

**THE SUPERNATURAL IN AMOS TUTUOLA'S *THE PALM-WINE DRINKARD* AND  
*MY LIFE IN THE BUSH OF GHOSTS***

**BY**

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ENG/14/1950**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES,  
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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out and written by ADESUYI ADEFOLARIN OLUWASOORE; with Matric Number: ENG/14/1950 under the supervision of Dr. Harry Olufunwa and approved for submission to the department of English and Literary Studies, Faculty of Arts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Arts in English and Literary Studies, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

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EXTERNAL EXAMINER

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SIGNATURE & DATE

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to God Almighty, and to my parents for the love and care.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My greatest thanks go to the Almighty God for his steadfast love and for bringing me thus far in my academics. To him be all the glory.

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## ABSTRACT

This research x-rays the existence of the supernatural and its role in reality which has become a pre-dominant factor that has gained prominence and importance from time immemorial, and how writers have tried to project this concept in their literary engagements. In an attempt to establish this argument, the researcher explored Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. These novels depict and explore the idea of the supernatural in various manifestations and they are rich in the supernatural and are rooted in the mythology and traditional African belief of supernaturalism. Supernaturalism is the belief that there are beings, forces, and phenomena such as God, angels or miracles which interact with the physical universe in remarkable and unique ways. This research is aimed at re-emphasizing the concept of the supernatural which has become an inseparable part of most of the works written by Africans, and bring to limelight the relationship it has with the human world and how both have exerted their influence on each other.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The concept of the supernatural is one of the key themes in African literature. African literature is “any literary work composed by an African having African experiences, elements, characters, attitudes, and settings” (Brown n.pag.). Before the advent or introduction of colonial literacy to the African continent, literature existed mainly in oral form which validates the autonomy of African literature and although the colonial situation imposes constraints on the African novel, it is essentially a hybrid out of the African oral tradition whose primary constituents is different from that of the European and other regional novel.

The idea of the supernatural is core of the experiences explored by African writers which therefore necessitates a scholarly research such as this on its significance in the African society, and more specifically in Yoruba culture using selected novels by Amos Tutuola; an indigenous African writer. According to Brown, the notion of the supernatural is embedded in the “religious and moral belief system” of Africans (n. pag.). These beliefs are examined below.

1. The belief in one Supreme God: Most African societies believe that there is one supreme God who has created the earth and also has complete control over the universe. They see God as “all-powerful, all-knowing and supporter of justice” (Brown n.pag.).
2. The worship of gods and goddesses: With the conception that the supreme God is too powerful and distant from the earth, most African societies come to believe that the supreme God has assigned different tasks to some smaller gods and goddesses to take care of. For instance, “some believe that the earth is a goddess that is directly connected with fertility and fecundity” (Brown n.pag.). The rivers, streams, and lakes are believed to have some gods and goddesses in charge of them.

3. The belief that every individual has a personal god that is in charge of the person's welfare from birth to death (Brown n.pag). Most people build houses or shrines for their god and also have images carved of woods to represent them. Sometimes, they have bigger shrines where the most powerful god of their land is served and worshipped.
4. The belief in human mediators: While the gods and goddesses are supernatural mediators, there are also human representatives who are of uncommon birth. Brown notes that these mediators can function as seers, priests, healers, rain makers, wise ones, and so on. The seers foresee the future, priests make sacrifices for atonement, healers heal the sick ones, rain makers call the rain unusually and the wise ones are like the community historians and custodians of the tradition from generation to generation (n.pag.).
5. The belief in morality: All African societies believe that certain activities are morally wrong while some others are morally right. The belief in morality is "dependent on social environment" (Brown n.pag.). This means that what is seen in a particular society as wrong might be right in another. For the sake of inculcating morality in the young generation, these societies have devised some oral means of transmission through folktales, riddles, songs and proverbs; because they believe that maintaining their moral standards attract more blessings from the gods.
6. The belief in the spirits of the ancestors: African belief embraces the worship of the spirits of the dead relatives because they believe that these spirits are able to provide protection against harm and misfortune, provide children, and provide rain for crops. The good spirits of the ancestors are further divided into the recently dead ancestors who remain active and are interested in the lives of their living relatives for many years. They are believed to search for blessings of the gods on their family members. The others are

spirits of the long dead ancestors. The recently dead gradually withdraw from their activities in the human world and become the long-dead ancestors, leaving the responsibilities for the recently dead ancestors at a particular time (Brown n.pag.). Because of the importance of the spirits of the ancestors, these African societies teach great respect for the ancestors, make sacrifices and pour libation to them. Also they create myths and oral histories to serve as reminders to the whole community, of their ancestors' heroic deeds.

7. The belief in spiritual marriages between supernatural beings and humans: In some African societies, some supernatural beings get married to humans in the spirit world. Brown explains that some of these supernatural beings are so jealous that they hardly allow their human to become emotionally attached to other humans in the physical world. Women who are married to the supernatural male beings are believed to be created with such exceptional beauty that is near perfection and thereby become appealing to male humans who are tempted to marry them, while the men who are married to the female spiritual beings are given much wealth and affluence in the physical world (n.pag.).
8. The belief in abominable diseases like leprosy, impotence, tuberculosis, and imbecility, which are believed to be the repercussions or punishments for disobeying the ordinances of the supernatural beings (Brown n.pag.).
9. The belief in magic, witchcraft and sorcery as a means of bringing interactions between the natural world and that of the supernatural (Brown n.pag.). Magicians, witches and sorcerers have skills that bring about this manipulation.

10. The belief in fate, predestination and foreordination (Brown n.pag). Every human is believed to have been created to achieve a certain purpose on earth either good or bad and nothing can avert it.

Many African literary works explore the theme of the supernatural. For the sake of this study, Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*, Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, Asare Konadu's *A Woman in her Prime*, and J.P. Clark's *Abiku* will be examined.

Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* dramatises the Yoruba perception of the world around them and its relationship with the supernatural. This play shows the Yoruba belief that when a king dies, his horseman will perform a suicidal ritual which is essential to helping the chief's spirit ascend to the spirit world. If it is not done, the chief's spirit will wander the earth and bring harm to the people. But when this ritual is interrupted in the play by a colonial officer, Elesin's son; Olunde commits the suicide in fulfillment of his father's intended objective in the uncompleted ritual. He has done this to elevate the shame which his family will face afterwards. But Elesin sees his son's death as punishment from the gods for his failure to carry out his duties and this drives him to suicide.

*The Concubine* by Elechi Amadi shows the Igbo belief in spiritual marriage and divination. Amadioha, their god, is presumably present at their shrine in form of a huge grey serpent. Also Ihuoma, the central character, is divined to be married to the sea god. The sea god has the jealousy trait, and therefore; any who comes close to Ihuoma either dies or is maimed for life. This is the case of her husband Emenike, who dies of lock chest and Madume, who is blinded by a spitting cobra after he harasses Ihuoma on her plantain farm.

Towards the end of the novel, Agwotulumbe the diviner, discovers this spiritual union and declares that Ihuoma can only be free to marry again if a sacrifice is made to the sea god at midnight. But before midnight, Ihuoma's eldest son mistakenly shoots an arrow at Madume, Ihuoma's lover, and just after midnight, Emenike dies. This novel presents Ihuoma as a dangerous woman who lures men to their death and who is jealously guarded by her supernatural husband. Ironically, Ihuoma does not feel like a daughter of the sea. She says: "these things are strange and almost funny. I certainly don't feel like the daughter of the sea. It is frightening, in a way" (201). This simply points to a contradiction that she is not even aware of the said marriage.

Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* presents the eponymous character of Efuru whose life revolves round the desires of the water goddess Uhamiri. Efuru is a woman who loves her tradition and respects it to the fullest. She has been chosen to be a worshipper of Uhamiri. She sees the goddess in her dreams and finds it pleasurable to look at her beauty. In her dreams, she notices that the Woman of the Lake (as Uhamiri is called) is rich but does not have children. This can explain why Efuru is given wealth in place of many children. Towards the end of the novel, Efuru is happy being a free woman and she feels fulfilled as a devotee to the Woman of the Lake.

Also Asare Konadu's *A Woman in her Prime* reveals the Ghanaian belief in predestination. Pokuwaa, the heroine of the novel is made to undergo all sorts of rituals and sacrifices to Tano, their god out of her desire to have a child. Yet, the child never comes until a certain period of her life when she has decided to end the rituals. This is to say that Tano has already predestined that Pokuwaa will not conceive until the predestined times reaches.

J.P. Clark's "Abiku" provides a vivid picture of the African belief in reincarnation. This means that when an *abiku* child is born, the baby dies and repeats this cycle for as much as it

wants. But when some sacrifices are made, it either ceases to die or remains dead without coming back to its mother again. While the Yorubas call this kind of baby an *abiku* the Igbos call it *ogbanje*. The mission of such children is to bring sorrow and sufferings to their mothers.

All these establish the fact that beyond nature, there is the supernatural.

## **1.2 Scope of the Study**

This study is limited to Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. Occasionally, references will be made to other texts in an attempt to gain extra insight into the workings of the supernatural in the African society.

## **1.3 Statement of Research Problem**

Over the years, several writers and critics of African literature have explored the concept of the supernatural from different perspectives. This research will examine Amos Tutuola's novels – *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* – as a depiction of African world view where reality is more than meets the eye and the world an experience of life beyond physical sensory perceptions.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How can the supernatural be defined?
2. How does the supernatural manifest in Nigerian fiction?
3. How is the supernatural used by Amos Tutuola in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*?
4. What is the author's attitude to the supernatural in the texts?
5. What is the significance of the supernatural in the texts?

## **1.5 Research Objectives**

1. To proffer a comprehensive definition of the supernatural.
2. To show how the supernatural manifests in Nigerian fiction.
3. To illustrate vividly how the supernatural is used by Amos Tutuola in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*.
4. To examine the attitude of the author towards the supernatural in the texts.
5. To explore the significance of the supernatural in the texts.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

This study is of significance in many ways: it will contribute to an understanding of cultural perspective of the supernatural, as rooted in the African belief system. Also, this study will be of immense benefits to scholars in the field of African literature. Moreover, this study will spark up further studies and research into the African belief system in which the supernatural is a high point of such African belief systems. This is indeed a research that keeps Africans connected to their root.

## **1.7 Methodology of the Study**

The method of gathering information is based on texts that have been written on this subject by several critics, library and internet resources as well as personal analyses of primary texts based on the understanding of the African society and the supernatural.

## 1.8 Theoretical Framework

### 1.8.1 Postcolonialism

This research will utilize post-colonial literary theory. During a lecture of the course *Survey of Epochs in Literature*, entitled “Twentieth Century World Literature: Postcolonialism” (10 March 2016), Dr. Agwu explained that postcolonialism is a theory that analyses the cultural implications of colonialism and imperial expansionism in formerly colonised regions of the world. Its main features are “an emphasis on the deconstruction of Western cultural superiority, agitation for the cultural authenticity of colonised people, and it also explores the difficulty of achieving a national cultural identity after decolonization” (n. pag.).

Tracing the emergence of Postcolonialism, Tyson points out that:

European domination of the New World began in the late fifteenth century. Spain, France, England, Portugal, and the Netherlands were the main contenders for the plunder of natural and human resources, and over the next few centuries European empires extended themselves around the globe. During the nineteenth century Britain emerged as the largest imperial power, and by the turn of the twentieth century the British Empire ruled one quarter of the earth’s surface, including India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, and significant holdings in Africa, the West Indies, South America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. British colonial domination continued until the end of World War II, when India gained independence in 1947, and other colonies gradually followed suit. By 1980 Britain had lost all but a few of its colonial holdings. Although postcolonial criticism didn’t become a major force in literary studies until the early 1990s, the cultural analysis of colonialism on which it draws has played an important role in anticolonial political movements everywhere and took its place as a field of intellectual inquiry when colonial regimes began to topple after World War II. (418)

Two prominent theorists of Postcolonialism are Frantz Fanon and Edward Said. Fanon was a French West Indian psychiatrist and political theorist whose analyses of colonialism place him among the leading revolutionary thinkers of his time. Fanon has become associated with his advocacy of revolutionary violence to purge colonized peoples of their colonial mindsets, often

to the neglect of his other ideas. He concluded that colonialism causes a unique pathology in both the colonised and the coloniser, and that the only cure is a revolutionary struggle by the colonized to free themselves from colonial rule (Encarta n.pag). Fanon articulated these ideas in his political writings. In 1959 he published a psychiatric study of colonialism titled *L'An V de la révolution algérienne – A Dying Colonialism*, 1967.

Edward Said was a Palestinian American writer and educator. In his writings and lectures, Said was highly critical of Western portrayals of Arabs and of United States foreign policy in the Middle East. For much of his life he was a passionate advocate of the cause of Palestinians displaced by the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Said is best-known for his book *Orientalism* (1978), which discusses the attitude of Western intellectuals toward the East, and in particular toward the Middle East. Said argued that Westerners have a limited, oversimplified concept of the Middle East and its history. This view, he said, goes hand in hand with political imperialism.

Summarily, postcolonialism “analyzes literature produced by cultures that developed in response to colonial domination, from the first point of colonial contact to the present” (Tyson 418).

#### **1.8.1.2 Justification of the Application of Postcolonialism to the Study of the Supernatural in Amos Tutuola’s Novels**

Amos Tutuola’s novels are not just works of fiction; they are founded on the lived realities of Yoruba society – realities shared with many other African communities. In affirmation to this, Nyamnjoh notes that Tutuola’s novels “depict endogenous epistemologies that are very popular in Africa, as the stories he recounts are commonplace across the continent” (3). However, these “endogenous epistemologies” are:

often ignored, caricatured or misrepresented in the categories of magic, witchcraft, sorcery, superstition, primitivism, savagery and animism inspired by the origins and dominance of Eurocentric social sciences. Like the narrators in his novels, Tutuola is unapologetically part and parcel of the universe that fascinates him. His stories are contributions to his mission of keeping alive and relevant African ways of knowing and knowledge production, and fending off the one-dimensionalism of resilient colonialism (3).

## **1.9 The Yoruba Perception of Myth**

The belief in the supernatural has its origin in myth which is man's attempt to interpret and assign meaning to the happenings within his environment. A wide variety of mythologies have developed among many people that live in Africa. While some of these mythologies are simple and primitive, others are elaborate and complex (Onabiyi 5).

The Yoruba society, like any other African society, comprises mainly of farmers and hunters whose means of livelihood depend mostly on proceeds from the land and forest. And they being aware of both physical and natural threats like war, farming drought, flood etc, realise the need to appease and propitiate the spirits and gods of the land at the appropriate time, for good harvest fruitful hunting, and protection from their adversaries.

In their bid to achieve all these, they developed festivals and rituals which most of the time involve a symbolic enactment of the life of some of the gods. The rituals mostly contain sacrifice, which is the acknowledged means of propitiation and purification. Sacrifices are made to the gods with things that are peculiar to each of them, ranging from inanimate to animate things. It is the priest or priestess as the case may be, that heeds in the ritual act. The people regard the priests and priestesses as representatives of the gods (Onabiyi 9).

Modern African writers in their bid to present what can be characterized as a true African literature dive into the history and background of the people which are manifested in their myth, legend, folktales, taboos, proverbs, songs etc. They attempt to depict the sociological, religious,

political, economic, cultural and ethical beliefs of the people in relation to their norms and values. One example of such writers is Amos Tutuola, who making perfect use of his knowledge about the Yoruba cosmos wrote *The Palm-wine Drinkard* and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*.

### **1.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a general introduction into the concerns of the present study. It lays a foundation for identifying its progression by providing relevant points that serve as the background for the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In the African world view, the supernatural is one predominant factor that has gained prominence and importance from time immemorial. In other words, from pre-colonial Africa to the contemporary, an African has always recognized and has also tried to strike a balance between what he knows and what is inexplicable to him; that is, things natural and things mysterious. The African man, even before the advent of external influence, had begun to order his world so that he would find harmony and blessing in it. Man had begun to have some conceptions about the spiritual or mysterious essence of some natural phenomena. He had begun to interpret his world in tandem with the "unknown".

To buttress this point, Kofi Awoonor observes that:

The African established, from time immemorial, a spiritual hierarchy which reveals a cunning understanding of natural phenomena and a clever talent for manipulating them toward good for himself and evil for his enemies.(11)

Man had come to know that, "beneath the creator God, is a host of minor deities", and he manipulates this knowledge for his benefit. Awoonor goes further to assert that:

By the light of his own logic, the African assigns to the creator God a certain degree of distance and inapproachability, not because he considers him unconcerned, but rather because he thinks of him in his primal ancestral role as the supreme paterfamilias who must not be bothered with petty details of the universe. He, himself, appoints lieutenants and assistants who become overseers and guardians of various natural phenomena and faculties. These minor deities are the recipients of sacrifices and messages for the creator God. He... receives no sacrifice. He has neither shrines nor priests. (18)

The efficacy of the supernatural revolves around the African belief system.

Africans believe that when one dies, one does not become a waste as the lower animals; that one's life possess through a process of transformation; that there is life after death and the dead African may decide to be re-born to the offspring through a process of reincarnation. In this vein, Ozumba is of the view that:

The concept of immortality is closely linked with reincarnation. For the Africans, spirits are reincarnated. Both good and bad spirits. The good spirits are welcomed while the bad spirits called *Abiku, Ogbanje, Ndew...* are either exorcised or rejected. The Africans through divination or other esoteric means claim to be capable of detecting which spirit has reincarnated ... (10)

To Africans, the process of life and living is complex and difficult to fathom. It is believed that life process is a journey without beginning and end. On this premise, Saleh analyzing the world of Mada people of Nasarawa State observes that:

The world of the living and that of the dead are intricately linked in the culture we are dealing with. The one (spiritual) influences the other (human). The dead having acquired a new status by their transformation into the metaphysical realm are believed to have been endowed with certain supernatural power by virtue of their nearness to the Supreme Being. (The Mada believe in a supernatural world of ancestral spirits, other gods all under the control of a Supreme Being). The ancestral spirits are capable of supplicating and interceding on behalf of the community. They not only influence the community, they also serve as important Mechanisms for social control. They are sometimes invited as divine figures to inflict punishment on the unruly, the prone to non-conformity attitudes and antisocial members of the community ... (25-26)

African worldview also stipulates that there is destiny, and the issue of destiny is complex. Destiny is a form of declaration between the almighty God and the immortal beings. Before one is born, it is believed that one would have made a choice of what one would like to become on earth, and it is even held that, one usually made choice on when one would return to meet the maker. Based on this, Boston in discussing the Igala and Igbo religions asserts that:

In both the Igala and Igbo religions, a person's destiny in this world is believed to depend upon a choice made in the presence of the creator in the spirit world before the person was born. One spirit may decide to become famous in the world of the living; another may chose a life of obscurity or even one of misfortune. Once this destiny has been chosen and approved by the creator, its outline cannot be altered. And in token of divine assent, the creator appoints a particular ancestor of the person concerned to act as spiritual guardian (*ojo* or *chi*) and to ensure that the destiny is fulfilled. Both the Igala and Igbo believe that there are parallels between the life on earth of the appointed guardian and the destiny that the guardian supervises ... (18)

In African worldview, the issue of destiny is permanent. The Igbo believe that one's destiny is written on one's palm of the hands. One's destiny can hardly be altered. If it is written that one would die as a pauper, it will come to pass. If it is written that one's early life would be ridden with misfortunes but at the "evening" of one's life, one would become great, this also must come to pass. In this vein, Opatata states that:

For the Igbo of Nigeria, three principles could be isolated as operative in the shaping of a person's life. These are: *akaraka*; literally meaning lines of the hand that is lines found on a person's palms; *chi*, that is a person's personal guardian spirit or the invisible pilot of the day to day activities of human beings; and the physical/psychic endowments of the person concerned. The Igbo say: *Ife sina chi*, meaning that the things which happen to one are determined before hand by the dispositions of the person's guardian spirit. At the same time that the Igbo strongly affirm that, they are also quick to point out that, *onyekwe, chiyakwe*; meaning that if one says yes, the person's chi will concur... (152)

The African worldview about life and death is not remote from other world religions. For instance, in Christianity there are issues of life and death, heaven and earth, heaven and hell, saints, angels, other celestial bodies and Jesus Christ. All of them would like to see that the almighty God would succeed in His daily duties. In Igala worldview, Boston states that:

The ancestors are called *Abegwu* by the Igala... These terms are used for the deceased members of patrilineal kin groups ... who are believed to retain a close interest in the affairs of their

descendants and to intervene on occasion for either good or ill according to the kind of relationship that has been maintained between the living and the dead. A person who lived a good life and does not neglect to make regular offerings to his ancestors will be blessed by them so that his affairs and his family life prosper. A person who incurs the wrath of his ancestors through quarrelling within the family or through the neglect of the proper offering may be visited with sickness or other misfortune by them. (17)

Several other cultures in Africa, especially Nigeria have made their worldview and cosmology manifest. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria it is believed that man does not become a waste but lives on after his death; that man has a continuous life process which forms a cycle; and that the past, the present and the future are pertinently conceived and woven together.

According to Wole Soyinka:

Life continues within its manifestation, the ancestral spirits, the living and the unborn ... the past is the ancestor, the present is the living, and the future to the unborn. The deities stand in the same situation to the living, as do the ancestors and the unborn, obeying the same laws, suffering the same agonies and the uncertainties, employing the same masonic intelligence of rituals, for the perilous plunge into the fourth area of experience, the immeasurable gulf of transition. (35)

The Izon/Ijaw people of Nigeria are not left out. Like other African cultures, they believe in the existence of the almighty God who is the creator of heaven and earth. They also believe in other gods, spirits and deities and each of them has a role to play in the life of an average Ijaw person. In this view, Emiemokumo quotes Ifie on Izon cosmology and worldview as saying that:

gods (Oruama) constitute the second stratum of spirits in Izon religion, after the supreme deity. The people believe in the existence of many divine beings whose abode is mostly in the waters, but also at times in groves and forests. All natural phenomena can serve as dwelling places of gods and spirits. There is also a hierarchy among the gods, but they are usually, independent entities possessing their own powers areas of influence and patterns of worship. Although there is the belief that everything flows from God, there is also the belief that the wealth of man comes from the water spirits. Material success is predicted

on the water and its spirit inhabitants, which control the waves and the sea-creatures as well as the fishing activities and trading expeditions of the people. This total dependence on water accounts for the prominence accorded water spirits in the religion of these people. (46)

The belief in religion is also a recurring motif in African literature. African traditional religion is an avenue for interaction between man and the supernatural. This interaction occurs through religious rituals such as prayer, worship, and sacrificial offering. Abanuka observes that:

the ritual aspect of religion... is surely a way of expressing the inner intention to be part of or make contact with the supernatural or invisible world... the main aim of ritual is to excite feeling and act on our inner intention... ritual is relevant to the extent it enables the individual to reach beyond self or the attainment of a perfect state of being. (17)

Abdou quoting Oladele Taiwo is of the opinion that:

Religion in African Society places great emphasis on supernatural agencies. The African himself is superstitious and believes very strongly in mystic rites. He reconciles himself to these forces and treats them with reverence and dignity. He believes that his every action is guided and directed by spirits. (217)

From the foregoing, therefore, it can be inferred that Africa had gained a vast knowledge about the two worlds that live in concurrence with each other: the natural world and the supernatural world.

### **A Review of Existing Literature on Amos Tutuola's Fiction**

Although a pioneer, prolific writer and master storyteller, Amos Tutuola was little known, little appreciated, and often abused during his lifetime, mostly by the educated elite of his home country. Generally, the accusations leveled against him by his Nigerian critics had little to do with his creativity, or inventiveness rather they had to do with the way he wrote. In all, Tutuola wrote nine novels and three collections of short stories and folktales during his lifetime,

yet most of the criticisms of his works have been centered on the language in which he chose to write, rather than on the message and merit of his works.

One can probably excuse Tutuola's critics for their lack of toleration of his language, since the colonial masters worked very hard to make sure that their subjects spoke "proper" English. To achieve this "noble" goal, they even went as far as banning the speaking of local languages in the colonial school system and anyone caught speaking "vernacular" was duly punished. Thus, to have someone write the way Tutuola did in the heydays of colonialism must have come as a big shock to his educated Nigerian audience. Although they may have been very familiar with the day-to-day usage of the vernacular, or pidgin form of the Queen's English, they probably were very uncomfortable with the written form of it. To them, it cast them in a very negative light regarding the rest of the English speaking world.

Ajani (2001) explored, in part, this issue of Tutuola's language – why he wrote the way he did, and the linguistic principles that underlie his experimentation with the English language. Using three of Tutuola's works – *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*(1952), *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954), and *The Brave African Huntress* (1958) – as corpus for this linguistic analysis, Ajani's dissertation tried to show how the Yoruba language, among others, has exerted a profound influence on English language as used in present day Nigeria.

Critics have often blamed Tutuola's scanty formal education for his "peculiar" way of using the "Queen's English." Although this is true to a large extent, this kind of retooling of English language is not limited to Tutuola. More famous writers, such as Chinua Achebe of the world-acclaimed *Things Fall Apart* (1957) and Wole Soyinka, the 1986 Nobel Laureate in literature, both fellow countrymen of Tutuola's have also been known to use English language in very unconventional ways, even though in more subtle ways than Tutuola. For instance, Soyinka

loves to experiment with English language in very sophisticated ways, to an extent that most people accuse him of being unnecessarily difficult and his works largely inaccessible to a great majority of readers. However, Soyinka has once said that in his use of English language, he has tried to stretch it, impact it, fragment and reassemble it, in order to transform it into a tool that could adequately carry his messages to a wider world. As regards this, Achebe says:

So my answer to the question, Can an African ever learn English well enough to be able to use it effectively in creative writing is certainly yes. If on the other hand you ask: Can he ever learn to use it like a native speaker? I would say I hope not. It is neither necessary nor desirable for him to be able to do so. The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience... It will be a new English still in full communion with its ancestral home, but altered to suit its new African surrounding. (29-30)

Almost a decade before Tutuola's novel came on the scene, another writer from far away India had already shared similar convictions in another well-known and often quoted statement: "We cannot write like the English, we should not" (Rao 8). Rao's statement (above) should put to rest the argument often made that Tutuola's unconventional English was a disgrace to fellow Nigerians.

Ajani's research concludes that Tutuola has not been accorded a deserving place among African writers. He felt that Tutuola had not been given a fair hearing, simply because of the tool he had used to bring his message about. It really doesn't matter how anyone chooses to look at Tutuola's works, one cannot easily dismiss a man who has produced over a dozen works; no, it is impossible to ignore such a person without doing a great disservice to his legacy. He definitely deserves to be taken seriously, no matter what he has to say, and which way he goes about doing

so. Below is what Tutuola himself had to say about why he decided to write, in spite of what many purists have termed his “handicap” with the English language:

I don't want the past to die. I don't want our culture to vanish. It's not good. We are losing [our customs and traditions] now, but I'm still trying to bring them into memory. So far as I don't want our culture to fade away. I don't mind about English grammar – I should feel free to write my story. I have not given my manuscript to anyone who knows grammar to edit. (*West Africa*1299)

What Tutuola was saying in essence is this: I will not be bogged down by trying to write English like a British or an American. I am going to domesticate the English language to serve my own ends. I am going to let it bear the burden of my experience. I am a man with a message and a mission and I shall not be distracted by elitist critics. I will use the English language as an instrument to convey my mission to the next generation. I am trying to preserve the culture and customs of my people before it dies away.

His first two novels, and by far his most popular – *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* – were also adapted for the stage in Nigeria in 1958. *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was first produced as a Yoruba opera in 1968 by the popular Yoruba dramatist Kola Ogunmola. In 1995, a stage adaptation of *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* was presented in the United Kingdom as Nigeria's entry play for the Africa95 international festival held in London that year. Several other performances of these two books have been made by various local operas since their first stage presentations, a testimony to their popularity among the masses of the people at the home front (Ajani 8).

Tutuola's popularity among non-elite Yoruba speakers and the common people could be attributed to the fact that his works spoke to their hearts – they could identify with the folklores of their common backgrounds. Because his works and the way he used his language (i.e. English) conveyed the worldview of Yoruba speakers, it was easy for the common people to

identify with and appreciate his works. Although he drew from a common pool of knowledge, he went one step farther by making that knowledge his own first before sharing it with an international audience. He did this by adding his own creative slant to the age old stories in such a way as to make it both easily accessible to his people and the world at large. Although some have questioned his original intended audience, it can be safely argued that by writing in English he was also aware that his works would be read by his fellow Nigerians and foreigners alike.

Despite the hostile attitude towards Tutuola and his works and his apparent lack of popularity among a large segment of the Nigerian educated elite, an excellent proof of the general popularity of his works and their influences on the Yoruba elite was Wole Soyinka's staging of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* in Yoruba land, which was followed by several other staging of both English language and Yoruba language versions by various theater groups across West Africa, especially in Nigeria and Ghana in the early sixties (Ajani 8). In fact, according to Eko, the first Yoruba language stage adaptation and performance of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* by Kola Ogunmola (with parallel English Language translation) in April 1963 was "an immense success with the public, especially African intellectuals, and received an excellent review from Wole Soyinka" (20).

It should also be observed that Tutuola's fiction has received high praise from his fellow novelists. Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe are known to openly admire Tutuola and his works. Achebe is known to have referred to Tutuola as "the most moralistic of African writers" while Soyinka has popularized his works among the masses through theatrical performances. Both authors are the two most famous writers to come out of Nigeria, and probably Africa as a whole.

Tutuola has been unequivocally recognized as the first person to write any full-length narrative in English language in Nigeria, as well as the first West African writer of English

language expression to win considerable international attention. Eko has this to say about Tutuola's pioneering efforts:

Amos Tutuola was undeniably the first West African writer of English expression to win considerable international recognition. The publication of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* in 1952 marked the beginning of modern Nigerian literature and apparently took the literary world by surprise. An important review by Dylan Thomas launched the book on its way to fame and the author on his way to becoming one of the most controversial writers of modern African literature. (19)

Bernth Lindfors, who has written a full-length *Critical Perspectives on Amos Tutuola* (1975) and has studied Tutuola and his works over several decades, has the following observation to make with regards to the publication of Tutuola's pioneering work, "Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was the first substantial literary work written in English by a Nigerian author, and its publication in 1952 created a stir" (51).

Tutuola, then, has been given credit for opening up the new field of modern African literature in English language for Achebe, Soyinka and the other Nigerian writers who followed. It should be acknowledged, however, that although Tutuola pioneered creative writing in English, he himself was following in the footsteps of another compatriot and kinsman, Daniel O. Fagunwa, who was actually the first person to codify Yoruba language folktales in creative written form, the only difference being that he chose to write in Yoruba rather than in English language.

Tutuola built his literary career primarily by the creative retelling and expansion of Yoruba folktales, stories that not only he, but all other Yoruba children like him have heard again and again by adults under the bright moon-lit African sky. They are stories that have been told and retold, from one generation to another over the millennia. All of his eleven books draw from these common sources. Throughout his life, Tutuola's goal was to preserve Yoruba culture by

codifying his people's folklore; his choice of language was English, but his was a modified English, an English that could convey adequately the culture he was trying to preserve without doing much damage to its originality and intensity, an English made to serve his people, an English created in the image and likeness of his people and their language.

The existence of different varieties of English Language is now a well established fact. Much has been written about Indian, South African, West African, Nigerian, Cameroonian, Australian and other varieties of English around the world. In fact, American English itself is a variety or dialect of English, with its own idiosyncrasies that set it apart from the British or any other variety of English Language.

When the London firm, Faber and Faber, published his first novel, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, on May 2, 1952, it became an instant success, mostly due to a positive review by Dylan Thomas in *The LondonObserver* of July 6, 1952. Other rave reviews of the book followed, especially after the American edition appeared the following year, issued by Grove Press. The seriousness with which the American audience took his work could be seen in the many reviews that it enjoyed in leading newspapers and magazines across the nation. According to Eko, within three years of its publication, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was translated into four other European languages: French, German, Italian and Serbo-Croatian (19).

While Tutuola enjoyed mostly favorable reviews in Europe and America, the story was quite different at home; he was booed and jeered at by the Nigerian educated elite, who felt that he had disgraced them because of the "unconventional" way in which he wrote his English. They were afraid Europeans would label them incompetent to acquire the "glorious" English language. They felt that he was an anomaly and a disgrace because he had not followed strictly the rules of

the “Queen’s English”. Owomoyela observes that they got stuck on his language and forgot to look at his message.

With the death of Tutuola in 1997, however, there seemed to have emerged a more favorable criticism of the man and his works, as evidenced in the numerous posthumous tributes in most Nigerian dailies and news magazines shortly after he passed away. It had taken, unfortunately, the death of the literary luminary for people – especially those he called his own – to finally begin to appreciate his worth. In a posthumous eulogy recognizing Tutuola’s achievements, the editor of *West Africa* magazine referred to Tutuola’s first novel in the following terms:

Today, this book is recognized as a significant milestone – indeed, the first milestone – on the long road that Nigerian authors writing in English have travelled since that time. It was the national equivalent of *The Canterbury Tales* in British literature, Tutuola being Anglophone Africa’s aboriginal Chaucer. (1268)

What both Achebe and Rao said in earlier quotes above is exactly what Tutuola has done, and this he has done well. Proof of his success is to be found in the effusive praise and adulation showered upon him in numerous posthumous tributes in the Nigerian press after his passing away. One writer referred to him as “Nigeria’s Nobel Literature Laureate who never won” (*West Africa* 1266). Another described him as “an honored ancestor, an inspirational father figure to a whole generation of younger writers” (*West Africa* 1266). Another tribute writer in the same article quoted above put it so well in one single but powerful sentence: “Tutuola may have died, but what he left to the world lives on” (1267). In other words, Tutuola has left a lasting legacy to generations yet unborn.

## **Conclusion**

Although many well-known writers and critics, such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, Harold Collins, Bernth Lindfors, to mention just a few, have come to appreciate and to positively appraise Tutuola's works and worth, there are still a few, mostly Nigerian critics, who feel Tutuola is not deserving of all the attention he is being accorded.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SUPERNATURAL IN *THE PALM-WINE DRINKARD*

#### **3.1 Synopsis of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard***

The narrator lives contentedly as the son of a rich man who retains a palm-wine tapster for his son's exclusive use. Each day, the tapster draws enormous amounts of palm-wine for the narrator, who drinks it with his friends. One day, after the narrator's father has died, the tapster falls from a palm tree and is killed. The narrator misses his supply of palm-wine, and his friends no longer visit him, so he decides to go to Deads' Town to find his tapster.

The narrator's journey leads him from his town to various parts of the bush that is the habitation of all sorts of inhuman creatures. He has many adventures. For instance, he stays with a man who promises to give directions to Deads' Town if the narrator will find Death and bring him to the town. The narrator tricks Death into coming along to the town. After that, Death cannot return to his former home, and so Death enters the world. The narrator asks again for directions to Deads' Town, but his host says that he must first rescue his daughter, who had been attracted to a handsome gentleman and followed him into the bush. The gentleman is really a curious creature of the bush. He had returned to the bush and, as he entered, given back each bodily part that he had rented from a human being, until he was nothing but a skull; he then held the young woman captive. The narrator searches for the host's daughter, finds her, and the two escape the bush.

The two marry and stay in her town until the day a child is born from her thumb, and is instantly able to speak, move, and eat and drink everything in sight. Driven from town because of this insatiable child, they wander into the bush, where they meet three persons named Drum, Dance, and Song. The child is so attracted by their music that he follows them. Released from their terrible companion, the narrator and his wife wander until they get to Wraith-Island. The

beautiful creatures who live here have nothing to do but plant their magic seeds and then dance all day long. After an encounter with a huge creature that demands a sacrifice from the narrator for its field and an encounter with a tiny creature that can undo the work of all other creatures, the narrator and his wife leave Wraith-Island with some of the magic seeds.

In Unreturnable Heaven's Town, they encounter people who call themselves the enemies of God and who do everything exactly the opposite from the normal world. The narrator and his wife are beaten, stoned, scraped by rocks and broken bottles, and finally buried up to their necks. With the help of a friendly eagle, they escape from the town and, after a short recuperation, go on their way. As they pass a huge, white tree, two hands reach out of an opening in the tree and draw them inside. This is the land of the Faithful Mother, whose sole task is to solace and care for those who have experienced great difficulties in the world. As they enter this land they rent their fear and sell their death. When they leave, after staying the maximum allowable three months, they take back their fear, but can no longer be killed, because they had sold their death. This leads to the odd circumstance that they can feel fear in the face of danger, even though the danger cannot kill them.

In Red-Town, the narrator's wife speaks in riddles for the first time, and it develops that she has the gift of prophecy. Everything and everyone in this town is red-colored because of a mistake the Red-King had made years ago. By facing fearful creatures, the narrator frees them from their curse and settles down to use his magic seeds, soon becoming a rich man. While there, they meet the Red-Lady, daughter of the king and also the person who had been called Dance in an earlier adventure. She and her two companions play together in Red-Town until they play themselves right out of this world—only their names remain. When the narrator hires a farm

laborer called the Invisible Pawn, who is really the chief of all bush-creatures, the Pawn's overenthusiastic completion of his labors angers the townspeople, so again they move on.

After passing through the town of the Wise-King, they reach Deads' Town and find the tapster, but cannot stay, because "alives" are not allowed to live with "deads." With a marvelous egg from the tapster, they return to the narrator's town, where they use the egg to feed people during a famine, until someone breaks the egg. Finally, the narrator ends a war between Heaven and Earth and the people prosper again.

### **3.2 Ordinariness of the Supernatural**

In *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* the supernatural is simply natural. Gods, Death, spirits and the terrible creatures of the bushes and forests take on human nature, just as humans develop the supernatural attributes of these invisible forces in their lives. The narrator who names himself "father of the gods who could do everything in this world" (10) is also extraordinary in his capacity to collapse boundaries between the human and the supernatural. When he is confronted by a big river he ordinarily could not cross by foot or by swimming, he commands his juju acquired from "a kind spirit" to activate himself to acquire the form and consciousness of a canoe, while maintaining his consciousness of a human being, and is thus able to transport his wife and himself across the big river, before regaining his form of origin (39).

Similarly, spirits and gods in touch with humanity feel and behave the same as humans. These humans like the narrator, can seek to outsmart others with their trickery. When the skull – that is watching the captured lady whom the narrator sets out to find and bring back to her father – falls asleep and thus is not in a position to blow the whistle and alert the other skulls, the narrator is able to change himself back from a lizard into a man to speak to the lady, who is seated "on a bullfrog with a single cowrie tied on her neck" (26). And even when the cowrie on

the lady's neck "made a curious noise" that alerted the skulls, he had "changed" or "dissolved himself into air" before a cowrie could be tied around his neck as well (27). By tying the cowries round the neck of their victims, the skulls were able "to reduce the power of any human being" and "also to make a person dumb" (27). When he finally snatched the lady away and started fleeing with the skulls chasing him through the forest, "rolling on the ground like large stones and also humming with terrible noise," he "changed the lady into a kitten and put her inside my pocket and changed myself to a very small bird" (28).

Moreover, we see Death living as a human being, among the alives, until the narrator, "brought Death out from his house," upon the request of a god turned man, thereby rendering Death forever with "no permanent place to dwell or stay," and since then, "we are hearing his name about in the world" (16). Death might be extraordinarily frightening, but it also is very ordinary and often outsmarted by its victims. Death has a house and a yam farm, and must cultivate, consume and ensure a healthy lifestyle to stay alive and away from starvation.

Even the dead of the Deads' Town are ordinary in their activities – eating and drinking and indulging in the practices of the alives, even as they train and qualify to behave like the dead, which includes walking backwards. In the Deads' Town – where the palm wine drinkard eventually locates his dead tapster, "BAITY," after a ten-year search – where it is "forbidden for alives to come" (96), alives are nonetheless tolerated. Despite forbidding alives from living there, Deads' Town is very accommodating, as "both white and black deads" are living there (100). Also, the culture of gifts and gifting is the same in Deads' Town as it is in the world of the alives: "he [tapster] told me that he could not follow me back to my town again, because a dead man could not live with alives ... and said that he would give me anything that I liked in the Deads' Town" (100). As a parting present, the tapster gives him an egg, telling him "to keep it as

safely as gold” upon his return home. The tapster told him “the use of the egg was to give me anything that I wanted in this world and if I wanted to use it, I must put it in a big bowl of water, then I would mention the name of anything that I wanted” (101). Indeed, the sameness between the alives and the dead of Deads’ Town is so striking.

Furthermore, there is always a case of one good turn deserves another in the world depicted by *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. All those the narrator encounters promise to help or reward him in exchange for services. He must do something first, something that often threatens his very life. For ten years spent going from town to town through bushes and forests looking for his tapster, the narrator encountered people who “would say unless I should help them to do something, they would not tell” (99). This is true of the old man who is a god who sends him to fetch a bell from the blacksmith, but which he refuses to name, as a way of making the task more challenging for the narrator. Beaten at his own game, the man old challenges the narrator to capture Death and bring it to him. But when Death is indeed captured and brought, the old man and his family flee, for they never thought anyone could capture Death. Similarly, the head of the town with the famous market asks him to free his daughter from the terrible curious creature who borrowed body parts and fancy clothes to transform himself into a complete gentleman.

### **3.3 Life is Beyond Physical Sensory Perception**

There is more and less to bodies than meets the eye. The passages that best illustrate this are those which describe how the beautiful daughter of the famous head of the town who had turned down every suitor imaginable is deceived by the handsomeness of a man she meets at the market:

This lady was very beautiful as an angel but no man could convince her for marriage. So, one day she went to the market on a

market-day as she was doing before, or to sell her articles as usual; on that market-day, she saw a curious creature in the market, but she did not know where the man came from and never knew him before. (18)

She was instantly charmed by this “beautiful ‘complete’ gentleman, dressed with the finest and most costly clothes” (18). Indeed, “all the parts of his body were completed”; he was both tall and stout, and had he “been an article or an animal for sale, he would be sold at least for £2000 (two thousand pounds)” (18). The more he ignored the lady, the more she felt attracted to him. She “left her articles” unsold and “began to watch the movements of the complete gentleman about in the market” (18). When the market day ended and people were returning to their various destinations, the lady followed the complete gentlemen, despite his repeatedly “telling her to go back, or not to follow him” (19). She “did not listen to what he was telling her, and when the complete gentleman had tired of telling her not to follow him or to go back to her town, he left her to follow him” (19).

Roughly twelve miles away from the market, at a crossroads, “they left the road on which they were travelling and started to travel inside an endless forest in which only all the terrible creatures were living” (19). As they branch off the main road at the crossroads, the lady’s fantasies turns into her worst nightmare, as she begins the journey of discovery that there is much less to her prince charming than meets the eye. Her complete gentleman begins the process of self-deactivation by returning and paying the rental for “the hired parts of his body to the owners” (20) who had so generously lent them to him. “When he reached where he hired the left foot, he pulled it out, he gave it to the owner and paid him” (20), and continued his journey. And “when they reached the place where he hired the right foot, he pulled it out and gave it to the owner and paid for the rentage” (20). Both feet gone, the complete gentleman “began to crawl along on the ground” (20). Frightened at what was unfolding before her eyes, as her illusion of a

complete gentleman evaporated, “that lady wanted to go back to her town or her father,” but the now not so complete gentleman would not let her.

Left with “only the head and both arms with neck,” the complete gentleman could not crawl any more, and resorted to “jumping on as a bull-frog” (20). Overwhelmed by fear and forbidden from returning home to her father, the lady fainted. When he had plucked off, returned and paid for both hired arms, as well as his hired neck, the “complete gentleman was reduced to head and when they reached where he hired the skin and flesh which covered the head, he returned them, and paid to the owner,” reducing himself to a “Skull” (20-21). As a skull, “he could jump a mile to the second before coming down,” (22) so whenever the lady attempted to run away, “he hastily ran to her front and stopped her as a log of wood” (22). They got to his house, which was a hole under the ground; “there were only Skulls living in that whole” (22). Once home, the skull “tied a single Cowrie on the neck of this lady with a kind of rope,” “gave her a large frog on which she sat as a stool,” and then “he gave a whistle to a Skull of his kind to keep watch on this lady whenever she wanted to run away” (22). She would remain under their watch until eventually released by the narrator, “father of the gods who could do everything in this world” (23-31).

As the example of the “complete gentleman” attests, everyone at a village market might look ordinary and human, but there may be little that is human about all those who appear obviously human. Moving at the same time and going about the business of buying and selling are “also spirits and curious creatures from various bushes and forests” (17), some of them obviously human, others invisible to the physical eye. This makes it difficult to draw a line between ordinary humans and spirits, gods and ghosts, half-gods, half-ghosts, half-spirits and all other variations of supernatural beings appearing as normal humans.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE SUPERNATURAL IN MY LIFE IN THE BUSH OF GHOSTS

#### **4.1 Overview**

In addition to examples discernible from the excerpts of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* discussed in the previous chapter, this section draws predominantly from *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* and explores how human beings, ghosts, spirits and other creatures in the African universe employ techniques of the body and instrumental techniques to activate themselves to the level of potency that makes action possible.

#### **4.2 Techniques of the Body**

Immobilised in the centre of the town where “she sat permanently like a stump” (90) – deactivated by the lack of mobility, the Flash-Eyed Mother, as her name suggests, had:

“... eyes which were bringing out splashes of fire all the time and were used to bring out fire on the firewood whenever she wanted to cook food and the flash of fire of these eyes was so strong that it would catch the firewood at the same moment like petrol or other inflammable spirit or gunpowder...” (88)

She could also use her flash eyes “at night as a flood of light in lighting the whole town” (88). When offended by any of her short ghost servants, “both eyes would be flashing out fire on to the body who offends her, and the fire would be burning the body at the same moment as fluffy things or rags” (89). Indeed, her flash eyes were capable of reaching out across long distances, so she could use them “as a whip to flog any other of her offenders” (89) regardless of how physically far away from her they were. Her capacity to use her flash eyes to activate herself to such formidable levels of strength made her “very fearful to other creatures coming to her town without special reason” (89). Even His Majesty “the King of the Bush of Ghosts” could not dare

to ask “Who is she?” (89). She is further fortified by “a large mouth which could swallow an elephantuncut” (88), and by “millions of heads ...on her body” (87), each of which:

... had two very short hands which were used to hold their food or anything that they want to take, ... two eyes which were shining both day and night like fireflies, one small mouth with numerous sharp teeth, the head was full of long dirty hair, two small ears like a rat’s ears appeared on each side of the head. (87)

Thus armed or compensated for the fact of her immobility, the Flash-Eyed Mother could rely on the Short Ghosts to hunt game for her. She also sold some of her flash eyes to others who desired to enhance themselves in similar fashion. The Flash-Eyed Mother “was selling the flash fire of her eyes to other kinds of ghosts who were coming from the various towns to buy it, and a flash was worth a heavy amount of ghosts’ money” (95). She was thus able to make ends meet and in certain cases thrive on her flash fires despite her being immobilised at the centre of the town like a stump. The fact of selling the power of her flash eye to others speaks to the circulation of jujus and magic as technologies of power. The Flash-Eyed Mother does not pretend to claim completeness of any kind, despite her super endowments. She is very dependent for her sustenance. Without the Short Ghosts to hunt for her, she would simply perish, in spite of her superabundance in body parts.

#### **4.3 Instrumental Techniques**

Still in other instances, the technology is beyond simple dependence or interdependence. It is a thing external to oneself, available to be activated to render possible what one desires. Something as jujus and magic, as such things are commonly known both in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* and *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. Thus, the King of Smelling Ghosts of the 7th Town of Ghosts is able to transform his seven-year-old victim – the narrator in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* – into various kinds of creatures – monkey, lion, camel, horse, cow or bull – and back, as it

pleases him or depending on what services he wants rendered (21). It is a technology that is adaptable – capable of taking the form of a monkey in one instance and that of a lion, camel, horse, cow or bull in another. With his juju, the King of Smelling Ghost is able to manipulate his victim to assume the form and consciousness of whatever creature he wanted. Thus:

In the presence of these guests, my boss was changing me to some kinds of creatures. First of all he changed me to a monkey, then I began to climb fruit trees and pluck fruits down for them. After that he changed me to a lion, then to a horse, to a camel, to a cow or bull with horns on its head and at last to my former form. (21)

To celebrate his good luck for bringing back a strange creature from earth, the King of Smelling Ghosts “performed a juju which changed me to a horse unexpectedly, then he put reins into my mouth and tied me on a stump with a thick rope” (22). Then, “he mounted me” (22), “mercilessly” (23), accompanied by two of his attendants, “with whips in their hands and flogging me along in the bush” (23), “I felt as if he was half a ton weight” (23). This was a repeated occurrence as he paraded his victim like a trophy:

... he would mount me mercilessly and both his attendants would start to flog me in such a way that all the ghosts and ghostesses of that town would shout at me as a thief. But if they shouted at me like that my boss would jump and kick me mercilessly, with gladness in the presence of these bystanders until he would leave that town. (23)

As a horse, the earthly person was fed guinea corn (which he could eat) and leaves, which “I was unable to eat ... as I am not really a horse” (24), and offered urine mixed with limestone to drink, which is what the smelling ghost drank as “ordinary water” was “too clean for them” (24). As a horse, “I was all the while tied in the sun which was shining severely on me” (24), a burden compounded by the fact that “as I was tied in the sun all the young ghosts of this village were mounting me and getting down as if I am a tree as they were very surprised to see me as a horse” (24). If the King of the Smelling Ghosts needed another kind of beast of burden, he would

transform his victim accordingly: “he changed me again to the form of a camel and then his sons were using me as transport to carry heavy loads to long distances of about twenty or forty miles” (25). He could also be hired out to other ghosts by his boss “to carry loads to long distances and returning again in the evening with heavier loads” (25).

The “Super-lady” ghostess of the Nameless-town occupied exclusively by ghostesses is another ghost with the technology (juju) to transform and revert to forms. The inhabitants of the Nameless-town are distinguished for having “been betrayed by their husbands after their marriage” (113). All wearing under their lower jaws “long brown moustaches which resemble that of he-goats”, the ladies and women of the Nameless-town all marry each other, as “none of them could marry any male again” (113). The narrator first encounters the Super-lady as an antelope, who then transforms itself into “a very beautiful lady” (101), and requests him to marry her, confessing: “I prefer to marry an earthly person more than the other creatures” (102). The Super-lady’s power to transform herself into anything of her choice and back was given her by her grandmother when her father and mother plotted to kill her through sacrificing her to be eaten by witches and wizards of the community of witchcraft whose meetings they presided (108). It was this power that saved her from being killed. She explains:

So through this power I had the opportunity to change to an invisible bird early in the morning that my father and mother would kill me, then I packed all my belongings, after that I bade both of them invisible ‘good-bye’ and then I came to live permanently in this Nameless-town, which belongs only to women, and since that day I am not appearing to them personally but changing to a kind of a creature... (108)

The narrator, now “earthly husband” of the Super-lady, upon hearing of her “wonderful power to change to any form of creature”, challenged her to prove herself by changing to some form at that very moment for him to see. She obliged:

First, she became an antelope with two short horns on its head, secondly a lioness and roared at me several times so that I nearly died for fear, thirdly, a big boa constrictor which made me fear most when she was coiling round my body, especially when it opened the mouth very wide as if it wanted to swallow me, and after this a tigress and jumped on me at the same time, after this she jumped away from my head and was jumping from room to room, having stopped jumping about in the rooms and house, then without hesitation she jumped outside the town, she was chasing fowls about in the town. After ... that she changed to a lady as usual, and to my surprise she was on the same chair as before ... and also held the two fowls which she killed outside with her hands. (109)

Other Ghosts in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* with similar powers are the “Burglar-ghosts”. They burgle long-distance, navigating between the Bush of Ghosts and towns and villages inhabited by “earthly persons”, whom they resemble the most. The Burglar-ghosts describe themselves as both earthly and not earthly – “I am and I am not” (40) – “living as earthly persons and also as ghosts” (43). They are frontier beings, as they collapse the boundaries and borders between the world of ghosts and the world of humans through their capacity to insinuate themselves into the world of the earthly in order to burgle them. They transact between worlds, bringing ghostly beauty in contact with the earthly, and in turn taking earthly foods, animals and things back to the Bush of Ghosts for their consumption. Known as “born and die babies” among the earthly, the Burglar-ghosts go about their business of burgling the earthly by luring them with a deceptive attractiveness described as follows:

If an earthly woman conceives we would choose one of us to go to her at night and after the woman has slept then he would use his invisible power to change himself to the good baby that the woman would be delivered of whenever it is time. But after he has driven out the good baby and entered into the woman’s womb, he would remain there and when it is time the woman would deliver him instead of the good baby which had been driven out; ... As this inferior baby has invisible power or supernatural power, so all the money spent on him and also the sacrifices would be his own and

all would be stored into a secret place with the help of his invisible power. (41)

The Burglar-ghosts are also able to accumulate material goods from the earthly through their ability to manipulate them and to prey on their vulnerability and love of “superior babies”. No amount of resources spent to keep alive such unusually attractive babies is ever enough. Once the “born and die babies” have thoroughly eaten up their victims, it is time for them to return to the Bush of Ghosts with their booty. In the words of the same Burglar-ghost as above:

... after the woman has spent all she has and become poor, then one night he would pretend as if he has died, so the woman who bore him as a superior baby, her family and other sympathisers would be saying thus: ‘Ah! That fine baby dies’, but they do not know that he is not a superior baby. They would bury him as a dead baby, but the earthly persons do not know that he does not die but simply stops breaths. But after he is buried, then he would come out of the grave at night, then he would go direct to the secret place where all the moneys and sacrifices as sheep, goats, pigeons and fowls, all would be alive and are stored by his invisible power, and he would carry them to this town. (41-42)

The Burglar-ghost, who narrated this account, went on to prove his story. He disappeared to an earthly town, and returned ten months later “with bales of sewn clothes, sheep, goats, pigeons, fowls, all were still alive and moneys with all other used expensive articles”(44). When the Burglar-ghost displayed the bales of clothes he had brought back:

I saw plainly many clothes which belonged to my friends and my mother in my town that were among these clothes and was also surprised to see many clothes which my mother just bought for me and my brother before the war scattered all of us. (44)

Interestingly, the technology for activating someone or something to assume different forms can be acquired and lost. It is not an intrinsic part of being a ghost, being human or being whatever and whoever. This is evident when the King of Smelling Ghosts transforms the narrator his victim from a camel back to his former form – an earthly person – with the intention of later

transforming him into a horse to ride to the conference of ghosts, but when he forgets to hide away the technology, the victim appropriates it for his own ends:

After he changed me to a person then he went away to take the reins which he would put into my mouth when he changed me to a horse, but as soon as he went away I saw where he hid the juju which he was using to change me to any animal or creature that he likes, so I took it and put it into my pocket so that he might not change me to anything again. (26)

Without his juju to activate him, the King of Smelling Ghosts “has no power to change me to a horse again” (27). The king is impotent, all of a sudden. The captive has effectively deactivated his captor by taking away his juju. The latter can no longer lay claim to being superior and invincible as he was when his juju was still in his possession. The captive is able to release himself from his confines and flees:

I jumped right out from the bag to the ground and without hesitation I started to run away inside the bush for my life. (27)

As the King of Smelling Ghosts chases and threatens to catch up with him, he uses the juju he has stolen from the king and transforms himself into a cow. This makes him more powerful and able to run faster than the king who is overburdened with all his gear, amongst which the boa constrictor he uses as a belt and the heavy bag “full of mosquitoes, small snakes with centipedes” (15) he carries around on his left shoulder. No sooner is he free of the King of Smelling Ghosts than he, still as a cow, is threatened by a hungry lion. So he starts escaping from the lion, only once again, to run himself into cow-men who are only too happy to embrace and return to the fold one of their cows that they imagined had gone missing (28). Unable to change back into a person, the 7 year old starts his life as a cow (28). Subsequently, as he runs away from a crowd chasing him to kill as sacrifice to a god, he falls into a pond and upon seeing a reflection of himself as a cow in the water his form is changed back from cow to person (34-35).

Armed with his new magical powers, the earthly person and narrator now convincingly an insider is able to change himself into different types of animals and things, depending on what he needed to activate his potency in order to attain his ends in given situations. In one instance we see him in competition with a ghost magician trying to outsmart each other in a frenzy of transformations into countless forms. This is when he refuses to share the proceeds that came as reward following a competition in magic. He recounts that when he refused to share the gifts with his competitor, the ghost magician, the latter “changed to a poisonous snake” (151) and “wanted to bite me to death” (151). In reaction, he immediately used his own magical power and “changed to a long stick ... and started to beat him repeatedly” (151). Driven nearly to death by the pain of the beating, the ghost magician “changed from the snake to a great fire and burnt this stick to ashes, after that he started to burn me too” (151). In turn, the narrator “changed to rain” (151) and “quenched him at once” (151). Refusing to give up, the ghost magician used his powers to transform “the place that I stood to become a deep well” (151) and to make “rain to be raining into the well while I was inside” (151). The well rapidly became full of water. Before the ghost magician could close the door of the well, the narrator changed himself into a big fish and attempted to swim out. But when the ghost magician saw the fish, he changed into a crocodile, jumped into the well and came to swallow him. Before the crocodile could swallow, “I changed to a bird and also changed the gifts to a single palm fruit, I held it with my beak and then flew out of the well straight to the 18th town” (151- 152). Quickly, the ghost magician “changed himself again to a big hawk” and chased him about in the sky. Afraid that the hawk was catching up with him, the narrator changed himself to “air and blew within a second to a distance which a person could not travel on foot for thirty years” (152).

This feat did not deter the ghost magician, as he mobilised his magic and appeared where the narrator was heading well before the narrator arrived. Now face to face, they struggled for many hours, at the end of which, “I shared the gifts into two parts, I gave him a part, but he insisted to take the whole” (152). Reluctantly, “I gave him all” (152). This was just a temporary surrender, however, as the earthly person transformed himself into air again, anticipated the ghost magician to where he was headed, killed an animal and buried it neck down in a hole he had dug near the road. When the ghost magician saw the head of the animal, he concluded the animal had planted itself deliberately on the side of the road because it wanted his gifts. He started throwing the gifts at the animal one by one, until he had no gift left on him. Later, the earthly competitor came and retrieved all the gifts from the animal’s head (152-153).

As the earthly person desperately seeks his way out of the Bush of Ghosts, his family back in his home town is equally preoccupied with finding him, and has not given up despite his prolonged absence. They resort to another type of technology to assist them in this exercise. To keep alive in him memories of home, his family secures the services of a fortune teller and his “Invisible Missive Magnetic Juju” (148), renowned for its capacity to “bring a lost person back to home from an unknown place” (148), however faraway it may be, “with or without the will of the lost person” (148). The force of this magnetic juju makes him dream of home repeatedly (147). In the end, he is delivered back home under the very same “future sign tree” where his journey into the Bush of Ghosts began 24 years earlier (160). This delivery is made possible by the powers of a “Television-handed ghostess”, in recognition for his having cured her of her sores. Pleased to have been cured, the Television-handed ghostess asks him to look at her open palm. And as soon as he does, he finds himself, all of a sudden, under the exact same tree where he disappeared 24 years ago, much to his utter surprise (160).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

#### **5.1 Summary**

The first chapter provides a general introduction into the concerns of the present study. It consequently lays a foundation for identifying its progression by providing relevant points that serve as a background to the study. It also gives a caption for the problem that this work attempts to solve in the subsequent chapters. Finally, it gives a comprehensive note on the theoretical framework that is employed in the analysis of this research. The second chapter of this research covers the review of existing literature on the same field of study.

The third chapter of this research is the analysis of the first novel; Amos Tutuola's *The Palmwine Drinkard*. This chapter covers the careful exploration of the manifestation of the supernatural in African society. The fourth chapter also examines the manifestations of the supernatural in terms of its techniques in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*.

#### **5.2 Findings**

In the world depicted by Tutuola, everyone and everything is flexible, from humans to animals and plants, gods, ghosts and spirits. People and things adopt different forms and manifest themselves differently according to context and necessity. Something transformed can regain the state that preceded its transformation. In *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* for instance, gods are humans and humans are gods. Spirits assume human forms, and humans can transform themselves into spirits, animals and plants. Sometimes a creature combines multiple forms of being – half-human and half-animal or half-plant, half-god, half-ghost, half-spirit, half-male or half-female, etc. – and assumes the consciousness related to each form.

Anything can be anything. It is thus not surprising that 18 years into being lost in the Bush of Ghosts, the earthly person, our narrator, who would end up spending a total of 24 years with ghosts, goes native. Having married twice to ghostesses, had a “half earthly and half ghost” son, kept the company of various ghosts across over 18 towns of the Bush of Ghosts, the earthly person is able to pass for “a real ghost” (150), speaking the language of the ghosts and behaving generally like one of them. He recounts how after the breakup of his second marriage to the Super-lady ghostess, he roams about in the bush day and night and nobody can identify him as earthly and therefore a stranger or an outsider to the community of ghosts. He had “become a full ghost and was doing everything that ghosts are doing and also speaking the language of ghosts fluently as if I was born in the Bush of Ghosts” (128). His ghostly abilities meant that “I was always protected from uncountable merciless ghosts as it was hard for some of them to believe that I am an earthly person” (128). Indeed, his familiarity with the ways of ghosts and being a ghost had become so convincing that “a ghost friend of mine taught me the art of magic, because he did not know that I am an earthly person at that time” (150). This shows that certain technologies and knowledge reserved for insiders can be acquired through dedicated effort by those who start their journey as outsiders and eventually ease into their host communities.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

In African cosmology, the supernatural has been a very indispensable factor which cannot be ignored because it is really rooted in the belief system of the African man.

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