

Exploring Afrojujuism in Amos Tutuola's My Life in the Bush of Ghosts: Spirituality, Myth, and Surrealism

Amos Tutuola'nın "My Life in the Bush of Ghosts" adlı eserinde Afrojujuizm Öğeleri: Maneviyat, Mit ve Gerçeküstüçülük

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Abstract: This study explores "Afrojujuism," a concept that merges traditional African spirituality with the mysticism of "juju," blending the supernatural with the natural in African literature and culture. In his seminal work, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1954), Amos Tutuola introduces Afrojujuism as a narrative framework that blends Yoruba cosmology with Western literary traditions, creating a distinct genre of African speculative fiction. The novel centers on a young man's journey through a mysterious bush, where he encounters missing persons, ghosts, and other supernatural beings. By examining key passages, this article highlights how Afrojujuistic themes are interwoven throughout Tutuola's narrative, offering a unique exploration of the intersections between African magical beliefs and reality. The findings of this study reveal how Tutuola's work not only reflects African cultural and spiritual practices but also contributes to the development of African science fiction and fantasy, establishing Afrojujuism as an important concept in contemporary African literary studies.

Keywords: Philology, Western literature, English literature, Afrojujuism, spirituality

Öz: Bu çalışma, geleneksel Afrika maneviyatını "juju" mistisizmiyle birleştiren, Afrika edebiyatı ve kültüründe doğaüstü ile doğalı harmanlayan bir kavram olan "Afrojujuizm"i araştırmaktadır. Amos Tutuola, öncü eseri *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*'ta (1954), Afrojujuizm'i Yoruba kozmolojisini Batı edebiyat gelenekleriyle harmanlayan ve belirgin bir Afrika spekülatif kurgu türü yaratan bir anlatı çerçevesi olarak tanıtmaktadır. Roman, genç bir adamın gizemli bir çalılıkta kayıp kişilerle, hayaletlerle ve diğer doğaüstü varlıklarla karşılaştığı yolculuğuna odaklanır. Mevcut çalışma, önemli alıntıları inceleyerek Afrojujuistik temaların Tutuola'nın anlatısında nasıl iç içe geçtiğini vurgulayarak, Afrika büyümlü inançları ile gerçeklik arasındaki kesimlerin benzersiz bir keşfini sunmaktadır. Elde edilen sonuçlara göre, Tutuola'nın çalışmalarının yalnızca Afrika kültürel ve manevi uygulamalarını yansıtmakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda Afrika bilimkurgu ve fantezisinin gelişimine de katkıda bulunduğunu ortaya koyarak, Afrojujuizm'in çağdaş Afrika edebiyat çalışmalarında önemli bir kavram olarak ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Filoloji, Batı edebiyatı, İngiliz edebiyatı, Afrojujuizm, maneviyat

Introduction

Afrofuturism is a cultural movement that explores the intersection of race, identity, technology, and speculative futures, with a particular focus on reimagining the African diaspora through new lenses. One critical component of this movement is Afrojujuism, a blend of traditional African spiritual practices and modern technological imaginings, which serves as a unique framework for re-envisioning African futures. The works of scholars across various disciplines have highlighted the dynamic roles that both Afrofuturism and Afrojujuism play in redefining African and African diasporic identities in speculative and artistic contexts.

Afrofuturism has often been a vehicle for cultural resistance, offering a platform to challenge historical stereotypes and reimagine futures that transcend colonial and racial oppression (Smith, 2020). According to West (2020), Afrofuturism provides a cultural foundation for Black identity that is not confined to historical victimization but looks toward cosmic, utopian futures. In this context, Afrofuturism challenges the historical narratives imposed on the African diaspora, envisioning new spaces where African culture and technology can coexist harmoniously.

One of the significant contributions of Afrojujuism, as discussed by Olamide (2021) and Ajayi (2022), is its ability to merge African mysticism and technological advancements, creating a new genre in contemporary African cinema and art. Afrojujuism uses elements of African traditional religions and mystical practices to explore futuristic themes, blending ancestral spirituality with speculative narratives that offer alternative visions of Africa. Olamide (2021) explores how Afrojujuism is depicted in African cinema, noting that films often use magical realism to depict African spirituality in a futuristic light, providing a contrast to

the typical portrayals of Africa in Western media. Similarly, Ajayi (2022) highlights how contemporary African artists use Afrojuism to construct new cosmologies that challenge colonialist depictions of African religion and culture.

Afrofuturism's engagement with African spiritual traditions is not just aesthetic but deeply political. Mbabazi (2021) argues that the fusion of Afrofuturism with African religious practices creates a powerful political tool for the African diaspora. This approach critiques colonial histories and the erasure of African belief systems, offering instead a vision of Africa that is cosmically connected to its ancestors and traditions. Nduka (2022) similarly examines the technological dimension of Afrojuism, demonstrating how digital media and technological advances allow Afrojuism to evolve into a contemporary form of storytelling that bridges the gap between traditional African spiritualities and future technological innovations.

A significant area of research in Afrojuism involves the role of women, particularly within the framework of Black feminist Afrofuturism. Ngugi (2021) discusses how Afrojuism empowers Black women by intertwining ancestral knowledge with speculative futures. This approach challenges patriarchal structures and offers new possibilities for the representation of Black women in speculative fiction. Afrojuism in this context is not only a form of cultural re-imagination but also a mode of feminist resistance that reclaims African heritage while envisioning a future of liberation and empowerment.

The intersection of Afrojuism with digital storytelling further expands its reach and relevance. Tambo (2020) examines how the advent of digital platforms, such as online literature and digital comics, has enabled Afrojuism to become a global phenomenon. The ability to tell stories that blend African traditions with futuristic elements in accessible digital formats has allowed Afrojuism to reach wider audiences, creating a new paradigm for African futures that is both rooted in the past and directed toward the future.

Zulu (2023) emphasizes the cosmic politics embedded within both Afrofuturism and Afrojuism. The notion of "cosmic politics" links African spirituality to the idea of universal interconnectedness, where the African future is shaped not only by earthly struggles but also by cosmic, metaphysical forces. This cosmic view challenges Western-centric worldviews and repositions Africa at the center of a global, spiritual, and technological renaissance. Afrofuturism and Afrojuism represent a dynamic fusion of cultural, spiritual, and technological reimaginings of Africa's past, present, and future. These movements offer powerful critiques of colonial legacies while re-envisioning African futures through the lens of African spirituality, mysticism, and modern technology. From digital storytelling to Black feminist re-imaginings, Afrofuturism and Afrojuism offer critical insights into how speculative futures can reshape cultural and political realities for the African diaspora.

Afrojujuism is a relatively recent conceptual framework used to explore the intricate relationship between the magical and supernatural elements found in West African fantasy fiction. It draws upon traditional African spiritual beliefs and cosmologies, particularly those rooted in Yoruba thought, to understand how the natural and supernatural worlds coexist in African literature. Afrojujuism functions as an important tool for examining how African authors blend myth, faith, and magic in a literary tradition that stands in stark contrast to Western literary norms. Where Western literature often treats the supernatural as separate from the real world, Afrojujuism envisions a world where these two realms are intertwined, shaping the worldview of the characters and the narrative itself.

One of the earliest and most notable expressions of Afrojujuism is found in Amos Tutuola's groundbreaking 1954 novel *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. This work, often cited as one of the first in African speculative fiction, introduced readers to a fantastical world where the boundaries between life, death, and the supernatural are blurred. Through the protagonist's journey in a mysterious bush filled with ghosts, spirits, and mythical creatures, Tutuola brings to life the Yoruba cosmological understanding of the world—where the spirit realm is not merely a mystical dimension but a vital part of everyday existence. The novel's fusion of Yoruba mythology with Western narrative styles created a unique literary space that transcends both African folklore and Western fiction.

Tutuola's work emerged at a time when African societies were experiencing profound cultural shifts, as the continent was undergoing the processes of modernization and decolonization. His stories, deeply embedded in African oral traditions, mythology, and folklore, are emblematic of the Afrojujuistic worldview, which resists the colonial-era literary frameworks that often marginalized or misrepresented African spiritual practices. The protagonists in Tutuola's narratives typically find themselves navigating a world where the spiritual and physical realms are seamlessly interwoven, reflecting the Yoruba belief that spirits, ancestors, and otherworldly beings are integral to the lived experience of the people. Through the protagonist's journey in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, Tutuola portrays the complexity of African spirituality, challenging Western depictions of Africa as a place of superstition and darkness.

The novel's exploration of Afrojujuism offers a profound commentary on the tension between traditional African spirituality and the encroachment of modernity. Tutuola's portrayal of a young man journeying through a supernatural landscape serves as an allegory for the struggles faced by African societies in reconciling their spiritual heritage with the forces of colonialism and modernization. In the Yoruba tradition, spirits are not mere specters but active participants in the world, influencing everything from individual actions to the collective identity of the community. This worldview challenges Western notions of the supernatural as something external or irrelevant to daily life, presenting a more integrated view of existence.

Moreover, Tutuola's work can be seen as a pioneering effort in the development of African speculative fiction. By placing African mythologies at the center of the narrative, he not only revitalizes traditional spiritual beliefs but also lays the groundwork for the flourishing of African science fiction and fantasy. In this way, *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* stands as a foundational text that has influenced generations of African writers, encouraging them to explore themes of identity, existence, and the supernatural from an Afrocentric perspective.

This article aims to contribute to the growing body of research on Afrojuism and African speculative fiction by analyzing how the novel illustrates Afrojuistic themes through its portrayal of the supernatural. It will demonstrate how Tutuola's innovative blend of Yoruba cosmology and Western literary traditions offers a unique lens through which to view African spirituality, identity, and the metaphysical. Additionally, this study will explore how Afrojuism challenges both colonial and post-colonial depictions of African societies, positioning Afrocentric narratives as central to the ongoing dialogue on African literary and cultural studies.

The Plot Summary of the Novel

Amos Tutuola's 1954 book *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* is a unique work that combines traditional Yoruba folklore, myths, and oral stories with a strange and supernatural story. The book is about a young boy's trip after he accidentally enters the fantastical "Bush of Ghosts," a parallel world where ghosts and other supernatural beings live. The book is about Tutuola's study of life, death, and the African cosmological worldview, especially that of the Yoruba people. It is structured in scenes and dreams.

At the start of the book, a seven-year-old boy is living with his family in peace in a Yoruba town. He lives a pretty good life because his father is rich and has two sons. The boy's peaceful life is shattered when war breaks out in his town and many people have to leave, including the boy and his older brother. As chaos breaks out, the boy's family is split up. The bigger brother runs away in one direction, but the scared boy runs deeper into the woods. He stumbles into the mysterious and dangerous Bush of Ghosts by accident. This is where the story takes place for the rest of it.

As a parallel to the human world, the "Bush of Ghosts" is a realm of the supernatural where ghosts, spirits, and other strange animals live. For the boy, entering this scary world is like crossing over into a place where normal rules about life and death don't apply. He meets a lot of strange and scary creatures that often represent different parts of Yoruba mythology. He meets a lot of ghosts and spirits, and each one is a symbol of something. These forces often teach him lessons about life, religion, or society.

The main character's first important meeting is with a group of ghosts, who capture him. People have said that these beings are grotesque and horrifying and that their looks go against reasoning and nature. The ghosts have locked the boy up and use him as a sort of helper or toy. They bury him alive and wrap him in spider webs to show how much power they have over people. But he can get out of this mess in the end thanks to his smarts and the help of other spirits. He will spend almost 24 years of his life in the Bush of Ghosts, where this is the start of his long and hard journey.

The main character of the book has to deal with a lot of strange problems. Each meeting shows how dangerous and unpredictable the spirit world is. In Yoruba culture, life and death are seen as having two sides: good and evil. Tutuola talks about spirits and ghosts that are both good and bad. The main character's relationships with these ghosts are strange, but they also have deeper philosophical and moral meanings.

The boy meets a lot of ghosts, but the "television-handed ghostess," a woman ghost with a TV in her hand, is one of the most memorable. This strange figure represents how old and new, traditional and modern, are mixing in postwar Africa. Her part in the boy's journey shows how his understanding of the spirit world changes as he learns how to get around in it better. The television-holding ghost also brings up the idea of escaping reality because her look suggests a way to get back to the real world. But the boy still has a long way to go before he can be free. The boy finally marries a female ghost as he gets used to living in the Bush of Ghosts. This union is a sign of how he is becoming more like the spirit world, blurring the lines between the real world and the magical world. His ghost-wife helps him stay alive and find his way through the dangerous bush, and for a while, he seems to accept that he will always live in the spirit world. Tutuola's marriage is another example of how he explores relationships and how to stay alive in harsh conditions. The boy's trip isn't just about staying alive; it's also about getting used to a place where normal rules of life don't apply. The main character still misses his home and the world of the living, even though he is temporarily blending in. He is constantly reminded of how far away from his human roots he is by his marriage to a ghost, and he is still eager to find a way to return to his family and village. As he keeps looking for a way out of the Bush of Ghosts, his desire to go home drives him. The meaning of life, death, and existence is a major theme that runs through the whole book. In *The Bush of Ghosts*, ghosts and spirits have their own rules, which are often based on greater philosophical questions. The main character's trip is a metaphor for how people experience life and death, and it also explores the idea of life after death. Tutuola's depictions of the spirit world go against the way Westerners think about life and death. Instead, they show a cycle in which the lines between this world and the next are not so clear. In *The Bush of Ghosts*, the main character learns that ghosts can

live for hundreds of years before they have to reincarnate, and that time moves differently there than it does in the real world. In this way, the Bush of Ghosts is a place where spirits can still live and connect between the real world and the afterlife. In this setting, Tutuola can look into African ideas about death, religion, and right and wrong. The boy wants to get out of the Bush of Ghosts more and more as he gets older. He is always trying to find ways to get back into the world of people. But the ghosts often get in his way, and the mysterious forces at work work together to keep him in their realm. He eventually gets away, but it's not an easy trip. There are setbacks and mysterious problems along the way. Near the end of the book, the boy's hard work and determination pay off. He finally gets out of the Bush of Ghosts and back to the real world after many trials. After 24 years in the spirit world, he comes back as a different person. His life events have changed how he thinks about death, life, and the meaning of life. When he gets back to his village, everything has changed. He now has to figure out how to fit his new personality into the world that he used to know previously.

The fantastical setting of the Bush of Ghosts is used by the allegorical story to explore deep themes of identity, faith, and survival. In Tutuola, the main character's trip shows how the Yoruba think about life and death, where the spiritual world is just as real and important as the physical world. The novel's episodic format, full of strange events and moral lessons, is similar to the way stories are told orally in African cultures. The way Tutuola mixed folklore, myth, and surrealism in the book not only made it an important addition to African literature but also gave readers a new way to think about the human condition, especially in postcolonial Africa.

The Concept of Afrojujuism in Literature

Afrojujuism, coined by American-Nigerian author Nnedi Okorafor, represents a dynamic form of speculative fiction that blends elements of magical realism, surrealism, and fantasy with the deeply rooted spiritual beliefs of African cultures. The term itself is derived from "juju," an African spiritual practice tied to both magic and religion and represents a literary framework where the magical and the real coexist in a way that respects and reflects African cosmologies. By placing African spirituality at the heart of its narratives, Afrojujuism challenges the traditional Western literary norms that often marginalize or misunderstand these systems of belief.

Afrojujuism is not simply a response to the Western literary categories of magical realism or fantasy; it offers a critique of how African spirituality is often either ignored or reduced to exoticism in the global literary canon. In contrast to Western traditions where the supernatural is typically externalized and relegated to fantasy or myth, Afrojujuism locates juju as an inherent part of the African reality, seamlessly blending the every day with the magical. The genre is rooted in

various African mythologies, especially Yoruba cosmology, and draws upon the unique ways in which African cultures view the intersection of the physical and spiritual realms.

A key feature of Afrojujuism is its emphasis on the profound role of spiritual beings, ancestral spirits, and mythical creatures within African societies. For example, in Amos Tutuola's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, the protagonist's journey through the titular bush is not a departure from reality but a journey deeper into a parallel world that is intricately connected to the tangible world. This blending of the spiritual and the physical, as Tutuola demonstrates, reflects the Yoruba belief in the pervasiveness of spirits, which are not only involved in rituals but actively participate in everyday life, influencing decisions, relationships, and societal structures (Krampah, 2022).

Afrojujuism has, over time, grown into a prominent literary movement that not only embraces African spiritual beliefs but also critiques how colonial and post-colonial forces have shaped African narratives. By foregrounding African cosmological systems, Afrojujuism allows African writers to reclaim and reimagine their cultural and spiritual heritage, providing a counter-narrative to the dominance of Western ideologies in global literary discourses. Writers such as Nnedi Okorafor and Tomi Adeyemi have incorporated Afrojujuistic elements into their works, using these themes to explore identity, belonging, and the dynamics of power in a world that often marginalizes African perspectives. In Okorafor's *Akata Witch* and Adeyemi's *Children of Blood and Bone*, characters engage with magical systems rooted in African traditions, asserting control over their stories and identities through their spiritual connections.

This literary trend is particularly important in its challenge to Western literary structures. Afrojujuism, alongside movements such as Afrofuturism, subverts the typical narratives of African history and culture, offering an alternative epistemology that emphasizes African ways of knowing and understanding the world. In Afrojujuist stories, time is often fluid, reflecting African cosmologies where past, present, and future coexist, in stark contrast to the linear time structures typically employed in Western narratives. The protagonist's experience in the novel, the bushes where they spend 24 years in the bush but return to a world that has aged much more slowly, illustrates this non-linear approach to time (Burger, 2023).

Regional Perspectives on Afrojujuism: Afrojujuism, while deeply rooted in Yoruba traditions, has taken on regional variations across Africa. Writers from different African countries have adapted Afrojujuist elements to reflect their unique spiritual and cultural contexts. For example, in South Africa, authors like Zakes Mda use Afrojujuism to critique the apartheid legacy and integrate ancestral beliefs into their narratives of reconciliation and healing. Meanwhile, in East Afri-

ca, writers such as Binyavanga Wainaina incorporate Afrojujuist themes in their explorations of post-colonial identity and spiritual dislocation. These diverse regional interpretations highlight the flexibility of Afrojujuism in addressing local concerns while remaining grounded in shared African cosmologies.

In West Africa, Afrojujuism continues to draw directly from Yoruba traditions, but it is also influenced by the diverse cultural landscapes of countries like Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. Authors from these regions often incorporate indigenous mythologies alongside more localized spiritual practices, further enriching the Afrojujuist literary landscape.

Opposing Views in the Findings Section: While Afrojujuism has garnered widespread support for its capacity to amplify African voices and spirituality in literature, some scholars, such as Dyer (2023), caution against the over-romanticization of African spiritual beliefs. They argue that elevating juju to a central narrative element can risk simplifying or idealizing African spirituality, potentially reducing complex traditions to literary tropes that cater to global market trends. Dyer suggests that such portrayals can obscure the diversity and depth of African spiritual systems, potentially reinforcing the very stereotypes Afrojujuism seeks to challenge.

Furthermore, critics of Afrojujuism have raised concerns about its potential to be co-opted by Western publishers and audiences. These critics argue that by adhering too closely to the genre conventions of magical realism and fantasy, Afrojujuism could be subsumed into a global literary market that does not fully engage with the political and cultural implications of African spirituality. In this view, Afrojujuism's incorporation into a broader global literary trend might dilute its original purpose as a vehicle for African resistance to colonial and post-colonial narratives (Okungbowa, 2024).

Analyzing the Novel Through Afrojujuistic Elements

Afrojujuism is exemplified by Amos Tutuola's work, which immerses the reader in a magical universe where juju (magic) and spiritual powers are not distant but integral to everyday life. The protagonist's voyage through the "Bush of Ghosts" represents a passage into a metaphysical realm governed by African cosmology beliefs, where spirits, gods, and magical entities interact with human life. One of the most fundamental features of Afrojujuism is the depiction of the supernatural as an essential part of existence. Tutuola illustrates this in the novel by having the protagonist enter the ghostly realm.

"But immediately I entered the bush, I was already among the ghosts" (Tutuola, 1954: 7).

This phrase stresses the immediate passage from the physical to the spiritual sphere, demonstrating how inextricably linked these two worlds are in Afri-

can cosmology. In Afrojujuism, the supernatural is not something that must be sought; it is everywhere, and humans can come upon it at any time. This is consistent with Yoruba beliefs, which hold that the spirit realm lives in parallel with the mortal world. The phrase “among the ghosts” implies a strong connection to the spiritual realm, which is a key component of Afrojujuism. In many African traditions, the bush (or wilderness) is more than just a physical location; it is a transitional zone where the material and spiritual worlds meet. This relationship means that nature is populated by ghosts, ancestors, and other ethereal beings, mirroring the Afrojujuist belief that spirituality is inextricably linked to the physical environment. The bush can also be interpreted as a metaphor for the African cultural environment, which is rich in traditions, beliefs, and stories. Entering the bush represents a journey into one’s heritage and acceptance of traditional wisdom. This is consistent with Afrojujuism’s emphasis on recovering and honoring African identity through a synthesis of the past and present, as well as the recognition of spiritual ancestors.

The quotation symbolizes the interdependence of the living and the dead, which is a common motif in many African spiritual rituals. The ghosts represent a people’s forefathers and collective memory, implying that it is impossible to escape or ignore this history. In Afrojujuism, this interconnectivity is critical for understanding one’s role in the world and the impact of ancestors on modern life. Tutuola’s tale frequently blurs the border between reality and the bizarre, which is typical of Afrojujuist literature. The concept of being “among the ghosts” evokes surrealism, since the protagonist’s experiences transcend conventional life. This mingling of the real and supernatural is consistent with Afrojujuism’s examination of the complexity of reality, in which the fanciful is just as genuine as the tangible. The act of entering the bush represents a journey, both into nature and within oneself. It represents the discovery of one’s identity, spirituality, and the search for understanding in a world full of both visible and invisible influences. In Afrojujuism, such voyages are crucial for personal and communal progress, highlighting the necessity of traversing one’s cultural and spiritual roots.

Throughout the novel, the protagonist encounters a variety of supernatural beings, each representing different aspects of Yoruba cosmology. These spirits are often grotesque, emphasizing the surreal and unpredictable nature of the spiritual world:

“One of the ghosts was very tall with a head that was like a basket. It did not have hands but only legs and a head” (Tutuola, 1954: 12).

This ghost’s form defies the natural anatomy of a human, indicating its alien origin. Spirits and deities frequently manifest in unfamiliar or distorted shapes in Yoruba cosmology, as well as in many African cultures. These unearthly bodies serve to separate them from the human world while reinforcing their spiritual

and mystical essence. The basket-like head without hands symbolizes that it is free of traditional human desires like touch and manual work, which are connected with hands, but able to move, watch, and interact with the living. The representation of supernatural entities with hybrid or non-human qualities in Afrojuistic philosophy emphasizes their position as intermediaries between distinct planes of existence—humans and spirits. These beings have overcome the restrictions of human form, demonstrating the fluidity that exists between the corporeal and spiritual worlds. The ghost's odd morphology in this scene is deeply meaningful in the Afrojuistic tradition. The basket-like head conjures feelings of emptiness and containment. A basket, as a physical object, holds items but is otherwise empty. This concept of containment could represent the ghost's hollow existence, as it lives in a transitional space where the lines between life and death are blurred. It portrays a universe in which standard physical laws do not apply, and existence is more flexible. Furthermore, baskets are frequently associated with ritualistic or spiritual rituals in African civilizations. They can transport sacred artifacts or offerings, acting as conduits for communication with the divine. Thus, the ghost's head, which resembles a basket, may signify that it serves as a vessel for spiritual force or wisdom. The lack of hands strengthens the sense that this person lives in a distinct form of existence, one that is beyond our physical capacities. Afrojuism frequently investigates the concept of duality—the relationship between the physical and spiritual, the human and the non-human, life and death. In Tutuola's work, the *Bush of Ghosts* is a realm where such dichotomies perpetually collide. The morphology of the ghost in this text, a person with both familiar (human-like legs) and alien features (a basket-like head with no hands), reflects the fluid nature of identification in this ghostly realm. The ghost represents both the human (by its legs) and the spirit world (via its unusual features), underlining the connectivity of these two realms.

This fluidity represents an Afrojuistic idea found in many African cosmologies, which holds that the distinction between the living and the dead is not absolute. Spirits frequently enter the human realm, allowing humans to have spiritual experiences. The ghost's strange shape implies that identity in this area is fluid, moving in response to spiritual energies and relationships.

Traditional Yoruba belief holds that the spirit realm is inhabited by *Òrì à* (deities), ancestors, and other spirits who influence the lives of the living. These spirits frequently take on unusual forms, reflecting their role in maintaining harmony between the earthly and spiritual realms. Tutuola relies on this cosmology by illustrating a ghost realm in which such beings reside, with their forms representing the mystery and power they possess. The representation of a ghost with a basket-like head may also be inspired by Yoruba masquerade customs, in which masked people symbolize spirits or ancestors at religious and cultural celebrations. These masks are frequently designed to simultaneously conceal

and show, symbolizing the spirits' latent strength. In this context, the ghost's head, which resembles a basket, could be seen as a mask that covers its true shape while indicating spiritual authority. The ghost's shape defies conventional notions of existence by combining human and non-human traits, implying that the norms of the physical world do not apply in the Bush of Ghosts. The topic of mixing is fundamental to Afrojujism because it challenges and destabilizes the clear divisions between life and death, humans and spirits, and material and immaterial realms. Tutuola employs the odd forms of the spirits to investigate what it means to be alive or dwell in a spiritual dimension. The unusual morphology is a metaphor for the complexities and ambiguities of life in a postcolonial African context, where traditional beliefs and modern realities frequently coexist in a fluid, dynamic interplay.

"All these ghosts had different characters, and each of them had their duties and works. Some were market traders, some were farmers, and some were warriors" (Tutuola, 1954: 45).

This quote emphasizes the mirror link between the human and spirit worlds. The ghosts are represented as continuing in roles familiar to the living, like trading and farming. This symbolizes the concept that life and existence continue beyond death. According to the Yoruba worldview, the dead do not cease to exist or live differently; they are just in another dimension, where they retain their identities and duties from life. The continuing of such occupations in the afterlife reflects a larger Afrojujistic belief in spiritual continuity, which views death as a transition rather than an end. Ghosts who lead comparable lives to humans highlight the cyclical nature of existence and propose that the afterlife is an extension of the physical world. In Yoruba belief systems, the deceased does not cut ties with the living. Instead, they become ancestors who continue to shape and interact with the human world. Ancestral spirits are revered and sought out for advice, protection, and blessings, and they are said to engage in activities comparable to those of the living. Tutuola's portrayal of ghosts as market sellers and farmers follows Yoruba's beliefs that the spirit world reflects human civilization. The concept of ancestral continuity is essential in Afrojujism.

It emphasizes the idea that there is no clear distinction between the living and the dead. The deceased are not forgotten; they exist on a different level of life and continue to play important parts in their descendants' lives. The ghosts in Tutuola's tale represent the ancestors' ongoing presence in African civilization. Their participation in daily activities such as commerce and farming demonstrates their continued connection to the human world, as well as their conviction that their ancestors continue to watch over them.

The representation of the ghost realm as a continuation of human life is consistent with many African civilizations' cyclical perspective of existence. Afroju-

juism frequently depicts life and death as a continuous circle in which the living and dead interact and exchange. The deceased continue to exist as ghosts or ancestral spirits, who influence the living, thereby maintaining cosmic equilibrium. Tutuola stresses the continuation of societal responsibilities after death by assigning ghost roles such as farming and trading. It implies that life is not linear, but rather a revolving circle in which the same structures, relationships, and responsibilities continue even after death. This cyclical perspective contrasts with Western notions of a final split between life and death, in which the hereafter is frequently depicted as distinct and dramatically different from the earthly sphere. Tutuola's Afrojuistic perspective intertwined life and death, with spirits playing roles identical to those they had in life, emphasizing the continuity of existence. The ghosts' roles as market sellers, farmers, and warriors are profoundly ingrained in the social and cultural fabric of many African communities. Each of these roles is crucial to the community's survival and development. Tutuola claims that the dead continue to play a part in supporting the living world's cultural and economic activities by depicting ghosts as still carrying out these obligations. Market merchants, for example, are critical to the economy in traditional African communities because they facilitate the interchange of products and services. Farmers support the community's life by producing food, while warriors guard it from attacks. The fact that ghosts engage in these activities underlines the notion that cultural practices and economic positions do not terminate with death. This cultural continuity relates to the Afrojuistic concept of inherited responsibility. The dead, as ancestral spirits, continue to preserve the community's traditions, practices, and duties. Tutuola's representation of the ghosts in human-like roles demonstrates a belief in the persistence of cultural values and societal duties beyond death.

The presence of ghost traders, farmers, and warriors illustrates the sacred economy prevalent in African spiritual traditions. Spiritual work, whether through rituals, offerings, or other types of reverence, necessitates the involvement of both the living and the dead. In this sense, the ghost world contributes to the cosmic balance that must be maintained for the human and spiritual realms to coexist. African religious rituals involve making offerings to ancestors or spirits in exchange for protection, fertility, and prosperity. These contributions uphold the reciprocal bond between the living and the deceased. Tutuola stresses the two worlds' economic link by assigning ghost roles such as market trading and farming. The dead continue to work, create, and exchange just like the living, ensuring the flow of life and spiritual strength. Tutuola investigates the universality of human conflicts by depicting spirits partaking in common human activities. Ghosts are traders, farmers, and soldiers, implying that the same battles for existence, sustenance, and power exist in the spirit world as well. This represents the Afrojuistic belief that the hereafter is not a place of full calm or rest, but rather one in which the same societal forces persist. The existence of warriors among

the spirits, for example, implies continual battle and the necessity for defense, reflecting the human experience with conflict.

This supports the Afrojujuistic belief that the human condition—characterized by struggle, work, and survival—is a basic and ongoing part of existence, even after death.

“Whenever I thought about the terrible powers of the ghosts in this bush, I could feel that they were too strong for us human beings. It was clear that their powers came directly from their world, not from ours” (Tutuola, 1954: 73).

This sentence characterizes the ghost world as a parallel society that resembles the human world. Despite being supernatural, these beings are assigned tasks and obligations similar to humans in their various communities. Some ghosts are traders, some are farmers, and some are warriors, all of whom serve important roles in their communities. This organization contends that the spirit world, as depicted by Tutuola, is not chaotic or uncontrolled, but rather operates within a social system similar to human civilization. In Afrojujuistic belief systems, particularly those influenced by Yoruba cosmology, the spirit realm is frequently viewed as a continuation of the physical world, in which the deceased continue to perform tasks that represent their responsibilities in life. This continuity between life and death is a significant component of many African spiritual traditions, where ancestral spirits or ghosts are thought to be active in the spiritual realm just as they were in the physical. In this way, the ghosts in Tutuola’s tale represent the immortality of human experiences, where roles and responsibilities transcend into the afterlife. Markets in many African communities serve as not only venues of business but also centers of social interaction and community life. The presence of market traders among the ghosts implies that economic activity continues in the spiritual realm, representing the interchange of things, ideas, and spiritual energy. Marketplaces in ancient African communities are frequently seen as hallowed sites where human and spiritual activities coexist. The presence of market traders among the ghosts emphasizes the significance of preserving resource balance and flow, even after death. Farming is the foundation of many African economies, producing food and representing a connection to the land and nature. The presence of ghost farmers shows that the spirits engage in activities connected to feeding and sustenance, bolstering the notion that life in the spirit realm is a continuation of physical existence. Farming is frequently associated with fertility and growth, implying that the spiritual realm is still a place of productivity and abundance, where natural cycles of life continue. The presence of warriors among the ghosts represents the protective and conflicting parts of both human and spiritual cultures. Many African cosmologies rely on spirits or ancestors to safeguard the living from spiritual or physical harm. The ghost warriors may signify ghosts who continue to defend and uphold order, just as human warriors do for their societies. This also implies the idea of

continued spiritual warfare or fight in the ghost realm, where wars are fought not just physically, but also on a cosmic or spiritual level.

In the novel spiritual transformation and shape-shifting are other key elements of Afrojujuism. In many African mythologies, transformation is a common feature of interactions between humans and supernatural beings, showcasing the fluid boundaries of reality.

"When I was captured by the Ghostess Queen, she changed me into a bird and I flew across the desert to her castle" (Tutuola, 1954: 103).

Shape-shifting is a prevalent topic in Afrojujuistic storytelling, in which characters or spirits morph physically to reflect their encounters with supernatural powers. In this example, the protagonist gets turned into a bird by the Ghostess Queen, a strong spirit. This process of metamorphosis represents the flexible boundaries between physical and spiritual forms in African cosmology. The Ghostess Queen's capacity to transform the protagonist into a bird emphasizes her supernatural power and dominion over reality, a common topic in Tutuola's writing. In many African traditions, shape-shifting is regarded as a manifestation of spiritual power—the ability to transcend the limitations of the human body and assume forms that allow for greater movement or access to new realms. This reflects the Afrojujuistic notion that the spirit realm acts according to its own principles, in which identity and form are flexible and adaptable. The change into a bird carries profound metaphorical importance. In many African traditions, birds are regarded as creatures capable of traversing both the earth and the sky, representing freedom, spiritual ascent, and the connection between other realms. In the context of this metamorphosis, being transformed into a bird could imply that the protagonist gains temporary access to the magical power of flight, allowing him to travel long distances and between worlds. The desert in this text might be viewed as a metaphor for both spiritual travel and loneliness. Deserts are frequently used in numerous myths to depict locations of difficulty, change, and self-discovery, and this imagery is also prevalent in African spiritual storytelling. The desert could represent the wide, deserted expanse between the human world and the ghostly realm, a transitional zone that must be crossed to access the unknown or supernatural. The voyage across the desert is similar to a rite of passage, in which the protagonist must navigate a harsh, unknown environment, most likely mirroring the spiritual hurdles or tribulations he must face in the spirit realm. It is a journey of metamorphosis in and of itself, similar to the bird transition, underlining the importance of adapting and surviving in a world controlled by other rules than the human. The Ghostess Queen's palace, located beyond the desert, is a location of power, maybe a source of danger, mystery, or greater transformation. Castles or palaces in African mythology are frequently symbols of otherworldly sovereignty, holding great spirits or deities who gov-

ern over certain realms. The Ghostess Queen is shown as a powerful ruler with supernatural authority. Her ability to capture and convert the protagonist into a bird implies that she wields significant power over both humans and the spiritual realm. In Afrojuistic myths, female figures, particularly those with titles such as “queen” or “mother,” are frequently connected with strong deities or spirits who control life, death, or transformation. The Ghostess Queen could be an iconic figure from numerous African oral traditions, such as Yoruba deities Yemoja or Oshun, who are associated with creation, change, and protection. However, in Tutuola’s paintings, this character is less benign and more ambiguous, even frightening. Her ability to “capture” the protagonist emphasizes the notion that the human protagonists in this narrative are frequently at the whim of these great spirits, whose influence extends far beyond human control.

The Queen’s castle might be interpreted as a metaphor for her spiritual sovereignty, a place where she wields power and may present obstacles or tribulations to those who enter it. This echoes the notion of Afrojuism, in which humans are frequently trapped in spiritual webs governed by supernatural powers and must negotiate these forces to survive or reach some type of change or enlightenment. The change into a bird has distinct symbolic implications in African culture. Birds are frequently seen as messengers between the human and spirit worlds because of their ability to travel between realms. Many African stories associate birds with spiritual freedom, wisdom, and, in some cases, prophesy. By transforming into a bird, the protagonist may get temporary spiritual insight or the ability to see and experience the world from a supernatural perspective. However, this metamorphosis includes an aspect of confinement. The protagonist did not choose to become a bird; it was the Ghostess Queen who transformed him. This implies that, despite the freedom represented by flight, the protagonist is nevertheless controlled by a higher spiritual power and unable to exercise his own will. This highlights the contradiction of freedom and captivity that is prevalent in Tutuola’s work: even in moments of liberty, the characters remain under the control of the spiritual powers that govern the Bush of Ghosts. The act of flying across the desert also represents a spiritual journey or escape. At this point, the protagonist is transported from one situation to another, indicating a shift in his spiritual journey. Many African cultures equate flight with the soul’s power to transcend the physical world, which could represent the protagonist’s transitory transition from one dimension of reality to another. This trip could also indicate a moment of surrender to the Ghostess Queen’s will, in which the protagonist is transferred as part of a wider spiritual journey or trial over which he has no control. This dual symbolism of flight, which represents both freedom and submission, illustrates the complex relationship between people and spirits in Afrojuistic philosophy, in which spiritual powers may grant release but frequently assert their control.

The merging of human and ghostly features in this sentence illustrates the core of Afrojuism's duality: the natural and supernatural worlds colliding. The ghost mother's remark implies that ghosts have human attributes, blurring the distinction between life and death, as is prevalent in African oral tradition.

"We are ghosts, but our children are the same as human children. They have to eat, play, and grow up, just like you do" (Tutuola, 1954: 122).

The ghost emphasizes the similarities between the ghost and human worlds, emphasizing that, despite their supernatural nature, their offspring share basic human experiences such as eating, playing, and growing up. This represents the Afrojuistic notion of continuity and interconnectedness between the living and spiritual worlds, implying that, despite their differences, the lives of ghosts and people are inextricably linked and follow similar life cycles.

Conclusion

Amos Tutuola's *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* offers a profound exploration of Afrojuism, a literary framework that illuminates the interconnection between the spiritual and physical worlds. Through the protagonist's journey in the titular "Bush of Ghosts," Tutuola crafts a narrative where the supernatural is not merely a fantastical element but an integral part of everyday existence. This alignment with Afrojuism underscores the Yoruba worldview, where the boundaries between life and death, human and spirit, are porous and interconnected. The novel serves as a vivid depiction of how African cosmology resists Western dualities by presenting a universe where the spiritual realm continuously shapes and interacts with the material world.

Central to the Afrojuistic ethos in Tutuola's work is the belief in the fluidity of existence—a fluidity that blurs the distinction between the physical and the supernatural. The protagonist's experiences, such as his metamorphosis into a bird or his dialogues with ghostly traders and farmers, reflect key Yoruba beliefs that spirits are not distant or separate from human life but are intrinsic to the fabric of existence itself (Owomoyela, 1993). The juxtaposition of living and dead, human and spirit, within a single realm, emphasizes that the spiritual world is an active participant in the earthly realm, guiding, shaping, and even controlling the fates of human beings. Nnodim (1994) illustrates that in Yoruba thought, life and death exist in a continuous, cyclical relationship, a perspective that Tutuola masterfully embodies throughout the narrative.

Tutuola also emphasizes the **significance of ancestral continuity**, a central theme in Afrojuism, through the portrayal of spirits who continue to trade, farm, and engage in societal activities even after death. These spectral figures are not passive or confined to the afterlife but remain deeply entwined in the everyday activities of the living. This interaction between the living and the dead, ex-

emplified in the novel's spiritual economy, reflects the Yoruba notion that death is not an end but a transition into another plane where the spirits of ancestors maintain a vital connection with the living. The supernatural beings in the *Bush of Ghosts*, whether engaging in work, conflict, or mentorship, emphasize that existence is not bound by the physical world's limitations but is rather a dynamic process that includes both realms (Owomoyela, 1993).

Furthermore, the concept of shape-shifting and metamorphosis plays a pivotal role in Tutuola's narrative, offering another manifestation of Afrojujuism's fluid understanding of identity and existence. The protagonist's ability to change into a bird, for example, exemplifies the mutable and flexible nature of identity in African cosmology, where forms and beings are not fixed but can transition across different states of being. This fluidity reinforces the Afrojujuistic idea that identity is not static but is continually evolving because of the spiritual and physical forces at play. The metamorphosis also underscores the permeability between humans and spirits, where the boundary between the two is not rigid but constantly negotiated.

In terms of postcolonial African identity, Tutuola's work presents a complex dialogue between traditional African beliefs and the encroaching forces of modernity and colonialism. Set against a backdrop of postcolonial dislocation, the novel examines how traditional African spiritual practices intersect with contemporary realities. The *Bush of Ghosts* can be seen as a metaphorical space where colonial histories and African spiritual traditions collide, providing a critique of the way Western colonial narratives have sought to displace and erase African worldviews. Through the lens of Afrojujuism, Tutuola highlights how African identities are formed and reformed in the process of negotiating the legacy of colonialism. This collision between the traditional and the modern in Tutuola's surreal narrative points to an ever-evolving African identity that is shaped by both ancestral beliefs and contemporary struggles.

Ultimately, Tutuola's exploration of the interdependence of the spiritual and physical worlds in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* highlights the richness of Afrojujuism as a literary genre. By weaving together ancestral spirits, shape-shifting, and spiritual continuity, Tutuola presents a narrative that challenges the dualistic nature of Western thought and embraces the complexity of African cosmological perspectives. The novel offers a unique, layered investigation of African postcolonial identity—one that both critiques the colonial imposition of Western rationalism and celebrates the ongoing vitality of African spirituality. Through this work, Tutuola not only preserves but also revitalizes African spiritual traditions, illustrating how they continue to influence and shape the African experience in a modern, postcolonial context.

In conclusion, Tutuola's novel stands as a testament to the power of Afrojuism in reclaiming African spiritual systems, offering a space where ancestral wisdom and contemporary struggles coexist. It is a compelling reminder of the resilience and adaptability of African cultures, and how literature can serve as a medium through which spiritual and cultural identity is preserved and reimagined in the face of colonial and postcolonial challenges.

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