

# DEMONIC IMAGERY, CHRISTIAN VISION: PARADOX IN FAGUNWA'S *OGBOJU ODE NINU IGBO IRUNMOLE*

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## **Abstract**

In literary circles, D. O. Fagunwa's name is often evocative of Yoruba cultural irredentism. His magnum opus, *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole* (*The Brave Hunter in the Irunmole Forest/ The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*) as well as his other Yoruba classics is replete with an effusion of Yoruba myths, legends, folklore, and throws up a host of highly demonic imagery (characters, situations, verbal interchanges). The often facile conclusion of some critics is that Fagunwa's deployment of demonic imagery in his works is not only didactic but preserves a vital Yoruba cultural heritage even as it entertains. Few critics seem to realise that Fagunwa's demonic imagery is, in reality, a mask for his Christian vision. Even when they do, this notion attracts, at best, a fleeting acknowledgement or passing comment. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to establish the missing link between the demonic imagery in Fagunwa's fiction and his Christian message in the bid to test the hypothesis that the enduring popularity and artistic forte of Fagunwa's Yoruba classics stem not from his use of Yoruba cultural artefacts (myths, legends, folklore, etc.), but in his uncanny ability to successfully navigate a literary paradox; the employment of demonic imagery to express a Christian vision.

**Keywords:** Demonic, Imagery, Christian, Vision, Fagunwa

## Introduction

Fagunwa's full names seem to embody the paradox that permeates his art, most especially in *Ogboju Ode* (1950). Daniel Olorunfemi (God-Loves-Me) Fagunwa (Ifa-Reigns) is a paradoxical collocation of two contradictory but not mutually exclusive belief systems: the Yoruba traditional worldview and the Christian religion. Born in 1903 into a family that had been devotees of the Ifa cult, as reflected in his surname, Fagunwa must have come in contact with the Christian religion early in life in his educational sojourn through such missionary establishments as St. Luke's School, Oke-Igbo (his hometown) and St. Andrew's College, Oyo, where he trained as a teacher. Had he survived the fatal accident of 1963, he would probably have succumbed to today's wave of "born-againism" in Christendom by deleting the "Fa" from his surname to replace it with "Jesu". As Daniel Olorunfemi "Jesugunwa" (Jesus-Reigns) the oxymoronic paradox in his names will have been obviated, leaving only the Christian signification. Nonetheless, the paradox in his art would have remained, refusing to kowtow to such simplistic arithmetic procedures.

Before delving too deeply into the paper, it is imperative to clarify the major concepts involved. The term "demonic imagery" is taken from Northrop Fry's seminal work, *Anatomy of Criticism*, in which he distinguishes between apocalyptic and demonic mythical imagery in literature. According to Frye, apocalyptic mythical imagery refer to metaphors, symbols, myths which represent a mythical paradise or heaven, while demonic imagery refer to metaphors, symbols, myths representing notions relating to hell. In essence, Apocalyptic images are mimetic renditions of human desires projected into literature while demonic imagery:

...is the presentation of the world that desire totally rejects: the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion; ... the world also of perverted or wasted

work, ruins and catacombs, instruments of torture and monuments of folly. (Frye 147)

Such a “demonic” world is easily discernible in *Ogboju Ode*, in which one-legged spirits conspire with human-headed birds to enslave, kill or maim human beings.

The term “paradox” ordinarily means “a statement which seems on its face to be self-contradictory or absurd, yet turns out to make good sense” (Abrams 127). However, this paper adopts the extension of the term by New Critics to “encompass all surprising deviation from, or qualifications of, common perceptions or commonplace opinions” (Abrams 127). In sum, the paradox in Fagunwa’s *Ogboju Ode* that this paper explores is his use of demonic imagery to express an apocalyptic or Christian vision.

Critical reception and perception of Fagunwa’s works generally problematize their literary felicity in “being either a receptacle or mirror of culture” (Quayson 2), in this instance, the Yoruba culture. In other words, many critics regard Fagunwa’s literary creations not only as “literature” but also as a kind of “preservative” (to borrow a term from the food industry) of vital Yoruba cultural heritage evident in the preponderance of Yoruba myths, legends and other folkloric elements in his works. Chief among this class of critics is Abiola Irele whose “Tradition and the Yoruba Writer: D.O. Fagunwa, Amos Tutuola and Wole Soyinka” attempts to highlight the “continuities” between “Yoruba literary tradition” exemplified in the works of the selected writers and the received European literary tradition. As Ato Quayson argues, the primary concerns of Irele in the above essay is to “examine[s] the ways in which the three writers deploy Yoruba oral traditions in their works and [to] intimate[s] that their writings establish a bridge between the traditional cultural heritage and Western metropolitan culture” (Quayson 4, emphasis mine). In essence, the thrust of Irele’s

essay is Fagunwa et al's use of Yoruba folkloric elements, rather than the interface of demonic imagery and Christian message also perceptible in these works.

Joel Adedeji and Isidore Okpewho are among critics who have examined Fagunwa's works from a perspective analogous to Irele's. Adedeji's "The Genesis of African Folkloric Literature" stresses Fagunwa's use of Yoruba folkloric elements, referring to him as "the doyen of folkloric artists" (Adedeji 10). Adedeji's thesis is clear: Fagunwa's literary forte inheres in his deployment of Yoruba folkloric tradition in his works. Okpewho, however, goes beyond the usual identification of Fagunwa with the effort to preserve Yoruba cultural heritage by classifying him as a "bondservant" to the oral tradition. To Okpewho, the literary output of Fagunwa and Tutuola manifest a tendency towards "tradition observed" because the writers created contemporary protagonists around which the themes and techniques of the oral narrative tradition are woven. In Okpewho's opinion, this tendency reveals "a marked bondage to tradition".

Even though Jacob K. Olupona's "The Study of Yoruba Religious Tradition in Historical Perspective" focuses on religion and not literature, his reference to Fagunwa's works as capturing "the essence of Yoruba religious tradition in literature" (Olupona 250) echoes Adedeji's and Okpewho's critiques of Fagunwa's works. Obviously, Olupona interprets Fagunwa's works as reflective of the Yoruba traditional religious thought rather than the Christian worldview. He seems unaware that Fagunwa may have deployed elements evocative of Yoruba traditional religion (a vital aspect of the Yoruba culture) to underscore his Christian vision. Thus, the paradox that this paper evaluates is completely lost on him.

A corollary of the reviews of Fagunwa's works demonstrates a deliberate attempt by some critics to vivify the interface between Fagunwa and the Yoruba Cultural heritage. It does not matter whether

the critic regards Fagunwa's works as a "receptacle", a "mirror" or a "bondservant" to the Yoruba culture. Of paramount importance in this paper is the ineluctable absence of the vital connection between Fagunwa's works and the Christian worldview. Although some other critics have identified the interconnectivity between the form in Fagunwa's narratives and their Christian message, their treatment of this vital aspect of his works has been tenuous, tangential and inexhaustive.

Oyekan Owomoyela in "African Literature in African Languages" (African Literature, MSN Encarta) writes that:

The most important Yoruba writer, Daniel Olorunfemi Fagunwa, used his writings to commend Christian virtues to the public...His first work is also the first full-length novel published in Yoruba...It tells of the exploits of Akara-Ogun, a fearless hunter in a forest infested with a myriad of unnatural creatures and draws extensively on Yoruba folklore. (Owomoyela 1)

The first part of this extract broaches the connection between Fagunwa and Christianity. However, this connection is quickly severed and swallowed up in the last statement linking Fagunwa to "Yoruba folklore".

Bernth Lindfors, David Whittaker and Toyin Falola have also linked Fagunwa to the Christian worldview. Although Lindfors's attempt to link Fagunwa to Christianity through John Bunyan's *Pilgrim Progress* has been challenged by Ode S. Ogede (198), Lindfors, nevertheless, successfully establishes the interface between Fagunwa's narratives and Christianity. In the same vein, David Whittaker in "Realms of Liminality: the Mythic Topography of Amos Tutuola's *Bush of Ghost*" observes that Fagunwa's "sophisticated narratives drew inspiration from such diverse sources as the Bible, Classical texts,

Christian religious literature, as well as from Yoruba folktales” (Whittaker 6).

Falola’s “Yoruba Writers and the Construction of Heroes” focuses on the way Yoruba creative writers and historians build the plot of their stories on the exploits of the heroes that dominate particular historical moments. To Falola, Fagunwa’s narratives “moralize about society” (Falola 160), and his “vision of a new Yoruba society” is “a blend of the past and the present, including those changes wrought by colonialism and Christianity” (Falola 161).

None of these reviews exhaustively analyses the interface of Yoruba traditional lore and the Christian worldview in Fagunwa’s works. This paper, therefore, fills the gap in research by providing textual evidence from *Ogboju Ode* that accentuate the thesis that in spite of the profusion of demonic imagery in Fagunwa’s works, his narratives project the Christian dogma.

### **Textual Analysis**

The ensuing textual analysis is broken into four parts. First Fagunwa’s use of demonic characters with Christian significations will be in focus. This will be followed by an assessment of his use of allegorical spirits to preach the Christian message. Third, our analysis examines instances of direct or indirect references to the Bible which confirm Fagunwa’s evangelical purpose. Lastly, this paper evaluates Fagunwa’s use of narrative distance in putting outright sermons in the mouths of his characters as well as his recourse to the story-within-a-story narrative device to deliver his homilies on childbearing, over-ambition, pride, etc.. These homilies are delivered with appropriate sermonic tones comparable to the tone of the Yoruba Bible.

The first demonic character in *Ogboju Ode* is the sword-bearing spirit who accosts Akara-Ogun’s father on a hunting expedition. This

unnatural being materialises from dense black smoke that suddenly envelopes the vicinity and immediately declares:

Iwo ko mo pe emi ki ise ara aiye ndan? Oni ni mo ti isalu orun de! Tori tire ni mo tile se wa pelu: mo wa lati pa o ni ... (*Ogboju Ode 3*)

("Don't you realise that I'm not of this world? I came down from heaven today! And it is because of you that I have come; I have come to kill you..." My translation)

The other-worldly appearance of this creature and his avowed mission renders him demonic. Paradoxically, Fagunwa puts a Christian message in the mouth of this terrifying being. This message rises to the fore in the verbal interchanges between the creature and Akara-Ogun's father. The would-be victim begs his would-be executioner, in the name of "Olorun Alaye" to tell him his offence before carrying out his sentence. The being replies that his would-be victim has sinned against his "Eleda" by marrying a self-confessed witch who subsequently dispatches eleven people to their graves before God's appointed time.

"Olorun Alaye" (the Living God) is one of the names ascribed to God by Yoruba Christians, while "Eleda" (Owner of man's souls/Creator/Maker) is another of his cognomens. The Yoruba Bible is replete with both expressions. Aside from the Christian aura cast on the scene by these expressions, a statement put in the mouth of the supernatural being recalls the murder of Abel by Cain in Genesis 4. The being says:

"Eje awon Iyawo re ko ha nke pe o? (*Ogboju Ode 4*).  
(Is the blood of your wives not crying after you?)

In Genesis 4:10b, God said to Cain after the murder of Abel, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground"

(Amplified Bible). Undoubtedly, the spirit's statement is a deliberate echo of the biblical assertion. In sum, despite the demonic appearance of the sword-bearing-spirit, Fagunwa uses him to propagate the Christian message which condemns witchcraft and stipulates death (by stoning) for all witches. Hence, the creature instructs Akara-Ogun's father to go home and execute his witch wife (*Ogboju Ode 4*).

The next demonic character in the narrative is "Egbere" (Gnom), a figure from Yoruba mythology described as a pigmy-sized forest spirit that carries a tattered mat about and weeps disconsolately all the time. Akara-Ogun has not been able to kill any animal prior to his encounter with Egbere. And just as he is about to do so, the creature's loud weeping scares away his intended prey. Irrked beyond reason, the hunter abuses Egbere to his heart's content. Instead of reacting violently in consonance with his demonic appearance, Egbere delivers a sermon condemning men's insatiable and ungrateful nature which often leads to their untimely death:

Bayi ni enyin omo araiye ma nse, eyin aforesunise, awa a ma wo yin, oju yin ko gbe ibikan, e nba hilahilo kiri: awon ti won ba ri je ninu yin, nwon a ma wa ipo ola, nwon a fe ma j'aiye oba, nwon a gbagbe pe omo ika owo ko dogba. Gege bi iwa eda yin pelu, okan yin ki ibale; eniti inu re ba dun loni, awon enia re ko ni simi lola; oni iku, ola arun; oni ija, ola airoju; oni ekun, ola ibanuje; ni omo araiye ma nba kiri; nigbati awa ba si ronun nipa tiyin, anu yin a ma se wa, awa a ma sokun nitori yin, ikun a si ma yo ni imu wa, sugbon dipo ki eyin ma feran wa, ki e si ma jo ki wa ki e si ma yo ki wa, eyin a ma fi eni wa gan wa, e ma fi ikun imu wa bu wa, e ma soro wa bi iya e si ma soro wa bi egbin e ma wi nipa tiwa pe: "Omi loju Egbere." (*Ogboju Ode 9*)



Even so do you children of earth behave, you who have turned kindness sour to charity. We watch you, you whose eyes do not stay long in one place, you who chase emptiness all your life. Those of you who already boast a full stomach continue to seek glorified positions, seek to live like kings, forgetting that the fingers of your hand are unequal. And it is also in your nature that your minds are never at peace; those who find happiness today ensure that their neighbours find no peace the day following; death today, tomorrow disease; war today, confusion tomorrow; tears today, tomorrow sorrow – such is the common pursuits of children of earth. And when we think of your plight, we pity you, we weep for you and mucus drips at our nostrils, but instead of earning your affection, instead of dancing to greet us and fussing over us, you find even our mats a cause to despise us, our running nostrils become your favourite target, you speak of our solicitude as a punishment, our existence as beneath contempt - even to the extent that you have now coined the belittling expression, “Tears in the eye of a gnom”. (Soyinka 19)

A perusal of Egberé’s “sermon” shows its affinity to 1Timothy 6:6-10 which advocate godliness with contentment as a great gain, admonishing Christians to be satisfied with life as long as they have food and clothing.

“Alade Igbo” (Crown Prince of Forests, a bog-troll), another figure from Yoruba mythology is another unnatural being described in the narrative as tinier than but as ugly as Egberé. He, too, prevents Akara-Ogun from killing animals by scaring them away each time the hunter takes careful aim. In his characteristic mercurial temper and acerbic tongue, Akara-Ogun lambastes this demon for his seeming heartlessness in preventing him from getting his daily bread (*Ogboju Ode*

10). Once again, the demon's reaction is out of character with his fearful mien. Alade-Igbo delivers what is best described as a sermon condemning man's ostentation, pride, over-ambition and inability to control his tongue:

...Bi mo ti kere ni, mo nsise ti Eleda mi ran mi – mo nrin irin ologbon, mo si nhu iwa oloye; nko je na owo mi mu ohun ti owo mi ko to, kin ma dawole ohun ti ipa mi ko ka; emi ko hu iwa bi alaironu ri, kin se nkan tan ki ntun ma kabamo. Ona ti mo ti fesele ni mo nto, ise ti mo ti gbe lowo ni mo nse, lati ojo ti Olorun Oba ti da mi. Enyin onigberaga wonyi, enyin a ma na owo yin ni inakuna nitori afe aye nikan. E nfe te araiye lorun, e ngbiyanju ohun ti ko se, e gbagbe pe yoyo ni enu araiye nda, eniti nwon ba bu loni, nwon le yin oluware lola. Nigbati enia bada owo re le nkan, omo araiye a ma bu u, nigbati nkan na ba yori si rere tan, omo araiye a tun ma yin oluware. Ko si eniti nwon ko le bu, nwon a ma bu talaka nwon a si ma bu olowo; nwon a ma bu bokini, nwon a si ma bu gbajumo; igbati o ba wu won pelu, won a ma bu oba won: nitorina ma ba ona tire lo, emi na yio si ma ba temi lo. Ibiti Eleda mi ran mi ni mo nlo. (*Ogboju Ode 11*)

(...Diminutive though I appear, I pursue the task which my Creator has assigned to me: I walk the walk of the wise, I act with the nature of the discerning. I never reach for that which my hand cannot encompass, nor do I embark upon that which is beyond my power; I do not act in the manner of the thoughtless nor do I complete an action which I then regret. I proceed along the course which I have set for myself, and pursue the task I have set my hand upon since the day of my creation by God the King. You arrogant creatures, you throw

good money into the gutter. You tell yourselves that you are buying clothes and waste your money because of the superficial pleasures of life. You want to live up to worldly expectation, so you attempt things which are beyond your powers. You forget that the tongue of men is merely slick, that a man they malign today they are quite likely to praise tomorrow. When a man makes an effort at something, the sons of men sneer at him, but when success has crowned his efforts they turn round and hail him. There is no one immune from their calumny. They malign the poor and malign the rich; they malign the common man and malign the famous; when they feel like it they malign their king also. Therefore, continue on your way, and I also will follow mine. I merely go where my creator has sent me. (Soyinka 21)

The last part of this sermon vividly recalls James 3 where the Bible admonishes Christians to guard against loose talk. Interestingly, the Christian-like sermon by the demonic Alade-Igbo is peppered with “Olorun Oba” and “Eleda”, both Yoruba names for the Christian God.

Aroni, a one-legged being from Yoruba mythology and Kurumbete are used by Fagunwa to preach against rebellion against God’s authority. Aroni is cast in the light of a fallen angel, thus transforming into a demon proper. According to him, God Almighty deformed him because he flouted his authority and would not take to the corrections of “Oba Solomomi” (Ogboju Ode 42). His reference to King Solomon is an unambiguous biblical allusion.

Kurumbete is one of the most fearsome demons in *Ogboju Ode*. He is two feet tall with two heads, each with a sharp horn. He also has a big eye in the middle of his stomach. Kurumbete, like Aroni, is a fallen angel used by the author to condemn rebellion against God’s authority.

According to this demon, he was a former angel (“maleka”) also deformed by God following persistent disobedience:

... emi ni Kurumbete eniti ile re mbe ni orun alakeji; mo ti je okan ninu awon maleka ri ti Olorun feran, sugbon mo ko ofin Olorun ati ilana Re mo si da rudurudu sile ni orun; Olorun ri pe mo le, ati pe ogbon mi, buburu ni, O si fi mi fun Esu ki o je mi ni iya ni odun meje, beni mo gbe inu ina orun apadi ni odun meje gbako. Mo pada to Olorun lo ni odun keje, Olorun si ri i pe ko si iyipada rere lara mi, o wi ni ibinu re pe: Iwo nyo Mi lenu iwo era; iwo nta si Mi iwo ti ko ju ko-to-nkan lo; loni yi ni Emi yio pin ori re si meji, Emi ko si jeki ede re sokan mo, Ngo da o ni ede ru bi mo ti se si awon ara ile iso Babeli, ni ojo tin won ngberaga si Mi. (*Ogboju Ode* 43)

(... My name is Kurumbete, he whose home will be found on the other side of heaven. I was one of the original angels who were much beloved of God, but I rejected the laws of God and His ways and engineered chaos in heaven. God saw that I was intractable, and that my genius was an evil one. He handed me to Satan to inflict agonies on me for seven years, and even so did it come about that I lived in Hell for seven clear years. I returned to God after the seventh year but He perceived that there was no repentance in me, and He said in his great anger, “You pester me, you ant; you kick at me, you less than the little sand-fly. This day will I split your head in two and prevent unity of thought in you. I will sow confusion on your tongue as I did among the dwellers of the Tower of Babel when they grew overbearing in their ways. (Soyinka 63)

His speech to Akara-Ogun makes copious references to biblical incidents: the rebellion of Lucifer; Esu, Yoruba Bible's equivalent of Satan; and the tower of Babel (Genesis 11). In sum, Fagunwa employs Kurumbete to condemn pride and disobedience to God's authority in line with his Christian vision.

Other demonic characters used to propagate Christian virtues in the *Ogboju Ode* include: Ogongo, an outrageous ostrich-like creature with a human head; Were-Orun (Madman of Heaven) a wicked creature who feeds on men, birds and other animals; and Egbin (Filth) who was used by the author to condemn filthy personal habits. All the demonic characters above are instruments in the hands of Fagunwa to propagate his Christian vision, directly or impliedly.

Aside from demonic characters, Fagunwa also utilises some allegorical spirits to advance his evangelical mission in *Ogboju Ode*. For instance, a spirit-being named Iranlowo (Help/Assistance) divinely assists Akara-Ogun to escape from the underground prison into which he has been cast by Agbako (Harm), another allegorical character in the narrative (*Ogboju Ode* 16). She emerges out of the wall to help the protagonist the moment he repents of his temerity in engaging Agbako in a duel and asks for God's assistance. Essentially, Akara-Ogun's predicament is used by the author to commend the virtue of repentance to the public. But Iranlowo's evangelical mission seems to be to make people realize the need to esteem God and to behave properly towards their fellow men and women because divine retribution would always take its course. She tells Akara-Ogun:

... Emeta ni mo nyi aiye po lojo lati ma ki awon ore Olorun ati lati ma ba won se ohun ti won ban se; eyiti o ba feran Eleda mi kekere emi a se kekere fun u; eyiti of ba si fe E pupo emi a se pupo fun u; eyiti o ba bikita fun Eleda mi emi a bikita fun u; eyiti ko ba si ka A si emi a sai ka oluware si; nitori eniti o ba gbin rere, rere ni yio ka; eniti o ba si gbin ika, ika ni yio ka;

olododo ko ni sai jere ododo, eleke ko si ni sai jere eke; bi o tile da ti aiye tun yipada, tobe ti adie nhu ehin ti igi ope sin so eso agbon, Olorun ko ni sai san a fun olukuluku bi ise re ba ti ri. (Ogboju Ode 17)

(...Thrice in one day I go through the world to visit the friends of God and to assist them in all their endeavours; whoever bears only a little love to Him, I perform a little service for him; and he who loves my God with a great love I care for in as great a proportion; whoever acts with concern towards Him I treat with concern, and whoever treats Him with disrespect even so do I act towards him; for whoever sows well shall harvest goodness, and whoever sows evil, evil shall come to him. The truthful shall not fail to profit good, the deceitful shall gain nothing but deceit; even if it came to pass that the world turned topsy-turvy, that fowls grew teeth and the oil palm grew coconuts, God will not fail to reward every man according to his deeds. (Soyinka 29)

Copious references to “Olorun” and “Eleda” in the above-sermon buttress Fagunwa’s Christian purpose, which is to preach the Golden Rule to his readers. Iranlowo’s (Helpmeet’s) sermon also propagates the Christian version of the law of Karma which states that a man will reap whatever he sows.

Iwapele (Gentleness/Meekness) is another allegorical spirit used to narrate the fate of a city that persists in rebelling against God’s authority. Even though God sends many tribulations to them, they only repent for as long as it takes God to have mercy on them. Then they do worse things than before. The city’s final punishment is reminiscent of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Bible (Ogboju Ode 18).

Like righteous Lot and his family, only Iwapele escapes the terrible fate that befalls the city of Emo whose inhabitants are stiff-necked sinners.

Fagunwa's Christian purpose is further embellished by direct and indirect references to the Bible. For instance, there is an allusion to Daniel in the den of lions on page 32 of the narrative, where Akara-Ogun is compelled to kill a one-eyed lion that lives in a cave-like hole. Ecclesiastes 3 that talks about the times and seasons of life is alluded to on page 53. The Christian Creation story in Genesis 1 is mentioned on page 58 of the text, while Adam and Eve are also mentioned on page 70.

These biblical references are buttressed by sermons built on stories-within-a-story with Iragbeje as the story-teller. Fagunwa's stories-within-a-story follow a discernible pattern. All the stories are told by Iragbeje, the man who cannot die because he mistakenly chose a unique dress in heaven which confers immortality on the wearer ("ewu aiku", *Ogboju Ode* 70). Iragbeje, therefore, is the quintessential story-teller who cannot die and whose stories, by inference, remain an eternal fresh-water spring, a balm for all generations. Iragbeje usually precedes his stories with a homily which sets out the morale he wishes to impart. The ensuing story is thus an imaginative illustration of this morale.

His first homily is on godly parenting. After enumerating the disadvantages of spoiling a child, the duties of parents to children and those of children to parents (see Ephesians 6: 1-4), Iragbeje narrated the story of a demonic child called Ajantala to buttress his morale (*Ogboju Ode* 72ff).

Another homily condemns over-arching ambition which does not take God into consideration. The story used to illustrate this homily is a biblical allusion to the story of the rich fool in the gospel of St. John (*Ogboju Ode* 82). Iragbeje's homily on the omnipotence of God is supported with a story which alludes to the biblical King

Nebuchadnezzar who was reduced to an animal for daring to compare himself to God (*Ogboju Ode* 100).

These and many more stories are used by Fagunwa to propagate the Christian gospel, while employing demonic imagery taken from the Yoruba cultural repertoire. This literary paradox has contributed immensely to the popularity of his narratives among the Yoruba irrespective of religious affiliations. Those who cannot identify with his Christian vision still enjoy Fagunwa's stories because of his use of recognizable cultural artefacts, his rich imagination and his indubitable concerns for the moral and social uplifting of the human race.

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