

# An Analysis of Stylistic Trends in Published Kiswahili Short Story Genre

Evans M. Mbuthia<sup>1</sup> & P. I. Iribemwangi<sup>2\*</sup>

1. Department of Kiswahili, University of Nairobi, Kenya.
2. Department of Kiswahili, University of Nairobi, Kenya.

\* E-mail of the corresponding author: [iribe@uonbi.ac.ke](mailto:iribe@uonbi.ac.ke)

## Abstract

Writers express themselves in varied styles regardless of the genre they use as their vehicle of expression. Writing styles can also vary depending on the genre in focus. In this regard, therefore, stylistic issues can be focused upon from a two prong approach; that is from a writer's centered focus and secondly from a genre-based focus. Kiswahili Short story manifests generic features that are unique to the short story genre only. On the other hand, different writers have used a variety of styles to weave their stories. Some of these styles at times seem to be unique to specific writers. This paper uses stylistic approaches to analyse Kiswahili short stories and exemplifies how stylistic features are applied to the short stories. The paper concludes that Kiswahili short story genre has come of age and indeed continues to grow. As a result, as the paper shows, Kiswahili short story is weaved using a variety of styles that make it more interesting, informative and educative. Most of these styles give Kiswahili short story a unique African rendition that is born out of interweaving both exotic and native African styles.

**Key Words:** Genre, Kiswahili, short story, stylistic approaches

## 1.0 Introduction, definition of terms and Literature review

A short story is a genre that can easily be assumed to be readily understood by almost every literate individual. Probably this is true if one considers the most obvious aspect of a short story – length. However, together with this criterion, there are other identifying factors of this genre that are less obvious. On the issue of length (Prose 2000:3) presents a well thought analysis thus:

We know that a short story is a work of fiction of a certain length, a length with apparently no minimum. An increasing number of anthologies feature stories of no more than a humble page, or a single flashy paragraph indeed one of the most powerful stories in all of literature, Isaac Babel's 'Crossing Into Poland', less than three pages long, is capacious enough to include a massive and chaotic military campaign, a soldiers night of troubled dreams, and the report of a brutal murder. Similarly, Cynthia Ozark's "The Shawl" is only four pages long. But nearing the opposite end of the spectrum Robert Boswell's "The Darkness of Love" is over forty pages long.

It is not easy to exhaust the argument about the appropriate length of a short story. What is clear, however, is that if a piece of prose is longer than conventional short story, it can be classified as a novella if it meets the other essential criteria that distinguish these two closely allied genres.

Evans (1977) sheds light on an important aspect of the short story. He explains that novices in literature, out of ignorance, believe that a short story is a shortened form of the novel made so as to make up for limitations of character creation. He clarifies this by explaining that this form is chosen deliberately by a writer as his own particular vehicle of expressing his literary ideas.

Kibera (1988) in the introduction to her anthology explained that the short story is not a shortened novel and consequently demands special skills from the author. This means that the author is obligated to adhere to the canons of this form though one can digress to achieve aesthetic or thematic goals. Reid (1970:54) comments on the ambiguity of the description given to this genre. He also traces the growth of the short story and finally enumerates the essential qualities of a short story. Among the points he highlights is Poe's explanation on "unity of impression". Reid explains that the chief formal property of the short prose tale "is unity of impression", which he regarded as a product of conscious artistry; the author first "conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, and then devised an appropriate narrative vehicle for conveying that." Poe's enumeration of this cardinal quality of short stories echoes what other critics have referred to as artistic unity. This aspect refers to the harmonisation of various structural aspects in works of arts such as characterisation, setting, plot and ultimately the themes of the work concerned.

In as far as writer's styles are concerned, it is notable that Kiswahili short stories have been on the path of growth and indeed writers continue to exhibit various styles in their works. This paper will analyse stylistic trends in Kiswahili short story with a view to expounding them and showing that this genre is on the path to growth.

## 2.0 Theoretical Perspectives

This paper will mainly look at style from the perspective of a technique of exposition (Murry 1956) and also style as choice as expounded by Enkvist (1964). The two cited stylicians imply that writers have an array of choices before them as they endeavour to carry out their roles.

Simpson (1997) highlights the role of style in explaining linguistic patterns in different texts. This fact is what has given rise to many interpretations of the same texts, a fact that attests to the subjectivity of this method. This arises when different critics focus on different aspects of style that are employed in a given text.

Simpson (1997:6) further explains: "Stylistics facilitates the comparison of different genres of language. In this generic application, emphasis is placed on the relationship of literature to other types of discourse". For this matter, this method of analysis will therefore make it possible for critics to compare varying language manifestation within the same genre and across various genres.

Indangasi (1988:6) concisely describes stylistics as the study of style. He further describes stylistics as "the linguistic realization of aesthetic effects. It can be argued that style not only adds to the aesthetic value of a work but it also reinforces the message.

## 3.0 Discussion and Results: Manifestation of Style in the Short Story

As indicated on the onset of this paper manifestation of style can be viewed from a generic perspective or from a general perspective. In the former, a critic can focus on a specific genre and analyse the manner in which the message has been conveyed to the reader within the constraints of the said genre. In the latter a critic can analyse issues of style regardless of the genre. This paper analyses stylistic features as they manifest themselves in Kiswahili short story.

Kiswahili short stories that were published by the Sheldon press in the 1960s were written quite simply. Readers are thus able to almost effortlessly understand the meaning because all of them are written in a literal language without any effort of creating an underlying meaning. A significant change in regard to style was heralded by the BBC and Longman anthologies namely; *Pavumapo Palilie*, *Mapenzi ni Kikohozi*, *Kinywa Jumba la Maneno* and *Vituko Duniani*. Whereas each individual writer used their own style, one can generally posit that the styles employed made the works aesthetically superior to the previously published works. This trend of employing diverse styles continued in the next phase of writing where publishers opened up to the short story genre from the 1970s to the present time. In the sub-sections below, this paper will now analyze some selected styles that have been employed by Kiswahili short story writers. The paper is cognizant of the fact that certain stylistic features, although not a preserve of the short story genres, may be used in a way that is pertinent to the short story genre.

### 3.1 Generic Attributes as Manifestation of Style

When critics allude to the style of a certain genre, they would be referring to the structural attributes of the genre and other qualities apparent in the work in question. Kiswahili short story shares universal characteristics with other short forms from elsewhere. Msokile (1992:92) identifies the following attributes as the distinguishing factors of a Kiswahili short story:

It is a narration of one episode that is set within the culture of the Kiswahili language.

The episode should be narrated in a brief manner and should not have many characters; one or two should be enough.

A short story should be a creative work. In this case creativity does not mean a fabrication of lies but instead should be events drawn from real life situations.

A short story should not have a wide domain.

A Kiswahili short story should not have a complicated narration.

The setting should not be too complicated.

The issues highlighted by Msokile are very realistic and indeed this paper's analysis of various stories indicates that they generally fall within this description. It is, however, notable that writers have deviated from this description by writing stories that are quite complex in comparison to the conventional ones. Nonetheless, this paper will not delve into comparative issues from a generic perspective.

#### 3.1.2 General Issues of Style

Whereas stylicians can focus on very many issues, this paper will concentrate on three broad issues of style, namely: use of rhetoric devices, allegoric structures and figurative tropes and schemes

### 3.2 Rhetorical Devices

The short story genre utilizes rhetorical devices in two major ways. One of them is through rhetorical questions that serve to emphasize or highlight a certain streak in the story or repetitive devices that also achieve the same. Rhetorical questions and repetitive devices cannot be said to be an emerging trend in published Kiswahili short

story since they are evident even in earlier oral stories. It is, however, evident that the writers are more and more inclining towards philosophical, political and immersing issues in the use of rhetorical devices.

### 3.2.1 Rhetorical Questions

Mohammed's (2004:14) story, "*Mjadala Kwenye Kiburuji*" ("A Debate by a Seaside Terrace") is a good example of a writer tapering towards the philosophical realm. In this story, an invisible character surprises a newspaper reader by commenting upon what he was reading. What follows is a discussion between the invisible character who explains that he belongs to the past and the newspaper reader who epitomizes the present. The invisible character poses a number of rhetorical questions that amplify the fact that though the present world has developed very much compared to the Ancient World; it is still beset by many man-made problems. He explains, for example, that the gap between the rich and the poor keeps growing in leaps and bounds. Some of the rhetorical questions he asks are:

*Hamuoni katika upeo wa mafanikio hayo ya mwanandamu wa dunia ya kileo mna ushenzi wa kupigana vita baina ya mataifa kwa mataifa, vita vya ndugu kwa ndugu... ugaidi, kutekana nyara...Je hayo ndiyo mnayoyaita mafanikio?*

(Don't you see that in this human success of today, there is barbarism manifested by wars among nations and fights among brothers, terrorism, kidnappings...Is this you call success?)

The unseen character comments on human development *vis-a-vis* their negative or even wicked indulgences and poses the question as to whether this is anything to take pride in. This example clearly highlights use of a distinct style by the writer to underscore his position that emerging nations should not ignore their communal heritage that emphasized humanity as they embrace western culture and its attendant capitalism where class divide scorches humane conduct.

Rhetorical questions can be used in a variant way as exemplified in some short stories such as '*Si Shetani si Wazimu*' ('Neither Satanic nor Crazy) by Mohammed. In Mohammed's (1985:2) story, the author employs hypophorah to highlight human cruelty. In this section of the story the narrator does not see any good excuse for his incarceration and therefore wonders aloud and proceeds to answer the question he poses thus:

*Kisa cha kifungo changu niliambiwa; wengine shetani na wengine wazimu ... Huoni kwamba walimwengu wa kisasa ni wapujufu na watenda kinyume zaidi kuliko mimi?Uko wapi utu?Umepotea uwanandamu...Sasa kosa langu miye lipi?*

(As for the cause of my incarceration some said it was satanic influence on me, others said I acted crazy...Can't you see that human beings are now vindictive and they do more wicked things than I do? Where is humanness? Humanness has disappeared. What is my mistake?)

The use of hypophorah can be said to be a developing stylistic trend because it is not common among Kiswahili short story writers or even among others in other genres in Kiswahili Language.

### 3.2.2 Repetitive devices

Authors frequently use repetitive devices in order to highlight certain issues in their works. Kiswahili short stories abound with this kind of style. The emerging trend is to use repetitive devices in a specialised manner that make them encapsulate other devices. A good example is Mwinyumbegu's (1985) "*Juma kamwakia mkewe shikamoo akidhani ni mama mwenye nyumba waliopanga*" ("The story of how Juma mistakenly salutes his wife respectfully thinking it is their landlady"), the author deliberately repeats Juma's name after mentioning the numerous tasks he was supposed to accomplish in a single day. This repetition serves to amplify Juma's predicament as he worked for a heartless employer leading him to be dazed and unable to recognize his own wife whom he greeted in an unusual manner and thus provoked laughter from his visitors. In this example though what stands out is the use of repetitive device the author at the same time can be said to have employed parody as the employer is chided for being over dependant on his employee even for chores that he should ordinarily take charge of.

### 3.3 Allegoric Structures

Allegoric structures can manifest themselves in two ways; that is as allegories and allegoric names. These devices have both an aesthetic and thematic purpose in a short story. Allegoric names have always featured in both the oral narratives and the modern short stories. Allegoric names are usually created with a specific end in purpose. An author may use it to reinforce a character profile or to satirise him as is the case in Tulimanywa's (1982) story "*Wali wa Ndevu*" (Rice from the Beards). The author gives them names that clearly indicate their hypocritical conduct. Their names are as follows: "Benzi Nne" (Four Mercedes Benzes), "Bwana Shibe Mzalendo" (The well fed Patriot) "Jaji Mabuku" (Bookish judge) implying that he is a court official, devoid of common sense. "Dakitari Shingombili" (Two necked doctor) implying that he is unprofessional. "Bwana

Khamis Magorofa” (Mr Khamis owner of storied buildings), implying that he had enriched himself dishonestly. Another writer who uses allegorical names in abundance is Iribemwangi. For example in the story “Namchukia Babangu” ( I hate my Father) Iribemwangi (2007:110) he uses names such as “Mafutu” (Rage/fury), “Mzee Mkata M’Mali” (the Old Impoverished but propertied man), “Bahati” (Luck), “Mtoro” (Dissident), “Mhandisi Mwishu Njozi” (The Engineer who lives his dream) and Mfuata M’Mali” (One who runs after wealth) among others to profile his characters. In another story, “Kunani Marekani?” (What’s there in America?), Iribemwangi has characters with names that describe their profiles such as “Mkurugenzi” (Director), “Kasisi” (Pastor), “Liza” (She who makes me cry) and Natasha Carrier (to describe her HIV status). Allegoric names are however not very prevalent in the oral short story genre. However use of allegories seems to have become prevalent with the advent of the written short stories.

### 3.3.1 Allegory

Lanham (1991:4) describes an allegory as:

(Extending a metaphor through an entire speech or passage; the rhetorical meaning is narrower than the literary one, though congruent with it. The allegory is sometimes called ‘pure’ when every main item in the passage has a double significance, “mixed” when one or more terms do not.)

Use of allegory was not prevalent in the earlier short stories but it seems to be a later development. The oral tales in Kiswahili literature that predates written literature featured ogres but this was not alluded to as representing other beings as is the case in the modern short stories. In the modern short story, when characters with supernatural abilities are introduced, readers understand that this is the use of magic realism to drive a message in a unique style. Suleman’s story (1970:58) “*Hata Sumu Huwa Tamu*” (“Even poison can be Delicious!”) aptly employs an allegory. In this story Rajabu treats women as sex objects. His attitude is well captured in an allegory, thus:

*Kwa hakika wanawake kwa Rajabu walikuwa ni mfano wa samaki wa baharini. Nima alikuwa ni mmoja tu miongoni mwa malukuki, na alikuwa akilimeza kwa hamu chambo alichotupiwa na mvuvi yule stadi. Pale alipokuwa akimuona Rajabu analainika mikononi mwake hakujuu kabisa kuwa akimregezea mshipi tu ili ameze uzuri ndoano yake. Na ndipo Nima mfano wa samaki aliyeopolewa majini, alipoteza nguvu zake na kuingia mikononi mwa mvuvi. Ikiwa mvuvi yule atamkangaa samaki wake, au atamchemsha, au atamrejesha majini, hiyo ilikuwa ni hiyari yake.*

(In fact to Rajabu, women were just like fish in the ocean. Nima was just one among the thousands, and she was enthusiastically swallowing the bait that was thrown to her. When she imagined that Rajabu was getting charmed by her, he was actually relaxing the fishing line so that the hook can get into place. And that is how Nima, like a fish that was removed from the water lost her strength and got into the fisherman’s control. It was up to the fisherman to decide whether he will fry it, boil it, or return it to the waters.)

Use of this allegory fits in very well with the events of the story. Rajabu who definitely sees himself as the fisherman in this story was quite heartless and was not moved by his ceaseless acts of breaking girls’ hearts just like a heartless fisherman will toss an unwanted species to the shore to be scorched or eaten by other creatures.

### 3.4 Figurative Tropes and Schemes

Leech (1969) explains that figurative interpretation is not done randomly but it follows rules that guide the reference of meaning. He explains that these rules are so established that when they are used in expressions one seldom thinks of them. Literature has many figurative tropes that enhance aesthetics and effectiveness in message delivery. This paper will focus on metaphors, similes, satire and imagery.

#### 3.4.1 Metaphors

Lanham (1999) describes use of metaphor as substituting literal language to a reference that is analogous to what is being focused on. Lake off and Johnson (1989) on the other hand have an unusual approach to metaphors. They have identified orientation and ontological metaphors. They explain that the former have to do with spatial orientation, while the latter have to do with experiences with physical objects. In Mkomagu’s (1982:1) story, “*Msiba*” (“Tragedy”), the sad circumstances of a character are captured metaphorically. The author explains:

*Maua alikuwa peke yake nyumbani amekaa chumbani. alikuwa sasa ua lilonyauka ... alikuwa amechanuka kama ua la waridi, lakini sasa ua limegeuka jani lililokauka. Halipendwi na nyuki wala vipepeo.*

(Maua was alone at home, she was in the bedroom. She was now a shrivelled flower, she was previously like a blossomed rose, which had turned into a dry leaf. One that was shunned by bees and butterflies alike.)

This metaphor accurately captures the sad circumstances of Maua who got neglected by her husband Mkubwa Lyanda. Maua who at first enjoyed a tranquil and blissful life was now a neglected and miserable wife whose husband had married another woman. In another story, Nassor (1972:18) captures the helplessness of the main character Gharib whose marriage proposal was rejected. He skilfully explains Gharib's predicament by use of metaphors thus:

*Kuyasikia hayo Gharib aliona macheche ya moto yanamjia usoni, dunia inazunguka kama pia ... Akayaona maisha yake yanakaribia kutia nanga kwa fimbo ya ghafla aliyopigwa.*

(On hearing this news Gharib saw flames of fire coming towards his face, the world was spinning round like a cone ... He saw his life nearing the end like an anchoring ship as a result of the blow that he was given.)

This is an effective metaphor since Gharib was very emotionally attached to Ghariba, the girl whose parents rejected his proposal. This action was certainly a big blow to Gharib.

### 3.4.2 Similes

According to Wales (1989:421), "A simile is a figure of speech whereby two concepts are imaginatively and descriptively compared ...." This comparison is done indirectly, that is, by use of words such as: like or similar to and so on. This device is frequently employed by short story lighted to create clarity and for aesthetic reasons. Senkoro (1989:67) in his story "Ndoa Chungu" ("Bitter marriage") uses a simile to describe how one of the main characters hated her parents. He explained:

*Alifikia wakati ambapo alimchukia baba yake na mamake kwa chuki ya ajabu. Chuki hiyo ilikuwa kama mlima wa volcano iliyolala na siku moja volcano hiyo ililipuka....*

(It reached a time when he hated his parents in a very strange way. That hatred was like a dormant volcano and one day that volcano erupted.)

Aisha's hatred for her parents was as a result of their advice against her wayward conduct while she was in school. The author's use of this simile highlights how Aisha was determined to ignore her parent's advice while sticking to her chosen path in life. The use of this simile not only amplifies the bad relationship between the two parties but also points to the dangers that lay ahead of Aisha.

### 3.4.3 Satire

Satire is described by Scott (1979:257) as: "The holding up of folly to ridicule. It often makes us. It often makes use of ironic sarcasm. Its motive is amendment, its province moral and manners. The holding up of vice or folly to ridicule. It often makes use of ironic sarcasm. Its motive is amendment, its province moral and manners. This device is a popular vehicle of expressing disagreement with the manner in which people conduct themselves in the society. It is used widely in literature and the Kiswahili short story also makes use of it. Tulimanywa (1982:66) achieves this by his description of one of the characters. He explains thus:

*Profesa Kandambili.... Kwa kawaida wakati wote mtu anapokuwa anazungumza hunong'onezea jirani yake akitoa makosa 'upuuzi' wa huyo msemaji au kupongeza 'busara' yake kwa kupima maneno yake kwenye mizani ya mfalsafa mkuu, baba wa siasa na uchumi wa kijamaa, Karl Marx.*

(Profesa Kandambili.... as usual, whenever someone is speaking would whisper to his neighbour pointing out the 'foolishness' of the speaker or praising' his 'wisdom', by weighing his (the speakers) words on models provided by the great philosopher and father of socialist politics and economy, Karl Marx.)

From the foregoing it is evident that the author satirises Profesa Kandambili for his blind allegiance to Marxism that lead him to imagine that it can be the panacea to all human problems. In Senkoro's (1989:63)"Ndoa Chungu", the author satirises one of the character's misconduct in an incident where the character Tadei attacked his wife without any provocation at all. The author explains:

*Aliendelea kumpiga Aisha. Baadaye akaacha na kupanguza jasho. Mwananchi alikuwa kajenga nchi kweli, hadi jasho likamlowanisha.*

(He continued beating up Aisha. Later on he stopped and wiped his sweat. The citizen had contributed in nation-building until he became wet from sweat.)

The author's employment of omniscient narrator's style of commenting on the issue, pointing out the irony of the situation, that is the character using his energy to beat up his wife instead of building the nation, highlights the difficulty that Aisha encounters in her marriage. In Iribemwangi's (2011: 67) "*Utamu wa Vita*" (the Delight of War), a pregnant woman is butchered just because two rebel fighters wanted to confirm a bet they had made about the sex of the unborn. After the heinous act, one of the rebels stated:

*"Aaah, si nilikwambia ni mvulana? Huyo angeishia kuwa dikteta kama Bachacha au Kosesese au Sameli Swara au Idada au ..."*

("See! Didn't I tell you its a boy? That one would have ended up being a dictator just like Bachacha or Kosesese or Sameli Swara or Idada or ...")

While justifying his action, the rebel ends up criticizing dictators he had heard of from his region. It is ironic that his actions also seem to be hinged on dictatorial tendencies. But it is the comment by the second rebel that clearly captures satire, he says:

*"Ah ah, la. Usiendeleee, usiseme zaidi, usiendeleee na orodha hiyo kwa kuwa ni ndefu sana na ... na, inaweza hata kukudhuru, tahadhari bwana ..."*

(Oh no, no! Do not continue, say you no more, do not continue enumerating them for that list is so very long and ... and, it may even cause you harm, be cautious brother ...)

The insinuation from this comment is that the speakers may themselves not be very far from a propagator of dictatorship and that's why caution is advised. Other satirical stories include Iribemwangi's "*Mheshimiwa Gavana*" (Your Excellency the Governor) and "*Shajara ya Mheshimiwa*" (The Honourable Members Diary) by Hamisi Babusa both in Walibora and Iribemwangi (2011).

#### 3.4.4 Imagery

Lanham (1991:4) describes an image as: "A thing that represents something else; a symbol, emblem, representation..." It is a truism that different societies may have different images to represent certain concepts. This means that images have to be contextualised. Furthermore images may be broadly divided into symbolic and descriptive imagery

##### 3.4.4.1 Symbolic images.

Symbolic images are a popular device in short story writing. Mohammed (1978:2) makes an effective use of this device when he describes Rajabu's helpless situation after waiting for his wife in vain. We are told:

*Rajabu alizuka kochini. La hatouachia moyo wake pia usimame ... kupitia dirishani aliyaona mwachweajua yamepaka rangi ya damu.*

(Rajabu rose from the coach. Oh! He will not allow his heart to stop beating ... Through the window he could see the blood – red setting sun...)

It is significant that Rajabu becomes apprehensive that the sun is setting. The fact that the sun's colour is described as blood-red signifies the danger that his marriage is facing since he had earlier on warned his wife of divorce if she does not comply with his expectations. In Wamitila's "*Shingo la Mbunge*" (2007: 43) hapless villagers set out on a journey fraught with dangers to their own security. The author captures this reality with symbolic images that give a foregleam that awaited the group:

*Tulikuwa tumevuka mto mbwa walipoanza kubweka ... mkarara wa mbweko inayochusa kila mahali kafuatia. Nyenje nao waliimba kwa fujo ... Bundi wengi ajabu waliimba mbolezi zao huko chini mtoni. Sauti hizo nzito zilichanyatana na kuunda mahadhi ya ajabu; mahadhi yaliyoilaki asubuhi iliyokuwa sasa inaanza kupambuzi pole pole.*

(We had crossed the river when dogs started barking ... a series of annoying barks followed. Crickets too sung out loudly. Downstream crickets sounded their dirge, this incredible noises combined to create a strange cacophony; that ushered in the day break.)

Wamitila's use of these descriptive images creates a fearful atmosphere that pervaded the area they were traversing. In addition it underlies their psychological states since they were a worried lot having been neglected

by their parliamentary representative and unsure of how they would be received once they got to his residence.

#### 3.4.4.2 Descriptive Images

Descriptive imagery is quite common in most genres. These kinds of images manifest themselves in five ways, namely; kinetic, tactile, visual, thermal and olfactory.

##### 3.4.4.2.1 Kinetic images

These kinds of images have to do with the sense of movement. Kinetic images are widely used in the short story. One example is in Mohammed's (1978:1) "*Kicheko cha Ushindi*" (The Victors Laughter) when his main character, Rajabu explained how quickly time was moving, thus:

*Wakati ukivaa mbawa zake, kitu cha ajabu kilioje wakati mara ngapi aliuona ukipita mbio mbele yake, mithali ya paa mwenye miguu minne, akatamani usimame ili astaladhi kwa umbo lake? Mara ngapi uliyinyirika taratib kwa kirihi na maringo kama jongoo mwenye mamia ya miguu na yeye akatamani kuufukuza?*

(Time adorned in wings appeared to move fast in front of him, like a four-legged antelope, he wished to stop it so that he could admire its beauty! How many times did it (time) glide by, proudly, like a millipede with its hundreds of legs and how he wished he could chase it.)

Rajabu's perception of the movement of time was triggered by his senseless threat to his wife who in turn reacted by hiding herself. Since he could not tell whether she had abandoned him, his anxiety as he waited for her to turn up, made time to appear to be moving in an unusual way.

##### 3.4.4.2.2 Tactile Images

Tactile images have to do with the sense of touch. These kinds of images have various manifestations. In Senkoro's "*Jamila Mpenzi*" (1989) the author remembers his childhood girlfriend, Jamila with a sense of nostalgia. He explains that she was a unique individual, very different from the rest of the crowd. He cannot reconcile with the fact that Jamila died in the prime of her life. Because of this, he views life as a crown of thorns.

In another story by Senkoro (1989), his main character gets attracted to fresh roses. As she tries to pick them she gets pricked by the thorns. This incident was at the beginning of her marriage life, which apparently appeared to be full of promise – symbolized by the roses. However, her marriage life turned out to be very unhappy and probably the fact that she got pricked by the thorns as she picked flowers is an indication that the enjoyment she imagined she would experience in her marriage life was but a mirage.

In "*Zaka la Damu*" (A Sacrifice of Blood Relations) by Mwakyembe (1982:107) Kena and his father disagree and the father cautions his son by telling him: "*Utaukata mshipa wetu wa damu ndipo utakapovuja na tutakiona kifo chetu.*" (You will cut off the veins that carry our blood and spill blood and we shall witness our dying). This was a powerful tactile image that was meant to dissuade Kena from fighting his own father in the political arena.

In Suleman (1972:4) story, "*Wivu Mwovu*" (Wicked Envy) a police inspector accuses Mikidadi of robbery. Mikidadi feels very hurt by this false accusation. The author explains: "*Maneno yale yalimkata maini Mikidadi na alihisi kama moyo wake unakeketwa kwa kisu kibutu.*" (These words were so hurtful that Mikidadi felt as if his heart was being mercilessly cut up with a blunt knife)

##### 3.4.4.2.3 Visual images

Visual images have to do with the picture like situation that an author creates in order to highlight events. Quite a significant number of authors use this device. In "*Jamila Mpenzi*", Jamila explains to her friend that the intelligentsia is alienated from the common people. She told him that there is a big valley that separates the two groups. Concerning Fakiri, a country in Mkomagu's (1982:8) story, "*Msiba*" (Tragedy) the author relates about the surrounding in a villager's house. He explains:

*Katika mwanga ule wa moto aliweza kuona matundu mengi ukutani na mashimo mengi sakafuni. Sakafu yenyewe ilijaa mavumbi matupu. Mavi ya panya yalikuwa yakiporomoka kutoka paani kama mvua ya mawe. Mapanya walikiwa elfu na elfu paani na chini pia.*

*Walipiga machwichwi huku wakifukuzana kama watoto wadogo wafanyavyo.*

(In the dim light provided by the fading fire, he could see many holes on the (earth) wall and on the floor. The floor itself was very dusty. Rats' droppings kept falling noisily like hailstones from the ceiling. There were many rats that kept on making their scratchy noises and kept running after one another like children.)

This vivid description achieved by use of visual images alludes to the poverty of this household and the story is a microcosm of the whole society that the author writes about.

#### 3.4.4.2.4 *Thermal Images*

Thermal images have to do with heat. The use of these kinds of images makes the reader imagine a character or characters experiencing a fire or suffocating heat. This kind of language is used to amplify a character's adverse situation. In Senkoro's (1970:72) "*Ndoa Chungu*" (Painful Marriage), the author employs this device in explaining Aisha's predicament in her marriage, arising out of the negligence and violence that was inflicted on her by Tadei. Concerning Aisha's first encounter with Tadei the author explains:

*Siku ile kumbe Aisha alikaribisha janga. Au tuseme janga lilimkaribisha Aisha. Janga nalo lilisongea kama mdomo wa kaburi likamkumbatia Aisha ndani ya tanuru la moto mkali. Alimezwa na mdomo wa janga hili, mdomo uliomdanganya kwa uburudisho wa muda, kumbe baadaye ni moto wa cheche kali zinazoungua.*

(So on that day Aisha invited disaster or disaster invited Aisha, so to speak. Disaster moved on like an open grave and hugged Aisha in a fierce flame. She was swallowed by the mouth of that disaster; a mouth that cheated her by entertaining her temporarily. Alas! thereafter it turned out to be a fire with fierce sparks that burn one up.)

The author successfully makes it possible for the reader to have a preview of the kind of marriage that Aisha was getting herself into.

#### 3.4.4.2.5 *Olfactory Images*

These kinds of images have to do with the sense of hearing. When these kinds of images are employed, noise will be produced that affects the characters in one way or another. In Mohammed's "*Kicheko Cha Ushindi*" (The Victors Laughter) the author skilfully uses olfactory imagery to create a sense of bewilderment in the main character Rajabu. Rajabu had a misunderstanding with his wife. As he apprehensively waited for her with his mind spinning in confusion even the ticking sound of the clock was enough to distract him from his thoughts.

In "*Maryam na siku ya Mwanzo ya Dakhakia*" (Maryam and her first day in the Girls' Hostel), Olfactory images are used very well. Before she left for the city her nights were filled with natural and sedating sounds of owls and bushbabies in the dead of the night. The author also mentions dry leaves and fruits falling as a result of the wind. When she moved into the city, the noises she experienced there were of a different kind. Now she had to contend with noises from crowds and the hooting of vehicles and around her snores from her sleeping friends. This kind of noises was disturbing and made her very confused.

### 3.5 *Use of Journey Motif to Develop Thematic Issues*

The issue of length in the short story definitely impinges on all the other issues that have to do with delivery in the short story. In this regard use of the journey motif is a feature that is mostly associated with the longer pieces of prose like the novel or to some extent with the novella. Nevertheless, like any other issues of style, it is not practical to create permanent demarcations because writers will always create exceptions.

Wamitila's "*Shingo ya Mbunge*" (The Parliamentarian's Neck) and Iribemwangi's "*Kunani Marekani?*" are good examples. In both stories characters move from their usual environment in pursuit of bettering themselves but end up not achieving their goals but in the process they undergo a sense of self discovery. In *Shingo ya Mbunge*, villagers set out on a journey that can best be described as an odyssey. Their goal was to see their member of parliament with a view of presenting a host of problems that were besieging them. Their journey takes them through various terrains that reveal the serious neglect that the populace has suffered from their parliamentary representative. The authors exposition of the degraded landscape as a result of overexploitation by the antagonists kin together with the explanation about public utilities grabbed at the instigation of the same



person paint a grim picture of misrule. Furthermore this degraded landscape is elaborated at the backdrop of the lofty existence of their parliamentary representative. The author aptly contrasts the two worlds; that of the ruler and the one of the subjects thus (2007:45):

*Njia tuliyoitumia sasa ilinyinyirika katikati ya ardhi iliyotifuka na kujaa mawe na makorongo mengi ajabu: ardhi ambayo haikuwa na msamaha na kiumbe yeyote.*

(The path that we used glided through land that had been degraded and was full of boulders and gullies of all sorts of manner that showed mercy to no one.)

In contrast their representative's home is described as being afar as follows (2007:45):

*Nyumba yenyewe ilionekana kama doa la nili kwenye karatasi ambayo haikuwa na maandishi yoyote. Ilijitokeza kama jabali pweke; ingawa sehemu fulani ilikuwa imezibwa na miti ambayo lazima ilipandwa ili kuipa upekee na kuitenga na mandhari ya karibu.*

(The particular house appeared like a blue mark on a clean paper devoid of any writing. It sprung forth as a lonely crag covered by trees that were definitely planted to give it uniqueness and to separate it from the surrounding homes.)

The author's choice of language in describing the rest of the homesteads clearly shows the economic divide between the ruler and the ruled. He uses the same kind of imagery to describe the neighbouring homesteads ibid (2007:46-47):

*Kando kulikuwa na nyumba kadhaa ambazo zilionekana kama madoa ya wino ambayo yaliangukia sehemu ambayo hayakuhitajika kwenye karatasi ya mchoraji; madoa ya mtoto ambaye anaanza kujizoeza kupaka rangi.*

(On the sides there were several homes that seemed like ink marks that had fallen on an artist's paper at a section that they were not required; marks made by a child who is just learning how to draw.)

Clearly the author uses this kind of style to amplify the class distinctions between the representative and the people he represented in parliament. Their journey ends up in disappointment as their hosts slips away oblivious of the fact that his unwanted visitors clearly see him making his way out through the coffee plantation. The prelude to this journey was their concern for their own economic existence and the journey itself was long and tiresome. The fact that they never achieved their objective; that is to have their problems addressed by their leader, is not only a betrayal of the electorate but a discovery on their part that they are on their own because their leader was advancing his own cause and not that of the public that elevated him by voting him as their representative. Use of the journey motif in this case highlights the sense of betrayal.

In Iribemwangi's "*Kunani Marekani?*" (What's there in America) the main character, Ebiri, travels abroad with a view to earning a PhD. While there, he gets to see many other people from his country who had braved the journey to America with the hope of uplifting their economic standards. One such character is Mkurugenzi. His efforts are in vain as he is forced by circumstances to do demeaning jobs given his academic standards. This leads him to regret and to search his soul for answers. Therefore the author aptly calls the story *Kunani Marekani?* clearly an appropriate title that queries why one would abandon a well paying job and a good quality of life to travel abroad in search of greener pastures only to end up doing menial jobs.

This short story details the frustrations visited on Mkurugenzi when he leaves for America. It also chronicles the setbacks that befell Kasisi in his journeys and later on Liza, his daughter, who takes the cue and immigrates to the same place. It emerges that what they take to be the land of plenty ends up as a mirage to them. Therefore their journey is in vain and leads to a disappointing self discovery. Characters realise that the allure of the first world is based on misinformation since they are unable to better their lives and instead they encounter a capitalist system where every service has to be paid for and where good jobs are hard to come by. It is only those who sojourn for specific purposes - and who get back home like Ebiri - who succeed.

Walibora's "*Damu Nyekusi*" (Black Blood) also details the tribulation of a Black man in a foreign country. His main character who was student in foreign country suffers discrimination from White people as well as fellow

black people. Apparently his journey to America was intended to better his life but instead his experiences in the hands of the law enforcers and instructors at the University manifest a world that practices double standards at the expense of the black people. Ironically, his attempts to seek solidarity with black Americans - who he mistakenly believe would warm up towards him because of a common ancestry - alienates him further as he is not only threatened and robbed, but he is also humiliated. The author therefore intimates that Faraja, as the main character is called, is highly disappointed by his hosts and looks forward to completing his studies and travel back home where he believes his life will be much better.

### 3.6 *Use of Letters to Break the Monotony of Narration*

Use of letters interposed in the narration seems to be a recent style. Authors use them to substitute dialogue so as to create continuity when certain characters have to discuss an issue or when certain information has to be passed on to other parties. This style was certainly not in use in the earlier stories (and clearly not in the oral narratives) but seem to be taking shape in the twenty first century among some writers in this genre. One writer who particularly applies this style is Swaleh as in the story "*Alidhani Kapata*" (She thought she had acquired) in Iribemwangi Ed. (2007:84) where the whole story is an exchange of letters between Vicky Brainsworth and Francesca Pondamali. Swaleh also has another story that is entirely based on epistles. "*Uhuru Uliopania*" (Enforced Independence) in Iribemwangi (2011) is an exchange of letters between a husband (Amani) and his estranged wife Fatmina Jamaldin. In the same anthology, Iribemwangi uses a letter in the lead story "*Kunani Marekani?*" as does Nandwa in "*Mja ni Mja*" (A human being always remains a human being). Nandwa also uses the letter style in "*Jua Litawaka*" (The Sun will shine) in Habwe Ed. (2010). Mailu also uses this same style in Mbatia Ed. (2000).

### 3.7 *Use of Magic Realism*

The dichotomy between oral literature and written literature does not always hold. This is because written literature has borrowed many aspects from oral literature such as character types; that is the use of animal characters some of whom have super human powers. Some critics have classified some of the stories following this style as falling in the category of *magic narratives*. Concerning them, Levi-Strauss quoted by Jameson (2000:182) explains:

... Human characters are ceaselessly transformed into animals or objects and back again: in which nothing like narrative "point of view" let alone 'identification' or 'empathy' with this or that protagonist, emerges, in which not even the position of an individual (storyteller or sender destinaire) can be conceptualized without contradiction.

There are very many stories that have characters created in this manner. Kezilahabi's "*Mayai Waziri wa Maradhi*", Mohamed's "*Sadiki Ukipenda*" and many other stories have utilised this style. The characters in these stories have superhuman abilities, a feature associated with oral narratives. The motive behind this approach is not only to raise the level of style in regard to characterisation but also to achieve thematic goals albeit in an unusual manner.

## 4.0 Conclusion

As expected, the initial stories that were translated from the oral sources could not exhibit a multiplicity of styles because of their fixed mode of delivery. With the advent of the written form of literature, many writers came into the scene. These manifested their own idiosyncrasies and besides, social conditions changed creating situations where individuals and families moved from countryside to cities or even to foreign lands.

These changes in the social-economic landscapes brought conflicts at many fronts *viz* between spouses, between foreigners and their hosts, between parents and their siblings and so on. In order to reflect these emerging issues some authors employed letter writing to express these new situations and others.

The earlier short story writers also avoided using super human characters relegating them to the oral past but increasingly quite a number of modern short story writers make use of such characters not only for stylistics purposes but to deliver certain thematic issues.

Although we have taken the position that generic boundaries are porous it is evident that certain approaches are likely better suited for longer pieces of prose for example science fiction. Just like an allegorical style such an approach would require more than a veneer of interpretation and therefore its complicated nature will render such a style unsuitable for a short story.

It is therefore likely that the Kiswahili Short story genre will continue being a medium of choice for many writers and like other genres it is likely to continue evolving stylistically more so as generic boundaries continue becoming hazy.

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