



A Stylo-Graphological Analysis of Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle*

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Abstract. Copious foregrounded stylo-graphological resources typify Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle (Eagle)*. The aim of this study is to explore a stylo-graphological analysis of Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Children of the Eagle* in order to examine how the choice of graphological designs help to project the message of the literary text. The novel constitutes the data for the study. After a close reading of the text, the predominant graphological thumbprints were identified, grouped and analysed using Halliday's (1994) theoretical framework of Systemic Functional Grammar. The research employed the method of qualitative data analysis. Adimora-Ezeigbo, apart from the usual and simple prose writing form in straight paragraphing, traversed profound admixtures of narrative forms and styles, which include profile/resume and missive writing styles, versification, italicization and capitalization to elucidate the intended message, meaning and social relevance of the novel. The citation style was stylishly deployed to introduce the prominent female characters in the novel and to bequeath to them some form of social recognitions, the letter writing and versification styles were to engage an interesting and plausible form of interaction in the narrative, while both linguistic tools of italicization and capitalization were used to highlight discrete social functions in the narrative.

Keywords: Italicization, capitalisation, profile, stylo-graphological analysis, versification.

1. Introduction

The relationship between language form and function cannot be over-emphasised. Literary writers have deployed the former to project the latter. One of the various ways of studying and understanding literature is to study and understand the language that brings it into reality. It therefore means that the study of the language of literature is a way of explicating literary discourses. This assertion is supported by Halliday

(1964: 68) when he affirms that "a literary text has meaning against the background of the language as a whole in all its uses, how can its language be understood except as the selection by the individual writer from the total resources at his disposal". For Adeyanju (2008: 87), "language implies the availability of an internal structure which makes it possible for writer or speaker to construct texts that are not only coherent but also situationally appropriate".

Literature can be approached from different perspectives. These include literary criticism, linguistic stylistics, text linguistics and discourse analysis. By focusing on linguistic stylistics, this study has explored how an aspect of linguistic structure is deployed to project the meaning and message of one of the foremost womanist novelists to emerge out of Nigeria, Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, in her fiction, *Children of the Eagle*. This is in line with Halliday (1985: 15) that "... linguistic analysis enables one to show how, and why, the text means what it does. In the process, there are likely to be revealed multiple meanings, alternatives, ambiguities, metaphors and so on". However, stylistics, which is a branch of linguistics, has branches. Some of the branches include cognitive stylistics, critical stylistics, multimodal stylistics and feminist stylistics. Since this study focuses on the way a woman writer utilizes the creative resources of language at her disposal to project her message, the enquiry being conducted belongs to the feminist stylistic enterprise.

Feminist critique of texts has established itself in the development of a critical approach to language. One of the successful works on this subject is by Sara Mills (1995) in *Feminist Stylistics*, where she draws on the theoretical position developed by Norman Fairclough (1985, 1995) to explain the socio-cultural contexts of texts written by women. Another grammatical analysis of the transitivity patterns of a feminine novelist has been carried out on Sylvia

Plath's *The Bell Jar* by Deirdre Burton (1982). There, it is found that Sylvia Plath's agency and verb forms contribute to the creation of a sense of powerlessness in the central character. In a similar vein, Wareing (1991) studies the grammatical transitivity structures in recent popular fiction where the traditional gender roles are reserved, and the central characters are portrayed as women who have struggled to become strong and successful in their own rights. Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Eagle*, as one of the modern novel written by a woman, has attracted robust scholarly attention particularly from literary point of view. However, there is a gap in the stylo-graphological interrogation of the text.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework deployed in this study is the Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistic. This theoretical framework serves as a background against which the analysis is carried out. It will cover inquiries into foregrounding, linguistic vis-à-vis style and stylistics. Berry (1975: 24) captures the essence of the systemic linguistics succinctly well, when he explains that it is a grammar that "is interested in relating the internal organisation of language, the various kinds of patterning which language exhibits to the function of language and to the social situation of language". This means that the theory can sufficiently account for form, structure and function of language. Halliday (1973: 104) further lends weight to this argument by saying that "by a functional theory of language, I mean one which attempts to explain linguistic structure, and linguistic phenomena, by reference to the notion that language plays a certain part in our lives that it is require to serve certain universal types of demand". Furthermore, the Systemic Functional Grammar recognizes four primary levels of language arrangements; phonology, graphology, syntax and semantics, out of which graphology is the main focus of this research.

3. Literature Review

Citing the Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought (1977), Thornborrow and Wareing (1998) describe stylistics as a branch of linguistics which studies the characteristics of situationally-distinctive uses of language, with particular reference to literary language, and tries to establish principle capable of accounting for the particular choice made by individuals and social groups in their use of language. In another studies by Crystal (1999:32), the above definition is supported when it presents stylistics as the "study of any situational distinctive use of

language and of choice made by individuals and social groups in their usage in all linguistic domains". From the definitions, it is clear that stylistics studies and analyses literary text through linguistics. In other words, stylistics is grounded theoretically in the principles of linguistics and this is borne out of the plethora of terminologies culled from linguistics.

Cluett and Kampeas (1979) opine that the concern of stylistics is to study, criticize and expose 'tangible manifestation of style' through both bare facts (descriptive and interpretive judgments). But what are these tangible manifestations of styles? Fowler's (1975:11) idea gives an apt answer when it says "focus on style...entails close attention to the surface structure of literary texts, and an assumption that phonology, syntax, everything which makes up rhetoric are of paramount importance in determining the identity of literary work". Part of 'everything' which Fowler refers to, apart from phonology and syntax, are also lexis, semantics and graphology which are all elements of linguistics. Now, having therefore located graphology within the ambit of stylistics, it may be expedient to review what graphology implies in stylistic studies.

In stylistic studies, the examination of written language is of primary concern. Language itself is either transmitted by audible sound-waves or by visible marks on a surface: that is, language is either phonic or graphic (Spencer et al. 1964: 69). Graphology can therefore be seen as the study of the system of symbols that have been devised to communicate language in written form. It refers to visible features and designs which a writer makes use of to enhance the overall meaning of his literary works. Simpson (1997:25) makes it clearer when he suggests that "the term graphology will be used here in its broadest sense to refer to the visual medium of language. It describes the general resources of language's written system, including punctuation, spelling, typography, alphabet and paragraph structure, but it can also be extended to incorporate any significant pictorial and iconic devices which supplement this system".

Therefore, the essence of graphology cannot be over-emphasized. It exerts psycholinguistic influence on reading process. How the text is visually arranged in particular helps to manipulate perceptual strategies, creating mental sketches which inform the way we process and understand information. Chapman (1973:33) drives home the importance of graphology in written texts better when he posits that "the graphology of any text is of great importance in identifying the stylistic peculiarities of a writer, since

the apparatus of writing consists of visible marks made by various implements on various types of surface...and received by the eyes”.

These visible marks or visual features according to Ngara (1982: 17) “can be exploited by the reader or writer”. For instance, a poet usually employs the graphological thumbprints of lineation (i.e. verse and stanza) while we expect a novelist to use paragraphing. Graphological devices also include shape and arrangement of literary works. It entails the foregrounding use or deliberate neglect of the norms of punctuation marks such as capitalization or lower case letters, the use of question marks, interjection, the comma, the colon, the semi-colon, the dash, the quotation marks, ellipses, symbols, hyphens and occasional contracted forms. Others are paragraphing, spacing as well as prints (small, gothic and bold prints). And according to Dada (2004: 6) “italicization is also a study of particular interest to graphologists.” These devices of rule breaking reflect a conscious deviation from the norms and demonstrate individuality which has been the hallmark of stylistics. Graphology enables a writer to give aesthetic pleasure and erect a signpost for his/her readers to comprehend his/her message and to penetrate into his/her literary world.

4. Analysis

In this section, everything which constitutes the graphological aesthetics of Akachi in *Eagle* will not be explored. The paper will focus only on five most prominent ones, namely: profile, letter, versification, italicization and capitalization.

4.1 Profile/Resume

Profile is a short description of someone or something. Akachi has not only succeeded as a smooth narrator, she is also an impressionistic profile writer. She does not depend entirely on narrative skills to introduce her characters to us; she prepares a sandwich of abundant narration mixed with a little profile writing technique to savour readers’ appetite. The first instance of profile is found on page 16 of the novel.

Ogonna Okwara-Nduka: A Secondary school teacher in Lagoon city. Married with four children-two sons and two daughters.

Nnenne Okwara-Okoli: A senior lecturer at the University of the South in Lagoon city. Married with two children – a daughter and a son.

Obioma Okwara-Ebo: A church leader, pastor and evangelist who lives in Lagoon city. Married with four children – two sons and two daughters.

Amara Okwara: A journalist living in Coal city. Single. She has no intention of bringing children into this world.

Chiaku Okwara-Kwesi: A medical doctor who practices medicine in London and lives in a flat with her African American friend. Divorced. She does not have a child.

Nkendirim Okwara: A secondary school boy in Kada city, the youngest member of the family.

Eagle – Page 16

With this profile writing style instead of the usual description that is woven in long sentences and paragraphs, Akachi reveals her gift of economy of words/expressions which notwithstanding does not leave out any salient details about the character being presented. In addition, this unique foregrounded graphological device enhances the readers’ enjoyment. It aids quick recovery/remembrance of information, since essential points are itemized/highlighted in an easy-to-remember way.

But essentially, this profile style is used to show clearly the accomplishments of all the children of the Eagle one after the other. With this, Akachi enhances for them the respect of the readers without saying much to demand for it.

She is a university teacher and a researcher, well versed in the writing of books. Above all, she is a literary artist, possessing an uncanny ability to string words together like beads. Nnenne produces books as a queen bee spawns egg. Her fertility in this area is prodigious. A published dramatist and novelist, she has a poetry collection in her kitty entitled *Melodies of Love...*Nnenne is a born writer...

Eagle page 91

The above is another example of profile writing style of Akachi in *Eagle*. However, this citation of Nnenne delivered through Ogonna is quite different from the earlier one in that while the former contains short expressions marked out by one punctuation mark or the other, the later is presented in fluid descriptive form that builds up into paragraph. It is also a way of describing to the reader the calibre of the women characters in the narrative.

The Chairman, Obejiri Nzeka – a former University Professor, ex-politician by the grace of the nation’s military government, at the present a business tycoon...

Eagle – Page 296

In the above example of resume from the novel, Akachi gives the citation of a male character for the first time. This shows Akachi as a balanced celebrator of high profile of both female and male. Even as a defender and projector of womanist views, she remains unprejudiced in recognizing quality where found also in men.

4.2 Letter/Missive

Another graphological aesthetics which Akachi employs to foreground the social relevance of the novel is letter/missive writing. Letters can be formal or informal. A formal letter is an official letter while an informal letter is a personal letter. The distinguishing feature of both is the form (structure) and the language. Incidentally, the two types of letter are employed in the novel to really create a social or situational environment which allows for plausible forms of interaction/communication among the people in the narrative setting. For example, Dr Okoli's letter to Ogunano Ezeala.

Josiah Obidiegwu Okwara's Compound.

Ezeala Village

Umuga

December 16, 1990

Ogunano Ezeala

Ezeala Village

Umuga

Dear brothers,

LAND DISPUTE

We-Ogonna Okwara-Nduka and Nnenna Okwara-Okoli, the two eldest

daughters of late Josiah Obidiegwu Okwara, arrived home yesterday. We

were informed and we also saw and confirmed that the agbudu-boundary

markers used for the demarcation of the disputed land between Josiah

Obidiegwu Okwara and the family of William Umeaku were cut down and

removed....

Your sisters,

Mrs Ogonna Okwara-Nduka

Dr (Mrs) Nnenna-Okoli

Eagle page 76-77

The two eldest daughters of the deceased Josiah obidiegwu Okwara wrote the above formal letter to the Ogunano Ezeala, the village council in charge of land dispute. This letter has all the attributes of a letter, including the address of the writer and date, the designation and address of the receiver, salutation,

title, body of the letter, complementary close and names of the writers. Akachi uses the letter to show that women too can stand up to protest and fight against injustices in the society using subtle and non-violent means of communication. But apart from this, the way the letter fuses with the narrative without causing a distortion in the flow of the plot shows Akachi as a dynamic prose writer.

It took me sometime to decide how to address this all-male Organization. I finally settled on 'Dear compatriots' then I wrote: let me begin by congratulating you on the successful conferment of chieftaincy titles on over fifty deserving Umuga citizens on 20 December, 1989. It was ... Eagle page 170-171

In the example of letter cited above, which is also a formal letter, Akachi saves the readers of the headache of reading through the formal features, and only allows the letter to diffuse freely into the narrative without giving it out distinctively as a letter. This once again attests to Akachi's creativity, skillfulness and dynamism as a writer. And like what obtains in the first letter, the women, led by Nnenna also present their grievances to the Umuga Progressive Union (UPU) on the marginalization done against women in selection of candidates for honours and titles in Umuga. All this presents a picture of women in struggle for equity and justice through a peaceful means.

My dearest Mother,

This is just to let you know that I'm fine. Don't worry about

me. I have a fracture but the doctor says it will heal quickly.

How were your birthday party and papa's memorial service?

I'm sorry I missed the two events. I hope you had a good time.

I hope too you left some cake for me. How are my sisters?

Did Chiaku return home? See you soon. Lots of love from your son,

Nkemdirim.

The above is the third and only informal letter in the narrative. It is written by Nkemdirim whose conspicuous absence from Eaglewoman's birthday and her husband's memorial service has caused a lot of worry to the entire family. The letter comes at the heels of a sad message received concerning him. Akachi uses this letter to show the role an informal letter like this can play in bridging the gap of communication between family members. It shows how such a letter can alleviate worry, heal wounds

and douse tension caused by sudden break in communication flow between loved ones. Apart from this, the letter momentarily put paid to insidious speculation that the family is now without a surviving male child. This missive erupts in the family joy and rekindles the hope of Eaglewoman.

And as usual, the missive too creates a perfect blend into the narrative and it adds an innovative aesthetics to the writing of a novel. The readers' enjoyment of the novel heightens as they are served different varieties and genres of writing.

4.3 Versification

One other prominent aesthetic graphological deign at the disposal of Akachi in *Eagle* is versification. Versification is a form of writing whereby creative and imaginative ideas are expressed in verses, lines and stanzas. Versification is undoubtedly a poetic feature, which one does not actually expect to form a predominant occurrence in a prose work. But in *Eagle*, short passages rendered in form of verses are introduced, mixing up with the usual paragraphs expected in prose writing. These verses can be classified into three, which are songs/lyrics, poems and prayer.

4.4 Lyrics/songs

Song dominates the use to which verses are put in *Eagle*. Akachi perhaps uses this to remind us of the social relevance of the entire work because song/singing is part of day to day events in real life situation. Songs are sung for various purposes and in different settings. That is why the various songs in the narrative reflect different social functions. For example:

a) Dirge

May God be with you /Till we meet again/ Till we meet again ...

Eagle-page 15

Dirge is a type of song rendered at the grave yard to mourn the departed. The above excerpt is the first versification that appears in *Eagle* precisely on the first page of the narrative. This is used to set the stage for all the unfolding plots in the novel. It quickly reveals to the readers the basis of the gathering of the Eagle woman with all her children, which is for a remembrance service for her husband. The dirge bids farewell to the departed, and it is loaded with a lot of nostalgic feelings.

b) Children Rhymes

These include lines rendered in songs for the enjoyment of school children. Such songs are composed by stake holders in education to teach pupils salient rote learning. Pupils sing the songs either in the morning or afternoon assembly. An example in the novel is given under:

*Schools belong to the community/Schools belong to all of us
Support your own state/And help rebuild your school.
Eagle – page 219*

Akachi, through the above children song expects to infuse into the readers' mind a sense of collective responsibility in the stake of education

c) Masquerade's Songs

Akachi involves elements of oral performance in her narrative. Just an example will do to exemplify this:
*Madam, do you have money?/Please give it to Ulaga
Master do you have money?/Please give it to Ulaga
Kwa mmelegogogo kwa mmelego
Eagle page 189*

In the above excerpt, *Ulaga*, a singing masquerade intercepts the strolling four sisters on the way and entertains them fully with the song. The singing is accompanied with drumming and dancing. Apart from the entertaining function of the song by this masquerade, Akachi stylistically reflects part of the rich culture of her people in *Ulaga's* live oral performance. The four sisters even have to stop and watch as *Ulaga* flaps his costume, sings and dances to the beating of the assorted musical instruments held by his followers.

d) Church/Gospel Music

Akachi does not only portray her society in a sophistication of cultural values, she also clearly demonstrates that Christian religion has a powerful influence on the custom of Igbo people. Not only do we read about Christian practices in the novel, we are made to partake along with them in one way or the other. One of the ways through which Akachi involves readers' participation in the pervasive Christian practices is through gospel lyrics. The songs are either rendered by church choir or a gospel band. Example:

*Aye ye ye/Kauna/Kauna/Itace Baba
Kauna na Yesu/Kauna ta hada mu
Eagle page 196*

The above popular gospel song is raised in Hausa language; the song means 'love is the greatest. The love of Christ binds us together.' This exactly is what

Akachi wants to achieve by the lines of this song rendered in native Hausa language. The picture becomes clearer when one thinks of the fact that the song is rendered in Hausa and sung by the Igbos. Although the sisters rendering this song in the narrative desire love within themselves as children of the same mother, this depicts Akachi's solution to the ethnic conflicts. The song is also performed with accompaniment of harmonious musical instruments. And like the novel describes it, it is 'soul stirring and uplifting' (*Eagle*: 196).

e) Satirical Songs

Another category of lyric employed for aesthetic pleasure in *Eagle* is satirical song. This is a song which is meant to lampoon/criticize a group of people in a funny way. Example:

you wanton woman child/when they enticed you with gifts you did not tell your mother/when they pumped semen into your vagina you said nothing to your mother/now that you are pregnant you tell your mother of your disgrace...
Eagle page 233

The purpose of the above song is to ridicule fornicating girls, who eventually get pregnant outside wedlock. While it ridicules those who have fallen victims, it strongly warns other girls to desist from such wayward habits.

4.4 Poems

Although every versified passage is poetry, they serve different functions. While songs are sung, poems are recited or chanted. And that is exactly what is noticed in *Eagle*. Two different types of poem deliberately composed, recited and printed for readers' enjoyment can be identified in the narrative.

4.5.1 Ode

This is a long lyric poem which is addressed to ideas, objects, animals or persons.

Two odes appear in the novel. The first ode is on page 110 and it is addressed to Udele, the vulture. The second one appears on page 211-212 and that one is sung to a *Goat's Head*. The first ode is used to teach growing children that it is not good to eat or drink too much of anything or between meals like the vulture. The second one celebrates a goat that once lived and reminds everyone still alive that one day they too will pass the way of death.

Oh, goat that once frolicked in the field/Splendid acrobat, in love with life

*Right from your days as a kid.../Now reduced to a mere skull
Without a tale, without a name....*
Eagle page 212

4.5.2 Didactic poem

A didactic poem teaches moral lesson. Example:

*If you are wise and want the good life eat sensibly
Consume vegetable, devour fruits/Go easy on sugar,
oil and fat
Sweeten your life with honey/Stuff your month with
salad without dressing
You will be as fit as a fiddle*
Eagle page 111

*Farewell Oh, cake!/Delicious though you may be
Oh, sweetened drinks/And you creamy ice cream
Good bye goodbye!/You all I must desert
Though my favourite dessert/You all are/Aurevoir*
Eagle page 288

The two prominent didactic poems in *Eagle* are used to add glamour to the narrative. Incidentally, the two appear on different pages teach and celebrate a healthy eating habit. This depicts Akachi as a nutritionist as well as a therapeutic writer.

4.6 Prayer

Some verses in the novel also appear as prayers. However, they perform different prayer functions. This becomes clear through the content of each prayer. Examples:

*Hear me Beloved/You are my reason why I stand:
Oh my Lord/If you withdraw your hand, I totter and
collapse:
Hold me up....*
Eagle page 136

The above versified passage is a prayer meant to intercede for support.

*Some have food but no appetite/Some have appetite
but no food
For having both we thank thee Lord*
Eagle page 187

The above excerpt is a prayer of thanksgiving which is rendered before one begins to eat.

*Have your way Lord/You died for me/Have your
way... Eagle* page 389

The above is a song-prayer rendered while praying by Obioma, one of the daughters of Eaglewoman. It is a prayer asking God to intervene in some matters. In all these and similar examples of prayers in the novel we feel Akachi's religiousness, the importance she attaches to place of prayer in man's life and her message which resounds in readers' mind not to joke with prayer.

Epic

The last category of versification which forms part of graphological depiction in *Eagle* is a type of poem known as epic. An epic tells a story of a national hero or a god's deeds and adventures. From the novel we have this example:

*Once there was a man/He had only one child
The child's made was Okorigwe
He was the strongest man ever seen
He was the strongest man on Earth... Eagle – Page 328 -329*

The epic presented above is titled *The Epic of Okorigwe* and this summarizes Akachi's aim in the *Eagle*. Okorigwe signifies the heroic strength and a celebration of an indomitable fighting spirit in the face of social-cultural oppression. Akachi symbolically desires a woman-Okorigwe to stand in deviance against the various injustices done to women in the society. She also uses the poem to teach readers generally about courage and heroism. To conclude this section, one will notice that with an array of verses culled from a prose work like this, it would seem as if we have an anthology to deal with. This idea adds powerful and dynamic aesthetics to the outlay/outlook of Akachi's narrative work, *Eagle*.

4.7 Italicization

Italicization is a method of printing selected words or expressions in a text in a different character. In employing italicization to achieve a graphological aesthetics, Akachi uses the device for the following purposes in *Eagle*.

a) Borrowings

Yule (1996:65) describes borrowing as "the taking over of words from other languages." There are many examples of local words used in the text. These local words come from Pidgin English, Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa and French. This reflects interplay of cultural diversities within the writer's socio-cultural setting. Examples:

wrappa *Eagle – page 29*
udara and uguri *Eagle – page 32*

Dada *Eagle – page 35*
Ayeyeye... *Eagle – page 196*
Aurevoir *Eagle – page 288*

Example (i) is pidgin, meaning a piece of cloth women tie around the waist. (ii) is an Igbo word which refers to some fruits found in the local environment. (iii) is the Yoruba word for a person having dreadlock. (iv) is part of a Hausa song (see 3.3.1.d) and (v) is a French word meaning goodbye/farewell. Akachi deliberately uses them for want of an appropriate expression for them in English and purposely to show the incursion and great influence of other languages on the dominant Igbo language of her people.

(b) Titles of Works

Some films or books are cited in the novel. Their titles are italicized to make them easily identified from ordinary expressions. Examples are *Jaiyesimi*, a popular Yoruba film by Hubert Ogunde (page 38). Also on the same page, we have, *Melodies of Love; A Cry in the Wilderness, Lord of the Flies and the Epic of Ojaadiri*. Page 112 of the novel is also replete with titles like: *How to Live a Stress Free Life; How to Make Your Marriage Work; How to Find Yourself a Husband; How to Think and Grow Wealthy and How to Use Mind Power to Get What You Want*. Through these collections of titles of films and books, Akachi reflects a voracious desire for reading, which she is trying to encourage in readers.

(c) Proverbs

Another item which is foregrounded by means of italicization is proverb. A proverb is a wise saying which is employed to explain an issue. Some examples are:

It is not everything the eyes see that the mouth talks about: the mouth does not utter all that the heart knows.

Eagle - page 89

'Ogori luo di abuo, amara nke ka nma', meaning, it is after a woman has tasted two marriages that she is in a position to say which is better.

Eagle – Page 128

Akachi uses the proverbs to show the rich Igbo culture.

(d) Newspapers/magazines

Some newspapers feature in the novel. The names of these newspapers are italicized too for effect. Examples are: *The Eagle* (a weekly magazine),

Weekend Post and the *Daily Post*, which appear on page 146, 196 and 197 respectively. Thus, Akachi foregrounds the place of the print media in the social affairs portrayed in the novel.

(e) Biblical Allusions

Akachi alludes into the Bible one way or the other in *Eagle*. Examples:

Beloved, I am your handmaid, waiting for your command.

I wait for your word...

Eagle – page 15

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive

our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Him

that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out...

Eagle – page 140

The first alludes to the call of the little boy Samuel while under prophet Eli, while the second example comprises of direct quotations from the Bible. All these are clear pointers that Akachi is a Bible scholar.

(f) Thoughts

Some expressions come inform of thoughts which are not verbalized in the narrative by one character or the other. Akachi distinguishes between verbalized expressions and un verbalized thoughts by printing the later in italics. Where this is the case, introductory clauses such as ‘She thinks...’, ‘Nnenna thinks...’, precedes the thoughts. Example:

Nnenna thinks: How painful, disconcerting it is to see deformity,

to be confronted with a handicap in another human being when

you are bubbling with good health! It does give you a humble

feeling that you are blessed to be well and whole.

It does make you wonder why he and not you are facing this

predicament.

The above excerpt is a spontaneous line of thought of Nnenna who is seen expressing a feeling for the stroke victim met on the way while she is strolling in company of her sisters. Akachi uses this un verbalized thought to show the thoughtfulness of women, their sympathetic feeling and concern for the wellbeing of others especially those in distress.

(g) Abuses/Curses

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines an abuse as “rude or offensive things that someone says when they are angry”. Some abuses find expressions in *Eagle*. Examples:

His number one and only swear expression was ‘Fucking

bloody thief’ ... he would blurt out the word onyiori – thief

– as if it was the only abusive word he knew. Eagle- page 334.

The above abusive statements are credited to a man who is fond of calling people thief meanwhile he himself is a thief because later we see him being sentenced to death. It is a case of the pot calling the kettle black. The writer foregrounds this aspect to demonstrate that sometimes a man may live what he professes.

(h) Horoscopes

This is a description of someone’s character and the things that will happen to him based on the reading of the star. A fairly long passage spanning from page 281 to 287 is dedicated to zodiac record concerning Ogonna, the second daughter of Eaglewoman. Everything the horoscope says is documented in italics to show how important they are. And by placing side by side the horoscope and the life lived by Ogonna, one cannot help thinking that the astrologer’s records concerning Ogonna are revealing and prophetic. This is a deliberate attempt by Akachi to show that the spiritual actually controls the physical. And that if everyone is privileged to have a glimpse of his future, he would know how to survive challenges posed by life. But this is practically impossible.

There are several other miscellaneous uses of italicization in *Eagle*. Others are poems, songs, ironical expressions, letters, and words in appositions. The way Akachi uses italics in *Eagle* is highly resourceful and depicting. Italics actually form the largest or most used graphological device in the novel. It can be said that the writer’s love for this graphological icon is with a lot of profundity in a way that suggests that almost everything said in the novel must be taken note of by the readers. But really, is there anything said/written that should not be noted in *Eagle*?

4.8 Capitalization

Capitalization is another marked pattern in *Eagle* and it is used to highlight three major functions. These are briefly discussed below.

4.9 Epitaph

This is a short piece of writing on the stone over someone's grave. Examples in the novel are:

IN MEMORIAM JOSIAH (OSAI) OBIDIEGWU
OKWARA: REST IN PEACE

Eagle Page 16

IN MEMORIAM OBIATU, LEADER OF OBUOFO
IN MEMORIAM EJIMNAKA OBIATU
IN MEMORIAM EZIAGBA OBIATU

Eagle Page 21

Those words printed in block letters serve two major purposes in the novel. One is to constantly remind the readers that everybody's journey in life will end up in the grave like those people buried in those graves. Secondly, it is to make it difficult for people to completely and quickly obliterate the relevance, contribution and memories of the dead ones from their minds. The epitaphs thus serve as a link between the past/dead and the present/living.

b) Newspaper Headlines: On one occasion, the caption of a news item in a newspaper is printed in block letters in *Eagle*. Example:

Glaring at her were the words

DON RECOMMENDS MASTURBATION.

Eagle – Page 147

The above style of writing makes the expression in block captivating and attention arresting. Although the title is funny and shocking, even to Nnenna whose contribution in an interview with *The Bugle* is being relayed, Akachi stylistically reveals that the press can sometimes be embarrassing with some of their publications.

4.10 Acronyms

There are a couple of acronyms in Akachi's *Eagle*, which are printed in capital letters for stylistic effects. Although some of the acronyms are familiar and explained, some of them are not. The acronyms cover names of International Organizations, Public Establishments, Non Governmental Organizations, Institutions and others. International and regional organizations such as the UN, OAU, SADA, COMESA and ECOWAS find expressions on page 208 of *Eagle*. Also GEW (that is Gender Equity watch) an NGO appears on the same page. There is NTA on page 121, GRA (Government Residential Area) on page 152, NYSC (National Youth Service Corps) on page 341, ACMAS (Archdeacon Crowther Memorial Girls' School) on page 187, ASWOJ (Association of Women Journalists) on page 197.

However, we shall like to draw attention to the example on page 54.

Amara grunts. "Someone told me that the real meaning of NEPA is Never Expect Power Always."

What interest us is about the way the acronym mentioned above is interpreted. Instead of National Electric Power Authority, it is interpreted to mean "Never Expect Power Always."

This is rather funny but deliberate. It is used by Akachi to satirically reflect the epileptic situation of power and the ineptitude of the establishment in charge of electric power in the social setting. She also berates with this graphological design the irregularity of power supply which the entire nation is suffering in the hand of NEPA. This adds a risible pleasure to the readers as they feel live, part of the enduring circumstances which exist outside the narrative setting.

5. Conclusion

This paper has succinctly examined some graphological devices which add to the beauty of Akachi's *Eagle*. It is found out that Akachi stylistically employs the use of several genres of writing instead of a strict pattern of paragraphs and chapters which should normally characterize a novel. Enjoyable forms of writing such as profile, letter and poetry constitute some very fine aesthetics which Akachi uses to portray the work as a socially relevant text and which help elucidate constantly her womanist ideas in the novel. And with the two foregrounding markers, italicization and capitalization, which are at Akachi's disposal in the novel, we witness a beautiful display of skill of writing that brings nearly all issues of social concern being discussed in the novel into prominence. There is no doubt that on the whole Akachi succeeds as one of the leading womanist novelists to emerge out of Nigeria.

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