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35. Graphological & Phonological Foregrounding in Tunde Olusunle's *Fingermarks*

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The study of authorial style has been a crucial approach to appraisals. Series of research essays and publications abound on the analysis of style at different levels of language. The goal of any stylistic study should be to offer a scientific declaration about the distinctive features of a given user, genre or epoch of language. Such declarations are only valid if tested positive for their precision in relation to the communicative intention of the language user and the desired impact at the receiving end. Therefore, this essay focuses on the rudimentary levels of language on which empirical and linguistic investigations could be conducted. It starts by giving an overview of graphology and phonology as the basic levels of analyzing both written and spoken forms of a language. The functional implications of these tools of achieving foregrounding in Olusunle's *Fingermarks* as a collection of contemporary Nigerian poems are equally given. This, in a way, seeks to show the significance of systemic interaction of the rudimentary substance in achieving a functional decomposition and interpretation of graphological and phonological patterns in the text.

Introduction

Poetry is generally a discourse whose structural components rise beyond the ordinary. These components are made to cohere in such a way that they complement the meaning realization of the information structure. This implies that the structural properties of a linguistic expression also play the unique role of a medium. From the functional perspective, medium does not only serve as the linguistic vehicle of thought expression, but also on its own, especially when marked, serves as the 'third eye' with which the intention, communicative value and function (of the sensibility) resident in the mind of the user of the language can adequately be perceived on a given occasion of use.

The socio-political and economic situations which feed Olusunle's poetic ideology and argument present us with a complex web of contradictions. In order to suspend this information load on his poetic composition, therefore, certain rudiments of linguistics, especially graphology and phonology, needed to be invested with highly 'intoned' quality. All of these are responsible for why it is necessary to dissect the foregrounded elements in order to crack the nut of meta-structural meanings which parade his poetry.

Fingermarks is a collection of poems which falls into the 'native tradition' category of Nigerian poetry. The collection is a harmony of modern literary composition which explicates the genuineness of the contemporary Nigerian

artists. Predominantly, most of the materials in the collection seem to have originated or rather, were sourced from the contemporary realities in Nigeria. The various poems in the collection are poems of esteem – esteemed by virtue of the loaded content and by virtue of the unique style. The style is unique because it radically deviates from the stagnant traditional norm of poetic composition. The style is also unique because it almost defies imitation.

Foregrounding, as implied in this essay, began to receive a serious attention in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Different reasons abound for its stimulus and initiative. Most importantly, the linguistic categories which had been set up to account for marked features in a language data were frequently used in an inconsistent manner. In some other cases, such data were incomplete with no adequate formal basis. This was as a result of the impressionistic approach to textual appraisals. Coupled with these is the fact that there were several aspects of language which could not be adequately handled by such categories as register and tenor alone.

Hence, it becomes crystal clear why this paper pre-occupies itself with the use of graphological and phonological features which Tunde Olusunle uses to appeal to the minds of every curious reader of poetry, and how these features feature recurrently to offer his collection of poems – *Fingermarks* – an idiosyncratic identity. It should be noted that Olusunle's choice of the varying graphological and phonological devices are marshaled in such a way that he finds it easier to address and express his thoughts to create artistic impressions on the minds of 'his people' who inhabit a country whose labour, sweat and riches are used only to acquire dilemma, agony, sickness and death. So, these grapho-phonological devices, in their varying proportions, would be identified in selected portions of the collection, and given functional interpretation.

Conceptual Overview

Foregrounding is an aesthetic exploitation of the potentials a language or language genre possesses. It functions to create a dynamic awareness of the linguistic medium of expression in the audience. This is principally achieved by attaching unique prominence to the linguistic sign against the norms of language in commonplace. Wales (2001: 157) declares that:

Within the literary text itself linguistic features can themselves be foregrounded or 'highlighted', 'made prominent', for specific effect against the (subordinated) background of the rest of the text, the new 'norm' in competition with non-literary norm. It is on this, 'internal' foregrounding that critical attention is largely focused.

This means that foregrounding can either be paradigmatic or syntagmatic: paradigmatic when it is governed by deviation; and syntagmatic when it is dependent on repetition as a harbinger of cohesive tie.

Alabi (1999:173) maintains that apart from patterns and choices of words, discourse contains paragraphing, spacing, punctuation and lettering. All these, when they follow an unusual order can be marked for stylistic effects. Wales (1989:213) defines graphology as embracing features associated with the written or graphic medium: punctuation, paragraphing, spacing and capitalization. Crystal and Davy (1969:18) see graphology as the study of a language's writing or orthography as seen in different forms of handwriting or typography. From a rather more succinct perspective, Leech and Short (1981:131) write:

The lowest level of style ... is the choice of graphological realizations of a given syntactic form... concerning such matters as spelling, capitalization, hyphenation, italicization and paragraphing. Such matters are to a great extent determined conventionally by syntax, and become noticeably expressive only when a writer makes graphological choice which is to some degree marked or unconventional, such as a deliberate misspelling.

Hence, Alabi (1999:181) adds that it is by foregrounding these various graphological devices that they become stylistically effective. The implication here is that graphological devices are marked when they follow an unusual order of use. Such instances would be investigated in Olusunle's *Fingermarks* to prove a point: that a medium, when well foregrounded, paints the image of the text better in the minds of the audience, thus investing the discourse with 'iconic' impressions for overall effectiveness of its textuality.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995:1058) defines phonology as "the study of the system of speech sounds in a language, or the system of sounds itself". Kreidler (1989:5-6) describes phonology as a language study which is concerned with the way speech sounds are organized into a system of a given language. Phonology relates the physical facts of speech to other linguistic knowledge which a language user possesses.

Traugott and Pratt (1980:56) present phonology as a branch of linguistics, which is concerned with the identification of distinctive sound units in a language and how they combine to form a sequence. This means that it is a study of the ways in which phonetic elements are grouped and exploited for use by speakers to effect communication. They also add that "such patterns function as the framework of literary expression and control of an author's choice of words as well as the invention of new words, and therefore are of importance to textual criticism". This stance justifies the inclusion of phonology as part of our stylistic tools of investigating the marked patterns of words and expressions in Olusunle's *Fingermarks*.

Graphological Analysis

The attention in this section shall be directed at investigating certain unusual graphological devices which feature recurrently in *Fingermarks*. Such techniques

are so foregrounded that, apart from boosting the thematic pre-occupation of the text, they offer it a peculiar identity.

It is conventional that poems are composed in verses. However, Oluosun infuses a difference by employing quite a number of unusual graphemics in the collection. In “NEPA” for instance, the lineation coheres better than the words used in the true expression of the subject matter – the erratic supply of power by “NEPA” in Nigeria. The writer evolves a clear graphic representation of his poetic ideologies. An extract from the poem is presented as follows for clear illustration of its connotation.

*You are a chr
onic sic
kler
waxing now
wan ing soon
inc
onsistent like
sea waves
You
delight in
perpetual pr anks... (p. 28)*

NEPA is addressed as an agency whose activities are likened to that of a sickle and which is inconsistent like sea waves; thus, the broken lineation is a graphic device which accentuates the claim of the inconsistencies in power supply in Nigeria. The epileptic arrangement of lines provides an indication, or rather an endophoric reference (via lineation), to the abrupt and sudden cut from the source of power supply.

Italicization

A significant use of italicization is one prominent and recurring stylistic tool in the text. This graphemic approach is adopted throughout the collection to indicate points where it becomes either difficult or not expedient to express nuances of indigenous thoughts in English and so, the poet resorts to native (Nigerian) words, coinages and non-English expressions. In such instances, words and expressions involved are accompanied with asterisks. The essence of asterisks is to draw the reader's attention to the words or expressions on which they are superimposed so that the reader may contextually and idiosyncratically situate their meanings in relation to the footnotes given. In “Lagos”, words and expressions like **oriki*, and

*Eko akete ilu ogbon ! **
*Lasgidi !! ***
*Ilu J'omo ta, J'omo jere ****
Ma J'omo kere oko dele !!

re-occupation of the

However, Olusunle's
graphemics in his
text is not lost through translation. Hence, the poet's use of italicization at such
instances justifies his intention to seal the collection with 'his unique signature'.

The presentation of *fi vie** (meaning special brand of waist beads) in "Benin
revisited", *Alagbon** (meaning dreaded police headquarters in Lagos) in "Soweto
in my land" and *babalawo** (meaning witch doctor) in "Sermon" among others in
italics (as borrowed words in the cases cited) is meant to boost the aesthetic
clarity of the text as a collection of indigenous poems.

Apart from locally sourced words and expressions, Olusunle coins a great
number of words for the sake of "thought expressions". Such words possess
English roots but are either compounded or modified to express the intended
shade of meaning. Olusunle uses italicization to present such affectively
motivated words throughout in the collection. In "Ode to garri" for example,
the words *naira-full*, *mudufull* and *sin-full* are coined as a result of categorical and
semantic extension and adaptation of roots into new forms, and are thus,
italicized. This unique style is peculiar with virtually all the poems in the
collection. It is also intended to economize space and effectively express the
'thought' process of the poet in the light of the reality on ground.

Capitalization

As a matter of graphological consistency, each of the lines in all the thirty-seven
poems, excepting "NEPA", starts with capital lettering. Initially, this may not be
seen as being stylistic enough, most especially when one considers the effect of
conventional composition of poetry in verses. But with a deviation in the
treatment given to "NEPA" – as a poem which breaks the track of consistency
which others follow, in line with its erratic thematic pre-occupation, Olusunle
indirectly marks his hitherto 'unmarked' use of capitalization with the singular
contrast erected in "NEPA".

Capitalization

The use of capitalization as a foregrounding technique is noticeable in the
presentation of virtually all the acronyms which have become conventionally used
words throughout the text. In most cases, such acronyms are locally evolved and
thus, understood by Nigerians generally. Such acronyms and their corresponding
actual location are exemplified below:

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words throughout the text. In most cases, such acronyms are locally evolved and
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actual location are exemplified below:

Acronym	Full Import	Location
MANR	Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources	p.22
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme	p.29
NEPA	National Electric Power Authority	p.28
UNTH	University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital	p.39

In the text therefore, capitalization stands out as a paramount stylistic device
which compels the readers to pay special attention to those 'words' in order to
employ their sense of assessment of the programmes to which those words refer in

the outside world of reality. For instance, in the footnote which Olusunle gives on SAP, he leads the readers to understand the irony which accompanies the economic revitalization programme introduced by a regime into the country "which inflicted severe pain on the polity".

Slant Indentation

This is a graphological technique used by a writer when each of the lines/verse is indented from the point at which the preceding one starts. One interesting thing about Olusunle's adoption of this technique is that on the three occasions when the slant indentation is used, there are three lines/verses (triplet) involved in each case. At the same time, these three sets of slant triplets have been used at definite points of literary climax. This unique quality offers the necessary impetus for stylistic consideration of the text whose content is given a tripartite division into *Vistas*, *Variform* and *Visions*. The indented triplets are given as follow for clear illustration and investigation.

I.

Alive!
 Uncompromising!
 Real!
 ("Lagos"; Lines 5-7; p.12)

II.

Ashes ...
 Coal dust ...
 Rubble ...
 ("The fire next time"; Lines 1-3; p.65)

III.

The rattle of the gong
 The sound of the trumpet
 The voice of the town crier
 ("Message"; Lines 9-11; p.67)

In the three cases cited, it is apt that the thematic pre-occupations of the triplets are climactic; each unfolding its message in order of magnitude. The stylistic import of this technique is that it seeks to draw the readers' attention to the endless rise in social vices in our society so that a timely antidote can be sourced and applied before matters get out of hand; as hinted by the recurrent exclamations and ellipses in I and II respectively.

Ellipsis

This is another major graphological device which recurs frequently in the text. Ordinarily, ellipsis denotes omission of a word or words in a sentence when the meaning can be understood. It also refers to a three dots punctuation mark (...) which is used to indicate such omission, formally, in writing. In the text under

only – *Fingermarks*, Olusunle foregrounds the emotional predisposition of his target audience through his frequent use of ellipsis. As a matter of style, this technique can be said to have been used to caption the speechlessness which accompanies the dilemma, instigated by undue social, political, economic and religious agonies which parade the thematic focus of the text. For example, the triplet in “The fire next time” is ‘ellipted’ as presented thus:

Ashes ...
 Coal dust ...
 Rubble ...
 (p. 65)

Similarly, ellipses have been deployed in the text to properly situate words and expressions in their appropriate contexts. The device boosts the poet's effort at indicating the subject matter within the terrain of occurrence to enhance readers' understanding and appreciation. Examples of such cases are provided as follow:

And swing ...
 Then swirl ...
And swerve ...
 (“Highway Blues”; Lines 3-5; p. 27)
Hair strands stand ...
 Heads swell ...
Hearts leap into awe-dumbed mouths ...
 (“Highway Blues”; Lines 12-14; p. 27)

The ellipses used in the above extracts are imitations of the true-to-life situations on Nigerian roads. Apart from the stylistic essence, they also convey certain pragmatic clues relating to the gaps and series of traffic obstructions which characterize ‘average’ Nigerian roads.

Another use into which ellipses have been specially put is utilizing their potential in leading one to the understanding of the possible entailments, presupposition and implicatures in the text. Let us consider the following extract:

Kunmo ndun gba gbo!! ...
 (“Rogbodiyan”; pp. 31-32).

The line (though not composed in English) rehearses the disorder and disaster which follow the wake of unrests and riots on Nigerian campuses. Hence, the ellipsis which has been used to punctuate the tail-end of the line provides an insight into the limitless, irreparable and irresistible relics which accompany such intervals.

It should be noted that the text is a collection of poems which laments a drastic degeneration of a one-time promising nation. Hence, one expects to see multitudes

of rhetorical questions in the exposition of the subject matter. Tunde Oluosunle however, fails to use interrogation throughout the collection except on two occasions in each of these poems "My hear pounds with pangs of pain" and "Yet yet adieu, Osa."

As one who believes in his revolutionary ideology to effect social change, Oluosunle deliberately avoids the use of rhetorical questions even where necessary so as not to dislodge his disciples. The writer seems to see the use of rhetorical question as a sign of confusion. Instead, there is a marked use of fullstops to intensify the assertive power of his suggested antidotes in the last section of the collection.

Apart from the 'conventional' punctuations, the tendency of using excessive compounds calls for the over-use of hyphens throughout the collection. Oluosunle elevates the aesthetics of the text by the distinguished use of alliterative compound words. Examples of the hyphenated compounds and their location within the space of just one poem are provided in the table that follows:

<i>Compounds</i>	<i>Poem</i>	<i>Location</i>
'house-head'	"Lagos"	p. 12, Line 22
'criss-crossing'	"	p. 12, Line 12
'man-made'	"	p. 12, Line 17
'dare-devil'	"	p. 13, Line 55
'punk-styled'	"	p. 13, Line 32
'see-through'	"	p. 13, Line 32
'theft-proof'	"	p. 13, Line 56

As stated earlier, in lieu of rhetorical questions, there is occasional use of interjections. Such exclamations become imperative when it is necessary to diffuse tension at certain points of poetic climax. Examples of cases like this can be found in the text as shown in the following table.

<i>Poem</i>	<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>
"Lagos"	12	3,4,5
	13	59
	14	62,63,65
"Rogbodiyan"	31	1,4,5,13 23,31,39,41
"Sermon"	47	19
	48	41

Overall, graphological devices may superficially appear as a relatively minor part of textual style; and more often than not, they may not enjoy serious attention from readers. However, where a writer makes graphological choices which are at a certain level marked or unconventional (as we have in the text under study), it is understood that such features would instigate stylistic interest as they automatically constitute tools of foregrounding (Leech and Short, 1981; 153).

Phonological Analysis

It is true that poetry is noticeable for its dexterity in the use of speech sounds. However, the analysis of Olusunle's sound devices reveals a wide range of varying and distinctive phonetic peculiarities which invest the entire collection with a thought-provoking sensational trait.

One major phonetic device which recurs several times to evoke stylistic interest in the collection is the unique alternation of sound sequences in certain pairs of words in the same line, in such a way that intervocalic signals between words in a cue differ due to phonemic substitution. For instance; such pairs as in the following, among others, are peculiar cases.

*Of bawling ... bawling ...,
Of croaking ... crowing ...,
(“Lagos”; Lines 39-40; p. 13).*

Also, poetry generally is celebrated for alliterative potential as a phonetic feature. Olusunle nonetheless uses the technique in a peculiarly distinctive manner. Both the conventional and alternating alliterations are simultaneously used throughout the text. These are used to foreground the anxiety, urgency of positive reaction etc. which the text is intended to stimulate in the readers.

In a number of cases, almost the entire stanza of the poem is rendered using strong alliterative verses. This is essentially associated with poems which Olusunle uses to present the antithetical contrast between ‘thematic investment’ and ‘consequent expectation’. Let us consider the following extract which constitutes a whole stanza.

*Then shall they arise!
Scorched scions of pauperized parents
Who tilled but thirsted
Who farmed but famished
Who wetted but wanted
Who hoed but hoped
Who sweated but starved
(“Armageddon”; Lines 15-21; p. 64)*

Though, there are occasional intrusions of assonance, this has been stylishly blended within the cues of the alliterative verses. Assonance can be interpreted to have been used to diffuse the tensions raised by consecutive occurrences of alliterations. Such instances would be cited before the end of this section.

Olusunle utilizes the fertility of phonology as a qualitative style. This makes it easy for him to incorporate oratory devices which challenge and charge the ‘audience’ to fuel his crusade. From his poem, “The fire next time” (pp. 65-66), let us consider the following extract.

There,
 A massive cathedral
 With candles, cassocks, crosses,
 Crashed in rage-lit flames
 Here,
 A towering mosque
 With its mats, minarets, mufflers,
 Crumbled in fury-fanned fire.

There and *here* which open the two stanzas respectively are effective cohesive devices blended with phonologically distinctive words to balance his views on the two principal religions in Nigeria. The writer maintains a neutral stand as far as possible owing to the sensitivity of religious issues in the country. When one comes across a Christian *cathedral with candles, cassocks and crosses* or a Muslim *mosque with its mats, minarets and mufflers*, the readers' excitement is raised especially when one considers the alliterative /k/ and /m/ in words which constitute "trademarks" of the two religions which underpin the thematic preoccupation of the poem.

A consideration of "Prophecy" (p. 63) reveals a different use into which alliteration is put by Olusunle.

And Government Reserved Areas
 Shall turn
 Ghost Ridden Areas
 And bedrooms blood-pools
 And cosy cars comfy coffins
 And silk suits silk shrouds

The style of the last three verses of this text presents a clear case of marked phonological pattern. The poet superimposes on the alliterative verses, the unflinching will, and the irresistible determination to effect a social change. The syntactic pattern (which is not within the scope of this investigation) is a revelation to our conclusion.

A statistical study of the frequency of alliterative verses in the collection is given in the table which follows.

	Poem Title	No of Lines	No of Alliterative Lines
1	"Lagos"	88	32
2	"Benin revisited"	34	20
3	"Lokoja"	43	11
4	"City life"	22	8
5	"A song for Koko"	51	29
6	"Ode to garri"	27	11

7	"Akula"	18	4
8	"The siege"	41	25
9	"Lagos rain"	15	3
10	"Highway blues"	22	10
11	"NEPA"	17	1
12	"Soweto in my land"	30	8
13	"Rogbodiyan"	46	21
14	"Rasta"	12	4
15	"Drop"	14	6
16	"Night"	31	4
17	"Lake of life"	25	15
18	"Not yet adieu, Osa"	56	13
19	"Epitaph for the Naira"	42	17
20	"Obsequy?"	31	9
21	"Heaven's gate"	21	7
22	"October first"	48	15
23	"Sermon"	44	17
24	"Dread"	13	3
25	"Hew-man rights"	38	15
26	"New breed"	15	7
27	"Another shuffle"	18	1
28	"Addresses"	20	6
29	"My heart pounds pangs of pain"	26	8
30	"Consolation"	16	6
31	"From me to you"	19	2
32	"Cheer up, brother"	23	7
33	"Environmental sanitation"	39	14
34	"Prophecy"	13	5
35	"Armageddon"	29	16
36	"The fire next time"	32	8
37	"Message"	33	14
Total	37 POEMS	1,112 LINES	402 LINES

$$\frac{\text{Total number of lines in the text}}{\text{Total number of alliterative lines}} \times 100$$

$$\frac{1112}{402} \times 100 = 36.15\%$$

The table shows clearly that more than one third of the total number of lines which make up the collection is alliterative. This has been used to evoke radical

consciousness in the readers concerning the subject matter. It has also been employed to such a magnitude to foreground the urgency which the resolution of the crises requires.

Assonance stands out as another phonologically effective device used in the text. Alabi (1999:176) writes that "Assonance is also a half-rhyme realized by repeating the same (stressed) vowel but with different final consonants in a sequence of nearby words". As stated earlier, assonance is intermittently intruded into the webs of alliterations to alleviate the piled-up burdens heralded by alliterative verses. For instance, right in the middle of five consecutive alliterative lines in 'Armageddon' (p. 64) is this assonance

When time is ripe /ai/;

and

Who hoed but hoped /əʊ/

The latter is also marked in the same poem as a deliberate insertion of assonance to break the long cues of alliteration in the third stanza. Also, within the thought-provoking lines which mutate the alienation of *garri* as a staple food is the assonance /ai/ in:

When rice was bride strutting with pride (p.22)

The repetition of the vowel sound – /ai/ – in this case with different consonantal coda is intrusive and marked to solicit for readers' intensive attention and consideration over the unfriendly development. *Do we savour the flavour, brain drained faculties, quests for forest breath* in "Soweto in my land" (p. 29), "Rogbodiyan" (p. 31), "Lake of life" (p.38) respectively, among others, are salient examples of the use of assonance in the text. The device, as used in the collection, carries an undertone of juxtaposing "the much desired expectation" with "the reality".

Pun remains a phonologically potent device which literary artists and linguists use to elevate the aesthetics of their works. Pun refers to figures which play on words such that it signals modification of the real sense of words involved. Olusunle, however, utilizes the technique to convey certain loaded implications and entailments, most of which require thorough inferential procedures for full understanding. *In peace in one piece* in "Highway blues" (p. 27), *battered by barbers* in "Epitaph for the Naira" (p. 42), and *free and fair, devoid of fears* in "Hew-man rights" (p. 50) are examples of marked cases of the use of pun.

In the first example, one grasps the fullest import through a deductive process most especially when one brings the popular saying "may we hug our homes in peace and not in pieces" to the fore. The second instance reveals an inclusively 'pregnant' usage. The expression evokes a rehearsal of the relationship between

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naira (money) and *barter* as two distinct media of exchange of goods and services. Barter system became replaced with money due to its socio-economic defects. Now that Olusunle maintains that *Naira* has been battered by barter, his message transcends the surface denotation. It creates a picture of abject devaluation and depreciation of our much esteemed '*naira*' years back.

The last example, *Free and fair, devoid of fears* is an antithetical presentation of the unbowed determination of the 'human rights' activists in the face of tyranny and oppression to effect a positive change in the socio-political systems of the country which is fast hitting the rock. Olusunle further foregrounds this notion of antithesis by carefully webbing it up with consonance. In this manner, he balances his arguments on both sides. In "Hew-man rights" (p. 50), *dance and prance, some heavy sighs ...*, *Hundreds are herded*, *Booted and butted, scores of corpses*, among others within the space of that single poem are consonant sounds, and other sound effective devices. Apart from the aesthetic potential which the device offers the text, it also nourishes the harmonization of its rhythm.

In the area of end-rhymes, none of the poems in the collection has a regular rhyme pattern. This stands to draw the readers' attention to the importance of the thematic preoccupation of the poems over their aesthetic features. This also complements the tone of seriousness, commitment and unflinching determination in his clamour for social change.

Overall, the totality of the sound devices used in the collection has alliteration at the centre as the pivot. It determines the pace and movement of all other sound devices. The device is stylistically marked to show 'contrasts' and 'contradictions' associated with Nigerian situations. This is confirmed by Olusunle when, in "Lagos" (p. 14), he writes:

This is Lagos
Album of oddities
The good and bad,
The absurd and bizarre
Catalogue of contrasts
The fair and foul,
The funny and furious;
Encyclopedia of opposites'
The grand, the squalid'
The chic, the chequered.

Lagos is a representative urban city which projects the image of the entire country. Hence, 'normalcy' or 'regularity' of its accompanying systems may not be expected. This idea is summed up when he adds:

This is Lagos ...
Where order is disorderly
Where disorder is order.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the effect of sound devices in the antithetical presentation of the subject matter is preponderant; most especially as it functions as a hinge on which the negotiation of the intended meaning is suspended. Thus, the importance of phonology in a stylistic study of such a text as *Fingermarks* cannot be over-emphasized.

Concluding Remarks

Olusunle's *Fingermarks*, a collection of contemporary Nigerian poems, is a lamentation of undue social, political, economic and religious strife which bedevil our dear nation that was once filled with milk and honey. To create a lasting impression on his readership via his forensic and highly intoned expressions, Olusunle uses specially marked graphological and phonological devices in order to paint a picture of his poetic philosophies. This is done in order to infuse his message with functional rhetoric; an artistic way of evolving a social change through a change of attitude to life generally.

So far, what we have done in this paper is to show how graphology and phonology, as rudimentary levels of stylistics (Halliday, 1994) have contributed to the overall effectiveness of Olusunle's poetic discourse in *Fingermarks*.

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