

1991

D. O. Fagunwa: The Art of Fabulation and Writing Orality

Pamela J. Olúbùnmi Smith

University of Nebraska at Omaha, pamelasmith@unomaha.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/goodrichfacpub>

 Part of the [Modern Literature Commons](#)

Please take our feedback survey at: https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE

Recommended Citation

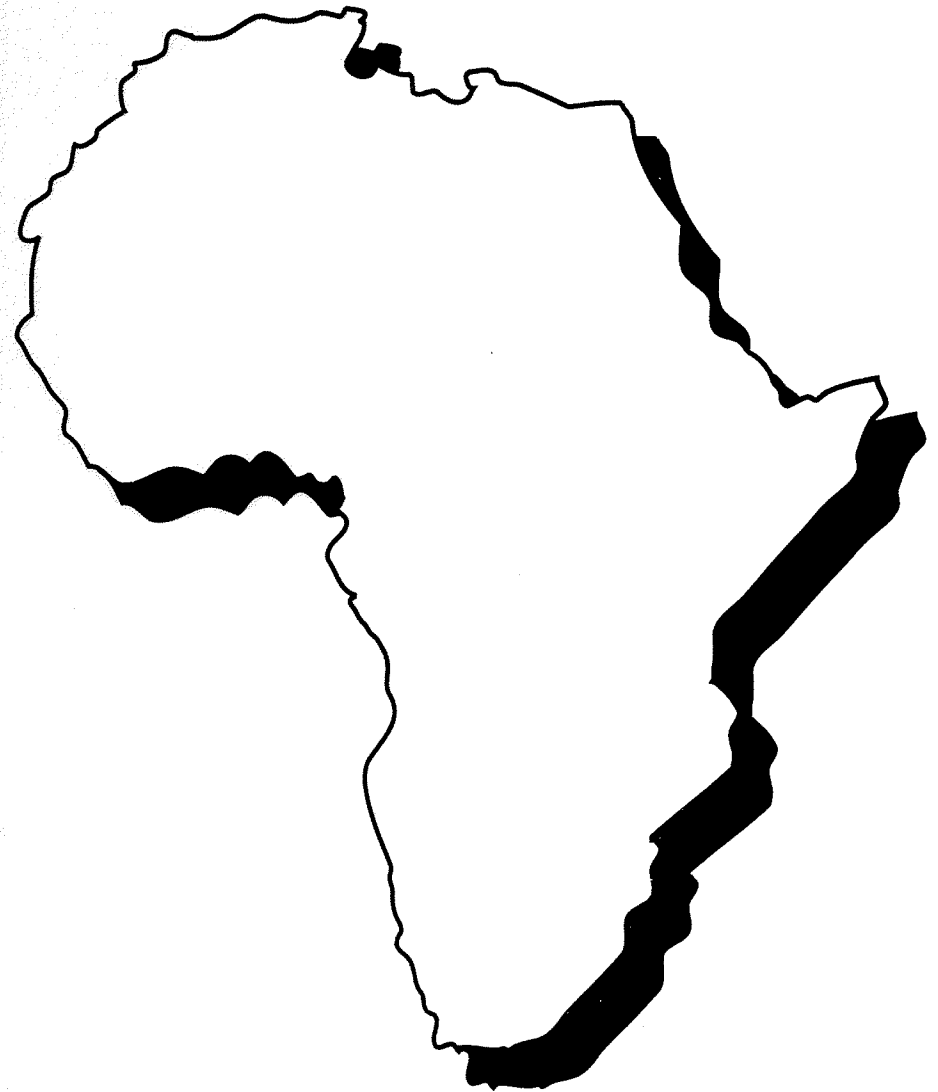
Smith, Pamela J. Olúbùnmi, "D. O. Fagunwa: The Art of Fabulation and Writing Orality" (1991). *Goodrich Scholarship Faculty Publications*. 30.

<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/goodrichfacpub/30>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Goodrich Scholarship Program at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Goodrich Scholarship Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.

THE LITERARY GRIOT

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BLACK ORAL AND LITERARY STUDIES



Tradition, Form and Ideology

Volume 3, Number 2 Fall 1991

THE LITERARY GRIOT Vol. 3, No. 2 Tradition, Form and Ideology Fall 1991

D. O. Fagunwa: The Art of Fabulation and Writing Orality

Pamela J. Smith

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Many non-Yoruba critics of African literature have often cited Yoruba writer D. O. Fagunwa as a valuable contributor to African orature. However, these citations have tended to be allusions, passing references, in the critics' analyses of other African texts.¹ There is still a great need for a purposeful analysis of the *exact* nature of Fagunwa's acclaimed literary contribution, particularly as it relates to the discussion of an afrocentric esthetic of African-language texts and the extent of his direct influence on African literature in English. Fagunwa is no stranger to Yorubas, young and old, literate and illiterate alike; but because of his chosen medium,² most Western and non-Yoruba African critics are denied *full* access to the essence of his classic texts.³

Unfortunately and ironically the Amos Tutuola controversy of the 1960s which seemed to promise a full appraisal of Fagunwa's influence on Tutuola and other African writers yielded relatively little,⁴ and the profit-oriented Nelson/Nelson Pitman publishers and perhaps the Fagunwa estate/administrators have not deemed Fagunwa's classic works worthy of a wider international audience.

This paper examines Fagunwa's art of fabulation through an analysis of his method of incorporating the oral and the aural in a written form. This analysis needs to be situated in the context or framework of a discussion of Fagunwa the author.

Fagunwa in Perspective

The importance of Fagunwa as a master of Yoruba verbal art and a contributor to Yoruba culture and literary history is unparalleled. His work includes five seminal novels, two travel books, a collection of folktales, a popular school reader he co-authored, and an unfinished novel on which he was working before his untimely death in 1963.⁵ Yoruba scholars and critics A. Olubummo (1963), Adebisi Afolayan (1968), Adeboye Babalola (1971), Ayo Bamgbose (1974), Ogundipe-Leslie (1977), Abiola Irele (1981), and German critic Ulli Beier (1967) have situated Fagunwa's art in its linguistic and literary perspective.

As Abiola Irele aptly observed, Fagunwa responded early to the need for a literature "of a less exclusively religious character" in the vernacular "by translating the oral tradition into a written form, and laying the basis for its transformation into a literature culture" (177). Emmanuel Obiechina noted that apart from the mass of historical and social anthropological publications that appeared between 1920 and 1946, the first creative work of any significance produced by an educated West African was Fagunwa's *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* (1938) [*The Brave Hunter in the Forest of Four Hundred Spirits*] (143). By showing how folktales could be "legitimately and profitably used for narrative prose fiction in the Gutenberg era," Fagunwa initiated "one of the most remarkable trends in African indigenous literature" (Babalola and Gérard 193). Consequently, Fagunwa has exerted a most pervasive influence on Yoruba creative writing, especially with regard to the novels written in the "Fagunwa tradition," a tradition in which folklore is expanded into an extended narrative (Irele 179). In fact, most of the novels within the Fagunwa tradition are said to "range from outright imitations . . . to serious and imaginative adaptations of the type that one finds in Amos Tutuola's novels" (Bamgbose 5).

The extraordinary outburst of literary activity between 1948 and 1951 which saw the publication of at least nine of his books made Fagunwa a household name among Yoruba readers. Fagunwa's success and his remarkable deployment of the resources of the Yoruba language also served as a model for later writers, some of whom dedicated a few novels to him; these writers include Nobel prize winner Wole Soyinka, who also writes in literary genres other than the novel, and Amos Tutuola. With this kind of

legacy etched in the cultural and literary consciousness of the Yoruba who "feel a firm commitment . . . to reconciling their tradition with the imperatives of contemporary life" (Okpewho 174), it is no wonder that more than five decades after the publication of his first novel (1938), the virtues of Fagunwa's fantastic imagination, his storytelling ability, his verbal adroitness, and his peculiar, unparalleled method of fabulation continue to endear him to an evergrowing circle of passionate admirers, young and old. This admiration perhaps accounts for the near canonization of his works among the Yoruba.

Mythic Consciousness and Yoruba Orality

Fagunwa's narratives are embedded in Yoruba mythic imagination. As Irele pointed out, Fagunwa's novels "are constructed in relation to a definite cosmology" (178). The cosmography is inclusive. It is one in which the realms of the spirit world of the dead interpenetrate and interact intimately with that of the living. Fagunwa's hunters pass through the various spheres of the African cosmography, as they interact with human, superhuman, mythical beings and divinities on earth and in the underworld which is represented by the African forest.

Fagunwa's work is steeped in the mystical world of Yoruba lore. His tales belong to a large body of heroic hunter lore. It is not mere convenience that Fagunwa chose the formidable forest as the setting for his novels, and the hunter as the hero of his narratives. It is noteworthy and symbolic that Fagunwa's hometown, Oke Igbo, literally "the height/hill of forest" (the crest of the forest) is surrounded by *four* other forests: Igbo Olodumare [Forest of the Almighty], Igbo Omidudu [Forest of Dark Waters], Aba Olode [Hunter's Haunt/Grove], and Igbo Gureje [Forest of Gureje] (Bamgbose 9).

In Yoruba lore, the forest is usually the setting for "man's encounter with and understanding of his world" and the hunter, the traditional folk hero who, as character symbol, combines the role of healer, military scout, and culture hero as he extends the frontiers of the world in his search for an understanding of the imponderables of human existence.

For the Yoruba, the balance of human life, the very sense of human existence, consists in the dynamic correlation of individual responsibility and the pressure of external events and forces. In oral literature, the understanding that human fate is as much a matter of chance as of

conscious moral choice is what determines its social function. . . . (Irele 181)

The Yoruba view of the universe is therefore one in which the condition of man and the condition of the cosmos reflect each other as well as "the moral ideal of harmonious integration of the self with the world" (Irele 182).

The institutions depicted in Fagunwa's novels are Yoruba political institutions complete with what Ogundipe-Leslie describes as their "gerontocratic system of chieftaincy and kingship" (87), the hierarchy of medicine men and hunters, and the deference towards age derived from the complex Yoruba religious system. Even the basic beliefs underlying the actions and attitudes of Fagunwa's characters reflect Yoruba traditional folklore and beliefs, including witchcraft, medicine, charms, and numerous spirits, gnomes, trolls, and a myriad strange creatures which inhabit the natural and supernatural worlds.

Oralizing of Print: The Method of Transcription

In Yoruba oral culture, the primary ritual of storytelling involved the village folk at the end of the day, usually after their labors on the farm or at the marketplace. Since many Yorubas considered the continuing tradition of stroytelling as the crux of traditional life prior to the advent of and easy accessibility to television and the vcr, the typical storytelling scene is worth recasting here. The village scene might look something like this: a pitch-dark night, lit by flicking palm-oil lamps; children scurry around, unleashing the last burst of their unbounded energy in hid-and-go-seek and such games; the household animals are finally corraled; the adults have at last finished their evening meal and slowly gather on the veranda or in the courtyard on a moonlit night when the session might be more elaborate and formal, encompassing almost the entire village gathered around a pipe-toting old man of the village. The session is almost always preceded by riddles to hone the skills of the younger listeners and ensure the alertness and complete attention of the audience:

Storyteller: What drops in water but makes no sound?

Audience: A needle.

Storyteller: What passes before an oba's palace but makes no obeisance?

Audience: A rain flood.

The story proper may then begin after the storyteller has gauged the audience's readiness, an imperative if the narrative is to be successful. The storyteller begins with the formulaic exchange "Alo o/alo o" intended to set up the very important call-and-response rhythm typical of storytelling, and to establish rapport between the narrator and the audience.

While these formulaic preambles of fabulation are not visibly present in their familiar oral forms in Fagunwa's novels, they are nonetheless present in a transcribed, yet recognizable form. The following excerpts from the beginning pages of the first two *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* [*The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*] and *Igbo Olodumare* [*The Forest of the Almighty*]*—the only translated Fagunwa novels—illustrate Fagunwa's use of rhetorical and paraliterary devices of the oral narrative in his attempt to preserve the linguistic and aesthetic kernels of Yoruba tradition in written form:*

My friends all, like the sonorous proverb do we drum the *ogidigbo* drum; it is the wise who dance to it, and the learned who understand its language. The story which follows is a veritable *Ogidigbo*; it is *I who will drum it, and you the wise heads who will interpret it*. Our elders have a favourite proverb—are you not dying to ask me how it goes?—they tell it thus, "When our masquerade dances well, our heads swell and do a spin." Forgive my forwardness, it is the proverb which speaks. *Now I do not want you to dance to my drumming as a mosquito to the deep ibembe drums, its legs twitching haphazardly, at loggerheads with the drums. Dance my friends, in harmony, with joy and laughter, that your audience may ring your brows with coins and pave your path with clothing. . . .* But for a start, if you want this dance to be a success, here are two things I must request of you. *Firstly, whenever a character in my story speaks in his own person, you must put yourselves in his place and speak as if you are that very man. And when the other replies, you must relate the story to yourselves in his place and speak as if you, sitting down, had been addressed and now respond to the first speaker. . . .* (*The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* 7; my emphasis).

It was high noon, not too long ago, when, after lunch, I left my house and took a short walk. Having climbed to the top of a certain rock, I sprawled in the shade of a nearby tree. . . .

So it was that I sat contemplating the nature of the world and the ways of humans, for I have met and lived among many types in my day. The period I now speak about was a very important one in my life. It was about the time my father passed away. . . . My mind flashed back

to the event of my father's death as I sat sprawled in the soothing shade of the tree on that sweltering noon day. Lost in these thoughts, I was unaware of the stirrings of a man in a nearby grove. . . . Most certainly uninvited, the man made his presence felt, forcibly planting himself before me. Anger welled up inside me; I donned the frown of a starving, ferocious man, hissing incessantly as one in agony.

The man greeted me; I acknowledged him with due politeness lest I be called conceited and thus labeled a snob on that account; my courtesy was lukewarm at best.

The formal courtesies over, I feigned discourteousness and bizarreness, ignoring his conversation. I was silent, unmoved by his speech. . . .

Relaxed as I was in this pensive mood, and rather enjoying my provocative game of nonchalance, I was suddenly jerked to my senses by the shrillness of the creature's thunderous roar. . . . Finally, I muscled up, and began scrutinizing this fellow, only to discover, surprisingly, that it was the illustrious superman, *Akara-Ogun*, the world-renowned creature who accompanies the cook to the grave. . . . We exchanged warm greetings.

"Akara-Ogun," I hailed him.

"Yes, it is I," he proudly retorted.

"Akara-Ogun," I pronounced yet again.

"Yes, *Akara-Ogun* is indeed my name. I am called by a famous name, a well suited name indeed. I engage in and pursue only those adventures and encounters befitting a man of my caliber. Yes, it is (I?), your old-time pal. My strength and ability have neither waned nor have the bones in my body weakened. *Dip your hands in your pocket, perchance you may find some writing material. Wonders are bound to manifest themselves this day! I have a certain pressing and important message I want you to convey to the black race, for fruitful words of advice and wisdom lie in my safekeeping. Therefore, I implore you in the name of the black race, lie down on this rock, and using it as our makeshift table top, take on the task of note-taker while I, as chair of the session, dictate these thoughts to you. Let the vegetation of this forest stand as our audience!*" (*The Forest of the Almighty* 1-7; my emphasis)⁶

Thus began, with these carefully orchestrated preambles, what was to be the serialized narration of Akara-Ogun's and Olowo-aiye's hunting sagas in *Ogboju Ode* and *Igbo Olodumare*, respectively. The two stories are transcribed specifically for the reading pleasure, cultural edification, and moral upbringing of posterity.⁷

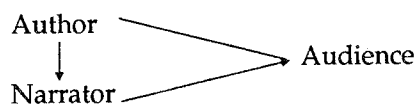
Implicit in the above passages as well as in the prefaces to the novels is a premonition of the passing of time and with it the uncertainty of sheer memory as reliable custodian of culture. We note in the *Ogboju Ode* passage the carefully laid out instructions couched in the metaphor of drum and dance: memory/listening alone is no longer adequate for "reading pleasure," "cultural edification," and "moral upbringing." Further on, the narrator gives definitive instructions to the author to "take up [. . .] pen and paper and write down the story" which is about to be told. Likewise, in the *Igbo Olodumare* preamble, the author is given explicit instructions, though in less metaphorical language, to "find some writing materials" in preparation for the recording of the "wonders" of the "pressing and important message of wisdom and advice" to which "the vegetation of this forest" will be the cosmic audience/witnesses. Fagunwa the fabulist and culture crusader, suspecting that Yoruba oral art, like the writing of the language itself, would shift with encroaching modernization, insightfully blazed the way to preserve a tradition through a literate form buoyed and energized by a residual oral tradition. It is in the context of Yoruba orature that one can appreciate the Yoruba fascination for Fagunwa as a master storyteller and a euphonic manipulator of the Yoruba language.

Fagunwa's transformation of orality into written text maintains the fluidity of the Yoruba traditional storytelling atmosphere, even though the typical preamble of riddles, games, anecdotes, and jokes which usually become the roots and stem from which the oral narrative grows, are not readily discernable in their traditional form. To ensure that the effect which these para-narrative devices add to the oral atmosphere is not lost in the written transcription, Fagunwa devised a rather unique and engaging metaphoric preamble which immediately sets the auditory-oral interactive-storytelling atmosphere called for in traditional storytelling. In the *Ogboju Ode* passage, the "prelude" is essential to the story. It is the appropriate *keying* of the audience to the intellectual texture of the story whose transcription/preservation is about to be witnessed. The metaphor of drum-dance/drummer-dancers becomes the contextual and/or aesthetic apparatus used in place of the verbal "*Alo* warm-up" to create an atmosphere of oral delivery.

The audience's much-coveted participation is galvanized through several means such as a salutary invitation, "My friends all," an

exhortation, "Remember that the sweetness of the world is equal to its bitterness." Fagunwa also uses direct address, "My people all, herein lies the entire tale," questions, "I ask you, does it not behoove one to give absolutely every bit of one's strength to such a fight?" and through mock arguments. For example, the *alo o/a lo* call-and-response pattern takes the form of a promised *ogidigbo* drumming-dancing whose success can only be ensured by total audience participation. Also in *Igbo Olodumare*, the narrator and the prospective recorder/author engage in a familiar banter in preparation for the real serialized storytelling "session" which will be initially audienced by "the vegetation of this (surrounding) forest" and later by curious fellow townfolks. And thus the story begins, "... It was during the twenty-fifth year of his life that my father prepared himself one morning for a hunting trip which took him into a certain grove close to our town," as the hunter sets out on what often becomes an "educative and redemptive" journey into the forest where he must justify and affirm his human essence in his search for ultimate truth.

The narrative structures are as interesting as the stories themselves. The pattern in all the novels establish the community of discourse as consisting of



The transcriber, a kind of amanuensis (reminiscent of the village letter writer), functions also as listener-writer. Then there is the narrator, usually a hunter, and in some cases a distinctively explicit multi-level audience as in the case of *Ogboju Ode* in which clearly the first audience is the invited active participants, those who are to "dance in harmony and joy" to the author's drumming, and a second audience which later joins the author and whose dual role would make them respondents to and judges of the first audience's author-invited "dance." In *Ogboju Ode* and *Igbo Olodumare* there is yet a third, less active audience, the "men and women of Yorubaland, the assumed listeners to/readers and receivers of the morals of the tales. It is the combination of these multiple audiences, whether human or spirit (as in the case of *Igbo Olodumare* where the initial audience

is the "vegetation of the forest") that necessarily actualizes the production and execution of the text.

Another narrative device used to capture the call-response which is characteristic of Yoruba storytelling is reflected in a scene in *Ogboju Ode* in which the audience engages in a mock argument with the narrator regarding the innumerability of God's works and the certainty and uncertainty of each mortal's journey on earth. It is worth quoting here:

"When I first set eyes upon you I was full of fear, but when I drew near my fear deserted me. For at first I could not help but think that when all of you will have died, all the iroko in the neighbouring bush will not yield enough planks to bury you; but in the end I took heart for I remembered that it is not everyone of you who will pass away in bed."

These words angered his listeners who began to retort, "I will surely die a peaceful death! I will surely die a peaceful death. . . ." While they were repeating this, he waved to them to be quiet and replied to them, thus, "Words of truth are as thorns, the honest man is the foe of the world. I wish to ask you four questions; if you can answer them it means then that I am at fault in what I said, but if you cannot it means that you have not understood me at all. . . . I would like one of you to rise and tell me precisely on what day he shall die; then I want him to tell me what manner of death he will die. . . . Thirdly, I would like to be told where this person will die. . . . And lastly, this—let the man tell me step by step what things shall befall him from this moment until the day of his death. . . .

When he had spoken thus no one could reply to him, for no one can tell what day he shall die So when he saw that our tongues appeared to be padlocked he said to us, "Aha, I observe that you fall silent, and the reason for your silence is this—the key to this world remains in the keeping of God. . . . His words amazed us greatly; they were full of wisdom and we changed our tune and began to tell him, "There is truth in this, old man; do carry on with your wise words." (*Ogboju Ode; The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* 69-70; my emphasis)

This scene not only succeeds in simulating the typical Yoruba storytelling atmosphere which delineates the centrality of an alert, active audience but also establishes the authenticity of the narrative and the claimed credibility and wisdom of the narrator.

Yet a third effective narrative device is the use of the oral traditional formula of ending a story which delineates the social interactive nature of storytelling. The endings of *Ogboju Ode* and *Igbo Olodumare* are illustrative:

My story is ended at last, *let it receive solid kola and not the segmented*, for the first is what secures a man to this world while the latter scatters him to the winds. And so adieu for a little while, *I have a feeling that we shall meet again before long*; let me therefore utter a short prayer and then raise three cheers. . . Muso! Muso! Muso! *I trust you have enjoyed this tale.* (Ogboju Ode; *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* 140; my emphasis)

The story is now ended. I salute you all, it is a pleasure to see all of you after such a long spell. May God protect your household, may He shield your pathway also. . . . May He continue to guide the strong in the path of truth. And so, adieu for a little while. *May Almighty God grant that we meet again soon.* (Igbo Olodumare; *The Forest of the Almighty* 217)

These endings compare to the following two examples of typical traditional Yoruba "end of story" formulae:

Narrator: *Ibiti mo ba nwon de ti mo pada ni yen.*
[And this is as far as I went with them (the story's characters) before I turned back]

Narrator: *Idi alo mi re gbangbalaka*
To ba se pe mo pa iro ki ago enu ko ma ro
Ti mio ba pa 'ro ki ago enu ro l'emeta
O ro abi o ro?
[This, in short, is the end (purpose) of my story. If I've told a lie, may the bells of the mouth (your voices) not ring. If I have told the truth, may the bells ring three times. Does my story ring true or not?]

Audience: *O ro, baba!*
[It rings true indeed, teller!]

There are clear parallels between the traditional formulaic endings and Fagunwa's transcribed versions of them in *Ogboju Ode* and *Igbo Olodumare*, where the raconteur rhetorically seeks the audience's approbation. The author/teller's statement "let it receive solid kola and not the segmented"—like the oral narrator's rhetorical question "does my story ring true?"—not only assumes the audience's rubber-stamp approval but also formally pronounces the end of the story as it was (re)told. This formulaic ending complements the formal opening, "alo o," and completes the story telling process.

The vital characteristic of this community of discourse is the immediacy of the "embodied voice(s)" of both the story teller and the audience. Gatherings occasioned by story telling form the focus of a culture's mode of education, its social assemblies and entertainment or recreation. It is noteworthy that the nightly "oral events" recast above are community-oriented and that they engage the visual, the aural, and the physical. One prominent characteristic is the sensory interplay of the spiritual as well as the physical aspects of the event. Visually and aurally, the raconteur is the focus of attention. His voice is momentarily the voice of tradition, and his person is the link between past and present. Socially, his voice, his nuances, sometimes his instruments and the dynamics of the all-important relationship between raconteur and audience characterize the heart of storytelling. Spiritually, the community of experience, that is the cultural bonding between storyteller and audience, becomes the method of preserving and presenting the mythos.

Although the visual is the dominant sense in the transmission of cultural education, the vocal is accentuated. As if compensating for the loss of the visual (the nuances and comic facial expressions of the raconteur), it is this accentuated vocal that Fagunwa succeeded in capturing through the use of ideophones. For example, the sound of the rough, scaly skins of lizards noisily grazing on dried leaves is described as "*hanranhanran*," and luxuriant leaves as "*gberegede-gberegede*" or "*gbogagboga*" to denote at once succulence and enormity.

Fagunwa exploited the entire semantic resources of the Yoruba language in the medium of literacy to produce some of the most memorable passages *aurally*, *orally* and *visually* in Yoruba narrative. One example of this remarkable fusion of Yoruba rhetoric and personal verbal virtuosity is this popularly-quoted passage which also serves as an excellent example of how sound and action are fused:

Nigbati baba mi yo ni iha ihin ti on na yo ni iha ohun awon mejeji duro nwon nwo ara won: nitori nigbati ajanaku ba pade ajanaku dandan ni ki igi ma wo lu ara won . . . gongo ma so. Esu-kekere ni o ko soro o la enu re nla ni o si wipe.

'Tani o? Kini o? Kil'o jamo? Kil'o je? Kil'o jasi? Kil'o nwa? Kil'o nfe? Kil'o nwo? Kil'o nri? Kil'o nro? Kini se o? Nibo l'o ti mbo? Nibo l'o nre? Nibo l'o ngbe? Nibo l'o nrin?—Da mi lohun! Omo enia da mi lohun ni

gbolohun Kan. Dajudaju iwo daran loni, iwo gun igi koja ewe, iwo ja lati oke bo sinu Konga, iwo je majele airotele, iwo ri oko ti o Kun iwo gbin epa si i. Iwo alaigbede okunrin, iwo komo pe kiniun ati agbonrin Ki ifi oju ri ara won, ati pe ekun on malu ki ise ore po, . . . A! mo dupe lowo Olodumare loni, mo dupe lowo irunmale gbogbo loni, mo dupe lowo awon anjonnu aiye, mo dupe lowo ogun awure inu apo mi, beni mo dupe lowo iwin pataki nla ni, Alade-igbo, ebor ti ise alakoso okiti ogan, ti o je ibatan mi. . . .

[When my father emerged from one end and the creature from the other, they both stood glaring at each other because when elephant meets elephant, trees are bound to collide with each other. . . . Pandemonium was on the loose! Esu-kekere was the first to break the silence, opening that broad mouth of his and speaking thus:

Who are you? What are you? What are you worth? What do you amount to? What are you up to? What are you seeking? What do you want? What are you looking at? What are you seeing? What are you thinking? What is wrong with you? Where do you walk? Answer me! You earthling, answer me in one word! You've certainly got yourself in trouble today. You've dropped from a great height into a well, you've swallowed poison unexpectedly, you saw a fully-seeded farm and yet sowed ground-nuts (peanuts) in it. You babbler of a man, do you not know that the lion and the deer cannot cross the same path, that the tiger and the bull cannot strike a friendship. . . . Ah! I thank the Almighty this day, I thank all of the many spirits of Irunmale, I thank all the genii of the world, I thank the good-luck charm in my shoulder bag, and I especially thank the great spirit, Alade-Igbo, crown prince of the forest, the bog-troll who is president of the anthill and a relation of mine! (Igbo Olodumare; The Forest of the Almighty 68-69; my emphasis).

In this passage we see how the relentlessness of the repetition combined with the daring call to action by an imp to a renowned hunter fuses the sound of words and more words to the inevitable action which the feverish and breathless pitch of the sing-song diatribe allows the audience to naturally anticipate.

From the random textual examples cited, there is evidence of Fagunwa's strong attachment to Yoruba oral tradition which is reflected in the context, matter and manner of his narratives. Contextually, Fagunwa successfully duplicated in writing the essence of the physical environment of the oral narrative: the ever-present audience.

The immediacy of audience and the awareness of audience by both narrators-hunters (Akara-ogun and Olowo-Aiye) and the primary and secondary authors (the unnamed scribe-author and Fagunwa) in *Ogboju Ode* and *Igbo Olodumare* constitute crucial elements in the nature of the narratives. This keen awareness of audience by both narrators and authors sets up the traditionality of the narrative and invokes a convincing atmosphere of orality when the narrators frequently punctuate their narration to address the scribe-author and/or the audience directly as "My friends all." Also, Fagunwa's conscious reflection of and reference to the Yoruba (black) race at the end of *Ogboju Ode* and *Igbo Olodumare* heightens the vivid sense of the immediacy of the larger extended audience—the men and women of Yorubaland.

The transcription of the significance of the social involvement is interesting since the typical storytelling tradition involves a gathering of the collective. Fagunwa's variation which begins with the pattern of Narrator→Scribe→Author→multi-level Audience is well suited to the nature and purpose of the narration which is to "literate for the benefit of posterity." For Fagunwa the emphasis is on the element of story as it entertains and edifies. To this end, the objective to "entertain" and "edify" follow the pattern of what many critics view as the major flaw of Fagunwa's art, which is an almost testy penchant for sermonizing. But Yoruba readers find Fagunwa's sermonizing bearable because, above all, he succeeds in capturing and rendering in literate medium "euphony" by exploiting those phono-aesthetic devices characteristic of Yoruba speech patterns which delight Yoruba audiences.

Although print tends to create a sense of closure, Fagunwa devised the method of infusing the written text with the freshness and "openness" of spoken language through deft linguistic manipulation and artistic wizardry. It is the combined use of paralinguistic devices such as ideophones, repetition, hyperbole, declamatory speech, excessive imagery, and onomatopoeia, energized by a personal flair for the sheer sonority of words that constitute the essence of Fagunwa's art, that euphonic quality implicit in what Wole Soyinka described as "the fusion of sound and action" (*The Forest*, notes n.p.).

Notes

1. As Irele pointed out in his 1981 essay, "Tradition and the Yoruba Writer: D. O. Fagunwa, Amos Tutuola and Wole Soyinka," the outbursts which accompanied the Amos Tutuola controversy of late 1960s unjustly relegated Fagunwa's artistic achievement and influence to mere mention in reference to highlights of Tutuola's much-acclaimed literary genius. And now a decade later, non-Yoruba critics, alas due to the lack of foresight of Fagunwa's own publishers, continue to derive their impression of Fagunwa's literary contributions to Yoruba, and indeed African literature, through translated excerpts, one published translation of *five* seminal novels, Ayo Bamgbose's in-depth study, and a handful of critical articles presuming full analysis of his works based more on limited secondary sources rather than on translations of the primary texts. A renewed call for English translations of Fagunwa's novels is a literary imperative to a more accurate African literary history and criticism.
2. Many non-Yoruba critics have bemoaned their lack of access to Fagunwa caused by his conscious choice of the Yoruba language as the medium for all his works which are specifically written primarily for a Yoruba reading audience. Fagunwa's formal training as an educator in Nigeria and in Britain is well documented by Bamgbose. Evidence of an unpublished, simple, one paragraph translation from his last novel, *Adiitu Olodumare* which Fagunwa himself had attempted—(Typescript MS 326409, Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)—reflects that he could have certainly written in English (and may indeed have contemplated doing so) had he chosen to do so.
3. His novels and other works remain the major standard texts in primary and secondary schools as well as for Yoruba Studies at the University level.
4. To date the record of published Fagunwa translations is dismal. Although two of his five novels have been translated, only one, *Ogboju Ode* (*The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*, translated by Wole Soyinka) has been published. Two more recent separate Ph.D. dissertation translations of the second novel, *Igbo Olodumare* by G. A. Ajadi (*The Forest of God*, 1984) and Pamela J. Olubunmi Smith (*The Forest of the Almighty*, 1985) remain un-

published. All five novels have been translated into French by J. O. Abioye a few years ago. These, like the Ajadi and Smith English translations, await copyright clearance to publish. Journal publications of single chapter translations of *Ogboju Ode* and *Igbo Olodumare* by Akinwowo and by Beier and Gbadamosi have also appeared in 1963.

5. The sheer number of reprints of his novels gives a great measure of Fagunwa's pre-eminence as a man of Yoruba letters as well as his popularity among the Yoruba. For a detailed listing of Fagunwa's writing, see Yoruba scholar Ayo Bamgbose's significant study, *The Novels of Fagunwa* (1974).
6. Although the paper uses Wole Soyinka's English translation of *Ogboju Ode*, and Pamela J. Smith's translation of *Igbo Olodumare*, from hereon, the titles of the sources of translated and/or Yoruba excerpts used will be given in their Yoruba original for textual convenience.
7. Each of the five novels begins with an authorial preface, delineating authorial intent, textual intent and audience identification.

Works Cited

- Babalola, Adeboye and Albert S. Gérard. "A Brief Survey of Creative Writing in Yoruba." *Review of National Literatures: Black Africa* 1.2 (Fall 1971): 188-205.
- Bamgbose, Ayo. *The Novels of Fagunwa*. Benin City, Nigeria: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1974.
- Fagunwa, D. O. *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale*. Edinburgh: Nelson, 1950. (First published by C.M.S. Bookshop, Lagos, 1938).
- . *The Forest of A Thousand Daemons*. Trans. Wole Soyinka. London: Nelson, 1968.
- . *The Forest of the ^{Almighty} Lord*. Trans. Pamela J. Olubunmi Smith. Unpublished, 1985.
- . *Igbo Olodumare*. Edinburgh: Nelson, 1949.
- . *Ireke Onibudo*. Edinburgh: Nelson, 1949.
- . *Irinkerindo Ninu Igbo Elegbeje*. Edinburgh: Nelson, 1954.
- . *Adiitu Olodumare*. Edinburgh: Nelson, 1961.

- Irele, Abiola. "Tradition and the Yoruba Writer: D.O. Fagunwa, Amos Tutuola and Wole Soyinka." *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology*. London: Heinemann, 1981: 174-197.
- Obiechina, Emmanuel. "Transition from Oral to Literary Tradition." *Présence Africaine* 63 (1967): 140-167.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, Molar. "The Poetics of Fiction by Yoruba Writers: The Case of *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* by D. O. Fagunwa." *ODU: Journal of West African Studies* 11 (July 1977): 85-96.
- Okpewho, Isidore. *Myth in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University P, 1983.