

**THE ROLE OF LINGUISTIC DEVIATIONS IN  
MEJA MWANGI'S STRIVING FOR THE WIND**

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A project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Master of Arts Degree in the University of Nairobi

2005



## DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to the university of Nairobi for awarding me a scholarship, which has enabled me to undertake my studies.

I would also like to register my sincere gratitude to my first supervisor Dr. Alina Rinkanya who unselfishly provided me with invaluable source of guidance, advice and constructive criticism. I am especially indebted to her for not only according me careful supervision but also helping me add yet another thread to my academic web. I also thank my second supervisor Dr. Waigwa Wachira for his criticism that has helped shape this project.

I also thank my lecturers Dr. Kiiru, Prof. Indangasi, Prof. Helen Mwanzi, Prof. Chesaina, Dr. Wasamba and Mr. Kitata for shaping my critical perspectives.

I would wish to express gratitude to my husband, Milu Muyanga for his believe in my academic potential and for encouraging me to further my studies. I also thank him for his financial, material and moral support. And to my daughter Annette, I take responsibility for the limited motherly attention.

I thank my classmates Rose, Lydia, Velma, Phyllis, Mwai, Maitho, Omutiti and Mwairumba for their academic and moral support. I wish to mention my indebtedness to Mbugua, Larry and Omuteche for their academic support. I thank Macharia and Kiura for accepting to be my interviewees during the research.

I sincerely thank my parents and family for their inspiration and moral support. I particularly thank my sisters Jemmy, Angela and brothers Jake, Mike, Muema and Mwogela. My brother in-law Ambrose and daughter Brenda for their concern.

I also thank my mother in-law Jemima and her entire family for their concern and moral support. My brothers- and sisters- in-law for showing interest in my project and your constant encouragement, I say thank you.

## DEDICATION

To

*My parents, Ben and Susan*

and

*The Almighty God*

*'Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit'*

*Zechariah 4:6*

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## ABSTRACT

The use of one language in a text has become the “conventional” way of communication for most writers and readers. In Striving for the Wind, the interaction of three languages: Kiswahili, Kikuyu and English disrupt a smooth discourse. This is linguistic deviation for “it leaves a gap, as it were, in one’s comprehension of the text.” (Leech 1969, 61). The Kiswahili and Kikuyu words and expressions “stick out” from the English background. Leech argues that anyone who wishes to investigate the significance and value of a work of art must concentrate on the element of interest and surprise, rather than on the automatic pattern. The main objective of this study was to analyze the artistic significance of these linguistic deviations in developing themes and characters. Stylistics and postcolonial approaches to literature have been used to evaluate the role of the deviations in the text.

Chapter two analyzes the style of characterization in the novel. The names of characters are considered as deviations as close scrutiny of the names shows that they give a different sense than the literal one. The names are used figuratively and therefore their meaning has been analyzed among other tropes to establish the role they play in character development.

Some loans words, expressions, and sayings are fore grounded in the text through repetition and structural parallelism. These fore grounded features have been analyzed to

establish what role they play in the text, such as reinforcement, antithesis, and development of characters and themes.

Chapter three identifies the ways in which the author deviates from the linguistic norms through loan words, code switched expressions and dialogues, use of Kikuyu and Kiswahili folklore inform of proverbs, witty sayings, idioms, folk songs either in native languages or in literal translation. The study recognizes these linguistic deviations as stylistic devices that the author uses intentionally to give the text a Kenyan identity. The study examines how the theme of conflict between traditional culture and modern culture leads to development of hybrid identity.

The study is summarized through a conclusion that highlights the findings of the study. The study has established that, for the author to achieve aesthetic and thematic wholeness, he stylistically deviates from linguistic norms. However, our study is by no means exhaustive. Stylistically, cohesion among the three languages was not analyzed. This is a field that other scholars can explore. Thematically the treatment of women in this text has also not been thoroughly explored.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Meja Mwangi is a Kenyan novelist whose fiction reflects his social concerns and vision for the African society. His works can be divided into various categories. The urban trilogy comprising Kill Me Quick (1973), Going Down River Road (1976), and The Cockroach Dance (1979) deal with the urban poor in postcolonial Kenya. Mwangi exposes the back street life and wrecked humanity of the urban poor. The urban trilogy also introduces the theme of the working class in Kenyan literature.

Carcass for Hounds (1974) and Taste of Death (1975) add to the Kenyan body of literature dedicated to Mau Mau anti colonial struggle. The Bush Trackers (1979) and Bread of Sorrow (1987) belong to the thriller genre.

In his latest novels of the late 1980s to present, Mwangi broadens his view and focuses on the entire African continent. Weapon of hunger (1989), The Return of Shaka(1989) and The Last Plague (2000)examine the problems facing the African continent, such as, civil war, famine, diseases, HIV/AIDS and pursuit of political power.

In Striving For The Wind (1990) Mwangi returns to his Kenyan society and this time identifies the village as his object of ridicule. He attempts to show the source of discord in the Kenyan traditional community.

Mwangi has also written children books and short stories. The children books include Jimi The Dog, Looking For Jimi and Adventures With Little White Man. The short stories are “Like Manna From Heaven”, “No Credit: Terms Strictly Cash!”, “Say Tham” and “Coming Back”.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Meja Mwangi is not a new name in Kenya’s literary scene. With eleven novels, three children books and short stories to his credit, he is one of Kenya’s most prolific writers.

In his latest novels the Last Plague, The Return of Shaka and Striving For The Wind he has introduced stylistic devices that are not manifest in his earlier works. This is by extensive use of phrases and folklore in indigenous African languages. In The Last Plague we encounter Kiswahili lexemes while in The Return o Shaka there is explicit use of Zulu words, witty sayings and proverbs either in the native Zulu language or in literal translation. In Striving For The Wind, the author makes use of Kiswahili and Kikuyu languages through loan words, code switching, literal translation and folklore. Despite the much criticism on Meja Mwangi’s works by scholars, these stylistic devices have not been given adequate critical attention. Our study aims at analyzing the stylistic and thematic effect of Kiswahili and Kikuyu languages in Striving for the Wind.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to analyze the artistic significance of the linguistic deviations in developing themes and characterization in Striving For The Wind.

To demonstrate how these linguistic deviations in Striving For The Wind give the text and realities depicted a Kenyan identity.

### **Hypothesis**

This study is guided by the assumption that the linguistic deviations in the text are not casual but are intentionally and a strategically used by the author to achieve a stylistic and thematic effect.

### **Justification of the study**

Despite the fact that Meja Mwangi's works covers a gamut of styles and themes, the linguistic deviations in Striving for the Wind has not been given adequate critical attention. Our study hopes to enrich our knowledge on the stylistic devices that define Kenyan Literature. This study aims at establishing whether the three languages used in the text work in a complementary nature to effective realization of the novel's content.

### **Theoretical framework**

This study is guided by stylistics and postcolonial theoretical framework.

Eric Enkvist in Linguistics and Style, observes that language is expression and the study of expression is the study of aesthetics; therefore both aesthetics and linguistics are concerned

with one and the same phenomenon. (7). One objective of this study to assess the stylistic and thematic wholeness achieved by linguistic deviations in the text.

We therefore examine the linguistic interaction of the Kenyan languages and English language, that is, how the creative manipulation of linguistic code achieves an aesthetic effect. A linguistic study is imperative in the sense that:

Stylistics is the linguistic study of style, an exercise in describing what use is made of language... stylistics has the implicitly or explicitly the goal of explaining the relation between language and artistic function (Leech 1981,13).

Leech argues that in a literary text we bring in simultaneously two faculties however imperfectly developed- our ability to respond to it as a literary work and our ability to observe its language (13). In analyzing the tropes and constructions in the text, which are foreground through repetition and syntactic parallelism, stylistics will help us in that:

All devices for securing emphasis or explicitness can be classed under stylistics: metaphors, which permeate all languages, even the most primitive type; all rhetorical figures; syntactical patterns. Nearly every linguistic utterance can be studied from the point of view of its expressive value (Wellek and Warren, 178).

However, the over reliance on linguistic analysis of the text does not mean that stylistics approach is restrictive. Language is part of human social behavior and thus operates within a wide framework of human activity. Erikivist posits that:

Any piece of language is... part of a situation, and so has a context, a relationship with that situation. It is this relationship between the substance and the form of a piece of language on the one hand and the extra linguistic circumstances in which it occurs on the other, which gives what is normally called the meaning of an utterance (68).

Therefore, a linguistic description of the text will not be complete unless we consider the relationship between the work and the context in which the work was created. Emmanuel Ngora says that while writers are speaking independent of history, form is socially conditioned. Style arises as a result of historical and social factors. (13) The text under study fall under Kenya's postcolonial literature. Meja Mwangi attempts to create a literature with a Kenyan identity. One way of doing so is through the appropriation of the English language. Language plays a significant role as Ngugi wa Thiong'o writes that language carries culture and culture carries particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world (Decolonizing the Mind, 16).

Postcolonial theory will help us understand some postcolonial realities like the hybrid identity of the characters portrayed in the text. The cross-cultural interactions between

Africans and the Europeans led to a creation of a hybrid personality and identity of the African. The postcolonial African writing is characterized by an amalgamation of African cultural values and western values. Language being the carrier of this hybrid culture is characterized by linguistic interaction to exemplify the hybrid nature of African identity.

Postcolonial theory will help us appreciate the Kenyanness of this text. Through the choice of languages, Meja Mwangi gives the text Kenyan identity as Stuart Hall asserts, “we all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always ‘in context’ *positioned* (Contemporary Postcolonial Theory, 110).

## **Literature Review**

There are number of reviews on Meja Mwangi novels. David Dorsey analyzes the narrative form of Meja Mwangi’s urban novels: The Cockroach Dance, Kill Me Quick, and Going Down River Road. He emphasizes the importance of studying a novels narrative form because it is the governing medium of statements. He argues that “the novels meaning, the ultimate significance of events, characters, and even the overt authorial comments and the full didactic intent cannot be gleaned from the plot, characters and narrators comments without reference to the sequence and manner in which these are reported to the reader (11).

In terms of identity, Dorsey argues that the identities of speaker and listener are substantial contributors to the statements full meaning. A novelist needs to have in mind certain essential elements of the reader’s identity, and the reader must identify the writer. He however argues,

“the mundane biographical facts of the author’s life are not the relevant elements of his identity. The significant facts are, necessarily, incorporated into the novel itself”(11). The novelist in his novel claims a certain affective identity, his sensibilities, his value system, his erudition, and his loyalties. The author seldom chose to lie, but truthfully or not, the form of the novel announces the person who wrote it, and envisioning the person is an ineluctable part of the reader’s perception of the story and its meaning. Dorsey sees the importance of the author knowing the identity of his putative reader, and the actual reader discerns from the text how well he fits that identity.

Dorsey further contends that, the author must decide what the reader knows and decide, in the face of ignorance, whether to insert explanations. More crucial to the structure of a given novels putative reader’s beliefs and values, his opinions about the novel as a genre, about a given subject and setting, about various modes of linguistic usage, about any specific factual details. All these and myriad of other unknowns about the actual reader press the writer to endless immediate decisions. Dorsey emphasizes the importance of a text’s content in giving the text, the novelist and the reader an identity. Our study sees the importance of language in establishing these identities. This study examines how Meja Mwangi’s linguistic choices in Striving For The Wind helps Kenyan readers identify with the text, and how the linguistic choices give the text a Kenyan identity. This study also examines how the author’s linguistic choices deviate from the English norms of communication to achieve thematic and stylistic effect.

Eustace Palmer in his essay- “Two Views of Urban Life: Meja Mwangi, Going Down River Road and Nurudin Farah, A Naked Needle” explores the urban life of squalor, degradation and misery as presented by Meja Mwangi’s novel Going Down River Road. Palmer observes “ Mwangi’s preoccupation with the social realities of the city does not prevent him from creating some interesting characters and exploring some significant relationships (106). He notes that Ben, for example, is the most fascinating of all of them. He is a central consciousness through whose eyes almost all the events and other characters are viewed. The centrality of Ben in the novel makes his character survive in the mind of the reader as a kind of anti-hero whose huge bulk and physical strength go oddly with lack of resolution and guts.

At the level of language, Palmer notes that, Mwangi’s earthly language matches the status and occupations of his characters but feels that “it is excusable for him to lapse himself into his own narrative” (107 Palmer’s study examines the portrayal of urban life in Meja Mwangi’s novel Going Down River Road. Our study sets out to not only examine the portrayal of a village life in Striving For The Wind but also how this life is typified through language and characterization to give it a Kenyan identity.

Angela Smith criticism of the Novel In East Africa identifies Meja Mwangi’s Carcase For Hounds as the author’s fictional recreation of the central events of his time. She sees him as latecomer with the theme of Mau Mau struggle in Kenya. Carcase for hounds appeared in 1974, ten years after Ngugi wa Thiong’o Weep Not Child and Charles Mangua’s A Tail In The Mouth. Smith notes Mwangi’s exceptional writing and says that



Mwangi, perhaps more than any other African novelist, resembles Achebe in the clarity, fluidity and apparent detachment of his style... like Achebe he requires a participating reader who recognizes the implicit links in the novel...he uses the plot to embody the meaning as well as to create suspense, and he evokes the weather and the landscape of Kenya so powerfully that they dominate the novel. (18).

Smith feels that the character's moods and circumstances are created to a large extent by place and weather. She disagrees with Eustace Palmer's assertion that the weather and landscape of Kenya dominates the novel to reflect the characters' moods and circumstances. Smith is surprised that rarely do African novelists describing the struggle for their home rule bother to create a sense of place. She gives an example of Samkange's Years Of Uprising and Kanichigwe's No Easy Task. "The reader sometimes has to resort to the potted biography of the author to guess at where the events described are taking place"(19).

Smith's sentiments are in line with our study. He sees the need of writers to give names of places implicitly or explicitly, for example, through description of the landscape. This gives the events described a national identity. Our study focuses on how Mwangi's manipulation of languages in Striving For The Wind helps readers to be familiar with where events in the novel are taking place.

J.A. O. Teyie in his M.A dissertation studies the depiction of individualism on the East African urban novel. The study attempts to show that there is in east Africa a novel that can

be referred to as the urban novel. The study identifies the features that make this particular novel unique vis-a vis other forms of fiction in East Africa. The emphasis has been laid on a characterization in a bid to show the nature of individualism. Teyie focuses on Mwangi's urban trilogy while our focus is on Striving For The Wind, a novel with a rural setting.

Roger Kurtz in "Tracking The 'Tramp Of The Damned': The Novels Of Meja Mwangi", embarks on an extensive survey of all Meja Mwangi's works: the adult novels, the children books and short stories. He explores Mwangi, development as a writer, the social concerns he raises and the social vision he advances in his works. He says that Meja Mwangi's work is representative of the entire Kenyan narrative fiction. In his works we find the full range of thematic concerns that run through Kenyan writing as a whole and we are faced with the tensions between popular and serious writing that have so occupied Kenyan critics.

Kurtz identifies Mwangi's first category of novels as comprising of Carcase for Hounds and Taste of Death. The novels are about the armed resistance to British colonialism in Kenya. The Mau Mau revolt formed material for his early novels like other many Kenyans writers, especially from Kikuyu ethnic group to which Mwangi belongs. These writers include Ngugi, Manguas, Wachira, Gicheru, Kahiga, Karoki and Waciuma. Kurtz singles out Mwangi's thrillers: The Bush Trackers and Bread Of Sorrow as some of his writing that have put him at the heart of the raging critical debate in the Kenyan literary establishment over the merits of popular literature. He however notes that "of all the popular novels from Kenya Meja Mwangi's thrillers are among the most creative and most consistently well written (11).

Kurtz feels that Mwangi's urban trilogy- Kill Me Quick, Going Down River Road and The Cockroach Dance is the most compelling and innovative in its treatment of what is arguably the most pressing contemporary social problem in Kenya.

Kurtz evaluates Mwangi's latest novels of mid 1980s to 1990s. Weapon Of Hunger alludes to the situation in Ethiopia in 1980s." the fictional nation of Borku is experiencing drought and famine, which are exacerbated by civil war in the separatist region of Arakan- a clear reference to Eritrea, which achieved independence from Ethiopia in 1993" (119). Jack Rivers the major character is an American rock star organizes food aid to reach these famine stricken areas but is concerned that the food supplies are not reaching the famine struck areas.

Kurtz sees The Return of Shaka and Striving for the Wind as hybrids of the popular and the serious:

While they display many of the same characteristics as Mwangi's thrillers, these novels deal in much more complex way with contemporary African social issues. At the same time that they draw on some of the tropes of popular writing, they also contain a critical commentary on the genre. (121).

He sees Striving for the wind as an ambiguous text but the most impressive since the urban trilogy." While the prose is very snappy and the action fast paced, the story carries a serious

message”(122). The major concern of the novel is the issue of postcolonial land tenure. To exemplify this theme he says of the characters:

Baba Pesa (literally, “father of money”) is a greedy landowner in the former white highlands who is intent on capturing the remaining parcel of land in his area, which is owned by the poor Baru (“father of dirt”). Pesa’s intelligent but disillusioned son, Juda, provides a critical commentary. In the end, Baru and Pesa are forced to cooperate and help each other with their harvests, and Pesa rediscovers the cultural and spiritual values of land, rather than seeing it merely as a source of income. The power of Pesa (money) over Baru (dirt) is weakened. (122).

Our study analyzes alternative meanings of the names, such, Baba Pesa, Baru, Juda among others tropes. These alternative meanings will provide a further understanding of characterization and development of character types that help shape the text and give it a Kenyan identity.

Lars Johnson “In The Shadow Of Neocolonialism: Meja Mwangi’s Novels of 1973-1992” conducts the first full-length study of Mwangi’s works to highlight the display of ideological ambiguities in his narratives. Johnson’s study is based on the social contradictions in the Kenyan society and how they shape his writing, for example, land issues and land distribution and the social injustices of neocolonialism. His interest is in the origin and of the content of the ideology of Meja Mwangi. Our study centers on one novel- Striving For The

Wind particularly the stylistic peculiarities of the text and how they contribute in articulating the social contradictions Lar Johnson identifies: land issues and distribution and the social injustices of neocolonialism.

Alina N. Rinkanya in her article “Evolution of a Social Ideal In Meja Mwangi’s Novels of the 1980s and 1990s examines Meja Mwangi’s portrayal of traditional values in Striving for the Wind, The Last Plague and The Return of Shaka. Rinkanya notes that Kambi in many ways typifies the Kenyan modern villages. Meja Mwangi calls for return to our traditional way of life through Juda, given that:

The only “voice of reason” in the novel comes from the mouth of Juda- Baba Pesa’s elder son, who after getting a degree from a university in the capital city unexpectedly returned to his father’s house. Juda is certain about the necessity to revive the traditional African society with its ideals of communism-common property, common concern, common life, harmony between community and personality”(50).

Rinkanya observes that the idea of “returning to the roots” or the reviving of traditional Africa through the resurrection of rural community is expressed more clearly in Mwangi’s novel The Return of Shaka. Moshesh the son of South African chief has got “stuck” in America where his people sent him to study and acquire the wisdom of the white man. Moshesh is reluctant into coming home for he feels that his education will not offer his

people salvation. It is through James Duncan, an elderly African American who finally convinces Moshesh to come to his traditional home. Rinkanya observes that:

...According to Mwangi the only alternative to the present lamentable state of affairs lies in the revival of traditional African community... in the two novels Mwangi offers his readers- a social ideal-either utopia (in Striving for the Wind) of resurrection of African socialism (in The Return of Shaka)(52).

In The Last Plague the social ideal undergoes a radical change. Mwangi calls for a reunion between the “old” and “new” values. “At best people can alter the traditions, polish them, shine them and repair them, wherever it is possible...examine them for their usefulness, and modify and adapt them to the ever changing needs”(53). Rinkanya analyzes three novels and her approach is thematic while our study of Striving for the Wind discusses it from the stylistic point of view.

Maureen N. Ndumba in her M.A dissertation has studied the treatment of the theme of HIV/AIDS in The Last Plague, Mwangi’s latest novel. The study looks at the socio economic impact of HIV/AIDS and how the scourge impacts differently on men and women. In this text there are linguistic deviations similar to those we are examining in Meja Mwangi’s Striving For The Wind. Ndumba does not analyze these linguistic deviations and their value in the novel

Angus Calder in his essay: “Meja Mwangi’s novels” examine Mwangi’s bibliography and appraises his earlier works. Although his approach to these texts is thematic he also touches on style and notes that some of his texts, African situations and dialogue are stylized in terms of conventions of American movies. Calder disagrees with stylization in Kill Me Quick. He says that dialogue between Maina and Razor recalls Hollywood movies. This makes Mwangi’s novel not convincing especially on the setting. Calder notes that the use of Kiswahili, Kikuyu languages and English spoken in diverse styles with varied degree of expertise, is the only way in which the readers are reminded that it is Kenya where the works refer. Calder’s study does not investigate further what other roles these languages play especially in his latest works like Striving for the Wind in which our study is based.

Amos Chebii’s dissertation “Meja Mwangi: His development as writer” studies how his five novels Kill Me Quick, Carcase for Hounds, Taste of Death, Going Down River Road and the Bush Trackers reflect the Kenyan society. His approach focuses on how the description of particular themes helps in reflecting the Kenyan society. Our study examines how language use in the text reflects the Kenyan society.

Simon Gikandi’s study “The Growth Of East African” novel examines how Meja Mwangi depicts his characters in his earlier works. He looks at the plight of the working class in Kill Me Quick and Going Don River Road. He also examines the portrayal of prostitution in urban areas and its causes. His study is centered on urban novels while our study focuses on the portrayal of village in Striving for the Wind.

This study also recognizes the existence of criticisms by other scholars on the role of linguistic deviations in Kenyan literature.

Henry Indangasi in an article “The Kenyanness of Kenyan Literature” discusses the salient properties that define Kenyan literature. He notes that the bulk of our national literature has been written in English. He identifies Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Leonard Kibera, Francis Imbuga and debatably Meja Mwangi, as some of the Kenyan writers who have been instrumental in defining our national consciousness and national character. He asserts:

Our literature is characterized stylistically by lexical borrowings from English..., as it is the case with the broader question of the choice of creative language, this particular stylistic feature reflects our ambivalence in the area of language policy. There is a parallelism however between our two forms of literary expression. Our literary texts in English are interspersed with borrowings from Kiswahili. Words such as *Uhuru*, *kanzu*, *ugali*, *panga*, *jembe*, *shamba*, *ngombe*, *mbwa*, are some of the many which have become part of the lexicon of Kenyan English (Nairobi journal of literature, 4).

Indangasi also observes that Kiswahili idioms and proverbs are also encountered in Kenyan English texts. Unlike their Nigerian counterparts who use pidgin in their writing, Kenyan writers do not feel compelled to tamper with the English syntactic conventions to express African thought patterns. However he isolates Kibera and Imbuga as some of Kenyan writers who have been more adventurous stylistically but in a Kenyan fashion. For example



Imbuga's Betrayal in the City, Mulili speaks broken form of English to capture his semi-educated status.

In Man of Kafira, Osman tells the girls to shake the breasts proper proper and later tells them "so shake them small -small". The hyphenated repetition of the words proper-proper and small-small is direct translation of Kiswahili expressions *sawa sawa* and *kidogo kidogo* respectively. While Indangasi gives examples of the several Kenyan writers, he does not mention Meja Mwangi's text Striving for the Wind which exhibits the linguistic and stylistic peculiarities he identifies. Our study aims to add to this body of knowledge by showing Mwangi's contribution in creating a literature with a Kenyan identity through these linguistic choices.

Evans Mwangi in his study of the "Stylistic Reciprocity Between Textual Erracy and Cohesion in David Maillu's Broken Drum briefly examines how the interaction of Kikamba and English languages in the text leads to bilingual pleonasm. His study analyzes how the bilingual pleonasm by the author enhances cohesion in the text. Mwangi's study has inspired our study to examine the bilingualism/trilingualism in Meja Mwangi's Striving for the Wind from linguistic deviation angle.

## **Methodology**

We have approached the study from two angles: from a linguist's angle the study has examined the linguistic choices the author makes and the stylistic implication of the

deviations analyzed. From a literary critics angle the study has examined the aesthetic effect achieved through the deviations. The study has relied on textual analysis and library research.

Interviews with native speakers of the Kikuyu language were also conducted to enhance our understanding of the Kikuyu words, sayings, proverbs and expressions as used in the text.

### **Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The study is limited to Mwangi one novel Striving For The Wind. This is because the frequency and distribution of the linguistic deviations is wide and even. This is the only text that provides a good illustration of the process of linguistic deviation. Though the Last Plague and The Return of Shaka exhibit the linguistic deviations, they were left out because our study was concerned with Kenyan realities.

### **Summary**

This chapter has provided a framework under which to conduct the study. The literature review has shown that the stylistic devices Mwangi has employed in his latest works The Last Plague, The Return of Shaka and Striving for the Wind are yet to be given adequate attention. Stylistics approach will be used for it 'recognizes the literary text as a linguistic object which consciously uses language for both aesthetic and thematic effects (Wellek and Warren, (174). The postcolonial theory will work in a complementary nature with stylistics

by helping us appreciate the effects of colonialism and neocolonialism and other postcolonial realities in Kenya.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Linguistic Deviation: A Style of Characterization**

This chapter analyzes the style of characterization in the novel. The deviation from the linguistic code gives rise to sense deviation or tropes realized through figurative use of language. The figurative naming of characters, animals and places used in the text has been analyzed to identify such tropes as metaphors, synecdoche, paradox, irony and simile. The special interpretation of the tropes is also done to establish the stylistic role they play, for example, of personifying, animizing or concretizing. The warranty for this deviation lies in the figurative interpretation of the tropes and their contribution in understanding the text. The author's ground for the deviation is to give a fuller and exacter expression of his thoughts.

The author enhances the meaning of some Kikuyu and Kiswahili words and expressions by foregrounding them through repetition and structural parallelism. The process of foregrounding results to formal and structural repetition, which affects the formal patterning of the text. Leech asserts that these abnormal arrangements lend themselves to the forceful and harmonious presentation of ideas"(74). The lexical repetition and structural parallelism are foreground features that affect the meaning of in the text and thus have been identified and their rhetorical effect analyzed.

## **Analysis of tropes**

Tropes...have been identified as devices involving the alteration of the normal meaning of an expression (Leech1969, 74). The names of characters, animals and places in the text are seen as linguistic deviations that the author uses to achieve stylistic ends. The names are used figuratively and therefore this study analyzes the meanings of the names and how they contribute to characterization.

Baba Pesa is one of the major characters in the novel as various themes are realized through him. His name is coined from two Kiswahili words, Baba and Pesa. Baba is a Kiswahili noun describing a male parent while Pesa is a noun describing coins or notes used to buy things. Baba Pesa's name literally means father of money. The narrator's choice of such a name has a stylistic role.

The name is a trope the narrator uses to articulate various concerns in the novel through the character and reveal major character traits. The name is a metaphorically used to dehumanize Baba Pesa. The narrator expresses an attitude towards this character's action and the values he stands for. As a metaphor, the name gives Baba Pesa both animate and inanimate qualities.

Although the word father gives him human qualities Pesa gives him inanimate qualities. Baba Pesa is a father to Elijah, Juda and Penina and a father figure to many in Kambi village. However in playing these roles, Baba Pesa fails to meet the

expectations of his family, the Kambi villagers and to some extent the reader. Money has dehumanized him such that his life's desire is the pursuit of wealth. The narrator expresses an attitude of contempt for money as those who have it utilize it in improper manner. The portrayal of Baba Pesa's wealth and character throughout the novel brings out the negative values associated with money:

...he was the richest man on this hill and the next and the next. He owned three hundred acres of hills and valleys, forests and plains, trees and rocks and more cattle and goats and chickens and tractors, things that his ten acre neighbors didn't even dream about (1).

The description of Baba Pesa's property is done with a tinge of hyperbole. His property is grouped in contrasting items, which are paralleled and separated using commas in one long sentence. This exaggerated description of Pesa's property is meant to capture the disparity between Pesa and his neighbors. It is a way of satirizing the few rich who live lavishly while their neighbors languish in poverty. The physical description of Pesa's is consistent with his wealth and property.

From close up, Baba Pesa was even more formidable, a five foot seven giant weighing two hundred and fifty pounds...in fact Baba Pesa was the biggest man on this hill and the next...He was known to have demolished a bar counter with one angry thump of his fist. His voice at

best that of an angry bull, was never known to laugh in genuine mirth (3).

The narrator dehumanizes Pesa by use of animal metaphors. He compares him with a giant to show the disparity in size between him and the Kambi people. The narrator denies Baba Pesa human qualities by comparing him with a bull. These animal metaphors describing Baba Pesa express the narrator's judgment of this character, which is later, fulfilled in the novel.

Other characters in the novel see Pesa as an animal. Mama Chuma says "*ithe wa mbeba ni ngui ya mundu*. The father of money is an animal, a beast of a man (7). In another incidence Baba Pesa throws mama Baru out of his pickup and physically assaults her. Mama Baru tells Mutiso, "the man is an animal... a hyena of a man. A wild beast from the forest." (72). This wordiness in comparing Baba Pesa with various animals by Mama Baru and Mama Chuma is semantically redundant to emphasize Pesa's inhumanity.

In understanding Baba Pesa character better, an analysis of dialogue between Pesa and other characters in the novel is important as "an analysis of how characters communicate with one another can also contribute to our understanding of the higher-level, one sided conversation between the author and reader" (Leech, 81, 289). In chapter one Baba Pesa's conversation with his son Elijah reveals his commanding and domineering character:

“Go help your brother home!” He said suddenly.

“Soon as I finish my breakfast”, said Elijah defiantly.

“Now!” barked Baba Pesa. “*Haraka!*”

The formal properties of the word “barked” give Baba Pesa the qualities of an animal—a dog. The use of the word *now* with an exclamation mark reveals his commanding character. The word *now* is followed by the Kiswahili word “haraka” that means quickly. When the two words are used together they capture Pesa impatience and domineering character. The words, therefore, complement each other.

Throughout the novel, Baba Pesa’s language alienates him from his neighbors and fellow villagers. He calls his farm an estate and cannot stand any other person in the village using this word to describe their farm. When Moses Baru makes a wooden sign post with the words BARU ESTATE and places it on their farm, Pesa storms in their compound and warns them “There is only one estate in this district, Mine! The rest including yours are *shambas* (18).

The narrator satirizes Baba Pesa who represents the few rich who took over after the colonial masters to oppress their fellow Kenyans. Pesa wants to ape Lord Soammes lifestyle and language. Pesa uses the word estate as used by the former white settler Lord Soammes. Estate, according to Cambridge Advanced learners Dictionary is defined as “a large area of land in the country which is owned by a family or an



organization and is often farmed (414). A *shamba* on the other hand is a Kiswahili word describing a small farm. According to Pesa, all the people in Kambi own shambas. His farm being an estate therefore not only makes him a distinctive character but also alienates him from his fellow citizens. Ironically although Baba Pesa wants to use the English language, which he thinks is superior, the narrator satirizes him by exposing his illiteracy in a conversation with some his family members. Pesa says of his son Juda:

‘They call him profetha’

‘What?’

‘profetha’

‘Professor?’ said Elijah.

‘profetha’ said Baba Pesa

‘Why?’ asked Mama Pesa.

‘They say he is a teacher’

‘Of what?’

‘Like a prophet (8).

The humorous pronunciation of professor as profetha captures his illiteracy. Although his son Elijah tries to correct him, his pride cannot allow him to admit he is wrong. Pesa’s comparison of a teacher with a prophet is contradictory. The paradox captured in this speech reveals Pesa’s illiteracy as he fails to understand the meaning of a teacher and that of a prophet. This confusion is way of distinguishing the literate and

the illiterate. This linguistic interplay and preference of English by Pesa reveals his attitude towards education. Language is used here as a means of characterization.

Elijah acknowledges that Juda is a genius who should deal with greater issues and thus his education is to make up for the illiteracy in the family. This sarcasm by Elijah is directed towards his father but annoys Baba Pesa:

...Talk of illiteracy rubbed him the wrong way. It was no secret that for all his wealth and power, he had no more than three years of formal schooling (8).

Later in the text, the narrator uses a synecdoche to describe his illiteracy. At the Tajiri bar when he is embarrassed by Ruhui, the chief's brother, the narrator says "everyone expected Baba Pesa to splatter his meagre brains all over the walls of the bar (39). Meagre brains describe his low level of intelligence.

In another conversation with Juda, the narrator uses humor to expose his illiteracy. Pesa does not understand the meaning of Judas dogs name despite Juda's attempt to explain:

"Why do you call him confusions" wondered Juda's father in one of the rare moments they exchanged words.

"Confucius, Corrected Juda, confu-cius'

“Why?”

“Confucius was a Chinese thinker”

“Of what?”

“A thinker’, said Judas, from China!”

“Choma Choma too came from Chania’,said Pesa.

“Not Chania’, said Juda despairing. “China is thousands of miles away from here. You can’t walk there.

“How then did he come to Thome?”

“He never came to Thome,” Juda said. He lived thousands of years ago. Before Thome existed.

“Why then do you call your dog con...his name?”

“Because he is wise like the China man

“Two thousand years five hundred years ago, the China man already knew that one should be loyal to ones family and friends and treat others as one would like to be treated. Believe me father; loyalty was strangely as revolutionary then as it is today (45).

Juda as an educated member of Kambi village compares his dog with an ancient Chinese thinker. The name Confucius is metaphorically used. He uses the name Confucius to articulate the values the Chinese philosopher came up with and which are still relevant to the Kambi society. These values include loyalty, friendliness and love, which many Kambi people seem to lack. Confucius is a metaphor that humanizes the dog through personification. The Dog is portrayed as being protective,

caring, and loving. The dog is also very loyal and respects its master, Juda. According to Juda the dog is like a brother (46). The irony captured in this metaphor is that, although Pesa is the human being, his role has been subverted. Since he is not capable of protecting, loving and caring for his son, the dog plays the roles.

The name Baba Pesa as seen from the foregoing discussion has negative connotations. The narrator expresses his attitude towards money and the vices that go with it. The narrator castigates materialism and high-level corruption in this society as it is fueled by money. Although Pesa has three hundred acres of land, he still envies Baru's ten-acre farm. He wants to own Baru's farm through whichever means. To him money has the power to change things. He tells the chief to use the chief's Act, which he does not understand, to help him acquire the Baru farm. The chief understands the implication of such an action as it could land them both in jail but Pesa argues "me... Go to jail? What is money for (39)? Baba Pesa uses his wealth and power to enslave all the members of Kambi village: Neighbors, villagers, his family and public servants.

The *Tajiri bar*, which is named using a Kiswahili word *Tajiri* that means rich, is meant for the prominent people in Kambi. When Baba Pesa enters the bar being the most prominent in Kambi, he orders the poor, who counted their wealth in donkeys to go home to drink *uji* beer. *Uji* is a Kiswahili word describing porridge. *Uji* beer is therefore a traditional alcoholic porridge usually consumed by the poor at the *uji* bar. *Uji* bar and *Tajiri* bar are juxtaposed together to show the class differences and

disparity between the rich and the poor. Ironically, Juda Pesa who is the most educated member in Kambi and a son to the wealthiest man in Kambi prefers the uji beer to modern beers. The bottled beers are reserved for Chief Kahiu, Daktari Choo, Master Bull, Pata Potea and Baba Pesa because they are members of the Tajiri bar:

Among the most prominent inhabitants of Kambi village was honorable chief Kahiu who was razor sharp in more ways than one, the health inspector Chimba Choo who never tired of pleading with the villagers to stop defecating in the bush like goats, a veterinary officer called Master Bull because his main function was a artificial insemination, Githinji Choma the butcher and Baba Pesa the father of money...Then there was the assistant Chief Pata Potea, hit and Miss, because not even the administration could find him to pay his salary (34).

The names of the prominent members of Kambi are used to portray them as caricatures. Their names encapsulate their main character traits. Chief Kahiu's name is borrowed from a Kikuyu word for knife. The narrator describes him as being razor sharp in more ways than one. This description is sarcastically made because throughout the text, the chief does not perform his duties accordingly. He is in charge of the village, to maintain law and order and protect the villager's rights. However, since Pesa enslaves him, he performs his duties according to Baba Pesa's interest.

When Baba Pesa throws out the poor villagers from the Tajiri bar, we expect the chief to use his power to protect them but:

Their chief watched them go and felt very small, though it was his duty to maintain order and protect their rights, he knew as well as they did that money spoke louder than any other voice, and, as the wise ones once said, the fart of a rich man did not stink (38).

Since chief Kahiu is “sharp in more ways than one”, we expect him to use his wit to help his villagers but does nothing. The narrator gives him the name Kahiu that is a euphemism to satirize him by exposing his inactivity, foolishness and neglect of duty.

Daktari Choo’s name is coined from two Kiswahili words Daktari and Choo. This name literary translated is Doctor Latrine. As the health inspector, he is supposed to ensure that the villager’s live in a health environment and that their habitat is safe for human habitation. Being one of the prominent members of Kambi village he is a member of the Tajiri bar, which ironically is not only in a dilapidated state but also very filthy. He gives the Chief’s brother, Ruhui, a license to operate the filthy bar. This reveals the level of corruption and neglect of duty by the public servants. Daktari Choo is embarrassed when Baba Pesa questions him about bending the law to allow Ruhui to operate the filthy bar. While Daktari Choo feels ashamed by his own actions and neglect of duty, Pesa assures him:

There is nothing to be ashamed of. We are all men here. Tell him, Chief. We all drink a little *chai* now and then (36).

Chai is a Kiswahili word that literary means Tea. However, in the Kenyan context to “drink chai” is an idiom that means to give or take a bribe. Bribery is a form of corruption, which Baba Pesa proudly admits they all do.

Pata Potea, hit and Miss, is the area assistant Chief. He is always busy doing his personal things and not serving the people. Like all the other public servants he does not perform his duties accordingly but all serve the interests of Baba Pesa. Instead of the public servants integrating with the local people to understand their needs, they alienate themselves from the people they are supposed to serve. Pesa’s money and wealth has enslaved the public servants such that they work according to his wishes. Baba Pesa, chief Kahi, Daktari Choo and Pata Potea are the prominent members of Kambi. The narrator satirizes their prominence because they don’t serve their society. They are an antithesis to Baru and Juda.

Baru is also a major character in the novel. His name is derived from Kikuyu word Baru that means ribs. His name is figuratively used to describe his physical, economic and emotional emaciation. Baru is Baba Pesa’s immediate neighbor who owns a ten-acre piece of land. The location of Baru’s ten-acre farm near Pesa’s three hundred acre farm has a stylistic implication in the novel. This juxtaposition captures the

contrast between Pesa and Baru. His small physique also contrasts Pesa's bulky stature.

Baru's household comprises of Mama Baru, his wife, son, Mosses, and daughter, Margaret. Baru represents the poor in the novel. Having worked as a tree pruner during the colonial period, he has nothing but promises to offer his family. The physical description of the compound captures Baru's poverty:

The Baru compound was, no doubt, a poor man's compound. It consisted of one big mud hut, a grain store made out of sticks and straw and Mosses tiny hut which was tucked a way half- way between the main hut and the leaning latrine with its sack- cloth door. On the upper end of the compound, upwind so that the smell of the chicken manure never ceased, was the chicken house, made out of sticks and rusty corrugated iron sheets that had once been part of giant storage silo down in old Kambi (40).

The name Baru is complemented by his English name Johnstone that implies tough or hard. This explains his hardened life of living in destitution. Although Baba Baru is materially and economically poor he is spiritually rich. He represents the traditional values and upholds the virtues of love, humility, patience and collectivism. As a Kikuyu, he sees the spiritual values attached to the land unlike Pesa who wants to use the land for economic gain. When Pesa offers Baru thirty thousand shillings three



times any other buyer could offer, Baru declines the offer. According to the Kikuyu, land has a symbolic importance as Jomo Kenyatta writes in facing Mount Kenya:

Land tenure is the key to the people's life; It secures for them that peaceful tillage of the soil which supplies their material needs and enables them to perform their magic and traditional ceremonies in undisturbed serenity, facing Mount Kenya.

When Baru declines the thirty thousand shilling offer by Pesa, Juda Pesa realizes that..." a man was truly free and happy when he had no desire for the things that money could buy"(41).

Baru stands for collectivism, a form of African socialism, and sees the need of people to live harmoniously with each other and share the little they have. He has love and respect for the rich and poor. He indiscriminately invites them in his household to share his traditional honey beer where they perform some rituals as they drink the beer- a sign of togetherness. His visitors sit on tree stumps, eat and drink from calabash utensils. Like Juda, he sees the need for the people to preserve the African traditional way of life.

Juda Pesa's name alludes to the Biblical character of Juda Iscariot. Juda Iscariot was one of Jesus' twelve disciples who betrayed him. According to the Pesa family, Juda has not only betrayed his family but also his society. The Kambi society values

education so much that, to them Juda is a prominent person in Kambi. Being the only person in Kambi village with university education he is respected and admired. When he is suspended from the university, he refuses to go back despite persuasion from family and friends. The entire village conducts a *harambee* or a fund raising to send him abroad for studies, which he declines. Juda becomes a social deviant in Kambi by becoming an alcoholic. Juda causes his mother and his family great pain as mama Baru asserts:

“*Uciari uri ruo*,” Mama Baru was saying. Motherhood is such a painful thing. He is a good boy but he causes his mother great pain that child (7).

At birth Juda is given the name Cain that again alludes to biblical character of Cain who killed his brother Abel in the Garden of Eden. Baba Pesa gives his son the name Cain at birth because he believed his wife was pregnant with twins and Juda devoured his twin brother in their mother’s womb. However the Cain name changes to Juda during Baptism as the pastor refuses to call him Cain.

The two names the narrator gives this character have a negative connotation. The Kambi people believe that Juda is a lunatic because of his alcoholism. The village madman, Ndege, admits that juda as more of a mad man than he was. He recommends Juda to a mental hospital. “You are more *kichwa maji* than I am. You

should be in Mathare hospital". Kichwa maji is Kiswahili slang expression that means being mad.

However, although Juda does not behave according to his family and society's expectation, he is the only voice of reason in the novel. Juda is concerned about the welfare of his society. At the windmill in the market place he encourages people to be self-reliant and empowered for self-improvement. By being self-reliant it could reduce poverty and joblessness in Kambi village. He encourages them to be self-employed like Choma Choma the butcher and Maiti the carpenter. Choma Choma means roast roast while Maiti means corpse. The two characters' name describes their professions but is also a way of creating character types in this society.

Juda's positive character comes out when he exposes the idiocy of the prominent members by shaming them in public. He confronts them at the Tajiri bar and attempts to show them their responsibility and duty to their society. Baba Pesa's attempt to show him the role of education in shaping him to be a role model to the rest of the society falls on deaf ears. Juda however feels that his father should use his power and wealth to be of service to his community. Juda wants his father to understand that education equals money:

You could have been a great man yourself. Juda Pesa said to his father.  
A leader of men and an example to the rest of us. You choose instead to drink with these servants of people and keep them a way from their

duties for which the society pays them handsomely. You choose instead the path of corruption in pursuit of wealth (60).

Pesa's opinion of education to shape a person into being a role model contradicts Juda's opinion. Juda sees the importance of other institutions in the society in creating a role model for the society. The name Juda Pesa is also paradoxically used in the text to capture the contradictory opinions between Juda, his father and the Kambi people. The character of Juda in the Bible is portrayed as man who loved money. In this text Juda sees money as a source of evil that has blinded his father and other Kambi people.

While the "prominent members" alienate themselves from the local people, Juda integrates with them to understand their needs and help them out. He is a responsible character, because he takes over the duties of the chief to educate the villager's about their rights and how they can develop themselves. He also takes over the duties of the health inspector by educating the public on the need to stay in a health environment. He also takes the responsibility of Margaret's pregnancy, who is sexually abused by Elija, his brother, and impregnated by his father, Pesa. Juda offers not only to take care of Margaret but also to marry her.

At the Tajiri bar, Juda breaks bottles of beer bought by his father. Judas's action at surface level appears like an expression of his deviance, but it is also an expression of his anger. This shows his disapproval of the members' idleness and neglect of duty..

As he breaks the bottle all the prominent members flee in fear and shame while his friends cheer him up saying:

*“Kula waya,”* cheered Judas friends. *“Juda juu!”*

*Tena!* Once more.

Baba Pesa *Hoyee!*

*Hoyee!”*(61)

*Kula waya* is a Kiswahili slang expression used to laugh at people. Juda’s friends laugh at the “prominent members” as Juda exposes them. *‘Juda Juu’* means Juda up! This expression not only shows Juda is their hero but it is also a way of showing solidarity for his actions. Baba Pesa *hoyee!* is an expression to laugh at him and the “members”. The ‘laughing at’ is way of satirizing the members to show them their vices and consequently reform. Juda’s character contrasts his brother’s character, Elija.

Elija Pesa is Juda’s brother, and Pesa’s second son. Like Juda his name also alludes to the Biblical character of Elija, the prophet. He is the ideal son in the family because he is not only responsible and God fearing but also very hard working. He conforms to his family’s tradition unlike Juda who rebels. However his actions in the novel don’t match his name. According to mama Baru, “although Elijah is hardworking he has not got the goodness of heart Juda has” (7). His hard work in the farm impresses his father so much that:

Watching Elija uncouple the machines Baba Pesa observed how hard the boy worked and wished Juda would be as industrious. With two Elija's in the family, Baba Pesa would be richer (14).

Like his father, Elija is individualistic and inhuman. He prefers staying alone or working with the machines in farm than to integrate with other people. Having a Diploma in Agriculture he is also an educated member of the Kambi society. He is the only male youth in Kambi who goes to church and thus he is given the opportunity to read the Bible in church.

Going to church and reading scriptures from the Bible by Elija matches with Christian roles of a prophet-a Lords servant. Ironically, however, his church attendance is hypocritical as his father's. Like his Father, he sexually assaults Margaret. When Elijah's father, Baba Pesa, eventually impregnates Margaret Elija calls Margaret a village *Malaya* meaning village prostitute. The narrator uses the name to camouflage the evils of Elija. The narrator later exposes his religious hypocrisy through his actions. Juda and his father are portrayed as prostitutes, since they offer Margaret material favors in exchange for sex.

From the foregoing discussion it is evident that, the names are rhetorical devices that the narrator consciously creates to enhance characterization. The author further

enhances characterization by foregrounding particular linguistic choices through repetition and structural parallelism.

### **Lexical Repetition and Structural Parallelism**

Striving for the wind is a text that portrays the struggles of various characters in the novel to rise above their problems and achieve a common ideal. This struggle is captured through actions and speech acts of the characters. These actions and speech of the characters are foregrounded through repetition of particular lexicons and structural parallelism.

Baba Pesa, struggles to gain more wealth. This makes him impatient with other characters in the novel whom he feels to be dragging him behind. As he talks to them he is either ordering or commanding. The orders and commands are accompanied by the Kiswahili word “Haraka” which means quickly. Incidences in the text where the word is used include:

When Mosses Baru pleads with him to give him a lift in his pick up, he tells him:

‘*Ruka nyuma,*’ Baba Pesa said. ‘Jump in the back’. *Haraka!* (16)

His pick up being the only means of transport for milk and passengers from Kambi to Nyahururu town he orders the workers to unload the milk cans:

‘Unload,’ Baba Pesa ordered. *Haraka!*

He also commands the passengers in the pickup to alight from the pick up quickly.

‘This is not a matatu,’ He told them. Fanya *Haraka!* (19)

When Mama Pesa tells him she is warming his food, he tells her

“Haraka!” (124).

In his farm, he also orders the workers in farm to work harder and quickly. He tells Njara the mechanic for example:

‘Load the drums on the pick up,’ he ordered. *Haraka!* (157)

Later in the novel, when the Kambi villagers come to hire his tractor for farming he tells Juda.

Line them up. *Haraka!* (200).

Baba Pesa only when ordering other characters in the novel uses the word. The repetition of the word in his speech has a rhetorical effect in reinforcing his commanding character and his impatience with laziness. The word *haraka* compliments the orders and commands to highlight Pesa’s speech acts.

The narrator to describe Pesa’s character also repeats the word ‘Legendary’. Some of his attributes are emphasized using the word for example: his driving was legendary, his rage



was legendary, his eating was legendary, his ruthlessness and shrewdness was legendary, the size of his belly was legendary and his contempt of traditional liquor was also legendary. The word reinforces the physical and moral characteristics of Pesa discussed earlier. The word is also used to show how his character is as an antithesis to other characters in the novel. Mama Pesa, for example, “her patience and self control was legendary.” The fore-grounded repetition adds to rhythm and cohesion in the novel through consistent characterization of Pesa.

The word “*shamba*” is also repeatedly used throughout the novel. The word highlights not only the agrarian nature of the Kambi society but also describes the small scale farming in Kambi society. Since farming is the source of livelihood for the Kambi people, *shambas* cannot produce enough to sustain the society. Shamba is used to describe the poverty characterizing the lives of Kambi people. As the novel opens the narrator describes Kambi village as full of “poor wretched shambas” (1).

Baba Pesa warns Baru on calling his *shamba* an estate since Baru’s ten acre land cannot be compared with Pesa three hundred acres. The word *Shamba* is fore grounded to contrast it with an estate. This also captures the disparity between the poor and the rich. As Baba Pesa drives through the Kambi area to check whether his car is in order “Mothers give up working on their *shambas* and come down the roadside and watch it go by (89)”. When he reaches the Baru farm he notices” the feverish activity on their *shamba* and all the *shambas* around his estate...”Pesa tells Baru “I see your *Shamba* fares no better than my estate”. (51).

The word *shamba* is used to describe the lifestyle of the poor. Their farming practices and farm implements also explains why the shambas are in 'wretched state' and why the tools make the users work 'feverishly'. Like the word *shamba*, *panga* is also foreground through repetition captured through a parallel structure, which helps develop Baru's character.

Baru is a major character representing the poor in the novel. His main farm implement is the *panga*, which is used at home and in the farm. The tool is fore grounded in the novel through repetition of the word *panga*. Baru's main hobby becomes sharpening the tool, which is foregrounded through structural parallelism:

Sharpening his *panga* was Baru's hobby...

He... sharpened his *panga*.

When he was sad he sharpened his *panga*.

When he is idle he sharpened his *panga*

He sharpened his *panga* when he was happy too,

And he had sharpened and worn out more *pangas* than he could afford. (51).

The structural and lexical repetition in this paragraph is tied to the meaning of the novel. The foregrounding illustrates Baru's poverty and his attachment to the only tool he owns. The tool is special to him because it is used in the farm and at home. However, the narrator seems to satirize Baru's use of the tool, which leads to poor productivity in the farm and his subsequent poverty. He uses it when he is happy and when he is sad. When his daughter Margaret lies to him about visiting her grandmother, Baru is so angry that narrator says:

“He pointed at her with his razor sharp *panga*...he then tightened the grip on his *panga*...and then pointed at her with his *panga* (115).

Baru uses the tool to camouflage his weakness, which leads to his inability to attain his ideal -to become rich.

To emphasize the disparity between the poor and the rich, a conversation between Pesa and Baru captures the contrast in property and the value each party attaches to his possessions:

‘You ruined my pick-up!’ reminded Baba Pesa.

‘You killed my ox!’ Asserted old Baru.

‘A worthless ox!’

‘My only ox!’

‘I should sue you for the damage!’

‘What about my ox!’ (202).

This semantic parallelism contrasts Baru and Pesa. Like the *panga*, the ox is a special animal in the Baru farm. The ox is called *Tinga Tinga* or tractor, which contrasts Baba Pesa’s real tractor. When Pesa’s pick-up kills the ox, nobody in Baru’s family eats the meat. The animal is given a special burial. Baru tells Mutiso “we could not eat him for we are not cannibals...we buried him. Over there. (173). The anthropomorphism of treating the ox like a

human being reveals the special attachment the family had to the animal and a special asset in the poor family.

The traditional religion of the Kambi people is captured by foregrounding an old prayer chant through repetition. As they go up the snowy Mountain to worship their traditional god *Mwene nyanga*, the worshippers chant in the following prayer in three separate incidents.

*Ngai thai i- o thai*

*Ciana thai i – o thai*

*Mbura thai i – o thai*

*Ngai thai i- o thai*

*Ngombe thai i – o thai*

*I thaka thai i-o thai*

*Ngai tha- i- o thai*

*Ciana tha-i-o thai*

*Mburu thai – i- o thai (86)*

The repetition of the chant gives the worship a particular rhythm- it is like a movement from the usual to the climax of the activity. The first chant is started and led by the medicine man cum witchdoctor who sets the mood of the worship. The chant is repeated as the worshippers start the actual performance of the rituals. The chant is repeated for the third time as the

worship and rituals come an end. This marks the climax of the worship. The fact that the chant is written in Kikuyu language gives the worship an original meaning and effect and captures the events in the traditional setting.

The religious aspect of the Kambi people and believe in God is captured by fore grounding the word God and Ngai by various characters in the novel. Ngai is a Kikuyu word for God. Mama Baru tells mama Chuma:

I told her everything belongs to God.

Wealth is given by God

Children are also given by God

Everything belongs to God for it is he who gives it to all...

This repetition of the expression leads to circumlocution but the narrator wants to reinforce the theme of religion in the society and the people's belief in God's providence to mankind. This explains the society's inertness and their lack of aspiration to change their situation, as they believe God ordains everything.

When the two women come across Juda Pesa lying on the road, Mama Baru exclaims:

*Ngai Njega...* Good God! Who is this lying on the middle of road?

When he realizes it is Juda he says

*Ngai baba...* Dear God. It is the son of Pesa... the one from university...Dear God I what shall we do about this child? (51)

Like the two women, Mutiso's character is captured through his speech acts. Mutiso is one of the minor characters in the novel. He is considered by other characters in the novel to be the oldest and therefore very wise. He is Baba Pesa's goatherd. Mama Pesa and Baru regularly consult him for advice. He uses wise saying in his speech. However he often uses a particular saying to describe anything he finds confounding and outrageous. When he is talking to Mama Pesa about Margaret Baru's rapid growth, he says:

*Kweli mama ...* It is true mother. The world is indeed round. *Dunia ni mviringo.* (31)

Later in the novel when mama Pesa tells Mutiso that Baba Pesa has impregnated Margaret Baru Mutiso tells her:

*Kweli Mama, Dunia ni mviringo.* It is true mother the world is indeed round. (121).

As the novel comes to an end Baba Pesa and Baba Baru who have been enemies for a long time reconcile and become good friends. The symbol of their friendship is captured when

Baba Pesa agrees to use his precious Mercedes Benz to pull Baru's plough. This act surprises Mutiso so much that he says:

*"Kweli mama,"* he said finally, *"Dunia ni mviringo"* (187).

The translation of the saying from Kiswahili to English by the narrator is repetitive to Kenyan readers and leads to pleonasm, a form of semantic redundancy. However, the repetition reinforces Mutiso's thoughtless character. Mutiso could find an alternative saying but prefers to use this particular one. This explains his lack of creativity and desire to change. At another level the saying helps the readers appreciate the hybrid consciousness that the characters adopt at the end of the novel as the symbolized by the union of the poor and the rich, tradition and modernity, socialism and capitalism. The saying emphasizes the theme of change.

### **Summary**

This chapter has identified the names of characters as linguistic deviations which the author uses figuratively to characterize the characters in the novel and articulate some themes through them. The names of characters like Baba Pesa, Baru, Daktari Choo, Chief Kahi, Pata Potea, Choma Choma, Maiti among others give them caricature features as they encapsulate their main character traits. A study of the figurative naming of characters, animals and places was done to identify such tropes as metaphors, synecdoche, irony and simile. The interpretation

of the tropes was done and its role established for example personifying, animizing and concretizing.

The words *panga*, *shamba*, *haraka*, *Ngai* and *legendary*, sayings like *kweli mama duina ni mvirigo* and the Kikuyu prayer chant have been foregrounded through repetition and structural parallelism. This chapter has identified the repeated words and the parallel structures and their rhetorical effect in the text analyzed.

The words *panga* and *shamba* are foregrounded through repetition to emphasize the poverty of Kambi people and also to show the disparity between the poor and the rich. The word *haraka* is also foregrounded in Baba Pesa speech. This word reinforces his impatient character. The word *legendary* is used to describe Pesa's physical and moral characteristics. The word is used to emphasize his physical features and portray him as an antithesis to other characters in the text.

The word *Ngai* and the Kikuyu prayer chant are repeated to capture the religious nature of the people. The repetition of these words is realized through parallel structures whose role in the text has also been analyzed.



## CHAPTER THREE

### **Linguistic Deviation: A Construction of Identity**

To encode some of the postcolonial realities affecting the Kenyan society, Mwangi feels that the English language alone cannot adequately express the realities of his people. He therefore deviates from the English linguistic norms. Some of the ways in which he has done this is through use of Kikuyu and Kiswahili proverbs, idioms, witty sayings, folksongs, loan words, vernacular transcriptions and code switched dialogues. This chapter identifies the linguistic deviations in the text and how they help the author create a text that reflects the Kenyan identity.

The setting of the novel is in a fictional village of Kambi situated in the slopes of Mount Kenya, near the Aberdare ranges in Central Kenya. The Kikuyu, one of the indigenous tribes in Kenya, occupy this area. Meja Mwangi, the author of the novel, hails from Central Kenya. He expresses his society's multilingual consciousness by creating a Kenyan literature, which is particular and carrying a Kenyan sensibility. This is by choosing a language medium that makes use Kikuyu language and folklore and Kiswahili, Kenya's national language.

The interaction of the three languages in the novel is an attempt by the author to solve the problem multilingualism and multi-culturism in the Kenyan society. The literature reflects the multilingual speech of Kenyan people as typified by the characters portrayed.

Events in the novel take place shortly after independence as various people struggle to come to terms with postcolonial realities. Striving for the wind is a novel that examines three major themes. The conflict between traditional values and modern values, the theme of postcolonial inequality caused by corruption, greed, exploitation, individualism, and betrayal and the theme of transformation or change.

### **Cultural Identity**

The use of Kikuyu language in expressing the material and spiritual culture of the people is one way of the author recovering one of the Kenya's cultural histories. The use of Kikuyu names to describe certain aspects of the Kambi people, give the novel a local flavor and make it appear authentically Kenyan. To vividly explain the cultural aspects of the Kikuyu people, he uses Kikuyu words that remain untranslated.

One way of recognizing the material culture of people is through their cuisine. The cultural names of dishes eaten by the people are given Kikuyu and Kiswahili names. The writer could have chosen English equivalent names for the foods but he opts to use names that are authentically Kenyan through loan words. This expresses the cultural distinctiveness of the of the Kambi society. Some of these foods include, *ugali, githeri, irio, njenga, and matumbo*. They are part of the material culture of the Kikuyu people. These foods are not particular to the Kikuyu, other tribes in Kenya consume them, and as they read the text they identify with this type literature that reflects their lifestyle. This gives the text a Kenyan identity.

Thematically the names of the foods have implications in the novel. *Githeri*, made by mixing maize and beans or any other leguminous products is staple food for several Bantu communities in Kenya. In the novel it is portrayed as a food for the poor as it is mostly eaten at the Baru household:

Inside the Baru hut, the family was settling down to a belated dinner of salted *githeri*, a human food that even Chui (their dog) sometimes wouldn't eat and calabashes of fermented porridge (111).

Like the *githeri*, *njenga* is also portrayed as food consumed by the poor in the text in that “at the Baru place Mama Baru was pounding maize to turn to *njenga*, the poor mans rice”(132). *Irio* made by mashing bananas is mostly consumed by the Kikuyu and considered a delicacy. It is baba Pesa's favorite, which Mama Pesa prepares delicately on Sundays to go with *matumbo* stew. “After church, Mama Pesa would make lunch of mashed bananas and *matumbo* stew. This was something they all looked forward to”(88). Like the cuisine, the physical setting or the landscape is captured through Kikuyu linguistic choices.

In describing the flora of the setting of the novel he gives the trees the cultural names without bothering to give English names of the trees. This is to capture the setting of this literature as some of the names of the trees have symbolic meaning attached to them. Some of the trees in the text are *sukuroi*, *chonge*, *mubiru*, *marariki* and *mugumo trees*. Apart from the Mugumo tree, the other trees explain the flora of the physical setting of this society. The

Mugumo tree is symbolic in the Kikuyu culture because it's a sacred shrine of their traditional god Mwene Nyanga.

The social culture is captured through greetings and kinship terminologies. The exchange of greetings between mother and son goes like this as captured through an exchange between Juda and his mother:

*Wakia maitu?*

*Wakia awa. (9).*

The presentation of the greetings in Kikuyu language is to underscore the distinctiveness of the cultural habits of the society portrayed.

The word *baba* or *mama* accompanies names of senior characters in the text. This is especially for women characters, for example, Mama Pesa, Mama Baru and Mama Chuma. This literally translated to English would look like mother of Pesa, mother of Baru and mother of Chuma. To other audiences, especially western, the names seem semantically absurd. However to a Kenyan audience the names are familiar. This is because, most Kenyan societies, kinship traditions require that you refer to a senior person as father or mother even it is not your biological parent. This is a symbol of respect. As seen from the foregoing argument, the use of the Kikuyu words and expressions to describe this society's culture like foods, names of characters, trees, and greetings, makes the portrayal of the village become vivid and authentically Kenyan.

The narrator borrows words from the Kikuyu language to describe some of the pre-colonial traditions that are still carried out by the Kambi people. As the villagers go up the snowy mountain to worship their traditional god, they cause a lot of tumult at the market such that:

It was the real village witch-doctor-cum –medicine man... who finally brought the gathering under control when, blowing on his *choro*, a venerated kudu horn instrument much like a doomsday trumpet (82).

The description of the *choro* blowing like a dooms day trumpet expresses the narrator's negative attitude towards this traditional form of worship. In fact in many societies in Kenya, even among the Kikuyu the blowing of *choro* is done to signal danger and death.

This is symbolic of the doom, probably signaling the death of these practices that are not relevant to the Kenyan modern society

The portrayal of the traditional worship is also ridiculed through particular linguistic choices. As the rituals begin “the first goat, a giant *thenge* whose owner had cried real tears when forced to part with, was brought forward, thrown on its back and its throat slit...as was the custom. (85) The demands by the elders to have the giant he goat shows the exploitative nature of the elders who emotionally blackmail the poor people to give out their precious property to their god. Ironically the elders and the hyenas eat the meat meant for sacrifice.

The prayer by the medicine man is also another way of justifying their demand for animals from the villagers “God of our people...you who never sleeps and never eats *ugali*, accept these offerings from the hands of the children of your children. (85). *Ugali* is a local food made from maize flour. The fact that their god, *mwene nyanga* never eats *ugali* gives them a reason to extort animals from the people. However, it causes the poor people a lot of effort for nothing.

The elders use Kikuyu wise sayings as they feast on the meat and honey beer brought for offering. Baba Pesa offers one of the small people a rib and tells him in Kikuyu “*ruma gaka mundu wa maitu. Ikihia ona mwene ni otaga*” which meant that that the poor man should enjoy the meat for, not matter how badly he grieved, others would have a hell of a feast. Ruhui, the chief’s brother, under a pile of monkey skins adds mischievously, ‘*yumbukaga na kiria imeretie.*’(86) This saying means you can only belch what you have eaten. The two saying by Pesa and Ruhui explains the sadistic nature of the elders. While the elders enjoy, the poor are upset. The elder’s social and moral stand is ridiculed because they not only take advantage of the poor but also abuse the cultural practices.

The narrator is not advocating for a return to this traditional worship as “ by noon a few old timers lay comatose under the trees. Most of them had all but forgotten why they were feasting in a lonely forest miles away from their homes and their individual problems. (86). The Kambi people have abused the traditional worship. The narrator seems to be saying that the times have changed and traditions should not tie us down. We should accept change and move on to catch up with the world.

Like all the Kambi people, Baba Pesa does not understand the traditional past of his forefathers and therefore abuses it. Pesa adorns himself with various cow and monkey skins that were part of the traditional dress for attending the traditional religious ceremony. Pesa has no idea what the dress represented in the old days when they were worn with style and decorum. The lack of knowledge makes him wear a *muthuru*. A *muthuru* is a Kikuyu euphemism describing a woman's traditional loin skin; a much-venerated dress that only a woman's husband was allowed to touch. This causes a lot of embarrassment to some people at the Kambi market who recognized it:

Now, wearing the entire culture of his people, not only on the wrong body, but also on the wrong occasion, Baba Pesa stood in front of the gathering feeling original and important and let the people admire the product of his imagination. (81)

Meja Mwangi ridicules the modern society for adopting practices that cannot fit in the modern society. The narrator appreciates the need to revive our past cultures to understand where we are coming from and therefore to shape our future. However, practicing our past traditions is like wearing the "right clothes on the wrong body". This is in line with what Brian Friel says "it is not the literal past, the 'facts' of history, that shape us, but images of the past embodied in language... we must never cease renewing those images because once we do, we fossilize (qtd in Benita Parry 84). The interaction of the three languages by Mwangi is made to renew these past images to solidify our identity as Kenyans. Muchugu Kiiru asserts:

The imaginative experiences the languages mirror should give rise to a literature whose sensibility is unique. The sensibility is expressed in the languages in which the literature exists and in the context as well as in the setting of the literature. The literature uses oral or written modes of transmission. The nation continues to pass on the inherited, as it produces new, indigenous, and at times borrowed, orally transmitted literature, some of which researchers have collected and collated in its languages of creation and translated into, by and large, English (67).

The novel evidently expresses Kenyan sensibility through the portrayal of the values of the Kenyan people as seen in the actions Kambi society. Apart from the material and spiritual culture, their social values are captured through their sense of African socialism, which goes a long way to define the Kenyan traditional cultural identity.

A sense of collectivism is depicted in the text. The people conduct a *harambee* or a fundraising to send Juda to America for further studies. Harambee is word coined by Kenyans shortly after independence to describe activities of persons coming together to mobilize resources for a common good. Although Kambi people are poor, they show their communal spirit by attending baba Pesa's fundraising. Their poverty is captured through what they raise in the harambee: three *kiondos* of coins (104). Kiondo is traditional basket. The fact that the people fill three kiondos of coins means that they are poor. However they believe that a harambee is a communal responsibility and thus "Baru and his wife, who had



had to sell several chickens to come to the harambee, dumped everything they had gained from the sale into the Kiondo saying ‘ a child does not belong to one person’(100). Baba Pesa cooks a lot of food for the people to feast and show his appreciation to the people. The chief tells them “now let us show our gratitude to this generous man by returning a hand”(100).

Many communities in Kenya to exemplify the community spirit use the two sayings *a child does not belong to one person* and *returning a hand* which are literally translated to English. Even “Ndege the village madman...gave his contribution of a few coins. Community spirit did not recognize madness as a valid reason for exemption (100). Mwangi’s portrayal of these traditional cultural values is a way of asserting our past or pre-colonial identity. The interaction of African values and western values led to emergence of new values. The author to depict the Kenyan modern culture uses Baba Pesa who epitomizes materialism in the novel.

Baba Pesa strives to acquire more material wealth as portrayed through his capitalistic desire to acquire property. This “ acquisitive instinct” as named by Tom Mboya as being responsible “ for the vicious excess and exploitation under the capitalist system (Indangasi, 7), continues to plague the Kenyan society up to date. In his pursuit of wealth Pesa exhibits egoistic qualities. He shows impatience with the inertness and lack of common sense among the villagers. His language towards the villagers is meant to ridicule them and show them his superiority. The author does this through certain linguistic choices.

When Pesa enters the Tajiri bar he declares that he is not going to drink with people “who plough with oxen and count their wealth in donkeys”. This saying is metaphorically used to show these people that they do not work to produce something meaningful for themselves. It is an ironic reminder to the villagers that the animals reproduce themselves without any human effort. The saying also shows Baba Pesa’s despise for the people who belong to the traditional culture, when people used animals as a form of currency.

Baba Pesa is the embodiment of acquisition practices and therefore money, which is the means of acquisition in a modern society, is foregrounded through him. He believes in the importance and value of money because it has the power to control other people. He orders the poor people to leave the bar. While they curse him and wish him death, Pesa believes that with money he cannot die. Pesa calls these people *tumundu*, which literally translated means little people. At another level, Pesa refers to them as little people because he sees them as backward people who have no potential.

When he enters the Tajiri bar, he declares “Baba Pesa *ameingia...*’ The father of money has come (35) the noise in the bar subsides and every body feels intimidated by his presence. The people whom Pesa chases out of the bar are the poor Kambi people. His action makes the poor think that he is not only selfish but also very proud. Pesa tells them “be grateful for all the money I save you ... go drink *uji*. *Uji* being the traditional brew is cheap and affordable to the locals. Pesa does not despise the poor or the *uji* beer but wants the people to live within their means. Pesa buys beers for the members “Three bottles for the chief...one to the Daktari and three for me. As for the others, *wajitegemee* from now on (39).

*Wajitegeme* is a Kiswahili term which literally means 'to depend on oneself. Pesa wants the people to do- to be self-reliant. He buys those who are wealth beer because he feels the others do not deserve a drink. He dismisses the people who cannot take care of themselves. Pesa represents the rich in our modern society who oppress and despise the poor. The other 'prominent members' in Kambi offer no sense of direction to the villagers.

The lack of vision among the villagers is also portrayed through their leaders – Chief Kahiu and assistant chief, Pata Potea. When Pesa throws the poor people out of the bar, the chief does nothing. We expect him to defend the people by informing them about their rights and freedom. The pessimistic attitude is summarized in this kikuyu wise saying which the author literally translates to English, that the chief “knew as well as they did that money spoke louder than any other voice, and, as the wise men once said, *the fart of a rich man did not stink*. (38).

Pata Potea's neglect of duty is portrayed when he encourages the people to consume the traditional liquor, which he is supposed to ban. This traditional liquor referred to as the *uji* beer, is cheap thus consumed by Kambi youth who like Juda become social deviants and dillusioned. When Pesa comes to Baru compound he is surprised that the assistant chief, Pata Potea should encourage the people to drink instead of discouraging them:

‘You ought to be ashamed of yourself!’ Baba Pesa said to the worm.

‘Why?’ asked the worm.

‘You are supposed to arrest these people, not drink with them.’

‘*Kwa nini?*’ stuttered Pata Potea. What for?’

‘This is an illegal gathering,’ said Baba Pesa.

‘It is?’ Pata Potea appeared genuinely surprised. (41)

The questions by Pata potea -why? *Kwa nini?* and is it? Explains his ignorance, neglect of duty and emphasizes his foolishness. He pretends not to be aware that the consumption of the traditional liquor is illegal. The omniscient narrator exposes his ignorance when he says, “ of course Pata potea...had been told once, without being told why, that he must arrest all the brewers and consumers of traditional liquor. (41) The dialogue captures the contrast between Pesa’s characters and Poteas. Pesa sees the need for set rules to be followed while Potea is ignorant and does not care. Pesa’s concern for the leaders to abide by the laws is, however, for his own advantage and not for the welfare of his society

Striving for the wind is essentially an attempt by the author to change the national character of Kenyans as typified by the characters in the novel. There is a need to strive and change the attitudes and inertness of the Kambi people. The inertness of the Kambi people is captured when they accept to ride in Pesa’s pick up. His pick up named *fagio* or sweeper is the village *matatu*. A *matatu* is a name used by Kenyans to describe a public transportation vehicle, usually a Nissan or a minibus. The naming of the pick up as *Fagio* or sweeper is metaphorical. *Fagio* is a broom and hence used for sweeping rubbish or dirt.

The fact that the Kambi villagers accept to ride by Fagio and on top of the milk cans as Pesa covers a distance of forty kilometers in twenty minutes shows the people's ignorance of their safety. The name is purposely used to show the people their "littleness". They have accepted to be treated like dirt or rubbish. Pesa charges the people five shillings, which is one shilling more than what the local matatus charge. This looks exploitative at the surface level but Pesa wants to alert them on their right and choice to drive in a decent vehicle that even charges less and show them that there are no free rides as captured in this code switched dialogue:

'*Shillingi tano tano!*' he told them. Five shillings each!

'Why five shillings? She asked. *Matatus* charge us four!

'This is not am matatu,' he told the. *Fanya haraka!* I have work to do. Next time you should wait for a matatu (19).

Baba Pesa wants the people to use common sense and especially in the utilization of resources. This is because he wants to take opportunity to make use of the resources and utilize them to make the maximum gains. A conversation with Mutiso captures his anger a disappointment with people who waste resources:

'Where have you been? Asked baba Pesa.

'Where you sent me, *baba*.

'*Wapi?* Where?

'*Kwa mzee Baru.*'

'So where is the dog meat?

'*Hakuna.*'

'You mean they ate it all?

'*Hapana,*' said Mutiso. *Malisika ile ndume.*'

'They buried the ox?

'*Ndiyo.*'

Baba Pesa shook his head incredulously. Those people are worse than fools,' he told Mutiso. They are sick. How do they bury dog meat when they are dying of hunger! (174)

Baba Pesa is so disappointed that the Baru family should bury the ox meat, a resource that could be utilized in other ways, for example feeding the dogs. This lack of common sense by the Baru's annoys Pesa so much that he can only compare them with animals. Pesa reduces the Baru family to the level of the dogs as he wonders how the family buries dogs' meat yet they are starving. This appears as inhumane of Baba Pesa towards his neighbors but it is a way of expressing his anger with the people's attitude towards the utilization of resources.

This code-switched dialogue between Mutiso and Pesa depicts Mutiso's illiteracy and social status. Mutiso's broken Kiswahili reveals his illiteracy and poor knowledge of Kiswahili language. For the narrator to capture this he alters the syntax of the Kiswahili word *walizika* to *malisika*. Mutiso calls Pesa *baba* which means father, this is a sign of respect for his master and therefore we understand his social status. Baba Pesa's concern for the ox's meat exemplifies his greediness which leads to high-level corruption as portrayed in the text.

The public servants in this society practice corruption. The Kambi village leaders like the chief, assistant chief, police officers and a health inspector are all portrayed as very corrupt. The neglect of duty by these officers is also overwhelming. Baba Pesa enslaves these officers because they feel that his material wealth has the power to affect their careers. The police officer, for example, knows that Juda has committed an offense worth prosecution but he is afraid of doing so for he hopes to get a promotion in his career. “He loved his job and hoped one day to rise to become a commissioner or higher, and was smart enough to know that baba Pesa may be the minister of the government in charge of such promotions” (49).

Positions of status and rise in social mobility in this society does not depend on ones achievement but “whether you know anybody”. Baba Pesa encourages these public servants to take bribes, which he refers to as *chai*. When he says we “drink a little chai now and then”(6) it means it is the tradition of taking and giving bribes in this society. This is a form of corruption.

The Kambi society is also portrayed as a lawless society as Daktari Choo says, “rules are made to be broken”(204). This attitude makes the ‘members’ of Tajiri bar harass the poor people, as they know money has the power to buy the authorities. Choma Choma physically abuses Ndege’s cousin at the Tajiri bar while Baba Pesa orders all those who ploughed with oxen to go home. As an old man pleads that he is not guilty, he is not spared as the members forcefully eject him out of the bar saying in Kikuyu:

*‘Kiri kumia kimwe’* said baba Pesa.

*'ciamia ciothe,'* echoed the members. Guilty by association!

The meaning of this saying is that, although the old man might not be guilty of the crime, the fact that one of them has done it (the poor) he is equally guilty. The members use the Kikuyu saying to address the old man for they know he belongs to the “old school” where people addressed each other using wise sayings. The members use a language that is not only familiar to the old man but also as a way of mocking him and justifying their reason of throwing him out. The narrator says that “old man who had grown up in the old school where they taught a sense of independence and high moral indignation ...turned to the chief and begged him to intervene (123).

The chief does nothing to help the man. The old man tells the members about his right and freedom to use his money as he pleases. Choma Choma warns him to stop his *jua kali* politics. Jua-kali politics means that the old man's arguments are backward, informal and self-made. Pesa tells him “money speaks... it calls me daddy” and Daktari Choo adds “money speaks, you old fool”(123). This shows how money in modern society has the power to corrupt the thinking and actions of those who have it. It creates disparity between the rich and the poor. The rich also use money to oppress the poor. It also leads to moral decline as seen through Pesa.

Pesa's moral degradation comes out when he impregnates Baru's daughter who is young as his daughter, Penina. He uses money to lure the girl into sleeping with him “He had given her



money and warned her never to tell anyone about it which, in any case, she would never have done for she had grown quite fond of him then. (117).

The Baru's are poor and therefore Baba Pesa takes undue advantage of the situation to physically and sexually abuse the women. Pesa gives Mama Baru a lift in his pick up and starts making sexual advances towards her. When she refuses Baba Pesa physically abuses her. Pesa takes advantage of Margaret's age to entice her with money and he not only sexually abuses her but also impregnates her. This is humiliating to the Baru's, but they bear it with patience and decorum.

Grandmother Baru chooses to report the matter to the Pesa's because she came from "an era where tact matters as delicate as the one before them was the key word, and where fine words were once valued more than wealth. (116). She uses an idiom, which is familiar to both parties and says, "*someone in your house has broken our goats leg* (116). This means that someone in the Pesa's family has impregnated their daughter. The idiom is metaphorically used to emphasize the traditional way of life, which the Baru's epitomize. Baba Pesa declines responsibility for the pregnancy and this makes readers understand gender relations in this society.

The action towards the Baru women by Baba Pesa reveals his exploitative and oppressive attitude towards women. To him women are like machines as captured through a question to the chief "does the old wife have to die for you to marry another one?"(36). This shows his polygamous nature and disrespect for his wife and women. He calls Margaret Baru a *Malaya*,

which means a prostitute when he realizes she is pregnant. The women characters are portrayed as numb and totally unable to stand for themselves. This reflects the postcolonial realities as men continue to dominate women, while the women continue to accept their traditional role of being submissive in the male patriarchal setting. The quest for change in Kambi is explored through Juda.

Juda Pesa represents the postcolonial consciousness in the novel. He strives to transform his people's attitude towards formal education, money, power and social status. The villagers see formal education as the yardstick to social, economic and moral worth of a man. Because the villagers lack formal education they became pessimistic and don't strive to change their situation. Formal education, according to juda is not enough to respond to the people's needs. Juda feels formal education alone cannot help him and his society.

When he comes home to his family and society they feel that he is misplaced and does not belong there. His efforts to change the people at the windmill in the market are thwarted, as the people don't take him seriously. "What he was talking about was neither new nor enormously significant. They had heard it before and, although they knew it to be true and wise, they also knew a half a dozen other arguments, also valid (55).

This pessimistic attitude of the villagers frustrates Juda who turns to alcohol and consequently becomes disillusioned and alienated. The villagers see his alcoholism as a form of deviance. The villagers cannot understand Juda. To them he is *profethar*. A *profethar* means a professor. The narrator corrupts the English word, to correctly depict the level of

education or the illiteracy of the Kambi people. To the Kambi people a professor is a highly educated person who should not mix with the local folks. When Juda announces to his true friends the village drunks, that he is going to marry Margaret, they are awe struck. To them Margaret is a *calico*, which means an illiterate, primitive village girl like everybody in Kambi. As a *profethar*, they feel Juda deserves an equally educated woman.

This *calico* and *profethar* opposition creates a gap between the literate and the illiterate and thus alienating Kambi people from one another. The feeling of the Kambi people that they are *calicos* is also way of accepting their poor status. They have resigned to their fate and feel that there is nothing they can do to rise above their problems. Juda's decision to marry Margaret Baru who is a *calico* is not only a way of saving her from shame but recognizing the potential in such simple people. Their believe that they are calicos gives them a justification to remain poor, beggars and dillusioned. In a conversation between Juda and his friends reveals the villagers attitude:

‘Buy us a drink,’ they said for now.

‘I have no money,’ he told them.

‘Profethar,’ they said,’ ‘we have been counting on you.’

‘I was counting on you too,’ said juda.

‘Talk to FFU,’ they sad. ‘He only understands your language.’(136).

This conversation highlights the remnants of colonial consciousness as the people wait for orders rather than rely on their own sweat. Juda is disappointed with the villager's attitude

towards formal education and wealth. He wants them to understand that, the fact that they never got the chance to go to school does not justify their poor economic status. He wants them to understand that the educated also need the uneducated and both parties should work together for a common goal. He encourages the villagers to be self-employed like Githiji Choma Choma and Maiti. Githinji Choma Choma 's name is derived from the Kikuyu word *githinji*, which means to slaughter. *Choma* is Kiswahili word, which means to roast. Maiti's name means a corpse because he makes coffins for the villagers.

The narrator gives the two characters the names that describe their professions. The narrator ridicules the Kambi people who argue that there is no employment yet Githinji and Maiti are self-employed without formal education. Juda calls for a synthesis between informal education and formal education to produce an education that will be responsive to the needs of the Kambi people "I tell you all the time... school education is not the only education. (91)

Juda encourages the people to choose elders among themselves and not to rely on the rich people like his father whose only mission in life was to enrich themselves "choose your leaders from among yourselves...someone you can keep an eye on...*he who has diarrhoea must himself find the bush*"(57). He uses a language that is familiar to the villagers but to them, " a common proverb, very old and very wise. But to most people this was pure gibberish" (57).

Everybody in Kambi society considers Juda as the reigning village drunk and a lunatic. Although he is the most educated and concerned in improving his society, the people don't

take him seriously because of his alcoholism. Mutiso tells mama Pesa “*kweli, mama...huyu kijana kweli wazimu.*”(132) Ndege, the village mad man, tells him” you are more *kichwa maji* than I am (56). While Baba Pesa tells his son that he is a” drunken *mlevi* (60). *Wazimu* is Kiswahili word for madness while *kichwa maji* is a Kiswahili slang expression for madness. The two emphasize juda’s inappropriate behavior which his father feels is caused by drunkenness. He calls his son a drunken *mlevi*. *Mlevi* means, “being drunk. The collocation of the two words ‘drunken’ and ‘*mlevi*’ is to emphasis Judas’ alcoholism. His alcoholism and the villager’s inability to change become an impediment to achieving his society’s ideals. Juda does not give up his crusade at the windmill despite warning from his father, the chief and the OCS. This persistent attitude by Juda shows the author’s faith in the possibility of correcting and affecting the moral resurrection of the characters. Juda sets an example to his father and the rest by marrying Margaret and therefore initiates the change himself.

### **Hybrid Identity**

As the novel comes to an end the author expresses his desire for the people to overcome pre-colonial and colonial consciousness and adopt a hybrid consciousness. Mwangi dedicates his novel to the memory of his one-eyed old friend from Meru who once told him “*Mwangi, kuria uru kwa mu-Afrika gutigiria arie wega!* This proverb is loosely translated to mean that, the fact that you are suffering today does not mean it will last forever.

In Striving for the Wind, the author ridicules the poor people to examine their practices and borrow what is relevant in today’s society to alleviate the poverty and move forward. The

author calls for a synthesis of both African traditional socialism and modern ways of living as Juda does. This is what Patrick Hogan in 'The Gender of Tradition' calls " a synthesis or universalism... the combination of elements from both indigenous and colonial traditions in order to forge a new culture which one hopes to be superior to both. (Order and Partialities, 88).

The portrayal of Pesa's grotesque character and caricature features of other characters as the novel open is connected to the author's bleak view of the characters. As events in the novel unfold, people like Pesa begin realizing their flaws and start transforming. Pesa realizes the need to be humane to his fellow men. Juda's action in marrying Margaret makes him realize the potential in the "small" people. The narrator says Baba Pesa becomes conscious of the Baru's suffering without the ox, which he had killed. He shows his humanity by offering his precious car to pull the plough.

This shows that nothing is lost for Pesa; he can still transform and live harmoniously with his fellow villagers. At another level Pesa's car and Baru's plough symbolize the merging of modernity with the past and the rich and the poor. Baba Pesa accepts to drink the traditional liquor from a calabash. This is transformation for at the beginning we are told his contempt for traditional liquor was legendary. This is one way of symbolizing change in Kambi village. Baru on the other hand:

All his life, Baru had done things the right way, the old, tried and proven way because he did not believe in any but the true and tested. But from now on, he

could do things as his spirit dictated for Juda had just brought him to the conclusion that not only was there nothing impossible but that there was no right or wrong way of doing things. Taboo and tradition were not only mere tools of convenience, they were also mentally colonizing burdens and from now on he would store them in the old cattle shed along with the gods, the ghosts and the superstitions and all the old firm implements that he didn't any more use (134).

After the two parties reconcile, there is a heavy downpour, a sign of blessing, to seal this bond created by uniting two unlike parties for a common goal. In this euphoria, Mutiso starts a children rain song in his mother tongue, which the narrator does not disclose to the readers. Pesa and Baru join in with their Kikuyu version:

*Nguthinjire gategwa*

*Getagwo atia?*

*Njiru, njiru, njiru, njiru!*

This linguistic deviation captured in the children song, reflects Kenya's multi ethnic society. It also indicates the author's hope for people to live and interact harmoniously despite their different ethnic identities. The two versions of the song by Mutiso and the Pesas' illustrates that Kenya is a multiethnic|multicultural society with people of diverse origin who should aim for a common ideal. The cooperation between different ethnic groups and their striving

for common goal is what the author sees as blend of traditional culture and modern culture to form a superior culture that can meet today's challenges.

For the society to achieve this common goal, they should have the innocence of children or going through a rebirth, as represented by the old men singing a children rain song. The women do not understand the men dancing and behaving like *kihii*. *Kihii* is a euphemism in Kikuyu culture that describes an uncircumcised male or a small boy. The author calls for the society to go back to the "childhood" or to the "beginnings" and start a fresh. The author does this at the end of the novel by giving us an alternative society that should replace the present Kambi society.

The novel concludes with Margaret giving birth to twins: A boy and a girl. The birth of the children born of a rich man and a poor woman shows the union of rich and poor working for the common good. However, Margaret dies during the birth process probably signaling the death of the past generation. The twins symbolize the birth of a new generation that will search for a common ideal and appreciate the dynamism of the society.

In conclusion, Kambi typifies all the villages in Kenya. Mwangi calls for a re-examination of our values and practices, both traditional and modern that hinder us from realizing our goals and actualizing our potential.



## Summary

This chapter has identified the linguistic strategies that Meja Mwangi has used to domesticate the text and give it a Kenyan identity. Some of the ways include the use of Kikuyu and Kiswahili proverbs, sayings and idioms, use of folk songs, code switching, and loan words. This not only gives the text a local color but also helps to typify the characters portrayed. The linguistic strategies help in articulating the themes depicted in the text, for example, traditional culture, which stands for traditional practices like traditional religion and collectivism. Modern culture, characterized by search for material wealth at the expense of others for individual gain has also been analyzed. It has led to ills like moral degradation, inequality, and corruption. While one camp stands for the traditional culture the other stands for modern culture. There is a call by the author through Juda to merge the two cultures and achieve a hybrid culture.

## CONCLUSION

This study has identified various stylistic features that Meja Mwangi has employed in his text through loan words, idioms, witty sayings, proverbs, folksongs in his native Kikuyu language and Kiswahili or literally translated to English. The study has tested the hypothesis that the stylistic features are linguistic deviations that the author uses for both stylistic and thematic purposes.

Mwangi feels that the English language alone cannot help him articulate the realities and experiences of the society he portrays. Mwangi does not express or typify his society's cultural practices and other phenomena using the English language. The spiritual and material culture of the Kambi society like greetings, foods, dresses are described using the Kikuyu language. The use of traditional wisdom captured through use of folklore is a way of the author asserting our cultural heritage and identity. However, an evaluation of the text has established that Mwangi is not advocating for a return or adoption of these practices. The portrayal of the Kambi village indicates that Mwangi is calling for a blend of the traditional practices with modern practices to adopt a hybrid consciousness that can cope with today's challenges.

Although Striving for the Wind is text that deviates linguistically from the English norms, the stylistic features that lead to this deviation help the writer realistically capture the

multilingualism and multiculturalism of this society. This text has captured the mannerisms of the Kenyan speech. The writer is able to distinguish his characters linguistically through the language they speak. We are able to tell their level of education, sex, social status and philosophy from their speech. Juda speaks philosophically and refers to ancient thinkers and other great scholars when he speaks. This helps us understand he has tertiary level of education. Mutiso not only speaks broken Kiswahili, which reveals his illiteracy but also calls Pesa baba. Given that Mutiso is much older than Pesa we understand his social status as servant. Kiswahili slang words and expressions like *kula waya* and *kichwa maji* are used by the Kambi youth and this helps appreciate that slang is an informal language and mostly used by youth. The preference of some words by Pesa like *Tajiri*, *chai*, and *haraka* helps us understand his materialistic ideology. The linguistic deviations thus help in characterization. They are also stylistic devices that reveal Meja Mwangi's creative impulse.

Meja Mwangi's language medium has helped him create a literature that can be said to be particularly Kenyan. The Kikuyu language is spoken by one of Kenya's indigenous tribes and its use in the text shows that the literature reflects the Kenyan society. Kambi village typifies all Kenyan villages as they struggle to shake off the remnants of pre-colonial and colonial consciousness. Meja Mwangi identifies the causes that lead to present status of the Kambi people. The people are stuck to old traditions and practices and still believe in the colonial ideology that they have to be directed or initiated to act. This causes inertness and lack of common sense among the Kambi people which hinders them from development. The pursuit of material wealth by the rich is also castigated because it leads to exploitation, corruption and disparity between the rich and the poor. It also alienates the rich from the

poor. Mwangi' message to the Kambi people is to synthesis their traditional culture with the modern culture to achieve a hybrid cultural identity that will enable them to cope with the society's dynamism. This is a message to all Kenyan villages.

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