

A Linguistic Analysis of Henry Ole Kulet's novel, *Blossoms of the Savannah*

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Abstract: The main aim of this paper was to carry out a linguistic analysis of Henry Ole Kulet's novel, *Blossoms of the Savannah*. The novel is currently a compulsory set text for secondary schools in Kenya. In the novel, Ole Kaelo is retrenched, and therefore he with his family has to relocate to Nasila, his rural home. Given that he had turned his back on Nasila culture, his two daughters, Resian and Taiyo are not circumcised. He also finds himself ensnared by an unscrupulous and extortionist Edward Oloisudori, who loans him money to start a business and to buy a house. This study investigated the existence of linguistic features and their efficacy in bringing to the fore the intricate aspects of Maa culture and the conflict between Ole Kaelo and Oloisudori. The study shows that Ole Kulet has used a number of linguistic devices to effectively communicate the intended message. He particularly uses grammatical and semantic features to portray Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as not only obnoxious, but also outdated. He uses descriptive nouns and adjectives to concretise characters and events. The results of this study will be invaluable to students and scholars in the area of Stylistics.

Key words: Analysis, circumcision; culture, linguistic description, Ole Kaelo, semantic

Date of Submission: 20-11-2020

Date of Acceptance: 06-12-2020

I. INTRODUCTION

Henry Ole Kulet was born in Kenya in 1946. He was brought up in Entare-Ngusur in Narok County in Kenya. He is a prolific writer who has written a number of novels to his credit. His other novels include *Is it Possible* (1971), *To Become a Man* (1972), *The Hunter* (1985), *Daughter of Maa* (1987), *Moran no More* (1990), *Bandits of Kibe* (1999), *Vanishing Herds* (2011) and *The Elephant Dance* (2016). *Blossoms of the Savannah* was published in 2008 [1]. A novel is a piece of writing in prose, and prose is made up of complete sentences. Bradford (1997:51) [2] argues that "prose is more closely allied to metonymy, in that its linguistic selections maintain a parallel relationship between what is said or written and what is presented." This means that anything written in prose is presented in a straight forward manner that reflects the pattern of our everyday speech. The object of Ole Kulet's writing in almost all these novels is the expression of the Maa culture and environmental concerns.

In *Blossoms of the Savannah*, Parsimei Ole Kaelo who has lived and worked in Nakuru, Kenya, for the past twenty-two years, is retrenched from his job at Agribix Limited. He had given his back to his Maa culture. On return to Nasila, he is to be relinked to his community so that he can fit into the Nasila culture. The sensitive issue of the circumcision of his two daughters Resian and Taiyo as per the dictates of Maa traditions haunts him. The daughters are *Intoiye Nemengalana*, uncircumcised girls. In addition, Ole Kaelo is in business with an unscrupulous and extortionist man by the name Edward Oloisudori Lonkiyaa. Oloisudori lent Ole Kaelo money to start a business and to buy a house. These two factors (circumcision of the daughters and the business deal between Ole Kaelo and Oloisudori) form an intertwined conflict in the novel.

Linguistic description refers to the exploration and classification of linguistic features of a given text and the linguistic features are reflected by style markers which are linguistic items, Dong (2006) [3]. This study will go beyond description, and link the linguistic features or devices to their linguistic functions in *Blossoms of the Savannah*. It takes cognisance of the fact that such linguistic features contribute to the overall understanding of a text. As Leech and Short correctly observe, "Halliday's view is that all linguistic choices are meaningful and all linguistic choices are stylistic" (1981: 33) [4]. In other words, each linguistic feature is intended to convey a certain message to the readers. Linguistic features therefore constitute style. Readers always pay attention to the linguistic patterns only when the patterns are made significant by being foregrounded. Devardhal et al (2013:1) [5] assert: "Advocating stylistics as a means to develop language proficiency is committed to the value of conscious attention to details of linguistic features 'foregrounded' in a text...."

The structured way to study these linguistic features is to discuss the novel in terms of a number of interrelated levels of description, Crystal and Davy (1969) [6]. Leech (1969) [7] identifies these levels as lexical, grammatical, phonological, graphological and semantic levels.

II. PHONOLOGICAL LEVEL

Phonology studies the sound system of a language. A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics [8] defines phonology as “the study of sound systems of languages” Crystal (2008:365) [8]. The sounds are not studied in isolation, but how they function in relation to each other in a language. This is why it is defined as a system of sounds. The linguistic features described at this level include repetition, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance and onomatopoeia. These linguistic features are very common in short texts such as poems where they are used to enhance the musicality of those poems. In prose, a narrative structure, the features do not quite stand out.

2.1 Assonance

Assonance is the recurrence of a particular vowel sound in words that are close to each other. A few examples to illustrate assonance as used in the novel include the following:

1. “He advised Ole Kael to re-assimilate himself into his people’s culture.” (p51-52)
2. “Was she simply infatuated with him?” (p71)
3. “Have you run amok child?” (p96)

In (1) and (2) above, the vowel sound /i/ recurs in words that are close to each other. In (3), we have an example of near-asonance. The sound /ə/ of “have” and “amok” and the sound /ʌ/ of “run” are close in articulation. The repetition of these vowel sounds not only draw the readers’ attention to the phrases where these words occur, but they also help accelerate the musical effect in those utterances.

2.2 Alliteration

Alliteration is the use of the same consonant sound at the beginning of several words that are close one another. The effect of alliteration is twofold. First, it draws the reader’s attention to particular words in the text, signifying that those words are important and therefore the reader should pay attention to them. The second effect is the musicality or rhythm created by the alliterating consonant sound, which enhances memorability.

4. “Interspersed were olive-green *iloirienito* trees whose frequent foliage filled the air with their aromatic scent.” (p 15). The recurrence of the sound /f/ draws the attention of the readers to the phrase where they are used. As a result, the cool and beautiful morning that Ole Kaelo’s daughters have woken up to is defined.
5. “Striding swiftly to where a gong hung...” (p 157). In addition to creating rhythm, the repetition of the voice fricative /s/ draws the readers’ attention to how fast and urgently Joseph Parmuat moved to strike the gong.
6. “She wrapped the blanket the old woman had given her...letting her head float fleetingly into all kinds of fanciful thoughts.” (p 219-220). The consonant sound /f/ alliterates in the words in which is at the beginning. It helps create rhythm. The alliteration also helps enhance the helplessness and desperation Resian finds herself in while at Olarinkoi’s place.
7. “She felt as if a haze of tiredness had come over her mind in the form of a fleeting dream; floating like mist blown by a gust of wind.” (p 222). The sound /f/ creates rhythm.

2.3 Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia refers to the use of words where sounds imitate or directly echo the sounds of the thing described. “It is the formation of words through the imitation of sounds from nature” Bussmann (1996:836) [9]. The meaning of an onomatopoeic word includes the sound that is similar to the noise that word refers to. In other words, the word phonetically sounds like what it describes.

8. “Chicken *clucked* and scratched in the cool shade underneath.” (p 15). “Cluck” is a word that imitates what it describes-the short, low sound made by chicken.
9. “Come on, woman,” Olarinkoi *growled*. (p 217). The onomatopoeic word “growled” aptly brings out Olarinkoi’s hostility, that his behaviour was more of an animal than of a human being.
10. “She could hear from afar the discordant *howls* of the hyenas, the monotonous *groaning* of the wild dogs, and the *chirrup* of the crickets and cicadas outside that blended with the *rustling* sound made by the blowing wind.” (p 243). The italicised onomatopoeic words blend well to bring out the loneliness and desperation of Resian after Nabaru fails to show up.

III. GRAPHOLOGICAL LEVEL

According to Simpson (1997:47) [10], "the term graphology describes the general resources of a language's writing system, including punctuation, spelling, typography, alphabet and paragraph structure...." More specifically, they include internal punctuation marks such as commas, semi-colon, dash, ellipsis, parenthesis and quotation marks. It also entails chapter organisation.

3.1 Chapters

Blossoms of the Savannah is divided into nineteen chapters. Chapter fourteen is the longest (27 pages); it is highly dramatic. The conflict between Resian and Oloisudori on one hand, and between Resian and her father on the other, is heightened in this chapter. It forms the climax of the novel. The shortest chapter is chapter nineteen, the last chapter, which is made up of six pages. This chapter merely provides the conclusion of the story: the victory over Oloisudori and his ilk and the fulfilled dream of the two girls (that of joining Egerton University). The chapter headings are printed in bold and in larger fonts to attract the attention of the reader and to mark division between one chapter and the other. The chapter titles are in the sentence case.

3.2 Paragraphs

OleKulet uses paragraphs of different sizes to create variety and pace in the novel. When he is merely describing events as he does in chapter four where he describes what happens during the homecoming ceremony, the paragraphs are largely long. Shorter paragraphs are used to heighten conflict and enhance pace as illustrated by the following dialogue.

11. "Why not, *Papaai?*?" she asked angrily as she stood rigidly before her father's desk, her hands clasped firmly to prevent them from trembling.

"Because I know for now, you have had enough of formal education," he answered eyeing her sharply, and then stretched his arm, took some papers from a tray at the far end of the table and leafed through them. (p 207)

At the end of the novel, when the Resian and Taiyo have achieved their dream of joining Egerton University, the writer uses very short paragraphs to capture their excitement, this sort of sigh of relief.

12. "*MeisisiOlaitoriani,*" Resian said prayerfully as the vehicle went past the waving workers. "It is all well that ends well."

"*Esaai,*" concluded Taiyo excitedly.

And they were off to their Nirvana, that was Egerton University! (p 284)

3.3 Use of Quotation Marks

Quotation marks have three basic functions in writing: to enclose direct speech (direct quotations), to enclose unusual words, and to enclose titles of short works of art. In *Blossoms of the Savannah*, quotation marks are used to enclose direct speech, especially in conversations and in speakers' own thoughts or reflections.

13. "Oh, my God!" her father exclaimed under his breath, straightening up, his eyes suddenly dilating up. (p 97). This direct speech is used to capture Ole Kaelo's strong emotion of surprise, shock and anxiety about Oloisudori's visit.

14. "Oh, my God," she exclaimed to herself excitedly, "I am standing here foolishly thinking of Oloisudori's stupid antics, while I could be actually on my way to the university!" (p 98-99). Resian is not only contemptuous of Oloisudori, but she also has her eyes on the prize: joining the university.

15. "But now the chicken had come home to roost," Ole Kaelo had lamented ruefully. (p 110). Ole Kaelo is utterly regretful. Oloisudori, his business associate is interested in his daughter Resian. Ole Kaelo has to pay for his business deals with Oloisudori, an extortionist and unscrupulous man.

16. "That will teach them a lesson," Olarinkoi said. Olarinkoi expresses satisfaction after beating up the vagabonds who had accosted Resian and Taiyo.

17. "Oh my God! What is this?" Resian cried out silently...." (p 228). Resian is disgusted by the verbiage from Olarinkoi's mother. It was repugnant and downright obnoxious.

18. "Oh God of all creation! Resian cried out bitterly and audibly as soon as the cruel old woman left. "What have I done to the gods to deserve this kind of punishment?" (p 229). The tribulations Resian undergoes make her hopeless and frustrated.

Quotation marks have also been used in the novel to identify speakers involved in a speech act. They provide immediacy thereby attracting the attention of the reader. Examples include the following:

19. "I suppose it's going to be very different from the kind of life we are used to here, isn't it?"

"Most likely so, yes."

"It seems so very strange," Resian pressed on relentlessly, "to be leaving Nakuru town." (p 3)

20. "My brother Ole Kaelo," Supeyo called amidst malicious laughter that had a touch of friendly mockery. "Tell me, who have you been corrupting?"

"Nobody really..." This is a conversation between Ole Supeyo and Ole Kaelo, (page 25).

21. "Is this the home of Parsimei Ole Kaelo?" the man asked in a cold, sharp voice.

"Yes, it is," answered Resian in a subdued voice.... A conversation between Resian and Oloisudori (92)

22. "Must I be there, *Papaai*?" Resian asked desperately. "Surely *yeiyo* can manage on her own...."

"You have to be there, Resian! (p 171).

23. "Are you ResianeneKaelo?"

"Yes! Resian answered wondering what was happening.

"I guessed right," she said delightfully, her eyes glittering with excitement. (p 255). This is a conversation between Resian and Minik.

3.4 Use of Italics

Italics can be used to punctuate titles in a text, set off words that are foreign and to create emphasis for readers. In *Blossoms of the Savannah*, foreign words (words in local dialect) are foregrounded by being italicised. The author uses local dialect to give the text a local setting and flavour. To the Maa people, use of local dialect makes the text more appealing, hence driving the message home more forcefully. This is particularly so given that most of these have to do with the Maa culture, specifically female genital mutilation which the author is castigating. Examples of such expressions include the following:

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|--|
| 24. | Elangata | 'girlfriend' |
| 25. | Elangatare | 'love affair' |
| 26. | Enkebaani | 'nurse' |
| 27. | Olmurunya | 'razor-sharp blade used by the girl-child circumciser' |
| 28. | Papaai | 'father' |
| 29. | Intoiyenemengalana | 'uncircumcised girls' |
| 30. | Daktari | 'doctor' |

Daktari is a Kiswahili word for 'doctor.' It is a title Lebutu, the lorry driver, uses to refer to MinikeneNkoitoi, (p 254)

The song that the group led by Joseph Parmuat sings during Ole Kaelo's homecoming ceremony is italicised (p 42-43). This foregrounds it by setting it off from the main text. The same can be said of the song the girls from Inkapuka-e-Maa sing at the party organised by Mini *eneNkoitoi*. (p 281). The label on the carton of gifts that Resian and Taiyo give Oloisudori is also written in italics. Apart from setting it from the main text, the sarcasm and contempt of the two girls is brought out. The song Taiyo sings about three blind rats (p 154) and the wise words of the Holy Book that Resian recalls (p 257) are italicised to set them off from the main text.

IV. LEXICAL LEVEL

This is the study of vocabulary as used by a given author, "the way individual words and idioms tend to pattern in different linguistic contexts...." Crystal and Davy(1969:18) [11]. A writer's choice of words determines the aesthetic appreciation of his or her writing. This level of linguistic description therefore investigates the manipulation of language at word level.

4.1 Use of Nouns

Generally, Ole Kulet uses simple nouns. Proper nouns are used to identify characters and places. Many of these proper nouns define the setting of the story: Maa community in the Rift Valley region in Kenya. Personal names include Ole Kaelo, Mama Milanoi, Resian, Taiyo, Ole Musanka, Edward OloisudoriLonkiyaa, Olarinkoi, Minik, Nabaru, Ntare, Ole Supeyo, Lenjirr and Lante. Proper names of places used to define the setting of the novel as Rift Valley region of Kenya include Nakuru, Milimani Estate, Nasila, Esoit village, Inkiito, Ntare-Naaju Sheep Ranch, Kerio Valley, MbenekDapashi, Egerton University.

In addition, abstract nouns are used to describe events, perceptions, moral and social qualities. The following are a few examples to illustrate this.

31. "The rising sun shone on rooftops, giving them a yellowish *tinge*. (p 1). The author uses "tinge" to create perception, a trace of colour that appeals to our sense of sight.

To describe a profligate practice prevalent in urban centres, a socio-moral quality, the abstract noun "harlotry" is used as illustrated below.

32. "It was one thing to perform in a school festival, he reasoned, but to perform in a public gallery was one short step to *harlotry*. (p 45).

33. "The bravery which might have enabled them to face the two *vagabonds*, fizzled out quickly...." P (140). The noun is aptly used to describe the quality of the two young men who accost Resian and Taiyo.

34. "It now dawned on her that she had arrived at the place in which she expected to find her *nirvana* and she had hardly known it." (p 251). This is in reference to MinikeneNkoitoi's place, an ideal place-a place of freedom. Later on, when they reach a place of their dream, Egerton University, the word is used again.
35. "They both found *fault* with their father for wanting to please Oloisudori to the *detriment* of his own children's lives." (p 276)
36. "How would they ever repay Minik the *emakerere* for her *kindness*?" (p 284)

4.2 Use of adjectives

Ole Kulet uses what can be described as complex adjectives. In fact, an average student will be required to look up most of the adjectives in a dictionary. However, Ole Kaelo uses descriptive adjectives to concretize the events, people and abstract nouns being referred to. The following are examples:

37. "She had noticed that he had become even more *belligerent* ever since the family learnt that he had been retrenched...." (p 1)
38. "Although he was blessed with a *shrewd* brain and a *pugnacious* obstinacy that had stood him in good stead...." (p 9)
39. "On his face was a wide *impudent* grin." (p 18)
40. "Mama Milanoi, dazzled by dreams of eventual fulfilment failed to notice that her husband's silence was *ominous*." (p 27)
41. "She was sure it was that *inexplicable* attitude of her father towards Resian that had contributed to *tempestuous* disposition." (p 34)
42. "The *exultant* crowd in the homestead broke into an exciting rhythm of song and dance." (p 45)
43. "But who was that person, they wondered, who was referred to as a 'wasp' and who evoked so much *virulent* hatred amongst the people of Nasila?" (p 53)
- "...she had discovered right from the time he married her that he had his own unique *chivalrous* qualities that neutralised his hubris." (p 62)
44. "For the few minutes she stood before him, she felt his black *languorous* eyes move up and down her face...." (p 95)
45. "He was circumcised with the rest of the sons and became a *valorous* moran." (p 101)
46. "His *ubiquitous* presence at every meal had now been accepted by everyone in the home." (p 139)
47. "Then there was a sinuous movement along the ground by the second tree as the man there disappeared into another bush." (p 161)
48. "He knew how relentless and *pertinacious* the demonic man was." (p 164)
49. "...she too thought their father cut a sorry figure as he stood alone with an *ingratiating* smile on his face." (p 176)
50. "The first day the *lucid* memory came, she realised that she was alone in the room...." (p 224)
51. "You are a *mendacious* spinster who has lost a chance to get married...." (p 283)

4.3 Use of Adverbs

Adverbs, particularly those of manner, are extensively used in *Blossoms of the Savannah*. This is because adverbs of manner, how, and in what way, an action denoted by a verb, is carried out. Like adjectives, many adverbs used in the novel are complex. They are appropriately used in the novel to create perception as illustrated by the following examples.

52. "They have finished loading the lorries, Yeiyo," Taiyo said *nonchalantly*." (p 5)
53. "Once she was convinced that the relocation would enable them begin a new phase of life, she became *unflaggingly* enthusiastic." (p 7)
54. "And as chunks of meat went round, he *furtively* looked at his brother...." (p 12)
55. "He remained so for a moment, then sunk back into his chair, smiling *mirthlessly*." (p 25)
56. "They wove into an intricate pattern, hands touching and dropping, their eyes *demurely* downcast." (p43)
57. "She was *resplendently* dressed in purple silk and moved happily...." (p 47)
58. "Yes, those traditions were *certainly* ghastly," Resian said *vehemently*." (p 128)
59. "*Suddenly* and *unexpectedly*, a third man sprang out of the bushes like a ghost." (p 141)
60. "The thirty men together with Ole Kaelo and Joseph Parmuat sprinted *murderously* from the bushes and *hotly* pursued the two with their weapons...." (p 161)
61. "One or two *surreptitiously* stared or watched from the distance, but when they passed near them, they were greeted with respect." (p 168)
62. "The men ate *ravenously*." (p 172)
63. "When she got to Oloisudori, he took a long time washing his hands as he *gloatingly* peered at her." (p 179)
64. "he cleared his throat *portentously* and said...." (p 207)

65. "What were you guarding so *tenaciously* and *valiantly* when I am told you are not yet a woman?" (p 227-228)
66. "Resian stared at him *blearily*." (p 241)
67. "...the heavy maroon curtains that flowed *voluptuously* to the floor and fluttered *lazily* in the wind that blew through the open windows." (p 260)

V. GRAMMATICAL LEVEL

According to Crystal and Davy (1969:18) [12], "grammar is the central part of a linguistic statement." This is because it encompasses two integral components of linguistics: morphology and syntax. Morphology studies the internal structure of words. In this study, the focus is on syntax, the arrangement of units larger than words such as phrases, clauses and sentences.

5.1 Sentence Types

In prose, varying sentence style and structure add spice to the writing -they create sentence variety. Different sentence structures not only help reduce repetition and clumsiness in writing, but they also give it life and rhythm. In other words, sentence variety amplifies one's writing in a way that engages the reader. In *Blossoms of the Savannah*, the author uses statements (declaratives), exclamatives, interrogatives and imperatives to create variety thereby making his writing interesting.

In order to state facts as they are in the prose or simply to relay information, the author uses declarative statements as illustrated in examples 68-73. Declaratives usually take the conventional subject-verb-object structure.

68. "Taiyo knew her father well. He was not a man who cared to have his well-laid work-plans delayed or disrupted." (p 1)

69. "He told her the much he knew about Olarinkoi. The man was a mystery. Nobody seemed to know him well." (p 80)

70. "He could not place the problem. He had won the heart of the girl he ardently admired. That should have filled his heart with exhilaration. Instead, it was filled with a frightening premonition." (p 136)

71. "They could never thank Olarinkoi adequately. They were lucky he had come at the nick of time." (p 146)

72. "They gave and they received in equal measure. They experienced children being taught, right from infancy, to be mindful of others and to be respectful to seniors. They were taught to shun such negative attributes as selfishness." (p 149).

73. "The banging at the door became more urgent and insistent. Resian took the first step, staggered and nearly fell. She supported herself with the walls of the room, walking slowly and haltingly." (p 246)

To give life to the novel, the writer enacts episodes where characters interact with each other, giving commands or requests for something to be done. To achieve this, imperative sentences are used. The following are but a few examples.

74. "Let's pray that the Good Lord gives us journey mercies." (p 6)

75. "Come out and have your tea." (p 15)

76. "Don't be so harsh with me." (p 17)

77. "Leave my sister alone!" (p 19)

78. "Don't trust him any further than you would a hyena in your homestead." (p 26)

79. "Don't fuddle me with your weird kind of reasoning..." (p 32)

80. "Look at that young man..." (p 42)

81. "Call them mundane," Resian pursued relentlessly. (p 73)

82. "Come on, woman," Olarinkoi growled. (p 217)

83. "Don't stand there staring like a fool," Olarinkoi rebuked her angrily. (p 218)

84. "Tell me, are we not people like those in towns?" (p 236)

85. "Come in and take your seats." (p 279)

Blossoms of the Savannah has high levels of emotions. Such strong emotions may not be effectively expressed in prose using declarative or interrogative sentences. Instead, exclamatory sentences are used. An exclamatory sentence ends in an exclamation mark, and can express a range of emotions-love, confusion, excitement (happiness), shock, sarcasm, uncertainty among others. In the following examples, the author expresses strong disapproval, condemnation or sarcasm.

86. "Leave my sister alone!...Let go her arm at once!" (p 19)

87. "Wiser indeed!" jeered Resian... We won't blink or wince even as *enkamuratani* mutilates our sexuality into smithereens!" (p 72)

88. "You are mad!" Resian screamed at him. (p 204)

89. "Today we shall see our educated your body is! Yes, we shall see!" (p 221)

In the sentences 90-94, strong emotions of excitement and yearning are expressed.

90. "Come in, my brother!" Supeyo said happily, "Welcome! Welcome! Welcome! Come right inside." (p 23)

91. "I'm standing here foolishly thinking of Oloisudori's stupid antics, while I could actually be on my way to the university!" (p 99)

92. "How she missed her sister Taiyo. Oh sweet loving Taiyo!" (p 220)

93. "That was music in Resian's ears." (p 233)

94. "And they were off to their Nirvana, that was Egerton University!" (p 284)

Strong emotions of anger or bitterness is exemplified by the following examples:

95. "Come off it!" Taiyo said sternly. (p 18)

96. "There is an end to all this nonsense!" (p 171)

97. "...and you must stem out that argumentative attitude that is creeping into you. Now go!" (p 172)

98. "Stop it! Stop it!" Resian screamed excruciatingly pained by the disdainful remarks. (p 205)

In examples 99-102 below, the author captures strong emotions of surprise, shock and uncertainty.

99. "Oh, my God!" her father exclaimed under his breath, straightening up, his eyes suddenly dilating widely. "Oloisudori of all the people! Oh my God! I wonder what has gone wrong for him to come looking for me!" (p 97)

100. "Did you say Oloisudori? Of all the people!" (p 100)

101. "Oh, poor thing!" the *enkabaani* exclaimed concernedly on seeing Resian. "You are sitting outside this late? Oh my God! The mosquitoes must have sucked your veins dry!" (p 231)

102. "It was Oloisudori!" (p 240)

Another sentence type that is used extensively in *Blossoms of the Savannah* to create variety is the interrogative. A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics Crystal (2008:252)[13] defines interrogatives as "verb forms or sentence/clause types typically used in the expression of questions." Therefore, they are primarily used in writing to seek information. However, an interrogative can also be used to make a persuasive point or to put particular emphasis on some point being discussed. If used in this manner, they are used stylistically and are referred to as rhetorical questions. A rhetorical question is not meant to be answered although the answer may be obvious. A question mark is put at the end of an interrogative sentence. In this paper, I will consider the stylistic use of interrogatives-rhetorical questions. The following are examples from the novel:

103. "Truly he had known Oloisudori to be a notorious criminal, but was not everybody doing business with him? Was he really that bad? He wondered. Or was it the usual business rivalry and envy?" (p 27). This emphasises the bewilderment and dilemma Ole Kaelo finds himself in after being told by his mentor, Ole Supeyo, that Oloisudori was not a man of integrity.

104. To bring out the subtle jealousy in Resian after seeing her sister Taiyo and the lithe young man (Parmuat), the following chain of interrogatives is used: "Was it jealousy consuming her? But why she should she be jealous of her own sister?" (p 49)

105. "What did they believe in? Were they traditionalists or were they modernists? In embracing the retrogressive cultural values, were they progressing or regressing?" (p 62). This foregrounds the dilemma Mama Milanoi finds herself in with regard to FGM and her daughters Resian and Taiyo.

106. Taiyo and Resian do not understand who Olarinkoi is. But he is in their home day in day out-something quite strange and intriguing. To capture the curiosity, Taiyo asks: "Who was he then? What was his background? And what was he doing in their home day in day out? What was his mission in their home?" (p 79)

107. "What, in the name of God, had he done to deserve such torment?" (p108). Ole Kaelo is confused and bitter after Oloisudori tells him that he is interested in his daughter Resian. He laments and regrets having acted so perilously as to risk the lives of his family.

108. "And who did not want to be referred to as a successful businessman, just like Oloisudori was? Who did not want to have a blooming import and export business, a flourishing transport business or thriving farming inputs supply business? What could be better than when one reached that state...them?" (p 109). The above chain of rhetorical questions serves to bring to the fore the false confidence Ole Kaelo has in being in business with Oloisudori, and also materialism and greed for wealth which is considered by unscrupulous business people as the hallmark of success.

109. To amplify the dilemma Ole Kaelo is in at the thought of Oloisudorimarrying his daughter, these questions are used, "But could Oloisudori, a man of his own age, be his son-in-law? Had he been of Ilmolelian clan as he was, would that have deterred him from marrying Resian?" Ole Kaelo's wife, Mama Milanoi is in a similar dilemma as illustrated by the example 110 below.

110. "Could Oloisudori be her son-in-law? God forbid! How could a man who was the age of her husband be her son-in-law? Where was the Nasila culture?" (p 114)

111. After falling in love with Taiyo, Joseph Parmuat finds himself in dilemma and bewilderment: whether to abandon his culture in exchange of a woman who had no respect for the same culture. The dilemma is brought out by the following questions: "Was the morsel worth the risk the fish had taken and nearly lost its

dear life? ...but was it worth dying for? ...did he have to abandon Nasila culture in exchange of a woman who sneered at its tenets? Was she one who could be tamed or was she like a wild donkey? Even if she could, how would he ever jump the hurdle of her status that negatively described her as being among *intoiyenemenagalana*? (p 137)

112. "Had she dropped from a frying pan into the fire? Was Olarinkoi a beast that that had been pretending to be a human being while waiting for an opportunity to avail itself so as to spring a surprise on her? Or was the man just playing games with her and would turn... place?" (p 219). These rhetorical questions foreground the hopelessness and helplessness of Resian in the hands of Olarinkoi.

5.2 Sentence Complexity

Sentence complexity deals with three aspects of syntax: sentence length, simple and complex sentences. In the novel, all these three aspects are evident. The author interlaces telegraphic, simple, compound and complex sentences to enrich his writing.

Telegraphic sentences are very short sentences, typically less than five words in length. Apart from creating compact punch in writing, telegraphic sentences strengthen a writer's argument or position, making such a position or argument definitive. Some of them are elliptical in structure, and maybe interrogatives or declaratives. In *Blossoms of the Savannah*, the following are examples of telegraphic sentences:

113. "Ready to go?" (p 6)
114. "You see that?" (p 24)
115. "Taiyo was Stupefied." (p 44)
116. "He relented." (p 85)
117. "No, certainly not" (p 113)
118. "She peeped in." (p 130)
119. "He declined her love." (137)
120. "Now go!" (p 172)
121. "Go!" (p 204)
122. "It was Olarinkoi!" (p 240)
123. "She listened." (p 275)

Simple sentences are statements or declaratives, which have already been discussed in section 5.1.

Compound sentences are also extensively used to state facts and to describe events and actions of characters. Compound sentences are independent clauses joined by coordinating conjunctions, namely *but*, *and*.

124. "She was torn between her love for her daughters and her dutiful role of a faithful and obedient wife of Ole Kaelo." (p 61)

125. "It was rarely activated, but when it was, it paralysed all activities in the homestead." (p 115)

126. "Joseph Parmuat loudly called out the names of the boys from the Ilmolelian clan and told the rest to go back into their classes." (p157)

127. "They were probably fifteen or sixteen, but they had all prematurely aged due to poor diet and hardships." (p 239)

The author has also used complex sentences. A complex sentence is made up of an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. Using a complex sentence is an effective way of showing that one idea takes prominence over the other. The idea in the main or independent clause is more important than the one in the subordinate or dependent clause. Subordinating conjunctions such as *till*, *when*, *whereas*, *after*, *because*, *if*, *until*, *since*, are used to join clauses in a complex sentence as illustrated in examples 128-133.

128. "While Ole Kaelo fussed around the vehicles, cursing and muttering expletives under his breath, Mama Milanoi and her daughters alighted and stood beside the vehicle." (p 10)

129. "When she finally got to the bedroom, Resian found it half-lit and quiet." (p 54)

130. "As they descended the Iltepes hills, they could see files after files of the tall muscular Ilarinkonmorans, resplendent in their red ochre-soaked *shukas*." (p 84)

131. "It would never be too long, Mama Milanoi reasoned sorrowfully, before the life-giving water of Nasila began to sicken and kill." (p 117)

132. "Although the ripples had calmed down, below the surface was a longer lasting effect from the incident, and the way it had been resolved." (p 167)

133. "Should Oloisudori fail to get Resian and recall the loan he had extended to him to buy that house, he was done." (p 194-195)

134. "If you allow us a few minutes of your time, madam, we shall explain what brought us to your place and you can thereafter decide our fate...." (p 259)

5.3 Inverted Sentences

In an inverted sentence, particular emphasis is put on an event at the beginning of the sentence. The verb is placed before the subject in the sentence. A number of inverted sentences are used in *Blossoms of the Savannah*.

135. "Little did he know that his friend was much more advanced when it came to murky business of the underworld." (p 23)
136. "Little did he know that Oloisudori's strange demand was made on the spur of the moment." (p 112)

VI. SEMANTIC LEVEL

At this level of linguistic description, what is examined is transmission of messages by using unconventional combinations of words. There are two levels of meaning: the superficial (surface) meaning and deeper meaning. Many of the devices that belong here are referred to as figures of speech.

6.1 Metaphor

According to Saeed (1997:347)[14], "Metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another." In other words, two domains of experience are directly compared, a source domain and a target domain. That is to say that the hearer is made to see an unfamiliar object and its qualities in an object that is quite familiar, Otieno(2015)[15]The comparison is done by mapping of roles, as Evans et al postulate: "Metaphor works by mapping roles from the source onto the target" (2006:295)[16]. In a broader sense, metaphor encompasses simile and personification.

137. To bring out Oloisudori's immorality and lack of integrity, the following metaphors are used by Ole Supeyo: "Don't trust him any further than you would hyena in your homestead He has a reputation that would rival that of a randy he-goat." (p 26)

138. "Ole Kaelo, he said, was a tiny strand of hair that had been blown away...." (p 51). Ole Musanka brings to the fore a sense of entitlement-Ole Kaelo is part and parcel of Nasila. To express the centrality and inevitability of Maa culture, Ole Musanka says: "Maa culture was the blood and marrow that gave sustenance to the body." (p 51)

139. After Ole Musanka's curse on Emakererei, Resian and Taiyo felt troubled. To express that trouble and bewilderment, the author uses the metaphor of rivet: "They felt squeamish as they stood there, their downcast eyes riveted upon the floor...." (p 53)

140. "She muttered inaudibly, "What an ill-mannered devil this man is!" (p 93). Resian uses this metaphor to express her disgust and contempt for Oloisudori.

141. Oloisudori is portrayed as a grotesque, immoral and threatening. He is therefore described as a monster: "The monster could do anything including snuffing out the life of an innocent child like Resian." (p 119)

142. Resian blames the tension that has gripped their home on an emerging culture, culture that is strange and therefore not definable, "... a newborn mongrel; a new culture that was partly Maa and partly a combination of a myriads of cultures found in Nakuru town." (p 174)

143. "Her eyes were twin rivulets from which hot tears streamed down continuously." (p 205). The author uses the image of rivulets to show that Resian shed a lot of tears out of anger after realising that her father wanted to marry her off to Oloisudori, a man she has contemptuously referred to as a monster.

144. "You silly thing, " he thundered angrily." (p 221). This amplifies the anger and the shouting of Olarinkoi directed at the helpless and desperate Resian.

145. "The sky became a bowl of red which darkened to a thick combination of deep purplish red colour clouds." (p 226).

6.2 Personification

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980:33)[17], "Personification allows us to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities. Inanimate objects are given human attributes, the effect of which is to showcase a non-human entity more vividly.

146. "...Nakuru town; that beloved town that was the mother of all flamingos." (p 2). This personification connects readers with Nakuru town, an attractive town that is the home of flamingos.

147. "A cool fresh breeze swept in and caressed her face soothingly." (p 14). The comforting and pleasurable aspect of the breeze is emphasised.

148. "It would not be long, Mama Milanoi reasoned sorrowfully, before the life-giving water of Nasila began to sicken and kill." (p 117). Pollution of the river is equated to a person being sick. This is meant to grab our attention and call for our sympathy and emotional support.

149. "Nature seemed to be in agreement with the depressing atmosphere...." (p 146). The atmosphere was gloomy and hostile, as if to augment the girls' apprehensive mood after the sad and unfortunate encounter with the vagabonds.

150. "... in the highlands where a cool breeze of fresh aromatic air from the hills soothingly caressed their nostrils and filled their lungs." (p 252). The breeze was gentle and comforting.

151. "A king-size pot of ugali hissed cheerfully at the side." (p 280). This evokes emotions of happiness and enjoyment at the event.

6.3 Similes

That simile is the most extensively used aspect of style in *Blossoms of the Savannah* cannot be gainsaid. Whereas metaphor is a direct comparison of two entities, simile is an indirect comparison. One entity is said to be like another. The following are examples of similes used in the novel:

152. "They had likened him to a mono-eyed giant who stood on legs of straw." (p 13) Elders use this simile in reference to Ole Kaelo. Ole Kaelo is not stable since he has only one wife and two daughters.

153. "Like cattle that required to be dehorned, to reduce accidental injuries to each other, a certain measure of docility was also necessary to keep more than one wife in one homestead." (p 22). Here, Ole Supeyo underscores polygamy and circumcision as ways of taming women. This portrays him as male chauvinistic.

154. "The threatening hostility the evil young man displayed had not dissipated and that sense of foreboding from the threat was still hanging in the air like the sword of Damocles." (p 27). This captures the mood of apprehension Taiyo finds herself in after being accosted by the evil young man.

155. At Ole Kaelo's homecoming party, the voices of the exuberant revellers who are in carefree mood are thus described: "... the talk and the laughter of the revellers rose and fell like the sound of waves beating upon flooded river banks." (p 50)

156. To show the danger that lurked in their new environment, this simile is used, "...their cause lay in the inescapable loneliness that seemed to stalk like a lost young leopard...." (p 57)

157. To foreground how lazy Resian is Ole Kaelo tells Mama Milanoi: "While Taiyo works herself to the bone, she lazes about like an over-fed lizard in the hot afternoon sun." (p 64)

158. In describing Olarinkoi, an anti-social and discreet man whose main intention in Ole Kaelo's home remains a mystery, the author writes: "He was always there, sitting quietly and staring unblinkingly, like a leopard would while stealthily stalking an antelope." (p 75)

159. "It was said to be contagious and therefore, one with *olkuenyi* was shunned like the plaque." (p 78). In this description Resian is portrayed as utterly uppish, somebody who should be shunned.

160. To portray Olarinkoi as anti-social and secretive, Taiyo says: "... it was much easier to fall in love with a creepy cold serpent than to fall for the likes of Olarinkoi." (p 80)

161. "They turned and turned again on their bed repeatedly, like *ilmintilis* being roasted in the fire." (p 107). This simile helps to foreground the torture that the couple underwent during the long night. It was a night of trouble.

162. To show express how rotten the society is, to the extent that unscrupulous and corrupt people are irresistible, Ole Kaelo reasons that: "And that was the reason, like a stinking rotten carcass would draw a torrent of flies to itself, people like him and many others got drawn to the murky business of Oloisudori." (p 109)

163. "Immediately, the 'village wireless' was activated and it spread the news like a bush fire during a drought." (115). This shows how fast the news of the ill-mannered old man who got infatuated with a fourteen-year-old girl spread.

164. Soon after the romantic meeting between Parmuat and Taiyo, there was a strange emptiness in Parmuat; he was filled with a devastating feeling of hopelessness. This is aptly captured in the simile: "His heart was desolate like a deserted house." (p 136)

165. As Ole Kaelo and Mama Milanoi wait for the coming of Oloisudori, they ignored the obnoxious reality of Oloisudori marrying their daughter Resian. This is brought in the simile: "Ole Kaelo had therefore continued to bury his head in the sand like the proverbial ostrich...." (p 138)

166. Oloisudori is described as ugly and frightening in the simile: "He is like a monster...." (p 171)

167. To show how Resian was uncontrollable and irrational when she was accusing her father of betrayal by betrothing her to Oloisudori, she is described as having "screamed and shouted like one possessed with demented spirits." (p 209)

168. Resian is portrayed as aggressive and determined and wild in the following simile: "...sunk her teeth into the flesh like a ferocious animal and tenaciously held onto it, tugging at it fiercely like a lioness." (p 221)

169. After being hit by Oloisudori, and passing out, Resian regains her consciousness very slowly, "... gradually like a remote recollection of a distant past incident." (p 222)

170. "Nabaru scooped Resian like a little baby and carried her back to the bedroom." (p 246). This simile does not only express the helplessness of Resian, but it also portrays Nabaru as caring and protective.

171. "You are like *embarie* the coward fox that waits for the lion to kill before it stealthily creeps in to steal the meat." (p 249). Nabaru implies that Olarinkoi is cowardly, but scheming and opportunistic.

172. To express the urgency and speed with which the rescue team moved to carry Taiyo away, the author says: "They carried her and scampered away fast, like men fleeing from a burning house." (p 271)

Other similes can be found on pages 29,30,45,80,96,108,119,121, 136, 141, 156, 157, 163, 170, 185, 191, 192, 194, 208, 210, 215, 218, 219,223, 228, 230, 243, 245, 259 and 263.

6.4 Irony

According to Simpson (2004:46)[18], "Irony is situated in the space between what you say and what you mean." There is a discrepancy between what is said and what is meant, or what is expected and what actually happens. The import of irony in writing is to emphasise a central idea so that a particular message is conveyed to the audience. Instances of irony in *Blossoms of the Savannah* include the following:

173. Mama Milanoi thought it would be easier to marry off her two daughters in the new town, and to men from reputable families in the land. On the contrary, the two girls fight against getting married to Oloisudori. In addition, the two men who attempt to marry them are not men Mama Milanoi would have wished to marry them. (p 8)

174. The development of the idea of *enkamuratani* and *olmurunya* was by women. It is ironical that a practice women themselves founded has become a source of pain and humiliation to them. (p 87). Parmuat tells Resian and Taiyo, "It is the women and not men who founded what eventually became tradition." (p 88)

175. Taiyo narrates to her father what they were told by Parmuat, that Oloisudori is a reputable financier, and that wherever he is seen, great business transactions are in the offing. (p 105). She does not know that her father is a beneficiary of Oloisudori's business transactions, a situation that has thrown Ole Kaelo into confusion and regret.

176. It is reported that there was nothing Oloisudori Lonkiyaa desired and did not get. (p 113). However, he wanted to marry Resian but Resian outmanoeuvred him. He changed his attention to Taiyo, but she was rescued by Minik's team. So, he did not get either of them.

177. It is ironical that soon after Joseph Parmuat falls in love with Taiyo, "His heart was desolate like a deserted house." (p 136). His heart was filled with a frightening premonition.

178. Taiyo is excited about her new found love and she eagerly looks forward to meeting Parmuat in the evening. (p 140). Ironically, Parmuat has changed his mind-he has declined her love.

179. Resian and Taiyo consider Olarinkoi antisocial and are disgusted by his ever presence in their home. On the contrary, it is Olarinkoi who comes to their rescue when the two vagabonds accost them. (p 142)

180. Ole Kaelo plans to marry off his daughter Resian to Oloisudori. But Resian, together with her sister Taiyo are contemptuous of Oloisudori. They have a lot of disgust for him and even refer to him as a monster. (p 176)

181. Ole Kaelo summons his daughter Resian to talk to her about Oloisudori's interest in her. But Resian is excited that either her mother or Taiyo may have talked to her father about the possibility of joining Egerton University. This excitement is therefore misplaced. She is not joining the university. (p 183)

182. Oloisudori is happy and grateful for the gifts he has received from Resian. Little does he know that these are the gifts he had given them. They are merely returning them to him as a sign of disgust-they want to embarrass and humiliate him. (p 202)

183. *Emuata* was worn by brides in Nasila as an emblem of beauty. The irony and the ridicule were that *emuata* was too heavy, and therefore not comfortable. The element of beauty was lost.

6.5 Idioms

A Glossary of Semantics and Pragmatics describes an idiom a multi-word phrase, and that idioms are non-compositional and syntactically frozen(2006)[19]. They are non-compositional because their global meanings cannot be derived from the meaning of individual words that constitute them. They are also referred to as colloquial expressions, set phrases or idiomatic expressions. The novel being a story told in the format of a speech, idioms are bound to be used. Examples from *Blossoms of the Savannah* include the following:

184. "He thought of Taiyo, his favourite daughter and the *apple of his eye*." (p 111). Ole Kaelo loves Taiyo most.

185. "Her daughter Resian... was a *hard nut to crack*." (p 118). Resian is difficult to deal with.

186. "... a committee that would go through all the known culture with a fine *tooth comb* and consign all the bad and negative ones to the dustbin of history." (p 128). The committee would do a thorough analysis of the culture.

187. "Taiyo was exhilarated beyond words. She was simply in a *seventh heaven*." (p 135). Taiyo was in a state of intense bliss (happiness).

188. "Ole Kaelo had therefore continued to *bury his head in the sand* like the proverbial ostrich...." (p 138). Ole Kaelo had continued to ignore unpleasant realities- that Oloisudori, a man of his own age, wanted to marry his daughter Resian.

189. "...she would try to convince their father to allow them to go back to Nakuru and enrol as students at the Egerton University, she *nipped in the bud* any opposition...." (147). She stopped any opposition at an early stage.

190. Olarinkoi had *vanished into thin air* immediately after rescuing the girls. (p 158). Olarinkoi had disappeared mysteriously.

191. "Little did he know that it was *a lull before a turbulent storm*." (p 168). It was a time that seemed quiet but would be followed immediately by some unpleasant happening. The girls were happy at that moment, but were later find themselves in problems.

192. "It was certainly going to be *an added feather to his cap*." (p 187). By marrying a graduate, Oloisudori thought that would be some achievement to be proud of.

193. "And knowing Oloisudori, he could very easily *draw the rug from beneath his feet*." (p 195). Ole Kaelo thought Oloisudori would withdraw his support.

194. "She held her breath." (p 200). Resian was in a state of anticipation and anxiety as Oloisudori arrived.

195. "I am also told, you, being his favourite daughter was always *fed in bed with a silver spoon*." (p 228). Olarinkoi's mother implies that Resian had an affluent or privileged background.

196. "That was *music in Resian's ears!*" (p 233). That was pleasant news to Resian.

197. "Had she dropped from a frying pan into the fire?" (p 219). Resian was wondering if her situation had moved from bad to worse-she had escaped from Oloisudori only to land in the hands of beastly Olarinkoi.

198. "Little did he know that Oloisudori's strange demand was made *on the spur of the moment*." (p 112). Oloisudori did not plan to make the demand to marry Resian-it was sudden.

199. "Then *all hell broke loose!*" (p 116). The situation became uncontrollable and violent as women poured into the homestead in their hundreds.

6.6 Hyperbole

Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics defines hyperbole as "an exaggerated description intended to elicit alienation, re-evaluation, or any kind of emotional reaction" Bussmann(1996:524)[20]. The exaggeration can be positive or negative, and is intended to create rhetorical effect. In other words, use of hyperbole in writing is aimed at increasing impact or attracting attention of the reader.

200. "...men are forced to book unborn baby girls, and then they still have to wait for thirteen to fourteen years to mature?" (p 128). This is meant to amplify the scramble for girls in Nasila necessitated by polygamy and patriarchy.

201. "Must you teach other people's children when your own sisters have been devoured by hyenas?" (p 156). Ole Kaelo intends to magnify the harm caused by the vagabonds who accosted the girls so as to incite Parmuat into immediate and urgent action.

202. "You will be the happiest lady in the whole of East Africa!" (p 203). Oloisudori promises Resian the best life ever.

203. "So it is you who chewed my son's hands to near amputation?" (p 227). This exaggeration increases the impact on the extent of damage caused by Resian biting Olarinkoi's finger-it was colossal.

204. "The mosquitoes must have sucked your veins dry!" (p 231). The magnitude of the mosquito bites and their effect on Resian is being magnified by Nabaru in this exaggeration.

205. "The concoction burned a trail of fire down to her stomach...." (247). The feeling of discomfort caused by the reaction of the medicine Resian has taken is exaggerated.

206. "There were seas of tawny woolly animals flowing and rippling around...." (p 258). This exaggeration amplifies large flocks of sheep at Minik's ranch.

6.7 Proverbs

Miruka (1994:47)[21] defines a proverb as "a brief statement full of hidden meaning, accepted and used by a community as an expression of truth or wisdom." Proverbs are relatively fixed. As a figure of speech, proverbs are not only intended to ornament a writer's expression, but they are also meant to teach a didactic role. Their main role is to teach wisdom and sagacity. Ole Kaelo uses a number of proverbs to add spice to the novel.

207. "...the man with the meat was also the same man with the knife." (p 25). Ole Kaelo uses this proverb to express the fact that for him to get the contracts, he had to work with Oloisudori, his being corrupt notwithstanding.

208. "...when a rat begins to smell, it returns to its mother's home." (p 52). Ole Kaelo has been away from home. He is part and parcel of Maa. Being old, he has returned home, to Maa culture where he belongs.

209. "To hide a boil that is under the armpit is unwise, for sooner or later it will burst and emit a foul smell." (p 78). According to *Yeiyobotorr*, the condition of the girls, that of being *Intoiyenemengala*, is dangerous and savage, and should therefore be checked.

210. "But now the chicken had come home to roost, Ole Kaelo lamented ruefully." (p 110). He was in business with the unscrupulous Oloisudori. The bad deeds have now come back to haunt Oloisudori.

211. "The Maa people say home is never far for one who is still alive." (p 211). Nabaru uses this proverb to encourage Resian to escape to the ranch for her safety and to realise her dream. She may still get home in future.

212. "Even the hyena's greed spared its young ones." (p 231). Resian uses this proverb in reference to her mother. Her mother had sold her out by being silent when her father, out of greed, planned to marry her off to Oloisudori.

VII. CONCLUSION

The main aim of the study was to analyse the linguistic features used in Ole Kaelo's novel, *Blossoms of the Savannah*. From the analysis, it is evident that Ole Kaelo has employed a number of linguistic resources to not only attract the attention of the reader, but also to effectively convey the intended message. These features are broadly grouped into phonological, graphological, lexical, grammatical and semantic levels. But *Blossoms of the Savannah* being a novel, a full text, graphological and phonological features are not as developed. However, lexical, grammatical and semantic features have been extensively used to communicate the intended message.

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Tom Mboya Otieno. "A Linguistic Analysis of Henry Ole Kulet's novel, Blossoms of the Savannah." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 25(11), 2020, pp. 16-28.