

SWAHILI FORUM 14 (2007): 153-163

A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED: KEN WALIBORA'S NOVEL *KUFA KUZIKANA*¹

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1. Introduction

After being for a long time in the shadow of its Tanzanian counterpart, Kenyan fiction has recently come into the foreground with writers such as Kyallo Wadi Wamitila, Rocha Chimera, Mwenda Mbatiah and Ken Walibora.

The latter, Ken Walibora, is of Luhya origin. His real name is Kennedy Waliaula (cf. Waititu 2005) and he coined his pen name by replacing the last part of his surname *aula* – “good” or “better” in Luhya (as well as in Kiswahili) – with its more common Swahili synonym *bora*, hence Walibora. He was born in January 1965 and grew up in Western Kenya, in Kitale, a little farming town in the North Rift Valley. After finishing secondary school, he worked for eight years as a probation officer (i.e. a social worker attached to the Prison Department) and it was during this period that he wrote his first novel *Siku Njema*. His dream, however, was to become a broadcaster. Since the time he was a student at the Kenya Institute of Administration, he had tried his hand at reporting sport events, but it was only in 1999 that he got a chance to read and anchor news, becoming a well-known Kenya Television anchor man. In the meantime he graduated from the University of Nairobi with a first class honours degree in Literature and Kiswahili and in 2004 he won the prestigious University Fellowship Award at Ohio State University where he is currently studying African literature.

Walibora is considered one of the best Kiswahili writers and broadcasters in Kenya (cf. *ibid.*). Thanks to his command of the language, he was instrumental in building Kenya TV Kiswahili broadcast and in leading the Kiswahili team in the translation of news from English. He is the one who coined the Kenyan Swahili term for constituency, *eneo bunge* (cf. *ibid.*). Walibora has published two novels so far: *Siku Njema* (“A good day”, 1996) and *Kufa Kuzikana* (“Friends for life”², 2003), besides a secondary school textbook of Kiswahili and three books for children. One of them, *Ndoto ya Amerika*, won the 2003 Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature (in the children category) and is about to appear in English as *The American Dream*, translated by the author. While staying in the United States, Walibora decided to try his hand at an English novel, *Guilty but Innocent*, which has not been published yet. It is a story, narrated by a young woman, of her ordeal of rape.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was read at the 19th Swahili Kolloquium, Bayreuth, 26-28 May 2006.

² The title, which literally translates “Dying and burying one another”, refers to everlasting friendship or love, and may be rendered with the English saying “A friend in need is a friend indeed”.

His first novel, *Siku Njema*, is the life story of the young hero, Kongowea Mswahili. In his overt moralizing, it owes much to Shaaban Robert's influence. Its most interesting feature is the beautiful language, recalling that of the Zanzibari writers. The book received immediate acclaim after its release in 1996 and, the following year it was selected as a set book for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education.

2. *Kufa Kuzikana*

2.1 Content

Walibora's second novel *Kufa kuzikana* takes place in a fictional country, *Kiwachema*, where two antagonist tribes, the *Wakorosho* and the *Wakanju*³, live next to each other. The first person narrator Akida, a fifteen-year-old student, is a *Mkanju* while Tim, his best friend, is a *Mkorosho*. The plot unfolds as Akida travels by bus from his village to the capital Tandika in order to be rewarded by the Minister for Education as one of the three best primary school leavers of the country. In town he stays at his friend Tim's place, but when a tribal war suddenly breaks out in his village, he cannot return home.

The government chooses not to give any news about the massacres in the media, pretending that nothing is happening. Neither of the two friends has any news of his family until Tim's sister Tamari, after a narrow escape from death, manages to reach her brother's place. After looking in vain for their relatives in the mortuary and in hospital, they decide to ask Tom for help, a young and influential man from their village. They call at his luxurious place when he has just learnt that his father has been killed.

Heedless of risk, Tom decides to bury him at the village and Akida volunteers to join him and his four bodyguards in this dangerous journey. While the others are burying Tom's father, Akida goes to his home only to find that it has been burnt down.

When he goes back to the others, he finds Tom's body lying in the mud. He was stabbed by *Korosho* policemen, colleagues of his bodyguards who did not lift a finger to protect him. Akida does not want to return to town before burying Tom's body although the others urge him to leave at once. He remains with his friend only to discover that he is not dead after all. With great difficulties he carries him to the hospital and stays with him until Tom slowly recovers.

In the meantime Tim has lost his job because of siding with the *Wakanju*. Akida finds him living with Tamari in a slum in utmost poverty and is invited to settle with them, living on casual labours like Tim. One day he punches a *Korosho* man who boasts he has killed hundreds of *Wakanju* and leaves him for dead. Akida flees to another region and becomes the servant of a local farmer.

³ Both *korosho* and *kanju* mean 'cashewnut'.

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Nevertheless, three years later he returns to the capital and gives himself up for the murder he thinks he committed. After the trial he is released because the man did not die, but was only injured. His relatives, however, try to take their revenge and Akida has a narrow escape disguised as a woman. In the end, Tom, who has moved to Canada, arranges for Akida to join him there.

2.2 Ethnicity

Kufa Kuzikana is a bitter story indeed. Despite taking place in an imaginary country, the reader is only too aware of the fact that in many African countries innocent people are butchered every day for ethnic reasons. The 1994 Rwanda genocide is still in everybody's mind, but even in Kenya there have been ethnic conflicts since independence. During the presidency of Jomo Kenyatta, who is of Kikuyu origin, the Kikuyu people (who represent over 60% of the population) were privileged. His successor Daniel arap Moi, a Kalenjin, favoured instead his minority ethnic group to the detriment of the others, and especially of the Kikuyu. In the 1990s, a number of ethnic conflicts broke out in Western Kenya.

The government promoted ethnic tensions by fanning resentment against the Kikuyu, Kenya's largest ethnic group, accusing them of supporting multiparty democracy for ulterior political motives. By making direct reference to the experience of the Ibo tribe, who suffered brutally during the civil war in Nigeria, KANU officials attempted both to intimidate those Kikuyu advocating a multiparty system and to incite hatred against them among members of other ethnic groups. This occurred at the same time that President Moi justified the government's resistance to a multiparty system because of the dangers of "tribalism". (Human Rights Watch 1990)

Perhaps the best known of these frightful events is the so-called "Saba Saba Riot" of 1990, the bloody repression of a demonstration, mainly staged by the Kikuyu, at the Kamukunji stadium of Nairobi on July 7 (from which the "seven seven" *saba saba* is derived). Unfortunately, ethnic tensions did not come to an end with the conclusion of Moi's presidency. In July 2005 frightful blood sheds took place in two villages near Marsabit town, in Northern Kenya, and around seventy people were killed, including at least twenty children (cf. VITA 2005).

In *Kufa Kuzikana*, ethnic divisions play a more meaningful role than those determined by class and wealth and that is why the poor Akida and the rich Tom, both Wakanju, are friends. On the other hand, tribal hatred breaks friendship and blood ties. In fact, at the beginning of the novel Akida's father Mzee Sululu and Tim's father Mzee Zablon, though from different ethnic groups, live peacefully as good neighbours and friends. They are nonetheless worried by tribal tensions.

Mara mbili tatu wamegombana na baba juu ya mpaka wa shamba. Lakini hawakuwa na uhasama mkubwa sana kati yao. [...]

"Ndugu yangu Sululu umeyasikia?" alimwuliza baba.

"Yapi?"

"Ilani imesambazwa kote Korosho kwamba Wakanju wahame."

“*Kwani mapya hayo?*”

“*Lakini mara hii nahofia...*”

“*Upuuzi tu!*”

“*Kuti la mazoea humwangusha mgema,*” *alihitimisha Mzee Zablon.* (KK 6)⁴

He and my father fought a few times over the boundaries of our fields, but there was no great antagonism between the two. [...]

“Sululu, my friend, have you heard?” he asked my father.

“What?”

“The public announcement all over Korosho reads that the *Wakanju* must leave the area.”

“Why, is this something new?”

“But this time, I am afraid...”

“It’s just nonsense!”

“An ordinary palm leaf would throw the tapper down the tree,” concluded Mzee Zablon. (My translation)⁵

But the government caused bloodshed in the village and in the whole region, killing a *Mkorosho* and blaming the *Wakanju* for it. Old friends turn into enemies, and ultimately Mzee Zablon kills Mzee Sululu (Akida’s father). Hatred cuts across family ties, too. Tim’s uncle, a fanatic *Mkanju* (like the rest of Tim’s family), sacks his nephew because of his friendship with Akida.

The story takes place in a Swahili-speaking African country called Kiwachema, with toponyms and ethnic names that do not exist. Among the few real place names, such as Canada and Tanzania, the author mentions Kenya, too (in the context of a football match between the Kenyan and Kiwacheman teams). Walibora, however, depicts a country which is almost a mirror-image of Kenya. Thus, for instance, Moi’s notorious instigation to ethnic cleansing, when he called for the clearance of the *madoadoa* (spots), that is, the non-Kalenjin areas in the Rift Valley, is echoed in the novel in the speech of the local deputy:

Hatutaki madoadoa hapa. Wakanju sharti wahame warudi kwao Kanju. (KK 24)

We don’t want spots here. Wakanju must move and return to Kanju, where they come from.

2.3 Characters

Unlike the hero of his first novel, Kongowea Mswahili, who is too perfect to be true, Akida does have some flaws, the worst being his short temper. His father, in fact, used to warn him that unless he learned to control his outbursts, he would surely get into trouble one day. And that is precisely what happens when Akida hears the Mkorosho man’s boasting and strikes him a powerful blow on his head. But, even if he gets away with it, he cannot bear the burden of remorse for long and, at last, he gives himself up to the police.

⁴ Here and in the following, citations from *Kufa Kuzikana* are given as ‘KK’.

⁵ All of the following translations are mine.

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One flaw in Walibora's portrayal of Akida may be that his character hardly behaves like the teenager he is supposed to be, but rather like a young man and, in fact, his older friends definitely treat him as their peer. Only on one occasion does Tim behave as his senior, in the situation which is completely new to Akida, i.e. when he arrives in town for the first time. Consider, for instance, the following humorous description of his first experience at a Fast food.

Mkahawa ulikuwa na wateja kiasi. Tukakaa pembeni. Tim akaniuliza kama napenda kula 'chips na sausage'. Nikakubali pasi kujua nivikubalivyo. Hadimu wa mkahawani alituletea hima sahani mbili za vidude vilivyofanana na vidagaa, vyeupe si vyeupe, manjano si manjano. Kadhalika kila sahani ilikuwa na kitu kilichoshabihiana na kidole cha mkono wa mtu, au chuchu za kiwele cha ng'ombe.

"Hawa samaki wanavuliwa wapi?" nilimwuliza.

"Hizi ni chips shemeji, vipande tu vya viazi," alijibu Tim. [...]

"Ni nini hivi kama chuchu za ng'ombe?"

"Sausage. Wacha nikuonyeshe vile zinavyoliwa." (KK 12)

In the cafeteria there were several customers. We sat in a corner. Tim asked me whether I liked to eat 'chips and sausage'. I agreed without knowing what I was agreeing on. A waiter brought us quickly two plates of strange small things resembling sardines, whitish and yellowish in colour. Also, each plate had something like a finger, or a cow's teat, in it.

"These fish, where do they come from?" I asked him.

"These are chips, buddy, just pieces of potatoes," Tim answered. [...]

"And what are these tings like cow's teats?"

"Sausages. Let me show you how to eat them."

All in all, there is not much difference between the narrating I and the narrated I, that is, between the instances when the first-person narrator relates the events which occurred in an earlier period of his life, and when he adopts the perspective of his younger self. The two "selves" do not seem to possess different degrees of maturity as the reader would expect.

Two friends with confusingly similar names, Tim and Tom, play an important role in Akida's life. Tim, five years older than Akida, has a good job thanks to his rich uncle. He lives in a nice flat and has a pretty girl-friend, Pamela, who loves him dearly. But when he loses his job because he does not want to yield to ethnic hatred, he loses everything apart from his rich fiancée who remains faithful to him. Tom, a *Mkanju* like Akida, is a living legend among the villagers: he studied abroad, returned with a Canadian wife, built a large house for his father and bought him amenities such as a TV set, the first and only in the village. Thus he does not disown his origins like many educated Africans do and even if his wife urges him to expatriate, he does so only once he is about to be killed by his countrymen. Both Tom and Akida have no wish to leave their country, but they are forced to once they realise that there is no future for them there.

3.4 Language and style

The author's mastery of Kiswahili is impressive indeed and it is no wonder that his rich and colourful language requires nine pages of glossary at the end of the book. It is noteworthy that Walibora, of Luhya origin (as it has been pointed out earlier), has learnt his outstanding Kiswahili from Zanzibari novels. That is why his book features typically Kenyan elements, such as *suitafahamu* ('misunderstanding') or *uzuri* (instead of *vizuri*), along with Zanzibari ones, like *madongo-poromoka* ('shacks') and *chambilecho* ('as said by').

Kisa cha suitafahamu kati ya Pam na Tim [...] kikanijia akilini. (KK 200)

The story of the misunderstanding between Pam and Tim [...] came to my mind.

"Jioni hiyo naikumbuka uzuri," alianza kutongoa Mzee Uledi. (KK 77)

"I remember well that evening," Mzee Uledi started to explain.

Miaka mitatu haikutosha kunisahaulisha udhaifu wa Tamari masomoni. Masomoni alikuwa "hawezi kufumbua macho yakaona vizuri", chambilecho hayati mamangu. (KK 194)

Three years were not enough to make me forget Tamari's poor performance at school. In class "she could not keep her eyes open in order to see well", as my late mother used to say.

Walibora uses Kenyan neologisms like *runinga* (TV), *jokofu* (fridge), *kambarau* (lift) or (shule ya) *upili* (secondary school) as well as adapted loanwords like *televisheni*, *friji*, *lifti* and *sekondari* which are more common in Tanzania.

Tulipanda ghorofa kwa kamarau, tukashuka kwa vidato vya ngazi. (KK 22)

We took the lift upstairs and went down the stairs.

2.4.1 Metaphor and simile

Walibora employs a number of similes and metaphors, some common and some rather unusual or original.

Simile:

Tamari aliniona kama mkia wa mbuzi, kuzaliwa kwangu kama hasara kwa dunia. Kutaraji kumwoa Tamari kulikuwa kutegemea jambo muhali kabisa, kama kutafuta meno ya kuku. (KK 8)

Tamari considered me as a goat's tail, my birth as a calamity for the whole world. My hopes to marry her were as scarce as hen's teeth.

Metaphor:

Nilidhani mambo ni ya mkono kumbe ni ya upembo. (KK 35)

I thought that my bare hands were enough to get what I wanted, but then I realised I needed a hook. (i.e. it was more difficult to get than expected.)

The following is a metaphorical description of bribery.

Hakuna asiyejua kuwa baadhi ya walanguzi hao huruhusiwa na polisi hao kupita na dawa zao za kulevya maadamu tu mkono uende kinywani. (KK 92f)

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It was common knowledge that those policemen allowed some drug dealers to pass the border on condition their hands went to the mouth (i.e. that they got a bribe).

2.4.2 Idioms and sayings

Along with lexicalized metaphors, Walibora uses idioms and sayings to great effect.

Hajui huyu zikinipanda za kwetu, naweza nikaangusha majabali na milima? (KK 42)

Doesn't he know that when I fly into a temper I can pull down rocks and hills?

"Vitimbi vya dadako siviwezi," nikampasulia mbarika Tim. (KK115)

I can't stand your sister's whims," I told Tim the unpleasant truth (*lit.* I cracked open a castor nut for him).

[...] nilirudi matao ya chini (KK 42)

[...] I answered getting off my tall horse

Mzee huyo kauchapa mtindi (KK 75)

This Mzee is liquored-up

Nimetokea tundu la sindano. (KK 114)

I have had a narrow escape (*lit.* I escaped through a needle's eye).

Kuwazia kuwa wazazi wangu (...) hawakuwepo kushuhudia siku yangu ya furaha kulikutia mchanga kitumbua changu. (KK 51)

The thought that my parents were not there to share my day of joy with me put sand onto my pancake (i.e. spoiled my joy).

Yamkini kifo cha mwalimu Alex hakikuwa wingu wa kupita kama nilivyodhani mwanzoni. (KK 86)

It is possible that teacher Alex's death was not a passing cloud as I thought at first.

Instead of reporting the news of the tribal war, sheer banalities are heard on the radio. But it is useless, nobody is listening.

Redio iliendelea kutangaza. Ilibwabwaja hili na lile. Iliwachezea mbuzi gitaa hasa. (KK 30)

The radio went on broadcasting, babbling this and that. Actually, it was playing guitar to goats.

A less original rendering of the same issue:

BBC iliyapatia kipaumbele mambo yasiyotuhusu ndewe wala sikio. Hamna habari zozote kuhusu Wilaya ya Korosho. [...] Wanatumiza hawa, kwa kuyavalia miwani maafa ya kwetu, niliwazia. (KK 60)

BBC gave priority to the news that did not concern us at all. There was no information whatsoever about Korosho District. They are damaging us by turning a blind eye on our calamities, I thought.

2.4.3 Proverbs

Proverbs, skilfully woven into a character's speech, express briefly and efficaciously a certain topic or summarize a certain situation and are also aesthetically appealing.

"Umekuwa fundi wa dawa za nyoka kama babako?"

"Mtoto wa panya hakosi mkia." (KK 12)

"Have you become an expert in counteracting snake venom like your father?"

"A young mouse does not lack a tail."

Akida had his shoes stolen in a public park:

Bustani hakukaliki tena. Chaka la simba halilali nguruwe. (KK 33)

In the park it was impossible to stay anymore. The lion and the pig cannot share a thicket.

Tim's girl-friend comes and cooks their dinner:

"Kesho chajio tutakula papa hapa. [...] Fulani wangu atakuja kututembelea!"

"Ahaa! Mgeni njoo mwenyeji apone!" (KK 27)

"Tomorrow we'll have dinner here. [...] My friend will come to visit us."

"Ahaa! Do come, guest, and bring some relief to the host."

On the subject of the Wakoroshu threatening the Wakanju:

"Mwanangu tangu mdogo nimevisikia vitisho hivi. Vishindo vya mashua havishtui bahari." (KK 5)

"My son, I have heard these threats since I was a child. The noise made by a boat does not startle the sea."

See also *Kuti la mazoea humwangusha mgema* in a previous passage. And again on the same subject:

"Nyie Wakoroshu na sisi Wakanju ni ndugu," nikatoa kauli. "Meno ya mbwa hayaumani."

"[...] Tangu mdogo nikisikia, 'Wakanju ni walowezi, watimuliwe warudi kwao Kanju [...]"

"Sahani zikiwa kwenye treya haziachi kugongana," nikadakia. "Hizo ndizo tofauti ndogondogo na haziwezi kuleta vita 'shemeji'." (KK 29f)

"You, the Wakoroshu and we, the Wakanju, are brothers," I said. "A dog's teeth do not bite each other."

"[...] Since I was a child I've heard that 'the Wakanju are only settlers here and they must be chased to Kanju, where they come from. [...]"

"The plates on a tray do not stop banging," I interrupted him. "These are small differences and cannot bring a war, buddy."

2.4.4 Ideophones and onomatopoeia

Among other rhetorical devices, Walibora is particularly fond of ideophones and onomatopoeia which give rhythm as well as an oral quality to his prose. E.g. mweusi *pi*, kunyamaza

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jii, kunyamaza tuli, tukanyatianyatia nyatunyatu, kumejiinamia jii, yamejaa sisisi, kujipweteka pwata, waliingia vuuu, nimechoka tiki etc.

Nikabonyeza kitufe kimoja upande wa chini mkono wa kulia wa televisheni. Mara waa! Picha ikajitokeza kwenye kioo cha TV. (KK 28)

I pressed a small button on the lower right hand side of the television set. Suddenly waa! A picture appeared on the screen.

Alikuwa alivyojaliwa, kafungwa ndi kwa kamba ya katani kwenye mkokoteni, hawezi kufurukuta. (KK 54)

He was naked as the day he was born, tied up tight with a hemp rope to the push-cart, unable to move.

2.4.5 Repetitions

The whole text is interspersed with various kinds of repetition. Most striking is the frequent repetition of words which share similar characteristics whether in sound or meaning (or both), such as *dhahiri shahiri, raha na buraha, hamu na ghamu, vioja na viroja, mali na amuali, kwa miaka na mikaka, (shati halina) doa wala waa, kwa shada na mada etc.*

Ukitaka kutembea kidogo hiari na mukhtari ni juu yako. (KK 27)

If you want to walk a bit, the choice and option is yours.

Waziri alisema hali katika wilaya hiyo ni yenye amani na usalama. (KK 28)

The minister said that the situation in the district was peaceful and safe.

Moyo wangu ulikuwa bado mwingi wa kiwewe na kiherehere. (KK 31)

My heart was still full of confusion and anxiety.

Akida's great anger for being despised by a woman secretary is effectively expressed by the accumulation of near synonymous verbs with reduplicated stems:

Nilitaka kumparamia nimchanechane, nimpondeponde, nimsagesage, nimsongoesongoe. (KK 41)

I wanted to attack her, tear her to pieces, smash her, crush her to bits, annihilate her.

A common manner of enumeration is listing items each of them preceded by *si*:

"Kila mwaka nyie mwapata mazao bora zaidi kuliko wazee wangu. Si mahindi, si majani chai, si kahawa." (KK 13)

Every year you get better crops than my parents. Be it maize, tea leaves, or coffee.

Wachuuzi ndio waliolijaza basi wakipitapita na bidhaa zao wakiwachagiza abiria kuzinunua. Si vijiredio, si majora, si tochi, si soksi, si mashati, si soda, si kalamu, si madaftari, si sambusa – muradi basi liligeuzwa soko hasa, na abiria hawana hiari ila kuvumilia bughudha za wachuuzi. (KK 34)

Street vendors boarded the bus and were showing their goods trying to convince the passengers to buy them. There were pocket radios, rolls of cloth, torches, socks, shirts, sodas, pens, copybooks, samosas – so that the bus was transformed into a market place and the passengers had no choice but to endure the vendors' intrusion.

2.4.6 Syntactic and lexical parallelism

Often lexical repetition is associated with syntactic parallelism, as in the following passage:

Nilitiwa kisuunzi ghafla kwa wingi wa majumba ya ghorofa, yamekwenda juu kwa juu ungedhani yanaramba mawingu. Niliduwazwa kwa wingi wa watu, wanapita wakibanana hamna nafasi hata ya mtu kutema mate. Nilipigwa na kibuhuti kwa wingi wa magari, yamejaa barabarani sisizi kama sisimizi wapambavyo sukari. (KK 7)

Suddenly, I felt dizzy because of the many of tall buildings, springing up as if they wanted to lick the sky. I was dumbfounded because of the multitude of people, passing by all squeezed together so that there was not even room enough for spitting on the ground. I was astonished because of the multitude of cars, covering the road like black ants cover sugar.

As the narrative is told in the first person, the language is vivid and colloquial; even more so in some dialogues and in Akida's free direct speech. We can see an example of this in the vivid account of the bus accident in which Akida's mother died:

"Nikasikia mlipuko, sijui tairi ilipasuka sijui nini. Basi likayumbayumba. Kisha Puuu! Likakutana uso kwa uso na lori."

"Ilikuwa ajali mbaya," nikatoa hoja.

"Watu ndio wabaya mwanangu," alisema Mzee Matuko kwa shada na mada. "Abiria tumeumia hatujiwezi, badala ya kuja kutuauni, wanakimbia kuja kutupora. Huyu wanampiga pute pochi, huyu wanampokonya saa, huyu wanamvua koti, huyu pesa zinakwenda. Muradi niliona uhayawani kamili wa binadamu kwa binadamu mwingine. Hauwapigi mshipa hata wakiibia maiti jamani." (KK 43f)

"I heard an explosion, I don't know whether a tyre burst or what. The bus staggered. Then puuu! It collided with a lorry."

"It was a bad accident," I said.

"It is people that are bad, my son," Mzee Matuko said emphasizing his words. "We passengers were injured, we couldn't move, but instead of coming to our rescue they came to rob us. This one – they ran away with his purse, this one – they grabbed his watch, this one – they stripped him of his coat, this one – his money was gone. So I witnessed the sheer brutality unleashed against fellow human beings. My goodness, they didn't even feel ashamed to steal from the dead who were lying there."

In the following passage we can see how the first person narrator's account of past events fades out to give way instead to Akida's stream of consciousness which is rendered in free direct style and which vividly describes present event as they unfold.

Nilisimama kitambo kwenye kituo cha mabasi, sina hili wala lile. Kwa mujibu wa mipango yangu, Tim alipaswa kunipokea hapa na kunipeleka kwake. (...) Tim alikuwa amekubali kwa mawili na matatu kuwa mwenyeji wangu hadi nigotoe shughuli zangu zote Tandika. Simtaraji kughairi nia. Na kukitokea jambo asije itakuwaje? Jiji hili silijui mbele wala nyuma yake. Nitafanyaje? Jiji lanizuzua kwa upya wake na hali yake changamano. Mshamba hapa nilipo, najihisi kama zumbukuku asiyejua ngoma iko wapi. La! Najihisi kama samaki kwenye nchi kavu. La! Najihisi kama ndege asiye kuwa na mbawa. Asipokuja mwenzangu... (KK 7)

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I stayed for a while at the bus stop, not worried at all. According to my projects, Tim was to meet me here and bring me to his place. (...) Tim had accepted gladly to give me hospitality so that I could take care of my business in Tandika. I don't expect him to change his mind. But if something happens and he doesn't come, what then? I don't know this town at all. What shall I do? This town baffles me: everything is so new to me and it's such a hodgepodge. A villager as I am, I feel like a complete idiot who doesn't even know where the *ngoma* takes place. Nay! I feel like a fish out of water. Nay! I feel like a bird without wings. If my friend doesn't come...

Conclusion

Although *Kufa Kuzikana* is a powerful accusation of how ruthless ethnic feelings still inform many people from the intellectuals and top politicians to the uneducated villagers, the novel does contain a positive message as well in that it shows how true friendship can overcome ethnic and other differences and survive even in the most adverse circumstances. Ken Walibora's literary accomplishment well deserved second position for the Swahili section of the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature in 2005.

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