The Rhetoric of De/mystifying 'Presidential Mistakes' in Nigeria's Democratic Culture

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Abstract

This study examines the discourse/counter-discourse generated in/by Reuben Abati's treatise, proclaiming that some spiritual forces must have been responsible for presidential slip-ups characteristic of some successive Nigerian Presidents who have been operating in/from Aso Villa, Nigeria's seat of power. It juxtaposes the ideology (the presidents are not to blame for their gaffes) in Reuben Abati's treatise with the divergent ideologies embedded in the counter-discourses of two main rejoinders by Femi Adesina and Sonala Olumhense. It analyses the stylistic markers-cum-rhetorical strategies in the texts with the aim of uncovering or discovering their underlying ideologies. It applies Jeffries' Critical Stylistics, a model of Critical Discourse Analysis which postulates that to critically approach texts, there is need for the reader to engage some specific tools of analysis to get a clear sense of how texts may influence the ideological outlook of their recipients. It reveals that although the texts producers use language to configure realities and alternative realities relative to the workings of Nigeria's Presidency thereby demonstrating the ideational function of language, the texts are highly ideological and interestingly their ideologies are threaded through linguistic form and choice. Thus, it demonstrates that Critical Stylistics is a viable model to analyse texts with underlying ideologies, using stylistic tools.

Introduction

Seats of power across the world from the United States of America's White House to Britain's 10 Downing Street, from Brazil's Palacio da Alvorada to Singapore's The Istana, and from New Zealand's Government House to South Africa's Union Buildings are acclaimed enclaves from where policies and decisions shaping national interests both domestically and internationally originate. Such policies and decisions are sometimes subject to further ratifications by the countries' respective parliaments, though. Expectedly, any reference to Nigeria's Aso Villa located in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja should predominantly invoke an aura of state paraphernalia where the country's number one citizen wields power on issues relating to security, social development, economy and politics. Contrary to this basic assumption, Reuben Abati, former Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to former President Goodluck Jonathan, in a treatise 'The Spiritual Side of Aso Villa' of 14 October 2016 provides a rather weird metaphysical ambience of Nigeria's Aso Villa, claiming that some supernatural powers tend to incapacitate some Nigerian presidents in discharging their constitutional duties. Apparently, Abati's piece smacks of an attempt to explain away his former boss's (President Goodluck Jonathan's) alleged underperformance in office, which earned him the negative label 'Mr Clueless' by some Nigerian citizens who vehemently opposed his re-election bid in 2015.

Not only did Abati's piece generate a lot of furore in the social media, eliciting wild reactions from members of the Nigerian online community, it equally provoked rejoinders in the print media from political and public analysts who joined issue with him on his stance that certain spiritual forces which supposedly hover above Aso Villa stifle Nigerian presidents' capacity for performance. Interestingly, Femi Adesina Special, Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to President Muhammadu Buhari, rejoins Abati's piece in his treatise entitled 'The Unspiritual Side of Aso Villa', dispelling the aura of mysticism about Aso Villa and the superhuman figure cut for the residents. Also, Sonala Olumhense, a newspaper columnist, in his rejoinder entitled 'The Demons of President Goodluck Jonathan' pointedly dispels Abati's blaming supernatural forces for former President Jonathan's underperformance in office. To Olumhense, Jonathan's slip-ups in office stemmed largely from his inability to have matched a sense of responsibility with the desire for power acquisition.

Given the construction of knowledge by the text producers to configure the Aso Villa world in relation to the workings of the Presidency as well as the in/actions of the Presidents living in and discharging their official duties from the Villa, we cannot but share Foucault's (2003, pp. 33-34) view cited in Stoddart (2007, p. 205) that '[t]he delicate mechanisms of power cannot function unless knowledge, or rather knowledge apparatuses, are formed, organised, and put into circulation [...]'. Van Dijk (2006) also posits that discourses about specific events and actions, such as news reports, editorials, opinion articles and everyday stories about personal experience are ideological.

Ideologies, according to van Dijk (2006), are systems of beliefs shared by members of a social group, who also share other beliefs such as knowledge and attitudes. Thus, texts are inescapably ideologically structured and the ideological structuring of both language and texts can be related readily enough to the structures and processes of the origins of particular texts (Kress, 1985). Wodak (2001, pp. 2-3) shares a similar view submitting thus:

> A fully 'critical' account of discourse would thus require a theorisation and description of both the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of a text, and of the social structures and processes within which individuals or groups as social historical subjects, create meanings in their interaction with texts [...].

Van Dijk (2006, p. 124) argues that '[if ideologies are acquired, expressed, enacted and reproduced by discourse, this must happen through a number of discursive structures and strategies'. Arguing that ideology is threaded by our language use, Jeffries (2010) opines that the producer of any text is subject to the pressure of choosing the exact terms in which s/he frames the text, noting that this (linguistic) choice whether made consciously or unconsciously and at the whim of dominant pressures, is always ideologically loaded and may also be ideologically manipulative.

In the present study, we attempt a critical-political discourse analysis of the texts produced by the trio of Reuben Abati, Femi Adesina and Sonala Olumhense relative to their conceptions of the reasons for underperformance in Nigeria's presidency, following van Dijk's (1997, p. 12) view that '[...] that critical-political discourse analysis deals especially with the reproduction of political *power, power abuse* or *domination* through political discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance'. Significantly, it is imperative that we justify why we consider the texts we analyse in this study as adequate objects of study that could fall within the purview of Political Discourse Analysis (PDA). Wodak and de Cillia (2006, p. 713) posit that what counts as politics and political action is a key issue within research on language and politics.

Although politics is generally conceived to comprise the actions and practices of professional politicians, formal political institutions, and citizens who participate in the political process, Chilton and Schäffner (1997, p. 212) argue that the designation of 'political' results from a process of politicisation whereby social actors, phenomena, institutions, and communicative acts are rendered as potentially political. According to Chilton and Schäffner (1997), this process involves viewing communicative behaviour in terms of four functions: coercion, resistance⁄opposition, dissimulation, and legitimation. This conception of politicisation, Muntigl (2002) cited in Dunmire (2012, p. 738) argues, is needed to expand the 'conceptual horizon of politics' of political discourse beyond studies of 'stable, rigid forms of political actions' and media representations of political action.

To Muntigl (2002), politics is a set of discursive practices that do political work. In view of Muntigl's (2002, p. 45) submission that Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) focuses on a myriad of 'contingent, alternative forms of doing politics' – a form of sub-politics that the process of 'repoliticisation' has made possible, we consider the texts we analyse in the present study political because they serve as a site of struggle, 'a semantic space in which meanings are produced and/or challenged' (Seidel, 1985, p. 45). Hence, we intend to achieve the following objectives: (i) to analyse the stylistic markers appropriated in the texts to reinforce the ideologies therein; (ii) to examine some rhetorical strategies deployed in the texts in the staging of ideologies; and (iii) to compare and contrast the patterns of stylistic markers-cum-rhetorical strategies deployed by the text producers to transmit, reinforce, or inculcate ideologies in the reader.

Following this introductory background are five other sections of the study in this order: motivation for the study, methodology, theoretical framework, analysis and discussion, and conclusion.

Motivation for the Study

Studies in Political Discourse Analysis (PDA), particularly in Nigeria have focused largely on military coup speeches/announcements (Abaya and Mohammed, 2010; Enyi, 2016), Independence Day broadcasts of presidents and heads of state (Uduma, 2011/2012, Olaniyan, 2015), and discursive practices in the speeches of notable Nigerian political figures (Koutchadé, 2015; Sharndama and Mgbemena, 2015; Ashipu and Odey, 2016; Kamalu and Iniworikabo, 2016). Others are: language use in inaugural speeches of Nigerian civilian presidents and governors (Sharndama, 2015; Ademilokun, 2015a; Koussouhon and Dossoumou, 2015; rhetoric of political campaigns in general elections (Ademilokun and Taiwo, 2013; Ademilokun, 2015b); Wayar, 2015), and concession vs. victory speeches of political contestants (Okoye and Mmadike, 2016; Ademilokun, 2016).

In all of these studies, scholars have paid attention only to the texts produced by aspiring and actual political office holders at different times in Nigeria's political history. Interestingly, they have not attempted to explore the political rhetoric of presidential media aides who are usually saddled with the responsibility of projecting the mind of the president, clarifying socio-political and economic issues/policies and in some instances striving to explain away the president's gaffes. Thus, the present researchers are motivated to explore the extraordinary texts produced by two presidential media aides and one notable newspaper columnist in the Nigerian print media as to what could be the possible reasons for presidential mistakes in Nigeria's democratic culture. In so doing, the study brings to the fore the rhetoric of de/mystifying presidential slip-ups in Nigeria, a subject which more often than not has been on the fringes of political discourse in Nigeria.

Methodology

Reuben Abati's 'The Spiritual Side of Aso Villa' was sourced from the *Guardian Newspaper* 14 October 2016. Femi Adesina's and Sonala Olumhense's rejoinders entitled 'The Unspiritual Side of Aso Villa' and 'The Demons of President Goodluck Jonathan' respectively were both sourced from *Sahara Reporters* 22 October 2016. While Reuben Abati's treatise serves as the anchor piece which triggered off a lot of rejoinders, we need to justify why we have chosen Femi Adesina's and Sonala Olumhense's rejoinders from the pack. As to the choice of Femi Adesina, his being the immediate successor of Reuben Abati in office, residing in Aso Villa and performing his official duties from there though serving another President, make him stand on the same pedestal with Reuben Abati in constructing knowledge about the workings of the Presidency and the ambience of Aso Villa.

We opted for Sonala Olumhense given his pedigree as a veteran in the Nigerian media space. A former Ombudsman, editorial page editor, and editorial board chairman of *The Guardian*, Olumhense is a foremost Nigerian journalist whose experience dates back to 1983 with his first columns 'These Times' and 'The Presidency' in *The Punch*. At present, he runs a syndicated column – Sonala Olumhense Syndicated (SOS) – by some Nigeria's best known newspaper columns and websites which include *The Guardian*, *Sunday Trust*, *Nigerian Observer* and *Sahara Reporters*. We were equally motivated to source Olumhense's treatise given the ideology embedded in the text on leadership and responsibility, which we consider instrumental to nurturing Nigeria's fledgling democracy.

In terms of the analytical methods adopted for the study, we employ both the descriptive and comparative methods of analysis. Given the trading of ideologies in the treatises, we attempt a descriptive analysis of the linguistic choices and rhetorical strategies deployed by the political communicators to thread ideologies in the respective texts. Beyond the descriptive and interpretative thrusts of our analysis, we consider it germane to employ a comparative method so as to interrogate the patterns of linguistic tools and rhetorical strategies deployed by the texts producers relative to the ideological leanings of their respective texts.

Theoretical Framework

Despite the interest of CDA scholars in investigating issues of language, power and ideology in texts, the consensus is that CDA has several approaches derived from quite different theoretical backgrounds, oriented towards very different data and methodologies (Wodak, 2002; Weiss and Wodak, 2003). The present study, working within the broader paradigm of CDA, adopts Jeffries' (2010) model of Critical Stylistics which is a synthesis of linguistic stylistics and CDA. Writing on the focus of stylistics, Simpson (2004, p. 2) explains:

Stylistics is a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to *language*. The reason why language is so important to stylisticians is because the various forms, patterns and levels that constitute linguistic structure are an important index of the function of the text. The text's functional significance as discourse acts in turn as a gateway to its interpretation. While linguistic features do not of themselves constitute a text's 'meaning', an account of linguistic features nonetheless serves to ground a stylistic interpretation and to help explain why, for the analyst, certain types of meaning are possible.

According to McRae and Clark (2004, p. 332), a further aspect of textual analysis with which some stylisticians concern themselves is the study of the extent to which interpretation is influenced by 'the perceived existence of tensions between the text and its reception in the wider *context* of social relations and socio-political structures in general: i.e., the ideology underlying the text'. Underlining the convergence of stylistics and CDA, McRae and Clark (2004, p. 322) opine thus:

Stylistic analysis thus becomes embedded within a framework of *critical discourse analysis* (CDA). In this way, explorations of authority, power, and inequality feature as part of stylistic analysis, which pays attention to the formal features of the text and its reception within a reading community in relation to ideology.

Thus, Critical Stylistics is hinged on CDA's application of general theories to explain the impacts texts can have against the background of the social and political contexts in which they are read, on the one hand, and stylistics' providing detailed tools of linguistic analysis for understanding how texts work, on the other hand. Critical Stylistics combines the strengths of these two approaches to uncover the deep-seated ideologies of everyday texts.

Critical Stylistics attempts to provide a range of tools relevant to the description of ideological basis of texts. Jeffries (2010, p. 11) cites Fairclough's (1989, p. 26) three 'dimensions', which he also calls the 'stages', of CDA:

Description is the stage which is concerned with formal properties of the text.
Interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction – with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation [...].

Explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context – which the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects.

Jeffries (2010, p. 4) submits that as a stylistician, her interest is in the first and second of Fairclough's (1989) stages, explaining that her model for the purposes of doing Critical Stylistics is:

[...] to provide tools to analyse the different ways in which texts allow/ask us to conceptualise those topics they are addressing, and to provide some means of accessing this representational practice through the linguistic features that are already well-described in very many semantic-grammatical theories and models.

Generally, Jeffries' (2010) model of Critical Stylistics provides a set of tools which cover not only the ground suggested by Fairclough's (1989) 'stages' of CDA but also includes Fowler's (1991) modified functional model developed by M.A.K. Halliday and his colleagues which includes transitivity, modality and speech acts. Simpson's (1993) account of the modal system in English, his version of transitivity and his account of pragmatic analysis as well as his developing other tools of analysis such as construction of space and time in discourse, the presentation of speech and thought, among others, are also considered in Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics model.

In addition to adopting some of these traditional tools, Jeffries (2010) proposes a new set of tools which are geared towards answering the question of what any text is 'doing'. The taxonomy of the tools in Jeffries' (2010) model of Critical Stylistics is as follows:

- Naming and Describing
- Representing Actions/Events/States
- Equating and Contrasting
- Exemplifying and Enumerating
- Prioritising
- Assuming and Implying
- Negating
- Hypothesising
- Presenting the Speech and Thoughts of other Participants
- Representing Time, Space and Society
  (Jeffries, 2010, p. 15)

Relevant aspects of these tools will be applied in the present study to unpack how the participants appropriate language resources and rhetorical strategies to configure realities versus alternative realities of Aso Villa and the workings of Nigeria's Presidency which they seek to mystify or demystify.

Analysis and Discussion

Given the tenets of Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics model we have espoused above, the present section focuses on the appropriation of aspects of the theoretical orientation to demonstrate the precise ways in which the texts we analyse in this study may transmit, reinforce or inculcate ideologies in the reader. The section is divided into three sub-sections, each of which will be devoted to analysing each of the three treatises.

'When Presidents Make Mistakes [...]': Reuben Abati's Rhetoric of Power and Mysticism

Leadership failure by any stretch of the imagination could be adduced to individuals' ineptitude or systemic lapses. But when a presidential spokesperson produces a text with the ideology that there must be something supernatural about power and closeness to it, the question of which narrative voice(s) to opt for then becomes stylistic as seen in Reuben Abati's submission below:

> People tend to be alarmed when the Nigerian Presidency takes certain decisions. They don't think the decisions make sense. Sometimes, they wonder if something has not gone wrong with the thinking process at that highest level of the country. I have heard people insist that there is some form of witchcraft at work in the country's seat of government. I am ordinarily not a superstitious person, but working in the Villa, I eventually became convinced that there must be something supernatural about power and closeness to it. (*The Guardian Online*, 14 October 2016)

The third person narrative voice (heterodiegetic narrative) as well as the omniscient point of view used by the text producer is stylistically striking. Abati starts off his treatise by deflecting the supernatural reasons for leadership failure in Nigeria's Presidency to a third person narrative voice – 'People tend to be alarmed [...]'; 'They don't think [...]'; '[...] they wonder [...]'; and '[...] people insist that [...]' – thereby achieving self-effacement. The nominal element 'people' in the first and fourth sentences above and the anaphoric use of the pronominal element 'they' in the second and third sentences stylistically serve to mediate Abati's thoughts on the metaphysical reasons for presidential mistakes.

Strategically, Abati later shifts to the first person narrative point of view (homodiegetic narrative) where he now joins his voice with the voice(s) of others in the fourth and fifth sentences: 'I have heard people insist [...]', 'I am ordinarily not a superstitious person [...]', and 'I eventually became convinced [...]'. Although the text producer appears to have successfully shielded himself from being the proponent of this esoteric thinking about the reasons for leadership failure in Nigeria, the propensity for discourse domination and manipulation by presenting others' speech first is underlined by Jeffries (2010, p. 130) thus:

The power to represent the words and thoughts of others is potentially very manipulative of their ideologies as well those of the reader. Whilst many texts claim to represent 'faithfully' [...] the words of others, in fact there is *always* a gap between the original version and any quotation [...].

Hence, the use of free indirect speech (FIS) which 'has the potentially uncomfortable effect of merging the narrator's voice with that of the original speaker' (Jeffries, 2010, p. 133) is an analytical tool deployed by the text producer to transmit the ideology of the text – underperformance in Nigeria's Presidency is beyond the ordinary.

With a mystic atmosphere already painted of the political space, the reader would be curious to know how the Presidency is actually affected by the supposed spiritual forces in the Villa in discharging its constitutional duties and responsibilities. Abati writes:

When Presidents make mistakes, they are probably victims of a force higher than what we can imagine. Every student of Aso Villa politics would readily admit that when people get in there, they actually become something else. They act like they are under a spell. When you issue a well-crafted statement, the public accepts it wrongly. When the President makes a speech and he truly means well, the speech is interpreted wrongly by the public. When a policy is introduced, somehow, something just goes wrong. (*The Guardian Online*, 14 October 2016)

With the thematisation of the topic of discourse '[w]hen Presidents make mistakes' in the information structure of the first sentence above over any other information or comment, Abati employs the analytical tool which Jeffries (2010) refers to as 'prioritising'. Jeffries' (2010) terminology 'prioritising' resonates with what is known as 'topicalisation' or 'fronting' in traditional stylistic terms. Verma (1976, p. 26) states that one of the stylistic mechanisms by which an element is fronted for thematic prominence is called topicalisation or thematisation, defining it 'as a syntactic device which isolates one of the constituents of a sentence as 'topic' and shifts it to the sentence-initial position'. According to Ott (2009), stylistic fronting is an operation that fronts some element to a position immediately preceding the finite verb. So, the element that is fronted or topicalised is given prominence in the information structure of the sentence.

Having topicalised the issue, Abati now attempts to reinforce the ideology in the text by opting for the analytical tool of hypothesising. On the textual practice of hypothesising and its ideological workings, Jeffries (2010, p. 114) explains that: '[...] though we may tend to assume that most texts reflect the world as it is, many texts in fact reflect the speaker's or writer's view of how the world is or might be, how it ought to be or how they wish it was'. With regard to Abati's hypothesising in the excerpt above, we are interested in the discourse function of modality.

Hence, in the main clause that follows the thematised subordinate clause of time 'when presidents make mistakes [...]', the use of the modal adverb 'probably' is an example of what Jeffries (2010, p. 116) calls 'epistemic modality' which 'indicates the view of the speaker as to the likelihood of something happening/being true [...] but its main effect textually is to construct a potential view of the world that the reader/hearer may adopt or be influenced by'. Further, the text producer stylistically uses the analytical tool of presenting others' speech with the use of the free indirect speech (FIS) narrative style in the sentence: 'Every student of Aso Villa politics would readily admit that when people get in there, they actually become something else'. However, merging the voice of others with his voice in this sentence demonstrates the power of the one who controls the discourse. It smacks of discursive coercion to use the determiner 'every' when we know that this could not have been so.

Abati then engages the rhetorical practice of enumerating/exemplifying to give insight into the likelihood of certain spiritual forces' affecting presidential performance,   reeling off in a set of three stylistically significant antithetical structures government's intention/policy vs. public perception/reception/attitude: 'When you issue a well-crafted statement, the public accepts it wrongly. When the President makes a speech and he truly means well, the speech is interpreted wrongly by the public. When a policy is introduced, somehow, something just goes wrong'. The antithetical thrust of the structures is hinged on antonymous relations between certain lexical items that resonate with the primordial bipolar relation of opposites: 'right vs. wrong' or 'positive vs. negative' or 'good vs. bad' in popular discourses.

In all of these three antithetical structures, the text producer ascribes the good, right, and positive actions to the President with the use of the action verbs 'issue', 'makes', and 'introduce' as well as the adjective 'well-crafted' to qualify the noun 'statement'. Equally stylistic is the adverb 'truly', modifying the verb 'means' which is also modified by another adverb, 'well'. The collocation of the verb 'means' with the adverbs pre-modifying and post-modifying it intensifies the alluring image that the text producer paints of the Presidency and its perceived intentions and plans for the people. However, the adverb 'wrongly' is used to modify the verbs 'accept' and 'interpreted' which are used to configure the actions of the public in terms of perception of government's efforts. It is noteworthy that the relations between the Presidency and the public as portrayed by Abati is restricted to policies/pronouncements vis-a-vis their reception, and not moving beyond that realm to implementation and assessment.

One is therefore left to wonder what the missing gap could be between Nigerian presidents and the citizens, leading to communication breakdown. Could it be that the government information machinery grinds too slowly such that there is no adequate sensitisation of the populace? Abati sheds further light:

In our days, a lot of people used to complain that the APC people were fighting us spiritually and that there was a witchcraft dimension to the governance process in Nigeria. But the APC folks now in power are dealing with the same demons. (*The Guardian Online*, 14 October 2016)

What is particularly interesting about this excerpt is the text producer's stylistic use of the analytical tool of equating which is evidenced by the temporal deictic elements 'in our days' (time past) and 'now' (time present) in relation to the stifling forces in the presidential Villa which make the presidents underperform. In terms of employing the analytical tools of equating and contrasting for ideological purposes in the text, Jeffries (2010, p. 51) explains:

> If texts are involved in constructing some kind of version of the world for us to read/hear, then one of the things that they are likely to do is to tell us what they (or their authors) see as equivalent or what they see as contrasting.

In order to further drive the analytical tool of equating two different administrations in terms of underperformance and the probable mystical reasons responsible for it, the text producer uses the adverbial elements 'since Buhari assumed office' (present political dispensation) and 'under President Jonathan' (past political dispensation) as shown in the text below:

> Since Buhari government assumed office, it has been one mistake after another. Those mistakes don't look normal, the same way they didn't look normal under President Jonathan. I am therefore convinced that there is an evil spell enveloping this country. (*The Guardian Online*, 14 October 2016)

Abati's view in this excerpt as to the prevailing picture of presidential slip-ups in Nigeria's political culture and the underlying spiritual currents could be subjected to some further rhetorical enquiry, using Toulmin's argumentation model.

Toulmin (2003) argues that an assertion necessarily involves a claim and if the claim is challenged, we must be able to establish it and show that it was justifiable. To achieve this, Toulmin (2003, p. 90) explains thus:

> Unless the assertion was made quite wildly and irresponsibly, we shall normally have some facts to which we can point in its support: if the claim is challenged, it is up to us to appeal to these facts, and present them as the foundation upon which our claim is based. Of course we may not get the challenger even to agree about the correctness of these facts, and in that case we have to clear his [sic] objection out of the way by a preliminary argument [...].

The facts we appeal to as the foundation for the claim will be referred to as our data (D). Toulmin (2003) argues further that even after we have produced our data, we may be required to indicate its bearing on our conclusion. At this point, Toulmin (2003) argues that what are needed are general, hypothetical statements, which can act as bridges, and authorise the sort of step to which our particular argument commits us. Toulmin (2003) calls such a hypothetical bridge a warrant (W). When applied to Abati's argument, we come up with the argumentation structure below:
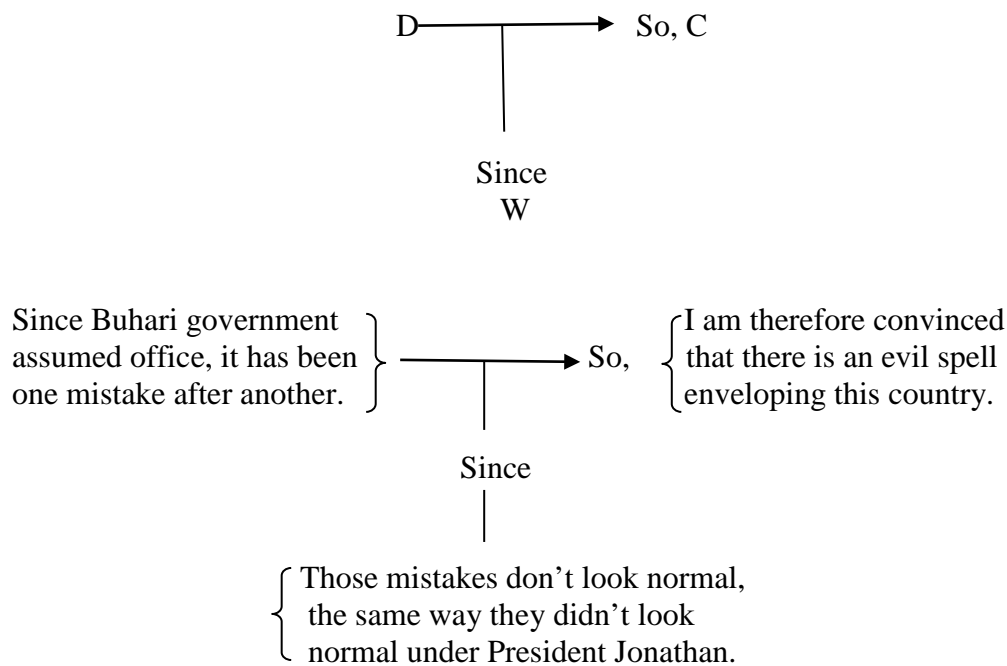
```
D ─────────────►  So, C
        │
        │
      Since
        W
```

```
Since Buhari government  ⎫                      ⎧ I am therefore convinced
assumed office, it has been  ⎬ ─────► So,  ⎨ that there is an evil spell
one mistake after another.  ⎭                     ⎩ enveloping this country.
                    │
                 Since
                    │
        ⎧ Those mistakes don't look normal,
        ⎨  the same way they didn't look
        ⎩  normal under President Jonathan.
```

Fig. 1: Illustration of Reuben Abati's Rhetoric of Power and Mysticism with Toulmin's Argumentation Model

The kind of argumentation put up by Abati is an example of an inductive argument which lacks strong/convincing premises to back up its claim/conclusion i.e., the claim/conclusion does not follow conclusively from the premises. The inductive, unlike the deductive argument therefore, provides a conclusion whose content exceeds that of its premises. Salmon (1963) explains that there are certain errors which can render inductive arguments either absolutely or practically worthless. Such errors are referred to as inductive fallacies. When an inductive argument is fallacious, its premises do not support its conclusion. The kind of fallacy committed by Abati in his argument is the fallacy of biased statistics which consists of 'basing an inductive generalisation upon a sample which is known to be unrepresentative or one which there is good reason to believe may be unrepresentative' (Salmon, 1963, p. 57). Assuming that President Goodluck Jonathan did not perform well in office and President Buhari his successor appeared to be slipping up, it is fallacious for Abati to adduce spiritual reasons for their inadequacies in office. More importantly, he has not been able to substantiate how spiritual forces stifle the samples in discharging their responsibilities.

How Femi Adesina in his treatise 'The Unspiritual Side of Aso Villa' creates an alternative reality to Abati's propositions is our concern in the next sub-section of the study.

'Chichidodo Presidents': Femi Adesina and the Ideology of Hypocrisy in the Corridors of Power

In Adesina's piece, we will focus mainly on the ideology of the hypocritical posture of some Nigeria's presidents who supposedly feel the torment of the corridors of power and yet would want to perpetuate themselves in office. In response to Abati's proposition of the prevalence of evil in Aso Villa, Femi Adesina retorts:

> If Aso Villa was such a haunted house, why then do most occupants like to stay put, right from the first tenant, Ibrahim Babangida, who was virtually forced to step aside in August 1993? And why did Goodluck Jonathan, Abati's principal, spend money in trillions (in different currencies of the world), just to perpetuate himself in a house that consumes its occupants? (*Sahara Reporters*, 22 October 2016)

The striking analytical tool employed in this excerpt is hypothesising. However, the construction of modal meaning is not realised by an auxiliary verb but by the 'if...., then...' conditional structure category (Jeffries, 2010, p. 118) used by the text producer to hypothetically construct an alternative reality of Aso Villa. The 'if..., then...' structure clearly underlines the incongruity between the sit-tight tendency of some presidents in the Villa and Abati's perceived view of the spiritual torment these political personages could experience. Equally stylistic about the 'if..., then...' structure is the way it is couched as a rhetorical question. In this way, the text producer seeks to reinforce the ideology of the reader by stoking their shared knowledge of the antecedents of the former occupants of the seat of power.

Further, the text producer uses the analytical tool of naming to underline the irony of seeing Aso Villa as 'a danger zone' and yet not desiring to vacate it even after the expiration of the occupant's tenure. Describing the occupants of the Villa by invoking the metaphor of tenancy conjures up the reality of occupying a Presidential Villa in established democracies around the world, as there are already constitutional provisions stipulating the number of terms or years to be spent in office. Regrettably, some African leaders would subvert constitutional provisions, staying in office till they are well stricken of age and are unable to perform their constitutional duties, only for them to hand over to their offspring or eventually die in office. Jeffries (2010) explains that one of the important ways in which naming can create ideological meaning in English texts is the question of whether other information is included within the boundaries of the noun phrase. In the present context, the use of the relative clause 'who was virtually forced to step aside in August 1993' to qualify 'Ibrahim Babangida' underlines the ideology of the hypocritical posture of 'president-tenants' in Aso Villa. The analytical tool of enumeration is equally employed with the naming of President Goodluck Jonathan as another occupant who wanted to stay put in office despite the perceived spiritual forces that supposedly hampered his performance. To further expose the ideology of hypocrisy which appears to underline Abati's proposition, Femi Adesina uses the appositive structure 'Abati's principal' to modify the noun 'Goodluck Jonathan'.

In all, the overriding sarcastic tone of the extract tends to expose the ideology of hypocrisy among political office holders and then conjures up in the reader's mind the image of chichidodo in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones Are not yet Born*. In the literary text, Armah uses the proverbial bird *chichidodo* which hates excreta but feeds on worms that breed in it as an analogy to configure the protagonist The Man who detests corruption but still feeds on the proceeds from his wife's corrupt practices. Then, if evil truly hampers presidential performance in Aso Villa and yet sitting presidents would wish to perpetuate themselves in office, they arguably cut the *chichidodo* figure.

Beyond the hypocritical posture of past presidents which Adesina tries to point out in Abati's text upon which he dispels any spirituality about presidential slip-ups, we will now consider Sonala Olumhense's creation of another alternative reality as to what could be responsible for presidential gaffes.

Matching the Allure of Power with Leadership Responsibility: Olumhense's Political Philosophy

Recall that the underlying ideology of Abati's text is that presidential slip-ups from Nigeria's seat of power are so grave that one cannot but finger some spiritual forces driving them. However, in Sonala Olumhense's rejoinder 'The Demons of President Goodluck Jonathan', the text producer seeks to provide an alternative reality to the representation of the political world in Abati's piece. Contrary to Abati's proposition that President Goodluck Jonathan's well-designed programmes and policies were not well received by the Nigerian people, Olumhense rejoins:

> A lot of Mr. Jonathan's initiatives were well-received. He did not run into trouble because they were poor. The devil, pardon the imagery, was always in his failure to implement. (*Sahara Reporters*, 22 October 2016)

The analytical tool of naming is employed by the text producer to quantify the noun head 'Jonathan's initiatives' in the nominal group, with the use of the determiner 'a lot'. The use of the determiner suggests that the problem with the Jonathan administration was not in policy formulation, as he actually formulated a number of policies. Arguing that a government is assessed based on actual implementation of policies and not on policy formulation, Olumhense uses the analytical tool of negation, saying: 'He did not run into trouble because they were poor'. On the textual practice of negation, Jeffries (2010, p. 106) writes:

> We tend to assume that most texts produce some kind of picture of the world as it is, or even as the speaker/writer thinks it is. However, a great deal of our communicative time is actually spent constructing and interpreting non-existent versions of the world which are created for a great many different reasons.

Hence, the use of the negative particle 'not' is stylistically significant, as the text producer prepares the ground to dispel the aura of mysticism woven around presidential slip-ups by Abati.

To create an alternative reality and inculcate the ideology that humans need to look inwards and engage in some reality check instead of blaming spiritual forces for their misfortunes, Olumhense goes ahead to use the analytical tool of either choosing to represent actions, events or states in configuring the problem with President Jonathan administration. Jeffries (2010, p. 37) explains that '[a] writer or speaker has the power to choose the words that suit her/his purpose most closely, and this includes the choice of a lexical verb which will present the situation in the way that the author (speaker) desires'. So, the choice of the verbal (copula) element 'was' to capture the alternative reality to Abati's mystical proposition is stylistic. Olumhense places emphasis on 'what simply was' (state) – 'The devil [...] was always in his failure to implement' – as opposed to 'what was being done' (action) – evil forces possessed Goodluck Jonathan and made him underperform. By opting for representing the state as opposed to the action, Olumhense's proposition counteracts Abati's reason for presidential slip-ups: the major reason for slip-up in the Presidency stems from the President's inability to match policy making or campaign promise(s) with action/implementation contrary to Abati's proposition that the public's poor reception of Jonathan's policies was the handiwork of evil forces.

It is interesting that Olumhense does not just make the proposition above. He actually goes ahead in the text to show how President Jonathan fell short of his targets. He writes:

> The Freedom of Information Act, for instance, was one of his early and celebrated efforts. But in practice, neither he nor any of his senior officials honoured it.
>
> Similarly, in July 2011, Mr. Jonathan announced an anti-corruption "war," saying he would begin with a comprehensive audit of the finances of all Federal Government ministries, departments, and agencies, with effect from 2007. For four years thereafter, he never implemented it. (*Sahara Reporters*, 22 October 2016)

In the above excerpt, the writer chooses the rhetorical strategy of exemplification to back up his proposition as to what led to Jonathan's failure in office. To make the text have power to influence the reader, he specifically mentions the Freedom of Information Act and the anti-corruption crusade. After topicalising the Freedom of Information Act policy in the first sentence, the text producer uses the adversative conjunction 'but' in the second sentence followed by the negative correlative conjunction 'neither ... nor' to intensify the reason he advances for the underperformance of President Goodluck Jonathan in office. Equally stylistic is the representation of temporal frames between the time of policy formulation (intent) in the adverb of time '[i]n July 2011' and the time of non-implementation (failure) '[...] four years thereafter'. Where and how did spiritual forces play a role in the slip-up should be the pertinent question the curious reader asks. It is on this note that Olumhense anchors his political teaching thus:

The truth is that power is a strange aphrodisiac which lures the unwary into forgetting that its flip side is responsibility. Ibrahim Babangida, Aso Rock's first occupant, didn't want to leave, neither did its most prominent occupiers so far: Sani Abacha and Olusegun Obasanjo. Are we to take it that the same gremlins that encouraged them to underperform and to betray also insisted that they must be forced to leave?

The essence of this excerpt is to demystify the workings of power in all their ramifications so that when 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely and supposedly mystically, too' as Abati paints in his excerpt, the discerning student of politics should be able to decipher where the missing link lies. To sell the text's underlying ideology that power is responsibility which must be seen to be performed, the text producer uses the analytical tool of naming. Power is equated metaphorically with an aphrodisiac. Metaphorically, power as an aphrodisiac could be possessive, hypnotising, intoxicating but the political office holder needs to engage in self-check and self-restraint so as to find out if s/he is fulfilling the (constitutional) responsibilities tied to her/his office. This hard truth is provided in the information embedded in the relative clause 'which lures the unwary into forgetting that its flip side is responsibility', qualifying the noun head 'aphrodisiac'.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to unpack the underlying ideologies in the texts produced by Reuben Abati, Femi Adesina and Sonala Olumhense on the sensitive issue of the possibility of some evil forces in Aso Villa being responsible for presidential slip-ups. In line with the tenets of Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics model, the study has tried to describe and analyse some significant analytical tools which underlie the ideologies embedded in the texts. From the analysis and discussion section of the study relating to the politicisation of issues in the texts, we can evaluate the extent to which we have met the objectives of the study and the applicability of the Critical Stylistics model to analysing texts which are ideologically structured.

We find out from the analysis and discussion that the ideologies in the texts are threaded through certain style markers and some rhetorical strategies which help to transmit, reinforce or inculcate them in the reader. From the stylistic markers of choosing the information to include in the nominal group (naming) to depicting a reality either as a state or as an action (representing actions/events/states), from topicalising issues of concern in the information structure of the sentence (prioritising) to the textual practice of negation (negating), from the rhetorical strategies of equating and contrasting to exemplification, and from enumeration to argumentation, we can conclude that the texts producers have been able to stylistically appropriate analytical tools which underlie the ideologies in their respective texts.

The stylistic markers and the rhetorical strategies serve as the conveyor belts with which the texts producers tend to transmit, reinforce or inculcate the texts' ideologies in the reader. We, however, subscribe to Jeffries' (2010) view that just as the stylistician should be concerned with stylistic choices, and the textual analysis which can illuminate the choices that a text producer has made, whether consciously or not, s/he should bear in mind that such an analytical focus is not a recipe for understanding the full impact of a text on a reader, because the background and experience of the reader will inform the impact. None the less, texts do indeed have some ideological contents which may or may not influence the reader in a range of ways. The tools we have analysed in this study will help the reader to discover those ideological contents.

In terms of the respective text producers' preference for certain analytical tools, the study reveals that Reuben Abati who offers a mystical reality of Aso Villa favours the analytical tools of representing others' thoughts and speeches, hypothesising, prioritising, and equating and contrasting. By opting for these analytical tools, he strives to transmit, reinforce or inculcate the ideology that in human affairs, misfortunes that befall people in their pursuit of certain goals in life and which inexorably they cannot comprehend are more often than not, at least from the African milieu, understood from the metaphysical perspective. However, Femi Adesina who first provides an alternative reality of Aso Villa and the unspiritual ambience opts mainly for the analytical tools of hypothesising and enumeration. In so doing, he tries to thread the ideology of hypocrisy that is embedded in his text. Finally, Sonala Olumhense who takes up the challenge of teaching on the workings of power for the enlightenment of the reader and for the political class in particular uses the analytical tools of negation, representing states rather than actions, naming and exemplification. With the use of these analytical tools, he tries to lend credence to the ideology of power as responsibility/accountability embedded in his text. Generally, representing others' thoughts and speeches, hypothesising, equating, enumeration and negating stand out as analytical tools in the texts produced by the trio.

Finally, in terms of the applicability of the Critical Stylistics model of CDA to the analysis of political discourse, we can see that employing a stylistic approach to Political Discourse Analysis validates van Dijk's (2006, p. 124) view that '[if ideologies are acquired, expressed, enacted and reproduced by discourse, this must happen through a number of discursive structures and strategies'. As our analysis has shown, we can conclude that Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics model provides a bridging theoretical underpinning for the stylistician-cum-critical discourse analyst in identifying ideologies in a text and in analysing and describing the stylistic markers-cum-rhetorical strategies which contribute to the text producer's task of seeking to transmit, reinforce or inculcate ideologies in the reader. Generally, the texts we have analysed in this study by using Jeffries' (2010) Critical Stylistics model demonstrate that stylistics as a branch of linguistics which is interested in the description of linguistic resources in texts, both literary and non-literary, can actually be employed to strengthen CDA which seeks to explain how ideologies are produced and understood in texts.

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