

A Stylistic Analysis of ‘O Uganda, Land of Beauty’ By Prof. George Kakoma

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ABSTRACT: This paper is a stylistic study of the lexical and phonological features of ‘O Uganda, land of beauty’ an anthem written by Prof. George Kakoma. Very little in-depth study had been done on the stylistic features imbedded in the anthem. This research therefore undertook a detailed investigation of its anaphora, alliterations, end rhymes, lexico-semantic features which made it to stand out in 1962 and be chosen as a national anthem.

The paper concluded that, based on a preponderance of abstract lexical items and non committal verbs (non finite verbs), Prof. Kakoma’s anthem did not display the immense beauty of Uganda as he suggested in the title.

KEYWORDS: lexical features, phonological features, anaphora, alliteration, end rhyme

1. INTRODUCTION

Stylistics refers to the (linguistic) study of style in order to explain the relation between language and artistic function. It seeks to explain why an author chooses a particular style in place of all the others available to him and how they achieve an aesthetic effect. (Geoffrey Leech, Mick Short, 2007). According to Literaryterms.net style is the unique way in which an author writes and/or tells a story in terms of diction, sentence structure, tone, narrator and creative devices. (Literaryterms, 2015). (Leech, 1969) (Geoffrey Leech, Mick Short, 2007) defines style as the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose or” the linguistic characteristics of a particular text’. Stylistic analysis in linguistics identifies patterns of usage in speech and writing. Stylistic analysis in literary studies is usually made for the purpose of commenting on quality and meaning in a text. (Mantex, 2009). A stylistic analysis of the anthem ‘O Uganda, land of beauty’ was conducted at mainly two levels, the lexical and phonological levels. At the lexical level, the words of the literary text were explored similarly at the phonological level the literary text was dissected to distinguish the articulated sounds. (Halliday, 1994) (Fredrick Ruban, Dr. Helen Unius Backiavathy, 2016)

Lexical features according to (Wikipedia, Lexical definition, 2020), refer to those words which have independent meaning such as: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, or preposition. A lexical definition of a word is one which reports the meaning of the word or a phrase as it is actually used by people in a language, and it changes with changing usage.

Phonological features refer to the different types of sound patterns used in a poem to create both an aesthetic feeling and to communicate a message to the reader. Phonology is the study of speech sounds of a language and the laws governing them. The phonological features of poetry include: stress, intonation, rhythm, metre, rhyme, alliteration (Ufot, 2013). At its phonological level poetic language is often characterized by a foregrounding of certain sounds through devices like repetition, alliteration, assonance, rhyme and phonaesthesia. (Ufyo, 2009)

2. ANTHEM ‘OH UGANDA, LAND OF BEAUTY’ BY PROF. GEORGE KAKOMA

The Uganda national anthem was composed by Professor George Wilberforce Kakoma a then renowned music teacher and Inspector of schools in Masaka district in southern Uganda. Prof. George Kakoma’s song was chosen in the contest because it was “short, original, solemn, praising and

looking forward to the future” (Musisi, 2012). The title of the Uganda national anthem ‘Oh Uganda, Land of Beauty’ wets the appetite of the reader to expect a description of the beautiful things in Uganda in the stanzas below it. The poem is divided into three equal line stanzas each with five lines which carry a traditional rhyme scheme. The beautiful things he talks about in the first stanza are: the unity, freedom and liberty of the people. In the second stanza the beautiful things he mentions about Uganda include: freedom, love, good neighbours and peace. In the third stanza the beautiful things he mentions are: the sunshine, fertile soils which produce food and the status of a being a pearl. The language is simple and easy to understand with no complex terminologies and it makes interpretation easy for the reader. There are no unusual words in the poem - no neologisms, and no unconventional affixations.

"Oh Uganda, Land of Beauty"

[1] Oh, Uganda! May God uphold thee,
We lay our future in thy hand.
United, free,
For liberty
Together we'll always stand.
Oh, Uganda! The land of freedom,
[5] Our love and labour we give;
And with neighbours all
At our country's call
In peace and friendship we'll live.
Oh, Uganda! The land that feeds us,
[10] By sun and fertile soil grown.
For our own dear land,
We'll always stand,
The Pearl of Africa's Crown
(Minahan, 2010)

The initial interpretation of the poem is Prof. George Kakoma’s celebration of Uganda’s independence from colonial rule. The first stanza’s subject matter is Ugandans placing their hope in the land of Uganda to support them for years to come. The subject of the second stanza is Ugandans’ commitment to love and work for Uganda with the support of their neighbours. The third stanza suggests that the fertile soils are the reason why they will stand out as a pearl in Africa.

All the three stanzas talk about land showing that the writer must have had a strong affection for the land which came out in the anthem. He says that the future of the people of Uganda is in the land meaning that what will make the nation continue to survive for generations will be the fertile soils where they can get healthy food. He goes ahead to say that it is this fertile land which makes Uganda the pearl of Africa. This could also be interpreted to mean that the land has the most precious things on the continent of Africa which make it stand out as a pearl in an oyster.

“Uganda, land of beauty” is not a difficult poem in terms of subject matter. But it makes reference to intangible elements which are vague. The readers are left to make their own mental pictures of liberty, freedom, unity. The elements mentioned in the anthem are not unique to Uganda as a country; they can be applied to many other countries. This lack of specific mention of the physical distinct features of Uganda creates apathy in the reader who is not given anything unique to attract him/her to the country.

Prof. Kakoma uses formal English as the register of communication maybe because he was an educated man and also because he was writing to people outside his immediate family circle, people he did not know and had never met. It can be said to be too abstract which makes it difficult for an individual to personally identify himself or herself with it. His register is conservative and uses the conventions properly.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1. Lexical Features

Open class words in the anthem were identified and placed in the table below. These are words which carry the majority of meaning in a language, and closed class (grammatical) words like determiners

and prepositions were also identified and classified. Closed class words link together open class words in meaningful arrangements in sentences. Table 1 below, shows how the open class words are distributed throughout the poem, and whether they are nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs.

Table1. *Distribution of open class words in “O Uganda land of beauty”*

NOUNS	MAIN VERBS	ADJECTIVES	ADVERBS
Future	May	Our x2	Always x2
Hand	Lay	United	In
Liberty	‘ll x3	Free	Together
Land x2	Give	Thy	
Freedom	Live	All	
Love	Call	Fertile	
Labour	Feeds	Grown	
Neighbours	Stand x2	Own	
Peace	Uphold	Dear	
Friendship	‘s x2		
Sun			
Soil			
Africa			
Crown			
Pearl			
Uganda x3			
Country			
God			
20	14	10	04

According to table 1 above, the poem consists mainly of nouns and verbs. Ten out of the twenty nouns refer to physical objects - that is, they are concrete nouns, two of these nouns are repeated twice. The other eight nouns are abstract nouns namely:- love, peace, friendship, freedom, future, God and liberty. The nouns above are going to be divided into two semantic fields/ areas of meaning. According to (Lexico.com, concrete noun, 2020) Concrete nouns refer to nouns which A noun denoting a material object rather than an abstract quality, state, or action, e.g. dog, building, tree. And an abstract nouns is a noun denoting an idea, quality, or state rather than a concrete object, e.g. truth, danger, happiness. (Lexico.com, abstract noun, 2020).

Table2. *Distribution of nouns within two basic semantic classes*

NOUNS RELATED TO NATURE	NOUNS RELATED TO HUMANS
Country	God
Uganda	friendship
pearl	peace
crown	neighbours
Africa	love
soil	freedom
sun	hand
land	liberty
	future

In table 2 above, there are eight nouns referring to nature and nine nouns referring to human qualities. This being an anthem with the title ‘Uganda land of beauty’ the title infers that each line will describe the beautiful physical features. Reference to numerous human and sublime nouns give the impression that the beauty referred to in the title are the people of Uganda and God more than the physical features which make Uganda different from other countries like the source of River Nile, Sipi Falls, Mt. Rwenzori which are never mentioned in the anthem. The mixture in the poem of nouns belonging to these two different semantic classes (Geoffrey Leech, Mick Short, 2007) nature and human could be said to account for what we perceive as a lack of detailed display of the natural features of Uganda that makes it a land of beauty.

According to table 3 below, the abstract nouns are weightier than the concrete nouns in the sense that they refer to bigger aspects that supersede the concrete nouns in the poem. The abstract noun [God] is bigger than [country, Uganda] because God is bigger than any country in terms of ability, strength, wealth and influence. The [pearl] and [crown] are related to the [future] but the [future] comprises of more aspects of wealth, financial security, political security, than a [pearl] or [crown].

Table3. *Semantic correlation of concrete nouns to abstract nouns*

CONCRETE NOUNS	ABSTRACT NOUNS
Country, Uganda, →	God,
Crown, pearl →	Future
Africa →	Neighbours, friendship, peace
Soil, land →	Hand, love, freedom, liberty

According to the composer, [Soil] and [land] were related to [hand], [love], [freedom] and [liberty] in an attempt to portray the release of the land from bondage at independence. However, having [land] is not the only thing that brings [love], [freedom], [liberty] and even the [hand] is used for many more purposes than tilling the land. The abstract nouns in this category apply to a much wider scope of nature than soil and land. The correlation between [Africa] and [neighbours], [friendship] and [peace] is the only one that can fit in the same scale in the sense that, the poet is implying that when Uganda forges friendships with its neighbours; the result of it will be peace. The semantic correlation above shows that the abstract nouns used in the anthem do not exclusively refer to Uganda and as such it becomes difficult for those singing the anthem to bond with those nouns.

Table4. *Distribution of verbs within two basic classes*

FINITE VERBS	NON FINITE VERBS
May	Uphold
Lay	Stand x2
Give	Live
Feeds	‘s x2
‘ll x3	Call

According to table 4 above, the poem has fourteen verbs, half of which are finite verbs and the other half are non finite verbs A finite verb is a verb marked with tense, shows agreement with a subject and can stand alone in a sentence. They are also called main verbs. All the verbs which are marked for tense (finite verbs) are in the present tense which creates a sense of immediacy as we read the poem. Finite verbs being the main verbs direct the audience to the main action of Uganda being free and united. This is reinforced by the adverbs with show: continuity ‘always’, unity ‘together’ and place ‘in’, showing that Uganda will perpetually be united.

Non finite verbs are not marked for tense and do not show agreement with a subject. Non finite verbs take three different forms—the infinitive, the participle, or the gerund. (Nordquist, 2019). All the non finite verbs are in the infinitive form. The presence of non finite verbs lightens the seriousness of the subject matter and reduces the weight of the unity professed in the national anthem to the reader or listener. This reduces the pull, power to draw the listener/ reader into the feeling of being a part of vision, prevents personal attachment to the words of the song and the formation of patriotic feelings towards the anthem. This lack of verbs which can stand on their own has a negative effect on the reader in the sense that, the reader/singer does not perceive the call of the author as an absolute necessity. Verbs like ‘may’ in the first stanza, ‘ll’ repeated in every stanza, ‘s’ repeated twice, ‘lay’ all contribute to the idea of choice which removes the resolve and distances the reader from itself. There is only one directive verb used in the poem ‘stand’ and it does not tell Ugandans how they will be able to stand as a pearl in Africa. It is used to urge the addressee to join in and be a part of the people who take their place and are counted as Ugandans.

There are no unusual words in the poem - no neologisms and no unconventional affixation. The words of the anthem are all common English words which do not require a dictionary interpretation for the reader to understand. This simplification was intended for the lay person to understand the words of the anthem. It was an attempt by the writer to speak at the level of the common man.

Table5. *Distribution of adjectives in the anthem*

Descriptive adjectives	Possessive adjectives	Indefinite adjectives
United	Our x2	All
Free	Thy	
Fertile		
Grown		
Dear		
Own		

There is one indefinite adjective [all] which describes or modifies the noun [neighbours] without making specific reference to particular neighbours. It provides indefinite/unspecific information about the noun. The vague description of neighbours opens the anthem to limitless possibilities which also brings a lack of direction for the people it is intended to direct. Consequently, if the specific nouns Uganda and pearl are removed, the anthem can refer to any country. The lack of specific mention of neighbours contributes to the failure to bond with the anthem that does not describe their prescribed boundaries. This indefinite adjective gives the reader the feeling that Uganda’s neighbours are numerous and unknown.

The descriptive adjectives used include: [united, free, fertile, grown, dear, own] which provide information and attribute to the nouns/pronouns they modify or describe. [united, free = we] describes the condition of the people of Uganda who have already become one. This already accomplished unity is presented by the use of the past tense in [united]. The adjective [fertile] describes the soils of Uganda which have been praised for bringing forth fruit from any seed which is thrown on the ground. The reader gets the impression that the adjective [grown] is also in the past tense to refer to the mature state that the country was already in even before independence. The adjective [own] is used after a possessive word (Macmillan, 2020) but instead of immediately being followed by a noun, it is followed by another descriptive adjective [dear] before the noun [land]. This style of description brings out the emotional attachment the author has to the land/ his country. Descriptive adjectives are also called qualitative adjectives because they show the state in which the thing being described. The poem/anthem above fails to describe the beautiful state of Uganda for the reader to distinctly visualise and appreciate. Besides [fertile], all the other descriptive adjectives used by the poet/ composer are not specific and exclusive to Uganda.

The poet uses inclusive pronouns in the poem [we],[us],[our] to show Ugandans that he too is Ugandan. In essence he says that he too is putting his trust in Uganda to look after him and his posterity. When he says that [may God uphold us] he acknowledges that it is only God (a supreme being) who can keep a nation up in the position of a pearl. The poet gives the anthem a spiritual aspect when he uses religious old English words like [thy], [thee] which are related to thyself especially as possessor or agent or as object of an action. This was intended to show that the people of Uganda were religious and the census of 1990 placed the population at 80% Christian. These words are used especially in ecclesiastical or literary language and sometimes by friends especially among themselves. By using these two words in reference to Uganda, the poet showed the friendship and love he had for Uganda. Prof. Kakoma’s use of archaic language must have come out of his knowledge that it was naturally invested with a dignity and solemnity which comes from its association with the noble literary achievements of the past. The archaic religious word ‘thy’ also gives a sense of cultural continuity and stability.

3.2. Phonological Features

3.2.1. Anaphora

An anaphora is a rhetorical device in which a word or expression is repeated at the beginning of a number of sentences, clauses, or phrases. (Merriam-Webster, Definition of anaphora, 2020). In the anthem, ‘Oh Uganda’ is repeated at the beginning of each stanza to lend emphasis to the prayer Prof. Kakoma was making on behalf of Uganda in the first stanza. In the second stanza, it is used to emphasise that Uganda is free from colonial rule and free to interact with all her neighbouring countries. In the third stanza it is used to describe the land of Uganda and its position on the continent of Africa

3.2.2. Exclamations.

Prof. Kakoma uses the same exclamation [oh] at the start of each stanza to express the strong emotions he feels towards Uganda. This style of writing falls under religious hymns composed in the early 1900s a time when the composer of Uganda’s national anthem was born. The interjection ‘oh’ is used after the name Uganda which is in conformity with the grammatical rules of sentence construction. This is in agreement with the fact that the composer was a highly educated man who studied at a historical period when the predominant style of writing was ceremonial or liturgical in form. Prof. Kakoma used the interjection in direct address to Uganda and personified the country in order to draw people’s attention to it. By using that expression he was also congratulating Uganda on her achievement of independence.

3.2.3. Contractions

A contraction is a word or phrase that has been shortened by dropping one or more letters. In writing, an apostrophe is used to indicate the place of the missing letters. Contractions are commonly used in speech (or written dialogue), informal forms of writing, and where space is at a premium, (Thoughtco.com, 2019). Prof. Kakoma uses contractions two times first in the last line of the first stanza and again in the last line of the second stanza. This use of contractions creates a colloquial tone to show that he is speaking for the rest of the Ugandans who are in agreement with him. He in essence says that Ugandans agree that they will be united as one and that they will live at peace with their neighbours. He uses these contractions to create a conversational tone and it lightens the seriousness of the commitment by Ugandans to stand together.

3.2.4. Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of consonants at the beginning of two or more words immediately succeeding each other, or at short intervals. Alliterative sounds create rhythm and mood and can have particular connotations. (LiteraryTerms, 2015) In the first stanza ‘future’ and ‘free’ both start with fricative alliteration to create a free flowing airy effect and its connotative meaning is that Ugandan’s future is free from colonial rule and subjugation. In the second stanza ‘Land’, ‘love’, ‘labour’ all have liquid alliteration which can flow, creating a sense of quick, light movement to symbolise the quickness and willingness with which Ugandans will give their love and labour to their land. The poet in the second stanza again uses fricative alliteration in ‘freedom’ and ‘friendship’ to depict the situation after independence where they will be free to choose their friends as a nation unlike before when the coloniser chose friends for them. The last stanza also employs fricative alliteration in ‘feeds’ and ‘fertile’ to show that Ugandans will be able to sustain themselves from the fruit of their land without relying on their previous masters. He concludes with sibilance alliteration which is a repetition of /s/ sound in ‘sun’ and ‘soil’ to softly point out the two major reasons why the independent Uganda will be able to sustain itself without seeking help from its former colonial master because Uganda is mainly an agricultural country.

3.2.5. End Rhyme

The rhyme scheme is used to create balance and relieve tension, manage flow, create rhythm, and highlight important ideas. Its basic function is to form units of sound and suggest units of sense. It also communicates the idea in a more effective way. The poem has fourteen lines but is a deviation from the Shakespearean sonnet because the first lines of its second and third stanzas do not rhyme. The anthem has an end rhyme in each of the three stanzas. End rhyme refers to lines ending with words that sound the same in a poem. It is also referred to as tail rhyme or terminal rhyme. (Yourdictionary, 2016). The end rhyme in this poem/anthem is a perfect rhyme because the words are an exact rhyme with the same ending consonant and vowel sounds they include: ‘hand’ and ‘stand’; ‘give’ and ‘live’; ‘all’ and ‘call’; ‘grown’ and ‘crown’; ‘land’ and ‘stand’.

The poet used end rhyme to create rhythm in his work. He used it throughout the entire poem, to create a beautiful rhyming pattern, giving musical quality to the poem, and adding flow in a perfect rhythmic way. It serves as a strong mnemonic device that facilitates memorization. In addition, its regular use marks off the ending of the lines, thus elucidating metrical structures for the audience. (LiteraryDevices, 2019). The use of ‘hand’ and ‘stand’ in the same stanza connotatively means that Ugandans will stand together united as one hand in hand- close to each other as brothers. ‘give’ and ‘live’ in the second stanza

An alternate rhyme scheme also known as ABAB rhyme scheme is used in the poem. It rhymes as “ABAB CDCD EFEF GHGH. It is simple and straightforward, suited to the simple message of the poem. It also creates a cyclical pattern that reflects description of different aspects of Uganda’s Independence. The end rhyme is used throughout the poem to create a rhyming pattern or rhyme scheme and to emphasise the musical quality, flowing in a rhythmic way. Songwriters also use end rhyme frequently, which makes their lyrics sound catchy and are often easier for listeners to remember. Most Ugandans when asked about their national anthem they know the tune but only fail at the lyrics this is because the poem lacks concrete nouns a singer can easily relate to.

4. CONCLUSION

. Mr Kakoma being a music teacher knew which words would sound pleasant and be easy for people to remember. He also knew the kind of audience he was writing for because he too was a Ugandan.

However, ninety five percent of all the beautiful things he wrote about Uganda were abstract nouns. These were aspects that could be found anywhere in the world. Even the one concrete noun “fertile soils” was not exclusive to Uganda. This apparent lack of concreteness in description denied Ugandans the feeling of belonging and appeal an anthem presents when it describes a home/motherland.

After the stylistic analysis above, it was observed that the only appealing element in the anthem was the rhyme scheme. The vast unique physical features which distinguish Uganda from other countries were not mentioned.

Uganda may need to revisit their national anthem to look for one with concrete nouns which describe Uganda’s unique beautiful geographical physical features. Elements which will draw Ugandans together and make them feel that they belong to the beautiful pearl. There is need to change the lexical items in the anthem to specific descriptive language synonymous to the picaresque features unique to the country.

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