

Lexico-rhetorical Stylistic Tools and Ideological Positioning in Selected Articles of Sam Omatseye

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Abstract

Language use in journalism plays a significant role in shaping socio-political discourse. This is especially so in countries grappling with governance challenges, systemic corruption, and societal inequalities. In Nigeria, socio-political commentary has become a significant tool for critiquing leadership, promoting accountability, and engaging public discourse. This study critically examined lexical and rhetorical stylistic tools in socio-political articles written by Sam Omatseye, a prominent newspaper columnist and news editor. The objectives of the study are to explore the stylistic features employed by Omatseye, uncover the ideological positions embedded within his articles, analyse how his use of language frames socio-political issues, and evaluate the impact of his stylistic strategies on public perception. A qualitative research approach was adopted, utilising textual analysis to examine linguistic elements such as metaphor, presupposition, irony, and intertextuality, which are central to critical stylistics. Data for the study were purposively selected from *The Nation* newspaper's archives of Sam Omatseye, focusing on articles that address critical socio-political issues in Nigeria. The findings reveal that Omatseye employs diverse stylistic techniques to engage readers. These include the use of vivid metaphors, cultural allusions, and rhetorical questions, which serve to critique governance and societal norms. His writings consistently advocate for values such as accountability, integrity, and justice, using language to frame socio-political issues as urgent moral imperatives. The study concludes that Omatseye's stylistic strategies not only enhance the rhetorical impact of his articles but also influence public discourse by shaping readers' perceptions and encouraging critical engagement with societal issues.

Keywords: Critical stylistics; Socio-political commentary; Journalism in Nigeria; Language and ideology; Public discourse.

Introduction

Journalistic writing has historically been a powerful tool for shaping societal values, addressing socio-political issues, and holding power to account. In Nigeria, the role of the press extends beyond reporting to include advocacy and activism, especially during periods of political instability and societal unrest (Ogbodo, Onwe, Ewa-Ibe & Oshionebo, 2024). This tradition of journalistic engagement has its roots in the colonial era, where newspapers became platforms for anti-colonial resistance, championing the voices of figures like Herbert Macaulay and Nnamdi Azikiwe. Over the decades, this role has evolved to reflect the changing dynamics of Nigerian society, with modern journalists navigating the complexities of democracy, governance, and cultural identity. In this milieu, Sam Omatseye's writings emerge as significant contributions to the discourse, characterised by their rich critical stylistic complexity and incisive socio-political critique. Sam Omatseye is a well-known Nigerian journalist, columnist, and writer, recognized for his sharp and often bold perspectives on socio-political issues. He has been a prominent voice in Nigerian media, particularly through his *In Touch* column in *The Nation* newspaper, where he critically analyses political affairs, governance, and societal matters. Beyond journalism, Omatseye is also a creative writer, with works spanning both fiction and nonfiction, making him a significant figure in Nigeria's literary and media space. His writing style is known for its depth, wit, and ability to spark important conversations.

The socio-political environment in Nigeria is marked by persistent issues such as corruption, ethnic divisions, and economic inequality, all of which create a challenging yet fertile ground for critical discourse. Omatseye's works often wade into these issues, offering readers a blend of critique, reflection, and literary artistry. He uses devices such as metaphor, irony, and hyperbole, to transform his articles into more than mere reportage; they become tools for societal interrogation and transformation. His language, often steeped in vivid imagery,

captures the intricacies of governance and societal dynamics, prompting readers to engage critically with the issues at hand.

Language, as a medium of communication, is tied to power and ideology. According to Jeffries (2010), critical stylistics provides a framework for uncovering how linguistic structures contribute to the construction and dissemination of ideological perspectives. This approach is relevant to journalistic writing, where authors wield language to inform, persuade, and critique. Omatseye's articles exemplify this dynamic, as it employs linguistic tools to frame socio-political issues in ways that resonate deeply with his audience.

The Nigerian press has played an important role in ensuring accountability and transparency in governance, especially during periods of military rule and political repression. Journalists have historically used their platforms to challenge authoritarian regimes and advocate for democratic values (Adesoji, 2020). Omatseye's writings is in tandem with this tradition of critiquing the shortcomings of political leaders while advocating for societal reforms. His works often reflect a deep concern for the socio-economic wellbeing of Nigerians, addressing issues such as poverty, education, and infrastructure development.

The rise of digital media has further amplified the reach and impact of journalistic writing. Blogs, social media, and online news outlets have transformed the dynamics of public discourse, enabling writers like Omatseye to reach a diverse and global audience. This digital shift underscores the need for critical analyses of journalistic texts, especially those that engage with socio-political issues. For Van Dijk (2015), media texts serve as sites of ideological production, shaping public perceptions and influencing policy debates. Applying this perspective to Omatseye's articles allows for a deeper understanding of how his stylistic choices reflect and shape societal attitudes.

Despite the rich tradition of journalistic engagement in Nigeria, there remains a dearth of academic research on the stylistic dimensions of journalistic writing. While studies such as Ademilokun (2016) and Mensah (2023) have explored aspects of socio-political commentary in Nigerian media, few have waded into examining the interplay of language and ideology in the works of individual journalists. This gap shows the need for focused studies that examine the stylistic and rhetorical strategies employed by influential writers like Omatseye. It is against this background that this study aims to critically analyse selected articles of Sam Omatseye, with a focus on uncovering the linguistic and ideological underpinnings of his socio-political commentary. Through the lens of critical stylistics, the study seeks to illuminate how Omatseye's writings engage with and challenge prevailing socio-political norms, contributing to the broader discourse on governance, justice, and societal transformation in Nigeria.

Review of Literature

Critical stylistics is a methodological framework that bridges the disciplines of linguistics and literary studies, focusing on the analysis of how language constructs meaning and ideology within texts. Introduced and developed by Jeffries (2010), critical stylistics expands on traditional stylistic approaches by incorporating critical discourse analysis (CDA) techniques to uncover the implicit power dynamics and ideologies embedded in language. Unlike classical stylistics, which often focuses on the aesthetic features of literary texts, critical stylistics interrogates how language functions as a tool of persuasion and control in everyday discourse, including media and political texts. Jeffries (2010) argues that critical stylistics provides tools to analyse textual elements such as naming, presupposition, negation, and modality, which contribute to the construction of

meaning and ideological positioning. Jeffries notes that the way entities are named or described in a text can frame them positively or negatively, thereby shaping the reader's perception of a person or an event (Jeffries, 2010). Also, Fairclough (2015) is of similar view that language is both a medium and a mechanism of power, which reflects and reinforces societal hierarchies.

Several other scholars have emphasised the relevance of critical stylistics in media discourse. According to Simpson and Mayr (2009), journalistic texts use linguistic strategies to position events, actors, and ideologies in ways that align with specific political or social agendas. They note that the use of modality, expressed through words such as "must," "should," or "may", can convey degrees of certainty or obligation, subtly influencing how readers interpret socio-political issues (Simpson & Mayr, 2009). Similarly, Wodak and Meyer (2016) highlight the role of intertextuality, where references to other texts or discourses create layers of meaning that resonate with readers' existing knowledge and beliefs.

Critical stylistics is effective in examining the language of socio-political commentary, where writers often deploy rhetorical strategies to critique power structures and advocate for change (Jeffries, 2010; Fairclough, 2015). This implies that the framework is important and highly effective in analysing language and writing style of commentators, writers, and critics etc. Moreover, critical stylistics contributes to the broader field of critical linguistics, which aims to empower readers to recognise and resist the ideological forces embedded in texts (Van Dijk, 2015). In sum, scholars agree that critical stylistics presents a robust framework for analysing the linguistic and ideological dimensions of texts, making it an invaluable tool for understanding the socio-political commentary of writers like Omatseye.

Journalism

Journalism is the practice of gathering, assessing, creating and presenting news and information to the public. As a cornerstone of democratic societies, journalism serves multiple functions: informing the public, holding power to account, and fostering dialogue on key societal issues (Ogbodo et al., 2024). The practice is old, and has evolved significantly over time, influenced by technological advancements, political contexts, and cultural shifts (Fenton, 2009; Oboh, 2021). The role of journalism in shaping public opinion has been extensively documented. McNair (2017) highlights that journalism is not merely a neutral conveyor of facts but a site of ideological negotiation, where narratives are constructed to reflect or challenge prevailing power dynamics. In Nigeria, where journalism has historically played a critical role in advocating for democracy and social justice, this function is particularly evident.

Journalistic writing is distinguished by its use of language to frame events and issues in ways that resonate with audiences. According to Richardson (2010), the linguistic choices made by journalists, such as headline construction, lexical selection, and narrative structuring, can significantly influence how readers interpret and respond to news. This aspect is relevant in the analysis of socio-political commentary, where writers often adopt persuasive and emotive language to engage readers and convey their perspectives. The Nigerian press has a rich history of activism, dating back to the colonial era when newspapers were used as platforms for anti-colonial agitation. Christopher & Onwuka (2013) emphasise that journalism in Nigeria has often been characterised by its commitment to social responsibility, with journalists playing an important role in addressing issues such as corruption, human rights, and governance.

In recent years, the rise of digital media has transformed journalism. It has created new opportunities and challenges (Obboh, 2021). Digital platforms enable journalists to reach broader audiences and engage with readers in real-time, but they also pose challenges related to misinformation and the erosion of traditional journalistic standards. Kovach & Rosenstiel (2021) argue that in this context, the principles of journalistic integrity, such as accuracy, fairness, and accountability, are more important than ever. Journalism's capacity to influence societal attitudes and behaviours underscores its importance as a field of study, and practice.

Socio-political Commentary

Socio-political commentary is a form of discourse that critiques and analyses societal and political issues (Chambers, Burchell & Gully, 2009), often with the aim of influencing public opinion and fostering change (Myers, 2008). It is rooted in traditions of advocacy and critique. Socio-political commentary spans various media, journalism, literature, and digital platforms. This genre is characterised by its engagement with issues such as governance, justice, identity, and power, making it a vital component of public discourse (Myers, 2008; Chambers, Burchell & Gully, 2008).

One of the defining features of socio-political commentary is its use of language to critique and persuade. According to Beard (2008), effective commentary employs rhetorical devices such as metaphor, irony, and satire to engage readers and provoke critical reflection. Habermas (1991) argues that public discourse serves as a space where individuals can debate and critique societal issues, contributing to the formation of public opinion. In the Nigeria, socio-political commentary has historically been a vehicle for addressing systemic issues like inequality, ethnic tensions, and corruption. Adesoji (2020) noted that commentators use their platforms to advocate for reform and accountability, reflecting the aspirations and frustrations of the populace.

The rise of digital media has further amplified the impact of socio-political commentary. Blogs and social media enable commentators to reach diverse audiences and engage in real-time dialogue. However, this digital shift also raises questions about the quality and ethics of commentary, as the proliferation of misinformation and polarisation challenges traditional norms of accountability and fairness (Obboh, 2021). Socio-political commentary's capacity to critique and influence societal values underscores its significance as a field of study.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies have increasingly emphasised the role of critical stylistics in understanding the ideological dimensions of media texts. Jeffries (2010) highlighted that; critical stylistics framework allows scholars to dissect the ideological positions embedded within journalistic texts. This is especially relevant in Nigeria, where media narratives often mirror and mediate societal power structures. Adeeko (2023) investigated the linguistic features in editorials addressing governance issues, revealing how lexical choices and syntactic structures construct narratives of political accountability. Adeeko (2023) framed corruption as a systemic issue rather than an individual failing, and imperatively subtly challenge governance practices while engaging readers in a collective critique. This is in line with the theoretical assertions of Fairclough (2015) that media discourse operates as a site of ideological negotiation, reflecting and shaping societal perceptions.

Further empirical evidence tells of the importance of stylistic analysis in socio-political contexts. Ottoh-Agede (2022) examined the rhetoric of media reports on terrorism in Nigeria, demonstrating how stylistic devices such as metaphor and intertextuality are employed to frame insurgency narratives. The study found that by describing Boko Haram's activities as a "plague" or "cancer," journalists evoke urgency and moral condemnation,

influencing public attitudes and policy responses. Similarly, Hamukwaya (2016) explored the use of satire in socio-political commentary, showing how humour and irony are deployed to critique governance failures and social inequalities. These studies highlight the adaptability of stylistic strategies in navigating sensitive and contentious topics, reinforcing the significance of language as a tool for critique and advocacy.

The relationship between journalism and ideology has also been a focus of empirical inquiry, with scholars examining how media texts construct and contest societal norms. Fafowora (2020) explored the representation of women in political leadership within Nigerian newspapers, finding that linguistic choices often perpetuate gender stereotypes while simultaneously highlighting the achievements of female leaders. The study employed critical stylistics to identify patterns of exclusion and inclusion in media narratives.

In addition to gender dynamics, studies have examined the stylistic dimensions of political discourse in Nigerian media. Ononye (2014) investigated how lexical and syntactic choices in reports on the Niger Delta conflicts construct narratives of victimhood and resistance. The study found that by framing oil-producing communities as marginalised yet resilient, media texts simultaneously critique state neglect and amplify grassroots activism. In similar light, Waribo-Naye (2018) analysed media depictions of religious conflicts, revealing how lexical patterns and narrative framing contribute to either escalating or mitigating tensions. These studies underscore the dual role of journalism as both a reflector of societal issues and a catalyst for change, with stylistic analysis providing a lens to uncover these dynamics.

The emergence of digital media has further amplified the scope and impact of journalistic discourse, prompting scholars to explore the stylistic and rhetorical strategies employed in online platforms. Iyoha (2023) analysed reader comments on online reports of socio-political crises in Nigeria, finding that interactivity and immediacy influence how narratives are constructed and consumed. The study highlighted the role of digital platforms in democratising discourse, allowing for diverse voices and perspectives.

Empirical studies have also examined the intersection of stylistics and advocacy in journalistic texts. Okoro (2022) investigated how Nigerian newspapers employed stylistic strategies to advocate for socio-political reforms during Muhammadu Buhari's administration. The study revealed a deliberate use of metaphor, modality, and narrative structure to critique governance while proposing alternatives. Through framing policy failures as a betrayal of public trust, journalists positioned themselves as advocates for accountability and justice. These findings corroborate the argument of Beard (2000) that rhetorical devices in media texts serve not only to inform but also to persuade and mobilise readers towards collective action.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is Critical Stylistics. This is a framework that combines the methodologies of stylistics and CDA to examine the language and style of texts, especially those with socio-political significance. Critical stylistics focuses on how language constructs and conveys meaning, in contexts where power, ideology, and persuasion are central. This framework is especially pertinent for socio-political commentary, as it unpacks the implicit ideologies embedded within journalistic and literary texts, revealing how linguistic choices shape readers' perceptions of social and political realities.

Evolution and Proponents of Critical Stylistics: Critical stylistics emerged as a response to the limitations of both classical stylistics and early critical discourse approaches. While stylistics traditionally focused on the

aesthetic aspects of texts, it often neglected the socio-political implications of linguistic choices. Conversely, CDA has been critiqued for its macro-level focus, which sometimes overlooks the intricacies of textual construction (Jeffries & Walker, 2012). To bridge this gap, Jeffries developed critical stylistics, a framework that marries the analytical precision of stylistics with the socio-political focus of CDA. This synthesis allows scholars to examine how linguistic features function ideologically within texts, offering a detailed lens for analysing media, literature, and other forms of discourse.

Propositions of Critical Stylistics: Critical stylistics is underpinned by several key propositions. First, it posits that all texts are ideologically constructed, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Language is not a neutral medium but a site where power dynamics and social values are negotiated and contested (Fairclough, 2015). Second, the framework argues that linguistic features such as naming, transitivity, and negation play crucial roles in shaping readers' perceptions. For instance, naming strategies can foreground or background particular entities, subtly influencing how events or actors are interpreted (Simpson & Mayr, 2009). Third, critical stylistics emphasises the interplay between textual and contextual elements, asserting that meaning arises from the interaction between linguistic choices and readers' socio-cultural backgrounds.

Criticisms of Critical Stylistics: Despite its contributions, critical stylistics has not been without criticism. One critique is its tendency to focus on individual texts at the expense of broader societal structures. Van Dijk (2015) argue that while textual analysis is valuable, it must be situated within a wider understanding of power and ideology to avoid reductionism. In addition, some critics contend that critical stylistics requires a high level of interpretive skill, which can introduce subjectivity into analyses. However, proponents of the framework maintain that its systematic methodology mitigates these concerns, ensuring analytical rigour and consistency.

Justification of the Theory: The application of critical stylistics as the theoretical framework for this study is justified by its unique ability to bridge the gap between linguistic analysis and socio-political critique. Unlike traditional stylistics, which often focuses on the aesthetic dimensions of language, critical stylistics examines how linguistic structures contribute to the construction of meaning and ideology within texts (Jeffries, 2010). This dual focus on form and function makes it suitable for analysing socio-political commentary, where language serves as both a medium of expression and a tool for advocacy. In Nigeria, where writers like Sam Omatseye engage with pressing socio-political issues such as corruption, governance, and societal transformation, critical stylistics provides a framework to uncover the implicit ideological positions embedded in their writings.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, specifically employing a textual analysis method within the framework of critical stylistics. Textual analysis is widely recognised as a suitable approach for examining the linguistic and ideological features of texts, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of meaning construction through language (Silverman, 2020). Qualitative research was chosen because it focuses on understanding phenomena in their natural context, prioritising depth over breadth. Unlike quantitative methods, which rely on numerical data, qualitative approaches are well-suited for analysing non-numerical data such as written texts, particularly where the objective is to explore the nuances of language use (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Furthermore, textual analysis complements the theoretical framework of critical stylistics, as both prioritise the analysis of linguistic structures and their socio-political implications. The qualitative approach is also justified by the nature of the study's objectives. Since the goal is to interpret and critique linguistic elements rather than

measure their frequency or statistical relationships, a qualitative approach provide the flexibility and depth required to achieve these aims.

Data Presentation and Analyses

The data used for this study consist of ten (10) socio-political articles written by Sam Omatseye between 2020 and 2024. These articles were sourced from *The Nation* newspaper's online archive. The selected articles focus on themes of election and its aftermath, societal norms and political critique, reflects the socio-political dynamics of Nigeria during the period under review. Table 1 summarises the key details of the articles, including their titles, publication dates, thematic focus and significant linguistic features relevant to the study.

Table 1: Summary of Selected Articles by Sam Omatseye (2020–2024)

S/N	Article Title	Publication Date	Thematic Focus	Key Linguistic Features
1	<i>If You Can't Beat Him, Burn Them</i>	13 January 2024	Political violence and opposition	Metaphor, irony, and presupposition used to critique political desperation
2	<i>No Abiku Syndrome in Lagos</i>	28 February 2023	Governance and infrastructural development	Metaphor and cultural references to discuss urban renewal
3	<i>Like Father, Like Fraud</i>	10 December 2022	Corruption and leadership failures	Wordplay, satire, and irony to expose systemic corruption
4	<i>Obaseki Breaks Benin Calabash</i>	15 October 2021	Political betrayal and governance	Symbolism and intertextuality to critique leadership conflicts
5	<i>Atiku and Obi: Certificate Miracles</i>	22 July 2024	Electoral disputes and accountability	Sarcasm, irony, and lexical choices highlighting electoral controversies
6	<i>Obi-tuary</i>	30 March 2024	Political critique and identity	Satire, metaphor, and cultural allusions targeting political narratives
7	<i>Atiku: An Open Pharisee</i>	14 August 2023	Religious hypocrisy and politics	Biblical references, metaphor, and critique of moral inconsistency
8	<i>Machina's Due</i>	5 May 2023	Electoral justice and democracy	Symbolism and rhetorical questions addressing fairness in political primaries
9	<i>Judas' Kiss</i>	17 November 2022	Betrayal in politics	Biblical symbolism and emotive language critiquing political loyalty dynamics
10	<i>Hypocritical Justice</i>	9 September 2021	Judicial impartiality and fairness	Irony, lexical ambiguity, and critique of legal double standards

Source: Researchers' compilation

Data Analysis

If You Can't Beat Him, Burn Them

Sam Omatseye's article, *If You Can't Beat Him, Burn Them*, employs striking critical stylistic strategies to critique the destructive tendencies of political desperation in Nigeria. The title itself functions as an encapsulation of the writer's perspective, blending idiomatic expression with a metaphorical twist. This approach sets the tone for a commentary that vividly portrays how opposition forces resort to extreme measures

when political defeat looms. Omatseye utilises a blend of satire and metaphor throughout the piece, sharpening his critique of political actors who undermine democracy through violence and intimidation.

One significant feature of this article is its heavy reliance on metaphorical constructs to characterise political manoeuvres. Words like "burn" are loaded with both literal and figurative meanings, symbolising destruction not only of property but also of democratic values. This choice of language suggests that political actors who cannot succeed electorally opt for chaos, effectively "burning" the fabric of governance and stability. Through this vivid depiction, Omatseye conveys a strong message about the degradation of Nigeria's democratic ethos.

Another notable strategy is the use of presupposition. Phrases that imply the inevitability of opposition sabotage, such as "when politics descends to thuggery," establish a narrative that does not merely question but assumes the dysfunction of political systems. This assumption places the reader in a position of moral indignation, compelling them to agree with the writer's condemnation of such acts. Furthermore, Omatseye's use of irony enhances the emotional engagement of his critique.

Lexical choices in the article further contribute to its persuasive power. Terms like "desperation," "sabotage," and "arson" carry strong negative connotations, evoking anger and disapproval in the reader. Such language draws attention to the ethical void in the actions of the political elite, transforming the article into a moral appeal for accountability. The rhythm of Omatseye's sentences also builds momentum, with shorter, punchier sentences reinforcing urgency and longer, reflective ones adding depth.

Omatseye's rhetorical questions, such as "Is this what democracy has become?" serve as a direct appeal to the reader, provoking critical thought and inviting engagement. Having framed the issue as a betrayal of democratic values, the writer reinforces his stance that such behaviours not only harm individuals but also erode the trust necessary for governance. This article, therefore, stands as a scathing critique of political opportunism, vividly illustrating its moral and societal consequences.

No Abiku Syndrome in Lagos

In this essay, Omatseye employs cultural symbolism to articulate a narrative of resilience and regeneration in governance. The title draws from Yoruba cosmology, where "abiku" refers to a spirit child that repeatedly dies and reincarnates, causing grief and uncertainty. By negating this concept in the context of Lagos, Omatseye establishes a metaphor for progress, signalling that the city has transcended cycles of failure and stagnation. A key stylistic element in this article is the deliberate integration of cultural allusions. The invocation of the "abiku" figure establishes an immediate connection with Nigerian readers familiar with the mythology, anchoring his argument in shared cultural knowledge. This reference frames Lagos as a city that has shed its reputation for chaos and inefficiency, instead embracing sustainable development under recent leadership.

Omatseye's descriptive language further reinforces this narrative of progress. Phrases such as "a city shedding its skin" and "from decay to dynamism" evoke vivid imagery of transformation, inviting the reader to visualise Lagos as a living entity undergoing a rebirth. These descriptions imbue the article with an optimistic tone, contrasting with the cynicism often associated with discussions of Nigerian governance. Another notable feature is the article's syntactical variation, which mirrors the theme of renewal. Sentences shift from reflective observations about Lagos's past to celebratory declarations about its present achievements. This dynamic structure mirrors the trajectory of Lagos itself, symbolising its transition from dysfunction to order.

Omatseye also employs repetition as a rhetorical device, with phrases like “no more” and “no longer” underscoring the departure from previous failures. This repetition serves as both emphasis and a form of reassurance to readers who may doubt the permanence of these changes. In addition, the writer's careful use of modality—through words such as “can,” “must,” and “should”—encourages the audience to see Lagos not just as an example of progress but as a model to be emulated nationwide. The article concludes with a subtle but powerful call to action, urging citizens and policymakers to sustain this newfound trajectory. Through marrying cultural symbolism with an analysis of governance, Omatseye creates a narrative that is both familiar and aspirational, inspiring confidence in the potential for broader transformation across Nigeria.

Like Father, Like Fraud

Like Father, Like Fraud exemplifies Omatseye's adept use of satire to critique corruption and the complicity of political elites in perpetuating systemic failures. The title itself is a biting wordplay on the adage “like father, like son,” suggesting a hereditary or cyclical nature of unethical behaviour in leadership. This sets the stage for an incisive analysis of how corruption is normalised and reproduced within political institutions. The major defining feature of this article is its reliance on irony to expose the contradictions between political rhetoric and action. Omatseye juxtaposes the public declarations of integrity made by leaders with their private indulgence in corrupt practices. In doing so, he highlights the hypocrisy of these figures and also draws attention to the systemic rot that enables such behaviours.

The article's diction is scathing. Words like “connivance,” “embezzlement,” and “betrayal” paint a vivid picture of moral bankruptcy. These lexical choices provoke a visceral response in the reader, fostering indignation and a demand for accountability. Omatseye also employs allegory, likening political corruption to a “disease” that festers and spreads unchecked. This comparison amplifies the sense of urgency and underscores the need for systemic reform. The article's structural choices further enhance its impact. Omatseye alternates between anecdotal evidence and broader reflections, creating a rhythm that keeps the reader engaged. For instance, he recounts specific scandals involving prominent politicians, using these examples to illustrate the wider issue of institutional decay.

In addition, Omatseye's use of rhetorical questions, such as “How can we trust leaders who lie to our faces?” invites readers to interrogate their own complicity in enabling corrupt systems. This rhetorical strategy shifts the article from a passive critique to an active engagement, compelling readers to reflect on their roles as citizens. Ultimately, the article serves as both a condemnation of corruption and a call for systemic change.

Obaseki Breaks Benin Calabash

In this article, Mr. Omatseye, employs rich symbolism and cultural allegory to explore themes of political betrayal and governance in Nigeria. The title references a “calabash,” a culturally significant item in many African traditions, often symbolising unity, peace, or a sacred covenant. By suggesting that Obaseki has “broken” this calabash, Omatseye immediately frames the narrative as one of betrayal, severing ties with established traditions or relationships, especially within the political terrain. The use of symbolism is central to the article's appeal. The act of breaking a calabash evokes strong imagery of irreparable damage. It reflects the gravity of the writer's critique. Omatseye intertwines this symbolism with a narrative of political disloyalty, specifically targeting Obaseki's perceived abandonment of his political allies. The allusion to Benin, an ancient kingdom with a rich cultural heritage, situates the critique within a larger historical and cultural framework, amplifying the weight of the betrayal being discussed.

Omatseye's tone in this article oscillates between reflective and accusatory, creating a dynamic rhythm that sustains reader engagement. Through sentences like, "The calabash was not dropped; it was smashed," he combines vivid imagery with deliberate word choices to underscore the intentional nature of Obaseki's actions. This phrasing portrays the betrayal as deliberate and calculated, reinforcing the moral dimension of the critique. The article also demonstrates Omatseye's adept use of intertextuality.

Omatseye's lexical choices further reinforce the article's themes. Words like "fractured," "shards," and "irreversible" convey a sense of finality and destruction, leaving no room for ambiguity about the writer's stance. This precision in language aligns with the goals of critical stylistics, where the focus is on how linguistic structures shape meaning and influence perception. The article concludes with a subtle yet firm moral judgement, suggesting that actions like Obaseki's not only harm individual relationships but also weaken the political fabric of society.

Atiku and Obi: Certificate Miracles

Here, Omatseye combines satire and sharp critique to address controversies surrounding the educational qualifications of Nigerian political figures. The title is laced with irony, using the term "miracles" to mock the dubious and often inconsistent claims of academic achievements by political elites. This approach sets the tone for a biting examination of the integrity—or lack thereof—within Nigeria's political landscape. A key feature of this article is Omatseye's strategic use of sarcasm. Sentences such as, "Certificates appear and disappear like magic wands," ridicule the inconsistencies in the narratives of political figures, exposing their perceived dishonesty.

The article employs repetition effectively, with phrases such as "show me your certificate" repeated to emphasise the lack of transparency in the political system. This technique mirrors the public's frustration with the evasiveness of leaders and reinforces the writer's argument. Additionally, the repetition serves as a rhetorical device that builds momentum, creating a sense of urgency around the issue. Omatseye's use of lexical contrasts adds depth to his critique. He juxtaposes terms like "miracle" and "fraud," suggesting that what is presented as extraordinary achievement is often underpinned by deceit. This choice of words creates a tension that mirrors the dissonance between the public image and private reality of political leaders.

Another notable aspect is Omatseye's deployment of historical and global comparisons. Through referencing instances of educational fraud in other countries, he situates the Nigerian issue within a broader context, implying that such scandals are not unique but require systemic reform. This global perspective enhances the credibility of his argument, presenting it as part of a larger critique of governance and accountability. The conclusion of the article is both reflective and indicting. It urges readers to demand higher standards of integrity from their leaders. Omatseye's ability to weave humour, critique, and analysis into a cohesive narrative ensures that the article resonates with a broad audience while maintaining its intellectual rigor.

Obi-tuary

The article *Obi-tuary* is one of Omatseye's most provocative pieces, employing satirical wordplay to critique the political ambitions and narratives surrounding Peter Obi, a prominent Nigerian politician. The title itself is a pun on the word "obituary," immediately setting a tone of finality and ridicule. In framing the article as an "obituary" for Obi's political campaign, Omatseye signals his perception of its failure, while simultaneously critiquing the rhetoric and identity politics that have characterised Obi's support base.

A defining feature of this article is its heavy reliance on satire. Through phrases like “saint of the masses,” Omatseye mocks the almost messianic image crafted around Obi by his supporters. This use of exaggerated praise shows the unrealistic expectations placed on the politician, setting the stage for a deeper critique of the superficiality of such narratives. Omatseye’s linguistic choices in this article are particularly potent. Words like “idolised,” “hyped,” and “worshipped” are loaded with connotations that challenge the legitimacy of Obi’s political appeal. The article also employs intertextuality effectively, referencing biblical and cultural motifs to critique both Obi and his supporters. For instance, Omatseye likens Obi’s promises to “manna from heaven,” a phrase that invokes both hope and scepticism. While the biblical reference suggests divine providence, its ironic usage casts doubt on Obi’s ability to deliver on his promises.

Structurally, the article mirrors the tone of a eulogy, with reflective passages about Obi’s political journey interspersed with sharp critiques of his campaign strategies. This structure reinforces the article’s satirical premise, creating a narrative arc that moves from promise to perceived failure. Omatseye’s use of rhetorical questions, such as “What has he truly offered?” further engages the reader, inviting them to scrutinise the substance of Obi’s political agenda. The article concludes with a poignant critique of identity politics, cautioning against the dangers of elevating individuals based solely on regional or ethnic affiliations.

Atiku: An Open Pharisee

In this article, Omatseye critiques the moral contradictions of Nigerian politics, using religious imagery and irony to highlight the perceived hypocrisy of former Vice President Atiku Abubakar. The title, invoking the biblical Pharisees known for outward piety but inward corruption, establishes the tone of the article as a sharp rebuke of performative morality in leadership. The article is steeped in biblical references, with Omatseye drawing parallels between Atiku and the Pharisees of scripture. This analogy is carefully constructed, as phrases such as “proclaiming virtue from the pulpit while plundering from the pews” tells of the contrast between Atiku’s public image and his alleged actions. These religious allusions resonate strongly with a Nigerian audience, for whom faith often intersects with politics, amplifying the article’s rhetorical impact.

Irony is a dominant feature throughout the article, as Omatseye juxtaposes Atiku’s speeches about accountability and justice with his alleged complicity in governance failures. By questioning the sincerity of such declarations, the writer subtly invites readers to examine the gap between rhetoric and reality in political leadership. Another noteworthy element is the precision of Omatseye’s diction. Words such as “sanctimonious,” “charlatan,” and “self-anointed” carry connotations of deceit and arrogance, painting Atiku as a figure who manipulates public perception for personal gain. These linguistic choices intensify the critique, leaving little ambiguity about the writer’s stance. The structure of the article mirrors a sermon, beginning with an exposition of Atiku’s public persona and gradually building toward a scathing critique of his actions. This rhetorical approach mirrors the preacher’s call for repentance, casting Omatseye as a moral arbiter challenging his readers to demand greater integrity from their leaders.

Machina’s Due

In *Machina’s Due*, Omatseye wades into the controversies surrounding party primaries in Nigerian politics, focusing on the case of Bashir Machina, whose candidacy in a senatorial race faced opposition from influential party figures. The article is a masterclass in using symbolism and narrative structure to critique political injustice and the subversion of democratic processes.

Omatseye employs symbolism through the term “due,” which conveys notions of entitlement, fairness, and moral obligation. Having framed the title around Machina, he immediately positions the subject as a victim of systemic manipulation, deserving both justice and recognition. This framing evokes empathy, encouraging readers to align with Machina’s plight.

The article’s tone oscillates between indignation and subtle mockery, especially in Omatseye’s descriptions of the party elites who sought to undermine Machina’s candidacy. Words like “kingmakers” and “puppet masters” highlight the undemocratic nature of internal party politics, painting these figures as wielders of illegitimate power. This characterization reinforces the article’s critique of the larger political system, suggesting that it prioritises personal ambition over fairness and accountability. Omatseye uses rhetorical questions effectively, asking, “Is this the democracy we voted for?” to challenge readers’ expectations of fairness in governance. Such questions function as a moral appeal, urging the audience to reflect on their complicity in tolerating these injustices. The article’s narrative style is compelling, as Omatseye recounts the sequence of events surrounding Machina’s political struggles. This chronological approach lends credibility to the argument, while the emotive descriptions of Machina’s perseverance amplify the moral dimension of the story.

Judas’ Kiss

Judas’ Kiss is a powerful critique of political betrayal, with Omatseye drawing heavily on biblical symbolism to convey his disapproval of disloyalty in governance. The title refers to the infamous act of betrayal by Judas Iscariot, framing the article around themes of deceit, loyalty, and the moral failures of political actors. The article’s opening is striking, as Omatseye writes, “The kiss that seals betrayal comes cloaked in affection.” This metaphorical statement captures the duality of political betrayal, where public camaraderie often masks private treachery. By invoking Judas, a figure universally associated with treachery, Omatseye sets a moral tone that resonates deeply with readers, especially in a religiously conscious society like Nigeria.

Omatseye’s use of emotive language enhances the article’s impact. Words like “stab,” “treachery,” and “backstab” evoke vivid images of betrayal, while phrases such as “a handshake with a dagger” amplify the moral gravity of disloyalty. These linguistic choices create a sense of moral outrage, positioning the writer as a defender of integrity and accountability. Intertextuality is another notable feature of the article, as Omatseye references both biblical and historical betrayals to situate his critique within a broader moral and cultural framework. This strategy lends depth to the argument, connecting individual acts of political betrayal to timeless narratives of moral failure.

Structurally, the article alternates between vivid descriptions of betrayal and reflective commentary on its societal implications. This dual approach ensures that the critique is both specific to its political subject and universal in its application. Omatseye concludes with a cautionary note, warning that betrayal not only harms its immediate victims but also erodes trust in governance and societal cohesion.

Hypocritical Justice

In this column, Omatseye addresses the double standards within Nigeria’s judicial system, critiquing the selective application of justice based on political affiliations and power dynamics. The title encapsulates the article’s central argument, suggesting that the judiciary, while ostensibly impartial, often operates in a manner that undermines its credibility and integrity. The article’s tone is sharp and uncompromising, with Omatseye using irony to expose the contradictions in the judicial system. Statements like, “Lady Justice is blindfolded, but

somehow she sees power clearly,” shows the disparity between the ideals of justice and its practical execution. This irony reinforces the writer’s critique, suggesting that justice in Nigeria is often skewed in favour of the powerful.

Omatseye’s lexical choices further underscore his argument. Words such as “manipulated,” “tainted,” and “bought” carry strong connotations of corruption, painting a bleak picture of judicial integrity. The article employs anecdotal evidence effectively, recounting high-profile cases where political figures received lenient treatment while ordinary citizens faced harsh penalties. These examples lend credibility to the argument, illustrating how systemic bias perpetuates inequality and injustice.

Rhetorical questions, such as “Who is justice serving?” invite readers to critically examine the judiciary’s role in perpetuating societal inequities. These questions function as both critique and call to action, urging the audience to demand greater accountability from the judicial system. He concludes with a powerful indictment of the judiciary, describing it as “a house built on shifting sands.” This metaphor encapsulates the fragility of Nigeria’s legal system, suggesting that without reform, it will continue to undermine public trust and democratic governance.

Conclusion

This study critically analysed selected socio-political articles by Sam Omatseye using the framework of critical stylistics. The findings highlight the ways in which Omatseye employs language to critique governance, leadership, and societal norms while advocating for systemic reform. His use of metaphor, irony, and cultural references demonstrates the power of stylistic features in shaping public discourse and engaging readers in meaningful dialogue. The study also revealed that Omatseye’s writings are underpinned by ideological positions that champion accountability, justice, and integrity. Overall, this research underscores the significance of critical stylistics as a tool for uncovering the ideological dimensions of journalistic writing. It contributes to the understanding of how language functions as both a medium of critique and a catalyst for societal change, offering valuable insights for scholars, media practitioners, and readers seeking to navigate the complexities of socio-political discourse in Nigeria.

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