# Graphic devices as signallers of meaning in Osundare's *Dialogue with my country*

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**Abstract**
*This paper focuses on graphic signs as signallers of meaning in Osundare's 'Dialogue with my country'. It has been observed that Osundare's literary work mirrors Nigeria's social and economic challenges of grave concern, as well as political issues of national importance. Therefore, the study examines how the essayist has employed language replete with a host of graphic markers to achieve his intentions pertaining to the essays' thematic thrusts and forms. The data for analysis constitute the following essays from 'Dialogue with my country':"Tears for my country", "Murderers be not proud", "Truth of my politics", "Abominations", "When government steals", "Leave the lawmakers alone", "The unthinkable", "Mad times" and "Scars of the season (I and II)". The selected essays were analysed based on the principles of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL). The analysis reveals that the following graphic symbols: capitalisation; italicisation and punctuations (i.e. exclamation, question mark, ellipsis dots; and the comma etc.,) are generously foregrounded and artistically deployed to communicate social meaning. Also, it is observed that the use of graphological devices prominent in the selected essays exhibits Osundare's artistic potentials, his freedom in compositional pattern as well as highlights the meanings he makes with these devices. It therefore shows that a writer's manipulation of these devices can either obscure or reveal meaning.*

**Keywords:** Signallers, graphic markers, graphic symbols, graphic devices

## 1.0 Introduction

Language is a means of communication among human beings. The anthropologist views it as a manner of social conduct; the sociologist, as a communication between participants of society; the literary critic, as an imaginative apparatus; and the philosopher, as a means of interpretation (Syal and Jindal, 2007). It is the vehicle of communication of all genres of literature and by its creative use, they achieve communicative and aesthetics effects. Language is the raw material of the stylisticians, and according to Douglas (2004),it is "the weapon with which he embarks upon the arduous task of demystifying the hidden message tucked behind the string of words generated by the text marker" (p.281). Further, he adds that any disorganized or an uncoordinated examination of the language of a text will produce nothing but a distortion of the facts and message of the writer (p.282).Using the above background, this paper will investigate the essay, one of the minor literary genres; or, an "invisible genre", according to Good (2014: p.14), in the sense that it is commonly used but hardly researched into. The study will identify the graphic features in the selected essays and how they have been deployed to convey social meaning. The envisaged analysis is considered worthwhile because it will help to unearth the graphic symbols in essays to fit the communicative functions of discourse; establish the efficacy of linguistic models, i.e. systemic functional linguistics, in the study of literary genres other than drama, poetry, and prose-fiction which have dominated stylistic investigation; and to highlight as well as evaluate the linguistic creativity of the essayist under study.

The essay is a literary genre replete with distinctive features. Whereas other genres are portrayed by the creative representations of reality, use of suggestive language and symbolic forms, it is typically factual, more direct and explicit as well as provides readers with information, data and facts (Diyanni, 1997: p.1711). The essay does not exist in isolation from other aspects of human social behaviour. It is influenced by a number of factors such as cultural, social, historical, political and economic events. As one of the forms of literature, it makes

use of language in a unique and creative way and often reflects the social context which produces it (Ibhawaegbele, 2006). Reading essays only for ideas and information while ignoring style and language, is to miss much of the pleasure they afford (Diyanni, 1997). Among all the genres of literature, the established gross deficiency of critical works in the essay, most especially from the linguistic perspective, is thus why it is under focus here. The study explores the genre and highlights the graphological features deployed by Osundare in the craft of the selected essays under study.

Niyi Osundare is a well acclaimed Nigerian author. He is a poet, dramatist, critic, essayist, human rights activist, and media columnist who had written over ten volumes of poetry; two books of selected poems; four plays; a book of essays; and numerous articles on literature, language, culture, and society. Osundare has witnessed the obvious deterioration of the Nigerian society. In *Dialogue with my country,* he factually and explicitly projects the various societal ills and vices which have impeded the development of Nigeria since independence, with the view to building a better society for the Nigerian citizenry. The essayist believes that as a social critic he owes the people this role; in essence, and his art dwells on a concern for life and humanity. His seriousness of purpose and faithful depiction of the menacing socio-political, cultural, economic, and moral realities of Nigeria are among the driving factors for this study which focuses on graphic symbols deployed in the presentation of his works.

**2.0 The notion of graphology**

Phono-graphology is the organisation of substance into meaningful events. The construct was promoted by Halliday (1961) in elucidating the various planes at which linguistic events can be described. Within this framework, Halliday (1961) notes that the primary levels are 'form', 'substance' and 'context'. Substance is the level at which the physical expression of language is revealed. It is made up of speech and writing. For example, the substance of speech is phonic (i.e.,

consist of sounds), whereas that of written language is graphic (involves visual symbols) (Ogunsiji, 2007: p.1). The phonic substance is realized by phonology and the graphic substance by orthography or graphology (Tomori, 1977: p.44). While form is the arrangement of phonic and graphic substance into patterns that express meaning, context on the other hand relates the connection of "patterned activity to the non-linguistic features of the situations in which language is used" (Tomori, 1977: p.45). Therefore, Systemic Functional Linguistics recognizes the formal and the situational dimensions of language description. Since the focus of this paper is on the substance of written language which involves visual symbols, the concept of graphology is examined below.

Graphology is "the characteristic line-by-line arrangement of poetry on the printed page" (Leech, 1969: p.47). Beyond the confines of poetry, it is "the analogous study of language writing system or orthography as seen in the various kinds of handwriting and topography" (Crystal and Davy, 1969: p.18). Further, these two exponents opine that graphology has to do with the writer's distinctive use of punctuation, paragraphing, and capitalisation. Crystal adds that graphology is "the writing system of language" (1985: p.143); and that it is the graphic representation of language on paper. Wales (2011: p.194) sees it as "the writing system of a language, as manifested in handwriting and typography; and to the other related features, such as punctuation; paragraphing; shapes, spacing, capitalisation". From the foregoing, it is evident that graphological patterns play significant and sometimes astounding roles in the reinforcement of subject and theme in literature (Oladeji, 1988: p.94). Graphology is given adequate attention in this paper because of its role in conveying the message of the selected essays.

**2.1 Graphological analysis**

To explore the substance of written language in a text as espoused by Halliday (1961) is to unearth those visual or graphic symbols deployed in the craft of such text. Of the several graphological features discussed in the previous section, the core interests here are: capitalisation, italicisation, and punctuations. These elements have been

selected for study because through their artistic manipulation, the selected essays achieve foregrounding. Foregrounding implies making certain features in a text prominent so as to attract attention (Leech, 1969). Any aspect of a text that is foregrounded is made conspicuous to attract the reader's attention.The next sub-section contains an analysis of the unconventional use of graphic symbols observable in the essays.

**2.2 Capitalisation**

Capitalisation is the conventional application of capital letters or higher case in a sentence. The essays under study commonly evince a deviant use of capital and small letters to communicate social message. Please note that (Henceforth, 'T' will be used to represent 'text'). As can be seen in the following essays (Nos.1-7), certain words, phrases, or even clauses are foregrounded through non-conventional use of higher case letters, or capitalisation, thus:

T1. Amina Lawal has been sentenced to death by STONING- she is to be buried up her neck in the ground, after which her punishers will surround her and throw rocks at her head until her skull is crushed and she dies a painful and horrible death ('TFMC', p.366).

T2. Needless to say, as presently constituted, Nigeria is NOT a country, it is an insufferable embarrassment ('TFMC', p.367).

T3. Now the world is almost sure who murdered Machel; but in this country, the question WHO KILLED DELE GIWA? still haunts us like an inscrutable mystery ('MBNP', p. 349).

T4. Those who believe that their tribesman can NEVER be wrong, and whoever says he can must be a tribalist; and others who come up with a partial concession: well, we know what he has done is wrong, but who are you to come from another tribe to criticise our tribesman? ('TOMP', p.341).

T5. But I have never really cared whose TRIBAL ox is gored as long as the issue at stake concerns our country, our continent, and our common humanity ('TOMP', p.341).

T6. New Tarzans in pinstripe suits, their teeth red with blood, their Large briefcases pregnant with ESTACODE dollars ('A', p. 320).

T7. Some articulated their own fury in languages and dialects beyond the wild, complacent pale of WAZOBIA ('WGS', p. 263).

A careful examination of the texts above shows that particular aspects are given prominence. In T1 and T2, for example, Osundare's "Tears for my country" regrettably exposes Nigeria's hunger and lack in the midst of plenty; its inefficient, decrepit, and, therefore, costly-to-maintain communications system; the poor, dysfunctional educational system; and blatant human rights abuse. The unusual capitalisation of 'stoning' in 1 and 'not' in 2 serves as a shouting voice which draws attention to the abomination perpetrated by religious fanatics right under the government's watch. Consequently, the essayist concludes that Nigeria is in a state of socio-political break down. In T3, culled from "Murders be not proud", Osundare decries the high rate at which journalists are murdered in Nigeria; therefore, the capitalisation of the rhetorical question, "Who killed Dele Giwa?" Capitalisation of this nature, according to Ibhawaegbele (2006: p.48), commands the reader's interest and attention regarding the writer's motive for this extraordinary style.

As for T4 and T5, from "Truths of my politics", the capitalisation of "NEVER" and "TRIBAL" gives Osundare the opportunity to highlight the ways in which politics in Nigeria has been battered by tribalism. Here, this technique enables the author to emphasize the subject under discussion. In T6, titled "Abominations", he laments the depreciation, depression, and desecration to which Nigeria and Nigerians have been subjected. The essay focuses on the atrocities committed by politicians and public officers. The seemingly offensive word, 'ESTACODE', is rendered in higher case letters in order to show

that these abominations are executed by the use of Nigeria's scarce resources in the form of travel allowances. Finally, in T7, cited from "When Government steals", Osundare speaks about the outrageous inflation in his country which has driven the price of virtually all essential commodity out of the reach of ordinary Nigerians, hence the capitalisation of "WAZOBIA" used to indicate the various languages used by angry Nigerians to decry their contemptible predicament considering the untold hardship this situation has brought upon them.

As the analysis above has shown, capitalisation constitutes a significant stylistic feature of the selected essays of Osundare. His preference for this style is based on his objective of deliberately foregrounding lexical items in order to enhance communicative impact. According to Adagbonyin (1994: p.132), the thinking behind this style is the "awareness that the use of normal type (forms) in such circumstances would achieve a lesser impact."

**2.3 Italicisation**

'Italicisation' refers to "printing on paper for the artistic effect of highlighting" (Edokpayi, 2006: p.66). According to Adagbonyin (1994: p.149), its uses include:

1) marking off lexical items, idioms, expressions, or refrains that are 'foreign' to texts rendered in English;
2) emphasising or stressing particular words (or parts thereof); or to highlight neologism;
3) signalling subtitles, epigraphs, or dedications;
4) as marker for the different sections of a text;
5) to indicate stage performance or stage directions;
6) for introducing some form of narrative comment.

In the essays under study, Osundare utilises italic markers for the purpose of aesthetics and to present linguistic usages that are not in the English language. The following texts illustrate the use of italics in his essays:

T8 "*Aburo*, please, give me money", he pleaded in a voice which

quaked like a broken record" ('SOTS' (1), p.8).

T9. The pragmatic core of *eewo* serves as the rallying trait of a group of Yoruba proverbs, whose clausal preface is *aakaii*… ('TU', p.322).

T10. How do I tell them that I am more pained than they are at this act of utter barbarism committed in the name of religion by faceless *mullahs* who have put Nigeria's engine in reverse gear to the Dark Ages? ('TFMC', p.366).

T11. *"Oga, how much be dis? Abi you no hear the news? Na N 30 for one letter to America now o! N1.50 kobo na for inside Nigeria"* ('WGS', p.262).
T12. "*Which kin country be this sef? Gofment way dey hard people like this? Khaki no be leather ke"* (WGS, p.263).

T13. *"If you wan die quick quick, make you go Nigerian hospital"* ('SOTS II, p.9).

In T8 above, Osundare uses the native Yoruba word, 'aburo', (younger brother) to underscore the purported closeness of the cash supplicant and the person being solicited. Similarly, in T9, there is the use of two native Yoruba words, 'eewo', (please have a look) and 'aakaii' (a moral law) to accentuate the modus operandi in every society that guides human behaviour and activities. T10 paints a picture of the atrocities perpetrated by religious fanatics, hence the use of indigenous word, *mullahs* (Hausa for miscreant) is foregrounded through italicisation. As if to display his competence in speech other than English, Osundare switches code from Standard to Pidgin English as observed in T11 to T13 –a sort of linguistic condescension to tally with the unpleasant situation being faced by Nigerians as a result of ill economy and the degradation of Nigeria's medical institutions and facilities. Concerning his usage of Pidgin English, Osundare does not merely switch-code with the mind of

a one-off alignment of content with mode of language, as observed in T11 to T13. His essays are noticeably interwoven with doses of Pidgin discourse, dialogue, and other forms of expression as conspicuously displayed above.

The aforementioned analysis corresponds with the joint opinion 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" (Mullany and Stockwell, 2010: p.45). This viewpoint is a fitting summation of the essayist's deployment of native words as well as Pidgin English to boost his expressions of disillusionment and bitterness over Nigeria's grave plight.

**2.4 Punctuations**

Punctuations are "marks used as guides to pauses and changes in the rhythm and intonation in sentences, and they have rules guiding their usage" (Ibhawaegbele, 2006: p.42). In the context of writing, 'punctuation' is used to provide the same signals (as pause, voice pitch, or stress) that operate in speech, in the declension of a word (or a group of words), in order to facilitate the reader's understanding (Dukiya, 1991: p.106-107). Edokpayi (2006: p.64) views it as "the act of dividing sentences by points or marks". She adds that in spoken and written discussion, speakers and writers often pause, break off sentences or even stop completely; punctuation marks are used to reflect these features (2006: p.64). Further, as posited by Adagbonyin (1994: p.116), it is commonly established that punctuation "constitutes a veritable means of encoding the unspoken aspects of a linguistic performance."The following punctuation marks are put to good use in the essays under study: comma, exclamation mark, ellipsis dots, question mark, etc. However, where some of them are applied in manners that defy the norm, the deviance is still worthwhile, because it is meant to achieve artistic effect. The next section features the discussion of a sample of

instances of the essayists' usage of the above-named punctuation marks, beginning with the comma.

### 2.4.1 The comma

The comma "separates or sets off the words and group of words within sentences. It also encloses expressions appearing within a sentence" (Ibhawaegbele, 2006: p.44). In the standpoint of Edokpayi (2006: p.64), this device is used to "convey varieties of meanings in a text"; and that it creates pauses in sentences; separates the components of a sentence; while helping the reader to grasp the message communicated. The following examples amply justify the foregoing definitions of, and observations on, punctuation marks in the below texts:

T14. Tricked and dribbled in so many years of General Babangida's maradonic manipulation, frustrated by General Abacha's elephantine insensitivity, fed upon "facts" with a heavy ethnic and sectional coloration, Nigerians are finding it increasingly difficult to "spot the difference" between truth and falsehood, between the reality in the street and the government megaphone's version of it ('MT', p.300).

T15. We have been lied to, cheated, swindled, denied our rights, hanged, and dehumanised in countless ways by those who have imposed themselves on us ('A', p.320).

T16. Pale, malnourished and haggard, this man who had plodded the deathly roads from the hinterlands to see the magic touch of an urban hospital, found death, not curative essence, at the venue of his last hope ('SOTS 11', p.9).

T17. As I surveyed the astounding variety of Nigerians who trooped out to "pay their last respects"-students, market women, drivers, motor cyclists, journalists, artisans, ex-politicians and business executives – it became infuriatingly obvious that whoever sent the death parcel surely

did not have the interest of Nigeria and Nigerians at heart ('MBNT', p. 349).

T18. For this special treatment and notoriety that has led to it, we have to thank the Association of Nigerian Document Forgers (ANDF), the drug barons and their couriers, the 419 experts and their gullible (and greedy) foreign victims, and, oh yes, Nigeria's political "system" which makes sure it never fails to shock the world with the most macabre, most primitive instances of political delinquency ('TFMC', p.365).

T19. The lawmakers' decision has become the talking point in the market places, local *bukas*, roadside workshops, motor parks, hotels and "do-work" fleshpots, football stadia, schools and colleges, shrines, mosques, and churches, and, of course, our sprawling slums ('LTLMA', p.325).

In the extracts above, we observe a profuse use of the comma. In T14, for example, Osundare's "Mad times", unveils the high level of insincerity and deception exhibited by the government. Four commas are creatively used in a series of parallel clauses to show that each of the clauses has equal importance. Also, in T15extracted from "Abominations" and T16from "Scars of the season (II)", respectively, the essayist underscores the degrading and despicable nightmares Nigerians are made to go through in the hands of their leaders. For instance, in T15, Osundare uses five commas (mixed with phrases and clauses) to criticise the government for defrauding and depriving its citizens of their rights. In the same vein, similar number of commas is conspicuously observed in T16 where he paints a picture of the poverty stricken life lived by most Nigerians, the bad state of their roads which have claimed many innocent lives as well as the contemptible condition of their hospitals which swiftly send most patients to their early graves.

In T17,titled "Murderers be not proud", Osundare speaks about the muzzling of the press by the government as well as the infringement on the rights of journalists. Six commas are artistically deployed to

achieve this effect which evokes a sad atmosphere of oppression on the majority of Nigerians. Social vices common in Nigeria are the essayist's thematic preoccupation in T18, cited from "Tears for my country". The seven commas utilise here are used to ensure a free flow of each lines in the text and also used for emphatic purposes to underscore meanings. This fact is buttressed in T19, from "Leave the lawmakers alone", where the highest use of the comma is observed. Here, Osundare imaginatively comments on most of the places where Nigerians discuss issues in the country bordering them. Eleven commas are dexterously marshalled for this strong linguistic impact. The first comma functions as a pause; that is, a break separating one part of the sentence from the others, while others merely list the varied places where the discussion is done. The commas used in this text not only ensure the free flow of reading, but also lend some emphasis to textual meaning. As the analysis above has shown; the ample use of the comma in these essays exhibit Osundare's artistic potentials.

**2.4.2 Question mark**

Question marks are a very significant graphological feature employed by Osundare as part of his style in the essays under study for several effects. Generally, question marks are used to end interrogatory sentences (Edokpayi, 2006: p.65-66). Besides, their conventional use, they are employed to expose Osundare's inquisitive state of mind, demand attention and also reflect his mood in some cases. The following texts present the use of question marks in the essays:

T20. …how can the result of an election whose mandate is Nigeria's greatest promise for unity lead to the break-up of the country? Did the millions of Nigerians who cast their vote on June 12 do so in order to destroy their country? Did General Babangida, the author of Nigeria's present tragedy, annul his country's best election so as to save the country from itself? In other words, did the dictator cancel the election because he was afraid the unity it promised would disunite the country? Or are we saying that an election based on truth and justice would break-

up Nigeria? What kind of country is threatened by such ideals? ('MT', p. 301-302).

T21. Where is Gani? Where is Agbakoba? Where is Falana? Where is Beko? Where is Nwankwo? Where is Ayo Obe? Where is Ifowodo? ('TOMP', p.340).

T22.Many Nigerians have been wondering what kind of "furniture" our lawmakers will be buying with those millions: what kind of wood, what kind of cushion, what kind of rug, what kind of drapery…? Will these material come from the Nigeria market patronised by the rest of us? If you require over three million naira to furnish a house, how much would it cost to build the entire house? ('LTLMA', p.326).

There is a special use of the question mark in the texts above. In T20 extracted from "Mad times", Osundare reports on the public ecstasy of Nigerians over Chief M.K.O Abiola's electoral victory in the 1993 general election, which had given the populace a new lease of life. Unfortunately, the hope for a new dawn was short-lived due to General Babangida annulling the election. Six question marks are used here in close succession. The first four are used to end four different complex sentences; the fifth is used at the end of a compound sentence and the sixth, a simple sentence respectively. The first two question marks used creatively to reflect on the election; the third and fourth are directed to the General for cancelling the election; and the final two directed to Nigerians, but they all do not receive responses. The significance of the deployment of question marks here is that they draw the readers' attention to the questions raised and also reflects the angry mood of the essayist.

Similarly, in T21 culled from "Truth of my politics", there is the use of six question marks, each making an inquiry. What is enthralling about the essayist deployment of question mark here is that the addresser does not direct the questions to any particular person, and the questions again get no replies. They are rhetorical questions and as such do not

demand responses. The addresser here represents ordinary Nigerians and Osundare depicts their passionate plea and call to those human right activists who in the past had fought for the course of the deserted, oppressed and emasculated in the society. These rhetorical questions are, therefore, put to special use by the essayist for rhetorical effects. T22 cited from "Leave the lawmakers alone" is not exempted in this creative use of graphic markers. Here, Osundare exposes the extravagant utilisation of Nigeria's scarce resources by our lawmakers, hence the deployment of question mark to probe the funds spent by our law makers. Note that in T22, Osundare displays his stylistic dexterity by using the colon and comma in place of the question mark. A careful examination of the first sentence shows that instead of using a question mark at the end of the interrogatory sentence, the colon is deployed. Similarly, in the succeeding nominal phrases, the use of three commas is equally observed and deployed in place of the question mark. The stylistic positioning of the colon and comma in place of the question mark in this text reveals Osundare's freedom in compositional pattern.

**2.4.3 Exclamation marks**

These marks are used in ending exclamatory sentences or exclamations (Edokpayi, 2006: p.65). Osundare puts these to effective use in the texts under study. The following are some of the exclamations he uses for artistic effect:

T23. "I'm sorry to wake you up with this shattering news: Dele Giwa is dead!" ('MBNP', p. 347).

T24. So the parcel bomb has made its triumphant entry into Nigeria at last! ('MBNP', p.349).

T25. Some also observe that a senator's furniture grant of 3.5 million naira is more than the salary of a Nigerian university Professor for ten years! ('LTLMA', p. 326).

T26. Now postal services have joined that forbidden list: we can no longer say hello to a friend across the border without taking a bank loan! ('WGS', p.263).

T27. Then send your minister of information to regale the whole wide world with tales about the freedom of the Nigerian press! ('A', p.321).

T28. As if that vicious murderer deserved respite from any sane human being! ('TOMP', p. 340).

Osundare uses exclamations to express astonishment, confusion, embarrassment, resentment, command, rebuke, and pain etc., in the essays under study. For example, in T23 and T24 culled from "Murderers be not proud", he decries the atrocities committed by the military administration and laments the depreciation, depression, and desecration to which Nigeria and Nigerians have been subjected using the murder of Dele Giwa as a case in point. The exclamation in the former text expresses surprise and pain whereas expresses surprise in the succeeding text. The astonishment and pain in the first results from the news about the sudden death of Dele Giwa while in the second, the entry of the parcel bomb into Nigeria at a time when everyone least expected also calls for surprise.

However, Osundare lashes and ridicules the government on account of the excessive fund used as furniture allowance in T25 extracted from "Leave the law makers alone". A university Professor by virtue of the education attained, the degree qualifications acquired coupled with the laborious nature of his job should earn more salary. Unfortunately, it surprising that this is not so! Also, it is equally embarrassing to learn that the Professor's take home pay for ten years cannot be equated with the senator's annual furniture grant. Whereas the exclamation mark in T26, an excerpt from "When Government steals" is used to express anger and confusion due to the atrocious increase in the charges of postal service; it is deployed in T27 culled from

"Abominations" to give command, show resentment and as well as ridicule the government for muzzling the press and preaching the freedom of the press to the world. Finally, in T28extracted from "Truth of my politics" the essayist laments over the unjust murder of innocents Nigerians by the military administration; hence, the use of exclamation by the author to expresses feelings of pain and discomfort as well as vents his spleen against this injustice perpetrated by the government.

**2.4.4 Ellipsis dots**

The ellipsis dots comprise three consecutive periods that indicate an omission of a word or words from the middle of sentences, a lapse of time, or a particularly long pause (Ibhawaegbele, 2006: p.45). It is most commonly used to avoid repetition. The extracts below are instances, where foregrounding is achieved through the use of ellipsis dots.

T29. "They have murdered Dele Giwa, but they cannot murder the truth… ('MBNP', 349).

T30. These were the people who fought Abacha, please come again o… ('TOMP', 340).

T31. We perpetrated those hangings because… You may not understand, Your Excellency, but you see, we are Nigerians, we are Africans… ('A', 320).

Noticeable in the extracts above is the use of the ellipsis dots which stands out uniquely. In T29, for example, Osundare's "Murderers be not proud" laments the vicious murder of Dele Giwa, who was a journalist and a human rights activist. As for T30 cited from "Truth of my politics" reference is made to those human rights activist who fought against the military government bringing untold hardship on Nigerians. T31 exposes some of the atrocities perpetrated by the military regime under the leadership of Abacha. For obvious reasons, Osundare must have used

these dots in an attempt to achieve brevity and to avoid repetition. His use of the ellipsis dots in these texts is probably to avoid redundancy which can make a work of art uninteresting.

**3.0 Conclusion**

From the model adopted in the study, findings indicate the sorts of graphic features deployed in the craft of the selected essays as well as their communicative functions in discourse. The analysis highlights and evaluates Osundare's linguistic creativity in the essay genre, which enable the reader to appreciate his artistic achievement. As an essayist, Osundare is seen to have creatively employed the graphic devices of language (capitalisation, italicisation and punctuations) in his writings to achieve his intentions pertaining to his essays' thematic thrusts and forms. He uses these graphic markers, which are meaning signalling devices, to communicate his message to the readers. These graphic features in the texts appeal to the reader's literary aesthetics. While it is factual that the graphic markers above are ordinary devices, it should also be noted that they are valuable aid to meaning. Thus, a writer's manipulation of these devices can either obscure or reveal meaning. Punctuation marks can create ambiguity when not used in place where they are desirable, just as they can make meaning clearer if used appropriately. In the essays analysed, Osundare has utilized graphological devices to suit his purpose, to reveal and reinforce the meanings he intends to put across. His text is extremely comprehensible, and this somewhat accounts for the impact these essays have made on some Nigerians and other people who have read his work.

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