

A LINGUISTIC STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF NIYI OSUNDARE'S *MY LORD, TELL ME WHERE TO KEEP YOUR BRIBE*

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Abstract

This paper considers Osundare's exposition of corruption as the bane of the judiciary through his poem, *My Lord, Tell Me Where to keep your Bribe*, from the perspective of linguistic stylistics. The study draws its data from the contents of the poem while integrative method is used as the theoretical framework. The study discovers, among others, that the diction of the work is marked by simple vocabulary characterized by the registers of various disciplines used to build the thematic concerns of the piece, figurative expressions used to adorn and elevate the language of the poem as well as to deepen the understanding of same, and two borrowed expressions from the mother tongue of the bard. At the level of graphology, findings indicate that the question mark, the comma and the full stop are preponderantly omitted where necessary for a flow of thought of the poet. More so, capitalization and the inverted comma are used to draw the attention of the reader to some lexical units. The paper establishes that these linguistic devices are apt as they are succinctly used to lampoon, decry and satirize corruption perpetrated by the helmsmen of the judiciary – judges and lawyers. The article concludes that Osundare dexterously deploys the identified linguistic features to expose the ills in the judicial system.

Key Words: My Lord, Bribe, Judiciary, Corruption, Satire

Introduction

Justice, honesty, transparency and incorruptibility are part of the virtues and values that uphold a system. If these essentials are missing, the fall of a system is imminent and inevitable. Nigeria's socio-political, economic, educational structures, among others, have been wobbling due to the pandemic of corruption. Corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria's systems, hence the penury, underdevelopment, infrastructural decay etc. noticed in the nation.

It has been observed that the patriotic stance and commitment needed to handle matters relating to national interest is lacking in Nigeria's leadership, hence, the breakdown of law and order and stagnation noticeable in the country. Atiku Abubakar (GCON), the former Vice President of Nigeria (1999-2007) and presidential candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) has this to say about Nigerian judiciary concerning the 2023 general elections:

If the Supreme Court legitimizes illegality, including forgery, identity theft and perjury; if the Supreme Court, the highest court in the land, implies by its judgment that crime is good and could be rewarded, then Nigeria is lost and the country is doomed irrespective of who occupies the presidential seat. If the Supreme Court decides that the electoral umpire, INEC, can tell the public one thing and then do something else in order to reach a corruptly predetermined outcome, then there is really no hope for the country's democracy and electoral politics.

Not only the politicians, literary writers and the masses are disgusted with the corruption in the judiciary. Even the jurists are complaining helplessly over the moral bankruptcy in the judicial system. This is obvious through the heroic valedictory speech of a recently retired Supreme Court judge, Justice Musa Dattijo Muhammad, who, during his valedictory speech at the Supreme Court of Nigeria, Abuja, on 27th of October, 2023, said:

Public perceptions of the judiciary have over the years become witheringly scornful and monstrously critical. It has been in the public space that court officials and judges are easily bribed by litigants to obviate delays and or obtain favourable judgments ...What is it that qualifies any person to bear that exalted name 'Honourable Justice?' Is it not for him to administer justice without fear or favour? Unfortunately, it has been severely vilified, with the Apex Court so denigrated and called by a social commentator as a voter gaggle of useless, purchasable judicial bandits

To many, the judiciary is not adequately rising up to the occasion on democratization process in Nigeria. It is this unmet expectation on the part of the judiciary that informs Niyi' Osundare's satirization of the judicial system in his poem, *My Lord, Tell Me Where to Keep your Bribe*. As such, this study is set to x-ray the linguistic features Niyi Osundare has deployed to expose corruption particularly in the judiciary through the said poem.

Motivation for the Study

Niyi Osundare is a renowned and prolific poet; his works have attracted great scholarship from both linguistic and literary points of view. As a social critic, he has been viewed as the “people’s poet” (Na’Allah 2004: xx) who is “devoted to serve the African peasantry” (Alu 2007: 237). He is noted for lampooning injustices, inequalities, corruption and vociferating a fair and egalitarian society, hence, his works do not only enlighten the reader and society; they aim at transforming same (Anyokwu 2011:5; Olaleye 2015:52, Babatunde & Aremu 2018:430; Melvina 2023: 14-16). The researchers are aware of some studies on Osundare’s poetry collections. For instance, Jolayemi (2003) has examined Niyi Osundare as a master metaphorist from the angle of stylistics using *Village Voices* as the focal point. Olaleye’s (2016) stylistic study of Niyi Osundare’s *Not My Business* reveals the poet’s “dissatisfaction and displeasure with the brutal use of force by the

oppressive military junta and their cohorts in Nigeria” (p.132). Ogungbemi (2018) looks at “Metaphors as Discourse Strategies in Osundare’s Poetry” using *Random Blues* (2011) as the corpus. Babatunde and Aremu (2018) study impoliteness as strategies and cognition in Niyi Osundare’s *Return of Penkelemesi Era* – a poem in the anthology *Random Blues*. Also, Melvina (2023) studies *My Lord, Tell Me Where You (sic) Keep Your Bribe* from the perspective of sociological criticism.

Despite the numerous studies on the works of Osundare, the researchers observe that there is inadequate information on the linguistic stylistic analysis of *My Lord, Tell Me Where to Keep Your Bribe* which is capable of unravelling the linguistic features used by Osundare to expose the corruption in Nigeria’s judiciary. This is the gap the present study is set to fill.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The data for this study is culled from Niyi Osundare's *My Lord, Tell Me Where to keep your Bribe*. Random selection is used to select the features considered in this study. The theoretical framework used for analysis is integrated or eclectic method - a combination of methods and theories used for a study with different layers of language description. We find this method appropriate for this study in that the analysis encompasses a few levels of language description which a theory/tool may not be adequate for. We use systemic functional linguistics by Halliday to discuss the functions of some linguistic devices used by the poet. The School grammar is deployed to analyse some grammatical features in this study. Apart from that, Halliday’s field of discourse is germane to the lexical category used in the work. In the words of Alabi (2003: 226), “field of discourse of a text relates to the subject matter or type of activity in a text and the linguistic features which may be associated with it”. Elocution, a division of rhetoric, is found useful in studying the figurative expressions the poet employs to entrench the aesthetics of the work which make the reading of the poem a pleasant experience.

The Poem in Brief

Niyi Osundare's *My Lord, Tell Me Where to keep your Bribe* has ninety-two lines. The piece satirizes bribery and corruption in the judiciary; it condemns hypocrisy as well as express disappointment in the judicial officials. The poet persona asks rhetorically where to keep the judge's bribe throughout the poem. He suggests various places where the bribe can be kept. The poet pursues the themes of corruption, disappointment in and hypocrisy of judicial officials. The tone of the poet is unfriendly and abhorrent. The mood of the poet is that of ridicule and disgust towards corruption in the judicial system.

Data Presentation, Discussion and Findings

Diction in the Poem

Diction refers to the lexical category or vocabulary employed by a language user to pass across their message or ideas. In “*My Lord, Tell Me Where to Keep your Bribe*”, Osundare uses simple diction within the understanding of the average reader. This is obvious through everyday terms and expressions with which he builds the poem. Such words include “bribe (line 1), mansion (line 3), water tank (line 5), maidservants and manservants (line 18), common man (line 33), handsome rewards (line 68), streets (line 81), church, mosques (lines 83 & 84), everyday ... every night (line 89), soul” (line 90), among several others. The choice of the simple diction is to make the reader understand the message easily. Not only that, the poet also uses registers of some fields of human endeavour to craft the poem. Such registers are law, religion, building, trade and commerce, banking, geography, transport etc. Exemplified below are a few words or terms related to the fields from which the poet draws his lexical items.

Law: My Lord (line 1), chambers (line 2), crime (line 8), judges and ... lawyers (line 36), wig (line 37), interlocutory ... injunctions (line 46), criminals (line 47), Election Petition Tribunals (line 49), electoral (line

51), Bench and ... Bar (line 52), Temple of Justice (line 57), courtroom (line 63), gavel (line 66) etc.

Religion: conjure (line 11), rituals (line 41), masquerades (line 43), Sunday ... church (line 83), Friday... mosques (line 84).

Building: mansion (line 4), water tank (line 5), backyard (line 6), septic tank (line 7), attic (line 9), ceiling ... roof (line 10), bedroom (line 53), parlour closet (line 54), kitchen sink (line 55).

Trade and Commerce: a billion (line 13), sale ... highest bidder (line 45), shop (line 47), buyable (line 52), A million dollars ... A million euros (lines 53 - 54), naira (line 55), sold (line 69), labour (line 12) etc.

Banking: bank accounts (line 19), bank bosses (line 27)

Geography: valley ... mountains (line 22), land (line 40), goldmines (line 50), country (line 67).

Transport: potholes ... jeep (line 23),

Health: plague (line 35), stench (line 40), corpse (line 87), decomposition (line 90)

The register of law is utilized to develop the theme of corruption in the judiciary. For example, the poet inquires rhetorically in the opening lines of the poem:

My Lord
Please tell me where to keep your bribe
Do I drop it in your venerable chambers
Or carry the evil booty to your immaculate mansions
Shall I bury it in the capacious water tank
In your well laundered backyard (lines 1-6)

The register of building is used, among others, to show and state where “My Lord” should keep his ill-gotten wealth. The lines below are a few examples.

Or carry the heavy booty to your immaculate mansion
 Shall I bury it in the capacious water tank
 In your well laundered backyard
 Or will it breathe better in the sceptic tank
 Shall I haul it up the attic
 Between the ceiling and your lofty roof
 Or shall I conjure the walls to open up (lines 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,
 10, 11)

Many corrupt public functionaries have been investigated and discovered to have kept looted funds in mansions, water tanks, backyard, in the attic/roof; hence the poet asks whether "My Lord" would want him (the poet) to keep the bribe in such places as others have done.

The words associated with religion used by the poet are deployed to depict the theme of hypocrisy exhibited by judicial officials. After collecting bribes and perverted "Justice all week long" (line 85), “Come Sunday, they troop to the church - Friday, they mouth their mantra in pious mosques” (lines 83- 84). These corrupt judges and lawyers go to church and mosques on Sunday and on Friday respectively to display their religious affinity, commitment and loyalty. Unfortunately, their religious practices do not debar them from taking bribes which religion forbids. Through this compromised disposition, the poet pointedly portrays their hypocrisy.

The register of trade and commerce is employed by the poet to disclose the enormity of the bribe collected by “My Lord” and to depict the moral decadence in the judiciary.

Shall I give a billion to each of your paramours (line 13)
 A million dollars in their Lordship's bedroom
 A million Euros in the parlor closet
 Countless naira breathe in the kitchen sink (lines 53-55)

The bribe received by "My Lord" is so enormous that the poet asks whether he should give a billion to each of the judge's paramours. Not only that, the bribe of "My Lord" involves strongest foreign currencies (dollars and euros) in millions besides "countless naira" (line 53). More so, the judicial officials have condescended and suffered moral degradation so much so that they have become "buyable" items and pervert justice for the highest bidder. Note these lines: "Opulent criminals shop for pliant judges", hence, the poet cries out "All hail our buyable Bench and cunning Bar" (lines 47, 52). Words related to trade and commerce depict the depth of corruption in the judiciary. Register of banking also corroborates the volume of the bribe collected by "My Lord" and where it should be kept - in "over flowing bank accounts" owned by "anonymous maidservants and manservants" of My Lord (lines 17-19), yet these fellows "famish like ownerless dogs" (line 20). What a callous soul "My Lord" is!

Figurative Expressions in the Poem

Though decrying pandemic corruption in the judiciary, Osundare coats the diction of the poem with figurative expressions which help to deepen the understanding of the work. Some of the figures of speech used by the poet are discussed below.

Apostrophe

Apostrophe is the situation whereby a person, an object or a thing is addressed as if they are physically present. Osundare uses this device to unravel the corruption in the judiciary. Three cases of apostrophe are exemplified thus:

My Lord

Please tell me where to keep your bribe (lines 1-2)

My Lord

Tell me where to keep your bribe (lines 61-62)

My Most Honourable Lord

Just tell me where to keep your bribe (lines 91-92)

In the lines above, the poet eagerly and desperately asks the judge where his (Judge's) collected bribe should be kept. The Judge, though not within the view and reach of the poet, is addressed as though he is visibly present to hear the request of the poet. Hence, the imagined presence of the Judge helps the reader to appreciate the desperation of the poet to help save the bribe; it also aids the understanding of the message being passed across by the bard.

Rhetorical Question

Rhetorical question preponderates in the poem to further facilitate the understanding of the work. Rhetorical questions are used to state where the bribes are to be kept, the enormity of same and what the bribes are expended on. Each utility is demonstrated below.

Do I drop it [your bribe] in your venerable chambers
 Or carry the heavy booty to your immaculate mansion
 Shall I bury it in the capacious water tank
 In your well laundered backyard
 Or will it breathe better in the septic tank (lines 3 -7)
 Shall I haul it up the attic (line 9)
 Shall I haul it all to your village (line 21)

Chambers, mansion, water tank, backyard, septic tank, the attic and village are the places suggested by the poet to keep the bribe. Other places to keep the proceeds of the bribe are bedroom, parlor closet, kitchen sink. Rhetorical questions capturing the enormity of the bribe are the following:

Shall I give a billion to each of your paramours (line 13)
 Or shall I use the particulars
 Of your anonymous maidservants and manservants
 With their names on overflowing bank accounts (lines 17-19)
 Shall I haul it all to your village
 In the valley behind seven mountains (lines 21-22)
 A million dollars in their Lordship's bedroom
 A million euros in parlor closet
 Countless naira beneath the kitchen sink (lines 53-55).

Apart from keeping the funds in chambers, mansion, water tank, septic tank etc., the remaining is so massive that the poet asks whether the remnant can be given to each paramour of the Judge in billions, saved in the overflowing bank accounts of his maidservants and manservants, in his distant village, parlor closet and kitchen sink.

Osundare does not keep away from the reader what and where the corrupt Judge expends his dishonest wealth when he asks:

Shall I give a billion to each of your paramours
The black, the light, the Fanta-yellow
They will surely know how to keep the loot (lines 13-15)

The three lines above make it clear that the Judge spends his bribe on women of different complexion.

Satire

Satire is the bedrock of this poem by which Osundare decries, condemns and vociferates against corruption in Nigeria's judiciary. The poem is inundated with various shades of satiric expressions to lampoon judges and lawyers. Sarcastic expressions like: to bury money in the looter's capacious water tank, laundered backyard and septic tank, to deodorize the smelliest crime, or haul it up the attic between the ceiling and lofty roof or conjure the walls to open up and swallow it etc. do not only ridicule judges and lawyers but also expose their folly. So, it is sarcastic that one who loots money does not know where to keep it.

Irony

As a tool for sarcasm, Osundare uses irony to further project the gravity of corruption in the judiciary. The use of "My Lord (lines 1, 25, 29, 31, 61) and "My Most Honourable Lord (line 91) for a corrupt Judge is not only the exact opposite, it is also a caricature and ridicule of same.

Or shall I conjure the wall to open up

And swallow this sudden bounty from your honest labour
(lines 11-12)

“Your honest labour” in line twelve (12) is the exact opposite of what the poet means (your dishonest labour)

All hail our buyable Bench and conniving Bar (line 52).

The poet's summons to everybody to "hail our buyable Bench and Bar" is ironical. The expression vociferates their shame and indignity.

Other figures of speech the poet uses to develop and adorn the diction of the poem include the ones exemplified thus:

Personification

Or will it [money] breathe better in the sceptic tank (line 7)

Corruption stands, naked, in its insolent impunity (line 40)

As corruption usurps his gavel (line 66)

Where Impunity walks the streets (line 81)

Money is personified as having the ability to breathe in line seven (line 7) while corruption is portrayed as a human who can stand, usurp his gavel and walk about (lines 40, 66) respectively. Impunity (line 81) is attributed with the ability to walk. In these lines, personification helps to give vividness to corruption in the judicial system.

Metonymy

Behind the antiquated wig

And the slavish glove

The penguin gown and the obfuscating jargons (lines 37- 39)

All hail our buyable Bench and conniving Bar (line 52)

The items " wig, glove, penguin gown, Bench and Bar" are associated with judge and lawyers.

Hyperbole

Where potholes swallow up the hugest jeep (line 23)

It will take the fastest machine

Many, many days to count this booty; ... (lines 26-27)

Is a rot and riot whose stench is choking the land (line 40)
 The potholes on the way to the village of the judge are exaggerated to be able to swallow up the hugest jeep. The line depicts the deplorable conditions of the road while he is busy hoarding money in different places. The humongous bribe collected by the judge is so massive to the extent that it will take "many, many days to count ..." (lines 26 -27) Line forty (40) portrays the pervasive corruption in judiciary as a stench which does not only diffuse to everywhere in the land but is choking the entire nation. The use of hyperbole in the poem helps the reader to have a better understanding of the message Osundare is diffusing.

Enjambment

Enjambment is a situation whereby the idea expressed in a line of poetry extends to or continues in the next line. To Alabi (2003;225), it is "run on straddled lines ... the 'striding over' of a sentence from one line of poetry to the next." Osundare utilizes enjambment to add to the aesthetics of the poem. Examples in the poem are the following:

Or shall I conjure the walls to open up
 And swallow this sudden bounty from your honest labour
 (lines 11 -12)

Or shall I use the particulars
 Of your anonymous maidservants and manservants (lines 17-18)

The last hope of the common man
 Has become the last bastion of the criminally rich (lines 33-34)

Imagery/Symbolism

The poem is fraught with words and expressions that call up mental pictures in the reader. Examples of such are "antiquated wig/ the slavish glove/ the penguin gown/ obfuscating jargon/ rot and riot whose stench is choking the land/ termites of graft/ monsters of

mammon in garish gowns”. Also, symbolic expressions such as “they prey every day and prey every night” portray the ravenous tendency of the judiciary.

Oxymoron

In the poem, contrasting words are deliberately put side by side to give us a panoramic view of corruption by the jurists. Note the few instances below.

Has become the last bastion of the criminally rich (line 34)
 Won gb'ebi f' alare (meaning “they declare the innocent guilty
 - line 75)
 Won gb'are f' elebi (meaning “they pronounce the guilty
 innocent” - line 76)

Metaphor

Opulent criminal shop for pliant judges (line 47)
 Just one judgment sold to the richest bidder (line 69)
 The law, they say, is an ass (line 71)

Simile

While they famish like ownerless dogs (line 20)
 Where impunity walks the streets
 Like a large invincible Demon (lines 81-82)

Apart from registers of various disciplines and figurative expressions with which the poet builds the diction of *My Lord, Tell Me Where to keep your Bribe*, the poet borrows two pivotal expressions from his mother tongue - Yoruba - to lace the poem. The expressions are:

Won gb'ebi f' alare (they declare the innocent guilty)
 Won gb'are f' elebi (they pronounce the guilty innocent - lines
 75 & 76)

Interjecting the poem with these expressions further heightens the disgust the poet has for corruption in the judiciary. In addition, the expressions entrench the nativity and *Nigerianness* of the poet - he

interjects Yoruba units occasionally in his works to exert his identity while communicating in the global language - English.

From the above explanation on diction, it is evident that Osundare uses figurative expressions to enhance the aesthetical value of the poem despite the crucial message it treats. As such, Osundare's diction is simple, comprehensible to the average reader and makes the reading of the poem appealing to the reader.

Syntactic Analysis of the Poem

The salient syntactic features examined in this study are syntactic parallelism, noun, prepositional and adverbial phrases, adverbial as well as adjectival clauses, simple, interrogative and declarative sentences, active and passive voice, as well as the present and future tenses. Each feature is expatiated thus.

Syntactic Parallelism

Parallelism refers to the use of the same structural patterns repeatedly (Wales, 1989:335; Alagbe 2021:181). At the grammatical level, Osundare copiously repeats some structures in the poem under consideration. Below are a few instances.

Do I drop it in your venerable chambers (line 3)

Shall I bury it in the capacious water tank (line 5)

The two interrogative sentences above have the same syntactic structure. Other examples in the poem include the following:

SVO

S	V	O
It	will take	the fastest machine (line 26)
A terrible plague	bestrides	the land (line 35)
Corruption	Has	its handsome reward (line 68)

SVA

S	V	A
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Judges	doze	in the courtroom (line 63)
Crime	pays	in this country (line 67)

SVOC

S	V	O	C
They	declare	the innocent	guilty (line 75 - gloss)
They	pronounce	the guilty	innocent (line 76 -gloss)

Phrase

Different phrasal types found in English are noun phrase, verb phrase, adjectival phrase, prepositional phrase, adverbial phrase, gerundial phrase and participial phrase. Osundare prudently and aptly deploys phrases in the poem. A few cases are demonstrated as follows:

Noun Phrase

My Lord (lines 1, 25, 29, 31, 61)

Interlocutory and perpetual injunctions (line 46)

The temple of injustice (line 57)

My most honourable Lord (line 93)

"My Lord" comprises determiner (my) and noun (Lord) - the head of the noun phrase "My Lord". "Interlocutory and perpetual injunctions" is made up of a compound adjective ("interlocutory" with "perpetual" joined together by the conjunction "and"), the adjectives pre-modify "injunctions", the head of the phrase.

"The Temple of Justice" has three elements namely article "the" which is a pre-modifier for "temple", "temple" - the head of the phrase, and "of injustice" - a prepositional phrase functioning as an adjectival phrase

which is a post-modifier for the obligatory element” “temple” - the head of the phrase.

“My most honourable Lord” has three structural constituents - "my" (determiner), "most honourable" (superlative degree of the adjective "honour") which pre-modifies "Lord", the head of the noun phrase.

Among others, the noun phrase is used to identify specific individuals, items, things and concepts in the poem

Prepositional Phrase

In your well laundered backyard (line 6)

“In your well laundered backyard” has two major components preposition “in” and the noun phrase "your well laundered backyard". The noun phrase which is the second component has four elements namely determiner (your), adverb (well - that modifies the adjective "laundered"); the adjective "laundered" modifies the noun "backyard" - the head of the noun phrase.

Between the ceiling and your lofty roof (line 10)

“Between the ceiling and your lofty roof” is made up of two broad elements -"between" and "the ceiling and your lofty roof". While "between" is the preposition introducing the prepositional phrase, “the ceiling and your lofty roof” is the complement of the preposition. The complement of the preposition “between” has two elements - “the ceiling” as well as “your lofty roof” joined together by the conjunction “and”. “The ceiling” has two constituents - “the” and “ceiling” where “the” is the definite article modifying the noun “ceiling”. The second component of the complement - “your lofty roof” - consists of three elements namely “your”, “lofty” and “roof”. “Your” is the determiner introducing the noun phrase “your lofty roof” while “lofty” is an adjective which modifies the head of the phrase (roof), “roof” is the obligatory element (the head) of the second noun phrase.

In places too remote for the sniffing dog (line 16)

“In places too remote for the sniffing dog” is made up of two major constituents which are preposition “in” and the noun “places too remote for the sniffing dog”. The noun has a complex structure comprising noun (places), post-qualifying adjective for the noun (“too remote”) and adverbial phrase (for the sniffing dog) which in turn modifies the adjective - “too remote”. The noun “places” is in the plural form; it has two complements namely “too remote” and “for the sniffing dog”. “Too remote” is an adjectival phrase modifying “places”. “Too” (an adverb/intensifier) modifies the adjective “remote”. “For the sniffing dog”, in turn, is an adverbial phrase modifying the adjectival phrase - “too remote”. “For the sniffing dog” has two components - preposition “for” and “the sniffing dog”. “The sniffing dog” is, therefore, the complement for the preposition “for”. “The sniffing dog” has three structural constituents - “the” (definite article), “sniffing” (adjective) which modifies the noun “dog” and “dog” (noun - the head of the noun phrase “the sniffing dog”) is the obligatory element of the nominal complement “the sniffing dog”.

The prepositional phrase, among other things, is used to indicate and describe places, situation and things in the poem.

The Clause

More so, Osundare uses the clause to develop the poem. He uses adverbial and adjectival clauses in the work. His adverbial clauses are introduced by “as” and “since”. Two cases are presented below.

Adverbial Clause

Since money can deodorize the smelliest crime (line 8)
As corruption usurps his gavel (line 67)

Adjectival Clause

Where potholes swallow up the hugest jeep (line 23)
 Where jobbers are judges (line 80)

“Where potholes swallow up the hugest jeep” qualifies “your village” mentioned in line twenty-one (21) of the poem. On the other hand, “where jobbers are judges” is a post - modifier for “the land” of line seventy-nine (79).

The Sentence

The sentence is another grammatical structure found in *My Lord, Tell me Where to keep your Bribe*. A sentence can be imperative, declarative, interrogative and exclamatory by function; but based on its internal constituent, a sentence can be simple, complex, compound, compound-complex, multiple, and multiple-complex (Osisanwo, 1999:21). Osundare deploys simple, interrogative and declarative sentences in the poem. Note a few instances of the sentence types the poet uses in the poem.

The Simple Sentence

Corruption stands naked (line 44)
 Corruption usurps his gavel (line 66)
 Crime pays in this country (line 67)

Interrogative Sentence

Shall I give a billion to each of your paramours (line 13)
 Shall I conjure the walls to open up (line 11)
 Shall I haul it all to your village (line 21)

Declarative Sentence

A terrible plague bestrides the land (line 35)
 Protect the criminal, enshrine the crime (line 48)
 Nigeria is a huge corpse (line 87)

The syntactic units mentioned above help to establish the brevity of the poet's expressions.

Voice

Voicing in the English language deals with the position of the subject in a sentence. If the element that occupies the position of the subject is responsible for the action of the verb, such a sentence is said to be in the active voice; but if the unit in the subject position is not the doer of the action of the verb but by other element outside the subject position, the sentence is said to be in the passive voice. In this poem, Osundare uses both the active and passive voice.

They will surely know where to keep the loot (line 15)
Penury leaves a scar on every house (line 24)

In the lines above, the subject of each sentence is responsible for the action of its verb - "they" is responsible for the action of "will surely know" while "penury" is the doer of the action of "leaves".

Cases of the use of the passive voice in the poem are:

Temple of justice is broken (line 57)
The roof is roundly perforated
By termites of graft (lines 59-60)

Tense

A notable syntactic feature observable in *My Lord, Tell Me Where to keep your Bribe* is that the poet expresses himself in the present simple tense as well as the simple future tense. The use of the present tense connotes that the impact of corruption is being felt in the judiciary while the simple future tense is utilized, among others, to state the implication of corruption. Note a few extracts of these tenses in the poem.

The Simple Present Tense

A terrible plague bestrides the land (line 35)

Judges doze in the courtroom (line 63)

The law in Nigeria is a vulture (line 73)

The Simple Future Tense

It will take the fastest machine (line 26)

Will catapult Judge & Lawyer to the Billionaires' Club (line 70)

Graphological Analysis of the Poem

Graphology is “the patterned systems of the graphic substance of language and their study” (Spencer & Gregory 1970: 76). It is “the analogous study of a language’s writing system or orthography as seen in the various kinds of handwriting or typography” (Crystal & Davy 1969: 18). To Leech (1969:39), it is “the whole writing system: punctuation and paragraphing as well as spacing.”

Poetic license affords poets to flout linguistic norms to achieve certain ends. Osundare vehemently leans on this opportunity in the poem under study at the graphological level for some purposes. This is noticeable through the omission of some punctuation marks throughout the poem. Punctuation marks are signs and symbols used in writing to aid the understanding of a text and to help in meaning realization. They add clarity and precision to a written discourse, hence, their omission reiterates deviation from the norm. The poet glaringly omits the sign of the question mark, the comma and the full stop respectively where necessary in the work. This may be due to the haste with which he voices his disgust and disappointment towards the entrenched corruption noticed in the judiciary. A few cases are mentioned below.

Omission of the Question Mark (?)

Conformity to the norm is that a question mark should be indicated at the end of an interrogative statement in a written text. However, in *My Lord, Tell Me Where to keep your Bribe*, the question mark

is omitted in all the cases where rhetorical question is asked in the poem. The omission might be a function of the need to voice his disappointment in the judiciary hastily. Take a look at the obvious omission of the question mark at the end of each of these lines.

Do I drop it in your venerable chambers (line 2)

Shall I bury it in the capacious water tank (line 5)

Shall I haul it all to your village (line 21)

Omission of the Comma (,)

Furthermore, there is also the omission of the comma in some lines of the poem. This might have been done to facilitate the flow of the thought of the poet.

Please tell me where to keep your bribe (line 2)

My Lord (lines 1, 25, 29, 61)

A comma is required between “please” and “tell” in the first example above so that the line will read: “Please, tell me where to keep your bribe”. Also, after “My Lord” in each line where the unit is used, the comma is required to clearly show that the poet addresses the Judge. However, the punctuation mark is omitted probably because of the overwhelming corruption of the judicial officers from whom the highest level of truth, integrity and honesty is expected.

Omission of the Full-Stop (.)

There are ninety-two lines in *My Lord, Tell Me Where to Keep your Bribe* but the full-stop is used only once in the poem – in the last line. This deviation from the norm is also important in that it establishes the agitation, worries and disappointment of the bard towards the judiciary; it portrays the poet's mood of hate towards corruption in the judiciary.

The Use of the Inverted Commas (“ ”)

The inverted comma is used in the poem to draw the attention of the reader to certain important lexical units. Examples are:

The “last hope of the common man” (line 33)

The “Temple of Justice” (line 57)

... various “gifts” (line 65)

“Last hope of the common man” and “Temple of Justice” are captured in the inverted comma for emphasis and to show the societal expectation from the judiciary. On the other hand, “gifts” is put in the inverted comma to indicate the oppositeness of what the word signifies in the context – bribes. The word “gifts” as used here is ironical.

The Use of the Ampersand (&)

The ampersand (&) is used to join “judge” and “lawyer” together because the duo is responsible for the corruption being recounted. The sign indicates that the two have the same characteristic – corruption.

Will catapult Judge & Lawyer to the Billionaires’ Club (line 70)

Capitalization

Capitalization refers to the presentation of a word/words or some part/parts of a discourse in the capital letters. Each line of the work is introduced in the capital letter to foreground its importance to the overall development of the piece.

Aside the initial letter of each line that is initiated in the capital letter, the poet also uses capitalization to introduce some lexical items so as to draw the attention of the reader to them. The following are a few instances:

And Penury leaves a scar on every house (line 24)

An Election Petition Tribunal (line 49)

All hail our buyable Bench and conniving Bar (line 52)

A million dollars in Their Lordship bedroom (line 53)

As Corruption usurps his gavel (line 66)

Will catapult Judge and Lawyer to the Billionaires' Club
(line 70)

“Penury” and “Corruption” are abstract nouns; however, they have their initial letters written in the capital letters as if they are proper nouns.

The poet might have personified them to project their negative impacts to his reader. Furthermore, “Bench” and “Bar” - a metonymy for judges and lawyers - have their initial letters capitalized to draw the attention of the reader to them and to establish how condescending the judicial officials have become – buyable items.

Based on the discussion above, it is evident that the linguistic tools used by Osundare to expose the rot in the judiciary are apt; they help the reader to have a proper understanding of his message. These linguistic devices lend credence to Osundare’s linguistic dexterity.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed Niyi Osundare's poem, *My Lord, Tell Me Where to keep your Bride*. The study considers the linguistic indices the poet employs to account for, expose and vociferate against corruption in the judiciary. The theoretical framework deployed for analysis is the integrative method due to many levels of language description involved in the study. Findings of the study indicate that Osundare uses simple diction in the poem. He makes use of registers of various spheres of life as part of the lexical category for the work while the use of figurative expressions deepens the understanding of the piece as well serves to adorn the work. At the syntactic level, the paper establishes that the poet utilizes syntactic parallelism, the phrase, the clause, the simple, interrogative as well as declarative sentence to entrench brevity of his expressions. Furthermore, it is discovered that the poet expresses himself in the present and simple future tense to reiterate the present presence of the corruption in the judicial system. The paper also finds out that, at the level of graphology, there is omission of the question mark to indicate an interrogative sentence, the comma and, that only a case of the full stop is found in the ninety-two line poem; this may be attributable to the corruption he condemns in the work. In addition, capitalization is used to draw the attention of the reader to some lexemes while the inverted comma is employed to emphasize some words in the text and to point out what the society

expects from the judiciary. The study concludes that the deployment of these linguistic devices by the poet is apt and has helped in exposing the ills noticed in the judicial system.

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