

Foreword by

WOLE SOYINKA



CELEBRATING

D.O. FAGÚNWÀ

Aspects of African and World Literary History

Edited by

Adéṣékè Adéèkò & Akin Adéṣòkàn



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FÁGÚNWÀ

ASPECTS OF AFRICAN AND WORLD LITERARY HISTORY

Editors

Adélékè Adéèkó & Akin Adésòkàn

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INTRODUCTION

I have set out in this chapter to explore the role of language, in its synchronic and diachronic application and, to adapt Ferdinand de Saussure, in both its syntagmatic and paradigmatic usage.¹ This is important in the work of an artist who predicates the entire framework of his craft on the beauty, evocative strength, associative reference of language and linguistic resources. He thus uses language both as a symbol and as a myth. In the same light, he predicates the success and stature of a hero in the traditional narrative on that hero's understanding of the secrets concealed by the codes of language and applied knowledge. For him, language is the embryo from which thought is created.

If we agree that the legacy of a tradition lives through its practitioner(s), then it is almost impossible to discuss Yorùbá story-telling and performance methods without the mention of Fágúnwà's epical narratives. This storytelling tradition tends to equate each spoken word with the enunciation of a world. In other words, speech is a living phenomenon possessing life and capable of motion. It is life and it bears life; a potent vehicle using utterance as its medium. In Yorùbá oral tradition, language is conceived of as 'living, wandering thoughts' and as a tool for creativity and innovation. Language is the basis of art and art is the wellspring of creation; at once a beginning and

an end.² Martin Heidegger once wrote that whenever art happens, there is a beginning whereby a thrust enters history.³ History here implies a conceptual context in which a people enter into their own legacy or endowment rather than constituting a discrete series of events which are subjectively conceived.

In five epical works of art, Fágúnwà configures the whole of Yorùbá language history and philosophy as art and as a literary tapestry. Contrary to the mainstream categorisations of genres, these works cannot adequately be classed as distinctively novels, epics or even dramas. The intertextual range and interplay of forms are complex and variegated such that each work could be adapted as epistolary, story-telling or dramatic performance.⁴ Fágúnwà not only speaks to us in his writings, his audience is invited to partake of a dialogue – to respond or complement in action what is spoken. I shall therefore refer to the writings as narratives.

Fágúnwà can be seen as a griot who tries to conceptualise a world and a philosophy through the expressive power of his language and the evocative nature of his linguistic dexterity. Why have I referred to Fágúnwà as a performer when, in actual fact, he wrote episodic and epistolary prose? First, it is noteworthy that in the authoritative book on the novels of Fágúnwà, Bamgbose noted, among other things, the effectiveness of language and evocative imagination:

He holds the reader's imagination by the way he unfolds the events, but particularly by his gift of language and his power of description. His powerful imagination conjures up the most fantastic situations which he describes with great ease, enthusiasm and conviction. His eye for the visual, his ear for the rhythm of his language, and above all, his keen observation of life and his humour all manifest themselves...⁵

Fágúnwà's peculiar use of language, therefore, is his forte as an index of culture. This will be our first point of reference. Second, there is the concentration of his epical plots around the person of a dramatic hero who goes on a quest. Third, he used allegory and symbolism as a vehicle for folk moralising. For effective focusing, I shall illustrate largely with his first work, *Ògbóju Ọde*, as translated by Wole Soyinka in *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*.⁶

LANGUAGE AS THE BASIS OF CRAFT AND CREATIVITY

There is a certain flavour of language which cold print or preservative writing cannot convey. In speech and in orality, there is an abiding force conveyed in voicing or in active utterance. To utter by vocal sound is to control and call

into existence. Speech therefore precedes writing in cosmic or conceptual categorisation. The warmth of speech calls into being – creates and re-creates – whilst print conserves and preserves. In the word, therefore, inheres both the living and that which gives life; the dead or that which conserves life as in a capsule, seed or embryo. Speech is a product of organic, natural rhythm that forms and constitutes man in motion and in the active routine of existence. I shall like, for the purpose of emphasis, to quote Heidegger once again:

Language is – language, speech. Language speaks. If we let ourselves fall into the abyss denoted by this sentence, we do not go tumbling into emptiness. We fall upward, to a height. Its loftiness opens up a depth. The two span a realm in which we would like to become at home, so as to find a residence, a dwelling place for the life of man.⁷

For this philosopher, in language we ‘live and move and have our being’. The root of language, or speech, is the basis of civilisation as well as the rudiments of all cultures. Though the five narratives of Fágúnwà published between 1938 and 1961 constitute a pentateuch, I shall concentrate on the first one in translation – *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* – because it is sufficiently, in scope and style, representative of the five. From the very start, the reader or listener is left in no doubt that linguistic sound and connotations are meant both as an aural as well as a visual medium.⁸ This is how the narrator begins his story:

My friends all, like the sonorous proverb do we drum the agidigbo; it is the wise who dance to it and the learned who understands its language. The story which follows is a veritable agidigbo; it is I who will drum it, and you the wise heads who will interpret it... Forgive my forwardness, it is the proverb which speaks. (7)

The passages are narrated through a proxy, and have in turn been transcribed from an original owner or corpus. They are thus reported passages by second remove. Whilst the whole story is conceptualised as oral history, there is the anachronism of having to write it from another oral, antiquated, ethereal narrator. The imagination thus stretches as the story comes closer within the tension mounted between linear and archetypal time frames. The collision course thereby conflates *time past* with *time present* and *time future* in one telescopic frame. This, I believe, is the contention of Dan Izevbaye when he writes that for the Yorùbá writer, art, however fantastic, conflates with life.⁹

The idea of establishing a historical resonance and a memory in the conduct of tradition, culture and human affairs causes the narrator, Àkàrà-Ògùn, to tell his story almost in the form of radio and television dramas. Both media use the benefit of oral and aural media to delight their listeners such that even a dumb listener can 'hear' the resonance of the language in its beauty. At the same time, the visual or scenic aspect, as in a televised narrative, complements sounds with clearly defined images that are able to leave indelible marks on the memory. Let us read aloud this rendering of an episode on an okra farm in the dead of the night as a sorceress alternates her form between that of an antelope and that of a human:

The figure came on unswerving until it vanished into a large anthill. Shortly afterwards, an antelope emerged from this anthill, entered the field and began to feed on the okro. My father brought his gun to bear on the creature and drove furnaces into its skull. The gun had no sooner roared than there came from the antelope a human cry and the words, "Ah, woe is me!" (13; my emphasis)

The hyperbole and the gloss can hardly be missed. The language of a discourse of this kind certainly seeks to draw in its audience beyond a mere logic of whether physical forms do transmigrate or whether faith gives rise to them. It is a world in which a hunter does not merely shoot but 'drives furnaces' into his targets. The roaring of the gun coincides with the threnodic howl of one presently transformed. It is a world where this syntagmatic correlation of words can only come alive with the background of an okra farm and the moon shinning at a shadowy tangent. In other words, the scene is an enchanting one and the location is synonymous with a haunt. This is the atmosphere in which the language of Fágúnwà conjures worlds and images in the minds of his captive audience.

In continuing within the realm of language usage, Fágúnwà has perfected the art of seeking to evoke the power of language by a system of continuous agglutination of nominals and verb phrases. This way there emerges an effective and vocal build-up as if utterances have attained the status of incantations. Witness this illustrative example:

The aggressive man dies the death of war,
 The swimmer dies the death of water,
 The vainglorious dies the death of women;
 It is the trade of the cutlass that breaks its teeth,

The food we eat is what fills our bellies –
 May God forbid that what you eat bring about your death. (36)

Though the onomatopoeic sounds and associations are lost in translation, the agglutinative or piling-up effect subsists.

There are other deft forms of language usage whose purpose is to make speech invent things or as Ulli Beier puts it, to make speech ‘visual’ as well as aural. For instance, the hero says, at a miserable point in his life as he wept profusely: ‘I took hold of tears and began to weep them’ (39). Beier takes his own examples from *Igbó Olódùmarè* and writes thus:

Fágúnwà’s language is extremely visual. Of a man in love he says: “Love spread across his face, like palm-wine overflowing a calabash.” A sad man “hangs his face like a banana leaf.” A quarrel “sticks in the throat like a fish bone.” A liar is a man “who has blood in his belly but spits white saliva!” When a man is frightened “his bottom changes to water”.... The hunter fired a shot, he has “the hunter called the gun – the gun answered.” When the lion queries the other animals and they dare not reply, Fágúnwà says: “The question killed the reply and ate it.”¹⁰

In Fágúnwà’s creativity, language or speech renounces abstractions, puts on human flesh and bone and performs feats. He personifies objects and beings in such a way as to send them on artistic errands. For him, language is the world which we summon, and in which we rant and roam. As a storyteller, Fágúnwà’s narratives link worlds like a chain and attain the impossible. Sometimes language abrogates worlds, collapses or elongates memory and stretches credibility to its limits. We listeners and hearers tend to collaborate and become the narrator’s captive audience. I intend to offer the thesis that it is actually the elastic conception of language as Fágúnwà utilises it that is responsible for his rambling plot structure – a weakness that eminent critics like Bamgbose and Beier have also referred to with reference to the novel under discussion. Thus, Bamgbose laments:

In many ways, this novel epitomises the typical weaknesses of the author which were to persist in his writing till the very end: ill-digested and badly integrated material drawn from various sources, and excessive moralising. But the novel points at the same time to Fágúnwà’s gift of story-telling, language and powerful imagination.¹¹

In the same way it is interesting to compare Beier's similar observations:

Fágúnwà's plot is rambling, somewhat disorganised fairy tale. It is a succession of adventures, loosely strung together... The true Yorùbá flavour of Fágúnwà's work lies not in the material he used, but in the language, in the manner and tone of his story telling. These are the elements to which the average Yorùbá reader responds with delight. For Fágúnwà has the humour, the rhetoric, the word-play and the bizarre imagery Yorùbá like and appreciate in their language.... Fágúnwà's moralising is often too deliberate and it would be difficult for the adult reader to take, if it was not done with so much charm.¹²

These observations reveal that, for Fágúnwà, language with its power of vivid description is the basis of creativity. It is language which calls worlds into existence. It is the basis of being; the alternative to nothingness.

This is a convenient point at which to turn to my second category of articulation, viz. his anthropomorphic preoccupation which reveals the life of a hero as the unraveling of a quest. This is what has given the five narratives their epical dimensions. Quite in character with the Fágúnwà imagination, the hero represents the collective spirit of everyman in the great adventure that passes for our lives. Each episode or encounter stands for one station on the cross of existence. In *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*, the travails of the hero/narrator, Àkàrà-Ogùn starts from infancy. The domestic setting is problematic and his family circumstance is turbulent since his mother is described as a witch. He loses both parents early and has to fend for himself. Typically, his adventures to the great forests constitute his encounter with the ups and downs of life. The forest of life constitutes the obstacles of a lifetime. Systematically, with divine and supernatural help and with unflinching determination and doggedness, he overcomes each of these obstacles. He then absorbs the lessons embedded in the experiences and hardships. No sooner had one major experience passed than he opts for a new one. Each main tranche is represented as an adventurous trip to a hideous forest or a dangerous mount. The moral encounters range from those of love to conspiracy, pride and temptation. Any lucky and earnest survivor is deemed as having passed through some form of initiation whereby they gained access to the secret wisdom of existence. The whole point of the sequential and graded rigour is to discover the real purpose of life and to gain spiritual and moral rebirth.

WHO IS A FOLK HERO?

But can we really refer to Fágúnwà's writings as obsessed with individualist heroism? In the classification of his works, they belong to that class which literary critics generally refer to as magical realism because the narratives subtend all manners of supernatural and extraordinary feats.¹³ This author is generally thought to be the great precursor and mentor of others like Amos Tutuola, Kola Ogunmola, and – to some extent – Wole Soyinka, Wale Ogunyemi and Ben Okri. In, confronting the issue of individualist heroism, therefore, there is a sense in which magical realists often present the collective experience of individual heroes as that of whole societies.

Ògbójú Ọde reveals that the community of the hero/narrator selects extraordinary men with diverse talents ranging from physical robustness to the mastery of music as its representative assemblage of heroes. But even when the individual narrates his experiences, the hero acknowledges that he has the backing of some other established authorities. So, the concept of heroism recognises that the hero is never alone or single-handed in the pursuit of life actions. What is more, heroes appear, like their travails, in gradations. The lesser heroes appear much like the classical Greek heroes who are mighty, but are being undone by a flaw in their character. The grand hero himself has virtually no flaw, but is all-good and craves a surfeit of adventure.

One can, therefore, push the thesis that the hero in Yorùbá folklore, myth or legend is super-human and cannot be undermined by just one human flaw, because he acknowledges and conquers each flaw at each turn in his career. This ensures that his story is filled with exaggeration so that his moral preoccupation is well served. This is the reason that didacticism and sensationalism have become the main flaw of Fágúnwà's narrative, and indeed those of the home video practitioners, his latter-day followers. In the home video idiom, the Yorùbá world from the 19th to the mid-20th century is often depicted from a mythical realist viewpoint, one where prowess overwhelms the hero to spill on to the psyche of the community which serves as the convenient backdrop.

In its stronger forms, this preoccupation leads on to epic dramaturgy, whilst in its prolepsis it leads to the banality of magic and religion. The two extreme forms in the late 20th and early 21st centuries have been the syndrome of, on the one hand, the magical and fetishistic home video projections and, on the other hand, the pseudo-religious 'born-again' syndrome so rampant in our society. In both sub-genres, we experience wild, expansive exhibition of imaginative leaps, which can only be rivaled by science fiction and mythopoesis.

This observation does not gainsay the fact that there are logical and systematic, even excellent home video products. Neither does it condemn, wholesale, the genuine preoccupation of dedicated religionists who do defeat genies and demons in the thickets and 'forests' of their individual and collective experiences. It is just to remark that the same worldview has given rise to wide-ranging interpretations of the same phenomenon across different genres, depending on the aspect of reality they confront. In all these social narratives, the plot or structure of existence is always episodic, chequered and grandiose. There abound grand comical reliefs as well as rheumy melodramas and tragedies inherent in these narrative and dramatic forms. The only unfortunate lapse is that what initially sets out to be a human-centred and homophilic endeavour may turn full circle and eventually result in a misanthropic vision. This has been so in the economically depressed conditions of the late 20th and early 21st centuries where amateurism and bland commerce seek to replace craft, talent and tradition.

Where does Fágúnwà's wide-ranging symbolism come into all these? Is it in the use of language or that of character portrayal? From the plot, characterisation, language and the naming of places and things, it is clear that Fágúnwà's writings are to be understood as narrated allegories in the category of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Man is always a hero and a hunter in a forest world pervaded by demons and wild creatures. He is, *illo tempore*, on an ideal quest from whence he must derive his fulfillment and goal. The names of the heroes are symbols of power, endurance or skill, for example: *Àkàrà-Ògùn* (Compound of spells); *Aramada-òkunrin* (a complete enigma); *Imòdoye* (fount of wisdom); *Elegbede-ode* (an extraordinary huntsman and paralinguist); *Kako* who is principled and energetic to a fault, and *Efoiyẹ* who possesses the ability to fly or levitate in his wakeful state.

These characters are persons, but because of their extraordinary powers appear as archetypes and symbols. Bamgbose also observes that on the symbolic level, the characters represent various abstractions.¹⁴ Fágúnwà personifies such emotional abstractions as *Èru* (Fear/Terror), *Tẹmbeḷẹkun* (Conspiracy), *Agbako* (Misfortune) and *Ijamba* (Peril). Here is a description of *Èru* or Terror:

When we saw the man, we were truly afraid, for this man had four heads: one was human enough and faced the east; the second was like the head of a lion and was turned to the west; the third was a serpent's, its tongue darted incessantly and spouted venom – this was to the north; and the fourth was the head of a poisonous fish from whose mouth flared huge flames – and

this was turned southwards. Myriad snakes were coiled around his neck and innumerable scorpions had made his shoulders their home: he was excessively hairy. Wasps and stinging bees flew round him in thousands and he caressed them as he walked.¹⁵

Each of these zodiacal abstractions is often summoned in the course of each human life or existence, and remedies to them are suggested or demonstrated in the course of the story.

Unlike the encounter with all the other personified abstractions, the encounter with Ẹru is most interesting. Most of the other foes are fought and overcome in laborious physical battles. But Fear could not be overcome by mere physical combat. The wisdom hero, Imọdoye, advises the musician hero, Olohun-iyọ, to raise threnodic chants and melodies to enable the group conquer fear – a purely psychological phenomenon. It is thus clear that Fágúnwà is quite scientific in his deployment of symbols to teach his readers that there are life-assailing factors that are best served by philosophical palliatives. It is only after Olohun-iyọ enchanted Fear with courage, gentle as in music that the abstraction turns tail and flees. The narrator informs accordingly:

Thus did we overcome by mere song a foe who was impervious to guns and bows, for whatever it is that man attempts by gentleness does not come to grief, but that which we handle with violence rebounds on us with equal toughness.¹⁶

In many of the world's great cultures, fear or terror is considered to be of psychological or psychic origin and its solution lies in the mystery of the song, lyre or tambourine.

Natural relief features like hills, valleys, glens, shades, forests, and fields are also evoked depending on the circumstances of the story or the mind of its narrator. Usually, each narrative climaxes in the traversal of a forest or the surmounting of a hill. Each lofty and sublime locale is often represented as being at a mere cock's crow distance from the dome of heaven. The juiciest fruit of knowledge lies at the summit of a distant and craggy hill. The groin and hollow of every tree houses a fairy or daemon, and the brow of every ridge subtends a legendary cave. Each ghommid or gnome speaks the tongue or language of the hero or narrator. This goes to suggest that the forest nation as inhabited by spirits is replicated as the counterpart of the human community. The storyteller near the dome of heaven, though pristine and ancient, is essentially a human being whose tales are peopled by the animals with which we are familiar.

One of the most astounding features of the sagas as told by Fágúnwà is that the universe of the stories is human-centered. All the narrations are given from the viewpoint of a man, an anthropoid from our terrestrial realm; our human community. If we realise that the human community is just one of the many communities mentioned in the writings, then there is a bias in the perceptions of the narrator who happens to come from just one of the worlds involved. There are intermarriages between the various worlds, and the products are mutually enriching. For instance, some of the brave hunters are hybrids descending from human and spirit parents. This is suggested as the cause for their prowess and extraordinary abilities. An extension of the symbolism in the stories, no doubt, is the exotic dimension of each episode and the ability to entertain with an uncommon sense of humour. Each event makes us feel that the essence of the narration is to present an allegory, the source of which delights and the end of which uplifts. The depth of its otherworldly language matches the exoticism.

Finally, there is the need to remark the reckoning of diurnal and periodic time and the effect of its passing on the psyche of the characters and heroes. Time is reckoned as a symbol for the maturing of emotion. The opening of each story often sees the narrator as a man in the prime of his youth, full of life and enthusiasm, and conscious of his own responsibility as a domesticated spirit. As he encounters life and its trials, he becomes more sober, more restrained and more mature. He begins to realise that though he has a wealth of charms and weaponry (a gun and machete) backed up by a bit of ammunition and bravado, these are hardly enough to sustain the weight of existence. He realises that beyond the world of his village and okra farms, there are many other worlds before the real heaven is reached. For example in an encounter between his team and Agbako (Misfortune), all else fails until Àkàrà-Ògùn calls on the name of his God and Creator.

By the time he goes halfway through his journey, he becomes a changed man and begins to reckon events with greater sensitivity, sincerity and detail. A point worth remarking about Fágúnwà's artistry goes beyond the mere confines of a 'well-wrought tale'. He is not only a compassionate humanist as seen in the depth and sincerity of his tales; its verisimilitude reveals him as a master storyteller. In spite of the fact that his tales dwell on monolithic heroism, he observes life with such insight and honesty that his credentials as a fictional historian cannot be faulted. Where there is the need, his hero loses out to the assailant. Àkàrà-Ògùn was captured, enslaved, and humbled on a few occasions whereby he 'wore' his humility like a badge. Some of the heroes

could not return home because they followed anti-heroic, self-subversive norms. For instance, Ọ̀to, Aramada-ọ̀kunrin's brother, disappeared with an anti-social character called Ẹ̀gbin (Filth); Ẹ̀foiyẹ and Lamọ̀rin also perished for lack of initiative. This shows that the heroes in the stories are not altogether superhuman. They reside in our world and are enjoined to learn from others, as others are wont to learn from them. Those heroes seek to master their tragic flaw. There are inevitable references to exact historicity such as when the contingent runs into Ẹ̀ru (Terror) at about 'half past ten' in the morning. In *Àdìitú-Olódùmarè*, the hero had access to a car and to all kinds of wealth known only in the middle of the 20th century. Given the taste and flavour of the stories, they are redolent of references to the historical period between the 14th and 19th centuries. Though the author lived in the 20th century, the anachronisms are, arguably, well integrated in the plot and narration of the stories. These are some of the lapses in the reckoning of time that will take critical volumes to resolve if the heroes and characters are contextualised or historicised.

CONCLUSION: FORECLOSING CRAFT

I have deliberately avoided the use of modern terminologies such as the novel or novella in the description of Fágúnwá's genre of the story-telling medium among a sub-Saharan people. I have stuck to the term 'narrative' because the sequences of the stories are episodic and fluid such that sections are interchangeable, and sequences can be un-fused and re-located as in the links of a chain. All through the episodes, there is a measure of cultural diffuseness and the conscious cultivation of a performative instinct, the conscious creation of a theatrical atmosphere. These stories, therefore, represent a set of cultural paradigms which would open new areas to the curious anthropologist. The stories are ritualised narratives. This is why they bring on board rhetorical and legalistic carriages in terms of long, rambling sentences and scenes akin to those of formalised court and village assembly proceedings. In fact, the narrator would often call on a clerk to pick up his pen and record the stories as messages from a higher authority. It is interesting to note that the rhetorical and performative methods of an oral culture are asked to be committed to writing, thus reinventing the tradition. In a way, we might be excused to say that the idea signals the inception and imperative of a new historical epoch.

The drift of the story, in writing, tends to incorporate the sonority or 'aurality' of the medium as well. The task of the narrator, who often disappears after the arduous task he sets for his adoptive community, is that of documenting

in cold print a culture intended for, or hinged on, performance, rhetoric and declamations. Most times, his audience of listeners is present as the ordained clerk records the proceedings. At times, the narrative is so compelling and the crowd or audience so overwhelming that a gallery, not unlike a Greek amphitheatre, is created to which the community conscripts all its mats and stools. The fact that there is a conscious audience and a platform for the narratives reveal that the event is often declaimed. Most importantly, the result is an art over which the community acts as a witness and for which it grants an imprimatur. By way of the fictional art, Fágúnwà 'prophesies' and relives the arrival of the written form in an ancient community once committed to the oral/aural art. This bears out the words of Victor Turner that: "In ritual one lives through events or through the alchemy of its framings and symbolings; one relives semiogenetic events, the deeds and words of prophets and saints or, if these are absent, myths and sacred epics."¹⁷ The various stories of wanderings, discoveries, the acknowledgements of other orders of anthropoids, the discovery of knowledge for the establishments of kings and polities do refer to an ante-diluvian civilisation and are now told as moral tales and narratives. Unlike many critics of Fágúnwà, who use the term "novel" to refer to his works, I argue that the works constitute, indeed, narratives. In the Yorùbá language, the following terms – *àròfò*, *àwígbó*, *itàn*, and *àṣàyàn* – are meant to denote varieties of narrative genres. The etymologies of the root words refer to a body of knowledge being re-lived or activated. The first term, *àròfò*, refers to one stored in an imaginative retrieval system of personages whereby it is fictive and malleable when uttered. The second term, *àwígbó*, refers to a diffused tale or story, which is more established in the community rather than in individual imagination. We must readily admit that both can be abused or forged but one has a purely imaginative base whilst the other is factual history. The third term, *itàn*, refers to a body of overwhelming knowledge from which *àṣàyàn* – careful and ordered selection – is made. This is also liable to conscious, tendentious selection or prejudiced compilation.

If we compare the Yorùbá expressions with two Latin terminologies, *narrare* (to tell) and *gnarus* (to know), and the Greek *gnosis* (to know), we begin to see that as in the Yorùbá etymology above, knowledge and narrative are akin terms. Turner has also observed further that narrative is knowledge emerging from action.¹⁸ If we equally agree that the words drama or performance derive from the Greek *dran* (to do or act), then it is clear that narrative amounts to 'knowledge acted or performed'. Or better still, knowledge in the service of action. This will amount to derived, applied or experiential knowledge.

The above analysis will point to the fact that the narrative is always an attempt at re-aggregating a subsumed, cultural whole within the structure of art. It is also an indexical value towards the reconstruction of that which is broken or dispersed within the framework of a plot in such a way as to be believable. In a sense, we see that Fágúnwà's heroic stories are tall and surrealistic narratives. We see the items of construction as ancient, unfamiliar bricks of folk stories and tell-tales. In other words, he re-constructed worlds that are not, and can no longer be, in fashion. But at the same time, his narratives have such gripping group appeal that he succeeds in mending broken historical fences where they might have failed to sustain folk belief, folk values, and memory in traditions of sustenance or survival. Fágúnwà's stories will endure imaginative translation such as we find in Soyinka's translation of *Ògbójú Ọde Nínú Igbó Irúnmalè*, in Dapo Adeniyi's translation of *Ìrìnkèrindò Nínú Igbó Elégbèje*¹⁹ or in adaptive influences as in Tutùọlá and Ogunyemi. The more enduring truth is that many aurally alert societies will find in the echoes the broken bits of their own past which could connect them to their future and, ultimately, their destiny.