

Graphological Patterning in Helon Habila's Novel, *Measuring Time*

Edokpayi, Justina N. PhD
Ambrose All University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria
E-mail: ngoedos@hotmail.com

Abstract

This paper explores the graphological devices deployed by Helon Habila in his novel, *Measuring Time*, to convey his messages and intentions. Graphology is simply the graphic representation of language on paper. In literature, literary artists deploy language resources and style in a manner that their messages are best articulated. Although the graphic substance is not a component of linguistics, its affinity with the phonic substance in particular, and language in general is so close that it exerts considerable influence on stylistics. The graphic shape often attempts to represent the phonic substance. Hence, the patterned system of the graphic substance is an aspect of the style of written discourse, which should not be overlooked. Habila is one of Nigeria's new generation writers, preoccupied by the socio-political malaise in Nigeria, which are a bane to growth and development. In *Measuring Time*, Habila does not only identify the societal ills, but he advances suggestions aimed at proffering lasting solutions, thereby making his literary works useful to the society.

DOI: 10.7176/RHSS/12-10-01

Publication date: May 31st 2022

1. Introduction

In language study, graphology deals with prints on paper. Leech (1960) claims that graphology is "the characteristic line-by-line arrangement of words on printed page". Wales (2001) also asserts that graphology refers to "the written system of a language, as manifested in handwriting and typography; and to other related features". Wales (2001) identifies punctuation, paragraphing, shapes, spacing and capitalization as graphological features. Therefore, graphology is a writer's use of punctuations, typography, capitalization, paragraphing, among others.

In the bid to convey his artistic visions in his novel, Habila deploys language resources among which are graphological devices. He makes extensive use of graphological patterns to derive meanings and messages in his text under study.

1.2 The Synopsis and Thematic Survey of *Measuring Time*

Measuring Time is Habila's second novel, set in fictional Keti village in Northern Nigeria. In the novel, Habila traces the history of Keti from the pre-colonial times to the post colonial era. The text is a chronicle of the events in Keti, a village in northern part of Nigeria, including the activities of the colonialists and Christian missionaries, and the peace that has once existed in the community. But later, the religious rivalry between Christians and Muslims, and the corrupt practices of the traditional leadership tear the community apart. These culminate in the crises and violence, which tear the village apart leading to loss of lives and properties.

The author also narrates the stories of Mr. Musa Lamang, his immediate and extended families. Originally from a poor family, Lamang becomes one of the richest and most popular businessmen in Keti and beyond. This is as a result of his marriage to Tabita, the daughter of a very wealthy man popularly called "Owner of Cattle", whose wealth Lamang inherits on his demise. He becomes very active and popular in politics despite all efforts by Iliya, his elder brother, to discourage him on account of his successful businesses and wealth. Unfortunately, Lamang suffers traumatic experiences in politics. He is betrayed by his close political associate, Alhaji Danladi, who becomes his political rival, steals and presents his idea of "Reverse Osmosis" a scientific technique, to defeat him in The Victory Party's annual convention, to elect the chairmanship candidate. Lamang has earlier introduced the technique into the party as his campaign strategy to win the election in question. He has also explained it to the members of his party as the final solution, to the problem of water shortage and drought in Keti and its environs. Surprisingly, despite Danladi's betrayal, all efforts made by Lamang to seek redress from the party executives prove abortive.

Disappointed and frustrated, he decamps to The New Victory Party, and contests as the party's chairmanship candidate against Danladi. But due to irregularities in the election, Lamang is arrested for election rigging and taken to the state capital, where he is detained and subjected to torture. To his greatest disappointment and surprise on his release, all his friends abandon him. None of the members of both parties cared for, or visited him, contrary to his expectation of a welcome party for him. He is traumatized, suffers stroke and dies tragically.

The novel also narrates the story of Lamang's children, Mamo and LaMamo, who are twins, but different in

many areas of their lives physically and otherwise. Mamo, who suffers sickle cell anaemia associated with health crises, is very weak, but very studious and highly intelligent. On the contrary, LaMamo, his twin brother, is strong and energetic, but not as academically sound as Mamo. Both children are adventurous and nurse the childhood dream of becoming soldiers with their cousin, Asabar, in order to become famous like their uncle, Haruna, an ex-soldier. While LaMamo and Asabar succeed in escaping from the village to the city to fulfill their dream of joining the army, Mamo stays behind on health ground disappointed. LaMamo later fights as a rebel soldier during the Liberian war, and in many African countries. But Asabar returns home later; he becomes irresponsible and a nuisance in the community, engaging in all sorts of nefarious activities. He becomes paralyzed and confined to the wheelchair as a result of bullet wounds, in a gun battle with the police due to his involvement in election malpractices.

Mamo's situation is further worsened as he is confined to the village disillusioned, having dropped out of the university due to ill health. But his relationship with Zara, his lover, brings hope back to him, and transforms his life tremendously. Zara encourages him in his writing career, and as a result he is not only employed as secretary to Mai, the traditional ruler of Keti, but commissioned to write his biography. He is brought to the limelight by his excellent performances in the palace, especially his organization of a successful fundraising ceremony. Thus, Mamo begins to associate with the important personalities in the state including the state governor.

Zara, a university graduate, married to a military officer, Captain George, is subjected to ill-treatment by her arrogant husband. Unable to cope with him any longer, she divorces him and returns to Keti, her village. She later takes up appointment as a teacher in Keti Community School, where she meets Mamo and falls in love with him. But being bothered by a lot of problems, one of which is her inability to get the custody of her only son, she gets frustrated and decides to relocate to South Africa, to render humanitarian services in an orphanage home, run by Themba, her old friend while in the university. After working in South Africa for some time, Zara comes back to Nigeria because of an issue in her relationship with Themba, which is contrary to their earlier agreement. Unfortunately for her, she suffers depression as a result of her bitter experiences in life, and the lack of love, affection from her family in spite of her problems. Mamo makes several efforts to see her, to know how he would help her, but he is prevented by her mother and sister.

In the novel under study, Habila conveys various themes including that of corruption in every facet of life in Nigeria, the factor for poverty and underdevelopment in the country. For instance, he exposes the corruption in government, politics, and traditional leadership, among others. Reiterating the high rate of corruption captured by Habila in the text, Omotayo maintains that:

Measuring Time uniquely narrates the greedy nature of African leaders and how the danger of it affects all – this is the shameful royal story of Mai and Waziri who assume the position of a demigod to the disadvantage of the people they are to serve (Omotayo 2010). He further adds that *Measuring Time* is a book whose content could not be horridly devoured without a strong and thorough analysis of how the themes, plot and characters relate with the situation that humanity still battles with. Habila has not only written a book, he has painted Africa's history and the origin of our pains.

The novel conveys the theme of feminism. Zara is subjected to women oppression. But in line with the feminist ideology that women should fight against oppression, and fight for their rights in the society, she refuses to be cowed and maltreated in her home by her husband, Captain George. She maintains a strong belief that women should never be shadows of men's successes (Omotayo 2010). Due to her quest for marital contentment and actualization in the words of Omotayo, Zara quits her marriage. She believes in the rights of women, as well as the feminist ideology that women should resist men's oppression by all means.

Generally, the novel is preoccupied by the socio-political problems in the society, colonialism, corruption in leadership, religious crisis, adventure, aftermaths of war, love among others.

3. Textual analysis

Crystal and Derek (1969) assert that graphology is the analogous study of language's writing system, or orthography, as seen in the various kinds of handwriting and typography. They identify the distinctive uses of punctuation, capitalization, spacing and so on as graphological features. We analyse below Habila's deployment of significant graphetic highlighting, capitalization, italicizations and punctuation in *Measuring Time*, to communicate his messages, ideas, sensibilities and intentions. As a creative artist, the novelist puts the poetic license enjoyed by literary arts to his advantage, violating the graphological rules of the English Language sometimes for stylistic effects.

3.1 Typography

Typography involves the size, arrangement and style of letters in writing and printing. Habila utilizes different

sizes, types, and arrangement of letters and prints in the text to achieve his individual style. With these graphological devices, he gives prominence to certain words and expressions, sometimes conveying additional meanings in *Measuring Time*. For instance, he presents the thoughts of his characters, letters, newspaper publications and biographies either in bold print or italics for artistry. We exemplify and analyze below how the author uses these devices to convey the themes of the novel.

3.1.1 The Use of Bold Print

The novelist deploys bold print for the artistic effect of foregrounding as shown below. We observe that all the entries in Mrs. Hannah Drinkwater's diary and newspaper headlines in the text are in bold prints. Here are examples:

1. **It is not enough to conquer their land; we must conquer their minds as well. And to do that we must use more than the Christian gentle persuasion, more than books and schools. We must break their spirits, we must break their backs and throw them down into the dust... Then they'll become our loyal co-workers in the huge task of civilization.** (217)
2. **Reverse Osmosis: Lamang loses to Danladi** (115)
3. This morning I re-read your essay, "A Plan for True History of the Keti." In which you propose to model our work on Plutarch's **Parallel** Lives and thereby achieve a truly human history of your people. (229)
4. **Today I bought a lamp from Ngendi, our nearest neighbour and one of our new converts in the village. He wouldn't accept money but requested to be paid in one of Nathan's old khaki pants...** (216)

Habila uses bold print, which serves as eye-catching device for arresting the attention, and arousing the interest and curiosity of the readers in the novel. He also utilizes it to highlight and emphasize his facts and information. For instance, in extract 1 above, the novelist deploys bold prints to X-ray colonialism in Africa; he conveys the deception associated with colonialism in Africa. The extract is Mrs. Drinkwater's dairy entry on Mr. Graves, the British representative in Keti, and his deceptive visions for the people. Mrs. Drinkwater is the wife of Reverend Drinkwater, the Christian missionary in Keti. Habila presents the character of Mr. Graves to paint a clear and an ugly picture of colonialism, and its adverse effects on Africa. In the excerpt, the novelist reiterates the fact that most early Europeans came to Africa with the guise of spreading the gospel, and trading along the coast of Africa, but with the ulterior motive of exploiting Africans. The colonists forcefully deprived Africa of her rich natural resources, for the enrichment of their home countries at the expense of Africa.

As recorded in Mrs. Drinkwater's dairy, Mr. Graves is so deceitful and inhuman that she refers to him as an indifferent Christian. He exhibits deception in all his actions and utterances as depicted in the sample. Thus, to Mrs. Drinkwater, Mr. Graves is not trustworthy.

In the same vein, the author deploys graphological variation to convey the themes of injustice and betrayal in sample 2. The bold print for the newspaper headline in the extract which is for eye-catching effect, lends credence to the assertion of Crystal and Davy (1969) that the most noticeable device in graphetic and graphological variation is the graphetic highlighting of the headline. Stating the importance of such headlines, they claim that:

the function of headlining is complex: headlines have to contain a clear, succinct and if possible intriguing message, to kindle a spark of interest in the potential reader, who, on average, is a person whose eye moves swiftly down a page and stops when something catches his attention; and the chief means of producing 'eye-catching effect' is by making use of the full range of graphetic contrasts.

In the headline, the novelist also calls the attention of the readers to a scientific technique known as "Reverse Osmosis". Alhaji Isa Danladi claims that with the technique, they can supply the whole state with water cheaply and steadily too. The implication of such technique is a lasting solution to the problem of water and drought, the major crisis in Keti and its neighbouring villages. Aside arousing the interest of the readers with the caption in board print in the extract, the writer states that with Alhaji Danladi's idea of "Reverse Osmosis", in his presentation of his vision for the party, Mr. Musa Lamang loses to him in the state chairmanship election, conducted in the state capital by the Victory Party.

We observe that Habila deploys the normal print in giving details and information about the headline in the extract. The messages inherent in the extract subsume betrayal and injustice. Ironically, the scientific technique of "Reverse Osmosis", an idea got by Lamang from his series of business trips, and explained to his political associates, is used by Danladi to defeat him in the election. Danladi is unanimously declared the chairman of the Victory Party to Lamang's surprise and disappointment. Despite all Lamang's efforts to seek redress from the party for the injustice done him, nothing is done. The party officers and his political friends betray and frustrate him out of the party to the New Victory Party. It is important to state here that Lamang's betrayal, frustration and traumatic experiences in politics are responsible for his ill health and subsequent untimely death.

In sample 4, Habila uses bold print to emphasize Africans' quest for foreign goods. For instance, Ngendi,

the Drinkwaters' neighbour, requests for late Reverend Drinkwater's old khaki pants instead of being paid in cash for the lamb Mrs. Drinkwater has bought from him. His request is borne out of the fact that the khaki pants are foreign products. In this extract, Habila has not only ridiculed the scramble for foreign goods in the society, but discourages the neglect of locally made products, thereby calling for the promotion of locally made goods.

3.1.2 The Use of italicization

Italicization is one of the graphological features; it involves printing in a peculiar manner for the purpose of foregrounding. Certain pieces of information are highlighted with the use of italics in literary texts. Habila utilizes italicization extensively in his novel for various purposes, among which are to ensure the clarity of writing, present the thoughts of his characters, and for writing biographies, diaries, letters and newspaper publications. The novelist also italicizes lexical items and expressions that are not in English. We exemplify and analyze below Habila's use of italicization for various stylistic effects in the text. For instance, in the following excerpts, the novelist uses italicization for the presentation of the thoughts of some of his characters.

1. Can't you see my father is only using you as a common thug, to do his dirty work, and does it give you much prestige to drive around drunk in a van intimidating people? Don't you know this is only going to end up one day in disaster? (154)
2. Of my uncle's silence I could write many books, Even my father's selfish ambitions had more nobility than these frauds have in their own lives. (232)
3. What really is there to write about their lives? Their combined life wouldn't be worth more than a chapter in a decent book. (231)
4. What's the use? ... (183)

In the novel, we observed that Mamo, the authorial voice, is often lost in thoughts, probably due to loneliness, frustration and his sickle-cell anaemia. His illness shatters his dreams and deprives him of many opportunities in life, especially that of joining the army with his twin brother, LaMamo, now a rebel soldier in Liberia. In sample 1, the author presents Mamo's thoughts about Asabar, his cousin, who is highly irresponsible, and indulges in alcoholism, smoking and selling marijuana. As the leader of the youth wing of Lamang's party, Asabar drives the party's van recklessly round the village with his irresponsible friends, intimidating innocent people. As the novelist captures Mamo's thoughts and mind in this excerpt, his feelings are expressed. Though disturbed by Asabar's behaviour, Mamo sees no reason advising him since he never takes advice. Therefore, making him to realize that Lamang, the popular politician, is only using him to his political advantage, or warning him against the danger of his irresponsibility and hooliganism, will only amount to waste of time.

In excerpts 2 and 3, the novelist captures Mamo's thoughts and psychological torment due to the precarious situation in which he finds himself. Under normal circumstances, he is principled and upright, and would never have indulged in acts against his principles and values. But he finds himself in a dilemma, having to write the history of very corrupt traditional rulers, against his wish because of his call to duty, and the need to uphold his principles. Consequently, he is forced to compromise his principles by his position as the secretary to Mai, as well as the need to make a name for himself in his writing career. In this excerpt, Habila satirizes those in the society who compromise their principles and virtues, especially as prevalent in Nigerian politics and government.

Habila also presents in italics Memo's thoughts about his father's responses to his request in excerpt 4. In anger, he has requested that his father should give him more information about their late mother; this is due to the negative stories he and LaMamo have heard about the ill-treatment he has meted out to her. In order to avenge her death, Mamo thinks of many grievous things to do to his father, and many questions to ask him until he breaks down, and confesses to his cruelties to her. But he declines, thinking as exemplified in sample 4. Unconsciously, he repeats his father's utterance, saying: *What's there to say?*

The writer utilizes italicization in samples 5 and 6 below, to present the two letters written to Mamo. The first letter is written by LaMamo while the second is from James, his friend.

5. June 1985

Dear brother

I am writing from a small village, on the border of Mali in the Sahara desert ----war has been going on for a long time. It is between the Tuaregs and the government. The Tuaregs feel they are oppressed and they want to be free.

Everywhere people want to be free and I think it is right. We are fighting on the side of the Tuaregs ... I see the stars in the sky and know that death is everywhere—yesterday the government forces came and raid our camp in the night—I was lucky, many died. I was covered in limbs and blood.

I have a new friend now—his name is Samuel Paul. He is from Liberia. His story is sad. ... He joined the army because of his family, which were all killed in a church on his sister's wedding day. It is a sad story and he cries whenever he remembers and he swears one day to revenge on the tribe that have killed his family and the people of his village in northern Liberia. They have entered the church, twenty of them on the day of the wedding and started shooting—he wasn't killed ... but he can hear his sister scream as they rape her before they

*killed her, and his mother begging them not to kill his sister, and the husband begging them not to rape his wife. There was blood in the church, everywhere, even the pastor killed because he belongs to this tribe. ...
I will write again soon, tell Auntie Marina and Asabar and everyone I am fine and I send my greetings.*

Your twin brother,

LaMamo (91-92)

6. *My Dear Mamo,*

I must first apologise for taking so long to reply your last letter, which I received almost a year ago. But so much misfortune has befallen me since then and I am sure you will forgive my tardiness when I tell it to you. Before I go on to weigh you down with my sad stories, though, let me first say that my sadness is now in the past and (even though I am over sixty years old). I look in the future with some optimism. Let me also say that I hope you and your dear ones are fine ...

But now, let us talk about you. Have you done anything about your ambition to write biographies? I have already mentioned it to a few friends of mine who are in the publishing business and they have expressed their keenness to see it. I am not writing this to rush you into finishing your book, but to encourage you on a worthy ambition. Write soon and tell me how you are doing.

*I remain yours,
James, K. Batanda
(299)*

An examination of the excerpts above shows Habila's prominent use of italicization for letters, employed for the conveyance of information in the novel. In the first letter, which is on wars and their aftermaths in Africa, the author conveys the themes of oppression, the quest for freedom, and the destructions done to lives and properties consequent upon the wars in various parts of Africa. LaMamo gives detailed accounts of the wars taken place in many African nations, especially in Liberia. The Tuaregs on whose side LaMamo and his friends fight are in war against the oppressive Liberian government in the quest for freedom. The war results in loss of lives and mass destruction of valuable things, thereby impoverishing the nation and the citizens. Artistically, Habila reveals the destructive effects of the wars in the nations, not only on the countries involved, but on Africa in general.

In the same letter, the novelist also captures brutality, rapes and killings as the aftermaths of the inter-tribal war in Liberia. LaMamo narrates the bitter and horrible experiences of the people, including the attack on a church, which has resulted in the massacre of all the members of Samuel Paul's family, on his sister's wedding day. The novelist states that Samuel has joined the army due to his determination to avenge the loss of his family members. In this sample, Habila condemns war in its entirety, portraying the aftermaths of the incessant wars in Africa as the causes of the underdevelopment of the continent.

The author conveys the themes of encouragement and optimism in the second letter written to Mamo. His friend, James, writes to console him due to his losses, and also encourages him in his writing career and ambition. He stresses the fact that one should resist grief by all means, and look to the future with optimism and hope.

Moreover, Habila italicizes the borrowed words from other languages into the target text for artistry as exemplified below.

1. Mamo had seen them arrive separately earlier on, all wearing their best *buba* and *wrapper*, their head scarves tall and stiff on their heads. (75)
2. "I don't know," she said, looking up guiltily, as if caught in *flangrante delicto*. (220)
3. The equestrian display proved to be the day's *piece de resistance*—even the Governor couldn't help waving his swagger stick in appreciation. (239)

From the sentences above, we observe that the artist italicizes words of other languages to indicate that they are not of English origin. For instance, *buba* and *wrapper* are words of Nigerian local languages for native attires. *Frangrante delicto* and *piece de resistance* in excerpts 2 and 3 respectively are lexical items of French and Spanish languages, incorporated into the target text for stylistic effects. The words of Nigerian local languages have been incorporated into the novel due to their lack of English equivalents. But sometimes, such words are incorporated to project and promote Nigerian languages and culture.

4. Capitalization

Capitalization involves the use of capital letters in the appropriate places in writing; they are used at the beginning of sentences, for proper nouns and deities, among others. But in literary creation, writers violate the conventional use of capital letters for artistry. This involves the deviant uses of capital letters. For instance, some words are foregrounded through capitalization for communicative purposes, as well as to give prominence to certain information. We exemplify below Habila's prominent use of capitalization for stylistic effects. In the first

place, we observe that he capitalizes the first two words at the beginning of every chapter in the novel. He also capitalizes some words and sentences to attract the readers' attention. The speeches of some characters are also in capital letters for emphasis as in the following examples.

1. HATE THY FATHER, MAKE HIM PAY. (20)
2. Since that day, CHEAT DEATH, BE FAMOUS became his second commandment in his mental diary. (21)
3. Mamo wasn't looking at his father as he spoke; he was looking at the plaque on the wall: THE SILENT LISTENER TO EVERY CONVERSATION. (183)
4. ... Bintou as she knelt before the concrete headstone bearing the simple word, LAMAMO LAMANG 1963-1994 (305)

All the examples above are instances of the author's use of capitalization in the text to pass his messages across to the readers. In sample 1, he presents Mamo's mental diary in capital letters. As Mamo learns the art of prioritizing, he begins to keep an imaginary diary. In it, he writes his first priorities in bold and capital letters for remembrance. The great extent, to which the twins hate their father, Lamang, and their desire to punish him as exemplified in extract 1, form the first item on the priority list in Mamo's imaginary diary. Their hatred for their father has started at the age of three years. According to the authorial voice:

The twins stayed with their uncle Iliya for the first three years of their lives, believing him to be their father. But after three years their father came and shattered their illusion, he took them away—that was the day the seed of their hatred was planted, and when they grew older and began to hear the song about the King of Women, and about the maltreatment of their mother by their father, the seed sprouted into a tree. (16)

To achieve their aim of punishing their father, the twins drop scorpion into his shoes occasionally, for the scorpion to sting him, or misplace his car keys just as he is about to go out in order to frustrate him.

Moreover, their father neither cares nor has time for them. Their aunt, Marina, solely takes up the responsibility of caring for the twins like a mother. In the light of the above reasons, Lamang's relationship with his only children has never been cordial. The message inherent in this excerpt is the need for parents to take adequate care of their children in order to enhance cordial relationship, between parents and children, as well as peace in families.

Also, capitalized in the novel, is Mamo's second commandment in his mental diary, arising from the twins' encounter with an aeroplane, which they assume carries only famous people. This assumption informs their decision to become famous in life so that they will be remembered even after their death. Mamo also sees this as a solution to his problem in life, and also to fulfill his life ambition. His decision to achieve quick fame is borne out of the fact that suffering from sickle-cell anaemia, he might never live to be twenty. Consequently, he concludes that the only assurance to immortality is quick fame. In this extract, Habila encourages positive ambitions among the youths.

Excerpt 3 contains a plaque on the wall with capitalized inscription. With his gaze fixed on the inscription, Mamo makes a confession to his father in an outburst of anger due to his grudge against him. The burden which has tormented him for so long is thus lifted. The burden arises from his erroneous belief that he is responsible for Asabar's paralysis and the death of his two friends. We observe that Mamo's focus of attention on the capitalized inscription arrests his attention, and therefore gives him the courage to make the confession.

However, unknown to Mamo, he is not responsible for Asabar and his friends' predicament contrary to his belief. His letter to alert the police about their involvement in election malpractice never got to the authority, but has been intercepted and given to his father, by a corrupt policeman working for him for money. At this juncture, Mamo's anger is rekindled against his father, for keeping the secret of intercepting the letter from him. Here, Habila depicts the bribery and corrupt prevalent in Nigerian politics in particular and Nigerian society in general.

5. Punctuation

In every write-up, punctuations are used due to the vital roles they play in effective communication when correctly used. Udofot and Ekpenyong (2019) explain the functions of punctuations in their assertion that:

In sentence construction, it is important to indicate that one sentence has ended, and that another is about to start, or that it is time to break either for a short time or because a certain quotation, list or another part of the sentence is about to follow. At times, punctuations signal abbreviations, proper nouns or omissions of certain letters. Some sentences require one type of punctuation only while others require more than one.

Also, Murthy (2010) asserts that punctuation plays an important role in developing writing skills, and that it is very often proved that punctuation may alter the meaning of a sentence. Commenting on the use and importance of punctuations, Dikiya (1991) notes that punctuation marks are "used in writing to provide the same signals such as pause, voice pitch or stress that we use in speech to delineate one word or a group of words ... to aid the reader to understand the writer's idea easily and clearly."

Punctuation marks comprise full stop or period, comma, question mark, exclamations mark, among others. Some punctuation marks are used at the end of sentences while some are used within sentences. Sometimes, creative artists make deviant uses of punctuations for stylistic effects as we exemplify below.

5.1 The Full Stop or Period

The full stop or period is used to mark the end of a declarative or an imperative sentence that issues commands mildly ... (Udofot & Ekpenyong, 2019). In the text under study, instances abound where Habila makes deviant use of it to emphasize certain important messages and intentions as in the following sentences:

1. Supply and demand. (75)
2. We are cut off from our office in Monrovia, no communications. Bad Soon, the rebel will be here, and I tell you they don't care who they kill. (139)
3. By Mamo Lamang. (312)
4. "... No word up to now. Rebel." (139)
5. Interspersed amid the male laughter were a few female voices. The widows. (75)

In excerpt 1 above, the noun phrase "Supply and demand." used as a sentence ending with a full stop constitutes a deviant usage. Stylistically, the author deploys it to emphasize the kind of approach that Mr. Lamang, the Unity Party's favourite, for the state chairmanship intends to bring into politics in order to win the party's forth-coming state chairmanship election. He reveals a very important technique referred to as "Reverse Osmosis", to the members of his political party during a meeting to map out strategies to win the election. As it is common in political discourse, he asks them the rhetorical question, 'What if we assured the people that we could solve the problem of drought that is confronted by Keti Community and its environs for years?' Thus, Lamang reveals the importance of "Reverse Osmosis". To convince the members, Lamang emphasizes the seriousness of his proposal, giving instances where he has taken advantage of "Supply and demand" to achieve success in the past.

Habila reiterates the aftermath of wars in extract 2, deploying the expression "Bad." as a sentence ending with a full stop. This is another instance where Habila breaks the graphological rule, for artistry due to the advantage of the poetic license. The sentence is emphatic; it is made by a white man in a rehabilitation camp, caring for wounded and sick victims of war, in response to Bintou's question whether there is any way she and LaMamo could help him. The author deploys the emphatic sentence aberrantly to describe and emphasize the ugly and helpless condition of the war victims. Aside the lack of manpower, the camp lacks food, medicines and other necessities with which to adequately cater for the sick and wounded victims. With the graphological feature in this excerpt, the author paints a clear picture of lack, diseases, sufferings, pains and deaths as some of the adverse effects of wars, thereby discouraging Africans from resorting to wars as the only solution to national crises.

Similarly, "By Mamo Lamang.", a prepositional phrase used as a sentence in extract 3, is deviant usage; it ends with a full stop even though it is not a complete sentence. It acknowledges Mamo Lamang at the end of a script acted by Keti Church drama group. The acknowledgement has not only indicated that Mamo has written the script, but serves as a source of encouragement to him in his writing career.

Worthy of note in the text also is Habila's unconventional use of full stop in sample 4 to give prominence to the issue of gruesome killings, and atrocities committed by the rebel troop in Liberian. Describing such atrocities, the authorial voice says:

- They must have been ambushed by the rebels because they are very many of them going about with nothing to do, just to loot anything they find.
... Soon the rebels will be here, and I tell you, they don't care who they kill.
They rob the sick and shoot the dead. (139)

The use of "The widows." an aberration in excerpt 5, as a sentence is for satirical effect. It emphasizes the activities of the shameless widows in Keti Community in the life of Lamang, the promiscuous wealthy man. They cluster around him shamelessly, taking part in every event in his household, and even attend political meetings in his house as portrayed in the extract. Their constant presence in Lamang's house, even in his bedroom is very embarrassing.

5.2 The Comma

Udofot and Ekpenyong (2019) see the comma as the most commonly used, and the least emphatic punctuation mark, claiming that it separates sentence elements. Edokpayi (2006) opines that the comma provides a brake or pauses in sentences, which enables the readers, assimilate the sense in the sentence. It is extensively used for various purposes as exemplified in the following.

1. The civilian state governors and the local government chairmen had been arrested by Military administrators, and as often happened after such takeovers, promises had been made, expectations had risen, most of Mamo's father's friends were now in prison for "economic

- crimes,” but nothing much had changed, (226)
2. ...as Grave passed with his policemen, he was rather a short man, with a big moustache, he always wore a howler hat, which seemed a bit too big for his head ... But he got even halfway to him, Grave brought out his gun and shot him in the chest. (228)
 3. .It was all a continuation of the power tussle that began when Graves, the first district officer, disposed one of the earliest Mais, his name was La Kei, by accusing him of murder. (227)
 4. He stood over his son, his head bowed, and then he turned to the white man and said, ‘Let’s go.’ He was led through the village, his hands tied behind him, to the new lockup. (228)

Habila makes profuse use of the comma as punctuation mark in the text. For instance, five commas are utilized in extract 1, to itemize the features characterizing the coups, which have been incessant occurrences in Nigeria, and the events thereafter. But the question is do the changes in government bring the desired improvements to the lives of the people and development to the nation? Unfortunately, neither the civilian nor military governments have made any positive impact on Nigeria and the citizens.

In sample 2, the novelist deploys series of commas to paint an ugly picture of Mr. Grave, the district officer in Keti who is not only physically ugly, but evil as portrayed in the extract. Mr. Grave’s evil practices are further captured in excerpt 3 and 4 by his treacherous arrest of Mai Kei after shooting his son dead. He has arrested Mai Kei to get rid of him, for he sees him as a threat to his authority as the district officer. According to the author:

The next day he was taken to the state capital, and that was the last the village saw of him. (228)

5.3 Ellipsis

In writing, ellipsis is deployed to indicate the omission of parts of sentences, sometimes in the middle of such sentences; it is also utilized to avoid repetitions in texts. We observe an extensive use of ellipsis in the novel for various reasons. Here are some examples.

1. “I am ... your uncle, Haruna. I ... I ... went to the war. “My uncle ...?” Mamo began, uncertain, and then stopped. (38)
2. “I ... I ... am so tired,” he said his eyes closing; he slowly stretched out on his back on the veranda step. “I’ve travelled ... for ... so far staring ...” (38)
3. “We can’t go with him, he is drunk.”
“What ... but?” Asabar spluttered, looking from one twin to another.
“What do you mean I can’t come with you? I am not ... very drunk”
“Don’t you know how serious this is? Can’t you stay sober for just one day ...?” LaMamo went on angrily. “We are leaving home, it is raining and we are almost late for the bus, and ... and ...”
“And ... and ... and ... so what?” Asabar mimicked and burst out laughing ... (50)
4. “Tomorrow by this time we will be in the city, in the army, and after that...’
after that ...”
“Keep going,” LaMamo said.
“Yes ... after that we will keep going!” (51)
5. I ... did not do ... it alone sir,” Mamo stammered, his hand still in the governor’s tight military grasp. (240)
6. “I ... I ... I ... I am not too bad. I am just numb ...” (296)
“Yes,” LaMamo breathed. “I ... want you to know I am not scared of dying. ... My only regret is now I won’t see my child.” (297)
7. “Promise me that you’ll send for Binton when things are back to normal. ... I want my child to grow up here ..., beneath the hills like we grew up. ... I know everything will be all right.” (297)

In excerpts 1 and 2 above, the novelist portrays Haruna’s poor state of health and horrible experiences of war with ellipsis. Having fought in the Nigerian/Biafra war, he returns to Keti after seven years of wandering from one warring country to another with devastating experiences. Habila captures his pathetic physical state on his arrival home, looking so sick and helpless that he could hardly talk. The pauses at various points in his speeches in the extracts depict his pathetic state. Haruna has not only been disfigured by his loss of one eye in the war, but by his psychological trauma arising from his horrible war experiences. His appearance is so horrible that Mamo, his nephew, to whom he introduces himself on arrival, concludes that he is a beggar. Traumatized and unable to cope with the realities of his life, he commits suicide by hanging on a tree despite all the care, and concern given to him by his relatives.

Habila also conveys the theme of adventure in *Measuring Time*. The twins and Asabar, their cousin, are adventurers; they are eager to travel and explore the world outside their village. Samples 3 and 4 express

LaMamo's anger against Asabar for getting drunk and trying to disrupt their escape plan. The adventurers see their successful escape from Keti as the only opportunity to fulfill their dream of joining the army, and exploring the world in order to achieve their life goals and ambitions. Moreover, they feel that this will change their future positively. The ellipsis in LaMamo's speeches in the samples indicate incompleteness in his sentences as a result of anger, while those in Asabar's utterances portray his drunken state. The author depicts in these extracts the twins' ambition and Asabar's irresponsibility.

Sample 5 expresses Mamo's response as the state Governor commends him for his effective organization of the fundraising event, which has proved very successful in Keti. We observe that the novelist deploys ellipsis dots in this extract to convey Mamo's surprise and uneasiness as the governor grasps his hands.

Habila also utilizes the ellipsis dots in examples 6 and 7 for stylistic effects. He captures LaMamo's state of pain and helplessness before his heroic death. This is as a result of the severe injuries, sustained while championing the protest against the oppressive traditional leadership in Keti. We observe pauses in his last speeches due to the severe pains. In sample 6, the novelist captures LaMamo's courage and determination to die for his people. He also expresses his desire, and request to Mamo that his child is born in Keti, thereby portraying his emotional attachment to Keti. No wonder he gives up his life for it, and fights a just cause to liberate his oppressed people. In these excerpts, the novelist conveys LaMamo's courage, patriotism and heroism.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, we have stated in this study that Habila deploys language replete with graphological markers intentionally in his novel, *Measuring Time*, to achieve his unique style. From the analysis above, it is evident that he has put graphological devices to his stylistic advantage in order to adequately convey the themes of the novel. The devices deployed to achieve this purpose subsume typography, punctuation, capitalization, italicization, among others.

References

- Cryatal, D & Derek, D. (1969), *Investigating English Style*, Longman.
- Dukiya, F. (1991), Use of Punctuation. *Undergraduate Text on English Language and Literature*, Paper Back Publisher Ltd, 59-72.
- Edokpayi, J. (2006), "A Graphological Analysis of Buchi Emecheta's *The Joy of Motherhood*". *Iroroh: A Journal of Arts*, 63-69.
- Habila, H. (2007), *Measuring Time*. Cassava Republic Press.
- Jayanthi, M. (2010), Dakshina. *Contemporary English Grammar*. edited by Indu Mala Ghosh, 25th and 26th ed., Book Palace.
- Leech, G. (1969), *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. Longman Group Ltd.
- Omotayo, J. (2010), "True Talk Measuring Time". <http://josephomotoayo.blogspot.com/2010/10/measuring-time-by-helon-habila.html> Retrieved 14th April, 2022.
- Udofot, I. & Ekpenyong, B. (2019), *A Comprehension English Course for Schools and Colleges*. Development Universal Consortia.
- Wales, K. (2001), *A Dictionary of Stylistics*. Pearson Education Ltd.