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Graphological Deviation: A Defamiliarizing Trope in Timothy Wangusa's Poetry

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This article attempts to examine the use of graphological deviation in Timothy Wangusa's poetry as a style of foregrounding in Timothy Wangusa's poetry. It is hoped to fill knowledge gaps in the Wangusaic scholarship as previous studies on Wangusa are on issues of originality of his poetry and conclude that the trajectory of his poetry is mainly Christian, African, and English traditions. The studies conclude that Wangusa's poetry was greatly influenced by classical and western literary traditions (Alfredo Okello 2005). Some studies are on Wangusa's novels and short stories, and as such, they focus on aspects like themes and narrative techniques but not graphological deviation. This leaves much to be studied on the variable of graphological deviation in Wangusa's poetry. This justifies why this research article is worthwhile as it evaluates how Timothy Wangusa employs graphological deviation to create foregrounding. Besides, the researcher used the theory of defamiliarisation proposed by Viktor Shklovsky throughout the study. The theory emphasises the use of poetic devices, which makes it an apt one as this study is on graphological deviation (which is used as a poetic device to achieve emphasis/foregrounding). The researcher used a textual analysis method and a descriptive research design in an attempt to explicate and make sense of the variable of graphological deviation. The results and findings from the data analysis prove that Wangusa uses graphological deviation to emphasise his message, shock or surprise readers (estrangement) and create mood in his poetry. This study recommends that studies be carried out on Timothy Wangusa's use of deviation of register.

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INTRODUCTION

The introduction offers major highlights on the key issues of this research article especially on graphological deviation. The researcher gives highlight not only the variable under study but also the poet himself. Timothy Wangusa published *A Pattern of Dust* (1994), *Anthem for Africa* (1995), *Africa's new Brood* (2006), *Salutations* (1997), and *Bilomelele bye Lukingi Masaaba* (2017). He also wrote novels like *Upon this Mountain* (1989) and *Betwixt Mountain and Wilderness* (2015).

In his texts (particularly poetry), Timothy Wangusa uses graphological deviation to emphasise or foreground his message. With this subtle weapon, Wangusa is able to emphasise/foreground certain issues but in an unfamiliar manner. It is this odd presentation of the message through capitalisation, italicisation, and concrete poems that makes Wangusa's poetry novel that any reader should allot equivalent attention (when reading). Reading Timothy Wangusa's poetry jerks the reader because of the newness/novelty that accompanies the poet's use of graphological deviation just as the major purpose of poetry should be, according to Russian formalists (Erlich, 1981).

This aspect of foregrounded irregularity is what Geoffrey Leech (1969) calls linguistic deviation. The typification of deviation is entirely dependent on which aspect of the language is deviant (from the norm). This paper focuses on the analysis of graphological deviation in Wangusa's two works of poetry.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employed a theory of defamiliarisation as advanced by Viktor Shklovsky. Defamiliarisation, a theory used throughout this study on graphological deviation, was proposed under Russian Formalism by Viktor Shklovsky. According to Victor Shklovsky, "the primary task of poetry was to defamiliarise our ordinary, overly familiar ways of seeing and thinking" (Michael, 2017, p.3). This assertion emphasises the lenses through which formalists view poetry.

In poetry, the formalists are more concerned with "the use of devices as well as with the way poetry arises out of a selection amongst similar terms and combination of different ones in a line of verse" (Michael, 2017, 4). With defamiliarisation, the reader is estranged so that they are surprised and lost in wonder as they try to make sense of the meaning of a text. Thus, using this theoretical approach is hoped to bring out the 'literariness' of Timothy Wangusa's poetry. The message and content of a piece of work (say poetry) are intertwined (Michael, 2017).

It is on this theory that the researcher based himself in attempting to interrogate the use of graphological deviation in Timothy Wangusa's poetry and, consequently, how the artist creates a foregrounding effect thereof.

Graphological Deviation

This is a type of deviation in which the dictates and rules of formal writing are not followed, for example, punctuation. With this form of deviation,

a poet (or any other writer) may write their work without strict adherence to punctuation rules (Leech, 1969). In other words, with graphological deviation, the author deviates their writing from the usual scheme of writing that is recognised as formal.

According to Khan et al. (2016), graphological deviation helps the poet to foreground certain words thereby tasking the reader to look for such words' dual meanings. With this deviation, the poet may also refer to inanimate objects as "he" or "she". This practice of attributing inanimate objects personal pronouns would be considered odd save for special circumstances where such has become obvious and normal, for example, people referring to their countries as "she" (to refer to the concept of 'motherland').

Besides, it should be posited here that over time, poetry has undergone a lot of changes and revolutions. Owing to such, it is imperative for poets from different parts of the world to introduce new forms which suit their poetic content. One such change is graphological deviation and out of these experimentations, poets write without capital letters and funny and unreasonable use of parenthesis. Such poetry that departs from the formal rules of meter is what is at present referred to as free verse (Khan et al., 2016).

METHODOLOGY

Using textual analysis, the researcher attempted to interrogate Wangusa's effective use of graphological deviation. This is an appropriate methodology as the study was majorly library-based and thus, not requiring methods like questionnaires and interviews applicable mostly when studying the behavioural aspects of human beings. The researcher used the poems "Time and Distance", "Finger upon Your Mouth", "The XYZ of Love", "Terminal", and "Dance of Granaries" as samples to prove the presence of graphological deviation in Wangusa's poetry. The rationale for this choice is informed by the fact that the two poems are craftily

written, especially with regard to the variable under study.

This study is a justification of several instances of graphological deviation (the means) and the motive or purpose for its use. Very imperative to this inquiry also is the explication of the norm from which graphological deviation is created.

The four logs of textual analysis methodology informed the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the findings. The poems under study were read closely to catch instances of graphological oddness. An explicit description of the nature of the graphological deviation and its effectiveness followed. The researcher, using the very methodology and the operating theory, analysed and interpreted data in the form of the poems under study. The variable understudy could not have been used in oblivion but rather purposefully to portray such poetic aspects as atmosphere/mood, tone and content or achieve certain poetic aims, for example, emphasis/foregrounding of the message thereof.

The graphologically deviant parts of the poems under study were highlighted and divided into segments for easy observation in the process of analysis, thereby making it clear to identify odd punctuations, lineation, and the general structure of stanzas. It is the level and frequency of graphological deviation that informed the researcher's conclusions as to whether, indeed, the poet uses this style or not.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the process of analysing and discussing data on graphological deviation, the researcher referred to poems from two poetry collections by Timothy Wangusa as proof of the presence of graphological deviation. Invoking the idea of graphology which concerns the arrangement of written material on paper, it can be argued that Wangusa uses graphological deviation in the concluding stanza of his poem titled "Time and Distance". Wangusa divides his poem into four parts with each part

having its own title “EARTH”, “HEAVEN”, “HELL”, and “GOD”. The poem talks about life in general (the kind of life we live while on earth, in heaven and hell). The persona of the poem describes the kind of experience mortals face in their earthly life. We live to the fact that we are mortal (liable to die). People usually have a number of plans and

But you have dreamt
And I have dreamt
Of the eventual collapse of time
And sky rolled up like a mat

(Wangusa, 1993, p. 65)

The next stanza is a recount of the kind of happiness experienced when all dead bodies will resurrect on Jesus’ second coming. This is in reference to the eschatological discourse of the bible (which talks

programmes to accomplish, but unfortunately, they sometimes die before such plans reach their fruition. It is always man’s wish to live on but in vain. Thus, the first stanza has overtones of eschatology (discourse on the end times when the earth man lives on ceases to be). The poet writes:

about the end times and the eventual start of a new life). After that time, there will be eternal life and, thus, no more death or pain. The persona says:

And making appearance in splendour
Of pain-proof bodies

(Wangusa 1993, p. 66)

However, with HELL, it will be a different story altogether. The persona paints a greasily and horrible picture of hell with corpses, vultures, and screaming blood. This untold suffering in hell makes him surrender to God to avoid the likelihood of suffering the ordeals therein. The persona imagines such a life and entreats God to forgive him. He imagines himself undergoing inescapably terrible suffering because of God’s wrath on judgment day. It is for this reason that the persona begs for God’s mercy.

To communicate his message well in the above poem, Wangusa divides his poem into four parts. Conventionally, a poem has a title, but taking liberties, Wangusa gives each part of his poem a different title as “EARTH”, “HEAVEN”, “HELL”, and “GOD”. This constitutes graphological deviation. This division of the poem into four parts (which S. T. Eliot would call ‘The quartets’) shows the stages of man’s life. It involves being born, dying, resurrecting and the eventual judgment by God).

Besides giving the poem four titles, Wangusa also capitalises them. He deviates graphologically from the rules of writing poems’ titles in the title case. Capitalisation of the four titles of the different stanzas of the same poem is meant to foreground or emphasise how important the four stages are. Therefore, the poet emphasises the truth about the existence of the four stages in the life of mortals depending on the choices of their actions in this earthly life. This is a deviation from the norm of formal English language writing and punctuation (graphological deviation). This beats the readers’ expectations and thus renders the titles and this new arrangement strange. This phenomenon invokes the idea of defamiliarisation forwarded by Viktor Shklovsky against which this entire article leans. However, capitalising the four titles of the four parts gives such titles great prominence and thus emphasis or foregrounding. It shows that all four stages of this earthly life are very pertinent in determining the eventual destiny of man. Life on earth determines the kind of life one lives after, death-whether in Heaven or Hell and, for fear of the latter, man has to seek the Grace of God. With this

graphological deviation, the omnipresent, omnipresent, and omniscient nature of God is heightened in the poem.

Graphologically speaking, the last stanza stands out owing to how it is written on paper. The above poem, as hitherto said, talks about some of the Christian doctrines on resurrection and judgment day. The very last word of the fourth part of the poem is the shape of the cross (symbolic of Christianity). Such poems or parts of the poem whose graphological appearance (on paper) points to their message are called shaped or concrete poems. As a mark of graphological deviation, Wangusa ends his poem titled “Time and Distance” thus:

A
C
MY CRY
E
P
T

The statement in the above pictorial /shaped stanza, which is the cross reads “ACCEPT MY CRY”. Moreover, the poet writes it in capital letters. This shows the fact that the statement /plea is made in earnestness. The persona entreats God to forgive him such horrors of hell.

To prove the presence of graphological deviation in the collection *Africa’s New Brood*, the researcher used the poem “A Finger upon the Mouth” as a case study. The poem recounts the life of the stubborn Jonah, who refuses God’s instructions to go to Nineveh but instead attempts to go to Tarshish. Because of his obstinacy, Jonah is swallowed by a whale, and he spends three days inside its belly. However, God’s love being boundlessly full of mercy, Jonah is spat on the shore of the sea when the latter prays to God inside the fish.

Wangusa presents the same message by deviating from/flouting rules of punctuation and lineation. The way he punctuates and arranges lines is one that

is unimaginable. In stanza four, for example, Wangusa writes:

In the cavernous mouth
Of an infuriated sea-

S
U R
RO UN
D E
D

By muscular darkness. (Wangusa, 2006, p. 69)

From the readers’ point of view, it is evident that Jonah is in the depth of the sea inside the whale and indeed, surrounded by “muscular darkness”. The reference to muscles implies that at this moment, Jonah is inside the belly of the fish. This also points to the omnipotent nature of God. Jonah wants to follow his whims instead of doing God’s bidding. It is only when he surrenders seeming to say, “Lord, let your will be done”, that Jonah is spat on the shore of the sea. Besides, the omnipresent nature of God is portrayed since God is even present in the belly of the whale to listen to Jonah’s prayer.

The word “SURROUNDED” is not only written in imitation of the shape of a circle to show that Jonah is indeed inside the belly of a fish surrounded, but also, it is in capital letters. Writing other lines of the poem as usual and all of a sudden, the poet capitalising the whole word or line is not something to overlook. The breaking of the normal scheme of lineation and punctuation foregrounds such a particular part of the poem. Wangusa wants to surprise the reader by writing strangely. This experimental writing is what makes literature worth its calling, thus the “literariness” of Wangusa’s poetry. This also proves the appropriateness of the operating theory of defamiliarisation as advanced by Russian formalists (Erlich, 1981).

The eighth stanza of the poem also has features of graphological deviation. The stanza is written as follows:

The submarine ways and wisdom of fish

Then
 Suddenly
 E C T
 J E
 E D
 Upon a startled shore-
 A broken prophet...

(Wangusa 2006, p. 70)

The above stanza's graphological deviation is threefold; one, it is written in a disorganised way. Lines are not aligned or uniform. Some are long, and others are short. This points to the confusion that Jonah has as well as the kind of puzzlement on the side of the reader of the poem. This is hinted at by the poet himself in the title of the poem, "A Finger upon Your Mouth". The way God does His things is indeed miraculous but also startling. We usually put a finger upon our mouths when surprised or shocked. This furthers the idea of God's omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience. God knows Jonah's moves as he is escaping to Tarshish. God is also present everywhere (even in the depth of the sea and inside the fish). God is Almighty since He can reverse Jonah's situation. In a submission to God's power and will, we are told that Jonah comes out of the depth of the sea "A broken prophet ..."

Two, the presentation of the word "EJECTED" in a convex or semi-circular shape shows how Jonah is spat or projected from the sea inside the fish. As hitherto said, such a shape that parallels the message of the stanza or even the whole poem constitutes a shaped poem or stanza. Three, the word EJECTED is all capitalised. Capitalisation heightens the gravity of the poet's message about God's omnipotence. Besides, it signifies the persona's sense of awe and the subsequent reverence for God.

With all the above analyses of graphological deviation, it is imperative to acknowledge the fact that Wangusa indeed, uses graphological deviation in his poetry collections with the intent to emphasise his message, estrange the readers' perception (thereby triggering more thinking) as well as

rendering his poetry novel. It is this characteristic which makes Wangusa's poetry peculiar from others and thus renders some of his poems multi-layered in meaning. This also echoes the tenet of defamiliarisation since such a style of writing renders the poems novel and thus elicits different perceptions by the readers.

In the poem "The XYZ of Love", Wangusa uses the letters of the alphabet to mark the three stages of love in the order of their importance and time. The persona argues that the most important stage of love is the end when married couples grow old having weathered all challenges of love and life in general. If the two lovers are able to withstand it all and, in their dotage, still be together, one can conclude that such is a manifestation of true love. This time is specially called the XYZ of love- the love in the climactic years of the two lovers. To the persona, the ABC stage of love, which marks the beginning punctuated with lustful desires, is not very important. At such a stage, one is chiefly driven by emotions. It is not a true yardstick of true love and resilience amidst all thick and thin thereof. Besides, the middle years that come with care, responsibility, and the like to raise the children do not matter. These, the persona calls the LMN of love. Therefore, what counts in love is not the beginning or middle but the end.

The peculiarity of the message and how it is communicated is enhanced by the poet's tendency to deviate from the norm. Creatively, the poet uses the three letters of the alphabet at every stage of love. The occasion would demand that words in the middle of the lines be written in small letters.

However, Wangusa goes against this norm and instead writes the letters in the capital, ABC, LMN, and XYZ, the three stages in the journey of love marking the beginning, middle, and end.

Wangusa's use of capital letters gives his message special prominence and force. The beginning and middle of love are important, but the very end (XYZ) supersedes the former two. In other words, the use of the letters of the alphabet (in capital form) underscores the importance the persona attaches to love at different stages of love.

Besides the above, Wangusa likens the journey of love to the English alphabet. Whereas all the letters of the alphabet are important as they are interdependent when being used to write words, the persona in the poem asserts that the most important of all is the XYZ, especially with regard to love.

Another poem that exhibits graphological deviation is titled "National Skulls Exhibition". In this poem, Wangusa satirises the wanton behaviour of the guerrilla fighters and rebels in Uganda. According to the poem, the rebels wreak havoc in the different regions of the country. The competition in the collection of all the skulls of fallen Ugandans to constitute artefacts for the museum is very satirical of the perpetrators of war and the eventual deaths in Uganda. The "...next anniversary / Of our permanent party's ascension to power" (Wangusa, 2006, p. 11) is a subtle reference to the ruling party and the government of Uganda. The mockery and ridicule in the poem are directed at the ruling party in Uganda that celebrates liberation day, which commemorates the day a first shot was made as a mark of the start of a bush war that brought the National Resistance Movement/National Resistance Army into power in 1985. That different Ugandans should collect the skulls and participate in a competition to see who has the most of them is a very biting satire.

Graphologically speaking, the poet uses capital letters to show the pertinent or crucial role different

battalions play in massacring Ugandans (which is a criticism of the vice). Capitalisation is also used in cases where the poet refers to the victims (affect regions of the country) depending on their number thereof, for example, "Mukura-Soroti AXIS". An axis is appointed where two lines meet or, by extension as in this poem, two places where something happens. "The Luwero-Mpigi-TRIANGLE" involves the three districts of Uganda mentioned in the statement. The "QUADRANGLE" involves four places; Arua, Adjumani, Koboko and Moyo, while the "PENTAGON" involves five affected places; Kasese, Kilembe, Kichwamba, Kabarole and Bundibujjo. The "HEXAGON" involves six places; Kitgum, Gulu, Atiak, Apac and Lira.

Each of the five regions or places where the war or killings are at their highest also had specialisation in the kind of deaths people experience. The AXIS would kill by burning the so-called traitors; the QUADRANGLE would annihilate; the PENTAGON (mainly by Konyi Rebels called The Lords' Resistance Army) would exterminate while the hexagon would cut people's noses. All these places with different modes of death (killings) portray glaring and horrendous atrocities committed by and in the reigning, Wangusa adds more weight to the words. One can arguably state that celebrations of the liberation day are a mockery to the populace whose wounds and memories are still fresh. Such reminders would only make the wounds (Ugandan's memories) fester or even become malignant.

In the poem titled "Terminal", the persona recalls a fateful day when his friend died because of a blood clot. The presentation of the poem on the paper itself, at first glance, communicates something amiss. It is a gradual process of the patient's diagnosis until he sinks into death. A blood clot in the knee of the heedless patient reaches the heart and the lungs until the victim dies. All these are mentioned in the first stanza in a rather organised way. However, realising that he has forgotten his

friend that fast, the persona is disappointed and guilty. That his emotions are in turmoil is presented graphologically (on paper) in disorganised and irregular lines. Just like the lines (that are irregular and disorganised), so is the person's life, notwithstanding the fact that the phenomenon is captured in the diary. That the persona's diary is crowded points to the fact that he is always preoccupied to the point of forgetting his friend (though long gone). The last stanza is written thus:

Oh that I
From my crowded diary
Have for so long
Excluded
Him!

(Wangusa, 2006, p. 33)

As hitherto said, the above arrangement shows a change in the state of affairs when the persona loses his dear friend. The fading away of the friend's life is in synchrony with his fading from the memory of the persona. This idea of fading is represented by the above line, which decreases in number as the poem gravitates to the end. Such poems that represent the poet's message on paper are called shaped/concrete poems.

In another poem titled "Dance of the Granaries", Wangusa italicises certain words for emphatic reasons. The persona explains the merry-making that punctuates the harvesting season. The rhythm of life at such moments is one of great activity yet, at the same time, recreation. People in Bugisu dance to the sound of different musical instruments like rattles, flutes, horns and wooden convex. The rhythm of the dance goes thus:

<i>Ka-ka-ta</i>
<i>Ka-ka-ta</i>
<i>Ka-ka-ta-ka-ka-ta ka-ka-ta</i>
<i>Ka-ka-ta-ka-ka-ta ka-ka-ta</i>
<i>Ka-ka-ta -ka-ka-ta ka-ka-ta</i>

(Wangusa, 2006, p. 35)

The above punctuation of the poem (italicisation) makes certain parts stand out from the rest of the poem, thus, foregrounding them. This exhibits Wangusa's craft in taking liberties by using italicisation to embellish his poetry with beauty. These features of graphological deviation make the poet go beyond the confines of the normal scheme of English language writing, thus foregrounding the message of the poem. It is this experimental behaviour of poets that makes their texts different from others'-a terms Russian Formalists call 'literariness (Erlich, 1981).

The finding of the study is that Timothy Wangusa uses graphological deviation through capitalisation, italicisation, and complete/shaped poems (or even just stanzas) to render his poetry novel/strange. Such work tends to appear strange and has the psychological effect of being easily noticed (by the reader) a term referred to as foregrounding. This is in line with the key tenet of Russian Formalism called defamiliarisation. A piece of work that exhibits graphological deviation appears odd on paper. It is this oddness that defamiliarises the reader's usual perception of the literary work.

Writing poetry this way embellishes it with beauty since it appears novel (different from others' poetry). It is this deviation from the norm, as Leech (1969) contends that makes poetry what it is, a term formalist call "literariness". Besides, it should be posited here that Timothy Wangusa's use of graphological deviation is chiefly for emphatic reasons. That certain parts of the poem are graphologically deviant points to their consequent deviation from the commonplace or routinised norm of the Standard English constructions, especially the writing of work (poetry) on paper.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that the independence in writing that is exhibited in Wangusa's poetry does not follow the dictates of metrical rules and patterns as conventional poets would have constituted

graphological deviation. It is this phenomenon that is referred to as free verse. However, free verse is not a preserve of Wangusa. It is a general name for the genre of poetry (in Africa and, indeed other parts of the world) that does not conform to the formal rules of the meter. It is normally used in contrast with the conventional or formal verse (an older version of poetry) that was always written with the strictest adherence to the rules of the meter.

With all the above analyses of graphological deviation, it is imperative to acknowledge the fact that Wangusa indeed, uses graphological deviation in his poetry collections with the intent to emphasise his message, estrange the poems from the readers' perception (thereby triggering more thoughts) as well as to render his poetry novel. It is this characteristic which makes Wangusa's poetry peculiar from others and thus renders some of his poems multi-layered in meaning. This also echoes the tenet of defamiliarisation since such a style of writing renders the poems novel and thus elicits different perceptions by the readers.

This study recommends that a comparative study be conducted on two issues; the poetry of Timothy Wangusa and any other Ugandan poetess and Uganda's old poets versus contemporary ones.

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