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AN ANALYSIS OF STYLISTIC DEVICES IN HEBA FOLK COMIC BALLAD

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Abstract

A ballad is one of the oldest forms of oral poetry found in many cultures in Nigeria. It is one of the categories of Həba folksongs that have survived. Though the ballad selected for this study has been documented, the sociocultural experiences embodied in it need to be understood. Therefore, this study analyses the song with a view to uncover how the performer's choice of language contributes to the meaning of the overall content and the effects created. Being a secondary and non-numerical data, textual analytical method with a qualitative approach was adopted. The analysis was hinged on the formalist stylistic model in order to focus on the text

and its effects on the readers. The results showed that the setting of the ballad is an ancient town in Høba community which is depicted in the opening stanza. The plot of folksong is propelled through four characters. The sequencing and progressing of the story from the beginning, to the climax and the resolution are clear and straight forward. The analysis also revealed that the use of simple vocabulary and syntactic structures enhanced clarity and the narrative pace of the folksong. Poetic devices employed to convey meanings and create desired effects include: simile, repetition, parallelism, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, imagery and ideophones.

Key words: Style, stylistics, folksongs, ballad, and comedy ballad.

Introduction

Songs are performed in every culture for different purposes. Folksongs are those that originate from the people, named after them and claimed by them as theirs. In the Həba language, folksongs are called *miya Həba*, which means songs of Həba. They are performed in Həba language and the authors are mostly anonymous. These songs are embodiments of the Həba experiences within their sociocultural environment. They are named after the events or occasions of their performance such as funerals, festivals, coronations, initiations, work, birth and naming ceremonies, among others. Each of these occasions determines the performing style and choice of language.

Folk ballads tell stories and they emanate from the folk. The stories are transmitted orally through generations. They reflect the lives and experiences of the people within their sociocultural milieu. Child (1965) cited in Nandhin(2021) contends that folk ballads are rich sources of cultural and historical information, as they reflect the themes, motifs, and symbols that are significant to the communities from which they originated. The contact of Həba with foreign cultures, especially with the western culture has had devastating effects on her rich cultural heritages. One of the effects is the drift towards foreign music. Songs composed in English and Hausa languages for instance, are now preferred by the younger generations. Even though some of the folksongs are still performed, not many of the younger generations can interpret or understand the meanings underlying the language used. A large number of the younger generation find it difficult to interpret folksongs and understand the cultural values embodied in them. These studies therefore, analyses and uncover the styles used by the performer. The knowledge of the styles will enable the readers to gain insight into the sociocultural meanings and information or values that the performer passes down to the younger

generations. The analysis focused on the styles of performance, organizational structure, lexical and syntactic features, literary devices and their effects on the target audience.

The Həba people and their language

The Həba people are found predominantly in Hong Local Government of Adamawa State, Nigeria. They occupy mountainous regions bordered by the Mubi Mountains to the east, to the South by Holma and Zumo mountains, to the north by Hawul Rivers; and to the west by the Gombi Mountains. A German source seized by the Soviet Army on 8th May, 1945 from Berlin Museum gave that the Həba people were in their present habitat since 8th century. The aboriginal name of the people is Həba and their language is *nya Həba*. *Nya* literally means mouth but it connotes language. The people are popularly known as Kilba, a term derived from the mispronunciation of Həba by their Fulani neighbours which was codified by the British colonial administrators. *Nya Həba* is a Chadic language spoken predominantly in Hong Local Government and the neighboring Local Governments like Gombi, Mubi North and South, Gombi and Song local government. It is also spoken Yola, the state capital. The language has a written and published orthography.

Conceptual clarifications

Folksongs are songs that originate from a particular cultural group and constitute an aspect of their identity. The authorship is mostly ascribed to the community than an individual. In other words, folksongs are traditional songs that emanate from a particular people which have been transmitted through generations. They embody the beliefs, values, customs, traditions, rites and rituals, festivals and ceremonies of the people. Okpokwasili (2023) defines folksongs as any song that originates among the people, a country or area, passed down orally from one singer or

generation to the next, often existing in several versions, and marked generally by simple, modal melody and stanza or narrative verse.

Folksongs are reflections of the peoples' experiences in their sociocultural milieu. They are modes of transmitting and preserving cultural heritages of the people. Ipasio (2025) asserts that 'folk music songs are not just songs They are stories that bear the smell of a faraway land, life lessons that have been passed through generations, some untold events from history and much more.' It could be inferred from the above assertion that folksongs are ageless. It is not possible to tell how old they are or trace their authors.

Folksongs are essential tools for transmitting and preserving cultural values of ethnic groups. They are means by which younger generations understand their past and get connected to their roots. Through performance of folksongs, younger generations are educated. Elmer (2021) opines that the transmission of songs is an elementary cultural practice, by which members of the older generations introduce both musico-linguistic rules affect-regulative means to the younger ones. The traditions, practices, values and beliefs of a community are often expressed in folk songs. Most folk songs are performed to the rhythm of folk musical instruments. In Høba community, the tone and the pace are determined by the rhythm of the musical instruments.

A ballad is a genre of traditional songs found in every culture. Though the performance of ballads differs from one culture to another and from individuals within a given culture, their themes are similar. Nandhini(2021) has it that ballads are passed down through generations of oral tradition and often tell stories of love, loss and adventure, reflecting the cultural and historical contexts in which they were created. It is in this regard that Amineva (2017) considers the ballad as the genre of western European literature which was widely spread in the

romanticism era. This could probable be in the written forms since story telling is a universal culture. Ballads are forms of storytelling through singing often accompanied by musical instruments. Mill (1974) opines that ballads are narratives or story telling songs in which action predominates. The traditional ballad as he further states come down from the past, has lost its individual authorship, shows evidence of variation in content by the existence of more than one version, is compact and concise in narrative and usually has repetition and refrain.

According to Kolozsvari, Lizak and Huszti (2021), a ballad is a song, originally transmitted orally, which tells a story. They further explain that a ballad is an important form of folk poetry which was adapted for literary uses from the sixteenth century onwards. Nandhin(2021) opines that ballads are passed down through generations of oral traditions and often tell stories of love loss, and adventure, reflecting the cultural and historical context in which they were created.

Style in both linguistics and literature pertains to distinctive or unique choice of language made by a particular writer or speaker to create meaning and to affect the audience in a given context. It is the subject of study in stylistics; a branch of linguistics that studies the choice of language by a particular speaker or author in a given context of communication and its effects on the target audience. Leech and Short (2007) define style as the use of language by a given person in a given context to achieve a specific communicative purpose. A comprehensive study of style as pointed out by Leech and Short covers both linguistic and non-linguistic features of a text. Linguistic features include the lexical, grammatical, phonological and graphological features, while the non-linguistic factors encompass the context, the purpose and participants. Oral literature texts are primarily in the spoken form and therefore in contrast with the written form. Akporobaro (2006) points out that oral literature, especially oral poetic compositions very often reveals a stylised use of diction and syntax. Elaborating on this assertion, Akporobaro maintains

that the chosen words, the order, rate and patterns in which they occur are very often different from the normal mode of speech. The study of style in poetic composition in this sense is the investigation of the artistic application of language to achieve desired effect.

Stylistics is the study of style in literary or non-literary texts. Burke (2014) describes stylistics as the study and analysis of text; it is in particular, although not exclusively, the study and analysis of literary texts. Similarly, Stockwell (2005) refers to stylistics as the analysis of linguistic form and its social effects. It studies how linguistic resources are chosen and patterned to achieve the purpose of communication in a given context. This implies that speakers or writers consciously select language in order to express their thoughts. In the words of Norgaard, Montoro and Busse (2010), stylistics is the study of the ways in which meaning is created through language in literature as well as in other types of texts. In this regard, texts whether spoken or written are the subjects of study in stylistics. For Fabian (2021), stylistics is a science that studies the communicative and nominative resources of the language system, the principles of selection and use of language tools to convey thoughts and feelings in order to obtain certain pragmatic results in various communication conditions. In this definition, stylistics is considered a science because it applies linguistic method to achieve objectivity. These definitions are based on the fact that stylistics studies style in texts, whether literary or non-literary, focusing on the forms of language and their effects on the readers. Based on this, texts are the objects of study in stylistics.

Materials and Methods

This study is a textual analysis of a comic folk ballad purposively selected from *Aspects of Həba folklore*. The book is a collection of Həba folktales, folksongs, riddles and proverbs. The selection of the folksong is based on its authenticity and accessibility. Authenticity implies that

the text is genuine and credible, while accessibility refers to the ease with which the text is obtained. The title of the song is 'Køla laa mala təranda' (see not a woman and pass by-philanderer). It consists of one hundred and ten lines (110) and eleven (11) stanzas. The researcher employed purposive sampling technique in order to gain in-depth insights into the stylistic features of the comic ballad, which is not commonly performed in Høba community like love ballads. Being a secondary and non-numerical data, textual method with qualitative approach was adopted. The analysis was hinged on the formalist stylistic model in order to focus on the text and its effects on the readers. A close reading of the text was carried out to identify the stylistically significant features. Excerpts from the text were used to support the claims of the researcher in the course of the analysis. In order to focus on the performance and the context, orality theory propounded by Walter J. Ong and further expounded by scholars like Marshall McLuhan, Harold Innis, and Eric Havelock which relies primarily on spoken language was adopted. The structure of the composition, the performance, the characters and language used were considered.

Results and Discussions

The outcome of the analysis revealed that the ballad depicts flaws in the upbringing of a female child. The performer used homours to criticise, ridicule and deride the antagonists (the lady in the story and her parents). The criticism aims at correcting imperfection in the community as well as entertaining the audience. It is founded on the beliefs of the Høba people with regards to the qualities of virtuous women. The plot of the story is simple, straightforward, and clear and propelled by four characters which are narrator (protagonist), the antagonist and her parents. The setting of the story is an anonymous town/village in Høba community.

Performance Styles

The styles of performance of folksongs vary from one culture to another in Nigeria. Even within a culture, there are variations according to the context of situations and the singers. In Həba the community, the context and the type of songs determines the performing styles. The mode of performance of the ballad under study is soloist. It was performed to the music of a lute called gullum. The performer plays the musical instrument and sings simultaneously. The solo artist's voice is followed by a refrain that he repeats on the lute as the audience sings it. The repetition of the refrain (*ding-ding*) adds rhythmic flow to the narration. The dancing style is lite feet accompanied by head nodding.

Plot structure

The song has a narrative pattern consisting of the beginning, the middle and the closing as in other narrative poems.

i. The opening

The story started abruptly using a technique of a flash back at the market. The narrator disclosed a flaw in the character of a lady. She holds a man and requests a gift in public. This is considered a taboo even in the present-day Həba community. Women in Həba community are expected to be graceful and respectful.

Ngatə kwa nda nwa ma.	Hear how the lady rushed
Biya tsot-tsot gup na ya nwa təma	Out she ran and grasped me.
Zər malləm ,tabiya dā anini.	Young teacher, give me half a kobo
Dadā kwaba ka dadā anini	Gift me a kobo, gift me half a kobo

Təma ngə ya na, tsadarda dzadəu,	Then suddenly I said,' move away,
Muvudə Ngə ndər katu.	Odorous like an idol stricken person

The above excerpt presents an abrupt scene at the village market. The narrator disclosed his encounter with a lady showing a flawed character. This opening draws the attention of the audience and sets the stage. The tone is harsh and terse. The narrator who is addressed as young teacher felt embarrassed and responded rudely. ‘I said; “move away from me, odorous like an idol stricken person.”’ Being the voice of the community, his response is the community’s feeling. In the ancient Həba community, idol stricken patients were treated with concoctions that produce an offensive odour. The expression “odorous like an idol stricken patient” is therefore insulting and ridiculous.

After the dramatic opening at the village market, the narration moved to the beginning of the story. The narrator got back home and prepared to visit the lady. The excerpt below gives the details of the narrator’s actions after the dramatic encounter that created suspense at the village market.

Ngə ya hya’ati fwatu a bəltada sho ki	I got up suddenly and went back home
Ya ma nda akəu nwa də. zində tə hi cul chuchudə kuraya tsu	But when it was evening, you know how I am
Ma ya fiya naya la’a mala durdur	I thought I had seen a beautiful woman
Biya tə ya na’a fər bəngtal tsəu.	I got set with a club
Fər bəngtal ta’a zhang tə chi tə .	With a club and the first gift on it.

The excerpt highlights the traditions of the Həba with regards to wooing a woman or courtship. The first gift carried by the suitor was based on cultural demand. It is symbolic of the declaration of interest, which could be in cash or kind. If the first gift is accepted, it means the suitor has been accepted but if it is rejected, it means the suitor has been rejected.

The middle

The middle is the climax of the story which comprises different events featuring crises/conflicts. A serious flaw in the upbringing of the girl was disclosed in the middle of the story. The mother herself attests to the flaws in the upbringing of her daughter by calling her a bull dog. Girls that are well brought up in Həba community stay at home once it is evening.

Ndəya aya maza vamedā ku vingana	I said, “People, is my love in the room?”
Ngatə ama nya na.	Hear her mother saying:
Jangə gazəm həya nga təra tə ki dlə giwa	Behold, the bull dog has go to roam the street
Ngardā nyi shili zəm	Call her back for me!
Ya, ngardā nyi dada.	Oh, call her back for me mother

The narrator requests the parents to call her back. The mother shot a gun, while the father beats the *bərni* drum to call their daughter back. The shooting of a gun and the beating of the drum to bring her back from the street suggest that she had gone too far. The sound of the gun “gwai” and the sound of the drum “goom” created a chaotic atmosphere. Similarly, the sounds of her footsteps “ndong-ndong” when coming back depicts flaws in her character. Well trained women in Həba community walk gracefully, especially when passing by men. A humourous incident occurred when she sat with her suitor who thought of getting fire (light) to see her face because it was night.

Ngatə kəra ya tə na	Hear what I thought of
Ngwa ya uya hu’u ja ya Ndzamar vamedə.	Let me get fire to see my love
Lamba wan ngə cha chiya na səpi kadəu	Number one, she put it out with breath
Mətlə ku nyi ngə cha təkə də madərda	The second, she farted on me
Makər ku nyi ngə shangəda ibi duru	The third, she poured real faeces on me
Kahə ma nda ya səya gyadi kərda,	When I suddenly guffawed
Ma nda cha mə ga dərda ngə sal pwabu	when she screamed and stretched like a male snake

The above excerpt also depicts a chaotic atmosphere. Loud laughter, farting and defecation in the presence of a suitor are all shameful acts. The loud laughter of the narrator at the shameful acts provoked the mother. She posed rhetorical questions depicting her anger. The posed rhetorical questions were in defense of her daughter which provoked the protagonist.

Həya, ndə shiuu-shiuua	You dog, cursed son
Mi ko gwaa zəma?	What are you looking for?
Mi bikər kwada ka uya ko gyadi ja?	What fault of my daughter did you get to laugh at?

In response to the rhetorical questions above, the suitor lashed out in anger. He said, “Let’s do verbal altercation mother.” To provoke laughter, he employed sharp insulting and deriding similes.

Madiya mala na pəlakə ngəs ndzəka gwal	An old woman with hip like roosters’ spur
Dləm bəbbəu wi kutəkə Jirnadəu	Wide mons pubis like Jirnadəu’s farmland

Həya alfakam na kər ngə fa kəla zoa	Dog, with bushy hairs like uncultivated land
Ma mər kyar dada.	Let's do verbal altercation mother
Nwadə-nwadə zhindar ngə wha'ami tə yo kum	Having swarmed desire for meat like maggots that bred in meat.
Darwar zhindar tsa ngyanyi na zər madəu	With swarming yearning that permits not leaving rivals child in your care
Ngidə- Ngidə-gajidi ngə təlma sal Gajel	with twisted clitoris like the horns of male antelope

The profuse use of hyperbole and similes is insulting, ridiculous and derisive. The similes are hyperbolic because the comparisons are sharp. A human hip is compared to a spur on a rooster's leg, the width of a woman's mons pubis to a farm land, and the hairs on the head to an uncultivated farm land. These comparisons provoke laughter and amusement.

The closing

The lady considered all that happened to her and her parents as a calamity. She quickly decides to propitiate the gods of the land in order to ward off the calamity. The excerpt below contains details of the propitiation.

Ngatə kwanyi nda ma	Hear the lady scrambling
Biya tsakə-tsakə ndəvə na kyara kətsa.	Out she ran and broke fresh twig
Uya tlam nyi patlə kwanu leng nghəu.	Getting her yeast full of iron bowl
Uya pərpaoa nyi dəng na tsəla fəli	Getting her cotton heaped in marketing basket
Hətə pərpaoa anda ngidə nda dza cha nda ni	Taking the cotton wool, she rubbed her body off

Cha ma'i nē cha dzəva pəu nyi nē mængali	She went with it and pours it into harvest ants' entrance.
Hətə kwar-kwar zadəti gii tē kyara kətsa.	Took a roll of cotton and unrolled it unto <i>kətsa</i> twig
Biya dlakəya dlakə ku laku Hyellu	Went out and cross it in God's path
Zhang səu ya nda ngati cha baziya:	One thing I heard her saying
Kukə hyana gaya uya vamedə kwá.	I sighted you moon, next moon I'll get six lovers
Hya nga pedə yo uya vamedə dlá	Next moon, I will get nine lovers.

The excerpt above is a narration of the propitiation to the gods of the land to ward off the calamity that she thought befell her. In Həba belief system, twigs of some trees or shrubs are sacred and symbolic of renewal of hope. Similarly, cotton wool symbolises cleanliness. Rubbing her body with cotton wool among Həba is an act of purification after having been contaminated. The protagonist dismissed the prayers she made and attributed her lack of lovers to family arrogance.

Ndə ya zadərəng mungha zadiya nya vi kə hya	I said, it's your mother's arrogance that entangled door front.
Zadər kərəng zade nya gangəru	Your own arrogance entangled bed front
Zadər dənggha zade nya ki kəhi	Your father's arrogance entangled your gate.
Ker tusəu ya təra	I vanished

The song ended abruptly just as the beginning of the story. The suitor being the protagonist vanished. Throughout the narrative, a terse and harsh tone was maintained.

Diction

The choice of words in this ballad is generally simple and straightforward. They are mostly everyday words that are familiar to the native speakers of Həba language. Being a satirical folk ballad, most of the words are archaic and descriptive. The narrator employed descriptive words and phrases to present a vivid image of the characters, places or things. Action verbs are also used for the purpose of clear description. The narrator who is the protagonist used descriptive words and action verbs in castigating and criticizing the antagonists.

Ngatə kwa nda nwa ma	Hear how the lady rushed
Biya tsot-tsot gup na ya nwa təma	Out she ran and grasped me
Zər malləm ,tabiya dā anini.	Young teacher, gift me half a penny
Dadā kwaba ka dādā anini.	Gift me money, gift me half a penny
Təma ngə ya na,tsadārdā dzadəu,	Suddenly I said, ‘ move away from me
muvudə Ngə ndər katu	Odourous like an idol stricken person

In the above excerpt, the verbs rushed, grasped, move and stricken describe physical actions. The uses of these verbs made the physical actions in the opening of the story clear. In addition, the descriptive phrase, “young teacher” paints the picture of the protagonist as a respected personality. Teachers in the ancient Həba community were respected personalities that were close to the people. The word “odourous” at the beginning of the last line evokes an image of a stigmatised person. Idol stricken people in the ancient Həba community were treated with concoctions that produce offensive smell. The use of an antiquated word is also noted in the excerpt. The word “anini” (a term borrowed from Hausa language) refers to the former British

coin. Anini in Hausa during the colonial period was half penny. This makes it clear that the performer is an aged person who was familiar with some British currencies.

The use of ideophones

Ideophones are words that appeal to sensory experiences. The sound of an ideophone imitates its action or suggests its meaning. Okon and Uddoinyang (2021) refer to idiophone as a sound device which is peculiar to African orature in which the sound produced suggests its meaning.

The following are examples found in the text:

Wula cho shili ndong,ndong fəltə̀m.	There she comes ndong-ndong and stood still
Ndong-Ndong shili Ndolang ngha gwo vi	Ndong-ndong coming, ndolang entered the room
Tsatlə –tsatlə kum tsatlə 'uada na hehi.	Tsatlə-tsatlə kum tsatlə, she eats unshelled groundnuts

The compounded word “ndong-ndong” evokes a sensory experience. It conjures up an ungraceful and aggressive walking. Well brought up women in the Həba community walk gracefully, especially when approaching or passing by men. The description paints the picture of an uncultured woman. Similarly, the compounded word “tsatlə-tsatlə” in the last line evokes a sensory experience. It paints the picture of a hungry person eating in a quick and rushed manner. Being a community that cultivates groundnuts on a large scale as food and cash crop, the sound is meaningful to the natives of Həba. The uses of these ideophones evoke laughter and create amusing atmosphere.

Syntactic structures

Syntactic structures refer to how words are arranged to form larger grammatical units such as phrases, clauses and sentences. The syntactic features of the ballad are simple and straight forward. The following are examples:

The Use of Simple and Complex Sentences

A simple sentence consists of one subject and one predicate. It conveys only one idea or thought. On the other hand, a complex sentence consists of one main clause and one or more subordinate ideas (Murthy, 2010). In narrative prose, the use of simple sentences intertwined with complex sentences to make the narrative clear and straight forward. In the text, simple sentences have been used prevalently for the purpose of clear description of the events and the actions of the characters. Generally, the use of simple sentence enhances clarity, makes emphasis, creates rhythmic flow and helps the reader to follow the direction of the story. The narrator, who is the protagonist and the voice of the community, uses a lot of simple sentences in critiquing the behaviours of the lady and her parents.

Examples are:

Ngatə kwa nda nwa ma	Hear how the lady rushed out
Biya tsot-tsot gup na ya nwa təma	Out she rushed and grasped me suddenly
Zər malləm ,tabiya dā anini	Young teacher, fetch me half a penny
Dadā kwaba ka dādā anini.	Gift me money, gift me half a penny
Təma ngə ya na,tsadārdā dzadəu	Suddenly I said, ‘move away from me
muvudə Ngə ndər katu.	Odourous like an idol stricken person

The use of simple sentences seen in the above excerpt makes the narrative fast, clear and straightforward. The subject of those that are imperative is implied; their subjects can be understood from the context as “you.” The predicate served at the initial of the sentence is a verb followed by its complement. Complex sentences are used alongside the simple sentences to link ideas in the narration. Examples from the text are:

Ma nda cha mə ga dɔdɔ ngə sal pwapu	When she screamed and stretched like a male snake
Tsuu ɓakə- ɓakə bwaburum səya tə	In a little while, inner wall was down.
Tsuu ɓakə-ɓakə zər fal səya tə	In a little while, a small granary was down
Tsuu ɓakə-ɓakə biya dzakə na bangu.	In a little while, she pushed out with the wall.

Line one above is a subordinate idea on which the three parallel complex sentences depend. Each of the three complex sentences are preceded by adverbial phrase of time and followed by an independent idea. The parallel structures create a rhythmic flow and made the reading fast and appealing to the emotions of the audiences. Complex sentences according to Thorne (1997) can withhold information until a certain point in the discourse, or subordinate some ideas to others which seem more important.

Compound Sentences

Compound sentences express more than one independent idea joined by a coordinating conjunction. Related ideas, actions or events in narratives are joined by coordinating conjunctions such as and, but, or, for, yet and so. In narratives, over use of compound sentences may reduce clarity. The reader may struggle to figure out the ideas (Thorne, 1997).

The uses of compound sentences are sparse in the text. Two examples identified are:

Amanyi ngwabə ya baa adnyi gəfəu	Her mother was seated and her father lying down.
Cha ma'i nə cha biya puwu nyi nə məngali	She went it and poured it into the entrancing of harvest ants.

In each of the two sentences above, two related ideas are joined by an additive coordinating conjunction “and”. The first shows a logical relationship between the ideas expressed, while the second extends the action.

Use of Repetition

Repetition is a literary device used to emphasise an idea, enhance musicality and rhythmic flow in song text. Okon and Udoinyang (2021) assert that most African folksongs can never be seen to be complete without repetition or refrain. Refrain is a form of repetition to reinforce or emphasise ideas. Barowski and Licciardi (2023) describe refrain as a line, a phrase or a word that is repeated periodically within the poem to build up drama or create emphasis. In the text, the refrain is a compounded word “*ding-ding*.” It is repeated by the audience after each voice of the singer. The singer also repeats on the lute before singing a new line. This repetition adds a rhythmic flow and maintains the musical tempo.

The Use of Parallelism

Parallelism is like repetition. The difference is that parallelism refers to the repetition of only part of a sentence. It means that only one part of a grammatical structure is constructed the same way. On the other hand, repetition refers to the use of the same word, phrase, or clause more than once

in a sentence or a complete sentence. Crystle (2022) defines parallelism as an act of grammatical balancing. Two or more ideas are easily understood when they are parallel. In literature, parallelism creates a rhythmic flow, emphasises ideas and appeals to the reader's emotion.

Examples from the text are:

Ma nda cha mō ga dōda ngō sal pwabu	When she screamed and stretched like male snake
Tsuu ɓakə- ɓakə bwaburum səya ti.	In a little while, room dividing was down
Tsuu ɓakə- ɓakə zər val səyati	In a little while, a small granary was down
Tsuu ɓakə- ɓakə biya dzakə na bangu	In a little while, she bolted out, pulled the wall

The three sentences introduced by the subordinate conjunction “when she screamed and stretched like a male snake” are parallel structures. The introductory phrase ‘in a short while’ is repeated at the initials of the three sentences but the main ideas are parallel. Different things happened in each sentence. Other examples of parallelism identified from the text are the repetition of gerund phrases at the initials of the following:

Uya tlam nyi patlə kwanu leng nghəu.	Getting her yeast full of iron bowl
Uya pərpaoa nyi dōng na tsəla fəli.	Getting her cotton pressed up in marketing basket
Hətə pərpaoa anda ngidə nda dza cha nda ni.	Taking the cotton, she rubbed her off

The excerpt above features parallel structures. The same gerund phrase is repeated at the initials of the first two sentences but the ideas conveyed are different. The third is a complex sentence with a gerund phrase at the initial. Having felt bad about the mockery and derision by the protagonist, the lady decided to propitiate the gods. Yeast and cotton wool were used for propitiations in different contexts in the ancient Həba community.

Literary Devices

Literary devices in generic sense refer to artistic strategies used by literary artists to make their writing effective. The use of literary devices takes the meaning of a word or expression beyond the literal level(Kassiani,2025). The following are examples found in the text.

i. The Use of Imagery

Imagery is a literary device used to evoke sensory experiences. It is the use of descriptive words to appeal to any of the human senses. Blakeley and Gentry (2023) refer to imagery as any part of a poem or other literary work that build up pictures of events, actions, places or characters in the reader's mind. In this ballad, the narrator employed imagery to evoke sensory experiences in the mind of the audience. The excerpt below contains examples.

Zhang səu ngə ya nda ngatə ada nyi a na.	One thing I later heard her father saying
Ndə shiuu-shiuuoa ma'i nya ki dā	A cursed man, away from my gate!
Kahə ma nda ya səya gyadī kərda.	I suddenly guffawed
Ndəra dəgal ma mər kyar nakə ja	<i>Old</i> man, let's go into verbal altercation
Ma mər kyar baba!	Let's trade insult father
Nədə shipəli ngə jigəl shantanəu.	See your testis like the one of evil gazelle
Tsəur huchi wi dəwar kalangu	With numerous wrinkles like 'kalangu drum

The above excerpt marks the climax of the crisis. The different visual imageries reveal serious conflict between the antagonist and the protagonist. The trading of insults between the protagonist and the antagonist at this point made the story humorous and entertaining. The Antagonist used descriptive languages (a cursed man) to evoke the image of an irresponsible man that came to woo his daughter. In response, the protagonist guffawed to ridicule the father. To evoke laughter, the protagonist used derisive similes to ridicule the father. He compared the testis of the man to that of an evil gazelle and his numerous wrinkles to suspenders of *kalangu* drums.

ii. Devices of Humour

Humour is used to entertain the audience by evoking laughter or amusement. In the text, the narrator, who is the protagonist, used a lot of funny expressions to criticise and deride the antagonists (the spoiled lady and her parents). The trading of insults in the story is made tense founded when the parents attempted to defend their daughter. The narrator achieved humour through the use of different forms of literary devices. The following are some of the devices of humour found in the text:

i. Simile

Simile is a figurative expression used to make an indirect comparison. In simile, something is likened to something or referred to as something. The antagonist in the story used simile to provoke laughter by mocking the antagonist. The following are examples:

Madiya malakə na palakə ngə dzeka gwal	Old woman with hip like rooster's spur
Dlam bəbe wi kutəkə Jirnadu	With wide mons pubis like Jirnadu's farmland
Həya alfakam na kər ngə fa kəra zoa	Dog, with bushy hairs like uncultivated farm

Nwadā-nwadā zhindar ngə waami a yo kum	Having swarmed desire for meat like Maggots that bred in meat
Ngidā-Ngidā gajidi ngə təlma sal gajal	With spiraled clitoris like the horn of male antelope

The sharp comparisons in above are amusing. These comparisons critique, ridicule, mock and deride the mother who stood in defense of her daughter's wrong behaviour. The narrator employed these humourous exaggerations to create comic atmosphere. At the mention of each of the sharp comparisons, the audience broke to laughter. The comparisons are sharp and straightforward. The tenor and the vehicle in each comparison are family to the audience. The tenor is the subject of the comparison-thing described, while the vehicle is the object of the comparison-the thing the subject is compared to. The comparisons are summarized as below.

Tenor	vehicle
Human hip	rooster's spur
Wide mons pubis	farmland
Bushy hairs	uncultivated farm land
Swarmed desire for meat	maggots that bred in meat
Spiraled clitoris	horn of male antelope

These comparisons are funny and amusing but ridiculous and deriding the antagonists.

Rhetorical questions

Rhetorical questions are questions that do not need answers. In literature or any persuasive text, rhetorical questions are asked to emphasize points, clarify ideas, evoke emotions, provoke

thoughts or create dramatic effects. Rhetorical questions are sparse in the text. This is attributed to the fact that the goal of a narrative poem is to tell a story rather than conveying or emphasizing ideas. The excerpt below contains twin rhetorical questions asked by the mother of the lady with a flawed character.

Həya ndə shiuu-shiuuoa !	You dog! A cursed person!
Mi ko gwaa zəma?	What are looking for?
Mi bikər kwadā ka uya ko gyadī ja?	What fault of my daughter did you get to laugh at?

The three lines above depict the emotional state of the mother. The two rhetorical questions do not emphasize ideas but rather use to provoke thought create dramatic effects. These questions create strong emotional impact and heighten the tension. Having been provoked by the questions, the protagonist lashed out in anger.

ii. **Hyperbole**

Hyperbole is a gross exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis. Thorne (1997) sees it as a form of overstatement for persuasive exaggeration. In the song text, there are several instances of the use of hyperbole to amuse the audience and deride the flawed character. The flaw in the character of the lady is featured in the following excerpt:

As we were sitting and chatting, hear what I thought of:

Ngwa ya uya huu ja ya ndzamar vamedā	Let me get fire to see my love.
Lumba wan ngə cha chiya na səpi kadəu	The first one, she put it out with breath.
Mətlə kunyi ngə cha təkə dā madərdā:	The second time, she farted on me
Makər kunyi ngə cha shangədā ibi duru	The third time, she discharged real faeces on

	me.
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The texts above are humorous and comic. The enumerated flaws evoke amusement in the audiences and deride the character. These are exaggerations mock and ridicule the subject. The three consecutive actions are all comic and ridiculous. Heavy breathing, farting and defecating publically are shameful acts, especially if done by a woman.

Conclusion

This study has attempted an analysis of style in a selected Høba folk ballad with a view to determine the performer's choice of language and the effects created on the audience. The analysis revealed that the song is a satirical comedy on the flaws in the upbringing of female children in Høba community. The narrator who is the protagonist used humour to mock and ridicule his three antagonist. It was observed that the narrator used different styles to mock and deride the antagonists. Ideophones were used for instance to evoke sensory experiences and adds rhythmic flow. At the lexical level, it was observed that the narrator used everyday vocabulary related the beliefs, values and experiences of the Høba people in their sociocultural milieu. The significant syntactic features used in propelling the plots and developing the theme include: simple sentences, complex sentences, compound sentences, repetition and parallelism. The literary devices used in critiquing the flawed characters include simile, imagery, hyperbole, rhetorical questions and onomatopoeia. Finally, it was observed that the style ssemployed by the narrator made the tone of the story terse and harsh.

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