

Research Article

An Analysis of Ngwaba's "Angels at Work" as Literature

Mazono Manassé¹ and Abita Elvira²

^{1&2}MA Literature Students, Department of Letters and English Civilization, University of Kinshasa, DRC.

Corresponding Author Email: lightmambundu@gmail.com

Received: October 04, 2022

Accepted: October 19, 2022

Published: October 26, 2022

Abstract: Ngwaba's "Angels at Work" is a poem full of important messages that the poet addresses to his readers. It constitutes an awaken bell to all people living in this physical world because it deals with life after death. As everyone will die one day, the poem messages concerns everybody. This is what the authors of this article have discovered after analyzing the play.

Keywords: Literature, literary analysis, angels, poetry.

Introduction

This article is entitled: "An Analysis of Ngwaba's "Angels at Work" as Literature". It is as its title suggests, an analysis of Ferdinand Ngwaba's poem entitled 'Angels at Work' as a piece of literature. The analysis is focused on the title of the poem, the main problem, characters, settings, themes, literary devices used in the poem, the writer's intention and our appreciation of the poem as a good or bad literary work.

The choice of this poem, "Angels at Work" has not been done at random. There are so many reasons which have motivated us to analyze this poem. First, it is because we are very interested in poetry that is why we have preferred to deal with poetry rather than prose or drama. Second, the title of this poem itself-"Angels at Work"- has captured our attention. As soon as we read the title of the poem we wanted to know what kind of work Angels are doing and for what purpose are they doing the work. How and where did the poet see those angels-spiritual beings-who are supposed to be invisible in human eyes? The third reason which urges us to read this poem was that the author of this poem is our professor of poetry and an author of so many poems published in different anthologies' in the USA.

Our assumption is that, as a great poet and professor of poetry, Ngwaba's poem should contain a useful message that he addresses to the readers or the hearers of this poem.

In analyzing this poem our objectives are: to read, understand, interpret and explain to our readers the meaning of this poem, the intention and the message the author wants to transmit to us.

To decode the message hidden in this poem, we have resorted to a number of literary theories and approaches. Among which we have the autotelic theory. This theory as led us to the work-based orientation and to the formalistic approach. Here we, first, considered the poem as a self-contained. We have also used the writer-based orientation. This orientation urges us to use the psychological approach which helped us to learn something on the author's belief and religious faith. The reader-based orientation has been helpful to us as we have also brought our personal experience to understand the work. In this point it is worth to mention that the pragmatic approach was of great use. To complete our eclecticism use of literary approaches, we made recourse to discourse

comprehension approach where we considered this poem as a text, discourse and literature at the same time.

We have divided this into four different sections. The first deals with the formal organization of the poem; the second presents the semantic organization. The general appreciation of the poet's control of the discourse is treated in the third section; and our personal appreciation of this poem, "**Angels at Work**", is discussed in the last section.

Section One: Formal Organization of the Work

Under this heading we will deal with such points as the glossary, line, rhyme, stanza, formal structure and the different sense devices the poet uses in this attractive poem.

I. 1. Glossary Box

Before tackling the analysis of the poem, "Angels at Work", we think that it is better to help our readers be acquainted with some terms and expressions used by the poet in this poem. In fact, in this poem the poet uses such terms as:

- ✓ Angel(s): a spiritual being believed to act as an attendant, agent, or messenger of God, conventionally represented in human form with wings and a long robe.
- ✓ To dream: to experience dreams during a sleep.
- ✓ Dream: a series of thoughts, images and sensation occurring in a person's mind during a sleep.
- ✓ Work: activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result.
- ✓ Banquet all: an elaborated and formal meal for many people.
- ✓ Hall: a passage in a building with rooms down either side: synonym corridor or a space or passage inside the entrance or from door of building.
- ✓ King: the male ruler of an independent state that has a royal family.
- ✓ To knit: make (a garment, blanket, etc.) by interlocking loops of wool or other yarn with knitting needles or a machine.
- ✓ Gold: a yellow precious metal used for making coins, jewelry, beautiful objects, etc.
- ✓ Tear: to be in tears: to be crying (for pain or pity).
- ✓ To swear: to use rude or offensive language, usually because you are angry.
- ✓ Threads: a long, thin strand of cotton, nylon, or other fibers used in sewing or weaving.
- ✓ To undo: to open something that is fastened, tied or wrapped.
- ✓ To give up: to stop trying to do something.
- ✓ Fight: action of fighting.
- ✓ To fight: to take part in a war or battle against an enemy. To struggle physically with somebody.
- ✓ World: earth, with all its countries, people and natural features.

I.2. Lines and Rhyme

Ngwaba's "Angels at Work" is a 15-lines poem. Each of these lines begins with a capital letter. This is a way to show the force with which the speaker speaks. These verses are free verses to show the spontaneity to which the poet tells his dream and the truth in the speaker's speech as he is not looking for words to polish his discourse. The free verse here also portrays the speaker's freedom of speech: he is not under pressure or regulations to tell his dream. This freedom of speech in poetry is part of the major characteristics of the modern literature. Thus, the work belongs to the modern trend. Therefore, this poem is not rhymed.

I.3. Stanza

"Angels at Work" has 3 stanzas. The first stanza is a quintet; the second stanza is an octave and the last stanza is a couplet.

I.4. Formal Structure

The poem uses such verbs as dreamt, saw, knit, undo, swear, give up, join, asked. Most of these verbs are conjugated in simple past tense to show that the speaker is no longer dreaming when he

tells the story of his dream. The time and act of dreaming have passed. He is now in a normal state with all his senses in normal positions: with his reason working normally. He does not think but he tells what he actually saw in a dream.

Nouns used in the poem are angels, work, table, king, banquet, hall, gold, tears, threats, prince, peace, fight and names. We have also noticed the presence of two gerunds: undoing and knitting, repeated twice each to show insistence.

The speaker uses such prepositions as at, in, for, and to. The adverbs and adverbials used are around, in the king's banquet hall, in the prince of peace banquet hall, around a table.

Four punctuation marks are used in the poem to convey meanings: full stop, semi colon, and comma. The poet has used apostrophe twice. Periods are used four times. Colons are used twice. In total the poet has expressed his thoughts through 78 words. Four nouns are used in plural: names, threads, angels and tears. Only two pronouns are used in the poem: I and they.

I.5. Sense Devices in Use

To make his plot interesting and rich, the author has used a large number of sense devices as repetition, ambiguity, variation, kenning, symbols, metonymy, ellipsis, assonance, euphony, allegory, allusion, connotation, euphemism, hyperbole and metaphor.

Repetition is found in the two first verses of the first and second stanzas. In fact, in all the text, the word 'angels' is repeated 6 times and the expression "at work" is reviewed 4 times. By repeating the word Angels 6 times, the speaker insists that what he did see in his dream were actual angels, not human beings like you and I-he did see angels! And if the expression 'at work' comes 4 times, it is to focus that these angels that the speaker saw were not doing useless things, they were not joking but they were 'Working'- they were at work! This shows the serious of the dream and the most important part of the meaning of the poem that is summarized in the title of the poem itself.

In the poem the ambiguity is discovered by the sense that the speaker does not say exactly where he did see 'angels working'. We wondered whether all these angels were in the 'king's' banquet hall or in the 'prince of peace's' banquet hall. Is the King and the prince of peace the same person or not (3 and 8 lines). Another ambiguity comes by the fact that the speaker mentions two groups of angels around "a" table but he does not explain clearly the position of those groups who are around one table. Where they face to face or side by side? Here lies the ambiguity. But let us carry on with our analysis things may become clearer later on.

The speaker uses variation to clarify his ambiguity. In fact, by using the terms 'king' and 'prince', we are sure that, the author uses variation because as a Christian, the speaker, who refers to angels, knows that in one hand the Bible refers to God as a King and to Jesus as a prince of peace. But in the other hand the same Bible sees Jesus as the King and Prince of peace. To clarify this mystery of Jesus-God, which has brought us to discover the variation the poet has used, let us learn what other critics say about Jesus and God. From Professor Dr. Zannuis, a protestant at the theological University of Utrecht, what follows: "*In this article, I will argue that 'King' is an indispensable metaphor in contemporary Christian God-talk. A key metaphor is a metaphor with many implications; it can be used as a model which illuminates our understanding of God and guides our Christian life*" (God our king www.Scielo.org.za). From this professor we learn that God is the King.

In the other hand when we refer to the Book of Isaiah 9:6 in the Bible we hear what follows: "*For us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace*". From this quotation which announces the birth of Jesus Christ, Jesus is presented both as a King-God-and as a Prince of peace-the son of God. To carry on, Philip Wiyaya explains why Jesus is called the prince of peace

that Jesus Christ was the only reason we could truly live peacefully with God. He carries on sustaining that “Jesus is called the prince of peace because he restores every broken relationship, provides a well-ordered and balanced life, and offers the assurance of eternal life (Jesus is ‘Prince of Peace’-The meaning of his name www.christianity.com). To summarize our explanation of the mystery Jesus-God let us learn what Jesus himself says about his relation with God in John 10:30, we read that “I and the father [God] are one”.

So, by using the variation in this poem, the speaker who is probably the poet himself wants to focus that God that he calls King, and Jesus, that he refers to as the Prince of peace, are just the same person. What a very deep theology the poet teaches in this poem! Now we may understand that there was only one banquet hall: belonging to ‘Jesus-God’.

The metaphor is clearly viewed by the fact that the author calls God ‘the King’. This is seen in the third line. Another (kind of) metaphor, that we call kenning, is observed when the speaker calls Jesus the ‘prince of peace’ in line 8. By using this kenning, the speaker wants to recall that he who believes in Jesus is at Peace! This is what John 8:32 states in these terms: “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32 then you will know the truth, and... www.biblehub.com). The quotation tells that he who knows the truth will be free, at peace. Here the truth refers to Jesus who claims that he is the way, life and the truth (John 14:6). This is a metaphor.

The poet uses such symbols as threads to mean names of people who give up the fight (line 11). The symbols like table, Gold and banquet hall represent the heaven situation, the paradise, where the Holy Spirits live (Line 2, 3 and 9). These symbols simply represent the heaven, where Angels live, i.e. in a peaceful place. They simply show that in his dream the speaker was brought into heaven, where Angels live, in a peaceful place.

Metonymy is found in the eleventh, twelfth and the fifteenth lines. In fact, the word “names” here refers to people human beings, men who have given up the fight. Here the metonymy consists of using the possessed thing (name) in the place of the possessor (men) as a name cannot fight or give up a fight but human beings do.

We also find ellipsis in the fact that the author omits some words in his verses; for example in the two last verses, “Then asked about the tears”. Normally the verse would be ‘Then when I asked (them) about the tears’. Here again the idea of the verse is not complete while we find a period at the end of the verse. Normally, it should be a comma or a semi colon (instead of a period) to meet the meaning of the last verse. “They gave up the fight”. This ellipsis proves how the author was discouraged to continue his story of the dream: he was sorry to know that some names are clean in heaven when the man does no longer obey the Lord!

The assonance is heard in the second and seventh lines with the repetition of a vowel sound /æ/ in the beginning of each phrase.

We also encounter euphony in the fourth verse due to the repetition of the vowel sounds /æ/ and /I / in the verse.

The poet also uses allegory in the phrase “the king’s banquet hall” and “the prince of peace’s banquet all”. Thus, here the speaker struggles to explain the royal court of the almighty God! It is not easy to describe spiritual things mostly divine things. To succeed in this, one should use allegory. Otherwise, people will not understand him/her. The speaker makes allusion to such biblical and historical spirits as Angels, God, Jesus to show the serious of the message of the dream. The use of such terms a ‘fight’ in the poem is connoted, mostly in the expression “to give up the fight”. Fight here means “devotion”. Thus, to give up the fight here means to abandon, to neglect the religious or divine devotion.

The exaggeration in the description of the heaven or just the hyperbole is found in the way the poet says that Angels were knitting with gold tools (Line 4). The poem simply states that, “Angels at work knitting in gold”. Gold here simply gives the idea of beautiful, happy, joy! So, Angels who were knitting in gold were happy!

The speaker also uses inversion. This inversion is found in the 9th line where the speaker says, “in gold knitting” instead of “knitting in gold” as he said it in the fourth line. This is just a way to insist that a group of Angels were happy! Now let us learn other important things in the semantic organization of the poem.

II. Semantic Organization

II.1. Paraphrased Version of the Poem

Divine Spirits in Duty

I had a dream and I saw Divine Spirits
At duty around one table in God’s Kingdom
Divine spirits in duty, were writing names with gold tools
Divine spirits in tears were cleaning names.

I had a dream and I saw Divine spirits
At duty around one table in Jesus’s Kingdom
Divine spirits, were writing names with gold tools:
They were writing names of people who kept
Their divine devotion; Divine spirits in tears
Were cleaning names of people who abandoned
Their Divine devotion in order to join the world prestige

Then when I asked about the divine spirits who were in cry
They answered that they abandoned their Divine devotion.

II.2. Scenario

The topic of the poem understudy is “Angels at Work”. It tells the story of a speaker who relate or recount what he saw in a dream he got from his slumber. The speaker here is a-I-speaker. He can be considered as a friend who relates his dream to another friend; or a believer who needs interpretation of his dream from a pastor or members of his religious belief; or a member of the family who tells his dream to other members of the family. This speaker here might also be the poet himself who addresses to the public audience-readers and hearers. We find also other speakers in the dream: angels who answer the question of the dreamer as in the fifteenth line.

Here we find a very close relationship between the speaker and the addressee(s). This relation is a relation of confidence, trust and faith; even a family relationship, religious relationship and or friendship. We believe this because a dream is not normally told to anyone at random. It should be told to a person who may help you the dreamer to explain to you the meaning of your dream. It can also be told to someone who is concerned by the dream in some way or another or simply to a person who can keep secret. Specialists in dream study state that the most important thing after dreaming is actually the people you tell it to. Gbenga (2019), a specialist in dream who refers to the dream of Joseph in Genesis 37:5, conquers and argues that “*telling your dream to the wrong people can cost you the life of the dream and sometimes your own life*” (Gbenga Adebamba 2019: if you want to kill a big dream, tell it to small minded people in www.guardian.ng). What precedes simply fosters the idea that the speaker addresses his dream to confident people.

The network that ties the speaker to the hearer is the one of family, the church or just the humanity. But the network which ties the speaker to angels (as seen in line 15) is the one of God’s creatures or servants-mostly in case the speaker is a pastor.

As to the setting, the speaker is telling his dream after he has got up from his slumber. It might be at home, in the church or just in a quiet place. But the scenario of the dream itself takes place in heaven-in the king's banquet hall. This means that in his dream the speaker was carried or finds himself in heaven in the paradise where God lives as we can read it in the following terms: "*I dreamt and saw angels/at work around a table/In the king's banquet hall/(...)In the Prince of peace's banquet hall*" (lines 1,2,3, and 8). To settle the matter, Jesus gives precision that angels make their home in heaven. We are told that: "*For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven*" (Mark 12:25). This proves that the message the poet transmit to his audience comes from a serious and peaceful place: from heaven where the Almighty God lives.

To deliver his message freely, the poet prefers to use the English language as the code. English is now the lingua-franca of the world to reach a large number of people we should recourse to English. In fact, here the poet has considered his dream as a prophecy. Manangama (2020) sustains that "a poet is a prophet". Other philosophers explain clearly that "*There is a saying that a poet is a prophet, and this saying has great significance and hidden meaning. There is no doubt that although poetry is not necessarily prophecy, prophecy is born in poetry: if one where to say that poetry is a body that is adopted by the spirit of prophecy, it would not be wrong*" (The poet and the prophet www.wahiddin.net). Thus, the poet has behaved like a prophet to deliver his message to the world.

The message of the poem is clear that the speaker dreamt and saw two groups of angels working in heaven. One group was recording, happily, the names of elected people for the eternal life while the other group of angels was in tears, unhappy to remove the names of people who abandoned their faith to God.

The purpose of this poem is to inform believers, mostly Christians that it is not sufficient to claim that as they are Christians, baptized, they are already saved. For when they believe in God, all the angels in the heaven are happy but when they reject their faith angels become sad as they no longer please to God. Thus, their names should be rubbed out from the book of life. This is what Jesus said to his apostles in these terms: "*if you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown into the fire and burned*" (John 15:6). In Matthew 3:9-10 Jesus insists that it is not sufficient to claim that we are saved as we are children of Abraham but we should resist to temptation, keep our faith and produce good fruits otherwise, as the axe of God's judgment is poised, we'll be copped down and thrown into the fire. We find this truth in the following point of view in the poem when the speaker says, "*angels in tears undoing threads/for names given up to join the fight*". The quotation reveals that according to Christianity, a friend of the world prestige is an enemy of God as we read in James 4:4 where a question is asked to Christians in these terms: "*you adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*"(Therefore, whoever chooses to be a friend of the world in www.biblehub.com). The quotation reveals that although a name is written, it can also be removed; and a friend of the world prestige is the enemy of God.

As to the tone used in the poem, the speaker uses three different tones: *serious, narrative and sad*. The serious tone is found in the first stanza where the speaker introduces his dream. This is justified by the strict respect of number of words in each verse. In each verse the speaker uses only five words, except in the 4th line where he adds one word to show and express his sadness of the tears he saw in the faces of angels. We find the narrative tone in the second stanza where the speaker explains and tells exactly what he saw in his dream. You can notice this narrative tone by the number of lines (8) in the stanza and lack of the exact number of words used in each verse. We can find verses with four, five, six and seven words in the same stanza. While in the other two stanzas we can find just 5 words per verse. So, the variation of number of verses and words proves that the speaker is narrating a story: he explains what he did see in the dream.

Sadness of the poet is clearly expressed in the third stanza which has but two lines with a strict number of words: 5 words only! As you can guess, here the poet shows his deception, discouragement, his sadness when he realizes that the tears of angels were due to the fact that those angels were asked to remove the names of some persons (those who did not obey to God's words) from the book of eternal memory.

This reveals that God and his holy spirits are not happy to see sinners' death or sufferings as said in Ezekiel 18:23, 32, "*I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth (...). I have no pleasure in the death of wicked...*" (God has no pleasure in the sinners' death www.gospeltruth.net). The poem finally reveals that as a good Christian the poet cannot accept that some people be prevented from eternal life. This is what the only two lines of the last stanza express in these terms:

"Then asked about the tears.

They gave up the fight". The shortage of verses in this stanza shows deception, indignation. This is proved by the fact that the poet did not finish the idea of the first verse of the stanza, yet he puts a full stop.

II.3. Subject Matter

The subject matter of the poem angels at work is "**God's Kingdom**". The speaker tells the different activities and attitude angels do and have in heaven. Angels are spirits God uses to reward the people who keep his devotion and or to punish those who do not keep going on doing his will. Angels are happy when they write names of people in the book of eternal life, but they are sad, unhappy to remove some names from this book. This subject matter can easily be understood through the analysis of the first and last stanza:

*I dreamt and saw angels
At work around a table,
In the king's banquet hall:
Angels at work knitting in gold,
Angels in tears, undoing threads./
Then asked about the tears.
They gave up the fight.*

II.4. The Main Problem

In this poem the main problem is that in a dream the speaker sees two groups of angels at work in heaven: one group is happy and the other is unhappy- "in tears" (Line 5). And the speaker's problem was to know why was a group (not one angel but a group) of angels crying in heaven, the most peaceful place.

The problem was resolved when the speaker asked the question and received the answer (surely from the group of angels who were happy or an interpreter who probably was beside him) that these angels were unhappy because they were asked to remove some names of persons from God's book of life. These are names of people who did not keep their faith in God but joined the pleasure of the world. We have this idea from the following verses:

*"Angels in tears, undoing threads:
for names given up:
to join the world around"* (11th, 12th and 13th lines).

II.5. The Meaning of the Poem

This poem means a large number of things for a believer especially for a Christian. First, it proves that the poet attaches great attention to his dreams. He believes that a dream is a message that is transmitted to people. Thus, when one has got a dream he should do his best to look for its meaning or to inform other people, if the latter are concerned in some ways or others by the message of the dream. A dream is not something to neglect. From the Bible we encounter a great many stories in

which God talks to his people through dreams. This is the case of Joseph (the spouse of Mary) in Matthew chapters one and two; and in many other places. The title of the poem itself, “Angels at Work” shows that in the heaven angels do not cross their hands in looking at each other but they have got different works- given by God. So, in heaven spiritual beings, including God himself, work: they are not lazy! From John 5:17 we hear Jesus saying that “*my father [who is in heaven] is working until now, and I too am working.*” This means that everyone in the heaven works.

The poem tells also that God is the King of the heaven and Jesus-his son-is the prince. Here again the poem openly express that everything God has belongs to Jesus either. Jesus and God-the King-is just the **Same Person**. The poet expresses this through the following lines: “*I dreamt and saw Angels/at work around a table,/In the King’s banquet hall:// I dreamt and saw angels/at work around a table,/in the prince of peace’s banquet hall.*” (First and second stanzas). Here the banquet hall belongs either to God or to Jesus. By writing this as a Christian, the poet refers to John 17:10 where Jesus addresses to God in his prayer that: “*All I have is yours, and all you have is mine.*”

The poem greatly says that if you want to get into eternal life believe in God. And if you believe in God, keep on believing, and don’t give up! Otherwise your name will be rubbed out from the book of life! Your yes, should remain “yes”. Jesus explains this when he says, “*all you need to say is simply ‘yes’ or ‘no’; anything more than this is from the evil one*” (Matthew 5:37).

II.6. Themes

II.1. The Central Theme

The central theme in this poem is “**The work of angels**”. In the poem the poet insists on the words ‘*angels*’ and ‘*work*’. The two words –angels and work- are equally predominant in the poem. In total the poem has 78 words; when combining with the three words which make the title of the poem, the poem covers, thus, a total of 81 words. From this total the word angels is repeated 7 times which represents almost 7%. And the word work is repeated 5 times and replaces in some other verses by the activities as “undoing threads”, “Knitting in gold”. So, when we consider these activities as the act of working, the word “work” is therefore used 7 times as the word **angels**. Remember that for a Christian, number seven means completeness.

Thus, in this poem the poet insists on the work or the activities of Angels. Alan Bonifay (1998) ranges the activities or work of angels into five areas. We learn that:

In studying the mission and the activities of angels we must keep in mind the dispensation or age in which a particular work was or is performed. Some activities that angels performed they no longer perform because the circumstances have changed, or the law for God’s people has changed, or God’s agents are no longer performing miraculous works. However, in a general study of their work it appears evident from God’s work that they worked or do work in about five areas:

- 1) *Miraculous protection of Israel and /or specific individuals in Israel.*
- 2) *Spiritual protection of God’s people now performed in the spiritual world.*
- 3) *Praise and worship of God*
- 4) *The miraculous revelation of God’s will*
- 5) *The execution of God’s judgments*

From this quotation we realize that the angels activities the poet saw in his dream falls in the 5th and second areas as they were to record (keep) names in gold-this is a way of protecting; and removing some names—as the execution of God’s judgments or decisions.

2. Secondary Themes

The poem embodies such secondary themes as God, Jesus, king, prince, abandon, eternal life, perseverance, peace, sadness, dream, work, angels, Jesus-God and Trinity.

The poem deals with God by the fact that God is known as the creator of angels and king of the heaven. In the poem we find this sub-theme in the third line where the poet states that he saw angels “in the King’s banquet hall”. The word “King” in this poem is written with a capital letter which means that the poet refers to the “Almighty God- the King of kings” (Dave Jenkins, 2020).

The kenning used by the poet in the 8th line represents Jesus as the Prince of Peace. The way the poet treats God and Jesus in his poem reveals that he is among Christians who believe that Jesus is the almighty God, the creator of everything. Of course this belief in Jesus as God the creator is a controversial reality which divides Christians having shakable knowledge of the Bible. But, in fact, a large number of lines of the Bible prove this equality of Jesus and God. John 5:18, for example, explains the causes of Jesus death that: “*therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His father, making Himself equal with God.*” We may also read this Divinity of Jesus in Philippians 2:5-6; John 1:1-2; John 5:23, John 14: 8-11, John 17:5; Colossians 2:9; John 10:30-35, and John 14:1 which states simply that “*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me*”.

From this unity of Jesus and God, the poet brings us to another heavy Christian notion called “Trinity” which may be simply explained as the differential unity of three in one. In the poem “Angels at Work” this notion of trinity may be seen through the number of stanzas the poet has used- 3 stanzas. For a Christian number 3 means a large number of realities but the most known is “*God is three in One*”. This is what Hope Bolinger (2019) explains in these words, “*of course, we can’t look at the number three without looking at the Trinity: God is Three in One: the father (1 Corinthians 8:6), the son (Colossians 2:9), and the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17)*” (The number 3 in the Bible- Its meaning and significance www.crosswalk.com). This Christian theologian critic believes that we cannot look at number “3” without thinking of trinity. So, with this idea in mind, we believe that the poet used only three stanzas in his poem to mean trinity because we cannot look at number three without making a link to the trinity. Thus, the poem teaches trinity!

The poem praises the virtues as perseverance, courage but it condemns the faults, failings or defects as discouragement, and abandoning of God devotion. We can find this in the two last lines of the poem which read that: “*Then asked about the tears./They gave up the fight.*” This implies that people who reject their faith to God make angels sad; while those who carry on fighting rejoice angels as we read it in the 9th and 10th lines: “*Angels at work, in gold knitting: names that swore to fight*”. This courage goes together with perseverance. The latter is a quality that anyone who wants to succeed should possess. Brian Dodo (2016) for example discovers 26 benefits that perseverance brings to people as pastors, watches and business leaders.

II.7. Feelings Aroused in the Poem

There are five main feelings that the poem arouses to the reader: the feeling of happiness, peace, pity, sadness and deception. The reader feels pity for the people whose names were already written in the book of life but now angels are ordered to clean those names. If one doesn’t believe in God his name will be rubbed out from the book of life. And once the name of a person is not found in the book of life, as Christians believe it, the person’s destination is straight to hell together with wrong doers-in a place of eternal sufferings. The Bible states that: “*But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death*” (Revelation 21:8).

The poem makes the reader sad when the speaker tells that “*he saw angels in tears*” lines 5 and 11) while these spiritual beings are supposed to enjoy their time in front their Creator- God-. Megan Bailey (not dated) believes that “*the angels celebrate God’s glory in not just heaven, but throughout the entire world[as God is everywhere]*”. The reader feels happy and is in peace when he reads that the speaker “*saw angels/ at work a table/in the King’s banquet hall(...) knitting in gold, in the prince*

of peace's banquet hall" (Lines 3,4,8,9). Here the reader may have the impression that angels were in feast.

The reader is a bit deceived by hearing that the angels were crying because some human beings "*gave up the fight*" (line 15).

II.8. Effect Created by the Poem

The poem urges the reader to believe and obey to God's requirements; to avoid doing things which goes against God's will. It gives the reader courage to carry on fighting for eternal life. These effects are created by the lines 9 and 10 which tell that: "*Angels at work, in gold knitting: names that swore to fight*".

III. General Appreciation of the Poet's Control of Discourse

III. 1. Level of the Language

The poet has used a normal, a standard level of the language. His style is not complicated to understand. As it is a narrative poem, that is "a poem that tells a story" (Ni Wayan, 2014:15). We have discovered this in the poet's use of familiar words to make himself understood to the reader.

III. 2. Poetic and Rhetorical Consideration

The poem covers almost all characteristics of modern poetry: free verse, no rhymes, complexity of ideas and themes, freedom of speech and the like. It is concise with just 78 words. What is curious is that a short poem of just 15 lines embodies more than 15 figures of style. The poet brings his plot forwards by using a larger number of poetic devices (see point I.4). It is thanks to these poetic or rhetorical devices that we have understood this poem fully.

III. 3. Use of Punctuation Marks

- ✓ The normal use of the language said in the preceding lines was clearly justified by the marks the poet used. In fact, the poet has used 5 different punctuation marks to convey meanings.
- ✓ The period is for example used 4 times in lines 5, 13, 14, 15 to limit complete thoughts or ideas.
- ✓ The poet uses colon twice to explain and praise the activities of angels.
- ✓ The semicolon is used once to join two independent clauses to avoid confusion in the activities of these two groups of angels (lines 10).
- ✓ The poet has used comma twice to explain the kind of work angels were doing. We read that "Angels at work, knitting in gold." (line 4) and also to explain the tools with which the angels used to knit names of people who swore to fight (lines 9 and 10).
- ✓ Apostrophe is also used in the poem to show possessive cases: "the King's banquet hall" (Line 3) and "the Prince of peace's banquet hall" (Line 8). These possessive cases helped us to realize that the banquet hall that the poet saw belongs both to the king and to the prince of peace.

III. 4. Use of Paralanguage

The form of the poem itself has helped us to recognize the use of number 3 in Christianity: trinity, completeness. The information focus has been revealed through the repetitive use of the words *angels* and *work*. The use of variation has helped the poet to express his thought and meaning freely and fully. The scenario itself has revealed a lot of hidden mysteries.

III. 5. Standard of Textuality

This poem is a text. All standards of textuality are respected in this poem: there is cohesion in the use of part of speech. The text is coherent. This is what helped us to understand the message and the intention of the poet. The intention of the poet is clear. He wrote this poem to encourage people "not to give up the fight": they should carry on obeying and serving God; otherwise their names will be removed out from the eternal book. The poem is informative as the speaker informs people about what he saw in his dream. The situationality of the poem is well built by the use of the scenario. The poem is accepted as it deals with the telling of dreams. No one can raise his fingers stating that he

has never dreamt. This poem is in a close relationship with a lot of Biblical stories. This is what justifies the Intertextuality of the text. Some of these numerous interrelated texts have been quoted in the body of this analysis.

IV. Personal Appreciation of the Poem

IV.1. Enjoyment of the Poem

Personally, as Christians, we have enjoyed this poem very much. First, by its topic, that deals with Holy spiritual beings: angels. Second, the content of the poem has delighted us very much. In fact, the analysis of this poem has helped us to put the Bible always on our table. This has not only enables us to progress with our analysis but also and importantly to deepen our understanding of this Royal Charter.

Third, as Christians we consider a large number of dreams about angels as prophecy and we should treat them carefully. In the last book of the Bible mostly in its very last chapter we read that: “*I Jesus, have sent my angels to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright Morning star. The spirit and the bride say, ‘come!’ And let the one who hears say, ‘come!’*” (Revelation 22:16-17). All this book of revelation is a dream that John-the apostle of Jesus- got. Yet, Christians take this dream as the ‘*word*’ of God. This simply proves that talking about dreams and angels to a Christian is talking about serious matters, which can costs even life if the message is not well understood.

IV.2. Universality of the Poem

There is no need to remind our readers that this topic is universal. The universality of this poem is clearly justified by the fact that *it talks about dreams*. No one can tell us that in their country people do not dream or people do not tell their dreams to other people. So, it is proved white and black that this poem concerns everyone who hears or reads it: be he in whatever country of this human world.

IV.3. Craft and Artistry of the Poet

We are afraid to talk about the artistry of the poet to the extent that we consider his poem, his dream as a real message that he received in an actual dream. In the poem the speaker or the poet talks about angels and God while as a Christian the poet would not make reference to God if what he tells is not true or was not inspired by the Holy Spirit. This poem teaches really Divine things because it deals with God. Bible readers know that the second of the ten principles God gave to Moses states that: “*thou shall not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*” (Exodus 20:7 King James Version). So, for me, the poet, as a prophet, simply reports the message he received in a dream. I have taken it as a true message; but if it is a fictitious story, really, I would rank the poet among the elite poets I have ever known, as far as his literary artistry value is concerned.

As to the craft, we have been delighted to see how the poet has presented his dream poetically. He has used all poetic rules as concision, coherence and all the other standard of textuality. A short poem with a large number of figures of speech! And all these figures of speech are adapted to the message he wanted to convey to implied readers. His style has been simple and intelligible!

IV.4. Power to Raise Questions

The poem has been powerful to raise so many questions in our mind. Such as: What criteria or how did God divide the two groups of angels to make some of them happy and others sad? Did he impose to each of the angels his role or he simply let each one to choose his work (to knit or undo what is knitted)? Are those names that angels are manipulating names of livings or names of dead people? Suppose that it is the names of living people; and once the person repents, will they reknit his name in gold or it is cleaned forever? By using the present continuous tense as *knitting* and *undoing* threads, is the poet trying to tell us that it is the daily activity of the angels or it is just for the moment he saw them?

All these questions and so many others have created fresh point of view in our mind.

IV. 5. Renewing of the Spirit

Frankly speaking, this poem has renewed our faith to the notion of eternal life. It has reminded us that to be saved we have to fight. We are already warned that “*It is difficult, hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven*” (Matthew 19:23). We are all rich as God granted to each of us a special talent or special talents. Each one has to fight to use his talent in a right way for God’s Glory. I knew it but not in a scientific way like this! My spiritual (that is my scientific-religious) knowledge is now renewed.

IV. 6. Power to Stimulate Imagination

The poet has brought us to an imaginary paradise where we could see a table, a banquet hall and two different groups of angels working separately. We can even imagine the lines of tears flowing out from the eyes of some angels. The poem has brought our imagination to visualize the joy of angels knitting in gold: we could imagine seeing their teeth out for joy and laughter or smile.

IV. 7. Expansion to the World and Self Understanding

The poem has helped us to understand why some people have devoted all their lives to the service of God. Some have given their money, means, their intelligence, their strength; some others have gone further to expose their life-body-for God. Here we think of martyrs! They need to keep on serving God for fear of being removed from the book of life. Personally, the poem has enables me to discover in which way I may keep on fighting and be useful for God!

IV. 8. Value of the Poem over Years

This is a classic poem. We are sure that its value will last until people will stop dreaming and until the notions of angels will vanish. Once these notions of angels, dreams and work are still in force in the mind of people, the poem will be in use until the end of the world.

IV. 9. Recommendation to other People

We will consciously and willingly recommend the reading and analysis of this poem to anyone who needs something to read either for his entertainment or for other purposes. The poem teaches people to work, to fight for God sake! The poem focuses on the *work* and the *fight for eternal life-not give up the fight!* All over the world we hear people claiming that life is a fight; also that he who does not work does not eat. These kinds of things are treated in this poem. We may teach this poem to children to encourage them endure difficulties while they are working. My wish is to publish this analysis so that a large number of people could learn what the poet teaches in his poetry.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to read, understand, interpret and appreciate the poem, “**Angels at Work**”. To reach this goal we have used a lot of literary approaches, orientations and theories. For the sake of clarity and understanding of this composition, we have divided it into four different sections. We are sure that this analysis will help other researchers to make other deep studies in the literary field in general and in poetry in particular.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Angels/definition of angel by Oxford dictionary on www.lexico.com
2. Bonifay, A. 1998. The Mission and Activities and the Destiny of Angels. www.newtestamentchurch.org
3. Dodo, B. 2016. The Importance of Perseverance. www.garfortheducation.com

4. Finrey, P. 1855. God has No Pleasure in the Sinner's Death. www.gospeltruth.net
5. Gbenga, A. 2019. If You Want to Kill a Big Dream, Tell it to Small-Minded People. www.M.guardian.ng
6. Ikupasa. 2020. A Study of an African Novel (Unpublished seminar at graduate school) Unikin.
7. Jenkins, D. 2020. What does it means that God is the King of Glory? www.christianity.com
8. Muis, J. (nd): God Our King. www.scielo.org.za
9. Ngwaba, B.F. 2017. Why I Write Poetry: A Collection of Poems. Creative Arts Collection: Kinshasa, DRC.
10. Ni Wayan, S. 2014. Defining Poetry and Characteristics of Poetry. Poetry 1 (PDF).
11. Philip Wiyaya. 2019. What does it mean that Jesus is the Prince of Peace? Jesus is "the Prince of Peace": the Meaning of this Name www.christianity.com
12. The Holy Bible of Jerusalem
13. The Poet and the Prophet. www.wahiduddin.net
14. Therefore, whoever chooses to be a Friend of the World? www.biblehub.com

Citation: Mazono Manassé and Abita Elvira. 2022. An Analysis of Ngwaba's "Angels at Work" as Literature. *International Journal of Recent Innovations in Academic Research*, 6(10): 22-34.

Copyright: ©2022 Mazono Manassé and Abita Elvira. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.