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A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS IN MUKOMA WA NGUGI'S NAIROBI HEAT

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**Résumé**

*L'objectif principal de cet article est de faire une analyse stylistique dans le roman de Mukoma Wa ngugilà où meurent les rêves.*

*Cependant, c'est un roman policier où l'auteur discute les themes de violence et crime transnational, trahison, avidité (cupidité) et deception, corruption et racisme.*

**Abstract**

*The main objective of this article is to analyse the style used by mukomawangugi in his novel Nairobi Heat.*

*However, it is a ditective novel in which the author discusses the themes of transnational violence and crime, betrayal, greed and deception, corruption and racism.*

**Keywords:** *Analysis, Stylistics and Style.*

## INTRODUCTION

African literature, as all other literatures of the world is linked to the daily situation of the people. Writers have their principal pre-occupation, from linguistic and literature perspective to depict social problems. By the case, MukomaWaNgugi uses his artistic capacity through the style to render the themes of African land and language issues, transnational crime and violence, betrayal, greed and deception, corruption and racism.

The method used is “New criticism”, which is based on the internal analysis of the text itself.

### 1. Life and literary Work of the writer:

**Life:** MukomaWaNgugi was born in 1971 in Evanston, Illinois, USA, but raised in Kenya, before returning to the United States for his university education. He is a Kenyan poet and author, the son NgugiWaThiong’o. He holds a BA in political Science from Albright College and an MA in Creative Writing from Boston University.

He received his PhD from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, where he specialized in how questions of authorized and unauthorized English, or standard and non-standard English, influenced literary aesthetics in Romantic Britain and Independence –Era Africa. He is an associate Professor of English at Cornell University.

He is the author of several books, including *Conversing with Africa: Politics of Change* (2003, described by *New Internationalist* as “a wide-ranging investigation of Africa’s dilemma). *Hurling Words at Consciousness* (poetry, Africa World Press, 2006) and *Nairobi Heat* (novel, 2009). His most recent book is *The Rise of the African Novel: Politics of Language, Identity, and Ownership* (2018). He is also a columnist for *BBC Focus on Africa* magazine and former co-editor of *Pambazuka News*.

He has published poems in *Tin House Magazine*, *Chimurenga*, *Brick* magazine, *Smartish Pace*, and *Teeth in the Wind*, *One Hundred Days* (Barque Press); *New Black Writing* (John Wiley and Sons); *Réflexionssur le Genocide Rwandais/Ten Years Later: Reflections on the Rwandan Genocide*.

In addition, he has published political essays and columns in the *LA Times*, *Radical History Review*, *World Literature Today*, *Mail and Guardian*, *Zimbabwe’s Herald*, *Kenya’s Daily Nation*, *The East Africa*, *kwani? Journal* and *zmag.org* among other publications. His short story “How KamauWaMwangi Escaped into Exile” was shortlisted for the Caine Prize in 2009 and is included in the anthology *Work in Progress- And Other Stories* (Caine Priza: Annual Prize for African Writing) (New Internationalist, 2009). His work was also shortlisted for the 2010 Penguin Prize for African Writing. Some of his poems have been archived on *Badilisha Poetry x-Change*.

### 2. His Literary Work:

#### *Nairobi Heat* (2009)

This novel tells the story of an African American detective Ishmael Fofona who leaves America for Nairobi to solve a case involving the murder of a young American girl whose body is found at the porch of an African Professor’s house in Madison Wisconsin, an American suburb. When Ishmael arrives in Nairobi, he is met by David Odhiambo, simply referred to as O, a Kenya detective working at the Criminal Investigation Department. Like in many detective stories this murder case is complex because the detectives have no way of identifying the murdered girl. Ishmael had received an anonymous call from Nairobi asking him to travel to Nairobi if he wanted to find the truth. As the detective traverses the city and its environs, he discovers that the African professor, Joshua Hakizimana played a role in the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

The detectives encounter obstacles as they try to follow leads to the murder and their security at times is not guaranteed. This makes them become violent as they respond to the various attempts to gun them down. Ishmael had become a thorn in the flesh of unscrupulous people behind Never Again Foundation, an organization bringing together a consortium of donors in the name of raising funds for humanitarian aid for the Rwandan refugees. In actual fact, the foundation is used as conduit to enrich those involved in the syndicate. Some of the refugees such as the women running *Kokomat Supermarket* are paid to keep quiet about the role professor Hakizimana played in the murder of hundreds of thousands of Rwandese during the genocide.

Detective Ishmael, Odhiambo and Muddy, a girl of Rwandan origin, are attracted on their way to the airport when Ishmael is being escorted out of the country back to America after he had had considerable clues to indict Joshua with the murder case. This attack which leads to the shooting of the assailants makes Odhiambo and Muddy change course and they propose that Ishmael should take a fight from Uganda. It is when they make a stopover at Butere, a village at western Kenya, when Ishmael discovers the identity of the murdered American girl. She is Macy Jane Admanzah. Ishmael gets other details concerning the Admanzah family who were missionaries at the time of the genocide in Rwanda.

When Ishmael finally makes it back to America he pieces the evidence together amidst an attack on him which leads him to shooting those behind the attack. Chocbanc, the leader of this attack, makes important revelation about the leadings of the Never Again Foundation before Ishmael shoots him dead. Ishmael approaches James Wellstone who works with the Ku Klux Klan militia who shoots Joshua fatally as he prepares to leave for Paris. Detective Ishmael also shoots dead the KKK goon who had accompanied Wellstone before confronting the latter and shoots him dead as he walks out of Joshua’s apartment. Joshua is a dying man when Ishmael finds him in the house and justice for Macy Jane Admanzah has been done at last.

#### **Short story:**

How KimauWaMwangi Escaped into Exile (2009).

**Plays:**

Conversing with Africa: Politics of Change (2003).  
 Drugs to Kill, Drugs to Cure (2016)  
 The Rise of the African Novel: Politics of Language, Identity and Ownership (2018).

**Essays:**

World Literature Today  
 The Los Angeles Review of Books  
 The Guardian  
 The International Herald Tribune  
 The Los Angeles Times  
 Business Daily African  
 The Black Commentator  
 The Progressive  
 The Dead End of African Literature (2018).  
 Brave New Words (2019).

**Poems:**

Hurling Words at Consciousness (2006)  
 Logotherapy (2016).  
 The method used is “New criticism”, which is based on the internal analysis of the text itself.

**3. Definition of the Key Words:**

**• Analysis:** Is a form of literary criticism in which the structure of a piece of writing is analysed.

**• Stylistics:** This concept is defined according to the role it plays in the work. It is generally the scientific study of the proceedings of style and its effects. It is also the practical knowledge of the particularities of styles proper to a language. According to Encyclopediaprinted in France in 1931 (pp.4-57):

« La stylistique est le recueil des règles de style. Elle tient le milieu entre la grammaire et la rhétorique : elle donne des règles sur les choix des expressions, et met en relief les caractères essentiels d’une langue donnée ».

“Stylistics is the collection of rules of style. It takes the medium between the grammar and the rhetoric: it gives the rules on the choice of expressions, on the use of parts of speech, on the construction of periods, and sets in relief the essential nature of a given language”. (Translation Mine).

At this point, the reader is curious to know what exactly this concept “stylistics” means, which can perform such wonders, that learners can approach literary and non-literary texts independently.

In fact, this concept has given multiple definitions when considering the following passages in English and French quoted by:

**Charles Bally:** “la stylistique est l’étude des effets de l’expression du langage selon leurs contenus affectifs”.

“Stylistics is the study of the effects of language expression according to their affective contents”. (Translation Mine)

**Finocchiaro:** “Stylistics is a linguistic analysis of the style often with particular reference to literary texts”.

**Geoffrey Leech:** “Stylistics is the study of style, the study of the use of language in literature”.

**Mac Millian:** “Stylistics is the study of style, especially in language and literature”.

**Pierre Guiraud:** “La stylistique est une rhétorique moderne sous sa double forme: une science de l’expression et une critique des styles individuels”.

“Stylistics is a modern rhetoric under its double form: a science of expression and critical of the individual styles”. (Translation Mine).

**H.G. Widdowson:** “Stylistics is the study of literary discourse from a linguistic orientation.” This quotation conveys the idea that when one wants to analyze and find out the full message of a literary work, he refers to stylistics as a tool for analysis”.

In my opinion, stylistics is a branch of a literary study which concerns the analysis of various styles. It studies the devices in a language and finally it is a contribution of linguistics to the study of literature in order to find out the message it contains.

However, what distinguishes stylistics from literary criticism, on the one hand, and linguistics, on the other, is that stylistics is essentially a means of linking the two and has no autonomous domain of its own. Stylistics then involves both literary criticism and linguistics, as its morphological make-up suggests: the “style” component relating it to the former, and the “istics” component to the latter.

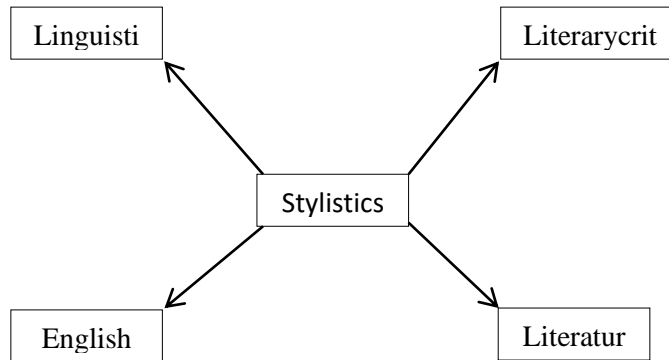
In fact, stylistics is an area of mediation between two disciplines, linguistics and literary criticism. Discipline is then defined as a set of abilities, concepts and ways of thinking, associated with a particular subject or area of human enquiry. Linguists and literary critics follow certain principles of enquiry which characterize their different disciplines. Therefore, the stylistics approach that we have used here concerns the metaphor and other figurative languages used by MukomaWaNgugi in his novel. A logical progression of decoding the coded message of a given text can help reader in getting the message of the writer. Stylistics does both: it studies the system of language used and its purpose from the point of view of arriving at the interpretation of the piece of literature being studied.

So, what my research is aiming at is to show that stylistics provides a way of mediation between the two subjects:

English language (Linguistics)

Literature.

Discipline



Academia. Stylistics Notes-H.G. Widdowson. p2

#### 4. Function of Stylistics:

The function of stylistics is to provide the channel or the mean whereby a learner or a searcher can relate or link a piece of literary writing with his own experience of language and so extends it.

Moreover, it enables someone formulate his intuition about literary texts in an explicit way by mean of language analysis, and it helps searchers to analyze poems or prose texts and shape their abilities to use the language in a real communication and acquire more mastery of the language in order to give a satisfactory result in the literary analysis.

#### 5. Importance of stylistics:

Adopting a stylistics approach to the study and teaching of literature, helps in arriving at the message that the author wants to convey. Approaching literature through stylistics leads students to be independent of the teacher and enables them to interpret literary and non-literary text with the help of the stylistics clues like linguistic deviation patterns with other linguistic features, both regular and irregular, to form a whole. Thus, it enables the students to visualize mentally what is described in words and to respond emotionally to the text and identify with or feel sympathy for hero or heroine.

Besides, through this approach students are able to understand the characters' motives and make critical and moral judgments about what they read. Approaching a text stylistically, a student can become aware of writer attitude and purpose and know whether a passage is intended be taken seriously or not. It also helps students to understand and answer the examination questions, as they are able to write summaries, critical appreciations and accounts of different characters.

• **Style:** Style is defined in the same dictionary on page (1486) as the particular way in which something is done or the distinctive manner of doing, performing something. Whereas in Encarta, style is a distinctive form it means that a distinctive and identifiable form in an artistic medium such as music, architecture, or literature.

However, the term is defined in different ways according to the appreciation of one author to another. The style is the whole of the proceedings by which a writer appropriates the resources of a language to express his thought. It is also a distinctive manner of doing, performing or presenting something; an aspect of written language which reveals the aesthetical style and it results from the choice that someone operates in the material with a view to realize certain effects. When considering the following passages in English quoted by:

1. **Arthur Schopenhauer:** "The style is the physiognomy of the mind. It is the mark of his personality: no one can hide his personality."
2. **Buffon:** « Le style est l'homme lui-même ».  
"The style is the man himself."
3. **Jonathan Swift:** "The style is the proper words in proper places, which amounts to the use of words according to the situation."
4. **Pierre Guiraud:** « Le style est un aspect d'exposé qui résulte du choix par le moyen d'expression déterminé à la nature et l'intention du sujet parlant ou écrivain »  
"The style is an aspect of statement which results from the choice by the mean of expression determined to the nature and the intention of subject speaking or writing".
5. **Sénèque:** « Le style est le visage de l'âme... le style des hommes ressemble à leur vie ».

“The style is the soul... the style of men resembles their life”.

6. In my opinion, the style is a particular manner of writing or expressing one’s thought. It is also a personal way to behave or execute a movement.
7. According to Oxford Dictionary (1995:p.1189): “Style is a manner of writing that is characteristic of a particular writer, a historical period or type of literature.”
8. In Webster’s New Dictionary: “Style is a manner or mode of expression in language, as distinct from the ideas expressed; the way of using words to express thought.”

So, the style of a man reveals the level of his personality just because he can be identified from it.

In his book *Preparing to Teach Writing*, James D. Williams states that: “the study of the style (that is stylistics), gained great importance in the 19<sup>th</sup> century approach to discourse of special interest where differences between speech and writing. Literary writing was considered to be a reflection of the cognitive development. Stylistic maturity was looked upon as a manifestation of reasoning ability”. This presumed connection between style and mind formed the rationale for several studies in the mid-1960s.

Consequently, the problem of style is that it can be confused with register. We would keep in mind that the two words are not synonyms.

A register is used to describe the level of formality a speaker adopts with a given audience. For example the language you use with your teacher is not the same as the language you use with your friend while chatting with him in the canteen. Though the two words are not synonyms, they have a very close link.

## 6. The Style of MUKOMA WA NGUGI.

The style used by MukomaWaNgugi in this novel is “direct speech”, which signals his presence in the text and describes the perceptions of characters in his own kind of language.

However, direct speech (in grammar, narratology) means the writing of speech, using the exact words of the speaker, usually between quotation marks.

This is proved in this extract: “At Customs I flashed my passport and my badge. The clerk didn’t even give my gun permit a second look, just shook his head and said, “You Americans, you really love guns, eh?” as he waved me through”. (N.H, p2).

### MukomaWaNgugi’s style in *Nairobi Heat*:

The narrative strategies are the artistic choices, techniques or methods an author employs in a narrative in order to communicate their message effectively. MiekeBal in *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* says that, “The aim of textual analysis is not to account for the process or writing, but for the conditions of the process of reception” (77). This, in effect, emphasizes the significance of how the narrative text comes across to the reader in certain manner.

However, Mukoma uses various narrative techniques in *Nairobi Heat* :

- **Exposition:** The beginning of this novel is an exposition where the author introduces the narrator and the characters in story. It also includes the background information which leads Ishmael to travel to Nairobi in spite of the fact that the crime was committed a week before. This helps to bring the issue of racial relationships between the African Americans and the white Americans to the fore, as Ishmael says that:

“A black-on-white crime does not go cold since the state will not rest until the black criminal is arrested” (N.H, p6).

- **Analepsis**(A form of flashback): On arrival in Nairobi, Ishmael is taken for a drink by his Kenyan counterpart Odhiambo after which he takes us back to Madison, Wisconsin and narrates how he was called in to start investigations on the murder of the white girl, Macy Jane whose body is found in front of Joshua’s house:

“Are you hungry?” Odhiambo asked. I nodded and watched as Odhiambo ordered some beer and two kilos of roast meat...A young blond woman found murdered on the doorstep of a black man-an African. Of course it was going to be the story of the year. (N.H, p6).

- **Suspense:** Ishmael and Odhiambo are ambushed at Timbuktu bar where they had been directed to go by Lord Thomson. The young man and woman assailants reveal that they had been sent to kill the two:

“We needed him more than he needed us. But, yes, I do have my own white whale... I finished lamely. “To kill or be killed by,” Lord Thomson said pointedly, looking at Odhiambo. “The devil will get us all in the end. Is that not so, Odhiambo?” “We got to Timbuktu Bar around eight pm. I entered first. The place was empty saved for the bartender and a butcher in a bloody apron” (N.H, pp.58-60).

- **American slang and swear word:**

❖ The language that Mukoma ascribes to the protagonist, Ishmael, is also striking in the sense that it is characterized by several American slang and swear words: “Always stuck with the real pretty ones, ain’t we Ishmael?”; “You gotta go, she said. Babe, you have to”; “Ain’t that the truth everywhere, I said to him”and “Listen, you schizoid sonofabitch” (N.H, pp.13-85).

- **Dialogue:** The use of dialogue in this novel enables Mukoma to communicate his message to the reader:
  - ❖ “Detective, where I come from death is a companion, like lover or good friend. Always” (12); “Ishmael, you know what it means to die? He asked. I shook my head. It means nothing, nothing unless you live. Paradox. Survivor like me knows death. You never kill, Ishmael? Yes, I answered truthfully...? And you, Joshua, have you ever taken a life? Genocide, no game? No hide and seek no police and rubbers. I ... I traded lives, Ishmael” (26).

### Conclusion:

Here I am at the end of my article whose title is A Stylistics Analysis in MukomaWaNgugi’s novel *Nairobi Heat*. As written above, its main objective is to analyse the style used by the author in this novel and the main method used in this article is New Criticism theory which helped me much to discuss the topic in order to reach its purpose.

After investigation, the main expected results prove that the style of MukomaWaNgugi is characterized by the following features:

- The use of direct speech;
- The use of exposition ;
- The use of analepsis ;
- The use of suspense
- The use of dialogues and
- The use of American slang.

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