

# Between Foregrounded Ignorance and Linguistic Manipulation: Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-wine Drinkard*

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines stylistics as a tool for interpretation of literary discourse. Specifically, it looks at the concepts of style and Stylistics and the role of stylistics in the interpretation of literary discourse. It also looks at two major and essential features in stylistic analysis: deviation and foregrounding. The study specifically examines the deviational and foregrounding techniques that are used in Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-wine Drinkard*, and how they contribute to the meaning of the text. Consequently, the study equips readers with the knowledge of the important role that Stylistics plays or should play in the interpretation of literary texts.*

**Keywords:** Linguistic Structures, Deviation, Foregrounding, African Literature, Amos Tutuola

## INTRODUCTION

### Style in Literature

Wales (1989:435) sees 'style' as a variation of language use, and as the distinctive sum of linguistic features that are characteristic, whether of register, genre or period, etc. Wales also (1989:436) sees 'style' as "the selection of features (i.e. choice of items and their distributional patterning) partly as determined by the demands of genre, form, theme, etc." Akekue (1990:2) helps to simplify and clarify this notion: "style becomes the choice of the best lexical and syntactic resources to express a pre-determined subject." And Ngara (1982:28) avers that the essence of style in literature is "to judge the success of the writer's wrapping technique in relation to the value of the article in the parcel". This is also the view of Halliday (1973:147):

At every point, the speaker (or writer) is selecting among a range of possibilities that differ in meaning. All options are embodied in the language system, and the system is a network of options deriving from all the various functions of language."

### Style versus Stylistics

Leech and Short (1981), and Chapman (1973) opine that literary stylistics has the goal of explaining the

relation between language and artistic function. Hence the major question, for which the stylistic analyst seeks an answer, from the linguistic angle, is:

'why does the author choose to express himself in this particular way' (i.e. by the type of word choice, deviational pattern; syntactic pattern; phonological pattern; figures of speech, etc)' (Awokumaka, 17)?"

In this vein, Toolan (1996:ix) opines that a chief feature of Stylistics is its attempt to understand "excellence of technique" or "the craft of writing". Toolan also identifies some of the linguistic components of that excellence, to include: "word-choices, clause-patterns, rhythms and intonations, contextual implications, cohesive links, choices of voice and perspective and transitivity, etc, etc," as well as pattern repetition, recurrent structures, ungrammatical or 'language-stretching' structures and large internal contrasts of content or presentation (2).

To Widdowson (1964), stylistics has to do with the issue of language patterns in texts, without any presupposition of artistic value. Akekue (1990:7) explains this to mean that "stylistics may draw attention to those patterns upon which inductive

awareness of artistic values may rest.” But Frye (1981) holds that literary criticism is in a state of naive induction due to its attention to individual works of literature without a proper conceptual framework. Therefore for us to arrive at an objective and positive induction, we must first establish a conceptual framework.

We agree with Ngara (1982:11), that “a purely rational (scientific) analysis cannot do justice to literature because literature is not scientific and so a purely scientific approach to its study can only kill the writer’s creative effort.” Therefore for us to do justice to literature we have to pay attention to both form and content, both of which are ultimately interconnected. A linguistic study of a literary text may help us to find out the writer’s preference of certain types of structures, signify particular cognitive tendencies, further the understanding of the writer’s intention and (greatly) condition the reader’s perspective on meaning. Nevertheless, we maintain that the student of style is interested in the statistical properties of linguistic choices, though leaving some room for the reader’s intuition and content to play some role, however small, in interpreting the literary text.

It is expected that any descriptive grammar would incorporate the features of language that are stylistically significant. Thus we are not concerned with everything that goes on in the text, but only with those features that can be shown to be of stylistic importance. Utterances display features which simultaneously identify them from different points of view, among which are: information about the speaker’s regional background or his place on a social scale; aspects of the speaker’s social situation; and the speaker’s language of communication.

### **The Role of Stylistics in the Interpretation of Discourse**

Discourse, in its traditional sense, is the ordered exposition in writing or speech of a particular subject, a practice familiarly associated with writers such as Descartes and Machiavelli...the term has come to represent the meeting-ground for diverse inquiries into the nature and use of language” (Fowler 1987:62).

To discourse analysts, Johnstone (2002:2) notes, “discourse’ usually means actual instances of communication in the medium of language.” These definitions imply that discourse goes beyond the sentence. In this work, discourse shall mean all kinds of literary texts. We are focusing on the language – in linguistic structures – of African literary texts, particularly that of Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm-wine Drinkard*.

That stylistics is the interface between literature and linguistics is undeniable. To Leech and Short (1981:6), stylistics is a dialogue between the literary reader and the linguistic observer in which insight, rather than objectivity, is the goal. They also hold that stylistics builds on linguistics, and in turn ... challenges our linguistic frameworks, reveals their deficiencies, and urges us to refine them ... Stylistics is an adventure for both the literary critic and the linguist.

Obviously, the goal of the adventure embarked upon by both the literary critic and the linguist is the search for meaning, especially based on the linguistic structures employed by the literary text under study.

According to Chapman (1973), stylistics is a branch of sociolinguistics because it studies language variation, with respect to social functions. On this, Akekue (1990:4) opines that “style is thus viewed as a product of social situation, the choice of which is constrained not by content, but by the circumstances of communication.” This, she argues, is in the sense that

If linguistics treats the sociological and psychological aspects of language, linguistics should be able to interpret a writer’s linguistic structure in relation to the values and preoccupations of the community for which he writes.

What we are trying to establish here is the role that the creative writer plays in projecting the values and preoccupations of his society through writing. That is to say, a thorough interpretation of a writer’s linguistic structures will tend to reveal the social values, norms and cultural preoccupations of the community in which the writer lives.

In conclusion, we can say that, “The first function of stylistics”, as noted by Akekue (1990:3), “is to investigate the relation between the formal structures and the content expressed.” This is in the sense that the major concern of stylistics is to examine how the content (of literary discourse) is expressed. In other words, it is not only what is said that so much interests the stylistician, but also, how it is said in the literary piece.

### **Essentials of Stylistic Analysis**

Over the years, stylistic analysts have identified two essential features of stylistic analysis. They are: deviation and foregrounding. These two features have been recognized as being responsible for the multi-dimensional variations in language use.

Leech (2008:55) holds that “The concept of deviation...is important to the study of style.” This is on the basis of his belief that, “To be stylistically distinctive, a feature of language must deviate from some norm of comparison. The norm may be an

absolute norm, i.e. for the language as a whole, or a relative norm, i.e. a norm provided by some set of texts, for the purposes of the study”.

Leech (2008:58) sees deviation also as a foregrounding technique, by holding that “Deviation provides us with a working criterion for the selection of those linguistic features which are of literary significance.” He explains that

Foregrounding is a term (see Muksfovsky 1958:18ff) for an effect brought about in the reader by linguistic or other forms of deviation. Deviation, being unexpected, comes to the foreground of the reader’s attention as a ‘deatomization’ of the normal linguistic processes...

Leech believes that foregrounding engenders the use of imagination. This is in the sense that,

when an abnormality comes to our attention, we try to make sense of it. We use our imagination, consciously or unconsciously, in order to work out why this abnormality exists.... In these imaginative acts of attributing meaning, or ‘making sense’, lie the special communicative values of poetry (Leech 2008:61).

Leech’s explanation here is quite insightful, and it helps to reinforce the importance of the duo-technique of deviation and foregrounding. Hence any functional stylistic analysis of discourse must, first and foremost, examine the deviational and, consequently, the foregrounding techniques that are employed by the writer. And this is why we are concentrating on these two stylistic elements in this study.

### Syntactic Deviation

A major technique that is conspicuous in Amos Tutuola’s *Palm-wine Drinkard* is that of syntactic deviation. With what could be described as “his eccentric handling of grammar and syntax” (Lindfors, 2001), Tutuola displays flagrant disregard for or ignorance of the rules of grammar, as far as the English Language is concerned. In fact the entire story, from the beginning to the end, is nothing but a medley of grammatical blunders that smack of acute violation of grammatical rules.

Let us look at some of the ways that Tutuola handles grammar and syntax in his text under study.

### Wrong Use of Tenses

The followings are some wrong uses of tenses. The verbs that have been misused are underlined, with the correct forms appearing in parentheses:

I lied (lay) down on the middle of the roads (11)

so he burnt (got burnt) together with the houses to ashes (34)

my wife was feeling overloading (overloaded) (37)

I was greatly terrified and was soon faint (fainting) (79)

The first explanation we could give for Tutuola’s wrong use of tenses is the low level of his education that could account for his inadequate knowledge of the grammar of the English Language. The second reason would be that the erroneous words are direct transliterations from his mother tongue, the Yoruba Language. This could suggest that the story was probably first written in Yoruba before it was directly translated into the English Language, without caring or paying attention to differences in the tenses of the two languages. A third possible explanation is that Tutuola deliberately deviates from the correct use of the English Language and thereby calls attention to his special mode of expression.

### Wrong Use of Auxiliary Verbs

Functionally, auxiliary verbs are those that are used with main or finite verbs to show their tenses, aspects, mood, etc. In *The Palm-wine Drinkard*, Tutuola uses wrong auxiliary verbs. For instance, in the statement:

but I did not satisfy with it (9)

the past tense form of the auxiliary verb ‘do’ is wrongly used to qualify the verb ‘satisfy’. It is wrong because ‘do’ has to do more with action, rather than the state of being that is being described here. The right auxiliary verb to use is the past tense form of ‘be’ which describes a state of being. Also, lexical verb is supposed to reflect the tense. Thus, the correct utterance should be:

but I was not satisfied with it.

Another example of wrong use of auxiliary verbs is:

When I saw that my wife had tired of carrying him (37)

Here the correct form of auxiliary verb would be ‘was’ rather than ‘had’

### Wrong Use of Adverbs

Normally, adverbs give information about actions in relation to the place, time, manner or degree of occurrence. In his text, *The Palm-wine Drinkard*, Tutuola also erroneously uses the adverbs in his expressions. For example, in the statement,

all the ropes of the yams in the garden tighted him hardy (12)

'hardly', here, invariably implies a negation of the action presented. In the true sense of the word, it means that the yam tendrils in the garden could not tighten the palm-wine drinkard. This, we believe, is far from the intended meaning that the author wants to pass across. But though we understand that Tutuola intends to express the fact that the yam tendrils are used for tying up the palm-wine drinkard, his use of 'hardly' here could be a way of emphasizing the weak nature of yam tendrils and their inability to successfully tie up a human being. Hence, Tutuola could actually be playing a lexico-semantic game with his readers here. Another example of questionable use of adverbs is in this statement:

Nobody was living near or with him there, he was living lonely (13)

Ordinarily, the last clause of the sentence could have read: "he was living alone", to state the fact that nobody was living with him. But Tutuola displaces the adverb 'alone' with the adjective 'lonely', probably to foreground the sense of loneliness in which Death was living. Yet another wrong use of adverb is seen in:

The gentleman left the really road on which we were travelling (26)

Here, the adverb 'really' takes the position of an adjective, thereby erroneously qualifying the noun 'road', which normally should be described with the adjective 'real'. This is done most probably to foreground the actuality of this particular road, comparatively.

### Misplacement of Prepositions

One area in which Tutuola grossly abuses the rules of grammar is by misplacing prepositions, as a result of his zeal to immediately indicate direction/position. A look at a few examples would confirm this:

we came back **to** home by 7 o'clock in the evening (40)

After that were drawing back **to** the **inside** of the tree (66)

and within 5 minutes it appeared **out** again (80)

then I told them that everyone would not be served unless **at** outside, but after they heard so, they went **to** the outside (121)

In the excerpt given above, it could be observed that the use of the prepositions is both unnecessary and inappropriate, and makes the statements in which they occur clumsy. This is because the prepositions are made to qualify the wrong nouns or noun equivalents. For instance, it is wrong to say "we came back to home"

if what is meant is returning home. In which case, the correct expression would be: "We came back home"; unless, of course, the reference is to a particular home that the speaker had earlier talked about; as, for instance, a particular healing home. In that case, it would be okay to say "We came back to the home" (especially the kind of home that is under reference). But since the ordinary sense of returning to the house is what is meant in the expression under reference, then it would be better to simply say: "We came back to the house."

In the second example, the offence against grammar is more grievous as a preposition 'to' is being used to qualify another preposition 'inside':

After that were drawing back to the inside of the tree (66)

This could be described as grammatical tautology.

In the fourth example given above, a preposition is necessary, but the wrong one is used.

### Wrong Pluralization

In a number of places in the text, Tutuola uses wrong plural forms of nouns to describe certain entities and experiences. Instances include:

I was travelling from bushes to bushes (9)

but there I saw that he was using skeleton bones of human-beings as fuel woods (13)

they told me that the town was very far away and only deads were living there (41)

After that we went further in this ruined town and saw another image with a full basket of colas on its front (56)

I told him that it was very far away to this town and he asked again were the people in that town alives or deads (96)

It is observed that many of the nouns erroneously pluralized, from the instances above, are non-count nouns. This is to say that such nouns as bush, cola and wood are non-count nouns that should not take '-es' and 's' forms. The condition under which wood takes an 's' is when it is used to refer to a forest of trees or in the idiomatic expression, "out of the woods" (meaning, out of difficulty or danger). In the case of 'alive' and 'dead', these are complements that cannot be pluralized. 'Dead' could also be used as an adjective, as in: 'A dead dog'. But in referring to living or dead people, the correct way to do it is to put the definite article 'the' before them, as in 'the living' and 'the dead'. This

implies that the people being talked about are more than one, though 's' is not used.

Whatever the reason, the fact remains that there is an acute violation of the rules of the syntax and lexis of the English Language in Tutuola's text under study. This mode of expression is undoubtedly a reflection of the pre-independent Nigerian society in which he both lived and wrote – a society in which the de-racinated African man not only has something to say, but also does so very emphatically in spite of his socio-political limitations and grammatical shortcomings. And this is the backdrop against which Tutuola's literary work is to be interpreted.

### Graphological Foregrounding

Amos Tutuola extensively uses graphological foregrounding to bring his message to the forecourt of his readers in *The Palm-wine Drinkard*. His graphological deviation techniques include:

#### Use of Capitalization

(i) In Sectional Headings  
Amos Tutuola extensively uses sectional headings in his text as captions for the various episodic sections of his story. Examples include:

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE CURIOUS  
CREATURE (18)

THE FATHER OF GODS SHOULD FIND  
OUT WHEREABOUTS THE  
DAUGHTER OF THE HEAD OF THE  
TOWN WAS (23)

"THE INVESTIGATOR'S WONDERFUL  
WORK IN THE SKULL'S FAMILY  
HOUSE" (26)

"ON THE WAY TO AN UNKNOWN  
PLACE" (34)

"NO ROAD" – "OUGHT TO TRAVEL  
FROM BUSH TO BUSH TO THE  
DEAD'S TOWN" (41)

THE "WRAITH-ISLAND" (46)

"DO NOT FOLLOW UNKNOWN MAN'S  
BEAUTY" (19)

PAY WHAT YOU OWE ME AND  
VOMIT WHAT YOU ATE (123)

From the examples given above, it could be seen that Tutuola uses these capitalized headings to introduce as well as to call attention to the various sections/episodes of his story. Apart from helping the reader to take note of the various sections /episodes of the story, the technique enables the reader to make

quick reference to any of the episodes or sections of the story, thereby saving valuable time.

Tutuola also uses the technique of sectional headings to pass direct messages to his readers. For example, the following example is actually a direct message or instruction to the readers:

"DO NOT FOLLOW UNKNOWN MAN'S  
BEAUTY" (19)

With the aid of this type of heading, Tutuola passes across the moral that it is risky to base your marital decision solely on the beauty of a man, especially when the man in question is an unknown man.

Another way that Tutuola has employed the sectional heading technique is in passing across authorial comments on the experiences of the persona, or of reflecting the persona's mind on issues or events confronting him. Here's an example:

"THE LADY WAS NOT TO BE BLAMED  
FOR FOLLOWING THE SKULL AS A  
COMPLETE GENTLEMAN" (25)

The author seems to exonerate the young lady from the consequences of her action of rejecting suitors, but choosing rather to follow the complete gentleman because of his beauty.

Thus the various sectional headings used in Amos Tutuola's text play various roles. These include the roles of introducing the various sections or episodes; calling attention to the various sections or episodes; passing across direct messages to the readers; serving as authorial commentary on issues/events or reflecting the mind of the persona on his opinion regarding his experiences and events around him. This is why the various headings have different graphological representations. For example, some are simply capitalized statements:

ON THE WAY TO THE  
UNRETURNABLE-HEAVEN'S TOWN  
(57)

OUR LIFE WITH THE FAITHFUL-  
MOTHER IN THE WHITE TREE (69)

WE AND WISE KING IN THE WRONG  
TOWN WITH THE  
PRINCE KILLER (93)

Headings of this nature simply introduce the sections or episodes that they precede.

Some other headings, in addition to being capitalized, are also embedded in quotation marks, as in the texts below:

“A FULL-BODIED GENTLEMAN  
REDUCED TO HEAD” (21)

“THERE REMAIN GREATER TASKS  
AHEAD” (29”

“NOT TOO SMALL TO BE CHOSEN”  
(48)

Headings like these, in addition to introducing the sections/episodes that they precede, are either the author’s commentary on the events or the persona’s opinions of the experiences or events confronting or surrounding him.

But in addition to all the various roles of the sectional headings and sub-headings discussed above, Tutuola is also believed to be foregrounding the African man’s natural tendency to emphasize or foreground his message through the use of signposts. The various foregrounded headings and subheadings are the signposts that should guide the reader as he wades through the ocean of the divergent and convergent episodic stories that make up the larger story. In a way too, Tutuola is championing a cause for the emergence of a strident and articulate voice that could clearly present the values of the African societies to the global community.

(ii) Within the Body of the Text

Apart from the use of capitalization in sectional headings, Tutuola also extensively makes use of capitalization within the body of the text.

Examples include:

In those days, we did not know other money, except COWRIES, so that everything was very cheap ... (7)

...now the complete gentleman in the market reduced to a “SKULL” and this lady remained with only “skull” (21)

...then I took out one of the colas, but to our surprise, at the same time that I took it, we heard a voice of somebody suddenly, which said: - DON’T TAKE IT! LEAVE IT THERE! But I did not listen to the voice that we heard (56)

...it was the road which led to the - “UNRETURNABLE-HEAVEN’S TOWN” the town in which human-beings or other creatures were bound to enter (56-57)

Obviously, the capitalized words or statements naturally call attention to themselves. Tutuola is believed to direct the readers’ attention to the capitalized words/statements because of their strange nature or because they form the central fabric of the

story or because they harbour some special meanings that the author does not want the readers to miss.

Let us look at one very unusual use of capitalization in the text.

We did not know that immediately we left the field, a tiny creature who was not chosen with us by the king went to the field and commanded all the weeds that we had cleared to grow up as if they were not cleared. He was saying thus: - “THE KING OF THE ‘WRAITH-ISLAND’ BEGGED ALL THE CREATURES OF THE ‘WRAITH-ISLAND’ AND LEFT HIM OUT, SO THAT, ALL THE CLEARED-WEEDS RISE UP; AND LET US GO AND DANCE TO A BAND AT THE ‘WRAITH-ISLAND’; IF BAND COULD NOT SOUND, WE SHOULD DANCE WITH MELODIOUS MUSIC.”

But at the same time that the tiny creature commanded the weeds, all rose up as if the field was not cleared for two years (49)

With this unusual use of capitalization, Tutuola appears to scream, along with the tiny creature, that no one, however little or insignificant he may appear, should be ignored in a society that desires the contributions of all for its development. This is because, even the tiny and neglected creatures command awesome powers with which to contribute to or hinder a society’s development/progress. Invariably, Tutuola is seen to be bidding for the recognition of some of the seemingly insignificant post-colonial societies and values in the scheme of things. This is with the belief that everyone and every society have something to contribute to the overall development of the larger human society.

### Use of Parentheses

Another graphological element that Amos Tutuola uses as part of his foregrounding technique is the parenthesis. Among other functions, parentheses are used to give further information, which could be in the form of clarification by illustration, explanations, definitions, references, etc. Normally, parentheses are supposed to be used sparingly, especially when the sentence is logically or grammatically complete without the word, phrase or sentence which they enclose. But it is observed that Tutuola extensively uses parentheses in his text as a way of incorporating all the information necessary for passing across his message to his audience. By so doing, he is able to foreground some of the vital information that would ordinarily escape a reader who may not have time enough to read between the lines.

Let us consider a few examples along with the functions they perform:

The first thing that he did when he entered the hole (house) he went straight to the place where the lady was (26)

Here, the parenthesis is used to redefine 'hole'. This is in the sense that the author wants the reader to appreciate the fact that the hole is not an ordinary hole in the ground, but is indeed a house for the skull's family. Others examples in which the author tends to redefine certain nouns or pronouns include:

After he (gentleman) had seen that the lady was there (26)

When I reached his (Death's) house (12)

There are instances in the text where parentheses are employed for giving additional information. Examples include:

Then I told the man (god) that I am looking for my palm-wine tapster (10)

When he saw me (bird) on the roof (11)

... there we saw about ninety of the same kind as this long white creature, all of them were coming to us (fire) and when they reach the fire (us) the whole of them surrounded it (40)

In the first example above, the author wants the reader to know that the 'man' is not like every other man, a god that commands supernatural powers. In the second example, the author gives further explanation to show that the narrator 'me' has at that material time changed to the form of a bird, with the aid of his magical power. And in the third example, the author applies both cataphoric and anaphoric references to explain 'us' versus fire. This is to impress upon the reader the fact that the Palm-wine Drinkard and his wife (us) were at this material time in the form of fire.

There are also instances in which parentheses are used for reference purposes. An example is:

I commanded my juju which was given to me by "Water Spirit woman" in the "Bush of Ghosts" (the full story of the "Spirit woman" appeared in the story book of the Wild Hunter in the Bush of Ghosts) (40)

With this parenthesis, Tutuola is actually referring his readers to Fagunwa's parallel Yoruba text entitled, *Ogboju Ode N'inu Igbo Irunmole* (The Wild Hunter in the Bush of Ghosts). Such cross-referencing is quite strange in a literary text. Tutuola seems to have been so carried away by his desire to give enough information to his readers that he almost thought he was writing a scholarly work.

There is also a strange use of parentheses on pages 15 to 16 of Tutuola's *The Palm-wine Drinkard*:

Then the old man and his wife escaped through the windows and also the whole people in that town ran away for their lives and left their properties there. (The old man had thought that Death would kill me if I went to his house, because nobody could reach Death's house and return, but I had known the old man's trick already.).

In this use of parenthesis, Tutuola, after describing to his readers the outward actions of escaping through the window of the old man and his wife, also metaphorically opens a window into the mind of his characters. This is done in such a way that the reader, through the parenthesis is let into the mind of the old man, to know what he is thinking about. The reader is also made to know that the Palm-wine Drinkard understands the trick and wiles of the old man.

Thus, Amos Tutuola employs parentheses in various ways to graphically foreground salient information and his message before his readers. This is also an affirmation of the fact that, beyond the ordinary or literal use of words, there are extra-textual reasons or explanations that could guide hearers/readers towards making objective or near accurate interpretations.

### Use of Numerical Figures

Amos Tutuola also uses numerical figures as a foregrounding element in his *The Palm-wine Drinkard*. The followings are some of the uses of numerical figures in the text:

So my father gave me a palm-tree farm which was nine miles square and it contained 560,000 palm-trees (7)

after that he would go and tap another 75kegs in the evening (7)

when it was 6.30 a.m. (11)

and the market-day was fixed for every 5<sup>th</sup> day (17)

on that day we came back home by 7 o'clock in the evening (40)

he stood at about 80 yards away from us (54)

He said that he wanted to borrow two thousand cowries (COWRIES), which was equivalent to six-pence (6d) in British money (86)

We met about 400 dead babies on the road (102)

Its size was about 150 feet diameter and it could contain 45 persons (103)

We saw that there were 9 terrible creatures in that bag before he caught us (104)

He was long about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile and his diameter was about six feet (42)

the fare for adults was 3d (three pence) and half fare for children (39)

Thus, Tutuola extensively uses the Roman Numerals as he strives towards precision and vividness in his descriptions.

But from the various examples given above, it is clear that Tutuola is inconsistent with his use of numerals. This is in the sense that he indiscriminately fluctuates between using the roman numerals and words. At times, he switches from the numerals to words in the same utterance; or at times he redefines the numerals or the words, as the case may be, in parentheses.

Let us consider, for instance, this quotation from the text, in which Tutuola makes use of both the Roman Numerals and words in his description of quantities of grains:

after that he entered his house and brought out four grains of corn, 4 grains of rice and 4 seeds of okra and gave them to me, then I went back to the farm and planted them all at the same time. But to my surprise, these grains and all the seeds germinated at once, before 5 minutes, they became full grown crops and before 10 minutes again, they produced fruits and ripened at the same moment too (48)

Or this:

He was long about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile and his diameter was about six feet (42)

A possible reason why Tutuola revels in the arbitrary use of numerical figures is due to his semi-literate status and the fact that he wrote for a pre-independent Nigerian society into which western education was just infiltrating.

### Use of Inverted Commas

Inverted commas or quotation marks are used, among other functions, for direct speech or formal quotation; to enclose a quotation within a quotation; to identify a word to which we wish to call special attention; to identify a technical term in an unusual context or a loan

word which has no direct translation; and to indicate the title of poems, films, articles, unpublished works etc. (Lucky, 2007:60-61).

In *The Palm-wine Drinkard*, Tutuola extensively uses inverted commas for various reasons. We pointed out earlier in this chapter (46-47) that Tutuola uses the inverted commas in addition to some of the capitalized sectional headings to draw special attention or to reflect authorial commentary on events, or to pass across direct message to the audience.

But apart from being used along with capitalized sectional headings, inverted commas are also used in the body of the text. In this example,

Now the complete gentleman in the market reduced to a "SKULL" and this lady saw that she remained with only "skull" (20),

Tutuola uses both capital letters and inverted commas to call attention to the gentle man, who indeed is nothing but a skull. By so doing, Tutuola is implying that there is more to handsomeness or beauty than the attractive outward appearance. He is also understood to be observing that some outwardly handsome men we see in the marketplace of the world are ordinary skulls that are made up with borrowed parts. Hence we should not be carried away by the outward handsomeness or beauty of man.

Tutuola also uses the inverted commas to present direct speech:

When her father saw that I brought his daughter back home, he was exceeding glad and said thus:- "You are the 'Father of gods' as you had told me before" (28)

Here, the author uses a preamble, "and said thus:-" to introduce the direct speech which is marked off by inverted commas. This preamble, though old-fashioned, is an attention catcher, which immediately directs the attention of the reader to the direct speech.

It is observed that the above direct speech is a unique one in the sense that it has inverted commas within inverted commas. The single inverted commas are used to foreground what they enclose, 'Father of gods' because of their unique manner of usage or because it is a representation of an earlier statement. The double inverted commas are used to reflect the direct speech made by the father of the lady. Thus, what we have here is actually a quotation within a quotation.

Another way in which Tutuola uses the inverted comma is in very unusual context:

Then the first thing that he did, he asked his mother:- "Do you know my name? His mother said no, then he turned his face



to me and asked me the same question and I said no; so, he said that his name was "ZURRJIR" which means a son who would change himself into another thing very soon (32).

Here, Tutuola uses both the capital letters and inverted commas to foreground the strange and terrible name of the strange son of the Palm-wine Drinkard, after which he goes ahead to paint the picture of the strange behaviours of the child.

The following are some other unusual usages of the inverted commas in Tutuola's *The Palm-wine Drinkard*:

there we say the creatures that we called "Drum, Song and Dance" personally and these three creatures were living creatures as ours(38)

When "Drum" started to beat himself it was as if he was beaten by fifty men, when "Song" started to sing, it was just as if a hundred people were singing together and when "Dance" started to dance the half-bodied baby started too, my wife, myself and spirits etc., were dancing with "Dance" and nobody who heard or saw these three fellows would not follow them to wherever they were going (38).

then we began to meet gangs of the "highway-men" on the road (40)

I was told that he was now at "Dead's town", and they told me that he was living with deads at the "Dead's town" (45)

they laughed at us if bombs explode, and we knew "Laugh" personally on that night (45)

All the above examples show how Tutuola personifies non-human and inanimate objects and ideas such as drum, song, dance, laughter, etc.

It is to be noted that Tutuola's text, being one of the first few attempts at literary writing in the continent of Africa, smacks of experimentation in the art of writing a story by employing direct speech. The work reflects more of the traditional story-telling through monologue. But the demand for dialogue in the literate art of writing a novel is what makes Tutuola to inject some direct speeches, through the use of inverted commas, into his truly monologous story.

We now conclude this section by saying that the graphological foregrounding techniques of Tutuola help

to present the tendency of the African man to emphasize and use metaphorical sign-posts to guide his hearers (or readers) towards understanding his story. Also, the graphological techniques reflect the African oral/story-telling or narrative tradition that contains a strident and articulate voice that could present the values of the African societies to the global community.

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is obvious that stylistics and such other techniques of style as deviation and foregrounding give impetus for an objective, or a near-objective interpretation of literary discourse. This is especially because of the fact that these stylistic techniques enable the reader or analyst to apply his imagination towards evolving plausible and functional interpretation of literary texts.

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