Until the Eighties the regional character of Kenyan prose writing was far less marked than that of Zanzibari novels. Different was the situation in poetry; in fact, Kimvita and Kiamu have been used even in modern times (see, e.g., Ahmad Nassir Juma Bhalo, Abdilatif Abdalla and Ahmed Sheikh Nabhany; the last one is well-known for his endeavour in enriching and modernizing Swahili terminology, and a few of his proposed terms, e.g. runinga for „television“, have been accepted). Kenyan prose fiction, on the other hand, used to be much alike to the up-country Tanzanian literary production, written as it was in standard Swahili, sometimes with many colloquial features.

The first coastal novelist (though a Mijikenda, not mother-tongue Swahili) is Katama Mkangi (b. 1944 at Ribe), so far author of three novels: Ukiwa (1975) — a love story, and two political satires, Mafuta (1984) and Walenisi (1995) „Mafuta deals with class differences and satirizes African leadership exhorting mass liberation. (but) it is so much steeped in allegory and symbolism that few readers are able to draw parallels between it and the political realities of post colonial Kenya.“ MKangi’s third novel Walenisi (The country of the Wale ni Sisi — They are Us) describes an ideal planet where all inhabitants live in peace and love, working hard, after having defeated the exploiters (Wachuna). The main character Dzombo, an inhabitant of the Emth, who has landed by chance on this happy planet, only after several years manages to get rid of his egoistic habits.

Mkangi’s language is particular, rich and difficult, with some words modified or invented by himself. Thus in Mafuta he writes bwagu instead of pwagu, and in Walenisi the number of „strange“ words increases considerably. For instance

- mamatia -shikilia bila ya kuacha, -gandama;
  hawakukoma kuamamattia kufa na kupona [Walenisi 152]

- girimiti kazi ya lazima, kazi ya shokoa;
  sio kama girimiti - yaani kazi ya kulazimishwa [Walenisi 101]

Habusu is Mkangi’s singular form of mahabusu.

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3 I am grateful to Bw Wamitila for this observation as well as for his help in understanding the Kenyan Kiswahili
4 Some of them have been explained to me by Mkangi’s countryman Wamitila, but I have a long list of words that even he does not understand!
According to Wamitila, Mkangi himself admits that he has an insufficient knowledge of Kiswahili for a writer. In fact, in *Mafuta* there are some strange (or ungrammatical) forms like

\[
\text{chumba alichojikutamo} \quad \text{"the room in which they met"} \quad \text{[Mafuta 14]}
\]

\[
\text{"Nimmumulieni chai?"} \quad \text{"Tutashikuru"} \quad \text{[Mafuta 55]}
\]

where -M- should be the object infix of the 2nd person pl. (instead of -WA-). He employs also some unusual causative verbs, like *-rukisha, -chokesha*, and even *-upyisha* "renew".

\[
\text{ni mbinu zisizoisha za kunyinya ubinadamu wetu} \quad \text{[Walenisi 127]}
\]

Anyway, there is a striking difference between *Ukiwa* on one side and the other two novels on the other side, the former presenting powerful imagery and rich but less "difficult" language.

A noteworthy Kenyan novelist of the Eighties is *Yusuf King'ala*, an up-country writer (born in Machakos in 1951), author of the Bildungsroman *Anasa* (1984) which illustrates the importance of a good education on the story of a pretty widow, her beautiful daughter and her neglected grandson who becomes a robber and a killer.

Another Kenyan title of the Eighties is *Miaka 52 jela* (1989) by *Michael Karanja Ngugi*, a Kikuyu born in 1919. His book is seemingly the autobiography of an incorrigible thief who passed almost all his life in prison. Being illiterate, Ngugi does not explain how he did produce his work. It is a pure narration enriched by proverbs and sayings illustrating the author's point, namely that *uhalifu haulipi* ("crime does not pay"). For instance

\[
\text{Ama kwa hakika, tamaa ilimwua fis} \quad \text{[p 8]}
\]

\[
\text{Wahenga wamesema, cha haramu hakidumu} \quad \text{[p 17]}
\]

In 1995-6 five Kenyan novels appeared\(^5\), thus confirming that if Tanzanian literature is at present at a standstill, it is not the case with Kenya. According to Wamitila, several other titles are awaiting publication\(^6\).

Besides Mkangi's third novel *Walensiti*, the most interesting of the five titles is *Nyongo mkalia ini* (1995) by *C.M. Rocha Chimerah*, a Giriama (i.e. Mijikenda). His novel is situated in 1975 and treats the critical situation in Kenya, even if the author had to put it in an invented country. Rocha criticizes an illicit trade in ivory and in drugs, illustrated on the story of the narrator Juma Mumanyi and his friends, however the episodic plot has only minor importance. A large part of the book consists in discussions of the friends about such important topics as corruption,

\(^5\) They were discussed by Wamitila at the previous Swahili Kolloquium, cf Wamitila 1997

\(^6\) Mkangi has a number of manuscripts that are likely to come out soon. Habwe has a forthcoming work *Maitsha kiendawili* (Jomo Kenyatta Foundation): Wamitila's *Nguru ya Sala* will be published soon by Longhorn. Another work likely to come out soon is Mwenda Mbatia's sociological *Upotevu* (Wamitila 1997: 118, note 2)
oppression, tribalism etc. which often result in lectures or sermons, so the text becomes heavy and
classified. The story takes place in the town Gongwa (Gongwa or Kongowea is the name used in
Muyaka’s poetry Mombasa) and the reader can identify a number of historical events
mentioned in the novel, from the Mau Mau freedom struggle (Majimaji) to university riots
(Wamitila 1997:121)

The strong point of Rocha’s work is an impressive imagery and a creative language, very rich
and idiomatic. His vocabulary is rather varied, it goes from modern coastal terms and words taken
from Muyaka’s poetry to urban slang.

John Habwe’s novel Maumbile si huja (1995) is situated in Mombasa and narrates the story
of an unfaithful wife, Amina, and her lover Saidi, a former servant of her husband Juma. While
Juma dies poor and lonely, the couple lives happily and comfortably; the infidelity is not punished
except the fact that their last child is born blind. And only then Saidi starts feeling remorse for
what he did to his employer Juma.

Habwe’s novel is noteworthy for a relatively high number of similes which are not stereotyped,
but have various forms and some of them are quite original.

Ali Hassan Njama is also a Mijikenda (Digo), born probably at the end of the Sixties. His
novellette Haki haziemi (1995) features an evil teacher Baya who seduces, abandons and at last
kills a girl - his student Mwanaidi. This (apparently) criminal story lacks (as often happens) a
powerful narrative force; “an outright poetic justice is absent and one may be left thinking that
the right (haki) hinted in the title as not getting lost actually does“ (Wamitila 1997:118). Njama’s
language reflects the Mombasa usage, but it is less interesting than the other discussed works.

The last novel of this group is Siku njema by Ken Walibora, published in 1996. The story,
“with some autobiographical infusions“ (Wamitila 1997:120) is situated in Tanga, Mombasa, and
in up-country Kenya, and narrates the adventures of a righteous orphan in search of his father.
“This Ich-Erzalung novel . . . reeks a lot of the moralistic tendencies and inclinations of Shaaban
Robert, the writer’s idol“ (Wamitila 1997:118).

This work, clearly targeting a school audience, is presented in a very rich and highly idiomatic
Kiswahili. Walibora’s language seems to be a mixture of regional varieties: he uses such typically
Kenyan words and expressions as skuli and shule ('') ya upili along with shule ya sekondari,
typically Tanzanian-bara hela together with idioms and sayings used by Zanzibari writers, such
as sako kwa bako, hamnazo or hazimtoshi. His vocabulary needs a glossary of 12 pages at the end
of the novel.

Morphologically, too, Walibora blends Kenyan and Tanzanian features, e.g. the Kimvita
present tense YUA- and the Tanzanian perfective tense KA-, or the typically Zanzibari usage of
the imperfective -KI-:

Nikimjua tu ahalten wa sahalan (hivi hivi tu), simkumbuki vyema. [Walibora 20]
Style

A striking feature of this new Kenyan prose in general, which approaches it to Zanzibari writings, is its expressive, colourful and idiomatic language. In fact, the style in most of these books is more attractive than the matter.

Consider the following picturesque expression:

Binamu zangu walikaa tu raha mustahe wameandika mne kwa miguu yao, au wanabukaa vitabu [Walibora 23]

"Writing the number four with one's legs" illustrates very well the sitting position.

Some expressions remind me of Said A. Mohamed and his countrymen, like *pumzi zamwenda mbili mbili, macho yakasharabu wekundu, macho njia mbili mbili* Consider also the following examples:

*Mfa yuawatazama tu, hatti neno wala mkono* [Rocha 41-2]
*Pana ajabu gani? Kwani bahani mimi nimeitia chumvi?* [Walibora 57]
*Nimekuwa mumunye (a kind of gourd), ninaharibikia ukubwani* [Walibora 31]

Other expressions are more colloquial:

*Nilitamani kumpa moja ya shingo hadi chini* ' [Rocha 118] (kumpiga ngumi moja ya shingo hadi aanguke chini)
*Polsi havairwi wakaja ghafila bin vuu* [Rocha 95]
*Ungedhani walishtadi kuponda raha maana karaha vaya* [Walibora 35]
*Niliona hohehahe sina sinani nikilizwa siungani* [Walibora 65]
*Alikuwa kama mtu baki kabisa tusivehusiana kwa damu wala kwa usaha* [Walibora 18]

Characteristic for Mkangi's style are free repetitions as well as syntactic and lexical parallelisms:

*Kwamba uzinga ndio uliokuwa ukimtawala mwake maishani, kulimchekesha sana 'Abu ni kwamba, nilizaliwa ujingani. Nimekulia ujingani. Ninaishi ujingani Nala, namya, nafa ujingani Yaonekana ujinga ni wepesi, ni raha, ni starehe na hausbungi Ujinga si matutizo bali ni starehe ya kujiona ni mimi tu na mimi tu basi,' Ti akawa akijiwazia* [Mafuta 51-2]

Rocha, too, exploits the rhetoric figure of repetition with its effect of intensification:

*Wakati wa kazi ulipokwisha nilitoka haraka haraka Esta akatoka haraka haraka Bwana Khalifa akatoka haraka haraka, sote tukakimbia mlango, karibu kugongana Esta akakimbia na Bwana Khalifa akakimbia na mimi nikakimbia* [Rocha 97]

A powerful stylistic device is enumeration — listening of two or more terms or phrases in the same syntactic position:

*Waliipipa sifa za kimiungu na kuanzisha tafrija, nederemo (Mv. joy, happiness), tamaduni, mila na desturi zilizokuwa na lengo moja tu* [Walenisi 146]
Mlango huo-huo mmoja ndio ki/a kitu kiliingia na kutoka. Si watu si mifugo. Si mbu si moshi. Si kuku si mainizi. Si uvundo si marashi. Si watoto si watu wazima. [Mafuta 27]

Habiba aliuliza kwa sauti iliyooja woga, masikitiko na uchovu. [King'ala 31]
Badala yake alimwanga la kwa macho makali yaliyoja bezo, beuo na sodewi. [King'ala 31]

The next example contains both the plain enumeration and the antithetic lexical parallelism:

Wachuna walikuwa na mavazi — nguo, viatu, shanga, vipuli, mikoba, mamukata na kadhalika, ya kila namna na kwa kila halı. Ya kazi na ya starehe, ya kulala na ya kuamkia, ya kuteembelea na ya gumzo, ya safarri na ya nyumbani. Ya usiku na ya mehana, ya baridi na ya jotu; ya furaha na ya kuomboleza, ya kuongelea na ya kuzikwa, ya kucheka na ya kukimbilia, ya kupikia na ya kulia; ya kutafutia mimba na ya kutohe mimba. [Walenisi 154]

An antithesis brings together two units with opposed meaning:

Tofali kubwa na zito lilikuwa ambapo liliyoja mirevu na mirevu kioneke na mirevu. Ineke na inorder. Ineke kii kubahasha. [King'ala 31]

Namna ya kuteembea Tipe kuteembea kikazi na vipi kuteembea kike Wapi kuviringisha na wapi kunepeza Wapi kulegeza na wapi kulegeza Wapi kutikisa nd wapi kuzuia. [Mafuta 29]

In the previous sentences we have also seen another kind of repetition, i.e. syntactic parallelism - the repeating, in two or more sequences, of the same morphosyntactic pattern accompanied by rhythmical and phonetic repetitions. Consider some more examples:

[Tohara] ilikuwa harusi yao ambayo walifika kwa kisu kukata ngozi, damu kumwanga, damu kumwanga. [Mafuta 28]

Akajibeua (kujipuuza) na kuiibekua (kujipuuza) na kutimishua (kujiringa) na kutimishua (kujiringa) na kuwahudumia (kama nyani) kabla hajafzkiria kutuhudumia. [Rocha 31]

Expressiveness of the style may be heightened by ideophones:

Alipontia mlango komeo na kuhakikisha ameufunga ndindindi. Alitooa kilike hibahasa. [King'ala 51]

Walikwenda marsha marsha (hara aka haka) wakamumia. [Walibora 22]

After having discussed schemes, we now turn to the other category of rhetorical figures, namely tropes. The most frequent ones are similes and metaphors.

Similes are usually taken from African nature and traditional life.

Daudi alanza kudungadunga chakula kama mtu alive kwa wakwe zake. [King'ala 27]
Walikuwa nika kama kupe na mitaa wa ng'ombe (inseparable). [King'ala 54]
Alikuwa ameanza kupiga unyende kama mbuzi anayove olewa mwiba uliokwama kwenye kaaka. [King'ala 101]
The following simile is taken from a Luo legend:

Alikuwa ameshikwa na hamu iliyomshika Tekayo alipoanza kula maini ya wajukuu wake  
[King’ala 41]

The same author (King’ala) draws his parallels also from Western culture:

Tabasamu ilimitoka na kuonyesha macho yaliyomeremeta kama ya mpiga filimbi wa Hamelin  
[King’ala 29]

Other modern similes are, e.g

Daudi alikuwa keshalainika kama siagi.  
[King’ala 3]

Menza meupe pepepe kama theluij [Walibora 16]

Mkasa-mjomba alinitumbulia tu macho kama sinema [Walibora 26]

Besides conventional similes (kama), Kenyan novelists (especially Mkangai) use other constructions which express or imply similitude (utadhani mithili ya etc.):

kiwiliwili chake kilionekana tuli mithili ya maji mtunzini [Walensi 109]

Umati huu ulikuwa sawa na wa ule wa ng’ombe wanaosubiri kuchiniwa [Walensi 2]

Sasa akawa macho wazi zaishi ya bundi? [Walensi 20]

Metaphor is omnipresent in literary writings. Consider just a few examples:

Mama Mumbe, japo alifahamu Kiswahili barabara, neno “wiyathi” (“uhuru’ in Kikuyu)  
likuwa limeingia na kutumakani mdononi mwaiku  
[Rocha 61]

Yeeye pia vichwa vya ndovu (beer) avisukuma kama nini sijui  
[Rocha 9]

Here the allusion is to the caps of the beer Ndovu, i.e. he drinks a lot of beer.

‘To push elephants’ heads” is an idiomatic expression. In fact, most idioms and proverbs arise from metaphors

Idiomatic expressions are - if you allow me this metaphor - like spices, without them the language would be tasteless. And the Kenyan novelists know how to use them, how to add taste to their writing.

Idiom is a morphosyntactic phenomenon. The lower structural boundary of idiomaticity is considered the compound lexeme (nazimtoshi, hamnazo, chambilecho), while the upper structural limit is constituted by the sentence, e.g

Ubwabwa wa shingo haujamtoka

Nitifumbo macho na kujiita hamnazo [Walibora 58]

Maskini hazimtoshi, sijui kapagava na pepo gani [Walibora 65]

Altingilia ukahaba akwa mdogo kata ubwabwa haujamtoka shingoni [Walibora 57]
Semantic idioms force the reader to decode them in a metaphorical way; these expressions are seldom transparent, as in

*Tulikuwa marafiki wa kufa kuzikana haswa* " [Walibora 83]
*Amekuwa mtu wa kiguu na njia* [Rocha 2]
*Nilituchukia baisieli mikamwaga vumbi* (kukimbia sana) [Rocha 92]
*Wanaenda kwao na mdomo mirefu* (maneno mengi) *kueneza uvumi usio na mwanzo wala mwisho* [Rocha 80]

Usually they manifest a high degree of opacity, although they may not exhibit any structural peculiarity.

*Watu nao hushukuru kuwa hakwenda magharibibi* (kulala nje na mwanamke si wake) [Rocha 2]
*Kazi ya kuwingiza maiti ile ndani ya jeneza ilikuwa kukuza jongoo kwa meno hasa* [Walibora 81]
*Umepania kabisa kutupa jongoo na mti wake* sio? [Walibora 79]
*Eri Said amegeuka kitatange* anamila tajiri yake kivuli 9 [Habwe 64]

Some idioms are widespread, used all over Swahili speaking territory, like *kuwa na mkono wa birika* or *kumpaka mtu kwa mgongo wa chupa*. Others are regional, yet others are part of colloquial speech or slang, like the following:

*Alikuwa anautema Umomba* (to speak English) *kama ambaye kazaliwa huko kwenyewe* [Walibora 56]

Idioms may exhibit parallelism, repetition and internal rhyme, like *(kupata) hija (k)wa haja* (to get two things at the same time), *dhahiri shahiri* (clearly, evidently), *sako kwa bako* (side by side) or *si hayati si mamati* (neither healthy nor sick: miserable) And besides,

*Moto aliyetumukia uzuri wa suga na sira* [Rocha 16] (sira - life of the Prophet) *Nikaingiwa na woga usiojulikana asili wala fasili* [Rocha 92]

Idiom is a syntactic unit which manifests lexical integrity Nothing can be added or changed in the idioms like *kuwa na kupona* (matter of life and death), *si hayati si mamati, pua na mdomo* (close, nearby), or *si wa maji si wa chakula* (very sick).

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7 The translation of Sacleux (p.562) is as follows: "C'est (aujourd'hui) le premier jour que le palétuvier commence à fleurir (que la passion s’est déclarée, que la chose a commencé)".

8 *To cut/bite a millipede with one’s teeth* means to deal with an unpleasant situation, while *to throw away a millipede with its stick* means to change one’s life.

9 *Kitatange* (a sea porcupine) ni aina ya samaki ambaye huwaongoza wengine hadi demani (chombo cha kuvulia samaki) kisha akakwepa yeye. *Hutumiwa kwa mtu wa aina hiyo*. (A person who stirs up strife among others) *Kumla mti kivali* ni kumfanyia mti mabaya aondokapo au asipokuwako (Wamitiila)
however, the lexical integrity of idioms is not always inviolate. Several idioms, especially those including a verb, can undergo a certain amount of transformations. Thus parts of idioms can be deleted or substituted, and an adjective or an adverb can be inserted into the structure of the idiom. It must be stressed that when an element of the idiom is changed, its original signification remains unchanged. Consider these three variations of the same idiom "to do not mind":

Walikaa kiholela, hawajali hawabali [Walibora 52]
Mama mkichaa alikwenda zake, hajali wala habali [Walibora 73]
[Maapizo] yameambulia patupu, hakuyali wala kuvabali [Rocha 14]

or the following two variations of the idiom "it is not at all your (his) concern":

Niliona hapani haja ya kukwambia maanake hayakuhusu ndewe wala sikio. [Habwe 60]
mtu mdaku aliyejishengesha katika mambo vasiyomhusu ndewe wala sikio [Walibora 22]

From the football terminology is taken the idiom kupiga/kupa chenga (dribbling > avoiding)

Alimpa chenga huku mbau zake zikiuma kwa mcheko [Habwe]
Nilimtulizia macho kitambo kizima, moyo ukinipiga chenga Mara wataka nismeze, mara waghairi [Rocha 1]

like idioms, proverbs may be opaque and transparent. Opaque proverbs have two meanings - one literal and the other figurative. The proverbs chosen from the Kenyan texts are mostly opaque, but with varying degree of opacity.

consider the following ones:

Alisteili sifa kwa upishi wake bora. Mgalla muwe na hakiki umpe. [Walibora 35]
Alisu wazi kuwa mtegemea mabuni haachi kunona " [King'ala 30]
Kumbuka huu ndio mwanzo, na mwanzo wa ngoma ni lele (tralala)11 [King'ala30]
Lakini, "radhi zana mabuni zinamana zaidi na namabuni, habiba aliendelea kufikiria bintiye kila siku ikiyayo.12 [King'ala 75]
Bali walisema wavyele, Mwenye kuwiri kina moyo, asi wondani mtima, hufa mabuni pondo-imana na kuondoka na kilema.13 [Rocha 42]

10 "A person who relies on the hump of a cow will not fail to grow fat. = If a person associates himself with the right people he cannot fail profiting from his relationship" (Scheven 255)
11 "Big things have small beginnings." (Scheven 598)
12 This proverb, in its more common form Pendo za mabuni zidzimana kufikiria bintiye kila siku (Scheven 1558), is translated by Sacleux, "l'amour pour l'enfant est sur (n'a autre siege que) les genoux de sa mere" (p.684), and is interpreted by Taylor as "Father's love for a child disappears when the mother dies".
13 "He that gives full play to his desires and does not restrain his heart, will die by drowning in shallow water, and decease with disgrace." (Scheven 810) Cf also Sacleux p. 612.
The most common way of introducing a proverb is to quote it entirely by the narrator or a character, often preceded by an introductory phrase such as *Waswahili wasema, wahenga wasema*. The proverb may be marked by quotation marks, italics or introduced by a colon, which emphasize its separation from the flow of the narration.

Hatimaye aliupiga moyo konde na kujiambia *.. Ukitaka kula nguvuwe, chagua aliyenona* “[King’ala 29]"

On the other hand, when the proverb, or a part of it, is introduced into the discourse more smoothly, the aesthetic pleasure increases

*Walikaa kiholela hawajali havabali, kana kwamba macho ya wapita njia yana pazia* [Walibora 52]

A great appeal is conveyed by the instances in which the proverbs are paraphrased, alluded to or further developed.

*Kuinamako ndiko kuinukako ati* [Walibora 65]

is the reversal of the proverb „*Kuinukako ndiko kuinamako* “Where there is standing up, there will be bending down.” (Scheven n.373)

Of course, the appeal of a proverb does not depend only on the technique of incorporating it to the narrative text, but also on its literary function. The role of the proverb may be that of advancing an argument in favour of one’s reasoning.

*Lakini alikuwa mbali na sando ya mbali haiziki* [Walibora 18] (coined on „*fimbo ya mbali haiui nyoka* “)

**Language**

Among the morphosyntactic peculiarities of Kenyan literary Kiswahili we may mention the frequent occurrence of the marker SHA, alone or combined with ME, e.g. *hakuwa ameshaona* [Mafuta 53], *aliwuwa ashajja* [Mafuta 53], *hukumu ishatelewa* [Rocha 115].

On the other hand, the so-called perfective marker KA- - *kaanza* [King’ala 19], *kapatwa* [Walibora 20], *aliwuwa *kenda* [Njama 51] or *aliwuwa *kaenda* [Walibora 24] - is far less frequent than in Tanzania; however, some authors use it, especially Walibora (remember that Walibora’s language is a mixture of Kenyan and Tanzanian features).

*Shati kaliacha nyuma* [Walibora 20]

The present tense marker -A- is preferred to -NA-, like in *kitanda chafaa kulalwa, .. ukiwa wataka (= ukitaka), mwashangaa, wajitanya hukumbuki, gia sasa hivi.*

*Siku hizi wanichukia sana na hata hutaki kuniona* [King’ala 25]
The 3rd person sing. form of the same prefix may be YUA- (yuajisikia, yuakijua [Rocha])

Wao hapa wapoteza wakati, mtu yuenda Kadude gari yuaipeleka mwendo wa ndege [Rocha 69]
Muradi nilikuwa na furaha kubwa kama kipofu anayetahamaki yuona [Walibora 48]

Recurrent enough is the negative copula with its full conjugated forms, in Rocha often in the combination with the adverb mbali: Kifo changu hak mbali [Rocha 47], mwisho wangu hau mbali [Rocha 115], kesho si mbali kai mbali [Rocha 107]. And besides,

Lakini sasa nave unakanusha hu Mungu hu Mwanawe na hu Rohoye [Walenisi 74]

Less usual are Rocha’s poetic copulas msi, msinacho (both „he who does not have“) and mlinacho („he who has“)

_Msi shukuani mwivi mkubwa wee!_ [Rocha 120]
_Taahu wa msinacho nazielwa sana!_ [Rocha 12]
_Wachelea kumwidhi mlinacho, lakini nina hakika matumbo yaumia._ [Rocha 11]

Another common feature are suffixed interrogatives, mostly -pi for wapi (fedha ulizipatapi, hayo yote yamefanyikapi - Rocha), but also -ni for nini (Asanyani hapa? [Mafuta 34])

Like in „Kiunguja“, instead of relative morphemes of the different classes, only -O- may be used, with the elision of the preceding vowel, e.g _alo_sema instead of _aliyesema_ or _wasokw_a instead of _wasiokw_a:

_weve ndiye ulouvunza (mkataba) [Rocha 121]
usiku ulokoleza weusi [Habwe 34]
binadamu aso na kazi [Walenisi 152]

The pluralizing suffix -NI is recurrent in the forms soteni and nyoteni

_Asali ni yetu soteni._ [Rocha 6]

Mkangi introduces into his writings some peculiar dialectal features, like the passive verb followed by the preposition ni instead of na, to be found especially in Mafuta:

_alikuwa akichunguzwa vikali ni mwenyi mali_ [Mafuta 4]
_he was observed attentively by the proprietary._

The demonstratives in -NO are used by Njama: _habari hino, jela hino, shule hino_.

The archaic suffix -ngwa „of another“, used by Rocha, is explained by Sacleux as „crase pour -a ngine „d’autrui ..“:

_Jipu lilipasuka msichanangwa_ (msichana wa watu, maskini msichana) _akafa_ (Rocha 104)
_Mhurumieni mwanamkengwa_ [Rocha 2]
Rocha uses a Kimvita passive -pawa instead of -pewa

Hata hiyo kazi ya ofisi alipaya na Amu Zaid  [Rocha 111]

He also features occasionally the archaic perfect:

Mimi usingizi ulikuwa univeme (umenivamia). [Rocha14]
Sote tulimtazama Warega Nave halele (hakuwa amelala). [Rocha 28]

Most of Kenyan writers make use of augmentatives in JI- (jilango, jibaba jinyama) with the plural MILI- mijisaha (from usaha), mijidamu or mijibunduki, as well as diminutives in KILI-/VIJI- (kijilikizo, kijibiashare, vijisafari, vijisarafu).

Nikatekwa na kijusingizi cha urongo na kweli  [Rocha 113]

Occasionally Kenyan texts also feature non-standard spelling like urongo. -mwaika, mme or hengi Sometimes W is inserted between U and A as in ataka kukuwa  [Walibora 42] or amenyakuwa  [Walibora 64] Kimvita pronunciation is reflected in ndoo = njoo  [Walibora 58], and ndaa = njaa  [Walibora 66]

These Kenyan texts are very rich and colourful in vocabulary. Thus the semantic variety of Rocha’s verbs of speech is remarkable. Besides the common verbs -sema or -ambia he uses, for instance, -takalamu -kuli, -toa kalima or -toa kauli, -tokwa na kalima or -tokwa na kauli, but also -funua kanwa, and for the opposite, i.e. not speaking, -ponyokwa na uneni and -angukwa na mdomo.

Nilikuli kwa sauti ya juu  [Rocha 100]
Kibibi alikawa haloi tena kauli sasa  [Rocha 115]
Ajabu ni kwamba sijafunua kanwa hata siku moja kumwambia kusudia kwenda ng’ambo.  [Rocha 87]
Amu Zaidi alitokwa na kalima  [Rocha 49]
Onaai aliponyokwa na uneni  [Rocha 12]
Mzee aliangukwa na mdomo hakuufungua mpaka alipoingia kitanjani  [Rocha 87]

Some novelists use archaic and poetic expressions (taken, maybe, from Muyaka’ poems) like kadamnasi [ya watu], in front of [the people]”. kuti „food“, -lola (-ola) „see“, ozi and nga „eye“, -tonga „speak“, ukwasi „wealth“, or the adverb ja „like“; e.g. the latter, according to Sacleux, is „adverbe archaïque, sans emploi dans le langage de la conversation.

Amu haoni haya kujaifanya mambo haya kadamnasi ya watu hasa ikiwa ana chupa mbili tatu kichwani  [Rocha 10]
alitamani ageuke nga antuata huko  [Habwe]
Nilikaribia mikononi mwake ja mwana mikononi mwa mamaye  [Rocha 106]

Instead of the standard locative noun mahali (or besides it) Rocha uses pahali for a near place and kwahali for a far place:
Akawaomba wampe pahali ake [Rocha 20]
Ametahadharishwa kwa kwa kwalhe kwenyewe ni mbali mno [Rocha 17]
Kuna watu fulani wanaokusanya pesa huku Uziwani na kuzipeleka kwalhe kwingine [Rocha 78]

A typically Kenyan word is ndiposa (ndipo sasa), used by almost all writers:

Ndiposa yule mwanamke muuzaji alipopiga mbio kasi na kumfuata [Walibora 72]

Other typically „Northern“ words are, e.g. nina „mother“, -gura -hama, kinyangarika „child“ (instead of the „Kamusi“’s definition: „kitu cha kudharaulika au kisicho na vida; kitu kisicho maana au kisichofaa“) or runinga „television“ (coined by the poet Ahmed Sheikh Nabhan)

Hay ziliwatoka toka matumboni mwa nina zao [Rocha 10]
Wametumwa na Amina wagurishe vitu [Habwe]
Vinyangarika vilipasua vitlo walipigwa kumbo na watu wazima [King’ala 63]
iuwa ni picha tu kama kwenye runinga [Habwe]

Loans from Kikuyu and other Kenyan languages (Mijikenda, Kamba, occasionally Maasai) are quite frequent. Obviously the authors suppose that everybody understands such words as inio mbosho or githeri (types of food), wiyathi (“uhuru”) and so on.

Tukaanza kijibiashara chetu cha mbosho na githeri’ [Rocha 19]

Only Ngugi explains less common Kikuyu terms in the text:

Nikakuta mlango wa kienyeji yaani riige umelala upande mmoja [Ngugi 7]

and Mkangi uses a Mijikenda word, dicho, explaining it in a note: „Neno hili asilia yake ni Kimijikenda Nalo ni muungano wa maneno mawili: Dii - maana yake kufanya kite mfululizo siku nzima. na cho ama che - mfululizo usiku wote Kwa hivyo, dicho ni sava na kusema, „kila siku au kilwa kiti“ (p 34)

Yaonekana kuta tuzijengazo dicho ili kuwacuza watu kama hawa kuja kutulwa ibia starehe zetu si inari ama ndefu ywa kutosha vya wao kushindwa kuziparaga [Mafuta 34]

While English borrowings are not particularly abundant, Arabic loans are plentiful and sometimes they are formally less adapted. Just two interesting examples are:

akhwati the broken plural of „sister“ (ukht):
Jambo Omar i analolichuka zaidi ni kuharibiwa akhwati zake [Rocha 25]

jufula Ar terror, fight > morgue;
Matit iliikuwa haijaletwa kutowa katika jufula hospitali ya mkoa [Rocha 114]
Many words used by Kenyan authors are absent from the extant Swahili dictionaries, like *darmadari* "around", *-deku* "observe", *ma duru* "much", *mrahani* "discussion", *mtahi* "friend", *lekele* "without reason", *purufu namba* "poor, destitute people", *-tanzika* "have no option", *sini* "not at all", *suitafahum* "misunderstanding" or *horomo* "enough, stop". This last word comes from the children play "hide and seek".  

*Hapa horomo ikipigwa hawa, kina dada atahitaji kupelekwa* [Rocha 9-10]

*Khalifa si mtu wa kupingapinga jambo lekele* [Rocha 13]

*Suitafahum baina yeu ilikawa yapungua sasa* [Rocha 108]

Some of these words are listed only in the new Russian dictionary like *mkakati* "tactics" or *msena* "friend", others terms do occur in Kamusi, but as a different part of speech, e.g. *mtondoti* (W mtu ambaye ana tabia ya kutaka maelezo mengi au apendaye kusema sana): in Kamusi only the abstract noun *utondoti* is explained as *maelezo marefu kupita kita*

The Kenyan authors also make use of *lugha ya mitaani* or slang, e.g. the widespread *toto shoo* "beautiful young woman", or some more specific local terms like *fwa* (bure au bila ya kazi), *fogo* (tele, kwa wingi). *-fali* (fall in love), *-sare* (-toweka, -potea, -acha), *-pangua* (-ondoka);

*Peponi ni iaha tupa na ni kukaa tu fwa* [Walensi 83]

*Pesa tunazo maji twapiga, wanawake fogo nini zaidi?* [Rocha 10]

*Kimbe hapa yuaniambia hivyo ilhali yeye mwenyewe amefoli kwa Kibibi!* [Rocha 86]

Ngugi in his autobiography *Miaka 52 jela* presents even thieves' argot:

*Namudekea pai ana kam saidi hi hebu tupangue = Nimemwona askari akija upande huu. Hebu twendeni* [Ngugi 24]

*Namudekea nongwe ana kam saidi hii na ana mnago fogo Nazidekeka mimi = Namwona mjinga anakuja upande huu na ana pesa nyingi Nimeziona mimi* [Ngugi 24]

*Tulijichukulia ati sisi ndio werewu, tukiijita „mapanja” na wale wengine tukawaita manongwe ..* [Ngugi 33]

*Nilipodekea „huku na huko niliona wale „manongwe wanakuja ( ) Karanja alituomba tumiachi „achai huyo nongwe yaani amuhibie huyo mjinga aliyekwana anakribia ( ) Karanja alipoangukia tu ile kibeti cha pesa yule „sara” alimkamata* [Ngugi 33]

Conclusion

I have presented only some features which are symptomatic for the style of Kenyan writers of the Nineties, but I hope to have proved that it exists indeed Kenyan literary language. It is no more anonymous, but has acquired its own characteristics. Or perhaps we may speak of *Kiswahili cha pwani* (na Visiwani) as opposed to *Kiswahili cha Bara*.
References


King'ala, Y. 1984 *Anasa* Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books.


