

## Graphological Foregrounding in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus

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### Abstract

*There is a symbiotic relationship between language structure and language function, which is particularly exploited by literary artists to relate language forms deployed in their texts to their intended messages and visions. This is possible because of the inherent elasticity or malleability of language as a communicative tool which can be shaped or conditioned by the social or discourse situation. With M.A.K Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar as the analytical template, this study, therefore, discusses the paralinguistic devices such as length of the text, paragraph structure, punctuation marks, topography, etc, utilized by Chimamanda Adichie to complement verbal signifiers and foreground critical and strategic aspects of meaning in relation to context of situation and textual function in her Purple Hibiscus. The study adumbrates the fact that paralinguistic resources of language have pragmatic force, in the sense that they help writers to capture contextual or stylistic meaning, enhance textual appeal, and also aid scholars/readers to conveniently comprehend and interpret the ideological contents or propositions contained in their texts. It, therefore, concludes that any explication of the meaning of literary texts without due and careful recourse to the subtle nuances of graphological patterning, is less than adequate.*

**Keywords:** Graphological foregrounding, Purple Hibiscus, Systemic functional grammar, Stylistic meaning, Social context

### Introduction

Essentially, writers deploy diverse ways not only to encode and disseminate their artistic vision and message, but also to achieve formal beauty in their texts. This is because the hallmark of a good writer, that is, what makes him to stand out from the crowd, is contingent both on the ideological content and propositions of his work as much as his stylistic peculiarities or distinctions and the extent to which both aspects (i.e content and container) relate. This thesis explains why writers take advantage of the elasticity of language in sundry ways in their discourses, in the sense that "language implies the availability of an internal structure which makes it possible for the writer or speaker to construct texts that are not only coherent but also situationally appropriate" (Adeyanju, 2008:87). In addition, the thesis also explains why writers employ various paralinguistic devices to complement linguistic choices, make meaning more precise and graphical, as well as enhance the aesthetic texture and appeal of their texts.

Amongst the latter set of stylistic resources highlighted above (i.e paralinguistic devices), are graphological elements or patterns which are of the visual dimension of language use, such as italicization, capitalization, punctuation, indentation, etc. These paralinguistic resources help writers to capture particular pragmatic senses in texts and aid the readability, comprehension and interpretation of linguistic forms in given situational or textual contexts. According to Adegoju (2008:160), Graphology concerns such matters as spelling, capitalization, hyphenation, a text's layout, lists, font choices, underlining, italicization, paragraphing, colour, etc which can all create different kinds of impact, some of which will cause the reader to react differently.

Ngara (1982:17) echoes a similar viewpoint when he observed that graphology covers such areas as the layout of the text, colour, shape of the printed marks, punctuation, paragraphing and spacing, etc. Short (1996:54-57) adds that splitting of a word to separate letters, writing all words together without orthographical spaces, etc, are also graphological patterns or symbols. Etymologically, the term has Greek roots-‘grapho’ meaning writing and ‘logos’ meaning word and, in its more known sense, it focuses on or deals primarily with handwriting. The term has, however, become very crucial and strategic in linguistic circles, particularly in descriptive stylistics and its use has extended to the study of all subtly meaningful symbols and signs, including pictorial devices, which help authors and writers to communicate messages. It is apparently most effective and applicable to an ideophonic language like English whose writing system largely depends on a set of symbols and signs.

According to Alo (1998:5), the descriptive study of style rests on the analysis of language resources which can be found at the various levels of language description including the following:

- i. Phonology (sounds/sound effects)
- ii. Lexis (word usage and diction)
- iii. Grammar (word and sentence structure)
- iv. Semantics (units of meaning)
- v. Graphology (orthography or writing system)
- vi. Pragmatics (language for action or getting things done).

Graphology is, thus, a level of linguistic analysis which focuses on the layout of texts, the size or shape of words and any other feature that is graphical or orthographical. It is a fundamental and crucial way of paying close attention to the visual images and diagrams in a text which help to encode, extend or modify its signification. In other words, it is a paralinguistic approach to the explication of textual meaning, since it focuses essentially on non-verbal aspects of texts, such as form and visual appearance which carry pragmatic force, that is, which yield their meaning by distinctive situational use within a particular social framework.

Foregrounding, on the other hand, refers to any attention-catching device in a text, including lexical or structural repetition, coupling, collocation etc, which makes parts of a text to stand out in specific contexts. The term traverses the entire gamut of discourses and presupposes any deliberate device, linguistic or paralinguistic, which authors and writers deploy to emphasize or make prominent a particular aspect of a text. It is a major component of arts criticism, helping arts scholars to distinguish between the background and foreground of paintings. According to the Online Wikipedia, the term was first associated with Paul Garvin in the 1960s, who used it as a translation of the Czech word ‘aktualizace’, a concept that was introduced by the Prague School structuralists of the 1930s. Instructively, the latter see it as the major distinguishing element between poetic language and non-poetic language, in the sense that it makes a text to be unique and catchy. According to Leech (1969), foregrounding manifests in linguistic parallelism and linguistic deviation and can be studied from lexical, grammatical, phonological, semantic and graphological angles. Leech and Short (2007) are of the view that there are essentially two kinds of foregrounding viz: quantitative foregrounding, which deals with frequency of occurrence of a particular textual feature; and breaking the language code or rule. Yankson (1987:3) alludes to the latter kind of foregrounding (i.e violation of language codes) when he defined the concept as “... the aesthetically intentional distortion of the linguistic components of a text.” According to this scholar (Ibid), “the normal language code is the background. Any deviation from the norm-the code- is the foreground, because it brings the message to the forecourt of the reader’s attention”. In the same vein, Halliday (1973:98) describes the term as “motivated prominence” given to a particular textual feature, in the sense that it covers all the linguistic and paralinguistic strategies used by literary artists or other authors to make parts of a text prominent which contribute substantially to their cumulative meaning, and attract the attention or close scrutiny of scholars and readers alike. According to this scholar (Ibid), there are two main types of foregrounding: parallelism can be described as unexpected regularity while deviation can be seen as unexpected irregularity. As the definition of foregrounding indicates, something can only be unexpectedly regular or irregular within a particular context. This context can be relatively narrow, such as the immediate textual surroundings (referred to as a ‘secondary norm’).

No doubt, foregrounding is a relevant, even indispensable, strand of textual texture, particularly of literary texts, by its very nature and function, as outlined above. Babajide (2000:131) highlights the relevance of foregrounding in graphological analysis inter alia: Foregrounding is a major device in the graphological aspect of a text. This simply means bringing a certain item to the fore. Foregrounding manifests in different forms such as capitalization, italicization, asterism, underscoring and all sorts of signs and symbols used to demand attention.

Specifically, therefore, the present study focuses on graphological elements which have been deliberately deployed by Chimamanda Adichie to draw attention to critical and strategic aspects of meaning in her *Purple Hibiscus*. The idea or rationale, as we have highlighted above, is to demonstrate the fact that there is an “intrinsic connection between visual appeals and meaning interpretation” in texts and that, The appropriation and interpretation of meaning in discourse are not entirely dependent on the use of formal linguistic elements. Graphological elements also serve as visual aids to the encoding and decoding of the meaning of linguistic units. (Adegoju, 2008:157).

In other words, the present study discusses the graphetic patterns deployed in Adichie’s text to show their communicative or stylistic value as elements of foregrounding, in the sense that there is a semantic link or bond between linguistic elements and the visual or graphological elements used in the text, as both complement each other.

### ***Theoretical Foundations***

Over the years, the linguistic style of writers has been a subject of intense enquiry by scholars. The Russian formalists and Prague school of the 1920s, for instance, saw style in literature as linguistic foregrounding i.e. they placed a high premium on the language of literary texts (Hawkes, 1977; Bennet, 1979; Lemon and Reis, 1965). The structuralists of the 1960s also emphasized the various linguistic devices used by writers to foreground aspects of meaning. According to Fowler (1990), linguistic formalism promotes the view that there is a special poetic language which is distinct from “Ordinary” or “scientific” language. Chomsky’s (1957) Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) also delineates the peculiarity of the style of writers in terms of deviation i.e. the style of a writer or speaker is marked by constant violation of linguistic norms.

However, since this study focuses on a functional use of language, we shall adopt M. A. K Halliday’s systemic functional grammar as the theoretical model for analysis. The interest of this grammar is not only in describing the structure of language, but also in explaining the properties of discourse and its functions. It revolves around the work of J.R. Firth in general and M.A.K. Halliday in particular. In Hallidayan (1971) perception, a formal feature is stylistic if it has a particular meaning, effect or value. This notion emphasizes how language functions in texts and the nexus between language and what it is used for, or to achieve. The critical point here is that, whatever linguistic resource that is worth describing must be put to use, in the sense that the description and interpretation are necessarily based on the situational variables that prompted its use. Hence Oha (1994:730) posits that the approach recognizes the interdependency of style, meaning and context of situation and that the latter should not be subjected to second fiddle position, or ignored, in the analysis of style.

In Systemic Functional Grammar, language structure is analyzed along semantic, phonological, lexical and grammatical lines. Language function, on the other hand, is examined from three angles viz: ideational, interpersonal and textual. These are referred to as the metafunctions of language. The ideational metafunction of language is synonymous with the field of discourse i.e. the subject matter or propositional content of the text and the context of language use i.e. is it a religious or socio-political subject? According to Adeyanju (2008:86), it “... implies that language serves as an instrument for the encoder (speaker, writer) to express and articulate his idea and experience internally”. The interpersonal or interactional function, at another level, refers to the tenor of discourse i.e. the social relationship that exists among participants in a specific discourse situation, which can influence or shape language use. According to Ogunsiji (2001:77), it “... helps to establish and sustain social relations”. The textual aspect is particularly germane to the present study. It is concerned with the mode; the internal organization and communicative nature of a text. Leech and Short (1985:209) see Halliday’s textual functions of language as “... ways of using language to organize, understand and express information for effective communication”. In Adeyanju’s (2008) view, it suggests “... the availability of an internal structure which makes it possible for the writer or speaker to construct texts that are not only coherent but also situationally appropriate” (p.87). The main point is that, the textual metafunction relates what is said in a text to ideas outside the discourse, as we shall demonstrate in the present study.

### ***Brief Biography of the Author***

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1977 in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria and was educated at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) secondary school; her father was a Professor of Statistics and later Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University.

She was a student of Medicine and Pharmacy at UNN for a year and a half before leaving for Drexel University, Philadelphia, Eastern Connecticut State, University, and John Hopkins University, Baltimore.

Chimamanda Adichie is one of the most universally acclaimed and decorated African writers of her generation. Her works include *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *The Thing Around Your Neck* and *Americanah*. *Purple Hibiscus* won the Hurston Wright legacy award for best debut, fiction category (2004); Commonwealth Writer's Prize for best first book (Africa) 2005 and Commonwealth Writer's Prize (Best first book, Overall) 2005. It was also shortlisted for the Orange Prize for fiction (2004) and longlisted for the Booker Prize (2004), among others.

### ***Synopsis of the Text***

*Purple Hibiscus* is a story of Kambili, a fifteen year-old girl growing up in a stifling Catholic household in Enugu, Nigeria. Her wealthy father, Eugene Achike, with strict Catholic doctrine, dictates to and oppresses Kambili, her brother, Jaja and their mother Beatrice. While generous and politically active in the community, he is repressive and fanatically religious at home. Eugene's religious fanaticism, mercantile attitude and over-bearing nature end up confining, incapacitating or stifling those whom he professes to love the most. He has even repudiated his own father for refusing to convert to Catholicism and turns his grand children against him, allowing only fifteen minutes a year with him at Christmas; but things change when Nigeria begins to fall apart under military coup. Eugene sends his children to stay with his sister, Ifeoma, a University Professor. Here, Kambili and Jaja meet their cousins, learns what it means to be free to speak their minds, laugh and argue. They discover a life and love beyond the confines of their father's authority. This new knowledge and awareness challenge their values and lift the silence and shadow from their world and in time, give rise to devotion and defiance.

### ***Contextualizing the Text***

*Purple Hibiscus* captures the complex political and religious struggles occurring in Nigeria. It highlights the country's history and cultural experiences from her independence times. Nigeria attained her independence in 1960. This was followed by instability and series of coups which caused a great turmoil. The turmoil in the country resulted in corruption which caused further instability and successive coups. Political unrest, chaos and violence rage as military coups unfurl subjecting the society to tyranny. This is highlighted in the text under "leader, Big Oga" which echoes the atmosphere of the time, symbolized by the reign of General Sani Abacha, who took over Nigeria in 1993. During this time, there were incessant arrests and jails of critics and activists and foremost intellectuals and educators fled the country to avoid rising autocratic rule, intimidation and deteriorating social services. It was at this time that a celebrated writer, Ken Saro Wiwa was executed with other human rights activists and Nigeria was suspended from the commonwealth of Nations. This is the backdrop or context against which the story of "Ogechi Nwankiti" in the text is crafted. Abacha died in 1998 and was succeeded by General Abdul Salam Abubakar, who attempted to restore democracy. A former General, Olusegun Obasanjo became the elected President of Nigeria and was inaugurated in 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1999.

Adichie also touches on the rich diversity of her people and their traditions, the variety of their religious beliefs and philosophy. She explores Western versus African cultures by contrasting the legacy of colonization – its religions, language and customs with traditional cultural values. Devout Africans (traditionalists) who are unfamiliar with the peculiar religious practices of others (especially Christians) tend to be seen from a detached, ironic point of view in Nigeria. The contemporary Nigeria has a variety of religious beliefs – Christians, Muslims and practitioners of traditional religion. These are the relevant contextual situations which inform linguistic patterning in the text.

### ***Textual Analysis***

We have already established that, in its broadest sense, graphology refers to the visual medium of language. It describes the general resources of the written system of language, including punctuation, spelling, typography, alphabet, paragraph structure, etc. Apart from this, as we have earlier mentioned, it can also be extended to incorporate any significant pictorial and symbolic devices which supplement the written system. Specifically, the present study investigates the length of the text, paragraph structure, punctuation, and typography as a result of their strategic stylistic value as elements of signification, aesthetics and foregrounding in the text.

### ***Length of the Text***

In Adichie's text, the consecutive sequence of four parts is three hundred and seven pages. The first part, "BREAKING GODS: Palm Sunday," and the last part, "A DIFFERENT SILENCE: The Present" are the smallest parts of the four sections, and both have equal pages of sixteen each. The second part, "SPEAKING WITH OUR SPIRITS: Before Palm Sunday" is the largest part of the text with two hundred and thirty seven pages; and the third part, "THE PIECES OF GOD: After Palm Sunday" has thirty eight pages. What immediately attracts attention in this graphological device is the manner in which Adichie uses key synonymous phrases i.e. "breaking God's ..." and "the pieces of God..." and the antonymous words and concepts: "speaking" and "silence" in the heading as the backdrop against which actions are delineated in the novel. The obvious fact is that this mode of graphological patterning depicts the kernel of meaning and the contradiction or conflict that pervades the entire text, a contradiction that borders on repression, hypocrisy and freedom. The aim of this juxtaposition of antonymous lexemes is clearly to foreground the battlefield of social-cultural and socio-political values and events in the text which is rife with abuse and despair, for as Mullany and Stockwell (2010:46) put it, "foregrounding can be analysed stylistically as a feature of textual organization".

### ***Paragraph Structure***

Adichie's text also overtly uses paragraph structure and development for stylistic effect. The best or most visible creative use of this device lies in her deformation of standard paragraphing. Adichie, in the opening paragraph of the text, begins with the indenting of the first two lines; where the indenting of the first line of a paragraph is the norm. Subsequently, all of her topic sentences begin with the indenting of the first two lines of the paragraph. This device clearly reflects what has been referred to as a deliberate distortion of language or textual conventions or codes (see Leech, 1969; Yankson, 1987; Leech and Short, 2007). The following excerpts from the beginning of the first three chapters of the text confirm this pattern of paragraph structuring:

- i. Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to the communion and Papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the etagere. We had just returned from church. Mama placed the fresh palm fronds, which were wet with holy water, on the dining table and then went upstairs to change....(3)
- ii. I was at my study desk when Mama came into my room, my school uniforms piled on the crook of her arm. She placed them on my bed. She had brought them in from the lines in the backyard, where I had hung them to dry that morning. Jaja and I washed our school uniforms while Sisi washed the rest of our clothes. We always soaked tiny sections of fabric in the foamy water first to check if the colors would run, although we knew they would not....(19)
- iii. In the following weeks, the newspaper we read during family time sounded different, more subdued. *The Standard*, too was different; it was more critical, more questioning than it used to be. Even the drive to school was different. The first week after the coup, Kevin plucked green tree branches every morning and stuck them to the care lodged above the number plate, so that the demonstrators at Government Square would let us drive past....(27)

Another interesting part of this device is the use of upper case for the first few words of the opening sentence of most of her paragraphs which should normally have been restricted to only the first letter of the opening word. This is obviously a violation of the graphological convention or practice. One significant stylistic effect of this technique is that it gives deliberate prominence to those words in the upper case. The analysis of the extract below will amplify the underlying point:

THE POWER WENT OFF that evening, just before the sun fell. The refrigerator shook and shivered and then fell silent. I did not notice how loud its non-stop hum was until it stopped. Obiora brought the kerosene lamps out to the verandah and we sat around them, swatting at the tiny insects that blindly followed the yellow light and bumped against the glass bulbs (220/221).

Relating the use of upper case in written language to the spoken form, though, never absolute, will project the speaker (narrator) as loud. The clear point is that Adichie deploys capitalization, what Davy (1969:174) refers to as "graphetic highlighting", to imbue or invest key aspects of meaning in the text with the appropriate or required prominence or emphasis. In the passage above, emphasis is then laid on such words with upper case which decidedly makes them louder and thus, more attention is naturally focused on them than the others in the same passage.

It is, therefore, a design by Adichie to emphatically and strategically capture the deteriorating infrastructure in the country which are recurring experiences and characterize the social fabric in Nigeria. Adichie liberally employs this device throughout the text. For exemplification, see below three more extracts selected randomly from the text that depicts that this design:

- i. WE LEFT ABBA right after .... The wives of the Umunna took the leftover food, even the cooked rice and beans that Mama said were spoiled, and they knelt in the backyard dirt to thank Papa and Mama. The gate man waved with both hands over his head as we drove off .... (103)
- ii. THE PHONE RANG EARLY, before any of us had taken a morning bath. My mouth went dry because I was sure it was about Papa, that something has happened to him. The soldiers had gone to the house; they had shot him to make sure he would never publish anything again.... (147)
- iii. I DID NOT GET a chance to tell Jaja about the printing until the next day, a Saturday, when he came into my room during study time. He wore thick socks and placed his feet gingerly one after the other, as I did....(197)

### **Punctuation**

Punctuation marks generally make for organized structure as well as effective thought flow in any piece of written text, which facilitates meaningful and efficient reading. Our analysis in this section, therefore, demonstrates that punctuation is also a marked or significant graphological feature in the text, as it helps in foregrounding the overall or cumulative meaning of the work. In other words, the mode or pattern of punctuation in the text is meaning-laden in the sense that it is suggestive or reflective of the given content or proposition in specific contexts. The full stop, for instance, is a technique generally used at the end of a sentence in writing. In the text, we notice that there is a deliberate investment of this technique to create the background for specific and general meanings. As a grammatical pause, Adichie employs this technique throughout the text which is significant for meaning, especially, through the use of declarative sentences and to mark longer pauses. The extract below illustrates the point:

You have to do something with all these privileges. Because God has given much, he expects much from you. He expects perfection. I didn't have a father who sent me to the best schools. My father spent his time worshipping gods of woods and stone. I would be nothing today but for the priests and sisters at the mission. I was a houseboy for the parish priest for two years. Yes, a houseboy. Nobody dropped me off at school (47).

Used as a grammatical pause, it inevitably slows down the reading pace. The underlying idea of the passage above is that the road to success is tasking or demanding and compels hardwork and focus if we are to make any meaning out of life. Thus, the slow process of reading imposed on the passage by the full stops matches the idea of the passage and foregrounds the meaning of the text. This pattern or punctuation and its effect beautifully matches form with message. In other words, the text is clearly constructed to relate content to form.

The comma is another punctuation mark that is deployed to foreground stylistic meaning in the text. Conventionally, it is used for a variety of purposes – separate main clause from subordinate clause; introduce a direct speech, etc. In the words of Adeyanju(2008:89), a comma “is a graphological device used to separate items in a list and to create a slight pause in the unit of thought...” Its main function in the text is essentially to show where Adichie would naturally pause so as to allow her message to be absorbed and also, to separate items in a list. The extract below illustrates this technique which is a prominent part of Adichie's stylistic choices:

At Ninth Mile, Papa stopped to buy bread and okpa. Hawkers descending on our car, pushing boiled eggs, roasted cashew nuts, bottled water, bread, okpa, agidi into every window of the car, chanting: “Buy from me, oh, I will sell well to you.” Or “Look at me, I am the one you are looking for”. (54)

The critical point is that a grammatical pause like the full-stop, the comma forces the reader to pause nine times in the extract; and would naturally force down the pace of reading. The theme of the extract is the struggles for survival. One must go to the roadside, wait, approach car owners, go round and round the car windows, and then chant in order to make a living. It is a difficult and a slow process; and it is this slow process of eking out a living that is enacted by the slow pace of reading the text through the use of commas. The critical fact that emerges from this style is that grammatical pause serves as a technique for foregrounding the meaning of the text.

The question mark is used to suggest that an expression is a question meant to elicit information from the addressee. The use of the question mark in the text is, apparently, also stylistically significant.

In other words, Adichie's deployment of question mark in this text has intrinsic stylistic value in the sense that it is deliberately used to foreground or draw attention to crucial aspects of meaning and to create directions in the mind of the reader. This extract exemplifies this point: "Sole administrator must go... head of state must go... Where is running water? Where is light? Where is petrol?" (228). The critical point to note in this context is that question marks carry with them a rising intonation, and the natural attitude associated with a rise in tone suggests the semantic feature/ + critical/. The design in the context is, therefore, to reflect the critical social conditions under corrupt leaders and which the people are forced to protest against. The central concerns in the passage are serious and the contradictions curious. The question marks are, therefore, a deliberate effort to mean, to interrogate the system: why the so much lack of basic amenities in Nigeria or any post-colonial African country, when there is so much resources and potential?

The stylistic technique of quoting conversation is also stylistically foregrounded in Adichie's text. It is mainly used to know characters by what they say especially in the novel genre which is inherently narrative. This is clearly in tandem with Campsall's (2008) observation that graphological features of a text determine subtle and important aspects such as genre and ideology. Adichie's novel is, in fact, replete with this style marker and it is achieved graphologically through the use of quotation marks. The most significant or critical point about the use of this device is the shortness of most of the quoted speeches of conversations and, in fact, its liberal use in the text makes it almost a drama piece in format:

"... I talked to Philipa the other day, She said.  
"Oh? How is she, how is oyinbo land treating her?"  
"She is well"  
"And life as a second-class citizen in America?  
"Chiaku, your sarcasm is unbecoming".  
"But it is true. All my years in Cambridge, I was a monkey who had developed the ability to reason"  
"That is what they tell you. Everyday our doctors go there and end up washing plates for oyinbo because oyinbo does not think we study medicine right. Our lawyers go and drive taxis because oyinbo does not trust how we train them in law" (244).

As can be gleaned from the extract above, the fundamental stylistic point here is that, through this device, Adichie makes her characters express critical opinions that are critical and strategic to our understanding and interpretation of the text. The short speeches make the points sharp, pungent and penetrating - they make the points to sink in seamlessly and thus, the reader can artistically relate to a common bitter experience of the blacks i.e. "I was a monkey who had developed the ability to reason" portrays an existing but sensitive racial phenomenon which continues to confront the black man in the white man's land.

### **Typography**

This is the outline of how words and letters are printed in a text. The print type of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is a significant graphological device through which foregrounding has been achieved and sustained throughout the text. Whereas the type is of the normal fonts; some have been italicized either for meaning or to show foreign or local words or phrases, and others capitalized to catch the attention of the reader. The passage below illustrates the point:

"This is what our people say to the High God, the Chukwu", Papa- Nnukwu said. "Give me both wealth and a child, but if I must choose one, give me a child because when my child grows, so will my wealth." Papa-Nnukwu stopped, turned to look back towards our house. Nekenem, look at me. My son owns that house that can fit in every man in Abba, yet many times I have nothing to put on my plate. I should not have let him follow those missionaries" (83).

Adichie makes use of native (Igbo) words in order to strengthen her point about Nigerian roots and culture, for the text itself is essentially a cultural or sociological artifact. This technique tallies with Mullany and Stockwell's (2010:45) view that "foregrounding depends on a sense that the particular feature that you have noticed is doing something noticeably different from the previous co-text or from what you might ordinarily have expected in that context." The beauty of the extract above lies in the use of a native or transferred word "nekenem" to introduce a heartfelt dismay over the missionaries (i.e. when we are genuinely troubled or seek to introspect or go deep into ourselves, we go back to our native language or cultural roots).

This transference of native words (i.e. Chukwu) into the English language or code-mixing is also to reflect the theme of cultural conflict or of transferred (alien or foreign) culture; that is, the alien religious system brought by colonialism into the traditional religion of ancestral worship which regards 'Chukwu' as too high up there: far-fetched and unreachable. This specifies the meaning of the text which Adichie seeks to establish – forcible imposition of foreign religious beliefs brought by the missionaries which adulterates the traditional cosmology. The point is that the imposition of Igbo on English kind of satirizes the imposition of foreign religious/cultural beliefs on African culture or religion. There is also the underlying conflict of the stupendous wealth of a son (i.e. represented by the house he built) and the grinding poverty of the parent. Thus, what makes such words in italics notable is that they serve as devices for stylistic foregrounding and within the context of *Purple Hibiscus*, they serve as pointers to the themes explored in the novel. The following context from the text lends further credence to this thesis.

Of course, Papa told us, the politicians were corrupt, and the Standard had written many stories about the cabinet ministers who stashed money in foreign bank accounts, money meant for paying teachers' salaries and building roads. But what we Nigerians needed was not soldiers ruling us, what we needed was a renewed democracy. Renewed Democracy. Papa read one of the articles in *Nigeria Today* aloud out, an opinion column by a writer who insisted that it was indeed time for a military president, since the politicians had gone out of control and our economy was in a mess (24/25).

The idea of "standard", though the name of a newspaper, in the passage above, is what any society needs i.e. the standard form of government – democracy. In the same manner, the idea of "renewed democracy" encapsulates the atmosphere of transparency and stability which constitutes the undertone of the passage. "*Nigeria Today*", another newspaper, captures the contemporary Nigeria and its deteriorating political situation, in which even a public opinion is mischievously or craftily manipulated against pure democratic ideals, which has subjected its economy to a complete state of shambolic mess. In this text, Adichie thus liberally makes use of italics to underline words with deep and far-reaching semantic context, in order to draw the attention of readers and scholars alike to their strategic relevance. What is particularly important here is that these graphological resources of language have contributed to the overall meaning of the work and etched the linguistic style of the author.

### **Conclusion**

This study has discussed the graphetic resources deployed by Chimamanda Adichie to foreground aspects of meaning and achieve aesthetic ends in her *Purple Hibiscus*, using M. A. K Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics(SFL), as the theoretical template. It is clear from the discussion so far that graphological techniques play a major role in communicating the message of a text, as it enables writers and authors to highlight aspects which are markedly and strategically important to the cumulative meaning of a text. Though Leech and Short (1981:131) have averred that "graphological variation is a relatively minor and superficial part of style," the study of textual length, paragraphing, punctuation and topography in Adichie's work demonstrates that an explication of textual meaning without due and careful recourse to the subtle nuances of graphological patterning in a text is less than adequate. This view is hinged on the fact that discourses contain "salient graphological features that appeal to the reader's visual imagination and assist his understanding of the writer's message" (Adeyanju, 2008:88). As Adegoju (2008:160) aptly observes, "... the meaning generated at the graphological level in some cases could be more significant than that generated by verbal signifiers." To lend credence to this view, the scholar refers to Hodge and Kress's position as cited by Locke (2004:23) that "... in contemporary society, meaning resides strongly and pervasively in systems other than the verbal, especially the visual." The key point is that, as the present study demonstrates and as Campsall (2008) observes, graphological elements are very key in critical textual analysis, as they are the first qualities of a written and printed text that we notice and "carry certain pragmatic force that is central to the interpretation of discourse" (See Adegoju, 2008:160).

Perhaps we need to restate that, as the study also shows, the importance of foregrounding in stylistic analysis in general cannot be overemphasized. Mullany and Stockwell (2010:43) have drawn our attention to the fact that "all texts, whether spoken or written, display style, which can loosely be defined as the recognizable linguistic and discursal patterns in the text". The implication of this viewpoint is that not all linguistic or paralinguistic features of texts can be useful or relevant for stylistic analysis, thus, bringing up the imperative of style markers or recognizable features in style study. This is the whole idea of foregrounding; hence Mullany and Stockwell (2010:45) further aver that, "... an important concept in stylistics is the notion of prominence or foregrounding.



Texts are not even; some parts are more noticeable than others. This unevenness of texture is a consequence of different choices, it underlies the existence of style itself, and it is what allows stylistics its validity and power.”

Essentially, the study also demonstrates that context plays a strategic role in the analysis of graphological elements in Adichie’s text and in any given discourse for, as Leech and Short (1981:208) observe, “discourse is linguistic communication seen as transaction between speaker and hearer, as an interpersonal activity whose form is determined by its social purpose.” This is clearly in tandem with the Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics(SFL) adopted for the explication of textual meaning in this study, particularly as it highlights the fact that language use is conditioned or constrained by sociological and psychological factors. Hence Adegoju (2008:158) argues that, the analysis of stylistic features of a discourse at the graphological level without linking such features to the contextual background that underlies them would undermine the social character of language; for language is socially determined and it varies according to the social situation. The overt implication of this fact is that any worthwhile analysis of graphological features as style markers in a given text must foreground or pay due attention to the role the wider social and cultural context plays.

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