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Amos Tutuola

(1920-)

Bernth Lindfors

University of Texas at Austin

- BOOKS: *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and His Dead Palm-Wine Tapsiter in the Deads' Town* (London: Faber & Faber, 1952; New York: Grove, 1953);
My Life in the Bush of Ghosts (London: Faber & Faber, 1954; New York: Grove, 1954);
Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle (London: Faber & Faber, 1955; San Francisco: City Lights, 1988);
The Brave African Huntress (London: Faber & Faber, 1958; New York: Grove, 1958);
Feather Woman of the Jungle (London: Faber & Faber, 1962; San Francisco: City Lights, 1988);
Ajayi and His Inherited Poverty (London: Faber & Faber, 1967);
The Witch-Herbalist of the Remote Town (London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1981);
The Wild Hunter in the Bush of the Ghosts (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents, 1982; revised, 1989);
Pauper, Brawler, and Slanderer (London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1987);
The Village Witch Doctor & Other Stories (London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1990).

OTHER: *Yoruba Folhtales*, compiled and translated by Tutuola (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1986).

Amos Tutuola is one of the great eccentrics in African literature. Born to Charles (a cocoa farmer) and Esther Aina Tutuola in Abeokuta, Western Nigeria (now Ogun State), in 1920, educated no more than six years in missionary primary schools, trained as a coppersmith during World War II, and employed as a messenger and storeroom clerk throughout most of his adult life, he appears to be the kind of man least likely to win an international reputation as an author. Indeed, considering his cultural background, minimal education, and lack of literary sophistication, it is surprising that he began writing at all and even more astonishing that he chose to write in English rather than in Yoruba, his native tongue. His works are crudely con-

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structed, severely restricted in narrative range, and marred by gauche grammatical blunders; yet aided by a remarkably vigorous imagination, he has been able to turn some of these liabilities into great assets, thereby transcending his own natural limitations as an inexperienced man of letters. Like the heroes in his stories, Tutuola seems apply blessed with both genius and good luck. He began his literary career almost by accident. In fact, if postwar demobilization in Nigeria had not thrown him out of work as a coppersmith in the RAF and if his own subsequent efforts to establish a smithshop had not failed, he probably never would have turned to writing. In 1947 he married Alake Victoria, and they later had three children. Only after he had taken a job as a messenger in the Labour Department in Lagos in 1948, a position that left him with plenty of free time on his hands, did he begin to write on pieces of scrap paper the English versions of the stories he claims to have heard old people tell in Yoruba. He did not originally intend to publish these jottings; he was merely trying to relieve his boredom by occupying his time in a profitable manner. But after he had been engaged in this writing pastime awhile, something must have urged him to put these stories into a longer narrative sequence and to seek publication abroad. In the late 1940s he wrote to Focal Press, an English publisher of photography books, asking if they would care to consider a manuscript about spirits in the Nigerian bush illustrated by photographs of the spirits. The director of the press, amused by the offer, replied that he would indeed be interested in looking at such a manuscript. Several months later Tutuola's first long narrative, *The Wild Hunter in the Bush of the Ghosts* (eventually published in 1982), arrived in London, wrapped in brown paper, rolled up like a magazine, and bound with twine. The sixteen photographic negatives accompanying the seventy-six-page handwritten manuscript turned out to be snapshots of hand-drawn sketches of spirits featured in the story. A reputable publisher of technical books on photography obviously could not print such a tale, but the director of Focal Press, impressed by the amount of labor that had gone into writing out the story in longhand, felt that Tutuola deserved some compensation for his efforts and therefore bought the manuscript for a nominal sum. He had absolutely no intention of publishing it and believed no other publisher in London would seriously consider bringing out such a book. He himself was interested in it only as a curiosity and conversation piece.

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Reading the book today, one wonders whether Tutuola's unusual literary career would have been quite the same if *The Wild Hunter in the Bush of the Ghosts* had been his first published book. In most respects it closely resembles his later books but it also contains a few idiosyncrasies. Like the others, it is an episodic adventure story told in the first person by a hero who has been forced to undertake a long, hazardous journey in a spirit-infested wilderness. As he wanders from one village to another in this ghostly forest seeking a way home, he encounters strange creatures and experiences extreme deprivations, tortures, and other ordeals that test his mettle and ingenuity. Fortunately a generous legacy of protective medicine (in this case, the juju of his father, a famous hunter and magician) enables him to survive any ordeals he fails to avoid through cunning or chance. After decades of such exploits, which include visits to both heaven and hell, the Wild Hunter finally returns to the human world and offers his people the benefits of his knowledge of other realms.

The story is divided neatly into seven parts, the opening chapter being the narrator's recollection of his father's life story as told to him the night before the father died: the old man had also been transported to the bush of ghosts many years earlier, when he had been swallowed by a one-legged ghost while hunting big game, but he had suffered only six months of colorful horrors before managing to escape. The narrator begins his own autobiography in the next chapter, which opens with a brief account of his father's death followed by a detailed description of how he himself was drawn ineluctably into the "First Town of the Ghosts in the Bush of the Ghosts." After a succession of misadventures involving tree ghosts, dead-smelling ghosts, and equestrian ghosts, he succeeds in slipping out of town only to be captured again early in the next chapter by a short, stout, taper-headed, hungry ghost who conveys him to the subterranean "Second Town of the Ghosts." So it goes, chapter by chapter, town by town, with the narrator facing in each episode two or three major threats on his life and numerous petty harassments until he reaches the Fourth Town, where he is sheltered in a Salvation Army church run by a saintly South African ghost named Victoria Juliana. This woman had died prematurely at age twelve, more than twenty years earlier than predestined, so she was biding her time before ascension into heaven by performing good works. She had even started a school for illiterate young ghosts, a school she persuades the Wild Hunter to attend. He does so well in his

studies that eventually he is appointed headmaster, a position he surrenders after her ascension, when the pupils begin to act unruly.

From there he moves on to the Fifth Town, the abode of the Devil; it is pictured as a well-organized ministate with a huge standing army, an efficient Engineering Department that controls the fuel supply for all four subdivisions of hell, a Correspondence Section in the Devil's office that employs eighteen thousand clerks, and an Employment Exchange Office that keeps extensive records on all sinners, both human and ghostly. Tutuola's vision of hell as a vast bureaucracy is one of the most entertaining conceptions in the whole story – something no doubt inspired by the government offices in Lagos with which his job brought him into regular contact. In this comically Kafkaesque underworld there is even a Labour Headquarters run by a commissioner named "Death," who is "the Devil's Cousin."

The final stop for the Wild Hunter is heaven, which, despite its "Glorious Technicolors" and busy orchestras, is a mild let-down for the reader after the hilarious vibrancy of hell. Though the Wild Hunter is still a living human being, he gains admission to heaven through the intervention of his old friend and mentor Victoria Juliana, who gives him a grand tour of the facilities before arranging his split-second return trip to earth. Then, just before bringing his story to an appropriate moral conclusion, the Wild Hunter pauses briefly for a commercial: he announces that he will transmit written messages via Victoria Juliana to any dead person in heaven the reader may wish to contact, if the reader will be careful to print the name of the person or persons clearly in capital letters on the back of an envelope containing the message and enclose this envelope in another along with a five shilling postal order or money order to cover expenses. The second envelope should be addressed to:

THE "WILD-HUNTER"
c/o AMOS TUTUOLA
35, VAUGHAN STREET
EBUTTE-METTA (LAGOS) NIGERIA.

The Wild Hunger had made a similar offer just after leaving hell. Any reader who wanted to find out if his or her name was included in the Devil's Records Office (thereby indicating that the person was classified a sinner and would ultimately wind up in hell) could follow the same procedure, addressing the inserted envelope to:

His Majesty's the King of the Hell,

17896, Woe Lane,
5th Town of Ghosts,
Bush of Ghosts,
Hell,

and mailing the entire packet and five-shilling fee to the same address in Ebutte-Metta.

Anyone familiar with Tutuola's other works will recognize in this synopsis some features that place *The Wild Hunter in the Bush of the Ghosts* in the same distinctive narrative tradition. First there is the monomythic, cyclical structure of the story, involving a departure, an initiation, and a return. Then there is the loosely coordinated internal structure, the result of a concatenation of discrete fictive units strung together in an almost random order on the lifeline of a fabulous hero. The hero is a composite of the most popular folktale protagonists – hunter, magician, trickster, superman, and culture hero – and some of the adventures he relates closely resemble episodes in well-known Yoruba yarns (for example, a half-bodied ghost, similar to the half-bodied child found not only in folktales but also in Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* [1952], torments the Wild Hunter before he gets to the Fifth Town of Ghosts). Moreover, certain motifs, such as the facile shifting of bodily shapes, the contests between rival magicians, and the encounters with monsters, mutants, and multiform ghosts clearly derive from oral tradition. The story is a collage of borrowed materials put together in an eclectic manner by a resourceful raconteur working well within the conventions governing oral storytelling.

Yet there are signs of literary influences, too. The narrative frame – a hunter's memoirs prefaced by a brief biography of the hunter's father – appears to have been inspired by D. O. Fagunwa's *Ogboju ode ninu igbo irunmale* (1938), which uses the same device. Indeed, the title of Tutuola's story is close to Fagunwa's "The Brave Hunter in the Forest of Four Hundred Spirits" (a literal translation of *Ogboju ode*), suggesting a strong kindred relationship between the texts, possibly bordering on plagiarism. In any case, no one could deny that they belong to the same family of letters.

Certainly there are striking similarities in some of the events recounted. For instance, in the course of fighting with a fierce ghost in the First Town of Ghosts, Tutuola's Wild Hunter breaks his cutlass on his adversary's body and the ghost calmly repairs it and returns it to him so they can resume their battle; Fagunwa's Akara-Ogun is offered the same strange courtesy in his duel with Agbako, a monster he meets in his first sojourn to Irunmale. Next the Wild Hunter is victimized by a

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ghost who mounts and rides him as a horse; so is Akara-Ogun. Both books tell of encounters with one-legged ghosts, four-headed ghosts, ghosts who want to learn how to cook, and ghosts with major social and psychological problems. Furthermore there are suggestive resemblances between parts of Tutuola's story and parts of Fagunwa's second novel *Igbo Olodumare*, published in 1948, apparently the year Tutuola began writing. Such a plethora of motific parallels, added to the structural similarities, establishes beyond doubt that Fagunwa had an important formative influence on Tutuola's mode of writing. Both writers made extensive use of the techniques and materials to indigenous oral lore, but Tutuola appears to have learned from Fagunwa how to transmute this oral art into written art.

And Fagunwa wasn't his only teacher. Tutuola had also read John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (2 volumes, 1678, 1684) and *The Arabian Nights*, classic adventure stories fabricated out of a chain of old tales loosely linked together. Events in Bunyan's narrative, such as Christian's fight with the monster Apollyon; his scalings of the Hill Difficulty and the Delectable Mountains; and his visits to Vanity Fair, Doubting Castle, the Palace Beautiful, and the Celestial City, may have served as distant models for some of the Wild Hunter's peripatetic adventures. Certainly there is the same element of restless questing, with the pilgrim either struggling against fearsome adversaries or learning the ways of God, the Devil, and humankind through discussions with helpful advisers. At one point even the Wild Hunter turns evangelist when he meets a ghost named Woe, who had been expelled from heaven for bad behavior and punished in hell for sixty-five years before being rusticated to the Third Town of Ghosts to live for eternity among the "wild beasts, poisonous snakes and scorpions": "After the ghost related his story like that, I was very sorry for him, and I advised him that if he could change his bad character, the God Almighty may take you away from these punishments, but he said immediately, that he could not change his bad character...and he said he was waiting for more punishments from God." When the Wild Hunter offers this ghost a drink of water to slake his thirst, the ghost consumes no more than two drops before being transformed into a little hill near the way to heaven. The Wild Hunter decides to write the ghost's name on the hill "for...bad ghosts to see whenever they would pass, and as a remembrance."

This vignette illustrates one point of difference between *The Wild Hunter in the Bush of the Ghosts* and the books Tutuola later wrote: missionary Christi-

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anity was a major theme in Tutuola's earliest writing. Although this theme was to resurface in some of his later works – as in the well-known episode in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954) in which the narrator meets his dead cousin who has established in the 10th Town of Ghosts a successful Methodist Church with more than a thousand provincial branches over which he presides as bishop at annual Synod meetings – Ulli Beier was right to note that Tutuola is not the Christian moralist that Fagunwa was. Nevertheless, Tutuola started from a position much closer to Fagunwa spiritually than has hitherto been recognized. They both began as didactic writers combining Christian theology with traditional Yoruba moral wisdom, but Tutuola, after initially following Fagunwa's example in Africanizing Bunyan, returned to more indigenous sources of artistic inspiration and wrote less-homiletic secular sagas.

Another exceptional feature of *The Wild Hunter in the Bush of the Ghosts* is what might be termed its autobiographical content. Tutuola had attended a Salvation Army school, had served briefly in a branch of the military service, and was working in a government office in Lagos while writing this story. It is not surprising, then, to find him inserting in his narrative fairly elaborate descriptions of Victoria Juliana's school, the Devil's army, or the crowded offices of hell. He was obviously using his own firsthand experience of such places as the basis for his fantasies. The story may thus be said to have a greater fidelity to actual circumstances and scenes in terrestrial life than is usually the case in Tutuola's fiction: readers are still in an imaginary garden, but it appears to have some freakishly real toads in it.

Yet it must be admitted that *The Wild Hunter in the Bush of the Ghosts* is neither Tutuola's most interesting narrative nor his most accomplished. Indeed, crudities abound, and there are moments when spectacularly outlandish happenings are robbed of imaginative intensity by colorless narration. The tale is obviously the work of a novice writer, in this case an apprentice craftsman with no formal training. Had it been published earlier, it would not have generated the same excitement among readers overseas as did his next narrative, a bizarre yarn with the improbable title *The Palm-Wine Drinkard and His Dead Palm-Wine Tapper in the Deads' Town*.

Tutuola was lucky to get this second story published and luckier still that it happened to become a commercial success. Tutuola had originally submitted the manuscript to Lutterworth Press, a missionary publisher for the United Society for

Christian Literature, in response to an advertisement in a Nigerian magazine listing books they had published by African authors. Two of the editors at Lutterworth were intrigued by the story and passed it on first to an educational publisher, Thomas Nelson and Sons, who rejected it outright, and then to Faber and Faber, who had the courage to publish it in May 1952. The book might have sunk rapidly into obscurity had it not been enthusiastically reviewed a few weeks later by Dylan Thomas in the *Observer* (6 July 1952). Within a year Grove Press published an American edition, which won similar acclaim, and neither edition has gone out of print. By 1978 more than ninety thousand copies of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* had been sold.

In Nigeria, however, Tutuola's writing did not get such a friendly reception. Educated Nigerians were shocked to learn that a book written in substandard English by a lowly Lagos messenger was being lionized abroad, and they were contemptuous of Tutuola's efforts when they saw that he had borrowed heavily from both oral tradition and the works of Fagunwa. Some Yoruba readers went so far as to say he had plagiarized from these sources, creating nothing startlingly new or original in the process and often mangling the best of the material he forged. To them he was not a naive, native genius endowed with a protean imagination but rather a bungling literary burglar with no imagination at all.

The book that sparked such controversy was summarized by Dylan Thomas as a "brief, thronged, grisly and bewitching story, or series of stories...about the journey of an expert and devoted palmwine drinkard through a nightmare of indescribable adventures, all simply and carefully described, in the spirit-bristling bush. From the age of ten he drank 225 kegs a day, and wished to do nothing else; he knew what was good for him, it was just what the witch-doctor ordered. But when his tapster fell from a tree and died, and as, naturally, he himself 'did not satisfy with water as with palmwine,' he set out to search for the tapster in Deads' Town."

The Palm-Wine Drinkard is pure fantasy, a voyage of the imagination into a never-never land of magic, marvels, and monsters. But the beings and doings in this fantasy world are not entirely unfamiliar. The journey to the land of the dead, the abnormal conception, the monstrous child, the enormous drinking capacity, the all-providing magical object, the tree spirits, the personifications, the fabulous monsters – these are standard materials of oral tradition, the stuff of which folktales are made.

The drinker himself appears at first to be an unpromising hero. He has, after all, done nothing but drink palm-wine all his life. But once he starts on his journey to Deads' Town, his extraordinary cleverness and unusual powers of endurance enable him to circumvent or survive numerous misadventures. He carries with him a substantial supply of juju so he can transform himself at will whenever he gets into a tight corner. However, even though he is part trickster, part magician, and part superman, he cannot overcome every adversary or extricate himself from every difficult situation; supernatural helpers have to come to his assistance from time to time. Eventually he finds his tapster in Deads' Town but cannot persuade him to reenter the world of the "alives." The drinker and his wife leave Deads' Town and, several adventures later, arrive home only to discover that their people are starving. Heaven and Land have had a bitter quarrel and Heaven has refused to send rain to Land. The ensuing drought and famine have killed millions. The drinker springs into action and in a short time manages to feed the remaining multitudes, settle the cosmic dispute, end the drought and famine, and restore the world to normal functioning order. The unpromising hero, who had set out on his quest with limited powers and purely selfish ambitions becomes in the end a miracle worker, the savior and benefactor of all humankind. He changes, in other words, from a typical folktale hero into a typical epic hero. Such a change does not take him outside the stream of oral tradition.

Many of the folktales Tutuola uses in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* exist in Yoruba oral tradition. Any sizable collection of Yoruba tales will yield parallels, and some of Tutuola's most striking episodes can be found in more than one collection. For example, the celebrated passage in which a "beautiful complete gentleman" lures a lady deep into the forest and then dismembers himself, returning the hired parts of his body to their owners and paying rentage until he is reduced to a humming skull, appears in at least seven different versions in Yoruba folktale collections. There are almost as many texts of the incident of the all-providing magical object, which produces first an abundance of food and later an abundance of whips. Many other tales and motifs in Tutuola's book – the quarrel between heaven and earth, the carrying of a sacrifice to heaven, the tiny creature that makes newly cleared fields sprout weeds, the enfant terrible, and the magical transformations – can be documented as traditional among the Yoruba. For those that cannot be so documented we have the word of

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Adeboye Babalola, a prominent Yoruba scholar, who writes in "Yoruba Folktales" (*Black Orpheus* 1965) that "the Yoruba are lovers of the marvellous, the awe-inspiring, the weird, the eerie. It is a small minority of [Yoruba] folk-tales that concern human beings only. The great majority of the tales feature human beings, animals behaving like humans, and often also superhuman beings: demons, ogres, deities." Further confirmation of Tutuola's debt to Yoruba oral tradition comes from Yoruba critics who insist that his stories are well known.

The tales are known not only in Yorubaland but throughout West Africa. The distinguished anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits remarks in his introduction to a 1958 collection of folktales from Dahomey (now the Republic of Benin) that "it will be instructive for one who reads the narratives in this volume to go to Tutuola's books with the motifs and orientations of the tales given here in mind. He will find them all" (*Dahomean Narrative*). Though this is certainly an overstatement, it serves to emphasize the fact that folktales known to the Yoruba are known to other West African peoples as well. Tutuola's tale of the self-dismembering "complete gentleman," for example, has been found not only among the Fon but also among the Igbo and Ibibio of Nigeria and the Krio of Sierra Leone. According to critic Jack Berry, the tale of the magical food-and-whips producer is widely distributed in West Africa, as are tales of ogres and other supernatural beings. Alice Werner, in her 1964 study of African mythology, reports that stories of people who have penetrated into the world of ghosts and returned "are not uncommon" not only present in many folktales but also "are believed in as actual occurrences at the present day." Thus *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, a lineal descendant of Yoruba oral tradition, hails from a large extended family of West African oral traditions.

What has been said about *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* also applies to Tutuola's other books, for his method and content have not changed much over the years. The quest pattern basic to his fiction has already been described; though Tutuola varies this pattern from book to book, he never abandons it entirely. He never chooses a totally different pattern. One suspects that his roots in oral tradition run so deep that he knows of no other way to compose book-length fiction.

Nevertheless, minor changes in Tutuola's writing are worth noting, for they reveal that though Tutuola has not moved any great distance from where he was in 1948, when he began writing *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, he has not been standing

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still all these years. His most radical departure from the quest pattern is in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, which opens with its narrator-hero, a boy of seven, being maltreated and abandoned by his stepmothers, separated from his older brother, and left to wander in the bush during a tribal war. Frightened by the sounds of gunfire and unable to distinguish between bad and good, he enters the Bush of Ghosts and spends the next twenty-four years wandering in an African spirit world replete with towns, kings, civic ceremonies, festivals, law courts, and even his cousins' Methodist church. He has experiences both harrowing and happy, and at one point he considers taking up permanent residence in the 10th Town of Ghosts with his dead cousin, but he can't bring himself to do it because he keeps longing to return to his earthly home. In this respect he resembles the protagonist of *The Wild Hunter in the Bush of the Ghosts*. And like the deus ex machina that appears at the end of that story, eventually a "Television-handed ghostess" turns up and helps the young man to escape so that he is reunited with his mother and brother and begins to lead a more-normal life. Obviously the hero's journey cannot really be termed a quest. Harold R. Collins describes it as a "West African Odyssey," and Gerald Moore sees it as "a kind of extended Initiation or 'rite of passage'... or Purgatory [in which the] initiation of the boy-hero is not sought, but is imposed upon him as the price of his development into full understanding." Both of these interpretations are apt, but they presuppose a degree of premeditation, of careful organization and methodical development, which cannot be found in the story. Again the plot consists of a string of loosely connected episodes in a random sequence. There is a distinct beginning and distinct end, but the middle is a muddle, the improvisatory nature of Tutuola's art. He moves from one episode to another not by calculation but by chance. And when he gets to the end of the chain, when all conflicts are resolved and his hero returns to a state of equilibrium, as most folktale heroes do, Tutuola rounds off the narrative with a moral: "This is what hatred did." The moral reminds the reader that the hero's sufferings and misfortunes can be blamed on his stepmothers, who rejected him twenty-four years before. Tutuola thus ends his story in typical folktale fashion by using it to teach a lesson about human behavior.

In his *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle* (1955) Tutuola returns to the quest pattern. Beautiful Simbi, an only child who has never known poverty and punishment, desires to set out on a journey "to know and experience their difficulties."

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Her mother and others warn her not to, but she feels she must. Toward the end of the story, she is fed up with poverty and punishment. She has been kidnapped, sold into slavery, beaten, starved, almost beheaded, set afloat on a river in a sealed coffin, carried off by an eagle, imprisoned in a tree trunk, half-swallowed by a boa constrictor, attacked by a satyr, shrunk and put in a bottle, bombarded by a stone-carrying phoenix, and petrified into a rock. Fortunately she is a talented girl who can sing well enough to wake the dead, and she gets plenty of assistance from girlfriends, gods, and a friendly gnome, so that in the end she manages to return home to her mother. Then, "having rested for some days, she was going from house to house...warning all the children that it was a great mistake to a girl who did not obey her parents." Simbi, too, has a lesson to teach.

Although it resembles Tutuola's other books in matter and manner, *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle* marks a new stage in his development as a writer, for it displays definite signs of formal literary influence. It was the first of his published works to be divided into numbered chapters, each encompassing a major adventure, and the only one to be written in the third-person point of view. Moore has noted that it contains far more dialogue and more frequent adverbial "stage directions" than the earlier books. Furthermore there are creatures such as goblins, imps, a gnome, myrmidon, phoenix, nymph, and satyr whose names, at least, derive from European mythology. And one passage so closely resembles an episode in a Yoruba novel by Fagunwa that it is difficult to believe that they could have been created independently of one another. Tutuola must have been doing some reading between 22 July 1952 and 26 November 1954, the respective dates *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* and *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle* were submitted for publication, but when Eric Larrabee interviewed him (for the article "Palm-Wine Drinkard Searches for a Tapster," *Reporter*, 12 May 1953), Tutuola owned no books and did not think of himself as an author. After *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* was published, Tutuola decided to attend evening classes to improve himself. Reading was not doubt a part of his program for self-improvement. When Larrabee offered to send him books, Tutuola requested *A Survey of Economic Education* published by the Brookings Institution, Aldous Huxley's *The Devils of Loudun* (1952), and "some other books which contain stories like that of the P.W.D. [*The Palm-Wine Drinkard*] which are written by either West Africans, White men or Negroes, etc." Larrabee recalls that,

of the other books sent, "the two he seemed most to enjoy were Joyce Cary's *Mr. Johnson* [1939] and Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*, which he said contained stories similar to those he had heard as a child" (*Chicago Review*, 1956). Not surprisingly there are traces of literary influence in *Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle*. Tutuola was becoming conscious of himself as an author, was reading more widely, and was trying hard to improve his writing. He could still tell only one kind of story, but should the traditional wellspring ever fail to provide him with sufficient material, he could now turn to other sources for inspiration.

Tutuola succeeded in improving the structure of his narratives considerably. They began to be organized into more neatly demarcated chapters. In *The Brave African Huntress* (1958) and *Ajaiyi and His Inherited Poverty* (1967), he adopted the practice of citing one or more proverbs at the head of a chapter and then using the action in that chapter to illustrate the proverbs. In *Feather Woman of the Jungle* (1962), his most-stylized work, he created an *Arabian Nights* structure by having a seventy-six-year-old chief entertain villagers every night for ten nights with accounts of his past adventures. Both of these narrative techniques must have entered literature from oral tradition. If Tutuola picked them up from his reading, as appears likely, he is to be commended for selecting those that suited his material perfectly. Using such techniques he could remain a raconteur and at the same time could link and unify his concatenated tales more effectively.

The tales were still woven into the familiar quest pattern. Adebisi, the heroine in *The Brave African Huntress*, ventures into the dangerous Jungle of the Pigmies to rescue her four brothers. The chief in *Feather Woman of the Jungle* sets out on a series of hazardous journeys in quest of treasure and adventure. Ajaiyi in *Ajaiyi and His Inherited Poverty* simply wants to get out of debt and is willing to go to the Creator, the God of Irony, the Devil, and assorted witches, witchdoctors, and wizards to ask for help. Each of the adventurers, after a succession of ups and downs, achieves his or her objective.

As for the tales themselves, Tutuola appears to have continued to rely more heavily on traditional Yoruba material than on non-Yoruba material. In *The Brave African Huntress* there are references to "elves, genii, goblins, demons, imps, gnomes," and a "cyclops-like creature," but the actual monsters encounters and the adventures undergone resemble those in Tutuola's earlier books. The episode in which Adebisi cuts the hair of the king of Ibembe Town and discovers he has horns has been

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cited by critics as a possible example of European or Indian influence because it resembles the story of King Midas and the Ass's Ears, but Tutuola, in a letter to Collins, stated: "The king who has horns is in the traditional story of my town." In published Yoruba folktale collections, one can easily find parallels to other tales and motifs, such as Adebisi's palace adventure in Bachelors' Town in *The Brave African Huntress*; the three dogs that rescue their master from woodchoppers, the journey to the underwater kingdom, and the town where people consume only water in *Feather Woman of the Jungle*; and the dead rats that come alive, the person who hides in the pupil of a blacksmith's eye, and the quarrel between lenders in *Ajaiyi and His Inherited Poverty*. Moreover, these books are packed with Yoruba deities, towns, customs, superstitions, and proverbs. Tutuola, despite his reading and increased sophistication, apparently chose to remain a teller of Yoruba tales.

There was a fourteen-year gap between publication of *Ajaiyi and His Inherited Poverty* and Tutuola's next long narrative, *The Witch-Herbalist of the Remote Town* (1981), but the hiatus does not appear to have had any measurable impact, positive or negative, on his chosen mode of storytelling. The later narrative is another rambling, episodic adventure tale, the quest this time being for medicine to cure a woman's barrenness. The brave hunter who undertakes the hazardous journey to obtain this boon from an expert witch-herbalist meets many curious creatures along his way, but eventually his persistence and ingenuity pay off. He gets the medicine, sips some of it on his return to stave off hunger, and then gives the rest of his wife, who promptly becomes pregnant. However, so does he, and he must undergo further trials and torments before being cured.

Tutuola's next new book, published five years later, is a different sort of venture, a small collection of short traditional tales rather than a long, consecutive story fabricated out of a concatenation of fictive motifs, some traditional, some not. *Yoruba Folktales* (1986) is significant as Tutuola's first attempt at pure narrative preservation; his other works could be described as exercises in impure narrative perversion. In *Yoruba Folktales* he must remain to a large extent faithful to his sources, for these stories are presented as being the communal literary property of his people. He cannot claim to have invented such narratives; he is merely passing them along to others in written form and in a foreign language. If he takes any liberties with texts, they must be small liberties, the sort that any story-

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teller might take when relating to a well-known tale. Moral essences must stay more or less the same. In transcribing such narratives, most of them stories told throughout West Africa, Tutuola remains true to tradition but occasionally appears to add some zaniness to spice up characterization and plot.

The only major change in Tutuola's storytelling style that readers are likely to notice – and some possibly deplore – is sociolinguistic in nature: in *Yoruba Folktales* there are hardly any of the grammatical blunders and stylistic infelicities that one associates with Tutuola's earlier works. The idiom that Dylan Thomas characterized as “young English” is gone almost without a trace. The reason is not difficult to discern: the book was aimed by its publisher at primary-school classrooms, and one cannot address a school audience in Nigeria in a fractured foreign tongue. Textbook English has to be correct English; otherwise the textbook will not be approved for school use. In the case of *Yoruba Folktales*, an American professor, the late Robert Wren, was responsible for purifying and refining Tutuola's language. His works have always been edited to some degree by his publishers, but *Yoruba Folktales* may mark the first time they have been edited to such an advanced degree that no naive Tutuolaisms survive.

However, for those who may have missed Tutuola's authentic narrative voice, another book soon followed that had all the defining characteristics of the genre he had made distinctively his own. *Pauper, Brawler, and Slanderer* (1987) tells of the peripatetic adventures of three characters – two men and a woman (Brawler, the wife of Pauper) – who, rejected by their parents and expelled from their town, create havoc wherever they go, often getting into amusing scrapes with one another as well as with more ordinary mortals. In the end they stand before the Creator in the Land of Judgement and are transformed into smoky whirlwinds that blow to every corner of the earth; and “to these days they are still roaming about invisibly on earth and yet they continue to trouble the people.”

Tutuola's *The Village Witch Doctor & Other Stories* (1990), comprises a dozen of Tutuola's short stories, some of which had been published previously in magazines or broadcast on radio. It is a diverse collection, not anchored to the life story of a single character or single group of characters, so it more closely resembles *Yoruba Folktales* than any of his other works. Tutuola also had further help from Wren, so the English is a bit smoother than usual. But the same bouyant imagination is in evidence, the same fascination with comically grotesque fan-

tasy worlds. Tutuola, after more than forty years of writing, remains a very resourceful raconteur.

A few critics, seeking to demonstrate how Tutuola improves upon the material he borrows, have contrasted passages in his books with analogous folktales. This type of argument, no matter how well documented, is not very persuasive because the critic cannot prove that the particular folktale text chosen for comparison is the version of the tale that Tutuola knew. Perhaps Tutuola had heard a different version, perhaps even a better version than he himself was able to tell. Eldred Jones makes the mistake of assuming that the Yoruba tale on which Tutuola based his account of the self-dismembering "complete gentleman" in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* is very similar to the Krio version of this tale. Jones therefore credits Tutuola with the invention of several striking details, which, though absent from the Krio version, are quite common in published Yoruba texts of the tale. Even a critic familiar with all the published Yoruba versions would not be able to draw a firm line between borrowed and invented details in Tutuola's redaction. Without knowing exactly what and from where Tutuola borrowed, it is impossible to know how much he contributed to the stories he tells.

Critics who search for literary influences on Tutuola's writing are on safer ground insofar as texts are concerned. Bunyan is again a case in point. The episode in which Death shows the palm-wine drinker the bones of former victims appears to be modeled on a scene in *The Pilgrim's Progress* in which Christian meets the Giant Despair in Doubting Castle. Several towns the drinker and other Tutuolan heroes visit bear a distinct resemblance to Vanity Fair. And the monsters often seem to belong to the same subspecies as Bunyan's Apollyon, who was "clothed with scales, like a fish...had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion." However, unlike *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Tutuola's narratives are not religious allegories. They have been influenced far more by Yoruba oral tradition than by the Bible. Bunyan may have been instructive in teaching Tutuola how to put an extended quest tale together, but Bunyan did not convert him to Christianity. In substance and spirit Tutuola remains a thoroughly African storyteller. Only in *The Wild Hunter in the Bush of Ghosts* does Bunyan appear to have left a religious imprint on Tutuola's narrative strategy.

Fagunwa, though, is the crucial literary influence on Tutuola. Between 1948 and 1951, the years in which Tutuola began his writing career, Fagunwa

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published ^{t/} at least nine books, including a new edition of his first work of fiction, *Ogboju ode ninu igbo irunmale*. Tutuola, who had read this book at school, must have been aware of Fagunwa's extraordinary outburst of literary activity in these postwar years. Indeed it is conceivable that Tutuola got both the idea of writing stories and the idea of submitting them for publication from seeing Fagunwa's works in print. Yet there are sufficient differences between the two writers to show that Tutuola is not merely translating Fagunwa and that Tutuola is always sensitive to the demands of his own narrative. Such differences also suggest that, even when he follows Fagunwa most faithfully, he does so from memory rather than from a printed text, that, instead of actually plagiarizing, he vividly re-creates what he best remembers from Fagunwa's books, knitting the spirit if not the substance of the most suitable material into the loose fibers of his own yarn.

Because Fagunwa occasionally makes use of material from Yoruba oral tradition, it is not always easy to tell when Tutuola is borrowing from Fagunwa and when from folktales. For example, both writers use motifs such as the "juju-compass," which helps travelers find their way; the hall of singing birds, which turns out to be a trap; the fierce gatekeeper who must be overcome in combat; and the deer-woman who marries a hunter. Tutuola's handling of these motifs may owe more to Yoruba oral tradition than to Fagunwa. Tutuola seems closest to Fagunwa when Fagunwa is closest to oral tradition. Fagunwa's books were among those that taught Tutuola how to weave various old stories into a flexible narrative pattern ^{t/} that could be stretched into a book. Fagunwa's contribution to Tutuola should perhaps be measured more in terms of overall structure and descriptive technique than in terms of content. Tutuola followed Fagunwa's lead and traveled in the same direction, but he did not always walk in Fagunwa's tracks.

Tutuola has never pretended that his stories were original creations: he has admitted in interviews and letters that he borrowed extensively from Yoruba oral tradition and always enjoyed reading works of Fagunwa, Bunyan, and other writers who made imaginative use of folktales and stories of fabulous adventure. Any storyteller building up his repertoire of tales probably would have done the same. In oral art what matters most is not uniqueness of invention but adroitness of performance. A storyteller is judged not by his capacity for fabricating new stories but by his ability to tell old, well-known tales in an entertaining manner. This fact may explain why Tutuola looted the treasury of

ready-made fictions he found around him. He was creatively exploiting his cultural heritage, not robbing it.

Yet some of his early critics maintained that his work was an unprincipled act of piracy, especially since Tutuola was writing in English for a foreign audience rather than in Yoruba for his own people. What made it worse, they said, was that he was an inept craftsman who could not match Fagunwa as a storyteller and could not write in proper English. According to some critics Tutuola's barbarous verbal behavior was giving readers overseas a poor opinion of Africans.

One can understand the virulence of this reaction if one remembers that Tutuola's first books appeared at a time when Africans were trying to prove to the outside world that they were ready to manage their own political affairs. The colonial era was coming to an end, and educated Africans, in their eagerness for national independence, were becoming acutely conscious of their image abroad. They wanted to give an appearance of modernity, maturity, competence, and sophistication, but the naive fantasies of Tutuola projected just the opposite image. Moore has suggested that Tutuola aroused the antipathy of some of his countrymen by reminding them of a world from which they wanted to escape. To such readers Tutuola was a disgrace, a setback, and a national calamity.

But, to readers in Europe and America, Tutuola was an exotic delight. The critic for *New Yorker* went so far as to say, "One catches a glimpse of the very beginning of literature, that moment when writing at last seizes and pins down the myths and legends of an alphabetic culture." In a similar vein V. S. Pritchett (*New Statesman and Nation*, 6 March 1954) claimed that *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* "discernibly expresses the unconscious of a race and even moments of the nightmare element of our own unconsciousness. ... Tutuola's voice is like the beginning of man on earth." The image-conscious Nigerians apparently had good reason to worry.

What fascinated many non-African readers of Tutuola was his style. Pritchett characterized it as "a loose, talking prose"; Dylan Thomas called it "young English." To native speakers of English, Tutuola's splintered style was an amusing novelty; to educated Nigerians who had spent years honing and polishing their English, it was schoolboy's abomination.

Tutuola's later books were not as enthusiastically received in England and America as his first two. Reviewers complained that Tutuola's writing

began to seem repetitive and deliberately childish rather than pleasingly childlike. Since Faber and Faber no longer took pains to cleanse his manuscripts of their grossest linguistic impurities, he appeared more inarticulate, more splintery, at times almost unintelligible. Clearly Tutuola's novelty had worn off, and the pendulum of critical opinion had begun to reverse its direction. Later it was to swing back to a more neutral position.

In Nigeria, on the other hand, the pendulum had started to swing in a decidedly more positive direction shortly after independence. In the early 1960s *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* was adapted for presentation on the stage as a Yoruba opera, and performances in Nigeria and at various drama festivals abroad were extremely well received. In the late 1960s and early 1970s a few Nigerian critics began serious reassessments of Tutuola's works, studying them with great care. In more recent years there has been a tendency, particularly among established Nigerian writers, toward a greater acceptance of Tutuola. More is being written about him and his works today than at any time in the past, the consensus of opinion being that, though he is not a typical author, he is far too important a phenomenon to be overlooked.

His importance resides not only in his eccentricities but also in his affinities with two established traditions of creative expression. His works unite oral and written art, bridging folk narratives on the one hand with precursors of the novel (such as *The Pilgrim's Progress*) on the other. Tutuola could be called the link between preliterate and literate man, for his creativity is firmly rooted in the cultural heritage of both. One sees in his works how two disparate systems of expressive conventions can be joined in a productive synthesis. Tutuola's writings will no doubt continue to interest readers for some time to come because they are a fascinating amalgam of old and new, indigenous and foreign, and oral and written materials. Tutuola, despite obvious limitations, is one of the most remarkably successful syncretists in African literature.

Though he has mostly resided in Ibadan and Ago-Odo, Nigeria, he has also traveled around Africa, Europe, and the United States. In 1979 he was a visiting research fellow at the University of Ife (Nigeria), and in 1983 he was an associate in the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. He has also worked for the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation.

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Amos Tutuola

Bernth Lindfors

University of Texas at Austin

BIRTH: Abeokuta, Nigeria, 1920, to Charles Tutuola and Esther Aina.

EDUCATION: Salvation Army School, Abeokuta, 1934-36; Lagos High School, Lagos, 1936-38; Anglican Central School, Abeokuta, 1938-39.

MARRIAGE: 1947 to Alake Victoria; children: Olubunmi, Oluyinka, others. and

BOOKS:

The Palm-Wine Drinkard and His Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Deads' Town.

(London: Faber and Faber, 1952; New York: Grove Press, 1953);

My Life in the Bush of Ghosts (London: Faber and Faber; New York: Grove Press, 1954);

Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle (London: Faber and Faber, 1955; San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1983);

The Brave African Huntress (London: Faber and Faber, 1958; New York: Grove Press, ¹⁹⁵⁸1970);

Feather Woman of the Jungle (London: Faber and Faber, 1962; San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988);

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~~AMOS TUTUOLA~~

~~Bernth Lindfors~~

Amos Tutuola is one of the great eccentrics in African literature. Born in Abeokuta, Western Nigeria (now Ogun State) in 1920, educated no more than six years in missionary primary schools, trained as a coppersmith during the Second World War, and employed as a messenger and storeroom clerk throughout most of his adult life, he appears to be the kind of man least likely to win an international reputation as an author. Indeed, considering his cultural background, minimal education and lack of literary sophistication, it is surprising that he began writing at all and even more astonishing that he chose to write in English rather than in Yoruba, his mother tongue. His works are crudely constructed, severely restricted in narrative range, and marred by gauche grammatical blunders; yet aided by a remarkably vigorous imagination, he has been able to turn some of these liabilities into great assets, thereby fortuitously transcending his own natural limitations as an inexperienced man of letters. Like the heroes in his stories, Tutuola seems amply blessed with both genius and good luck.

He began his literary career almost by accident. In fact, if post-war demobilization in Nigeria had not thrown him out of work as a coppersmith in the RAF and if his own subsequent efforts to establish a smithy had not failed, he probably never would have turned to writing. It was only after he had taken a job as a messenger in the Labour Department in Lagos in 1948, a job that left him with plenty of free time on his hands, that he began to write down on pieces of scrap paper English versions of the stories he claims to have heard old people tell in Yoruba. He did not originally intend to publish these jottings; he was merely trying to relieve his boredom by occupy-

ing his time in a profitable manner.

But after he had been engaged in this pastime awhile, something must have urged him to put these stories into a longer narrative sequence and to seek publication abroad. In the late 1940s he wrote to Focal Press, an English publisher of photography books, asking if they would care to consider a manuscript about spirits in the Nigerian bush illustrated by photographs of the spirits! The director of the press, amused by the offer, replied that he would indeed be interested in looking at such a manuscript. Several months later Tutuola's first long narrative, "The Wild Hunter in the Bush of ^{the} Ghosts", arrived in London wrapped in brown paper, rolled up like a magazine, and bound with twine. The sixteen photographic negatives accompanying the seventy-six page handwritten manuscript turned out to be snapshots of hand-drawn sketches of spirits featured in the story. A reputable publisher of technical books on photography obviously could not print such a tale, but the director of Focal Press, impressed by the amount of labor that had gone into writing out the story in longhand, felt the author deserved some compensation for his efforts and therefore bought the manuscript for a nominal sum. He had absolutely no intention of publishing it and believed no other publisher in London would seriously consider bringing out such a book. He himself was interested in it only as a curiosity and conversation piece.

Reading this manuscript today, one wonders whether Tutuola's unusual literary career would have been quite the same if "The Wild Hunter in the Bush of ^{the} Ghosts" had been his first published book. In most respects it closely resembles his later books but it also contains a few idiosyncrasies that make it unique. Like the others, it is an episodic adventure story told in the first person by a hero who has been forced to undertake a long,

hazardous journey in a spirit-infested wilderness. As he wanders from one "town" to another in this ghostly forest seeking a way home, he encounters strange creatures and experiences extreme deprivations, tortures and other "punishments" that test his mettle and ingenuity. Fortunately, a generous legacy of protective medicine (in this case, the "juju" of his father, a famous hunter and magician) enables him to survive any ordeals he fails to avoid through cunning or chance. After decades of such exploits, which include visits to both heaven and hell, the Wild Hunter finally returns to the human world and offers his people the benefits of his knowledge of other realms.

The story is divided very neatly into seven parts, the opening chapter being the narrator's recollection of his father's life story as told to him the night before the old man died. His father had also been transported to the bush of ghosts many years earlier when he had been swallowed by a one-legged ghost while hunting big game, but he had suffered only six months of colorful horrors before managing to escape. The narrator begins his own autobiography in the next chapter, which opens with a brief account of his father's death followed by a detailed description of how he himself was drawn ineluctably into the "First Town of the Ghosts in the Bush of ^{the} Ghosts." After a succession of misadventures involving tree-ghosts, dead-smelling ghosts, and pyrocephalic equestrian ghosts, he succeeds in slipping out of town only to be captured again early in the next chapter by a short, stout, taper-headed, hungry ghost who conveys him to the subterranean "Second Town of the Ghosts." So it goes, chapter by chapter, town by town, with the narrator facing in each episode two or three major threats on his life and numerous petty harassments until he reaches the Fourth Town, where he is sheltered in a Salvation Army church run by a saintly South African named Victoria Juliana.

This woman died prematurely at age twelve, more than twenty years earlier than predestined, so she was biding her time before ascension into heaven by performing good works. She had even started a school for illiterate young ghosts, a school she persuades the Wild Hunter to attend. He does so well in his studies that eventually he is appointed Headmaster, a position he surrenders after her ascension, when the pupils begin to act unruly.

From there he moves on to the Fifth Town, the abode of the Devil, which is pictured as a well-organized mini-state with a huge standing army, an efficient Engineering Department that controls the fuel supply for all four subdivisions of Hell, a Correspondence Section in the Devil's Office that employs 18,000 clerks, and an Employment Exchange Office that keeps extensive records on all sinners, human and ghostly. Tutuola's vision of Hell as a vast bureaucracy is one of the most entertaining conceptions in the whole story--something no doubt inspired by the government offices in Lagos with which his job brought him into regular contact. In this comically Kafkaesque underworld there is even a Labour Headquarters run by a Commissioner of Labour named "Death" who is "the Devil's Cousin." It is not clear whether his appointment to this post was the result of infernal nepotism.

The final stop for the Wild Hunter is Heaven which, despite its "Glorious Technicolors" and busy orchestras, is a mild let-down for the reader after the hilarious vibrancy of Hell. Though the Wild Hunter is still a living human being, he gains admission to Heaven through the intervention of his old friend and mentor Victoria Juliana who gives him a grand tour of the facilities before arranging his split-second return trip to earth. Then, just before bringing his story to an appropriate moral conclusion, the Wild Hunter pauses briefly for a commercial: he announces that he will transmit written

messages via Victoria Juliana to any dead person in heaven the reader may wish to contact, if the reader will be careful to print the name of the person or persons clearly in capital letters on the back of an envelope containing the message and enclose this envelope in another along with a five shilling postal order or money order to cover expenses. The second envelope should be addressed to:

THE "WILD-HUNTER"
 c/o AMOS TUTUOLA
 35, VAUGHAN STREET
 EBUTTE-METTA (LAGOS) NIGERIA

The Wild Hunter had made a similar offer just after leaving Hell. Any reader who wanted to find out if his or her name was included in the Devil's Records Office (thereby indicating that the person was classified a sinner and would ultimately wind up in Hell) could follow the same procedure, addressing the inserted envelope to

His Majesty's the King of the Hell,
 17896, Woe Lane,
 5th Town of Ghosts,
 Bush of Ghosts,
 Hell

and mailing the entire packet and five shilling fee to the same address in Ebute-Metta.

Anyone familiar with Tutuola's other works will recognize in this synopsis a number of features that place "The Wild Hunter in the Bush of ^{the} Ghosts" in the same distinctive narrative tradition. First there is the monomythic cyclical structure of the story, involving a Departure, an Initiation and a Return. Then there is the loosely coordinated internal structure which is the result of a concatenation of discrete fictive units strung together on the lifeline of a fabulous hero in an almost random order. The hero himself is a

composite of the most popular folktale protagonists--hunter, magician, trickster, superman, culture hero--and some of the adventures he relates closely resemble episodes in well-known Yoruba yarns (e.g., a half-bodied ghost, similar to the half-bodied child found not only in folktales but also in Tutuola's The Palm-Wine Drinkard, torments the Wild Hunter before he gets to the Fifth Town of Ghosts). Moreover, certain motifs such as the facile shifting of bodily shapes, the contests between rival magicians, and the encounters with monsters, mutants and multiform ghosts clearly derive from oral tradition. The story is a collage of borrowed materials put together in an eclectic manner by a resourceful raconteur working well within the conventions governing oral storytelling.

Yet there are signs of literary influence too. The narrative frame-- a hunter's memoirs prefaced by a brief biography of the hunter's father--appears to have been inspired by D.O. Fagunwa's Ogboju ode ninu igbo irunmale , which uses the same device. Indeed, the very title of Tutuola's story "The Wild Hunter in the Bush of ^{the} Ghosts" is extremely close to Fagunwa's "The Brave Hunter in the Forest of Four Hundred Spirits" (a literal translation of Ogboju ode...), suggesting a strong kindred relationship between the texts possibly bordering on illegitimacy. In any case, no one could deny that they belong to the same family of letters.

Certainly there are striking similarities in some of the events recounted. For instance, in the course of fighting with a fierce ghost in the First Town of Ghosts, Tutuola's Wild Hunter breaks his cutlass on his adversary's body and the ghost calmly repairs it and returns it to him so they can resume their battle; Fagunwa's Akara-Ogun is offered the same strange courtesy in his duel with Agbako, a monster he meets in his first sojourn to Irunmale. Next, the

Wild Hunter is victimized by a ghost who mounts and rides him as a horse; so is Akara-Ogun. Both books tell of encounters with one-legged ghosts, four-headed ghosts, ghosts who want to learn how to cook, ghosts with major social and psychological problems. Furthermore, there are suggestive resemblances between parts of Tutuola's story and parts of Fagunwa's second novel Igbo Olodumare, which was published in 1948, apparently the year Tutuola began writing. Such a plethora of motifemic parallels, added to the structural similarities already noted, establishes beyond doubt that Fagunwa had an important formative influence on Tutuola's mode of writing. It is true that both writers made extensive use of the techniques and materials of indigenous oral lore, but Tutuola appears to have learned from Fagunwa how to transmute this oral art into written art.

And Fagunwa wasn't his only teacher. He had also read The Pilgrim's Progress and The Arabian Nights, classic adventure stories fabricated out of a chain of old tales loosely linked together. Events in Bunyan's narrative such as Christian's fight with the monster Apollyon, his scalings of the Hill Difficulty and the Delectable Mountains, and his visits to Vanity Fair, Doubting Castle, the Palace Beautiful, and the Celestial City may have served as distant models for some of the Wild Hunter's peripatetic adventures. Certainly there is the same element of restless questing, with the pilgrim either struggling against fearsome adversaries or learning the ways of God, Devil and Man through discussions with helpful advisers. At one point even the Wild Hunter himself turns evangelist when he meets a ghost named Woe who had been expelled from Heaven for bad behavior and punished in Hell for sixty-five years before being rusticated to the Third Town of Ghosts to live for eternity among the "wild beasts, poisonous snakes and scorpions."

After the ghost related his story like that, I was very sorry for him, and I advised him that if he could change his bad character, the God Almighty may take you away from these punishments, but he said immediately, that he could not change his bad character atal (sic), and he said he was waiting for more punishments from God. (WHBG-ms., p. 26). ^{cl}

When the Wild Hunter offers this ghost a drink of water to slake his sixty-five years of thirst, the ghost consumes no more than two drops before being transformed into a little hill near the way to Heaven. The Wild Hunter decides to write the ghost's name on the hill "for the rest bad ghosts to see whenever they would pass, and as a remembrance."

This vignette illustrates one point of difference between "The Wild Hunter in the Bush of ^{the} Ghosts" and the six books that followed it: missionary Christianity was a major theme in Tutuola's earliest writing. Although this theme was to resurface in some of his later works--e.g., the famous episode in My Life in the Bush of Ghosts in which the narrator meets his dead cousin who has established in the 10th Town of Ghosts a very successful Methodist Church with more than a thousand provincial branches over which he presides as bishop at annual Synod meetings --Ulli Beier was certainly right to note that Tutuola was not the Christian moralist that Fagunwa was. Nevertheless, it is now clear from this new corpus of evidence that he started off from a position much closer to Fagunwa spiritually than has hitherto been recognized. They both began as didactic writers combining Christian theology with traditional Yoruba moral wisdom, but Tutuola, after initially following Fagunwa's example in Africanizing Bunyan, returned to more indigenous sources of artistic inspiration and wrote less homiletic secular sagas.

Another exceptional feature of "The Wild Hunter in the Bush of ^{the} Ghosts" ₁

is what might be termed its autobiographical content. Tutuola had attended a Salvation Army school, had served briefly in a branch of the military service, and was working in a government office in Lagos while writing this story. It is not surprising, then, to find him inserting in his narrative fairly elaborate descriptions of Victoria Juliana's school, the Devil's army, or the crowded offices of Hell. He was obviously using his own first-hand experience of such places as the basis for his fantasies. The story may thus be said to have a greater fidelity to actual circumstances and scenes in terrestrial life than is usually the case in Tutuola's fiction. We are still in an imaginary garden but it appears to have some freakishly real toads in it.

Yet it must be admitted that "The Wild Hunter in the Bush of ^{the} Ghosts" is neither Tutuola's most interesting narrative nor his most accomplished. Indeed, crudities abound, and there are moments when spectacularly outlandish happenings are robbed of imaginative intensity by colorless narration. The tale is obviously the work of a novice writer, in this case an apprentice craftsman with no formal training whatsoever. Had it been published thirty years ago, it would not have generated the same excitement among readers overseas as did his next narrative, a bizarre yarn with the improbable title "The Palm-Wine Drinkard and His Dead Palm-Wine Tapster in the Deads' Town."

Tutuola was very lucky to get this second story published and luckier still that it happened to become a commercial success. Tutuola had originally submitted the manuscript to Lutterworth Press, a missionary publisher for the United Society for Christian Literature, in response to an advertisement in a Nigerian magazine listing books they had published by African authors. Two of the editors at Lutterworth Press were intrigued by the story and passed it on first to an educational publisher, Thomas Nelson and Sons, who rejected

it outright, and then to Faber and Faber, who had the courage to publish it in May 1952. The book might have sunk rapidly into obscurity had it not been enthusiastically reviewed a few weeks later by Dylan Thomas in The Observer. Within a year Grove Press brought out an American edition which won similar acclaim, and neither edition has ever gone out of print. By 1978 more than ninety thousand copies of The Palm-Wine Drinkard had been sold.

In Nigeria, however, Tutuola's writing did not get such a friendly reception. Educated Nigerians were shocked to learn that a book written in sub-standard English by a lowly Lagos messenger was being lionized abroad, and they were contemptuous of Tutuola's efforts when they saw that he had borrowed heavily from both oral tradition and the works of Fagunwa. Some Yoruba readers went so far as to say he had plagiarized from these sources, creating nothing startlingly new or original in the process and often mangling the best of the material he forged. To them he was not a naive native genius endowed with a protean imagination but rather a bungling literary burglar with no imagination at all.

The book that sparked such controversy was summarized by Dylan Thomas as a

brief, thronged, grisly and bewitching story, or series of stories[...] about the journey of an expert and devoted palm-wine drinkard through a nightmare of indescribable adventures, all simply and carefully described, in the spirit-bristling bush. From the age of ten he drank 225 kegs a day, and wished to do nothing else; he knew what was good for him, it was just what the witch-doctor ordered. But when his tapster fell from a tree and died, and as, naturally, he himself "did not satisfy

with water as with palm-wine", he set out to search for the tapster in Deads' Town.

This was the devil--or, rather, the many devils--of a way off, and among those creatures, dubiously alive, whom he encountered, were an image with two long breasts with deep eyes; a female cream image; a quarter-of-a-mile total stranger with no head, feet or hands, but one large eye on his topmost; an unsoothing something with flood-light eyes, big as a hippopotamus but walking upright; animals cold as ice and hairy as sandpaper, who breathed very hot steam and sounded like church bells; and a "beautiful complete gentleman" who, as he went through the forest, returned the hired parts of his body to their owners, at the same time paying rentage, and soon became a full-bodied gentleman reduced to skull.

Luckily, the drinkard found a fine wife on his travels, and she bore him a child from her thumb; but the child turned out to be abnormanl, a pyromaniac, a smasher to death of domestic animals, and a bigger drinkard than its father, who was forced to burn it to ashes. And out of the ashes appeared a half-bodied child, talking with a "lower voice like a telephone"[...] There is, later, one harmonious interlude in the Father-Mother's house, or magical, techni-colour night-club, in a tree that takes photographs; and one beautiful moment of rejoicing, when Drum, Song, and Dance, three tree fellows, perform upon themselves, and the dead arise, and the animals, snakes, and spirits of the bush dance together. But mostly it's hard and haunted

going until the drinkard and his wife reach Deads' Town, meet the tapster, and, clutching his gift of a miraculous, all-providing Egg, are hounded out of the town by dead babies.¹⁴

As can be inferred from this incomplete summary, The Palm-Wine Drinkard is pure fantasy, a voyage of the imagination into a never-never land of magic, marvels and monsters. But the beings and doings in this fantasy world are not entirely unfamiliar. The journey to the land of the dead, the abnormal conception, the monstrous child, the enormous drinking capacity, the all-providing magical object, the tree-spirits, the personifications, the fabulous monsters--these are standard materials of oral tradition, the stuff folktales are made of all over the world.

The palm-wine drinkard himself appears at first to be an unpromising hero. He has, after all, done nothing but drink palm-wine all his life. But once he starts on his journey to Deads' Town his extraordinary cleverness and unusual powers of endurance enable him to circumvent or survive numerous misadventures. He carries with him a substantial supply of juju so he can transform himself at will whenever he gets into a tight corner. However, even though he is part-trickster, part-magician, part-superman, he cannot overcome every adversary or extricate himself from every difficult situation; supernatural helpers have to come to his assistance from time to time. Eventually he finds his tapster in Deads' Town but cannot persuade him to re-enter the world of the "alives." The palm-wine drinkard and his wife leave Deads' Town and, several adventures later, arrive home only to discover that their people are starving. Heaven and Land have had a bitter quarrel and Heaven has refused to send rain to Land. The ensuing drought and famine have killed millions. The palm-wine drinkard springs into action and in a short time

manages to feed the remaining multitudes, settle the cosmic dispute, end the drought and famine, and restore the world to normal functioning order. The unpromising hero who had set out on his quest with limited powers and purely selfish ambitions becomes in the end a miracle worker, the savior and benefactor of all mankind. He changes, in other words, from a typical folktale hero into a typical epic hero. Such a change does not take him outside the stream of oral tradition.

It is not difficult to prove that many of the folktales Tutuola uses in The Palm-Wine Drinkard exist in Yoruba oral tradition. Any sizable collection of Yoruba tales will yield a number of parallels, and some of Tutuola's most striking episodes can be found in more than one collection. For example, the celebrated passage in which a "beautiful complete gentleman" lures a lady deep into the forest and then dismembers himself, returning the hired parts of his body to their owners and paying rentage until he is reduced to a humming skull, appears in at least seven different versions in Yoruba folktale collections. There are almost as many texts of the incident of the all-providing magical object which produces first an abundance of food and later an abundance of whips. Many other tales and motifs in this book--the quarrel between heaven and earth, the carrying of a sacrifice to heaven, the tiny creature that makes newly-cleared fields sprout weeds, the enfant terrible, the magical transformations--can be documented as traditional among the Yoruba. For those that cannot be so documented we have the word of Adeboye Babalola, a prominent Yoruba scholar, that

the Yoruba are lovers of the marvellous, the awe-inspiring,
the weird, the eerie. It is a small minority of [Yoruba]
folk-tales that concern human beings only. The great majority

of the tales feature human beings, animals behaving like humans, and often also superhuman beings: demons, ogres, deities.

Further confirmation of Tutuola's debt to Yoruba oral tradition comes from his Yoruba critics who insist that his stories are well-known.

They are known not only in Yorubaland but throughout West Africa. The distinguished anthropologist Melville Herskovits remarked in the introduction to a collection of Fon tales from Dahomey (now the Republic of Benin) that "it will be instructive for one who reads the narratives in this volume to go to Tutuola's books with the motifs and orientations of the tales given here in mind. He will find them all." Though this is certainly an overstatement, it serves to emphasize the fact that folktales known to the Yoruba are known to other West African peoples as well. Tutuola's tale of the self-dismembering "complete gentleman," for instance, has been found not only among the Fon but also among the Ibo and Ibibio of Nigeria and the Krio of Sierra Leone. According to Jack Berry, the tale of the magical food-and-whips producer is very widely distributed in West Africa, as are tales of ogres and other supernatural beings. Alice Werner in her study of African mythology, reports that stories of people who have penetrated into the world of ghosts and returned "are not uncommon" and that shape-shifting transformations are not only present in many folktales but also "are believed in as actual occurrences at the present day." Thus The Palm-Wine Drinkard, a lineal descendant of Yoruba oral tradition, hails from a large extended family of West African oral narratives.

What has been said about The Palm-Wine Drinkard also applies to Tutuola's other books, for his method and content have not changed much over the years. The quest pattern basic to his fiction has already been described: a hero or

heroine sets out on a journey in search of something important and passes through a number of concatenated folktale adventures before, and sometimes after, finding what he seeks. Though Tutuola varies this pattern from book to book, he never abandons it entirely. He never chooses a totally different pattern. One suspects that his roots in oral tradition run so deep that he knows of no other way to compose book-length fiction.

Nevertheless, minor changes in Tutuola's writing are worth noting, for they reveal that though Tutuola has not moved any great distance from where he was in 1948 when he began writing The Palm-Wine Drinkard, he has not been standing still all these years. His most radical departure from the quest pattern came in his ~~second~~ ^{second} book, My Life in the Bush of Ghosts (1954), which opens with its narrator-hero, a boy of seven, being maltreated and abandoned by his stepmothers, separated from his older brother, and left to wander in the bush during a tribal war. Frightened by the sounds of gunfire and unable to distinguish between bad and good, he enters the Bush of Ghosts and spends the next twenty-four years wandering in an African spirit world replete with towns, kings, civic ceremonies, festivals, law courts, and even his cousin's Methodist church. He has experiences both harrowing and happy and at one point considers taking up permanent residence in the "10th town of ghosts" with his dead cousin, but he can't bring himself to do it because he keeps longing to return to his earthly home. In this respect he more nearly resembles the protagonist of Tutuola's earliest story, "The Wild Hunter in the Bush of ^{the} Ghosts." And like the deus ex machina that appears at the end of that story, eventually a "Television-handed ghostess" turns up and helps him to escape so that he is reunited with his mother and brother and begins to lead a more normal life.

~~As can be seen from this brief summary,~~ the hero's journey cannot really be termed a quest. Harold Collins describes it as a "West African Odyssey," and Gerald Moore sees it as "a kind of extended Initiation or 'rite of passage' [...] or Purgatory [in which the] initiation of the boy-hero is not sought, but is imposed upon him as the price of his development into full understanding." Both of these interpretations are apt, but they presuppose a degree of premeditation, of careful organization and methodical development, which cannot be found in the story. Again the plot consists of a string of loosely-connected episodes set down in a random sequence. There is a distinct beginning and a distinct end but the middle is a muddle. When Geoffrey Parrinder asked Tutuola "the reason for the apparently haphazard order of the towns of the ghosts" in this book, Tutuola replied: "That is the order in which I came to them." Here is confirmation of the improvisatory nature of Tutuola's art. He moves from one tale to another not by calculation but by chance. And when he gets to the end of the chain, when all conflicts are resolved and his hero returns to a state of equilibrium, as most folktale heroes do, Tutuola rounds off the narrative with a moral: "This is what hatred did." The moral reminds the reader that the hero's sufferings and misfortunes can be blamed on his step-mothers who rejected him twenty-four years before. Tutuola thus ends his story in typical folktale fashion by using it to teach a lesson about human behavior.

In his ^{fourth} ~~third~~ book, Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle (1955), Tutuola returned to the quest pattern. Beautiful Simbi, an only child who has never known poverty and punishment, desires to set out on a journey "to know and experience their difficulties." Her mother and others warn her not to, but she feels she must. One hundred and twenty pages later she is fed up with poverty and punishment. She has been kidnapped, sold into slavery, beaten,

starved, almost beheaded, set afloat on a river in a sealed coffin, carried off by an eagle, imprisoned in a tree trunk, half-swallowed by a boa constrictor, attacked by a satyr, shrunk and put in a bottle, bombarded by a stone-carrying phoenix, and petrified to a rock. Fortunately, she is a talented girl who can sing well enough to wake the dead and she gets plenty of assistance from girl-friends, gods and a friendly gnome, so that in the end she manages to return home to her mother. Then, "having rested for some days, she was going from house to house she was warning all the children that it was a great mistake to a girl who did not obey her parents." Simbi, too, has a lesson to teach.

Although it resembles Tutuola's other books in matter and manner, Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle marks a new stage in Tutuola's development as a writer, for it displays definite signs of formal literary influence. It was the first of his published works to be divided into numbered chapters, each encompassing a major adventure, and the only one to be written in the third person. Gerald Moore has pointed out that it contains far more dialogue and more frequent adverbial "stage directions" than the earlier books. Furthermore, there are creatures such as goblins, imps, a gnome, myrmidon, phoenix, nymph, and satyr whose names, at least, derive from European mythology. And there is one passage which so closely resembles an episode in a Yoruba novel by D.O. Fagunwa that it is difficult to believe that they could have been created independently of one another. It is clear that Tutuola must have been doing some reading between July 22, 1952, and November 26, 1954, the dates My Life in the Bush of Ghosts and Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle were submitted for publication. When Eric Larrabee interviewed him in 1953, Tutuola owned no books and did not think of himself as an author,

but after his ^{first} second book was published, another interviewer found that he had "decided to attend evening classes to 'improve' himself, so that he [might] develop into what he describes as 'a real writer'". Reading was no doubt a part of Tutuola's program for self-improvement. When Larrabee offered to send him books, Tutuola requested A Survey of Economic Education published by the Brookings Institution, Aldous Huxley's The Devils of Loudun, and "some other books which contain stories like that of the P.W.D. [The Palm-Wine Drinkard] which are written by either West Africans, White men or Negroes, etc." Larrabee recalls that of the other books sent, "the two he seemed most to enjoy were Joyce Cary's Mr. Johnson and Edith Hamilton's Mythology, which he said contained stories similar to those he had heard as a child." It is not surprising then to find traces of literary influence in Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle. Between 1952 and 1954 Tutuola was becoming conscious of himself as an author, was reading more widely, and was trying hard to "improve" his writing. He could still tell only one kind of story, but should the traditional wellspring ever fail to provide him with sufficient material, he could now turn to a number of other sources for fresh inspiration.

Tutuola did succeed in improving the structure of his narratives considerably. His ~~last~~ ^{two} three books do not differ markedly from his first ~~three~~ ^{two} in content or narrative pattern, but they tend, like Simbi and the Satyr of the Dark Jungle, to be organized into rather more neatly demarcated chapters. In The Brave African Huntress (1958) and Ajaiyi and his Inherited Poverty (1967), he adopted the practice of citing one or more proverbs at the head of a chapter and then using the action in that chapter to illustrate the proverbs. In Feather Woman of the Jungle (1962), his most stylized work, he created an Arabian Nights structure by having a 76-year-old chief entertain villagers

every night for ten nights with accounts of his past adventures. Both of these narrative techniques must have entered literature from oral tradition. If Tutuola picked them up from his reading, as appears likely, he is to be commended for selecting those that suited his material perfectly. Using such techniques he could remain a raconteur and at the same time could link and unify his concatenated tales more effectively.

The tales were still woven into the familiar quest pattern. Adebisi, the heroine in The Brave African Huntress, ventures into the dangerous Jungle of the Pigmies to rescue her four brothers. The chief in Feather Woman of the Jungle sets out on a series of hazardous journeys in quest of treasure and adventure. Ajaiyi in Ajaiyi and his Inherited Poverty simply wants to get out of debt and is willing to go to the Creator, the God of Iron, the Devil, and assorted witches, witchdoctors and wizards to ask for help. Each of these adventurers, after a succession of ups and downs, achieves his objective.

As for the tales themselves, Tutuola appears to have continued to rely more heavily on traditional Yoruba material than on non-Yoruba material. In The Brave African Huntress there are references to "elves, genii, goblins, demons, imps, gnomes" and a "cyclops-like creature," but the actual monsters encountered and the adventures undergone are not unlike those in Tutuola's earlier books. The episode in which Adebisi the huntress cuts the hair of the king of Ibembe Town and discovers he has horns has been cited by critics as a possible example of European or Indian influence because it resembles the story of King Midas and the Ass's Ears, but Tutuola, in a letter to Harold Collins, has stated: "The king who has horns is in the traditional story of my town." In published Yoruba folktale collections it is not difficult to find parallels to other tales and motifs such as Adebisi's palace adventure in Bachelors'

Town in The Brave African Huntress; the three dogs that rescue their master from woodchoppers, the journey to the underwater kingdom, and the town where people eat only water in Feather Woman of the Jungle; and the dead rats that come alive, the person who hides in the pupil of a blacksmith's eye, and the quarrel between lenders in Ayaiyi and His Inherited Poverty. Moreover, these later books are packed with Yoruba deities, towns, customs, superstitions, and proverbs. Tutuola, despite his reading and increased sophistication, apparently chose to remain a teller of Yoruba tales.

There was a fourteen-year gap between publication of Ajaiyi and His Inherited Poverty (1967) and Tutuola's next long narrative, The Witch-Herbalist of the Remote Town (1981), but the hiatus does not appear to have had any measurable impact, positive or negative, on his chosen mode of storytelling. The narrative is another rambling, episodic adventure tale, the quest this time being for medicine to cure a woman's barrenness. The brave hunter who undertakes the hazardous journey to obtain this boon from an expert with-herbalist meets many curious creatures along his way, but eventually his persistence and ingenuity pay off. He gets the medicine, sips some of it on his return to stave off hunger, and then gives the rest to his wife, who promptly becomes pregnant. However, so does he, and he must undergo further trials and torments before being cured of his own mis-conception.

Tutuola's next book, published five years later, was a different sort of venture, being a small collection of short traditional tales rather than a long, consecutive story fabricated out of a concatenation of fictive motifs, some traditional, some not. Yoruba Folktales (1986) is significant as Tutuola's first attempt at pure narrative preservation; his other works could be described as

exercises in impure narrative perversion. In Yoruba Folktales he must remain to a large extent faithful to his sources, for these stories are ~~pre~~^{re}presented as being the communal literary property of his people. He cannot claim to have invented such narratives; he is merely passing them along to others in written form and in a foreign language. If he takes any liberties with texts, they must be small liberties, the sort that any storyteller might take when relating a well-known tale. Verbal excrescences may vary, but moral essences must stay more or less the same. In transcribing ~~su~~^{su} such narratives, most of them ~~told~~ stories told throughout West Africa, Tutuola remains true to tradition but occasionally appears to add some zaniness to spice up characterization and plot.

The only major change in Tutuola's storytelling style that readers are likely to notice--and some possibly deplore--is sociolinguistic in nature: in Yoruba Folktales there are hardly any of the grammatical blunders and stylistic infelicities that one associates with Tutuola's earlier works. The idiom that Dylan Thomas characterized as "young English" is gone almost without a trace. The reason for this is not difficult to discern: the book was aimed by its publisher at primary school classrooms, and one cannot address a school audience in Nigeria in a fractured foreign tongue. Textbook English has to be correct English; otherwise the textbook will not be approved for school use. In the case of Yoruba Folktales, an American professor, the late Robert Wren, was responsible for purifying and ~~to~~^{to} refining the author's language. Tutuola's works have always been edited to some degree by his publishers, but this may be the first time they have been edited to such an advanced degree that no naive Tutuolaisms survive.

However, for those who may have missed Tutuola's authentic narrative voice, another book soon followed that had all the defining characteristics of the genre he had made distinctively his own. Pauper, Brawler and Slanderer (1987) tells of the peripatetic adventures of three characters--two men and a woman (Brawler, wife of Pauper)--who, rejected by their parents and expelled from their town, create havoc wherever they go, often getting into amusing scrapes with one another as well as with more ordinary mortals. In the end they stand before the Creator in the Land of Judgement and are transformed into smoky whirlwinds that blow to every corner of the earth; and "to these days they are still roaming about invisibly on earth and yet they continue to trouble the people."

Tutuola's most recent book, The Village Witch-Doctor and Other Stories (1990), collects a dozen of Tutuola's short stories, some of which had been published previously in magazines or broadcast on radio. It ~~is~~ is a diverse collection, not ~~held together~~ anchored to the life story of a single character or single group of characters, ~~is~~ so it more closely resembles Yoruba Folktales than any of his other works. Tutuola has also had further help from Professor Wren, so the English is a bit smoother than usual. But the same bouyant imagination is in evidence, the same fascination with comically grotesque fantasy worlds. Tutuola, after more than forty ~~years~~ years of writing, remains a very resourceful raconteur.

Town in The Brave African Huntress; the three dogs that rescue their master from woodchoppers, the journey to the underwater kingdom, and the town where people eat only water in Feather Woman of the Jungle; and the dead rats that come alive, the person who hides in the pupil of a blacksmith's eye, and the quarrel between lenders in Ajaiyi and his Inherited Poverty.³⁶ Moreover, these later books are packed with Yoruba deities, towns, customs, superstitions, and proverbs. Tutuola, despite his reading and increased sophistication, apparently chose to remain a teller of Yoruba tales.

A few critics, seeking to demonstrate how Tutuola improves upon the material he borrows, have contrasted passages in his books with analogous folktales. This type of argument, no matter how well documented, is not very persuasive because the critic cannot prove that the particular folktale text chosen for comparison is the version of the tale that Tutuola knew. Perhaps Tutuola had heard a different version, perhaps even a better version than he himself was able to tell. Eldred Jones makes the mistake of assuming that the Yoruba traditional tale on which Tutuola based his account of the self-dismembering "complete gentleman" in The Palm-Wine Drinkard is very similar to the Krio version of this tale. Jones therefore credits Tutuola with the invention of several striking details which, though absent from the Krio version, are quite common in published Yoruba texts of the tale. Even a critic familiar with all the published Yoruba versions would not be able to draw a firm line between borrowed and invented details in Tutuola's redaction. Without knowing exactly what Tutuola borrowed, it is impossible to know how much he contributed to the stories he tells.

Critics who search for literary influences on Tutuola's writing are on safer ground insofar as texts are concerned. Bunyan is again a case in point.

The episode in which Death shows the palm-wine drinkard the bones of his former victims appears to be modeled on a scene in The Pilgrim's Progress in which Christian meets the Giant Despair in Doubting Castle. A number of towns the drinkard and other Tutuolan heroes visit bear a distinct resemblance to Vanity Fair. And the monsters often seem to belong to the same sub-species as Bunyan's Apollyon who was "clothed with scales, lika a fish, [...] had wings like a dragon, feet like a bear, and out of his belly came fire and smoke, and his mouth was as the mouth of a lion." However, unlike The Pilgrim's Progress, Tutuola's narratives are not religious allegories. They have been influenced far more by Yoruba oral tradition than by the Bible. Bunyan may have been instructive in teaching Tutuola how to put an extended quest tale together but he did not convert him to Christianity. In substance and spirit Tutuola was still a thoroughly African storyteller. Only in "The Wild Hunter in the Bush of Ghosts" does Bunyan appear to have left a religious imprint on Tutuola's narrative strategy.

It is D.O. Fagunwa who remains the crucial literary influence on Tutuola. Between 1948 and 1951, the years Tutuola started writing, Fagunwa published at least nine books, including a new edition of his first work of fiction, Ogboju ode ninu igbo irunmale, which had originally appeared in 1938. Tutuola, who had read this book at school, must have been aware of Fagunwa's extraordinary outburst of literary activity in these post-war years. Indeed, it is conceivable that he got both the idea of writing stories and the idea of submitting them for publication from seeing Fagunwa's works in print. As noted earlier, the title of Tutuola's first narrative is virtually a literal translation of the title of Fagunwa's first published tale. And there is abundant evidence in critical studies and English translations of excerpts

from Fagunwa's fiction that Fagunwa's influence extends well beyond titles. Yet there are sufficient differences between the two writers to show that Tutuola is not merely translating Fagunwa and that he is always sensitive to the demands of his own narrative. Such differences also suggest that even when he follows Fagunwa most faithfully, he does so from memory rather than from a printed text, that instead of actually plagiarizing he vividly recreates what he best remembers from Fagunwa's books, knitting the spirit if not the substance of the most suitable material into the loose fibers of his yarn.

Because Fagunwa occasionally makes use of material from Yoruba oral tradition, it is not always easy to tell when Tutuola is borrowing from Fagunwa and when from folktales. For example, both writers use motifs such as the "juju-compass" which helps travellers to find their way, the hall of singing ~~birds~~

birds which turns out to be a trap, the fierce gatekeeper who must be overcome in combat, and the deer-woman who marries a hunter. Tutuola's handling of these motifs may owe more to Yoruba oral tradition than to Fagunwa. Indeed, it is conceivable that Tutuola seems closest to Fagunwa when Fagunwa is closest to oral tradition. Without folktale texts suitable for comparative study it is impossible to accurately assess Tutuola's debts. But it can be assumed that Fagunwa's books were among those which taught Tutuola how to weave a number of old stories into a flexible narrative pattern that could be stretched into a book. Fagunwa's contribution to Tutuola should perhaps be measured more in terms of overall structure and descriptive technique than in terms of content. Tutuola followed Fagunwa's lead and traveled in the same direction but he did not always walk in Fagunwa's tracks.

Tutuola has never pretended that his stories were original creations. Indeed, he has admitted in interviews and letters that he borrowed extensively from Yoruba oral tradition and always enjoyed reading works of Fagunwa, Bunyan and other writers who made imaginative use of folktales and stories of fabulous adventure. Any storyteller building up his repertoire of tales probably would have done the same. In oral art what matters most is not uniqueness of invention but adroitness of performance. A storyteller is judged not by his capacity for fabricating new stories but by his ability to tell old, well-known tales in an entertaining manner. This may explain why Tutuola looted the treasury of ready-made fictions he found around him. He was creatively exploiting his cultural heritage, not robbing word banks.

Yet some of his early critics maintained that this was an unprincipled act of piracy, especially since Tutuola was writing in English for a foreign audience rather than in Yoruba for his own people. What made it all the worse,

they said, was that he was an inept craftsman who could not match Fagunwa as a storyteller and could not write in proper English. Tutuola's barbarous verbal behavior was giving readers overseas a poor opinion of Africans!

One can understand the virulence of this reaction if one remembers that Tutuola's first books appeared at a time when Africans were trying to prove to the outside world that they were ready to manage their own political affairs. The colonial era was coming to an end, and educated Africans, in their eagerness for national independence, were becoming acutely conscious of their image abroad. They wanted to give an appearance of modernity, maturity, competence and sophistication, but ^{the} naive fantasies of the Lagos messenger projected just the opposite image. Gerald Moore has suggested that Tutuola aroused the anti-pathology of some of his countrymen by reminding them of a world from which they wanted to escape. To such readers Tutuola was a disgrace, a setback, a national calamity.

But to readers in Europe and America Tutuola was an exotic delight. Reviewers hailed The Palm-Wine Drinkard as "a fantastic primitive," a book "possessed of an imagination that [...] seems to be progressively eradicated as 'civilization' advances." The New Yorker went so far as to say: "One catches a glimpse of the very beginning of literature, that moment when writing at last seizes and pins down the myths and legends of an analphabetic culture." In a similar vein, V.S. Pritchett claimed that My Life in the Bush of Ghosts "discernibly expresses the unconscious of a race and even moments of the nightmare element of our own unconsciousness [...]. Tutuola's voice is like the beginning of man on earth." The image-conscious Nigerians apparently had good reason to worry.

What fascinated many non-African readers of Tutuola was his style.

V.S. Pritchett characterized it as "a loose, talking prose," Dylan Thomas as "young English," another as "naive poetry." One critic even spoke with enthusiasm of the emergence of a "new 'mad' African writing" written by those who "don't learn English; they don't study the rules or grammar; they just tear right into it and let the splinters fly." To native speakers of English Tutuola's splintered style was an amusing novelty; to educated Nigerians who had spent years honing and polishing their English it was a schoolboy's abomination.

Tutuola's later books were not as enthusiastically received in England and America as his first two. Reviewers complained that "Tutuola's idiom has lost its charm and spontaneity," that "his effects are a good deal more calculated than they used to be," that "there is none of the nightmare fascination of the earlier books," that "one's attention flags here and there." Tutuola's writing now seemed repetitive and "deliberately childish" rather than "pleasingly child-like."⁵ Since Faber and Faber no longer took pains to cleanse his manuscripts of their grossest linguistic impurities, he appeared more inarticulate, more splintery, at times almost unintelligible. The Times Literary Supplement, in a review of Feather Woman of the Jungle, recalled the "literary sensation" Tutuola's first two books had caused:

There had been nothing quite like them before, and the strangeness of the African subject matter, the primary colours, the mixture of sophistication, superstition, and primitivism, and above all the incantatory juggling with the English language combined to dazzle and intoxicate. Novelty-seekers, propagandists for the coloured races, professional rooters for the avant-garde--any avant-garde, anywhere and at any time--were alike delighted, and

none more vociferously than the thinning ranks of the Apocalypse. But now, with the publication of his fifth book, which "very much is the mixture as before [...], increasingly one's reaction is irritation, a desire to say 'So what?' in quite the rudest way, and to protest against what is dangerously near a cult of the faux-naïf." Clearly, Tutuola's novelty had worn off, and the pendulum of critical opinion had begun to reverse its direction. Later it was to swing back to a more neutral position.

In Nigeria, on the other hand, the pendulum had started to swing in a decidedly more positive direction shortly after independence. In the early 1960s The Palm-Wine Drinkard was adapted for presentation on the stage as a Yoruba opera, and performances in Nigeria and at a number of drama festivals abroad were extremely well received. In the late 1960s and early 1970s a few Nigerian critics began serious reassessments of his works, studying them with great care. In more recent years there has been a tendency, particularly among established Nigerian writers, towards a greater acceptance of Tutuola, warts and all. More is being written about him and his works today than at any time in the past, the consensus of opinion being that though he is not a typical author, he is far too important a phenomenon to be overlooked.⁵⁵

His importance resides not only in his eccentricities but also in his affinities with two established traditions of creative expression. His works unite oral and written art, bridging folk narratives on the one hand with precursors of the novel (such as The Pilgrim's Progress) on the other. Without too much exaggeration Tutuola could be called the missing link between preliterate and literate man, for his creativity is firmly rooted in the cultural heritage of both. One sees quite clearly in his works how two disparate systems of expressive conventions can be joined in a productive synthesis. Tutuola's

writings will no doubt continue to interest readers for some time to come because they are a fascinating amalgam of old and new, indigenous and foreign, oral and written. Tutuola, despite obvious limitations, is one of the most remarkably successful syncretists in African literature.

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