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BRIDGE ACROSS CULTURES

U. L. ARCHIVES

BY

JOHN OLAOYE ABIOYE



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By

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Dedication

This lecture is dedicated
to all practising Translators and Interpreters,
all over the world, and all Students of Translation in training,
whom we hope will eventually join hands with us to further
promote the ideals set by both Fédération Internationale des
Traducteurs and the Nigerian Association of Translators and
Interpreters (NATI).

Remember: Translation is our future; it links man to man.

U. L. ARCHIVES

BRIDGE ACROSS CULTURES

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Administration and Academic), other Principal Officers, Deans, Fellow Professors, my Lord Spiritual and Temporal, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

U. L. ARCHIVES

It gives me great pleasure to present to you this evening what is generally called, in circumstances as this one, Inaugural Lecture but which may on this occasion pass for some kind of Valedictory Speech - valedictory because already I am on the eve of my retirement from the service of this University.

I thank God that since I came on this campus on November 15, 1962 to embark on an N.C.E. Programme, it has pleased God to spare my life till now and to remain on this campus till this day.

When it first dawned on me to think of delivering an Inaugural Lecture, a number of topics presented themselves to me. I vacillated between a wide range of topics, including reminiscences, of my sojourn here on this campus. I quickly discarded those topics because such reminiscences may not be rich in enduring scholarship values. I therefore consulted a number of senior colleagues. The result of those consultations is the topic of today's Lecture: "Bridge Across Cultures" - a topic which best sums up and epitomises my dreams, aspirations, efforts and experiences in the area of Translation.

I see this occasion as an opportunity to present to this informed gathering results of my research efforts and further articulate my thought in the area of Translation. In this regard, one is guided by what one believes is part of the responsibility of the Nigerian University to the Nigerian nation, its people and society; opportunity to share knowledge and promote growth and development.

Before we go further in the consideration of our topic, we would like to refer in part to a line in a letter written by Abraham LINCOLN to his son's teacher:

"... Teach him the wonder of books"¹

What we intend to dilate upon, this evening, is in fact one of the wonders of books. As William Ellery Channing observes:

"Books are the voices of the distant and the dead and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages..."²

I dare say that without books I would not have been in a position to share with you these few thoughts tonight. As I remember that a time frame within which to make my presentation is imposed, one hour I am told, I cannot but refer to one of those salient wise sayings of that renowned legendary playwright, William Shakespeare, when he says in the Prologue to *Henry V*:

"... Turning the accomplishments of many years into an hour-glass..."³

I should like to complete the above quotation that:

"... for the which supply

Admit me chorus to this history

Who prologue-like your humble patience pray.

Gently to hear, kindly to judge, our play."⁴

I would like to make the same plea here that "I pray your humble patience, gently to hear, kindly to judge our efforts."

On occasions like this, it is customary to pay glowing tributes to lecturers as if they were perfect and always in first-class rating. Whereas perfection is no human attribute. To buttress this point,

please allow me quote copiously from *John Ploughman's Talks* by C.H. Spurgeon that:

"... He who boasts of being perfect is perfect in folly. I have been a good deal up and down the world, and I never did see either a perfect horse or a perfect man, and I never shall till two Sundays come together. You cannot get white flour out of a coal sack nor perfection out of human nature; he who looks for it had better look for sugar in the sea. The old saying is, 'Lifeless, faultless.' About dead men we should say nothing but good; but as for the living, they are all tarred more or less with the black brush, and half an eye can see it. Every head has a soft place in it, and every heart has its black drop. Every rose has its prickless, and every day its night. Even the sun shows spots, and the skies are darkened with clouds ... As there is no sunshine without some shadows, so is all human good mixed up with more or less of evil ... The best wine has its drops. All men's faults are not written on their foreheads ... A horse that is weak in the legs may not stumble for a mile or two, but it is in him, and the rider had better hold him up well. The tabby cat is not lapping milk just now, but leave the dairy door open, and we will see if she is not as bad a thief as the kitten. There's fire in the flint, cool as it looks: wait till the steel gets a knock at it, and you will see. Everybody can read that riddle, but it is not everybody that will remember to keep his gunpowder out of the way of the candle.

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If we would always recollect that we live among men who are imperfect, we should not be in such a fever when we find out our friend's failings. What's rotten will rend, and cracked pots will leak. Blessed is he who expects nothing of poor flesh and blood, for he shall never be disappointed. The best of men are men at best, and the best wax will melt. It is a good horse that never stumbles, and a good wife that never grumbles. But surely such horses and wives are found in the fool's paradise ... In this wicked world the straightest timber has knots on it and the cleanest field of wheat has its share of weeds. It is foolish to turn off a tried friend because

of a failing or two, for you may get rid of a one-eyed nag and buy a blind one. Being all of us full of faults, we ought to keep two bears, and learn to bear and forbear with one another. Since we all live in glass houses, we should none of us throw stones. Faults are always thick where love is thin. A white cow is all black if your eye chooses to make it so. If we sniff long enough at rose water, we shall find out that it has a bad smell ... With all our faults, God loves us still if we are trusting in His Son. Therefore, let us not be downhearted, but hope to live and learn and do some good service before we die. Though the cart creaks, it will get home with its load, and the old horse, broken-kneed as he is, will do a sight of work yet. There's no use in lying down and doing nothing because we cannot do everything, as we should like. Faults or no faults, plowing must be done; imperfect people must do it, too, or there will be no harvest next year...⁵

Faults or no faults, Inaugural lectures must be delivered; imperfect people must present them, too, or information will not be shared and progress will continue to elude Mankind.

Because of my firm belief that all blessings flow from God, permit me to warn that human beings should not become conceited or intoxicated with their seeming achievements for the Bible instructs us:

"...And what do you have that you did not receive?

Now if you did indeed, receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it"⁽⁶⁾

I Cor.4 v.7

Continuing to admonish us not to get carried away with our so-called achievements, the Holy Scriptures go further to declare that:

"...Because you say, 'I am rich, I have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' - and you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked"⁽⁷⁾

- Rev. 3¹⁷

INTRODUCTION

Hoping that the Bible passages above will serve as catharsis for those who are vain to believe that they are achievers without ascribing the honour to God, I shall now seek to continue with the consideration of our topic for the evening: "Bridges Across Cultures".

It has often been said that any language at all is a carrier of culture. And because no culture is superior to the other, we are happy to see our native language - Yoruba - in a kind of "bridal march" (apologies to Prof Ezeigbo in his Inaugural Lecture on August 19, 1998) with even the most developed languages of the world. It is recognised that wisdom is not an exclusive preserve of any nation or people. Therefore this evening we will endeavour to say that seeking wisdom and civilisation in Whiteman's land is like "carrying coal to Newcastle" - (Taa ni ko mo pe ile akoko ni won ti n gbe 'do?). It is often said in Yoruba: Igbeyin a dun! - (We pray to have cause to laugh last!). I ask you my audience - a gathering of seasoned and enlightened minds "How can a dog sleeping on a tiger's skin laugh last? - Igbehin ko le dun fun aja ti n fi awo ekun sun!

The message contained in the above saying is that the Whiteman himself will not be able to lay claim to an enduring civilisation if he does not have a change of mind about the Blackman whom he enslaves and whose economy he seeks to dominate and subdue to his own advantage.

THE NEED FOR TRANSLATION

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Mr Vice-Chancellor, Sir, distinguished members of the informed audience, permit me to draw your attention to the import of every word of my topic: "Bridges Across Cultures". It is often observed that human beings are most of the time alone because instead of building bridges, they are building walls. From

what we all know of the use and purpose of bridges, they do not limit their use to a one-way traffic. "Bridges" encourage reciprocity and symbiotic interaction. "Across" is a word that does not connote selfishness. It discourages egocentrism; it reaches out. As for "Culture", it is the totality of ways and habits of a people including their clothing, feeding, occupation, customs and language.

The Holy Bible informs us that at the beginning of the history of the human race:

"... The whole earth had one language and one speech..."⁽⁸⁾

From this piece of information one can infer that the whole universe had one culture. But the rest of the story informs us that a misunderstanding arose among the people as they were trying to construct a Tower to reach heaven. God Himself, according to the story in the Bible confounded them saying:

"... Indeed, the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth."⁽⁹⁾

- Genesis XI¹⁻⁹

That story of the Tower of Babel explains why we say tonight "cultures" and not just "culture". If languages are many, then the plurality of cultures can be tolerated.

Furthermore the same Holy Bible says:

"... Therefore if I know not the meaning of the

voice, (language) I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me...⁽¹⁰⁾

- I Cor. 14¹¹

It is therefore the multiplicity of languages in the world that recommends the *raison d'être* of Translation and Interpreting. The two Professions are intertwined and interrelated. To most people, the two are one and the same discipline. We say "No"! "No" because Translation deals with printed or written words while *Interpreting* is primarily and largely oral.

"... The Interpreter's job is in the business world and that of the true Translator is in the areas of scholarship and the arts."⁽¹¹⁾

We are tempted to accept the above because writing appears to "suit the exigencies of scholarship and the arts because writing gives the work of scholarship permanence".⁽¹²⁾ (Friedrich Schleirmacher) *Theories of Translation* p. 34. The job of an Interpreter is squarely in the area of spoken words. That "the word is the most enduring substance of the human race" is further buttressed by Lord Byron when he writes:

"... But words are real things
And a small drop of ink
Falling like dew, upon a thought,
Produces that which makes, thousands,
Perhaps millions, think;
'Tis strange, the shortest letter which man uses
Instead of speech, may form a lasting link
Of ages; to what straits old

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Time reduces
Frail man, when paper - even a rag like this,
Survives himself, his tomb, and all that's his!"⁽¹³⁾

If it is settled that speech soon disappears into the thin air but that written words endure and given the estimate that:

"the world has about 4,200 autonomous languages through which its almost 6 billion inhabitants communicate with one another"⁽¹⁴⁾

that impossibility that all individual inhabitants of the world would speak or communicate in all the known languages brings into greater focus the need for translators. If each of these "4,200 autonomous languages" is considered as a river, then one would need some bridges to link these rivers so as to make for accessibility, easy passage and fruitful interaction among peoples of the world, for no man is an island and no nation is totally economically independent of others.

Oversimplified therefore, the role of translators (and interpreters) can be seen as being analogous to that of a bridge, hence the relevance of our efforts to first portray the (literary) translator as a bridge.

Furthermore, the fact that there are as many as 4,200 autonomous languages in the world further highlights the complexity of the problems of the inhabitants of the world. Efforts to understand and co-operate with one another should therefore of necessity, begin with seeking to translate man to man.

It is recognised that national literatures exist. For comparative literature to flourish national literatures written in restrictive languages should be translated into other world languages so as to narrow the gap between cultures. Lofty ideas about reducing tension among nations are often eloquently dished out at international conferences and on pages of newspapers, reviews and magazines. We, however share the view expressed by P. Brunel, Cl. Pichois and A.M. Rousseau in their book *Qu'est-ce que la littérature comparée?* that:

"... offrir des oeuvres et des idées à des étrangers, cela exige d'abord que l'on se comprenne..."¹⁵

English translation:

"... Before a meaningful crossbreeding of ideas can take place amongst peoples and nations, such peoples must first seek to understand one another's language of communication..."

This explains, in part, why we who claim to be specialists in other peoples' languages and cultures have saddled ourselves with the responsibility of offering to the outside world a better form of literary documentation on Africa, a continent often misrepresented and misunderstood. In fact it is not uncommon to be reminded that:

"Africa has neither a past nor a civilisation worthy of the name"

It is even worse than that because Africa was often described (though until recent past) in the following terms:-

... L'Afrique offre à l'histoire un problème auquel on peut réfléchir indéfiniment. Pourquoi cette terre est-elle pendant des siècles perdue pour la civilisation? Les anciens la considéraient comme le lien de la fatalité et de la mort. Dans Lucain, les soldats de Caton s'en font un tableau effrayant:

'Tu n'es bonne à rien, Afrique. Tu ne portes que des monstres, tes serpents s'acharnent contre la vie, ton sol hait la culture et dévore la semence! Tu es maudite, terre qui chasse l'homme par tous les maléfices et par tous les venins'.

Tous les maux, la piraterie, la razzia, l'esclavage, la traître, l'anthropophagie assombrissent de nouveau le malheureux destin de l'Afrique et la nuit du néant frappe ses peuples d'une nouvelle malédiction..."¹⁶

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English translation:

"Africa offers to history a problem which can perpetually engage the thoughts of Mankind, why has this land remained for ages unknown to civilisation? People of old used to see it as a link between fate and death. In Lucain, Caton's soldiers used to paint a dreadful picture of it:

'Africa, you are good for nothing: only monsters inhabit you; your snakes are injurious to life, your soil hates cultivation and devours whatever is sown therein! You are accursed, a land which bedevils man with all sorts of curses and with all manners of poisons...'

African destiny is weighted down with all kinds of evil, piracy, razzia (disease) slavery, slave trade, treachery cannibalism and the night of nothingness strikes her peoples with a new wave of malediction..."

One wonders how much and to what extent the above view expressed arguably many years back has changed. Has the impression of the Whiteman about Blacks changed for the better even on the eve of the new millenium? Are our values still not minsunderstood and trampled upon? How free is the African economy from the fetters and shackles of the Whiteman? If Africa must survive, her voice must be heard and preserved in literary writings and translation (literary) offers the best opportunity to do that.

Since the audience here this evening is hardly interested in any kind of rhapsodical effusion on what Translation is or is not, we will only pass in review a few hints on Translation. There are those who believe translation is neither possible nor desirable. Such critics of Translation include: George BORROW in England who says:

Translation: [Translâtion is, at best, an echo]

Cervantès from Spain, compares translation to a rug turned inside out: all the motifs are there all night, but their beauty is not easily discernible.¹⁸

Dante from Italy on his part says:

"... Aucune chose de celle qui ont été mises en harmonie par le lien de poésie ne se peut transporter de sa langue en une autre sans qu'on rompe sa douceur et harmonie."¹⁹

Translation:

[Hardly can any of those things harmoniously strung through poetical arrangement be expressed in any other tongue without wreaking some havoc on its original beauty and sensitivity...]

From Germany, Williams von Humboldt adds his voice saying:

"... Toute traduction me paraît être incontestablement une tentative de résoudre une tâche irréalisable..."²⁰

Translation:

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['... Any attempt at any kind of translation clearly seems to me an exercise in futility: an attempt to do the impossible']

Schegel, on his part, says:

"... La traduction est un duel à mort où pèrit inévitablement celui qui traduit ou celui qui est traduit..."²¹

Translation:

["... Translation looks to me like a kind of duel in which either the translator or the author must of necessity, perish]

As if the flurry of attacks on attempts to embark on translation were not enough, the popular Italian expression:

Traduttore, traditore

(A Translator may end up betraying the author) comes with a harder knock on the Translator. While we concede that the great minds quoted above have a right to air their views, it is almost unthinkable in the modern world not to have translators and interpreters!

Translation is therefore desirable particularly when it is realized that translators help to propagate ideas, civilisation and messages embedded in especially languages of limited diffusion as is the case here tonight. And as we all know ideas pay no duties. They move freely from one territory to another.

We are not unmindful of the existence of those who may be wondering about faithfulness in translation. Our view is that at this level, nothing is absolute, everything is relative. Besides, translation is like a work of art in the hands of a sculptor - there is no end to desirable improvement.

We should like to mention at this juncture the broad generalisations and categories of translation. These are:

- General Translation (which may be on any topic a subject including love letters)
- Literary Translation - this centres primarily on literary texts
- Scientific and Technical Translation - which may include

not only texts on Technology but also texts on specialised professions such as Law, Accounting, Medicine, Banking, Computer etc. etc.

- Theatrical and Poetic Translation
- Paraphrase and Free Translation.

While the presentation of this evening is not entirely and primarily a treatise to Translation *per se* but rather an attempt to present Translation as an instrument of propagation of knowledge, we consider it useful to pass through that medium to assist some works gain international recognition. In this regard, we would like to dilate on our attempt to translate some African authors prominent among whom is D.O. Fagunwa of Nigeria.

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WHO IS FAGUNWA?

Fagunwa, D.O.: Born in 1903 at Oke-Igbo, in Ondo State. Started his Primary School education at St Luke's School Oke-Igbo (1916-1924). In 1926, he gained admission into St. Andrew's College, Oyo, to train as a teacher. On completion of his Teacher Training Programme, Fagunwa taught in many schools including St Patrick's School, Owo; Girls' School, Benin, Igbobi College, Lagos and St. Jude's School, Ebute-Metta.

Fagunwa, assisted by the Church Missionary Society, wrote his first novel *Ogboju-Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* in 1938. The success of this novel, the first of its kind in the Yoruba language, earned him a scholarship to study in Britain in 1946. He returned to Nigeria in 1948 only to go back to Britain in 1950. This time he paid for his stay in Britain. On his return he worked as Education Officer in the Ministry of Education, in the defunct Western Region and later with Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. He occupied this post until his death on December 7, 1963

He wrote four other Yoruba novels:

Igbo Olodumare (1949) 186p.

Ireke-Onibudo (1949) 162p.

Irinkerindo Ninu Igbo Elegbeje (1954) 138 p.

Adiitu Olodumare (1961) 164 p.

Fagunwa is the first indigenous Nigerian writer to write what can be described as a full-length novel (written in any indigenous Nigerian language). Assisted by the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S), Fagunwa wrote and published his first novel *Ogbodu-Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* in 1938. It is however unfortunate and indeed an irony of fate to observe that Fagunwa, rightly acclaimed the "pioneer of creative writing in Yoruba", has turned to be the most unsung, neglected and undiscovered writer, especially when European standards are applied. The reason for this 'obscurity' is not far to seek: his writings are in the Yoruba language (one of the three prominent indigenous languages in Nigeria - the other two being Hausa and Igbo), a language with limited diffusion particularly outside Nigeria. About 20 million people have this language as their mother tongue. In the past and, in fact, up till the recent past, African literature has often been described as violent. While this view may aptly apply to African literature written in French, it is consoling to observe that one still finds a few African authors who are not obsessed with the idea of *affirmation de soi*. Fagunwa of Nigeria belongs to this class of writers. He writes to entertain and instruct. In and through his writings, Fagunwa joins other African writers to better project the African image and correct outright fallacies and half-truths written about Africa and its peoples. It is therefore hoped that, through the kind of translation we have done for Fagunwa's works, the literary translator, in addition to serving the purpose of a bridge can also serve as a guide leading others (curious readers and researchers) to discover and better appreciate the prodigy of the

culture of the people whose ways of life are often described in literary write-ups.

Fagunwa is an interesting and fascinating storyteller. He writes out of the totality of his experience among his own people. He has as his main obsession the unfolding of the actions of his novels in a manner to arouse and sustain the interest of the reader. He narrates his stories in a matter-of-fact style. This he does because he is convinced that an audience to which his stories are directed is present and listening. He, most of the time, falls back on his uncanny, quick-witted imagination which, in turn, determines his choice of narrative techniques.

This method is reminiscent of the way folktales are told in villages where age is synonymous with wisdom, where marriage is the ambition of everyone and many children the fruits of such marriages. These stories and folk tales often told in groups as 'moonlight stories', especially after the day's work and before the nocturnal repose, are most of the time used in the education and up-bringing of the youths. To drive home his points, Fagunwa often draws from his powerful pictorial sense. This leads him into painting powerful word pictures of scenes and people. Fagunwa does not feel satisfied with merely narrating a chain of events without embellishing and garnishing such with an elastic repetitiveness of words and expression piled up to achieve the desired effect. This technique, apart from the content of the stories, is a very powerful device in Yoruba (oral) tradition, for the average Yoruba person revels in the piling up of words to make his point. This is reflected even in the Yoruba greetings. Fagunwa, product of his milieu and society, endlessly indulges in the use of these greetings (see Ogboju-Ode p.71):

'E ku abo, e ku irin;
e ku iyonu gbogbo;
e ku ewu oju ona...'
cf. *Ireke Onibudo* p.117.

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All told, Fagunwa is a rare gem, a literary phenomenon whose stature should not be allowed to remain a dwarf in history.

Literary translator: a bridge or a guide?

Translating an author (any author at all) from one language into another is like 'briser l'os pour sucer la moelle' (breaking the eggshell in order to suck the yolk). Since any language is a carrier of culture and since most of what Fagunwa has reduced into writing was originally oral, the work of the translator should be seen as a bridge, which allows contact to be made. From there, the literary translator himself should be seen as a guide conducting curious 'tourists' and 'adventures' (readers and researchers) into a foreign land. Readership cannot but follow!

The observation that Fagunwa has not invented much to write his novels may after all not be unfair or unkind, especially when it is realised that among sources exploited by Fagunwa are those provided by his immediate locality. There is no gainsaying the fact that the general background to the novel of Fagunwa derives from tradition of Yoruba folk tales. Care must therefore be taken in our attempt to translate such works, for the work of the literary translator is often fraught with many problems. The translator is undoubtedly an agent of inter cultural exchange and of 'cross-pollination' of ideas and civilisations. In translating Fagunwa into French, therefore, we should be prepared to see translation as taking on a journey someone who has never travelled before (especially on a given route). And without any noticeable transformation, languages involved in the translation are raised, to a higher level of expression. They are expanded into greater representation of complexity and subtlety

Reading Fagunwa in translation is like the initiation of a novice. The reader of the translated version must be ready to accept and tolerate the ways of life of the Yoruba and indeed of Africans. In fact, reading Fagunwa in translation, could easily

provoke the kind of reactions Montesquieu's Persians had to the French way of life when visiting France (see Montesquieu: *Lettres Persanes*, letters 1, 24 & 30).

Obviously there are areas of the Yoruba culture that will 'shock' the reader of the translation. For instance, how will 'foreign' readers not be 'shocked' by the idea of someone else inheriting another man's wife (all in the name of family ties)? Whereas this is a common occurrence in the Yoruba custom and tradition that when a married man dies, the wife or the wives left behind must be passed on in inheritance to the younger brother(s) of the deceased. It is unsavoury for any wife to reject this arrangement. Fagunwa is conversant with this practice and presents it in a matter-of-fact style in *Irinkerindo Ninu Igbo Elegbeje* p.9 (*Parcours Interminables*) when the hero says:

"...Were my mother not opposed to this idea, she would have been willed as a wife to a paternal uncle of mine..."

Since Fagunwa's writing constitute a kind of treatise to the cultural heritage of the Yoruba people, themes examined are garnished with many cultural details requiring explanations before a foreign reader can enjoy the works.

As a language is a carrier of culture, a lot of explanation will be required in the translator's bid to export the culture and tradition of the original author to the outside world. And it is in this regard that the literary translator plays the role of a guide to the reader. Fagunwa is first and foremost a product of the Yoruba society. The milieu and situation he describes in his novels are clearly those of the Yoruba people.

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To the average Yoruba reader of Fagunwa's novels, Fagunwa has not invented much in writing his novels. This is neither heresy nor an attempt to devalue the author's contribution to the growth and propagation of the literary writings of the

Yoruba. Rather it is because most of the elements including stories, proverbs, language, humour and jokes are almost commonplace features in the Yoruba society. But to the outside reader, some of these elements may sound stranger than fiction. For instance, a foreign reader may not fully understand what Fagunwa intends to achieve by explaining in *Ogboju-Ode* p.81 how the goat became a domestic animal, since the Whites do not normally share their abodes (living places) with animals such as goats and sheep - a common feature and daily occurrence in the traditional Nigerian set up, especially in rural areas. In these rural areas, it is not uncommon to witness a hungry goat snatch the food of a toddler, especially if the food is wrapped in leaves (of trees) as is often the case. The general background of the novels derives from tradition of folk tales. One therefore requires the services of a guide to take one through this new and probably strange (absurd?) civilisation.

In an attempt to draw from the tradition of his people, Fagunwa, in addition to making use of tales often told to children and young people, goes on to describe how his people tell the time. Time is told by referring to events, sunrise, sunset, and even eating habits. For instance, the Yoruba year is divided into two seasons: a rainy and a dry season. This division is done on the basis of what phenomena and activities are prevalent at a given period. The Yoruba have fixed and separate expressions to indicate day and night, morning and evening. The Yoruba month is lunar but the inter-relationship between the week and the month does not exist. Time is often told by the dove (see *Igbo Olodumare* - pp.1-2) (*Mystères divins* pp. 1-2), *Ireke-Onibudo* - *La Fortune Sourit aux Audacieux* p.2) or the cock or even by certain daily activities which have become a routine: for instance, the Yoruba talk of 'first cockcrow', 'the second crow of the cock', or even 'period of the day when the hot pap is taken as breakfast' (see *Ogboju-Ode* p.22). Of course there are many others, too many to mention here. The Yoruba people note dates by the reign of such and such 'Oba' (king), days and periodicity or frequency of

market days etc. This theme of time is very prominent in Fagunwa's writings. The quotation below gives our readers an idea of what we have in mind:

"... We then began to converse and share pleasantries... We spoke of dry season, which causes a great drought. Everything dries up: rivers, trees and leaves. All creatures are thirsty. This thirst is almost palpable to the point of becoming a scourge. During dry season, contagious, and air-borne diseases are rampant. It is a season dreaded by all. But even then and in spite of these inconveniences, the dry season had its advantages ... the weather is not often muggy nor the soil muddy as is often the case during the rainy season. People move freely and easily. Fallen trees do not usually obstruct the footpaths that link villages and farmlands..."

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Fagunwa describes these things in a vivid manner, a description of life as it is lived on the farm. In his second novel, *Ireke-Onibudo*, Fagunwa is quite at home in his description of how farmers enjoy fresh corn menu (often prepared on bonfire), how rats and other animals are hunted for food (see *Ireke-Onibudo* pp. 3-5). He also describes the source of potable water on the farm: streams running through cocoa (or some other crop) plantations etc. It is surprising to discover how fresh, limpid and refreshing such water can be! The description is so vivid and so detailed that it ends up whetting the reader's appetite, especially of those amongst them whose experiences fall within the realm of the culture or tradition being described. This explains precisely the need to provide footnotes or some kind of explanation as does a guide for a tourist, for without such explanations the foreign reader may not understand or appreciate why the author, describing the experiences on the farm, has to feed in this way along with his people.

This leads us into discussing the occupations of the Yoruba. Chiefest among the favoured occupations of the Yoruba are farming (predominantly crop farming and planting of

economic trees like cocoa, kola nut, oil palm, coffee), smithing (gold and black), drumming and petty trading which has now metamorphosed into big-time commercial business activities and hunting. Fagunwa treats all these occupations in his novels, but the one directly related to the experience described above as it relates to the feeding habits of the Yoruba is farming. Farmers in Yorubaland, like elsewhere, are hardworking. They set out as early as the first cockcrow or the second, depending on the location of the farmland. They work till about noon and go on break. It is during this break which lasts between noon and three o'clock in the dry season, that farmers take their corn meal prepared on bonfire. This meal, crude as it may appear, is usually enjoyed by all with relish. It is equally during this break that children of the farmers, the young ones and the young at heart, go on a kind of hunting spree described by Fagunwa in *Ireke-Onibudo* pp.1-2. Even in real life (especially in villages) the experience can be exciting and scintillating.

Another aspect of the culture of the Yoruba dealt with by Fagunwa in his novels is the Yoruba gods and beliefs. It is worthy to mention that before the advent of both the Christian and Muslim religions into Nigeria, the Yoruba people were reputed for their idol-worshipping. They used to worship gods like Sango (god of thunder), Oya (wife to Sango), Obatala, Orisa-Nla (great deity), Esù (the devil) etc. An average foreign reader of Fagunwa's works in whatever translation would be surprised, if not scandalised, to be informed that the devil (Esù) is worshipped. This is where the translator owes his audience, public and readers some explanations and when this is provided, he unwittingly assumes and plays the role of a guide. It must be added that Esu in the Yoruba panthéon is not the Devil or Satan of foreign religions. He is benevolent even though he can be offended. The firm belief of the Yoruba in the benevolence of these deities is given prominence by Fagunwa in his novels. The adherents of this traditional religion usually offer sacrifices to these gods so as to appease them, atone for sins, curry their favour or thank such

deities for favours received. Even the name 'Fagunwa' is coined from the name of one of such deities, Ifa (oracle). The name 'Fagunwa' implies that 'Ifa' (the oracle) installs himself majestically. Although the standpoint of Fagunwa is the recognition of the one and only Supreme God (the Creator), he does not disdain the religion of the traditional religionists. He does not even condemn the mode of worship of the idol worshippers. Fagunwa, on the contrary, proves sympathetic with them when he, in *Ogboju-Ode* pp.58-59 writes:

"... According to our tradition and belief, we took the bird, which we killed, opened it up and poured some quantity of palm-oil on it. We then put it in a certain piece of broken earthen pot and deposited it all at the foot of a certain big tree close by ... God then became pleased with us. Not because of the sacrifice we have just offered but because He realised that we would have worshipped Him in a more civilised way if we were more knowledgeable than this."

Another dimension to the culture of the Yoruba is their firm belief in the efficacy of prayers. This is reflected in:

- *Ogboju-Ode* pp. 35,49,101,102
- *Ireke-Onibudo* pp. 6,106
- *Irinkerindo* pp. 24, 117
- *Igbo Olodumare* pp. 63,157, 164
- *Adiitu Olodumare* p. 148.

As a guide to our foreign readers of Fagunwa in French, we wish to emphasise that in Nigeria, three forms of religion are recognised by law, namely: Christianity, Islam and Paganism (traditional religion). This explains why, for the purpose of swearing in Nigeria, one could swear by the Holy Bible or the Holy Koran or by the object representing the deity one believes in. This is however not tantamount to saying that all Nigerians belong to any of the three religions mentioned above. There are of course free thinkers or atheists who do not believe in the existence of God. After all, Nigeria is a secular state and no religion is superior

or inferior to the other(s).

The Yoruba (indeed Africans) believe in the use and efficacy of magical charms. Fagunwa capitalises on this aspect of our culture. Hence Akara-ogun in *Ogboju-Ode* uses 'juju' to conjure the footpath to throw the gnome Agbako (Misfortune personified) into the bush so as to prevent him (Misfortune) from attacking the hero. Also in *Irinkerindo* pp.8-19, the hero before setting out on his journey to Oke Ironu (Mount of Sober Reflexions) administers or causes to be administered on him all sorts of 'juju'. The belief in and use of amulets among the Yoruba are very rife. It is a popular form of protection.

Another area where the literary translator of Fagunwa's novels has to intervene is that of supersition. As we discuss this important aspect of the typical Yoruba person, we have come to an area which may be described as essential and irreplaceable. Almost everywhere in Yorubaland, unseen forces are often dreaded and adored. Most of what the Whiteman takes as part of the universe are deified by the Yoruba: the sun, the moon, the sky, mountains, rivers, metal and iron. Witchcraft constitutes an aspect of the Yoruba civilisation which should not be regarded as superstitious. It is believed among the Yoruba that if a child dies prematurely, he may have been killed supernaturally by a witch or wizard. Fagunwa recognises that this belief is rife but appears not to believe in it. Hence he offers in *Ireke-Onibudo* p.43 what appears to be a scientific explanation for why children die prematurely in Nigeria. Although the writings of Fagunwa have universal import, the culture and civilisation in which his thinking, mentality and expression are rooted are Yoruba in particular and African in general. Hence Fagunwa develops this theme in *Ogboju-Ode* pp.7,21; *Irinkerindo* pp.18-19; *Igbo Olodumare* p.139. And when in *Ogboju-Ode* p.23 Akara-ogun says:

"... As soon as I got up to go on the journey, I hit my left foot against a stone. This omen is traceable to my mother".

It is impossible for a foreign reader to get at the cultural meaning that goes with this translation. The reader therefore needs someone to guide him into getting the message. Simply put, when a Yoruba person contemplates executing a project and sets out on foot to execute the project thereafter, if he happens to hit any of the feet against an object, it is generally believed to be a kind of premonition. If it is the left foot, then it is bad omen. But if it is the right foot, it is a sign that all is going to be well with the project.

In the same token, a child must not sit at the entrance to a room to eat his meals, otherwise the child will never be satisfied no matter the quantity of food taken. Equally for the same reason a child must never dip his hand into the nest of any bird especially at night. On looking at the two instances cited above very closely, one may conclude that these two taboos or superstitions are mere precautionary measures, as in the first one, a child sitting to take his meal at an entrance to a room obstructs the way or a passer-by may trample on the food and waste it. Similarly, a child dipping his hand into the nest of a bird, especially at night, runs the risk of being bitten by a snake.

Figures too can have some connotations deep rooted in superstition. For instance, the Yoruba believe that one does not offer a gift in the odd numbers. Rather, offering such gifts in six symbolises love and affection drawing the donor and the recipient to each other. Hence the King of Oke Langbodo offers gifts to his visitors in the number of six (see *Ogboju-Ode* p.99).

By carrying out a French translation of all the five major novels of Fagunwa (originally written in Yoruba) we have assisted Nigeria to further contribute to world civilisations. I consider it pertinent to let the audience know how I came about the idea of translating Fagunwa's works into French. This story deserves to be told here today. It was in the 1963/64 academic session

(which happened to be my penultimate year on the N.C.E. programme) at the then Federal Advanced Teacher's College, Lagos, that one of our lecturers in English (the other teaching subject I was studying along with French), Miss N.K. Reeds precisely, instructed us to write a long essay on a (literary) topic related to Nigeria or Africa. I then stumbled on the following topic:

"The Development of the Nigerian Novel written in English."

In that long essay, I mentioned the names of authors who wrote in indigenous languages. My list included the name of D.O. Fagunwa whose *Ogboju-Ode* had been published, as far back as 1938. Besides, this novel of Fagunwa was the first full-size book in the Yoruba language to deserve being called a novel. When my supervisor read of the amount of work Fagunwa had done (Fagunwa had by then published his fifth and last novel *Adiitu Olodumare*) she wondered why I had not chosen to translate into English one of Fagunwa's novels, if only to give her a fore-taste of what Fagunwa's writings was all about. I retorted by accepting my then incompetence or limitation to embark on such a gigantic task. Since then, I nursed the idea that if ever I had the opportunity to do post-graduate studies, it was Fagunwa's novels that I would seek to translate. That was how when in 1972 the University of Lagos granted me a 3-year study leave (as it was then called) I decided to compare the works of Fagunwa with the *Fables* of Jean de la Fontaine (a French moralist of the 17th Century).

The title of my T.E.R. (*Travail d'Etudes et de Recherche*) intrigued and fascinated my then supervisor, Prof. Rene Bourgeois of the University of Grenoble III, France. He took great interest in the works of D.O. Fagunwa. Incidentally I had in my possession in France all the novels of Fagunwa. That was how I just chose to start my adventure into literary translation by embarking on the translation of *Ireke-Onibudo* (Fagunwa's third novel). That French translation (though quite imperfect then) really established the

veracity in the saying that the taste of the pudding lies in its eating". Prof Rene Bourgeois discovered the richness and prodigy of the Yoruba language and culture and wanted to discover more. But given the limited time within which I was to present the M.A. dissertation and the enormity of the work involved, it was decided that I shelve the idea of translating the remaining four novels so as to remain within the context and requirements of a Master's programme.

When in the 1973/74 session I embarked on the Ph.D. (Doctorat de 3^e Cycle) programme, I decided to switch to French Literature for fear of being discriminated against on return home that I have researched on a Yoruba author and not French. All along the line and all the time, my interest in translating the remaining four novels of Fagunwa into French did not wane. So, when in 1980, I received a scholarship award from TOTAL (NIGERIA) Ltd. tenable in France for just one year, I re-kindled my desire to translate the remaining four novels.

As soon as I got to the University of Grenoble III, France in January 1981 and discussed my project with Prof. René Bourgeois, he quickly reminded me to go back to the Fagunwa translation and take it up "where we left off in June 1973". And that was how I was able to complete in 1981 the translation of *Ogboju-Ode Ninu Igbo Irumale*, *Igbo Olodumare*, *Irinkerindo Ninu Igbo Elegbeje* and *Adiitu Olodumare*.

Results obtained in the project brought so much joy to TOTAL (NIGERIA) Plc. and the Parent-Company in France (la CFP) that they gladly renewed the Scholarship Award till February 1986 when I defended the Doctorat d'Etat thesis (in public) scoring Mention: Tres Honorable (Excellent) at the defence. That defence lasted six (6) hours: 1.30 p.m to 7.30 p.m (Feb. 6, 1986).

From the history of how I came about translating the novels of Fagunwa, two things have emerged *viz*

- (1) The great interest of the Whiteman in what many Yoruba people have often taken for granted and
- (2) The amount of money and goodwill TOTAL (NIGERIA) Plc. and la CFP, Paris, France have individually and jointly expended on the programme.

These two organisations have not relented in the moral and financial support being given to the work of Fagunwa. For instance; not only have they (both in France and Nigeria) held sumptuous parties for me to celebrate the achievement, they have also sponsored me to three international conferences where Fagunwa's works were given deserved publicity. Two of these were:

- (1) XIth Congress of ICLA (International Comparative Literature Association) At Sorbonne, Paris, France (1985)
- (2) XIth Congress of World Translators in Maastricht, The Netherlands between August 17 and Sept.7, 1987.

For all this assistance and sponsorship, Nigeria is very grateful as these generous contributions have assisted African Literature to consolidate its gains from the battle for recognition.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF FAGUNWA

Having "broken the egg-shell" (translating Fagunwa's novels) we are now able to make "omelette" which readers in France and Francophone world can now enjoy. By undertaking this said translation, we see ourselves demolishing a wall of deafness which the inability of many to read the Yoruba version of the works represents and assisting the works to have a larger and more international readership. The arduous task of having to translate these five novels is, simply put, analogous to an initiation process. Besides, all we have done by embarking on the said

translation can be seen as the germination of a seed. As it is generally known, the new plant grows out of what must have been sown. It is our hope that this new seedling will reach the fruition stage thereby generating further research efforts on the works of Fagunwa. But like the grain sown, which first "dies" before "resurrecting" we have thought it fit to first "break the egg" in order to make "omelette".

Although we recognise the fact that the message contained in Fagunwa's novels is of universal import, the works have (before this translation of ours) remained a kind of labyrinth as well as an aperture. Our translation therefore opens up a virgin area of research interest. Hence the novels could be seen as a kind of secret embedding the solution to even that secret.

Our faith in the Universality of Fagunwa is enhanced not only in the themes examined by the author in his novels but also by the view of L. MURBY, in Editor's Foreword contained on p.(vii) of *Ogbojo-Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale*:

"... It is probable that scholars will compare them (the "epics" and "allegories") ... with the great epics that stand at the threshold of European literature..."

Since one can only compare things that are similar, and in our bid to fulfil the hope expressed by MURBY in the above quotation, we decided to carry out the French translation of all Fagunwa's novels so that there may be some basis for valid comparison between what Fagunwa has written and other literary writings of the same orientation.

It is in fact striking to discover during the preparation of my M.A. dissertation that Jean de la Fontaine a 17th Century French moralist, condemns holding other people in disdain - "Le Renard et l'Ecureuil" where he writes:

"Il ne faut jamais se moquer des misérables, car qui peut s'assurer d'être toujours heureux?"

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English translation:

"None should laugh at people in distress for who can be sure of happiness all the time?"

This same message is found in Fagunwa's *Igbo Olodumare* p.34

"Maa sora, maa sora, maa sora ki o to maa saata omonikeji re..."(You are advised to think deeply before you denigrate your fellow human beings)

cf. "La Laitière et le Pot au lait = *Ogboju-Ode*, p.87

Fagunwa as a story-teller writes to educate the entire human race and his message is of universal import. This is reflected in the universality of themes examined by the author. Here are a few of them succinctly presented:

- On Ambition - *Igbo* 107
- On Flattery - *Ireke* p. 26
- On Ingratitude: *Ogboju-Ode* p.83 ff
- On Arrogance/Haughtiness (*Igbo* pp. 157, 162 Ko si eni ti nbe afi Olorun Oba *Irinkerindo* p. 23, 115)
- On Love and Marriage (*Igbo* pp.6, 24 Fagunwa condemns early marriage)
- On Women: *Ogboju-Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale*, pp. 72,90, 112
Irinkerindo p.17; *Adiitu* pp 45,65
- On Children: *Ireke*, pp. 4, 57; *Ogboju*, p.74.
- On Death *Irinke* p.8, *Ogboju-Ode*,p.2,

Fagunwa addresses the entire humanity:

- See (1) *Ogboju-Ode* p.11
** (2) *Igbo Olodumare* pp. 5, 162*
148* " Mo ni ise lati ran o si awon omo araiye"

- **
- (3) *Adiitu Olodumare* p.1
 - (4) *Ireke-Onibudo* pp. 2-4,20
 - (5) *Irinkerindo* p. 117
-
- (1) Farming See *Ireke* pp. 1 & 2
Irinke p.70
Adiitu p.17
 - (2) Hunting *Igbo* p.8ff
Ogboju-Ode
 - (3) Carpentry *Adiitu* p. 17
 - (4) Drumming *Ogboju-Ode* p.27

KNOWLEDGE OF EUROPEAN LITERATURE AND THE BIBLE

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- (1) *Odyssey* of Homer
- (2) *Chiron, the Centaure - Ireke* p. 119
- (3) *The Tragedy of Dr. Faustus* by Christopher MARLOWE adapted in *Adiitu* p.127
- (4) *As You Like It - Romeo and Juliet* (cf *Ireke-Onibudo* and *Ifepade*).
- (5) *Tales from Arabian Nights* adapted in *Ireke* pp. 131 - 139
- (6) "The Tale' of the Fisherman and the Genie" from *Arabian Nights* adapted in *Igbo* pp. 120-130.
- (7) The Bible:
 - (a) An adaptation of the story of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel 4²⁹⁻³⁷ found in *Ogboju-Ode* pp. 95-99
 - (b) Scandalous love affair between Potiphar's wife and Joseph (Genesis 39 v. 17-20) found adapted in *Ireke* pp. 51-52.
 - (c) Story of Adam and Eve summarised in *Ogboju-Ode* p.70

- (d) Story of the 10 lepers (found in Luke 17¹¹⁻¹⁹) adapted and incorporated in *Igbo Olodumare* p. 140
- (e) Birth of Jesus in a Stable (Lk. 1²⁶⁻²⁸, Lk. 2⁷) found in *Igbo Olodumare* p.
- (f) Jesus washed His Disciples' feet (John 13⁵) found in *Igbo Olodumare* p. 157
- (g) The Babel Tower (Gen. 10⁷ & 9) is found in *Ogboju-Ode* p.43
- (h) Samson killing a lion with bare hands (Judges 14⁵⁻⁶) found in *Ogboju-Ode* p.51
- (i) Biblical expressions - Mark 9⁴² cf. *Ogboju-Ode* p.60
cf. Ps. 115⁵⁻⁶ = *Igbo-Olodumare* p.118
- (j) Your "Yes" to remain "Yes" and "No" to remain "No" Matt. 5³⁷ found in *Igbo Olodumare* p.163.
- (l) Mode of prayer by the Aladuras found in *Ireke-Onibudo* pp.48, 106; *Igbo-Olodumare* p. 153; *Adiitu* pp.70-71.
- (m) Parody of the Christian Creed found in *Inkerindo* p. 50.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES PARTICULARLY ABROAD:

1. Use of lift described in *Ireke-Onibudo*, p.63
2. Use of telephone described in *Igbo Olodumare* p.103
3. Use is everything: interaction with "Oyinbos" (white people) no more a novelty to Fagunwa: see allusion to this in *Igbo Olodumare* p.156.

FAGUNWA AND HUMAN NATURE

First and foremost, the primary aim of Fagunwa was to document norms and culture of his people in writing. It is also his pre-occupation to write to entertain and instruct. Realising however that a moral lesson presented to readers in a naked form

could be boring or un-interesting, Fagunwa decided to give flesh to such moral lessons. Thus, he thought of writing about adventures but writing ended up being an adventure for him.

As a matter of fact, our first topic for this lecture was to have been: "Translation: Translation of a Translation". What we had in mind then was that before an author could put pen to paper to produce a piece of (creative) writing he (the author) must have been nursing some ideas in his mind. When he eventually writes, he not only gives vent to his feelings, he has also given birth to a body (of ideas) but without the human form. To seek to translate therefore such a piece of work amounts to Translation of a Translation. The idea has been expressed earlier on in this Lecture that "the word is the most enduring substance of the human race". What Fagunwa has written in his five novels is already in a "permanent" form. When we read such novels we unconsciously benefit from the thinking of that German philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer that:

"Reading is already translation and translation is translation for the second time... The process of translating comprises in its essence the whole secret of human understanding of the world and of social communication..."

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Because translation makes cross-cultural communication and understanding possible, (cf I Cor. 14¹¹) and because it is the themes examined by Fagunwa in his works that qualify them for translation we are sufficiently impelled to recognise the universality of such themes both in their application and value. Like Voltaire, quoted by Lilyan KESTELOOT, says:

"... on ne peut trop répéter que tous les dogmes sont différents, et que la morale est la même chez tous les hommes qui font usage de la raison. En outre le bon sens est la chose au monde la mieux partagée (Descartes) car morale et bon sens sont le fondement de la sagesse. Si les croyances, les coutumes, les rites des peuples sont souvent

fort différents, il faut en effet remarquer que leurs sagesses se ressemblent. C'est consolant car voilà, au moins un terrain commun où tous peuvent se comprendre..."

[Translation: "It can hardly be too much to emphasize that although dogmas and cultures may be different, morality is basically the same with people who make use of reason ..., even when it is observed and habits are different, it is interesting to observe that their wisdom looks alike ... and this represents a common ground for peoples to seek to understand one another].

The didactic elements and symbolism in Fagunwa's novels therefore lend weight to the observation that all nations of the world can read (albeit in translation) and enjoy Fagunwa. Even where different cultures belonging to different peoples of the world seem to inhibit perfect understanding of Fagunwa's writings. For instance, when Fagunwa treats the issue of polygamy, domination and servile submission (sometimes expected in marriage), it would still be appreciated that such writings contribute to human knowledge and provide room for appreciating (not denigrating) other people's cultures. Hence the need for translating authors like Fagunwa and many more into more world languages and vice versa. This view was expressed in The Editorial of *The Guardian* newspaper of Dec. 11, '84 p.8.

Fagunwa has a message for the entire human race and it is only fair not to allow the choice of a restrictive language to rob him of the opportunity to deliver the message. Fagunwa should be opened up to the larger world through further translations.

A THEMATIC OVERVIEW

Prominent among themes examined by Fagunwa in his novels are:

Providence, Marriage, Home-making, Virtues, Vices, Care of children, Youth, Religion, Use of opportunity, Patriotism, Politics, Death and Life after death.

Because Time is a wicked mother - gives birth to things new and renders them old) and not our friend, and because of constraint of space, we shall consider just two or three of these themes. For this purpose we shall rely on Wole Soyinka's English translation of *Ogboju-Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* (1938) published under the title: *The Forest of A Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* (1968).

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Brief Comments on Soyinka's translation

Our first reaction to this English translation of Fagunwa's first novel, *Ogboju-Ode* is that of appreciation for no matter the degree of imperfection observed in the said English translation Soyinka has, through it taken a giant stride, for nothing like that existed before his translation. To say "the bottle is half full" is not the same thing as "the bottle is half-empty". One shows appreciation, the other lack of it. In December 1988, during a Conference organised by NATI (Nigerian Association of Translators and Interpreters), I ventured to offer a review of Wole Soyinka's English translation. I presented a 36-page critique of the said translation. By January 1989, that effort had led to a barrage of polemics. Those I call apologists of Soyinka called me all sorts of names. What with captions like:

"Translators as Assassins"

- *African Concord* 30 January 1989, Vol.2, N°42, pp.32-33.

"Translators as Saviours"

- *African Concord*, 3 April 1989, Vol.3, N°1, p.31.

"Saviours as Opportunists"

- *African Concord* 24th April 1989, Vol.3, N°4, p.32.

Of all these write-ups, the one written by one Mr. 'Bayo Raji from Ibadan won my heart:

"Re: Translators as Assassins"

Dele Momodu's review article of Dr. J.O. Abioye's exposé

on Wole Soyinka's translation of Fagunwa's book (*African Concord* 30, Jan.1989) was too apologetic and excessively protective of the Nobel Laureate. Momodu would have done a better literary appreciation if his judgement had been more balanced and less biased.

Professor Wole Soyinka is not infallible or is he? So, he has the right to make his mistakes. And if anybody should point out those errors, such a person deserves commendation not condemnation for daring a literary 'god'."

African Concord, 6 March 1989, Vol.2, N° 49, p.5.

On the whole, we found Soyinka's efforts quite laudable even with all the imperfections in the said translation. After all, perfection is no human attribute! Besides, no translation is ever final. It seems pertinent to mention here that I did not see Soyinka's translation until after my own French translation had been published by Nelson Publishers in 1989 and displayed at a Book Exhibition at the University of Lagos, Akoka.

PATRIOTISM: On patriotism, suffice it to reproduce here below Fagunwa's view:

"Eyin ara ilu wa gbogbo, e seun ti e wa lati wo wa loni. E hu iwa bi omo enia, e se bi omoluwabi si wa; e mu ki ori wa ya, e mu ki aya wa bale, e si mu ki okan wa si si irin ajo wa. Bi ko ba si ohun ti o se ese, ese ki ise, bi ko ba ni idi eko ni dede se bayi ri wa. Gbogbo awa ti e nwo yi, Oke Langbodo ni a nlo, nitori ilu wa yi na si ni. Ajo ki idun titi ki onike ma re ile, ko si bi idale ti le dun mo wa to ki a ma ranti ile wa. Bi ilu eni kere ti o dabi ite eiye, ilu eni ni ilu eni; bi ilu eni doti ti o dabi ori atan, ilu eni ni ilu eni; bi ilu eni re ehin ti oju awon olugbe re ko la rara, ilu eni ni ilu eni; awon onilu ni si ise ilu, awon ni iso ilu idoti di mimo, awon ni si iso ilu kekere di nla. Sugbon eniken ti o ba wipe ilu on ki ise t'on mo, gongonsu enia ni. Ninu opolopolo oye ati imo mi, mo ri i pe irin' ajo ti o lewu ni o wa niwaju wa: ibi yio ma gun ori ibi; iya yio ma gun ori iya; iyonu yio ma gun ori iyonu; bi a ti lo

ko ni a o bo [...]

[...]

" 'Enyin elegbe mi ti e nlo si Oke Langbodo, e se okan yin giri ki e si se bi alagbara. Ogo wo ni o wa fun eniti nse afe kākiri inu aiye ti ko si se ilu re ni ore olokan! Iyi wo ni o wa fun ole enia ti o to ti akoni okunrin! Mo fe ki e mo pe atari ole ko to ekan alagbara, bi fari re ba duro ni iseju kan, iseju keji ni asiri re yio tu. Eha ti ri ti enyin fi fa oju ro! Sodeke se tire larin Egba o ba tire lo; Ogedengbe se tire larin Ijesa o ba tire lo; Ogunmola se tire larin Yoruba o ba tire lo. Nje mo bi yin: a o se tiwa tabi a ko ni se tiwa? Ona ti Imodoye fi soro yi dara pupo o si mu wa li okan le, gbogbo wa fiohun kan wipe: 'A o se tiwa, o ya, e jeki a lo.'

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Fellow citizens of this land, we thank you for coming to see us today. This is the usage of fellow beings; you have acted as good-natured people towards us, you have given us stimulation, made us confident, you have raised our hearts' eagerness for this adventure. If there is no cause the twig does not snap, if there were no reason at all for it you would not see us gathered here today. All who you see before you here are bound for Mount Langbodo, and we go at the behest of our land. No matter how pleasant is the foreign land, he who boasts of a home always returns home; no matter how delightful these strange lands may be to us, we will not fail to remember our home. If our town is small so that it looks like a bird's nest, yet the town is our town, if our city is filthy and looks more like a dung-heap yet the city is our city, if our nation is backward so that its citizens have not experienced civilisation, yet our nation is still our nation and only its own people will administer it; it is the people who will turn the dirt to cleanliness, they who must turn the small town into an important one. But whoever says that his birthplace is no longer his, that person is a half-witted fool. From the wealth of my knowledge and experience I know that this is a most perilous journey on which we embark; evil will join evil, tribulations; it is not as we leave you that we shall return

'My comrades who go now to Mount Langbodo,

make your minds resolute and act like men of strength. What glory is there to him who merely lives in luxury but does no service for his land? What honour can an indolent man possess that will compare with that of a man of steel? I want you to understand that the kull of a lazy man is not worth the fingernail of a strong man; if his self-display flags for one single moment, the next moment his emptiness becomes revealed to all. Why then do I see you look gloomy? Sodeke performed great deeds among the Egba and departed; Ogedengbe fulfilled his share among the Ijesa and went his way; Ogunmola did wonders among the Yoruba and went his way. So now, I ask you, shall we fulfil our own task or shall we not?"

Imodoye's manner of speaking was very effective and it steeled our hearts. Together we all declared, 'We shall fulfil our share, let us go.'

ON WOMEN:

The Holy Bible first informs us that both men and women were created by God (Genesis 1²⁷; Genesis 5²; Matt. 19⁴) then that women were created because of men (I Cor. 11⁸⁻⁹) Care must be taken in matters of women. A German proverb says:

"A woman has the shape of an angel, the heart of a serpent and the mind of an ass."

The Bible calls women "wickedness" (Zechariah 5⁷⁻⁸) and in Ecclesiastes 7²⁶ says:

"... And I find something more bitter than death: the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: who so pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her..."

Fagunwa, realising that "love penetrates men through the eyes and women through the ears" (French proverb) warns in *Ogboju-Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale* p.3:

"... Wo mi, ore mi, bi o ko ba iti ini iyawo, jowo ronu ki o to ni i. Looto, o ye ki iyawo re lewa, ki e ma ba tete su ara yin. Sugbon sibe iba ni eyini mo.

Ko si dara ki iyawo re ma ni ogbon ori, nitori ki e ba le ba ara yin jo, sugbon eleyi paapaa ko to nnkan. Ohun ti o se pataki ju ni pe iwa iyawo re ko gbodo sai dara, niwonbiotije pe iyawo re ni yio maa wa ounje funo, oun ni yio maa bu omi fun o, oun ni yio si mo pupo ninu asiri re. Olorun ti da won mo ni timotimo to bee ti o fi je pe sasa ona ni won ko le gba mu ni; nigba ti mo ba si so ohun oju baba mi ri nipa iyawo re eru yio ba o gidigidi..."

English translation:

"... Look on me, my friend, and if you are not yet married I implore you to consider the matter well before you do. True your wife ought to be beautiful lest you tire of each other quickly; and a lack of brains is not to be recommended since you must needs hold converse with each other, but this is not the heart of the matter. The important requisite is that your wife should not be prone to evil, for it is your wife who gives you meat and gives you drink and is admitted most to your secrets. God has created them such close creatures that there hardly exists any manner in which they cannot come at a man; and when I tell you what my father suffered at the hands of his wife of his you will be truly terrified".

Soyinka:1982 *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons* pp. 9-11

See also *Ireke-Onibudo* p.68

Adiitu Olodumare p.65.

ON MARRIAGE

Fagunwa endorses exogamous marriage but condemns early marriage see *Igbo Olodumare* p.6 where the author writes:-

"... Okunrin ti o ji ni kutukutu ojo aye re ti o gbe oran obinrin le ibi pataki ookan aya re ko ni di

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pataki laelae; obinrin ti o ji ni kutukutu ti o gbe oran okunrin le ibi pataki ookan aya re ko ni di pataki laelae..."

English translation:

"... Any young man who, very early in life, accords priority to showing interest in girls and women will never become an important person in life. In like manner, any young girl who considers following men a priority too early in life will never become an important person in life..."

ON POLYGAMY

Fagunwa condemns the practice of polygamy. His antagonism of polygamy runs through all his novels. He also highlights the dangers inherent in it hence he advocates monogamy in its stead.

In *Ogboju-Ode* (pp.2-3) Akara-Ogun's mother used witchcraft to eliminate three other co-wives of the same husband. In the same novel and in similar circumstance, eight of her husband's nine children were killed through witchcraft. She spared only one.

In *Igbo Olodumare* p.132, Fagunwa speaks through one of his characters, Eniyan-se-pele in form of a song:

"... obinrin kan igbadun pupo;
Obinrin meji, ijangbon meji;
Obinrin meta, ijangbon meta;
Obinrin merin, ijangbon merin;
Obinrin marun-un, ijangbon marun-un;
Obinrin mefa, ijangbon mefa;
Obinrin meje, ijangbon meje.

English translation:

(... One wife plenty of enjoyment);
two wives, two sources of trouble;

three wives, three sources of problems;
four wives, four sources of anguish;
five wives, five sources of trouble;
six wives, six sources of trouble;
seven wives, seven sources of problems etc.etc.)

In *Ireke-Onibudo* p.46, Ireke-ayé, father to Ireke-Onibudo was ruined because "he had twenty-two wives and thirty-two children".

Also in *Ireke-Onibudo* p.85, Ifepade's mother advised her would-be son-in-law against polygamy saying:

"... N ko fe ki o ni obinrin miiran pelu omo mi o; nitori bi emi paapaa ti wa ninu ile yii, mo mo nnkan ti oju mi n ri lowo awon orogun, bi ko ba si awon omo mi ti mo duro ti ni, n ba ti ko baba won sile..."

English translation:

("... I would not like you to marry another wife after my daughter, because I know what I am going through here in this home in the hands of my co-wives. Were it not because of my children I would have divorced their father long ago...")

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ADVICE TO PARENTS

Fagunwa, in *Ogboju-Ode* pp.72-74, writes:

"Two enia, iwo bimobimo, to omo re nigbati o wa ni omode, ranti pe ebum ni o je fun o, mase jeki omo re je abiko, ki iwo ma ba kabamo lehin ola, ki on ma ba di eru fun omo elomiran, ki on ma ya ile onile jeun kakiri. Bi omo re ba ji, fi ise fun u, ma jeki o baje si o lowo, mase jeki o-ma se bi o ti fe lojojumo, bi on ba se, fi ona han a; bi o ba yaju ba a wi. Bi iwo ba je olowo, mase ke omo re ni akeju, mase fi omo elomiran ke tire, ranti pe akeju ni iba omo olowoje, mase jeki omo re ni ero pe omo olowo ni on ise, mase gba igbakugba fun omo re, ki o dipe o bere eleyi loni iwo ra a

fun u o tun bere omiran lola iwo tun ra a fun u, ki on ma yo ayo iya ki on ma sokun egbin ki on si ma fi ege eran mewa jeun tan lekansoso, ranti pe yiye ni aiye nyi, iwo papa tun le pada di-talakaki epinni tun ma se agba re. Bi iwo ba si je talaka, se bi o ti mo, mase ma wo awon omo olowo, ki o ma ba bo sinu gbese aiyeraiye, ibiti enia ba mo ni ise. O ba si se olowo, o ba je talaka, ka apa iyawo re, ma jeki o ba o ni omo je, iyawo miran a ma omo se, sugbon omiran a ma ba a je nitori opolopo anu ti mbe ni iho oju obinrin. Mase jeki omo re ko egbekegbe, ki o ti kekere bere ode emu mimu, ki o ma bu obinrin olobinrin kakiri ilu, kio ma jo ijo emo kakiri ode, ki on ma fonnu wipe: 'Awa nikan ni mbe awa ni baba won'.

Ki ebu ni si wa se si omo re ti o wipe: 'O mu oti agbagba, o yo kinrindin; o mu oti ogidi, o yo kinrindin; o mu agbe emu kan, o yo kinrindin; o mu oti oka, o yo kinrindin; o mu oti igbese, o yo kinrindin; o yo kinrindin, o yo kinrindin, o yo kinrindin, o yo kinrindin.'

"Bi o ba fi omo re fun elomiran ki o ba to o, wo iru eniti ofi i fun, opolopo alagbato ko mo iyi omo, mase fi omo re fun eniti o le bi okuta ti yio fi iya je o lomo pa, ma sise fi omo re fun eniti o ro rekaja ala ti ko ni le ka apa omo re ti yio ba a je sile fun o. Iya baba ati iya iya-omo soro lati fi omo fun, sora nipa won. Bi o ba ri i pe o ko ni le sai fi omo fun won nitori iranlowo ti omo re yio je fun won, ko buru na, se be, sugbon, mase jina si omo na, ma bojuto nkan re ki on ma ba baje.

"So oro enu omo re, gba eke lowo re, gba ofofo lowo re, mase jeki oma soro aiye jade lenu, mase jeki o ma soro ti ko ba ikun gbé, oro eri, oro irira, oro nlanla, oro ti o ju enu omode lo, mase jeki o di ogbo ole mo-o lowo ki on di ero ewon lehin ola. Bi o ba ni owo, ko omo re ni iwe, bi o ko tile si ni pupo sugbon ti o ko je eniken ni gbese ti oju onje ojo ko si pon o, gbiyanju ki o ko o, bi o se igi ni, se e ta ki o roju gbe oran na de ori, ranti pe omo kan soso ti o jafafa ki ise egbe egberun omo alaileko, on ju gbogbo won lo. Sibesibe ninu iyanju ti iwo nfe gba yi, ri i daradara ki o to bere peo ko ni gbe oran na de idaji ki o duro ki awon enia si ma korin bu o bayi pe: 'Ajangoloto re, ajangoloto re, iwo lo

soro ti o ko le se be mo, ajangoloto re'. Ebu yi papa, ohun kekereni, eyiti o wa lehin ogofa o ju ogoje lo, oruko ti omo re yio wa ma je nisisiyi buru ju ti atijo lo, omo re ti di alaboeko nisisiyi. Oju nti alabo eko lati mu ada beni iwe ori re ko to lati fi jeun, alabo eko nfe wo bata beni owo osu re ko to ti ewu buba: nitorina bi o ba mo pe o ko ni le gbe oran na de ori, ki ise oran dandan ni, ko omo re ni ise ti o dara. Bi o se agbe ni, ko o daradara, wo bi awon enia dudu ti ni ile to, Eleda ni o fi ta baba nla won lore; bi o se owo sise ni; ko o kio jina; bi o si se gbenagbena ni, ko o ki o ye e daradara; mase jekio se eleyi die ki o se tohun die ki o ma fo ti ori kan de ekeji bi eniti o le eku meji ti o pa ofo; igba tire ni eyi, se igba na fun u, mase maba omo re binu pe: 'Nko ni iran a lowo, iwa iya re ko dara, on papa ko nilari lomo'. Mo fe ki o mo pe bi omo ga bi o to erin bi ganhaku re to efon, baba ko ni sai se baba. Ogbon omode ko po, die bayi lo mo. Ogbon iwe, otoni; ogbon fari, oto ni; bi osupa si nyo ni osan ti orun si nla ni oru, ogbon agba ko ni kuro ninu agba lailai. Nitorina mase fi oran ara re fale, to omo re nisisiyi ki o ma ba di omo-buruku sinu aiye, ki on ma ba 'se epe fun o lehin ola ki iwo si lo sinu isa oku pelu ibanuje.

English translation

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'My dear fellow humans, you who bring forth children, train your child when he is still a child; remember that he is a gift to you, and do not let your child be lacking in home-training, lest you regret it after tomorrow, lest he become a slave to the child of another, and go from house to house to seek a decent meal. When your child wakes in the morning, find him work to do; do not with your hand spoil him, do not grant him his whims day after day. When he transgresses, show him the error of his ways, when he is impertinent, rebuke him. If you are wealthy, do not indulge your child excessively, do not use another's child to indulge your own; remember that it is this indulgence which ruins the child of the rich, so do not let your child believe that he is the child of a rich man; don't take any nonsense from him, so that he asks this today and you grant it him, and he

asks another tomorrow and you buy it for him also, revelling in destructive indulgence, whining for attention and eating ten hunks of meat at one sitting.

Remember that the world is inconstant and that you may become a poor man tomorrow, when a halfpenny will prove an elder to you. If you are poor, cut your coat according to your cloth, do not envy the children of wealthy parents lest you enter into eternal debt. A man lives according to his means. And, whether you are rich or poor, be sure that you control your wife; see that she does not spoil your children. Some wives improve the behaviour of children but others ruin it, for there is far too much human kindness in the sockets of a woman's eyes. Do not permit your child to keep bad company, that he starts from youth to pub-crawl, insulting women all over town, dancing unclean dances in public places and boasting. "We are the ones who count, we are the elite over others." Then would calumny stick onto your child and people would sing, "He drank banana wine and was solidly drunk; he drank neat palm wine and was solidly drunk; he drunk the wine, the wine of debtors and was solidly drunk, solidly drunk, he was solidly, solidly solidly drunk."

If you hand your child to another to bring up, examine carefully what kind of person he is. Many guardians do not appreciate the value of a child; do not give your child to a man who is hard as stone, one who will inflict suffering on your child, nor should you hand your child over to the excessively soft-hearted who will merely spoil him. The grandfather and the grandmother are risky guardians, beware of them. If you find that you cannot avoid leaving your child with them because he will be of great help to them, well it is not too bad, do so, but be not too far from the child, watch after your treasure lest it become ruined.

Watch how your child speaks, rid him of lies, let not unseemly language pass his lips; don't let him utter things which do not go with the stomach, filthy discourse, disgusting words, boastful words and words which far exceed the language of children. See that he does not

become a hardened thief in your hands and inmate of prisons after tomorrow. If you have money educate your children, and even if you do not possess much, as long as you do not enter into debt and daily food is not too great a problem, try hard to educate him. If you have to cut firewood from the bush and sell it, endeavour to bring the matter to a successful end, bearing in mind that one brilliant child is not to be equated with a thousand children who have no training whatever; he is superior to them. Nevertheless, before you embark on this endeavour, see to it before you begin that you do not stop halfway lest people ridicule you in the words of the song. "Shame on you, shame on you, you made the promise but you cannot fulfil it, shame on you." The ridicule itself is however the smallest part of it, what follows a hundred and twenty far exceeds a hundred and forty: the name which your child now bears is worse than it was at the beginning, he is now a half-educated person. The half-educated feels ashamed to take up his cutlass, yet the amount of book-learning in his head is not enough to earn him a living; the half-educated wants to wear shoes yet his salary can hardly buy him a buba, therefore understand that if you cannot take it through to the end it is no compulsory matter: teach your child some useful trade. If it is farming, let him learn it well; see for yourself how the black nations are rich in land, it is a gift from their Creator to their great ancestors; if it is trading, teach him soundly, and if it is road-building, let him understand it thoroughly. Let him not learn a little of this and a little of that, jumping from one thing to the other, as a man who chases two mice at once surely catches nothing. This is your time, prepare his for him; do not take out your resentments on him saying, "I will do nothing to help you for your mother is ill-behaved and is herself useless as a person." I want you to know that even if a child is as tall as an elephant and his girth like a buffalo's, a father is still a father. A child has but little sense, it does not exceed this much. The knack for learning is one thing, the knack for strutting another; if the moon appears by day and the sun by night, the wisdom of the old cannot desert the aged for

ever. Therefore do not drag your interests in the mud; train your child now, that he does not become a worthless person in the world, so that he does not curse you after tomorrow and you go to meet Death with a broken heart.

ADVISE TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN GENERAL

Fagunwa, realising the need to show children the part they should follow, admonishes:

"... Oro kan o nisisiyi iwo omode, o ye ki ngba o niyanju die: Iwo omo, howu o, o gbagbe iya re ni? Tabi o ko tile ranti re mo? Jowo mo be o mase se eyi, ki a akalamagbo ma ba yo o loju je. Nigbati iwo wa ni kekere ti o dabi omo ekute awon ni ntoju re, iya re ni nnu ikun imu re, oyan re ni iwo nmu ti iwo nfa ni ifakufa, ti iwo nge je, aso re ni iwo nyagbe si ti iwo si nto si. Baba re ni o nmu ada ti nlo wa egbo igi ti nwon fi nse agbo fun o, awon obi re ni nwon nsa ka nigbati iwo ba nse amodi. Aso ti iwo nwo awon ni o ni, onje ti iwo nje awon ni o fi i fun o- mo bi o, kini o ku ti nwon ko tile se fun o? O ye ki iwo san ore fun won, ise ti nwon ba ko o, fi oju si i, ko o dada ki o le to awon ati iwo lati je, bi nwon ko ri owo to lati ran o lo si ile iwe mase binu, mase ma wo awon omo ti baba won ran lo, ranti pe omo ika owo re ko dogba, sa teramo isekisi ti iwo ba nse; ati agbe ni o, ati akowe ni o, ati onisowo ni o, okan ko yato jube lo, fifi oju si ise eni ni baba owo nini. Omode miran wa ti o je ipata omo, ti oje ipanle, tio je akotileta, ti o je alaimore, baba re a se igi ta a fi ko o, iya re a ja ewe ta a fi ko o, on a di eni nla tan a gbagbe won. Boya o ngba ponun meta losu, igbati awon obi re ba bere owo a fi sile kan fun won, igbati o ba tun to bi osu meta lehin eyini ti nwon tun bere omiran a dahun a wipe: 'E ko gba mi loju ki e gba owo? E se bi mo nka owo lori igi ni?' A! omo buruku, o je toju awon obi re! Bi nwon ko tile ni onje kobo ni ile ti nwon ko si ni aso epinni lorun inu ainu won ni nwon fi bi o, ojo ti nwon ba si ku ni iwo yio mo pe agborandun bi iya ko si, baba oni baba ko jo teni. Ye awon obi re si awon ni o bi o. Bi o tile je omowe, ti o gba oye Dokita (Doctor) mejila, ti o gba ti Loya (Lawyer) merindinlogun, ti o di Bisopu metala, ti o si gbe ogun oja

Alufa ko orun lekansoso mase fi oju 'di baba re lailai, ma wo opolopo awon enia dudu ti nwon jafafa ni iwe, ti nwon tiko tiwon de ilu Oyinbo ti nwon fi gbogbo ile Yoruba se baba ti obi won, ti nwon si feran ilu won timotimo tobe ti opolopo a ma wo asoile wa, ewu agbada ati buba, nwon a ma fi aso baba nla won gba aworan, nwon a mafi iwa irele han si gbogbo awon ti o ju won lo, mo fe so fun o, iwo omode, iwa ile ni o nba enia de ode, iwo ti o ko bu ola fun baba re o ko le bu ola fun ile enia dudu, kini iwo ha wa fun ninu eyini? " Ma ba baba re damoran nigbagbogbo on yio si mo-oni ologbon omo. Bi awon obi re ba nba o wi, dake, fihan won pe ibawi won dun o ati pe o ko ni se iru ese na mo, mase fun won ni esi ibawi lai; awon omo miran ki ijeki obi won fi ohun bale, ati papa awon omobinrin si iya won, bi baba ti nsokan omo a ma so meji. Omo miran pelu a ni aiya tobe a gbe owo si oke a ni on fe lu iya on, A! suru Olorun po, ibajepe emi ni Eleda ni, mba pase pe peki iru owo be ma le wa si ile mo, iru awon omo be-ko wopo sa o, o si daju pe bi won ko ba tete yipada nwon nfe ki ogongo Olorun yo awon loju je nikehin ojo aiye won. Mo bi o, iwo omo, iwo fe be bi? Igbamiran awon obire le se o, mu suru fun won, ranti pe bi nwon ba tun ti ndarugbo ni die ninu ogbon won tun npada di ti ewe. Jowo mo be o mase gba epe baba re ma si jeki iya fi o re, epe awon obi, bi omo ba jebi, timotimo ni imo omo won..."

English translation:-

... And now the matter is directed at you, youth. Young one, how is it? Have you forgotten your mother? Or do you not even remember her at all? I implore you, do not so, lest the father of hornbills pluck out your eyes for food. When you were little, hardly bigger than a mouse, it was your mother who wiped the mucus from your nose, her breasts you sucked and pulled at anyhow, even biting them, and it was on her clothes you defecated and pissed upon. It was your father who took up his cutlass and went after the bark of trees from which he made your potions, and your parents who ran hither and thither when you were taken ill. The

clothes you have on today, the food you eat, come from them. I ask you, what is there left which they did not perform for you? It is fitting that you repay these kindnesses to them: the trade they teach you, face it, learn it well that it may suffice you and them for food. And if they cannot afford to send you to school, do not therefore be angry, do not covet those whose parents have sent to school, remember that the fingers of the hand are unequal; work hard, at your trade, be it farming, clerical, or commerce, there is not that much difference between them - diligence at one's employment is the father of wealth. There are children who are frivolous children, who are never-do-well, who are the ruination of homes and ungrateful types; their fathers have gathered firewood and sold it to educate them; their mothers have gathered wrapping leaves for money to train them, and when they become people of importance they forget them. Perhaps this son earns three pounds a month; when his parents ask him for money he gives them a shilling, and when three months after they ask him for something he replies, "Why don't you slap me and wrest the money from me? Do you imagine that I pluck money from trees?" Ah, you worthless child, better take good care of your parents! Even if they do not have food worth a penny at home, even if they do not possess clothes worth a halfpenny, it was within this penury that they gave birth to you, and the day that they die you will understand that there is no concern as true as a mother's, and the father of another is never quite like yours. Give honour to your parents; they gave you birth. Even if you are educated, even when you become a doctor twelve times over, a lawyer sixteen times over; when you become thirteen types of Bishop and wear twenty clerical stoles at once, never condemn your father. Observe several sons of the black races who are brilliant in their scholarship, who studied in the white man's cities but who adopt the entire land of the Yoruba as the parent who gave them birth, who love their land with a great love so that many wear the clothes of their land, *agbada* and *buba*, love to be photographed in the clothes of their grandfathers; ... and show themselves

humble to those who are their elders. I wish to tell you, child, it is your character at home which follows you outside; you who fail to give honour to your father can do no honour to the race of black people, and what then is the meaning of your existence?

'Consult with your father always, and he will regard you as a wise child. If your parents rebuke you, stay silent, show that their censure grieves you; never talk back when they censure you thus. There are certain children who never let their parents speak without interruption, daughters especially towards their mothers; when the father speaks one word the child replies two. And children who are even so bold that they raise their hands against their mother! Ah, how merciful is God, for were I the Creator, I would command the arm of such a child to stay up and never come down again!

ON RELIGION

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As we consider the theme of religion in Fagunwa's novels, we observe that Fagunwa, being a Christian adores God. He goes further to preach religious tolerance. The best example of this is contained in *Igbo Olodumare* p. 128 where Fagunwa narrates the story of how three mysterious fishes (they are not of the same species) caught for food ended up causing confusion, uproar and grief each time anybody attempted to "stir the stew" in the pot. But once the three fishes were left un-stirred, there was peace. In the dénouement of this enigmatic story and drama, Fagunwa explains that the three fishes represent the three different kinds of religions groupings in his society namely: Christianity, Islam and the Traditional religion. These three groups are, according to Fagunwa, to be left to co-exist without anybody seeking to "stir the pot" in which the "three fishes" co-exist peacefully. This is preaching religious tolerance. It would be ideal to study this story in Fagunwa's novels along with Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (Letter 46). For Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (Letter 46) (written in French) to be enjoyed by Nigerians, such works must be translated into Nigerian languages and for the outside world to

read and enjoy the theme of religious tolerance preached by Fagunwa, that linguistic barrier (which I call wall of deafness and ignorance) must be pulled down and a bridge put in its place.

PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE TRANSLATOR

To those who understand the Yoruba language very well and have read or studied some or all of Fagunwa's novels, one thing is clear: Fagunwa, a literary phenomenon, is difficult and clumsy to translate into any other language. And since translation of any piece of work from any language into another one cannot and should not be over-simplified to be analogous with mere emptying the liquid content of Glass A into Glass B, it should not be difficult to observe that except care is taken, some harm (unintended though) may be done to the work being translated. Mastery of all the languages involved is a *sine qua non*. It is mandatory. It is imperative. This notwithstanding, the translator is occasionally caught in the web of perfect understanding and proper rendering of the message to be conveyed across. Danica SELESKOVITCH that renowned Interpreter at Ecole Supérieure d'Interpretes et de Traducteurs (E.S.I.T.), Paris, France is right when she declares:

"any message to be translated is a message to be interpreted".

All these apply to Fagunwa's writings. It is however disheartening to observe that many native speakers of the Yoruba language can hardly be described as being proficient in the use of the language. Whereas Dryden: observes; as quoted in Schuttle, *et al* (1992:1):

"That a man should be a nice critic in his mother-tongue before he attempts to translate a foreign language".

It is for the above reason that we would like to correct those who say in Yoruba "Egbon-on Dele"(Dele's brother) when in fact they mean "Egbon 'Dele" (Brother 'Dele); or Otaniyi for "Otaniyi, "Abule-oja" for Abule-Oja (a tribe in Ekitiland), "Amukoko"

for "Amukooko", Magodo for "Magodo" "Awoosika", Lasebikan" for "Laosebikan", "Fapohunda" for "Faapohunda" "Agbotikuyo" for "Agbotekuyo" (rejoicing at the news that masquerade festival is approaching) "Ojo" (along Badagry Expressway) for "Ojoo" (a suburb of Ibadan).

Because "Fagunwa is solidly conservative", he exercises his authority on the use of the Yoruba language. No wonder then young translators may not be in a hurry to forgive him for his adroit use of language rich in aphorisms, figures of speech and of course, proverbs. Talking about the experience of 'Dapo Adeniyi in his attempt to translate *Irinkerindo* into German 'Dele Momodu says:

"...the work has sapped his energy for about six years"
 - Special Report on Fagunwa in *African Concord*, 12 Dec. 1988, Vol.2, N°37, p.46.

It is just not easy to translate Fagunwa. A few examples will suffice to vindicate us:

- (1) "... Bi owe bi owe ni a n lu ogidigbo, ologbon ni i jo o, omoran ni si i mo o..." - *Ogboju-Ode* p.1
- (2) "... e gbagbe pe yoyo ni enu ayé n da ..." - *Ogboju-Ode* p.11.
- (3) "... Bi ko ba si ohun ti o se ese ese ki i se lasan..."
 - *Ogboju-Ode* p.56
- (4) "... Iwo jagba-jagba, rederede, randanrandan, galagala, jaga-jaga, yagba-yagba..." - *Ireke-Onibudo* p.90.
- (5) "...Ko si bi a ti le se Ifa ki o ma huwa ekuro..."
- (6) "... Mo gbon ire bi eni n gbon owu..." - *Irinkerindo* p. 34 l.14.

We also observe use of dialect:

- (1) "... won n fe oyi si i..." - *Irinkerindo* p.29.

- (2) "Iyanmo" - *Adiitu* p.34.
- (3) "... yi wole" - *Adiitu* p.94
- (4) "... Bi iré, bi iré, alaborun di ewu..." - *Ogboju-Ode* p.97
- (5) "... Iyumade yan ipata pupo..." - *Adiitu* p.70

There are also words and names of persons, objects and farm implement that exist in a particular culture but do not exist in the target culture. In such cases, the translator goes round to provide descriptive details and then offers footnotes. Translation is not on one-to-one basis. It is the message that should be translated not just the printed words.

RECIPROCITY, NATURE OF TRANSLATION

In the spirit of the message embedded in our topic namely that a bird does not fly with one wing, we have deemed it fit to mention that apart from the translation of all Fagunwa's five novels from Yoruba into French, we have equally translated into Yoruba some popular works originally written in French. These are:

- 1) Samuel BECKETT's *En Attendant Godot* (Translate into Yoruba under the title: *Eni n reti Atisun Akan...*)
- 2) Sembène OUSMANE's *Le Mandat* (Translated under the title: *Sowedowo*)
- 3) *Xala* by Sembène OUSMANE (Translated as *Magun*)
- 4) *Manon Lescaut* by Abbé PREVOST (Translated under the title *Eni o ri o ba lo*)

We would also like to mention that the choice of these literary works for translation into Yoruba has neither been accidental nor fortuitous. Rather they have been chosen because of the relevance their contents bear to the Yoruba culture and happenings in the Yoruba society in modern times.

For instance, the central theme of *Manon Lescaut* is

unbridled corruption and perversion of morals arising from commercialisation of love (sex) and promiscuity among the youth. This Yoruba translation informs our youth that "all that glitters is not gold". It is an attempt to arrest the decay in morals in the society. It is both entertaining and edifying. Otherwise the relevance of each of the titles in Yoruba would have been second-rate.

As for Samuel Beckett and Sembène Ousmane, although they belong to different cultural settings, themes and values examined in their respective works recommend them to readers in Yorubaland. For instance in Samuel Beckett's *En Attendant Godot*, humour constitutes an essential part that recommends the play to a Yoruba readership and audience.

Tramps who are often described by the Yoruba as "AREGOMU" (drunkards squeezing the last drop of beer or palm-wine out of its container) are the main characters in Beckett's play. The portrayal is so vivid and real that as the reader almost laughs off his head, the intrinsic value of the message (agony of waiting in vain) does not fail to sink into him. For a people whose way of life shows more concern for the future rather than for the present, the futility of life cannot but be re-examined within the context of uncertainty. The philosophical tone of the play does not even deter the Yoruba readership because

"a rope as strong and as sturdy as the elephant must be used to pull it (the elephant)". - Yoruba proverb.

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As for the choice of *Le Mandat* and *Xala* both by Sembene OUSMANE, both have an African setting and background. In essence, the two works constitute a biting satire on religion (an issue which has almost set Nigeria ablaze but for the vigilance and quick intervention of the Federal Government) and on attempt of some African elites to escape from poverty culminating in brazen corruption. Social vices like polygamy, land

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speculation, dishonesty, ostentations living, blind imitation of others, juvenile delinquency, and lack of respect for elders (a vice severely condemned by Fagunwa in all his novels) are ridiculed.

The status of a literary artiste in Nigeria (and indeed in Africa) is that of a mirror. Most of the time writers write to expose the social ills that plague the society with a view to bringing about desirable changes. To a large extent, one may wish to venture to say that the idea of "art for art's sake" is not yet popular with the Yoruba readership. Our literary writings must be an instrument of change; and since all hands must be on deck, borrowings of ideas (especially through literary translations) would certainly yield handsome dividends. One should never tell a river that one would never take of its water! After all, it has often been said that:

"Producers of great literatures do not exist in isolation; but rather they catch heat and warmth from each and one another." (Anonymous)

CONCLUSION:

Our desire for this idea of reciprocity through translation is deep-rooted in our belief and observation that a bird does not fly with one wing nor can one clap with one hand. This has led us into establishing an analogy in the functions of a bridge (which does not limit its operations to a one-way use) and those of a literary translator (whose ultimate aim and desire are to make the world a safe and better place for all via the pen.) The literary translator is not only like the bridge but also like Postal services: he links Man to Man. He is like a guide, he bridges gaps in communication and provides opportunities and avenue to discover and appreciate what would have continued to remain obscure, undiscovered and unknown. Succinctly put, the literary translator demolishes the wall of ignorance and deafness.

If the truth in that popular saying of Alexander Pope that:

"... The proper study of Man is man"

is to be fully appreciated and interiorised, then that "study of Man" should begin and end with Man through (literary) writings which aim is to preserve for posterity all activities of Man including technological feats. But since all can neither speak the same language nor all the languages in the world, it would not be a far-fetched idea to see translations from and into different languages as the last option for all. Translations promote international understanding, encourage dialogue of cultures, provide for opportunities for fruitful interaction and interdisciplinary co-operation, banish prejudices, reduce tension, distrust and suspicion among Nations and finally create a peaceful atmosphere for harmonious co-existence. Translations especially of literary texts - the gateway to understanding other peoples' cultures must be encouraged and allowed to flourish. It is in every Nation's interest so to do. They yield copious dividends. It pays all and in the end, no nation or people loses.

The World belongs to all and it should be shared by all. Translation provides avenue for the realisation of this desire.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In this regard we are happy to report that we in this University are already assisting Translation to flourish. For instance, we have a Professional Master's Programme in the Department of European Languages where those lucky to be admitted on the programme spend two academic sessions. Although reports reaching us by way of feedback on the performance of our products in the Translation market portend a bright future, we should like to seize this opportunity to:

1. Plead passionately with the University authorities to help us refurbish or replace our dilapidated, obsolete and malfunctioning equipment, provide a well-furnished and airconditioned room befitting professionalism in Translation

and a vehicle to facilitate movement of students and personnel in their quest to interact with other Translation Centres;

2. Encourage the Department to run a Post-graduate Diploma programme in Interpreting along with existing Translation programme;
3. Sensitize both Federal and State governments in the country to establish Translation Outfits attached, especially to the offices of the President and Governors. This is to guarantee security of vital, confidential pieces of information;
4. Provide students and teaching staff of the Programme with opportunities of exchange and re-training programmes in places such as Ecole Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs (E.S.I.T.) in Paris, Collège International des Traducteurs Littéraires (C.I.T.L.) in Arles, France and the British Centre for Literary Translation, University of East Anglia, Norwich, England without discriminating against the fledgeling one in Okigwe (established by the French Government) some years back;
5. Call on our Departments of English in the Nigerian University system to encourage someone to undertake an English translation of all Fagunwa's novels. The fact that Wole Soyinka has translated *Ogboju-ode* into English, that G.A. Ajadi has translated and published *Igbo Olodumare* into English and that 'Dapo Adeniyi has translated *Irinkerindo Ninu Igbo Elegbeje* into German (see *African Concord*, 12 December 1988 Vol. 2, No. 37, p. 46) should not discourage any would be translator because it is valid in Translation to have more than one translation of a work (cf. Holy Bible);

6. Finally make a passionate appeal to appropriate organ(s) of the Federal Government to give necessary legal backing to the recently inaugurated Institute for Translators and Interpreters (ITI) and expedite action on its take-off. This is to be a regulatory body for the practice and conduct of Translation and Interpreting in Nigeria.

Since the best thing to do with a piece of good advice is to heed it and pass it on, here I rest my case.

Thank you and God bless you all. Amen.

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"... whosoever rewarded evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house."

-Proverbs 17:13 (cf Jer. 18:20)

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I use this medium to salute the entire people of Iroko and Fiditi as well as those of Gbongan and Ode-omu and urge you to continue to live in harmony. I have benefitted from gains of your sweat.

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