

**LITERARY STRATEGIES IN TONY MOCHAMA'S PROSE**

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**DECLARATION**

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in another university

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## **DEDICATION**

To Dad,

For planting and nurturing the thirst for literature in me

and

To Mum,

For doing everything within your power to make me reach this far.

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## ABSTRACT

This study set out to examine the literary strategies in Mochama's prose and the resultant social, economic and political concerns revealed. The study explores the strategies of language, plot, setting, narration and characterization that Mochama employs to enhance the communicative aspect in his works. I argue that the various literary strategies Mochama employs allow him to concretize his views about the contemporary Kenyan society. Literary language in essence is defamiliarized hence allowing the reader to re-think and re-see the ideas the writer talks about in new light. Literary language is foregrounded and therefore draws attention to itself hence it is emphasized. This project paper utilized two theories: Russian Formalism and Achille Mbembe and Bill Ashcroft's strands of Postcolonial theory. The study entailed a close textual analysis of Mochama's prose works: *The Road to Eldoret and Other Stories*, *Princess Adhis* and *the Naija Coca Broda*, *Meet the Omtitas* and *Nairobi: a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun* as well as relevant secondary texts which allowed me to concretize the arguments about literary strategies. This study demonstrates that Mochama is able to communicate to the readers through the use of literary language. He manipulates language resources through both transgressions against and conformity to conventions to draw attention of the reader to the dystopia prevalent in the contemporary Kenyan society. At the same time he leaves room for hope in the degenerated society.



## **CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **Introduction**

In the contemporary Kenyan society there are emerging issues that writers try to grapple with in their writing. In early Kenyan writing, writers grappled with issues of nationalism and writing the Kenyan history to the world. This was majorly influenced by the fact that the colonizing power had painted a picture of Africa as having no history or culture. This can be seen in Ngugi wa Thiongo's writing which is infused with the rich culture and mythology of the Agikuyu community.

Once the mission of re-writing the Kenyan story in the world was over and issues of nationalism had been 'tackled', there emerged new problems brought about by the postcolonial situation. This new crop of writers question the concept of power and oppression with many forms exhibited in their creative ability to manipulate language resources. Tony Mochama belongs to this contemporary group that is writing about issues of disillusionment and dystopia in contemporary Kenya. The complex nature and avenues propagating dystopia in the modern Kenyan society require the writers to rethink their modes of writing and representation of the same. Dystopia literature according to Tom Moylan and Raffaella Laccolini is characterized by a bleak, depressing genre with little space for hope within the story. The state of the contemporary society forces emergent writers to reject the norm in order to interrogate the problems in the society. These writings need to be interrogated in light of the situations they emanate from.

The new writers reflect their resistance as well as rejection of the status quo through the way in which they use language in their works. As Michael Toolan notes in *Language in Literature*, the way language is used creates specific effects. With regards to language use in literature, writers employ different strategies to present their views about the society. These strategies range from diction, imagery, irony, satire and satire to parody and caricature. As a writer employs these strategies there is need to remember both the connotative as well as the denotative meaning they intend to pass across. The way in which writers manipulates the resources of language in order to express their thoughts best is the standard that separates good writers from the rest.

Tony Mochama is a journalist with The Standard Group. He writes various columns including: “Scene At”, which appears every Friday in the “Pulse” magazine in The Standard newspaper. “Scene At” utilizes a mix of street slang and some coinage of Russian form to express issues on the entertainment scene in Kenya. “Men Only”, appears every Saturday in The Standard on Saturday and focuses on giving a male perspective on social issues such as relationships and women. Occasionally, Mochama writes feature articles on youth and crime.

I begin my study of literary strategies in Tony Mochama’s prose on the assumption that the understanding of streetwise language in his columns in a way diffuses into his texts thereby enriching the language(s) we encounter in the texts. Mochama’s writing career began early with his participation in spoken word events. He occasionally attends summer literary seminars around the world.

Mochama's published works include: *What If I am a Literary Gangster?* (2007) a collection of poetry on issues facing the contemporary Kenyan society; *The Road to Eldoret and Other Stories* (2009) an anthology of short stories born out of the post election violence of 2007-2008 in Kenya; *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* (2011), a humorous novella about drug trafficking ; *Meet the Omtitas* (2013), a novella which won the third prize in the 2013 Burt Award and focuses on issues facing the youth; a fictional travelogue, *Nairobi: a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun* (2013) which gives an account of the Nairobi Night Runner's nightly escapades through the night in Nairobi and its environs; and a play, "Percy's Killer Party" published in the anthology *Six and The City: Six Short Plays on Nairobi* (2014). The six plays focus on the life in Nairobi from different perspectives of the cosmopolitan city.

This study is a comprehensive reading of Mochama's *The Road to Eldoret and Other Stories*, *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda*, *Meet the Omtitas* and *Nairobi: a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun*. I examine the issues he addresses regarding contemporary Kenyan society and the literary choices he makes to enable him communicate his message.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Language is the raw material for literature and literary artists make deliberate choices in exploiting the resources of the languages available to them. The literary strategies a writer employs enhance the beauty of the work; the strategies also allow the writer to communicate at a deeper level. Literary strategies employed by writers have a bearing on

the social conditions surrounding the writers at the time of writing, therefore writers are forced to strike a balance between the sociopolitical realities of the society and the literary demands of genres. This study examines how Tony Mochama utilizes literary strategies in his prose to address profound issues that affect the contemporary Kenyan society.

### **Objectives**

- i. To examine literary strategies that enhance aestheticism in Mochama's prose
- ii. To interrogate the effectiveness of the literary strategies in communicating Mochama's view of the contemporary Kenyan society

### **Hypotheses**

- i. Mochama employs various literary strategies which enhance beauty in his prose
- ii. Literary strategies are an effective means that Mochama has employed to address serious thematic concerns about the contemporary Kenyan society

### **Justification**

Different generations encounter different issues and present these issues differently. Mochama is a contemporary writer and an examination of his works is important in enriching our knowledge of the contemporary creative trends in Kenya. He is a representative figure of the emergent young writers in Kenya and as such this study considers him relevant in our understanding of the current issues facing the society.

The selection of the texts is informed by the fact that they reflect the contemporary Kenyan situation. All the texts under study have been written from 2007 onwards and capture the concerns of modern Kenya. The texts also demonstrate Mochama's ability to creatively reflect on the Kenyan society. The fact that the selected texts belong to different genres --novella, short story and travelogue is of importance since it demonstrates Mochama's dynamism and ability to harness his creativity to stretch and exploit the resources of language well enough to cover the different sub-genres of prose as well as the concerns he addresses. Through the different sub-genres, the writings capture the writer's reflection of society giving readers a holistic perspective of his thoughts about the contemporary Kenyan society. Mochama's poetry collection, *What If I Am a Literary Gangster?* and play "Percy's Killer Party" do not fit the parameters of the study hence the decision to leave them out of this study.

The study recognizes that language use is central to literary works. Mochama uses language creatively to communicate serious issues about the contemporary Kenyan society and therefore his works deserve scholarly attention.

### **Literature Review**

This literature review highlights research related to language use, Formalism and Postcolonial theories and works on Mochama's writing. This is with a view to identifying the gap that this study hopes to fill.

In her review of Mochama's *Nairobi a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun*, in The Standard On Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2014, Jennifer Muchiri says that Mochama's fictional travelogue interrogates the entertainment spaces and how people behave in these spaces. She further indicates that these escapades are a "deep commentaries on the social, economic and moral fabric of our country" (10). This study is alive to the ideas raised in this review and it stretches the argument of the review by interrogating how literary strategies enable the writer comment on the social, economic and moral fabric of the country.

Different writers employ different strategies in their writing in order to reveal their intentions. In "Echoes Of Trauma: Foregrounding of Violence In Ezenwa-Ohaeto's *The Voice of the Night Masquerade* and Fidelis Okoro's *When the Bleeding Heart Breaks*", F. O. Orabueze, Ifeyinwa Oghazi and P. A. Ezema, interrogate the way in which literary language is used by poets to foreground specific messages about the society. Their focus is on how these two poets use linguistic foregrounding and foregrounding of imagery of violence to draw the attention of the reader to the harshness of the world. They argue that forms of language, figures of speech and deviation are appropriated by the authors as they try to concretize the social reality of a violent world. This study borrows from their argument that literary language allows authors to concretize their social reality. While they focus on how violence is foregrounded, this study does not limit itself to a specific issue but it looks at Mochama's use of literary strategies to give a perception of the contemporary Kenyan society.

While analyzing *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born*, Eustace Palmer in *An Introduction to the African Novel* argues that Ayi Kwei Armah is successful in using language. He brings to the fore Armah's use of filth, putrefaction and excreta to symbolize the excessive corruption in Ghana. While palmer focuses on the descriptions of filth, putrefaction and excreta to reveal corruption in Ghana, This study looks at the various ways through which Mochama makes specific choices with regards to language in order to depict the problems that afflict the contemporary Kenyan society.

After independence there were a lot of expectations in the post independence African states. These expectations were dashed since the post-independence leaders continued the oppression that the colonialists had initiated. Obiechina Emmanuel in *Language and Theme: Essays on African Literature* asserts that this state led to "the collapse of humanity" (123). He points out that the "breakdown of ...solidarity has been vitalizing to African creative writing. It has for instance, infused in writers certain radicalism as well as a sharpening of their social instincts" (123). The writers end up attacking the elite for selfishly acquiring massive wealth at the expense of the masses. Obiechina says that the radicalism can be seen in the writing through the use of language. Certain writers employ defamiliarized language to "prick the vast bubble of false respectability blown up by the African elite" (128). This study agrees with Obiechina insofar as language is used in postcolonial writing. This study argues that Mochama stretches radicalism in his writing to comment about the falsehood eminent in the society. This radicalism is seen in the way he uses language veiled with imagery and symbolism.

Ryan Connor in “Regimes of Waste: Aesthetics, Politics and Waste from Kofi Awoonor and Ayi Kwei Armah to Chimamanda Adichie and Zeze Gamboa” looks at the presentation of scatology in early African writing in comparison with the contemporary African works. He argues that:

Our encounter with waste is always framed within a particular relationship between aesthetics and politics- what I will call a text’s regime of waste. More than a viewpoint or mindset, a regime consists of the language and images through which waste is made visible and intelligible. (52)

He further claims that metaphors of dirt are seen in these works as a discursive weapon of the political discontent. In contemporary works waste is not only a form of discontent at the political situation of the day but also a reflection of the way in which the contemporary writers deals with “multiple cultural fragments, perspectives, temporalities and spaces” (61). In the contemporary society he argues, there is a need to read waste differently and as a complex concept. In view of Connor’s work this study deploys his arguments on Mochama’s works which are marked by utilization of metaphors of waste. This study builds on Connor’s arguments and further the interrogation of metaphors of dirt with regards to the East African context through a reading of Mochama’s prose.

The idea of good and bad coincides with what Lars-Gunnar Anderson and Peter Trudgill say with regards to language. In *Bad Language* they argue that there is no such thing as bad language. The term ‘bad’ only points at the attitudes and the perspectives certain cultures put on certain words or phrases. This study while looking at the strategies in



Mochama's prose borrows from the arguments to concretize arguments on why certain literature should not be considered bad unless variations are there for analysis.

Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* theorizes the concept of heteroglossia. He argues that the novel can be defined as:

A diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purpose of the day, even of the hour (each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphases) -- this internal stratification present. . . .(262-263)

The aspect of dialogic nature of language allows Mochama's prose to not only be read denotatively but also connotatively. By interrogating language using Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia, this study is able to examine the different languages present in Mochama's texts and the intention behind the use of these languages. Every language employed carries certain intentions. Bakhtin further introduces the idea that language is dialogic in nature. It communicates on a number of levels depending on the source, the listener as well as the intonation and the intention as Bakhtin says:

No living word relates to its object in a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an

elastic environment that it is often difficult to penetrate. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized. (276)

In Mochama's works the language employed works in dialogia; on one level there is the outright presence of literary devices/flowery language while on another level the aesthetics act as a camouflage of deeper and serious sociopolitical issues.

This literature review reveals that despite Mochama having written a number of literary works there are no comprehensive studies on his writing. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is guided by two theoretical frameworks: Formalism and Postcolonial literary theory. Formalism is based on the assumption that a text is autonomous and stands on its own as a complete unit. According to Charles Bressler (Ed), the Formalists believe that "a text should be investigated as its own discipline" (51). Two schools emerge that propagate the autonomy of the text: Russian formalists and the New Criticism group. The New Criticism approach begins by assuming that the study of imaginative literature is valuable. The basis of meaning is in the structure or the form of the text. On the other hand, Russian formalism declares that "the proper study of literature is literature itself" (Bressler, 51).

In order to understand the meaning of a text there is need to look at the constituent parts. There is need to look at the linguistic and structural features of it. Some of the proponents of Russian formalism include: Victor Shlovsky, who argues that literary language works by defamiliarization; Boris Eichenbaum who argues that the literary scholar's work is to look at the distinguishing features of the literary material- the parts that make up the structure of the work of art; and Roman Jakobson who introduced the idea that the way a poet uses language is what makes the work literary.

Russian formalism introduces the concepts of defamiliarization and foregrounding. In *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, we are introduced to these ideas through Jakobson and Shlovsky's view that literature should be viewed as deviation from and distortion of practical language. Shlovsky coins the term defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) and argues that because habitualization devours everything "works, clothes, furniture..." it is the role of art "to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known" (Schleifer, 204). In this case therefore the act of making strange that which is familiar is what he refers to as defamiliarization. This study argues that by defamiliarizing various concepts by use of strategies of language, Mochama is able to reveal the socio-economic and political issues in Kenya in new light. Transgression and conformity allow the writers to foreground certain aspects. Jan Mukarovsky in his essay "Literature as Art" in *Contemporary Literary Criticism* expands the concept of foregrounding and argues that intentional distortion of the linguistic elements in a literary work foregrounds certain ideals that the writer puts forth. This is what Jakobson calls the dominant. The dominant is what is foregrounded in literary texts. By employing defamiliarization at all levels of

language use, Mochama foregrounds certain issues about the contemporary Kenyan society.

Postcolonial literary theory has various approaches. Neil Lazarus in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* says that the term ‘postcolonial’ was initially “a periodizing term, a historical and not an ideological concept” (2). The term has evolved and various scholars have theorized it differently. Postcolonial theory begins from the very first moment of colonial contact, and is the discourse of oppositionality which colonialism brought into being. Postcolonialism is concerned with a rejection of the master narratives of western imperialism and formation of the postcolonial subject. It is also concerned with dismantling the centre. Many trends have emerged in connection with Postcolonial theory with theorists such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Achille Mbembe.

I employ Achille Mbembe as well as Bill Ashcroft’s (et al) arguments on Postcolonialism. Achille Mbembe in *On the Postcolony* argues that the postcolony “identifies a given historical trajectory-- that of societies recently emerging from the experience of colonization and violence which the colonial relationship involves” (102). He goes further to interrogate the concept of Postcolonialism from a contemporary point of view where the power structures have changed hands and are now in the hands of the locals. He argues that we cannot look at the postcolonial condition from the point of view of the binary categories used in standard interpretation of domination. He says that there is need to look at how the world of meanings thus produced is ordered. There is need to

look beyond the structures to question the structuring of common sense. In the chapter “Aesthetics of Vulgarities” Mbembe argues that the grotesque and obscene are essential characteristics that identify postcolonial regimes where domination is complex. His theorization begins with Bakhtin’s arguments on the obscene and grotesque. Mbembe deconstructs Bakhtin’s ideas and introduces a new way of looking at the obscene and grotesque with regards to the postcolonial situation. Mbembe argues that:

the postcolonial relationship is not primarily a relationship of resistance or collaboration but can best be characterized as convivial, a relationship fraught by the fact of the commandment and its “subjects” having to share the same living space...this logic has resulted in the mutual “zombification” of both the dominant and those apparently dominated.

(106)

The idea of zombification then allows the society to use the obscene and grotesque to parody each other without realizing that all of them are participating in the acceleration of the state of dystopia in the society. Obscenity and grotesque representations in postcolonial literature depict the extravagance with which the postcolony has degenerated. Mbembe’s arguments aid my analysis of the state of the postcolonial Kenyan society with regards to the complex nature of oppression that takes place where the dominant as well as the supposedly dominated connive to propagate dystopia.

Ashcroft et al argue that one of the main features of oppression is language. They argue that:

Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order' and 'reality' become established. Such power is rejected in the emergence of an effective post-colonial voice. (7)

Language as used in literature is a tool of indoctrination whereby concepts of world view are shaped. Therefore when writers try to deconstruct the medium (language) of these 'realities', they fashion other 'realities' for the readers but also through code switching and decoding, they structure new ways of revealing the veiled problems. This study focuses on how Mochama manipulates language to reveal the veiled lies about the contemporary Kenyan society.

Ashcroft et al further argue that the language of the periphery is shaped by the oppressive discourse of power propagated by the centre. I argue that with the end of colonialism and emergence of other forms of oppressive discourses, language maintained its power to determine 'truth' and 'reality' for the masses, hereby acting as a weapon used by the centre (dominating power). The masses or their representative can subvert the weapon of the centre to carry the weight of their consciousness. Writers use a number of strategies of language to replace the language of the centre. This subversion is through abrogation or appropriation. Ashcroft further argues that:

The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place. (37)

With regards to language, I believe that Mochama re-places the language of the centre (dominating group) to carry the weight of his intention to communicate about the state of the society where there is a thin line between the oppressors and the oppressed since the supposedly oppressed also participate in oppressing others. Abrogation according to Ashcroft et al is “A refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or ‘correct’ usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning ‘inscribed’ in the words” (36). By subverting normative standards of language usage, code switching and infusing local terms into the language of the centre, Mochama is able to demonstrate how far the society has erred in bringing about development. This strand of Postcolonialism will enable me to interrogate the linguistic aspect of the literary strategies in Mochama’s prose. It will also allow me to examine how that language is able to reveal the oppressive nature of the dominating powers in the society.

The theoretical arguments raised complement each other in my study. Formalism focuses on the text and linguistic attributes and enables me to conduct a close textual reading of the selected texts. By interrogating language I examine issues that the writer foregrounds which assist my understanding of Mochama’s perception of the society. Postcolonial theory furthers the study by focusing on the complex nature of oppression in the postcolonial state which in a sense contributes towards dystopia.

### **Scope and Limitation**

This study is limited to a study of the literary strategies in Mochama's prose works: *The Road to Eldoret and Other Stories*, *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda*, *Nairobi: a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun*, and *Meet the Omtitas*. To enable a comprehensive analysis of the literary choices that the writer makes and the issues he addresses, this study leaves out *What If I Am a Literary Gangster?* and "Percy's Killer Party" which are an anthology of poems and a play respectively. However, this study will refer to them where necessary to complement the primary findings of this research.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is based on a close textual reading of Mochama's prose writing. The close textual reading enabled me to focus on the literary choices the writer has made and discuss the issues the literary choices highlight. Formalism enabled me to focus on the texts with a bias to the literary choices the writer makes and their resultant contribution to aestheticism of the texts thereafter, I utilized the postcolonial theory to analyze the social, political and economic concerns revealed through the literary strategies. This interrogation was in light of the conditions present in the postcolonial society. The postcolonial theory also enabled me to examine the ways through which the writer subverts the language of the centre to carry the weight of the periphery. I read secondary texts on language and strategies in literature to strengthen this study's arguments about the primary texts under study.



This study is organized into five chapters. The arrangement of the chapters is informed by the fact of the texts belong to different genres. The first chapter, **Background to the Study**, encompasses the introduction to the research, the statement of the problem, the objectives, hypotheses, justification, literature review, theoretical framework, the scope of the study and methodology. The second chapter, **Literary Strategies in *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda*** examines the literary strategies that Mochama employs and how these strategies foreground certain concerns about the contemporary Kenyan society. Chapter three, **Literary Choices and Its Implications In *Meet the Omtitas*** demonstrates that the language a writer employs is meant to highlight concerns about the society. Chapter four titled **The Use of Language in *The Road to Eldoret and Other Stories*** interrogates the language choices in the short story genre and how these choices enhance achievement of meaning. Chapter five, **Literary Strategies in *Nairobi: a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun*** examines the socio-economic concerns in urban Kenya with regards to the representation of the Nairobi night runner. The **Conclusion** ties up the arguments in the various genres on literary strategies tracing the points of convergence in Mochama's prose as well as giving the world view espoused in the texts.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERARY STRATEGIES IN *PRINCESS ADHIS AND THE NAIJA COCA BRODA*

### Introduction

This chapter examines the various literary strategies that Mochama employs in *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda*. This analysis is in a bid to interrogate how the literary strategies Mochama uses allow him to communicate issues concerning the contemporary Kenyan society. This study achieves this by focusing on the literary choices the writer uses Vis a Vis what the strategies foreground about the contemporary Kenyan society as well as the intention behind the language used by both the narrating voice as well as the characters. By tracing the nuances as well as the direct intentions of the language strategies employed, we understand the levels at which the text communicates.

The novella as a sub-genre is limited in length. As a form, however, the novella carries the intentions of the writer well. Ingrid Norton in “The Sweetness of Short Novels” says that the novella is a form that “demands compositional economy, homogeneity of conception, concentration in the analysis of character, and strict aesthetic control” (np). *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda*’s focus is narrowed down to the issue of drug trafficking with some slight interception of the issue of child molestation. Mochama ties the two issues in a seamless manner which ensures that during the reading, the train of thought of the reader is not interrupted by introduction of any other issues or characters who are not in any way related to the issues under discussion.

Judith Leibowitz's definition of a novella as quoted by Graham Good in "The Anatomy of the Novella" captures the essence of the novella as a form. She argues that:

Whereas the short story limits material and the novel extends it, the novella does both in such a way that a special kind of narrative structure results, one which produces a generically distinct effect. The double effect of intensity and expansion. (200)

The novella utilizes compactness and elaboration hence allowing it to reveal much in terms of form and content. Good goes ahead to elaborate that the intensity is done through "repetitive structure" where the novella "redevelops the situation" hence enhancing "thematic intensity" (200). *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* has this quality of thematic intensity since throughout the novella there is the repetition of the issues of drug trafficking and child abuse. In the first chapter we are introduced to the issue of drug trafficking but subsequent examination of the same allows us to reconsider the concept of drug trafficking. This is achieved through the constant repetition of various scenes which revisit the issue of drugs hence creating emphasis.

The novella's act of building to a single climax is what Roger Allen in "The Novella in Arabic: A Study in Fictional Genres" focuses on. Allen argues that the focus on a single climax foregrounds the role of the character that the action is centered on. This strengthens the argument that though the novella can complicate the characterization, the plot is majorly unified by a cause. In essence the novella utilizes "the economy of the short story with the openness of the novel (Allen, 475). The plot of the novella then is

tightly woven to capture the audience's mind. Language use in the novella therefore is important to allow the novella achieve the intensity of thought and strength of plot. In this chapter, I focus on how Mochama achieves this intensity of thought through literary strategies.

### **Summary of the Novella**

*Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* is a story that tracks Princess Adhis and her husband, Olusegun Ochineku, a Nigerian drug lord who sells drugs all over the world but has his base as Nairobi, Kenya. Princess Adhis has an affair with the mayor of Nairobi, Meyya Mutola, a greedy and manipulative man. The mayor tolerates Princess Adhis because he wants to find out Ochineku's drug connections which he intends to use to bring him down. His master plan is that after ensuring that Ochineku is deported, he takes over his massive empire. Meyya Mutola wants his plan to succeed because he knows that Ochineku is a powerful man who has connections in the right places.

While all this is happening, Ochineku's wrath on those who betray him is seen in the torture that Air Livindi goes through. Air Livindi had swindled Ochineku of money and he is tortured to death by the merciless God Papa who is a former CID chief. Princess Adhis is given an errand to run by her drug-lord husband, Ochineku, which she executes with Meyya Mutola. They travel to Mombasa to pick some payment for drugs from Karl Heinz Christof, a foreigner who uses the Kenyan coast to shoot pornographic movies with underage local girls. After picking the money, the drug rail leads them to Lagos, Nigeria where they exchange the cash with cocaine. In order to avoid the immigration

checkpoint, Princess Adhis and Meyya Mutola swallow the bags of cocaine. When they land in Peshawar, they get the bags of cocaine from their stool. Thereafter, they encounter a problem when the mujahedeen that was to give them cash for the cocaine sets them up by informing Ochineku about Princess Adhis' affair with Meyya Mutola. This set up leads to their arrest at the Peshawar airport with heroine. Meyya Mutola is stoned to death while Princess Adhis gets a seven year jail term for trafficking drugs.

Back in Mombasa, Christof, Von Wagner and Bradson entice Amina and Anita, twelve year old girls. They film the girls while raping them and then abandon the girls by the roadside. When Christof, Von Wagner and Bradson try to leave Mombasa, their plane crashes into the mountains and they die. Ochineku and God Papa travel to Nigeria. While savoring their victory over Ochineku's enemies, they die in a road accident.

### **Analysis of Literary Strategies in *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda***

There are a number of literary strategies employed in this novella. They range from strategies of narration to strategies of language, style, and plot. These strategies allow Mochama to communicate effectively about concerns in the contemporary Kenyan society. Literary strategies are a deliberate effort by the writer to present the narrative in a particular way for specific ends. Every emotion or thought that these strategies evoke in the reader are deliberate, in that the writer expects the reader to see the issues in a particular light. While analyzing the various strategies employed in this novella, my focus is on how effective they are in evoking certain thoughts as well as the resultant effect in

terms of aestheticism and realization of the writer's perspectives on the contemporary Kenyan society.

### **Strategies of Plot**

There are a number of literary strategies that Mochama has employed which enhance the realization of the plot. Plot refers to the sequencing of events in a story. There are various strategies at each writer's disposal in connection to effective communication in relation to plot. A story can take the linear plot form where events follow each other in a chronological order or the climatic plot where the story begins in *Medias Res*. Whichever form writers select allow them to realize aestheticism and foreground various thematic issues.

*Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* utilizes the frame story technique. The frame story technique is where there is an overall unifying story within which one or more other stories exist. This concept of double narration can be seen in *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* where the main story is the story of Meyya Mutola and Olusegun Ochineku and the drug trafficking issue. Within this macro narrative there is the connected but independent micro story of Christ of, Von Wagner and Bradson, sex perverts who molest and film young girls. Mochama seams the two stories in a manner that allows them to seem like one story. Mochama's use of one narrative voice, the omniscient narrator, enables the two stories to achieve unity as well as avoid appearing fragmented. The usage of double narrative enhances Mochama's interrogation of the problems in postcolonial Kenya. The double narration enhances the concept of multi-

layers of the ills prevalent in contemporary Kenyan society. Mochama is making a statement that inasmuch as the society is structured into different levels, these levels are connected through a seamless labyrinth of chaos and problems.

Although the two narratives are independent, they converge at one point. This convergence is seen when Princess Adhis and Meyya Mutola go to Watamu to collect Ochineku's drug payment from Christof. After this incident the stories once again take different directions. The convergence here is symbolic of the interconnectedness of the various forms of ills in the society. Princess Adhis and Ochineku are in the drug trafficking business, Meyya Mutola is a corrupt and irresponsible government employee and Christ of, Von Wagner and Bradson are child molesters. All these characters are connected through the web of deceit and exploitation. The convergence of the narratives illuminates this idea that though the characters belong to different social groups, their vices draw them in unity of destruction. What comes out clearly from the double narrative is that in order to destroy the entrenched ills in the society, there is need to trace the various connections and webs and have them destroyed too.

Another strategy of plot employed in *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* is the concept of poetic justice. This refers to the aspect of vice being punished by an ironic twist of fate which the reader has not expected. The characters representing the rot in the society are brought to their tragic end in circumstances that leave the reader assuming it is an act of God. Princess Adhis and Meyya Mutola are the first to come to their tragic end. In the novella, Princess Adhis and Meyya Mutola are arrested in Peshawar due to the

crime of transporting heroine. The mayor is stoned to death while Princess Adhis is sentenced to seven years in jail. Christof, Von Wagner and Bradson, the rapists, meet their death in a plane crash. The narrator even allows Christ of to stay scarred for some time before he meets his death which is painfully slow. Ochineku, the drug trafficking mastermind and God Papa, his accomplice, meet their deaths in a road accident in Nigeria. Through these deaths, Mochama is making a statement that vices should expect punishment at some point in life. This is a call to those propagating different forms of corrupt and oppressive activities to beware of the consequences. Since the poetic justice can be seen as an act of God, Mochama is giving an indication that some forces beyond human control can wreck the lives of perpetrators of ills in the society.

The structural partitioning of the novella is another strategy of plot that draws attention to certain aspects that the writer wants to emphasize for specific ends. In *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* this can be seen where there is interruption of the story by a poem. When Christ of and his friends waylay Amina and Anita, there is a shift from prose narration. The inclusion of the lyrics draws attention to the insensitivities of those propagating the molestation of young boys and girls:

Mama bear and papa bear went for a walk through the forest

Mama bear asked papa bear, 'could cha lick my porridge?'

Papa bear said 'shit mama bear, you must tink I'm sick. (71)

The above lines allude to the popular children's story *The Three Bears* by Robert Southey. The implicit reference to the children's story symbolizes the innocence of



children which the three adults shatter when they molest Amina and Anita. The use of metaphorical language heightens the tension that is created by the act of rape that happens. Papa bear, who as the father should set a good example to his child, uses a swear word 'shit' enhancing the symbolism of adults who act irresponsibly as Bradson, Von Wagner and Christ do. The issue of sexual abuse and its implication on the society gains prominence. The fact that the perpetrators do not care about the consequences of their actions on the unsuspecting young girls is also brought to the fore. A form of intertextuality can be seen later on where a corrupted version of *Humpty Dumpty* is given:

Humpty dumpty fell of the wall  
Coz a hoe on the Ave waz suckin' his balls  
All the king's horses and all the king's men  
Couldn't put that fat mah-fah together again... (75-76)

The corrupted version given serves a number of purposes. It utilizes a play on words which the writer skillfully employs to advance the beauty of the song and concretize the argument on loss of morals in the contemporary society. The word "hoe" in the song is a pun on the word "whore" and the usage of "balls" connotatively denote sexual ideas. The lyrics given also utilize slang. Words such as 'balls', 'suckin' and 'ave' demonstrate instances of slang. Their usage foregrounds the corrupted nature of the society. These 'dirty' words appearing in a singing game for young children are a demonstration of the loss of innocence in children. This song therefore foregrounds the loss of virginity, innocence and naivety for Amina and Anita. It is a sign that no one is safe in the

consuming rage of destabilizing variations of suffering and oppression suffocating the postcolonial state of the society where even the innocent are ensnared in this trap.

When Meyya Mutola and Adhiambo are arrested in Peshawar, the newspaper's headlines are given in capital letters together with the story:

NAIROBI MAYOR EXECUTED IN PESHAWAR...MUTOLA  
STONED TO DEATH IN PAKISTAN AS LOVER JANE ADHIAMBO  
OCHINEKU GETS SEVEN YEARS FOR DRUG CRIMES ON COURT  
COMPASSION! (94)

The use of capital letters here calls attention to the words capitalized since they are presented in a different sentence case from the rest of the words in prose. The reader's attention is captured by the words in capital. The capitalization enhances the idea of the presence of punishment for crimes committed. On closer scrutiny, one realizes that though Meyya Mutola and Adhiambo are punished for their crimes, it is because they have been outwitted by Ochineku, further strengthening Mbembe's argument about the complexity of the concept of oppression in the post colony. With regard to domination and oppression, all that matters is for one to master the art of survival for the fittest. When everyone is part of the oppressed as well as part of the oppressing force then the society is in no condition for positive change, unless there is a total overhaul of the oppressive system and its perpetrators.

Foregrounding also occurs when the plot is interrupted by a different story. In the traumatizing events that the girls Amina and Anita encounter, Amina sees the only hope

in drifting off to a fantastic world where she is seen flying as a little bird: “Amina is a bird. She’s over the wall flying over the white sands of Malindi” (75). The image of a bird denotes freedom which at this point the girls crave and wish to have. The image denotes the need for freedom to decide what to do and when to do it. For Amina and Anita, freedom has become elusive like the bird that flies above but is not ready to be captured. This interruption breaks monotony of the narration and allows the reader a pause to concretize the issues raised. This thought of a utopia where Amina is going to be free as a bird reminds us of the reality of dystopia on the ground. The bleakness of life’s uncertainties allow the reader to empathize with Amina’s ‘social dreaming’ of freedoms and sharply contrasts with her situation of rape and being used to create a pornographic movie without her consent. There is a lot of indifference surrounding the circumstance of the girls. The narrator says:

An Italian fashion model, looking for sun and solitude in Gucci sunglasses, lies topless and listless outside. An ice-cream man stands by his cart in the sun, his eyes turned to the sky, fantasizing that he is a Formula One driver in Brazil. His father was Brazilian, and abandoned his mother when he, ice-cream man, was two. Two months! And ran off to Brazil, leaving a semi-literate Swahili woman with a child who would grow up to be a seaside ice-cream cart man who liked to fantasise (sic) that he is a Formula One race-car driver, just like Lewis Hamilton, while all sorts of evil things go on behind him in a white-walled villa from which emerge faint sounds of a song that sounds like a dirty nursery rhyme.... (75)

The description of the happenings outside the immediate environment of the girls demonstrates that society moves on irrespective of the ills being visited on innocent beings. The postcolonial subject is a conscious subject but with all its awareness about right and wrong, rights and freedoms, the postcolonial subject maintains an air of indifference when an issue happens that does not concern them. This sense of indifference justifies the disillusionment and hopelessness felt in the post colony. While Anita and Amina are oppressed and ripped of their innocence, the society acts as if there is no care in the world indicating the sense of hopelessness that characterizes this society.

Mochama has also employed partitioning in the novella. Although the story follows a linear form, he has partitioned it into small sections with sub-headings for each section. The sub-headings add an air of humour into the narration as well as give one an idea of what one should expect in the section. This form of presentation is not very common in novels that follow the linear form. Instead of dividing the sections into chapters, Mochama uses subheadings which allow the reader to pause and think. This form ensures that in the reading of the novella one's attention is maintained throughout. For instance, the first section is given the sub heading: "The God Father's Shadow". In this section we come across God Papa who tortures Air Livindi. The shadow is a recurrent image in the novella. The image of a shadow is reflective of the dark side of human nature. God Papa is Ochineku's shadow and executioner. God Papa is representative of the dark side of Ochineku, the drug lord. The image of the shadow is an effective means of highlighting the evil in the society.

The last section in the novella is titled “The Final Freak Chapter.” This sub-heading illuminates the tone of the section. One gets a feeling of resignation from the sub-heading. This in a sense is indicative of the situation in postcolonial African states that have degenerated. The presence of poetic justice in this chapter is however, indicative of the subtle hope. Although Mochama is seen as concluding that the socio-economic situation in contemporary Kenya is hopeless, he voices the idea of hope in the deaths of the perpetrators of vice in the novella.

### **Strategies of Language**

Strategies of language are those techniques that enable the writer to use language in a manner that appears aesthetic as well as different hence allows the writer to foreground certain issues. My focus in connection to strategies of language is on the artistic use of language in *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda*.

One idea of foregrounding in language is seen in the use of corruption of various words. This strategy allows the words to call attention to themselves. It also heightens the beauty of the language used. Corruption of words entails the changing of words from their original use or meaning to others that are regarded as erroneous or debased. When literary writers deliberately write words in the ‘wrong’ way they are engaging in corruption of words. In literature corruption of words is done for specific ends. In most cases this brings about humour as well as revealing certain underlying inadequacies about the society. As a strategy, *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* utilizes this right

from the title. Mochama employs ‘corruption’ of words intentionally to call attention to the title.

The words ‘Adhis’, ‘Naija’, ‘Coca’ and ‘Broda’ are corrupted forms of words. Mochama, being a literary artist, is given the liberty to break rules of grammar (poetic licence) in order to maximize the communication of his ideas and feelings about the society. The ‘corrupted’ words in the title introduce us right into the mess that is the postcolonial society riddled with all sorts of problems. This also demonstrates the forcefulness and emphasis with which the writer wants to show the chaos and anomaly in the post colony.

The word “Naija” in the title is a ‘corrupted’ form of Nigeria as well as the way many Nigerians would pronounce the name of their country. This is a manifestation of the way Mochama presents Nigeria in the novella. Princess Adhis and Meyya Mutola get the drugs they transport from Nigeria. By corrupting Nigeria to ‘Naija’ the writer is pointing out the fact that the place has been debased. As the heart of the drug trafficking syndicate, Nigeria is seen as being deprived of integrity and morality. Nigeria in the text has been deliberately misspelled as ‘Najeria’. The misspelling within the text as well as the short form in the title is a way through which the writer creates a fictitious world. One would see the relation between the names but the assumption would be that this is a different world from the real one. As a strategy, misspelling allows the writer to create some fictional distance hence present the issues he tackles objectively. Misspelling is also a deliberate intention to demonstrate the falsehood in the state of the society. The drugs that Ochineku deals in are channeled from Nigeria to the rest of the world and back to Kenya. The misspelling is an indication of the disregard for morals due to materialism.

By corrupting 'Najeria' which appears in many sections of the novella we are introduced to the image of a distorted Nigeria or Africa as a place where things are distorted. Things are not as they are expected to be anymore, which begs the question: in the postcolonial world do we have any idea of what right is? The Nigerian in the novella, Olusegun Ochineku is a drug lord who supplies drugs to different areas of the world. Corruption of words as a strategy reveals the contemporary society as a place where things are not as they are expected to be anymore hence dangerous for the survival of humanity. A population ravaged by drugs is one on the brink of destruction. The debilitating effects of a vicious circle of drug abuse are revealed well. This furthers the cause of the novella to foreground the ills of the contemporary Kenyan society.

The term 'coca' is a corruption of cocaine. Cocaine is a hard drug that is harmful to people's health. The term 'coca' as used here is in reference to the drug, made from the coca plant. Cocaine is a stimulant and has numbing effects and it is also addictive. The corruption of the term is indicative of the state of the contemporary society as a place where people have been numbed by the hardships of life.

'Broda' is a corruption of 'brother'. Technically, a brother is someone who cares about one, someone who will always wish good for others and protects them. The 'broda' we encounter in this novella has none of the qualities of a brother. In this case, the word has been used ironically to refer to those people in the society who manipulate and misuse others. The idea is foregrounded through the concept of the defamiliarized presentation. This irony highlights the aspect of individualism in the contemporary Kenyan society.

Everyone cares about their needs and benefits but not the well being of the society. Ochineku does not care when his drugs end up affecting people. He gets a lot of money from drug trafficking at the expense of the society being incapacitated by the same drugs. At the same time, Christof, Von Wagner and Bradson think of themselves as brothers due to the fact that they share their vice of sexually molesting underage girls. The idea of brotherhood is interrogated here. Mochama seems to be indicating that caring does not make one a brother unless it is some aspect that does not involve partnership in vice. A good brother should dissuade one from doing wrong. Christof, Von Wagner and Bradson encourage each other in as far as their vice of sexually molesting young girls is concerned hence do not qualify to be brothers concerned hence do not qualify to be brothers. The word 'Broda' therefore can be said to have been corrupted in double measure. One aspect is in relation to the word itself and how it is written; the other aspect is in relation to its meaning.

'Adhis' is a corruption of Adhiambo, one of the major characters in the novella. The corruption of her name signals the corruption of her morals. The novella lives up to the presentation of her name. In the novella, Adhiambo is presented as a character that does not have morals. She commits adultery with the mayor of Nairobi while at the same time participates in her husband's drug trafficking business. When in Abooja, she is presented by the narrator admiring the colourful whores at the airport: "Princess Adhis ogles their picturesque outfits with admiration in her eyes..." (39). She admires the immoral in the society and aspires to shine in immorality. What she lacks in character insofar as immorality is concerned, she compensates for in appearance. The corruption of her name



in the title concretizes her presentation as a morally debased character. As one of the major characters, she is reflective of the widespread immorality in the contemporary Kenyan society. The title is both metaphorical and ironical hence it foregrounds the issues the text deals with in an aesthetic manner.

Another form of corruption of words is seen in the way Adhiambo and Meyya Mutola pronounce Christof's name. Meyya Mutola calls him 'Critofa' while Adhiambo refers to him as 'Christopher'. These corruptions are deliberate on the part of the writer because he wants to reveal the distorted nature of the character. It reveals Christof's inability to be a straight man. He justifies his pedophilia by relating to the actions of his grandfather. The narrator tells us that his grandfather told him:

The night before they were to be gassed, I would often bring them into my little house for a supper of soup and chocolate, the little starved things, then comfort them all night long in my bed. (29)

This not only shows his lack of morals but demonstrates the idea that both Christof and his grandfather exploited young girls' plight for their own carnal pleasures. In essence the rot in them is passed down from generation to the other and as such it is difficult to get rid of it. In the same manner an interrogation of the problematic moral fabric of the society reveals the deeply entrenched nature which is not easy to rub off.

Mochama also employs metaphors to foreground and illuminate the moral decadence in the society. For instance he stretches the meaning of cocktail when he talks of a "continental cocktail of pestilence" (46) in reference to the many ills ravaging Africa. He

goes further and indicates that the cocktail is homegrown “in the true spirit of African unity” (46). At this point the cocktail is foregrounded because one is then interested to know what cocktail this is. The effect of the description of the cocktail is contrary to the mouth watering cocktail of drinks we are used to. The ingredients of the cocktail include different varieties of diseases that ravage the continent: “cholera from Zimbabwe, typhoid from Kenya, HIV from South Africa, yellow fever from Nigeria and malaria from neighbouring Uganda” (46). The list of pestilences is endless – which implies that all these flourish in Kenya. Some of the diseases making up the cocktail have been eradicated in other parts of the world.

The cocktail of pestilence is a metaphor for the deeply entrenched rot in the society. Having been stripped of morals, the society has degenerated to the point of near-death. The rot is something that can and should have been eradicated but with the state of affairs where even government officials like Meyya Mutola collude with criminals, then nothing good can be expected out of the situation. The mention of the various countries where the different diseases come from is a strategic criticism of what Kenya as a country allows within its borders. Essentially, the writer seems to question the kind of relations Kenya has with its neighbours. Kenya is seen as a host to corrupt and morally deficient people. The cocktail is symbolic of the variety of problems and vices prevalent in Kenya.

Another metaphor can be seen in the name Air Livindi. The name Air is metaphoric. A consideration of the literal meaning of the verb ‘air’ reveals the metaphoric meaning of the word in connection to the character of Air Livindi. To air means to expose to the open. Air Livindi is exposed in a number of ways. His nakedness is an act of revelation of his

most private body parts as well as the rest of his body. Livindi's nakedness reveals the society's true picture which is not pleasing, "Air Livindi shorn of his Armani suit and bravado was already looking badly" (15). The name 'Air' alludes to the fact that Livindi is suspended in the air. In this case his life is floating in many directions and the power to end or allow life in this case is not in his hands. Air here is metaphoric of the exposure of evil in the society. Air Livindi's greed led him to steal from Ochineku and his corrupt deals were revealed eventually. Air Livindi serves as a symbol of the corrupt in the society who may end up being exposed.

All this corruption is further cemented by the metaphor describing Adhiambo Ochineku. The narrator refers to her as: "humongous mammary pack" (78). The narrator, referring to Princess Adhis as "humongous mammary pack" metaphorically denotes the baggage she represents of greed even when one has plenty. The description intensifies the concept of greed that is characteristic of the contemporary Kenyan society. The fact that the metaphor has animalistic connotations inherently underlies the way her character has been debased to the point that she can be seen as an animal. The extreme image of comparison relates the extent of debasement of the society.

Meyya Mutola's description also employs animalistic metaphors. The narrator says, "...with his pudgy fingers, massive organ, grunting bed manner and front-tooth-missing grin" (19) in reference to Meyya Mutola. The word 'grunting' relates Meyya Mutola to the sounds pigs make. In essence therefore, there is the implication of fatness and dissatisfaction. The other descriptive words in the description like 'pudgy' and 'massive'

also concretize the idea of dissatisfaction and greed. Although aspects of corpulence are revealed, the mayor is still not satisfied. He keeps amassing more and more riches through corrupt deals. He goes further to aid the likes of Ochineku in their drug trafficking deals in order to amass more wealth. His extreme greed is revealed when he is presented as wanting to take over Ochineku's businesses as well as his wife. As a government official, he is not content with his earnings; instead, he aids drug traffickers and allows all kinds of crooked business to go on under his watch. The description given above connotes hugeness.

The language in the description emphasizes on the lack of contentment in the mayor. Both 'pudgy' and 'grunting' insinuate greed. The fact that the aspect of grunting is connotative of the pigs explicitly relay the aspect of greed in the character of Meyya Mutola. Meyya Mutola is representative of the contemporary government officials who use their positions and power to enrich themselves at the expense of the nation. The narrator satirizes the contemporary Kenyan society for their pretences and hypocrisies. Meyya Mutola's description is not only humorous but also critical of the disorganization and disorientation in the contemporary leaders who embrace greed and corruption. The writer is making a statement about the morals of the greedy leaders. Even when faced with cases and thoughts of their end, their greed still rules them. Such leaders cannot make changes in the society, hence the disillusionment and hopelessness that characterizes the society.

Meyya Mutola's reference to Adhiambo as a zebra is another example of metaphor. The narrator says, "Meyya Mutola has often thought of naming her 'zebra'..." (20). A zebra is an animal lined with black and white shades in the hide. The implication of this metaphor is that Adhiambo has no uniform hue on her skin. The metaphor foregrounds the idea that Adhiambo has used skin lightening creams which have destroyed her skin tone making her end up with a tone that is not uniform. The metaphor of a zebra makes the reader see Adhiambo as having been dehumanized to the point of lacking any human instinct. Adhiambo's actions reflect the sense of dehumanization in that in the novella we are told of her liaison in drug business and extra marital affairs. She has embraced artificiality through the use of skin lightening creams that have changed the hue of her skin. Therefore she is the embodiment of fakeness. Mochama intentionally wants to demonstrate the extent to which the society has erred. It has copied artificial means of life which have eroded the morals. Mochama, by comparing her to an animal enables the reader see the contemporary Kenyan society as one that has degenerated below all ideals of humanity. This description lays bare the effects of the postcolonial world of hypocrisy. It draws animalistic comparisons which in a way denote the degeneration of the human race in a society accelerating towards doom. The extravagance of artificiality due to usage of lightening creams in her body hue demonstrates the extravagance with which the society has derailed.

The metaphor of a cockroach is seen when God Papa goes ahead to refer to Livindi as a cockroach: "I didn't know cockroaches can scream--"(25).The reference to cockroaches here is intended to portray Livindi as a small being that can be crushed easily. A

cockroach is considered a pest and Air Livindi is presented as a parasite that feeds on others by exploiting them. The writer, by use of this metaphor foregrounds the concept of exploitation inherent in the contemporary Kenyan society. Air Livindi is but a prototype for the characters who though in minor positions of power exploit those above as well as those below them in the class structure.

God Papa's torture methods leave one wondering if there is any ounce of pity in him. The metaphor defining him allows us to realize how heartless he is:

God Papa was that rarest and hardest of men, a loyalist enforcer, Goebbels in the bunker alongside Hitler, rational even if Adolf was psycho and suicidal. Once dedicated to a man, or cause, God Papa was an unbendable force. (48)

The comparison with Goebbels, Hitler's right-hand man intensifies the heartlessness in his being; it also demonstrates his loyalty to Ochineku. God Papa is seen as a close confidant and associate of Ochineku. He is also presented as one who is willing to do anything to ensure Ochineku is comfortable. The reference of God Papa as Goebbels brings to the fore the concept of people in the contemporary Kenyan society owing leaders primitive form of loyalty. This is where citizens worship leaders and do not question anything that the leaders do but are willing to do anything for the said leaders. God Papa is representative of citizens or associates to leaders who obey and follow everything the leaders say. Mochama foregrounds the concept of primitive loyalty through this metaphor and since God Papa in the end dies a miserable death, I argue that

Mochama uses God Papa to caution the contemporary society against primitive loyalty that fails to see the problems that certain kinds of leaders bring to the modern world.

The metaphor of a pawn is also employed in the novella. The narrator says: “Meyya Mutola looks across the bed at his pawn and then grins” (22). Adhiambo Ochineku is a pawn. A pawn is a piece used in a game of chess. For one to understand the effect of the metaphor there is need to relate it to a game of chess. The pawn in a game of chess is the piece with the smallest size and value. When Adhiambo is compared to a pawn, the indication is that she has limited power to influence the outcomes of things involving her life. She is part of a game that she does not understand so everyone else uses her for their own ends. The Meyya flirts with her because he wants to get Ochineku’s millions; on the other hand Ochineku uses her to run errands for his drug business. She has no free will in most of the things around her. The concept of a pawn reveals the forms of exploitation in the contemporary society where citizens sometimes are unaware that they are being exploited. This metaphor introduces the argument about free will which is in essence an illusion.

While metaphors signal a direct form of comparison, the novella also utilizes similes which are an indirect form of comparison. When describing Hussein, the narrator utilizes similes to emphasize on the effects drugs have on Hussein. The narrator graphically describes the boy:

Hussein reached with both hands into the back pocket of his khaki shorts, and like a lazy magician his hands reappeared, the left one clutching a

hypodermic syringe and the right one a small plastic bag with some white powder inside it. Omar noted, with horror, that his erstwhile best friend's arms were covered with dark spots, as if he were the survivor of a severe pox. One of Hussein's balls showed through the bottom of his khaki shorts, and Omar, without wanting to noted a pockmark there too. (57)

The simile that compares Hussein's dark spots with a victim of severe pox foregrounds the debilitating effects of drug abuse. The vivid description employed here draws the readers' senses and attracts empathy. Mochama does this deliberately because he wants the readership to see the debilitating effects of drug abuse. His is also a call to action, he intends the reader to not just see the chain but see how far the society has fallen. The society is destroying its young ones in the search of riches. Those expected to be guardians of the young children like Hussein are busy destroying their lives. For instance Ochineku is someone that can be considered a guardian but the fact that he runs a drugs business ensures he shatters the lives of young children who end up abusing the drugs.

The extract above also utilizes another simile where the narrator says that "Hussein reached with both hands into the back pocket of his khaki shorts, and like a lazy magician his hands reappeared" (57). This demonstrates the fact that those afflicted by the drugs end up being controlled by the drugs. They become reliant on the drugs to the point that their actions appear as though preplanned in connection to their ease of administering doses of the drugs they use. This simile reveals the powerlessness of the victims at the face of the drugs. The effects the drugs have on victims is an echo of the way in which



contemporary livelihood imprisons people to be dependent on ways of life that slowly seep life out of them.

The drugs make the victims appear like zombies or puppets who have no control over their lives. Hussein is further described using a simile that reveals the aspect of 'zombification' clearly, "Hussein's eyes, as he stared up at the sky, were like a glazed window reflecting the sun" (57). He is seen as a form of 'walking dead' character that is fully dependent on the drugs and is risking his life for the same.

In this novella, Adhiambo Ochineku's description in derogatory terms also utilizes a number of similes:

She is in a see-through *kamisi*, and her blonde weave is bundled like a rat's nest inside an old hairnet. The skin below her neck is darker than her face, but below her thighs, her skin lightens again. This is caused by the lightening creams she uses. Her arms, too, are black above the elbows, and light brown below. (20)

The narrator employs animal imagery to describe Adhiambo Ochineku. The above extract brings to light the issue of her hair looking like "a rat's nest inside an old hairnet" (20). This description paints the image of Adhiambo as covered with ugliness. The concept of the rat's hairnet reveals the corrupt and immoral nature of the character which is demonstrative of the contemporary society.

When describing Christ of's villa, the narrator says, "His villa was just off Mecca Road, behind a high fence of white coral whose aesthetics were spoiled by a crown of high-voltage wires – 'like Christ's last crown' "(30). This comparison relates the fencing of the villa to Christ's crown before He was crucified. This simile illuminates the fact of the villa was protected from prying eyes. It concretizes the idea that the sexual harassment and rape of young girls was protected from the public's glare. In essence, Mochama indicates the actions of veiling the problems emergent in contemporary society. Ills are protected by all means possible ensuring that people continue being oppressed while others in a position to help are not aware.

The prevalent degenerated nature of contemporary society is seen when the narrator talks of the whores in Abooja. The narrator says that the whores "are comfortably sprawled all over the lobby, like a welcoming committee" (38-39). This simile emphasizes on the fact that this is the first sight that meets any new arrivals in Abooja. The use of the simile highlights the idea of moral pervasion in that if the sight of whores is what greets a new entrant into Abooja then this is just a piece of what the rest of Abooja looks like. The whores are an indication of the degradation of the society. Having been introduced to the idea that this is where the cocaine that is taken to Peshawar comes from, the simile concretizes the moral rottenness prevalent and enhances the reader's apprehension of the same.

Through indirect comparison, similes allow the reader to invoke the senses thereby foregrounding the idea being presented. When the narrator describes Air Livindi's torture

by God Papa, there is the usage of a simile that calls to the attention the reader's relation of the senses in order to communicate meaning. The narrator says, "Cruel eyes laughed at him from behind the John Lennon spectacles, with the syringe clutched like a lightning bolt in the brute's hand" (51). The comparison to lightning bolt calls attention to the idea of a flash of electric current which when it strikes it can cause explosion of things, severe injury or even death. The above simile heightens the assumption that whatever liquid was in the syringe was of extreme damage to Air Livindi. God Papa is therefore seen as the executioner. This simile raises the idea of oppression and torture of weak victims who succumb to the wills of those with power. In essence it introduces the idea of misuse of power in the contemporary society, but also raises the idea that power is given to those who do not deserve.

The writer has employed the use of foreign language. The novella uses English as the primary language of narration hence any other language incorporated within can be considered foreign. Use of foreign language can be seen through the introduction of Kiswahili words. The use of Kiswahili allows the reader to contextualize the setting as an East African nation because Kiswahili as a language is spoken in East Africa. Mochama's use of Kiswahili words also allows the reader to visualize certain issues that he discusses. When the narrator refers to Air Livindi's torture, he describes the marks on his body. He says, "the lacerations on his back were a result of the one hundred and thirty savage lashes that he had received from a *nyahunyo* wielded by the other silhouette" (14). The word *nyahunyo* is a Kiswahili word for whip. This allows an East African audience to

visualize the item as well as the pain it can cause. In this case we are able to visualize the level of cruelty meted on Air Livindi and further feel the wrath of an annoyed Ochineku. Another instance where Kiswahili is used is when Air Livindi reacts to the action of being sprayed with a pesticide on the face. He screams out, “*Waaa, God Papaaaa, you have made my eyes blind. Waaaii, sioni cho-chote sioni, sioniii...*” (25). The above statement roughly translates to “Waaa, I can’t see anything I can’t see I can’t see....” Use of Kiswahili in this instance captures the extent of the pain and hurt that Air Livindi registers. Being the local language it is able to resent the feelings of Air Livindi as raw as they happen and enhance the emphasis on the pain to an East African audience. In essence, Kiswahili here carries the sensibilities of Air Livindi as a person.

Another instance when Air Livindi is tortured, he screams and begs to be released by imploring a Kiswahili word for please, “My God, papa...me, tafadhali! Untie me please.”(44). The use of both ‘*tafadhali*’ and ‘please’ enhance the plea that Air Livindi makes to God Papa. Both are polite words that are meant to persuade one to do as the bidder expects. In this instance they have no effect on God Papa, which then strengthens the assumption that God Papa is a very cruel man who is not changed by pleas of any kind. He is therefore representative of the contemporary kinds of dominators who are not swayed even by the squalor lives lived by those they oppress, instead they only care about the pleasure and benefits they derive from those they oppress.

The description of Adhiambo Ochineku also utilizes Kiswahili. The narrator says, “she is in a see-through *kamisi*” (20). The *kamisi* refers to a petticoat worn as an undergarment

by ladies. By presenting Adhiambo in petticoat with no outer garment, Mochama calls the attention of the readers to the idea of the modern society's disregard for morals. People do not observe decorum anymore hence the degeneration of the society. By using the word *kamisi* instead of petticoat, Mochama foregrounds it making the reader see the unusual nature of it being worn as the main item of dressing hence questioning the codes of decorum.

After the plane crash, the narrator says that Christof is found several miles away muttering, "Maliamina, Maliamina" (92), the white St. John's operative believes that he is muttering, "Mali ya Mungu" (92) which translates to God's property. This use of Kiswahili foregrounds the irony in the situation in that with all the sexual molestation of young girls that Christof did it would be near impossible for anyone to assume that he is God's property since he did not demonstrate the qualities of one to be revered by God when he was alive.

The use of Kiswahili in many instances in the novel allows Mochama to communicate with a large audience which in a sense also explains his wide usage of a mixture of Swahili and English words. One may argue that his target readership influences the language of his writing. The use of code-switching and code-mixing allows Mochama to not only achieve relevance and authenticity but also allows the novella to have a local flavor. As Alina Rinkanya in "Code-Switching in Contemporary Kenyan Novels After 2000" argues, mixing of Kiswahili and English in Kenyan novels allows the writers to "denote certain aspects of African reality which do not have adequate terminology in

European languages...”(86). When Mochama uses the word *nyahunyo* in place of whip the intention is inherently to denote the insinuations that are accompanied by the word in African contexts. These insinuations have relations to aspects of torture and oppression. The novella’s language is rich in a variety of dialects. The writer has utilized what would be considered as ‘dirty’ language. The dictates of writing has it that writers should observe language etiquette. In cases where writers forego this unwritten rule they do so deliberately to reveal certain issues in the society.

Air Livindi’s torture incorporates language that brings to the fore taboo issues. The writer does not use euphemisms but lays bare the issues using language that may appear derogatory though it presents the issues as they are. During Air Livindi’s torture, God Papa scares him by telling him how the typhoid fever would affect him:

You will have a nervous fever , your stomach will make horrid, gurgling noises known as borborgym, and when that happens, dash to a loo because you will be diarrhoeaing pea-green soup...I’ll let you dump all over yourself, because you are nothing but an asshole...and full of shit. (50)

Mochama carefully selects words that would be considered improper when describing the diarrhoea. Rules of etiquette have it that such descriptions of calls of nature be avoided. Mochama deliberately disregards the said rules in order to reveal the reality behind the façade of propriety in the contemporary society. The assumption is that the contemporary society hides its degeneration behind the veil of propriety when in reality it is a rotten society. By foregoing all forms of euphemisms, Mochama is simply revealing the society

for its degeneration. This description of excrement is nauseating and, as Mary Douglas comments in *Purity and Danger* the scatological representations in a text are a reflection of the society's cosmology. It is clear that this is a society that has depreciated because of decadence in all aspects. This is due to the state of disillusionment exhibited because of the problems ravaging the society such as drug trafficking, corruption and poor leadership.

When transporting the cocaine from Nigeria to Peshawar, Adhiambo and Meyya Mutola swallow bags of cocaine and thereafter swallow "several Imodium tablets to stop them from shitting" (64). The statement demonstrates that people go through pains in order to facilitate the trafficking of drugs. In Peshawar, Adhiambo and Meyya Mutola swallow laxatives to loosen up their bowels. The narrator tells us that the two painstakingly retrieve the bags from their own excrement with their bare hands. These excremental images demonstrate the deep-seatedness of the problems in the society. It also foregrounds the irony of the mayor and the "princess" engaging in such demeaning acts. When people go to extreme lengths to protect the apparently illegal but widespread trade in drugs there is a danger of the society collapsing.

When the novella ends, some sort of poetic justice takes place. The three sex perverts: Christof, Von Wagner, and Bradson meet their death in the plane they were travelling in. For Christof the end is more difficult: "They find him several miles away, under a cloud of stinging tse tse flies, stinking from his own stool, and dying of dehydration and exhaustion..." (92). The words "stinking" and "faeces" symbolize the rot in Christof's

character which even death does not erase. He is immersed deeply in his immoral ways and even death does not make him find salvation. Death in this case is not a sign that new life (hope) can be rejuvenated, but a reminder that more of the evil still resides in the society. The dystopia in this society overwhelms any idea of hope and in a way this novella lives up to what Tom Moylan and Raffaella Lacollini assert in *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination* as the spirit of dystopia -- there is no hope within the text. The deaths of the sex perverts are symbolic punishment for evil. The arrests of Princess Adhis and Meyya Mutola are also significant as punishment for evil. Death therefore indicates the writer's conviction that if the society is to change then the corrupt, evil and cancerous characters and systems have to be eliminated. The writer suggests a total overhaul of the systems and not just quick fixes.

The description of Peshawar is done skillfully. The writer makes deliberate word choices that attract the sense of sight. The narrator says this about Peshawar:

Peshawar with its street lights, still on in daytime, and its dogs, mosques, garbage dumps, women in ninja costume, closed cinemas where the projectors are coated in a thick film of dust. Peshawar's showered and unshowered masses trudge past on the dusty roads. (78)

The choice of words in the sentence above vividly describes Peshawar as a place of disorder. Peshawar is where the Adhiambo and Meyya Mutola exchange the bags of cocaine for heroine. The description of Peshawar which is city in Pakistan indicates that the human society around the world faces similar ills and that there is need to correct these ills. The hazardous disorder portrays the neglect with which those in power have



left their society. The images of Peshawar denote collapse and shut down. The cinemas having a thick film of dust demonstrate the fact that they have been unused for long, lights being on during daytime and garbage dumps everywhere are a sign of neglect. The idea of presence of both “showered and unshowered masses” also heightens the idea of waste. The choice of words in this other description of Peshawar leaves one with no doubt of the state of affairs there:

Traffic on the Karakoum proceeds with zero decorum, black London -- and yellow American-style taxis jostling with coaches, buses, rickshaws, as well as horses and carts on the roads. And the noise of Peshawar, ooh -- imams yelling from minarets fifteen hours a day, furious passengers shouting at bus drivers to stop so they may alight, commuters hooting their car horns to threaten and intimidate, brakes squealing, rickshaws and carts clattering. (60-61)

The sentence structure used makes one visualize the commotion, confusion and disorganization that characterize postcolonial states. The sentences are long which allows the reader to get a feeling of lack of an ending to the mess. The sentences also utilize nouns that can be visualized and verbs that denote physical actions hence heighten the reader’s visualization of the scene. The sentences allow the reader to visualize Peshawar hence heighten the comprehension of the mess. The description also connotes confusion in the sense that the Karakoum is a site for disorder. For instance, the narrator in mentioning the types of transport talks of the coaches, the buses, rickshaws, horses and carts all jostling for space in the road. The sight is one of complete disorder since there

are no clear roads or the different types of means of transport. At the same time the chaos is heightened by the mix in kinds of people on the road. The narrator talks of imams, passengers, bus drivers and commuters all shouting and their voices mingling with the different noises made by the different modes of transport. Peshawar is presented as a confused and disorganized city which as already mentioned is representative of urban centres in postcolonial societies which had no plan of order at their inception.

Meyya Mutola wondering out aloud amidst this commotion makes the reader see the connection between his confused state and the society around him. He blends in with the mess — he is a corrupt and greedy leader who is not ashamed to misuse public property. Peshawar is a reflection of where the contemporary society is headed if nothing is done to thwart the schemes of people like Meyya Mutola.

Nigeria is also described with its set of dirt. At the Abooja airport the narrator explains that:

Well-dressed whores in multi-coloured weaves – red, blonde, green, blue – are comfortably sprawled all over the lobby, like a welcoming committee. Princess Adhis ogles their picturesque outfits with admiration in her eyes.... (38-39)

This being the first sight that welcomes all arrivals at this city, we can conclude that the society has been reduced to its lowest point. The misspelling of Abuja as ‘Abooja’ foregrounds the idea of the city as being too corrupted by all forms of dirt that it is a shell of its old self. The concept of oxymoron revealed by the words ‘well dressed whores’

allows the reader to see the contradiction that is Nigeria. Although it is a beautiful place, within this beauty there are some aspects of immorality. Mochama selects the wording of the above description carefully to paint an image of Abuja as a place of no values. The presences of weaves of different colours signal the artificiality in the society. It reflects on the fakeness and the aspect that this artificiality has become the norm. The fact that the whores are 'comfortably sprawled' indicates the acceptance of their way of life by the society.

Further strategic description is seen when Mochama uses action verbs together, the narrator says Air Livindi "choked , wheezed, coughed, his body jerking with powerful ripples, and then let out a scream so high pitched it made God Papa wince" (24-25). The image created in our minds is of the movements that Air Livindi makes after being sprayed. By describing the actions, the reader is made to empathize with him.

Irony and satire as strategies have been employed extensively. The section "Princess Adhis" is a signal for the character of Adhiambo Ochineku, the wife of Olusegun Ochineku the drug lord. A princess in normal circumstances is a person of royalty both in terms of character and behavior. The character of Adhiambo Ochineku is in no way royal. She flirts with her husband's drug friends shamelessly. In the novella Adhiambo is seen having an affair with the mayor of Nairobi, Meyya Mutola and she is not apologetic about the affair. The fact that she assists the husband in his drug business is all the more reason why she is not fit to be referred to as a princess. Mochama calls her princess in the title deliberately so that the readers can question her morals. The contradiction here

brings out irony of reality and appearance. By employing irony, Mochama calls the readers' attention to the contemporary Kenyan society and how sometimes what is seen on the surface is just but a camouflage of the rot and disintegration prevalent. Many a times what is seen is but a veil of real degeneration. This incongruity intensifies the general argument of the novella with regards to the degeneration of the society. It adds up to the image that the reader gets of a society turned against itself in destruction.

The novella employs irony when the narrator says, "in the pursuit of happiness, Meyya Mutola has become a gentleman of insatiable appetites, from land bought below market values to OMW's. Other Men's Wives" (19). The reference to a gentleman in reference to Meyya Mutola is incongruous. Meyya Mutola's character is not anything close to how a gentleman should behave. He sleeps with other men's wives and amasses wealth wrongfully. A gentleman does not do such. The reference to gentleman here emphasizes his character as a greedy man. This irony exposes and critiques the greedy in the society. Watamu is the title of one of the chapters in the novella. Watamu literally means "sweet people" (27). Christof and Bradson and Von Wagner do misuse the sweetness of Watamu when they devour young girls from Watamu. At the beginning of the chapter by the same name, the narrator says, "if one is not a naturalist, there are plenty of other 'man-mades' to enjoy" (27). This heightens our interest as we are left wondering about the 'man-mades' here. It is ironical that Watamu attracts people who take advantage of their sweet nature. This irony reveals the subject of child abuse well.

The concept of brotherhood has also been presented ironically. This is introduced right from the title where the corrupted version of the word is used – broda. The kinds of brothers in the novella have none of the qualities of brothers but are exploiters of the masses. This irony reveals the idea of exploitation which the writer interrogates. It also brings to light the fact that the contemporary society is riddled with hypocrisies.

The villa that Christof, Von Wagner and Bradson share is protected by the administration police. The irony in this situation is that the same administration police are expected to protect the citizens at all costs. Instead of protecting citizens they are aiding the rapists' endeavours of molesting young girls. The fact that this may be happening without their knowledge is also indicative of the ignorance and lack of initiative in the security officers. Mochama is criticizing the police force for playing a role in aiding the people who break the law while leaving the citizens at the mercy of these oppressors.

*Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* is a parody on the contemporary Kenyan society. Parody essentially entails mimicry. Parody is seen as a style of writing that imitates the style of another person or something else in an amusing manner. *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda*, though fictional in nature, imitate two social events that outplayed themselves in the public arena in Kenya: The Akinyi-Chinedu-Wanjala saga and the Java Coffee House scandal. The Akinyi-Chinedu-Wanjala saga involved Akinyi, a Kenya lady and her Nigerian husband who for some time had been in and out of jail on cases relating to drug trafficking. On the other hand the owner of Java Coffee House was sometime back claimed to have molested a number of children. Mochama skillfully uses

these two public events to weave his fictional story. Through the narrative, Mochama ridicules and mocks both parties as well as those who do the same. He portrays them in a humorous manner. As a parody, the novella effectively captures the issues of drug trafficking and child abuse, and by ridiculing them, the writer manages to openly criticize such characters in the society.

Mochama has utilized a number of motifs in this novella. A motif is a recurring element that has symbolic significance in a story. Any motif used in any story plays a role in defining the nature of the story. It allows the readers to understand the story better and form an impression about the subject matter in the story. *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* has two conspicuous motifs: the blood motif and the silhouette motif.

Mochama uses the blood motif extensively to evoke in the reader disgust at the problematic nature of the contemporary society. Air Livindi's torture by God Papa is splashed with the messy splash of blood:

He had open bleeding wounds on his back and buttocks...the flies that haunt food-and-drink places like west silhouette were buzzing around the discarded piece of ass and the thick trail of blood on the floor...a cloud of flies settled on his mouth, which was covered in bloody froth. (14-15)

This description is nauseating and, as Douglas asserts, the scatological representations in a text are a reflection of the society's cosmology; it is clear that the contemporary Kenyan society is seen as one riddled with problems. The metaphor of blood enhances

the reader's senses of sight and intensifies the pathetism of the situation. The description here concretizes Mochama's arguments about the whole concept of corruption and degeneration of the society. The extents of dehumanization in the contemporary Kenyan society are foregrounded by metaphors of blood. Seeing and feeling disgust is meant to enhance understanding of the levels of degeneration in the society. Blood is seen as a motif of death. The society is being slowly murdered by characters such as Air Livindi, God Papa, Ochineku and Meyya Mutola who suck its resources and very life.

The silhouette motif is seen right at the beginning of the narrative when the setting in chapter one is described. The club where Air Livindi is tortured goes by the name west silhouette. The description of the place seems to insist on the recurrence of the silhouette image:

Naija drug lord Olusegun Ochineku peered through the half light and observed two silhouettes. One was of a man in a dark Stetson hat and a leather jacket...the other silhouette was of a naked man. (14)

The concept of a silhouette as used to describe images of people indicates the aspect of invisibility as well as lack of a clear form. The concept as used in this novella seems to interrogate the dark side of the society which is always hidden behind legitimate businesses. In this case torture of Air Livindi takes place at the dark corners of the west silhouette which is a legitimate business. The concept of a silhouette also indicates the lurking evil at the calm and clear nature of society. This motif enhances the writer's concretization of the evil prevalent in the society. A closer interrogation of the novella

reveals issues of both drug trafficking as well as child abuse which in essence reflect on the concept of a silhouette.

### **Strategies of Characterization**

In *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* a number of strategies have been employed to enhance characterization as well as to enhance achievement of meaning through the ways the various characters have been presented. These strategies range from dialectic marking of characters, presentation of caricatures to allegorical naming of characters.

In this text, the high in the society, the bourgeois who are expected to be civilized are made to use the broken language. The writer demonstrates that the bourgeois class is rotten and stinks just like the characters he creates who represent this class. The mayor uses accented language in many instances. In one instance Meyya Mutola says, “hi think what hi am playing is Meyya’s ngambit,” (22). The mayor’s language is incomprehensible. The undertones in his language are as important as the resultant effect they create in the character’s language. In this case the lack of a clear ‘tongue’ signals the disarray that is the bourgeois class. The mayor seems not to be educated enough and yet he handles the capital city. This leads one to concur with Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* disillusionment at the elite in post independence Africa. Mochama furthers his argument to show that decades after independence we still are not able to have an elite that is capable of handling the affairs of the nation hence the subsequent misplacement of priorities in the mayor. Instead of working towards the betterment of the city, he is obsessed with taking over Ochineku’s drug empire. He craves it and loses his life trying



to get his hands on it. There is humor in the way the bourgeois fights itself in a bid to settle supremacy battles. The masses have no place in this equation. It is a battle where the fittest are meant to survive.

The writer has used caricatures to ridicule and satirize certain issues or people in the society. Both Meyya Mutola and Adhiambo are caricatures. The physical appearance of Adhiambo has been exaggerated to create the illusion of fakeness. The narrator at some point tells us that Meyya Mutola refers to her as a zebra due to the uneven skin tone. This is a clear exaggeration since even if her skin tone is uneven, it is impossible to compare it to a zebra. The description is humorous and it also acts as a satire on people who in an effort to fit in ridicule themselves.

Meyya Mutola's name elicits images of greed. The narrator insists that his greed knows no bounds. The childhood name that he is given, '*Nzaa*' is symbolic of his greed. As a style, the use of such names enables the writer to easily demonstrate his points about the society. '*Nzaa*' is an Akamba word for hunger. The name foregrounds Meyya Mutola's lack of contentment. The use of the metaphoric name hints to the reader the greed inherent in the mayor. He is willing to forget about his government roles as long as he is benefitting. This is seen where instead of ensuring the society is rid of Ochineku because of his drug trafficking business, he aids the business for his selfish interests of wanting to take over. Meyya Mutola's lack of contentment is indicative of political and business leaders who use corrupt means to enrich themselves unlawfully thereby propagating the poverty in the society.

## **Strategies of Narration**

The narrative voice is at the centre of any narrative because it is the point of view from which the narrative is told. The narrative voice in the novella is the third person omniscient narrator. The narrative voice is strategic in that it allows the writer to look at each character's mind and present to us their truths as well as their pretences. For instance, the readers are able to see Meyya Mutola's secret wish – he wants to steal from Ochineku. The readers are made to see his hypocritical nature in that he pretends to love Princess Adhis when in real sense he is using her to exploit Ochineku.

The omniscient narrator is also an objective narrative voice hence is able to capture the degeneration of the contemporary society in a manner that allows the reader the objective distance with which to contemplate the concerns raised and chart a way forward for the society. This narrative voice is an all-knowing voice which allows for events to be interpreted by several different voices while maintaining some level of distance. Its objective distance allows the readers to see the concerns raised from a critical angle.

## **Conclusion**

The literary strategies employed enable the writer to foreground various issues. Mochama has extensively employed literary strategies that foreground the devastating conditions in the contemporary Kenyan society. The language used in this novella is highly descriptive evoking in the reader vivid images of the writer's perception of contemporary Kenya as a place ravaged by corruption, poor management and leadership and other social ills. In this case therefore, the choices a writer makes with regards to

language carry his intentions and world views. For instance when the narrator tells us about Adhiambo's complexion, it is foregrounded but at the same time there is a lot of humour used in the description. Here Mochama manipulates language through a humorous representation and his underlying satirical tone does not escape the reader. In this case therefore, literary strategies can be used successfully to convey messages.

The next chapter introduces us to another novella, *Meet the Omtitas*. I attempt to analyze Mochama's use of language in *Meet the Omtitas* and discuss the convergence and divergence of that novella with *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda*. Since the different novellas carry different messages, I look at how Mochama uses language that is simple and direct and yet foregrounded to discuss issues of youth.

## **CHAPTER THREE: LITERARY CHOICES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS IN *MEET THE OMTITAS***

### **Introduction**

*Meet the Omtitas* is a novella whose intensity of action is achieved through focus on one family, the Omtita family. Through the concentration on this family we are able to see the issues that the family faces and tackles as it survives in the harsh economic times. The writer bases his focus on the children more especially Tommy Omtita and his world view about life. The focus on youth allows the novella to capture the essence of it being seen as a youth reader. The major characters are youth enhancing the aspect of it succeeding as a text for youth. It traces the challenges and successes that youth go through in relation to family, friends and life in general. The major characters are typical of the way youth behave and the young readers can identify with them.

The novella concentrates on the Omtita family which in essence serves as a microcosmic view of the middle class in Kenya. All struggles and issues that this family faces are reflective of the contemporary Kenyan middle class.

### **Summary of the Novella**

The novella focuses on the Omtita family and the struggles they go through in an ever changing society. When the story begins, the estate children are cheering Bonnie Omtita to fight with the estate bully Obash. Tommy, his elder brother stops the fight and takes Bonnie home. While Bonnie tries to nurse the swollen forehead Wendy, their sister arrives with Angel her best friend. The youngsters chat for a while after which Tommy

escorts Angel home. Tommy has a crush on Angel and decides to ask her out to watch the movie 'Coming to America'.

Mr. Omtita, who has a timber business in Kisii, arrives at four in the morning while singing at the top of his voice. He disrupts Tommy's sleep. After a few days Tommy manages to gain courage to request his mother for some money to take Angel to watch 'Coming to America'. His mother gives him money and he takes her to watch the movie. Opening day for schools arrives and the Omtita household is awoken by the news that their dog, Simba is dead. They hold a small ceremony for the dead dog after which they go to town to shop for school items. Tommy is joining the university and he is excited. Before leaving for the university, Bonnie gives Tommy a poem he had written and Tommy is proud of his young brother.

At the university Tommy meets his high school friends and after orientation they go round town enjoying themselves. They end up losing the Higher Education Loans Board money they had received at a club. Life in the university becomes difficult. During the Nairobi agricultural show, Mrs. Omtita, Tommy, Wendy, Bonnie and Angel are driven to the show grounds by Nandwa. This trip then marks the end of the novella.

### **Analysis of Literary Choices in the Novella**

#### **Strategies of Plot**

The novella has been partitioned into various chapters which focus on specific issues relating to the Omtita household. The partitioning allows the novella have some elements

of order and enhance the novella's ability to be focusing on a single issue at a time. A look at the first chapter titled "The Fight" reveals its focus on the conflict between Obash and Bonnie. The section "Coming to America" is another section that deals with the date that Tommy and Angel have of going to the movies. This element of partitioning allows the novella to focus on a single issue at a time enhances its coherence.

The novella has utilized flashbacks which fill in information about the Omtita family as well as the situation in the country at the time. For instance when the narrator refers to Mr. Omtita's drinking habit; he uses flashback to give the readers the genesis of the habit. The readers are made to see the connection between the habit and Mrs. Omtita's accident which left her paralyzed and in a wheel chair. This flashback is important because it demonstrates the idea of people using alcohol to drown their fears and incapacities about life. Apart from making a statement about Mr. Omtita, the flashback makes the narrator reveal the indifference alcohol affords characters in the harsh contemporary life.

There is the infusion of the main plot with songs and a poem which are not only foregrounded but also enhance the meaning communicated in the sections they appear and enhance humour in the novella. The intertextuality further allows the novella to break monotony of prose narration. For instance when Mr. Omtita arrives from Kisii he is singing a number of songs at the top of his voice. The narrator introduces the first song which interrupts Tommy's dream: "Chiquittita you are my heeeaaaar...and there's no way I'm going to deny youuuuuuuuuu...oh ohhh ohhh ohhhhhhhh..." (19). The presentation of this song introduces some elements of humour with regards to the way Mr.

Omtita drags the song in certain parts of the song. It also reveals the level of inebriation and the state he is in.

Another section where intertextuality is seen is where the television is said to begin with the national anthem. The narrator goes ahead to give lyrics from the national anthem, “O God of All creation/ bless this our Land and Nation/ justice be our shield and defender/ And our home-land of Kenya/ Tunayo-i-penda...” (98). The idea that the television always began with the national anthem cements the view that people were made to respect the rule of law through subtle means. Everyday people are reminded through the national anthem of the importance to obey the rule of law. In essence, the song foregrounds the concept of the national anthem acting as one of the ways through which indoctrination of the citizens happens. By being reminded every morning and evening through the anthem of the importance of obeying the rule of law which is assumed to have been incepted by God, the citizens reach a point of accepting and believing in the idea of respecting the rule of law as an aspect of truth and reality. It becomes part and parcel of their being hence the citizens are indoctrinated and cannot fight back oppressive rule.

### **Strategies of Language**

While presenting issues that young people face, the novella utilizes language appropriate for young readers. Language, as already established, is the lifeline of literature. As such, the literary writer manipulates it in such a manner as to communicate effectively. The writer’s choice of words is of essence if they are to achieve any unity of thought.

Mochama is alive to this fact in *Meet the Omtitas* where he carefully knits language effectively. In the last chapter, the narrator describes Nairobi agricultural show as one of confusion and disorganization:

all these folks crowded and flanked the entire length of the Nairobi show food booths – sipping milk shakes that came in vanilla or strawberry or chocolate flavours, taking big bites off hot dogs and little bites off smokies, licking the peaked tops of dairy milk ice-creams, drinking seven up, Tarino and Mirinda sodas, crunching....(122)

The writer not only chooses his words carefully to present the disharmony but also the sentencing is deliberately long. The description of the variety in activity in one area depicts the disorganized nature of contemporary Kenyan society. The fact that even in such chaos enjoyment can be derived is also brought to the fore. The long sentencing pattern is meant to enable the readers to identify with the long and dragging nature of the disorder in events in urban Kenya.

The structure of sentences in various sections of the novella demonstrates a certain kind of maturity and thought. When referring to the Orientation the writer skillfully structures the sentences to carry the weight of his intention. The structure of the sentence demonstrates the way the orientation officer carried out the orientation. When the orientation officer speaks the writer employs the use of ellipsis to demonstrate the slowness of the speech: “now...students...welcome...to...the...university...of...Nairobi” (59). The ellipses indicate the long pauses that he takes between words. Sly, Tommy’s friend claims that he



sounds like he ate a bag of cement (59). This intensifies the understanding of the way he speaks. Sly also adds that “by the time he is finished we will all have grown beards as long as his” (59). All these images are meant to emphasize on the boring nature of the whole talk. Since he was talking to young students definitely they were not paying any attention. In essence one can understand why the graduates the universities produce fail to make an impact—they do not pay attention to lecturers. The old methods of lecturing also contribute to the low standards. The writer seems to indicate that there is need for changes in the education system so as to achieve quality education.

Chapter one opens with some aspect of repetition, “Fight, fight, fight, fight...” (7). This repetition of the word ‘fight’ introduces the story with conflict and tension which builds up suspense and makes the readers more interested in the story. As an opening, it arouses one’s interest and leaves one expecting more. The repetition also introduces us to the issues youth grapple with—the issues of standing up for themselves and earning respect. Bonnie, the youngest Omtita wants to fight with Obash because of being provoked.

One of the characters who wants to fight has a t-shirt with the words “I AM HAMMER” (8). The capitalization in the words draws the reader’s attention to itself by the virtue of it appearing different from the rest in terms of sentence case. The t-shirt is a mark for Obash’s character as the one who feels the need to bash others. His name also alludes to his character. He is rightfully called Obash because as the narrator intones he had the habit of threatening to bash other children. These aspects foreground the issue of bullying among youths and its effects. Bullying does not make one gain any respect; instead it

creates fear and false respectability in people. The mark of respect is the actions that one commits.

The different characters are given language with regards to their educational level and status in life. The estate watchman, Gilbert Wanyama is referred to as “kill-pat mnyama” (40). This is with regards to the way he speaks where he says everything with a heavy Luhya accent. For instance when reporting the death of Simba, the Omtita dog Gilbert says “*kalikuwa kame-enta kale ka choke ka asupuhi kake ka kawaita, kaka konkwa na kari, pwana!*”(41). In Kiswahili what Gilbert says translates to ‘*alikuwa ameenda kukimbia kama kawaida yake alipogongwa na gari*’ which means that Simba had gone for his morning jog when a vehicle hit him. The accent in his language not only identifies him as coming from the Luhya community, it also demonstrates his low level of education which informs his job of being a watchman. He does not have enough education to get him a better job. Gilbert’s heavily accented language acts as a source of humour in the novella. The manner in which he speaks makes everything he says sound funny.

Gilbert’s language can be contrasted to Mr. Omtita's language which in many cases is a slur while at other times he is fluent. When drunk he does not speak fluently. For instance, when he arrives from Kisii one night he tells Nandwa their house help, “you need to make me matokesh and cook one of these chicken for me for early breakfast. I am very starving, Nandwa—all I had for supper was one botto of whiskey, tee hee hee...” (22). The incoherence in his language is a demonstration of the effect alcoholic

drinks have on those who take them—they cloud one’s judgment and view of things. The novella’s primary language of presentation is English; therefore, any other language infused within the novella is seen as a foreign language. The use of foreign language allows the writer to achieve several ends. Through code-switching and code-mixing the writer foregrounds a number of social concerns.

One important aspect of foreign language to consider is the wide usage of Sheng in the novella. Thomas Geider’s definition as quoted by Rinkanya is “a peculiar sociolect based on Swahili and English with...lexical and grammatical admixtures from other Kenyan languages” (Makokha, Kabaji & Dipio: 90). Sheng is a dialect created by a certain social group. In Kenya it is used by the urban low class as well as by the youth. As a language for the youth, it makes the novella credible because it focuses on the youth. While talking about the city council, Nandwa, the Omtita house boy says, “at least the *kanjo* always sends trucks and guys to collect the rubbish” (11). The word *kanjo* is a corruption of ‘council’ in streetwise language. In a sense it makes the common man identify with the city council which many a times is high handed in the way it handles the common man. The rural home is referred to as “shags” (11), house helps as “mboches” (12), *matatu*, a Kiswahili word for public transport vehicles as ‘ma-three’ (37). All these coinages augur well with the youth and their take on society.

The usage of Sheng situates the youth and attempts to involve them in the issues of the state. By using Sheng, the writer is identifying with the youth. The use of Sheng grounds the novella as a text meant for a particular group of people—the youth. The presence of

Sheng also introduces the crisis in the postcolonial Kenya. Sheng as a bastard form of language with no clear roots is indicative of the loss of direction in the various state organs and the lack of trust the public has on the same organs. Mochama uses sheng in the novella as a “bridge of solidarity” with the youth and the oppressed in contemporary Kenya. In *The Nairobi Journal of Literature* (Vol 5) Rinkanya argues that sheng is “a form of new outlet for the expression of various cultures , especially the metamorphosed cultures resulting from the co-existence of various cultures and linguistic forms” (45). As a language, sheng is therefore able to not only present issues in a manner that the youth identify with but also demonstrates the multi-faceted nature of the contemporary urban space in Kenya.

When Tommy takes Angel out to watch a movie, their *matatu* ride is full of characters that use Sheng. The characters’ use of Sheng reveals their social standing as well as their capacity in the society. For instance in the *matatu* drive that Tommy and Angel have to the movie, the tout says “*utabeba manzi yako?*” Tommy is asked if he can carry his girlfriend. The word ‘*manzi*’ is Sheng for girlfriend. The tout is referred to as a ‘pointy’ which is Sheng word for a mulatto and physics is referred to as ‘*physo*’.

There is also wide usage of Kiswahili in the novella. When Tommy catches his brother Bonnie almost fighting, he warns Obash who is then more interested in fighting him. Tommy tells him, “the day you break your *sauti ya panya* rat voice, I will consider your offer” (9). The usage of Kiswahili heightens the humour in the metaphor given. The reader is made to see that although Obash is the estate bully; his voice does not match his

actions-- he speaks in a shrill. The shrill voice is compared to the rat's voice which is normally very low and weak. It is ironical that a person of such a low voice can threaten others in the estate. This in turn heightens the fact that the bullying is a way through which Obash covers up for the low self esteem due to the shrill voice. It is his way of asserting himself and earning respect. It is only by looking at it this way that we can understand the respect issues that young teenage boys grapple with.

The use of both sheng and Kiswahili help in contextualizing the novella in an urban Kenyan setting where the mix is common. Some Kiswahili words have also been used to carry the cultural context of the novella. For instance, when the narrator refers to a *dede* (8), the intention is to make the reader visualize this. The *dede* is not just any grasshopper out there but a big grasshopper. Using the word *dede* allows the young readers who the novella is meant for imagine and picture the scene. The word appears in the context of the fight that Bonnie was about to have with Obash. The image of the *dede* in comparison to Bonnie's spectacles being trapped is depictive of Bonnie's situation in the impending fight. Bonnie is no match for the bully Obash. The narrator is therefore showing that as small as Bonnie is, he is rapped and cannot win the fight.

Tommy Omtita is at one point threatened by a Gor Mahia fan when he goes with his father to watch a Shabana –Gor Mahia match. The fan tells him, “*mkitushinda, leo unaenda nyumbani bila njumu*” (29). The fan tells him that if Shabana beats Gor Mahia, he will go home without shoes. ‘Njumu’ is a Sheng word for shoes while the rest of the words are in Kiswahili. The fan uses a mix of Kiswahili and Sheng, but one thing is

revealed – the social standing of the fan as well as his emotional attachment to his team. The Omtitas being a middle class family afford a number of luxuries but the fan sees the shoes as an opportunity to get some cash. The living standards and divide in the society pushes people to extreme lengths, instead of going to watch the match some people like the fan go to watch for things they can steal from others.

Kiswahili songs have also been incorporated into the novella. The narrator says:

Tommy was awoken by the sound of the radio downstairs playing at full blast that dreaded song: *hata wewe mukulima, amka kumekucha. Kamata jembe na panga twende shamba....*(22)

The Kiswahili lyrics translate to ‘even you farmer, wake up it is morning. Grab a hoe and a cutlass lets go to the farm’. The song is a reminder to the youngsters to get ready to go to school and get over any form of laziness in order to build the nation. Incidentally, the addition of the lyrics not only reduces monotony of prose narration but also reveal the hope and vigour that was characteristic of postcolonial states immediately after the end of colonialism.

The one party in the nation in the novella is referred to as “*Chama cha Mwisho*” (48). The name of the party literally means ‘the last party’. The use of Kiswahili to name the party foregrounds the idea of dictatorship in that this is a one-party state where the president has refused to amend the constitution to allow for multi-party system of rule. ‘*Chama cha Mwisho*’ is also depictive of the poor leadership system in the state. The concept is representative of postcolonial African dictatorship systems which do not allow

room for divergent opinions hence leading to deterioration in the management of the nations. Mochama is interrogating the idea of African leaders' obsession with power and is presenting the consequence as destructive to the development of the states. Mochama is blaming this way of rule for the problems in postcolonial Africa. The use of Kiswahili lives up to what Rinkanya adds as another function of code-mixing. She argues that code-mixing reveals the author's attitude. In this case '*Chama cha Mwisho*' alludes to Mochama's view of the political state which in his view is retrogressive and destructive. Literature is essentially connotative in nature and use of metaphors and other forms of metaphoric references enhance a text's aesthetic beauty as well as its achievement by our senses and involve changing literal perception of words. Images used seek to stretch meanings of words and allow the reader to visualize the ideas so as to comprehend them well. A number of metaphors have been utilized in this novella.

When 'The Three Musketeers' attend the orientation, Sly nicknames the man conducting the orientation as 'Doctor Piriton'. This name is metaphoric since he is being compared to piriton, the drug meant to make people sleep. This comparison brings to light the fact that his voice and the pace of his speech seem to lull the students to sleep. The metaphor effectively allows the reader to comprehend the nature of boredom in the orientation. Another issue that comes to light through this metaphor is the attitude of the young generation over the wisdom of slow but old generation. To the young, this is the epitome of boredom. The carefree nature of youths is exposed as well as their lack of initiative. This in essence leads to the poor quality of graduates that are the end product of their education.

The novella widely employs a variety of similes. While demonstrating similarity in dissimilar things, similes are an explicit way of foregrounding certain concerns. The narrator says this while describing the Omtita family: “their father was a traditional African hardcore who ran the house like the military barracks...” (16). The comparison relates the way Omtita house is managed to the way the army barracks are run. Military barracks have certain rules and regulation that all trainees as well as army personnel adhere to. Failure to follow the code of conduct makes one be interdicted or worse still be punished severely. The simile above inherently indicates that the Omtita household employs the same rigidity and discipline levels seen in military barracks.

The fact that Mr. Omtita is seen as the executioner further brings to light his dictatorial character. The simile furthers the conception of the family as a microcosm of the state. In essence the dictatorial stint in Mr. Omtita is reflective of the dictatorial rule of the president Omojaa in the novella. The family is therefore one of the sites for the explicit signification of power games in the state.

To further concretize the concept of misplaced authority is the section when the narrator talks of Mr. Omtita’s arrival from Kisii town. The narrator says, “Mr. Omtita must have had a whole bottle of liquor all the way from Kisii Town (where he ran a timber yard called ‘Timberoa’) and arrived in Nairobi drunk as a fish and high as a kite” (20). These similes elicit the image of an inebriated character that has essentially lost faculties of reason. To imagine that authority has been bestowed someone who at times does not reason well defeats logic. This is reminiscent of the contemporary leadership where



politicians are drunk with power which blinds them from the needs of the common man. The similes enhance the writer's criticism of the political class which is obsessed with power and is indifferent to the needs of the electorate.

When introducing, Bonnie, the last born in this family, the narrator says this of him, "thin, his sharp bony knees pressing pointedly into the skinny jeans he always wore"(7). The narrator goes further to say, "Tommy approached them from Bonnie's back and could see his brother's geek-like spectacles sticking out of his back pocket like a trapped *dede*" (8). This in essence makes the readers empathize with the boy in his helpless situation. He wants to fight with the estate bully and yet his eyesight is not good. In this case he is as helpless as the trapped "*dede*" image that is used to refer to his spectacles. At this point Bonnie does not care about them but his honour. Mochama indicates that issues of honour and respect are also important to youth. Bonnie wants to fight because he feels his honour was challenged.

When Tommy tries to stop the fight the narrator says that Tommy "made his voice as deep as 'headmaster-ish' as he could" (8). The assumption here is that a headmaster should have a deep voice in order to command a school. From the young people's point of view, a deep voice commands respect and enables one to get a good job. Their view is that a person without a deep voice cannot be considered to be a headmaster at all. The young equate the serious job with a serious voice. This demonstrates their naivety at the way the society runs.

The narrator delves into Tommy Omtita's crush on Angel, Wendy's friend and says that "her skin looked like it was made from a dairy milk chocolate" (14). This comparison of Angel's skin to chocolate indicates that Angel's skin was not just smooth but also of chocolate colour. By describing her skin readers are made to see why Tommy is captivated by her beauty. He is experiencing youthful infatuation that is characteristic of teenagers.

Tommy's arrival in campus is also coloured with his view of the institution. The narrator says, "the campus buildings had equally *pararad* (were decrepit) and looked like a weebegone parade of people suffering from marasmus" (56). The reference expects one to compare the buildings to the sight of a patient suffering from marasmus. A patient suffering from marasmus is normally emaciated and has dry skin. This comparison to the university buildings essentially means that the buildings are not just old but have no shine and are in a poor state. This simile foregrounds the neglect in the venues for academic nourishment. The writer points out the fact that the government has failed to keep the areas for academic nourishment in order then the expected outcome cannot be of good quality. The conditions for academics are not conducive for transmission of knowledge.

In agreement with these looks the students took "passports" (56) instead of complete showers. Passports here allude to the "showers where water was simply dabbed on the face, under the armpits and certain nether regions of the body" (56). Tommy cannot understand how such an environment is meant to make someone be more educated. The description of the campus environment concretizes the idea of it not being able to produce quality graduates. The description is in essence the way things are.

The title *Meet the Omtitas* is one strategy through which the writer communicates to the reader. By using simple and direct language in the title, the writer is able to draw the audience's attention. The title suggests a form of introduction given to the reader about the family of the Omtitas. The usage of the word 'meet' in the title is symbolic of the actual meeting that the reader has with the Omtita family. The narrator introduces the reader to the Omtita family and the reader completes the action of being acquainted with the family through the act of reading. The title therefore is a signal of the introduction of the reader to this family. The symbolism in the title justifies the novella's concentration on the Omtita family as well as foregrounds the focus on the middle class in postcolonial Kenya. The family introduced to the reader therefore acts as a microcosm of the middle class and in essence the writer's interrogation of the same.

Another strategy of language used in the novella is irony. During this match the narrator describes the way Mr. Omtita was dressed: "His own dad, dressed in a full three-piece Raymond's suit had taken him to a Shabana versus Gor last December carrying a smart leather briefcase...full of stones" (29). The introduction of the contents of the briefcase heightens the tension in the situation. The use of ellipsis before the introduction of the contents of the briefcase is meant to make the reader feel some form of suspense. It is ironical that a man of his stature can forego morals in case of some violence. The fact that Mr. Omtita carried stones in the briefcase is demonstrative of the ability of decent people turning to hooligans if and when an opportunity presents itself.

Allusion is a figure of speech where the author refers to a subject matter by way of passing reference. Allusion invokes in the reader prior knowledge of the subject matter mentioned in passing in order to make meaning of the text being read.

The new students insist that every student needs an MTM. This as indicated in the novella translates to Mother Teresa Mboch. This acronym alludes to the philanthropist Mother Teresa who had good qualities of helping others without expecting anything in return. In this context it refers to a female student who does one's bidding—cooking, washing and even copying notes and attending lectures on behalf of the male student. This allusion foregrounds the aspect of laziness and lack of initiative among students which translates to poor graduates who are not well-versed in any trade thus the underdevelopment of the state.

In the campus Tommy meets his high school friends. They are referred to as “The Three Musketeers” an allusion to the adventure story *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas which focuses on the adventures of Aramis, Porthos and Athos as well as D'Artagan's attempt to follow them. This allusion in essence demonstrates their closeness insofar as doing both mischief and good. This is clearly demonstrated when they go out to drink and party and end up losing their higher education loans board (HELB) money in the process. They together commit mischief and cover it up. The club they visit is referred to as “the mad house” (69) intentionally. The writer wants us to equate what happens here to some form of madness. People lose themselves into music, girls and alcohol. The reality of the madness is seen when the ‘three musketeers’ find

themselves in the morning with nothing of their money. Activities taking place here are not good. The football teams in the novella allude to real teams within the Kenya football leagues.

Corruption of words is another strategy employed by Mochama to reveal the problems facing the contemporary Kenyan society. When talking about the government, the narrator uses a corruption of names. The narrator refers to the president as president Omojaa, while the education system 'Nanine'. The corruption of names here allows the writer to create a fictitious world that the readers can look at objectively. Mochama allows us to look at the novella without associating them with day Kenya hence see the reality more objectively. The fictitious world also allows the writer to give his criticisms about the state of affairs openly without fear of censure. As a strategy, it works well for both the writer as well as the reader. Inasmuch as he uses corruption of names, the names maintain some level of semblance to the Kenyan past leadership. Kenyan readers can identify the characters he corrupts clearly. This enables us to see them for what they are and not for the fakeness they purport to carry around.

The novella uses aspects of humour widely. The scene where Mr. Omtita arrives in the middle of the night is very humorous. The narrator tells us:

Mr. Omtita almost spilled into the corridor when Tommy opened the door.

He had been leaning on the door for support when it was flung open. Dad regained his balance, but the bunch of bananas he had been carrying in one hand, and the two chicken hanging upside down in the other hand, scattered to the ground. The bunch of bananas stayed silent on the; floor,

but the grown *kukus* legs firmly tied together, set up an almighty squawking. (21)

The scene is not just humorous but portrays the clumsiness in Mr. Omtita. In addition to this we get the feeling that although he is clumsy his family loves and respects him. When we get to question his drinking habit we are introduced to the fact that Mrs. Omtita's accident that left her paralyzed made him be a drunkard. Drinking is his way of coping with the stresses around him.

The ending of the novella ties up well with the beginning. The novella ends with, "it's such a pleasure to, like, really meet the Omtitas" (129). The writer uses the principle of end focus where he ensures the end ties up with the beginning well. The title, *Meet the Omtitas* ties with the ending, where one gets the feel that they have actually met the Omtitas. The novella achieves the full circle form by this connection. The reader is not lost on the intention of the writer which in essence was that they meet the Omtitas. The indication here is that the reader now has been finally introduced to this family and is pleased to have known them. The narrator's intention in the text was to show us what the family is like.

### **Strategies of Characterization**

One of the major strategies of characterization in this novella is the allegorical naming. Mochama has created different characters to represent the different types of characters in existence in the contemporary Kenyan society. These characters therefore act as

prototypes of the people in the society. Inherently, Mochama is defining the people as well as making a statement about their contribution towards the society's regeneration.

For instance, Sly Mutukufu is a prototype for the hypocritical leaders present in the modern African states. The name Sly is connotative of deceit and cunning nature of man. *Mutukufu* on the other hand is a Kiswahili word that means honourable. The name therefore represents the paradox in the kind of leaders prevalent in modern Africa. The leadership positions are riddled with characters that are deceitful and cunning, characters who pretend to be honourable and respectable but who hide behind this façade to fleece the citizens and exploit their innocence and trust. This allegorical name therefore reveals the hypocrisies in the political situation of postcolonial Africa.

The naming of the characters is also metaphoric in a sense. The characters used represent various character types existent in the society. Bonnie and Obash are two opposites. Bonnie which alludes to thinness describes the character of Bonnie Omtita who is physically thin but tries to behave as though he is not helpless by facing situations head on. Obash on the other hand derives pleasure in bullying other children. As the narrator explains, Obash's bullying makes him feared by the estate children.

Obash is representative of the dictatorial post-independent African leaders who cement their authority through violence. This strategy of complicity agrees with Mbembe's concept that violence is a means through which the masses are 'forced' to collude in their own oppression. The children in the estate are 'forced' to 'respect' Obash because of his threats and not due to anything constructive he does. Bonnie is representative of the

courageous but weak masses who sometimes are pushed towards revolt by the oppressive states. Considering his character, he is demonstrative of the spirit that is not willing to be cowed by threats.

Shiver is also a metaphoric name. The Omtita dog was christened shiver by Wendy because “it was raining heavily the night dad brought it home” (18). Tommy calls the dog ‘Shiva’ after the Hindu god. Their parents refer to it as Simba. All these names are metaphoric in a sense. The names allude to the fact that the dog is some sort of protector that is meant to send shivers down the spine of those who may intrude on the Omtita family.

Omojaa is another allegorical name. Omojaa is a corruption of ‘moja’ which means one. It subtly denotes the aspect of one-party nature of the state in the novella. Omojaa is therefore representative of dictatorial and tyrannical leaders who do not accept divergent voices in their rule. As seen in the novella, president Omojaa runs Kenaya through one party. The same dictatorial rule is seen to have set in place apparatuses that promote the performance of the dictatorship such as the Yao Buses which hoodwink the citizens into assuming that the government is playing its role well.

Another strategy of characterization in the novella has to do with the concentration of the writer. Since the novella’s focus is on the Omtita household, Mochama selects characters that have a close relationship with the family this allows the characteristics of this particular family to be illuminated.



## **Strategies of Narration**

*Meet the Omtitas* utilizes the third person narrative voice. As indicated in the chapter on *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda*, the third person narrative voice allows the writer objective distance with which to critically present the socio-economic and political concerns in the contemporary society. The usage of this perspective enables Mochama to talk about sensitive political issues like the dictatorship and oppressive regime of president Omojaa without appearing to be bipartisan. When reading the sections on the politics in Kenya the novella achieves objective distance which in essence enables the reader to also contemplate the same political concerns without bias.

The third person narrative voice is also able to present aspects of the story that that give reader insight into the actions of the various characters their thoughts as well as their motivations for acting the way they do. It allows the reader a view into characters minds and thoughts, which in essence allows the readers to have an understanding of the human conditions.

## **Conclusion**

Unlike *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* which extensively uses literary strategies to communicate, *Meet the Omtitas* maintains few and easily discernible devices which is in cognizance of the intended audience of the novella. The lack of complex devices does not make the text any lesser aesthetically. In fact it makes us see another view of Mochama as a writer who cannot just create complex plots and characters but one who is in this case , able to create simple characters and plots but do so at a high

level of aesthetics. The novella's language allows the young readers to reflect on the choices they make and see the benefits or the consequences.

The next chapter looks at Mochama's *The Road to Eldoret and Other Stories*. I focus on how Mochama utilizes language in the short story form to expound on social, political and economic issues in the contemporary Kenyan society.

## CHAPTER FOUR: LANGUAGE USE IN *THE ROAD TO ELDORET AND OTHER STORIES*

### Introduction

The short story as a form is short in length. Much of the characteristics of this genre have been contested apart from the issue of length. Jose Flavio Nagueira Guimaraes in *The Short-Short Story: a New Literary Genre* argues that the short story “tries to accomplish so much in so little space”(2). Another critic, Mary Pratt in “The Short Story: The Long and the Short of It” indicates that “the novel tells a life, the short story tells a fragment of a life” (99). These two critics seem to agree on matters of length that the short story does not have the space to elaborate on a life. However, this does not mean that the short story as a form cannot expound on a life. Confines of space cannot undermine the complexity of it as a form.

Mary Pratt gives a number of guidelines for the short story form. She says that the short story “deals with a single thing...it is a sample ...it is a fragment” (102-103). She gives a number of pointers but I select the ones I have mentioned because they in a sense define the short story. She further argues that the short story is a minor genre. On the contrary, we can argue that it is in no sense minor. It is as important as the other genres since it does not lack in aesthetics and content.

The language of a short story should be able to allow the reader get the essence of the story within one sitting. Valery Shaw in *The Short Story: a Critical Introduction* says:

The short story has a marked ability to bring apparent extremes of style together, mingling self-conscious literary devices and colloquial spontaneity within the ‘essentially poetic’ compression of a single narrative. (6)

While Shaw’s concern here is on style of writing the short story, her statement raises a number of concerns of note about the form of a short story. The idea of the short story being a compressed form indicates that writers of the short story be able to communicate within a limited space. This therefore means that for the short story to have any intensity, it must be able to capture the reader’s attention from the beginning to the end.

The plot of a short story has to be knit around a single climax. As Helen Mwanzi in her PhD thesis titled “The Style of the Short Story in Kenya: An Analysis of the Short Stories of Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Leonard Kibera and Grace Ogot” notes, “the restricted fictional world of the short story demands precision, economy in the use of language and the treatment of ‘character and action’” (269). Concentration in a short story should be on the point of action or crisis. The language use in a short story is key in achievement of the story’s precision and essence. Shaw adds that the language of a short story is calculated to create the effect of a “snapshot” (9). The language used should reveal a lot more than what is on paper.

The characters in a short story should be as few as the story can manage to develop. Considering the fact that the short story is a restricted form then it cannot have many

characters. The theme should also be one or two and the setting should be restricted to one. Mwanzi captured this essence in her conclusion of the short story form when she says: “The short story is at its best when allowed to focus intently on one main character, one setting both in time and space, one theme and to operate along one strong story line” (vi).

This is not a recent form as we have early versions of the short story like Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. Though the focus of the short story is narrowed due to length, as a form the quality of the short story is seen in the compactness. In this collection of short stories, the lengths of the short stories vary from short ones like “Birds Flying Backwards” to long ones like “Gray Lions”. The literary strategies the writer employs assists in foregrounding the concerns raised. The collection has nine stories which focus on the different concerns in the contemporary Kenyan society. This chapter is an extensive analysis of eight stories. The selection is determined by the fact that these stories utilize different literary strategies which enhance achievement of meaning.

### **Language Use in Specific Short Stories**

#### **“The Road to Eldoret”**

“The Road to Eldoret” begins with Mr. M in a hotel room in Nakuru where he sees a burnt church being the focus of some news channel. The church and the dead people are in Eldoret due to the violence that has been sparked there because of elections. Mr. M decides to drive to Eldoret to get his family out of the zone of violence to safer area. On the way to Eldoret, he comes across a road block where he is stopped by youths who

demand to see his national identity card. He promises them money but they do not care. They brand him one of the people who stole the elections and hack him to death.

The story focuses on a moment of crisis—the violence that followed the 2007 elections in Kenya. The act of concentrating on the crisis allows the short story to achieve the intended intensity and heighted the reader’s attention right from the beginning. The moment of crisis as the opening point of the short story allows the reader’s attention to be grasped by the story from beginning to end.

This is not only the title of the first story but also the title of the anthology. Therefore it plays a very important role in tying all the stories together. The title is symbolic in that Eldoret was at the heart of the post-election violence experienced during the 2007 elections in Kenya. The road to Eldoret refers to any action or progression of actions that lead to doom. By referring to the physical route that one can follow on their way to Eldoret it introduces the connotation of violence in that the closer one was to Eldoret the more intense the violence was. In essence the narrator seems to indicate that the road to self destruction is not the best that a society can take. As a title for the anthology, then one can argue that the road to destruction is not just symbolic of the tribal cleansing, but the road to Eldoret may as well be reflective of the massive extra-marital affairs that lead to family disintegration in “Sex Connection”, or the aspect of robbery in “The Tale of a Thief”. As a title to this story it is symbolic of the dehumanization of a people to the point of killing each other all for the sake of political dissatisfaction.

The main character has been strategically called Mr. M. The fact that he has not been given a clear name means that we can take the M to refer to anyone in his situation. The aspect of the writer veiling the identity of Mr. M is so as to make every reader realize that he is a representation of all members of the society.

When the narrator talks of Mr. M's farm, he says, "he bought in 1982 from a white MAN fleeing the coup..." (41). The capitalization is a stylistic aspect that foregrounds the word. In essence the writer is denoting that the rest are or were considered inferior to white men. One may wonder why but when considering the way Kenyans behaved both in 1982 and the time of Mr. M's travel, they are lesser than human beings; they are animals. This is because they kill others without any feeling of remorse. If someone can kill in cold blood without any feeling then has degenerated to the point of being considered an animal. The writer seems to imply that they are not worthy of being called men.

The writer intensifies the vividness and the incredibility of the acrimony when he says "...burnt churches in Rwanda, skeletons on the hard, sandy faces of Darfur, long endless ant-like lines of refugees in the DRC and those unpleasant images from inside Africa that western media seems so enamored of" (41). Mr. M is not ready to believe that mass killing was taking place in his country. It is as though such acts happen elsewhere and not in his country. The above illustration alludes to the fact that most of the African states have at one point or another been ravaged by violence. It is clear that the writer is foregrounding the idea that violence is not a new concept in Africa. This is a reflection of

what many thought at the time that Kenya was a peaceful country. It was thought as the epitome of peace in East and Central Africa. The fact that such acts of destruction of human life are happening in Kenya is indicative that no place is vaccinated from such. Every place is vulnerable if a people fail to tap into their humanity.

The vivid description of the attackers of Mr. M is deliberate. The writer wants to paint a picture of everyone being capable of inflicting pain on others if they do away with their humanity. The narrator says this of the perpetrators:

Some are tall, some are short, some are rugged, and some wear western t-shirts with improbable messages like ‘Raikonnen Rules’ in 2000 AD—and ‘Vote for Al Gore’. They look like refugees from a beer budget movie called old Sierra Leone. And in their hands, Mr. M notes they carry elongated shadows. (42)

The variation in sizes and shapes of the killers denotes that all are prone to violence and people should be wary in order not to degenerate to such levels of inhumanity. The state of the killers is demonstrative of their degenerated state. The messages on their t-shirts symbolize the incomprehensibility of their actions and the irrationality of the whole hatred and killing orgy.

The reference to elongated shadows is meant to create some aspect of mystery with regards to their weapons of destruction. The elongated shadows in this case refer to the machetes that they carry. By referring to them as elongated shadows one gets a feeling of



the machetes carrying with them a life—full of bitterness and evil. They are made to sound alive and reeking of evil. Therefore the writer here succeeds in demonstrating the evil present in the society. The elongated shadows are symbolic of the evil that lurks hidden behind faces innocent.

The “elongated shadows” are later on in the story seen to end Mr. M’s life, “elongated shadows rise and fall in the sun” (43). The writer tries to show that the people who commit such atrocities are possessed by some evil force. The shadow archetype here is symbolic of the darker sides in human beings which bring destruction. By using the shadow, the writer is demonstrating that when the dark side rules it is dangerous and destructive. Mochama gives a metaphoric visualization of the finality of the act of tribal cleansing. The fact that the above sentence has been given as a paragraph on its own in a sense foregrounds the finality of it all. It also allows the reader to pause and contemplate the violence of tribal cleansing and its effects. This symbolization in a sense makes the readers to deliberate on how far the society has fallen. When people kill each other for any reason, then the society is in a bad position.

The blood motif is seen in several instances in the short story as both the signal for life and destruction. In this story Mochama demonstrates the contradictory nature of human beings who use violence to perpetrate bloodshed with no remorse. One man, we are told, “In tattered red and white shirt, snatches it (Mr.M’s ID) up, dirty nails scraping the grimy road to Eldoret”(42-43). The dirt on this man reflects the filthiness of the characters of the perpetrators. They have been debased to the point where no sense of humanity is in

them. The last sentence of the story, “and the rivers for once, will run red and riot” (43), is symbolic of the massive bloodshed experienced during the 07-08 post-election violence and the inherent effects on the society that has permeated years after the violence.

The theme of ethnic cleansing is foregrounded through the use of body metaphors relating to blood and dirt. The narrator describes one character in such terms that denote dirt: “in tattered red and white shirt, snatches it up, dirty nails scraping the grimy road to Eldoret”(42). The red shirt is symbolic of the subsequent bloodshed experienced while the dirty nails reflect on the dehumanized nature of those involved in the killing. By describing the scenes as raw as they happen, the author is able to foreground the issue of ethnic cleansing. In most forms of writing there is the use of euphemism to veil the harsh reality of violence but in Mochama’s case he does no veiling. He demonstrates that through laying bare as an aesthetic decision, the reader is able to be shocked to the realization of the ills happening in the society. It not only acts as a form of didactics but also a form of defamiliarization.

By foregrounding the brutality of the violence, the writer is able to make the reader identify with the victims of ethnic cleansing and is also able to interrogate the problem of violence in detail. From the introduction we are made to realize that the genesis of what culminates into ethnic cleansing does not just begin with the botched elections. The elections only act as a trigger for something that had been boiling under. The political rule in the country since independence as noted by Atieno Odhiambo in “The Agrarian

Question, Ethnicity and Politics in Kenya 1955-1993” was one of seclusion and as such it catalyzed the whole fury and hatred that is finally seen in the post-election violence. A clear way in which the people had been conditioned to see the inequality is represented by the symbolizations of power at play. Kenyan ethnicity was a weapon always used by politicians to consolidate their power. As presented in the introduction and in this story, the political leaders of the two divides ODM (Orange Democratic Movement) and PNU (Party of National Unity) amassed their support bases by dividing Kenyans on tribal grounds. Those who feel the elections have been stolen end up meting punishment on the supposed supporters of the other camp -- all these is done along tribal lines as is the case for Mr. M.

The ethnic cleansing can be traced to Kenya’s politics which causes leads to the presence of political instability. This in a sense is as a result of power wrangles and greed among the political elite. In “The Road to Eldoret” the narrator hints at a previous aspect of political instability. This is introduced by Mr. M buying a white man’s land cheaply due to the attempted coup in 1982. The statement recalls the attempted coup by the Kenya air force in 1982. This is a clear sign that the country had been facing upheavals which up to the point of the attempted coup had not amounted to anything big. With regards to what Mr. M underwent on the road to Eldoret, it is clear that the political instability is an issue that had been gaining momentum up to the point of the ethnic cleansing.

The writer in the “Introduction” argues that in this state, Kenya is caught in a frenzy of hate “everyone is reduced to their Rawest Common Denominator-- their tribe” (28). The

graphic scene of how people are killed while hiding in a church foregrounds the concept of ethnic cleansing. The Kalenjin youths argue that “the church was infested with devils” (28). Devils here is a metaphor of those who the youths do not agree with-- the people of the other tribe. The assumption that the rawest common denominator is the tribe demonstrates the negative perceptions brought about by tribal alliances.

“The road to Eldoret” utilizes strategies such as metaphors, motifs, symbolism and graphological patterning. These strategies enhance the realization of the issues of ethnic cleansing as well as oppression. It is through the graphic presentations and the other strategies that Mochama is able to evoke the reader into shock on the violence.

### **“August First”**

The first day of the month gives an indication of new things, a fresh start where one is given an opportunity to correct the errors of past times. In this title August first refers to the day a coup was unsuccessfully stage in Kenya, 1982. It at the same time reflects on the beginnings of things. Beginnings can either be good or bad. In this case we are referring to bad beginnings due to the attempted coup.

Names have been corrupted to give a sense of fantasy to the story. The president is referred to as Mbooty Le Mwaah. The use of the term denotes criticism of the leader’s style of rule which according to the narrator is not good. Through this the president is painted as a man who believes that he is a democrat when he is one of the worst dictators:

To the north, the barbaric Saidi Barabara who often had his opponents wrapped in seng-e-nge (barbed wire) then thrown off choppers into the desert, Mang Bistu in the East who literally had his enemies barbequed, and the buffoon Yamin Baba in the South who called himself 'Emperor of Europe' and personally shot his foes, and ate their hearts with garnish while smacking his lips with relish and smirking "hmm, tastes like the swine they was, and goes down real nice with red wine" (45)

This foregrounds the widespread dictatorial forms of rule in Africa and the inhumanity of such forms of rule. President Mobooty we are told often said "I bet if the Indian Ocean didn't lie to our east we'd have a beast in bower there too" (45). This is ironical since he is no different from the leaders mentioned. He also rules with an iron fist and is very corrupt. He sees himself as a good leader when he is a dictator like the rest. The fact that he is not able to notice the similarities between his style of rule and that of the rest of the dictators demonstrates his level of understanding which is low.

Other names that have been corrupted include the name of the radio station, Radio Coup D'grace. It acts as a premonition of the impending coup attempt. It is also ironical that Leonidas Mambo hosts a show called Mambo Jambo which the narrator says translated to everything is just fine and yet he is the one made to make things change for the worse. In essence everything is not fine in a state ravaged by coup attempts. It demonstrates the people's dissatisfaction with the authoritarian rule of the leader.

There is use of foreign language in the story. When referring to the talk that the policemen have when busy trying to push for the coup, the police are made to use Kiswahili. For instance Ochi while harassing Mambo, says, “*Cheka, ama nikuweke risasi*” (48). This statement translates to ‘either laugh or I rain bullets on you’. This usage of Kiswahili not only demonstrates the alienated nature of the forces but also indicates the low level of education. This justifies the fact that they cannot see that their planned coup is bound to fail. The usage of Kiswahili also gives the story a local flavour. It is a signal that the story is reflective of East Africa as a region and the state of the postcolonial East Africa full of dissatisfaction due to poor leadership.

Another instance of usage of Kiswahili is when Kurutu recalls the training he went through before qualifying as a member of the forces: “*Kurutu, kimbia kama ngamia,*” “*Kurutu wacha uchinka, we nyeli ya fisi,*” (49). This means ‘Kurutu, run like a camel, Kurutu, stop being stupid, you hyena’s excrement.’ This section foregrounds the toughness of the practice system used by the trainees. It also brings to light the poor level of education of the trainers. The trainees are exposed to poor training systems and then exposed to the general public where they demonstrate their low levels of training and professionalism. Thereafter, this leads to the regeneration of the postcolonial state.

The name Kurutu is a corruption of the name ‘recruit’ as transposed into Kiswahili. As a name it stands for the trainees in the forces. Kurutu, the character can be seen as one who has not gone through intensive training. The symbolism behind the name is demonstrative of the poor training offered in the forces. It brings to light the fact that

poor training can lead to discontent. The security forces expect to pull off a coup when they are drunk. According to the narrator, the cheap whisky is given to the soldiers by Le Mwaah's regime. The same whisky that is meant to make them acquiescent makes them revolt. This irony reveals the discontent among the masses about the dictatorial regime which cannot be veiled by any form of bribery.

### **“Birds Flying Backwards”**

This story revolves around Norah who is involved in a road accident a few weeks before she is bound for a major show in abroad. Before the accident she had been denied a visa by the Kingdom United where she was bound to visit to revive her singing career with two other friends.

The title gives an idea that is unrealistic. Birds do not fly backwards. This story is a reflection of things that cannot be reversed, once destroyed cannot be made whole again.

The title ties up well with the plot presentation. It is presented in rewind form:

The ambulance carefully returns Norah into the mangled wreck of the Toyota saloon car, in which she was travelling before the accident, where the unconscious bodies of her three pals already lie. The ambulance, its siren getting rapidly dimmer disappears, still in reverse, up the road. Now the Toyota is flying back into Thika Road, fragments of glass flying off from the grass and back onto the windscreen of the saloon car. The wounds heal back. The cuts close up. Norah's face, so recently smashed and mangled, is once again intact. (51)

The use of reverse which is essentially a style in film makes the scene more picturesque and vivid to the reader. The presentation of events in reverse is a strategy that is seen as a transgression of the plot form in prose narratives which either take the linear or non-linear plot forms. The usage of long sentences allows the reader to 'watch' the scene in the mind. The long sentences enhance aspects of slow motion of the reverse in actions. Incidentally, these long sentences delay the comprehension but allow the reader to notice the emphasis the writer has placed here. This strategy defamiliarizes the whole scene of the accident; the delay in comprehension further heightens the foregrounding of the scene. This scene emphasizes the aspect that some actions cannot be reversed back.

We are informed that the UK embassy had denied Norah a visa to travel for a show. This rejection is vividly painted, "it is as if that stamp has been crushed against the surface of her left cardio-vascular valve, and Norah cannot breathe. The walls of the visa office swim away from her (52). The use of personification enhances the vividness of the denial. When the narrator talks of the walls of the visa office swimming away, the visa office is given animate attributes of locomotion. The rejection and denial of the visa cut deep and it is a form of death. Though not the main death that cannot be reversed, the writer seems to make a statement that such forms of death (rejection) can be changed but when it is the real death, nothing can make our loved ones resurrect. There is some finality in it.

The story also fuses double fiction where the narrative voice shifts from one level of narration to another. When Norah dies the narrative shifts to the idea of afterlife. This



merging of two levels of narration allows the reader to look at the first level as being real and therefore credible. It allows the reader to transcend realms of 'reality' hence be viewed as credible.

### **“Ole Poulous”**

“Ole Poulous” is a story about the joy and carefree feeling the narrator had with Sanaipei Mosop in Ole Poulous. Leo Lemayan, the narrator runs off with his friend’s father’s new BMW and meets Sanaipei Mosop who was herding goats. They then drive to Ole Poulous. They enjoy themselves and the narrator realizes that Sanaipei is a bright girl who is expected to join the university. Later on while at the university, the narrator looks for her but cannot find her. He learns later in the media about what became of Sanaipei’s life. She was not able to join the university, but was married off to a 60 years old man. The miseries of life lead her to stab her husband and commit suicide.

In this story the narrative voice stands out. Most of the other stories have been presented in the third person point of view; “Ole Poulous” is given using the first person narrative voice. The first person narrative voice allows the story to appear like a confessional where the narrator repents and reveals his sins. This as a strategy allows the writer to reveal the naivety of the narrator in relation to his actions with regards to his friend’s father’s BMW as well as Sanaipei Mosop, the girl he meets when he runs away with the BMW. The story opens with the narrator giving his name, which serves as an assurance that he intends to tell the truth, “my name is Leo Lemayan, and I am an active-aggressive

individual” (53). By pointing out his aggression, he seems to be justifying his actions of running away with the car.

He further gives his age, “It was 1999. I was 23. This is meant to invoke in the reader some elements of pity and sympathy. The narrative voice makes readers subjective in looking at the character and gauging his state of mind.

When describing the way Sanaipei ate in Ole Poulous, the narrator says, “she wolfed down the *nyama choma* as I shot the hot vodka down my throat” (54). The metaphor ‘wolfed’ relays comparison with the way wild animals eat. They do it greedily. This emphasizes the fact that Sanaipei ate too much. When asked to slow down; Sanaipei claims that she is always hungry. The aspect of hunger and ‘wolfing’ foreground Sanaipei’s interest and hunger for education and better life. The fact that the marriage to the old man cut all her hopes down and the subsequent suicide make readers empathize with Sanaipei. The metaphors also enhance the idea that bad cultures can lead characters to commit atrocities.

Some form of narrative break is introduced by Prince’s song. On the drive back from Ole Poulous, the narrative introduces lyrics of Prince’s song, “I want to live life, to the ultimate high, maybe I’ll die young, like heroes die. Maybe I’ll kiss you goodbye, somehow in a special way” (55). This song acts as a premonition for the death of Sanaipei. It also hints at the reader that Sanaipei’s death is an act of heroism. Sanaipei kills herself in order to escape the harsh realities of life. She was not free to be who she

wanted to be; instead the society had imposed on her marriage that acted as some form of prison. Therefore, killing herself in order to escape the prison in life is an act of heroism.

### **“Kwaheri ya Kuonana”**

This is a story about the narrator’s life with his girlfriend, Tigania. They meet at a media party and start dating. After some time they move in together. The narrator leaves for a writing seminar in Russia and has a sexual relationship with another woman. When Tigania finds out through a postcard sent by the other woman, she starts having relations with other men and eventually makes the narrator move out of the house they had rented together.

In the short story “Kwaheri ya Kuonana”, there is the use of the word “project-ed”. The narrator says, “We lived in an estate that went by the oddly ‘project-ed’ name of South A” (81). The word here has been hyphenated to create an emphatic effect. The author intends for readers to see beyond the fact that the neighbourhood had been advantaged. Inasmuch as it had been advantaged, the neighbourhood had also been foregrounded by the kind of buildings that were dangerously constructed in the area. This emphasizes the corruption in tendering by the municipal government.

The narrator talks about how the mayor participates in corrupt and illegal dealings. The mayor awards tenders to contractors who are not qualified to build high-rise buildings:

Dick had run South A like his personal fiefdom, awarding construction tenders left, right and centre--but mostly horizontally -- to cowboy

contractors, mostly financed by Somali businessmen, rich from pirate booty. (81)

The contractors are not qualified. They construct buildings without any consideration for planning. The illegality in the tenders is foregrounded through the way the narrator describes the buildings. The narrator says that his bedroom faces various “apartment buildings that skewed South A’s skies like knives” (81). This description is a form of defamiliarization from normal descriptions. It makes one visualize the shape A as the shape that the growing number of buildings take. It makes one realize the danger brought about by corruption. Buildings are constructed without any regard for the health hazard they may cause. All that the investors care about is money and not reducing risks to the tenants.

The use of Kiswahili allows the readers to contextualize the novella as being Kenyan. The story’s primary language is English. Aspects of Kiswahili within it can therefore be considered as foreign. The use of the same in the title denotes certain nuances clearly. “*Kwaheri ya Kuonana*” here depict some form of finality in the byes, an indication of the end of things.

When describing Tigania in relation to her environment the narrator says: “Although she was surrounded by media men like hungry hyenas around a graceful giraffe, she seemed to be dancing alone –surrounded by her own mystical aura” (82). Tigania’s beauty is presented as paling everything else around it. The men have been compared to hungry

hyenas; this indicates their infatuation with her beauty. The narrator therefore prides himself in being her man. But when on a trip to Russia he has an affair and Tigania finds out about it, the affair is equated to “white anthrax” (84) which foregrounds the idea of danger to the good life and relationship they had. White anthrax is a disease that is extremely dangerous and if possible should be avoided at all costs. In essence the story highlights the issue of unfaithfulness as being the poison that affects good relationships. When the narrator is dumped by Tigania who picks up another lover, the narrator feels hurt. He reaches a point where he wants to swallow Tigania’s pills. The concept of ingestion here reflects the mood of the narrator. He says:

I saw the pills and the 3D-Blade nestled in between soap and shampoo.  
Took a pee, and flushed the loo. The pills were washed away with the pee.  
The 3-D danced like a fish for a moment then sank to the bottom of the  
Fordham like a dead stone. (89)

The act of flushing and urinating in a sense denotes the finality of the heartache. In this case it marks the end of a raw moment in the narrator’s life and the beginning of a fresh start. Contrasted with the flow of blood in the introduction section, and “The Road to Eldoret” where the flow of blood can be framed within the concept of renewal and idea of end of inhumanity, it also denotes debasement of humanity.

Tigania is referred to as a tiger. This metaphor is seen when the narrator answers her about his infidelity, “that was last year Tiger!”(86). The comparison relates Tigania’s

character as one which is tough. She is made to appear as a harsh and strict person who does not entertain any mistakes.

The story utilizes corruption of words. For instance, the mayor is referred to as “Thick Wa-Wote”(81). The corruption of the name is indicative of the corruption that is rife in the society. The kind of leaders the mayor awards demonstrated his corrupt nature. He does not consider legal frameworks when awarding tenders. The use of the word ‘Thick’ as part of the mayor’s name also enhances the image of greed. The corruption in the name as well as the metaphoric reference of ‘thick’ is demonstrative of the greed in postcolonial leadership which is essentially self-centered. The word ‘*wote*’ means all in Kiswahili. Although he is corrupt and greedy, dick was a leader meant to serve all. It is therefore ironical that he is only concerned about the few who can give him bribes. He does not care about everyone but himself. Therefore this element of irony foregrounds the self-centeredness in his character which is demonstrative of the many leaders in contemporary Kenya.

### **“The Tale of a Thief”**

This is a story about the life of Ali Kibao, a professional thief. He starts stealing while in school. Ali does not make an effort to study hard; all he does is perfect his art of stealing. He begins by stealing books and magazines from classmates and at some point moves to stealing cars. While planning to steal a car in an uptown area, he is shot dead.

A major form of imagery can be seen in where the narrator says: “greed lent him wings” (93). Greed is seen as the subject that does the action of lending him (Ali Kibao) wings.

If we consider the meaning of the sentence, we realize some aspect that can be considered a case of mistaken selection. Greed is here given the animate character of lending. Personification in this instance allows the sentence to be foregrounded. Greed is given the animate attribute of flying by the use of wings. The use of personification allows the reader to visualize the extent of greed in Ali and see his motivation for wanting the good life that he cannot afford. Ali is representative of people in the society who are not content with the little they have. Mochama is indicating through this personification that lack of contentment is the undoing of many in the society.

Another form of foregrounding is seen in, “The good lord spoke not in tongues but in bullets” (94). The aspect of God has been deconstructed and here God is seen as the executor of justice in the manly sense. The concept of justice as subscribed to by man is foregrounded and the narrator seems to indicate that God also agrees with this form of justice. The narrator reveals the idea that no matter what kind of vice people commit; some form of judgment will catch up with them.

We are told that Ali Kibao attended Navel High School. The concept navel is symbolic of the lifeline that one is given. The symbolism here is reflective of education as the key to success in life. Since Ali Kibao rejected this lifeline, he ends up dead in the end due to robbing other people.

While waiting upon unsuspecting people to steal from them the narrator gives us a vivid description of Ali Kibao’s moments: “like a hungry leopard in the forest, he would lie in

wait for his prey” (92). A leopard normally waits patiently for a prey to devour. Ali Kibao is said to be very tactical in his robbery. He calculates every move before making an attempt at unsuspecting victims. He is a professional thief. He is symbolic of the clout of political leaders we have in contemporary Kenya who rob the citizens of their rights in broad daylight and citizens do not even realize that they have been robbed until it is too late to change anything. This trait in Ali Kibao is explained later when the narrator says “when you are one of life’s rats, as he was, the rat race is all that counts” (92). Ali Kibao is equated to the poor who have no means of earning a living hence resort to stealing. Ali Kibao rejects all that is morally right and at a young age is involved in robbery. The society on the other hand does not embrace him but pushes him away all this culminating in his death.

The contemporary society is seen as a place that is not friendly to those who have no education. Ali Kibao dropped out of school and chooses to become a thief in order to afford the kind of life that he wants. His struggle for survival is presented clearly when he tries to steal the Polo but the owner runs away with the key. Ali Kibao is left with no way of stealing the car and he has to run after the owner of the Polo. The narrator says, “he ran after him like a man fired by demons” (93). The comparison of the way Ali was running to being fired by demons foregrounds the desperation in Ali. Robbery is presented as his lifeline. For Ali, lack of an education and the need for quick money makes him rob with a ferocious desperation. In essence Mochama demonstrates that the conditions of life in urban spaces mould people into becoming the way they are. The lure



of quick money in the urban space makes Ali become a thief and he has to fight for survival in the ever harsh reality of the urban set up.

### **“The Sex Connection 9-11”**

“The Sex Connection 9-11” is a story about Clay and Adera, two lovers who meet while in high school. The circumstance in their schools leads them to start engaging in sex while in school. Adera gets pregnant and is expelled from school. Clay proceeds with his studies and Adera is forced to become a housewife. After school, Clay manages to become a secondary school teacher. He is then promoted till he becomes a principal. Adera becomes bored with housework and decides to go back to school. While attending driving lessons, she starts an affair with her trainer. Clay on the other hand has an affair with Ndunda, their underage maid. Ndunda is at the same time in a sexual relationship with Brayon, Clay and Adera’s son. Somehow the chain of sex relations leads to them being at a risk of being infected with HIV.

“The Sex Connection 9-11” begins with a statement of truth according to the narrator “sex with the same person after a while gets boring” (95). The narrator wants to justify the sex connection we encounter in the story and when one reads such an introductory statement they are pulled towards reading the whole story to either confirm the statement or to be able to dispute it. When the connection is given later on:

Clay, Adera, Nduda, Brayon, Resian, Mtupumsi, Njeri, Boo Sire n Fatuma, together they form a nine pointed intersecting star, nonary ovary, penile penumbra, but the total eclipse of the sun that will cause their star to

disintegrate into a sexpartite entity someday soon, lies on two straight points outside this charmed circle. (109)

It leaves one in shock of the thoughtlessness and vulnerability of having many sex partners. The connection emphasizes the need to maintain caution in relation to the sex partners one has in order to avoid messy ends.

The narrator describes the Vihiga Boys bus in humorous terms that make one see the rot in the society that not only encompasses the adults but also high school students. The narrator says:

A wooden contraption amalgamated with iron-mongery, and that had in a former lifetime served as a sugar-cane transporter in Webuye, and in true Hindustan reincarnation, in Nyanza, to deliver its cargo of testosterone-fuelled boys who for, some inexplicable reason, always had a faintly sugary smell about them, as well as the less saccharine scent of sweat and horse shit, when they alighted from their school-bus the Jogoo. (95)

The look of the bus as well as its occupants denotes their lack of morals. The vivid images used to describe the bus denote ruggedness of the bus. For instance it is referred to as 'iron-mongery' which has connotations to scrap metal. The bus is not just old but it is also wrecked. They visit the girls' secondary school for sex connections. Adera does not finish school because she gets pregnant. Somehow the sex connection derails other people by making them get pregnant or as for others they get diseases. The image of the bus having other lives demonstrates the recycling of sex partners that the story is

referring to. In essence this bus is an image of the decay in the society that has no place for morals. Once the sex connection widens many of the people get destroyed and the society loses its important resource, human beings.

One thing that stands out in the trips that Vihiga Boys and Kumakuma Girls make is the lack of chaperons. The young students are left to their own devices by the teachers who are busy enjoying themselves. The situation serves as a good breeding ground for the destruction of morals. The story is a criticism of grownups that do not bother with training their children in the right manner.

The name “Kumakuma” has connotations of sexual organs for ladies. Mochama’s direct naming of the school in relation to female sexual organs is meant to reflect on the poor morals in the girls of this school as well as the rest of the society. The name foregrounds the immorality which later on leads to the spread of HIV. Mochama is demonstrating that the spread of the disease is majorly brought about by immorality in the society.

### **“Legendary Channel Surfer”**

This is a story about Lenny Chansu who is bored and therefore decides to surf through the different channels in his DSTV connection. Through the different channels he browses, he comes across different characters in different situations and has conversations with some of them.

This story introduces the idea of character merging. When the character flips channels, he is made to seem to converse with or be present in the action taking place in that particular channel. When surfing through Mstar, Lenny merges into the TV reality and is seen with Steve Martin, a character in a movie. Steve Martin asks him, “Who the heck are you?”(116) and they have a conversation. The merging of character to the second level fiction denotes the engrossment of the character onto the action on the channel to the point that he is not aware of his surroundings. This in turn is a criticism of the contemporary Kenyan citizens who are oblivious of their surroundings because they are busy worrying about trivial matters that do not make a difference in anyone’s life. When one reads this chapter one may look at it as an exercise that is not meaningful, but understanding the triviality of the contemporary Kenyan middle class is the way to unraveling the story’s main concern. The writer seems to indicate that unless there is a change in priorities, the middle class will not be able to affect any positive change in Kenya.

The story therefore incorporates a shifting character. At times the character is seated somewhere, at other times, the character is part of the fiction he watches on TV. The character is seen as a fluid character that mingles with fiction and reality. In essence the concept of character merging heightens the beauty in the work and allows readers to gain an illusion of reality with the first level where Lenny Chansu is introduced. The feeling becomes that this level is the reality and when there is the introduction of the character conversing with the DSTV characters that becomes the level of fiction.

The use of different channels that the channel surfer uses, demonstrates the shifting aspects in the story. There is no clear demarcation between fiction and reality. This is done deliberately because the writer intends to demonstrate that at times reality appears more fictional than fiction itself, especially when people do things that make them seem less than human. The shifting channels also relay the different shades of life in the various parts of the world. He seems to indicate that though the continents are different, they are ravaged by same problems.

There is the intertextual form of introducing the dramatic form in the prose narration. This is seen when Lenny is watching Africa Magazine. The section is presented:

COP: you have the right to remain silent. Anything you say may be used against you in a court. *Pajama-man*: I have the constitutional right to ring a lawyer of my choice oga-oh! COP: Let's go! He drags pajamas out of bed. (124)

The section is humorous as well as demonstrative of the poor training of police officers in Africa. The policeman pulls the pajama-man out of bed to arrest him and at one point threatens to get a court order to gag the woman who complains about the arrest. This scene reveals the authoritative and dictatorial nature of those in power in postcolonial Africa. The cop is a representation of the powerful in society who misuse their power. This scenario is a reflection of the power relations in failed African states where one leader makes all the decisions and when questioned citizens are oppressed and pushed into submission.

## **Conclusion**

The short stories revolve around issues that instill disillusionment in a people; there is also realization of some hope. In all the stories picked the language that the writer employs is different from the everyday language, this heightens the reader's attention the writer does this deliberately. He is making a statement due to the debilitating state of the society.

The negativity in the society has led to disillusionment where in the stories given there is no hope for any positive change. This is not to say that there can be no hope. The writer allows room for hope outside the text where we can think of various different ways in which the society can change.

Mochama foregrounds these issues by use of deliberate language choices which attract the reader to specific concepts. The different stories are united by the acts of dystopia and indifference. The writer uses language extensively to capture the varying issues that each short story tackles.

In the next chapter, I focus on the strategies of language that Mochama employs in the travelogue form in relation to his view of the contemporary Kenyan society.

**CHAPTER FIVE: LITERARY STRATEGIES IN *NAIROBI: A NIGHT GUIDE***  
***THROUGH THE CITY-IN-THE-SUN***

**Introduction**

This chapter interrogates the use of literary strategies in a fictional travelogue. I refer to *Nairobi: a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun* as fictional because Mochama writes about fictional escapades. The writer's flexibility is seen in the way he uses literary strategies to communicate. In this chapter, I therefore demonstrate that Mochama is able to utilize literary strategies in the travelogue by examining the role literariness plays and how it is manifested in the text.

The form of a travelogue is one that many a times was considered a form that developed the imperial nation's superiority over the colonized states. The contemporary travel genre, however, as Steve Clark in *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit* puts it "lies in this project of formulating an acceptable, or perhaps less culpable, post imperial voice" (10). It is a break from its early form because the postcolonial period is not intent on imperial powers stamping their authority and the contemporary society has writers who do not carry the mission of the imperial power. The contemporary literary travelogue writes not to answer an imperial centre, but it writes back to the society. It tends to feel like a fluid form that takes in other genres. It borrows from other forms, fusing them into its form thereby attempting to configure newness. Therefore it can be seen as a flexible form that has the ability to transcend genres as well as deconstruct our perceptions of the world.

In this case, the literary travelogue is capable of interrogating the traveler's society critically. María Lourdes López Roperó captures this essence clearly when in "Travel Writing and Postcoloniality: Caryl Phillips's *The Atlantic Sound*" she says that "contemporary travel accounts have become powerful instruments of cultural critique, displaying a greater subject-orientation"(51). The literary travelogue focuses on the society, the traveler's life as well as on nature. The traveler foregrounds the said issues in the literary travelogue and illuminates them for critical analysis.

The fictional travelogue has similar characteristics to the non-fictional travelogue. However, the fictional travelogue has more liberties with regards to not being restricted by factual events. The writer can imagine a journey/ journeys which can then be presented artistically to reflect certain concerns that the writer wants to talk about. It is more open than its non-fictional form. One important quality of the fictional travelogue as raised by Reuel K. Wilson in *The Literary Travelogue: a Comparative Study with Special Relevance to Russian Literature from Fonvizin to Pushkin* is that the fictional travelogue has no unified plot. Wilson says:

Because the narrator must progress from one location to another, any single intrigue involving one set of characters becomes virtually impossible. The action therefore must comprehend a series of episodes or miniature plots. (x)

Wilson raises various issues about the setting and characters in a fictional travelogue. The traveler does not encounter the same people in his various journeys therefore it would be



impossible for the travelogue to have connectedness in terms of characters in the various journeys the traveler undertakes. At the same time it would be close to impossible for the traveler to journey to the same setting all the time. The unity in a travelogue is achieved through what Wilson refers to as “the author’s ability to generalize eloquently and convincingly” (xi). Generalization would entail the issues that the travelogue deals with in connection to the society.

The literary travelogue mostly utilizes the first person perspective which allows the travelers the chance to tell the readers of their journeys themselves. This point of view enhances the narrative’s subjective tone. This can be seen as both a positive and negative attribute of the form. On one hand it enables the readers to feel the traveler’s feelings about the issues on their society that they raise. At the same time the first person point of view can be seen as a biased voice. In her article “Difference and the I/Eye of the Beholder” Joyce D. Hammond, while analyzing the American visual travelogues says, “every traveler is biased by the traveler’s choice of places and people to visit, the decisions of which planned and unplanned sights to record, and the particular perspective used by the author or narrator to discuss what is presented” (18). In essence when looking at a travelogue we are made to see the world from the traveler’s point of view. In Mochama’s *Nairobi: a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun*, we see the world from the Nairobi Night Runner’s perspective but the writer introduces an omniscient voice which ensures a balance of objectivity.

## ***Analysis of the Literary Strategies in Nairobi: a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun***

The Nairobi Night Runner draws us into his journeys by very open statements. He says:

How can I describe how it is to night run; to step off the precipice of dusk and into the dark? Or how in the dim lights of a club, the eyes of strangers always look mysterious, giving people a depth, a danger even, of which they are devoid by day?( 34 )

The narrator/traveler uses images of motion (step off the precipice of dusk) to get the readers feel what it means to live by night. The night is made to appear as one that enables people's deepest darkest secrets to be revealed. The night is seen as a time when a hidden part of human beings is revealed. Through this assumption, the reader's attention is grasped and the Nairobi Night Runner is able to have the attention of the reader to the end. This baring of the soul allows us to trust the night runner and accept the view of the world as presented through his eyes.

In the title, one gets a feeling of having a guide through the city in the night. Through the reading, one gets a feeling of being the unseen friend and companion of the Nairobi Night Runner in his escapades. The Nairobi Night Runner does not in any one section appear to be giving directions, it seems as though the reader is the unseen partner in journeys across the city. In comparison to the other texts discussed in this work, Mochama now changes tact from the forms he had set of not giving away what the book discusses by now saying it literally in the title. Throughout the text one has a feeling of not just being the unseen

partner but in other section, the text reads like a conversation the Night Runner has with the reader.

The city in the sun as used in the title is a nick name of Nairobi due to the fact that it is the city closest to the equator line. The concept of the night runner as seen in the title borrows heavily from traditional African beliefs where some kinds of witches are claimed to run at night around villages when naked. The night runners in the traditional African setting wreck havoc on people's homes disrupting their night. As seen in the travelogue the name night runner alludes to the fact that the Nairobi Night Runner does his business at night. It can also be a suggestion of the fact that the night runner is intent on unraveling and revealing the defects in the society hence making the readers see the problems beneath the beauty in the society. What the Nairobi Night Runner does is disrupt the perspectives of the citizens with regards to the state of the society which in essence is related to what night runners in traditional African setting would do—disrupt the calm at night.

### **Strategies of Plot**

The travelogue has been divided into various sections with each section serving as an independent escapade of the Nairobi Night Runner. Although the title to the book indicates the information in the text, the subsequent sub-titles do not give away anything about the sections. Instead, they seem to be like some anecdotes to attract the reader into the sections they introduce. For instance, the sub-title, “Montreal, Night Moments”, it is

not saying much other than indicating that the Night Runner is in Montreal. “Gallery of Frogs” is a funny sub heading of a section that has nothing to do with frogs.

A look at the text, one notices the fact that the writer has partitioned the text into chapters. This partitioning allows him to talk about different episodes of night running in different sections. The fictional travelogue in essence does not focus on one train of thought. The unity in it is achieved through the essence of the journey. This partitioning allows the Night Runner to have escapades covering different social classes as well as different areas. This further enhances wholesomeness in the text making it achieve the essence of having cut across different classes and age groups in Kenya. Partitioning then can be said to have allowed the writer to foreground issues affecting various groups of Kenyans.

As a strategy, partitioning works well. In one section the Nairobi night runner can be seen in Gachie in a dingy club while at another instance he is in Naivasha. The partitioning makes this idea of disjointedness to be presented cohesively. It allows readers to have a comparative outlook of the different settings and characters that the night runner meets hence enable the reader form a perspective about contemporary Kenya. In “Thirsty Throats, Dusty Roads”, the Nairobi Night Runner introduces Gachie , a small town in the outskirts of Nairobi. The narrator says, “Hardware shops and butchers’ shops seem to be everywhere. Dogs, mostly mongrels, mill around the butchers’. Nothing mills around the hardware shops.”(13). In Gachie there are lots of idlers round town and “everyone drinks without decorum” (13). It appears like a ghost town where everyone is on the verge of a

blackout due to heavy drinking that takes place in the dingy bars. In another section of the travelogue, the Nairobi Night Runner visits Naivasha where with his entourage the Nairobi Night Runner talks of silhouettes of flowers in the dark. In Naivasha while drowning meat with beer, they talk of the Cholmondeley case which in essence reveals the fact that the poor have no right to justice; the rich always find a way of buying justice. The nightly journeys take the Nairobi Night Runner to Eastlands where the narrator talks of shops remaining open most of the night and miraa business flourishing at night.

These sections can be contrasted to the Nairobi Night Runner's visit to Montreal where he talks of the way they enjoy their drinking. The narrator says, "the Canadian revelers are everywhere; yet there's a civilization to their drunkenness, somewhat of a restraint to their behavior...not like us (me and you) here in Nairobi who, after a bottle or two, let ourselves go clean out of our minds!"(37). A comparison of the different sections partitioned to present different perspectives of night life in different parts of the world demonstrate the fact that the night life in Kenya is full of revelers wishing to drown their sorrows of tough economic times in beer. Hence the drinking in Kenya is clouded by recklessness and bitter discussions of the conditions in the country while in Montreal, all is calm. People drink with some level of responsibility. The clear difference and ability to compare is made possible by the partitioning of the travelogue into sections handling each escapade. This allows the reader a chance to look at each escapade separately but also to compare each escapade with the next.

It is important to note that partitioning allowed the writer to also title different sections according to the issues they handle. This is because when one looks at the titles of the chapters, one may not realize the intensity of what he discusses, and by viewing the work as some form of humour piece, a reader is drawn to it thereby realizing the intensity.

In chapter six, the writer achieves foregrounding graphologically when he embarks on a dialogue. The dialogue appears structurally different in presentation to the rest of the chapter which is given in prose. This enables the writer to foreground the dialogue given hence the issues raised are seen in new light. The dialogue goes like this:

“Hi, what are you reading?”

“The Economist.”

“Very good. What is it about?”

“Shimon Perez, Gazprog and Bagehot.”

“Hmm, what do you do?”

“Business in Benin and Burkina Faso!”

“Buy me a drink?”

“Okay.”

“Weee, barman, gimme Barcadi Breezer.”

“And the bill!”

“Kwani you are going?”(21)

The narrator here demonstrates the lack of intellect in the various women who prey on men around clubs and pubs at night. All the women want is some cash in exchange for sex. He claims that inasmuch as these women cannot hold a conversation, they can trap a

man. This in essence brings out the commercialization of everything in the modern society. This dialogue is foregrounded through the way it is presented in the fictional travelogue. Its structure is a break from the prose form in the text. It attracts the reader's attention to itself while at the same time demonstrating the shallow-mindedness of the women who prowl the night clubs waiting for prey.

Mochama breaks from his narration when he introduces lyrics of a number of songs in "Song of the Black Night" but the song one comes across is a combination of lyrics from a number of songs. This intertextuality allows the reader to pay more attention to this section thus it has been foregrounded. For instance the narrator talks of a song from the group Deep Purple, "Black night is not right/ don't feel so bright/ But I do not care to sit tight./ Maybe I'll find on the way down/ the line that I'm free/ but black night is a long way from home"(61). This song reveals the Nairobi Night Runner's search for peace and rest. The travels through the night can therefore be seen as travels in search for a place of rest and peace. A closer scrutiny at the songs reveals that the songs seem to give different dimensions of a black night. In this chapter he sticks to the various songs by different rock artists. This allows him to open up his small circle to other views.

In many instances in the text, the writer stops in the middle of a thought and intrudes with a different thought that does not necessarily rhyme with his earlier thought. In the chapter "Hot Nights at Geo-thermal" the writer talks about a trip to Naivasha. While describing a club called Geo-thermal, he quickly intrudes his thoughts by introducing something in brackets: "do bats ever get homesick, mayhap for a cave they crave?"(17) Immediately

after this intrusion, he goes ahead with his rumbling about the geo-thermal. Another section where he intrudes with a new thought is on chapter twenty six “Baada ya Kazi, Jiburudishe, ni Wakati wa...” where he is talking about ‘Baada ya Kazi Joints’ and their look. Here he also uses bracketing to introduce the intrusion:

Why is it that in so many locals, the bar men are behind caged counters? It is like you are ordering something from an animal in the zoo. (Note to self: find out what Kalamazoo means). (68)

This intrusion can be seen as some form of light touch to the story. One other intrusion can be seen in chapter thirty three, “Leaving jeans’ pub in Nairobi west at 8 a.m., not having quite gotten ‘there’ (don’t ask me where if you don’t know where ‘there’ is lakini ni pale pale si hapa hapa)” (85).

Although this section read as if the narrator is talking to us directly, we also get a feeling of listening to a fully inebriated person whose rumbings at face value may seem illogical and irrational. On closer scrutiny one realizes that the incoherence in the work is deliberately done to foreground the confusion and illogicality of life in the city in the contemporary society. The writer through these interruptions and incoherence is demonstrating the reality of the society that has lost direction, one that keeps on changing faces and allegiances like a chameleon. In such a case therefore life is full of irrationalism and illogicality. The common people who experience this life cannot make a clear direction of their lives simply because they do not know what to make of it and also they are not aware that it is incomprehensible.



## **Strategies of Language**

With regards to strategies of language, I focus on levels of language and how Mochama uses various techniques at those levels to foreground various concerns as well as achieve beauty in the travelogue. In essence therefore, I focus on phonological, syntax and semantic levels of language and how Mochama stretches these levels to make deep socio-economic and political concerns about the contemporary Kenyan society.

Mochama stretches semantic capabilities of language. This is seen in various aspects where he deconstructs our understanding of the meanings of various words, phrases or clauses. He is able to do this in a number of ways. He employs repetitive structures in a number of sections in the text. In the first chapter, when talking about MG, the narrator says: “maybe because, perhaps MG used to be a morgue, according to city records” (10). This sentence employs repetitive words. It can be seen through the use of both “maybe” and “perhaps” which relay the same meaning. Though this may be seen as unnecessary repetition, on a deeper level, it reflects the emphasis the writer puts on the origins of MG. It also draws us to the idea that it may as well have its origins on appalling stuff.

Another form of repetition can be seen in “Thirsty Throats, Dusty Places” where the writer says: “it is late afternoon/early evening in Gachie when the night runner makes his debut there” (12). One may wonder, why should the writer talk about “late afternoon” as well as “early evening” in the same sentence and yet one can do. This is a deliberate repetition where the writer intends to demonstrate the haziness in the Night Runner’s mind when it comes to talking about daytime moments.

“Maria, a miss, is the mistress of a married man—and she is in straits of distress” (65). This is a form of repetition where the writer emphasizes the concept of the fact that the lady is a mistress to a married man. The repetition emphasizes the fact that the woman is with a man but life is not any better because of the suffering she still undergoes. In one way, the writer tries to indicate that marriage is not the solution of all problems women have in the contemporary society. The writer foregrounds the problems in the institution of marriage in the contemporary society where the institution does not propagate any form of respect at all and as such through the repetition he shows the vanity in the whole concept of marriage. The institution has lost its meaning due to the fact that married men and women are involved in extra-marital affairs which in the end lead to break ups and children suffering.

Another form of repetition is: “It is a tough tough job for tough tough boys” (78). This is in reference to the job of bouncers in clubs who are supposed to face up to all kinds of issues that customers raise. It emphasizes on the difficulties people face in the world when they try to earn a living. The writer comments on the contemporary Kenyan society which makes it difficult for people to survive. In essence his conception of the contemporary society is where people have to make an effort to survive.

Pleonasm can be seen in chapter twenty seven where the writer repeats expressing himself. Pleonasm refers to the expression of the same thing in many repetitive words. In this chapter, the writer talks about a bath in so many words:

After a warm bath—this night runner always does hot showers, whether it be in Siberia or the Sahara [cold showers should only be taken in prison, or in boarding schools—but I’m repeating myself]. (70)

Mochama uses repetition to describe cold showers and one may argue that the repetition is unnecessary. The writer here then lays emphasis on the showers. Mochama demonstrates the emphasis people put on things that are not relevant at all while we forget the important issues that affect our society.

Semantic absurdity can be seen in the form of ambiguous repetition. In “The Beach is a Peach” Mochama describes life in many ambiguous words. The writer says: “life is a lemon... life is a bitch...life is a peach... (69). He further goes on: “life, really, is a beach. And a bitch...” (71). The writer leaves the definition open and one can wonder, what really is life? The contradictory definitions in a sense tend to foreground the uncertainty and lack of a clear assurance in life. The ambiguity here intensifies the argument that life cannot be defined in simple terms, but can only be lived with everything that it brings across—be it joy or hardships.

Writers can structure their sentences in particular ways to achieve particular ends. Mochama in this text employs some form of elision. Elision refers to the omission of syllables or letters from a word. He does this for particular ends. In chapter five, Mochama quotes the mad Duchess in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in wonderland*: “Day is day, and night is night; and ne’er should the two intertwine” (131). This form of elision is

referred to as syncope due to the fact that omission is of medial letters. Ne'er----- never. This omission draws one's attention to the condition given here. Since Mochama is talking about night running that runs over to the day. He is indicating that the concept of night running involves a lot of inebriation which when flows over to day one cannot fit in. The remorse of life and problems associates with it should only be quenched at the expected moment if we are to maintain a balance of sanity in the problematized contemporary world.

Mochama also uses word combination. It is rare to find many words beginning with the same vowel or consonant following each other in ordinary spontaneous communication. Mochama deliberately engages in 'verbal gymnastics' to create humour and for aesthetic purposes. While talking about his mid day running, Mochama says: "It's a tragic, Trojan complex. The type that could have served Trotsky's life..." (25). This demonstrates the difficulty in the contemporary Kenyan society for people to help others without expecting anything.

The title of chapter nine "The Heat and Beat of the East" is aesthetically appealing due to the use of aspects of assonance. This title demonstrates the mixed fortunes of life in the East of Africa. Things do not happen in the way one expects but seems to waiver with no certainty. In chapter twelve, the narrator says, "Books and booze bulldoze a lot of bucks out of us night bucks, who do not like to doze, and swallow life in large dosages. PDS is a plus" (36). Though the word combination is beautifully done, it also foregrounds the narrator's likes in life and affinity.

The effect that readers perceive from syntactic relations lies more in the manner than in the thought thrust forth. Consequently, syntax is the basis of literature. Mochama rejects the rigid conventional word order. By stretching the order, Mochama is able to draw certain effects from the readers. One instance of syntactic foregrounding is seen in chapter forty seven: “A vehicle ride later, you are in a dimly lit club” (115). In normal cases we say things like: a moment later, a few minutes later, a few days later, in the above case the writer foregrounds the sentence when he introduces a strange combination: “a vehicle ride later”. This in some way foregrounds the fact that the writer hops from club to club in a bid to inebriate himself.

The writer also uses fronting in the same chapter when he says: “One’s intentions, when one first sets out to have ‘two drinks at the pub while you ‘watch the game’, are entirely noble (114). The beginning with the concept of intention seems to indicate that those who drink too much do not begin drinking with that intention. The assumption is that they find themselves indulging more than they had planned. One may argue that boredom or the need to quench their problems pushes them to drink more than is necessary.

A major form of statistical foregrounding in the language of the travelogue is seen in chapter sixteen, “Seven Nights of Thunder” where the narrator introduces a notably high number of pronouns where there was hardly any. The narrator repeatedly uses the pronouns “you” and “your”:

On a Wednesday night, **your** friend Mueller is in tow, **you** decide to show off Nairobi’s African (sic) places because **you** are getting a bit of a

reputation as the man about town. From simmers to buffet park, from Fridays to fiesta, **you** represent your country in the hope that, someday soon Mueller will show **you** Dusseldorf or .... (45)

The narrator uses pronouns repeatedly to enhance the assumed direct address of the narrator to the reader. By foregrounding the second person narrative voice, the writer intends to make one feel as if he is listening to the speaker. This solidifies the concept of the travelogue of assuming an audience. In this case there is the use of direct address. By foregrounding the aspect of listenership, the writer makes one feel as if he is close to the writer. It allows the writer a one on one moment with the reader.

Another aspect of statistical foregrounding of language is seen in chapter thirty four where the narrator decides to create a pattern with sentences beginning with the word “expect”:

**Expect** to find it situated inside the 20<sup>th</sup> century cinema hall. Expect to find people, mostly couples, all lined up for soda and popcorn. **Expect** to climb many staircases to get into the actual wine bar. Expect to find it lit in wine-coloured lights. **Expect** the manager to be ebullient, and the services excellent. If you are a gent, expect lots of women with wine-coloured lips to smile at you. **Expect, expect** anything tonight. (88)

By sticking to parallel forms, Mochama calls attention to the issues he raises in the above section. This in essence allows us to look at the section with more focus hence it is emphasized.

Mochama uses lots of words from Kiswahili and Sheng. This is mostly meant to contextualize a text. In this case, since the text is a fictional travelogue, the aspect of contextualization does not arise but the registers play an important role. For instance: “Mdosi alinitumia SMS na hiyo bad news”... “Watu wengi U-dead x-mas na new year. Kwa hivyo ni opportunity kupata job” (11).

In this case the code-switching and code-mixing in the above extract are acts of foregrounding. Foregrounding is achieved here through the use of lexicon of a different language. Through this extract we are able to see the desperation of the common man and the poor state of life in existence that forces people to hope for the death of others in order to get jobs. The extract also relays the absurdity of the contemporary society with its reality of the illogicality of assuming that the obituary pages are job advertisement pages. This reveals the uncertainty of the job situation as well as the lack of jobs which in a sense push people to a state of fear of no tomorrow.

In the chapter “Thirsty Throats, Dusty Places”, the narrator shows the contrast in naming places. He says:

There will be no water at a place called Kwa Maji, nor a slippery slope at a place called neither Mteremko Terere, nor a door of any kind in Mlango

Kubwa. People just name places in Kenya in weird and mysterious ways.

(12)

To draw a parallel to the above, he further adds “If a place, though, is called Kona Mbaya, don’t dare loiter at night around there unless you fancy being mugged or even murdered” (12). This section foregrounds the contradictions in the contemporary Kenya and its urban areas. The parallel construction added further makes the reader pause and contemplate the issues emanating from the constructions. When Mochama states that Kona Mbaya reflects its meaning, he gives insight into the dark side of contemporary Kenya. *Kona Mbaya* is Kiswahili for ‘a bad corner’. Readers do not miss the sarcasm that accompanies the fact that names that allude to good things amount to nothing but those that allude to negative things are a reflection of the truthful image of contemporary urban Kenya. One may even argue that maybe the names ones were a reflection of the goodness of the areas which has deteriorated to nothingness.

In chapter fifty three, the narrator argues that “my old friend has gone *kukus*” (28). This though borrows the word ‘*kukus*’ from Sheng; the meaning given here is from the sheng coinage of the word which means that the friend has run mad. This foregrounds the idea that the oppressive lifestyle leads people to temporarily lose their minds.

Lexical choice has also been used to mark off characters. Through looking at the way certain characters the Nairobi Night Runner meets on his nightly escapades, we can deduce their behavior as well as their social status. In chapter two, the narrator gives the



caption of a mural in a butcher's shop in Gachie, "*We mchinga unaona nimenona, si uchinje mimi unipelekee kwa butchery ya Njuguna?*"(13). The wording in Kiswahili translates to, 'you fool, you can see I'm fattened, so slaughter me and take me to Njuguna's butchery.' The mural demonstrates the inferior educational status of those who live around here. It can also be seen as some form of humour meant to entertain customers to this place. In chapter forty seven we come across, "Why tha herr ara you rooking at me?" (115). This not only brings to the fore the incoherence of drunks but also their loss of feeling or remorse. The incoherence here together with the lack of seriousness in whatever the drunk is saying indicates the loss of a clear line of thought.

The whole of "Night of the Kurutu" involves a night out between two officers on patrol. Corporal Sumu's Swahili is accented with mother tongue influence and we also realize that he has a poor command of the English language which he uses on rare occasions. His partner Kurutu is more educated than him. Corporal Sumu towers over Kurutu by using intimidation which clearly demonstrates that he is insecure about himself. By harassing common men, he believes that he gains some leverage insofar as moral esteem is concerned. One thing is clear though, Corporal Sumu is an alienated character. The fact that Corporal Sumu, who is less, educated being a senior officer to Kurutu demonstrates the irrationality of how jobs are distributed. By affording corporal Sumu broken language, the writer is able to emphasize the rottenness in him and his likes in the society. He takes bribes indiscriminately and harasses those who cannot pay the bribes. The writer tactically denotes the case in contemporary Kenya where people who do not have skills get jobs and they use the positions they have to oppress others all in a bid to feel like real bosses –which is what they are not.

The naming of Corporal Sumu and Kurutu is metaphoric in the sense that their names relate to their characters. *Sumu* is a Kiswahili word that translates to poison. The way the character Corporal Sumu has been presented reflects his name. He does not train Kurutu well instead misuses him and criticizes every move Kurutu makes. Corporal Sumu can be seen as a killer of dreams. He makes Kurutu see the dark side of being a police officer. His behavior is also reflective of the way in which he kills citizens' belief in the police force. He takes bribes and harasses citizens. *Kurutu* is a Kiswahili word translating to recruit. The way readers encounter Kurutu, he is presented as a recruit and a trainee under Corporal Sumu.

Corporal Sumu is therefore a reflection of the old established persons and frameworks in the postcolonial state which disillusion young and progressive minded individuals and push them to becoming corrupt. The state of the postcolonial society can then be said to be diseased to the point that the rot is all that can be seen. Therefore for a change in the situation to happen there is need for a total overhaul of the systems in place.

When describing buildings by day or night, the narrator gives them a sense of life. He infuses in them the trait that makes readers see them alive. The narrator at one point says "the sun scintillates off Lillian Towers, making the building sparkle like bubbles in a champagne glass."(18). The attention to detail enhances his ability to appreciate daytime when he is a nocturnal person. One can even argue that he recreates an imaginary reality to please his less than alert self. This contrast to Lornho House by night: "Lornho house, with its antenna top seems to be giving the finger to the buildings around it."(19). He

employs language that is not polite here but it allows him to foreground the description of the house. The use of the term both shocks the reader but allows the reader to contemplate the architectural successes and failures of the modern Nairobi. He adds that “the view shown is always shot from the top! The reality on the ground is, of course, very different” (19). The double standard in the creation of the cities is appalling. The outward beauty of the buildings hides rot and corruption that takes place within them.

A look at chapters “The Morning After”, “Song of the Black Night”, “The Anticipation of Sunset” and “Night Talk All Night Long” reveals some aspect of progression. The choice of words in the titles indicates some form of movement from morning to night time. Since the Nairobi Night Runner’s travels take place at night, he envisions to readers his feelings about the night. The morning after, is presented as a time that is very difficult. The difficulty is presented through the use of imagery:

If it’s a bad morning, puffy eyes open and are immediately hit by sharp shards of light that pack the cornea and threaten to blind one. If it’s good, in spite of mild headache, one can still enjoy the play of the light against the ceiling. For doodlers, the mornings after are spent spinning silvery salivary strands onto pillows, like arachnids whose dreams are filled with flies. (58)

Essentially, the morning after a night of running is not such a great scene. The metaphors the narrator employs describe this moment as a painful moment. When the narrator says it is filled with “shards of light that prick the cornea” he personifies light and gives it

sadistic qualities to make us see the negative effects of having to face a new day for those who are busy at night working or enjoying themselves. The other simile (check doodlers) indicates the lack of or need for sleep for those who work tirelessly drinking or normal jobs at night.

The next chapter, “Song of the Black Night”, takes an interlude through songs that talk about the night. The songs foreground the uniqueness of every night. The different dimensions are what make night running intriguing. “The Anticipation of Sunset” moves to the next step that leads to the night. The night is presented as having the power to entice man to it. The fact that man feels like a robot that is compelled to do the night’s bidding makes it visual. The narrator says, “Men begging city bars to beckon them in; and the city is filled with the scent of fun or promise of sin” (60). It is a make or break moment where people can drink themselves silly or do activities that they would regret later. The Nairobi Night Runner insists that the idea of not knowing what they expect is what makes the night a good place. “Night Talk All Night Long”, finally gives us a taste of what night running is all about. Night running in this section is seen as involving forgetting about life’s problems and enjoying oneself.

While attending the eviction party of one of Tusker Project Fame contestants, the writer proposes a humorous idea:

Tusker ought to consider sponsoring the relevant public figures next year as a theme. They could sponsor, for example, project Bigot, project Jarring, and project Siyanda, project Patti, project Kingsway Kamenchu and other political wannabes by locking them in a house .(106)

The comparison of Tusker Project Fame, which is a televised reality competition where contestants are trained to sing and the best singer wins the prize, to Kenyan politics foregrounds the fact that Kenya has politicians who have to virtues hence the need to maybe observe them at close quarters before any voting takes place. Mochama reveals the need for the political leadership in Kenya to be trained in order to do away with the high levels of corruption and exploitation. This may make contemporary Kenya have leaders of mettle. At the same time the writer seems to indicate subtly that the citizens pay lots of attention to trivial matters like project fame rather than matters of national importance like leadership. This in essence translates to the poor state of affairs in our country.

While the Nairobi Night Runner is on his journeys, he visits MG. The narrator makes this observation about the waiters: “his waiters hop about like vultures, and an old man with a sly face, adjusting liquor prices by the odd five or ten bob based on how inebriated a patron seems to be” (10). The simile above relates the waiters to vultures. As birds of prey, vultures feed on the weak as well as left over carcasses left by other animals. This simile foregrounds the exploitative nature of opportunists in the modern Kenyan society. The old man adjusting liquor prices is part of the scam to steal from unaware customers in the bar. While hinting that beer parlors are one place where common people are exploited, the narrator allows the reader to realize that this is just a case in point. The postcolonial situation breeds all kinds of circumstances where oppression and exploitation thrives. It also calls attention to exploitation and oppression of the weak is

not just centered on the clear divide of rich and poor. Even within these wide categories, sub-categories of oppression exist.

The description of Nairobi's buildings utilizes a simile. At one point the narrator describes the city and says: "the spire of St. Paul's also free cloaked, looks like the proverbial red needle in the haystack" (18). This is an indication that it is the only representation of sanity or morality in the degraded society. St. Paul's, represents the voice of reason which in essence is bestowed upon the church. The narrator seems to indicate that in the contemporary society the morally upright is rare due to the corruption in the society.

The travelogue utilizes the journey motif as the Nairobi Night Runner is seen traversing different areas. Although the journey is the essential character of the travelogue, it also allows the writer to communicate certain ideas well. The Night Runner in the travelogue is in constant motion hoping from one place to another and meeting different characters and experiences. The journeys he makes capture his adventure and in a sense his travails act as a way of self-realization. Through the physical journeys that he makes, the Night Runner allows the reader to connect with the experiences he goes through. What comes out clearly is that life is a journey of sorts where people in urban spaces struggle with different issues in order to survive.

### **Strategies of Narration**

The fictional travelogue utilizes shifting narrative voices. In the travelogue there is a mix of both the third person omniscient narrator as well as the first person narrative voice. The shifting narrative voice is a strategy that allows the writer to appear both close to the reader while at the same time maintaining some element of objectivity. The reader then can claim to have both a personal connection with the Nairobi Night Runner and an objective perspective through the third person voice.

### **Conclusion**

This text though a fictional piece, employs literary strategies to illuminate ideas about the contemporary society. In essence, the word choices allow Mochama to attract the readers' attention and thus make the reader realize the extent of the impropriety in the society. When he uses wording or thought ordering that looks incongruous it pushes the reader to the limits of thinking where one contemplates the whole issue in new light. Since the travelogue focuses on the urban spaces and the perspective of the writer on the same, the strategies allow the writer to make the reader see this space in new light and visualize the chaos and the fun that accompanies the same. Through seeing the fun one can also see the complexity that draw people to the night life. In essence deliberate word choice that foregrounds the transgressed illuminates the writer's view of the contemporary urban Kenya.

## CONCLUSION, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the analysis of his prose, we realize that for this author language is important. He focuses on the wording of his works which in essence helps the reader to contemplate the contemporary Kenyan society. The different literary strategies that Mochama has employed are deliberate choices that have essentially allowed him to foreground certain issues. Mochama, as seen in the analysis given, has utilized both literary devices of language such as irony, imagery and satire as well as structural strategies like partitioning, intertextuality and double narration. The presence of these strategies is what makes a reading of Mochama's prose not only aesthetic but also informative of his world view of the contemporary Kenyan society.

As already interrogated a common thread in Mochama's prose is the setting. The narratives have urban settings. The urban space is both insightful of the situation of a state and also a site where the writer's diverse views of the society come to life well. All the prose works analyzed are solely set in one or another urban space. The urban space allows the writer to interrogate the postcolonial condition of Kenya at a time when Africa is not obsessed with writing back to a centre. It allows the writer the freedom to talk about a variety of issues. The problematic situation of the postcolonial Kenya is brought to the fore in the texts in a number of ways. *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda*, *The Road to Eldoret and Other Stories*, and *Nairobi: a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun* focus on the struggles that people face in the urban areas. *Nairobi: a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun* is focused on the different people of the different social



classes and their issues with every day hardships brought about by the capitalistic nature of the economy.

A notable trait in Mochama's language is that when he is referring to the negative in the society, he uses very clear images of dirt and bodily metaphors to allow the reader to see the problems in new light. This is the case in both *Princess Adhis and the Naija Coca Broda* as well as *The Road to Eldoret and Other Stories*. The metaphors of dirt and bodily aspects makes the images shock the reader into seeing the extent of degeneration that the society has been pushed to. On the other hand when talking about issues affecting the youth he tones this down as in the case of *Meet the Omtitas* where he uses direct and simple language since the novella is meant to be a youth reader.. *Nairobi: a Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun* utilizes lots of humour and direct second person narrative mode that assumes an audience. In essence Mochama is diverse in the way he employs language strategies in his texts.

Although he focuses on dystopia, Mochama's prose seems to be centered in urban spaces which in essence allow him to give a world view about the contemporary society. Mochama's prose employs a wide variety of literary devices which aid the writer by enhancing the intensity of the message he intends to communicate. The literary devices foreground the various issues which in turn enable the writer to concretize them.

The study concluded that Mochama's prose utilizes a variety of literary strategies which enhance the beauty of the works and reveal social, political and economic concerns about

contemporary Kenyan society. The various strategies foreground the concerns such as corruption, poor leadership, immorality, inhumanity and dictatorship. However, I noted that in some instances, the use of literary strategies prevented the realization of the concerns due to the way in which they were employed. In some cases, Mochama uses the strategies in excess which in turn fragment the reading process thereby hindering the realization of the themes. In essence therefore, I conclude that literary strategies have to be used with precision in terms of placing in order for them to make any impact on literary texts. Regardless of the few instances of overuse of strategies, Mochama's prose still communicates serious social, political and economic concerns about the contemporary Kenyan society.

Since my focus has been on literary strategies in Mochama's prose I suggest that further studies be done on Mochama's other works: *What If I am a Literary Gangster?* and "Percy's Killer Party" which are a collection of poetry and a play respectively in order to understand fully his use of literary strategies.

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