



STYLISTIC PATTERNS OF FOREGROUNDING IN NIYI OSUNDARE'S WORKS

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ABSTRACT

The study of style and the language of literature are some of the most traditional applications of linguistics. At the present time, linguistic analysis of literature is one of the most active and creative areas of literary studies. Osundare's interest in innovative style is conveyed in his ardent interest in the use of language. The avalanche of critical responses to his style, and the diverse conflicting stances, as well as the influencing factors of its brilliance, relevance and success in part, necessitated this discourse. Attempt is thus made to sample some of the literary and oral devices the poet employs in his poetry. Osundare has in his own special way imbibed a stylistic feature which is a characteristic of sound employed in most of his poems, hence reducing their complexity. In being engaged in literary stylistic criticism, one may choose to view stylistics as the study of various styles foregrounded in various language uses.

INTRODUCTION

Among the various stylistic theories, foregrounding theory is probably the most common and powerful one in literature. It is very general to the extent that it resists definition. However, many stylisticians have attempted some working definitions. Foregrounding causes the reader "to draw attention from the putative paraphrasal meaning of a message, what is said to focus on the message itself and how it is said" (Fowler, 1998:98). Leech (1969) has applied the concept of foregrounding to poetry. He considers the foregrounded figures as 'linguistic deviation' (57). For him, a linguistic deviation is artistically significant when it communicates something that is intended by the author and it is judged or felt by the reader to be significant. According to him, it is a very general principle of artistic communication that, "a work of art in some way deviates from the norms which we as members of society, have learnt to expect in the medium used" (56). He believes that, what makes poetry is the linguistic deviations the poet manipulates in his poetry, and therefore, linguistic deviation is regarded by him as a means for "poetic creation". Poetic language differs, however from standard language in far more than word-order transformation. Deviation is especially characteristic of poetic language, the poet deviates from expected norms of linguistic expression. In other words, he exercises, in the broadest sense, 'poetic licence'.

Literature, as we know, is made up of words, sounds and images. Hence, apart from the foregrounding of linguistic components, there is also the foregrounding of images. A literary work, for example, a poem, is made up of either "a series of images that support or contradict one another, or a single dominant image", such as the image of the earth in *The Eye of the Earth*, "on which the sequence and structure of the poem depend" (132). A literary work is built up on verbal structures and a critic can scarcely proceed in his study without paying attention to the way in which words are organized.

Deviation, as defined by Short (1996:11), is a linguistic phenomenon and has an important psychological effect on readers. In any literary text, if a part is defiant, it becomes especially noticeable or perceptually prominent. This psychological effect is called foregrounding.

Thus, "foreground" elements in any given text are of vital importance for understanding the message(s) conveyed. The theory of deviation has expanded and attracted varying comments and approaches. Leech (1969) illustrates the manifestation of deviation at different levels of poetic language, namely: syntactic, semantic and phonological. Todorov classifies them into four types, namely: quantitative (deviation in frequency of occurrence), qualitative (deviation from standard grammar); syntagmatic (deviation from a norm present in the text); and paradigmatic (deviation from a norm outside the text). (see Osundare, 27).



Halliday prefers the term “prominence” to deviation and its synonyms. He defines prominence as “a general name for the phenomenon of linguistic highlighting, whereby some feature of the language of a text stands out in some way” (113). Osundare explains that deviation may be extro-normic (unexpected violation of the rules, e.g. ungrammatical formations in language) and intro-normic (expected compliance with the rules of a deviant norm, e.g. the naturalization of those formations within the context of poetic language). In other words, deviation may be norm-breaking as well as norm-making linguistic features.

The problem in style as deviation perspective, according to Osundare, is in a second language situation where the L2 norm is taken to be diatopic “deviation” from the native norm. He sees deviation at this instance as taking on a “negative connotation, evoking a master-servant; right-wrong type of relationship” (29).

Literary language, it has been observed, is characterized by a use of language that violates the rules of the language code. This is what makes it distinct from standard or everyday language. The purpose of this distortion or violation of the standards of ordinary language in literature is, first, to foreground, that is, to give prominence to, or to highlight particular aspects of the linguistic texture of the work in order to generate new or renewed perceptions of the experiences in the text. Second, it is to achieve aesthetic effect. For example, there are violations of the linguistic rules for the purposes of creating lexical, phrasal and grammatical forms recognizable as uniquely poetic.

Foregrounding presupposes the existence of a background. Linguistically speaking, the background is the standard language, or the standard language of narration. Otherwise, it is “the traditional aesthetic canon” defined by Mukarovsky as “the set of firm and static norms into which the structure of a preceding school of poetry has dissolved by deautomatization...” (46). Each background consists of unforegrounded components resisting foregrounding, and are always present in a text. Against the background is the product of a set of rules internalized by native speakers of a language, rules which must be applied in performance according to the intuitive or shared knowledge of its users. Therefore, when a writer deviates from this background by making what G.N Leech calls a

Selection of an item which is not a
Member of the normal range of choices
Available at its place in the linguistic chain. (145)

Or, when he “repeatedly makes the same selection” when “there is a choice to be made at different points in the linguistic chain”. On the other hand, Mukarovsky says that “every work of poetry is perceived against the background of a certain tradition”, hence a new trend in poetry is perceived as a distortion of the traditional canon. Foregrounding is not achieved by a chance occurrence of deviant forms. It is not also a matter of quantitative effect. The device by which poetic language achieves its maximum of foregrounding consists in the consistency and systematic character of foregrounding. The consistency appears when there is stability in the foregrounding of a component to deautomatize another component. This eventually will lead to identifying “the component highest in the hierarchy”; in other words, the most foregrounded component “becomes the dominant”. The dominant is that component of the work which sets in motion, and gives direction to the “relationships of all other components”. Consequently, “all other components, foregrounded or not, as well as their interrelationships, are evaluated from the standpoint of the dominant”. Mukarovsky postulates that the function of poetic language consists in foregrounding the utterance. For van Peer and Hakemulder, the term refers to “specific linguistic devices, i.e., deviation and parallelism, that are used in literary texts in a functional and condensed way”. Under their definition, such devices can help to add a specific meaning to the text and provide the reader with aesthetic experience.

Others restricted their definitions to the literary side of the theory. Shen argues that this theory assumes that “poetic language deviates from norms characterized by the ordinary use of language and that this deviation interferes with cognitive principles and processes to make communication possible” (169). Martindale points out two types of foregrounding: deviation and parallelism. Deviation is a poetic license to the writer who is exceptionally allowed to deviate from normal rules and expectations, surprise the reader and give him a beautiful literary experience. Foregrounding in English literature and stylistics has been used with different meanings. Van Peer and Hakemulder have shown that foregrounding in English can refer to a prominent interest that a reader might assign to something in a text during the process of reading. Such prominence is resultant from a special use of some devices located in the text itself.

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In literary texts, on the other hand, foregrounding is structured; it tends to be both systematic and hierarchical. That is, similar features may recur, such as a pattern of assonance or a related group of metaphors, and one set of features may dominate the others (20); a phenomenon that Jakobson termed ‘the dominant’ (41). In everyday language, the primary purpose is communication. To this, Mukarovsky argues that foregrounding structures are normally not involved. But in literature, the purpose of foregrounding is to disrupt such everyday communication. Thus in literature, the act of communication becomes secondary. The primary focus of the reader is on style. To this Mukarovsky affirms:

In poetic language, foregrounding achieves maximum intensity to the extent of pushing communication into the background as the objective of expression and of being used for its own sake; it is not used in the services of communication ... (19).

Foregrounding enables literature to present meaning with an intricacy and complexity that ordinary language does not normally allow. Foregrounding is prominence motivated. It is not difficult to find patterns of prominence in a poem or prose text, regularities in the sounds or words or structures that stand out in some way, or may be brought out by careful reading; and one may often be led in this way towards a new insight, through finding that such prominence contributes to the writer’s total meaning. But unless it does, according to M.A.K Halliday, it will seem to be lacking in motivation; a feature that is brought into prominence will be ‘foregrounded’ only if it relates to the meaning of the text as a whole. In his words, “This relationship is a functional one; if a particular feature of the language contributes, by its prominence, to the total meaning of the work, it does so by virtue of and through the medium of its own value in the language – through the linguistic function from which its meaning is derived” (334). When that function is relevant to our interpretation of the work, the prominence will appear as motivated.

Let us now consider some of the grammatical devices with which Niyi Osundare deviated from the norm of language usage, and with which he foregrounds his message to his audience.

MORPHOLOGICAL DEVICES

Niyi Osundare employs very few morphological deviational techniques to express his meaning in *Waiting Laughters*. For instance, on page 34, the word ‘wound’ is unusually morphologically truncated, such that the penultimate line of the poem has ‘the wo’ and the last line reads ‘und’. Apart from the fact that the truncation of the word violates the rule of syllabification which forbids the breaking of such monosyllabic words, the process also creates a morphological problem in which the items ‘wo’ and ‘und’ cannot be located among acceptable morphological units. But Osundare most probably reflects the deep phonological import of the cry, emitted from the victim as the axe-man’s axe falls to inflict the wound.

Another instance of the use of deviational morphological devices is seen in the use of the word ‘rune-y’ on page 77 of the text. The line of the poem in which it appears reads:

Sermons from stones, books from rune-y

Woods

Semantically, ‘rune’ is “a letter of the futhork or ancient Germanic alphabet: a secret, a mystic symbol, sentence, spell, or song: a song, stanza or canto of a Finish poem, esp. of the Kalevala” (*Chambers English Dictionary*, 1287). Normally, the adjectival forms of the word are ‘runed’ or ‘runic’. Hence, Osundare’s use of the Anglo-Saxon suffix ‘y’ tends to call attention to the word. This is more so with the fact that the word is deviationally hyphenated to reflect a separation of the ‘y’ from the root word ‘rune’. This is understood to be reflecting the abnormality of the adjectival ‘runey’. If for instance, the appropriate adjectival form, ‘runed’ or ‘runic’ is used, then we would have:

Sermons from stones, books from runed

woods

Or

Sermons from stones, books from runic

Woods

Using any of the above adjectival forms would ruin the easy phonological flow and alter the semantic implication of the line. Thus Osundare uses the Anglo-Saxon ‘y’ to reflect an adjectival form that has convenient phonological quality and that helps to reflect the sense of the woods harbouring some mystic powers that find expression in books. What Osundare is believed to be emphasizing in the line is the difficulty of extracting useful sermons and books from hard stones and mysterious/mystical woods.

Niyi Osundare therefore employs morphological devices as convenient handles for reflecting his intended phonological quality or semantic implication of words.



SYNTACTIC DEVICES

Generally speaking, Adagbonyin (1996:10), quoting Ofuani, sees Osundare's poetry as "an example in concatenation, tautness and economy achieved through deliberate incompleteness of syntax". This is in the sense that his poetry reflects series of experiences that are linked together through the use of language. But his syntax is both taut and highly compact, and is aimed at achieving economy of space and expression. In *Waiting Laughters*, for instance, the theme of waiting is foregrounded through the linking of the various experiences of endless waiting of the Nigerian man through language. Osundare does this mainly by employing taut and compressed language.

For example, the refrain of the first poem in the collection, "Tonalties. Redolent tonalties", is both taut, highly compressed and is an example of incomplete syntax. Not only is the use of "Tonalties" alone as a phrase in itself an example of incomplete syntax, even the second phrase, "Redolent tonalties", is another incomplete sentence which helps to reinforce the first one. With this regular occurrence of the refrain of incomplete sentences, Osundare is understood to be saying that the experiences he is expressing in his text are just fragrances of the various shades or hues of the bitter experiences of the African man.

Tautness and incompleteness of Osundare's syntax is also reflected in this line that also appears in the first poem of *Waiting Laughters*:

The rain. The rain

The rain is onibanbantiba

The rain is onibanbantiba

The rain which taunts the roof's dusty laughter

In the comedy of February's unsure showers (4)

The taut and incomplete syntax are conspicuous in the first line above. Clearly, "The rain" is not a sentence, but only a noun phrase. But by putting a full stop after it, and repeating it, Osundare tends to foreground the natural phenomenon. The phenomenon is much more foregrounded by the counterpoint of the second and third lines which help to emphasize and stamp the experience contained in the fourth and fifth lines of the poem above.

Another example of incomplete syntax is the poem on page 69 of Niyi Osundare's *Waiting Laughters*:

Chuckling jungles

Impertinent tales...

How can a frightened flock

mine the awe

of the hyena's metallic

laughter?

Here, the tautness and incompleteness of the syntactic structures are also obvious. This is because it is not clear what happens to/in the chuckling jungles, neither do we know what the impertinent tales are about. The sense of the incompleteness is foregrounded by the fact that the first two lines are just noun phrases (NPs). Also, the use of ellipsis at the end of line 2 signifies that something is left unsaid. The rhetorical question which ends the poem in lines 3 to 6 imply that fear is the reason for the suppressed laughters and the sudden termination of the intrusive tales. Thus with the use of taut and incomplete structure, Osundare is able to paint the picture of the Nigerian masses who are so afraid to laugh and talk openly and freely in the midst or in the face of the awe-inspiring metallic laughter of the hyena (the military oppressor).

It is therefore clear that Osundare uses taut, compressed and incomplete structures in his *Waiting Laughters* to achieve economy of space and expression.

PHONOLOGICAL DEVICES

It is observed that the phonological attribute is very conspicuous in some poems in Osundare's text under study, whereas it is highly suppressed in some other poems in the collection. For example, the phonic or musical elements are so conspicuous in the following portion of the poem on page 22 which extensively uses Yoruba (Ikere) mythology:

Behold the wonder;

the crown is only a cap!

Orogododo. Orogododo

Orogododo Orogododo

Oba ba ti beyi

Omo d' Orogododo o o o o



The extensive use of the phonemes // and /əu/ in the latter part of the above extract shows a predominant employment of assonance as a sound element. Assonance is the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds in stressed syllables in a sequence. Though the fact that the Yoruba vowel sounds in the above example do not have appropriate dots under them poses a problem of identification and differentiation between the two vowel sounds.

Other examples of the use of assonance in the collection are:

Okerebu kerebu

Kerebu kerebu (63, 64)

The rain, the rain

The rain is onibanbantiba

The rain is onibanbantiba

The rain which taunts the roof's dusty laughter

In the comedy of February's unsure showers

The wing is its wing, the lake

One liquid song in its fluent concert (4)

Bi bi bi bi bi bi bi

Bi a a a (65)

Omi i lo o, iyanrin lookun rode

Omi i lo o, iyanrin lookun rode

Aye mo re'de, e emee jemi lo loona ooo (67)

It is obvious that all of the above are predominantly Yoruba (Ikere) utterances or songs. And the extensive use of the phonic and musical elements tends to reflect the musicality of the Yoruba language and the oral tradition of the African society.

Assonance is by no means the only sound or musical element that is employed in Osundare's *Waiting Laughters*. Another is alliteration, which entails the repetition of consonant sounds in sequence at the beginning of words or stressed syllables within the words. This is seen in the following lines from the text:

When earth, yolk-yellow, clamours

[yy]

For a warrant of wings

[ww]

Tiptoe on the prudence of an anthill

[tt]

My covenant is clay

[kk]

Wisdom my silent wheel (5)

[ww]

turning, turning, churning it like a bad diet,

[tt]

probing for pellets, probing for dusts

[ppp]

prospecting for quiet little banks in the empire

of my bag (13)

And my swollen pride, and her murmuring mercy;

[mm]

the sepia helmet of stubborn tendons,

the concert of hips, the moistening motion

of oblivious moments... (8)

[mmm]

Waiting

in the visahouse is a chronicle of cold complaint:

the calibrated aircon coughs a chill

in the sweaty calculations of a room

[kkkkkk]

aloud with doubt (11)

earth

where seeds rot for roots to rise (26)

[rrr]



waiting for the irreverent <u>probing of pale paddles</u> (37)	[ppp]
waiting for the <u>bubbles of Bussa</u> where <u>rock riles river</u> and a conquering boat fathoms the sand in a tumble of mysty furies (37)	[bb] [rrr]
The Desert marches in from the North; the <u>Sea sneaks in from the South</u> (46)	[sss]
Blind steel, unfalteringly deaf the blade's hunger <u>when wounded winds</u> bemoan their gashes and grasses bow under their crimson yoke (53)	[www]
<u>Yellow</u> <u>yelps like a yoyo</u> , before finally chasing its Green (78)	[jjj]
A luminous intimation leaps off the trestle, <u>breaks through the barricade of the board</u> , <u>before joining the sky in the fringes of the canvas</u> (78)	[bbbb]
... so innocent of the rumble of the tide. For the <u>sea</u> , <u>too, is silence of seeing sands, silence of unspoken</u> <u>bones...</u>	[sssss]
The <u>sea is silence. But silence is not the sea</u> , <u>so white, so wild with whiskers</u> of buried jaws; worsted galleons, stigma of manacled crossings (80) (Underlining and sounds in square brackets are mine)	[ssss] [wwww]

In the above, the alliterative sounds are contained in the words and lines that are underlined and they are clearly reflected at the extreme right column of the page. And in each of the instances above, Osundare consciously uses alliteration as one of the elements of sound with which he foregrounds his message.

Another of the sound elements that Osundare uses in *Waiting Laughtersis* onomatopoeia. Examples are seen in the following:

*The wind was a song leaping through silky curtains,
through sonorous cric-cracs of shuttered windows
before hitting the street with a burst
of seminal silence (8)*

*the evening explodes
with a diesel rigour
in its coughing horns (32)*

*the bark of cannibal guns
waiting for the after-silence of pacific twilights (54)*

*Far from the buried shrapnel waiting like a stalking paw
At the back of roaring mountains (83)*

*And the tempest returns a petal of whispering bliss
in its shriven hand (91)*

*only edicts come down, in metallic deluge,
from cloudy chambers of rumbling guns (92)*



In the first example given above, the reader can almost hear the sonorous ‘cric-cracs’ of shuttered windows as the audible sound of the wind leapt in like a song through silky curtains before hitting the street with a burst of ‘seminal silence’. Thus the wind is onomatopoeic in nature. In the second example, the reader tends to hear an imaginary loud noise of explosion and ‘coughing horns’ as the evening is filled with ‘a diesel rigour’. The third example emits the barking sound of ‘barking guns’ as they wait for the after-silence of ‘pacific twilights’. Also in the fourth example, the loud audible sound of ‘roaring mountains’ is made to be heard by the reader. Thus onomatopoeia is one of the sound elements that Osundare uses to make his imagery both perceptible and enduring in the ear and mind of his readers.

Consonance is another of the elements of sound that Osundare uses in *Waiting Laughters*. Consonance is like alliteration in the sense that it is about the repetition of consonant sounds in a sequence of words. But it differs from alliteration in the sense that it is the repetition of a sequence of two or more consonants, with a change in the intervening vowel sound. An example from the text is:

<i>The deed was dawn</i>	[dd] in deed/dawn
<i>and we watched a tutored childhood</i>	[tt] in tu/tored
<i>slip off in ripples of purple noons (8)</i>	[pp] in ripples/purple

The consonance in the repetition of the voiceless bilabial plosives /pp/ in the phrase, “ripples of purple” helps to foreground the ‘supple’ nature of both childhood and moon. Thus with the use of consonance, the reader is made to perceive the tangibility of the phenomena presented.

To conclude this section, we may say that Osundare employs such phonological elements as assonance, consonance, alliteration and onomatopoeia to intensify the phenomena and experiences that he describes. The objective is to make the experiences and phenomena vivid and enduring in the mind of the readers. It is also to make the audience participate in the experiences that are presented in the text.

6.1 Graphic Patterns

One way by which poetic form differs from prose form is in its graphic structures. That is, poetry exploits space to form its own graphological distinctiveness, like the use of line, stanza etc. According to Leech and Short “graphological variation is a relatively minor and superficial part of style concerning such matters as spelling, capitalization, hyphenation, italicization and paragraphing” (105). These are determined by the conventional use of syntax but become more expressive when the writer makes a graphological choice thus making use of an unconventional approach in his expression such as a deliberate misspelling.

Osundare in *Waiting Laughters*, *Songs of the Season*, *Songs of the Marketplace* and *Days* though adopts the verse-free form; enriches his works with stylistic variations of aesthetic patterning and line lengths, which give his poetry in the texts, their uniqueness. We shall look at a good number of texts in the collections whose poetic forms are exploited either to aid the ideational contents in them or for other stylistic significance.

In expressing his ideological view on the prevalent economic and political situation in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, Osundare deploys the graphic poetic forms to make greater emphasis and impact on what he is talking about. Osundare does this by giving both spatial one-word-line and indentational prominence to a word by making it occupy a class of its own in a text. More often, the lines are enjambed in two regular modes. There is also the projection of word in a stanza, or by giving line-initial capital to the first word in the second line. Such examples can be found in *Waiting Laughters*:

Waiting
 For the heifer which hides it horns
 in the womb of the calf

Waiting
 For the nail which springs an ivory wonder
 in the aprons of the finger

Waiting
 For the tome which split its spine
 in the spotted arena of reading eyes

Waiting
 For fists which find their aim
 and idioms which split their atoms
 in ‘ploding shadows. (10)



This poem expresses different and diverse situations of 'waiting', there is a simple structure of the same stanzaic parallelism, with each stanza containing just a unit of thought. The last line which has the status of a stanza assumes the essence of the waiting in which everything has come to the climax. The word "ploding" is incomplete as perhaps, the first syllable has been replaced with an apostrophe to make it have an onomatopoeic effect of an explosion which suggests violent eruption, in line with the overall theme of violent change in the entire collection.

The use of more than one literary device at a time is typical of Osundare as exhibited in some of his works with graphologically deviant structure and repetitions. The use of breath-space pauses, common in oral performances, is employed in *Songs of the Marketplace*; *Moonsongs* and *Waiting Laughters*. According to Alu, this device takes care of punctuations in written English by the use of spacing in print as in "Nightfall" "Back to the future" and "Phase XIII" poems. The structures of these breathing spaces usually result in some structural changes in the form of graphological deviations. For example in *Waiting Laughters*, the poet gives spatial and indentational prominence to certain word by way of giving over all attention to an expression:

Waiting

The anxious fumes of the visa awe-ffice
thick with queries, thick with fear
and stamps which bite trembling papers
with purple fangs, and seals pompous
like a mad phallus
Narrow, the walls
high, imperiously white;
the hangings stoke wondering dreams
with their tourist havens
the future is one wavering complexion
of the visaman's edict. (11)

Graphologically, apart from giving 'waiting' the spatial and indentational prominence, the last stanza is further indented from the rest in order to give sharp focus to the action of the visaman.

Waiting....

The visaman, rightly, suited,
his hair correct, his parting severe,
takes two furtive looks at the crowded hall
then shuts the window with a cold
imperial hiss; (11)

The change of the type of pre-eminence giving to 'waiting' is quite copious in *Waiting Laughters*. It has an overall significance on the essence of the poems in the anthology.

Some	say
You	moon
Are	the
Ash	es
Of	the
Sun	bath
Ing	lunpid
Night	in
The	grey
Ing	of
Your	silence. (23)

Graphic patterning in Osundare's poetry as a device, is clearly demonstrated in *Waiting Laughters* where a letter of the alphabet is used as a line: The above is also devoid of the complete sense of reading in a linear form. Only a word exists in a vertical arrangement which allows a reading from the top to the bottom. Some of the words are truncated in a deliberate attempt to restrict them to the two vertical lines.



Long
er
than
the
y
a
w
n
of
the
moon
in
a

sky... (84)

The poem is the longest in the collection *Waiting Laughters*, and the most deviant. It ignores almost all poetic patterns, as far as poetic composition is concerned. Normally, a poem is expected to have two levels: the graphic and the phonic. But in this poem, there is a complete merger of the phonic and the graphic media. In other words, the text can only be read with great difficulty, visually, it cannot be read aloud or verbalized, let alone being sung, so its phonic realization is lost. Many factors are obviously responsible for this. First, some verse lines merely have a letter in each of them, as in the spread of the lettered word “yawn” over four verse lines as:

“y
a
w
n”

Now if each of the letters is uttered as an independent line, no communication is made. This is not only a deviation from poetic standard but also the ordinary language structure which poetry is expected to deviation from in the first instance. The first two lines have two recognizable morphemes of the truncated word-longer: “long-“, “er”, while the maximal line of the poem contains just a lexical word. All these make the poem much more elongated than usual. This makes reading extremely difficult. For effective reading therefore, certain words must be brought together and some others separated following the lexical standard of English language.

But the elongation which, of course, engenders difficulty of reading, is graphologically justified as it foregrounds the long period of waiting “harvest” will take. Osundare uses the graphic elongation to admonish the oppressed and the ordinary people that the period of waiting for the political change will not come too soon but might be very long and boring. This long waiting which will eventually resulted in boredom is expressed in the idea of ‘yawn’ as an associative word. The word is stylistically foregrounded for the purpose of striking emphasis.

Osundare further reinforces this idea of long wait with the use of the metaphor of the farmer’s much awaited rainfall for the drying tendrils in the dry season – note the repeated word “waiting” and “dropping” for this emphasis. Again, “waiting” is syllabically “fractured” to further show the slow pace of movement of time as against the people’s hope and expectations.

Wait
ing
And the hours limp a-
long
with
band-
ages
of fractured moments. (29)

There is an extensive comparison drawn between the period waiting and the realization of the people’s desires. They keep on:

Waiting
la felon yoked to a tryst with the noose
a groom for the magic of the bridal night
a husband pacing the scented corridors of the labour
ward
a home-sick traveler on the platform of tardy trains
a big-bellied billionaire for the aroma of Rhine-rouge
champagne...



Yet in all of these, the ‘‘bandaged’’.

Time
 ambles
 in
 diverse
 paces
 with
 diverse
 persons (30)

Another kind of graphic deviation for stylistic effect, can be observed in the poem ‘‘a tongue in the crypt’’ which not only plays on the title of Soyinka’s collection of prison poems, *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1967) but also ridicules infringement of the rights of the people to freedom of expression under military rule. The idea is expressed in form of an advert:

Patriots
 Thinkers
 Countrymen
 Behold your tongue
 Sealed up in this iron cage
 For public safety
 And the national interest

For permission to use,
 Apply to:
 The Minister of Whispering Affairs
 Dept of Patriotic Silence
 53 Graveyard Avenue
 Dumberia (SS. 127)

The poet has in this text exploited the use of incarceration of opposition by the military junta. This is satiric. The first three lines of the poem sound like the observation of certain protocol before the reading of a prepared speech. However, nobody is addressed in particular, but the ‘‘Patriots’’, ‘‘Thinkers’’ and ‘‘Countrymen’’ are those who do the biddings of the power that be. The ‘‘iron cage’’ is an allusion to imprisonment for security purposes in which those who are opposed to anti-social policies are usually kept.

The graphological crafts with which Osundare expresses this concept makes it unique. Of course, failure to adhere to keep a sealed lips of government policies may result to incarceration or an outright extermination as it has always being in military regime or even in a democratic dictatorship. It evokes the imagery of military scenario and oppressive dictatorship where oppositions are crushed or incarcerated.

The poet also uses iconic devices to effect the presentation of certain idea(s) in his poetry. These are in a category of poems classified as ‘‘shaped poetry’’ and concrete poetry’’ in poetic terms. According to Ofuani, ‘‘shaped poetry’’ is the effort on the part of a poet to match graphic form with the conceptual context of the text’’ (85). While ‘‘concrete poetry’’ is simply defined as a form of poem which exists, ‘‘only in written form; there is no corresponding, spoken text at all’’ (Levenston, 467). It essentially involves lexical truncating and cramping, thereby deviating radically from the expected poetic form. In *Waiting Laughters* we have:

The Rails Criss and cross
 in a crisis of sleep
 ing
 steel... (32)

This same conceptual expression also occurs in *Songs of a Marketplace* entitled ‘‘the Nigeria Railway’’ where lexical truncation is expressly used graphically:



dark sna
 ky str
 uctures
 tor tuous
 milli
 pede on
 legs
 of iron
 crawl ing
 wear ily
 fromswamp to savannah. (30)

As ‘shaped poems’ the text achieve graphic patterns that are representatives of the crossing of a rail line at its junction. Osundare uses this to paint the graphic picture of the moribund Nigeria railway system in a comatose. The only reminder of its existence is the rusted line criss-crossing the swampy and the savannah landscape of the country. It has remained in a rickety condition, almost in a state of despair, as he gives a pictorial but yet a graphic description of a locomotive system that is near total collapse:

“...tor tuous
 milli
 pede on
 legs
 of iron
 crawl ing
 wear ily...” (30)

The use of words such as ‘millipede’, ‘crawling’, and ‘wearily’ gives a vivid visual image of the old models of locomotive engines compare to the much modern models which use electricity with faster speed. The ‘millipedic’ movement could also be viewed from the socio-political and economic development of the nation, which still crawl as against the fast developing economies of the developed world. ‘Millipede’, ‘crawl’ and ‘wearily’ in the structure, further reinforce the state of neglect and ineptitude in the Nigerian railway system. While the lexical truncation in the word ‘sleeping’ in the third line suggests the dysfunction of the railway system. Osundare acknowledges this as a fact in an interview with Oguanah (2009), that “the appearance of the poem is a means of meaning” and that “the physical appearance of the poem shows that Nigeria has no railway system”. This poem has both lexical and semantic implications. The words are scattered are jumbled. In his words, “the arrangement of the poem slows down your reading speed. You count the words - all depicting the waiting process”.

One can also observe the use of graphology in “Our Earth Will Not Die”. The last poem in *The Eye of the Earth*. Osundare adopts the graphic craft as a way of expressing a conceptual idea:

Lynched
 the lakes
 Slaughtered
 the seas
 Mauled
 the mountains
 But our earth will not die

 Here
 there
 everywhere
 a lake is killed by the arsenic urine
 from the bladder of profit factories... (50)

There is the scrambling, jumbling and slanting of the words to depict the harm that has been visited on the natural environment. Although it is a summary of the evils of profit - driven capitalism as a material character to the destruction of the earth, this he has done in a graphic form in order to enhance the meaning of the poem.

This same graphic style is used to expressed the concept of silence in ‘Serpent of silence’, in *The Word is an Egg*. Silence is described in the slanting sliding movement of a serpent. Ironically however, the serpent is to be killed not with a stick but with a pen;



A serpent of silence
 wriggles across my path
 I aim my pen
 at its head
 My pen breaks
 into a forest of singing trees
 A fountain
 of sprightly idioms. (41)

A pen is not the right weapon with which to kill a serpent. But it is a long silence and so after the silence comes verbal expressions and this is through the tip of the pen which ‘‘breaks/ into a forest of singing trees’’ and ‘‘a fountain/ of sprightly idioms’’. The ‘‘songs’’ and the ‘‘idioms’’, flow from the pen after a long silence. The period of silence is over and nature becomes the first to express the joy of a broken silence ‘‘forest of singing trees’’.

In ‘‘Daughter of the word’’, Osundare uses both graphic crafts and repetitive pattern to express his idea of nature’s role in the existence of the universe through the invocation of words, especially those elements which he describes in feminine terms as ‘‘daughter’’

I invoke
 Grief
 Daughter of the Tear
 Tear
 Daughter of the River
 River
 Daughter of the Cloud
 Cloud
 Daughter of the Sea
 Sea
 Daughter of the Moon
 Moon
 Daughter of the Word. (29)

There is the use of climax to indicate a rising order of importance in the idea expressed. Each of these elements has its role and position in the affairs of nature and one comes before the other. Finally, the ‘‘word’’, is the last and powerful of all. There is an allusion to creation in which words were uttered and the universe came into existence. Osundare sees the word as the beginning of creation. This is paradoxical and tends to contradict the biblical expression. However, the second drives home the truth embedded in the seeming contradiction.

In the Beginning was not the Word
 In the Word was the Beginning. (12)

The use of more than one literary device at a time is typical of Osundare as expressed in the following graphic structures. This type of literary device is used for emphasis to enhance meaning:

I proscribe the snail
 I proscribe the shell
 I proscribe the frog
 I proscribe the tadpole
 I proscribe the sun
 I proscribe the moon
 I proscribe the tale
 I proscribe the TRUTH
 I proscribe History! (WL, 50)

This is typical of dictatorial expression of the military regime where everyone and everything including natural elements such as ‘‘the sun’’, ‘‘the moon’’, and if possible ‘‘HISTORY’’ are proscribed in order to eliminate opposition and criticism. ‘TRUTH’, is the foregrounded element in the poem. The reality of the foray of proscriptions is that truth is a reflection of all other elements mentioned. The proscription TRUTH is the proscription of nature itself which history stands to reflect. Another kind of graphic deviation for stylistic effect can be observed in the following poem;



Waiting laughs:

...The eyes I see are waiting for rallying visions
 The fists for a bolt of implacable thunder
 For time it may take
 Time it may take
 The stammerer will one day call his
 Fa-fa-fa-ther-ther's na-na-na-me! (74)

In the last stanza, Osundare tries to capture the mannerism of a stammerer's natural utterance. In doing so, he uses the graphic form to show the actual phonic realization of the stammer's natural idiosyncrasy. In this way, the poem deviates from the expected poetic form by the lexical truncation through hyphenation of the unusually spaced words together in the line to achieve the natural difficulty and jerky efforts of a stammerer to utter words. While the word "will" is deliberately misspelt "wil", a deviation depicting a revolt by the stammerer.

Contextually, Osundare uses the metaphor of the stammerer as a sort of warning to corrupt leaders that not too long there shall be a revolt from the very people they thought are not relevant in the scheme of things. The led who like the stammerer are not good in dialogue may one day express their pent - up emotion in violence.

Relevant graphological features that we shall further consider relate mostly to punctuation marks and these include; capitalization, italicization, and repetition. The utilization of these features in the texts under consideration has some semantic and stylistic implications as shall be revealed in the following analysis. In fact, the deployment of certain graphological resources of language is a common feature in African literary works. For example, Okunoye and Odeunmi (2003:293) have also observed that Achebe makes special of some print marks like italicization and capitalization among others, in *A Man of The People* and *Anthills of the Savannah* to achieve some stylistic effects.

CAPITALIZATION

Capitalization is a common graphological feature in most of Osundare's poems. In *Songs of the Season*, some expressions are foregrounded for prominence and emphasis. This features prominently in satiric poems such as; "For Fela Anikulapo-Kuti":

...Sing on, then
 bird of our battled dawn
 someday our FOLLOW FOLLOW...
 when a loamy black has routed
 the YELLOW FEVER of our slaying souls:
 we shall then stop SHUFFERING AND SHMILING. (96)

Note the use of the sound / / - "sh" as against the sibilant sound /s/ which further places great emphasis on the two words "suffering" and "smiling". This poem captures the experiences of the great musician, Fela, in the hands of the military for using his music as a weapon to fight against tyranny, social injustice, and some other social vices that kept the people "in prison house when dragons wrestle TRUTH".

Capitalization as a form of deviation stands out among other elements in the poem. This is a type of foregrounding which M.A.K Halliday refers to as 'prominence'. It is used in "health for all by the year 2000" for the purposes of prominence and emphasis. This is also a satire on government health policies in every successive administration in Nigeria. This has become more or less a kind of political jingle which has remained a mirage, due to the fact that those factors militating against the realization of a robust health policy are still nor yet addressed. These are poor sanitation, hunger, high cost of drugs and poor facilities in the hospitals:

Though rubbish builds skyscrapers in our streets
 And malaria struts the lanes like a conquering demon
 HEALTH FOR ALL BY THE YEAR 2000
 Though kwashiorkor decimates our brood,
 Our children so obese with needless hunger
 HEALTH FOR ALL BY THE YEAR 2000
 Though medicine merchants murder with unnatural prices
 And DEATH sells at a thousand for ten kobo



unconnected with the poet’s expressed idea on an issue that needed to be registered in the mind of the reader. In “Let Earths Pain Be Soothed”, the use of repetition here is to achieve in the reader the seriousness and effects of the dry weather on the environment:

Dust
 dust in the brewing kitchens
 dust in eating halls
 dust in scheming boardrooms
 dust in retrenching factories
 dust in power brothels (EE, 28)

The use of repetition also creates certain effects and emphasis in an Ikere mythology of the dethronement and banishment of a king who was once revered and worshipped but now a mere human of bone and flesh:

Behold the wonder,
 The crown is only a cap!

Òrògòdodo Òrògòdo
Òrògòdodo Òrògòdo
Òbá bá ti bēyi

O mō d Òrògòdodo oooo.

The king’s brave legs are bone and flesh
 Bone and flesh, bone and flesh
 The king’s brave legs are bone and flesh
 The castle is a house of mortar and stone
 Mortar and stone, mortar and stone
 A chair is wood which becomes a throne. (22)

The repetition is used to heighten the effect of the prevailing weather condition in which the earth has been described as prostrating “famished horses” and the plain that was once the “Cradle of green” looks bald thus provoking the dust.

Repetition is also used as a satiric device in:

I proscribe	the snail
I proscribe	the shell
I proscribe	the frog
I proscribe	the tadpole
I proscribe	the sea
I proscribe	the sky
I proscribe	the sun
I proscribe	the moon
I proscribe	the tale
I proscribe	the TRUTH
I proscribe	HISTORY! (50)

The repetition creates emphasis to suggest that military regime(s) do not spare anything in their repressive tendency. And the lexical item “proscribe” in the poem is characteristic of military lexicon in gagging the press. Osundare also makes use of criticism of dictatorial African political leaders:

Waiting
 like the pothole for its po(r)tion of blood
 like the smart General for his umpteenth million
 like idle bugs for their mighty feast
 like the prathing tongues of parliament of ruse
 like Blaise for a trusting Thomas



like Imelda for her shoes. (52)

Osundare makes use allusion to names that are reputed for dictatorship and corrupt practices in governance such as “Blaise” as a symbol of betrayal and mistrust in the Cote d’voirean politics and “Imeldia” the plunderer of the Philipino economy.

Shaped poetry or graphic method of writing poetry has its aesthetics and meaning. Osundare skillfully uses it to achieve and enhance the meaning of his concept of life in a contemporary society. As the initiator of the “Alter-Native Poetic Tradition”, his use of graphic style has added some uniqueness to his style of poetry by way of deviating from the normal poetic tradition and composition.

Meaning permeates all the levels of language description, I have shown how Osundare exploits some aspects of the phonic and the graphic substance of language to achieve some thematic and stylistic effects in his volumes of poetry. The combination of phono - graphological features in the texts appeals to our sense of seeing and hearing. To this Eagleton affirms that:

...Meaning is scattered or disputed
along the whole chain of signifiers.
It cannot be easily nailed down;
it is never fully present in any
one sign alone... (128)

The deployment of phonostylistic features in the poems is in the words of Jeyifo (2004) “genre-bending...force” (39), in line with the “Alter-Native Tradition” of Osundare’s fame.

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