

Drawing the Boundaries: Unearthing the Stylistic Features in Kwesi Brew’s Poem, “The Mad are Sane”

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Abstract

The study analysed the stylistic features in Kwesi Brew’s poem, ‘The Mad Are Sane’. The analysis was done by identifying the stylistic features and their effects on language in the poem. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the poem, ‘The Mad Are Sane’. The study employed the formalist theory and stylistic approach in the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of the poem. The study uncovered five stylistic features/deviations in the poem. The first stylistic feature is syntactic deviation which revealed that the poem is made up of a complex sentence, where the first part functions as a subordinate clause and the second part as an independent clause that summarises the subordinate clause. The second stylistic feature is lexical deviation which revealed that the poet uses words in an unconventional way, diverging from their ordinary usage to impart deeper meaning of the poem. The third stylistic deviation is phonological deviation, which revealed the use of /s/ sound in the words, “sanity” and “sane” to reflect how some abnormality in society as found in the poem has become common. The findings again revealed the use of semantic deviation in the poem, where the words fall into the semantic categories of synonyms and antonyms. Finally, grammatical deviation was identified in the poem, which implies that the poet intentionally disregards conventional rules of sentence structure.

The study concluded that stylistic tools, particularly deviations and their types, enable a more accurate interpretation of the poem. This study therefore aimed at introducing the stylistic techniques and their practical application in poetry analysis to students and readers of English language and literature.

Keywords: *Kwesi Brew, Literary Stylistics, Style, Formalist Theory, Foregrounding, Deviation*

Introduction

Kwesi Brew, an accomplished African poet, has authored several notable poetic works, including “The Mesh,” “The Mad Are Sane,” “A Scandal on The Head,” “Ancestral Faces,” “African Panorama,” and “Return of No Return.” His poetry delves into diverse and universal themes, ranging from the complexities of loss of status to the celebration of innocence and ancestral heritage. Brew’s worldview encapsulates both the beauty and ugliness inherent in life (Awaya, 1994). On the other hand, stylistics pertains to the analysis of literary language, focusing on the creative utilisation of language in literary compositions.

Interpreting poems through stylistic analysis offers a valuable approach (Awaya, 1994). In Kwesi Brew’s poem, “The Mad Are Sane,” despite its brevity, lies profound depth. Stylistics involves the application of linguistic tools to understand a text or piece of work. Mills (1995) defines stylistics as the examination of the language of literary texts, drawing from linguistic theories to conduct analysis. Stylistics, the analysis of literary language, occupies a central position in literary studies. Bradford (1997) characterises it as an intricate field, integral to understanding the diverse facets of literature, emphasising the significance of style in every scholarly contribution.

Similarly, Short (1996) characterises stylistics as an approach to analysing (literary) texts using linguistic description. This underscores the pivotal role language plays in stylistics. Recently, the tools and methodologies of linguistics within stylistics have become instrumental in interpreting literary texts. Providing a foundation based on linguistic evidence. Among the various literary genres such as poetry, drama and prose, poetry stands out for its utilisation of aesthetic language, demanding creative expression within concise, yet profound sentences (Awaya, 1994). The language employed in poetry significantly shapes the interpretation of poetic works, as meaning often lies within the intricacies of language craftsmanship. Kwesi Brew, a distinguished African poet, has made substantial contributions to the advancement of African poetry (Awaya, 1994). Despite his notable publications, Brew’s works have received comparatively less critical attention.

His distinct writing style sets him apart as a remarkable literary figure in poetry.

Engaging in stylistics entails delving into language, particularly exploring its creative applications (Simpson, 2004). Stylistics primarily examines how language is creatively fashioned into distinctive styles. Stylistic analysis offers a pathway for interpreting poems by applying linguistic tools to decipher texts or works of art. Similarly, Short (1996) characterises it as an approach to analysing (literary) texts through linguistic description. African poetry holds a unique position, being crafted by African poets. Therefore, Kwesi Brew's "The Mad Are Sane" is a succinct piece that delves into the normalisation of anomalies. Despite its brevity — composed of merely four lines — the poem carries profound thematic depth. The purpose of this paper is to dissect the stylistic elements employed in Brew's "The Mad Are Sane".

Literature Review

This aspect review works that have been done in the area of stylistics. It focuses on formalist theory, Style and stylistics, Foregrounding, Lexical deviation, Semantic deviation, Phonological deviation, Grammatical deviation, graphological deviation and historical deviation.

The formalist approach was developed in Russia by Vladimir Propp, Victor Shklovsky and Roman Jakobson in the 1900s. The origination of the approach in Russia has earned it the description, "Russian Formalism" to many instead of its actual name, "Formalism".

The central tenet of formalism is the emphasis on closely examining the intrinsic qualities of the literary work itself. Formalism has gained popularity among researchers as it offers a framework for appreciating literary texts on their own merits, allowing readers to understand and derive enjoyment from the inherent value of the work as a piece of literary art. Consequently, adherents of formalism become more astute and discerning through the application of its principles and adherence to its methodologies (Dobie, 2012). Russian formalists such as Vladimir Propp, Victor Shklovsky and Roman Jakobson in the 1900s argue that while everyday language is commonplace and ordinary, literary language diverges from this norm. It intentionally strays from the expected, utilising a plethora of literary devices at the author's disposal to render the familiar into something unfamiliar and intriguing.

Victor Shklovsky, one of the prominent figures within the Russian formalist movement, introduced the concept of 'Defamiliarisation' in 1900 to describe a literary technique that invigorates language, preventing it from becoming mundane or predictable. Defamiliarisation imbues a work with artistry, compelling the reader to remain attentive and engaged. It prompts the reader to scrutinise the text, encouraging a deeper exploration of its imagery and

themes in order to decipher the author's intentions (Dobie, 2012). From the formalist perspective, close reading is paramount; it entails analysing each element of the text independently to understand how they collectively contribute to its artistic integrity. Unlike other approaches such as structuralism that consider external factors such as historical context or author biography, formalism prioritises the text itself. Consequently, a cursory reading may overlook intricate details that only reveal themselves upon closer examination. Upon subsequent readings, readers may notice recurring motifs, patterns of language, and layers of meaning, ultimately discerning how these formal elements interact to shape the text as a whole. By meticulously observing these details, readers unravel the intricate workings of the text and its artistic significance (Dobie, 2012). This work applied formalism theory on Kwesi Brew's poem the 'Mad are Sane.'

Style and stylistics

Style refers to the distinctive way language is used in a particular text, discourse, or context. It encompasses various linguistic choices, including vocabulary, sentence structure, figurative language, and rhythm, all of which contribute to the overall effect and meaning of a text. However, defining style is complex, as different readers and scholars perceive it in varying ways (Wales, 1989).

Stylistics, as a discipline, delves deeply into textual analysis, scrutinising linguistic forms to facilitate interpretation. It closely aligns with practical criticism, as it provides a systematic way of analysing texts. Dictionaries define stylistics as "the science of literary style" or "the art of forming good style in writing." However, scholars offer more refined definitions. Leech and Short (1981) describe it as the linguistic study of style, while Widdowson (1975) characterises it as the examination of literary discourse from a linguistic perspective.

What makes stylistics unique is its role as a bridge between literary criticism and linguistics. This dual nature is reflected in its morphological structure: the "style" component links it to literary criticism, while "istics" connects it to linguistic analysis. Unlike traditional literary criticism, which often considers authorial intent, stylistics takes an objective approach, focusing on the text itself and providing linguistic tools for modern criticism (Kumar, 1987). Despite its name, stylistics is not limited to style alone; historically, it has examined various language varieties, including religious, legal, and scientific discourse.

The difficulty in defining style also lies in the diversity of linguistic choices available to writers. Carter and Stockwell (2008) argue that authors employ varied styles, such as racy, formal, or colloquial, to convey different effects.

They emphasise that style involves a deliberate selection of linguistic structures, although this selection is not always conscious. In literature and discourse, language choices can be intuitive or intentional, yet both have significant impacts on reader interpretation.

Within the broader field of linguistics, stylistics plays a crucial role in uncovering hidden linguistic patterns and nuances. It enables scholars to dissect texts into comprehensible segments, aiding in the interpretation of embedded meanings within literary works. By providing a systematic and analytical approach, stylistics enhances our understanding of language use in both creative and formal texts, making it an essential tool in both literary and linguistic studies.

Foregrounding

Before delving into the analysis of the chosen poem, it is vital to spotlight a significant concept in stylistics, 'foregrounding'. Foregrounding holds a paramount importance in stylistic analyses, particularly in poetry. Foregrounding is emphasising one element or aspect of a text over others, drawing attention to its prominence. Linguistic deviation and linguistic parallelism are the means through which foregrounding is achieved. Leech (1969) identifies various types of deviation in poetry, based on his examination of poems. These deviations include the following:

Lexical deviation

Lexical deviation refers to the intentional alteration or manipulation of standard word usage in language, often employed in literary works to achieve a particular stylistic effect. The lexicon of English Language fall into different word classes. Also, each word in English has a particular form and function. Apart from the words having different form or structure, they are also limited and definite in number or size. Lexical deviation, therefore, occurs when a particular word is given a form different from its normal form or structure, as in possessing different spelling due to some reasons. Deviations are typically used to draw attention, evoke specific emotions, or convey unique concepts that standard language may not adequately express. For instance, poets and novelists might invent words or repurpose existing ones to enrich their narratives and engage readers more deeply. Lexical deviation occurs when a word of a particular word is assigned a different word class. There are various ways in which lexical deviation can manifest, constituting (neologism), assigning unconventional meanings to existing words, or using words in unusual grammatical forms. (Coinage), Coinage refers to the creation of new words or phrases, often for branding or cultural trends. Malapropism, is the mistaken use of a word in place of a similar sounding one, often with unintentionally amusing effects. and sub-standard vocabulary.

Poets craft deviation by employing words in unconventional ways, departing from their ordinary usage. This technique imbues words with heightened significance, allowing for deeper expression of meaning and the presentation of aesthetic value within the poem. For example, lexical deviation can be seen in the following line:

*Stirred for a bird, - the **achieve** of the mastery of the thing!* From this example, the word *achieve* belongs to the category verb with its noun form as *achievement* but in the example above, the poet uses *achieve* as a noun because it is placed in the position of a noun since it is preceded by an article, 'the'.

Semantic deviation

Generally, semantics is one of the main branches of linguistics which deals with interpretation and meaning of words, sentences, and symbols. Semantic deviation is the unusual patterning of words or phrases to result in logically inconsistent or unconventional meanings for the overall meaning and aesthetic experience of the poems (Ali and Al-Shemmary, 2020). It implies that semantically deviated items are grammatically conventional, yet the meanings are unconventional. Again, semantic deviation refers to the phenomenon wherein an ordinary, seemingly straightforward word takes on a remarkable or surprising meaning within a poetic context. The interpretation of such words can be influenced by the poet's personal experiences and cultural background, adding layers of complexity to their significance.

Leech (1969) refers to semantic deviation as tropes with which words and phrases are considered at nonliteral and figurative levels of meaning. Leech (1969) identifies three forms of semantic deviation: semantic oddity, transference meaning, and honest deception. Semantic oddity deals with strangeness or bizarreness of meanings of certain expressions. There are five types of semantic oddity: pleonasm, periphrasis, tautology, oxymoron and paradox. Pleonasm – Using more words than necessary to say something. Example: "I saw it with my own eyes." (The phrase "with my own eyes" is unnecessary because "I saw it" already implies that.) Tautology – Repeating the same idea using different words, making it redundant. Example: "Free gift" (All gifts are free, so "free" is unnecessary. Oxymoron – A phrase that combines two opposite words. Example: "Bittersweet," "Deafening silence," or "Living dead". Paradox – A statement that seems contradictory but can reveal a deeper truth. Example: "The more you learn, the more you realise how little you know."

According to Leech (1969), these five types can further be categorised into two broad groups. Those that show semantic redundancy at one hand and those that show semantic absurdity at other hand. The semantic redundancy includes pleonasm, tautology and periphrasis while the absurdity comprises oxymoron

and paradox. It is interesting to note that the redundancy generally seems to be repeating an idea while the absurdity does not give sensible structures.

Both paradox and oxymoron deal with contradiction. In the case of the paradox, the contradiction happens at sentential level as it comprises groups of statements while oxymoron happens at word or phrasal level. The following examples illustrate oxymoron and paradox. An example of oxymoron: *Kola nut is a bittersweet stimulant*. From this example, *bitter* contradicts with *sweet*, illustrating an instance of oxymoron and it falls under semantic deviation. An example of paradox: *All humans are equal, but some are more equal than others*. The example above is a paradox in the sense that if all humans equal how some can be more equal than others.

Phonological deviation

Phonological deviation deals with pronunciation which is a typical feature of speech. Leech (1969) opines that the sounds of a language are linked to speech while in literature it mostly occurred in written form, and that explains why there are chances of phonological deviation in poems or texts. Texts that deviate phonologically give an indication of the social status or the educational level of the characters. In identifying phonological deviations, one needs to have in-depth knowledge about the sound system and their patterns in English. Again, phonological deviation pertains to deliberate alterations in sound patterns within poetry, crafted to enhance musicality, aimed at achieving rhyme.

There are two main categories of phonological deviation: conventional license of verse composition and special pronunciation for the convenience of rhyming. Conventional license of verse composition deals with the permission poets have to omit certain sounds of words they use to achieve an effect. These omissions sometimes make the reading of the poem faster.

For example, *do not and don't*. The second category, special pronunciation for the convenience of rhyming, deals with the poets' or authors' creation of their own words to achieve a particular rhyming scheme which may have certain musical effect on a piece. For instance:

*The boy came to my ho'e
And picked a big hoe*

The syncope on the word, *home* to have *ho'e* helps to have a common vowel [əʊ] for the two words ending the lines in order to have a common rhyming scheme.

Another form of phonological deviation arises from the use of incorrect sounds or mispronunciations, which may be fossilised or result from an

individual's speech defect. For example, some people pronounced *frame* as *flame* which is phonological deviation.

Grammatical deviation

Grammar, in its broad sense, involves every aspect of the in the context of language, grammar encompasses everything from the smallest grammatical unit to the structuring of words into the largest unit, which is the sentence. Grammatical deviation is the situation where words are formed through different medium than the acceptable means, and where words are patterned differently from the normal or the standard means of patterning words. One other grammatical deviation is the ungrammaticality of sentences. There are four main forms of grammatical deviation: wrong formation of words, incorrect or sub-standard grammar, syntactic re-arrangement, and the composition of the language items. In grammatical deviation, poets intentionally disregard conventions governing sentence structure. Grammatical deviation includes deliberate omissions of punctuation, such as periods, and the deliberate misuse of verb tenses, among other grammatical liberties.

The use of dialect

The limitations of the standard dialect often fail to capture the depth of emotion poets wish to convey (Lesle and McIntyre, 2020). Consequently, poets incorporate elements from their native dialects, known as “refined dialects,” to better express their feelings through their poems. This practice, termed “Dialectism” by Leech, enables poets to imbue their writing with greater emotional resonance. Kwesi Brew often infused his poetry with elements of dialectism—the use of words, phrases, or structures from a specific local dialect or language variety. His use of dialectism reflects his Ghanaian heritage, cultural identity, and oral traditions. For example, dialectism in his poem, “The Mesh,” Brew incorporates Akan linguistic structures and proverbs, which mirror the rhythmic and philosophical nature of traditional Ghanaian oral poetry. He uses expressions like “the talking drums” and “the elders’ words” to reflect Akan cultural expressions where wisdom is passed through oral tradition.

The use of register

Register, also referred to as “professional dialect,” encompasses the specialised vocabulary, grammar, and other linguistic features utilised by individuals in specific contexts or events. It is not universally employed but rather confined to particular groups. Occasionally, writers engage in “register mixing,” incorporating elements from different registers within their writing, (Leech, 1969).

Historical deviation

In this form of deviation, poets incorporate archaic words that have fallen out of common usage in everyday language. They do this to elevate the aesthetic quality of the poem. Poets may integrate words derived from Latin or Greek languages, such as "thou," "ere," or "hither," into their poetry.

Graphological deviation

Graphological deviation is the physical presentation of texts which is different from the standard way of writing. It deals with the study of writing systems. Graphological deviation involves the intentional disregard of punctuation rules, such as writing without capitalisation or spacing, or eschewing traditional rhyme schemes. Sometimes, certain written texts are underlined or capitalised for special effects. Graphological deviation can manifest in the use of punctuation, structure, orthography, typography, and fonting of characters in various writing.

Syntactic Deviation

Syntactic deviation in poetry refers to the intentional departure from standard grammatical structures to create unique artistic effects. Poets often manipulate syntax, such as word order, sentence structure, and grammatical rules, to enhance meaning, rhythm, and stylistic distinctiveness. These deviations help foreground certain elements, evoke emotions, and engage readers by breaking conventional linguistic expectations. The types of syntactic deviations in poetry include the following:

- a) Inversion (Hyperbaton) This is where poets alter the normal word order to achieve emphasis or maintain meter. For example: *"In silent night when rest I took"* (Anne Bradstreet) instead of *"When I took rest in silent night."*
- b) Ellipsis (Omission of Words): Here, certain words are omitted, but meaning is still conveyed through context. For example: *"Golden her wings, bright sun her eyes,"* where the verb "are" is omitted.
- c) Anastrophe: This is a subtype of inversion where adjectives or phrases are placed unexpectedly. Example, *"Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing"* (Edgar Allan Poe).
- d) Parallelism and Repetition: This has to do with using repetitive sentence structures to create rhythm and reinforce meaning. For instance, *"I have a dream..."* (Martin Luther King Jr.).
- e) Asyndeton and Polysyndeton: Asyndeton: This has to do with omitting conjunctions (e.g., *"I came, I saw, I conquered."*).
- f) Polysyndeton: In this type of syntactic deviation, excessive conjunctions are used (e.g., *"We laughed and cried and sang and danced."*).

Recent scholarly articles have explored various aspects of deviation in poetry, focusing on how poets intentionally deviate from linguistic norms to create artistic effects. For instance, Azadibougar and Ghazizadeh (2011) examine how deviations from standard language in poetry pose challenges in translation, particularly focusing on the works of Persian poet, Ahmad Shamlu. The research identifies eight types of linguistic deviation, including lexical, grammatical, phonological, and semantic deviations, and discusses their implications for translators. Fabb (2024) also explores how syntactic deviations in song lyrics and poetry break conventional grammar rules while maintaining poetic coherence. He argues that these deviations serve to reinforce meaning and artistic expression (Fabb, 2024). Again, Muhammad (2021) analyses various syntactic deviations in poetry, emphasising foregrounding — the way poetic language deviates to attract attention. He identifies inversion, ellipsis, and unusual word order as major syntactic tools used in poetry (Muhammad, 2021). Nofal (2014) also examines syntactic deviations in classical and modern poetry, particularly in Chaucer and T.S. Eliot, showing how deviations create ambiguity, enhance rhythm, and challenge reader interpretation (Nofal, 2014). Lastly, Ahmed (2021) delves into syntactic deviations in poetry, investigating how poets rearrange standard sentence structures to achieve particular stylistic effects. The study highlights the creative potential of syntactic deviation in enriching the expressive capacity of poetic language.

Therefore, syntactic deviations play a crucial role in poetry, allowing poets to break away from traditional sentence structures to enhance aesthetic value, rhythm, and meaning. Recent studies confirm that these deviations are not just stylistic choices but also powerful tools for engaging readers and deepening literary interpretation.

Methods

The paper employed a qualitative research approach to examine stylistics features employed in Kwesi Brews' poem, 'The Mad Are Sane'. Purposive sampling was employed to select the poem. The poem is made up of only four lines. The choice of the words employed by the poet necessitated the choice of this particular poem. and a consensual coding strategy was utilised, meticulously categorising the poem into stylistic features such as lexical deviation, grammatical deviation, phonological deviation etc. The study, therefore, employed stylistic analysis as a design to analyse, interpret, and evaluate the selected poem, focusing on the stylistic features in it. According to Jafaar (2014), using stylistic analysis to analyse a poem highlights certain deviant characteristics of the poem. Hence, stylistic analysis served as the analytical framework of the present study. The literary theory which was used as the theoretical foundation for the study is the formalist theory., Formalism

enabled the researchers to concentrate solely on the poem itself, disregarding external influences during analysis while stylistic analysis helped in analysing the stylistic features in the poem.

The above discussion has looked methodology that has been used in analysing the poem, the Mad are Sane by Kwesi Brew.

Analysis and discussion

The analysis and discussion are done based on the stylistic features identified in the poem. Also, evidence of these stylistic features identified in the poem are used to support and ground the discussions.

Kwesi Brew's "The Mad Are Sane" is a brief, four-line poem with a continuous structure and no rhyme scheme. The poem features deviant characteristics that make it stand out for lexical deviation. It is therefore essential to analyse "The Mad Are Sane" in the light of this that we set out to analyse foregrounding techniques used in the poem. The deviant stylistic features identified in the poem are discussed in subsequent paragraphs:

A stylistic analysis at the syntactic level

The poem is composed of a single complex sentence, as shown below:

"In these days, when abnormality has become the normal sign of sanity, the mad are sane."

In analysing this sentence, we added punctuation marks to clearly delineate the sentence structure. The poem's syntax is a complex sentence, where the first part, *when abnormality has become the normal sign of sanity*, functions as a subordinate clause and the second part *the mad are sane*, as an independent clause that summarises the subordinate clause. Although the poem is brief and appears simple, its complex structure adds a layer of complexity to its interpretation. The subordinating conjunction *when* typically serves as an adverbial marker of time, (Wiredu, 1999) but in this poem, it is used to indicate a condition, thereby turning the subordinate clause into a conditional clause. In poems, complex sentences allow poets to convey nuanced ideas and relationships between concepts, adding layers of meaning to their work. This complexity can mirror the intricacies of human thought and experience, providing a more profound engagement for the reader. This is what exactly Kwesi Brew did in his poem the Mad are Sane.

A stylistic analysis at the lexical level

Lexical deviation occurs when poets use words in an unconventional way, diverging from their ordinary usage to impart deeper meaning and enhance the

aesthetic value of the poem. In "The Mad Are Sane. Kwesi Brew employs lexical deviation to highlight and emphasise his message. In the poem:

When abnormality has become
The normal sign of sanity
The mad are sane.

The underlined sections of the poem highlight lexical incongruities that impact its overall meaning, reflecting the acceptance of numerous abnormalities in the country as expressed in the poem. These deviations symbolise the abandonment of African culture in favour of Western culture, which has often been equated with civilisation. Although this poem was written in the 1990s, it remains relevant to contemporary Ghana, where corruption, bribery, and economic mismanagement — once considered abnormal — have become accepted as signs of sanity. The *mad* in the poem likely refers to those who engage in these corrupt practices yet are deemed "sane" because they are aware of the rightness or wrongness of their actions.

A stylistic analysis at the phonological level

Phonological deviation involves the intentional manipulation of sounds to create musicality, often through the use of rhyme. One example of this is the identification of alliterated sounds in the poem. According to Simpson (2004), alliteration is a type of rhyme scheme that relies on similarities between consonant sounds. It occurs when a series of words begin with the same consonant sound, which is then repeated at regular intervals throughout the poem. An example of alliteration in Brew's poem is:

The normal sign of sanity.

The underlined sound is a voiceless, alveolar fricative, /s/, that mirrors the persona's mood, conveying a sense of surprise or disbelief. It highlights the persona's astonishment that behaviours once deemed unacceptable by society are now becoming increasingly common. The voicelessness of the sound /s/ and its sibilant nature further foreground the society's continuous low level of advocacy against these unacceptable conducts exhibited by unscrupulous individuals.

A stylistic analysis at the semantic level

Semantic deviation demonstrates how a simple, everyday word can carry an unexpected meaning. In the poem, the words fall into the semantic categories of synonyms and antonyms, with *abnormality* and *madness* being synonymous, as well as *sanity* and *saneness*. The poet therefore juxtaposes aberration with rationality and psychosis with clear-headedness. By using terms like *abnormality*, *mad*, *sane*, and *sanity*, the poet explores the mental or psychological state of individuals in contemporary times. This technique is

employed to comment on the mindset of people in "these days." Semantic deviation also occurs in the line 'the *mad are sane*'. The form of semantic deviation employed here is oxymoron which is the use of two words which contradict each other. This also foregrounds the idea that in recent times, conducts which were once frowned upon by society are now considered normal behaviours.

A stylistic analysis at the grammatical level

Grammatical deviation happens when poets intentionally disregard conventional rules of sentence structure. This may involve deliberately omitting punctuation marks within sentences or manipulating tense to influence the interpretation of the poem. In Brew's "The Mad Are Sane," the only punctuation mark used is a full stop (.), which concludes the poem. The absence of other punctuation marks highlights this grammatical deviation. The poem is presented below:

In these days
When abnormality has become
The normal sign of sanity
The mad are sane.

The poem flows continuously without any pauses, reflecting the poet's intense concern, as if pausing might cause him to lose his train of thought. The absence of commas in the poem explains this urgency. The absence of commas in the poem also foregrounds the poet's mood of anger about the current situation in his society. In other words, the poet is unhappy about the sudden negative turn of events and therefore expresses his opinion on such absurdity in an angry manner.

The tense of the poem plays a crucial role in shaping its overall impact. The verbs in the poem are in the present tense, which influences how the reader interprets and appreciates the poem. The verbs *have become* and *are* lend a timeless quality to the poem, allowing for a broader interpretation that extends beyond specific contexts to various aspects of life, including our contemporary experiences. These deviations contribute to the poem's distinctiveness, enhancing the reader's ability to appreciate and interpret its meaning on multiple levels.

Findings

The analysis revealed that Kwesi Brew's "The Mad Are Sane" contains certain stylistic characteristics which contribute to the overall message of the poem. First, the poem features syntactic deviation, which revealed that the poem is made up of a complex sentence. The first part of the sentence functions as a subordinate clause and the second part as an independent clause that summarises the subordinate clause. Secondly, there are lexical deviations,

which revealed that the poet used words in an unconventional way, diverging from their ordinary usage to impart the deeper meaning of the poem.

In addition, the poem contains a phonological deviation, which revealed the repetition of the voiceless alveolar fricative sound, /s/, in words “sanity” and “sane”. This reflects the persona's surprising mood about the increasing occurrence of absurdities in the society and the society's continuous low level of advocacy against these undesirable happenings.

The findings again revealed the use of semantic deviation in the poem by juxtaposing words which fall into the semantic categories of synonyms and antonyms. This enables the poet to comment on the mental or psychological state of individuals in recent times.

Finally, grammatical deviation is identified in the poem. Here, the poet intentionally disregards conventional rules of sentence structure. This involves deliberate omission of punctuation marks (i.e., commas) within the sentence or manipulating tense to influence the interpretation of the poem.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the nature of the poem has offered an approach to understanding its significance. The choice of Brew's "The Mad Are Sane" highlights the stylistic elements that distinguish his work from others. Stylistics helps identify the components of a literary text and document their functions, drawing on the terminology and methods of disciplines focused on real-world language use. The stylistic tools, particularly deviations and their types, enable a more accurate interpretation of the poem, even without prior knowledge of the literary work. It is essential to remember that words serve as keys to unlocking the meaning and interpretation of any literary genre.

Implications

The findings of this study on “The Mad are Sane” by Kwesi Brew have significant implications for literary scholarship, education, and African poetic analysis.

1. By identifying the stylistic features in Brew's poem, this study deepens the understanding of how language, structure, and literary devices shape meaning, enriching the appreciation of African poetry.
2. The research reinforces the relevance of stylistic analysis as a tool for interpreting poetry, highlighting its role in bridging linguistic and literary perspectives.
3. Brew's thematic exploration of sanity and madness reflects deeper African philosophical and sociocultural concerns. This study provides a framework for examining how African poets use style to critique and reflect societal realities.

4. Educators can use the study's findings to teach poetry analysis more effectively, equipping students with the tools to engage critically with poetic texts.
5. This study sets the groundwork for comparative analyses with other poets and themes, encouraging further exploration of stylistic trends in African literature.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, which examined the stylistic features in Kwesi Brew's poem "*The Mad are Sane*," the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Researchers should extend stylistic analysis to other works by Kwesi Brew and other African poets to uncover recurring linguistic and literary patterns that define African poetry.
2. Educators and curriculum developers should incorporate stylistic analysis in literature courses to enhance students' appreciation of poetic language, themes, and techniques.
3. Future studies could compare Brew's portrayal of madness with that of other poets from different cultures to explore universal and culture-specific perspectives on the theme.
4. Researchers could employ digital tools and corpus linguistics to analyse poetic language patterns, providing new insights into style and meaning.

Ethical Statement

This study involved non-human participants. The primary data for this study was the poem, "The Mad are Sane" written by Kwesi Brew. The poem was retrieved from <https://home.koranteng.com/writings/kwesi-brew.html>

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Conflict of Interest

The authors confirm that they have no conflicts of interest concerning the publication of this article.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Adukpo: Developing the research idea, formulating research questions, drafting the manuscript. Kumi: Formulation of research design, data collection and analysis. Gaaku: Review of relevant literature and developed the theoretical framework. Wumbei: Editing, proofreading, formatting, citations, and compliance with ethical research standards.

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