are no canoes nor sailing boats. You will swim, although there are lots of sharks. When you have crossed [...]' (Kezilahabi 1999: 20). Thus it is shown that achieving equality requires crossing a whole shark-infested ocean (and much more). Lakes and rivers are also presented to have dangerous inhabitants, especially crocodiles. For example, in *Mzingile* when an old man tries to catch a fish from a lake, he is caught by a crocodile (Kezilahabi 1991: 20). Similarly, in Kitereza's novel crocodiles in a lake are a well-known danger, and one boy is caught by a crocodile while playing (Kitereza 2002: 445–446). In general, the water imagery in Kitereza's novel emphasises the dangers of water (see, e.g. Kitereza 2002: 59, 447, 495, 496, 533, 538, 539, 541, 542, 642).

In the poem *Kilio Kijijini* 'Mourning in a village' (Kezilahabi 1988: 17) rain is presented as a nuisance in a concrete way: "Nje panateleza, wendao haraka waanguka" 'Outside it is slippery, those walking quickly fall down'. In *Rosa Mistika*, it is mentioned how the rainy season can affect the atmosphere: "Kwa kawaida siku mvua ikinyesha wanafunzi hawakuwa na raha pale shuleni maana mvua ilipunguza sana uhuru wao wa kutembea" 'Usually during the days when it rained, the students did not have joy in the school because the rain decreased a lot their freedom of going around' (Kezilahabi 1971: 50). Similarly, in *Gamba la Nyoka* it is mentioned how heavy rains force people to build their houses more quickly (Kezilahabi 1979: 47).

Most essential to daily life is the day-to-day task of acquiring drinking water, and that becomes a central image in *Gamba la Nyoka*. People are promised that they will get proper water pipes if they move to the Ujamaa village, and later, when the promise is still unrealised, people complain: "tutawaletea maji mkihamia vijijini! Mabomba yako wapi, hayo maji yako wapi! Maisha yetu ni yale yale ya kwenda kisimani na ndoo, kukoga uchi hadharani, na kurudi na madebe ya maji vichwani. Zaidi ya hayo visima sasa vimekuwa mbali kuliko zamani." "We will bring you water if you move to the villages!" Where are those pipes, where is that water! Our life is exactly that of going to the well with a bucket, washing ourselves naked in public, and returning with containers of water on top of heads. In addition to this, the wells nowadays are farther away than before.' (Kezilahabi 1979: 108)

At the end of the novel, the promise becomes reality, and the opening of the water pipe is celebrated, showing its importance: "Palikuwa na sikukuu ya kijiji katika shule hiyo; sikukuu ya kuzindua bomba la maji" 'There was a village celebration taking place in that school; celebration of opening the water pipe'

(Kezilahabi 1979: 145), and a new rule is set: “Tangu leo mtu ye yote asionekane anakoga uchi kisimani au mtoni. Ni marufuku.” ‘Starting today no one should be seen to bathe naked by the well or in the river. It is forbidden.’ (Kezilahabi 1979: 148) Interestingly, there is however at least one person who does not see the change as positive: “‘Mimi siwezi kukoga nyumbani kama mgonjwa!’ alisema mzee Chilongo mbele ya wake zake, ‘nataka kukoga mtoni kwenye maji yate-mbeayo, mtoni kwenye samaki na nyoka! Nataka kukoga ziwani kwenye mamba! Mimi sijawa mzee kiasi cha kuletewa maji ya kukoga uoni!’” “‘Me, I cannot bathe at home like a sick person!’” said the old man Chilongo in front of his wives, “I want to bathe in the river where the water moves, in the river that has fishes and snakes! I want to bathe in the lake that has crocodiles! Me, I have not yet become old enough to be brought water to bathe in the courtyard.” (Kezilahabi 1979: 149) Indeed, the prohibition on bathing naked in natural waters seems contradictory to the closeness to nature in traditional Kerewe culture. In Kitereza’s novel, not only do the characters bathe in the river, but nakedness is connected to water also religiously: when the men are fishing, they never wear clothes in a boat in order to show respect to Mugasa, the water deity (Kitereza 2002).¹⁸⁴

In *Gamba la Nyoka*, the water pipe and Chilongo’s resistance to the new ways of washing oneself represents also people’s opposition of the new politics of Ujamaa: a lot of progress was promised, much of it which came late, and even that was not received well by all people, especially the old. The water pipe scene, but above all, the end of the washing sequence, can be seen as essential for the interpretation of the whole novel. The next morning, after the installation of the water pipe, Chilongo goes to the river to bathe:

Peke yake katika baridi ya asubuhi, alivua nguo akaziweka kwenye jiwe, akayaendea maji. Alikuwa hajainama kuyashika maji alipoona nyoka mkubwa juu ya miti midogo midogo iliyokuwa karibu na mto. Mzee Chilongo alishtuka. Alisahau fimbo yake, na bila kutambua kuwa alikuwa uchi alianza kutimua mbio kwa woga. Hakufika mbali akatambua hali yake. Alirudi pole pole akiokota kila jiwe aliloliona mbele yake. Alipoyakaribia tena maji alianza kuliponda lile joka kwa hasira. Jiwe la tatu lilimpiga yule nyoka akakatika sehemu mbili. Lakini nyoka hakutingishika. Mzee Chilongo alitambua – Lilikuwa gamba la nyoka. Alianza kujicheka mwenyewe kabla ya kuanza kukoga. (Kezilahabi 1979: 150)

¹⁸⁴ In the Swahili translation, Kitereza has added, within the story, a note about this old Kerewe tradition: “wanaume zamani zile walikuwa hawavai mavazi yao ya ngozi ziwani ama baharini. Ilikuwa hasa mwiko wa Kimungu cha Baharini chenye jina la ‘Mugasa’” ‘in the past, men did not wear their leather cloths [while] in the lake or the sea. It was a taboo especially because of the Deity of the Ocean called “Mugasa”’. (Kitereza 1980: 370)

Alone in the coldness of the morning, he undressed and put the clothes on a stone, then he went to the water. He had not yet bent to scoop the water when he saw a big snake on top of the small trees/bushes that grew next to the river. Chilongo was startled. He forgot his walking stick, and without realising that he was naked, he started to run away fast because of fear. He had not gone far when he realised his condition. He returned slowly by collecting each stone he saw in front of him. When he came near to the water again he started to pound the huge snake with anger. The third stone hit that snake which then was cut into two parts. But it did not shake up. Chilongo realised – it was the skin of a snake. He started to laugh at himself before starting to bathe.

Old Chilongo realises that the new, threatening creature in view – the big snake next to the river, as opposed to the snakes that Chilongo announced he can swim with – is just an empty skin. All his anger and forceful attack is useless: the empty skin cannot do anything, and it will disappear itself. This can be regarded to represent how Ujamaa was not as powerful as people feared, in good and in bad ways. There was a lot of talk about it, but at the end most of it was just talk, just an empty skin, and people's life did not become that different, at least if they chose to continue the old ways, like bathing in the river instead of using the new water pipe, the symbol of the new life.¹⁸⁵

5.1.3 *Might that drowns*

The power of the water masses is a reality, and the human desire to conquer the water is, ultimately, based on an illusion: as Bachelard (1983: 179) notes, “there is always a little naïveté in the will for power [over water]. The destiny of the will for power is, in effect, to dream of power beyond actual power. [...] To govern the sea is a superhuman dream.”¹⁸⁶ It is noteworthy that unlike freshwater, the sea was rather foreign to Bachelard: he was almost thirty years old when he first saw the ocean, and consequently, he acknowledges that his book “shall not do justice to the sea” (Bachelard 1983: 8);¹⁸⁷ however, it can be argued that his viewpoint is reminiscent of Kezilahabi's own late acquaintance with the ocean. Moreover, it is a matter of fact that tidal waves or floods can destroy lives, and it is apparent

185 Another possible interpretation might be that the skin of the snake represents traditional culture: culture has to moult from time to time, and the traditions become just an empty skin; they might still look impressive, but have no strength anymore. However, because Chilongo is represented as a firm defender of old ways and it is specifically he who feels such rage against the skin, this interpretation does not seem plausible.

186 In the original: “il y a toujours un peu de naïveté dans la volonté de puissance. Le destin de la volonté de puissance est, en effet, de rêver la puissance au-delà du pouvoir effectif. [...] Commander à la mer est un rêve surhumain.” (Bachelard 1942: 240)

187 In the original: “je parlerai mal de la mer” (Bachelard 1942: 11).

also in the poetry written by the Swahili poets of the East African coast that the mere depth of water, especially oceans, can fill with awe. The might of water is concrete, but also offers tools for highly symbolic images. In Kitereza's novel it is used, for example, in the recurrent saying that represents mutual help among people: "Save me from my deep waters that I may be around to save you from your shallow ones" (Kitereza 2002: 99; in a bit different form, Kitereza 2002: 570, 664). A similar plea can be found in the Bible: "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come in deep waters, where the floods overflow me." (Psalm 69:1–2)

Kezilahabi faced the powerful nature of water masses already at a young age: two of his brothers had drowned in Lake Victoria. "Kwa sisi tunaotoka Ukerewe mambo ya kuzama ni kitu ambacho ni cha kawaida" 'For us who come from Ukerewe, drowning is something common', Kezilahabi noted in an interview (26 Mar. 2009), frequently referring to the power of water masses. Corresponding with Bachelard's notion of the human being's power as compared to that of water, Kezilahabi states:

Maji hayatawaliki na watu, kwa njia ya mawimbi makubwa. Unaweza kusema kwamba ni vigumu sana kutawala maji, na mawimbi hasa kwa ziwa Viktoria yanapokuja hasa wakati wa upepo mwezi wa sita na saba, mara nyingi watu wengi wanakufa miezi hiyo kwa sababu upepo ni mkali sana, na ni vigumu sana kuwa na uwezo wa kuyatawala hayo maji [...]. (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009)

Water is not governable by people, in the form of big waves. One can say that it is very difficult to have power over water, and when the big waves come especially in Lake Victoria, especially during the winds of June and July, people often die because of these very hard winds, and it is very difficult to have the power to govern that water [...].

According to Kezilahabi, Lake Victoria is for Ukerewe people almost the same thing as a sea: although he had read about the ocean, Kezilahabi did not have a great desire to see it, for he tells that "kwetu sisi Ziwa Victoria ilikuwa ni kubwa sana kwetu, kwa hivyo tuliona kama bahari labda na Ziwa Victoria karibu ni sawa" 'for us, Lake Victoria was very big, so we thought that the ocean and Lake Victoria are almost the same thing' (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009). Namagondo, the village that Kezilahabi spent his childhood in, is located in the middle of the island, so the River Nabili was much closer than the lake, and the river is where the writer mostly swam as child (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009). Kezilahabi first saw the sea (Indian ocean) in 1960, when he was 16 years old. He did not swim in it – he was afraid of the great waves; seven years later, as

a student at the University of Dar es Salaam, Kezilahabi swam in the sea for the first time, but it never became a habit for him.

Kezilahabi compares Lake Victoria to the sea, and indeed as the largest lake in Africa Lake Victoria is not very far from being a sea. Accordingly, when Kezilahabi uses images of forceful water, the setting is often a lake. The might of the water masses is illustrated impressively in *Upepo wa Wakati* 'Wind of time', particularly in the raging lines "Yakipanda na kushuka. Yakivimba, / Yakiviringika, yakigongana na kutoa povu" 'Raising and lowering. Expanding, / Rotating, colliding and bringing about foam' (Kezilahabi 1974a: 4; the imagery of the poem is discussed in 6.3.2). Lake Victoria is identified with the ocean even more strongly in Kitereza's novel: the words sea and lake are used with apparent interchangeability. The characters live in Ukerewe, an island in Lake Victoria, and the water referred to is clearly that of the lake; but sometimes it is referred to merely as sea (Kitereza 2002: 495, 538, 541), sometimes first as sea, then lake (Kitereza 2002: 447, 642–644), sometimes using both terms many times (Kitereza 2002: 444–445). The same applies to Kitereza's own Swahili translation of the Kerewe original. The words *bahari* 'sea' and *ziwa* 'lake' are repeatedly used interchangeably, and there is even a sentence that notes this: "Siku zile Ntulanalwo, kwa kuwa walikuwa wanakaa karibu na bahari (ziwa), akawa na utundu wa kuchezea ziwani" 'Those days Ntulanalwo, because they lived close to the sea (the lake), had the naughtiness of playing in the lake' (Kitereza 1980: 393).

Rain, which for example is a positive image in *Kilio Kijijini* 'Mourning in a village' (Kezilahabi 1988: 17), is used ambiguously in some poems of Kezilahabi. As previously noted, in traditional Swahili poetry rain is a very positive image, but in modern Swahili poetry, rain by its nature is more double-edged. In Western literature, rain often acts as a synecdoche for bad weather in general, and that makes it a symbol of hardships in literature (Ferber 1999: 164). This fits the description of the poor, suffering woman in *Ukucha wa Mbwa* 'The Claw of a dog' (Kezilahabi 1974a: 25, not included in Appendix 1): she is believed to have been "aliangushwa na mvua / Kutoka juu angani" 'dropped by rain / From the sky'. In Kezilahabi's short story *Mayai: Waziri wa Maradhi* 'Mayai: Minister of illnesses' (2004: 63–77) rain is connected with a frightening atmosphere, bad weather in general, and the dead.¹⁸⁸ In Kitereza's novel, too, rain is sometimes presented as scary, especially thunderstorms; one image even uses personification of rain: "He had been running quite a while when rain said: 'What I am sparing

¹⁸⁸ Mayai is the name of the main character, but the word also means 'eggs'. The short story was first published in a newspaper in 1978, and as Bertoncini-Zúbková (2004: 39) notes, it was probably written in the same period as some of Kezilahabi's poems in *Karibu Ndani*.

you for!’ and it poured down buckets, real heavy rain, foaming rain amidst a raging storm shaking the skies!” (Kitereza 2002: 59).

Notwithstanding, the most common danger related to water in Kezilahabi’s literature is drowning – which seems natural due to his personal history. In *Rosa Mistika*, when Rosa comes to the school a whole month too late, one of the officers has already told others that she knows that Rosa “alikuwa maji wakati akiogelea ziwani” ‘drowned when she was swimming in the lake’ (Kezilahabi 1971: 21). This is not explained in any way, and in the next sentence it is stated that Rosa is fine – the drowning clearly was just speculation, but apparently a natural explanation to imagine when a student in Ukerewe does not appear at school. Similarly, in *Kichwamaji*, Manase almost drowns as a child, but the main character, Kazimoto, saves him, and this deepens their friendship (Kezilahabi 1974b: 14). Later in the same novel, when Manase and Kazimoto talk about life and death, Kazimoto contemplates:

Kifo ninachoogopa mimi [...] ni cha majini. Mtu akizama, hasa akiwa anafahamu kuogelea [sic], anapata mateso makubwa kabla ya kufa. Nakumbuka siku moja mtumbwi wetu ulizama. Tuliogelea. Mara mwenzetu mmoja alichoka. Alisema kwa ufupi, “Jamani kwa herini, mimi nimechoka nakwenda zangu. Nisalimieni mke wangu.” Halafu alizama. Hatukumwona tena. Sisi tuliendela [sic] kujikaza mpaka mtumbwi mmoja wenye tanga ulipotuona na kujaja kutuchukua.
(Kezilahabi 1974b: 211–212)

The death that I am afraid of [...] is that of water. When a person drowns, especially if (s)he knows how to swim, (s)he suffers a lot before dying. I remember one day our canoe sank. We swam. Suddenly one of our friends got tired. He said just briefly: “Gosh, good bye, I am tired, I go my way. Please greet my wife for me.” Then he drowned. We did not see him anymore. Us, we continued to persevere until one canoe with a sail saw us and came to collect us.

This detailed consideration and description of drowning probably relates to Kezilahabi’s close contact with fishermen in Ukerewe; Kezilahabi’s relatives were fishermen, and as noted earlier, two of his brothers drowned while fishing. Similarly, in Kitereza’s novel, the threat of drowning is always present in the lake/sea imagery. A few drownings are narrated in the novel (Kitereza 2002: 495–496, 642–643), and a Kerewe saying reminds: “The sea is nobody’s playground” (Kitereza 2002: 539).

The danger of drowning is present in several parts of *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*, too. Sometimes the danger is very concrete, for example when Kasala finds his mother’s clothes floating in the river and immediately regards her as drowned (Kezilahabi 1975: 33–34). At other times the image is more symbolic: Tumaini

considers fleeing the village before it is found out that he impregnated a girl in the village, before he gets into trouble because of that, and expresses it in the thought: “au nitoroke niende nchi za mbali kabla mtumbwi haujatoboka” ‘or should I go to a distant place before the canoe breaks through’ (Kezilahabi 1975: 48). The water (coming through the canoe) can refer either to knowledge, truth, other people’s reactions or pregnancy; in each case, water represents something that is disastrous for Tumaini. He and his new girlfriend choose to run away from the village, and during their journey, the dangers of drowning are simultaneously very concrete and symbolic. During the ship journey from Nansio to Mwanza, the weather turns stormy: there are huge waves in the lake, the ship loses direction and takes on water, people are seriously afraid of dying. The power of the waters puts the characters’ idea of themselves into perspective: “Boti iliyokuwa kubwa mwanzo wa safari sasa ilionekana kuwa ndogo” ‘The ship that in the beginning of the journey was big, now looked small’ (Kezilahabi 1975: 82). The dangers of the new, independent life are in contrast with the goodness Tumaini and his girlfriend expected; the stormy lake is both a concrete introduction to their hard adult life and a symbolic expression of the transition. Kezilahabi (interview, 26 Mar. 2009) himself notes the importance of the journey motif in relation to water: “Maji ninayatumia sana katika safari. Nakumbuka mara nyingi nilikuwa nasafiri kutoka Ukerewe mpaka Mwanza kwa boti; kwa hiyo wazo la kusafiri liko kichwani, kila wakati, kusafiri juu ya maji.” ‘[The image of] water I use a lot in [connection to] travelling. I remember the many times I was travelling from Ukerewe to Mwanza by boat; thus the idea of travelling in my mind is always travelling over water.’

In most of Kezilahabi’s poems, the image of drowning is menacing, or outright violent. In *Upepo wa Wakati* ‘The Wind of time’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 4) drowning illustrates an extreme emergency: “Kama mzamaji, mguu wa rafikiye, ashikavyo!” ‘Like a drowning person, how he grips the leg of his friend!’ In *Uvuaji wa Samaki Victoria* ‘Fishing in Lake Victoria’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 9), drowning is also grieved. In *Mto wa Haki* ‘The River of justice’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 17–18), the main character is afraid of even entering water: “Alianza kuogopa asije akamtupa majini. / Alianza kumwomba atembe polepole.” ‘He started to fear that he would be thrown into the water. / He started to ask the man to walk slowly.’ All these references to drowning show just how significant the possibility of drowning is in Kezilahabi’s water imagery; how the realisation of the power of water is always present.

5.1.4 Over-flooding threat

Flooding is another water-related danger that often occurs in Kezilahabi's poetry. In *Mafuriko* 'Floods' (Kezilahabi 2008: 4) the power of water is contrasted with the fragility of human beings and their buildings:

*Mafuriko ya mwaka huu
Yatishia nyumba kongwe bondeni.
Waliomo wameanza kuihama
Na miti ya umeme imeanguka.
Palipokuwa na mwanga, sasa giza.*

This year's floods
Threaten old houses in the valley.
People in them have started to move out
And the electric poles have fallen down.
Where there was light, now darkness.

In addition to the electric poles, a tree has fallen down next to the narrator's house, and the narrator uses the attribute *kongwe* 'ancient, old' for the tree, as well. Later in the poem, the houses are defined as "nyumba zetu hafifu" 'our rickety/frivolous houses' and their walls are similarly referred to as "kuta hafifu za nyumba" 'the rickety/frivolous walls of the houses'. At the very end of the poem, the comparison of the fragile houses and trees to human beings is made more explicit:

*Tutabaki kuwasimulia wajukuu:
Mwaka ule wa mafuriko
Miti mingi mikongwe ilianguka.*

*Mafuriko ya mwaka huu!
Wengi wataumbuka.*

We shall remain to tell the grandchildren:
That year of floods
Many old trees fell down.

This year's floods!
Many will be destroyed.

Wengi 'many' in the very last line is used in the noun class 2, which means it refers to human beings. Earlier in the poem, the narrator has focused on the falling down of trees and houses, but through the last line, the identification of human beings with trees is more apparent. This also makes the reader focus on another layer of meaning regarding floods: concrete flooding of rivers does not discriminate by age groups. Thus, the constant reference to the falling down of old things, and by

extension comparing this to human beings, might refer for example to a political or cultural change, a sort of “overflowing” of something new.

The word *mafuriko* ‘floods’ is used in the poem six times (one of which in the title), and the line “mafuriko ya mwaka huu” ‘this year’s floods’ appears as many as four times. This repetition makes the style of the end of the poem full of lament. The beginning of the poem, in which the speaker wittily describes how (s)he is going to write the song on the wings of different insects so that it will reach everyone, is energetic and flowing, but the song itself – the end of the poem – represents grievance. Although the speaker of the poem apparently lived through the floods and seems energetic and relatively young, (s)he can still identify with the loss of life of the old trees, houses, and people.

The flooding water in the poem titled *Mpiga Zeze* ‘Zeze player’ (Kezilahabi 2008: 8–9, not in Appendix 1) is named to be River Nabili.¹⁸⁹

*Mto Nabili ulifurika kwa mvua ya juzi
Ukamchukua mama mja mzito
Aliyebeba zigo kichwani, mtoto mgongoni.*

River Nabili flooded by the rains of recent days
And took a pregnant woman
Who was carrying a load on her head, a child on her back.

The mention of the woman being pregnant and the detailed description of how she was walking make the dangerousness of the flood crueler and more concrete. A tangibly cruel flood is found also in *Mafuriko Msumbiji 2000* ‘Floods in Mozambique 2000’ (Kezilahabi 2008: 43), a poem which refers to the tremendous floods that ravaged Mozambique in February–March 2000. The speaker of the poem addresses the ancestors, trying to make them wake up:

*Amkeni! Enyi Wabenga!
Kwani huko Msumbiji
Mafuriko ya damu
Ya miaka ilopita
Mafuriko ya mvua ya sasa*

Wake up! You there, ancestors!
Because in Mozambique
Floods of blood
Of the past years
(Are) now floods of rain

189 *Zeze* is a stringed musical instrument similar to banjo.

Mafuriko ya damu 'Floods of blood' refers presumably to the bloodshed that took place in the country during the 17 years of civil war: the speaker compares the calamity of the floods to the calamity of that war. The idea that ancestors can affect life in the living world is present in many African cultures (cf. Okwu 1979; Booth 1975); in this poem, it can be interpreted that the speaker laments the unnatural situation in which the ancestors are actually completely dead.

As was in the case of the actual floods in Mozambique in year 2000, the flooding described in the poem is truly disastrous. The flood is depicted to create emptiness, apparently both about history and the future:

*Yamekokota wanenu
Na mifupa yenu sasa
Tupu yaelea
Matundu ya macho yakitazama
Ukanda wa fedha upeoni
Mwa maji mengi.*

They [the floods] have dragged your children
And your bones now
Float empty / in emptiness
Sockets of eyes look at
The belt of silver in the horizon
Where the water is deep.

The image of ancestors' bones floating either empty or in emptiness represents the loss of history, while the image of the sockets of eyes looking forward, instead of eyes themselves, illustrates the loss of the future. Moreover, the object of the look, the horizon, has deep water, which in the context of the floods, can be read as a heavy and sad image.

There is an escape from the situation, but it is a controversial one:

*Wanenu waponea
Vikombe vya machozi
Yaliyochotwa kutoka visima
Vya uoni wa ndugu wazamao.*

Your children escape for/through
Cups of tears
That were scooped from the wells
Of the sight of our brothers who drowned.¹⁹⁰

190 The image of a cupful of tears appears also in *Rosa Mistika*: when Rosa cries, it is described that "[m]achozi yalimtoka kiasi cha kuweza kujaza kikombe cha chai" 'she shed enough tears to fill a teacup' (Kezilahabi 1971: 65).

This passage presents five different settings for water, making the reader shift from the image of floods (from which the children escape) to the image of cups, then to the image of tears in eyes, to the image of the wells, and finally to the lake in which the brothers drowned. The passage can be seen as divergent and the tone of it suspensive;¹⁹¹ the shifts from one image into another do not obey ordinary logic but constitute a lateral complex of imagery, with its internal paradox: the only escape from the mass of water (floods) is through self-scooped water (tears). This is connected to the water imagery of the poem in multiple ways: the tears come from where the victims of the floods have drowned, and they come in masses, too – each cup can hold thousands of tears, and the poem mentions the plural, cups. This connects the tears to the flooding. Thus, contradictorily, the only way out of the floods is through a different kind of flood: the flood of grief. The poem can be interpreted to express that in order to overcome the calamities of the past, one needs to let the emotions come in flood.

5.2 *Water as mind*

5.2.1 *Water as image of creativity*

The image of water is used already in the *Shukrani* ‘Acknowledgements’ of Kezilahabi’s first novel, *Rosa Mistika* (1971): Kezilahabi thanks two of his friends/mentors “kwa kunisukumia baharini ili nianze kuogelea kama sisimizi” ‘for pushing me in the ocean in order for me to start to swim like an ant’. Although there is no fixed saying in Swahili as such,¹⁹² Kezilahabi’s expression is illustrative. It can be seen to have many levels: the ocean can be interpreted to represent both general challenges in beginning something, or particularly the challenges of writing a novel, or the huge field of literature itself. Similarly, water imagery represents poetry in Kezilahabi’s (1974a: xiv) preface to *Kichomi*, as mentioned in the Introduction. In addition to Kezilahabi, the writer of the preface to the poetry collection, Farouk Topan, uses a corresponding illustration. Topan (1974b: xi, emphasis added) employs the image to present the new form: he writes that the new poets in free verse “si kuvumbua *mito mingine ya kishairi* tu bali pia kutufunulia mawazo ya aina fulani ya kisasa” ‘not only discover *other poetic rivers* but

¹⁹¹ On the definition of the term suspensive, see pp. 41–42 above.

¹⁹² At least in English and French, sayings use water imagery to illustrate this way of learning. In English, in addition to “to be thrown right into it”, “to be thrown into the thick of it”, expressions “to immerse oneself in order to swim”, and “to be thrown headfirst into the water” can be used. In French there is the saying “se noyer dans le bain (afin de faire quelque chose)” (= to drown in the pool/swim [in order to do something]). (Kyra Levine, pers. comm. 23 Nov. 2010)

also reveal to us certain kinds of modern/current ideas'. As Ferber (1999: 172) notes, the image of river is a common symbol for poetry in many literatures.

Whereas Topan speaks of the ways of writing poetry as different rivers, Kezilahabi sees the traditional type of poetry as dried leaves in his poem *Karibu Ndani* 'Welcome inside': "Na ushairi umehama, umerudi upeponi / Lakini majani makavu, sasa hayatingishiki" 'Poetry has moved away, returned to the wind / The dry leaves do not move now' (Kezilahabi 1988: 34–37, not included in Appendix 1). Another water-related illustration of poetry in the same poem is the depiction of traditional poetry as superficial: "Na mahadhi yagaagaa, juu ya bahari ya utenzi / Yameshindwa chini kuzama, kwenye kina cha urazini" 'Recitation [of the traditional poems] floats above the sea of traditional poetry / It has failed to submerge in the depth of consciousness'.¹⁹³ Two kind of wordplays can be seen here. Firstly, *kina* can mean both 'depth' and 'rhyme'. Hence in addition to accusation of not reaching the depth of consciousness, the line can be read to ironically suggest that even though (or because) traditional Swahili poetry puts emphasis on *kina* 'rhyme' in language, it fails to reach *kina cha urazini* 'the rhyme of consciousness'.

Secondly, *bahari* is used in discussing prosody of Swahili poetry, in at least two meanings. It is used of the final-line rhyme in *utenzi*.¹⁹⁴ It also refers to the form of poetry. Wamitila presents these two meanings in his *Kamusi ya Fasihi: Istilahi na Nadharia* (2003a: 27):

ISTILAHU hii hutumiwa katika FASIHI YA KISWAHILI kwa maana mbili. Kwanza, hurejelea kile kina cha mwisho katika UTENZI na ambacho hakibadiliki katika utenzi au UTENDI mzima. Maana ya pili ni kumbo la tungo za kishairi ambalo huweza kuwa na sifa na vitanzu mbalimbali.

This TERM is used in SWAHILI LITERATURE in two meanings. Firstly, it refers to the last rhyme in *UTENZI/UTENDI*, the rhyme that does not change in the whole poem. The second meaning is form/type of composition that can have different qualities and genres.

193 Even though *Karibu Ndani* is not written in a traditional bound form, the grammatical comma is used throughout the poem: all the lines are separated into two half-lines by a comma. In *ushairi wa vina* 'strophic or stanzaic poetry' the grammatical comma is always used (Lodhi 1990: 114). Thus the poem, written in free verse but with content that deals with traditional poetry, combines the forms. – The word *utenzi* actually refers to a type of poetry (see n. 68), but Kezilahabi seems to have used the word here as a metonymy for traditional poetry in general; perhaps since *utenzi* constitutes the major part of traditional Swahili poetry.

194 According to *Swahili–Suomi–Swahili-sanakirja* ('The Swahili–Finnish–Swahili dictionary' 2002), *bahari* means 'a one-line refrain', not just the final rhyme. Most other Swahili dictionaries do not give any prosody-related translation of the word – for example Sacleux's *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* (1939), Johnson's *A Standard Swahili–English Dictionary* (1939), Madan's *Swahili–English Dictionary* (2000, 1st publ. 1903) or Baba Malaika's *Modern Swahili–Modern English* (1991) do not connect the word to poetry.

Shariff (1988: 44) notes the last-mentioned meaning: according to him, “[b]ahari ni kumbo moja la tungo ambalo huweza kuwa na mikondo tafauti ndani yake; Kwa mfano, wimbo, shairi na utenzi ni bahari mbalimbali za tungo” ‘bahari is one form/type of composition that can have different *mikondo* within it; for example, *wimbo* (song), *shairi* and *utenzi* are different *bahari* of composition’. Correspondingly, the other watery term *mkondo* (lit. ‘current, stream’) is defined as “aina tafauti ya tungo katika bahari moja” ‘different types of composition in one *bahari*’ (Shariff 1988: 44).¹⁹⁵ In Kezilahabi’s *Karibu Ndani* ‘Welcome inside’ the interpretation of *bahari* as a form/type of composition is most eligible, but in any case, the word can be seen to refer to the prosody of traditional Swahili. It plays concurrently with the idea of a concrete ocean as well, as expressed the recitation “yagaagaa, juu ya bahari” ‘floats above the sea’.

In classical Greek and Latin literatures, fountains symbolise sources of poetic inspiration (Ferber 1999: 79). Similarly, in Kezilahabi’s poetry *kisima* ‘well’ is the source of creativity and the place from which to get inspiration.¹⁹⁶ In *Hii Moja Hadithi* ‘This one story’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 45) the speaker, who seems to be an alter ego of Kezilahabi himself, tells the story of his writing career so far. It starts from “ua waridi fumbo” ‘flower of mysterious rose’, referring to *Rosa Mistika*, and continues until “kitanda cha mtoto alipolala Nagona” ‘child’s bed where Nagona slept’, referring to *Nagona* and simultaneously, to philosophic search for truth. The image of well represents inspiration: “Nikaselea magofuni karibu na kisima cha uzima” ‘I have stayed in the ruins near the well of vitality’. This refers to an argued contrast of traditionalist and modernist Swahili poetry: the speaker has occupied the old ruins of Swahili poetry, and draws fresh, living water from the well of creativity and vitality.

Similarly, in the first stanza of *Kisima* ‘A Well’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 25), “[k]isima cha maji ya uzima ki wazi” ‘the well of the water of vitality is open’, and the giant, the hero, comes to it. The giant is depicted as having “sindano ya shaba kitovuni” ‘the copper dagger in the navel’, which refers to the legend of Fumo Liyongo ‘King Liyongo’: the poetic hero Liyongo is attacked by his own son, who was bribed to kill Liyongo. The son uses a special copper dagger. Liyongo follows the attacker armed with a bow and arrows, bows at a village well and dies, but stays in a kneeling position at the well for three days, and people do not realise he has died. (King’ei 2001: 79)

In *Kisima*, the character also has “[u]pinde na mishale mkononi” ‘a bow and arrows in hand’ and he “likapiga goti kisimani” ‘kneels down at the well’. The

195 Usually the term *kipande* (lit. ‘piece, part’) is used instead of *mkondo* in this sense.

196 The word can also be translated as ‘water-hole’ or ‘water-pit’.

character is clearly Fumo Liyongo, but the well in the poem turns to deal with creativity and poetry in general, and particularly the clash of modern and traditional poetry. The first stanza depicts the powerful Liyongo “[t]ayari kumfuma akaribiaye” ‘ready to pierce anyone approaching’, but what is remarkable is that Liyongo is already dead, although people are unaware of this. This can be seen as representing how traditional poets are still considered very powerful, although according to Kezilahabi (1988: 34–37), traditional poetry is like dead, dry leaves; dead like the kneeling Liyongo.

In the second stanza, the lack of energy or life among the poets is accompanied by the image of drought. In contrast to the open well of vital water in the beginning of the first stanza, the second stanza starts with the statement: “Hatuwezi tena kuteka maji / Na kalamu zetu zimekauka wino.” ‘We cannot scoop water anymore / And the ink in our pens has run dry.’ The end of the poem suggests that, although the corpse of Liyongo is still blocking the well from the next generation, his killing was the only solution, a brave act:

*Aliyeitia kitovuni kwa hofu
Ingawa tegemeo hakulipata
Alifungua mlango uelekeao
Katikati ya ujuzi na urazini mpya*

He who put [the dagger] in the navel in fear
Even though support was not given
He opened the door heading
To wisdom and new consciousness

Although shooting Liyongo made him kneel at the well and consequently block the well of creativity while trying to kill his murderer, it was nevertheless necessary in order to make the well fully accessible in the future. The period when Liyongo is presented to be blocking the well (before people will notice he is dead) can be seen to represent the period of fierce debate on modernist Swahili poetry in the 1970s: even if in reality “dying or dead”, according to Kezilahabi, the traditionalists were trying to “block” the entrance to Swahili poetry. The name of Kezilahabi’s first collection, *Kichomi*, can also mean ‘stab’. Its publication can be regarded as an attempt at “stabbing” the traditionalist guards of the well of creativity, in order to liberate it for the use of the next generation of poets; to open a new door for Swahili poetry.

5.2.2. Immersions in subconsciousness

Graziella Acquaviva (2004: 69) remarks in her article *Jazanda ya Njozi Katika Baadhi ya Mashairi ya Euphrase Kezilahabi* 'Oneiric images in some of the poems of Euphrase Kezilahabi': "Njozi za ulimwengu zinazojitokeza katika ushairi wa Kezilahabi zinafanana sana na zile za mtu anayeweweseka akiwa usingizini" 'Visions of the world that appear in Kezilahabi's poetry resemble closely those which people have while they sleep'. Dreamlike narration and imagery is abundant not only in Kezilahabi's poetry, but also in the last two novels, *Nagona* and *Mzingile*, including many of the water images, as well. In *Mzingile*, there is a house floating in the middle of a lake (Kezilahabi 1991: 31), and a spring inside a cave because there is a river running underneath the cave (Kezilahabi 1991: 50). In *Nagona*, there is a direct link of water and dreams: the villagers get their dreams "[k]atika kisima cha ndoto ambacho wanasema hakikauki kamwe." 'from a well of dreams which they say never dries up.' (Kezilahabi 1990: 6) This well seems to be a source of both dreams during sleep and (day)dreams and hopes of people; later the narrator meets philosophers who tell him that the well of dreams has already dried up (Kezilahabi 1990: 14).¹⁹⁷ At the end of the novel the well seems full again, and it shows its dark side: "Wengine [...] kwa ajili ya wasiwasi mkubwa waliokuwa nao, walitumbukia katika kisima cha ndoto zao wakafa kwa uwingi wa ndoto walizokunywa." 'Others [...] because of the big worries they had, fell into the well of their dreams and died because of the amount of dreams they drank.' (Kezilahabi 1990: 62) In addition to drinking, the image has also implications of drowning and disappearing; maybe referring to lunacy or self-absorption.

Mind, imagination and subconsciousness are presented through liquid imagery in both *Nagona* and *Mzingile*. In *Nagona* it is told that soul is "kitu kama maji-maji" 'a somehow wet thing'; in the surrealist, dreamlike way, the characters are able to spit out their souls and examine them in their palms (Kezilahabi 1990: 15). Interestingly, water is regarded as able to affect the mind even from outside the body, at least baptismal water: an old man refuses Christian baptism, "hayo maji ambayo yangefanya fikra zangu zote zisiwe na maana kwenu" 'that water which would make all my thoughts not have a meaning for you' (Kezilahabi 1990: 41–42). This might be interpreted as a defence of Kerewe beliefs against Christianity; the old man wants to keep his understanding of the world which he can share with other locals, much like in the community described by Kitereza:

197 *Nagona* plays with narratorship, and often it is ambiguous if the narrator is the same as earlier and whether it is a group or divided personality, or just id, ego, and superego of the same person; in this research, the narrator is nevertheless referred to as a singular. Because the narrator identifies himself with the group of men (Kezilahabi 1990: 56), he is referred to as a male.

his novel does not mention any colonial influence, and the characters seem to have an almost uniform world view.

The comparison of water and human mind can illustrate the fluidity and movement of thoughts, as well as the depth of potentiality. Psychoanalysis often illustrates the subconscious with water, and finds them similar; the Freudian theory is filled with hydraulic metaphors (Strang 2004: 67). In *Mzingile*, the narrator declares: “Nilitamani sana kuogelea katika bahari ya nusu urazini, kati ya kuwa na kutokuwako, kati ya ndoto na hali halisi, kati ya uhuru na ufungwa” ‘I greatly desired to swim in the ocean of half consciousness, between existence and non-existence, between the dream and the reality, between freedom and imprisonment’ (Kezilahabi 1991: 17). The image of subconsciousness as a substance in which one can swim around could be interpreted as an image of artistic creation. It seems *Nagona* and *Mzingile* themselves fulfil the desire declared by the narrator, working at a level that combines images of subconsciousness and the real world.

According to research, it is particularly immersion in water that has physiological effects in human beings: for example, immersing in water causes lowering of heart rate and changes in EEG (Strang 2004: 55). The experience of being in water is intense, but at the same time weakens the observation of other senses besides touch. Accordingly, the tactile sense is in focus in the description of a swim in *Mzingile*:

Nilipoamka nilijihisi kuwa karibu na mto. [...] Nilitembea kuelekea mtoni bondeni. Nilivua nguo zangu polepole halafu nikajitumbukiza majini nikajinyoosha. Ghafla niliona kiu. Nilisafisha maji pale niliposimama. Nikachota maji kwa viganja nikanywa. Nilijinyoosha tena majini. Ubaridi wa maji ya asubuhi ulipenya nyweleni na kuingia kichwani. (Kezilahabi 1991: 23)

When I woke up I felt that I was near a river. [...] I walked towards the river in the valley. I undressed slowly, dipped into the water and stretched myself out. Suddenly I felt thirst. I cleared the water in the place I was standing, drew water in my palms and drank. I stretched myself again in the water. The coldness of the water in the morning entered my hair and then head.

The detailed nature of the description expresses its importance: the narrator has not been able to bathe for a long time, for similarly to *Nagona*, there is drought in *Mzingile*. The way in which the coldness of the water is noted can be regarded as emphasising the “wateriness” of the water: according to Bachelard (1983: 32) water is “embodied coolness”.¹⁹⁸

198 In the original: “fraîcheur substantifiée” (Bachelard 1942: 46).

Another description of swimming in *Mzingile* presents a completely different, nightmarish image. When the narrator swims in a fountain (into which water comes from above like rain), his/her fingers and toes drop off; the same happens to the other swimmers. Moreover: “Nilipojaribu kujisugua mwili nilibandua ngozi na nyama yake. [...] Tuliogopana, tukaanza kukimbia hovyoy na kugongana.” ‘When I tried to scrub my body I peeled the skin and the flesh off. [...] We scared each other, and started to run haphazardly and collide with each other.’ (Kezilahabi 1991: 17) Like in a dream, the events quickly get even more nightmarish: “Nilipotoka nje nilistuka. Niliona watu waliokuwa na michirizi ya machozi wamenizunguka. Kulikuwa na shimo karibu nami. Baadhi ya watu walikuwa wameshikilia mchanga viganjani mwao wakinitazama kwa mshangao mkubwa.” ‘When I got out [the spring is in a place below earth] I was surprised. I saw people with streams of tears surrounding me. There was a hole [in the ground] next to me. Some of the people were clutching sand in their hands, looking at me with a great surprise.’ (Kezilahabi 1991: 17) It seems that by swimming in the fountain, the narrator has come close to dying; the disembodiment in the water can be regarded as referring to decomposition of the body. After the immersion in water, the narrator is first considered dead, but when (s)he manages to move, people try to catch him/her (Kezilahabi 1991: 17).

Similarly, in *Kinjeketile* the main character, Kinjeketile, is under water for such a long time that people regard him as dead: “Tumengojea siku nzima. Naona vema sasa tuzike tu. [...] Ntu gani anaweza kukaa ndani ya maji siku moja nzima? Toka jana saa kama hizi mpaka leo?” ‘We have waited for a whole day. I think it is best now just to have the funeral ceremony. [...] What kind of person can stay under water for a whole day? Since yesterday around this time until today?’¹⁹⁹ (Hussein 1969: 13) But to their surprise, Kinjeketile emerges from the river alive, and moreover, his clothes are completely dry despite the immersion in the water (Hussein 1969: 14–15). People are impressed by this, and listen to Kinjeketile’s thoughts of war. In contrast with that, in *Mzingile* the narrator is labelled a lunatic since the day he swam in the fountain. This, however, does not bother him at all: “Nakubali kuitwa kichaa. Huo ndio ulikuwa utashi wangu tangu awali.” ‘I agree to be called a lunatic. That exactly was my desire from beginning.’ (Kezilahabi 1991: 18) Although the attitude of other people is very different, the act of swimming in the fountain in *Mzingile* bears similarities to Kinjeketile’s immersion: both characters experience another state of being (Kinjeketile is possessed by Hongo, and the narrator of *Mzingile* is in a dreamlike/hallucinatory/lunatic state), and both are transformed during the immersion.

199 The translations from *Kinjeketile* are mine; Hussein’s own English translation of the play was published 1970.

In addition to transformation, the image of water also acts as a vehicle for transition. The short story *Mayai: Waziri wa Maradhi* ‘Mayai: Minister of illnesses’ (Kezilahabi 2004: 63–77) uses three different levels: reality, unreality, and dream world, which can be connected with subconsciousness. As Bertoncini-Zúbková (2004: 40) notes, in the story the “transition from reality to unreality is marked by darkness and nasty weather”, and the nastiness of weather means mainly rain. Likewise, in Arabic poetry, the effect created by the movement of water can indicate “the transformation of reality into illusion” (Eksell 1997: 54), but the images combine movement of water with the effect of light, which together produce a visual effect. In Arabic poetry, the optical effects are “all-important”, and water is commonly depicted glittering like gold or diamonds (Eksell 1997: 22).

In Kezilahabi’s fiction the visual aspect of water images is not central, and optical effects, such as light playing on water, are not described; other aspects seem more important. In images of transition, what often is crucial is immersion in the water. In *Mzingile*, the narrator is able to reach the house in the middle of the lake only through water, in a throughout sense:

*Kadiri nilivyozi kuendelea mbele ndivyo kina cha mto kilivyozi kuwa kirefu.
Maji yalinifika kifuani. [...] Maji yaliponifika shingoni miguu ilianza kutetemeka.
Nilijibisi nateleza. Ghafla miguu yangu iliinuliwa na mkondo mkali wa maji nika-
viringishwa kama pia. Muda wa kupiga kelele sikuupata.*

Nilijikuta nimelala karibu na nyumba ndogo iliyokuwa na mwanga ndani.
(Kezilahabi 1991: 31)

The more I continued forward, the greater the depth of the river became. The water reached up to my chest. [...] When the water reached to my neck, my legs started to tremble. I felt myself slipping. Suddenly my feet were lifted by a strong current of water and I circled around like a spool. There was no time to make noise.

I found myself lying down near a small house that had light inside.

By letting go and being immersed in the swirl of the water, the narrator reaches the place (s)he aimed for. Since the man living in the house in the middle of the lake is a god-like figure (e.g. he notes how beforehand, people existed only in his thoughts, but nowadays he also exists in people’s thoughts; and he is referred to as *Mfadhili* ‘Benefactor’, which typically refers to God), the visit in the middle of the lake can also be seen as a religious experience, and perhaps also as an almost-death. The narrator returns from the house in a similar way as he got there: “ghafla niliteleza nikaanguka majini. Nilijaribu kuogelea kuja juu lakini nguvu sikuwa nazo. Nili-popata fahamu [...]” ‘suddenly I slipped and fell into the water. I tried to swim to come to the surface but I did not have the strength. When I regained consciousness

[...]’ The end of the quotation reveals that at least the immersion in the shift to the floating house and back to the shore has happened without consciousness; and the rest perhaps subconsciously, in line with the dreamlike state of the novel.

Veronica Strang (2004: 57) notes water’s potential to provide an impression of “oneness” with the element. Considering this common experience, it is an interesting detail that the salt content of our body reflects the amount of salt in primeval oceans (Haslam 1991: 1). As in the above-quoted description of being taken by the whirl of water and the image of losing one’s fingers, toes, skin and flesh in water, the disembodiment sensation of immersion or floating can also be frightening. There is the danger of loss of self: “if control is removed, immersion becomes drowning: the ultimate overwhelming of identity” (Strang 2004: 72). This risk of water illustrates the depth of sleeping in Kezilahabi’s poem *Nondo* ‘Moth’ (1988: 13–15, not included in Appendix 1): “Ninapotea katika bahari ya ndoto” ‘I disappear inside the sea of dream’. Sometimes the disappearing/disembodiment is at the same time dissolving, like in *Karibu Ndani* ‘Welcome inside’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 36, not included in Appendix 1): “Sasa fumba yako macho, usione tunavyoyeyuka” ‘Now close your eyes so that you will not see how we are dissolved’.

These images in Kezilahabi’s poetry resemble the beginning of Kahigi & Mulokozi’s (1973: 31) poem *Bahari Niliyomo* ‘The Sea that I am in’: “Dunia imeyeyuka chini ya miguu yangu” ‘The World has liquefied under my feet’. Moreover, the final line of the poem (“Natokomea, namezwa na bahari ya dunia!” ‘I vanish, I am swallowed by the sea of the world!’) seems to be echoed in Kezilahabi’s *Nondo* ‘Moth’: “Ninapotea katika bahari ya ndoto” ‘I disappear inside the sea of dream’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 15, not included in Appendix 1). Both poems represent the person as passive, being absorbed by the powerful sea; the dissolution seems to be both literal and metaphorical.²⁰⁰

5.2.3 *A Nightmare in water*

Kezilahabi’s (1974a: 1–2) poem *Jinamizi* ‘Nightmare’ begins with an image of water as a suppressing material. Even the fish feel suffocated, which is presented in the surrealist lines “Samaki ambaye, kupata hewa, / Aliinua kichwa chake juu

200 These nightmarish/hallucinatory images of disappearing/melting could possibly be linked with the idea of dissolution of the universe at the end of time. In the Bible, the Judgement Day is identified with the image of dissolution of the existing world, throughout the Old and New Testament (e.g. Ps. 46:6, 68:2, 97:5; Amos 9:5; Nah. 1:5; Mic. 1:4). In these Biblical images, people are among the matter that dissolves as a consequence of the judgement of God. Hence in these poems the nightmarish images of dissolution of the people might refer to the Biblical idea of destruction through dissolution.

ya maji” ‘Fish which, in order to get air, / Raised its head from the water’. It appears that the fish is suppressed by the fishermen in a canoe, who are controlling the fish: “macho yao wameyakazia majini” ‘[they are s]taring into the water’.

The image of “fuvu la kichwa” ‘a skull’ is connected to politicians (by the references to government and “siasa kwa ujumla” ‘politics in general’), illustrating them as being mere tools in the hands of someone else, or being unknowledgeable. The first stanza can be seen depicting the colonial situation: the original inhabitants, the fish, cannot breath freely, since even if they are on home ground – or rather, in home water – their situation is critical. The people above them are just *fishing* for benefits for themselves – the white colonialists are exploiting the original inhabitants, the fish. The fishermen are both *weusi* ‘black’ and *weupe* ‘white’, which probably refers to the black servants or assistants of the colonialists.

The second stanza dramatically changes the static atmosphere of the first stanza. There is a great amount of action, and the choice of words, such as *mara* ‘suddenly’ and *-kimbilia kwa fujo* ‘invade fiercely’, accentuates the great speed of the incidents. Crocodiles invade the canoe of the fishermen, the canoe is split, and “wakatatuliwa / Vipande, vipande” ‘they were ripped / Into pieces, pieces’. The passage is ambiguous: the predicate *wakatatuliwa* ‘(they) were ripped’ can refer either to the crocodiles or to the fishers, or perhaps both (however, not to the boat, which the reader might assume). In a way it is compatible with the dreamlike qualities and the high speed of the poem that it is not clear who is ripped.

The relationship between the fish and the crocodiles is complicated. The crocodiles come from the same water as the fish, and on one hand they invade and break the canoe, breaking the static domination by the people above. On the other hand, they are ripped themselves (if the predicate is interpreted to refer to the crocodiles), and it is only after that when the fish “waliinua / Vichwa vyao juu ya maji / Na pamoja wakaimba wimbo wa Uhuru” ‘raised their / Heads from the water / And sung together the song of Freedom’. Therefore the crocodiles might depict violent overtakers: overtaking the decayed rulers, but being decayed, just hungry for power, themselves. The overtakers are frightening, they have sharp teeth, but they help the fish to get freedom – being (possibly) destroyed themselves.

The canoe and the crocodiles are demolished, but the nightmare is not over. In the distance there are *majitu* ‘giants’, and in the water there are more crocodiles. Even though “kutoka bahari / La magharibi washairi walikuwa / Wameanza kuimba juu ya kifo cha wadhalimu” ‘in the western sea / The poets had started to / Sing of the death of the oppressors’, the speaker is afraid of both the crocodiles and the giants. The title of the poem, *Jinamizi* ‘Nightmare’, is not only metaphorical: the poem has several elements of a typical nightmare dream. There is the peculiarity of fish not able to breath in the water; the quick action; the obscure,

baffling messages – the giants are depicted to laugh “[k]icheko kilichoonekana kutokuwa na maana” ‘a laughter that seemed not to have a meaning’ and to shake their heads in a way that “haikueleweka maana” ‘was not understandable’.

The scary creatures – giants and crocodiles – are also a trademark of nightmares. The idea of beings particularly attached to water masses seems to be intrinsic in all the mythologies: anthropologist Veronica Strang (2004: 69) notes that “[i]t is hard to find any cultural body of mythology without lurking water creatures of one sort or another: serpents, kraken, devil fish, giant octopi and other leviathans – these ideas run deep”. Our minds are inseparable from myths: as anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss famously argues, “myths operate in men’s minds without their being aware of it” (quoted e.g. in Leitch 1983: 19).

While reading the poem aloud, the clearest single consonant that remains in the echo memory, and on the lips, is /m/. It is most frequent in the first stanza, constituting 8.7% of the phonemes. It is also very high in the second stanza (7.4% of the phonemes) and the last stanza (7.6% of the phonemes); in the short third stanza, which announces the action of the Western singers, the phoneme constitutes only 4.5% of the phonemes, which fits the way in which the stanza is laid out, indented unlike the other lines of the poetry, creating a separate entity. The phoneme /m/ is usually considered soft and it often expresses tenderness. However, /m/ also resembles for example the sound of an engine starting, and in this poem the phoneme seems to imply pent-up power – which in the second stanza emerges in the form of the fierce crocodiles. The phoneme /m/, followed by /a/, also begins the three central words in the poem, the three dangers: *mafuvu* ‘empty shells’, *mamba* ‘crocodiles’, and *majitu* ‘giants’. In the second stanza, the frequency of verbs is high – eleven predicates in just three sentences – imitating the swift movement of the water. The connection of /m/ to water is enhanced by the high amount of continuous phonemes in the poem: the semivowels /w, j/ constitute as much as 7.3% of the sounds in the poem, while for example in the “dry” *Fungueni mlango* ‘Open the door’ they form only 3.9% of the phonemes.

Water in *Jinamizi* is portrayed to involve great dangers, but on the other hand, it also has hope. The poets who “[w]ameanza kuimba juu ya kifo cha wadhalimu” ‘started to sing of the death of the suppressors’, are situated in “bahari la magharibi” ‘the western sea’. Here again, the image is confusing: if one assumes that the actions are located in East Africa, there is no “western sea” within reach. However, *bahari la magharibi* can refer to the Atlantic Ocean that is the western sea to Africa as a continent, or in general to the west. The image of the western poets singing about ‘the death of the suppressors’ while the people, including the speaker of the poem, are still afraid and living in the middle of the crocodiles and giants, seems to allude to the neo-colonial situation. The state of affairs is

not easy or simple (especially as early as in the beginning of the 1970s, since Tanganyika became independent only in 1961).

As the first poem in *Kichomi, Jinamizi* in a way sets the pace for the whole collection, or gives a foretaste of it. The image of water in the poem also, in a way, summarises the image of water in the collection. It presents many sides: on one hand there are the scary creatures, while on the other the songs of freedom and the songs of the death of suppressors, coming from the water as well. In the end, water illustrates life or the world – with all the chaos and dangers, water is the only place in which fish can live.

5.2.4 *Steamed into hallucination*

Besides their dreamlike nature, Kezilahabi's poems on occasion resemble or depict hallucination. The same can perhaps be said of his latest prose works, too: Diegner (2005: 26) describes the novel *Nagona* to be “written in a puzzling style between realism and hallucination”, and the description could be applied to *Mzingile*, as well. Intriguingly, most of the depictions of hallucinations in Kezilahabi's poems are associated with water or the lack of it.²⁰¹ The beginning of the poem *Nenda Ukanywe!* ‘Go to drink!’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 30) presents a nightmarish image:

Mafunza wameniingia bongoni
Nao wakati wa joto wachezapo mchezo
Wao ndani ya nyumba hii ya mawazo
Hunifanya kama mwehu

Worms have invaded my brain
 And are dancing their dance during hot times/the hot season
 In this house of thoughts
 They make me insane

The hallucinatory atmosphere in the passage, in which the speaker experiences things that cannot be real, could be linked with the consequences of dehydration, since the poem has references to drying (as observed in 6.7.1 below).

In *Kichwa na Mwili* ‘Head and body’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 16) the speaker of the poem dreams of being immersed: “ningeoga damu na maji” ‘I would bathe in blood and water’, and the hallucination in the poem is linked with the smell of blood. The hallucinatory experience is possibly even caused by the smell:

²⁰¹ Water and hallucination indeed have a connection in reality: long immersions in water produce visual and auditory hallucinations (Strang 2004: 55), and hallucinations also occur in the case of dehydration, if 10% of body fluid is lost (Strang 2004: 59).

*Bunduki! Harufu ya damu kutoka kusini!
Polepole kichwa kinalegea, harufu kama moshi
Wa bangi inaingia kichwani – chuki kama chongo na moshi.*

A rifle! The smell of blood from the south!
Slowly my head relapses, the smell like the smoke
Of marijuana enters my head – annoyance, like one-eyed in smoke.

The smell of blood is compared with the smell of marijuana, and the results are corresponding – the speaker starts to hallucinate, and thinks that (s)he is without head, but yet has senses: “Bila kichwa ninasikia haki mwili mzima / Na ninaona haja ya kushika bunduki.” ‘Without head I feel justice with the whole body / I see the need to catch a rifle.’

The personality of the speaker seems to change during the third stanza, in which (s)he smells the blood. In the first stanza of the poem the content of the speech is crude, but the effect is softened by the use of conditional mood: “Ningekuwa askari” ‘If I were a soldier’. In the second stanza, the speaker even notes reasons for avoiding the shedding of blood: “Inasemekana, sadaka kukataliwa / Damu ya mwanadamu ilitetemeshwa mbingu.” ‘It is said that ritual sacrifice is prohibited / Blood of people made heaven shake.’ In contrast to that, in the third and especially in the fourth stanza the attitude is very sharp and commanding, including lines such as the first line of the fourth stanza: “Usiniambie zaidi! Usinisihi!” ‘Do not tell me more! Do not beg!’

The use of punctuation underlines the radical stance: the exclamation mark is used five times in the last stanza, and twice in the preceding (third) stanza. Five of the eight sentences in the last stanza are exclamations. In comparison, the first two stanzas do not employ exclamation marks at all. Even the question “Nikifa je!” ‘What if I die!’ in the fourth stanza is ended with an exclamation mark, in the way that *je*, the word marking the sentence as question, seems to be added to intensify the remark, in defiance. Shoptaw (1995: 217) argues in regard to punctuation that “[f]lowing and stopping also characterize modes of being and behaving: smooth and rough, elegant (graceful) and rude (awkward), romantic and realist, diffuse and concentrated”. In *Kichwa na Mwili* ‘Head and body’, especially in the last (or last two) stanza(s), the “mode of being and behaving” is “rough”, “rude”, and “concentrated”; perhaps “realist” as well (at least in contrast to “romantic”), despite the hallucinatory references.

Whereas in *Kichwa na Mwili* Kezilahabi refers to *bangi* ‘marijuana or hemp’, in two other poems he writes about *kasumba* ‘opium’. Interestingly, the word *kasumba* does not mean only opium or other drugs. *Kamusi ya Maana na Matumizi* ‘Dictionary of meaning and use’, Bakhressa (1992) defines *kasumba* as follows: “1. bangi, hashishi, afyuni. 2. mawazo na fikira za kibeberu na kikoloni”

‘1. hemp or marijuana, hashis, opium. 2. imperialistic and colonialistic ideas and thoughts’.²⁰² The word *kasumba* once again illustrates the depth of images: both the literal and the metaphorical meanings can be harnessed. The sense of restricting or cloaking the field of vision is strongly present in the poem *Moshi Ukizidi Pangoni* ‘When smoke increases in the cave’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 11, not included in Appendix 1). The poem depicts the traditionalist poets as stubborn diehards who stay in a cave: “Kweli wali hawaioni, kasumba iliyowasuka” ‘Really they do not see it, opium that twines (/twists/plaits, braids) them’.²⁰³

The poem *Tunatazamana* ‘We are looking at each other’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 65–66) is a fascinating mixture of imaginative illusion, representation of history (onset of Ujamaa), and concrete everydayness. The first four lines of the second stanza ground the hallucinatory passage of the stanzas from second to fourth:

Polepole maji yalianza kuzunguka
Kufuata mwendo tukazungusha vichwa vyetu.
Mvuke wa kasumba ukaanza kutoka
Tukatoa vichwa vyetu ukapita [...]

Slowly the water started to go round and round
 Following the way we moved our heads round.
 Steam of opium started to come out
 We moved/took out our heads and it passed [...]

Despite the line ‘steam of opium started to come out’ and the following hallucination, the daydream is purely imagined: “unga wa uganga” ‘the healing powder’ that the father is told to fetch and add into the water (and which the reader at first believes to be some herbal narcotic), turns out to be corn flour – they are preparing *ugali* ‘maize porridge’!

Even the revelation of the everyday level is started in a mysterious way, divulging the concrete side of the image in the fifth line of the fifth stanza:

Kitu kama muujiza kikaanza kutokea.
Baada ya mda mfupi akatoa
Kitu kimoja kiitwacho ugali.

202 The latter sense is probably derived from the Marxist idea of religion as the opium of the people; it is also possible that it was used already before merely because opium has the property of diluting. *Swahili–Suomi–Swahili-sanakirja* ‘The Swahili–Finnish–Swahili dictionary’ (2002) defines the word as follows: ‘*Kasumba*: 1. opium 2. the way of thinking that is against the traditional way, a consequence of colonialism, or trace of colonialist propaganda.’ This definition remarks better the fact that colonialism has also left traces that are not conscious.

203 The spelling *wali* is probably a spelling mistake; it should be *wale* ‘those’.

A miraculous thing started to appear.
 After a short while he took out
 The thing that is called *ugali* [maize porridge].

The action in the poem thus takes place merely in the imagination of the narrator. The speaker is possibly a child, since (s)he refers to *baba* 'father', and tells that (s)he has small mouth and small palms.

The imagined hallucination is connected with the water that is heated in the cauldron. The water starts to bubble at the end of the first stanza, and in the beginning of the second stanza the water vapour is equated with the steam of opium. The succeeding visions are linked to the changes of the water that is being heated. The clouds in the beginning of the dream – "tukauona / Unapanda juu katika mawingu ya udanganyifu" 'we saw it / Riding upon the clouds of deceitfulness' – refer to the steam. Next the water is told "kufanya vilima" 'to form hills' and "kupasuka" 'to burst out', which describes the beginning of boiling. That is followed by the lines "Baada ya mda mfupi askari wakali / Walianza kucheza majini bila mpango" 'Soon after that severe soldiers / Started to dance in the water without order', miming the movement of the water. The movement, and perhaps voice, too, of the (soon) boiling water is illustrated by the line "Halafu askari wakawa wacheza ngoma" 'Then the soldiers were dancing'.

The soldiers are described to be moving chaotically: "Wakaruka juu hewani bila fahamu" 'They were jumping in the air without sense', "Wakaruka hata nje ya sufuria, wakatuchoma" 'They even jumped out from the cauldron, burning us'. This image uses the motive power of the dangerous and uncontrollable side of water. The depiction of the scary dance in the cauldron – *mapinduzi!* 'revolution!' – conveys a story of either fear or experience of the speaker: the frightening soldiers who create chaos and (try to) harm the speaker and his/her family. Since the first line of the poem mentions that "[m]ama alikuwa ameuawa na wazungu" 'mum was killed by white people', the speaker has probably experienced the disturbance depicted. The equation of the movement of the water and the memory may be a way to process the trauma.

In *Tunatazamana* the powerful water is tamed by the corn flour, which the father sprinkles into the water. At first it escalates chaos: the soldiers "wakaanza kuruka / Kama wagonjwa waliopagawa waachwapo na shetani" 'started to jump / Like ill, possessed people when a devil/spirit leaves them'. With the help of more corn flour, the soldiers finally calm down. Interestingly, in one line the flour is called "unga wa ujamaa" 'the flour of Ujamaa'. *Ujamaa* refers to the socialist politics of Julius Nyerere and is hard to translate, but can also mean 'familyhood' or 'brotherhood' in general. Since written with small *u* in the poem,

ujamaa could be interpreted as ‘familyhood’ here; but the content of the poem supports a political reading. Even though this line sees the “Ujamaa flour” as the way to calm the situation, criticism towards the Ujamaa politics is to follow.

In the last stanza the speaker brings up the problem of differences between people:

*Lakini kitu kimoja niliogopa daima.
Kuna watu wenye viganja vikubwa zaidi.
Vile vile wapo wamezao upesi upesi.*

But one thing I was afraid of all the time.
There are people with very big palms.
Similarly, there are people who swallow very quickly.

The presented dilemma employs the image of eating *ugali*, but represents the implementation of Ujamaa politics, too. The noble idea, sharing everything, can fail like the eating in a circle: some are quicker or more skilled than others, and may exploit the system. Moreover, the adherents of the system behave in an alarming way when the speaker raises the question: “Hao hao walinitazama kwa hasira” ‘They themselves looked at me in anger’. The poem seems to imply that the system of Ujamaa might have helped something (calming of the water) but there are problems which it does not recognise.²⁰⁴

The punctuation in the end of the poem is remarkable. Unlike in the beginning of the poem or in the other poems of Kezilahabi, the full stop is often used. Whereas the stanzas from first to fourth use it from three to four times, the second to last uses the full stop seven times, and the last as many as eight times. Sometimes the full stop is used against the ordinary way, particularly in the lines “Kwa kuwa mimi kinywa changu kizito / Na viganja vyangu vidogo. Mwishowe nilisema.” ‘Because my mouth is slow / And my palms small. I said at last.’ The peculiar punctuation seems to emphasise the confidence and calmness of the speaker, whose attitude and situation is summarised in the last three lines:

*[...] bila hofu nikawatazama.
Tukatamazana.
Sungura na mbweha.*

204 Even though Bertocini sees Kezilahabi as being more critical towards the realisation of Ujamaa politics than the principles of it (Bertocini 1980: 89), the poem’s depiction of the fundamental problem of “eating from the same plate” can (also) be seen to refer to problems in the core of Ujamaa ideology.

[...] I looked at them without fear.
 We looked at each other.
 A rabbit and a jackal.

The second to last line has been chosen to be the title, as well, emphasising its importance even more, stressing the prolonging of the gaze. Unlike the hallucinatory middle part of the poem, the end is lucid. The steam has dispersed, the chaotic water tamed by the flour, reason prevails again.

5.3 *Liquid ethics*

5.3.1 *Through water into purity*

When I asked Kezilahabi whether he sees water more as a positive or negative (dangerous) image, if he had to choose without thinking too much, Kezilahabi (interview, 26 Mar. 2009) immediately replied: “Ni utakaso zaidi, utakaso ndio nafikiria zaidi na huo utakaso unaweza ukawa wa kiakili, unaweza ukawa ni wa kiutamaduni, unaweza ukawa pia ni wa kiroho kwa hiyo ni utakaso wa kila aina.” ‘It is more about purification, indeed, more about purification, and that purification can be intellectual purification, it can be cultural purification, it can also be spiritual purification, so it can be purification of any type.’ Earlier in the interview, he had already noted that as a Christian, he also uses water (in literature) “kama njia ya utakaso” ‘as a way of purification’. Indeed, in the Bible, water is often seen as purifying: for example, God is depicted promising Israel, his chosen people: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.” (Ezek. 36: 25)

Bachelard regards the central role of water in the act of purification:

The human mind has claimed for water one of its highest values – the value of purity. How could we conceive of purity without the image of clear and limpid water, without this beautiful pleonasm that speaks to us of *pure water*? Water draws to itself all images of purity.²⁰⁵ (Bachelard 1983: 14, original emphasis)

Clear water is a constant temptation for a facile symbolism of purity. Any man, with no guide or social convention, can discover this natural image. A physics of the imagination, then, must take this natural and direct discovery into account. It must examine attentively this attributing of a *value* to a mate-

205 In the original: “L’eau est l’objet d’une des plus grandes valorisations de la pensée humaine: la valorisation de la pureté. Que serait l’idée de pureté sans l’image d’une eau limpide et claire, sans ce beau pléonasm qui nous parle d’une *eau pure*? L’eau accueille toutes les images de la pureté.” (Bachelard 1942: 20)

rial experience which, in this way, shows itself to be more important than an ordinary experience.²⁰⁶ (Bachelard 1983: 134, original emphasis)

Bachelard's notion of the importance of the material experience, the way a value of purity is attached to a matter, can again be seen to link with nonconceptual understanding of material experiences: they exhibit more meaning than concepts can express. As Bachelard (1983: 133, emphasis added) notes, water "*gives precision* to the prolix psychology of purification".²⁰⁷

One of Kezilahabi's poems even has the word *Mtakaso* 'Purification' as its title (Kezilahabi 2008: 19–20). The poem opens with an image of a straying wanderer:

Mawazo.
Mawazo kichwani, mawazo begani
Natembea nikiyumbayumba kama mgeni
Mheshimiwa alolewa karatasi alizokunywa.

Thoughts.
 Thoughts in the head, thoughts on the shoulders.
 I walk staggering like an honoured guest/stranger
 Who was drunk with the paper he drunk.

Not only loaded with heavy thoughts, but the speaker is also "drunk" because of all he has read,²⁰⁸ which makes it difficult to walk forward. Importantly, the speaker is compared to *mgeni mheshimiwa*, which can mean 'an honoured guest' but especially in the context of the poem also refers to the speaker's foreignness; the enjambment, line spacing between the words *mgeni* 'stranger; guest' and *mheshimiwa* 'honoured, respected', makes the ambiguity stronger.

The following lines increase the sense of difficulty of moving forward in the situation:

Nyumangu sauti za watoto zaseng'enya:
Ndiye! Siye! Ndiye! Siye!
Natazama nyuma: kiza, kimya.
Mto mpana u mbele yangu.

206 In the original: "L'eau claire est une tentation constante pour le symbolisme facile de la pureté. Chaque homme trouve sans guide, sans convention sociale, cette image naturelle. Une physique de l'imagination doit donc rendre compte de cette découverte naturelle et directe. Elle doit examiner avec attention cette attribution d'une *valeur* à une expérience matérielle qui se révèle ainsi être plus importante qu'une expérience ordinaire." (Bachelard 1942: 182–183)

207 In the original: "donne des sens précis à une psychologie prolix de la purification" (Bachelard 1942: 181).

208 With this poem, the speaker is identified as male, because of Kezilahabi's explicit notion on the poem's autobiographical background (interview, 26 Mar. 2009).

Behind me the backbiting voice of children:
 It is him! It is not him! It is him! It is not him!
 I look behind: darkness, silence.
 In front of me a wide river.

Although the speaker does not see anything behind him, and indeed does not even hear anything when he turns to face back, the voices in his head keep interfering with his walk. Interestingly, although the image of a wide river can be seen to represent a big challenge for the walker, the soundscape emphasises its pleasant side: “Mto mpana u mbele yangu” uses the soft phoneme /m/ three times, each time as the first letter of a word, creating alliteration. Due to the choice of other phonemes, including vowels, the semi-vowel /j/ and the phonemes /b, l/ that are generally considered soft, the whole line sounds soft; the choice of the locative *u* also increases the calm feeling of the line, for the use of the more ordinary locative, *uko*, would have included the voiceless stop /k/ which is generally experienced as aggressive and harsh (see 2.6 above). This is in stark contrast with the first two lines of the quoted passage, depicting the voices from behind: “Nyumangu sauti za watoto zaseng’anya: / Ndiye! Siye! Ndiye! Siye!” In these lines, the voiceless fricative /s/, which is one of the least periodic sounds, is used four times, creating atmosphere of harshness and friction; the voiced fricative /z/, used twice, enhances the image. The repetitive monotonous nature of the second line adds to the feeling of something abrading, as does the use of the strong voiced stop /d/. Thus, when reading the line “Mto mpana u mbele yangu” after these, the reader is inclined to use sharpening (see pp. 42–43 above): the image of the river stands out from the text.

The second stanza reveals what the river, and/or the land on the other side of it, represents: “Nchi yangu tukufu ilee!” “That glorious land of mine!”²⁰⁹ Although the ‘glorious land’ might be interpreted in other ways, too, the interview with Kezilahabi (26 Mar. 2009) informed me that *nchi* ‘land; country’ in the poem indeed refers to Tanzania:

Nafikiri bata katika kitabu hiki cha mwisho kuna shairi moja ambalo linatumia [maji] kama utakaso. Unajua wakati nilikwenda kusoma Marekani na kutoka nchi kwetu huku kidogo nilipofika kule, nilikuta aina mpya ya utamaduni. Kwa hiyo nikaona kwamba wakati sasa nimemaliza PhD wakati narudi ilinibidi sasa kufikiri kwamba nimekuja na utamaduni wa aina nyingine, lakini nitawezaje kuishi na watu katika utamaduni huu ambao niliuacha kwa muda wa miaka

209 *Tukufu* can also be translated as ‘magnificent’ or ‘holy’; it comes from the same root as *takatifu* ‘holy’. – The ordinary spelling of the last word of the line would be *ile*, but the prolongation of the last phoneme is often used in spoken Swahili for emphasis.

minne? Nakumbuka katika shairi hilo nafikiri kuna wazee wanaoniita kwamba “Njoo, rudi!” na ninajaribu kuvuka lakini ninapojaribu kuvuka nasikia sauti nyuma; wananiita tena lakini mimi ninakwenda, ninakwenda, ninakwenda tu kurudi Tanzania.

[...] babu zangu wananiita kwamba “Rudi rudi yaani katika utamaduni wetu, sabau ule utamaduni niliokuwa nao Marekani, jaribu kuwa Mtanzania tena”. Halafu kuna mto Nabili pia katika shairi ambalo nilitajataja, hasa katika mashairi ambayo kuna Namagondo. Huo mto wa Nabili unajitokeza katika kuogelea na kujaribu kujisafisha.

I think that one of the poems in the latest collection, too, uses water as purification. You know when I went to study in the USA and left our country, when I arrived there, I found a new type of culture. So I saw that when I had finished my PhD, the time I returned, I had to think that I am coming from another type of culture, but how can I live with the people of this culture that I left for four years? I remember in this poem, the elders are calling me “Come, return!” and I try to cross but when I try to cross I hear voices from behind; they are calling me again but I go, I go, I just go and return to Tanzania.

[...] my grandfathers were calling me “Return, return to our culture, forget that culture that you had in USA, try to be a Tanzanian again”. Then there is the River Nabili also in this poem that I referred to, especially in the poems about Namagondo [Kezilahabi’s place of birth]. The River Nabili appears in [the images of] swimming and trying to cleanse oneself.

Thus the space behind the speaker represents the USA, and the space in front of him Tanzania. Kezilahabi’s mention of the elders’ call clarifies that the voice in the poem indeed belongs to the ancestors: although it comes from behind, the confusing voice can be argued to belong to *wazee* ‘elders’, or *babu* ‘grandfathers’, of the speaker of the poem. On the other hand, unlike Kezilahabi recalls, the voices in the poem do not call “return, return to our culture” but rather question or discuss the identity of the walking man; because of their location behind the man, the voices could maybe also represent the people and culture that influenced the speaker of the poem while he lived in the USA.

The last sentence of the quoted reply of Kezilahabi is most closely connected to purification: the poet refers to the River Nabili ‘in which to [...] try to get clean’. This links to the last two lines in the second stanza that in total is:

*Nchi yangu tukufu ilee!
Mto nitauvuka, miguu kuitakasa
Kisha nione mwanga, maisha nikiutafuta.*

That glorious land of mine!
I will cross the river, cleanse my feet.
Then I will see a light, lifetime I was searching for it.

Nabili, the river that has a central place in Kezilahabi's memories of childhood, represents the means of cultural purification. The crossing of the river and the cleansing of the feet seem to represent a fresh start, a newness of being. The rebirth aspect of purification is noted by Bachelard, who states that "[t]hrough purification one participates in a fertile, renovating, polyvalent force" (Bachelard 1983: 141),²¹⁰ and that fresh water suggests renovation: "One dives into water in order to be reborn and changed." (Bachelard 1983: 144)²¹¹

In *Mtakaso* 'Purification', crossing of the river does not, at the end, make the speaker of the poem free: on the contrary, in the last stanza it is told that he is captured by a rope, whipped and insulted. This can be interpreted to express how an expatriate returning to his/her home-country often faces a reverse culture shock, and is not necessarily treated well by the countrymen, who may find him/her now foreign. However, the atmosphere in the poem importantly calms down when the speaker has crossed the river. Similarly, the elders calm down, too, and after the river is crossed, one of them announces: "Usiogope! Ndimi mlinziwo." 'Do not fear! I am the one who is your guard.' Before that, the voice has been urging the speaker to proceed quicker – the exclamation "Chapu!" 'Quick!' is used as many as six times – but after the image of crossing the river, there is a new, encouraging tone.²¹² The wanderer has crossed the river, he has been purified of his strangeness.

Correspondingly, in *Njia tulopitishwa* 'The Road we were made to go' (Kezilahabi 2008: 3) water is seen as something that could purify and offer a fresh start. There is a need for getting rid of the burden of the past: "Njia tulopitishwa yasikitisha" 'The road we were made to go is sad'; the road might refer to the history of Tanzania. However, unlike in *Mtakaso* 'Purification',

210 In the original: "Par la purification, on participe à une force féconde, rénovatrice, polyvalente" (Bachelard 1942: 193).

211 In the original: "On plonge dans l'eau pour renaître rénové." (Bachelard 1942: 197)

212 The expression *chapu* seems to be an equivalent of the English expression "chop chop", which is used at the end of a sentence to indicate an order that must be completed quickly. My Zanzibari informant Haji Mohammed Haji describes the meaning of *chapu* as follows: "Hili sio neno la Kiswahili sanifu, sio rasmi, zaidi neno hili linatumwa kwa muda mrefu na zaidi ni mjini hapa Unguja na miji mengine kadhaa. Ni neno la kiingereza *sharp*, kwa maana na 'haraka sana'. Kama ninataka kukuambia wewe uje hapa kwa haraka basi ninaweza kusema 'Nakutaka uje hapa chap chap' au unaweza kusema 'Aah lete huo mkoba wangu chapuu kwa sababu ninataka kwenda sokoni sasa'." "This is not a Standard Swahili word, it is not official, more it is a word that has been used a long time in this town in Zanzibar [Stone Town] and maybe other towns, too. It is [from] the English word *sharp*, used in the meaning "very fast/hurry up". For example if I want to tell you to come here very quickly, I can say "I want you to come here *chap chap*" or you can say "Oh bring me that basket of mine *chapuu* because I want to go to the marketplace now".' (pers. comm. 14 Oct. 2010)

there is no water available to offer the purification: “hatuna machozi ya moto / Yatayofuta aibu hii tukufu” ‘we do not have hot tears / That would clear off this glorious shame’.²¹³ Instead of the glorious country mentioned in *Mtakaso*, what is described as glorious in *Njia tulopitishwa* is, surprisingly, shame. In line with seeing shame as glorious, the poem finishes optimistically: although the shame cannot be removed, “Bendera ya haki itapepea daima / Daima tutakuwa na kuwako.” ‘The flag of justice will wave forever / Forever we will be and we will exist.’ It might be interpreted as a notion of histories: although a nation’s history can be difficult and we lack the tools to wash it away, it bears a blessing, for the non-expendability of histories guarantees permanence.

Bachelard (1983: 146) argues that being in water can have a moral component. The way water can represent moral purification is dealt with in one of the early poems of *Kichomi*, *Mto Nili* ‘The Nile’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 7). The poem connects the building of the pyramids with the time “[w]akristu wakioshwa na kutakaswa, na dhambi zikielea mtoni” ‘when the Christians were washed and purified, and the sins were floating in the river’. The passive voice of the sentence can be argued to be implying that the actor is God, who is thought, in essence, to perform the purifying process. But as discussed in section 5.3.6 below, the end of the poem reveals that the purification referred to turns out to be rather just an attempt.

5.3.2 *Washing the past*

Mental or moral purification, although not always connected to water, is central in the development of the main characters in both *Kichwamaji* and *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*. In *Kichwamaji*, Kazimoto thinks about his life and decides to stop going out with many women and to marry Sabina, the girl he started to date in the first place just to take revenge on her brother. Now Kazimoto realises he loves her and wants to be a good man (Kezilahabi 1974b: 121–122). In *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*, similarly, the main character (Tumaini) ponders over his life and then decides to change it at once, and indeed does that: he stops drinking in the bars, stops going out with several women, and changes his occupation to become a farmer because he specifically wants to work hard and sweat to earn his living.

Purification holds an even more central role in the last two novels, *Nagona* and *Mzingile*. In addition to Christianity, which is linked to Kezilahabi’s view of water as purifier, it is noteworthy that in traditional Kerewe culture, ritual

²¹³ Tears seem to often be a positive image in Kezilahabi’s poetry; e.g. in the poem *Mgomba* ‘The Banana plant’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 8) it is referred to “Machozi yenye matumaini” ‘The tears that have hope’.

washing has an important role. Kitereza's (2002: 359) novel describes how babies are bathed excessively from the day when the umbilical cord is cut: "the newborn baby was bathed endlessly and water became its perpetual companion in its first period of growing up, during which it would be bathed time and time again throughout the day, as the custom was". Bathing is connected to all the main events in life from birth to death. A newly-wed couple is referred to with the saying "Their soles are still wet with the water of their wedding baths" (Kitereza 2002: 605), and when someone dies, his/her death is bathed: the funerals last four days, and "on the fifth day the mourners bathed his death and the funeral ended" (Kitereza 2002: 632).

In a similar way, in *Nagona* and *Mzingile* the image of washing deals with purification of the society. In *Nagona* (Kezilahabi 1990), there is drought (e.g. pp. 13, 39) and only dirty water (e.g. p. 21), and everyone's soul is dirty (e.g. p. 17) but it is remembered how in the origin the world was pure: "Wakati wetu ulipoanza katika bonde la hisia, sote tulikuwa safi. Wewe na mimi. Tulipoogelea na kuibuka baharini tulikuwa tukung'ara. Lakini kadiri ulivyozidi kukua ndivyo tulivyozidi kuchafuka." 'When our time began in the valley of senses,²¹⁴ everyone was clean. You and me. When we swam and emerged from the ocean we were shining. But the more time grew, the more we got unclean.' (Kezilahabi 1990: 16) The image of *kung'ara* 'shining' resembles the way in which in the Islamic *Utendi wa Miiraji* 'Utendi of Miraj' the sinners "wakang'ara wote" 'were all shining' after bathing in the seventh heaven (Knappert 1967: 224). In *Nagona*, the characters are concretely washing their souls in the river (Kezilahabi 1990: 17); this is referred to in *Hii Moja Hadithi* 'This one tale' (Kezilahabi 1988: 45) as well.

At the end of *Nagona*, there is *Ngoma Kuu* 'The Great dance', a celebration that is also "siku ya kukoga karne" 'the day of washing the centuries'.²¹⁵ This might refer to Mwaka Kogwa, the new year celebration that takes place in Makunduchi, Zanzibar, and in different form in Pemba, each July, when the year starts according to traditional calendar. Mwaka Kogwa is about purification, too: although water is not involved in the ceremonies, it is about getting rid of the aggressions and being pure when the new year begins. In *Nagona*, "siku ya kukoga karne" literally means washing the centuries: "Kulikuwa na mpango maalum wa kukoga karne." 'There was a special plan to wash the centuries.'

214 The word *bisia* can also be translated as 'emotion, feeling'. However, because in the descriptions of this valley, perceptions and senses have a more important role than emotions in my view, the translation 'sense' is chosen.

215 *Karne* can be either a singular or a plural, but because throughout the novel there are characters from different centuries and because there is a mention of the washers in the river having "[k]arne zote hizi" 'all these centuries' to wash, the plural is chosen.

(Kezilahabi 1990: 56) Everyone goes to “ziwa takatifu” ‘the sacred lake’: young women first, followed by young men; then mature women and finally, mature men. The order might be interpreted to refer to the purity of different groups; the older have collected more to wash off, and as old men have possibly for example fought in wars, they are allowed to enter the lake as the last group. Each person gets clean: “Ilipofika saa kumi watu wote walikuwa wamekwishatakasika kimwili. Sasa tulikuwa tayari kutoa sadaka ya karne.” ‘When it was 4 p.m. all the people had been already bodily purified. Now we were ready to give the sacrifice of the centuries.’ (Kezilahabi 1990: 56) After all the rituals, it finally rains, and a girl named Nagona is born. The world seems to be reborn, and the drought is over: when the narrator goes to see Nagona, “[s]auti za ndege ziliweza kusikika kutoka kwenye miti iliyokuwa imeanza kuchipua jangwani.” ‘the voice of birds could be heard from the trees that had started to sprout in the desert.’ (Kezilahabi 1990: 62) This newness of the world, after purification, seems to express through fiction Kezilahabi’s view of environmental issues in the world that he presented in an interview (26 Mar. 2009):

Imefika mahali ambapo binaadamu sasa inabidi afikiri tena na kujaribu kusahihisha makosa ambayo ameyafanya, na hiyo ndiyo itakuwa ni njia tu ya kusema kwamba tujaribu kuangalia nature upya na kusahihisha makosa ambayo tumeyafanya wakati tunaendelea.

It has come to the state where human beings now have to think again and to try to correct the mistakes that we have done, and this will happen only through saying that we should try to see the nature anew and correct the mistakes that we have done during the development.

The image of *kukoga karne* ‘washing the centuries’ can be found in the poem *Karibu ndani* ‘Welcome inside’, too: “Tuna hamu ya kucheza, tupate kukoga karne.” ‘We have the desire to dance, so that we can bathe the centuries.’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 36, not included in Appendix 1). The poem deals with the relationship of traditional and modern poetry, and here the washers can be interpreted to mean modern poets, who are eager to “wash the centuries” of traditional Swahili poetry by writing new, refreshing poetry. In a ceremony within the poem, the speaker of the poem performs a modern poem, and the old men dance; the dance indeed seems purifying, for “vikaanza kutoka jasho / Jasho lenyewe damu” ‘they started to sweat / Sweat with blood’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 37).

Mzingile resembles *Nagona* in much of its imagery of purification. In the beginning, the narrator arrives at a river in a valley, and washes himself in it. The description bears similarity to the earlier quoted description of swimming,

located ten pages later in the novel (Kezilahabi 1991: 17), but lacks all the nightmarish aspects:

Baada ya kuvua nguo zote nilijitumbukiza majini, nikajinyoosha kwa muda hadi mapafu yalipobitaji hewa tena. Nilipotoka majini nilijisugua mwili mzima kwa mchanga mwororo. Nilijitumbukiza tena majini, nikaondoa uchafu uliokuwa umekokomolewa na mchanga. Nilijisikia mtu mwenye nguvu mpya. Nilikaa majini kwa muda. Nilipotoka nilifurahia mwanga wa jua ambao hapo awali uliukaanga mwili wangu kwa joto kali. Kwa kuwa hapakuwa na dalili za kuwako mtu mwingine sehemu hiyo nilitafuta kivuli cha mti karibu na mto, nikalala chali kupumzika hali nikiwa uchi wa mnyama. Usingizi ulinichukua. (Kezilahabi 1991: 7)

After taking off all my clothes I dipped in the water and dived until my lungs needed air again. When I got off from water I scrubbed my whole body with soft sand. I then dipped in the water again, removing the filth that the sand had made apparent. I felt myself a person with new strength. I stayed in the water for a while. When I got off I was happy about the sunlight which dried my body with its strong heat. Because there was no sign of any other person in the area, I searched for a shade of a tree near the river and lied down to rest in the state of animal nakedness. The sleep took me.

The description has paradisiacal features: the water makes the swimmer not only clean but also new in strength; the person is completely alone in the nature; and he is stark naked.

Outside the valley, there is no water, because the world has been destroyed by nuclear catastrophe. However, at the end, the narrator and a woman start new life in the valley, much like Adam and Eve. They are completely innocent: “Tulilala tumekumbatiana kama watoto wawili yatima wasiokuwa na hatia wala dhambi ya asili” ‘We lied down hugging each other like two orphan children who had no fault nor original sin’ (Kezilahabi 1991: 64). The environment resembles Paradise in regard to the liquids, too: there is *chemichemi* ‘a spring’ (Kezilahabi 1991: 64), *ziwa dogo lenye maji safi* ‘a small lake with pure water’ (Kezilahabi 1991: 65), and *asali* ‘honey’ dripping down from a tree with bees (Kezilahabi 1991: 64). The characters are aware of the purifying power of the water, and seek purity: they wash themselves several times in the spring (Kezilahabi 1991: 62–69). The woman addresses the narrator: “Maji hayo hapo. Yaoge upate kuwa.” “This water here. Wash yourself with it so that you can be/become.” (Kezilahabi 1991: 63) In Swahili, *kuwa* means both ‘be’ and ‘become’, and both meanings can be seen as essential here. Kezilahabi (1985: 124–126) himself discusses the connection of being and becoming, and argues for their inseparability. “Being and becoming keep vacillating [*sic*] between the past and the future thus creating an eternal now in which being and becoming are dynamic realities.” (Kezilahabi

1985: 126) It seems that through purification, the characters in *Mzingile* are able to *kuwa* ‘become’ and ‘be’ in a new, deep sense.

After washing, the narrator remarks on his concrete transformation: “Nilipojimwagia tone la mwisho mwili wote ulianza kung’ara ukawa kama wake.” ‘When I poured the last drop my whole body started to shine like hers.’ The woman smiles and comments: “Sasa umekuwa. Njoo, na katika upya wetu tuanze maisha mapya yenye hisia zilizochujwa na fikra pevu zilizokomazwa na wakati.” ‘Now you have become. Come, and in our newness, let us start new life with purified feelings and mature thoughts that the time has given growth to.’ (Kezilahabi 1991: 63). Moreover, later she notes that they now are “tegemeo la taifa jipya la binadamu” ‘what the new humankind depends on’ (Kezilahabi 1991: 65).

5.3.3 *Judges within water*

In *Njia tulopitishwa* ‘The Road we were made to go’ (Kezilahabi 2008: 3) water is seen not only as purifying but also as an element that has a different moral component: *Twasubiri mvua ya haki* ‘We wait for the rain of justice’. Similarly, in *Mto wa Haki* ‘The River of justice’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 17–18) water is portrayed as able to both purify and judge – and even to punish. The poem is opened with the mentioning of flood: “Mto ulikuwa umefurika, hauvukiki.” ‘The river had flooded, was not crossable.’ The flood can be seen as metaphorical: for example in Ancient Egypt, as theologian Robert A. Wild (1981: 28) notes, the flood of the Nile symbolised the “renewal” or even the “rebirth” of the river. The main character in *Mto wa Haki* is an immoral man who has subjugated other people. Somehow he senses the power of water and is afraid of it: “Alianza kuogopa asije akamtupa majini. / Alianza kumwomba atembe polepole.” ‘He started to fear that he would be thrown into the water. / He started to ask the man to walk slowly.’

Soon the man who is carried forgets his fear, and “[p]olepole alianza kujiona mjinga kwa kuogopa / Maji yaliyokuwa yakimtakasa mwenzake” ‘slowly he started to see himself as a dummy because of being scared of / Water that was purifying his companion’. This is the only reference to the purifying capacity of water: the companion of the immoral man, the one who is carrying him on his shoulders, is evidently a good man, pure in the heart, but the immoral main character cannot escape the judgement of the water. He is struck by a bolt of lightning, and it is only afterwards that “[a]lisikia sauti ya haki na usawa wa binadamu: / Kwa mda wa dakika moja alielewa ukweli” ‘he heard the voice of justice and equality of human beings: / For one minute he understood the truth’. This realisation of the truth is in the next stanza referred to as “Alikuwa

ameona kivuli chake majini” ‘He had seen his shadow in the water’, using the old symbolism of water as a reflecting material.

The congealing in the poem happens because of the rotten nature of the person. Thus the water serves as a judge that uncovers the real nature of the man being carried over the river. The crossing of rivers is a significant act, especially in the Bible, for example in the crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land in Exodus.²¹⁶ The poem suggests that water has the power of making visible all that which is bad. The evil person “[a]kageuka jiwe ili wajukuu wapate kuona” ‘turned into a stone for the grandchildren to see’. Similar to the stone in *Mwamba Ziواني* ‘A Rock in a lake’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 6), the stone represents ultimate death. On the other hand, the rock in *Mwamba Ziواني* is implied to be highly moral: “Mawimbi yananigusa na kuvunjika / Kama upanga wa muuaji ushindwayo kwa roho” ‘The waves touch me and break down / Like the sword of a killer is defeated by spirit’. In contrast, in *Mto wa Haki* ‘The River of justice’ the stone is presented resembling rubbish: “Sasa alikuwa kama takataka.” ‘Now he was like dirt.’

The transformation of a liquid into solid matter is used as an illustration of a very negative experience, kind of small death, also in *Rosa Mistika*. When Rosa confronts her father, the shocked father is described as physically solidifying: “Rosa alishinda. Mbele yake pandikizi la mtu aliloshinda lilikuwa limesimama bila damu. Damu ilikuwa imeliganda.” ‘Rosa won. In front of her the giant that she won was standing without blood. His blood had congealed.’ (Kezilahabi 1971: 58) Similarly, in *Gamba la Nyoka*, when she hears about having to move to an Ujamaa village, Mama Tinda wishes for the drying up of people as a curse. She trusts that the priest will try to arrange a curse for the organisers of Ujamaa: “Ataomba kwa Mungu wakauke kama mti iliyopigwa na radi!” ‘He will ask God to make them dry up like a tree that is struck by a bolt of lightning!’ (Kezilahabi 1979: 10).

The term *mto wa haki* ‘river of justice’ is mentioned also in the poem *Dikteta* ‘Dictator’ (Kezilahabi 2008: 31), which, similarly to the poem titled *Mto wa Haki*, combines purification, morals, and water. *Dikteta* first creates an image of a tyrannical dictator oppressing people, and then notes:

Uliowadhulumu na uliowaua
Mawazo yao sasa milizamu
Ambamo watoto bucheza kwa furaha
Na kunawa shombo uliloliacha.

²¹⁶ The other main events of the Exodus are also connected to water: the crossing of the Red Sea and the crossing of a desert with the help of the waters of the rock of Horeb. – In the footnote added to the poem, Kezilahabi makes an explicit reference to another Biblical story: the wife of Lot who looked behind.

Those who you oppressed and killed
 Their thoughts now are the gutters
 Inside which children often play cheerfully
 And wash off the bad smell that you left behind.

Although the people are dead and away, their heritage still offers a space through which fresh water can run and wash away the influence of the oppressor. The verb *-nawa* refers specifically to the washing of body parts, so the children are washing perhaps their hands, or the whole body; the impact of the dictator has been tangible, but at the same time it is washable.

The second stanza creates another type of water image:

Madaraka ni ndoto isiyotegemewa.
Ni kuwaa kofia juu ya gari wazi
Lendalo mbio kuvuka mto wa haki
Ambao daraja lake limechukuliwa
Na mafuriko ya sheria ulizovunja

Power is a dream that is not to be leaned upon.
 It is to wear a hood on a convertible
 That moves quickly to cross the river of justice
 Whose bridge has been taken off
 By the floods of broken laws

In addition to ‘power, control, responsibility’, the word *madaraka* can mean ‘self-government, security, regulation’, but the general translation ‘power’ seems fitting in the context. The image connects water very closely to morals: the river of justice is an element that reveals the rottenness of power, no matter if it is tried to be covered by a hood, the water gets into it like into a convertible trying to cross a river.

5.3.4 Drowning and destroying

In one poem by Kezilahabi, saliva is presented as a healing liquid. *Kumbe* (Kezilahabi 1974a: 37, not included in Appendix 1) depicts the healing of a lion as follows:²¹⁷

[...] *simba aliyeumizwa,*
Bila haya alijikokota kwa unyonge
Mpaka nyumbani, vidonda vikalambwa
Vikapona kwa mate ya nyumbani

217 The title means an expression of astonishment, surprise, or irony.

[...] the lion that was wounded
 Without shame dragged itself weakly
 Home, and the wounds were licked
 They were healed by the saliva of home

The saliva can heal, but it can also express hatred. In his article “The Swahili Novel and the Common Man in East Africa”, Kezilahabi (1980: 78) depicts the frustrated people and illustrates: “With anger they keep on spitting the poisonous saliva like rabid dogs.” While the spittle of the frustrated is directed at anyone, or everyone, the saliva as an allegory of a brutal insult, is clearly addressed in the poem *Dakika 15 za Uzalendo* ‘Fifteen minutes of patriotism’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 51, not included in Appendix 1): “Walitupiga makonzi, tukatemewa nyusoni” ‘They [colonialists] hit us [Tanzanians], we got spat in the face’. These images of the use of “poisonous saliva” resemble the image of spit and other body fluids as a manifestation of frustration and extremity of corruption and greed in Ayi Kwei Armah’s (1988) *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Nigerian writer Tanure Ojaide (1995: 8) notes the power of the use of abhorrent imagery in strengthening the judgement of the things criticised in literature.

In *Uvuaji wa Samaki Victoria* ‘Fishing in Lake Victoria’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 9) water is closely related to ethics, too. The speaker narrates:

*Jana asubuhi ufukoni niliona watu
 Wenye nguvu, wasohuruma, na walafi wakiimba
 Na kuvuta kitu kirefu kutoka majini.*

Yesterday morning I saw people on the shore
 Strong, merciless and greedy, they were singing
 And pulling a long object from the water.

The greediness of the people is illustrated for example by the remark “Niliweza kuhesabu meno yao” ‘I could count their teeth’. The fishing is presented as “mashindano ya kamba” ‘a tug of war’: against each other are “wenye damu ya joto na wa baridi” ‘warm-blooded and those who are cold’. The expression “wa baridi” ‘of cold’ seems to refer to cold-blooded organisms, that is fish. In the end it is the battle between human beings and nature. The strong assonance of /a/ in the lines “Sijaona mashindano makali ya kamba kama haya /Kati ya wenye damu ya joto na wa baridi” ‘I have never seen a harder tug of war than this / Between warm-blooded and those who are cold’ (emphasis added) makes the word *joto* ‘warmth’ distinctive; the reader is likely to apply sharpening, paying particular attention to the deviating words (see Tsur 2008: 33–36). The word *wenye* ‘that has’ or ‘with’ is discerned, too, but does not have any semantic impor-

tance. Therefore *joto*, presenting humans, can be seen to stand out, representing how human beings do not fit into nature.

At the end the humans win. The speaker explains that because “walikuwa na choyo kisomfano” [‘the people] were selfish beyond comparison’, they are left without auspices: “*Neptune* aliacha mashindano” ‘*Neptune* left the competition’. The name *Neptune* is in italics (i.e. already in the original) and attached with an asterisk, which has an explanation at the bottom of the page: “*Neptune*: Mungu wa bahari (Katika utamaduni wa Kirumi)” ‘*Neptune*: God of the sea (In the Roman culture)’. Kezilahabi’s poems have explicit watery references to other European sources, too: in the poem *Ukweli* ‘Truth’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 31, not included in Appendix 1), the speaker mentions “mji wa Oran” ‘the Oran River’ and explains in the footnote that the Oran was the river in which plague was put in the story “La Peste” ‘The Plague’ by Albert Camus.

The greedy fishers leave the fish to dry and die on the sand:

[...] *mamia*
Walikuwa sasa wamelala mchangani
Wakirukaruka huku na huko
Ili kuepa mionzi mikali ichomayo.

[...] there were hundreds [of fish]
 Laying on the sand
 Jumping here and there
 In order to avoid the hard rays that were burning them.

The fish are in dire straits: they cannot escape anywhere, and moreover, they are accused of dirtying the drinking water – everything in the behaviour of people really seems to be upside down in the poem. The numerous fish are sentenced into the cooking pot; the speaker of the poem disapproves of the fishermen’s greediness. The poem accuses fishermen of too much fishing, and indeed, according to statistics, the freshwater fish catch in Tanzania approximately doubled between 1973 and 1974 (World Resources Institute 2005); the poetry collection was published in 1974. Later Lake Victoria really became overfished, so Kezilahabi’s accusation of greediness can be seen as fully justified.

Lake Victoria, the setting of *Uvuaji wa Samaki Victoria* ‘Fishing in Lake Victoria’, is also one of the chief headwater reservoirs of the Nile, which is the setting of *Mto Nili* ‘The Nile’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 7); the White Nile rises from the lake. Thus these two poems can be seen as inter-connected. On the other hand, all the poems of a poet can be regarded as inter-connected: “Any poem is an inter-poem, and any reading of a poem is an inter-reading.” (Bloom 1997: 149)

The last lines of *Uvuaji wa Samaki Victoria* 'Fishing in Lake Victoria' are obscure. After deprecating the fishers, the speaker seems to shift to other people without further explanations:

*"Tunafanya hivi mara tatu nne kwa siku", walisema.
Hapo peke yangu nilisimama, kwa hasira yenye huruma
Nikiomboleza na kuwalilia
Waombolezi wa wazamao
Na walimu wa uogeleaji.*

"We do this three–four times a day", they [the fishers] said.
I stood there by myself, in anger mixed with pity
I grieved and cried for
Mourners of the drowned
And swimming teachers.

Who are the drowned? It seems implausible that the speaker of the poem suddenly reminisces about some completely different people who have drowned in the past. It can possibly be argued that the fishermen have drowned in greediness and that the speaker of the poem cries for someone to teach them to be reasonable. However, it seems rather unlikely that the speaker would mourn them; mourning does not fit well *hasira* 'anger' towards the fishers, mentioned just before mourning. Thus the most probable reading perhaps is that the drowning refers, paradoxically, to the fish. Since fish cannot breath outside water, being taken to the ground represents "drowning" to them; laying on the sand without life they resemble the corpses of drowned people floating in water. The speaker of the poem demands attention to the overfishing, and the cry for swimming teachers might refer to people who would take care that fish would not be caught for no purpose.

Similar to the uncaring fishers in *Uvuaji wa Samaki Victoria* 'Fishing in Lake Victoria', the use of the image of water illustrates the lack of morality of a group of people in Kezilahabi's short story *Mayai – Waziri wa Maradhi* 'Mayai – minister of illnesses'. In a dream of Mayai (the main character), there are ministers drinking beer, then urinating in a river as some stockbreeders bathe and water their herd, and even mocking the breeders while exhibiting this behaviour. These images represent Mayai's acknowledgement of the irresponsible and arrogant behaviour among the people with power, including himself. The image illustrates how what is essential for sustenance for some (and at the end, for all) is considered as a dumping ground by another, and how immoral behaviour often affects most the innocent ones.

5.3.5 Poisoned purity

As the example of ministers urinating in a river shows, water is a matter that is easily contaminated. Although water can be seen as “a pure matter *par excellence*” (Bachelard 1983: 133, original emphasis),²¹⁸ the purity of water is extremely fragile. Bachelard notes how the power of purification has its contrast: “In the dialectic theme of the purity and impurity of water, this fundamental law of material imagination acts in both directions, guaranteeing the eminently *active* nature of the substance: one drop of pure water suffices to purify an ocean; one drop of impure water suffices to defile a universe.” (Bachelard 1983: 142, original emphasis)²¹⁹ Although this kind of immense power of purifying or defiling naturally is symbolic, what is essential is that imagination needs the matter; Bachelard (Bachelard 1983: 139) argues that we require a substance in order to understand, for example, curses. Material presence offers the abstract quality a base that makes it exhibit “*more meaning, and more definite meaning*” than it would without the matter (Kenner 1975: 26, original emphasis); in a cursed water, “[e]vil is no longer a quality but a substance.” (Bachelard 1983: 139)²²⁰

In Kezilahabi’s novels, characters use poisoned water in order to murder people. In *Rosa Mistika*, another girl tries to kill Rosa by polluting her water: fortunately Rosa notices that the water turns blue when it is boiled, so she pours it out. The next morning there is an anthill in the place on which Rosa has poured the water. People tell her that the same very strong poison within the water has killed many people in the village, and that each time when poisoned water is poured on the ground, the next day an anthill appears. (Kezilahabi 1971: 73) Similarly, in *Gamba la Nyoka*, people die because of poisoned water (Kezilahabi 1979: 115). Kezilahabi (interview, 26 Mar. 2009) comments on the image of poisoned water: “hasa ukimwekea mtu sumu ndani ya maji [...] Sumu ya kuua ni kitu ambacho kinachukiwa sana, ni jambo ambalo watu wanalichukia sana hasa Ukerewe huko” ‘especially if the poison is put in water [...] Poison that kills is something that is much hated, especially in Ukerewe’ and added that one type of fertiliser (which was added in the water while watering plants) killed a lot of people in Ukerewe at one point.

In *Rosa Mistika*, the way Rosa at the end commits suicide is also connected to defiled water: Rosa breaks a glass, mixes the broken glass with water and

218 In the original: “la matière naturellement pure par excellence” (Bachelard 1942: 181).

219 In the original: “Sur le thème dialectique de la pureté et de l’impureté de l’eau, on peut voir cette loi fondamentale de l’imagination matérielle agir dans les deux sens, ce qui est une garantie du caractère éminemment *actif* de la substance : une goutte d’eau pure suffit à purifier un océan ; une goutte d’eau impure suffit à souiller un univers.” (Bachelard 1942: 194)

220 In the original: “Le mal passe de la qualité à la substance.” (Bachelard 1942: 190)

drinks the mixture (Kezilahabi 1971: 90–91). Interestingly, Rosa's father, whose over-controlling character and excessive drinking cause many problems, is called *Maji-Machafu* (Kezilahabi 1971: 24), which can be translated as 'Dirty water' or 'Filthy water'. It is "jina lake la ulevi" 'his drunken name' of which he is actually proud (Kezilahabi 1971: 24). It is noteworthy that *-kata maji* means 'drink a lot of alcohol',²²¹ a word pair which is also used in the novel (Kezilahabi 1971: 39). Nevertheless, the father's name can be seen as symbolic of his problematic (impatient and irresponsible) character.

In Kezilahabi's novels water is also connected to illness; specifically, water in the wrong place. In *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*, Tumaini's mother gets an illness with weird symptoms: "Ugonjwa huu hulifanya tumbo lijae maji na kuvimba" 'This illness makes the stomach fill with water and swell' (Kezilahabi 1975: 21); at the end the mother dies because of the disorder with water. The same illness later bothers other people, too (Kezilahabi 1975: 34), but its disorderly nature seems clearest with the description of Tumaini's mother's illness: she has already noticed that her son has become spoiled and immoral, which worries and disturbs her. The disorder with the water in her body seems to represent the emotional and moral disorder.

Similarly, in *Kichwamaji* (Kezilahabi 1974b) the disorder of water in body represents the moral disorder of the characters: both Kazimoto's and Manase's offspring have a head filled with water, symbolising the questionable morals and acts of their past. This disability also concretely results from the men's history: both of them have caught a venereal disease by sleeping with a random woman (despite being already in a relationship with their partners). Kazimoto's child dies in childbirth because of its huge head, but Manase's child lives as a constant remainder of Manase's choices. However, Kezilahabi (interview, 26 Mar. 2009) himself does not see the image of water meaningful in these disorders. Interestingly, Kitereza's (2002) novel uses frequently the expression oversize-head creature as an insult (e.g. twice on page 216); in the Swahili translation by Kitereza, the insult nevertheless is replaced by the ordinary words *mwehu* 'crazy' and *mpumbavu* 'stupid' (Kitereza 1980: 169).

In *Nagona* and *Mzingile*, there is polluted water which enhances the image of a lack of pure water. In *Nagona*, even the beautiful buildings "yote yalikuwa yamezungukwa na madimbwi ya maji machafu" 'were all surrounded by pools of dirty water' (Kezilahabi 1990: 21). The water is dirty because of the industry: "Maji haya yanatoka kwenye viwanda na karakana, yana sumu kali." 'That

221 Lit. 'cut water'. It can also mean 'go up a stream in a vessel' (*Kamusi ya Kiswahili–Kiingereza*, TUKI 2001).

water comes from the factories and workshops, it is strongly toxic.’ (Kezilahabi 1990: 18) Interestingly, this water is connected to one type of dreams people have: “Ndoto zote za maendeleo ya binadamu huishia humo” ‘All the people’s dreams of development live inside there’ (Kezilahabi 1990: 18); this can be read as criticism towards the consequences of industrialisation and people’s desire to always get newer and more products. In *Mzingile*, the water is polluted because of the nuclear catastrophe; it is also scarce and stagnant.

Niliendelea kutembea badi nilipofika mahali palipoelekea kuwa na mto. Niliona korongo refu. Kwa chini niliweza kuona maji machache ya kimvua kilichonyesha siku kadhaa zilizopita. Maji haya yalikwisha anza kuzalisha mbu ambao sasa walianza kunisakama. (Kezilahabi 1991: 56)

I continued to walk until I arrived in a place that seemed like a river. I saw a long ravine. At the bottom I could see a bit of rain water that had rained a few days ago. This water had already started to breed mosquitoes which now started to pester me.

The dark, dystopian image creates a stark contrast with the paradisiacal life in the valley, presented only a few pages later. Similar to the polluted water in *Nagona*, the image of the rotting river shows where humankind might end up if the dreams of development are not sustainable; however, the new beginning at the end of the novel shows hope.

5.3.6 *Watering with blood*

In *Nagona*, there is no water because “[m]aasi ya karne nne yamegeuza maji ya nchi hii kuwa damu tupu.” ‘the rebellions of four centuries have turned the water in the earth to be bare blood.’ (Kezilahabi 1990: 4) This is a concrete image; it might also refer to blood-shedding wars and symbolic covering of the earth with blood, but blood actually replaces water in the area, in every place: “Nilipofika karibu na mto nilishangaa. Mto ulikuwa umejaa damu tupu ambayo ilikuwa ikitiririka kwa nguvu.” ‘When I came near the river I was surprised. The river was filled with pure blood that flowed with force.’ (Kezilahabi 1990: 6–7) Moreover, the amount of blood seems to be constantly increasing, and an old man tells the narrator that it will flood all the way to the town (Kezilahabi 1990: 7). Indeed, at the very end of the novel it floods, and the old man is caught by the flooding: “dhambi na maasi vilikithiri akakumbwa na mafuriko yaliyosababishwa na gharika la damu” ‘the sins and rebellion surpassed and he was pushed by the flood that was caused by the over-flooding of the blood’ (Kezilahabi 1990: 62).

There is a lot of blood in Kezilahabi's poems, as well; perhaps as often as water. Because of the dramatic nature of the material, the expressions stand out. Besides, the word *damu* 'blood' is used directly more often than *maji* 'water'. Importantly, the image of blood is often in some way connected to water. In the poem *Kujifunza Kuendesha* 'Studying driving' (Kezilahabi 1988: 29, not included in Appendix 1) the speaker dreams that "[b]ahari ikawa damu na damu ikawa bahari" 'the sea became(/was) blood and the blood became(/was) sea'. The connectedness of water and blood can be found in the Bible, too: Jesus is described by the line "This is he who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood." (1 John 5:6) Similarly, during the crucifixion, both water and blood are depicted flowing from the Christ's side.

In traditional Swahili love songs the "disease", love, is described as taking away blood: "kupenda [...] kunimaliza damu" 'love [...] takes away (lit. finishes) all blood' (Knappert 1972: 98), "Waninyonya damu yangu" 'You suck my blood' (Knappert 1972: 88). In these expressions blood is used to represent life. According to Ferber (1999: 29), "blood as life" is one of the three main clusters of meaning attached to blood; the other two are "blood as family or ancestry" and "blood as sacrifice". Not all images of blood in Kezilahabi's works fit into this division, however. For example in *Nagona* the presence of blood represents and enhances the image of the lack of essential, pure water.

In *Kichwa na Mwili* 'Head and body' (Kezilahabi 1974a: 16) the image of blood is primarily a symbol for violence and warmongering, but in the third stanza blood represents (also) family ties and feelings close to pan-Africanism: "Uhusiano wa damu ndugu zangu mzito mno, / Na mapenzi ya Afrika nzima kama samaki na maji." 'Connection of the blood, my brothers, is too heavy (or: extremely heavy), / The love for whole Africa like a fish and water.' Blood as the image of kinship is commonly used for example in Latin and Greek literature (Ferber 1999: 30), and can also be found in the Bible. In the quoted lines of *Kichwa na Mwili* the images of blood and water occur close to each other. Both symbolise the vital importance of the issues; as innate as blood is for everyone, as essential as water is to the fish. As in these lines of *Kichwa na Mwili*, blood is connected to the national spirit in the poem *Mkwawa* (proper name; Kezilahabi 1974a: 59, not included in Appendix 1): "Tone lako moja la damu lilitosha / Kuandika vitabu vingi vya uzalendo" 'One drop of your blood was enough / To write many books of patriotism'.

In *Fungueni Mlango* 'Open the door' (Kezilahabi 1974a: 23) the image of blood contrasts with water as the image of life: blood represents being smothered. Correspondingly, *Fungueni Mlango* is also the title of the second part of the collection, which, as discussed before, has considerably fewer water images than

the first part of *Kichomi*. In the title poem, the only liquids present are sweat and blood. The image of sweating is combined with the image of lack of air, creating the impression of severe suffering:

Hewa kumikosa
Na jasho kunitoka ndani ya chumba
Kwa upweke

I am without air
 Sweating inside the room
 With solitude

Similarly to *Nenda Ukanywe!* ‘Go to drink!’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 30), the poem is very dry. In addition to the loss of water through sweating, the lack of water can be considered enhanced by the lines “Kwa kichwa kama cha mbuni / Mchangani, tena ninaugonga” ‘With my head like that of an ostrich / In the sand, again I bang [the door]’. The image of dry, dust-like sand is as far from water as possible.

The word *damu* ‘blood’ is mentioned four times, all in three lines:

Damu
Damu puani, damu mdomoni,
Damu kichwani [...]

Blood
 Blood in the nose, blood in the mouth,
 Blood in the head [...]

The indentation of the first word *damu*, and its placement as the only word in the line, accentuate the significance of the repetition. The initial repetition is combined with syntactic parallelism (repetition of the syntactic structure). Moreover, the dry atmosphere is contributed by the strong transverse consonance. As in *Nenda Ukanywe!* ‘Go to drink!’, the prevailing phoneme is the dry /n/, whose frequency in *Fungueni Mlango* as high as 13.6% of the phonemes (compared with 9.7% in the also “dry” *Nenda Ukanywe!* and 5.0% in “moist” *Chai ya Jioni* ‘Evening tea’). The occurrence of the prenasalised phoneme pair /ng/ is very high as well, again similar to but stronger than in *Nenda Ukanywe!* – it is used 19 times, constituting 8.2% of the phonemes (3.2% in *Nenda Ukanywe!* and just 1.0% in *Chai ya Jioni*).²²² It seems that if the scale of “wetness” is identified with the scale of continuity, /n/ does not fit in: rather than “wateriness”, it might actually present dryness. The great amount of blood does not make the

²²² Note that the <ng> in *ng’ombe* is a different phoneme, /ŋ/. The velar nasal /ŋ/ does not occur frequently in the analysed poems, so it is not discussed in the analysis of the phonemes.

image any wetter; on the contrary, the hiss of blood in the ears (the speaker feels *kizunguzungu* 'dizzy' – note the double /ng/) illustrates the drying and being smothered. The threatening presence of blood is later referred to by the lines "Ninapiga kelele kama / Ng'ombe machinjioni" 'I make noise like / A cow in the slaughterhouse'; the image of slaughterhouse strengthens the earlier image of blood coming out of the nose and mouth. According to Gromov (2009), the poem discusses "the lonely and torturous state of an artist"; that indeed is one possible interpretation of it, but it can also be read as a general expression of the state of anxiety or feeling of being suffocated.

In *Mto Nili* 'The Nile' (Kezilahabi 1974a: 7) the speaker depicts the construction of the civilisation by the Nile as having been built with the help of the death of others: "Ninawaona wakimwagilia mashamba yao kwa damu." 'I see them irrigating their fields with blood.' The poem denies that it accuses anyone, but it does not have to – the image of drinking other people's blood creates a strong impression of brutality:

*Maelfu walifanywa watumwa, na maelfu
Waliuawa kwa sababu zisojulikana!
Halikuwa kosa lenu. Damu yetu
Iliwaleweshwa mlipotenda hivyo.*

Thousands of people were turned into slaves, and thousands
Were killed for reasons that are not known!
It was not your fault. Our blood
Had made you drunk when you did that.

Unlike in *Utendi wa Miiraji* 'Utendi of Miraj' (e.g. Knappert 1967), in *Mto Nili* the blood in river is not a direct punishment, but rather an expression of greed; "squeezing the blood" of other people. The image is also somewhat different from the image of the Nile filling with blood in the Bible (Exod. 7: 17–18):

Thus says the Lord, "By this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood.

The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile."

The turning of the water of the Nile, the longest river on Earth, into blood in Exodus illustrates the power of God, and his curse upon people. In *Mto Nili* the image is not as strong, since not all of the water is turned into blood, and the blood comes from the drowned people, not through a curse nor punishment. Nevertheless, the impression of reason–consequence relation is present. It is

implied that because they profited from the slave trade, people are punished by the water scarcity. Besides the image of blood in the river, the end of the poem supports this interpretation:

*Moyo wangu unatulia nitazamapo ramani.
Ni adhabu ya kutosha kupashwa kuishi
Juu ya sahani yenye joto kali, ya kukaangia.*

My heart calms down when I look at the map.
There is enough punishment in being set to live
On an overheated frying pan.²²³

The heat causes perspiration, taking the essential water out of the body. The images of heat and sweat (though liquid itself, but leaving the body) present drying in the poems *Fungueni Mlango* 'Open the door', *Nenda Ukanywe!* 'Go to drink!', and *Mto Nili* 'The Nile'.

In all three poems, the image of drying is connected to the image of blood. Whereas *Mto Nili* sees the drying as the punishment for shedding blood, *Nenda Ukanywe!* and *Fungueni Mlango* present the blood as a liquid that dominates when the vital liquid, water, has run out. In *Nenda Ukanywe!* the link is expressed by equating the sentences of similar syntax: "Nitakapokuwa marashi, damu, vidonda" 'When I will be perfume, blood, wounds' is reflected in "Nitakapokuwa nikikauka kwa wakati" 'When I will be drying of time'. Blood is essential to the body, too, but without pure water, one cannot live.

5.4 Conclusions

The image of water in Kezilahabi's fiction resembles traditional poetry in two significant matters. Firstly, although other modern Swahili poetry does not seem to use the image in relation to purification, for Kezilahabi, purification is one of the main themes connected to the image of water. Whereas in traditional Islamic Swahili poetry the purifying water is found only in the four rivers of Paradise,²²⁴ in Kezilahabi's poetry purity is available in ordinary places, for ordinary human beings. Kezilahabi himself sees his view of water and purification as influenced

223 The literal translation: 'On a pan with hard heat, of frying.' The line plays with the word *sahani ya kukaangia* 'frying pan': mere *sahani* means 'a plate', and when the parts of the structure are separated, the line can be read in two ways, either referring directly to a frying pan or to a fiercely heated plate. The anastrophe or hyperbaton, i.e. the departure from ordinary word order, thus creates a literary effect.

224 That pertains only to ordinary people; the prophet Mohammed is purified on Earth when his chest is washed, as in *Utendi wa Miiraji* 'Utendi of Miraj' (Knappert 1967).

by Christianity; in addition, the central role of ritual bathing in Kerewe culture might have affected the crucial position of purifying in Kezilahabi's works. Kezilahabi's imagery of purification evolves into an original level: through the image, Kezilahabi discusses the possibility of cleansing the whole world, washing off the cruelties and destructions of the past, and starting afresh.

Secondly, the image of blood replacing water is used as a severely dangerous, death-related image that emphasises the lack of water, much like in traditional Swahili poetry and in contrast to other modern poetry. The aspect of religious punishment is not as apparent in Kezilahabi's works,²²⁵ but a moral component is strongly present, as exemplified in the imagery of purification.

Like in other Swahili poetry written centuries ago or as recently as Kezilahabi's, the image of salt water often represents danger in Kezilahabi's fiction. Especially imminent is the threat of drowning, and the image of suffocating is present also in some poems in which there is *lack* of water. Likewise, in some images of water, even fish are presented as suffocating in either water or air. The intermingling of matters or perspectives is typical to Kezilahabi's imagery in general. Correspondingly, while in traditional Swahili poetry water can be seen as strictly divided into good and bad water, the division in modern Swahili poetry, including Kezilahabi's works, is more blurred: for example the image of rain is not simply positive anymore. Another blurring can be seen in the use of the image of water in discussing identity. Similar to the disappearance into the ocean in Kahigi & Mulokozi's (1973: 31) poem *Bahari Niliyomo* 'The Sea that I am in', Kezilahabi presents images of dissolution and disembodiment. This shift in imagery perhaps represents how modern poetry focuses on the experiences and imagination of an individual, instead of discussing themes that have traditionally been valued by the society.

Kezilahabi indeed concentrates on presenting subjective, individual inner worlds. Although many of Kezilahabi's works also discuss social and moral issues, the imagery seems to take the reader into someone's private subconsciousness. The image of water is often employed in dreams or dreamlike (and often nightmare-like) narration and verse, in which water can transform, transit or dissolve the person. Like in a dream, the nature of the matter can also very quickly change: because a crystal-clear pool can dramatically turn into a decomposing grave, any strict division into good and bad water becomes even more impossible. In water imagery, the role of immersion seems to be significant, perhaps influenced by

225 It is noteworthy that although eating blood is not generally prohibited in Christianity, in contrast to Islam, in the Bible it is presented as forbidden, both in the Old Testament (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:14) and in the New Testament (Acts 15:28–29).

Kinjeketile's long, transformative immersion in the river in *Kinjeketile* by Ebrahim Hussein. Kezilahabi considers this play influential to his view of water. In accordance with the dreamlike nature present, the order and logic in Kezilahabi's water imagery is not as strictly connected to God as in traditional Swahili poetry. Much like in Kitereza's novel, in which some people can make rain and in which rain can even talk, the characters in Kezilahabi's works, especially his poetry and his last two novels, are more active agents in relation to water. Kezilahabi seems to employ traditional Kerewe mythologies and perspectives in his works, but using them in a new and often very topical way, for example in discussing the state and future of the environment in today's world.

6. THE IMAGE OF WATER IN CONSTRUCTING THE IDEA OF LIFE IN KEZILAHABI'S POETRY

Life is the main theme that water represents and illustrates in Kezilahabi's works. This final chapter begins with a brief discussion on the concept of life in African philosophies. This is followed by elaboration of the Swahili concepts of life, after which the poetic images connected to each of these concepts are analysed; the main emphasis is on Kezilahabi's poetry, but some reference is made to his prose works, as well. After the analysis of images connecting water to life, the reverse images of drought and death are discussed. Finally, the conclusions seek to connect this concluding chapter of the book to the previous chapters, and present the main findings of the research.

6.1 Concepts of time and life

In discussions of the idea of life in African philosophies, the image of circle and the concept of circularity occur frequently; circle seems to be "the African spiritual symbol par excellence" (Mazama 2002: 221). African concept of time is generally regarded as cyclical (e.g. Soyinka 1976; Barthold 1981; Stöger-Eising 2000),²²⁶ and as, for example, Nigerian historian Austine S.O. Okwu (1979: 19) notes, the cyclicity of time is connected to the idea of circularity in life: "An important corollary to the African concept of time is the notion of life and death merely as two different stages of a cyclical process – existence." Similarly, African American researcher Mambo Ama Mazama (2002: 221) argues that in African philosophies, the symbol of circle "takes on its full meaning as it stands for the constant renewal of Life through death and birth", and notes that death and life are merely different modes of existence; "there is no major difference between death and life" (Mazama 2002: 220). Correspondingly, Nigerian scholar Kofi Kissi Dompere (2006: 41) sees life as cyclical, and views death not as "finality" but "a transformation to life with a difference"; and Cameroonian philosopher Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia (1999: 187) considers death "as a change of a becoming", arguing that "life is eternal in its various manifestations".

226 However, as Finn Fuglestad (1992: 314) notes, cyclical time concept is by no means found only in Africa. Fuglestad notes its appearance in for example Sami (Northern Scandinavian and Finnish) world-view; and it can be argued that in fact linear time-concept is relatively rare among the cultures in the world.

South African poet Mazisi Kunene (1992: 36–37) argues that the idea of circularity is found in all African philosophies:

Another example of divergence between the two systems [Western and African systems of thought] involves the concept of life after death (or of death itself). According to the African system of thought, continuity is central to all activity. It overrides the idea of death, which is viewed primarily as a state of physical and spiritual transition when the body becomes integrated into the sacred earth and when the spirit or the shadow goes through a series of clearly defined stages until it enters the womb of eternity. Each stage represents a continuing link with the living until after a certain period has elapsed. In short, there is no disjunction between life and death at any point; there is only a series of cycles emanating from the beginning of time. An awareness of these cycles might be incorporated in a religion, but in themselves, they are merely a logical description of cosmic behavior. According to the African view of the world, the spiritual is not dislocated from the physical. It is one aspect of the immaterial continuity and involves a different form of consciousness. This “after-death life” continues in a dual form of existence. The only change that occurs is the growing dominance of the spiritual dimension over the physical.

Kezilahabi (1985: 128, 138–139) refers to Daniel Kunene’s and Soyinka’s (1976) theories of African cyclical concept of time, and in his dissertation (1985) generally agrees that African view of time differs from the Western concept which is linear. Kezilahabi (1985: 117) also sees the circle as “the basic characteristic of the African concept of time”. Moreover, Kezilahabi (1985: 39) notes the reflection of the circular time concept in literature: “The cyclical nature of African oral narratives and their timelessness make them defy linear thinking.”

In addition to and connected to cyclicity, what often is found characteristic of African world-views is the symbiotic relation of life and death. Gerald Moore (1968: 70) notes that “it is death which feeds life and makes its renewal possible”, but Dompere (2006) goes further, emphasising the essential duality of existence, the way in which life and death reside in the same entity: “It is not simply the idea that there is no death without life in relativity and reversal processes, but that life itself emerges out of death and death emerges out of life as well as both reside mutually in each other as bipolar entity” (Dompere 2006: 40–41). Mazama (2002: 221) also argues that “in the African worldview, life and death, far from being opposites, are complementary”.

Another connected idea is the presence of the ancestors. Okwu (1979: 20) emphasises that in African cultures, ancestors are regarded to influence life. Newell S. Booth Jr (1975: 87) even suggests that because of their argued presence, instead of circularity, the African concept of life is perhaps rather better described “in terms of the ‘coexistence’ of past, present and future. There is no

need to ‘return’ if one has never really ‘left’”. Kezilahabi (interview, 30 Mar. 2009), however, regards the possible return of the deceased as essentially circular:

Kuna mambo mengine ambayo nayaandika kuhusu utamaduni wa Waafrika, na Wakerewe humo humo ndani, na Soyinka anaeleza vizuri, kwamba katika utamaduni wa Kiafrika, wahenga wanakwenda lakini wanaweza kuzaliwa tena, na kuzaliwa tena wanapewa jina hilo hilo la babu aliyekufa [...] Hata tabia inafanana kidogo na ya yule ambaye wamempa jina, na inafikia hatua ambayo wazazi wanaweza wakaamini kwamba kwa kweli babu yao yumo, amerudi kwa njia fulani.

Na hiyo ndio imani kwamba wazo la wakati la Mwafrika si mstari mmoja mwembamba uliokuwa wima moja kwa moja isipokuwa ni mzunguko, ni circular, kwamba circular time, na wakati ambao unakwenda mstari moja kwa moja ambao uliwekwa na Ukristo, ni wazi mpaka unafika omega. Sasa hilo ndilo wazo ambalo nilikuwa najaribu kutoa hapo kwamba katika mtazamo wa Kiafrika tunaangalia mviringo, wakati wa mviringo, kwamba watu wanakwenda lakini mzunguko ni ule ule, si kama tunakwenda mstari wima tunapotea huko tunakokwenda mpaka mbinguni au mpaka wapi, lakini bado, kwa hiyo ulimwengu tuliomo hatuishi peke yetu, tunaishi na babu zetu bado wako mahali fulani karibu nasi, hawako mbali sana.

There are other things that I write about the cultures of Africans, including Kerewe people, and Soyinka explains well how in African cultures, ancestors go [away] but they can be born again, and being born again they are given the name of the grandfather that died [...] Even the character [of the child] resembles a bit the character of the one whose name (s)he was given, and it reaches the level that the parents can really believe that the grandfather truly is there, he has returned in a certain way.

And this is exactly the belief that the time concept of Africans is not one narrow line that goes directly forward, but it is a cycle, circular, circular time, and the time that goes forward in one line was brought by Christianity, it is open, going until it reaches omega. Now the idea that I tried to present here is that in the African view we look at the circle, circular time, in which people go [away] but there is circularity, it is not going in a direct line disappearing there where we go, until heaven or wherever, but that still, in the world that we live in we do not live alone, we live with our ancestors who still have certain place near us, they are not very far.

Correspondingly, in his dissertation, Kezilahabi (1985: 174) quotes the Senegalese poet Birago Diop: “Those who are dead have never gone away.” Similarly, Dompere (2006: 41) quotes the same poem of Diop: “Those who are dead are never gone away. [...] They are in the flowing water, And in the still water [...] The dead are not dead.”

In the above-quoted interview comment, Kezilahabi notes that the linear time concept was brought by Christianity, and the view of the linearity of

Christian time-concept seems to be generally accepted (e.g. Gray 1978; Hayden 1987). In Islam, several aspects in the concept of time can be differentiated. Although the idea of the Day of Judgement is central both in Christianity and Islam, the Islamic time-concept seems to differ from Christian linearity: time “has neither beginning nor end” (Böwering 1997: 62). Importantly, time has no existence apart from God; God’s time is real, but people’s time is imaginary. These two are however linked: “although a product of our imagination, time is, in each moment, the virtual and actual object of interaction with eternity. Eternity belongs to God alone, but God’s creature participates in the present moment.” (Böwering 1997: 62) It is noteworthy that both in Christianity and in Islam the afterlife is eternal, and the Last Judgement is regarded to freeze time on Earth.

Kezilahabi’s (explicit) concept of time and life seems to lack Christian or Islamic influence, but in addition to general African ideas of circularity, Kezilahabi (interview, 26 Mar. 2009) notes the existentialist nature of his idea of death and, consequently, life:

Ni wazi unapozungumza juu ya maisha na kifo kwangu mimi tunaweza kuingilia katika falsafa ya existentialism, na katika falsafa hiyo kufa ni nini? Nafikiri nimeandika mahali fulani kwamba kifo ni tokeo la mwisho, lakini ni tokeo ambalo lina-tokea katika kuishi, kwamba binadamu unapoanza kuzaliwa tu kwamba already wakati huo huo kifo kimekwishaanza. Si kitu ambacho unakiona tu hapa mwishoni kwamba umekufa, lakini toka mwanzoni unapozaliwa wazo hilo la kifo unatembea nalo kila wakati na linaanza kukuathiri, kwa hiyo kule mwishoni ni matokeo tu. Ni kitu ambacho kinaendelea toka mwanzo, kwa hiyo kuvitenganisha si rahisi. Ndiyo mawazo ambayo yanatokea sana katika riyaya zangu.

It is clear that when you discuss my ideas of life and death, we can enter the philosophy of existentialism, and in that philosophy, what is dying? I think I have written somewhere that death is the last event that happens / final result, but it is an event that happens *within* living, that when a human being just begins to be born, already that time death has started. It is not something that you see at the end only, that you have died, but from the beginning when you are born, you walk with this idea of death all the time and it starts to influence you, so at the end it is just a result. It is something that is continuous since the beginning, thus it is not easy to separate those two things. These are ideas that frequently occur in my novels.

Although Kezilahabi has mentioned Western existentialist writers as inspiration for his novel *Kichwamaji* (Bernander 1977: 49; Bertoncini-Zúbková 1989: 108–109), Kezilahabi’s existential idea of life/death seems to be deeply anchored in the above-discussed idea of complementary nature of life and death, found in African philosophies: life and death “reside mutually in each other as bipolar entity” (Dompere

2006: 40–41). Kezilahabi (1985: 116) also argues that African concept of time “holds the eternal now to be of utmost importance”. The eternal now is a central idea in his philosophy, and it expresses how not only the past but also the future can be seen to be present in each moment: the eternal now “brings the past and future into a meaningful and relevant now” (Kezilahabi 1985: 126).

6.2 Concepts of life in Swahili

Defining what is meant by “life” or “being alive” is surprisingly difficult. Schejter and Agassi (1994: 97) capture well the problematic nature of defining the concept of life:

What is required of an adequate definition? Apart from its not being trite and uninformative (circular, to use a traditional term), it should be neither too wide nor too narrow; it should not exclude living things and it should not include dead ones. Somehow, this is highly troublesome since it looks quite unenlightening to tell us that what we know to be living is living and what we know to be inanimate is inanimate.

Attempts at defining the concept of “life” (e.g. Schrödinger 1946; de Loof 2002) indeed seem to fail this criteria. Within Swahili, there are different concepts that can be translated as ‘life’, namely: *maisha*, *uhai*, and *uzima*. In order to illustrate (rather than define) what is meant by “life” in the analysis of the image of water in constructing the idea of life, these Swahili concepts and their usage in Kezilahabi’s works are now discussed.

Dictionnaire Swahili–Français (Sacleux 1939) defines *maisha* as ‘La vie en tant que durée, carrière, manière de vivre, lieu où l’on vie.’²²⁷ (= Life as duration, career, manner of living, place where you live) *Kamusi ya Kiswahili–Kiingereza* (TUKI 2001) translates *maisha* simply as ‘life’. *Maisha* and the verb *-ishi* ‘live’ have the same root.²²⁸ *Maisha* is often used in the titles of biographies and autobiographies written in Swahili, representing the idea of life-time and manner

227 The examples given in the entry illustrate the aspects of duration and manner of living: “*-wa na m. (-wa na m. sana)*, durer, vivre longtemps. *M. mengi*, longue vie. *M. maovu*, mauvaise vie (on dit mieux *mwendo mbaya*). – Adverbial. *Akaka pale m. yake*, il habita là toute sa vie. *Ntakutumia m. yangu*, je te servirai ma vie durant.” (= *wa na m. [-wa na m. sana]*, to last, to live a long time. *M. mengi*, long life. *M. maovu*, loose/bad living (better: *mwendo mbaya*). – Adverbial. *Akaka pale m. yake*, he lived there all his life. *Ntakutumia m. yangu*, I will serve you during my life.)

228 The verb *-kaa* is generally also translated as ‘live’, but it refers to living somewhere, being a habitant somewhere; it is not used alone but together with a reference to place, e.g. *Nimekaa hapa muda mrefu* ‘I have lived here a long time’ vs. *Nimeishi muda mrefu* ‘I have lived long’.

of living.²²⁹ In Kezilahabi's works, *maisha* seems to generally refer to the whole journey of life; hence it shall be often translated as 'life-span'. However, at other times in Kezilahabi's works, *maisha* refers rather to the life in the world, or world itself, than the journey of life. In these cases, *maisha* is translated merely as 'life'.

Whereas *maisha* focuses on the duration and way of life, *uhai* concentrates on the pure essence of being alive: *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* (Sacleux 1939) defines it as 'Vie, existence, condition de l'être vivant.' (= Life, existence, condition of being alive). After the translation, it is noted that the root is *hai*. *Kamusi ya Kiswahili–Kiingereza* (TUKI 2001), again, translates *uhai* as just 'life'. In Kezilahabi's works, the word *uhai* is less common than *maisha*, and although it occasionally seems to be used in the general same sense, it usually refers to being alive; thus in, addition to 'life', it will be translated as 'being alive'.

In *Kinjeketile*, the word *maisha* is used to refer to life in a general, broad sense, and importantly including the sense of 'being alive', thus overlapping with the concept of *uhai*. The special water is referred to as *maji ya maisha* 'water of life' (Hussein 1969: 15, 18, 39); 'water of life' is the English translation used in Hussein's own translation of the play, too (Hussein 1970: 16, 19, 43). Since the water is believed to keep the soldiers alive in the battle, the senses of 'life-span' or 'life in the world' are not essential in the image. It can perhaps be suggested that the alliteration of the words *maji* and *maisha* has made Hussein choose *maisha* instead of other terms; according to John Iliffe (1967: 510), the special water in Majimaji war was referred to as *maji ya uzima*, and according to Thaddeus Sunseri (1997: 241), it was called *dawa ya kinga* 'protecting medicine'. In *Kinjeketile*, the protective nature of the water is important, too, but it is connected to the idea of 'water of life'. Kezilahabi (interview, 26 Mar. 2009) himself sees the idea of life essential in the image of water in *Kinjeketile*; when discussing the connection of water and life, he brought up the play of Hussein:

- Kezilahabi: *Unakumbuka maji pia ni kitu ambacho kinatumika Afrika nzima, unakumbuka mchezo wa Hussein, Ebrahim Hussein, vita vya Majimaji, yule mganga aliyewaambia kwamba ogeni maji, maji yatakuwa ni kitu ambacho risasi ikipiga hamwezi kufa, unakumbuka mchezo wa Hussein?*
- Ranne: *Eee, ndio, Kinjeketile?*
- Kezilahabi: *Ndio Kinjeketile. Kwa hiyo maji hasa kwa kwetu sisi Ukerewe ni uhai; bila maji hatuwezi kuwako.*

229 As Farouk Topan (1997: 303) notes, the word *maisha* features in most biography titles, although nowadays many titles have merely the name of the individual as the title.

- Kezilahabi: You remember that water is also something that is used [as an image] in whole Africa, you remember the play of Hussein, Ebrahim Hussein, [about] the war of Majimaji, that traditional healer who told people that they should bathe in the water, the water would be the thing that would prevent them from dying from the bullets, you remember Hussein's play?
- Ranne: Eh, yes, Kinjeketile?
- Kezilahabi: Yes, Kinjeketile. This way water especially for us in Ukerewe is life/being alive; without water we cannot exist.

Although Hussein (1969) uses the word *maisha*, it seems to correspond with the term *uhai* in Kezilahabi's works; and it can be argued that all the three terms, *maisha*, *uhai*, and *uzima*, are closely connected.

Uzima is defined in *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* (Sacleux 1939) as 'Vie, vitalité; état de preservation; santé, état de santé; salut en tant que preservation, vie sauve.'²³⁰ (= Life, vitality; state of staying alive; health, state of health; a protecting salutation, safe life) It is noted that the root is *-zima*; the word *-zima* is also used as an adjective meaning 'healthy, well'. In *Kamusi ya Kiswahili–Kiingereza* (TUKI 2001), the aspect of health is presented as the most crucial: *uzima* is translated as 'health, wellbeing, life'. In Kezilahabi's works, the word represents both life and health. It will be translated with a word that combines them: 'vitality'.

Kezilahabi (2001: 188) draws attention to the fact that the concept of *obuzima* 'wellness' is central in all Kerewe greetings; as the appearance of the words reveal, the Kerewe word *obuzima* has the same Bantu root as the Swahili word *uzima*: *-zima* is a reflex of a reconstructed Proto-Bantu adjective stem *-gimà* meaning 'whole, healthy' (Bantu Lexical Reconstructions); the words *maisha* and *uhai* are of Arabic origin. Kezilahabi (2001: 188) sees that in Kerewe world-view, "being" is always connected to good health and well-being. Furthermore, Kezilahabi (2001: 188) notes that "wellness" is "a basic element in Bantu concepts of life", referring to Tempels 1959, Mbiti 1969 and Nkurunziza 1989.

230 After the translation, examples are given: "Aph.: *Ukukuu wa kamba si uzima wa mkano*, une vieille corde ne vaut pas un nerf de bœuf. Aph.: *Kuna kufa na uzima*, on peut mourir comme on peu réchapper. *Tukapata u.*, nous eûmes la vie sauve, syn. *tukapata salama*. *Alipo pata ugondzwa akarudi kwao*; *huko vile vile hakupata u. barabara*, lorsqu'il eut contracté la maladie, il retourna au pays; là il ne retrouva pas la parfaite santé." (= Aph.: *Ukukuu wa kamba si uzima wa mkano*, an old rope is not worth an ox's nerve. Aph.: *Kuna kufa na uzima*, there is death like there is life. *Tukapata u.*, we had the safe life, synonym: *Tukapata salama*. *Alipo pata ugondzwa akarudi kwao*; *huko vile vile hakupata u. barabara*, when he had got the disease, he returned to his country; he did not find perfect health there either.)

As previous researchers (e.g. p'Bitek 1964; Crahay 1965; Eboussi-Boulaga 1968; Hountondji 1977; Okafor 1982; Mudimbe 1983) have argued, Placide Tempels's work *Bantu Philosophy* (1959; earlier French translation of the Flemish original was published in 1945) has to be approached very critically.²³¹ The many pitfalls of the work, such as over-generalisation and a patronising attitude towards local people, will not be central to this research; however, it is important to note that Tempels uses terms "vital force", "life force", "life", "force", and "being" indiscriminately, as if they were interchangeable (Okafor 1982: 89–90).²³² *Bantu Philosophy* has affected researchers even relatively recently, as Kezilahabi's reference shows; while Kezilahabi (1985: 23–28) discusses Tempels's problems in detail, for example Nkafu Nkemnkia (1999) frequently refers to Tempels in a positive tone. In addition to them, Stephen O. Okafor (1982), although rejecting Tempels's theory as such, finds the central idea of the work – the importance of the idea of life – relevant. Okafor (1982: 91) states that "the core of African cosmology is the view of the world as only meaningful in the context of the 'concept of LIFE'".

Although this research does not make any claims about cosmology, philosophy or literature of the whole vast continent of Africa, the concept of life indeed is crucial in the philosophy presented in Kezilahabi's fiction. It is closely connected to the image of water, and thus the analysis of water imagery concerning the idea of life brings forth the philosophy in the works of Kezilahabi.

6.3. *Maisha: Life-span and the world*

6.3.1. *Water as life-span*

The one-way course of water offers an illustration of the inevitable proceeding of human life, the journey from birth towards death. In *Kichwamaji*, Kazimoto ponders the image: "Nilianza kufikiri kama kweli maisha ya binadamu yalikuwa hayawezi kulinganishwa na maji yateremkayo kutoka mlimani kwenda ziwani au baharini. [...] kurudi hayawezi." 'I started to think: could life of human beings really not be compared with water that flows down from the mountains towards

231 However, as V.Y. Mudimbe (1983: 133) notes, Tempels's work can be seen in a different light if it is read in the historical, colonialist, and missionary context: "Rather than a philosophical treatise, his *Bantu Philosophy* could be understood as, simultaneously, an indication of religious insight, the expression of a cultural doubt about the supposed backwardness of Africans, and a political manifesto for a new policy for promoting civilization and Christianity."

232 *Uhai* could also be translated as 'life-force', but due to the negative connotations to Tempels, that translation will be used in this book only if the translation 'being alive' does not seem to fit.

a lake or a sea? [...] it cannot return.’ (Kezilahabi 1974b: 101–102) Similarly, in *Mto Nili* ‘The Nile’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 7) the way of human life is compared to the way of water: “Ziwa, mto, bahari – maisha” ‘Lake, river, sea – life’. The order of the words ‘lake, river, sea’ is significant. Strang (2004: 63) notes that in poetry, the image of river is often used to illustrate time and the image of sea eternity; Ferber (1999: 172), too, comments on the river being a symbol of life in literature.

In this image of *Mto Nili*, lake can be considered to represent the peaceful childhood. The river, then, illustrates the progress of one’s life. Unlike during the “timeless” childhood, the adulthood time runs fast. The life flows quickly towards the irrevocable end: death, the sea, perhaps the eternity. This can be seen as presenting the two-sidedness of the image of water: how the same H₂O can be both life-water (the lake and river) and death-water (the deep of the ocean). It could be argued that the linearity in the image of the flow of the river as representing life does not correspond with cyclical time-concept; the image of irrevocably flowing towards death might have been influenced by the Western/Christian concept of time. However, another interpretation is that the ocean, as eternity, represents life, too, but in a different form, which can be regarded as connected to the idea of death as “another mode of existence” (Mazama 2002: 220) or “life with a difference” (Dompere 2006: 41).

The poem *Kwa Walimu Wote* ‘For all teachers’ (Kezilahabi 2008: 1, not in Appendix 1) uses a contrary image, stating: “Lakini wakati ungalia hai / Unaweza kubadilisha mkondo wa maji.” ‘But while you are alive / You can change the way of the water.’ Instead of the inevitable running of time, the way of water illustrates human beings’ behaviour during life: we are in charge of our actions. In addition to the choices of individuals, the image can also be interpreted to refer to history, which does not follow a predetermined route but is directed by people themselves.

6.3.2 *Water as life in the world*

The simile “Ziwa, mto, bahari – maisha” ‘Lake, river, sea – life’ in *Mto Nili* ‘The Nile’ can be seen as referring to society and earthly life, too. In the first stanza, the speaker of the poem refers to the time “dhambi zikielea mtoni” ‘when sins were floating in the river’. In the second stanza, the speaker mentions “damu ya watu waliozama zamani ziwani” ‘blood of the people who drowned in the lake in the past’. In these images, water is portrayed as something that absorbs everything, implying perhaps that even the darker aspects and sad incidents are part of life and can always be found in the history.²³³ The poem is based on allusions to

233 The ethical questions *Mto Nili* deals with are discussed more closely in 5.3.1 and 5.3.6 above.

slave trade, but at the same time it discusses life in general, most explicitly in the line ‘Lake, river, sea – life’. The question “kwa nini Afrika ya weusi na Afrika ya weupe?” ‘why is there Africa of black people and Africa of white people?’ contemplates the racial segregation in Africa, though it can perhaps also be seen to refer especially to the Nile, since the people of the lower and upper course have traditionally been enemies.

The river is depicted as a moving entity that washes the sins away, but the lake, too, is described as being able to bury or dilute things into it. The alliteration and the several internal rhymes in the words “waliozama zamani ziwani” link deeply together the verb *-zama* ‘drown’ with its homograph *zama* ‘era’ as well as *zamani* ‘in the past’ with *ziwani* ‘in the lake’. The words are not etymologically related – the verb *-zama* is a Bantu word whereas *zamani* is borrowed from Arabic – but that does not diminish the auditory and visual effects. The poem appears to imply that leaving the past behind is like letting time drown, and that it is illustrative to think of “in the past” as “drowned in the lake”. The assonance, that is the repetition of the vowel /a/ and the consonant /z/ through every word of the line, creates a flowing atmosphere that emphasises the semantic content of the line. The idea of the past as drowned but still present resembles the psychoanalytic idea of the subconscious, but also the co-existence of the living and the dead found in African philosophies: “In African traditional societies the past is not dead.” (Kezilahabi 1985: 173)

Likewise, in *Gamba la Nyoka* (Kezilahabi 1979: 134) the image of water represents the history and life in the world. Magesa, an old man, notes the political events that have taken place in Tanzania during the onset of Ujamaa politics: “Wazee walisema ukikuta mto umefurika subiri kwenye jiwe. Ujamaa niliuona kama mafuriko. [...] Sasa naona mafuriko yamekwisha.” “The elders said that if you face a river that has flooded, wait on a rock. I saw Ujamaa as a flood. [...] Now I see that the flooding is over.’ Similar to the image of the skin of snake, the image of flooding shows how the character is able to put political movements into perspective: Ujamaa felt overwhelming at one point, but it was only one flooding of the big river of the life/world, a flooding that went over without too much trouble, if one waited patiently.

Another comparison of rough, moving water and life in the world is presented in *Upepo wa Wakati* ‘Wind of time’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 4). In the first stanza, the speaker is looking at a lake one stormy day. He describes the scenery:

[...] *mawimbi*
Yakipanda na kushuka. Yakivimba,

Yakiviringika, yakigongana na kutoa povu
*Kama fahari wehu katika bonde lisomajani*²³⁴

[...] waves

Raising and falling. Expanding,

Rotating (spinning), colliding with each other and bringing about foam

Like mad bulls in a valley without grass

By situating the word *yakiviringika* right after the word *yakivimba*, the speaker creates a feeling that the first word actually expands into the second – the first six letters are the same in both words, but the second word continues four letters longer – which is effective since the visual and auditory alteration takes place simultaneously with the semantic content. The line starting with the word *Yakiviringika* ‘Rotating’ is also longer than the preceding line, strengthening the impression of expanding. The rhythm of the words, with the alteration of the syllables that end with /a/ and the others that end with /u/ or /i/ can be regarded to resemble the rhythm of the rising and falling waves. The verb *-viringika* ‘rotate’ itself seems to contain three ‘rounds’, since the first three syllables end with /i/: *vi-ri-ngi*, each /i/ completing a round.

All this furious, foam-producing rage is compared with human life in the second stanza, which commences with the lines “Hivyo ndivyo ulimwengu ulivyo. / Na hivyo maisha ya binadamu.” ‘Just like that is the world. / And like that (is) the life of human being(s).’ “Hivyo ndivyo ulivyo” ‘just like this is’ is a standard phrase in Swahili, but nevertheless, here again the internal rhymes strengthen the claim – the similarity of the words *hivyo*, *ndivyo* and *ulivyo*, and furthermore the alliteration of *ulimwengu* and *ulivyo*, support the suggested equivalence of waves and the world. Moreover, the description of the first stanza is partly repeated in the second stanza. Because in Swahili the noun class of the syntactic subject can be seen in the predicate, the adaptation of the second stanza can be very delicate, but still the reader knows that now the speaker is talking about human beings, not waves: “Yakipanda na kuskuka – Wanapanda na kushuka” ‘They (waves) raise and fall – They (human beings) raise and fall’, “Yakisukumwa – Wakisukumwa” ‘They (waves) are being pushed/forced – They (human beings) are being pushed/forced’. The subtle change in the first syllables also strengthens the impression of rhyme, instead of pure repetition. The waves are compared with the lives of

234 In standard Swahili *fahali*; *fahari* means ‘pride’ (translating the line as ‘like pride, madness in a valley without grass’ does not make much sense). The use of *fahari* might be due to the common free variation of /l/ and /r/ in mainland Tanzania. – The word *fahari* in the line can be either single or plural, but because the reciprocal verb *-gongana* ‘collide with each other’ is used, the plural translation is more viable.

human beings, and the world is hence portrayed as a chaotic place, as in the title of the novel *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo* 'World, the arena of chaos' (Kezilahabi 1975). The water cannot decide where to go, but it is pushed by the winds that happen to blow at the time. Importantly, the winds blowing are "upepo wa Magharibi na Mashariki" 'winds from the West and East', which seems to refer to the cultural influence of the Western countries and the Eastern Bloc. The polarity of the directions of the winds represents the Cold War, and the way in which Tanzania was in between the two "winds", the opposing parties.

Furthermore, *Upepo wa Wakati* 'Wind of time' portrays life as a constant struggle for power, with waves that splash high and clash in order to remain stronger than the others. An impressive simile is constructed in the lines "Tazama wanavyojinyakulia madaraka / Kama mzamaji, mguu wa rafikiye, ashikavyo!" 'Look how they [human beings] seize power of themselves / Like a drowning person grips the leg of his friend!' The desperate situation of drowning brings out the selfish side of the human nature, or the side guided by the instinct of self-preservation. The image of water representing the world in *Upepo wa Wakati* seems similar to the image found in both traditional and other modern Swahili poetry: it illustrates the fighting, chaos and dangers in the world. However, whereas in both traditional poetry and other modern writers' poetry the image is always the ocean, *Upepo wa Wakati* employs the image of the lake; this probably is connected to the noted resemblance of Lake Victoria to the ocean.

The waves are described to circulate, collide and produce foam like *fahari wehu* 'mad bulls', illustrating the crazy competition and clashing of people. There is even more complete disorder in the poem *Hadija* (Kezilahabi 1974a: 22, not included in Appendix 1). It is expressed in several images, one of them using water: "Umeziba mto hasira / Nyumba yako sasa mafurikoni" 'You have plugged up the river with hatred/anger / Your house [is] now flooded'.²³⁵ The expression notes the importance of free movement of water, and can be seen as representing problems and dams in emotions and communication. The strong streams and waves can be scary, but one cannot get rid of them by damming them up. On the contrary; the rapids are part of life.

In *Marahaba* 'You are greeted' (Kezilahabi 2008: 11) water represents the life in the world, as well. What is original is that the image of coming to the world and leaving the world is represented through the image of islands: In the beginning of the poem it is mentioned that "sote tulitoka kisiwa kimoja / Cha

²³⁵ The literal translation is 'You have plugged the river hatred/anger'. Therefore the line could also be interpreted as 'You have plugged the river of hatred/anger'.

Mungu mmoja Mfadhili” ‘we all came from the same island / Of one God, the Beneficent’, illustrating the birth. Then, later in the poem it is suggested:

*Tuzibe matundu ya mtumbwi wetu
Na tupige makasia, tuelekee
Kwenye kisiwa cha uzima wa milele
Kama hapa duniani tu wasafiri.*

Let us block the holes of our canoe
And let us paddle, heading
To the island of eternal life/vitality
As in this world [we are] just travellers.

Life is a wet voyage, especially if the canoes get holes, but it is not forever; the eternal life, afterlife, takes place on solid ground, an island. Since *tu* can be either ‘only, just, merely’ or the short form of being (used interchangeably with *tuko wasafiri* ‘we are travellers’), the last line can be read either as ‘As in this world we are travellers’ or ‘As in this world [there are] only/mere travellers’; perhaps the ambiguity is intended (Alena Rettová, pers. comm. 21 Nov. 2010).

Although the image of paddling through life gives an impression of control, the latter part of the poem shows how the duration of life is not regulated by human beings, after all:

*Lakini ghafla twajigonga kikondoo
Kwenye mwamba thabiti wa usasa
[...]
Kwa kutokuwa na hakika
Twaogelea juu ya vipande vya mtumbwi
Na kurudi kwa mioyo mizito duniani*

But suddenly we collide like sheep
On a rigid rock of the present/of modernity
[...]
Without certainty
We swim on the pieces of the canoe
And return with heavy hearts to the world

The image of water may be seen to represent transitions in life rather than the whole life; perhaps the world is the mainland (or a third island), where the characters had spent their lives after coming to the world from an island and before leaving the world for another island. They have to return to life in the world because that is the nearest solid ground; the afterlife is still too far away, and cannot be reached without a canoe that is intact, representing the way a life can

be thought to become complete when one has lived long enough. In one image, the world is actually presented as a place that is lacking real water:

*Ambako twakaribishwa
Kunywa vikombe vya majonzi
Na kula ukoko wa mateso*

Where we are welcomed
To drink cups of mourning
And to eat the hard crust of misery

The misery of life is a dry, hard crust, and it is swallowed with cups of mere mourning, which seems to be an image of non-water, leaving the drinker perhaps even thirstier than before the drink. So although the transitions in life can offer joy and moist vitality, the everyday life is a hard bit to bite; but it has to be chewed. This image resembles the image of lack of real water on Earth (as opposed to Paradise) and the idea of illusionary nature of the water in the world, found in traditional Islamic Swahili poetry.

6.4 Uhai: Being alive

Hali ya jangwa inahitaji mvua na hakuna mvua, na mvua inapokuja, uhai, inakuwa ni alama ya uhai. Na ni wazi utaona katika vitabu vyangu kwamba zamani zile watoto kama mvua inanyesha watoto wadogo walikuwa wanatoka nje wanavua nguo wanaoga na wanakimbia kwenye mvua kama njia ya kushangilia kwamba kuna uhai, uhai huu umekuja. (Kezilahabi interview, 26 Mar. 2009)

The state of drought needs rain and there is no rain; when the rain comes, life, it is the sign of life. It is clear that in my books you will see that in the past, when it rained, small children went outside, undressed and bathed [in the rain], and ran [around] in the rain as a way of celebrating that there is life, this life has arrived.

Kezilahabi seems to refer to the image of kids celebrating rain by running around naked in *Rosa Mistika* (Kezilahabi 1971: 71). The image of rain is connected to *uhai* also in *Mzingile*: “Ilikuwa kama kwamba mvua hii ilitonesha uhai” ‘It was as if this rain dripped life’ (Kezilahabi 1991: 62). Rain generally represents goodness (blessings) in traditional Swahili poetry, too, but it seems that only in modern poetry is rain directly identified with *uhai* ‘being alive’. In Kezilahabi’s works, the connection of water and *uhai* seems especially strong – as in the above-quoted interview comment, the images of water and life sometimes are used as almost synonyms of each other. In particular, images of either drinking or dew often express *uhai* ‘being alive’ in Kezilahabi’s poetry; these images are now discussed.

6.4.1 Dew, touch of life

In *Kichwamaji*, when the mother of Kazimoto and Leonila faints, she is carried outside the house and laid in the grass “ili apigwe umande azindukane” ‘so that the dew would bring her back to consciousness’ (Kezilahabi 1974b: 93); earlier, also Kamata becomes conscious thanks to dew (Kezilahabi 1974b: 52–53). Similarly, in *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*, dew makes Tumaini become conscious again after he has been beaten: “Tumaini alipopata fahamu asubuhi kwa sababu ya umande wa usiku” ‘Tumaini became conscious in the morning due to the dew of the night’ (Kezilahabi 1975: 140).²³⁶ When presenting dew as able to bring someone back to consciousness, back to life, dew is identified with life itself; specifically, *uhai* ‘being alive’. The state of getting back into consciousness is at the border of life and death, and this is demonstrated when Kamata regains his consciousness in the dew. He is beaten by a gang of boys, and says about his recovery:

Mimi sikuwa na fahamu wakati huo. Lakini inaonekana kwamba waliponipiga sana na kudhani kwamba nimekufa waliniburura na kunitupa zivani. Mungu bariki walinitupa maji mafu, na badala ya kuanguka kifudifudi nilianguka chali pua na mdomo juu ya maji. Umande wa usiku pamoja na maji chini ya mgongo yalinisaidia na kunifanya nizindukane asubuhi. (Kezilahabi 1975: 53)

I was not conscious at that time. But it seems that when they beat me badly and when they thought that I had died, they dragged me along and threw me in the lake. Thank God they threw me in the shallow water, and instead of falling face down I fell on the back, nose and mouth above water. The dew of the night together with the water below my back helped me and made me regain my consciousness in the morning.

Kamata would have drowned if the water were deep, but the dew and shallow water brought him back to life; the line between life-giving dew and drowning pool is blurred, drawn in water. Moreover, for a while Kamata himself is not sure whether he is alive or dead; “Nilijiona maiti” ‘I saw myself as a corpse’ (Kezilahabi 1975: 52). He also assumes that the villagers who found him took him as a spirit: “Wale watu waliponiona walistuka, kama kwamba waliona mzuka fulani.” ‘When those people saw me, they were startled, as if they saw some spirit.’ (Kezilahabi 1975: 53). The image of dew represents life-force, a life-giving element that pulls wounded or fainted people back to life from the unconscious, blurred border between life and death.

²³⁶ The *po* in *alipopata* is probably a typing error, for *alipopata fahamu* ‘when he became conscious’ does not fit the sentence.

In the poem *Kilio Kijijini* 'Mourning in a village' (Kezilahabi 1988: 17) there is a deceased person and much water, but the water is again connected to *uhai* 'being alive'. The deceased "amelala kama jiwe / Lenye thamani mizanini" 'sleeps like a precious stone on the scales', which is reminiscent of the contrast between the dead stone and living water in *Mwamba Ziwani* 'A Rock in a lake' (Kezilahabi 1974a: 6). The connection of water and *uhai* is most apparent in the image of dew: an uncle who has just arrived at the mourning house is still very much alive, which is described with the lines "Umande umelowanisha ncha za suruali / Ya huyu mjomba" 'Dew has moistened the legs of the trousers / Of the uncle'.²³⁷ The image resembles the use of dew in the Bible: it is special water, dew of grace, always welcome. Moreover, it seems to be linked to youth, both in the poem and in the Bible. The Psalm stating "the dew of your youth will be yours" (Psalm 110: 3) suggests, according to the literary researcher Michael Ferber (1999: 57), that dew is "something young people have within them".

The connecting of youth and dew is a natural image, since dew appears mostly in the morning. The linking of young age and moistness is natural in the light of physiological changes in ageing: the older one gets, the less water is retained in body cells, resulting in wrinkles. In Kezilahabi's poetry, dew seems to however represent rather *uhai* 'life-force; being alive' than youth as such, but often there is a connection to newness and beginning. The idea of newness is implicitly present in the images of dew bringing someone back into consciousness, "new life". In *Gamba la Nyoka* (Kezilahabi 1979), the image of dew is connected both to morning as a beginning and to the beginning of the whole novel. In the first paragraph, it is told how Mama Tinda gets up and leaves the house in the morning, including the description: "Nje aliona vibwawa vidogo vidogo vya maji, na majani yaliyokuwa yamejaa umande" 'Outside she saw little pools of water, and the grass was filled with dew' (Kezilahabi 1979: 1). This resembles the way in which the beginning of Kitereza's novel presents an image of Bukonoka's parents walking towards Myombekere's home: "They had been wading through the water of the rivers they had to cross and through dew-soaked grass in the footpaths they took at that early morning hour in the season of the year when dew forms thickest on grass" (Kitereza 2002: 5).

The dew in *Kilio Kijijini* 'Mourning in a village' moistens only the person who is moving (coming to the house of mourning), in contrast to the immobile deceased. The corpse gets wet merely due to tears. It is noteworthy that the deceased is told to be "[a]kidai aoshwe na mito / Ya machozi mashavuni yatiririkayo" 'demanding to be washed by the rivers / Of tears that flow on the cheeks'.

237 In addition to uncle (on the mother's side), the word *mjomba* can also mean 'nephew'.

This describes how the speaker of the poem imagines that the deceased, his/her father, hopes that his close ones will grieve him. The image also refers to the purifying aspect of water, in the same way as tears in *Njia tulopitishwa* ‘The Road we were made to go’ (Kezilahabi 2008: 3) are connected to purification. In addition to that, the image can be argued to imply that the deceased is waterless and thus lifeless, desperate to still get water that is the element of life, hoping he could absorb some life from the tears; or perhaps the image illustrates rather how the speaker of the poem feels about the death of his/her father, wishing he could miraculously be alive again. In traditional Greek and Latin poetry dew is often a metaphor for tears (Ferber 1999: 58), but in *Kilio Kijijini* dew and tears do not seem connected: dew represents being alive, and tears cannot bring the corpse back to life.

6.4.2 *Drinking the finite elixir*

Although life-force can perhaps be considered eternal and the amount of it constant, for an individual, the life on Earth is limited. In Kezilahabi’s works, the image of water is used also to illustrate the finiteness of *uhai* ‘being alive’. This can be seen as connected to the concept of *maisha*, too, but instead of illustrating the span of an individual’s life, in the case of *uhai*, the finiteness of water represents the way in which the life-force within/for an individual is an exhaustible resource: the way in which there is only a certain amount for each of us to drink the elixir of being alive. In *Kilio Kijijini* ‘Mourning in a village’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 17), this is apparent in the image of trees after rain. It is told that the trees outside “bado matone inadondosha, ya mvua” ‘are still throwing drops, of rain’ and “kuwahesabia miaka yao ya uhai” ‘[are] counting their [human beings’, not of trees] years of life/being alive’. This image of water as a measure of time bears similarity to a passage in *Gamba la Nyoka* (Kezilahabi 1979: 44): “matone ya mvua yaliyokuwa yakihesabu utajiri ujao juu ya paa za nyumba zao” ‘rain drops were counting the future richness on the roofs of their houses’. In both images, rain drops may be regarded to represent the property that they are counting. As life is dependent on water, the depletable drops from the trees can be viewed to illustrate how a life at the end inevitably withers; because the rain is already over, it is more evident that the drops from the trees will necessarily finish at a certain point. The image of rain drops on the roofs can be seen more concretely: as the richness in agricultural societies is dependent on the rain, the drops on the roofs can be viewed to represent the future economy of that compound.

At the same time, both images also play with the reference to the steady, even threatening sound of the drops: it is a timer with regular rhythm, hammering

towards the unavoidable end. Interestingly, both images are also connected to silence. In *Gamba la Nyoka*, just before presenting the image of rain drops counting the future richness, the silence of the environment is emphasised: “Kuku kimya, mbuzi kimya. Kimya kati ya viumbe isipokuwa upepo uliokuwa ukivuma na kuyumbisha miti gizani” ‘The chicken are silent, the goats are silent. There is silence among the creatures, except for wind that blows and makes the trees sway in the darkness’ (Kezilahabi 1979: 44). In *Kilio Kijijini* ‘Mourning in a village’, the image of silence, appearing soon after the image of rain drops counting the life that is left, is very similar, but even stronger:

*Kimya! Kimya kijijini,
Kimya nje ya nyumba, ndani vilio.
[...]
Kimya kijijini, kimya nje ya nyumba*

Silence! Silence in the village,
Silence outside the house, inside the mourning.
[...]
Silence in the village, silence outside the house

The image of silence occurs often in Kezilahabi’s works, and when appearing in connection to water, it seems to represent death. For example in *Nagona* there is no water in the town due to the sins and rebellions of the past, and “[u]kimya ulitawala mji huu.” ‘silence governed the town.’ (Kezilahabi 1990: 2) The repetition of the word *kimya* especially in *Kilio Kijijini* makes the reader linger on the image, and creates a repetitive rhythm in the poem, reflected in the image of dripping trees. The regularity of the rhythm in dripping, then again, makes the drops an effective timer. The image of dripping trees resembles an hourglass, and the dripping in *Kilio Kijijini* indeed has a definitive end: “Mara matone yaonekana yanakoma / Na maisha yaonekana mafupi.” ‘Suddenly the drops seem to cease / And life seems short.’ The alliteration of the words *matone* ‘drops’ and *maisha* ‘life’ and the identical nature of the predicates (*yaonekana* ‘seem’; they are identical because the subjects belong to the same noun class 6) accentuate the similarity of the limitedness.

Shortness of life is illustrated in *Kilio Kijijini* also by the lines:

*Isipokuwa maji ya mvua
Yatiririkayo kasi kuelekea bondeni
Kutukumbusha njia ya kila binadamu.*

Though the rain water
That flows quickly towards the valley
Reminds us of the way of every human being.

The verb *-tiririka* ‘glide, trickle, slide along’ seems to be onomatopoeic: the consecutive syllables *ti-ri-ri* resemble the sound of trickling water.²³⁸ The regular rhythm of *ti-ri-ri* can be seen as connected to the dropping of the rain from the trees, and although the rain drops focus on the exhaustible nature of life and the rain water flowing on the ground on the speed of the passing time, both images illustrate the shortness of life.

In *Chai ya Jioni* ‘Evening tea’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 3) there is no pure water, but the image of tea represents *ubai* and its connection to *maisha* in a similar way. This poem seems to confirm Bachelard’s (1983: 117) claim that “all liquid is a kind of water for material imagination”;²³⁹ his explanation is: “This is a fundamental principle of material imagination, which requires that one of the primitive elements be at the root of all substantial images.” (Bachelard 1983: 117)²⁴⁰ Moreover, tea is water, just water brewed with tea leaves; although in Tanzania tea is generally saturated with sugar, and the mention of *utamootamu* ‘sweetness’ of the tea in *Chai ya Jioni* refers to that as well.

Chai ya Jioni is the first poem in *Karibu Ndani*, and its outlook is mature, reflecting that while Kezilahabi was 30 years old when *Kichomi* was published, he turned 44 during the year of *Karibu Ndani*’s publication. *Chai ya Jioni* depicts an elderly couple drinking their evening tea on the porch. The speaker and his/her companion hope to be able to accept (drink) and appreciate (smile at) every part of their life: “Tumalizie machicha ya chai yetu ya jioni / Bila kutematema na kwa tabasamu.” ‘We shall finish our evening tea with the tea grounds / Without spitting them out, smiling.’²⁴¹ They want to make the most out of life, and even suck “utamootamu / Uliobakia kwenye midomo yetu” ‘the sweet taste / That remains on our lips’.

Said A.M. Khamis (1990: 80) argues that in the poem, *chai* ‘tea’ stands for “all what [*sic*] is good in life”, but that view can be considered quite restricted. Even if

238 As noted before, the word that has the same root – *mtiririko* ‘gliding’ or ‘trickling’ – is also used to name types of poetry (see p. 17). The verb *-tiririka* resembles the verb *-chirizika* ‘stream, gush’, which can be seen as the more forceful version of the same action: with its changing consonants, the sound of *-chirizika* expresses the abruptness of gushing while *-tiririka* focuses on the sound repetition in gentle trickling.

239 In the original: “pour l’imagination matérielle, tout liquide est une eau” (Bachelard 1942: 158).

240 In the original: “C’est un principe fondamental de l’imagination matérielle qui oblige à mettre à la racine de toutes les images substantielles un des éléments primitifs.” (Bachelard 1942: 158)

241 The subjunctive form (of *tumalizie*) is closer to the translation ‘let us’ than ‘we shall’, but it is used in a non-urging sense, too. In order to preserve the subtle, mature nature of the poem I have chosen to use the translation ‘we shall’ in this line, while in the fourth line the subjunctive is translated with ‘we should’ and in the third stanza and the very last line of the poem with ‘let us’, to retain balance. – The reduplicated form *kutematema* ‘spit around’ emphasises the continuation of spitting or the smallness of the amount of spittle.

the taste that remains on the lips of the speaker is said to be sweet, that can represent the memories – like the aftertaste of tea, memories are often sweeter than the actual situations in which they are created. Because the speaker expressly notes that they swallow even the tea grounds, tea cannot present only all that is good. Rather it becomes an image of their whole life as it stands. The fact that the characters of the poem are drinking together illustrates the deep companionship, sharing their life, both the sugared warm tea and the bitter remains.

The poem ends with the lines of farewell:

*Lakini kabla hatujaondoka kimyakimya
Kukamilika nusu duara iliyobakia.
Tuhakikishe vikombe vyetu ni safi.*

But before we will leave just silently
To complete the half circle that remains
Let us make sure that our cups are clean.

Khamis (1990: 81) claims that leaving the cups clean means “to do good deeds”, but that interpretation seems incomplete or even incorrect. The image of cleaning one’s cup symbolises rather purification: settling up with all the close ones, balancing the accounts, contemplating the life and preparing to leave it. Tea in the cups has been the life that the speaker and his/her partner have been enjoying, and now it is time to finish the tea.

‘The half circle that remains’ is linked with the previous image of the poem, where the speaker memorises him/herself swinging “zaidi ya nusu duara” ‘further than a half circle’. The image of swinging high illustrates the lively times of the characters’ most active years. The predominant shape in the poem is that of a half circle. Even the phonetic scenery supports the image strongly: transverse alliteration with the phoneme /u/ is used a lot, creating a soft atmosphere. The vowel /u/ is used 83 times altogether, which makes 10.3% of the phonemes in the poem, whereas for example in the more turbid poem *Mto Nili* the vowel constitutes only 6.5% of the phonemes. The form of the grapheme <u> resembles a swing, strengthening the image also visually. The team play of content, auditory and visual sides makes the poem a very intense reading experience.

The phonetic atmosphere of the poem is altered along with the thematic shifts in the lines. The frequency of the phoneme /u/ is high in the first four lines, which depict the peaceful sitting and enjoying of tea and the view of children playing:

*Wakati tunywapo chai hapa upenuni
Na kuwatazama watoto wetu
Wakicheza bembea kwa furaha
Tujue kamba ya bembea yetu*

While we drink tea here on the porch
 And watch our children
 Swinging cheerfully
 We should know: the rope of our swing

In Swahili, the noun “swing” can be either *pembea* or *bembea*;²⁴² the choice of *bembea* supports the peaceful soundscape of the poem. The word can perhaps be seen to implicitly refer to the etymologically related verb *-bembeleza* ‘sooth, quieten’, as well.

The phoneme /b/ as such is soft and relaxing. It resembles the peaceful ripple of a lake, the softness of a warm bath, and the gentle movement of the warm tea in a cup. The frequency of /b/ is high for a consonant in the whole poem: 27 times (3.3% of the phonemes), whereas for example in *Nenda Ukanywe!* ‘Go to drink!’ it is used only 11 times (1.6% of the phonemes). The soft impression is strengthened by the use of reduplication, for example in *tujilambelambe* ‘let us lick’ and in the subsequent word, *utamutamu* ‘sweetness or a good taste’. The reduplication of verbs is common, and is used to express many things.²⁴³ However, the reduplication of the noun *utamu*, which means sweetness itself, is rare, and Kezilahabi has probably used it just for the aesthetic quality: to further the leniency of the line “Baada ya hapo tujilambelambe utamuutamu” ‘After that, let us lick the sweet taste’.

The auditory landscape returns to quite a gentle style later in the poem, but changes into a harder one after the quoted first four lines. “Harder” phonemes, such as /i/ and /d/, are prevalent in the next two lines. Yet most striking is the occurrence of the vowel /o/, which is used six times in the last four-word line (and once just at the end of the previous line): “Imeshalika na imeanza kuoza / Na bado kidogo tutaporomoka.” ‘[The rope] has already worn through and started to rot / After a short while we will fall down.’ The line is auditorily very repetitive: almost all the syllables in it belong to one of the two sets of assonance:

242 Only Baba Malaika’s *Modern Swahili–Modern English* (1991) mentions both *bembea* and *pembea* for the noun “swing” (both forms are also given for the verb). *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* by Sacleux (1939) views *pembea* as the noun, and has both *pembea* and *-bembea* for the verb; similarly, *Swahili–Suomi–Swahili-sanakirja* (“The Swahili–Finnish–Swahili dictionary”, 2002) mentions *pembea* for the noun and *-bembea* for the verb. Johnson’s *A Standard Swahili–English–Dictionary* (1939) does not mention *bembea* (neither as noun nor verb), neither does Madan’s *Swahili–English Dictionary* (2000, 1st publ. 1903) in the sense of swing. Both *bembea* and *pembea* are however generally used in today’s Swahili both as verb and noun, depending on the context; *pembea* is more common in Tanzania than Kenya (Haji Mohammed Haji & Abdilatif Abdalla, pers. comm. Dec. 2010–Jan. 2011).

243 It can define various phases of intensity: on one hand it can underscore the meaning contained in the word, on the other it can lessen the force of the word. It is also used to express continuation of the action, or the idea of distribution. (Lodhi 2004: 147–149)

sha-ka-na-za-za-ta-ka or *o-do-do-go-po-ro-mo*. The chopping rhythm underscores the image of the dangerously worn out rope, resembling the fast heartbeats of a threatened person, or a knife cutting the rope.²⁴⁴

The repetition of the grapheme <o> is also a visual allusion: the grapheme is a circle, symbolising the completing of life. On the other hand, the roundness of /o/ is produced at the articulatory level, too: when articulated, the mouth forms the shape of <o>. The young half circle of the swing becomes round like <o> and /o/, and the swinging is over. The shape of a circle can be found also in the form of the teacups in the poem. The carrying of the images of circles and half-circles in *Chai ya Jioni* works at several levels. As the auditory changes, the alteration of the visual aspects goes hand in hand with the transitions in content. In the second stanza – right after the harsh notion of the rope being worn out soon, but separated by the stanza break – the speaker steepes him/herself in recollecting the time when the swing moved far and lightly, and the whole stanza frequently uses the grapheme <u>. Its use is most pronounced in the first line with seven <u> graphemes: “Kulikuwa na wakati ulinisukuma juu” ‘There was a time when it pushed me upwards’.

As for example Wamitila (1998: 87) and Xavier Garnier (2006) have noted, the image of circle also occurs frequently in Kezilahabi’s novels, especially *Nagona* and *Mzingile*. Kezilahabi has talked in an interview about the *mzunguko* ‘a circuit, round’ of searching the truth (Diegner 2005: 32), and Garnier connects the image of circle in Kezilahabi’s novels with the chaos of society.²⁴⁵ In *Chai ya Jioni*, however, the image of circle seems to be connected to the circular idea of life, present in African philosophies. Completing the circle represents after-life, contrasted to the inescapable incompleteness of life, which is illustrated by the half-circle. While this image is calm and rather the opposite of chaos, it can be argued that the search for the completeness of the circle – life – is close to the search for truth. The shape of a half-circle and the steady to-and-fro, up-and-down movement of the swing (the oscillation waves) can possibly also be seen

244 The wearing away of the rope is interestingly connected to water: the rope is said not only to be worn through, but also to have started to *-oza* ‘rot’. Rotting does not take place without moisture, and therefore water is not only a positive image in *Chai ya Jioni*. Then again, even though rotting speeds up the wear and tear process, the rope would be worn out anyway. There is a certain amount of tea for every drinker and certain amount of swings for every rope.

245 “Le cercle désigne un centre à la fois très précis et toujours à distance. L’obsession du cercle dans les romans de Kezilahabi est la marque de la proximité de son univers avec le chaos. Les personnages se mettent en cercle dès lors qu’ils sont sortis de l’ordre social.” (Garnier 2006: 104) (= The circle designates a precise centre and, at the same time, is always at distance [from it]. The obsession with circle in the novels of Kezilahabi is a mark of the proximity of the universe with chaos. The characters create/constitute a circle from the moment they exit/leave social order.)

referring to waves of the sea or lake, which intensifies the wet image of living as drinking one's tea. The image of a whole circle is also close to water: water cycle is a common metaphor in literature. The circulation of water has been used as a religious symbol of ascent of human beings, such as dew returning to its heavenly origin. (Dickson 1987: 1–10) Similarly the whole circle as the image of completed life in *Chai ya Jioni*, together with the wet image of drinking tea as the image of life, can be seen as referring to a completed water-cycle.

A crucial part of water-cycle is rain: the condensation of moisture in the air into rain drops that then fall somewhere. In *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*, this image is used to represent the way new life arrives into the world, into the life of a woman. When Mungere has found out that her daughter is pregnant, she is described as watching her bring firewood indoors when rain is approaching the house: “Mungere alimtazama binti yake kwa huzuni; binti ambaye maisha yake ya mbele yalikuwa sasa katika wingu jeusi. Lini mvua itanyesha – Mungere hakufahamu.” ‘Mungere watched her daughter with sadness; the daughter whose future life now was in black clouds. When the rain would fall – Mungere did not know.’ (Kezilahabi 1975: 15) The approaching rain represents new life, but it also poses a threat to current life. This illustrates well the two-sidedness of the image of rain in modern Swahili poetry, as opposed to traditional poetry in which rain is merely a positive image.

6.5 *Uzima: Vitality*

In *Karibu Ndani* there are two poems that mention water as the source of *uzima* ‘vitality, life’, with almost identical expressions: *Kisima* ‘A Well’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 25) talks about “[k]isima cha maji ya uzima” ‘the well of the water of vitality’ and *Hii Moja Hadithi* ‘This one tale’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 45) mentions “kisima cha uzima” ‘the well of vitality’. The rhyming of the words *kisima* and *uzima* accentuates the close connection, even equation, of water and vitality. As discussed in section 5.2.1 above, in both of these poems water is connected to creativity and producing new art, new literature. Since the water is also linked to vitality and well-being, there can be seen an identification of artistic creativity and physical vitality. Indeed, especially in an African culture in which the idea of health traditionally includes the idea of fertility, the image of creativity is not far from the image of physical well-being: both are abilities to create something new, to add new life into the world.

In *Marahaba* ‘You are greeted’ (Kezilahabi 2008: 11), *uzima* is linked to after-life: “Na tupige makasia, tuelekee / Kwenye kisiwa cha uzima wa milele” ‘And let us paddle, heading / To the island of eternal life/vitality’. *Uzima* can refer here

to both life and vitality, representing afterlife as both eternal in time and in well-being. With the contrast of the dryness and dismal nature of the world presented in the poem, the vitality of the place beyond this world stands out.

It can be argued that the idea of *uzima* 'vitality' is present also in all the images analysed in the previous section under the concept of *uhai* 'being alive'; indeed, the word *uhai* 'being alive' is directly mentioned in only a few of them. Extending Kezilahabi's notion of *obuzima* 'wellness' as an inseparable part of "being" in the Kerewe worldview, I present that in Kezilahabi's poetry, *uzima* 'vitality' is inseparable from all the life-related concepts, including *maisha* and *uhai*.

6.6 *Desire and procreation*

In addition to the sensation of being one with water, Strang (2004: 73) notes the presence of water or other fluids in the "most powerful dissolving of boundaries and flowing together" between human beings: the prenatal symbiosis with amniotic fluid, the breast feeding with milk, and the sexual intimacy with semen. The association of water with the prenatal state may contribute to the connection of water and childhood in literature (of African novels, see, e.g. Dangarembga 1989; Maraire 1996). In Kezilahabi's poetry, specifically River Nabili represents childhood. In *Namagondo* (1974a: 67, not included in Appendix 1) the speaker thinks back to his/her childhood and asks: "Uko wapi mto Nabili uliokuwa ukifurika" 'Where is the River Nabili that flooded' – without a question mark, for the question is rhetoric. Later (s)he continues recollecting: "kelele tukazipiga / Jasho likitutoka Nabili tulijiogea" 'we were noisy / When the sweat came off in Nabili in which we swam (bathed)'.

In the poem *Mwamba Ziwani* 'A Rock in a lake' (Kezilahabi 1974a: 6), water represents both life and physical desire, which is presented as an inevitable part of being alive. The speaker of the poem admires the rock in the water: it is strong, hard and not exposed to anything. In contrast to that, the speaker cannot get away from the sphere of influence of a girl even when he is alone:²⁴⁶ "Nikitetemeshwa na mapaja ya huyu msichana / mbichi karibu nami." 'I am being trembled by the thighs of that / fresh girl near me.' The adjective *-bichi* means

²⁴⁶ Though the gender of the speaker of *Mwamba Ziwani* is not specified (Swahili does not mark gender, and the speaker refers to him/herself as *mtu* 'a human being, a person'), since nothing alludes to the speaker being woman, either, regarding the poem as a description of a girl thinking of a girl seems like a far-fetched reading. However, the way in which the speaker addresses himself as *mtu* 'a human being, a person' can be read to illustrate how desire concerns equally all human beings.

‘unripe’, ‘very young’, [sexually] immature’, ‘fresh’, and ‘wet’;²⁴⁷ as an attribute of a girl, the translations ‘very young’, [sexually] immature’ are most relevant, but it can be argued that the other meanings are present as implications. Through the similar sentence structure of the consecutive lines “Nikisukumwa na mawimbi, / Nikitetemeshwa na mapaja na huyu msichana” ‘I am being pushed by the waves, / I am being trembled by the thighs of that girl’, the image of water is connected to femaleness, sexuality, and youth.

The concept of water has an intriguing connection with womanhood even in the Swahili language: the word *ziwa* stands both for ‘a lake’ and ‘a female breast’. Even though the word for breast has its name from *maziwa* ‘milk’ (and though *nyanza* is also used for ‘a lake’), the words are homographs; homographity is often used in poetry. Thus, combined with the content of the poem, the word *ziwa* in *Mwamba Ziwani* can possibly be seen to refer to a female breast too, in addition to the primary object of a lake. The connection of female sexuality and water can also be found in Arabic poetry, in which the image of water is used allegorically to represent sexuality (Eksell 1997: 26). For example the image of an untouched spring or a pool of crystal-clear water is used to represent chastity, and there is an expression “to drink water from her” (Stetkevych 2002: 16). The image of crystal-clear water represents female beauty also in Kitereza’s novel: “she was an extremely beautiful woman, sparkling all over like crystal-clear spring water, pure from whatever side you draw it” (Kitereza 2002: 252). The image of water is also used to praise the feminine walking style with swaying hips: “She walks as if borne by the waves, *yee!* [...] She’s arriving borne by the waves, *yee!*” (Kitereza 2002: 153). As in *Mwamba Ziwani*, water seems to be particularly connected with women, or men’s desire for them. Perhaps the image is not so much about sexuality as such, but a way of representing women as objects of desire; it is hard to say since almost all available published Swahili poetry is written by men.

247 *Kamusi ya Kiswahili–Kiingereza* (TUKI 2001) translates *bichi* as ‘unripe; raw, underdone, semicooked; wet’. Sacleux (1939) defines *bichi* as ‘Au pr. et au fig. Cru, qui n’est pas mûr, qui n’est pas cuit ; vert (ni sec, ni mûr) ; frais, qui n’est pas sec, nouvellement cueilli ou fait, qui n’est pas encore altéré, qui a encore de la fraîcheur et de l’éclat ; non salé, non fumé ; nouveau (vin de palme, etc.), faible, doux, qui est à peine fermenté ; qui a peu de goût, fade, insipide ; non éteinte (chaux) ; fraîche, jeune (en parlant d’une personne du sexe) ; fig. cru (langage), choquant, libre, peu décent, indécent ; fig. tendre (coeur), facile à impressionner.’ (= Literally and/or figuratively: Raw, which is not ripe, which is not cooked; green (neither dry nor ripe); fresh, which is not dry, lately gathered or made, which has not yet changed, which still has freshness and glow; not salted, not smoked; new (palm wine, etc.), weak, soft, which is hardly fermented; which has a little of taste, tasteless, insipid; unhardened (limestone); fresh, young person (in regard to sex); figuratively: raw (language), shocking, free, not very decent, indecent; figuratively: tender (heart), easily impressed.)

Bachelard (1983: 14, original emphasis) notes how “poetic imagination nearly always attributes *feminine* characteristics to water”,²⁴⁸ but he sees the reason to be the maternal character of the matter: “Water carries us. Water rocks us. Water puts us to sleep. Water gives us back our mother.”²⁴⁹ (Bachelard 1983: 131) However, motherhood has a connection to sexuality, namely childbirth. As Bachelard (Bachelard 1983: 14, original emphasis) notes, “Water is a substance that we see everywhere springing up and increasing. The spring is an irresistible birth, a *continuous* birth.”²⁵⁰ In Kezilahabi’s works, the image of water occasionally can be interpreted as identified with male (or male sexuality), too.

The speaker of *Mwamba Ziwani* ‘A Rock in a lake’ sees himself as *mwovu* ‘bad/evil’ because of his inability to control *kutetemeshwa* ‘being trembled’. Not until the end of the poem does he realise that the rock is dead, and that “[w]akati wote niishipo sitaweza, nao kufanana” ‘as long as I live, I cannot resemble it’. Desire is part of human life, but cultural norms often make people’s attitudes towards it ambiguous. For example, in Swahili culture the bride is, traditionally, supposed to look sad on the day of her wedding; this seems understandable because she is leaving her family, but according to Swahili scholar Ida Hadjivayanis (pers. comm. May 2010), it is connected to the view that women are not supposed to show/imply they enjoy sex – expressing joy on the wedding day easily gives the girl the reputation of *malaya* ‘a loose woman, whore’. In *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo*, the old husband-to-be of Anastasia suspects this kind of confused attitude from his wife-to-be, when Anastasia is crying in his presence: “Unafahamu kwamba mbwa hunywa maji, akisema ‘sitaki kunywa, sitaki kunywa maji!’ Lakini anaendelea kunywa. Ninafahamu kwamba unanipenda lakini hutaki kuniambia.” ‘You know that a dog drinks water saying “I don’t want to drink, I don’t want to drink water!” But it continues to drink. I understand that you like/love me but you do not want to tell me.’ (Kezilahabi 1975: 59) Although in this case Anastasia’s

248 Although Bachelard in general sees water as feminine, he regards violent, stormy water as masculine: “The water becomes spiteful; it changes sex. Turning malevolent, it becomes male.” (Bachelard 1983: 15) (In the original: “L’eau prend une rancune, elle change de sexe. En devenant méchante, elle devient masculine.” Bachelard 1942: 21) This multi-sexual nature of water is essential for its dynamics: “Here on a new level is the conquest of a duality inscribed in the element, a new sign of the basic value of an element of the material imagination.” (Bachelard 1983: 15) (In the original: “Voilà, sur un mode nouveau, la conquête d’une dualité inscrite dans l’élément, nouveau signe de la valeur originelle d’un élément de l’imagination matérielle!” Bachelard 1942: 21)

249 In the original: “L’eau nous porte. L’eau nous berce. L’eau nous endort. L’eau nous rend notre mère.” (Bachelard 1942: 178)

250 In the original: “L’eau est une matière qu’on voit partout naître et croître. La source est une naissance irrésistible, une naissance *continue*.” (Bachelard 1942: 20)

husband-to-be is completely wrong about her reasons to cry, the image of the need for water illustrates well the need for satisfying physical desire.

In *Mwamba Ziwani*, the negative attitude towards physicality (at least in the beginning of the poem) is implied also in the comparison of water, and therefore of physical desire, too, with a sword of a killer: “Mawimbi yananigusa na kuvunjika / Kama upanga wa muuaji ushindwavyo kwa roho.” ‘The waves touch me [the rock] and broke / Like the sword of a killer is defeated by spirit.’ Even if physicality in *Mwamba Ziwani* is identified with life, paradoxically it is also attached to death (through the purpose of the killer’s sword), expressing perhaps the idea that although physicality is a life force, it can also destroy life or overwhelm it. Psychoanalytic theory sees Eros as a life force that is at the same time inseparable from Thanatos, the destructive force of death instinct (Freud 1975). The image can also be interpreted to refer to the supremacy of spirit over the physical, or to how the mind is in contrast with the physical: in the poem the spirit is presented as literally against it.

The end of *Mwamba Ziwani* is very repetitive (emphasis added):

[...] *Lakini ule mwamba,*
Ule mwamba ulikuwa umekufa.
 Wakati wote niishipo sitaweza, nao kufanana.
 Nitapokufa kama **huo mwamba,**
Huo mwamba nitaushabih.

[...] But **the rock,**
The rock had died.
 As long as I live I cannot resemble it.
 When I will die like **that rock,**
 I will be like **that rock.**

The word *mwamba* ‘a rock’ is used four times, while just once or twice would have sufficed. The repetition is emphasised with the use of demonstrative pronouns *ule* and *huo* (both meaning ‘that’). Repetition occurs both in traditionalist and modernist Swahili poetry, and can have many functions; the above-quoted lines are harping on the same string in a way that fits the English linguist Catherine Emmott’s idea of the meaning of repetition in poetry. She suggests that a poem’s repetitive style can simulate the speaker’s lack of concentration when (s)he is in deep thoughts, continually returning to the topic that troubles him/her (Emmott 2002: 94–95). In *Mwamba Ziwani*, the rock is troubling the speaker who is driven to mention it so many times in the last lines; it is also used in the title. In contrast to that, in the beginning of the poem the word *mwamba* is not mentioned. It is first used as late as in the eleventh line, so the reader cannot be sure of the

subject of the predicates before that. On the other hand, since the predicates reveal that the noun class of the referred speaker is the same as the class of the title (noun class 3), the subject can be anticipated. However, the notable change in the frequency of the word *mwamba* ‘a rock’ illustrates the freshness of the contemplation – how the rock starts to trouble the speaker while he is staring at it. The repetition also strengthens the concrete image of the matter, the stone, and its characteristics as opposed to water.

In *Kuwako* ‘Existence’ (Kezilahabi 2008: 10), the image of water is connected to sex, fertility and life, and it is a thoroughly positive image. The speaker of the poem narrates how (s)he came into the world, after leaving God’s memory where (s)he existed as an idea:

[...] *nilijipenyeza kwenye nyufa*
Nyembamba katika ngoma ya pumbao
Na kama kiluilui kidogo sana nikaogelea
Kishujaa katika mto wa machozi
Hadi nilipogonga ukuta mwororo
Na kuingia ndani kuwa kiumbe.

[...] I pushed myself through a narrow split
 During an astounding dance
 And like a very small larva/tadpole I swam
 Bravely in the river of tears
 Until I hit a soft wall
 And entered it to become a creature.

At this part of the poem, the speaker can be identified with a sperm cell; the astounding dance refers to intercourse. Consequently, the “river of tears” can be seen as representing the vagina. The speaker enters into a material being through water, through the river of tears; this might refer to how just-born babies immediately cry, or perhaps to how the “river” inside the vagina is comprised of something that has come there in a similar way as tears: discharged from inside a human body. As noted in section 5.3.1, tears are generally a positive image in Kezilahabi’s poetry, so the image of tears is unlikely to refer for example to sadness of life.

The water images of the poem do not finish after the sperm cell has entered through the soft wall, for also the space behind it, the womb, is essentially moist:

Humo nilipumzika katika rutuba ya uhai.
Nilipopata nguvu mpya
Nilifurukuta na kuingia mto wa machozi
Nikatokeza dirishani na kudondoka hai.

There I rested in the dampness of life.
 When I got new strength
 I moved and entered the river of tears
 And then appeared from the window, falling out alive.

The image resembles the one found in *Wimbo wa Kuzingatia* ‘A Philosophical song’ (Knappert 2004: 227): *Maji yao ukangia* ‘Their [your parents] water you entered’. The creature, in the process of becoming a living being, gets life-force from “rutuba ya uhai” ‘the dampness/fertility of life’. *Rutuba* refers to soil, but it is often used metaphorically to refer to the womb. This image of water is connected to both fertility and maternity: the new life can develop in the fertility of the womb, and it is also protected from the outer world by the shielding walls of the mother’s tissue. After becoming strong enough, the being is ready to be born, which happens again through the “river of tears”.

After the first stanza, there are no more direct water images in the poem, but in the second stanza the speaker mentions how (s)he, as a grown-up, dances the same “astounding dance” him/herself:

Nikacheza mchezo ambao kila siku
Maelfu hutolewa nje ya uwanja
Na hawarudi tena.

I then dance the dance from which each day
 Thousands are taken out outside the field/arena
 And do not return again.

The word *uwanja* ‘field, arena’ refers to the God’s mind, from where the creatures are presented to escape during sex; their coming into the world takes place during a playful act, dance, but is definitive to the creatures. The image represents how serious the role that people have is: forming of the waters brings new life into the world.

The prevailing phonemes of *Kuwako* ‘Existence’ are /m/ and /u/: /m/ constitutes 5.8% of the phonemes (whereas for example in *Nenda Ukanywe!* it forms only 3.7% of the phonemes), and /u/ composes 8.6% of the phonemes (whereas for example in *Mto Nili* the vowel constitutes only 6.5% of the phonemes). As relatively high in both continuity and periodicity, the phoneme /m/ is in general considered tender, smooth, and soft; all these characteristics fit the atmosphere of the poem, in which new life is created through love-making. On the other hand, like in the poem *Jinamizi* ‘Nightmare’, the phoneme /m/ can also be seen to represent energy and potentiality. As a vowel, /u/ is located at the very beginning of both the continuity and periodicity continuums; due to its visual shape,

it can also be argued to resemble waving water, similarly to its usage in *Chai ya Jioni* ‘Evening tea’.

There can be seen a transition in the soundscape of the poem. The beginning of the poem, up to the middle of the seventh line, is high in the phoneme /k/: in these lines, /k/ forms 10.6% of the phonemes, compared to the rest of the poem, in which the frequency of /k/ is just 6.9%. The high appearance of /k/ reinforces the content of the lines, which describe crampedness:

*Kusema kweli nilipata kuwa mbinguni
Nikizunguka katika nafasi finyu
Mawazoni mwa kumbukumbu za Mungu.
Aliponisahau nilijipenyeza kwenye nyufa
Nyembamba katika ngoma ya pumbao
Na kama kiluilui kidogo sana nikaogelea
Kishujaa katika mto wa machozi*

To tell the truth I got to be in heaven
Going round in a cramped space
In the ideas of God’s memory.
When he forgot me, I pushed myself through narrow splits
During an astounding dance
And like a very small larva/tadpole I swam
Bravely in the river of tears

The change is encapsulated in the last line, which transforms from “kishujaa katika” into “mto wa machozi”. Once the poem has reached “mto wa machozi” ‘the river of tears’, it has entered moistness, life.

The speaker notes: “Najua siku moja ataniita katika mahakama yake / Ambamo malaika na shetani hugombea uwakili” ‘I know one day He will call me in His court / Where angels and devils quarrel about representation’, and this reference to being judged after death seems rather Christian (or Islamic). On the other hand, the speaker says that (s)he started to be or got existence already in the heaven, and existed there in some form (at least as an idea in God’s mind), which might be seen to refer to some cyclicity in life. The idea of pre-existence of the soul is contradictory in Christianity (D.P. Walker 1964 discusses this extensively); even if the idea is regarded to be in line with Christianity, the concreteness of the pre-existing creature in *Kuwako* ‘Existence’ makes the image a rather original interpretation of the idea. The pre-existence of the creature and his/her entrance to the world can be perhaps rather seen as the reverse image of what Kunene (1992: 37) presents “a state of physical and spiritual transition when the body becomes integrated into the sacred earth and when the spirit or the shadow goes through a series of clearly defined stages until it enters the womb

of eternity”, that is death in cyclical life-concept. Kunene (1992: 37) stresses that the only significant change is “the growing dominance of the spiritual dimension over the physical”; in birth the speaker of the poem seems to change from some kind of idea, existing in God’s mind, into a physical being.

The poem also interestingly uses two different levels of discussion, presenting how new life is, at one level, created through sex (which again is presented with the image of dance) and, at the same time, how it comes from God’s mind. This, again, corresponds with Kunene’s (1992: 37) notion of how “[a]ccording to the African view of the world, spiritual is not dislocated from the physical”. The poem merges these ideas into one coherent complex, illustrated through concrete imagery of *nafasi finyu* ‘cramped space’, *nyuga* ‘narrow splits’, *kiluilui* ‘larva/tadpole’ and *mto* ‘river’. The use of concrete but symbolic imagery when referring to sex seems to differentiate Kezilahabi’s poetry from his novels. Lyndon Harries (1976: 161) argues that because of the somewhat explicit references to sex in *Rosa Mistika*, “within the context of the Swahili coastal community as well as in other East African communities, *Rosa Mistika* is an offensive, immoral book”; in contrast to that, Kezilahabi’s poetry can be argued to follow the tradition of alluding to sex only through imagery.

6.7 *Death*

6.7.1 *Drying – dying*

Like in *Mgomba* ‘The Banana plant’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 8), the lack of water very often identifies the lack of life in Kezilahabi’s works. Consequently, dying is connected to drying. In *Njia tulopitishwa* ‘The Road we were made to go’ (Kezilahabi 2008: 3) the drying of the environment foretells the dying of human beings: It is told that “*mito na visima vimekauka*” ‘rivers and wells have dried up’, and people have one question in their mind: “*Sasa tufe hivihivi*” ‘Are we now dying like this’. Naturally the drying up of the surroundings can cause the death of the people through drought, but the image seems to represent drying in a more symbolic sense: Are we as a nation giving up like this, drying up like this, dying like this?

In *Nenda Ukanywe!* ‘Go to drink!’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 30), the furious energy of the first stanza shifts into the passive suffering and infirmity of the future in the second stanza where the speaker sees him/herself drying: “*Nitakapokuwa nikikauka kwa wakati*” ‘When I will be drying by the time’. The expression illustrates at the same time the physical drying out of the skin and body of old people, and the drying up of mental strength. The impression of drying is strengthened

by the use of consonance, that is, the repetition of the “dry” consonant /k/ in every word of the line, seven times in the four words.²⁵¹

The prevailing consonant in *Nenda Ukanywe!*, however, is /n/: it occurs as many as 67 times, constituting 9.7% of all phonemes of the poem, which is considerable for a consonant. In comparison, in *Chai ya Jioni* the nasal /n/ is used less by a half: it constitutes 5.0% of the phonemes. Furthermore, the prevalence of the phoneme pair /ng/ catches the ear: the phoneme pair occurs 11 times in the poem. The phonemes /n, ŋ/ and in particular the prenasalised phoneme pair /ng/ resemble the sound of groaning of children, or very tired people – when one is not capable of speaking. In *Nenda Ukanywe!* the phonemes create an image of terrible thirst, and suffering, as well as tiredness in the last stanzas. The auditory atmosphere is as inconsolable as the content. Unlike in an idiomatic use of the word *maji* ‘water’, when it represents being absolutely tired (as remarked on p. 3), here the *lack* of water illustrates the overall exhaustion, being both physically dead tired and mentally clapped-out. Interestingly, the passivity that is foreboding death, is not connected with complete absence of any moisture, but with the lack of pure water: “Nitakapokuwa marashi, damu, vidonda” ‘When I will be perfume, blood, wounds’. The word *marashi* can refer either to perfume or a milder version of that, scented water, but both are degrees of the same phase – the pure water is getting turbid and scarce.

The four stanzas of the poem are not separated with line spaces, so it would be possible to speak about a single stanza. Nonetheless, the indented words divide the parts, and each part or stanza has a different tone and a different phase of life. The first is thus full of energy, fighting against the sickness or drying, which has apparently already started: the worms in the brain have “wakati wa joto” ‘hot times’, and the heating refers to drying. The second stanza presents a passive phase, the submitting to the approaching death. The third phase depicts time after death. Now there is water only in “[m]achozi juu ya kaburi langu” ‘teardrops on my grave’. The message of the speaker is the same as in the title of the poem: *Nenda ukanywe!* ‘Go to drink!’ Even though the word *maji* ‘water’ is not even mentioned in the poem, all the references to water are most crucial. As the last three lines tell in allegories, the death is irrevocable. The speaker appears to suggest that one should not waste scarce water in the form of teardrops – they do not help anybody – but keep the water, the life, in him/herself instead, drink all the energy of life that is available.

251 On the other hand, *Nenda Ukanywe!* is also aggressive, and the aggression can be seen as connected with the dryness, supporting Tsur’s (1992: 9; 2008: 212–214) and Fónagy’s (1961) arguments of the expressiveness of /k/ in regard to anger.

Chai ya Jioni ‘Evening tea’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 3) discusses death, too, but unlike in *Nenda ukanywe!*, there is no fury. The poem discusses how the characters are soon going to finish their last cup of tea, representing how they are soon going to die, but because of the circular life-concept, the tone is calm. Life continues, namely in the children whom the elderly couple are watching. The many references to circularity resemble the view of life in Kithaka wa Mberia’s (1997: 32) poem *Dau Haliendi!* ‘The Dhow does not go!’: “huu / ni / mwendo / duara” ‘this/ is / the course / of circle’.

In *Tunatazamana* ‘We are looking at each other’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 65–66), drying is connected to death brought by colonialism. Colonialism can be seen as identified with death; the whole poem opens with the line “Mama alikuwa ameuawa na wazungu” ‘Mum was killed by white people’, and the description of the colonialists uses imagery of drought. The colonialists are depicted as powerful enough to control even the sun, and to cause harm either because of lack of understanding, or lack of caring (emphasis added):

Akayawasha majani makavu
Yakawaka kuwasha kuni kavu
Zilizokaushwa na ndimi za jua kali
Lililotundikwa hewani kwa kejeli na wakoloni.

He [the father] set the **dry** leaves on fire
 They caught fire and set fire to the **dry** wood
 Which was **dried** by the tongues of the **hard** sun
That was hung up in the air ironically by the colonisers.²⁵²

The expression *jua kali* ‘hard sun’ is also used in Kenya for a small business that is operated “under the hard sun”, for example along the road, in order to survive. This connotation, though not Tanzanian, may be present in the poem: the hard economic situation in which the *jua kali* workers toil may be seen as influenced by the colonialism. However, the literal sense of the ‘hard sun’ is present, too. The adjective *-kavu* ‘dry’ is used twice, and the verb *-kausha* ‘dry’ once; besides, the word *-kali* ‘hard’ alliterates with them. Similar to *Nenda Ukanywe!*, the consonant /k/ occurs frequently: it is used 13 times in these four lines, which constitutes 11.9% of the phonemes; and as in *Nenda Ukanywe!*, /k/ is associated with the image of dryness. In *Tunatazamana* the death-related dryness is employed: dry leaves are burnt in order to change the situation, to create new political order

²⁵² *Kwa kejeli* could also be translated as ‘as mockery’ or ‘just to make fun of them’, for example: ‘That was hung up in the air as mockery by the colonizers.’ According to Lodhi (pers. comm. Feb. 2006), the translation ‘ironically’ nevertheless is the most appropriate.

(Ujamaa). The fire – which is even referred to as *moto wa matumaini* ‘the fire of hope’ – is a way to get rid of the dry leaves and dry wood; a way to get rid of the consequences of colonialism, to boil new water.

6.7.2 *Being dead – being dry*

Mgomba ‘The Banana plant’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 8) presents intermingling images of dryness and death. The banana plant “umelala chini: hauna faida tena, / Baada ya kukatwa” ‘is lying on the ground: it is of no use / After being cut’. The essential connection, the connection of crop and the water underneath the ground, has been cut by cutting off the stalk. The act of mowing has been a big question, since it is mentioned twice that the workers of the garden were hesitating when doing it. Cutting off a tree is a very serious mistake also in *Hadija* (Kezilahabi 1974a: 22, not included in Appendix 1): the addressed person, Hadija, is accused first of all with the line “Umekata mti mtima” ‘You have cut the tree in the heart’.

In *Mgomba* ‘The Banana plant’, as the banana tree has been cut down, the only existent liquid in the presence of the poem is the wound liquid; it can be included in Diadji’s (2003: 274) category of soiling death-water (cf. 1.5 above). The image of uncovered wounds, presented at the end of the poem, seems to be connected to the image of the cut trunk of the banana tree: the “wounded” and exposed inside of the tree. The wounds “[s]asa viko nje kufyonzwa na inzi wa kila aina / Na vinanuka vibaya” ‘now are open in full view for every fly to suck / Stinking’; the stinking could be connected to the rotting of a cut tree. The people who are to blame are “[w]enye hila waliokizunguka kitanda na kulia” ‘betrayers who go round and round the bed and cry’. ‘Betrayers’ seems to refer to the workers of the garden, who cut the stalk – later they regret it. *Kitanda* ‘the bed’ can be seen as referring to the stub of the plant, which resembles a deathbed that the mourners encircle.

The structure of the poem is absorbingly repetitive: in addition to the passage of a plant being cut down with hesitation, the description “Bustanini hakuna kitu / Isipokuwa upepo fulani wenye huzuni” ‘There is nothing in the garden / Except for some sorrowful wind’ is repeated in a slightly modified version. The repetition of the line “Bustanini hakuna kitu” ‘There is nothing in the garden’ creates a strong image of emptiness. The circular rhythm of *Mgomba* ‘The Banana plant’ applies

Yeats’s view of the meaning of rhythm:

The purpose of rhythm, it has always seemed to me, is to prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake, which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotony, while

it holds us waking by variety, to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols. (Yeats 1975: 55)

The repetitions in the poem, making the reader rotate around the emptiness – “the alluring monotony”, combined with the alteration of the lines, create a trance-like feeling, which strengthens the images. The image of emptiness resembles the image of silence in *Gamba la nyoka* (1979) “Kimya [...] isipokuwa upepo uliokuwa ukivuma na kuyumbisha miti gizani” ‘There is silence [...] except for wind that blows and makes the trees sway in the darkness’. By presenting the very quiet voice of wind as an exception to the silence, and by presenting the invisible/ immaterial presence of wind as an exception to the emptiness, the impression of otherwise absolute silence/emptiness is made even more expressive.

In the poem *Mto wa Haki* ‘The River of justice’ (Kezilahabi 1974a: 17–18), the absence of water is connected with death in a very original way. Dying is presented as solidifying within water – the dying person turns suddenly into a solid stone in a river, like melted tin when poured into water. This otherwise highly non-realistic image is reminiscent of the physiological fact that human beings are for the most part (60–70%) made of water, and that this liquid nature within us is essential for staying alive. Beyond this physical level, it identifies immortality with death, and death with being solid. In *Mto wa Haki* ‘The River of justice’, the image of stone represents ultimate death in the same way as the image of stone in *Mwamba Ziwani* ‘A Rock in a lake’. The speaker of the poem makes an announcement that can be interpreted to refer to the difference between dying and being dead. He states: “Nitapokufa kama huo mwamba, / Huo mwamba nitaushabihi.” ‘When I will die like that rock, / I will be like that rock.’ However, what is essential is the rock has not died; the rock has never been alive and hence it has never died. Consequently, the speaker can never ‘be like that rock’; even when he dies, he will have lived. A solid rock is very different from something that is part of the water-cycle.

In *Kilio Kijijini* ‘Mourning in a village’ (Kezilahabi 1988: 17) water generally represents life as in Kezilahabi’s other poems, but there is a contrary image too. The raindrops that count the years “chini yameshachimba vishimo / Kuonyesha mfano kwa washika majembe” ‘have already formed small hollows in the ground / Showing example for those holding hoes’. This connects the raindrops not only with the passing of time, but also directly with death. When dropping is equated with the digging of a grave, the image of water is far from being the elixir of life. It seems rather “a sort of plastic mediator between life and death” (Bachelard 1983:

12).²⁵³ The way the raindrops dig the grave seems to represent Kezilahabi's view of life being "slow dying": "binaadamu unapoanza kuzaliwa tu kwamba already wakati huo huo kifo kimekwishaanza" 'when a human being just begins to be born, already that time death has started' (Kezilahabi, interview 26 Mar. 2009). Kezilahabi's view can be connected to the co-existence of life and death in African philosophies, but it is also echoed by Bachelard (1983: 54): "is this not living with Death? Death, then, is a long and sorrowful story, not merely the drama of a fatal hour".²⁵⁴ Dying is part of life, dropping of rain is part of water cycle.

6.8 Conclusions: *Catch of the submersion*

Maisha, *uzima*, and *uhai* have more dimensions than the one-word translation they are usually given, 'life'. *Maisha* covers the idea of 'life-span', but also 'place of living', which should be understood in a very general sense: the poems discussing *maisha* often discuss the world itself. Similar to the image of ocean in traditional and other modern Swahili poetry, in Kezilahabi's poetry, stormy lake water with furious, dangerous waves represents the world. *Uhai* covers the aspects of 'being alive' and 'life-force', which in Kezilahabi's works are often represented through the images of dew and drinking. *Uzima* stands for 'vitality' and 'well-being', often connected to the idea of fertility. Whereas in traditional Swahili poetry, the connection of the images of water and life concentrates on *maisha* 'life-span; life in the world', in Kezilahabi's works, as in other modern Swahili poetry, water often represents *uhai* 'being alive, life-force'. This might be connected to today's environmental issues, pollution and irregularity of rains due to climate change; the centrality of water in life and water as life is concretely experienced. Through water imagery, Kezilahabi and other modern Swahili writers also speak out for the conservation of nature.

Notwithstanding all the different dimensions of *maisha*, *uzima*, and *uhai*, the three concepts are thoroughly interconnected. As *obuzima* 'wellness' is central for "being" in Kerewe culture, and as the images representing life in Kezilahabi's poetry seem to often have at least an implicit connection to *uzima*, I argue that in Kezilahabi's philosophy, especially *uzima* 'vitality, well-being' is an essential part of both *maisha* and *uhai*. Kezilahabi's works present that life should not be regarded as mere staying alive, from beginning to the end, but that it essentially is being vital, well; being alive in the deepest sense of the word. Moreover, it

²⁵³ In the original: "une sorte de médiateur plastique entre la vie et la mort" (Bachelard 1942: 18).

²⁵⁴ In the original: "n'est-ce pas faire ménage avec la Mort? La mort est alors une longue et douloureuse histoire, ce n'est pas seulement le drame d'une heure fatale" (Bachelard 1942: 76).

is significant that the root *-zima* is used as an adjective in two meanings: ‘well, healthy’ and ‘whole, complete’.²⁵⁵ The word *uzima* is generally translated to refer only to ‘vitality, well-being, life’, but it seems that Kezilahabi’s conception of *uzima* also includes the idea of ‘wholeness’. In traditional Islamic Swahili poetry water is often presented as able to make human beings *kamili* ‘complete, whole’ or *timamu* ‘complete, perfect’, and while this dimension is not present in other modern Swahili poetry, through the connection of water and *uzima*, the image of water in Kezilahabi’s works can be regarded to have this powerful feature. Kezilahabi’s conception of *uzima* is also connected to purification. In *Mzingile*, the characters are able to fully *kuwa* ‘be/become’ by first purifying themselves in Paradisiacal fountains (Kezilahabi 1991: 63). I argue that in Kezilahabi’s philosophy, achieving *uzima* in its ideal sense – vitality, well-being, wholeness – requires purification.

Generally in Kezilahabi’s works, dying is part of living, not the opposite of life. Similarly, the dead are not completely dead, but rather live in a different form. The image of drying represents dying: drying is evaporation, followed by condensation somewhere else. It is part of the water-cycle, which represents well the philosophy of life in Kezilahabi’s poetry and its link to cyclical life-concept. Flowing of water (life) might seem linear, but it is part of the water-cycle, as is evaporation (death) and condensation (birth); water-cycle is continuous movement on, above and below the earth. The creation of a new water-drop illustrates birth; consequently, water imagery seems essential in the poetry that deals with procreation and sexuality. The circle found in the water-cycle is also found in the phoneme /o/ and in the grapheme <o>, which are used in some images of cyclicity of life. In contrast to this, some water images in Kezilahabi’s poetry seem to represent linear time-concepts and anxiety about approaching death; instead of one fixed image of water or life, the poems present a variety of speakers and perspectives. Kezilahabi’s water imagery also includes an original, supernatural image of solidifying: morally wrong people can become instantly dry, solidifying while immersed in river water. This seems very different from ordinary dying, and can be identified with the non-living world, often represented by the image of stone. This idea of (river) water as a moral judge can be related to Qur’anic and Biblical images of water in a river turning into blood as punishment; in

255 *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français* (Sacleux 1939) defines *-zima* as ‘Vivant, qui a la vie sauve; intact, complet, entier, non endommagé; bien portant; sain, vigoureux, valide.’ (= Living, whose life has been saved / who is well alive; intact, complete, whole, not damaged; feeling well; healthy, vigorous, valid.)

Kezilahabi's poetry blood often acts as the fatal substitute of water, similar to its role in traditional Swahili poetry.

The movement of water, often described with verbs such as *-viringika* 'rotate' and *-kuzunguka* 'go round and round', is crucial. In most of the poems in which water is full of life, the water is moving – waving, dropping, or flowing. The opposite of moving forward in some of the poems seems not to be immobility, but being stuck with one, repeated movement, such as banging a door or an iron wall over and over again. The lack of water and the lack of moving forward are also connected to the image of emptiness. The cycle of life is constantly rotating; the thoroughly hard stone is still, solid, and without any drop of vitality, any life.

The idea of constant movement, found in water, can be connected to Kezilahabi's idea of the inseparability of being and becoming: being, in its proper sense, is constant becoming, and this seems to be one of the reasons why the image of water so often represents life in Kezilahabi's poems. The dynamism of being and becoming creates the possibility for "eternal now" (Kezilahabi 1985: 126). In the eternal now, both the past and the future are present. The eternal now can be contrasted to the idea of *Carpe diem* which is based on the uncertainty of the future: instead "seizing the day because there might be nothing else",²⁵⁶ the eternal now is "seizing the moment because it has everything in it". Thus the eternal now is intense: it is "a moment in depth" (Kezilahabi 1985: 126), and can be seen even as "ekstasis" (Kezilahabi 1985: 127). Importantly, this intense "rapture" is not expressible in normal language, but can be expressed through poetry (Kezilahabi 1985: 126–127). I argue that the eternal now is a nonconceptual experience, which can be expressed in language of Being (or in Bachelard's terms, as the poetic truth), in poetic imagery.

Kezilahabi's references to "ekstasis" and "rapture" in connection to the eternal now resemble the Islamic view of how ecstasy can enable "momentary breakthroughs to eternity" during life on Earth (Böwering 1997: 65). At the same time it seems to draw from the idea of the presence of the past and the future in each moment, found in African philosophies (cf. Booth 1975; Okwu 1979). Similarly, Kezilahabi's image of the ocean as afterlife resembles the idea of death as "different mode of being" in African philosophies (Mazama 2002: 220). On the other hand, the linear image of river flowing into an ocean can be also interpreted as Christian. As shown throughout the book, Kezilahabi's water imagery

²⁵⁶ The Latin saying comes from a poem Ode 1.11 written by Roman poet Horace (65–8 BC); literally it means 'pick the day'. It has been interpreted in various ways, but in the context of the poem, the most eligible reading is "Snatch away' something from time, which snatches away all things eventually" (Grimm 1963: 317).

both resembles traditional and other modern Swahili poetry (in different ways) *and* departs from them into its own direction. Through his extensive familiarity with both various African (including traditional Islamic Swahili) and Western philosophies and literatures, Kezilahabi has been able to gather ideas from different perspectives, from Islamic and Christian to secular. Kezilahabi's idea of life is an original elaboration: the eternal now and the idea of full being, which is constant becoming, include the idea of *uzima* interpreted as 'vitality, well-being; completeness'.

Similarly, Kezilahabi's idea of purification seems to have drawn inspiration as much from the importance of ritual cleansing in Kerewe culture as from the significance of purification in Christianity and Islamic Swahili poetry, while developing into his very own philosophy. In Kezilahabi's fiction, purification extends to cover various levels from moral and cultural purification of an individual to purification of the consequences of colonialism, other moral issues in history, and environmental catastrophes. The way in which polluted or poisoned water are repeatedly and radically contrasted with pure water enhances the emphasis on purification: despite its liquid nature, impure water is not real water. The recurring image of defiled water can be regarded as an argument for the conservation of sources of pure water, but it is also an ethical argument in general. By presenting that full being is only possible if the human being seeks purification, Kezilahabi's poetry expresses a strong moral stance.

Nkafu Nkemnkia (1999: 178) argues that "[a]ccording to the Bantu mentality perception is the first and foremost moment of an authentic knowledge". Kezilahabi (1985: 242) also discusses authenticity, noting that in "authentic life", which is connected to living in the eternal now, "man comes to the closest intimacy with the cosmos"; in general, Kezilahabi (e.g. 1985: 240–242) emphasises the close connection of human beings and nature. While Nkafu Nkemnkia's argument of the importance of perception can be connected to the argument about perceptual knowledge of nonconceptual experiences, Kezilahabi's idea of the closeness to nature and cosmos can be viewed to deal with concrete, material elements. In his fiction, both the concrete and abstract closeness to nature is apparent in the water imagery: children want to be *in* the rain when they dance naked in the pouring rain (Kezilahabi 1971: 71); an old man demands to continue bathing *in* the river, instead of just pouring water from a lifeless metal tap (Kezilahabi 1979: 145–150). Moreover, Kezilahabi (1985: 243) argues that through the eternal now and full being/becoming, human being can have "temporary amalgamation with the world". Water seems to be an element that in poetic imagery is able to express this experience: water is constantly fluid and changing, being and becoming, and the image of dissolution can offer an expres-

sion of “temporary amalgamation”. Furthermore, as the problem of defining “life” shows, “life” or “being alive” is understood by everyone, but it is very difficult to conceptualise; I argue that “being alive” as such is mostly a nonconceptual experience, and that because of this, concrete images are so expressive in presenting life in poetry. The image of dew can express the experience of newness and return to life, the image of the past drowning in a lake can express how the history stays in collective memory, and non-restrictable movement of waves can express emotions and desires; but the image of water can also represent the simple yet definition-escaping experience of “being alive”. Furthermore, it can be argued that the concreteness of the image of water makes the philosophy in Kezilahabi’s poetry more illustrative or accessible to the reader than the very abstract level on which the ideas are presented for example in Kezilahabi’s doctoral dissertation.

Essential in the water imagery is the auditive dimension, which plays a supportive role in conveying the full perception: “maumbo ya vitu dhahiri yanayojitokeza katika mawazo baada ya kusoma au kusikia neno fulani” ‘appearance of manifest things that takes place in the mind after reading or hearing a certain word’ (Ruo 1989: 81). The “wetness” of the phonemes in Swahili seems to mostly follow the scale of continuity. However, the alveolar nasal /n/ does not fit within it,²⁵⁷ as it seems to frequently express dryness. The alveolar nature of this nasal seems to affect its sound in a way that is crucial to its connection to liquidity. A hypothetical explanation might be that the way in which the tongue touching the roof of mouth in /n/ makes the resonance chamber more restricted than in /m/ (whose full sound is created with the sound resonating in the entire mouth), combined with the way in which the airflow is blocked (and redirected through nose) in /n/, creates associations to the dryness of throat in thirst, or even implications to suffocating. The expressiveness of phonemes in Swahili and Swahili literature would however need much more research; similarly, in-depth analysis of material imagery in Swahili poetry could open up many new perspectives of Swahili literature and philosophies encapsulated within it.

257 As noted earlier (n. 222), the other nasal phoneme in Swahili, the velar nasal /ŋ/, does not occur frequently in the analysed poems, and it is found (infrequently) both in poems with images of water and in “dry” poems. Hence its role in the soundscapes, in regard to water, does not seem significant.

REFERENCES

Primary sources

- ABDALLA, Abdilatif 1971. *Utenzi wa Maisha ya Adamu na Hawaa* [Utenzi of the life of Adam and Eve]. Nairobi: OUP. (1st publ. 1964)
- ACHEBE, Chinua 1994. *Things Fall Apart*. NY: Anchor Books. (1st publ. 1959)
- ALLEN, James de Vere (tr. & ed.) 1977. *Al-Inkishafi: Catechism of a soul*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.
- ALLEN, John W.T. (ed.) 1971. *Tendi*. London: Heinemann.
- ARMAH, Ayi Kwei 1988. *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Oxford: Heinemann. (1st publ. 1969)
- BASHIR, Aboud (ed.) 1972. *Utendi wa Mikidadi na Mayasa: Sanaa ya utungo 3* [Utendi of Miqdad and Mayasa: Art of composition 3]. Nairobi: Heinemann. (Same edn of the poem as Allen, J.W.T. 1971)
- BÜTTNER, Carl G. (ed.) 1894. *Anthologie aus der Suaheli-Litteratur*. Berlin: Emil Felber.
- BÜTTNER, Carl G. & Carl MEINHOF (tr. & ed.) 1911–1912. Chuo cha Herkal: Das Buch von Herkal. *Zeitschrift für Kolonialsprachen* 2(1): 1–36, 108–136, 194–232, 261–296.
- CHIRAGHDIN, Shihabuddin (ed.) 1973. *Tungo za Kiberamni* [Compositions of Kiberamni]. Nairobi: Longman.
- CHUM, Haji 1974. *Utenzi wa Nushur* [Utenzi of Resurrection]. Kampala: East African Literature Bureau.
- DANGAREMBGA, Tsitsi 1989. *Nervous Conditions*. Seattle: Seal Press.
- HARRIES, Lyndon (ed.) 1962. *Swahili Poetry*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- HAULI, Crispin 1996. The Song of the Common Man. In: D. COOK & D. RUBADIRI (eds), *Poems from East Africa*: 49. London: Heinemann. (1st publ. 1971)
- HICHENS, William (tr. & ed.) 1939. *Al-Inkishafi: The Soul's awakening*. London: Sheldon Press.
- HICHENS, William (ed.) 1940. *Diwani ya Muyaka Bin Haji Al-Ghassaniy* [Poetry collection of Muyaka Bin Haji Al-Ghassaniy]. Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press.
- HUSSEIN, Ebrahim N. 1969. *Kinjeketile*. Dar es Salaam: OUP.
- HUSSEIN, Ebrahim N. 1970. *Kinjeketile*. London: OUP.
- JAHADHMY, Ali A. (ed.) 1975. *Kusanyiko la Mashairi: Anthology of Swahili poetry*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- KAHIGI, Kulikoyela & Mugyabuso MULOKOZI 1973. *Mashairi ya Kisasa* [Poems of today]. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House.
- KAHIGI, Kulikoyela K. & Mugyabuso M. MULOKOZI 1976. *Malenga wa Bara* [Poet of the mainland]. Dar es Salaam: East African Literature Bureau.

- KAHIGI, Kulikoyela K. & Mugyabuso M. MULOKOZI 1979. Diwani Yetu [Our poem collection]. In: K.K. KAHIGI & M.M. MULOKOZI, *Kunga za Ushairi na Diwani Yetu* [Secrets of poetry and our poem collection]: 65–119. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House. (1st publ. 1974)
- KANDORO, Saadani Abdu 1972. *Mashairi ya Saadani* [Poems of Saadani]. Dar es Salaam: Mwananchi Publishing.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1971. *Rosa Mistika*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1974a. *Kichomi* [Twinge, Pain]. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1974b. *Kichwamaji* [Hydrocephalus]. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1975a. *Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo* [World, the arena of chaos]. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1979. *Gamba la Nyoka* [Skin of snake]. Arusha: Eastern Africa Publications.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1987. *Sofferenza* [Twinge, Pain]. Tr. from Swahili into Italian by E. Bertoncini-Zúbková. Napoli: Plural.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1988. *Karibu Ndani* [Welcome inside]. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1990. *Nagona*. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1991. *Mzingile* [Labyrinth]. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1992. Cha Mnyonge Utakitapika Hadharani [The Food of the wretched you will vomit in public]. In: M. MSOKILE (ed.), *Misingi ya Hadithi Fupi: Maana, mbinu za uandishi, matatizo na nafasi yake katika jamii* [The Basis of the short story: Meaning, method of writing, problems and its place in the society]. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press. (1st publ. in *Mzalendo*, 7 April 1985)
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1999. *Kaptula la Marx* [Marx's shorts]. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 2004. Mayai: Waziri wa Maradhi [Mayai: Minister of illnesses]. In: K.W. WAMITILA (ed.), *Mayai Waziri wa Maradhi na Hadithi Nyingine* [Mayai: Minister of illnesses and other stories]: 63–77. Nairobi: Focus Publishers.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 2008. *Dhifa* [Feast]. Nairobi: Vide-Muwa Publishers.
- KHATIB, Muhammed Seif 2003. *Wasakatonge*. Dar es Salaam: OUP.
- KING'EI, Kitula 2000. *Miale ya Uzalendo*. [Rays of patriotism]. Nairobi: Phoenix Publishers.
- KITEREZA, Aniceti 1980. *Bwana Myombekere na Bibi Bugonoka, Ntulanalwo na Bulihwali*, I & II [Mr. Myombekere and Mrs. Bugonoka, Ntulanalwo and Bulihwali]. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House.
- KITEREZA, Aniceti 2002. *Mr. Myombekere and His Wife Bugonoka, Their Son Ntulanalwo and Daughter Bulihwali: The Story of an ancient African community*. Tr. from Kerewe by G. Ruhumbika. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers.
- KITHAKA wa Mberia 1997. *Michezo wa Karata* [Card games]. Nairobi: Marimba Publications.

- KITHAKA wa Mberia 2001. *Bara Jingine* [Another continent]. Nairobi: Marimba Publication.
- KITHAKA wa Mberia 2007. *Msimu wa Tisa* [The Ninth season]. Nairobi: Marimba Publications.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 1958. *Het epos van Heraklios: Een proeve van Swahili Poëzie. Tekst en vertaling, voorzien van inleiding, kritisch commentaar en aantekeningen*. Proefschrift PhD Thesis, State University of Leiden.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 1964a. Utenzi wa Miraji: The Ascension of the Prophet Mohammed. *Afrika und Übersee* 48: 241–274.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 1964b. Utenzi wa Mikidadi bin Alasuadi na Mayasa Mkewe: Mombasa version. *Swahili: Journal of the East African Swahili Committee* 34(1): 120–129.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 1966. Miiraji: The Swahili legend of Mohammed's ascension. *Swahili* 36(2): 105–156.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 1967. *Traditional Swahili Poetry: An Investigation into the concepts of East African Islam as reflected in the utenzi literature*. Leiden: Brill.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 1971. *Swahili Islamic Poetry*, I–III. Leiden: Brill.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 1972. *A Choice of Flowers – Chaguo la Maua: An Anthology of Swahili love poetry*. London: Heinemann.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 1979. *Four Centuries of Swahili Verse*. London: Heinemann.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 1983. *Epic Poetry in Swahili and Other African Languages*. Leiden: Brill.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 1990. Psalms, Hymns & the Translation of the Poetic Passages of the Bible into Swahili. *Lugha* 4: 94–99.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 1999. *A Survey of Swahili Islamic Epic Sagas*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press.
- KNAPPERT, Jan (ed.) 2004. *A Survey of Swahili Songs with English Translations*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press.
- LESSO, Zuberi A. 1972. *Utenzi wa Zinduko la Ujamaa* [Utenzi of the onset of Ujamaa]. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.
- MAHIMBI, Evaristo M. 1981. *Utenzi wa Chama cha Mapinduzi* [Utenzi of the opposition party]. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House.
- MARAIRE, J. Nozipo 1996. *Zenzele: A Letter for my daughter*. NY: Crown Publishers.
- MAZRUI, Alamin 1988. *Chembe cha Moyo* [A Crumb/seed of the heart; means also Epigastrium]. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- MDUNGI, Abbas 2009. *Malenga wa Mwana wa Mwana* [Poet of Mwana of Mwana]. Zanzibar: Al-Mafazy Print.
- MHINA, George A. 1979. *Utenzi wa Kumbukumbu za Azimio la Arusha* [Utenzi of the memory of the Arusha Declaration]. Dar es Salaam: Black Star.
- WA MLAMALI, Muhamadi (ed.) 1980. *Ikisiri ya Inkishafi* [Clarification of Inkishafi]. Composer Sayyid Abdalla A. Nasiri. Nairobi: Longman.
- MNYAMPALA, Mathias E. 1963. *Utenzi wa Enjili Takatifu* [Utenzi of the Holy New Testament]. Mombasa: Coronation Printers.
- MNYAMPALA, Mathias E. 1965. *Utenzi wa Zaburi*. [Utenzi of Psalms]. Ndanda: Ndanda Mission Press.

- MNYAMPALA, Mathias E. 1967. *Utenzi wa Enjili* [Utenzi of New Testament]. Lindi: Ndanda Mission Press. (1st edn publ. in 1963; this 2nd version is revised)
- MOHAMED, Said Ahmed 1980. *'sikate Tamaa*. Nairobi: Longman.
- MOHAMED, Said Ahmed 1984. *Kina Cha Maisha* [Depth of life]. Nairobi: Longman.
- MOHAMED, Said Ahmed 2002. *Jicho la Ndani* [The Inside eye]. Nairobi: Longhorn Publishers.
- MULOKOZI, Mugyabuso M. (ed.) 1999. *Tenzi Tatu za Kale (Fumo Liyongo, Al-Inkishafi, Mwanakupona)* [Three ancient poems (Fumo Liyongo, Al-Inkishafi, Mwanakupona)]. Dar es Salaam: TUKI.
- MWINYIHATIBU, Mohamed 1977. *Tungo Zangu* [My compositions]. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House.
- NASSIR BIN JUMA BHALO, Ahmad 1966. *Poems from Kenya: Gnostic verses in Swahili*. Tr. & ed. L. Harries. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- NASSIR BIN JUMA BHALO, Ahmad 1971. *Malenga wa Mvita: Diwani ya Ustadh Bhalo* [Poet of Lamu: Poetry collection of Ustadh Bhalo]. Ed. Shihabuddin Chiraghdin. Nairobi: OUP.
- NASSIR BIN JUMA BHALO, Ahmad 1979. *Utenzi wa Mtu ni Utu* [Utenzi of (the proverb) Human being is humanity]. Ed. M.K. Khan. London: Macmillan.
- NASSIR BIN JUMA BHALO, Ahmad 1982. *Taa Ya Umalenga* [Discipline of poetry]. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.
- NEUHAUS, Gustav (ed.) 1935. *Kitabu Mauludi*. Buch der Geburt Muhammed's. Suaheli-Gedicht des Lamu-Mannes Scharifu Mansabu bin Scharifu Abdurrahmani al-Hussaini. Manuskript in arabischer Schrift, wiedergegeben in Autotypien, übersetzt und erläutert. *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* 38(3): 145–201.
- NGÜGĪ wa Thiong'o 1989. *Matigari*. Tr. from Gikuyu into English by W. wa Goro. Berkshire: Cox & Wyman. The original work publ. 1987 with the title *Matigari ma Njiruungi* by Heinemann Kenya.
- NOOR, Ibrahim (ed.) 1972. *Utenzi wa Qiyama* [Utenzi of the Last Judgement]. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- NYERERE, Julius K. 1965. *Usawa wa Binadamu* [Equality of human beings]. In: M.E. MNYAMPALA (ed.), *Mashairi ya Hekima na Malumbano ya Ushairi* [Poetry of wisdom and cross-examination of poetry]: 1–3. Tanzania: Chama cha Washairi wa Kiswahili.
- ROBERT, Shaaban 1952. *Omar Khayyam Kwa Kiswahili* [Swahili translation of Omar Khayyam]. London: Macmillan.
- ROBERT, Shaaban 1959. *Insha Na Mashairi* [Essays and poems]. Tanga: Art and Literature Private Bag.
- ROBERT, Shaaban 1960. *Almasi za Afrika* [African diamonds]. London: Nelson.
- ROBERT, Shaaban 1967. *Utenzi wa Vita vya Uhuru, 1939 Hata 1945* [Utenzi of Freedom War, from 1938 to 1945]. Nairobi: OUP.
- ROBERT, Shaaban 1968. *Utubora Mkulima* (Diwani ya Shaaban 8) [Utubora the farmer (Poetry collection of Shaaban 8)]. London: Nelson.
- ROBERT, Shaaban 1991. *Mapenzi Bora* [Excellent love]. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota. (1st publ. 1969)

- SALIH, Tayib 1991. *Season of Migration to the North*. Tr. from Arabic by Denys Johnson-Davies. Oxford: Heinemann.
- UVETIE, Ellie A. 1976. *Utamu wa Lugha* [Sweetness of language]. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.
- VERA, Yvonne 1993. *Nehanda*. Harare: Baobab Books.

Secondary sources

- ABDULAZIZ, Mohamed H. 1979. *Muyaka: 19th Century Swahili popular poetry*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.
- ABEDI, K. Amri 1979. *Sheria za Kutunga Mashairi na Diwani ya Amri* [Rules for composing poetry and our collection]. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau. (1st publ. 1954)
- ACQUAVIVA, Graziella 2004. Jazanda ya Njozi katika Baadhi ya Mashairi ya Euphrase Kezilahabi [Oneiric images in some of the poems of Euphrase Kezilahabi]. *Swahili Forum* 11: 69–73.
- AHMAD, Muhammad ‘Abd al-‘Aziz & Majdi as-Sayyid IBRAHIM 1996. *The Water of Zamzam*. London: Dar Al Taqwa.
- ALLEN, James de V. 1982. Traditional History and African Literature: The Swahili case. *Journal of African History* 23: 227–236.
- ALLEN, John W.T. 1945. Arabic Script for Students of Swahili. *Tanganyika Notes and Records, Supplement*, November 1945: 7–78.
- ALLEN, John W.T. 1961. Introduction. In: R. ALLEN (ed. & tr.): 3–5.
- ALLEN, Roland. 1946. Inkishafi: A Translation from the Swahili. *African Studies* 5(4): 243–249.
- ALLEN, Roland (ed. & tr.) 1961. *Utenzi wa Abdurrahmani na Sufiyani: The History of Abdurrahman and Sufian by Hemel Abdallah Saidi Abdallah Masudi el Buhry el Hinauy*. Dar es Salaam: East African Literature Bureau.
- The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* 2000. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- ARNOLD, Rainer 1973. Swahili Literature and Modern History: A Necessary remark on literary criticism. *Kiswahili* 42(2)–43(1): 68–73.
- ASHTON, Ethel O. 1964. *Swahili Grammar (Including Intonation)*. London: Longman.
- ASHTON, Ethel O. & Archibald N. TUCKER 1942. Swahili Phonetics. *African Studies* 1(2): 77–103.
- BACHELARD, Gaston 1938. *La Psychoanalyse du feu*. Paris: Gallimard.
- BACHELARD, Gaston 1942. *L'eau et les rêves, essai sur l'imagination de la matière*. Paris: J. Corti.
- BACHELARD, Gaston 1943. *L'air et les songes*. Paris: J. Corti.
- BACHELARD, Gaston 1946. *La terre et les rêveries du repos*. Paris: J. Corti.
- BACHELARD, Gaston 1948. *La terre et les rêveries de la volonté*. Paris: J. Corti.
- BACHELARD, Gaston 1964. *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*. Tr. A.C.M. Ross. Boston: Beacon Press.
- BACHELARD, Gaston 1983. *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the imagination of matter*. Tr. E.F. Farrell. Dallas: Pegasus Foundation.

- BACHELARD, Gaston 1988. *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the imagination of movement*. Tr. E.F. & F. Farrell. Dallas: Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture.
- BAKHRESSA, Salim K. 1992. *Kamusi ya Maana na Matumizi* [Dictionary of meaning and use]. Nairobi: OUP.
- Bantu Lexical Reconstructions*. <www.metafro.be/blr>, accessed 26 May 2009.
- BARBER, Alex, 1998. The Pleonasticity of Talk about Concepts. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 89(1): 53–86.
- BARTHOLD, Bonnie 1981. *Black Time: Fiction of Africa, the Caribbean and the United States*. New Haven: YUP.
- BERLEANT, Arnold 1971. Education as Aesthetic Process. *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 5(3): 139–147.
- BERNANDER, Lars 1977. Euphrase Kezilahabi: Narrator of modern Tanzania. *Lugha* 1: 46–50.
- BERTONCINI, Elena 1980. Two Contemporary Swahili Writers: Muhammed Said Abdulla and Euphrase Kezilahabi. In: U. SCHILD (ed.), *The East African Experience: Essays on English and Swahili literature*: 85–90. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- BERTONCINI-ZÚBKOVÁ, Elena 1986. An Annotated Bibliography of Swahili Fiction and Drama Published between 1975 and 1984. *Research in African Literatures* 17(4): 525–562.
- BERTONCINI, Elena 1987. Islam in Swahili Literature. Islam et Littératures Africaines. Association pour l'étude des littératures africaines. *Nouvelles du Sud: Arts, littératures, sociétés* 6–7: 15–21.
- BERTONCINI-ZÚBKOVÁ, Elena 1989. *Outline of Swahili Literature: Prose, fiction and drama*. Leiden: Brill.
- BERTONCINI-ZÚBKOVÁ, Elena 1992. Stylistic Approaches to E. Kezilahabi's Novels and Poetry. *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 31: 5–67.
- BERTONCINI-ZÚBKOVÁ, Elena 1994a. Inland Tanzania: Swahili Literature or Literature in Swahili? In: D. PARKIN (ed.), *Continuity and Autonomy in Swahili Communities: Inland influences and strategies of self-determination*: 205–213. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.
- BERTONCINI-ZÚBKOVÁ, Elena 1994b. La Maladie et la Mort dans les œuvres de Kezilahabi [Illness and death in the works of Kezilahabi]. In: J. BARDOLPH (ed.), *Littérature et maladie en Afrique: Image et fonction de la maladie dans la production littéraire* [Literature and illness in Africa: Image and function of illness in literary production]: 5–26. (Actes du Congrès de l'A.P.E.L.A., Nice, septembre 1991) Paris: L'Harmattan.
- BERTONCINI-ZÚBKOVÁ, Elena 1996a. *Vamps and Victims: Women in modern Swahili literature*. Cologne: Köppe.
- BERTONCINI-ZÚBKOVÁ, Elena 1996b. Marx's Shorts and Ancestor's Caves: Tracing critical motifs in Kezilahabi's play and poems. *AAP (Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere)* 47: 139–148.
- BERTONCINI-ZÚBKOVÁ, Elena 2004. Mayai – Waziri wa Maradhi: Magic Realism in Kezilahabi's Long Time Unpublished Short Story. *Swahili Forum* 11: 39–44.
- BERTONCINI-ZÚBKOVÁ, Elena 2008. *Outline of Swahili Literature: Prose, fiction and drama*. 2nd revised edn. Leiden: Brill.

- BIERSTEKER, Ann 1990. *The Significance of the Swahili Literary Tradition to Interpretation of Early Twentieth Century Political Poetry*. (African Humanities Discussion Paper 6) Boston: Boston University African Studies Center.
- BIERSTEKER, Ann 1996. *Kujibizana: Questions of language and power in nineteenth- and twentieth-century poetry in Kiswahili*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.
- BLOOM, Harold 1997. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of poetry*. NY: OUP. (1st publ. 1973)
- BOOTH, Jr. Newell S. 1975. Time and Change in African Traditional Thought. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 7: 81–91.
- BORG, Gert 1997 *Mit Poesie vertreibe ich den Kummer meines Herzens: Eine Studie zur altarabischen Trauerklage der Frau*. Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archeologisch Instituut te Istanbul.
- BÖWERING, Gerhard 1997. The Concept of Time in Islam. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 141(1): 55–66.
- BULCAEN, Chris 1997. The Dialogue of an Author: Kezilahabi's "Kaputula la Marx". *Swahili Forum* IV: 107–115.
- CAVELL, Stanley 1976. *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of essays*. Cambridge: CUP.
- CHACHA, Chacha Nyaigotti 1988. Meaning and Interpretation of Swahili Poetry: A Portrayal of a changing society. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Yale University.
- CHENOU, Marianne 1997. "Nagona" und "Mzingile", zwei Romane des tanzanischen Autors Euphrase Kezilahabi. In: B. SOTTAS, T. HAMMER, L.R. VISCHER & A. MAYOR (eds), *Werkschau Afrikastudien: Le forum suisse des africanistes: 362–368*. (Afrikanische Studien 11) Hamburg: LIT.
- CRAHAY, Franz 1965. Le Décollage Conceptuel: Conditions d'une Philosophie Bantoue [Conceptual launch: The Terms of a Bantu philosophy]. *Diogenes* 52: 55–78.
- DAHL, Gudrun & Gemetchu MEGERSSA 1990. The Sources of Life: Boran conceptions of wells and water. In: G. PALSSON (ed.), *From Water to World-Making: 21–37*. Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.
- DAMMANN, Ernst 1940. *Dichtungen in der Lamu-Mundart des Suaheli: Gesammelt, herausgegeben und übersetzt von Ernst Dammann*. (Schriften des Kolonialinstituts der Hansischen Universität 3) Hamburg: Friederichsen, de Gruyter & Co.
- DARROCH, R. G. 1943. Some Notes on the Early History of the Tribes Living on the Lower Tana, Collected by Mikael Samson and Others. *Journal of the East Africa Natural History Society* 17: 244–254.
- DAVIES, Martin 1983. Idiom and Metaphor. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 83: 67–85. [Referred to in Kezilahabi 1985]
- DERRIDA, Jacques 2000. A Self-Unsealing Poetic Text: Poetics and politics of witnessing. In: M. CLARK (ed.), *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of literature in theory today: 180–207*. Berkeley: UC Press.
- DIADJI, Iba Ndiaye 2003. From "Life-Water" to "Death-Water" or on the Foundations of African Artistic Creation from Yesterday to Tomorrow. Tr. from French by O. Brock. *Leonardo* 36(4): 273–277.

- DICKSON, Donald R. 1987. *The Fountains of Living Waters: The Typology of the waters of life in Herbert, Vaughan and Traherne*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- DIEGNER, Lutz 2001. Metaphern und Allegorien im Frühwerk des swahilisprachigen Schriftstellers Euphrase Kezilahabi. Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Cologne.
- DIEGNER, Lutz 2002. Allegories in Euphrase Kezilahabi's Early Novels. (Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere 72) *Swahili Forum* 9: 43–74.
- DIEGNER, Lutz 2005. Intertextuality in the Contemporary Swahili Novel: Euphrase Kezilahabi's *Nagona* and William E. Mkufya's *Ziraili na Zirani*. *Swahili Forum* 12: 25–35.
- DIEGNER, Lutz 2007. *The Extension of Social Criticism in the Swahili Novels of Euphrase Kezilahabi and Said Ahmed Mohamed*. PhD Thesis, University of Cologne.
- DITTEMER, Clarissa 2006. Inkishafi kwa mara nyingine: Erste Schritte zu einer neuen Textedition. In: K. WINKELMANN & D. IBRIZIMOW (eds), *Zwischen Bantu und Burkina: Festschrift für Gudrun Miehe zum 65. Geburtstag*: 23–44. Cologne: Köppe.
- DOMPERE, Kofi Kissi 2006. *Polyrhythmicity: Foundations of African philosophy*. London: Adonis & Abbey Publications.
- EBOUSSI-BOULAGA, Fabien 1968. Le Bantou problématique. *Présence Africaine* 66: 4–40.
- EKSELL, Kerstin 1997. *Descriptions of Water in Jahiliya Poetry: A Formal approach*. Edsbruk: Stockholm University.
- ELIOT, Thomas S. 1975. The Auditory Imagination. In: G. MARTIN & P.N. FURBANK (eds), *Twentieth Century Poetry*: 50. London: The Open University Press. (Repr. from T.S. Eliot 1933. *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*. London: Faber.)
- EMMOTT, Catherine 2002. Responding to Style: Cohesion, foregrounding, and thematic interpretation. In: M. LOUWERSE & W. VAN PEER (eds), *Thematics: Interdisciplinary studies*: 91–118. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- FARSI, Kadhi Sheikh Abdulla Saleh 1965. *Kisa cha Miraji* [Narrative of Miraj]. <www.zanzinet.org/poems/other_poems/kisa_cha_miraji.html>, accessed 30 Mar. 2016.
- FELDHAUS, Anne 1995. *Water and Womanhood: Religious meanings of rivers in Maharashtra*. NY: OUP.
- FERBER, Michael 1999. *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*. Cambridge: CUP.
- FÓNAGY, Iván 1961. Communication in Poetry. *Word* 17: 194–218.
- FRAZER, Ray 1960. The Origin of the Term Image. *English Literary History* 27(1): 149–161.
- FREUD, Sigmund 1975. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Tr. & ed. J. Strachey. NY: Norton. (1st publ. 1920)
- FROLOVA, Natalya 2001. Поэтическое творчество Эфраса Кезилахаби [The Poetry of Euphrase Kezilahabi']. Unpublished Graduate Thesis, Moscow.
- FROLOVA, Natalya 2003. Euphrase Kezilahabi: The Renewal of the Kiswahili Poetry. *Kiswahili* 66: 59–65.
- FROLOVA, Natalya 2004. Развитие современной поэзии Восточной Африки на языках суахили и английском (70–90-е гг. XX в.) [The Evolution of modern East African poetry in Swahili and English (1970s–1990s)]. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Moscow.

- FRY, Dennis B. 1970. Speech Reception and Production. In: J. LYONS (ed.), *New Horizons in Linguistics*: 53–75. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- FUGLESTAD, Finn 1992. The Trevor-Roper Trap or the Imperialism of History: An Essay. *History in Africa* 19: 309–326.
- FURBANK, Philip N. 1970. *Reflections on the Word "Image"*. London: Secker & Warburg.
- GARNIER, Xavier 2006. *Le romanswahili: La notion de "littérature mineure" à l'épreuve*. Paris: Karthala.
- GEIDER, Thomas. 2002. The Paper Memory of East Africa: Ethnohistories and biographies written in Swahili. In: A. HARNET-SIEVERS (ed.), *A Place in the World: New local historiographies from Africa and South Asia*: 255–288. Leiden: Brill.
- GÉRARD, Albert S. 1976. Structure and Values in Three Swahili Epics. *Research in African Literatures* 7(1): 7–22.
- GIBBE, Abel G. 1982. Baadhi ya Taswira katika Gamba la Nyoka [Some of the images in Gamba la Nyoka]. *Kiswahili* 49(1): 1–8.
- GLUCKSBERG, Sam & Joseph H. DANK 1975. *Experimental Psycholinguistics: An Introduction*. NY: Halsted Press Division of Wiley. [Quoted in Tsur 2001.]
- GOODWIN, Ken L. 1982. *Understanding African Poetry: A Study of ten poets*. London: Heinemann.
- GRAY, Richard 1978. Christianity and Religious Change in Africa. *African Affairs* 77(306): 89–100.
- GRIMM, R. E. 1963. Horace's "Carpe Diem". *The Classical Journal* 58(7): 313–318.
- GROMOV, Mikhail D. 1998. Nagona and Mzingile: Novel, tale or parable? (Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere 55) *Swahili Forum* 5: 73–78.
- GROMOV, Mikhail D. 2006. The Question of Kiswahili Style Again? The Poetry of Kithaka wa Mberia. *Kiswahili* 69: 109–126.
- GROMOV, Mikhail 2009. On Stylistic Trends in Modern Swahili Poetry. Presentation at the workshop "Swahili poetry in performance: Voice-Overs and counterpoints on poetic trends and continuities", 16 September 2009, Nairobi.
- GWASSA, Gilbert C.K. 1972. Kinjikitile and the Ideology of Maji Maji. In: T.O. RANGER & I.N. KIMAMBO (eds), *The Historical Study of African Religion*: 202–218. Berkeley: UC Press.
- GWASSA, Gilbert C.K. 2005 (written 1973). *The Outbreak and Development of the Maji Maji War: 1905–1907*. Cologne: Köppe.
- GWASSA, Gilbert C.K. & John ILIFFE 1967. *Records of the Maji Maji Rising*. Dar es Salaam: East African Publishing House.
- HALEEM, Muhammad Abdel 2001. *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and style*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- HALLEN, Barry 2006. *African Philosophy: The Analytic approach*. Asmara: Africa World Press.
- HARRIES, Lyndon 1950. A Poem from Siu from the Swahili-Arabic Text. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13(3): 759–770.
- HARRIES, Lyndon 1966. Language and Law in Tanzania. *Journal of African Law* 10(3): 164–167. Cambridge: CUP.
- HARRIES, Lyndon 1976. The Nationalization of Swahili in Kenya. *Language in Society* 5(2): 153–164.
- HASLAM, Sylvia M. 1991. *The Historic River: Rivers and culture down the ages*. Cambridge: Cobden of Cambridge Press.

- HAUNER, Magdalena 1984. Complex Tenses and Style in the Novels of E. Kezilahabi. In: J. MAW & D. PARKIN (eds), *Swahili Language and Society*: 107–125. Vienna: Afro-Pub.
- HAYDEN, Gregory F. 1987. Evolution of Time Constructs and Their Impact on Socioeconomic Planning. *Journal of Economic Issues* 21(3): 1281–1312.
- HECK, Richard G. 2000. Nonconceptual Content and the “Space of Reasons”. *Philosophical Review* 109: 483–523.
- HEELAN, Patrick A. 1983. *Space-Perception and the Philosophy of Science*. Berkeley: UC Press.
- HINNEBUSCH, Thomas & Sarah MIRZA 1998. *Kiswahili: Msingi wa Kusema, Kusoma na Kuandika* [Swahili: The foundation for speaking, reading and writing]. Maryland: University Press of America.
- HOLDSTOCK, T. Len 2000. *Re-examining Psychology: Critical perspectives and African insights*. London: Routledge.
- HOUNTONDJI, Paulin J. 1977. *Sur la “philosophie africaine”: critique de l’ethnophilosophie*. [On “African philosophy”: critique of ethnophilosophy]. Paris : F. Maspero.
- HRUSHOVSKI, Benjamin (Harshav) 1968. Do Sounds Have Meanings? On the Problem of Expressive Sound Patterns in Poetry. *Ha-Sifrut* 1: 410–420. (In Hebrew). [Quoted in Tsur 2008]
- HUG, Heinz 2001. Euphrase Kezilahabi: Literat in Swahili. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 254: 32.
- LIFFE, John 1967. The Organization of the Maji Maji Rebellion. *The Journal of African History* 8(3): 495–512.
- ILLICH, Ivan 1986. *H2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness*. London: Marion Boyars.
- INGOLD, Tim 2000. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. London: Routledge.
- IRELE, Abiola 1990. *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology*. London: Heinemann.
- ISER, Wolfgang 1993. *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting literary anthropology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- JAKOBSON, Roman 1968. *Child Language, Aphasia, and Phonological Universals*. The Hague: Mouton.
- JOHNS, Anthony H. 2006. Water. In: J.D. MCAULIFFE (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an*, V, Si–Z: 461–466. Leiden: Brill.
- JOHNSON, Frederick 1939. *A Standard Swahili–English Dictionary*. n.p.: OUP.
- JOHNSON, Lemuel A. 1980. Crescent and Consciousness: Islamic Orthodoxies and the West African novel. *Research in African Literatures* 11(1): 26–49.
- KAHIGI, Kulikoyela K. & Mugyabuso M. MULOKOZI 1979. Kunga za Ushairi [Secrets of poetry]. In: K.K. KAHIGI & M.M. MULOKOZI, *Kunga za Ushairi na Diwani Yetu* [Secrets of poetry and our poem collection]: 1–64. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House. (1st publ. 1974)
- KELLY, Sean D. 2001. The Non-Conceptual Content of Perceptual Experience: Situation dependence and fineness of grain. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62(3): 601–608.

- KENNER, Hugh 1975. The Image: What the words actually name. In: G. MARTIN & P.N. FURBANK (eds), *Twentieth Century Poetry*: 25–31. London: The Open University Press. (Repr. from Kenner 1966. The Image: What the words actually name. *The Art of Poetry*: 37–48. NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.)
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1973. The Development of Swahili Poetry: 18th–20th Century. *Kiswahili* 42(2)–43(1): 62–67.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1975b. *Shaaban Robert: Mwandishi Wa Riwaya* [Shaaban Robert: Writer of novels]. MA Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam. (Published 1984 by the Tanzania Publishing House)
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1976a. *Ushairi Wa Shaaban Robert* [The Poetry of Shaaban Robert]. Kampala: East African Literature Bureau.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1976b. Ushairi wa Mapokeo na Wakati Ujao [Poetry of the past and the future]. In: J.P. MBONDE (ed.), *Uandishi wa Tanzania: Kitabu cha Kwanza – Insha* [Writing of Tanzania: The first part – Essays]: 121–137. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1977. Mashairi ya Kiswahili [Swahili poetry]. In: F. TOPAN (ed.), *Uchambuzi wa Maandishi ya Kiswahili: Kitabu cha Pili* [Interpretation of the Swahili writing: Part Two]: 59–70. Dar es Salaam: OUP.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1980. The Swahili Novel and the Common Man in East Africa. In: U. SCHILD (ed.), *The East African Experience: Essays on English and Swahili literature*: 75–84. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1983. Uchunguzi katika Ushairi wa Kiswahili [Research of Swahili poetry]. In: *Makala za Semina ya Kimataifa ya Waandishi wa Kiswahili III: Fasihi*. [Papers of the national seminar of writing in Swahili III: Literature]: 144–163. Dar es Salaam: Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Kiswahili.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 1985. *African Philosophy and the Problem of Literary Interpretation*. PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase 2001. A Phenomenological Interpretation of Kerebe Greetings. *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 14(2): 181–192.
- KEZILAHABI, Euphrase & Heinz HUG 2002. Moderne in afrikanischer Sprache. *Literatur Nachrichten* 72: 9–11.
- KHAMIS, Said A.M. 1990. Poetry and Maturity (The Case of Swahili Poetry). *Lugha* 4: 78–83.
- KHAMIS, Said A.M. 2001. Classicism in Shaaban Robert's Utopian Novel. *Kusadikika. RAL* 32(1): 47–65.
- KHAMIS, Said A.M. 2003. Fragmentation, Orality and Magic Realism in Kezilahabi's Novel Nagona. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 12(1): 78–91.
- KHAMIS, Said A.M. 2005. Signs of New Features in the Swahili Novel. *Research in African Literatures* 36(1): 91–108.
- KING'EI, Kitula 2001. Historical and Folkloric Elements in Fumo Liyongo's Epic. *Folklore* 16: 78–86. <www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol16/liyongo.pdf>, accessed 26 Apr. 2006.
- KRUMM, Bernard 1940. *Words of Oriental Origin in Swahili*. London: Sheldon Press.

- KUNENE, Mazisi 1992. Problems in African Literature. *Research in African Literatures* 23(1): 27–44.
- LACUNZA-BALDA, J. 1997. Translations of the Quran into Swahili, and Contemporary Islamic Revival in East Africa. In: D. WESTERLUND & E.E. ROSANDER (eds), *African Islam and Islam in Africa*: 95–126. London: Hurst & Company.
- LAMBERT, Harold E. 1964. Review: [untitled]. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 27(1): 204–206.
- LANGER, Susanne K. 1957. *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the symbolism of reason, rite, and art*. Cambridge: HUP. (1st publ. 1942)
- LEITCH, Vincent B. 1983. *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced introduction*. NY: Columbia University Press.
- LIBERMAN, Alvin M., Ignatius G. MATTINGLY & Michael T. TURVEY 1972. Language Codes and Memory Codes. In: A.W. MELTON & E. MARTIN (eds), *Coding Processes in Human Memory*: 307–334. NY: Winston.
- LODHI, Abdulaziz Y. 1990. The Poetics of Swahili Proverbs. *Lugha* 4: 113–117.
- LODHI, Abdulaziz Y. 2000. *Oriental Influences in Swahili: A Study in language and culture contacts*. Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- LODHI, Abdulaziz Y. 2004. Strategies of Emphasis and Intensity in Swahili. *Africa & Asia* 4: 142–150.
- LODHI, Abdulaziz Y., Ahmed S. FARIS & Mohamed Y. LODHI 1974. *Swahili Poetry: A Shortguide for beginners*. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institut.
- DE LOOF, Arnold. 2002. *Communication, Life, Mega-Evolution: Decrypting life's nature*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- LORENZ, Alfred 1933. Gedicht vom MajiMaji Aufstand. *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* 36: 227–259.
- MCDOWELL, John 1994. *Mind and World: The 1992 John Locke lectures*. Cambridge: HUP.
- MADAN, Arthur C. 2000. *Swahili–English Dictionary*. Ashford: Bay Foreign Language Books. (1st publ. 1903)
- MALAIKA, Baba 1991. *Modern Swahili–Modern English Dictionary*. n.p.: n.p.
- MAPUNDA, O .B. & Gaudens P. Mpangara 1969. *The Maji Maji War in Ungoni*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House.
- MARTIN, M. 1992. Perception, Concepts, and Memory. *Philosophical Review* 101: 745–764.
- MATTSON, Ingrid 2008. *The Story of the Qur'an: Its history and place in Muslim life*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- MAZAMA, Mambo Ama 2002. Afrocentricity and African Spirituality. *Journal of Black Studies* 33(2) (13th Cheikh Anta Diop Conference Selected Proceedings): 218–234.
- MAZRUI, Alamin 1992. Conservationism and Liberalism in Swahili Poetry: The Linguistic dimension. *Research in African Literatures* 23(4): 67–76.
- MAZRUI, Alamin 2007. *Swahili Beyond the Boundaries: Literature, language, and identity*. Ohio: Ohio University Press.

- MBATIAH, Mwenda 1998. Mienendo Mipya katika Uandishi wa Kezilahabi: Nagona na Mzingile [New trends in the writing of Kezilahabi: Nagona and Mzingile]. *Mulika* 24: 1–11.
- MBELE, Joseph L. 1986. The Liongo Fumo Epic and the Scholars. *Kiswahili* 53(1&2): 128–145.
- MBITI, John 1969. *African Religions and Philosophy*. n.p.: Heinemann.
- MEINHOF, Carl 1932. *Introduction to the Phonology of the Bantu Languages*. The English version of Grundriss einer Lautlehre der Bantusprachen (1st publ. in German 1899 by C. Meinhof) Tr., rev., and enl. by N.J. van Warmelo in collaboration with the author and A. Werner. Berlin: Reimer.
- MEZGER, Sonja 2002. Roman Catholic Faith Represented in Kezilahabi's Mzingile. *Swahili Forum* 9: 75–85.
- MIEHE, Gudrun, Katrin BROMBER, Said KHAMIS & Ralf GROSSERHODE 2002. *Kala Shairi: German East Africa in Swahili poems*. Cologne: Köppe.
- MITCHELL, William J.T. 1993. Image. In: A. PREMINGER & T.V.F. BROGAN (eds), *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*: 557–558. Princeton: PUP.
- MLACHA, Shaaban Ali Kachenje 1987. The Portrayal of Cultural Conflict in Kiswahili Prose Fiction: A Structural study of the novels of Euphrase Kezilahabi. Unpublished PhD Thesis, SOAS, University of London.
- MLACHA, Shaaban Ali Kachenje 1988. The Effects of Foreign Culture to the Younger Generation: A Case study of Kezilahabi's three novels. *Kiswahili* 55(1/2): 45–57.
- MONTGOMERY, Martin, Alan DURANT, Nigel FABB, Tom FURNISS & Sara MILLS 1992. *Ways of Reading: Advanced reading skills for students of English literature*. London: Routledge.
- MOORE, Gerald 1968. The Imagery of Death in African Poetry. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 38(1): 57–70.
- MPHANDE, Lupenga 1992. Ideophones and African Verse. *Research in African Literatures* 23(1): 117–129.
- MSOKILE, Mbunda 1991. *Uchambuzi na Uhakiki wa Karibu Ndani (E. Kezilahabi)* [Analysis and critic of Karibu Ndani by Euphrase Kezilahabi]. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.
- MUDIMBE, Valentin-Yves 1983. *African Philosophy as an Ideological Practice: The Case of French-Speaking Africa*. *African Studies Review* 26(3/4): 133–154.
- MULOKOZI, Mugyabuso M. 1975. Revolution and Reaction in Swahili Poetry. *Kiswahili* 45(2): 46–65.
- MULOKOZI, Mugyabuso M. 1983. Dunia Uwanja wa Fujo. *Kiswahili* 50(1): 1–12.
- MULOKOZI, Mugyabuso M. 1989. Et Oversyn Over Kiswahili-Litteraturen 1970–1988 [A Review of Swahili literature 1970–1988]. *Vinduet* 4: 46–51. Tr. into Norwegian by I. Rogde.
- MULOKOZI, Mugyabuso M. 1992. A Survey of Kiswahili Literature: 1970–1988. *Afrika Focus* 8(1): 49–61.
- MULOKOZI, Mugyabuso M. & Tigiti S.Y. SENGO 1995. *History of Kiswahili Poetry: AD 1000–2000*. Dar es Salaam: Institute of Kiswahili Research.

- MUNGAH, Charles Irungu 1999. Dhana ya Maisha katika Novela Mbili za Euphrase Kezilahabi: Nagona na Mzingile [The Concept of life in two novels of Euphrase Kezilahabi: Nagona and Mzingile]. Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Nairobi.
- MURRY, John Middleton 1975. Metaphor. In: G. MARTIN & P.N. FURBANK (eds), *Twentieth Century Poetry*: 7–17. London: The Open University Press. (Repr. from J. Middleton Murry 1931. “Metaphor” in *Countries of the Mind: Essays in literary criticism*: 1–17. London: OUP.)
- MWITA, Leonard Chacha 2007. Prenasalization and the IPA. *UCLA Working Papers in Phonetics* 106: 58–67.
- NABHANY, Ahmed Sheikh 1987. Utangulizi [Introduction]. In: S. CHIRAGHDIN (ed), *Malenga wa Karne Moja* [The Poet of one century]: iv–vi. Nairobi: Longman.
- NASSIR BIN JUMA BHALO, Ahmad. 1990. Muyaka wa Muhaji na Ushairi wa Kiswahili [Muyaka bin Haji and Swahili poetry]. *Lugha* 4: 17–37.
- NJOGU, Kimani 1995. Poetic Serialization: Kiswahili metapoetry on prosodic Knots. *Research in African Literatures* 26(4): 138–150.
- NJOGU, Kimani & Rocha CHIMERAH 1999. *Ufundishaji wa Fasibi: Nadharia na mbinu* [Teaching literature: Theories and methods]. Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta.
- NKAFU NKEMNKIA, Martin 1999. *African Vitalogy: A Step forward in African thinking*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.
- NKURUNZIZA, Deusdedit R.K. 1989. *Bantu Philosophy of Life in the Light of Christian Message: A Basis for an African vitalistic theology*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- NUCKOLLS, Janis B. 1999. The Case for Sound Symbolism. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28: 225–252.
- OINONEN, Yrjö 1945. *Vesiluonto Eino Leinon ajan runoudessa* [Water nature in the poetry of the days of Eino Leino]. Kouvola: n.p.
- OJAIDE, Tanure 1995. New Trends in Modern African Poetry. *Research in African Literatures* 26(1): 4–19.
- OKAFOR, Stephen O. 1982. Bantu Philosophy: Placide tempels revisited. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 13(2): 89–90.
- OKWU, Austine S.O. 1979. Life, Death, Reincarnation, and Traditional Healing in Africa. *A Journal of Opinion* 9(3): 19–24.
- OLALI, Tom Mboya 2004. *The Veneration of the Prophet: The Role of Kasida ya Hamziyyah during the Maulidi Festival of the Lamu Archipelago, Kenya*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.
- PARKER, Carolyn A. 1979. On the Dating of Utendi wa Ayubu. *Research in African Literatures* 10(3): 380–382.
- P'BITEK, Okot 1964. Fr. Tempels' Bantu Philosophy. *Transition* 13: 15–17.
- PEACOCKE, Christopher 1992. *A Study of Concepts*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- PEACOCKE, Christopher 1998. Nonconceptual Content Defended. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 58: 381–388.

- PENDERGRAST, Mark 2003. *Mirror, Mirror: A History of the human love affair with reflection*. NY: Basic Books.
- POLÁNYI, Michael A. 1967. *The Tacit Dimension*. NY: Anchor. [Quoted in Tsur 2008]
- POLOMÉ, Edgar C. 1967. *Swahili Language Handbook*. Washington DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. 1974. Princeton: PUP.
- RAFFMAN, Diana 1993. *Language, Music, and Mind*. Bradford, MA: MIT Press.
- RAHMAN, Fazlur 1989. *Major Themes of the Qur'an*. Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica.
- Ranne, Katriina 2011. The Image of Water in the Poetry of Euphrase Kezilahabi. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, SOAS, University of London.
- ŘEHÁK, Vilém 2007. Kazimoto and Mersault: "Brothers" in Despair and Loneliness: Comparing Kezilahabi's Kichwamaji and Camus' L'Etranger. *Swahili Forum* 14: 135–151.
- RETTOVÁ, Alena 2004. Afrophone Philosophies: Possibilities and practice: The Reflexion of Philosophical Influences in Euphrase Kezilahabi's Nagona and Mzingile. *Swahili Forum* 11: 45–68.
- RETTOVÁ, Alena 2007. *Afrophone Philosophies: Reality and challenge*. Středokluky: Zdeněk Susa.
- RICOEUR, Paul 1976. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the surplus of meaning*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press.
- RIOS, Alberto 2001. Degas in Vegas: Some thoughts on sound in poetry. In: J. KNORR & T. SCHELL (eds), *Mooring Against the Tide: Writing fiction and poetry*: 34–37. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.
- RÖSCH, Johann 1986. Auf dem Weg zu einer nationalen Literatur in Tansania: Anmerkungen zum Schaffen von Euphrase Kezilahabi. *Bayreuther Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft* 7: 271–282.
- RUHUMBIKA, Gabriel 2002. Introduction. In: A. KITEREZA, *Mr. Myombekere and His Wife Bugonoka, Their Son Ntulanalwo and Daughter Bulihwali: The Story of an ancient African community*: viii–xxxii. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers.
- RUO, Kimani Ruo 1989. *Nguzo za Ushairi wa Kiswahili* [The Foundations of Swahili poetry]. Nairobi: Macmillan Kenya.
- SACLEUX, Charles 1939. *Dictionnaire Swahili–Français*. Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, Université de Paris.
- SAKKOS, Tiina 2008. Existentialism and Feminism in Kezilahabi's Novel. *Swahili Forum* 15: 51–61.
- SALEH, Ally 1990. Miindo wa Mashairi Huru: Maoni na uandishi [Forms of free verse: Views and writing]. *Lugha* 4: 84–93.
- SCHADEBERG, Thilo C. 2009. Loanwords in Swahili. In: M. HASPELMATH & U. TADMOR (eds), *Loanwords in the World's Languages: A Comparative handbook*: 76–102. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- SCHJEJTER, Abel & Joseph AGASSI 1994. Of the Definition of Life. *Journal for General Philosophy of Science* 25: 97–106.
- SCHRÖDINGER, E. 1946. *What is Life?* Cambridge: CUP.

- SENKORO, Fikeni E.M.K. 1988a. *Ushairi: Nadharia na tahakiki* [Theory and critique]. Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press.
- SENKORO, Fikeni E.M.K. 1988b. Pot-Pourri of Myth and Reality. *Kiswahili* 55(1/2): 178–181.
- SHARIFF, Ibrahim Noor 1988. *Tungo Zetu: Msingi wa mashairi na tungo nyinginezo* [Our poetry: The Basis of poetry and other poems]. Trenton: Red Sea Press.
- SHARIFF, Ibrahim Noor 1991. Islam and Secularity in Swahili Literature: An Overview. In: K.W. HARROW (ed.), *Faces of Islam in African Literature: 37–57*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- SHOPTAW, John 1994. *On the Outside Looking Out: John Ashbery's poetry*. Cambridge: HUP.
- SHOPTAW, John 1995. The Music of Construction: Measure and polyphony in Ashbery and Bernstein. In: S.M. SCHULTZ (ed.), *The Tribe of John: Ashbery and contemporary poetry: 211–257*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- SHOPTAW, John 2000. Lyric Cryptography. *Poetics Today* 21(1): 221–262.
- SOYINKA, Wole 1976. *Myth, Literature, and the African World*. Cambridge: CUP.
- SPEAKS, Jeff 2005. Is There a Problem About Nonconceptual Content? *The Philosophical Review* 114(3): 359–398.
- SPEL, Stefan 1989. *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*. Cambridge: CUP.
- STALNAKER, Robert 1998. On the Representation of Context. *Journal of Logic, Language and Information* 7: 3–19.
- STANKIEWICZ, Edward 1960. Linguistics and the Study of Poetic Language. In: T.A. SEBEOK (ed.), *Style in Language: 69–81*. Cambridge: MIT.
- STETKEVYCH, Suzanne Pinckney 2002. *Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, gender, and ceremony in the classical Arabic ode*. Bloomington: IU Press.
- STÖGER-EISING, Viktoria 2000. “Ujamaa” Revisited: Indigenous and European influences in Nyerere’s social and political thought. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 70(1): 118–143.
- STRANG, Veronica 2004. *Meaning of Water*. NY: Berg Publishers.
- SUNSERI, Thaddeus 1997. Famine and Wild Pigs: Gender struggles and the outbreak of the Majimaji war in Uzaramo (Tanzania). *The Journal of African History* 38(2): 235–259.
- Swahili–Suomi–Swahili-sanakirja* [The Swahili–Finnish–Swahili dictionary]. 2002. Helsinki: The Finnish Literature Society.
- TAYLOR, William E. 1915. Inkishafi, a Swahili speculum mundi. In: C.H. STIGAND, *A Grammar of Dialectic Changes in the Kiswahili Language: 73–105*. Cambridge: CUP.
- TEMPELS, Placide 1959. *Bantu Philosophy*. Paris: Présence Africaine.
- THOMAS, Jean-Jacques 1987. Metaphor: The Image and the formula. *Poetics Today* 8(3/4): 479–501.
- TOPAN, Farouk 1974a. Modern Swahili Poetry. *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies* 37(1): 175–187.
- TOPAN, Farouk 1974b. Dibaji [Preface]. In: E. KEZILAHABI 1974a: vii–xii.
- TOPAN, Farouk 1997. Biography Writing in Swahili. *History in Africa* 24: 299–307.

- TOUNOUGA, Camille Talkeu 2003. The Symbolic Function of Water in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Cultural approach. *Leonardo* 36(4): 283–284.
- TRAERUP, Sara & Ole MERTZ 2009. Linking Climate Trends to Coping Strategies in Northern Tanzania. *Earth and Environmental Science* 6:41: 1.
- TSUR, Reuven 1992. *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive: The Poetic mode of speech-perception*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- TSUR, Reuven 2001. Onomatopoeia: Cuckoo-Language and Tick-Tocking: The Constraints of semiotic systems. <www.trismegistos.com/IconicityInLanguage/Articles/Tsur/default.html>, accessed 1 Jan. 2011.
- TSUR, Reuven 2003. *On the Shore of Nothingness: A Study in cognitive poetics*. Exeter: Imprint Academic.
- TSUR, Reuven 2008. *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics*. 2nd edn expanded and updated. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.
- TUCKER, Arhibald N. 1946. Foreign Sounds in Swahili. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 11(4): 854–871.
- TUKI 2001. *Kamusi ya Kiswahili–Kiingereza*. Dar es Salaam: TUKI.
- TYE, Michael 2006. The Thesis of Nonconceptual Content. *European Review of Philosophy* 6: 7–30.
- UD DEEN, Kamil 2005. *The Acquisition of Swahili*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- UYOVBUKERHI, Atiboroko S.A. 1976. The Idea of Tragic Form in Nigerian Drama Written in English. Unpublished Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison. [Quoted in Kezilahabi 1985.]
- VESSELLA, Nino 1996. Euphrase Kezilahabi. <www.swahili.it/kezilahabi.html>, accessed 16 Dec. 2010.
- VINCENT, John 1998. Reports of Looting and Insane Buggery Behind Altars: John Ashbery's queer politics. *Twentieth Century Literature* 44(2): 155–175.
- VOIGT, Ellen Bryant 1991. Image. *New England Review* (1990–) 13(3/4): 254–268.
- WALKER, Daniel P. 1964. Eternity and the Afterlife. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27: 241–250.
- WAMITILA, Kyallo Wadi 1991. Nagona and Mzingile: Kezilahabi's metaphysics. *Kiswahili* 58: 62–67.
- WAMITILA, Kyallo Wadi 1997. Contemptus Mundi and Carpe Diem Motifs in Kezilahabi's Works. *Kiswahili* 60: 15–24.
- WAMITILA, Kyallo Wadi 1998. A Philosophical Labyrinth: Tracing two critical motifs in Kezilahabi's prose works. (Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere 55) *Swahili Forum* 5: 79–91.
- WAMITILA, Kyallo Wadi 1999. A Rhetorical Study of Kiswahili Classical Poetry: An Investigation into the nature and role of repetition. *Research in African Literatures* 30(1): 58–73.
- WAMITILA, Kyallo Wadi 2000. *Umatinishaji wa Historia na Historia ya Umatinishaji: Kaptula la Marx ya E. Kezilahabi* [Textualisation of history and history of textualisation: Kaptula la Marx of E. Kezilahabi]. *Mulika* 26: 1–8.

- WAMITILA, Kyallo Wadi 2001. *Archetypal Criticism of Kiswahili Poetry*. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies.
- WAMITILA, Kyallo Wadi 2003a. *Kamusi ya Fasihi: Istilahi na nadharia* [Dictionary of literature: Terminology and theory]. Nairobi: Focus Publications.
- WAMITILA, Kyallo Wadi 2003b. Influence or Intertextuality? A Comparative study of Kezilahabi's Nagona and Mzingile and Juan Rulfo's Pedro Paramo. *Kiswahili* 66: 49–58.
- WERNER, Alice 1921–1923. Utendi wa Ayubu [Utendi of Job]. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 2(1), 2(2), 2(3): 85–115, 297–320, 347–416.
- WERNER, Alice 1927. Some Missing Stanzas from the Northern Version of the Inkishafi Poem. *Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-Sprachen* 17: 291–294.
- WERNER, Alice 1930–1931. Hadithi ya Mikidadi na Mayasa [Story of Miqdad and Mayasa]. *Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-Sprachen* 21: 1–25.
- WERNER, Alice 1932. *The Story of Miqdad and Mayasa from the Swahili–Arabic Text: Hadithi ya Mikidadi na Mayasa*. Medstead: The Azania Press.
- WHITELEY, Wilfred H. 1957. Utenzi wa Vita vya Maji-Maji [Utenzi of Maji-Maji War]. *Supplement to the East African Swahili Committee Journal* 27: 32–72.
- WILD, Robert A. 1981. *Water in the Cultic Worship of Isis and Sarapis*. Leiden: Brill.
- WIREDU, Kwasi 1992–1993. African Philosophical Tradition. *The Philosophical Forum* 24(1–3): 41.
- WIREDU, Kwasi 1996. *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African perspective*. Bloomington: IU Press.
- WIREDU, Kwasi (ed.) 2004a. *A Companion to African Philosophy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- WIREDU, Kwasi 2004b. Truth and an African Language. In: L.M. BROWN (ed.), *African Philosophy: New and traditional perspectives*: 35–50. Oxford: OUP.
- World Resources Institute 2005. Freshwater Fish Catch & Aquaculture Production, Tanzania, 1970–2000. In: *EarthTrends: The Environmental information portal*. <earthtrends.wri.org/text/water-resources/country-profile-178.html>, accessed 5 Oct. 2005.
- YEATS, W.B. 1975. The Symbolism of Poetry. In: G. MARTIN & P.N. FURBANK (eds), *Twentieth Century Poetry*: 51–58. London: The Open University Press. (Repr. from W.B. Yeats 1961. *Essays and Introductions*. NY: Macmillan.)
- ZHUKOV, Andrey A. 1992. The Dating of Old Swahili Manuscripts: Towards Swahili paleography. *Swahili Language and Society: Notes and News* 9: 60–65.

**APPENDIX 1:
KEZILAHABI'S POEMS IN SWAHILI
AND ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS**

Poems that have images of water in Euphrase Kezilahabi's *Kichomi* (1974a), *Karibu Ndani* (1988), and *Dhifa* (2008), translated by Katriina Ranne

Kichomi*Jinamizi*

Watu weusi na weupe
 Mtumbwini walikuwa wamesimama, wametulia,
 Na fimbo ndefu mikononi mwao,
 Na macho yao wameyakazia majini.
 Samaki ambaye, kupata hewa,
 Aliinua kichwa chake juu ya maji
 Utawala wa chuma ulimtoboa fuvu
 La kichwa na kutupwa mtumbwini.
 Halafu nilifikiria Afrika
 Na siasa kwa ujumla
 – Mafuvu!

Lakini mara, mamba, kwa maelfu
 Mtumbwi waliukimbilia kwa fujo,
 Mtumbwi kupasuka wakatatuliwa
 Vipande vipande.
 Halafu samaki wote waliinua
 Vichwa vyao juu ya maji
 Na pamoja wakaimba wimbo wa Uhuru.
 Lakini majitu, ambayo kwa mbali
 Yalisimama yakitazama, yalionyesha
 Kicheko kilichoonekana kutokuwa na maana,
 Na kutingisha vichwa kwa njia ambayo
 Haikueleweka maana.

Kwa wakati huo, kutoka bahari
 La magharibi washairi walikuwa
 Wameanza kuimba juu ya kifo cha wadhalimu
 Na sauti zao zilisikika bara zima.

Lakini, niliogopa meno marefu ya mamba,
 Zaidi ya hayo, majitu, ambayo
 Kutoka mbali, yalisimama yakitazama,
 Yakicheka na kutingisha vichwa vyao
 Juu, chini, kushoto, kulia.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1974a: 1–2

Nightmare (Jinamizi)

Black and white people
 In a canoe, standing, resting,
 Long sticks in their hands,
 Staring into the water.
 Fish which, in order to get air,
 Raise their heads from the water
 The government of iron drilled a hole in the empty shell
 Of the head and it was thrust into the canoe.

I came to think about Africa
 And politics in general
 – Empty shells!

But suddenly thousands of crocodiles
 Invaded the canoe fiercely,
 The canoe split, they were ripped
 Into pieces, pieces.
 At that time all the fish raised their
 Heads from the water
 And sung together the song of Freedom.
 But the giants who were in the distance
 Standing and watching, showed
 A laughter that seemed not to have a meaning,
 And shook their head in a way
 That was not understandable.

During that time, in the western sea
 The poets started to
 Sing of the death of the oppressors
 With a voice that was heard on the whole continent.

But I was afraid of the long teeth of the crocodiles
 And the giants who were
 Standing in the distance watching,
 Laughing and shaking their heads
 Up, down, left, right.

Upepo wa Wakati

Juu ya mlima mdogo
 Siku moja nilisimama.
 Nikatazama chini ziwani, siku
 Ya dhoruba. Halafu niliona mawimbi
 Yakipanda na kushuka. Yakivimba,
 Yakiviringika, yakigongana na kutoa povu
 Kama fahari wehu katika bonde lisomajani.
 Yalivyotengenezwa!
 Yalivyofifia na kuanza tena!
 Kamwe sikuona.
 Lakini niliyaona yakishuka kwa nguvu
 Na kupanda haraka, yakisukumwa
 Na upepo wa Magharibi na Mashariki.

Hivyo ndivyo ulimwengu ulivyo.
 Na hivyo maisha ya binadamu.
 Wanapanda na kushuka
 Wakisukumwa na upepo na wakati.
 Tazama wanavyojinyakulia madaraka
 Kama mzamaji, mguu wa rafikiye, ashikavyo!
 Wanavyoshika pesa kama mtoto
 Na picha ya bandia
 Au asikari mwehu na bunduki yake
 Na kutunyamazisha!

Watapanda na kushuka
 Na wataanguka kweli!
 Wakisukumwa na upepo wa wakati!

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1974a: 4

The Wind of Time (Upepo wa Wakati)

One day I stood on a small hill.
 I looked down at the lake, a stormy day.
 At that point I saw the waves
 Raising and lowering. Expanding,
 Rotating, colliding and bringing about foam
 Like mad bulls in a valley without grass.
 How did they get in order!
 How did they weaken and start again!
 Never seen before.
 I saw them lowering intensely
 And raising in a hurry, pushed by
 The winds from the West and East.

 Exactly like this is our world.
 And the life of human beings.
 They raise and lower
 Pushed by the winds of time.
 Look how they snatch power for themselves
 Like a drowning man grips the leg of his friend!
 How they grip money like a child
 Grips the picture of a doll
 Or a soldier grips his rifle
 And silences us!

 They will raise and lower
 And really fall!
 Pushed by the wind of time.

Mwamba Ziwani

Hautingishiki, hauzungumzi: umekufa;
 Lakini ninaweza kuusikia ukizungumza:
 “Kijana mimi sicheki, uwe hivyo na wewe.
 Tazama jinsi ndege walivyokifanya kichwa changu
 Cheupe kama mchwa na fuvu, mimi nimetulia,
 Sina wasiwasi ingawa naonekana mjinga.
 Mawimbi yananigusa na kuvunjika
 Kama upanga wa muuaji ushindwavyo kwa roho.
 Mimi ni imara na sihamishiki.
 Na mtu mwovu siumiziki.”
 Huo mwamba umekwenda. Siwezi tena kuuona.
 Hapa ndipo nilipo, melini, mtu mwovu,
 Na mwenye wasiwasi
 Nikisukumwa na mawimbi,
 Nikitetemeshwa na mapaja ya huyu msichana
 Mbichi karibu nami. Lakini ule mwamba,
 Ule mwamba ulikuwa umekufa.
 Wakati wote niishipo sitaweza, nao kufanana.
 Nitapokufa kama huo mwamba,
 Huo mwamba nitaushabihi.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1974a: 6

A Rock in a Lake (Mwamba Ziwani)

Does not shake, does not speak: is dead,
But I can hear it saying:
“Young man, I do not laugh, let it be like that with you, too.
Look how birds make my head
White like a termite and a skull, I have calmed down,
I do not have problems even though I seem ignorant.
The waves touch me and break down
Like the sword of a killer defeated by spirit.
I am firm/steady and shall not shift.
Even a bad person cannot hurt me.”
The rock is gone, I cannot see it anymore.
Here I am, a bad person,
Worried
Being pushed by the waves
Being trembled by the thighs of that fresh/unripe
Girl near me. But the rock,
The rock had passed away.
As long as I live I cannot resemble it.
When I will die like that rock,
I will be like that rock.

Mto Nili

Ninamwona huyo nyoka wa uchawi juu ya ramani
 Amechomeka mkia wake ziwani
 Piramidi zikijengwa, na Warumi wakipiga mahema,
 Wakristu wakioshwa na kutakaswa, na dhambi zikielea mtoni

Ninawaona wakimwagilia mashamba yao kwa damu.
 Ile damu ya watu waliozama zamani ziwani
 Kwa sababu ya *pepo za Julai*.^{*}
 Ziwa, mto, bahari – maisha.

Kiini cha maisha yenu kimo katika kiini
 Kitu gani kingetuunganisha zaidi ya hicho!
 Sasa kwa nini Afrika ya weusi na Afrika ya weupe?
 Lakini hapa nashikwa na bumbuzi.

Maelfu walifanywa watumwa, na maelfu
 Waliuawa kwa sababu zisojulikana!
 Halikuwa kosa lenu. Damu yetu
 Iliwaleweshwa mlipotenda hivyo.

Moyo wangu unatulia nitazamapo ramani.
 Ni adhabu ya kutosha kupashwa kuishi
 Juu ya sahani yenye joto kali, ya kukaangia.
 Na yaliyopita, yamepita.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1974a: 7

^{*} *Pepo za Julai*: Pepo zivumazo wakati wa kipupwe mwezi Juni na Julai.
 Pepo hizi husababisha watu kuzama ziwani, hasa wavuvi.

The Nile (Mto Nili)

I see the snake of witchcraft on the map
 With its tail pierced in the lake
 When the pyramids were built and the Romans erected the tents,
 When the Christians were washed and purified, and the sins
 were floating in the river.

I see them irrigating their fields with blood.
 The blood of the people who drowned in the lake in the past
 Because of *the wind of July*.^{*}
 Lake, river, sea – life.

The core of your life is in the nucleus
 What could connect us more than that!
 Then why there is Africa of black people and Africa of white people?
 I am puzzled.

Thousands of people were turned into slaves, and thousands
 Were killed for reasons that are not known!
 It was not your fault. Our blood
 Had made you drunk when you did that.

My heart calms down when I look at the map.
 There is enough punishment in being set to live
 On an overheated frying pan.
 What happened has happened.

^{*} *The wind of July*: The wind that blows during the cold months of June
 and July. This wind causes the drowning of a great amount of people, even
 fishermen.

[clarification: this footnote, too, is written by Kezilahabi]

Mgomba

Mgomba umelala chini: hauna faida tena,
 Baada ya kukatwa na wafanya kazi
 Wa bustani kwa kusita.
 Watoto, kwa wasiwasi wanasubiri wakati wao
 Bustanini hakuna kitu
 Isipokuwa upepo fulani wenye huzuni,
 Unaotikisa majani na kutoa sauti ya kilio.

Hivyo ndivyo ufalme wa mitara ulivyo.
 Mti wa mji umelala chini: hauna faida tena,
 Baada ya kukatwa na wafanya kazi
 Wa bustani kwa kusita.
 Chumbani hakuna kitu
 Isipokuwa upepo fulani wenye huzuni utingishao
 Wenye hila waliokizunguka kitanda na kulia.
 Machozi yenye matumaini yapiga
 Mbiu ya hatari ya magomvi nyumbani.

Magomvi

Kati ya wanawake

Magomvi

Kati ya watoto kwa ajili ya vitu na uongozi.
 Ole! Milki ya 'Lexanda imekwisha!

Vidonda vya ukoma visofunikwa
 Ambavyo kwa mda mrefu vilifichama
 Sasa viko nje kufyonzwa na inzi wa kila aina
 Na vinanuka vibaya.
 Lakini inzi kila mara hufyonza wakifikiri
 Nani watamwambukiza.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1974a: 8

The Banana Plant (Mgomba)

The banana plant is lying on the ground: it is of no use,
 After being cut by the workers
 Of the garden, with hesitation.
 Children, anxiously, wait until time is up
 There is nothing in the garden
 Except for some sorrowful wind
 That makes the grass tremble and carries a cry.

This is exactly like a polygamous ruler.
 The tree of the town is sleeping on the ground: it is of no use,
 After being cut by the workers
 Of the garden, with hesitation.
 There is nothing in the room
 Expect for some sorrowful wind shaking
 The betrayers who go round and round the bed and cry.
 The tears that have hope
 Warn about the danger: eruption of quarrels at home.

Quarrels

Between women

Quarrels

Between children, about goods and leadership.
 Poor you! Alexander's realm has finished!

The wounds of leprosy are exposed
 Wounds that had remained covered for so long
 Now are open in full view for every fly to suck
 Stinking.
 With every suck the fly is thinking of
 Whom to infect next.

Uvuaji wa Samaki Victoria

Jana asubuhi ufukoni niliona watu
 Wenye nguvu, wasohuruma, na walafi wakiimba
 Na kuvuta kitu kirefu kutoka majini.
 Uzitocho ulionekana kuwataka mashindano.
 Hata hivyo walivuta tu.
 Kwa nguvu zaidi sasa.
 Niliweza kuhesabu meno yao.
 Sijaona mashindano makali ya kamba kama haya
 Kati ya wenye damu ya joto na wa baridi.
 Mwishowe watoto wa Adamu walishinda,
 Na *Neptune** aliacha mashindano,
 Maana walikuwa na choyo kisomfano!
 Baada ya kutolewa katika utawala wao, mamia
 Walikuwa sasa wamelala mchangani
 Wakirukaruka huku na huko
 Ili kuelea mionzi mikali ichomayo.
 Lakini wapi – walishitakiwa kwa kuchafua maji ya kunywa.
 Na kwa kudanganywa na mmelemeto wa pesa,
 Wadhalimu, waliwahukumu chunguni.
 Niliondoka.
 Saa kumi na moja nilikwenda tena kuogelea.
 Wale watu walikuwapo bado, nusu uchi!
 Walikuwa wakivuta tena!
 “Tunafanya hivi mara tatu nne kwa siku”, walisema.
 Hapo peke yangu nilisimama, kwa hasira yenye huruma
 Nikiomboleza na kuwalilia
 Waombolezi wa wazamao
 Na walimu wa uogeleaji.
 Euphrase Kezilahabi 1974a: 9

* *Neptune*: Mungu wa bahari (Katika utamaduni wa Kirumi)

Fishing in Lake Victoria (Uvuaji wa Samaki Victoria)

Yesterday morning I saw people on the shore
 Strong, merciless and greedy, they were singing
 And pulling a long object from the water.
 So heavy that it seemed to challenge them.
 Still, they kept on pulling.
 Very hard.
 I could count their teeth.
 I have never seen a harder tug of war than this
 Between warm-blooded and those who are cold.
 In the end the children of Adam won,
 And *Neptune** left the competition,
 For they were selfish beyond comparison!
 After they had been given the control, there were hundreds
 Laying on the sand
 Jumping here and there
 In order to avoid the hard rays that were burning them.
 But where – they were accused of polluting the drinking water.
 Deceived by the glitter of money,
 Despots, they passed a sentence of putting them into the cooking pot.
 I left.
 At five I went again to swim.
 Those people were still there, half naked!
 Fishing again!
 “We do this three-four times a day”, they said.
 I stood there by myself, in anger mixed with pity
 I grieved and cried for
 Mourners of the drowned
 And swimming teachers.

* *Neptune*: The god of the sea (in the Roman culture)

[clarification: this footnote, too, is written by Kezilahabi]

Kichwa na Mwili

Ningekuwa askari ningeoga damu na maji,
 Ningepasua vichwa na kuchana matumbo,
 Ningekanyaga kichwa cha msaliti au mhaini
 Ili kuitwa mume wa wanaume.
 Ningekuwa wa kwanza kutimiza malalamiko ya watu,
 Wa kwanza kuona hatari ingawa wa mwisho kuiogopa
 Ningekuwa askari wa haki, amani, na mapenzi Duniani.

Lakini kichwa changu kina kiburi mno na kigumu,
 Na sitaogelea katika damu ya wasio hatia
 Kwa manufaa ya umma na wajukuu.
 Inasemekana, sadaka kukataliwa
 Damu ya mwanadamu ilitetemeshwa mbingu.
 Mkono wa haki ukaporomoshwa hukumu Duniani kwa mataifa,
 Na sheria ikawa juu ya mwanadamu.

Bunduki! Harufu ya damu kutoka kusini!
 Polepole kichwa kinalegea, harufu kama moshi
 Wa bangi inaingia kichwani – chuki kama chongo na moshi.
 Uhusiano wa damu ndugu zangu mzito mno,
 Na mapenzi ya Afrika nzima kama samaki na maji.
 Bila kichwa ninasikia haki mwili mzima
 Na ninaona haja ya kushika bunduki.

Usiniambie zaidi! Usinisihi!
 Mimi sitakunywa maziwa
 Kama mtoto mchanga. Nitakunywa damu!
 Sitakaa nyumbani kucheua majani
 Kama mbuzi. Nitakula nyama mbichi!
 Nikifa je! Mwanadamu hakuokolewa
 Utumwani mwa shetani kwa damu?

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1974a: 16

Head and Body (Kichwa na Mwili)

If I were a soldier I would bathe in blood and water,
 I would split heads and tear up stomachs,
 I would trample on the head of a traitor and betrayer
 So that I would be called “the husband of men” [the real man].
 I would be the first to fulfil protests of people,
 The first to see danger even though the last to be scared
 I would be a soldier of justice, peace, and love in the world.

But my head has much painful pride,
 I will not swim in the blood of those who are not guilty
 For the benefit of people and new generations.
 It is said that ritual sacrifice is refused
 Blood of people made heaven shake.
 The hand of justice rolled down the verdict for the nations of the world,
 And the laws for the people to follow.

A Rifle! The smell of blood from the south!
 Slowly my head relapses, the smell like the smoke
 Of marijuana enters my head – annoyance, like one-eyed in smoke.
 Connection of the blood of my brothers is too heavy,
 The love for whole Africa like a fish and water.
 Without head I hear the justice with the whole body
 I see the need to catch a rifle.

Do not tell me more! Do not beg!
 I will not drink milk
 Like a baby. I will drink blood!
 I will not sit at home chewing the cud
 Like a goat. I will eat fresh meat!
 What if I die! Was man not saved
 From the slavery of Satan by blood?

Mto wa Haki

Alikuwa safarini kwenda arusini kwa furaha
 Mto ulikuwa umefurika, hauvukiki.
 Mara waogaji wawili kwake wakaenda.
 Mmoja wao kumvusha kwa thumuni kajitolea.

Alimpanda. Mabegani kibwana alimkalia.
 Lakini lo! Masikio madogo, pembe hana,
 Mnyororo mdomoni hana: ni mwanadamu huru.
 Alishika kichwa chake kidogo, mtoni wakaingia.

Alipepea hewani kama kidefu cha kabaila.
 Alinepanepa kama kiboko cha Mjerumani.
 Alipepea kama bendera ya Mwingereza:
 Suti juu yake, elimu kichwani na pesa mfukoni.

Alianza kuogopa asije akamtupa majini.
 Alianza kumwomba atembe polepole.
 Polepole alianza kujiona mjinga kwa kuogopa
 Maji yaliyokuwa yakimtakasa mwenzake.

Halafu alisikia kitu kama radi kutoka mbinguni
 Na umeme ulipiga moyo wake.
 Alisikia sauti ya haki na usawa wa binadamu:
 Kwa mda wa dakika moja alielewa ukweli
 Ambao vitabu vyote vilikuwa vimeshindwa kumweleza.

Alikuwa ameona kivuli chake majini.
 Unafanya nini? Sauti iliuliza.
 Hakuweza kujibu: mwili wake ulikuwa umeganda
 Kama yule *mwanamke aliyetazama nyuma**
 Akageuka jiwe ili wajukuu wapate kuona.

Ubaya wake ulikuwa umeota moyoni, ndani kabisa,
 Na ulikuwa bado kufikiwa kwa maandashi na hotuba.
 Sasa alikuwa kama takataka.
 Alikuwa anakwenda kutupwa nchi nyingine:
 Alikuwa hastahili kuishi na watu hawa.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1974a: 17–18

* *Mwanamke aliyetazama nyuma*: Mke wa Lot aliyetazama nyuma wakati miji ya Sodom na Gomorrah ilipounguzwa moto na Mungu. Aligeuka kuwa jiwe la chumvi. (Biblia – Genesis 19:24)

The River of Justice (Mto wa Haki)

He was on his way to a wedding in a good mood
 The river had flooded, was not crossable.
 Two people who had come to bathe were passing by.
 One of them offered to help him cross the river for a small coin.

He climbed on his back. The oldest son of the house sat on the shoulders.
 But strange! Small ears, no tusk,
 No chain in the mouth: he was a free human being.
 He gripped his head lightly, they walked into the river.

He was shaking in the air like the chin of a high-born.
 He was flexible like the lash of a German.
 He bent like the flag of an Englishman:
 Suit on him, education in the head and money in the pocket.

He started to fear that he would be thrown into the water.
 He started to ask the man to walk slowly.
 Slowly he started to see himself as a dummy because of being scared of
 Water that was washing his companion.

Then he heard from the sky something like thunder
 And a lightning struck in his heart.
 He heard the voice of justice and equality of human beings:
 For one minute he understood the truth
 That all the books had failed to teach him.

He had seen his shadow in the water.
 What do you do? The voice asked.
 He could not answer: his body had congealed
 Like of that woman who looked back from behind him*
 And turned into a stone for the grandchildren to see.

The evil in him had grown in the heart, entirely inside,
 And was yet to come to the writings and sermons.
 Now he was like dirt.
 He had been thrown into another country:
 He was not allowed to live with his people.

* *Woman who looked back from behind him*: The wife of Lot who looked back in the days of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah when the fire of God was lit there. She turned into a pillar of salt. (The Bible – Genesis 19:24)

[clarification: this footnote, too, is written by Kezilahabi]

Fungueni Mlango

Hewa kunikosa
 Na jasho kunitoka ndani ya chumba
 Kwa upweke
 Ninajiona nimefungiwa.
 Sioni madirisha lakini
 Mlango wa karatasi uko mbele yangu
 Ninaugonga kwa mikono
 Kichwa na mabega
 Mlango unatoa mlio kilio,
 Lakini mwanadamu hatanifungulia.

Damu

Damu puani, damu mdomoni,
 Damu kichwani itumikayo kama wino.
 Mikono, kichwa, mabega uchovu.
 Kwa kichwa kama cha mbuni
 Mchangani, tena ninaugonga
 Lakini mwanadamu hatanifungulia.

Ninaona kizunguzungu
 Ninapiga kelele kama
 Ng'ombe machinjioni:
 Fungueni mlango!
 Mlango fungueni!
 Lakini mwanadamu hatanifungulia.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1974a: 23

Open the Door (Fungueni Mlango)

I am without air
Sweating inside the room
Of solitude
I see myself confined.
I cannot see windows but
A door of paper is in front of me
I bang it with my fists
Head and shoulders
The door cries, shouts,
But no one opens it for me.

Blood

Blood in the nose, blood in the mouth,
Blood that is used like ink in the head.
Hands, head, shoulders, all tired.
With my head like that of an ostrich
In the sand, again I bang the door
But no one opens it for me.

I feel dizzy
I make noise like
A cow in the slaughterhouse:
Open the door!
The door, open it!
But no one opens if for me.

Nenda Ukanywe!

Mafunza wameniingia bongoni
 Nao wakati wa joto wachezapo mchezo
 Wao ndani ya nyumba hii ya mawazo
 Hunifanya kama mwehu
 Nikimbie na kuwashambulia watu hao
 Na kama nguruwe mwitu
 Kugonga kuta hizo za chuma
 Ziwapungano wanadamu

Lakini

Wakati wa baridi inzi watakapoingia puani
 Nitakapokuwa marashi, damu, vidonda
 Kunusa siwezi au vizuri kupumua
 Nitakapokuwa nikikauka kwa wakati
 Basi nitaweka bunduki chini
 Na kama askari aliyetaka na nguvu asizoon
 Nitakaa nyumbani na mafua yangu
 Wajukuu kunipanda, kichwa shinda kutikisa.

Ninasema

Wakati siafu watakaponinokoa
 Macho na maskioni kuingia
 Nitakapokuwa sioni, sisikii
 Ngoma na vilio vya dunia
 Kazi bure itakuwa kumwaga
 Machozi juu ya karibu langu.
 Ukilia shairi hili litakwambia
 “Nenda ukanywe!”

Kwani

Nani alikula asile tena!
 Nani aliruka hewani asitue?
 Lakini nani alikufa akarudi?

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1974a: 30

Go to Drink! (Nenda Ukanywe!)

Worms have invaded into my brain
 They have hot times while playing their game
 In the house of thoughts
 They make me insane
 I will run and attack those people
 And like a wild boar
 Bang the walls of iron
 That close the people outside
 But
 During the cold months when a fly will invade my nose
 When I will be perfume, blood, wounds
 I cannot smell or breathe well
 When I will be drying of time
 Then I will lay my rifle down
 And like a soldier who was robbed by forces he cannot see
 I will stay home with my flu
 Grandchildren will climb my back, shake the deficient head.
 I say
 When the ants will masticate
 My eyes and invade my ears
 When I will not see, not hear
 The drum or cries of the world
 There is no point in farewells
 The tears on my grave
 When you cry this poem will tell you
 "Go to drink!"
 For
 Who ate does not eat anymore!
 Who flew in the air will not come down?
 But who passed away and came back?

Tunatazamana

Mama alikuwa ameuawa na wazungu.
 Sufuria lilikuwa juu ya mafiga
 Baba akaleta moto wa matumaini
 Akayawasha majani makavu
 Yakawaka kuwasha kuni kavu
 Zilizokaushwa na ndimi za jua kali
 Lililotundikwa hewani kwa kejeli na wakoloni.
 Kuni zikawaka kulipa joto sufuria
 Maji yapate kuchemka.

Polepole maji yalianza kuzunguka
 Kufuata mwendo tukazungusha vichwa vyetu.
 Mvuke wa kasumba ukaanza kutoka
 Tukatoa vichwa vyetu ukapita, tukauona
 Unapanda juu katika mawingu ya udanganyifu.
 Halafu maji yalianza kufanya vilima
 Vidogo vidogo vilivyovimba na kupasuka.
 Sisi tuliokuwa tukitazama
 Tukaanza kuwa na mashaka.

Baada ya mda mfupi askari wakali
 Walianza kucheza majini bila mpango.
 Hatukuamini macho yetu.
 Halafu askari wakawa wacheza ngoma
 Wakaruka juu hewani bila fahamu.
 Mapinduzi! Tulianza kuogopa.
 Lakini Baba aliyekuwa ametulia
 Kama mganga azungumzaye na mababu
 Aliyakazia maji macho kwa fikira

Halafu Baba akachukua unga wa uganga
 Akaumimina kwa uangalifu majini
 Askari wakawa wehu wakaanza kuruka
 Kama wagonjwa waliopagawa waachwapo na shetani.
 Wakaruka hata nje ya sufuria, wakatuchoma.
 Baba akaongeza unga wa ujamaa
 Pole pole askari wehu wakatulia
 Kama wafungwa waliokatishwa tamaa
 Na urefu wa ukuta wa mawe.

Akakoroga! Akakoroga! Tena na tena.
Dawa tuliyokuwa mda mrefu tukiisubiri.
Kitu kama muujiza kikaanza kutokea.
Baada ya mda mfupi akatoa
Kitu kimoja kiitwacho ugali.
Akaleta mboga tuliyolima sisi wenyewe.
Tukauzunguka kula pamoja.
Wote tulikuwa na njaa
Na mwanzoni hatukuzungumza.

Lakini kitu kimoja niliogopa daima.
Kuna watu wenye viganja vikubwa zaidi.
Vile vile wapo wamezao upesi upesi.
Kwa kuwa mimi kinywa changu kizito
Na viganja vyangu vidogo. Mwishowe nilisema.
Hao hao walinitazama kwa hasira
Nami bila hofu nikawatazama.
Tukatamazama.
Sungura na mbweha.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1974a: 65–66

We Are Looking at Each Other (Tunatazamana)

Mum was killed by white people.
 The cauldron was on the cooking stones
 Dad brought the fire of hope
 He set the dry leaves on fire
 He lit the dry wood
 Which was dried by the tongues of the hard sun
 That was hung up in the air ironically by the colonisers.
 Firewood made the cauldron suffer from heat
 That made the water bubble.

Slowly the water started to go round and round
 Following the way we moved our heads round.
 Steam of opium started to come out
 It passed into our heads, we saw it
 Riding upon the clouds of deceitfulness.
 Water started to form hills
 Little by little it expanded and burst out.
 We who were looking at it
 Started to worry.

Soon after that severe soldiers
 Started to play in the water without order.
 We did not believe our eyes.
 Then the soldiers were dancing
 Jumping in the air without sense.
 Revolution! We started to fear.
 But Dad was calm
 Like a medicine man talking with ancestors
 His glance was fixed on the water, deep in thoughts

Then Dad fetched the healing powder
 He sprinkled the flour carefully into the water

The soldiers were mad and started to jump
 Like ill, possessed people, when Satan leaves them.
 They even jumped out from the cauldron, burning us.
 Dad added more flour of Ujamaa (familyhood)
 Gradually the mad soldiers calmed down
 Like captured who lose their hope
 Because of the thickness of the stonewall.

He stirred up! He stirred up! Again and again.
Medicine that we had been waiting for, for long.
A miraculous thing started to appear.
After a short while he took out
The thing that is called *ugali* [corn porridge].
He fetched vegetables that we had planted ourselves.
We made a circle and ate together.
Everybody ate for hunger
So at first we had no conversation.

But one thing I was afraid of all the time.
There are people with very big palms.
Similarly, there are people who swallow very quickly.
Because my mouth is slow
And my palms small. I said at last.
They looked at me in anger
While I looked at them without fear.
We looked at each other.
A rabbit and a jackal.

Karibu Ndani

Chai ya Jioni

Wakati tunywapo chai hapa upenuni
 Na kuwatazama watoto wetu
 Wakicheza bembea kwa furaha
 Tujue kamba ya bembea yetu
 Imeshalika na imeanza kuoza
 Na bado kidogo tutaporomoka.

Kulikuwa na wakati ulinisukuma juu
 Nikaenda zaidi ya nusu duara;
 Kulikuwa na wakati nilikudaka
 Ulipokaribia kuanguka,
 Na kulikuwa na wakati tulibebana kwa zamu
 Mmoja wima akisukuma mwingine amekaa.
 Wakati huo, japo tulipaa mbele na nyuma
 Tulicheka kwa matumaini yaliyotiwa chumvi
 Na kisha tukaongozana jikoni kupika chajio;
 Ilikuwa adhuhuri yetu.

Sasa tukisubiri ndoto tusizoweza kutekeleza tena
 Tumalizie machicha ya chai yetu ya jioni
 Bila kutematema na kwa tabasamu.
 Baada ya hapo tujilambelambe utamuutamu
 Uliobakia kwenye midomo yetu,
 Tukikumbuka siku ilee ya kwanza
 Tulipokutana jioni chini ya mwembe
 Tukitafuta tawi zuri gumu
 La kufunga bembea yetu
 Naye mbwa Simba akikusubiri.

Lakini kabla hatujaondoka kimyakimya
 Kukamilika nusu duara iliyobakia.
 Tuhakikishe vikombe vyetu ni safi.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1988: 3

Evening Tea (Chai ya Jion)

While we drink tea here on the porch
 And watch our children
 Swinging cheerfully
 We should know: the rope of our swing
 Has already worn through and started to rot
 After a short while we will fall down.

There was a time when it pushed me upwards
 I went further than a half circle,
 There was a time when I caught you in the air
 When you almost fell down,
 There was a time when we took turns to carry each other
 One standing and pushing, the other on the board.
 During that time, even though the swing rose high when we swayed back and forth
 We laughed at too high hopes
 And went to the kitchen to prepare supper;
 It was our early afternoon.

Now when we wait for dreams that we cannot carry out anymore
 We shall finish our evening tea with the tea grounds
 Without spitting them out, smiling.
 After that, let us lick the sweet taste
 That remains on our lips,
 We remember the first day
 We met in the evening under the mango tree
 Looking for a good, solid branch
 To tie our swing to
 Whilst your dog Simba waited for you.

But before we will leave just silently
 To complete the half circle that remains
 Let us make sure that our cups are clean.

Kilio Kijijini

Baridi kali, upepo na dhoruba.
 Vilio vya watu ndani ya nyumba.
 Naye amelala kama jiwe
 Lenye thamani mizanini,
 Akidai aoshwe na mito
 Ya machozi mashavuni yatiririkayo.
 Nje shambani, mihindi imelaliana
 Ikionyesha upepo ulikotoka, wa kifo.
 Miti bado matone inadondosha, ya mvua
 Ambayo chini yameshachimba vishimo
 Kuonyesha mfano kwa washika majembe
 Na kuwahesabia miaka yao ya uhai.
 Mara matone yanakoma
 Na maisha yaonekana mafupi.
 Umande umelowanisha ncha za suruali
 Ya huyu mjomba afikaye sasa kilioni.
 Hakuna kijiaminicho,
 Isipokuwa maji ya mvua
 Yatiririkayo kasi kuelekea bondeni
 Kutukumbusha njia ya kila binadamu.
 Kimya! Kimya kijijini,
 Kimya nje ya nyumba, ndani vilio.
 Hapa tulipo tumeinama kama mihindi
 Hatujakomaa, twasubiri tukiogopa mvunaji.
 Nje panateleza, wendao haraka waanguka.
 Ng'ombe na mbuzi kimya wamesimama,
 Wakimtazama kila apitae kwa huzuni.
 Kimya kijijini, kimya nje ya nyumba,
 Ndani vilio vya mihindi iliyoinama:
 Baba yenu mwisho ameshindwa!
 Mungu Mkubwa! Waambiwa.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1988: 17

Mourning in a Village (Kilio Kijijini)

Harshly cold, windy and stormy.
 People are grieving inside the house.
 He sleeps like a heavy stone on the scales,
 Demanding to be washed by the rivers
 Of tears that flow on the cheeks.
 Outside in the fields the corn heads lie flat
 Revealing from whence the wind came, of death.
 The trees are still throwing drops, of rain
 That have already formed small hollows in the ground
 Showing example for those holding hoes
 Counting their years of life.
 Suddenly the drops cease
 And life seems short.
 Dew has moistened the legs of the trousers
 Of the uncle who just arrived.
 No one trusts himself
 Though the rain water
 That flows quickly towards the valley
 Reminds us of the way of every human being.
 Silence! Silence in the village,
 Silence outside the house, inside the mourning.
 Here when we bow down like the corn heads
 We are not yet ripe, fearful of the harvest.
 Outside it is slippery, those walking quickly fall down.
 A cow and a goat stand in silence,
 Watching sorrowfully every passer-by.
 Silence in the village, silence outside the house
 Inside the cry of the corn heads bowing:
 Your Dad has finally been beaten!
 God is Great! They were told so.

Kisima

Kisima cha maji ya uzima ki wazi
 Na vyura katika bonde la taaluma watuita
 Tujongee kwa mahadhi yao
 Yaongozayo pandikizi la mtu
 Kwa hatua ndefu litembealo
 Na sindano ya shaba kitovuni
 Upinde na mishale mkononi
 Kisha likapiga goti kisimani
 Tayari kumfuma akaribiaye
 Maana shujaa hafi miongoni mwa wezi
 Bali kama simba mawindoni.

Hatuwezi tena kuteka maji
 Na kalamu zetu zimekauka wino.
 Nani atamsukuma kwa kalamu
 Aitwe shujaa wa uwongo!
 Aliyeitia kitovuni kwa hofu
 Ingawa tegemeo hakulipata
 Alifungua mlango uelekeao
 Katikati ya ujuzi na urazini mpya
 Mwanzo wa kizazi tukionacho.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1988: 25

A Well (Kisima)

The fountain of the water of vitality is open
The frogs in the valley of civilisation invite us
To come closer to their concert
That leads the giant
In long steps
With the copper dagger in the navel
A bow and arrows in hand
He kneels down at the well
Ready to pierce anyone approaching
For a hero does not die in the middle of robbers
But like a lion on prey.

We cannot scoop water anymore
And the ink in our pens has run dry.
He who will push [somebody] forward by pen
Will be called the hero of lies!
He who put [the dagger] in the navel in fear
Even though support was not given
He opened the opposite door
Between wisdom and new understanding
The first offspring that we see.

Hii Moja Hadithi

Na hii moja hadithi kuwasimulia watoto,
Ya mtu aliyesita alipofika njia panda,
Akaongozwa ile njia ya ndege akirukaruka:
Ujana wangu ulianza kwenye ua waridi fumbo,
Ukaishia kwenye kamba kandokando ya mto,
Baada ya kisu kutokata kamba niloning'inia.
Nimepanda vilima na kushuka hadi pangoni,
Nikaselea magofuni karibu na kisima cha uzima.
Nimejifunga lugha nyingi za vichaa na wanyama,
Nimeuona ule mji wenye lugha ya kimya,
Nao huo mto wa damu ilimopotea miswada.
Nimeshuhudia pia utapikaji wa roho,
Na jinsi zilivyopotea kwenye maji ya uzima.
Nimeicheza usiku kucha ngoma ya vurumai.
Baada ya haya yote jua likapatwa
Nikaendelea palepale jangwani nilipoanzia
Kwenye kitanda cha mtoto alipolala Nagona
Au pale kilimani watoto walipoketi
Hii moja hadithi watoto wataipenda.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 1988: 45

This One Story (Hii Moja Hadithi)

And this one story to tell to children,
About a person who hesitated at the crossroad,
And was then shown the way of the flying bird:
My youth started in a flower of mysterious rose,
And it ended on a rope by a river,
After a knife did not cut the rope I was hanging on.
I have climbed hills and descended in the caves,
I have stayed in the ruins near the well of vitality.
I have taught myself many languages of lunatics and animals,
I have seen that town of the language of silence,
And that river of blood where the manuscripts disappeared.
I have also witnessed the vomiting of souls,
And the way they disappeared in the water of life.
I have danced the whole night a dance of chaos.
After all this the sun was eclipsed
And I continued at the desert where I started
In the child's bed where Nagona slept
Or on the mountain where children sat
The children will enjoy this one story.

Dhifa

Njia tulopitishwa

Sasa wakokota tongotongo nzito
 Machoni kwa mswaki kuukuu
 Na kusafisha meno ya njano
 Kisha wacheka gizani kwa mawi yatokeayo
 Na kujigonga kwenye kichuguu
 Walichokiumba na kuukimbia mchwa
 Ulao kila kitu kilichoko.
 Mlima watoa cheche hafifu kileleni
 Zisotosha kuonyesha njia.

Nzige waloanguliwa jangwani
 Sasa walala juu ya majani.
 Na yadaiwa mito na visima vimekauka.
 Watetezi wapiga madebe shinda.
 Ni ndege waoga tu washtukao.
 Kesho tutakula nini, swali la watoto.
 Sasa tufe hivihivi, la watu wazima.

Njia tulopitishwa yasikitisha.
 Twasubiri mvua ya haki
 Tukisawazishe kwa majembe makali
 Na kukandika nyumba mpya
 Na kuchoma moto malkia wa askari.
 Penye haki vichuguu na milima hulala.

Ingawa hatuna machozi ya moto
 Yatayofuta aibu hii tukufu
 Bendera ya haki itapepea daima
 Daima tutakuwa na kuwako.
 Mbele ya umoja thabiti
 Milima na vichuguu hulala.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 2008: 3

The Road We Were Made to Go (Njia tulopitishwa)

Now they take heavy discharge
 Out from eyes with a worn-out toothbrush
 And clean the yellow teeth
 Then they laugh in the dark at the foulness that comes out
 And crash into an termite hill
 Which they made and escaped termites that
 Eat anything available.
 The hill has a faint spark at the peak
 That is not enough to show the way.

Locusts that were hatched in the desert
 Now sleep on the grass.
 And it is claimed that rivers and wells have dried up.
 Defendants beat the cans the whole day.
 Those who startle are only cowardly birds.
 What will we eat tomorrow, is the question of children.
 Are we now dying like this, of the adults.

The road that we were made to go is sad.
 We wait for the rain of justice
 Let us level [the termite hill] with sharp hoes
 And plaster a new house with clay
 And burn the queen of the soldiers.
 Where there is justice, termite hills and hills sleep.

Although we do not have hot tears
 That would clear off this glorious shame
 The flag of justice will wave forever
 Forever we will be and we will exist
 In front of strong unity
 Hills and termite hills sleep.

Mafuriko

Nitaandika wimbo juu ya mbawa za nzi
 Utoe muziki arukapo wausikie walio wengi
 Ushairi wa jalalani utaimbwa
 Juu ya vidonda vya wakulima
 Na usaha ulio jasho lao.
 Nitaandika juu ya mbawa za wadudu
 Wote warukao
 Juu ya mistari ya pundamilia
 Na masikio makubwa ya tembo.
 Juu ya kuta vyooni, maofisini, madarasani,
 Juu ya paa za nyumba, kuta za Ikulu,
 Na juu ya khanga na tisheti.
 Nitaandika wimbo huu:

Mafuriko ya mwaka huu
 Yatishia nyumba kongwe bondeni.
 Waliomo wameanza kuihama
 Na miti ya umeme imeanguka.
 Palipokuwa na mwanga, sasa giza.
 Mafuriko ya mwaka huu!
 Mti mkongwe umelalia upande
 Wa nyumba zetu hafifu.
 Upepo mkali uvumapo hatulali.
 Kila kukicha twatazama mizizi yake
 Na mkao wake, na kuta hafifu za nyumba.
 Lazima ukatwe kuanzia matawi hadi shina
 Mafuriko ya mwaka huu yaashiria ...
 Tutabaki kuwasimulia wajukuu:
 Mwaka ule wa mafuriko
 Miti mingi mikongwe ilianguka.

Mafuriko ya mwaka huu!
 Wengi wataumbuka.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 2008: 4

Floods (Mafuriko)

I will write a song on the wings of a fly
 Let the song make music when the fly flies, let many hear it
 Poetry of rubbish will be sung
 On the wounds of farmers
 And pus that is their sweat.
 I will write on the wings of insects
 All that fly
 On the stripes of a zebra
 And the big ears of an elephant.
 On the walls in toilets, offices, classrooms,
 On the roof of houses, walls of the State House,
 And on the kangas and t-shirts.
 I will write this song:

This year's floods
 Threaten old houses in the valley.
 People in them have started to move out
 And the electric poles have fallen down.
 Where there was light, now darkness.
 Floods of this year!
 An old tree is lying next to
 Our rickety houses.
 When strong wind blows, we do not sleep.
 Every day we look at its roots
 And its position, and rickety walls of the house.
 It has to be cut from the branches to the trunk
 This year's floods give a warning ...
 We shall remain to tell the grandchildren:
 That year of floods
 Many old trees fell down.

This year's floods!
 Many will be destroyed.

Kuwako

Kusema kweli nilipata kuwa mbinguni
 Nikizunguka katika nafasi finyu
 Mawazoni mwa kumbukumbu za Mungu.
 Aliponisahau nilijipenyeza kwenye nyufa
 Nyembamba katika ngoma ya pumbao
 Na kama kiluilui kidogo sana nikaogelea
 Kishujaa katika mto wa machozi
 Hadi nilipogonga ukuta mwororo
 Na kuingia ndani kuwa kiumbe.
 Humo nilipumzika katika rutuba ya uhai.
 Nilipopata nguvu mpya
 Nilifurukuta na kuingia mto wa machozi
 Nikatokeza dirishani na kudondoka hai.
 Niliona kwa mara ya kwanza
 Mali iliyokuwa imefichama kwangu muda mrefu.
 Nililia kwa furaha.
 Halafu nilianza kufaidi utamu
 Na uhalisia wa kuwako.

Mungu alipokumbuka na kuona
 Mfanowe nje yake
 Alinipa jina na nambari
 Nikacheza mchezo ambao kila siku
 Maelfu hutolewa nje ya uwanja
 Na hawarudi tena.

Kwa hiyo,
 Najua siku moja ataniita katika mahakama yake
 Ambamo malaika na shetani hugombea uwakili.
 Nitashtakiwa kwa yale niliyoyatenda uhuruni
 Na kwa ushairi wangu mbaya umfanyao akae macho.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 2008: 10

Existence (Kuwako)

To tell the truth I got to be in the heaven
 Going round in a cramped space
 In the ideas of God's memory.
 When he forgot me, I pushed myself through a narrow split
 During an astounding dance
 And like a very small larva/tadpole I swam
 Bravely in the river of tears
 Until I hit a soft wall
 And entered it to become a creature.
 There I rested in the dampness of life.
 When I got new strength
 I moved and entered the river of tears
 And then appeared from the window, falling out alive.
 I saw for the first time
 Wealth that had been hidden within me for long.
 I cried out of joy.
 Then I started to enjoy the sweetness
 And reality of being.

When God remembered and saw
 His image outside himself
 He gave me a name and number
 I then dance the dance from which each day
 Thousands are taken out outside the field/arena
 And do not return again.

Because of this,
 I know one day He will call me in His court
 Where angels and devils quarrel about representation.
 I will be accused of what I did during the freedom
 And of my bad poetry that makes Him stay awake.

Marahaba

Kama sote tulitoka kisiwa kimoja
 Cha Mungu mmoja Mfadhili
 Basi sote yatupasa huko
 Malalamiko yetu kuwasilisha.
 Na
 Yaelekea kadiri tunavyozeeka
 Na matatizo ya maisha kuongezeka
 Twazidi kuyakumbuka makasia
 Tuliyotundika ukutani ujanani
 Na jasho lililolowanisha miili yetu.
 Basi
 Tuzibe matundu ya mtumbwi wetu
 Na tupige makasia, tuelekee
 Kwenye kisiwa cha uzima wa milele
 Kama hapa duniani tu wasafiri.
 Na
 Tukifika, sote tuseme kwa sauti moja
 Shikamoo Baba!

Lakini ghafla twajigonga kikondoo
 Kwenye mwamba thabiti wa usasa
 Usemao hawezi kujibu Marahaba.
 Na
 Kwa kutokuwa na hakika
 Twaogelea juu ya vipande vya mtumbwi
 Na kurudi kwa mioyo mizito duniani
 Ambako twakaribishwa
 Kunywa vikombe vya majonzi
 Na kula ukoko wa mateso
 Kati ya vilio vya maskini
 Na ngumi za matajiri.

Ghafla kutoka mahali pasipojulikana
 Twasikia ngurumo kubwa:
 Marahabaa!

Euphrase Kezilahabi 2008: 11

You Are Greeted (Marahaba)

Like we all came from the same island
 Of one God, the Beneficent
 So that is where we all are obliged to
 Send our protests
 And
 It seems that the older we get
 And the more our lives get difficult
 The more we remember the paddles
 Which we hung up on the wall in youth
 And the sweat that wetted our body
 So
 Let us block the holes of our canoe
 And let us paddle, heading
 To the island of eternal life/vitality
 As in this world [we are] just travellers.
 And
 When we arrive, let us say in one voice
 Be greeted, Father!

But suddenly we collide like sheep
 On a rigid rock of the present/of modernity
 That says that he cannot reply "you are greeted".
 And
 Without certainty
 We swim on the pieces of the canoe
 And return with heavy hearts to the world
 Where we are welcomed
 To drink cups of mourning
 And to eat the hard crust of misery
 Among the cries of the poor
 And fists of the rich.

Suddenly from an unknown place
 We hear a big roaring:
 You are greeted!

Mtakaso

Mawazo.
 Mawazo kichwani, mawazo begani
 Natembea nikiyumbayumba kama mgeni
 Mheshimiwa alolewa karatasi alizokunywa.
 Nyumangu sauti za watoto zaseng'anya:
 Ndiye! Siye! Ndiye! Siye!
 Natazama nyuma: kiza, kimya.
 Mto mpana u mbele yangu.

Nchi yangu tukufu ilee!
 Mto nitauvuka, miguu kuitakasa
 Kisha nione mwanga, maisha nikiutafuta.

"Chapu!" Nyumangu "Chapu!"
 Nani aninyatia! Hatua mbili natembea.
 "Chapu Chapu!" Nyumangu "Chapu Chapu!"
 Nani! Natazama nyuma:
 Kiza. Kimya.

Natazama mbele, nakimbia, anakimbia,
 Navuka, natulia tuli. Anavuka, tuli anatulia.
 Mbele ramani ya Afrika imenasa mtini.
 Halafu umeme na radi. Sauti:
 "Usiogope! Ndimi mlinziwo. Ndimi nali
 Nikikufuata: tazama, hisi, tii na elewa!"
 Pazuka jengo miiba yaota kulizunguka
 Na tai atua juu yake.

Mara kamba zanizunguka:
 Miguuni, mikononi, shingoni,
 Mwili mzima. Kujitingisha siwezi.
 Kutoka hewani kiboko chanishukia matakoni
 Halafu wimbo, kiboko, wimbo.
 Kila baada ya wimbo jengo lazama kiasi.
 Tai arukia begani. Aninong'oneza kilichomo.
 Kutoka milima jirani nasikia mwangwi
 Sauti za watoto wakipiga kelele
 "Mnyoosheni maksai!"

Euphrase Kezilahabi 2008: 19–20

Purification (Mtakaso)

Thoughts

Thoughts in the head, thoughts on the shoulders

I walk staggering like an honoured guest

Who was drunk with the paper he drunk.

Behind me backbiting voice of children:

It is him! It is not him! It is him! It is not him!

I look behind: darkness, silence.

In front of me a wide river.

That glorious land of mine!

I will pass over the river, cleanse my feet.

Then I will see a light, lifetime I was searching for it.

“Quickly!” Behind me.

Who stalks me! I take two steps.

“Quickly!” Behind me. “Quickly, quickly!”

Who! I look behind:

Darkness. Silence.

I look forward, I run, (s)he runs,

I cross, I slow down, (s)he crosses, slows down.

In front there is a map of Africa hung on a tree.

Then thunder and lightning. A voice:

“Do not fear! I am the one who is your guard. I am the one following you: look, feel, obey, and understand!”

There emerges a big building

Trees with thorns grow around it

And a vulture stops/perches/sits on top of it.

Suddenly a rope encircles me:

Around legs, arms, neck,

The whole body. I cannot shake myself/shake it off.

From the heaven a whip falls on my buttocks,

Then a song, whip, a song.

After every song the building always disappears a bit.

A vulture flies on my shoulders. It whispers what is inside.

From the neighbouring hills I hear an echo

Voices of children making noise

“Straighten that castrated animal!”

Dikteta

Kama wajiona ni wewe pekee
Uwezaye kufikiri
Ulikufa karne nyingi zilizopita.
Kilichobaki ni wako mweweseko.
Wale uliowakemea, uliowaweka ndani
Uliowadhulumu na uliowaua
Mawazo yao sasa milizamu
Ambamo watoto hucheza kwa furaha
Na kunawa shombo uliloliacha.

Madaraka ni ndoto isiyotegemewa.
Ni kuvaa kofia juu ya gari wazi
Lendalo mbio kuvuka mto wa haki
Ambao daraja lake limechukuliwa
Na mafuriko ya sheria ulizovunja,
Ambalo breki zake ni roho za watu
Na matairi yake ni mafuvu manne
Ya wale uliowaita vichwangumu
Haini namba wani wa fikra zako.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 2008: 31

Dictator (Dikteta)

As you see it is only you
 Who can think
 You died many centuries ago.
 What remains is your delirium.
 Those who you scolded, those who you put in jail
 Those who you oppressed and killed
 Their thoughts now are the gutters
 In which children often play cheerfully
 And wash off the bad smell that you left behind.

Self-government is a dream that is not to be leaned upon.²⁵⁸
 It is to wear a cap on a convertible
 That moves quickly to cross the river of justice
 Whose bridge has been taken off
 By the floods of laws you broke
 A car whose brakes are the spirits of people
 And whose tyres are four skulls
 Of those who you called hard-headed
 The prominent betrayers of your thoughts.

²⁵⁸ or: Self-government is an unreliable/unlikely/impossible dream.

Mafuriko Msumbiji 2000

Nimekuja kugonga
Lango lenu la wakati
Kwa nyundo ya huruma
Amkeni! Enyi Wahenga!
Kwani huko Msumbiji
Mafuriko ya damu
Ya miaka ilopita
Mafuriko ya mvua ya sasa
Yamekokota wanenu
Na mifupa yenu sasa
Tupu yaelea
Matundu ya macho yakitazama
Ukanda wa fedha upeoni
Mwa maji mengi.
Wanenu waponea
Vikombe vya machozi
Yaliyochotwa kutoka visima
Vya uoni wa ndugu wazamao.
Nge wenye mikia isokunjika
Na pembe zizungukazo, waruka
Lakini washindwa kung'ata
Na kuua vyanzo vya umaskini
Sikilizeni mgong'oto wa mshairi
Bubu asemaye na kuomba kwa moyowe.

Euphrase Kezilahabi 2008: 43

Floods in Mozambique 2000 (Mafuriko Msumbiji 2000)

I have come to knock
On your door of time
With a hammer of mercy
Wake up! You there, ancestors!
Because in Mozambique
Floods of blood
Of the past years
(Are) now floods of rain
They have dragged your children
And your bones now
Float empty/in emptiness
Holes of eyes look at
The belt of silver in the horizon
Where the water is deep.
Your children escape for/through
Cups of tears
That were scooped from the wells
Of the sight of our brothers who drowned.
Scorpions with tails that cannot be coiled
And encircling horns, fly
But fail to bite
And to kill the source of poverty
Listen to the hatch of a poet
The mute who speaks and begs with his/her heart.

**APPENDIX 2:
OA BY MUYAKA BIN HAJI AL-GHASSANIY
WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

Oa

Oa, kwamba u muozi, uzoeleo kuowa,
Oa, mato maolezi, na mboni ukikodowa;
Oa, maji maundazi, meupe kama maziwa,
Oa, Sizi ndizi ndowa. Asokuoa ni yupi?

Oa, ndiwe muolezi, uzoeleo kuowa,
Oa, sifumbe maozi, maninga uchiyavuwa;
Oa, uzaze uzazi kama ulivyojaliwa.
Oa, Sizi ndizi ndowa. Asokuoa ni yupi?

Oa, maji t'imet'imbe, mema ya mt'u kuyoa;
Oa, maozi sifumbe nawe utafurahiwa;
Oa, uole wapambe wako uliopambiwa.
Oa, Sizi ndizi ndowa. Asokuoa ni yupi?

Oa, maji ya kisima yatengenywe na mvuwa,
Oa, ukijitezama, kioo ukichanguwa.
Oa, mwanamke tama, mtukufu wa sitawa.
Oa, Sizi ndizi ndowa. Asokuoa ni yupi?

Oa, watoka ngamani ulipo ukiifuwa.
Oa, majini ya p'wani umeyakosa ya ziwa.
Oa, ni hizi zamani tulizo tukiambiwa.
Oa! Sizi ndizi ndowa. Asokuoa ni yupi?

Oa, unoweze nami, unowezapo t'akoya
T'akoya saya maumi maumi ya kuumia
Umia nyama za nyemi nyemi za kunyemenyea
Nyea kutombonekea ambonekae ni yupi?

Muyaka bin Haji al-Ghassaniy

The edition is from Abdulaziz (1979: 182–184); I have only changed the differing spellings of *Asokuoa* 'Who does not get married (or: swim/bathe/see)', which was spelled both *Asokuoa* and *Aso kuo*a, to be consistently *Asokuoa*.

Oa

Oa, in order to be a spouse, who is used to marrying/bathing/seeing,
 Oa, with sharp eyes and staring pupils;
 Oa, abundant water, white as milk,
 Oa, this is just what marriage is. Who is that who does not marry?

Oa, it is you who is the swimmer, who is used to swimming,
 Oa, do not shut your eyes, open them wide;
 Oa, beget children as you were begotten.
 Oa, this is just what marriage is. Who is that who does not marry?

Oa, fresh spring water, good to wash oneself in;
 Oa, do not shut your eyes and you will be entertained;
 Oa, look at your young girls who have been decorated.
 Oa, this is just what marriage is. Who is that who does not marry?

Oa, mix well water with rain,
 Oa, when you look at yourself, when you take mirror from the wall.
 Oa, a perfect woman, magnificent and elegant.
 Oa, this is just what marriage is. Who is that who does not marry?

Oa, you come from the bilge where you were baling out water.
 Oa, in water of the coast if you don't have water of a lake.
 Oa, these are things that in the past we were told about.
 Oa! This is just what marriage is. Who is that who does not marry?

Oa, relax with me, when you relax you will be contented
 (It) will content this pain pain that hurts
 Hurts flesh of pleasure pleasure pleasing
 Tickle (that) cannot be seen, who is that who can be seen?

Translation by Katriina Ranne, partly based on the translation by
 Abdulaziz (1979: 183–185).

STUDIA ORIENTALIA

Edited by the Finnish Oriental Society (Societas Orientalis Fennica)

A complete list of publications as well as a list of articles in each volume can be found at: www.suomenitainenseura.org. Back issues in electronic format can be found at: ojs.tsv.fi/index.php/StOrE/issue/archive.

Distributed by Federation of Finnish Learned Societies/Bookstore Tiedekirja

www.tiedekirja.fi

address: Snellmaninkatu 13, FIN-00170 Helsinki, Finland

tel. +358-9-635177

e-mail: tiedekirja@tsv.fi

Volumes available:

76. 1995. 228 pp. Five Rağaz Collections: Materials for the study of Rağaz Poetry, II. Compiled and ed. **J. Hämeen-Anttila**. €25
77. 1995. 258 pp. **T. Paajanen** Scribal Treatment of the Literary and Vernacular Proverbs of al-Mustatraf in 15th–17th Century Manuscripts. With special reference to diglossic variation. €25
78. 1996. 268 pp. Minor Rağaz Collections, Materials for the study of Rağaz poetry, III. Compiled and ed. **J. Hämeen-Anttila**. €25
79. 1996. 178 pp. **P. Huang** Lao Zi: The Book and the man. €25
80. 1997. 179 pp. **P. Nikkilä** Preference and Choice in the Confucian Analects. €25
81. 1997. xiv + 136 pp. **R. Harjula** The Ideal of the Good Life: As crystallized by Tanzanian Meru proverbs. €20
82. 1997. vii + 290 pp. (Collection of 10 articles + book reviews.) €25
85. 1999. x + 468 pp. (Collection of 22 articles + book reviews.) €30
86. 1999. vii + 264 pp. **H. Juusola** Linguistic Peculiarities in the Aramaic Magic Bowl Texts. €25
87. 1999. 326 pp. **Writing in the Altaic World**. Proceedings of the 41st Annual Meeting of the Permanent International Altaistic Conference (PIAC). Ed. Juha Janhunen & Volker Rybatzki. (Collection of 29 articles.) €25
88. 2000. viii + 249 pp. **V.-J. Vuori** Repetitive Structures in the Languages of East and South-East Asia. €25
89. 2000. xiii + 238 pp. **S.M. Alamolhoda** Phonostatistics and Phonotactics of the Syllable in Modern Persian. €25
90. 2000. xii + 330 pp. + 24 pls. **M. Tornainen** From Austere *wabi* to Golden *wabi*: Philosophical and aesthetic aspects of *wabi* in the way of tea. €35
91. 2000. xii + 436 pp. **M. Parpola** Kerala Brahmins in Transition: A Study of a Nampūtiri family. €35
92. 2000. xi + 263 pp. **R. Lehonkoski** Describing East-Asian Grammar: An Application of Role and Reference Grammar. €25
93. 2001. xiii + 247 pp. **A. Kerkkänen** Yugoslav Jewry: Aspects of post-World War II and post-Yugoslav developments. €25
94. 2001. 511 pp. **Vidyārṇavavandanam**: Essays in honour of Asko Parpola. Ed. Klaus Karttunen & Petteri Koskikallio. (Collection of 31 articles; a bibliography of Asko Parpola's publications.) €40
95. 2003. 516 pp. (Collection of 22 articles + book reviews.) €30
96. 2003. vi + 320 pp. **H. Weiss** Obligatory Almsgiving: An Inquiry into *Zakāt* in the pre-colonial Bilād as-Sūdān. €30

97. 2003. xxxix + 325 pp. **Remota Relata**: Essays on the history of Oriental studies in honour of Harry Halén. Ed. Juha Janhunen & Asko Parpola. (Collection of 26 articles.) €30
98. 2003. vii + 341 pp. **S. Seppälä** In Speechless Ecstasy: Expression and interpretation of mystical experience in Classical Syriac and Sufi literature. €30
99. 2004. xxvii + 444 pp. **Verbum et Calamus**: Semitic and related studies in honour of the sixtieth birthday of Professor Tapani Harviainen. Ed. Hannu Juusola, Juha Laulainen & Heikki Palva. (Collection of 34 articles.) €30
100. 2004. xviii + 253 pp. **S. Muir** Yiddish in Helsinki: Study of a colonial Yiddish dialect and culture. €30
101. 2007. 595 pp. (Collection of 22 articles + book reviews.) €30
102. 2006. 175 pp. **S. Akar** But if You Desire God and His Messenger: The Concept of choice in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. €30
103. 2006. xviii + 230 pp. **Africa in the Long Run**: Festschrift in the honour of Professor Arvi Hurskainen. Ed. Lotta Harjula & Maaria Ylänkö. (Collection of 14 articles.) €30
104. 2006. 736 + xviii pp. **T. Salmenkari** Democracy, Participation, and Deliberation in China: The Discussion in the official Chinese press, 1978–1981. €40
105. 2008. 437 pp. **H. Weiss** Between Accomodation and Revivalism: Muslims, the state, and society in Ghana from the precolonial to the postcolonial era. €30
106. 2009. xxiv + 503 pp. **Of God(s), Trees, Kings and Scholars**: Neo-Assyrian and related studies in honour of Simo Parpola. Ed. Mikko Luukko, Saana Svärd & Raija Mattila. (Collection of 34 articles.) €35
107. 2009. 400 pp. (Collection of 14 articles + book reviews.) €30
108. 2010. xviii + 335 pp. **Anantaṁ Śāstram**: Indological and linguistic studies in honour of Bertil Tikkanen. Ed. Klaus Karttunen. (Collection of 20 articles.) €30
109. 2011. xii + 240 pp. **Himalayan Nature**: Representations and reality. Ed. Erika Sandman & Riika J. Virtanen. (Collection of 12 articles + book reviews.) €25
110. 2011. xxiv + 333 pp. **Pūrvāparaprajñābbhinandanam – East and West, Past and Present**: Indological and other essays in honour of Klaus Karttunen. Ed. Bertil Tikkanen & Albion M. Butters. (Collection of 22 articles.) €30
111. 2011. xi + 482 pp. **J. Abellán Pérez** Ordenanzas jerezanas sobre la guarda de la frontera frente a Ronda y su serranía a comienzos de la guerra de Granada (1482–1484). — **L. Behzadi** Categories of proper language in classical Arabic literature. — **M.M. Dziekan** Algerische Literatur im achtzehnten Jahrhundert. — **M. Espinar Moreno** Economía de los centros de culto del Reino de Granada: Los bienes habices de la mezquita y rábitas del Padúl (Valle de Lecrín, Granada). — **K. Karttunen** Studies in the Gṛhya Prayogas of the Jaiminiya Sāmaveda: 5. Pratisarabandha. — **T. Kukkonen** The Good, the beautiful, and the true aesthetical issues in Islamic philosophy. — **S.H. Levitt** New considerations regarding the identity of Vedic *sóma* as the mushroom fly-agaric. — **T. Lindquist** Semantic borrowings and grammatical change in written Arabic in Israel under the influence of Hebrew: The Function of DPs and the peculiar ماحش. — **I. Lindstedt** Anti-religious views in the works of Ibn al-Rāwandī and Abū l-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arrī. — **V. Martínez Enamorado** Falcons and falconry in Al-Andalus. — **F. Moscoso García** Un pionero en los estudios de árabe marroquí: El P. Fr. Patricio José de la Torre. Refranes y adagios. — **I. Nokso-Koivisto** Summarized beauty: The Microcosm-Macrocosm analogy and Islamic aesthetics. — **C. Pérez Beltrán** Mujeres en cursos de alfabetización en el norte de Marruecos: Un estudio de caso en el círculo rural de Asila. — **T. Salmenkari** Access and repression in Korea. — **H. Shehadeh** Arabic loanwords in Hebrew. — **L. Tainio** Kosovo Turks: From privileged status to fear of assimilation. — **R. Tuori** “More didactic than lyrical”: Modern views on Karaite Hebrew poetry. — **M. Viitamäki** New wine from Medina: Aesthetics of popular qawwali lyrics. — **S. Wu** The great migration: Inception of the Zhou identity. — **J. Janhunen** Review article: Ancient art and archaeology from Central Asia. — Book Reviews. €30

112. 2012. vi + 206 pp. **M. Grodzki** “Muslims” and “Islam” in Middle Eastern Literature of the Seventh and Eighth Centuries AD: An Alternative perspective of West European oriental scholarship. — **A. Kamczycki** Zionist Restitution of the Ugly Jew’s Image: The Case of Theodor Herzl. — **K. Karttunen** Aśoka, the Buddhist Saingha and the Graeco-Roman World. — **H. Mazuz** Christians in the Qur’ān: Some insights derived from the classical exegetic approach. — **J.P. Monferrer-Sala** One More Time on the Arabized Nominal Form Iblis. — **M.D. Rodríguez Gómez** Describing the Ruin: Writings of Arabic notaries in the last period of al-Andalus. — **N. Rubinstein-Shemer** Larger than Life: Prayer during wartime in Islamic law. — **T. Salmenkari** Using Feudalism for Political Criticism and for Promoting Systemic Change in China. — **J. Töyräänvuori** Weapons of the Storm God in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Traditions. — Book Reviews. €15
113. 2013. x + 230 pp. **Ex Oriente Lumina: Historiae variae multiethnicae** – Festschrift tillägnad Juha Janhunen på hans 61. födelsedag 12.2.2013. Ed. Tiina Hyytiäinen, Lotta Jalava, Janne Saarikivi & Erika Sandman. — **T. Hyytiäinen, L. Jalava, J. Saarikivi & E. Sandman** Preface. — **J. Anhava** In Search of Hidden Languages. — **M. Béniard** Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902–1988): un auteur mésestimé. — **O.K. Fält** Perplexing Emperorship: The Status of the emperor of Japan in the United States’ planning bodies in 1943–1944. — **A. Girfanova** The Taz Ethnic Group: Its past and future. — **M. Härkönen** Tibetan Nuns: Gender as a force in a culture under “threat”. — **K. Karttunen** Finnish Students of Oriental Philology in St Petersburg. — **Kelsang Norbu with C.K. Stuart** An A Mdo Tibetan Woman’s Life and Religious Practice. — **J. Komppa** Bargaining for Deities and Chattels: Recent developments in Xiahe as reflected in the local antiques trade. — **S. Kuzay** Li Hanqiu 李涵秋 (1874–1923): Ein Author zwischen Tradition und Moderne: Der Roman “Die Fluten Von Guangling” (廣陵潮 Guangling Chao) Als Spiegel Seiner Zeit. — **A. Lahtinen** Challenges of Qinghai Province. — **Libu Lakhi, C.K. Stuart & G. Roche** Namuyi Tibetans: Electrified change. — **Limusishiden, Ha Mingzong & C.K. Stuart** Niidosang: A Huzhu Mongghul (Tu) Deity. — **A. Logie** Understanding the Enigma of Traditional Korean Culture. — **A. Niemi** Sitting by the Rice-Basket: Hunger phrases in Chan Buddhism. — **G. Roche & Lcag mo tsheng ring** Notes on the Maintenance of Diversity in Amdo: Language use in Gnyan thog village annual rituals. — **T. Salmenkari** Language in Taiwanese Social Movements. — **C. Schönig** Die Modernen Türksprachen: Skizze zu einem Familienportrait. — **M. Suutarinen** Arabic Script among China’s Muslims: A Dongxiang folk story. — **Wuqi Chenaktsang** A Short Introduction to Tibetan Kinship Terms in A-mdo. — **V. Zikmundová** Several Observations Concerning the Sibe Practice of the Deoci and Andai Rituals of the Khorchin Mongols. €20
114. 2014. xii + 578 pp. **Travelling through Time: Essays in honour of Kaj Öhrnberg**. Ed. Sylvia Akar, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila & Inka Nokso-Koivisto. — **S. Akar, J. Hämeen-Anttila & I. Nokso-Koivisto** Foreword. — **H. Halén** Kaj Öhrnberg: A Biographical sketch. — Bibliography of the Publications of Kaj Öhrnberg. — **M. Anhava** An Enchanted Wanderer. — **P. Berg** Like-Minded Scholars Through the Centuries: Mission Georg August Wallin. — **I. Lindstedt** The Transmission of al-Madā’inī’s Historical Material to al-Balādhurī and al-Ṭabarī: A Comparison and analysis of two *khabars*. — **J. Hämeen-Anttila** Al-Kisrawī and the Arabic Translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*. — **T.P. Lankila** The Saracen Raid of Rome in 846: An Example of maritime *ghazw*. — **T. Heikkilä** Between East and West: The Many uses of the life of St Symeon of Trier. — **I. Perho** Ibn Taghrībirdī’s Voice. — **V. Martínez Enamorado** Bronces de al-Andalus y epigrafía: el caso del hallazgo de Denia (siglo XI). — **R. El Hour** De nuevo sobre el cadiazgo de al-Ándalus almorávide: reflexiones acerca del cadiazgo de Almuñécar. — **J. Abellán Pérez** La derrota granadina en las Lomas de Diego Díaz (1483). — **M. Espinar Moreno** Noticias sobre el cadi Rodrigo Aben Chapela de Aldeire y su familia. — **M. Viitamäki** Modern Conveyances, Traditional Destinations: Khvāja Ḥasan Niẓāmī’s 1911 tour of the Middle East. — **H. Weiss** „Katastrophen Sind Prüfungen Allahs“: Alltags Erfahrungen Muslimischer Gelehrter in Nord-Ghana. — **M. Saarnivaara** From Terrorists to Celebrities: Deportation as a political opportunity for Palestinian Islamic

- Hamas. — **I. Nokso-Koivisto & S. Svärd** The Microcosm-Macrocosm Analogy in Mesopotamian and Mediaeval Islamic Contexts. — **J. Kaukua** Suhrawardī's Knowledge as Presence in Context. — **J. Mattila** The Philosophical Lives of Ibn al-Haytham and Ibn Riḍwān: Autobiography as an expression of the philosophical way of life. — **T. Kukkonen** On Adding to the Names: The Camel's smile. — **R. Tuori** Polish-Lithuanian Karaite Hebrew *Zemiroṭ*: Imitation only? A Review on a marginal genre. — **N. Nasrallah** Mediaeval Arabs Ate Sandwiches, Too: *Bazmāward* and *awsāt* for the record. — **M. Meouak** Palmiers-Dattiers et Dattes dans l'Occident Musulman d'après la '*Umdat al-ṭabīb fī ma'rifaṭ al-nabāt li-kull labīb* d'Abū l-Khayr al-Ishbīlī (6^e/XII^e siècle). — **V. Prevost** Nourritures Médiévales: L'alimentation au Maghreb d'après les Sources Ibadites (XI^e–XIII^e siècle). — **M. Iliushina** A Journey to St Petersburg: On the fate of the manuscript *Kitāb riḥlat al-shitā' wa-l-ṣaif* by Muḥammad al-Ḥusainī. — **T. Harviainen & K. Karttunen** The Outset of Arabic Studies in Finland with Notes on Finnish: Carolus Clewberg and Michael Avellan. — **H. Halén** Haik Bek-Arakelov: An Armenian officer and Islamic poet. — **F. Thomasson** Johan David Åkerblad: Orientalist, traveller, and manuscript collector. — Illustrations to Thomasson's and Vasilyeva's Articles. — **O.V. Vasilyeva** Åkerblad's Collection in Suchtelen's Orientalia: From Sweden to Russia. — **H. Palva** G.A. Wallin's Contributions to the Study of Arabic Dialects. — **Fr. Moscogarcía** Dos cuentos en árabe del norte de Marruecos: 'El porqué el murciélago no tiene plumas' y '¿Quién arma más lío?'. — **H. Juusola** Notes on the Orientalism Debate and Orientalism in Finland. — **S. Akar** Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language: From Grammar-Translation method to the Audio-Lingual approach. — A Note from the Editor. € 28
- 115.** 2015. xiii + 332 pp. **Riika J. Virtanen** Tibetan Written Images: A Study of imagery in the writings of Dhondup Gyal. € 24
- 116.** 2015. xvi + 454 pp. **Klaus Karttunen** Yonas and Yavanas in Indian Literature. € 24
- 117.** 2016. x + 284 pp. **Crosslinguistics and Linguistic Crossings in Northeast Asia: Papers on the languages of Sakhalin and adjacent regions**. Ed. E. Gruzdeva & J. Janhunen. — **E. Gruzdeva & J. Janhunen**. Preface. — **J. Janhunen** Reconstructio externa linguae Ghiliacorum. — **A. Vovin** On the Linguistic Prehistory of Hokkaido. — **H. Shiraiishi & B. Botma** Asymmetric Distribution of Vowels in Nivkh. — **A. Pevnov** On the Specific Features of Orok as Compared with the Other Tungusic Languages. — **S. Kazama** On the Similarities and Differences between the Mongolic, Tungusic, and Eskimo-Aleut Languages. — **T. Sato** A Classification of the Types of Noun Incorporation in Ainu and its Implications for Morphosyntactic Typology. — **A. Bugaeva** On the Innovative Nature of Sakhalin Ainu: Focusing on nominalization. — **Y. Nagayama** Nominalization in Alutor. — **I. Nagasaki** Relative Clauses and Nominalizations in Kolyma Yukaghir. — **Ks. Shagal** Relative Clauses in the Languages of Sakhalin as an Areal Feature. — **E. Gruzdeva** Epistemic Modality and Related Categories in Nivkh. — **A. Anttonen, J. Luukkonen, E. Sandman, S. Santalahti, T. Ylitalo & E. Gruzdeva** Attritional Phenomena in the Nivkh Language on Sakhalin. — **N. Mamontova** The Sociolinguistic Landscape of the Island of Sakhalin. — **R. Länsisalmi** Northern Voices: Examining language attitudes in recent surveys on Ainu and Saami. — **A. Logie** Untold Tales: Two lesser known personal and social-linguistic histories of Sakhalin Koreans. € 24

