

THE USE OF LANGUAGE AND STYLE IN THE WORKS OF TWO KENYAN PLAYWRIGHTS

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1.1 Abstract

Stylistics criticism is based on the study of style as used in literary expressions and their effects on the audience. It attempts to establish principles capable of explaining the particular linguistic items and choices made by an individual author in his/her work of art in an attempt to bring about certain meanings in the society as well as foreground certain issues that affect society. The thesis of this paper is that both the formal and informal elements deployed by most of the Kenyan playwrights contribute to the dramatization of issues of social concern. As such, the paper examines how metaphor as a style is used to dramatize the metaphors of power in the 21st century Kenyan society. The study delimited itself to two plays, namely *Inheritance* by David Mulwa and *The Hunter is Back* by Dennis Kyalo. The study engaged Sociological theory and Stylistic criticism to investigate its concerns. The study was library based owing to the textual nature of both its primary and secondary sources. Therefore, a close reading of both primary texts and secondary sources was done. The stylistic features employed by the playwrights include imagery, symbolism, proverbs and wise sayings. These devices have been carefully used to demonstrate how power is exercised and transformed for good and for bad – depending on who is wielding it in society. Due to the informative impact of the two plays, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, the Kenya Literature Bureau and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should also review and adopt these plays for studies in literature in secondary and primary schools in Kenya.

Keywords: Stylistic Features, Kenyan Playwrights, Metaphors, Power, *The Hunter is Back*, *Inheritance*

1.2 Introduction

Language and style are critical areas in the expression of meaning in any work of art. As such, for a literary critic to arrive at any meaningful interpretation of any work of art, he/she must pay particular attention to the language and style of that work. Style enables an author to carefully unravel social concerns to the reader. Through style authors are able to foreground issues in the society as well as evoke and appeal to the readers' thoughts, emotions and feelings. In this way, art constitutes an important work of social change.

Underlining the centrality of language and style in literary interpretation, Jeremy Hawthorn (1985), in *Unlocking the Text* argues that: "Literary works are the only works which consist largely of language – if one interprets 'literary work' in such a way as to include such things as oral poetry and some of the performing arts. It is not surprising therefore that the artists have sought to use language in the construction of theories about literature" (p. 51). This observation underscores the fact that language, whether in drama or in other forms of art, play a pivotal role in unravelling the meaning(s) of literary works of art. Language constitutes the only prime aspect in a literary work

of art that is subjected to interpretation. The language of a literary work of art is intertwined with style.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The study is a biased investigation on how metaphors of power are performed and manifested in the selected plays as a reflection of the Kenyan society in the 21st century. It examined how Kenyan dramatists not only transform but also dramatize the power-charged politics and social changes in their social surrounding into drama. Based on the study, therefore, this paper examines the various stylistic features deployed by David Mulwa (2004) in *Inheritance* and Dennis Kyalo (2010) in *The Hunter is Back*, selected Kenyan playwrights, in their dramatization of metaphors of power and change in Kenya.

1.4 Materials and Methods

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The study employed an in-depth analysis of metaphors of power and change in the text, which involved offering explanation and interpretation of the texts governed by the objectives of the study as its analytic technique. Systematic content analysis was used in describing the nature of power and change in the two plays as a reflection of the realities of society. The primary texts for the study were selected through purposeful sampling. The choice of the two texts was informed by the authors' knowledge of Kenyan drama and a thorough reading around the area of study. Before settling on the topic and texts of study, the authors conducted an investigation of various Kenyan playwrights and their major contemporary preoccupations.

The primary data for the study was collected from a thorough and close reading and analysis of the primary texts. Library research was undertaken. This focused on texts and scholarly works relating to the area of study, relevant materials focusing on language, style and social concerns and Internet research. The primary and secondary data collected were examined and analyzed in line with the objectives of the study. Data analysis was based on the conceptualization of power and change in relation to the social contexts in the texts. Therefore, through content analysis, a comprehensive synthesis and interpretation of data gathered from the reading of the primary texts together with the secondary sources was undertaken in order to come up with a coherent final study.

1.5 Results and Discussion

1.5.1 Symbolism

Symbolism is one of the stylistic devices that writers utilize in their works of art. Symbolism is used to convey information indirectly. Chadwick (1971) defines symbolism as “the art of expressing ideas and emotions not by describing them directly, nor by defining them through overt comparisons with concrete images, but by suggesting what these ideas and emotions are, by recreating them in the mind of the reader through the use of unexplainable symbols” (p. 2). In other words, a symbol stands for something whose meaning lies elsewhere.

In the selected literary texts, symbolism manifests itself in two forms:

- i. Object and Animal symbolism
- ii. Character symbolism

1.5.2 Object and Animal Symbolism

In this form of symbolism, objects and/or animals are used as symbols of certain ideas, ideals, people and things in the real world.

The Crown

In the play *Inheritance*, the crown is not only used as a symbol but also as a metaphor of power. The crown is used as a symbol of authority in the Kutula Republic. However, it is seen as a metaphor of power since it embodies the power and influence that leaders wield over their subjects in Kutula Republic. For instance, on the Coronation day, Lacuna Kasoo is given the crown that was hitherto owned by his father to show that the Kasoo is the successor. He (Kasoo) ascends to power upon killing his own father under the auspices of the colonial government. Again, during the commemoration ceremony, King Kasoo is also given the crown by Lulu to symbolize the strength and influence of his power over the people of Kutula. Lacuna Kasoo's taking over of the mantle of leadership in Kutula Republic does not please the citizenry because his ascendancy happened under unclear circumstances, suspicion and fear. It is alleged that his involvement with the colonizers facilitated the killing of the then King and his eventual rise to power. Thus, Kasoo's power is seen as the triumph of the colonizers; Kasoo is thus seen as the puppet of the colonizers, a symbol of neo-colonial agency.

Bukelenge Valley

Bukelenge Valley in the play *Inheritance* is used as a symbol as well as a negative metaphor of power. It is used to symbolize the deeds of an oppressive regime; a regime that has very little or no regard for its people. The leaders are only interested in enriching themselves at the expense of the people. They come up with projects that are intended at fetching them a lot of money. However, in order for them to reap any benefits of the projects, they are required to divert the river that is the only source of livelihood of the people in the valley. When the selfish leaders eventually divert the course of the river, the valley that was once blossoming with life becomes a valley of death. The inhabitants are stunned as they stare at death; their only source of life no longer flows through the valley. The valley is, therefore, viewed as a metaphor of power of life and death. Before the river was diverted, the valley blossomed with life; but it depicts people's pain, suffering, hunger, anger and looming rebellion when the leaders divert the river. The dam built by Kasoo's government causes people to suffer when all the streams in the valley are diverted to the dam rendering the valley dry and unproductive. The people are forced to trek long distances to access the dam, the only source of water in the region. Further, to please the foreign financiers, Rollerstone and Goldstein, the king forcefully evacuates the people living in the valley. Thus the valley depicts the injustice that the people of the valley have to endure under the unpopular oppressive regime. This action further shows the extent of foreign influence on the activities of Kutula Republic. They are the ones who call the shots in an independent Kutula Republic at the expense of the citizens. This represents a negative manifestation of the power of a free independent African state.

Doves

The symbolism that underlies the use of the doves in the play *Inheritance* alludes to that in the Bible. Doves are used as a symbol of peaceful revolution and hope. In the play, tired of oppression and dictatorship that characterize the ruling elite, the people stage a peaceful and bloodless coup against Kasoo's leadership. Kasoo's leadership has performed dismally due to domination by foreign influence, manipulation and total disregard of the wishes of the people.

Apples

Apples are a symbol of fruitfulness and wealth. Usually, apples are a less common type of fruits. In the play, they are found mostly in the palace and less among the general citizenry. They are, therefore, used as symbols of affluence. King Kasoo welcomes his influential guests with apples that are ever displayed next to his royal seat. This paints a picture of a leader who is embroidered in wealth and good life while his people languish in abject poverty and hunger. This materialism is seen in the way the king organizes big ceremonies in which huge sums of money are spent in treating the dignitaries to banquets. All this is done at the expense of improving the lives of the masses.

1.5.3 Characters as Symbols

In this form of symbolism, characters in the play are used to represent certain ideas and ideals in the real world.

Lulu

Lulu is used in the play as a symbol of hope amidst despair and suffering among the Kutula people. She is a virgin and, in accordance with the customs of the people, is the one to hand over the crown to the king and subsequently 'entertain' him at the palace. However, Kasoo takes advantage of the custom to detain Lulu in his palace against her will. He even goes ahead to force himself on the young girl and attempts to make her his second wife. This shows how the king has arrested the hopes of the people in his greed and desecrated the purity of the customs and the land. However, Lulu is strong willed and bold enough to stand her ground. She completely shuns the king and gives a deaf ear to his threats. This disempowers the king and depicts him as a weak human being who is not invincible. At the end of the play, she escapes unscathed. Lulu is salvaged from being a second wife symbolizing a restoration of hope to the Kutula Republic. She does not give the king a chance to defile her in the same way he has defiled the young nation of Kutula. In the same vein, the people – through a civil revolution – put an end to Kasoo's authoritarian regime.

Lacuna Kasoo

Lacuna Kasoo is the unpopular leader who ascends to power after the mysterious death of King Kutula XV. He uses foreign powers and trickery to get into leadership. He thus violates the established rules and traditions that govern the transition of power. By disregarding the rules and wishes of the people, Lacuna Kasoo is a symbol of an impediment to the realization of justice and democracy in Kutula republic – a metaphor of negative power. He is a symbol of illegitimate leadership in the African post-colonial states. Lacuna Kasoo is overly concerned with acquiring wealth, grabbing of national resources for his own selfish gain, manipulating power for his own vested interests and for the greedy conspicuous consumption of his cronies. He assassinates at will those who would oppose him and immerses himself in immoral decadence. He is a true representation of those African leaders who, trusted with political power, have ended up misusing that power to humiliate the very people who looked up to them for leadership. By going against the wishes of the people, Lacuna Kasoo negatively depicts the image of political power as an opportunity to amass wealth and oppress others.

The 'Hunter'

On the other hand, in the play *The Hunter is Back*, symbolism manifests itself right from the title. From the title, one wonders who the hunter is and who is the hunted. As the play unfolds, it becomes clear that both the hunter and the hunted are human beings. The chief refers to Mzee Tumbo as a hunter who is back as revealed from the latter's story narrated to the chief. Coincidentally, both Mzee Tumbo and the chief are hunters, hunting the same 'preys', namely the chieftdom as well as Rita, the beautiful girl. As such, the two represent forms of negative power.

Apart from being the hunted, Rita is also the hunter in her own right. The playwright presents her as one who has been through a series of experiences that are not palatable to her struggle for a bright future. She becomes the hunter of men as she tries to work towards the attainment of herself fulfilment. Ironically, she does not know that in her quest for self-fulfilment, she is playing into the hands of her hunters, the likes of Mzee Tumbo and the chief. It is, therefore, not surprising that she easily falls into the snares of Mzee Tumbo and eventually is on the verge of being married off to the old man against her desires and wishes. The other hunters like the chief and Ngumi turn their backs on her. The chief, who is the head of the people, ought to fight for her rights but he does not use his power to alter her fate. Similarly, Ngumi, who is supposed to take care of Rita as her benefactor, gives her a cold shoulder. Finally, Rita's escape from the snare comes in the form of a scholarship for further studies from a care centre. It is through her studies that she attains self-actualization. It is then that Rita, the new hunter, returns to fight for her rights. She opens the eyes of the society and now starts to fight for the rights of the ignorant illiterate community. She opposes the powers that were ruthless to her and even becomes the chief of Chamaland.

Maneno

The author of *The Hunter is Back* also uses character names as symbols. For instance, Maneno is a derivation of a Swahili word that means words. The character of Maneno is portrayed as a rumour monger. She is the conduit of gossip from one corner of Chamaland to the other. It seems like she is always the first one to receive any kind of heresy. She engages in gossip with Naomi about their husbands. She confronts and in the end irritates Rita over the issue of marriage. With her nature christened in her name, Maneno only exists in and through words and not in actions. The only admirably striking virtue in Maneno is her firm stand that is based on logic. This is what makes her change and take Rita's side on the fight against injustices in society.

Tumbo

Tumbo is another symbolic character in *The Hunter is Back*. The name is also a derivation from Kiswahili that means tummy. It is associated with people who have big tummies or pot-bellies. The name Tumbo as in the play is associated with material opulence and greed. In the play, Tumbo is a very wealthy man and has married many wives for whom he has paid a lot of dowry to their parents. He uses his wealth to woo Rita to be his wife. He even goes to the extent of bribing the chief so that he can force Rita to marry him. He is corrupt and uses his money as a means to his selfish ends. Tumbo represents the corrupting and dehumanising influence of material wealth in society.

Taabu

Taabu is another symbolic name derived from Kiswahili, meaning problems. Taabu is portrayed as a helpless character in the play. She is a sickly person. She never enjoys any bit of her short life.

She is afflicted by a disease that Maneno describes as a curse from the gods while Jeremy insinuates as the Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus. Apart from Rita, the people stay away from Taabu and are repulsed by the thought of being near her. Rita later paints a grim and sympathetic picture of Taabu's entire life revealing how poverty and other problems drove her to indulge in sex.

1.5.4 Ngumi's Dream

Ngumi tells of a dream he had (p.20). In the dream, he is given a seed to plant. The seed germinates and grows up very fast but he is unable to cut it down. The chief is angry that the tree cannot be cut. He tries to cut it down himself but, like Ngumi, he fails. The tree symbolizes Rita. Rita (the seed) is left in the hands of Ngumi as his benefactor. He mistreats her and does not even defend her when Mzee Tumbo ensnares her into marriage. Fortunately, she gets reprieve through the scholarship. Upon completing her further studies, Rita comes back enlightened and subsequently sets out to champion the rights of her community. In so doing, she wins the hearts of many and becomes a household name. Like the tree in Ngumi's dream, she has blossomed. She can no longer be trampled on by draconian cultural practices. She initiates development projects that blossom very fast and bring prosperity to her village.

1.5.5 Irony

Mugubi (2005), in *Stylistics and Literary Techniques*, defines irony as an expression whose meaning is directly contrary to that suggested by the words/expressions. In the play *The Hunter is Back*, the chief talks about how he is "serving his society without fear or favour" (p. 37) during Rita's wedding to Mzee Tumbo. This is ironic because the chief is unfair in his leadership. He fails to help Rita when she seeks help from him; instead he throws her out of his house. The chief's leadership is characterized by favouritism. He accepts bribes from his cronies in order to make favourable decisions. Chamaland looks up to the chief to improve their living conditions. Ironically, he is the parasite that is stealing from the community. He demands bribes in order to grant justice. Rita, the girl who becomes chief, becomes the saviour of the community and presides over cases without taking bribes like her predecessor.

It is also ironic that Kito, the chief's faithful worker, suddenly walks out on him and joins hands with Rita in condemning the chief's leadership. The chief, out of frustration, describes Kito as ungrateful. Ironically, the chief used to despise Kito when there is no one to challenge his rule. Kito walks out in protest because of the chief's failure to pay his wages. It is ironical that the chief, a rich man, does not pay his servant his dues. Although, he is a Christian he does not follow the teachings of the Bible. He is mean, demeaning and also disrespectful to people, especially women. He does not think a woman like Rita should argue with him.

Ngumi is hell-bent on marrying off Rita because he expects to get rich from her dowry. He had even started budgeting for the money. Ironically, Ngumi does not get any money. Naomi, Ngumi's wife, does not allow customs that harass women to prevail; so she decides to help Rita against her husband's wishes. This is ironical because in her society, a wife is expected to support her husband. Naomi indeed goes to the extent of mocking her husband and Mzee Tumbo as hyenas as she rescues Rita from the forced marriage. Nevertheless, she does not leave her husband, even when she discovers he is unable to sire children because of his excessive indulgence in alcoholism. She chooses to stay on in her failed marriage yet she helps Rita escape from an arranged marriage.

In the play *Inheritance*, irony is also evident. For instance, Lacuna Kasoo kills his father, King Kutula XV, in order to ascend to the throne. As a son, he is expected to be loyal and supportive to his father, especially because the father was a good leader with good intentions for the people of Kutula. King Kutula XV wanted cohesion and unity of the people and genuine development for the country. Lacuna Kasoo's greed for power leads him to betray his own father and king. As a native, he chooses to take sides with the former colonial government. Upon ascending to power, Lacuna Kasoo convinces the people that he killed his father in order to save Kutula. He says that the deceased king ran the country down the edge of precipice by his bad leadership; that he did not spur the country to great heights in terms of development. He is, therefore, convinced that, in collusion with the former colonizers, he can develop the country to greater heights of economic prosperity. Ironically, Lacuna Kasoo takes over power only to concern himself with the affairs of his own and his cronies. Kutula republic is thrown into chaos with corruption, extreme poverty, poor leadership, dictatorship, moral decadence, oppression, greed and land grabbing which pervade the society.

1.5.6 Allusion

Allusion is the art of making reference to or quoting from known authorities, journals or books (Mugubi, 2005). It also includes making references to familiar objects, places, events, processes or persons known to the readers. Biblical allusion is one of the common forms of allusion that many writers employ in literature. Biblical Allusion refers to making reference to or drawing analogies from the Bible. In *The Hunter is Back*, Kito refers to the Bible when he says that the hand that giveth is the hand that receiveth. The statement refers to the biblical declaration that blessed is the hand that giveth than the one that taketh. Kito refers to the chief, who is not willing to pay him what he has actually worked for, as the one that takes or receives what he should give instead. Although the chief is a rich man, he finds it difficult to pay his workers because he is selfish. The chief is described as an ardent churchgoer, yet he is very disrespectful of his workers. He is a hypocrite.

Rita refers to her uncle and Mzee Tumbo as beasts because all they think about is how they are going to benefit from her. Rita wishes that they be punished like Sodom and Gomorrah because of their evil ways. This biblical allusion paints a sordid picture of the twisted morality in Rita's society.

Tumbo refers to the chief as Saint Joseph (p. 32). He likens the chief to Joseph in the Bible, a holy and very morally upright man. This is ironical because the chief is far from good. He prides himself as a man who loves justice and fairness, but he demands and takes bribes and oppresses the poor and underprivileged. As such, Tumbo's reference to the chief as Saint Joseph is a form of sarcasm or mockery on the chief's true character.

Rita makes references to the Bible when talking about how people will be repaid for their efforts. This alludes to the biblical saying that the people will reap what they sow. In her reference, Rita encourages her aunt Naomi who helped her escape the planned marriage. Rita's trust in God makes her successful. She is likened to the Messiah in the Bible who came to restore hope, peace and harmony among the nations of the world.

1.5.7 Imagery

Imagery is to the use of language to create or evoke mental pictures. Imagery manifests itself in literature through vivid descriptions, similes and metaphors.

1.5.8 Similes

In describing the journey they had to make on their way back from the Thorne's palace, King Kutula XV says, "Our royal train knows no better than walk like a wedding match" (p. 14). This shows that the journey took too long. In his failure to convince the people to stop rebelling against the whites, Governor Thorne says, "The King is dangerous like a queen bee he sanctions the sting" (p. 14). This means that King Kutula XV as the leader of the people (the queen) has the power to incite (sanctions the sting) the people against them. It further underscores the legitimacy of the king's leadership. He had the following of the people. It also underlines how the white colonizers feel threatened by the king's power.

While recalling the events that characterized the room just before the arrest of her husband, Tamina says, "The room was hushed expectant like the stillness in the eye of the hurricane!" (p. 23). This paints a room full of expectations and fear over the impending arrest. It also resonates with the feelings of the people during the periods of political transitions. There is fear, anxiety and mixed hope and anticipation.

Judah Zen Melo, narrating the story of how he started drinking, says, "Rock the tree with my head like the mother warthog and die while the fruits shower around my Family" (p. 35). In other words, drinking provides him with an opportunity to buy *Mithambo*, a drink at the top five pubs and consequently get a promotion as a machine operator. This reflects his determination to provide for his family despite his condition.

1.5.9 Metaphors

Lacuna Kasoo calls Rollerstone a "Young mangoose" (Mulwa, 2004, p. 73) because of his stand on doing business with Kutula Republic. Rollerstone insists that the west should conduct business with Kutula Republic on equal footing and that the king was to account for the loans advanced to him. However, the king is unhappy with this position. As a totalitarian king, he does not see the need to be accountable to anyone. In another instance, Lacuna Kasoo says, "A true father is not the old lion who waits for the lioness to labour" (Mulwa, 2004, p. 89). He deploys the use of this metaphorical statement to justify his involvement in evacuating the people from Bukelenge Valley that was due to be occupied by the international financiers. In several instances, Lacuna Kasoo calls his wife "a demon", "an oversize matchstick of angry dynamite", "cobra headed hand grenade" (Mulwa, 2004, p. 98) in his effort to seduce young Lulu to marry him. These metaphors point to the fact that the king is a moral reprobate despite holding a position that demands high moral integrity.

Lacuna Kasoo refers to Princess Sangoi as "My parrot Sister" (Mulwa, 2004, p. 111). This is because Sangoi has been critical of his leadership and the fact that she is loved by the people gives the king sleepless nights. She is a constant critic of his leadership. The male leader refers to the security forces as "a bunch of deflated wind bags" (Mulwa, 2004, p. 131) in regard to the manner in which they were reduced to nothing by the king. They play to the tune of the palace and have no powers left in them. They were also disunited.

1.6 Proverbs and Wise sayings

Proverbs and wise sayings are short or terse witty expressions or statements that generally convey advice, caution or wisdom (Mugubi, 2005). They are used to demonstrate the dexterity of language and cultural expressions of a people as well as command authority.

In the play *Inheritance*, for instance, various characters employ proverbs and wise sayings in their utterances. For instance, Princess Sangoi tells governor Throne “Only the flowers dare display their beauty to the world as your women do” and “a good heart doesn’t stand well upon the forehead” (Mulwa, 2004, p. 14). She employs the two sayings in response to the governor’s question on whether or not the king taught her anything good. In using the two sayings, Princess Sangoi not only admits that she has been taught the ways of people but also intimates on the fact that one does not need to stand on the rooftops and shout or proclaim the knowledge they have. She thus espouses humility despite her intelligence. The sayings depict Princess Sangoi as wise and authoritative. She also abides by the ways and follows the will and wishes of the people. Bengo has fond memories of his brother Judah Zen Melo. He remembers what he (Judah Zen Melo) once told him that “The crow may be a coward, but he lives to see his grandsons” (Mulwa, 2004, p. 24). This is a warning meant to enlighten him to desist from opposing the king’s leadership in Kutula Republic. However, Bengo refuses to cow down and is detained for several years. This underscores his resilience and courage. In the end, he plays a pivotal role in the people’s revolution that deposes King Kasoo.

Tamina vividly recalls the kind of person that King Lacuna Kasoo was before he turned against the people. She laments “the foolish sheep thought the python kind just because she was secure in the python’s coils-until feeding time” (Mulwa, 2004, p. 29). This underscores how Tamina and her family feel deceived and betrayed by the king. The king dismisses Judah Zen Melo from his government position and strips him of the property he owned subjecting his family to abject poverty. Lulu is sent away from school due to lack of fees. The saying, therefore, depicts Lacuna Kasoo as a hypocrite who has been alienated from his friends and family by greed.

During the commemoration ceremony of King Kutula XV, Princess Sangoi says “When the dead murmur in conscience, the guilty hear in it the terror of thunder” (p. 56). The saying foregrounds the unjust overthrow and killing of King Kutula XV. It also shows that the perpetrators of his murder fear the repercussions of his spirit even though he is long gone. The saying thus foregrounds the people’s belief in the sacredness of life and how those who take life must face the wrath of spirits.

When the foreigners venture into a business partnership with King Lacuna Kasoo, Goldstein remarks “Make hay while the sun shines” (p. 61). The financiers were taking advantage of Lacuna’s poor leadership to make a killing for their economic power. However, they never believed that King Kasoo could be trusted in the partnership. Referring to his erstwhile friend-turned-foe, King Lacuna Kasoo says “Thy mother befriended the weaver bird” (p. 85). Traditionally, the weaver bird is regarded as a clever bird that does everything on purpose. It is believed that whenever it chooses to build its nest, it carefully evaluates the benefits that will accrue from the immediate environments. Therefore, the King uses this saying to refer to his foreign friends who have become his foes. The financiers not only desert him but they also vow to strip him off his money stashed in foreign banks after the king fails to settle the debts owed to them.

In another instance, King Kasoo observes that “A python never strikes except in hunger” (p. 114). This statement is meant to highlight the king’s might or strength and temperament. The King’s failure to act should not be misconstrued to mean that he is powerless. The king warns the foreign financiers not to disrespect him and his office. He threatens to severely deal with them. , the King views the action of imposing conditions on his government as a provocation of his venomous wrath. On the other hand, in reaction to the king’s threats, Goldstein retorts “A tethered hen has no power” (p. 117). This implies that king Kasoo has no choice but to meet the demands

of the foreigners. He has lost the support of his people and is no longer as powerful as he thought. His overseas accounts have also been put under the control of the foreign powers. He has been crippled and subjected to the whims of the westerners to whom he is a puppet.

In the play *The Hunter is Back*, Rita uses a lot of proverbs and wise sayings that foreground her intelligence and tact. In one instance, she says “change is as good as rest” (Kyalo, 2010, p. 43). Her aunt, Maneno, is amazed by what she sees in Rita’s new house. She is also mesmerized by the technology of which she even finds it difficult to pronounce. Rita justifies these changes in her life as a sign of contentment and peace that she wishes for everyone in her community. It is also her way of persuading people to accept change. In another instance, Rita comments that the chief is “fighting himself because nobody is interested in his seat” (Kyalo, 2010, p. 54). Since her return from further studies, the chief has been sceptical of the various development projects that Rita has initiated in the village. Through these projects, Rita has won the confidence and support of the people. Therefore, the chief feels threatened by her growing power, even though Rita is not interested in position of power. She thus uses the statement to allay the chief’s fears.

1.7 Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has explored the various stylistic features employed by two Kenyan playwrights in interrogating the metaphors of power and change in society. From the discussion of the results, it is clear that each of the stylistic features identified help the two writers to foreground certain issues of social concern in their dramatic works. The playwrights have deployed imagery, symbolism, proverbs and wise sayings to demonstrate how power is exercised and transformed for good and for bad in the society.

The two plays studied in the paper are important texts in understanding the nature of power and power relations in 21st century Kenya. It is, therefore, recommended that more critical studies should be conducted in these and similar plays in Kenya with the aim of demonstrating the value of art to society as well as expound on the national vision of the Kenyan writer in regard to change and development. The Ministry of Education, the Kenya Literature Bureau and the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should also review and adopt these plays for studies in literature in secondary and primary schools in Kenya.

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