



## The Language of Labour and Productivity: A Stylistic Analysis of Niyi Osundare's *Harvest call* and *Ours to Plough, Not to Plunder*

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### Introduction

African poetry has long been a medium for socio-political and economic discourse, exploring issues such as labour, exploitation, resilience, and communal productivity. Poetry, specifically from the works of socially committed poets, serves as a voice for the oppressed and a platform for mobilisation, reflecting the realities of African societies where labour and economic production are fundamental to survival and identity. Niyi Osundare is one of African prolific poets whose works exemplify the dignity of labour, the exploitation of workers, and the responsibility of leadership in fostering productivity. His poetry is in tandem with Marxist concerns about class struggle, yet it is deeply rooted in African oral traditions, making his style both engaging and ideologically rich. In *Harvestcall* and *Ours to Plough, Not to Plunder*, Osundare examines themes of agricultural labour, economic production, communal effort, and the effects of mismanagement and exploitation. The study intends to do a stylistic analysis of *Harvestcall* and *Ours to Plough, Not to Plunder*, through lexical choices, imagery, repetition, and parallelism in order to unveil how language itself becomes an instrument of advocacy. This research exercise is significant because it tends to expand scholarship on African poetry as a tool for socio-economic discourse. It also deepens the understanding of how language constructs meaning in poetic works.

### Methodology

Through a qualitative descriptive stylistic analysis, dominant linguistic and stylistic features in the poems are purposively identified and analysed to unveil how these features contribute to thematic concerns of labour and productivity. Relevant excerpts from the poems are selected, SFL applied to the analysis of lexical choices, mood, and transitivity. Foregrounding theory applied to examine stylistic devices. Findings are then interpreted in based on the themes of labour and productivity. As such, adequate citation of sources is ensured to maintain academic integrity.

### Findings and Discussion

Findings reveal that Osundare's poetry contains a number of agricultural and economic vocabulary, reflecting deep engagement with themes of work, sustainability, and social responsibility. Parallel structures were also deployed to highlight the cyclical nature of labour and distinction between diligence and exploitation. The poet uses agricultural imagery, depicting the earth as alive and responsive to human effort throughout both poems, demonstrating a mutual dependence between workers and nature, the repeated focus on planting, ploughing, and harvesting presents work as a communal duty and a source of pride. Labour is portrayed as honourable and essential for survival. Themes of Diligence and Hard work; Exploitation and Inequality and; theme of Communal Effort and Resistance were exemplified. Osundare's *Harvest call* and *Ours to Plough, Not to Plunder* employ stylistic and linguistic choices to emphasise themes of labour, productivity, and economic justice. It thus submits that lexical and syntactic choices in the poems reinforce the reality of labour and exploitation.

### Conclusion

Through the use of imagery and metaphors, a vivid contrast between the dignity of labour and the injustice of exploitation is created. Hence, Osundare's stylistic approach resonates traditional African oral forms, his message then becomes both poetic and persuasive.

**Keywords:** Parallelism, Foregrounding theory, Metaphor, Productivity