

**LANGUAGE OF CONFESSIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY: A STYLISTIC APPRAISAL OF EMMANUEL ENI'S *DELIVERED FROM THE POWERS OF DARKNESS***

Adesina B. Sunday  
University of Ibadan  
Nigeria  
[sinadaybuk@yahoo.com](mailto:sinadaybuk@yahoo.com)

***Abstract***

*Confessional autobiography is an important genre of prose writing. It creates an avenue for the narrator to reveal his/her present through his/her past. This paper analyzes the language of Emmanuel Eni's *Delivered from the Powers of Darkness* from a stylistic perspective. The narrator uses the first person narrative point of view to present two conflicting worlds, namely that of Satan and that of Christ. He demonizes the former and eulogizes the latter. Specific places, events and personages are given to authenticate the narrative. Capitalization and quotation are used to foreground some expressions. Complex and compound-complex sentences dominate the narrative. The narrator uses language to make the narratee see the evil in occult groups.*

**Key words:** Emmanuel Eni, *Delivered from the Powers of Darkness*, Stylistics, Confessional autobiography

**INTRODUCTION**

Language, apart from being a concept that distinguishes humans from animals, plays an important role in expressing change of life. An individual who has experienced some transformation shows this consciously or unconsciously through his language (Turner, 1994:19). Autobiography, a type of writing about self, has far-reaching effects on the narratee-the narrator's addressee (Prince, 1996). In Christian circles, it is an effective tool of evangelism. The effect of autobiography becomes more powerful when it is a confessional autobiography. This paper examines, from a stylistic point of view, how Emmanuel Eni has deployed language to share the testimony of his life in *Delivered from the Powers of Darkness*.

**CONFESSION**

Confession/penance is one of the seven sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church. The others are: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Holy Orders, Marriage and Anointing of the Sick (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1992:756a). During confession, members of the Roman Catholic Church confess their sins to the priest and promise not to go back to them. The priest forgives the penitent on behalf of God. The purpose of

confession is to reconcile the sinner to God and to the Christian community. The confession must be done at least once a year (*New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 1974).

In law, confession is a voluntary statement made by a person in which he admits that he is guilty. He not only admits his guilt, but he also describes how the crime occurred (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1992:337). There are several types of confessions recognized by the court. One is a *simple confession*, which is merely a plea of guilt. Another one is an *implied confession*, which is one in which a defendant who has not pleaded guilty asks the court for a light judgement. The third is an *indirect confession*, which is one that the court assumes from the way the accused persons has conducted himself (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1992:337). The United States courts classify confessions into two major groups – *Judicial* and *Extrajudicial* confessions. The former are the ones made during court proceedings, while the latter are the ones made outside the court, either to law officers or those not law officers. US courts do not allow as proof or evidence involuntary confessions, that is, confessions made through threats, promises or injury (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1992: 756a).

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

According to Fraser and Brown (Fraser and Brown, 1997:157), the word ‘autobiography’ was an early nineteenth century coinage. It was first used by Robert Southey in 1809 in an article in the *Quarterly Review*. In the article, he predicted an ‘epidemic rage for auto-biography’. However, the practice of autobiography predated this year; there had been spiritual autobiographies before this time. Seminal writers, such as St. Augustine, Bunyan and Rousseau, wrote autobiographies. The genre only flourished in the nineteenth century (Fraser and Brown, 1997:157).

Autobiography is the class of writings that are called self-revelation. Other writings closely related to it are *diary*, *journal*, and *memoir*. “Autobiography sees separate occurrences, even in early life, as moving toward and completing a pattern finally achieved in later life”. The *diary* is a record of daily experience. It is a preservation of the day-to-day process of somebody’s life. It does not pay attention to patterned development, narrative continuity, or dramatic movement toward a climax. *Journal* focuses attention on the interior life of the writer. It often excludes some events that are outside the reveries or meditations of the memory and imagination of the author. *Memoir* focuses more attention on “occurrences around and outside the writer than to the writer himself (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1974:803).”

There are some elements of fictional conventions in autobiography (Fraser and Brown, 1997:131). ‘Unconscious fictionalizing’ may occur in autobiography because the writer may be psychologically unable to reveal some of his motivations or “untrained in his analyses of his own behavior, or simply unconscious of his true motivations (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1974:803).”

The autobiographer writes about a topic that he is keenly interested in and upon which he is the highest living authority (Fraser and Brown, 1997: 155-156). But the autobiographer has some constraints:

For example, the autobiographer is constrained by the need of his projected self-image and the narrative which embodies it to select only some details of his real life which quantitatively

constitute only a segment of that life; when he goes on to present this segment as *the* life, the whole life, he is already distorting reality. The self of autobiography is therefore an invention which is a symbolic representation of the total man. The proof of this lies in the fact that the autobiographer's self-image usually differs in significant way from an image of him portrayed by another writer, his biographer (Oriaku, 1998: 2-3).

There are four main types of autobiography:

(i) *Confessional Autobiography*: The motive of this is to 'unburden one's self of a feeling of guilt (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1974:803).'

(ii) *Apologetic Autobiography*: Here, attempt is made by the writer to declare and to justify the course of his life or a particular action he has taken (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1974:803).

(iii) *Explanatory Autobiography*: In this type of autobiography, the writer uses the act of writing as an instrument of research and a way of examining his own behavioural patterns (*Encyclopedia Americana*, 1974:803).

It has to be noted that autobiography usually results from a combination of these motives (*Encyclopedia Britannica Student Home Edition*, 2010:23).

## STYLE AND STYLISTICS

Style has been variously defined by scholars. This is why there are different approaches to style (Babajide, 2000:123-130). Prominent among them is style is man (*stilus virum arguit* 'the style proclaims the man'). That is, style is the linguistic 'thumb-print' of a writer (Leech and Short, 1981:10). Style is also seen as the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on (Leech and Short, 1981:5). This approach sees style as context. Another approach is style as choice. This sees style as selection from a total linguistic repertoire (Crystal and Davy, 1969:1-4; 83-91). In other words, style is parole. Style is also conceived as the way language is used in a particular genre, period, school of writing, or some combination of these (Fowler, 1977: 61-64). Style can also be approached from the angle of the text (Verdonk, 2002:1-3). In this case, style is the linguistic characteristic of a particular text (Fowler, 1977:63-64).

Stylistics is the study of style (Osundare, 2003). Stylistics validates intuitions by giving detailed analysis (Clarck, 1996:7). It is also a kind of dialogue between literary reader and linguistic observer with insight, not just objectivity, as goal (Enkvist, 1964:10-12). Stylistics is 'literary' from the angle of linguistics or linguistic from the angle of literary studies. So it is both literary and linguistic (Carter and Malmkjaer: 510-511). It is "the application of theoretical ideas and analytic techniques drawn from linguistics to the study of literary texts (spoken or written) (Fowler, 1981:11)." Treating literature as discourse is seeing the text as a mediator of relationship between language users. This relationship is not only of speech but also of consciousness, ideology, role and class. In this way, the text ceases to be an object and becomes an action or process. Stylistics normally refers to the practice of using linguistics for the study of literature, and also other texts (Leech, 1969:1-2; 225-227). Stylistics does not subscribe to the claim that

there is an exclusively ‘literary language’, unlike traditional literary-critical approaches which see literary language as a special ontologically stable language form which is the exclusive property of exclusive texts (Simpson,1993:3).

## **ENI’S *DELIVERED FROM THE POWERS OF DARKNESS*: A STYLISTIC APPRAISAL**

*Delivered from the Powers of Darkness* is a story of the life of Emmanuel Eni (1988). In it, he confesses how he lived his life in the kingdom of darkness. He also presents how he became a new person through “encounter with Jesus Christ”.

### **Narrative Technique**

Using the first person point of view, Eni arranges the story of his life into nine chapters. Each chapter, except chapter five, opens with a biblical quotation. Chapter five, which does not begin with a Bible quotation, is titled “My Encounter with Jesus Christ”. This title has taken care of the Bible quotation because Jesus himself is the Word of God. Notably, the Bible quotation that opens each chapter is a summary of the message in each chapter. For instance, chapter one, which deals with how he was introduced to the occult as a child, begins with “train up a child in the way they (sic) should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Prov. 22:6)”. The last chapter, titled “Now what Next,” begins with:

The spirit and the bride say “COME”. Let each one who hears them say the same “COME”. Let the thirsty one come “Anyone who wants to let him come and drink the water of life without charge” (Rev 22:17 – Living New Testament).

This chapter, which is the shortest of all, is an altar call. This is the major purpose of his writing the text. The whole message is encoded in this verse.

From the outset of the narrative, Eni confronts the narratee with the fact that he is not writing for its’ sake; rather, he is writing because he has been “compelled” to do so. Immediately after the Bible verse that begins chapter one, he writes:

This is a story of God’s works – mighty wonderful and my serious (sic) in obedience to the command of JESUS CHRIST to me saying “Go and testify what I have done for you”.

He has done this to impress upon the narratee the objectivity and credibility of the narrative.

### **Graphological features**

Right from the cover page, Eni has shown that he intends presenting two opposing worlds. This binarity is shown by the way the title is written. The title has six words. The

first three words – “delivered from the” – are written in small letters and in red, while the remaining three words – “POWERS OF DARKNESS” – are written in capital letters and in black. He has made the second part of the title bold to make it clear that he wants to reveal certain aspects of this world. It is also printed in black because blackness is often associated with darkness. One wonders why the first part of the title which contains the word “delivered”, which is the key concept as far as his new life is concerned, is written in small letters. But this is not an attempt to undermine the redemptive work of Christ. Rather, it is a semiotic representation of how God’s power, which sometimes appears little, can swallow the apparently big power of Satan. It is just like the encounter between Moses and the sorcerers and the magicians of Pharaoh, as recorded in Exodus 7:8-14. Aaron’s rod which became a serpent (representing God’s power) swallowed all the rods of the Egyptian magicians (representing Satan’s power). Similarly, the use of red for printing the first part is important. Red symbolizes danger and also stands for blood. In this narrative, blood is significant. It is the source of life for the agents of Satan. It also symbolizes human life. As used in the title, it stands for the blood of the Lamb, which is danger to the “POWERS OF DARKNESS.”

Eni foregrounds many sentences in his narrative. There are, in fact, some pages almost half of which contain sentences written in capital letters. It appears that Eni wants the narratee to see how serious he is about his message. Anything he wants the narratee to remember he imprints, as it were, boldly on his mind. Some of them are:

...AND ONLY CHRISTIANS CAN SAVE OUR  
NATION. (p.24)

...THEY ONLY ADD MORE DEMONS TO THEM. A  
DEVIL CANNOT CAST OUT DEVIL. (p.25)

ONE OF THE AREAS OF THE DEVIL’S SOUL  
WINNING IS THE SECODNARY SCHOOLS,  
ESPECIALLY GIRLS’ SCHOOL. (p.32)

### **Presentation of Personages**

Eni himself is the protagonist. He presents himself as a hero, as somebody who did what no ordinary man could do. He ate excreta (p.13); he commanded the ground to open and it did (p.15); he was in ‘INDIA JUNGLE’ where he encountered many “dangerous reptiles and wild beasts” (p.14).

He also shows himself as somebody who was not entirely wicked when he was in the “world”. He says that he did not kill his uncle when asked to do so:

I obeyed and went but having not killed before, I hadn’t the  
courage to kill him, rather I destroyed his medicines and  
rendered him powerless (p.20).

When commanded to go and kill again, he went and killed but he records it thus:

However, I obeyed and went back to the village and  
'managed' to kill these men and sent their blood to her  
(p.20)

Whether one managed to kill or not, killing is killing. He has used "managed" to absolve himself of complicity.

The narrator presents all agents of Satan as bad but presents God's people as good. Alice, the antagonist, is described as "devil's agent"... "involved seriously in occultism and spiritism" (p.11). The devil is described as "deceiver", "thief", causer of barrenness, one who has no free gift (pp.18, 19, 26).

He presents God as: caring; life giver; protective; giver of real children; Almighty (pp8, 21, 22). He describes the Christian lady who was his spiritual mother as loving and caring, one "who took interest in explaining the word of God to me and counselled me as well". He adds that: "the brethren became very interested in me and cared. I saw real love". (p.42)

### **Presentation of Events**

The narrator makes reference to specific people, places, dates and time.

**People:** Alice, Anthony, Chinedum Onwukewe

**Places:** India, Lagos, Nkpor town, Odukepe Road, Umuakpa in Owerri, Silver Valley, Port Harcourt, Catholic Cathedral in Owerri, NO. 108 Bonny Street, St. Michael's School, Benin City.

**Dates:** August 1982, 28/9/85, Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1985.

**Time:** 12 noon, 2.00a.m.

He has done this to give credibility to his story. And because he is writing an autobiography, he wants to give room for 'doubting Thomases' to verify the authenticity of his claims.

It is also noteworthy that he conceals the identity of some people, probably as a way of saving such people from embarrassment or to escape being sued for libel. He gives the name of a lady as Sister J (p.52). She is a member of a 'living' church but is an agent of the devil who was later delivered. He also calls the lady who initiated Sister J into the occult 'sister'; her real name is not given.

### **Binarism**

Apart from some instances of binarity mentioned earlier, there are still some notable ones. Although Eni claims to still be a member of Assemblies of God Church, he presents the church as an uncaring church (p.8), one full of yet-to-be-born-again Christians: "...the Assemblies of God Church, Silver Valley Port Harcourt...I laughed because when in the spirit I looked into their lives almost three quarter (sic) of the people singing the chorus were living in sin" (p.34). When he became born-again, he says he was not allowed to give his confession (testimony) because he did not bring a "membership letter" (p.40). Conversely, he presents the Scripture Union (SU) as a body where there is "real love" and care (p.42). This is not surprising because it was in this church that he was fully delivered and allowed to confess his sins. In fact, his

autobiography was published by SU. This is a way of advertising the Christian organization called SU. The advertisement came at a time (1980s) when many people, even Christians, were criticizing the tenets of SU bitterly, and holding them in contempt.

On page 42, Eni also draws attention to the difference between his “old nature” and the “new life” he now has. His new life prevents him from dealing with his uncle who pulled down his house and threatened to kill him.

### **Quotation**

The narrator uses direct speech a lot. To give weight to certain utterances, he quotes the speakers directly. In most cases, it is the utterances of Satan and his agents that he quotes. This is an attempt to unravel the mystery enshrouding Satan and his operations and to make his story credible. Here are samples:

...she told me – “Now it is time for you to visit me”. (p.16)

I am the QUEEN OF THE COAST. I would like very much to work with you... I promise to give you wealth and all that go with it, protection and all that go with, life and an ‘angel’ to guide you.

### **Itemization**

The narrator highlights his points a lot. This is a way of being brief and making the narratee to remember the points easily. A good example is on p. 56.

The believers’ weapons

- THE NAME OF JESUS
- THE BLOOD OF JESUS
- THE WORD OF GOD
- CHRISTIAN PRASES

### **Syntactic features**

Complex and compound-complex sentences dominate the text. This dominance is in line with what he is presenting. He presents the world as being full of manipulation, exploitation, wickedness and other vices. He has used sentence structure to buttress this complexity of the world.

Besides, “If-clauses” are common in the text.

If she accepts, SHE WOULD ALSO BE GIVEN A CHARM. (p.26)

If a man comes to us for money he would be given these conditions to fulfil. (p.27)

These conditional sentences show that, in the two worlds that he presents, most happenings are conditional.

## CONCLUSION

Through the story of his life, Emmanuel Eni has shown the transformation that has taken place in his life. He has shown the mysteries behind the power of darkness. But he has also indicated that what he has presented is not everything that he needs to say. Expressions like “certain things which are difficult to explain” (p.26); “what I saw inside this hall is difficult to explain, but I will try to explain the much I can” (p.36), show the profundity of the occult world.

Eni has also shown that he is a good story-teller. He tries to carry his narratees along. He imagines the narratee as being physically present. In fact, to him, it is as if he is telling his story orally. Anyway, this is a confession. On several occasions, he says: “dear reader, it is difficult to describe...” (p.36); “Dear reader, you will realize...” (p.36), or related utterances to carry the narratees along.

In all, Emmanuel Eni’s *Delivered from the Powers of Darkness* presents a way in which language can be deployed to present one’s confession with a view to winning the sympathy of others and thereby win them to one’s Lord. He has shown the genuineness of his conversion through this confession.

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