



Woes of the African Society: A Stylistic Analysis of Parallelism and Semantic Deviation in Philip Obioma Chinedu Umeh's *Ambassadors of Poverty*

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Abstract

Corruption has been one of the main challenges bedeviling the African society. Most artistic works in the form of writing and craft have dealt extensively with this canker of corruption. The poem 'Ambassadors of Poverty' is one of such works that touches on corruption in Africa. The present study seeks to examine the communicative implications underpinning the use of parallelism and semantic deviation in the poem. The study is situated within the linguistic and stylistic categories framework by Leech and Short (2007). The findings of the study identify forms of parallelism (noun phrases, prepositional phrases, simple and complex sentences) as well as forms of semantic deviation (metaphor, personification, irony, sarcasm, paradox, oxymoron and symbolism). The findings further unveil a preponderant use of varied shades of parallel structures to juxtapose the impoverished state of the ordinary African with the corrupt and luxurious lifestyle of African leaders while forms of semantic deviation are used to encode the unpatriotic attitudes of African leaders in figurative terms. The study concludes that literary works such as poems are potent instruments that are subtly used to expose and condemn the ills of society. The study has implications for research, theory and practice.

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is generally said to be life. This is very true because literature actually mirrors life in an artistic manner. One of the potent forms of representing life in literature is through poetry. Poetry is an art form that uses figurative language to express varied life situations and experiences. Poets have unlimited freedom to exhibit their idiosyncrasies in the use of language which is called poetic license. Davies (1989, p. 51) posits that poetry is the best medium for a holistic representation of the subtleties of shapeless minds and simultaneously ‘incants, invokes, suggests, moving towards emotional synthesis and an experience of wholeness of perception’. Poets therefore express their personal viewpoints about various societal issues through the use of a myriad of figurative devices (Alobaidy & Halawachy, 2020). The ills of life’s situations sometimes are so intense that literal language becomes inadequate to express them. In such cases, literary language appears to be the best medium to express such ills. In such a well-knit mental literary genre, where varied threads and shapes of thoughts are intertwined, poetry best represents the complexities of life (Zhao, 2012). The poem *Ambassadors of Poverty* authored by Philip Obioma Chinedu Umeh details the various woes that have befallen the contemporary African society masterminded by African politicians or leaders. The poem touches on issues relating to selfishness, incompetence, injustice, indiscipline, insensitivity, callousness, failed promises and the impoverishment of the ordinary citizens among others. These contribute significantly to the political, social and economic malaise of the masses in Africa and other continents. Philip Umeh in the poem meticulously chooses linguistic items and structures to control the content, the fragments of the flow of thoughts, without mutilating the reality of the ideas expressed. Afful-Boachie (2006) proffers that “a good appreciation of literary work is not possible without a sound knowledge of the numerous literary devices” used (p. 47). Literary devices are therefore used by literary writers to encode vital messages meant for the audience or readers. Parallelism and forms of semantic deviation happen to be some potent literary devices used by literary writers and poets in particular to consciously and unconsciously foreground, beautify and project their messages. A writer’s prowess in literature is therefore measured by their ability to use various linguistic and literary devices to drum home their ideas or messages. Ibrahim, Mugairb & Abbas (2020, p. 728) therefore aver that “a writer is deemed talented or successful when s/he manipulates language creatively”. Philip Umeh is a famous writer in African Literature and poetry in particular whose prowess is demonstrated in his aesthetic use of language. His aesthetic use of language is made evident in his poem *Ambassadors of Poverty* which is linguistically stuffed with parallel structures and forms of semantic deviation. Previous studies by Robert & Anura (2018) and Mpotsiah (2018) conducted thematic analyses of the poem *Ambassadors of Poverty* but relegated some important dominant features in the poem such as parallelism and semantic deviation to the background. It is based on this premise that the present study seeks to analyse the use of parallelism and semantic deviation in the poem *Ambassadors of Poverty* from the stylistic perspective in order to find out the encoded linguistic and literary implications underlying the use of such devices.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to examine the use of parallelism and semantic deviation in the poem *Ambassadors of Poverty* by Philip Umeh from the stylistic perspective. The study seeks to show how meaning is construed through the use of parallel structures and forms of semantic deviation. The study demonstrates how the poet makes conscious use of these devices to convey to his readers the intended message in the poem.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What forms of semantic deviation and parallelistic structures are dominantly used in Philip Obioma Chinedu Umeh's *Ambassadors of Poverty*?
2. How are the forms of semantic deviation and parallelistic structures used to construe corruption in Africa in Philip Obioma Chinedu Umeh's *Ambassadors of Poverty*?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature touches on the concepts of deviation and parallelism in poetry. It also mirrors and operationalises the perspective on corruption and its relation to the African context which underpins the study.

2.1 The Concept of Deviation in Poetry

One important concept in Stylistics is the concept of foregrounding. Foregrounding is not only meant to attract the reader's attention, but to also signal important information and also for aesthetic purposes. It is comprised of two main techniques: deviation and parallelism. Deviation breaks the language code in order to achieve some literary significance. Leech (1969, p. 56) proffers that "writers tend to use language quite creatively just to produce a sort of unexpected surprise". Deviation has a dual effect on both readers and listeners based on its noticeable form. Mansoor & Salman (2020 p. 8) also aver that "deviation is considered as a license or permission for poets and writers to say or write what people in normal situations of language cannot use." Poets mostly make use of deviation at various linguistic levels to create artistic effects. The term linguistic deviation was coined by Geoffrey Leech in 1969, when he found various linguistic irregularities while studying a number of poems. He identified nine types of linguistic deviation in poetry; lexical, semantic, syntactic, phonological, morphological, graphological, historical, dialectal, and register. Semantic deviation usually dominates in poetic language in order to make it figurative. It is construed as the most important over the other types of deviation, due to its key contribution to making language sound figurative. Semantic deviation can be defined as a form of deviation where the meaning of a specific word, a phrase, or even a whole sentence might be vague (Awonuga, Chimuanya & Meshioye, 2018). In other words, it is what Leech (1968, p. 45) refers to deviation as *absurdity*. The absurdity found in semantic deviation incites the mind of the reader to decode ideas encoded in figurative language. Forms of semantic deviation may include irony, paradox, metaphor, simile, pun and other figures of speech. It is the most typical type of deviation in the poem which is realized in the use of an avalanche of metaphors and other figurative devices to drum home the intended messages in poems. Previous studies on semantic deviation in poetry have mainly focused on Shakespearean poems Sanhadi (2012), in the book of Psalms (Widodo, 2004) and in T.S. Elliot's poems (Saleem, 2009; Ibrahim, Mugairb & Abbas, 2020) without any significant attention on African poems. For that matter, the study will consider instances of the use of semantic deviations dominantly in the form of metaphors in the poem *Ambassadors of Poverty* and how these deviations contribute to projecting the message in the poem.

2.2 The Concept of Parallelism in Poetry

In tracing the root of the word *Parallelism*, Balogun (2015) avers that the term *Parallelism* draws its etymology from the Greek word *Parallelos*, meaning "beside one another". Parallelism is the logical linkage of ideas by using similar grammatical forms. This arrangement may be applied to words, phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, or complete units of compositions. Jakobson (1996), one of the leading scholars in the study of parallelism in his bid to outline the valuable role of parallelism in poetry postulates that, the

linguistic realization of poetic function is through parallelism, or the principle of equivalence. Zhao (2012) also adds that parallelism is the perfect balance of contradiction that renders to poetry most of its beauty and vibrancy. The most attractive thing about parallelism, from both the linguistic and literary perspectives, is that it breeds variation out of regularity. Relating the relevance of parallelism in poetry, Al-halhooli, Al-Khawaldeh & Shureteh (2017) posit that it puts in the hands of readers and researchers the key to the poet's dominant idea, and so it is an unconscious spotlight on the poet's depths that he highlights for people. It is also a part of the emotional cleverness for presenting linguistic structures in which the poet tries to organize words, so that he can build an emotional base of a certain kind. The foregrounding effect in parallelism makes it call the attention of readers/listeners. This is because parallel structures are often repeated which signal attention to graphology. The repetition in parallelism also beautifies the text or utterance and makes meaning clearer. Mwinwelle, Adukpo, Asante-Anyimadu & Avevor (2021, p. 126) aver that one of the aesthetic functions of parallelism is that it "creates rhythmic effects to enhance the musicality" in various texts. Basically, linguistic devices like repetition, coupling, unexpected lexical collocations, syntactic inversions etc. are used in the construction of parallel structures. There are three salient elements that add stylistic or rhetorical aesthetics to parallel structures. These are the phonological, semantic and the syntactic elements. Most scholars have based on these three elements to establish that there are three types of parallelism namely; phonological, semantic and syntactic parallelism. Yankson (2011, p. 71) posits that 'the semantic and syntactic parallelism is reinforced by phonological parallelism'. Some studies have been conducted regarding the analysis of parallelism in poetry such as in Arabic poetry (Al-halhooli, et. al., 2017), in Eloise Greenfield's poems (Al Subhi, 2009), in Osundare's poems (Okunowo, 2012) and in selected poems of Msimang (Thwala, 2017). The present study is therefore a modest contribution that aims at examining the use of parallelism in Philip Umeh's *Ambassadors of Poverty*.

2.3 Corruption in the Socio-political Context

Corruption is an age-long phenomenon which transcends cultural, educational, religious and political boundaries. It is multifaceted in nature because it manifests in all aspects of human activities. The term *corruption* originates from the Latin word *comrumpere*. The Latin word *com* means *with* or *together* while *rumpere* means *to break*. From the etymological sense, corruption is construed as a form of dishonesty carried out by an individual who is entrusted with authority. There exists a plethora of definitions for corruption which are influenced by varied perspectives such as economics, political science, anthropology, sociology, history, organization studies, international business, business ethics, psychology, and philosophy (Anderson and Marcouiller, 2002; Breit, Taro & Olaison, 2015). Despite the multiple perspectives on the definition of corruption, the present study adopts the sociological/socio-political perspective where corruption is construed as a societal or a political misnomer perpetuated by a social or a political leader for their personal gain to the disadvantage of the public good. This corroborates Iyanda's (2012) postulation that corruption is the unlawful use of official power or influence by an official of government or a leader either to enrich or further their course at the expense of the public, in contravention of their oath of office and/or contrary to the conventions or laws that are in force. It is therefore quite paradoxical for a continent such as Africa which used to be known for its highly strict adherence to cultural values to be touted with corruption. Igbolin (2015) opines that in the precolonial days, African leaders were responsible and responsive to their subjects as much as possible and were never said to be corrupt because their operations were guided by communal spirits. However, Mpotsiah (2018) debatably traces the root of corruption in Africa to the insurgence of colonial authority. Upon arrival in the coast of Africa, the colonial

authority used “material inducement to compel” African traditional authorities “and administrators to collaborate with them in the pursuit of their colonial project of dominating and exploiting their own people” (Mulinge & Lesetedi 1998, p. 87). This weakened and destroyed Africa’s highly strict adherence to cultural values therefore, providing a fertile ground for the growth of corrupt activities in Africa. The rise in corruption in Africa has therefore drawn the attention of poets to deal with this canker in their works and Philip Umeh's *Ambassadors of Poverty* is no exception.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The analysis of language can be carried out from various theoretical perspectives. As such there exist a plethora of linguistic theories available to linguists for analysing linguistic data. Among the numerous theories available, the present study is theoretically framed by the linguistic and stylistic categories theory by Leech & Short (2007). It serves a heuristic purpose which enables linguistic researchers to gather data on a fairly systematic basis. Secondly the theory is common to those who have basic familiarity with the use of language. As a stylistically oriented framework, the linguistic and stylistic categories framework analyses ‘the use of language by a given person, in a given context for a given purpose’ (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 9). The devices that signal the style of a writer are called *stylistic devices*. These devices encode sufficient and justifiable communicative functions. The theory holistically stratifies stylistic devices into four main categories namely the lexical, grammatical, figures of speech, and cohesion and context categories.

Considering the holistic nature of the framework, researchers may only base their studies on specific aspects of the framework to achieve specific goals of their studies. It is in this light that the current study employs the figures of speech category of the framework since it caters for the analysis of parallelism and forms of semantic deviation. This category deals with foregrounded features in a text that have departed from the norms of communication by means of language code. The figures of speech category is organised into three sub-categories namely grammatical and lexical schemes, phonological schemes and tropes (Leech & Short, 2007). Grammatical and lexical schemes cater for the formal and structural repetitions in language such as anaphora and parallelism. It accounts for various paradigmatic relationships such as synonymous relationships, antonymous relationships, contextual conditioning, coupling and other relationships between repeated or similar linguistic structures. Phonological schemes drift from the structural patterning of language to look at the use of sound devices in a text and the underlying stylistic effect carried by these devices. Tropes are used to alter or change the meaning of sentences in different ways by the artistic use of words. This framework best fits the present study because the analysis of parallel structures falls under the strand of grammatical and lexical schemes while the analysis of semantic deviations falls under tropes. The study therefore examines stylistic significance underpinning the use of parallelism and semantic deviation in the poem *Ambassadors of Poverty*.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study is an exploratory qualitative study in nature which aids the researchers in providing illustrative samples of parallel structures and semantic deviations in order to establish the stylistic value encoded in such structures. The study adopts Philip Umeh’s poem, *Ambassadors of Poverty* as its primary source of data. The poem is made up of 92 lines which are stratified into nine (9) stanzas. To rationalize the choice of the poem, the researcher identified varied forms of parallel structures as well as forms of semantic deviation which call for linguistic attention in order to identify the encoded stylistic and linguistic relevance underpinning the dominant use of such structures. The study is underpinned by the linguistic and stylistic categories theory by Leech & Short (2007). It serves as the main

analytical framework within which the parallel structures and forms of semantic deviation are analyzed. The code-recode strategy was employed in the study. In using this strategy, the researchers first of all coded the parallel structures and forms of semantic deviations in the poem and recoded them after every two days for two consecutive weeks in order to deal with possible errors and omissions in the coding process. To analyse the data, the study applied the following stages in textual analysis as proposed by Cohen (2007:470), namely: (1). "Generating natural units of meaning", (2). "Classifying, categorizing and ordering these units of meaning", (3). "Structuring narratives to describe the contents of the text or speech", and (4). "Interpreting the data". In line with Cohen's (2007) assertion for textual analysis, parallel structures and forms of semantic deviation were identified, classified and used as illustrations to back the analysis in the interpretation of the data.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first part of the analysis identifies and discusses some parallel structures used in the poem while the second part of the analysis identifies and discusses instances of the use of forms of semantic deviation.

5.1 Analysis of Parallelism

This section of the analysis presents the analysis and discussion of the parallel structures identified in the poem *Ambassadors of Poverty*. Various parallel structures in the form of prepositional phrases, noun phrases, simple and complex sentences are analysed to unearth the stylistic implications and messages contained in them. The analysis is backed by textual illustrations from the poem.

Without motive, without vision, without mission **line 67**

The parallel structures in the line above are made up of the same syntactic structure in that, they are all prepositional phrases with the structure *preposition + noun*. In the structures, the nouns are all preceded by the preposition *without*. The use of *without* is foregrounded by its graphological arrangement. All the nouns used are singular in form. Phonologically, the three lexical items share the same stress pattern (stress isochronicity) with the stress placed on the first syllable in all three lexical items *motive* /'məʊtɪv/ *mission* /'mɪʃ(ə)n/ and *vision* /'vɪʒ(ə)n/. They are also disyllabic in terms of syllabification. Semantically, the lexical items *motive*, *mission* and *vision* are related synonymously, having the same feature /+intention/. All the structures in the line above begin with the preposition *without* which reinforces a lack of something. The nouns in the phrases *motive*, *vision* and *mission* are words that represent a mental direction towards an accomplishment and their absence indicate a gross loss of hope and focus. The differences in these parallel structures are found in the individual meanings of the nouns *motive*, *vision* and *mission*. *Motive* refers to a reason for doing something, *vision* means foreseeing things and *mission* refers to a task to be accomplished. The words *motive*, *vision* and *mission* are therefore contextually conditioned as synonyms referring to future plans thereby imposing equal significance on the words. This parallel structure is stylistically used to add another dimension to the definition of who the *Ambassadors of Poverty* are. It identifies the *abled-bodied men* who are strong enough to fend for themselves but due to lack of purpose and direction in life allow politicians to use them to unleash violence on their political foes so they (politicians) can remain in power. This is corroborated by Robert & Anura (2018, p. 13) who aver that "As a result of the ugly situation, the impoverished poor resort to worthless and ill-living, yielding to the exclusive whims and caprices of the dubious inhuman leaders and elites". These *able-bodied men* are also classified as *Ambassadors of*

Poverty because they also contribute to the woes of the African. In effect, anyone who contributes to the political woes of the African can be classified as an *Ambassador of Poverty*.

<i>death traps for roads</i>	line 36
<i>Mud for water, candle for light</i>	line 37
<i>Underneath trees for schools</i>	line 38
<i>Rats for protein</i>	line 39
<i>Fasting as food</i>	line 40

The parallel structures in the lines above are similar in the sense that they are all noun phrases. They have the structure *noun + preposition + noun* respectively. The syntactic similarity in the structures translates into some form of semantic similarity where the nouns preceding *for* and *as* in all structures are contextually conditioned as synonyms as well as the nouns that come after the preposition *for* and *as*. The nouns *rats*, *mud*, *candle*, *traps*, *trees* and *fasting* are contextually conditioned as harmful or partially-important elements to human existence in relation to their roles and cannot replace the basic necessities of human life. For instance, *rats* are disgusting and cannot be used as a source of protein, *mud* contains impurities and cannot be used as water for human consumption, *candle* provides temporary light and cannot last as compared to electricity, *traps* are dangerous to human lives, *trees* cannot provide permanent shelter for learning as school buildings do and *fasting* indicates the absence and avoidance of food and cannot therefore be used as food. The poet therefore uses these nouns to foreground how deprived and impoverished the African people are due to the negligence and callousness on the part of their leaders. On the other hand, the nouns *protein*, *water*, *light*, *roads*, *schools* and *food* are contextually conditioned as synonyms under the general semantic feature */+basic necessities/*. The stylistic relevance of these parallel nouns is to contextually contrast the harsh inhumane conditions of the African people to the accepted living conditions for humans. The contrast between these two groups of nouns foregrounds the deplorable condition of the African caused by the negligence of their leaders.

<i>Ambassadors of poverty are</i>	line 1
<i>The corrupt masters</i>	line 2
<i>Ambassadors of poverty are</i>	line 19
<i>The dubious-sit-tight 'patriots'</i>	line 20
<i>Ambassadors of poverty are</i>	line 28
<i>The political elites</i>	line 29
<i>Ambassadors of poverty are</i>	line 42
<i>The rancorous elites</i>	line 43
<i>Ambassadors of poverty are</i>	line 56
<i>The round trippers,</i>	line 57
<i>Ambassadors of poverty are</i>	line 65
<i>The able-bodied men</i>	line 66

The parallel structures above are made up of the structure *SVC*. The *subjects* and *complements* are both noun phrases linked by the linking verb *are*. There is a repetition of the subjects *Ambassadors of poverty* and the verb *are*. The relevance of the repetition of the *subjects* and *verbs* in the structures seeks to foreground the *Ambassadors of poverty* as the focus of the discussion. The complements are in a paradigmatic relationship because they are all noun phrases with the structure (*Det + Adj. + Noun*). Secondly, the head nouns in the complements (*elites*, *trippers* and *masters*) are all in the plural form which presents a graphological and phonological sameness on these nouns indicating that the *Ambassadors of poverty* refer to a group of people and not just a single person. The

similarity in the grammatical structure of the complements translates into a semantic similarity thereby considering the phrases *political elites*, *rancorous elites*, *round trippers*, *dubious-sit-tight elites*, *abled-bodied trippers* and *corrupt masters* as contextually conditioned synonyms under the general semantic feature [+ *negative acts*] referring to diverse descriptions of who the *Ambassadors of poverty* are. This stylistically foregrounds the identity of the *Ambassadors of poverty* as the political leaders and unveils their negative attitudes (dubious, corrupt etc.) which impoverish their own people.

<i>Ambassadors of poverty are</i>	line 76
<i>All of us whose in-actions</i>	line 77
<i>Reduce their peoples' expectation to nothingness</i>	line 78

<i>Ambassadors of poverty are</i>	line 83
<i>All of us whose in-actions</i>	line 84
<i>Steal our collective joy</i>	line 85

The sentences above are parallel because they have a syntactic similitude made up of the structure SVC. The subjects are semantically and syntactically the same because they are total repetitions. The sameness in the syntax and the semantics of the subjects seeks to lay emphasis on the fact that it is no other group but the *Ambassadors of poverty* who are referred to. Both structures also contain the linking verb *are* which links the subjects in the structures to their complements. The repetition of the present tense verb *are* “suggests that corruption is a generational canker and, it therefore does affect anyone after having secured power from the people” (Mpotsiah, 2018, p. 44). The complements are both relative clauses. There is a repetition of the expression *whose actions and in-actions* in the complements. The clauses *reduce their people's expectation to nothingness* and *steal our joy* are the parts of the sentences that are not totally repeated. The words *steal* and *reduce* are in a paradigmatic relationship because they are both verbs occurring in a similar structure. The verbs *reduce* and *steal* are therefore contextually conditioned as synonyms in the parallel structures under general semantic feature /+*negative attitude*/. The syntactic similarity in these verbs therefore translates into a semantic similarity therefore foregrounding the effects of the activities of the *Ambassadors of poverty* on their people.

5.2 Analysis of Forms of Semantic Deviation

This section of the analysis examines the forms of semantic deviation identified in the poem. It centers around the analysis of forms of semantic deviation such as metaphors, personification, irony, sarcasm, oxymoron, paradox and symbolism.

5.2.1 Oxymoron and Paradox

Oxymoron/Paradox is a form of semantic deviation in which two contradictory words or statements are placed side by side to present two contrasting aspects of the same idea. Oxymoron/paradox may be used to achieve the effect of sarcasm. The poet in stanza two makes use of a number of oxymorons and paradoxes. For instance, the placement of the words *The dubious-sit-tight and 'patriots'* side by side in line 20 has an oxymoronic effect. This is because a *patriot* who is supposed to be actively committed and loyal to a particular cause of action is said to be dubious and irresponsible at the same time. Another use of oxymoron is realized in the phrase *unseen goods and services* as used in line 59. Goods cannot be invisible but the persona avers that these African leaders are *The elusive importers of unseen goods and services*. These imported goods and services are so insignificant that they are unseen (unnoticed) by the people because the leaders (importers) have used them for their private gains hence the people's inability to feel/see any impact of the imported goods in

their lives. The paradox in the line 15 *Position occupants and enemies of service* is established based on the fact that people who occupy positions are supposed to serve the good of others but the contrasting statement follows up that these position occupants are *enemies of service*. This therefore construes the African politician as one who just occupies an office but fails to do what is expected of that office. Literally, one would work towards the progress of his office and not work against it. The poet therefore makes use of paradoxes and oxymorons to reveal the double standards of the African leaders/politicians which construe them as untruthful and disloyal. This juxtaposes what is expected of the African leaders against what they actually do. The use of paradoxes and oxymorons in the poem heavily contributes to highlighting the theme of corruption and negligence.

5.2.2 Metaphor

A metaphor is a form of semantic deviation which compares one entity to another. The poem contains a substantial number of metaphors. To start with, the title of the poem *Ambassadors of Poverty* in itself is a metaphor. The title of the poem is used to refer to the corrupt leaders who pose as saints but are evil in themselves. The poet therefore spends time in ascribing a plethora of qualities to *The Ambassadors of Poverty*. He clearly identifies who the ambassadors of poverty are in stanza 4 line 1 which states, *Ambassadors of poverty are the political elites*. The source domain for this metaphor is *Ambassadors of poverty* while the target domain is *the political elites*. The poet further maintains the source domain of the metaphor but relates it to different target domains in order to identify the multidimensional attitudes of African leaders/politicians. The poet further uses other target domains in metaphors to unveil corrupt nature of African leaders such as *Ambassadors of poverty are the rancorous elites*, *Ambassadors of poverty are the round tippers*, *Ambassadors of poverty are the dubious-sit-tight elites* and *Ambassadors of poverty are the corrupt masters*. Through the use of these metaphors, the persona construes African leaders as the cause of all the economic, social and political challenges faced on the African continent which goes to buttress the theme of corruption and negligence in the poem. Other metaphors such as *mowing down their own*, *for harvest of dollars as import*, *Steal our collective joy* and *Under the weight of poverty* are also used. These metaphors are used to compare the treatment meted out by African leaders to their people construed in how a mower cuts grass without any pity or consideration, money represented by dollars is illegally hoarded as though they were harvested crops, joy construed as a concrete object which can be stolen and poverty presented as a heavy object. These metaphors are used as lens to magnify the effect of the corrupt practices of African leaders on their people which advances the theme of corruption, cruelty and the insensitivity of leadership to the lead in Africa.

5.2.3 Personification

Personification is a form of semantic deviation which construes things or ideas as if they were living things (person or animal) by associating animate attributes to them. In the poem, the persona uses personification in order to foreground the effects of the intensity of the actions of the corrupt African leaders/politicians. In stanza 1, the personification *killing their future* is used to present the future of the masses as though it were a living thing that could be killed. This helps the persona to throw light on the concrete effect of the corrupt practices of the politicians on the future of their country. If the future is killed, it therefore signals a complete loss and distraction of hope for the masses. Again, in stanza 1, the personification *Having been defeated by poverty*, is used to project poverty as a human being or living thing that has the ability to fight. This personification presents poverty as a victor who overcomes the masses due to the corrupt practices of their leaders. The continent is therefore in a state of total penury due to the problem of poor leadership and mismanagement

of resources. The imposition of animate qualities on inanimate entities in the poem helps the poet to project the theme of economic hardship.

5.2.4 Sarcasm and Irony

Irony is a form of semantic deviation that is used to indicate the opposite of what one actually means. It establishes a discrepancy between what is said and what is actually implied. Irony can be used to achieve sarcastic effects. Sarcasm is the use of irony to make a bitter comment to wound the feelings of a person. Irony is used to shower praises on African leaders which in actual sense are 'depraises' through the use of the lines *Ambassadors of poverty are the 'saviours' of the people, Office loafers in the guise of workers and Barons of incompetence*. The persona refers to African politicians as 'saviours' of the people but puts the word *saviour* in quotation marks in order to create some form of graphological deviation which signals that the word *saviours* has a different contextual meaning. The persona then follows up with the actual description of African politicians/leaders as *Office loafers in the guise of workers and Barons of incompetence*. The irony here is that a *saviour* seeks the good of others but the *saviour* used in this context rather seeks the downfall of his people. This is a sarcasm which mocks African leaders who pretend to be serving the interest of their people yet are very selfish, corrupt and negligent as confirmed by Robert & Anura (2018, p. 14) who posit that "Umeh, satirises the political elite, stressing that their despicable irresponsibility has given birth to numerous socio-political problems that bedevil the nation and its people".

5.2.5 Symbolism

Symbolism refers to the use of an object, person, place or event to represent an idea. The poem under analysis is replete with quite a number of symbols. For instance, *Whiteman's machine* is used to symbolize weapons of mass destruction which are imported by politicians to cause havoc during political campaigns and in times of crisis. *Kleptomanaic fingers* is used as a symbol for embezzlement and theft. This depicts the tendencies of leaders stealing and embezzling public funds to enrich themselves and impoverish the masses. The word *anus* symbolizes abandonment. So, in the human system, it is the outlet for abandoned stuff from the human body such as fecal matter. This is used in the poem to refer to the socially and economically abandoned masses. *Black patronage* is used as a symbol of illegality. This has to do with the bribes received that constitute the wealth of the politicians. *Merchants of loot* is also used to represent thieves which refers to the corrupt politicians who loot the public purse through various illegalities. Generally, symbolism was employed in the poem to construe a pictorial view and concretise the corrupt nature of the African politician and how they neglect the welfare of the people who voted them into power. This advances the theme of corruption and negligence in the poem.

6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of parallelism and forms of semantic deviations in the poem has demonstrated that there exists a nexus between literary works and issues which affect the daily lives of people in society. The poet makes effective use of parallelism in the form of noun phrases, prepositional phrases, simple and complex sentences in the poem to foreground the unfair treatment African leaders unleash on their people resulting in the pathetic socio-economic conditions of the African people. Forms of semantic deviation such as metaphor, personification, irony, sarcasm, paradox, oxymoron and symbolism are also used to achieve varied stylistic effects. Irony and sarcasm are used to tease African leaders who pretend to be serving the interest of the people yet are very selfish, corrupt and negligent; paradox and oxymoron are used to unearth the double standards of African leaders/politicians which construe them as untruthful and disloyal; personifications are employed to impose animate qualities on inanimate entities/activities in order to project the theme of economic hardship;

metaphors are used to magnify the effect of the corrupt practices of African leaders on their people which advances the theme of corruption and cruelty while symbolisms are used to construe a mental picture of the corrupt nature of African politicians/leaders. The study concludes that literary works such as poems are potent instruments that are subtly used to expose and condemn the ills of society.

6.1 Recommendations for Further Research

This study adequately conducts a stylistic analysis of parallelism and semantic deviation in Philip Umeh's *Ambassadors of Poverty*. African poems make a dominant use of parallelism yet literature reveals that there exist few studies on the analysis of parallelism in African poems. More attention should therefore be devoted to the analysis of the semantic implications encoded in the use of parallel structures in African poetry. Other studies could also carry out a comparative study on the use of parallelism in African and non-African poems. The study of parallelism could also be extended to anthems, political speeches and academic discourse. This will help broaden the depth of knowledge on the use of parallelism in texts. Regarding semantic deviation, future studies could examine the effectiveness of the use of semantic deviation in poetry juxtaposed with other forms of deviation.

6.2 Implications for Theory, Research and Practice

The study has implications for theory, research and practice (Africans and their leaders). Regarding theory, the use of the linguistic and stylistic categories framework in the study presents the theory as a suitable linguistic theory that can be used to unearth the construal of various ills in society which includes corruption in literary works. In terms of literature, the study is a modest contribution to studies on parallelism in poetry. It will also have considerable significance for the poem *Ambassadors of Poverty* since it adds a different dimension to previous studies. The study will also serve as a valuable teaching material for the teaching of Stylistics which will guide students as to how to carry out analysis of stylistic devices in poems. This will aid students and researchers replicate the analysis in this paper on other literary texts. For poets, the findings of the present study juxtaposed with findings of previous studies establish that different stylistic devices can be used to achieve the varied purposes. Writers/poets therefore have at their disposal to choose which stylistic devices to use in order to present their ideas in their works. To Africans and their leaders, the study frowns on corruption whether practiced by leaders or their followers. It aptly unearths the teeming and rippling effect of corruption on the continent of Africa and Nigeria to be precise in order to draw the attention of African leaders to desist from the act of corruption. The study also appeals to the masses in Africa to find something doing so that they will not serve as instruments in the hands of corrupt politicians. If these appeals are adhered to, it will help the African continent to develop and catch-up with other developed countries in the world.

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APPENDIX

Ambassadors of Poverty by Philip Obioma Chinedu Umeh

Ambassadors of poverty are 1
The corrupt masters of the economy
with their heads abroad and
Anus at home
Patriots in reverse order
Determined merchants of loot
Who boost the economy of the colonial order
To impoverish brothers and sisters at home.

Ambassadors of poverty are 9
The 'saviours' of the people
Office loafers in the guise of workers
Barons of incompetence
With kleptomaniac fingers
And suckling filaments
Position occupants and enemies of service
Locked in corrosive war of corruption
With their peoples' treasury
And killing their future.

Ambassadors of poverty are 19
The dubious-sit-tight 'patriots'
Frustrating the corporate will of their followers
The beleaguered, hungry and famished
Owners of the land People priced out of their conscience and power
Incapacitated by their destitution
Unable to withstand the temptation
Of crispy mint and food aroma.

Ambassadors of poverty are 28
The political elites
In air-conditioned chambers
And exotic cars
With tearful stories of rip-off
Tucked away from
Their impoverished constituencies
Lying prostrate
With death traps for roads
Mud for water, candle for light
Underneath trees for schools
Rats for protein
Fasting as food
And alibi as governance.

Ambassadors of poverty are 42
The rancorous elites
In battle of supremacy

For the control of power
And their people' wealth
Mowing down their own
With whiteman's machine
Oiled by the prosperity of black patronage
Counterpoised by deprivations
As the corpses of their able-bodied men
Women and children lie unmourned
In shallow graves
In their fallow farm lands Long abandoned.

Ambassadors of poverty are 56
The round trippers,
The elusive importers
Of unseen goods and services
Sand inclusive
Who trip the economy down
By tricking form
For harvest of dollars as import
When their people see neither money nor food.

Ambassadors of poverty are line 65
The able-bodied men on the streets
Without motive, without vision, without mission
Men fit for the farms
But glued to the city
Hungry and desperate
Constituting willing tools in the hands
Of political overlords
For mission of vendetta
Against political foes
In their fight for power.

Ambassadors of poverty are 76
All of us whose in-actions
Reduce their peoples' expectation to nothingness
Those whose antecedents'
Have lost their spark to inspire
While their people lie in surrender
Having been defeated by poverty.

Ambassadors of poverty are 83
All of us whose in-actions
Steal our collective joy
Because of what we should do
Which we never do
As we bargain away
Our conscience in the market place
Under the weight of poverty
To assuage our hunger
And our masters will. 92