

## Essays

# Fálétí's Philosophical Sensibility

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### Introduction

Let us begin with an unfortunate fact: Adébáyò Fálétí is one major writer that is hardly anthologized. The problem could not have been that he wrote in Yorùbá because Fágúnwà is far more anthologized than he is. Simon Gikandi's edited *Encyclopedia of African Literature* (2003) has an entry and other multiple references to Fágúnwà. There is only one reference to Fálétí which is found in the index without any accompanying instance in the work. In Irele and Gikandi's edited volumes, *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature* (2004), Fálétí only managed an appearance in the bibliography that featured four of his works—*Wọ̀n Rò Pé Wèrè Ni* (1965), *Ọmọ Olókùn Èşin* (1969), *Başòrun Gáà* (1972) and *Ìdààmú Páàdì Mínkáílù* (1974). In the preface, Irele and Gikandi write:

The scholarly interest in African orality also drew attention to the considerable body of literature in the African languages that had come into existence as a consequence of the reduction of these languages to writing, one of the enduring effects of Christian evangelization. The ancient tradition of Ethiopian literature in Ge'ez, and modern works like Thomas Mofolo's *Shaka* in the Sotho language, and the series of Yorùbá novels by D. O. Fágúnwà, were thus able finally to receive the consideration they deserved. African-language literatures came to be regarded as a distinct province of the general landscape of imaginative life and literary activity on the African continent (2004, xiii).

In fact, the publication of Fágúnwà's *Ògbójù Ọḍẹ Nínú Igbó Ìrúnmalẹ̀* (The Intrepid Hunter in the Forest of Spirits, 1938) made the chronology of literary events in Africa, and it misses out Fálétí's 1965 work. In her "Literature in Yorùbá: poetry and prose; traveling theater and modern drama," in the same volume, Karin Barber seems to redress this imbalance when she gives a place to Fálétí in her discussion of post-Fágúnwà writers. According to her,

In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s there was an explosion of literary creativity, with many new authors emerging and pioneering new styles and themes. Among the most prominent were Adébáyò Fálétí whose *Ọmọ Olókùn Eṣin* (1969) is a historical novel dealing with a revolt against the overlordship of Ọyọ, and Ọládẹjọ Òkédìjì, author of two brilliantly innovative crime thrillers (*Àjà ló lẹrù*, 1969, and *Àgbàlagbà Akàn*, 1971), as well as a more somber tragic novel of the destruction of a young boy who is relentlessly drawn into a life of crime in the underworld of Ifẹ (*Atótó Arére*, 1981). Notable also are Akínwùnmi Ìsòlà, whose university campus novel *Ó le kú* (1974) broke new ground in social setting and ambience; Afọlábí Ọlábímtán, author of several novels, including *Kékeré Èkùn* (1967), which deals with the conflicts arising from early Christian conversion in a small village, and *Baba Rere!* (1978), a contemporary satire on a corrupt big man; and Kólá Akínládé, prolific author of well-crafted detective stories such as *Ta ló pa Ọmọ Ọba?* (Who Killed the Prince's Child?). These authors were all verbal stylists of a high order; they transformed the literary language, moving away from Fágúnwà's rolling cadences to a more demotic, supple prose that successfully caught the accents of everyday life (2004, 368).

While it may be misplaced to draw a comparison between Fágúnwà and Fálétí, there is a sense in which Fálétí's demonstrates a more robust literary sensibility that goes beyond the allegorical into a realistic assessment of human relationship and sociality within the context of the Yorùbá cultural template. While Fágúnwà could not resist the influence of Christianity, and especially the allegorical motif of the journey in which humans encounter spiritual challenges (which John Bunyan's *Pilgrim Progress* made popular), Fálétí is fundamentally a cultural connoisseur; a writer with a most intimate and dynamic understanding of the Yorùbá condition, especially in its conjunction with the political and sociocultural contexts of contemporary Nigeria. And we have Ọlátúndé Ọlátúnjí to thank for the deep exploration and interrogation of the fundamental poetic and literary nuances that Fálétí has left for us.

In this essay, I will attempt to unearth the philosophical sensibility that undergirds Fálétí's literary prowess, especially as demonstrated by his poems.

Both the poets and the philosophers have always had one thing in common—the exploration of the possibilities that ideas and visions yield:

As theoretical disciplines concerned with raising social consciousness, philosophy and literature engage in similar speculation about the good society and what is good for humanity. They influence thoughts about political currents and conditions. They can, for instance, lead the reader to critical reflections on the type of leaders suitable for a given society and on the degree of civic consciousness exercised by the people in protecting their rights. Philosophy and literature, equally, offer critical evaluation of existing and possible forms of political arrangements, beliefs and practices. In addition, they provide insights into political concepts and justification for normative judgements about politics and society. They also create awareness of possibilities for change (Okolo 2007, 1).

Compared to Qlátúnjí's exploratory unraveling of Fálétí's poetry, my objective is to enlist Fálétí as a poet that has not been given his due as one who is sensitive to the requirements of political philosophy and its objective of ensuring the imagination of a society that is properly ordered according to the imperatives of justice.

### **Fálétí in Plato's Republic**

How would Plato have dealt with someone of Fálétí's poetic sensibility? There seems to be a standard response to that question—Plato would have dealt with Fálétí the same way he dealt with Homer: banishment from the proposed Republic. And the reason Plato gives applies to all poets and storytellers equally. According to him, poets and all those who tell stories in one form or the other are fundamentally imitators, and as such they spin falsehoods that are far removed from truth. In Book III and X of the *Republic*, Plato provides very strong justification for not only a very heavy censorship of poetic works, but also for exiling these imitators in a manner that prevent the Republic and its lofty ideals and objectives from being corrupted. So, in curtailing their literary activities, Plato recommends that we not only correct what poets narrate but also how they narrate it.

So, in the first place, given the way poets and storytellers like Homer take poetic license with the narration about gods, heroes, death and other existential matters, Plato says to Adeimantus:

We'll ask Homer and the other poets not to be angry if we delete these passages and all similar ones. It isn't that they aren't poetic and pleasing to

majority of hearers but that, the more poetic they are, the less they should be heard by children or by men who are supposed to be free and to fear slavery more than death.... Moreover, we have to be concerned about truth as well, for if what we said just now is correct, and falsehood, though of no use to the gods, is useful to people as a form of drugs, clearly we must allow only doctors to use it, not private citizens.... Then if it is appropriate for anyone to use falsehoods for the good of the city, because of the actions of either enemies or citizens, it is the rulers. But everyone else must keep away from them, because for a private citizen to lie to a ruler is just as bad a mistake as for a sick person or athlete not to tell the truth to his doctor or trainer about his physical condition... And if the ruler catches someone telling falsehoods in the city—he'll punish him for introducing something as subversive and destructive to the city... (1997, 1024, 1026-1027).

In the second place, Plato also warns about the style the poets and storytellers deploy in their narrations. Essentially, narration comes with imitation; the narrator attempts to put himself in the place of the characters in his story. However, while Plato acknowledges this, he was more concerned about what can be imitated. In Book X of the *Republic*, Plato comes down very hard against Homer, whose narratives are imitations that are thrice removed from reality and the truth. An imitation is thrice removed from reality because it is a representation of what has been fashioned from nature. When a poet narrates through his poetry therefore, what he claims knowledge of is derived from mere imitation. Those who then applaud poets like Homer are not aware that “their works are at the third removed from that which is and are easily produced without knowledge of the truth (since they are only images, and not things that are)” (ibid, 1203). Socrates therefore challenges Glaucon to produce instances in which Homer’s knowledge of practical issues—of warfare, government and education—has assisted in the governance of any city, the same way Lycurgus’ knowledge enabled the governance of Sparta. How does the imitative knowledge of a people’s way of life make those people live better lives? What war has any Homeric narrative advice about war won?

In the final analysis, according to Plato, imitation “really consorts with a part of us that is far from reason...[that] imitation is an inferior thing that consorts with another inferior thing to produce an inferior offspring” (ibid, 1207). The poets and their imitative narration, in other words, produce works that project our base experiences, and therefore excite lamentation rather than rational calculations. Socrates’ inexorable interlocutory logic led Glaucon to agree that poets, and especially tragedians, are dangerous people since their poetic imitations eventually lead us to applaud what we ordinarily would consider base and worthless in human emotion. It therefore stands to reason,

Socrates concludes, that poetry and the poets be banished from the Republic whose urgent businesses go beyond what the poets can offer any reasonable assistance on. But Socrates is charitable: "Nonetheless, if the poetry that aims at pleasure and imitation has any argument to bring forward that proves it ought to have a place in a well-governed city, we at least, would be glad to admit it, for we are well aware of the charm it exercises" (ibid, 1211). Thus, in what Socrates refers to as the "ancient quarrel" between poetry and philosophy, the poet lost out. How then do we justify the significance of Fálétí, or of all other predicament poets like him who constantly feed on national circumstances to create images of the past, trajectories of the present, and visions of the future?

Plato's harsh censorship, and the severance of the poet from the context of politics, has spawned a lot of intellectual anti-poetry attitude over the age. Take for instance, W. H. Auden's classic statement: "poetry makes nothing happen." That statement is taken from stanza two of Auden's poem, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats." Auden drew a significant relationship between Yeats, his poetry and the political mess Ireland was in:

You were silly like us; your gift survived it all:  
 The parish of rich women, physical decay,  
 Yourself. Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.  
 Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,  
 For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives  
 In the valley of its making where executives  
 Would never want to tamper, flows on south  
 From ranches of Isolation and the busy griefs,  
 Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,  
 A way of happening, a mouth.

### III

Earth, receive an honoured guest:  
 William Yeats is laid to rest.  
 Let the Irish vessel lie  
 Emptied of its poetry.

Auden's pithy diminution of poetry's significance interjects itself forcefully into the larger discourse on the responsibility of the artist to the society. In Auden's view, Yeats got the worst part of the deal in his relationship with Ireland. This is so because he allowed "mad Ireland" to hurt him into poetry, rather than into a more politically significant activity conducive to the achievement of a "well-ordered city." And thus, while Yeats is laid to rest, the

Irish vessel “emptied of its poetry,” “Ireland has her madness and her weather still”! Given this Audenian assessment therefore, Wólé Şóyínká the activist would be considered much more politically relevant than Wólé Şóyínká the consummate poet, even considering the fact that some of his poetic works are politically charged. While Şóyínká has maintained some kind of synthesis between his activism and his poetry, Auden ironically made a significant shift from his early politically engaged poems to a growing distaste not only for activist politics like Marxism, but also for the capacity of poetry to change anything politically worthwhile. This attitude was indeed a reflection of the time within which Auden lived. This was a time of an active individualism, as well as several ideological clashes, especially between democracy and fascism, that tasked an individual’s, especially an artist’s commitment to political ideas and ideals.

Huddleston, in his commentary on the dynamics of Auden’s trajectory as a poet, provides a historical and intellectual context for interrogating not only Auden’s declaration against poetry but also a deeper understanding of how we ought to relate the poet to the context of politics. This context contrasts artistic productions as individual endeavors to politics as a collective enterprise. Huddleston summarizes this distinction:

Political orthodoxies of both the right and left have often insisted that art should remain subservient to politics, supporting their contention by asserting a utilitarian moral right. Artistic freedom concerns one person alone, or at best a privileged minority, while politics concerns the good of many. Political concerns can seem reassuringly anti-elitist. For collectivists, whether nationalist or proletarian in their orientation, communal benefit always outweighs the prerogatives of the individual. The left in particular has long held that by allowing too much power to the few, liberal governments erode the welfare of the many. And for Marxists, the primacy of individual liberty and formal rights is a sham concealing unjust advantages and systematic oppression (2015).

Given this ideological delineation, it was therefore possible for party establishments to demand cultural productions that serve the objectives of the party and of the state. In fact, for Marxists like Georg Lukács, modernist art and its decadent humanistic posturing was essentially responsible for the incapacity of liberal democracy to serve as a bulwark against encroaching fascism. This gloomy view of art and of the artists, as well as of representative democracy, led Marxist intellectuals to commit to a view insisting that artistic productions must be subservient to political imperatives and orthodoxies.

Auden was caught right in the middle of this historical disagreement between the liberty of the artist as an individual member of society decorated with certain sets of freedoms and the demands of politics as a collective endeavor. While not a party member, Auden developed sympathy for the Marxists' defense of egalitarianism. It did not occur to him that Marxism would eventually demand more of him than his individual artistic sensibilities would allow him to give. By the time he returned from Spain where he had gone to support the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, he was already well into his disillusionment with political orthodoxy and its demanding pressures. And the real issue was the urgent need, perceived by the party, for poets and artists to do more; to subordinate their intellects to political and ideological necessities (even if that means the cultural production of sterile art works, as the Russian case demonstrated). For Huddleston therefore, the declaration that "poetry makes nothing happen" references two distinct positions consequent on Auden's withdrawal from Marxist politics. The first is a blunt denial of political efficacy to poetry:

If one reviews the political activity of the world's intellectuals during the past eight years, if one counts up all the letters to the papers which they have signed, all the platforms on which they have spoken, all the congresses they have attended, one is compelled to admit that their combined effect, apart from the money they have helped to raise for humanitarian purposes (and one must not belittle the value of that) has been nil. As far as the course of political events is concerned, they might just as well have done nothing (cited in Huddleston, *ibid.*).

In this sense, it is vain to expect art to serve as the vehicle for political change. This perspective leads logically to the second prescriptive sense of Auden's declaration: "poetry should not make things happen; it should not be instrumentalized for a political cause and is harmed by acceding to such uses. 'Poetry makes nothing happen' is therefore as much a rhetorical act as a statement of Auden's actual beliefs about the efficacy of poetry. It means, essentially, Don't corrupt poetry by making it do the wrong thing" (*ibid.*).

This is what Derek Attridge calls the singularity of literature. His argument is simple: "literature, understood in its difference from other kinds of writing (and other kinds of reading), solves no problems and saves no souls; nevertheless, as will become clear, I do insist that it is effective, even if its effects are not predictable enough to serve a political or moral program" (2004, 4). Any attempt to derive non-literary ends—ideological, moral, political, linguistic, historical, etc.—from literary texts, Attridge understands as "literary instrumentalism." And this, for him, goes beyond what makes any text literary. The

weight of the instrumental appreciation of literature, Attridge argues, has led to “the diminishing of careful attention to the specificity of the literary within the textual domain, and to the uniqueness of each literary object” (ibid, 10). Literariness, for Attridge, concerns the *form* of a literary text. Thus, it is the form of a literary work that enables a genuine aesthetic experience. The singularity of a cultural object therefore

...consists in its difference from all other such objects, not simply as a particular manifestation of general rules but as a peculiar nexus within the culture that is perceived as resisting or exceeding all pre-existing general determinations. Singularity, that is to say, is generated not by a core of irreducible materiality or vein of sheer contingency to which the cultural frameworks we use cannot penetrate but by a configuration of general properties that, in constituting the entity (as it exists in a particular time and place), go beyond the possibilities pre-programmed by a culture’s norms, the norms with which its members are familiar and through which most cultural products are understood (ibid, 63).

In Plato, literariness, in Attridge’s conception, by itself becomes an even longer rope by which to hang the poet since it loses the instrumental edge which Plato requires any poet to contribute to the organization of a well-ordered city. On the contrary, Nietzsche will find someone like Fálétí as a distinct savior. This is because, unlike Plato, poetry is not a distraction from the task of reinventing the Republic, but a redeeming grace.<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche’s view on arts and aesthetics is inevitably tied in with his existential nihilism. Human life is essentially meaningless since we are all born into an absurd universe. For Nietzsche, it is tragedy that gives us a glimpse of this existential truth about human life and human existence. However, it is also tragedy, and the

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1 Saying this about Nietzsche’s view on art and literature must be taken with a cautiousness that permeates not only Nietzsche’s perspectivism, but equally his interesting and dramatic life. Ridley argues that ascribing a “philosophy of art” to Nietzsche’s thought is “doomed to failure”:

It is true that he says some things at the beginning of his career that he also says at the end; it is true, too, that his sense of the significance of art barely wavered; but – because of the evolution of his thought as a whole – the apparent sameness of those ‘things’ and of that ‘significance’ cannot be taken as a sign that he cleaved throughout to any settled view. Rather, Nietzsche’s thinking about art must be seen as standing in a dynamic and reciprocal relation to his thoughts about everything else; and this means that any worthwhile attempt at a reconstruction of his ‘philosophy of art’ must be both developmental and contextual – that it must, in effect, be an attempt to understand Nietzsche’s intellectual biography through the prism of art (2007, 2).



arts in general, that enables us to cope sufficiently with that dampening truth. Tragedy redeems us, as it were, from our sad existence.

Here, at this moment of supreme danger for the will, art approaches as a saving sorceress with the power to heal. Art alone can re-direct those repulsive thoughts about the terrible or absurd nature of existence into representations with which man can live; these representations are the sublime, whereby the terrible is tamed by artistic means, and the comical, whereby disgust at absurdity is discharged by artistic means (Nietzsche 1999, 40).

Ultimately, Nietzsche declares, “We possess *art* lest we *perish of the truth*” (1968, 433). Do we find any redemptive solace in Fálétí's poems? I argue that Fálétí serves one significant Nietzschean purpose. His poems give us a sense of values which Nietzsche argues needed to be created even if we live in a nihilistic and absurd world. It seems to me therefore that immediately we see the significance of the poets as a Nietzschean value-creating being endowed with the capacity to “create values powerful enough to force people into acceptance and to constitute cultural and social profiles” (Horstmann 2002, xvii), then the idea of the literary as a mere formal framework for creating aesthetic pleasures breaks down. We could even risk a further argument that this Nietzschean point could facilitate the re-entry of the poets into Plato's Republic. And this is because all Plato harps on is the inability of the poets to do any other significant thing beyond the imitation of nature.<sup>2</sup>

### The Poet's Worldview

Adébáyò Fálétí is an indigenous Yorùbá narrative poet.<sup>3</sup> This assertion constitutes a specific narrative of Fálétí's chronological and cultural trajectory of experience. Even though he was a rounded literary personality—with a prolific dexterity in prose and play—he was essentially a poet par excellence. In fact, for Ọlátúnjí, “Fálétí is perhaps second only to Josiah Šóbòwálé Šówándé (Šóbò Aróbíodu) who has the advantage of the respectability which distance in time, and volume confer” (1982b, vii). Fálétí's upbringing was steeped in cultural knowledge and experience which constituted a deep influence on the formation of his ethical value system and aesthetic sensibility. One of his first and most critical socializing moments derives from his father's professional

2 See Nietzsche's critique of the folly of the “youthful tragedian Plato” in Nietzsche (1999, 68).

3 Ọlátúnjí's biographical compilations of Fálétí's chronology (1982b, xii) reveals that he switched totally to writing in Yorùbá in 1954 after writing a long poem in English on the Ọyó Riot, and a friend advised that he ought to write his poems in Yorùbá. And that was the end of English poems for Fálétí.

endeavor. Àkànbí Fálétí was a certified oral poet and entertainer at the court of Aláàfin Şìyanbólá Ládìgbòlù (1911-1944). Royal praise poetry which Fálétí's father was steeped in must have equipped him with a deep sense of Yorùbá history, cultural mores and lore, and performance dynamics which he definitely passed to his son. According to Ọlátúnjí,

We can trace the narrative nature of Fálétí's poetry to his father's poetic influence. Fálétí himself confessed to me that he owes the story of Adébímpé Ọjédòkun to his father who told him that it was a true story. The mark of the oral poem—the pressing awareness of the present audience to be addressed and communicated with, the great emphasis on entertainment through humour and empathic identification—which we see in Fálétí's poetry can be said to be a part of this heritage. The use of the stylistic devices of Yorùbá oríkì (praise poetry) as evidenced in the characterization of Ànlá, the drummer in “È dá Kò L'áròpin”, and of “Adélabú” and “Adébímpé Ọjédòkun” is an indication that Fálétí has internalized the technicalities of the poetic genres long impressed on him (ibid, 2-3).

All this is apart from the general cultural lessons and experience which he also picked up from the larger extended family, on the ethical and philosophical basis of his cultural existence.

While he must have inherited his father's narrative dynamics, Fálétí is unique because he molded this technique into deep aesthetic and ethical poetic modes from which we can deduce fundamental philosophical issues that have the capacity to orient cultural-philosophical discourses, as we shall see very soon. His dexterity with the *ewi* (poetry) demonstrates not only the influence of his cultural environment, but also his own adaptive versatility with modern sociocultural and political exigencies. In fact, the structure of the *ewi* “exemplifies the creative spirit of Yorùbá popular culture. *Ewi* is a modern poetic practice that we can only properly appreciate in light of the dynamism and integrative capacity of the culture that sustains it. It straddles the written and the oral and exhibits what a creative fusion of indigenous and borrowed values can produce” (Okunoye 2010, 44). This is quite significant for Fálétí's poetic sensitivity because it not only facilitates the capacity to wield various aesthetic techniques together to form a coherent mode, but it also enables Fálétí's philosophical openness. Okunoye argues that

*Ewi*'s uniqueness derives from the fact that it is a modern invention, a blend of aspects of traditional Yorùbá poetry and a sense of individualized sensibility that came with the creative use of literacy among early Ègbá Christian converts. It consequently does not designate any of the traditional

poetic forms that Olátúnjí describes in *Features of Yorùbá Oral Poetry*. While it draws freely on such oral forms as *ijálá, rárà, ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ ifá, oríkì, ẹ̀fẹ̀*, and others, it also constantly projects the individual poet's peculiar outlook, orientation and discursive inclination (ibid, 46).

In what follows, we will attempt to concretize our earlier claim that Adébáyò Fálétí is a Nietzschean value-creating being. And as we have seen, this is even made more plausible by the internal aesthetic structure of the *ewi* and its innovative openness.

The analysis here will seek to unravel, in a preliminary manner, Fálétí's philosophical worldview in the poems collected in Olátúnjí's *Ewí Adébáyò Fálétí: Iwé Kinní* (1982). Let us begin with Fálétí's own assessment of the poet's persona. In "Dídáké Akéwí" (the Silence of the Poet), we have a picture of a poet as an introspective bohemian whose thoughts and feelings are often contrary to the convention:

*Níjọ tí ẹ̀ bá rákẹ̀wì tó dákẹ̀,*  
*Ẹ̀ má bìínú, akẹ̀wì n wí nnkan nínú nì.*  
*Níjọ tẹ̀ bá pàdẹ̀ akẹ̀wì tí kò sọ̀rọ̀,*  
*Ẹ̀ má bìínú, akẹ̀wì n wí nnkan nínú nì.*  
*Ẹ̀gbọ̀n ta ní mohun tákẹ̀wì n rò nínú?*  
*Ta ní lẹ̀ mọ̀rọ̀ tí m̀bẹ̀ lódò ikùn ọ̀mọ̀ràn?*  
*Ta ní morin tákọ̀rin fẹ̀ kọ̀ lẹ̀nu?*  
*Omi tí kò jàgbẹ̀ lójú,*  
*Ó lẹ̀ dénú akẹ̀wì kó dòkun,*  
*Ó lẹ̀ dénú akẹ̀wì kó dọ̀sa.*  
*Ẹ̀ fúùfú tó sì n m̀òkun m̀ọ̀sà,*  
*Ó lẹ̀ dénú akẹ̀wì,*  
*Kó má jooru ẹ̀nu lọ.*  
*Inu akẹ̀wì gbòsẹ̀,*  
*Inú akẹ̀wì gbèéwú*  
*Inú akẹ̀wì sì gbomi tó mọ̀ gáàra.*  
*Ẹ̀gbọ̀n bí ẹ̀ bá pàdẹ̀ akẹ̀wì lónà,*  
*Tó dori kodò, tí kò sọ̀rọ̀*  
*Ẹ̀ má bìínú, ẹ̀ má ẹ̀ ibàjẹ̀ akẹ̀wì lẹ̀yìn,*  
*Akéwì n wí nnkan nínú nì (Olátúnjí 1982a, 1).*

On the day you see the poet so quiet,  
 Do not be angry, the poet is ruminating.  
 On the day you meet the poet and he refuses to talk,  
 Do not be angry, the poet is ruminating.

But who knows what the poet meditates on within?  
 Who can discern the words within the belly of the wise?  
 Who knows what the singer wants to sing about?  
 The water that appears insignificant to the farmer,  
 Can become a mighty sea in the poet's mind,  
 Can become a mighty lagoon in the poet's mind.  
 And the mighty wind that disrupt the sea and the lagoon,  
 Can become in the poet's mind,  
 Nothing more than the warmth from the mouth.  
 The mind of the poet accommodates dregs,  
 The mind of the poet accommodates muddied water,  
 And the mind of the poet also accommodates water that is clear.  
 But when you meet the poet on the way,  
 Downcast, and very quiet  
 Do not be quiet, and do not say bad things about him,  
 The poet is ruminating.

We have here a picture of the poet as being detached without being aloof. And this is all the more so because the poet is a product of his society, but it is a society which he has somehow risen above sufficiently to constitute its sentinel (*alóre*). Thus, when he is quiet, he is musing on social values; when he is sad, he is musing on social vices. And what is more, no one can adequately predict the trajectory of the poet's mind. Lines 14 to 16 of "Dídáké Akéwì" address the "disparate, fragmentary and almost contradictory impressions which are fused into something whole and strange by the poet's creative imagination" (Ọlátúnjí 1982b, 15).

Fálétí exemplifies this persona of the poet in "Oníbodé Lálúpon". In this comic poem, Fálétí narrates the significance of the multiverse of meanings that a poem is capable of yielding. Essentially, a poem is pregnant, and not just with twin meanings! Does this amount to a Derridean textual *différance*, and the eternal postponement of meanings? In "Oníbodé Lálúpon," Fálétí, as the narrator, tells of the mischievous antics of drummer-poets whose ambivalent drumming deprives the clueless listeners off their money and meals while lampooning them!

*Bálùlù bá ẹbi, wọn kì í gbèpè.*  
*Bí wọn bá faguda búni tán,*  
*Wọn a tún gbowó ẹni lọ.*  
*Àdiùtú èdè m bẹ lẹrẹkẹ àyàn.*

When the drummers do evil, they are not cursed.  
 Once they stylishly abuse the listener,  
 They in turn deprived you of your money.  
 The deep meaning of speech lies with the poet.

So, Fálétí confesses that the Oníbodé (gatekeeper) of Lálúpon was really an ugly fellow—flat headed, thick lipped, heavily jowled, misshapen like a wart-hog, and so on. So, when the drummer sounds the drum,

*Dan dan dan dàn dàn dàn*  
*Dan dan dan dàn dán*  
*Dan dan dan dan dán-án*  
*Dan dan dan dan dán dán*

The textual indeterminacy built into the drum that allows for its meaning to continually be both deferred and to differ. Thus, after adequate promptings from those who think they understood the lampooning message the drummer is using the drum to convey, the drummer himself responds that he was using the drum to commend the hospitality of the Oníbodé. Ọlátúnjí seems to agree with the textual indeterminacy which, for him, is embedded in the drumming. He argues that the two ascribed meanings deducible from the drumming are correct. In fact, he further argues, there is no meaning that cannot be certified as the truth as long as the meaning can be deduced from within the poem itself (1982a, 67). Yet, Fálétí undermines this very assumption of textual *différance* when he concludes the poem thus:

*Şùgbón kò sẹni tó mède àyàn*  
*Bí ẹni tó mọpàá ẹ lẹwọ*  
*Ẹni tó gbómọle ló le mohun tómọle ní sọ*

But no one understands the “language” of the drummer  
 Like he who by himself beats the drum  
 Only he who beats the drum understands what the drum says.

So, if the drummer-poet knows what he is using the drum to say, then the poet in “Oníbodé Lálúpon” definitely knows what the drum sound means, meaning is definitely fixed, and the death of the author cannot therefore be celebrated in a text. This juggling with texts and meanings is further consolidated in “Ẹlẹ̀ là Lẹ̀rọ̀”. Here, the poetic inversion of narrative logic keeps us gasping until eventually the poet provides an understanding of the narration.

In the poem, Fálétí wants to unravel the following counterintuitive and counterfactual narrations as a mode of access to cultural knowledge:

*N òd wí, n kò ní şàìsọ  
 Bí ọkà bàbà ti şe tó fi dénú ọkà  
 Bí kòkò şe tó fi rìn dénú ẹ̀kọ yangan,  
 Bẹ̀şin ti şe tó fi wá orín fún olówó  
 Èniyàn tó já lórí igi ata, tó şe bẹ̀ tó kú,  
 Ohun tí ojú àşá rí tó  
 Kó tó fò fẹ̀rẹ̀, kó tó wá gún alápatà lẹ̀bẹ̀  
 Lójú gbogbo wa—  
 Gbogbo rẹ̀ ni mo fẹ̀ sọ.*

I will speak, I need must speak  
 How the guinea corn found its way into the cobra's mouth  
 How the frog found its way into the corn meal  
 How the horse managed to secure a chewing stick for the owner  
 And the person that fell from the pepper stalk, and died  
 What the hawk saw  
 Flew straight down, and stabbed the butcher  
 In the sight of everyone—  
 I will narrate everything.

But apart from being a poet of textuality and literary aesthetics, Fálétí also espouses significant insights into fundamental issues that are cultural but with universal import for humanity and human relations. “È dá Kò Láròpin,” for example, is a significant poem because of its dynamic deployment of cultural knowledge that weaves the issues of death, social expectations, debts, and wisdom together into a philosophical fabric of social reciprocity that challenges our understanding of what is required and expected in relating to one another and to the society. The poem begins with a normal Yorùbá admonition about not giving up on oneself despite what anyone or the society thinks:

*Èni tí kò ì kú láyé,  
 Kó dákun, kó má rora rẹ̀ láròpin;  
 Èni tí kò ì tí ì wàjà  
 Kó dákun, kó má rora rẹ̀ láròpin;  
 Bényàn ò kú işe ò tán,  
 Níjọ a bá kú lagbajá pin.*

Anyone still left living,

Please, do not give up on yourself;  
 Anyone who has not died  
 Please, do not give up on yourself;  
 As long as we are alive, deeds have not ceased,  
 It is only death that puts an end to fretting.

The narration focuses on “Ìyá Àjàṣẹ́” who gives birth to eight children who turn out to be good for nothing. They not only become a public nuisance, but also constitute a threat to the community order. There is nothing they embark upon that succeeded.<sup>4</sup> The mockery of the community seems justified since Yorùbá wisdom already proclaims that a multitude of children leads to a multitude of misery (*omọ̀ bẹ̀rẹ̀, ọ̀ṣì bẹ̀rẹ̀*). The social expectations on the children increased when the mother becomes old and gets near her transition period. And then she dies. Her death did not lower the limit of what the community requires of them. At this point, we are already led on a trajectory of narrative expectations about how the story will end. In other words, since we were already told about the listless lives the eight were leading, what else could have happened than for them to be put to shame in their obvious inability to give their mother a befitting burial? What other way could the poet have passed the message that (a) there is the need for parents to always give thought to the prudence of childbirth, and (b) the necessity of rethinking one's life after one had been given birth to (*tí a bá bíni, a máa n túnra ẹni bí*)?

Yet, the poet's narration defeats our expectations. Consider that after the death of their mother, the eight children are galvanized into a frenzy of actions in a bid to stave off a simmering undercurrent of expectations and almost certain failures. Each of the eight children calls on a social network of assistance to make the burial a success that gives the lie to the perception of their incapacity and the anticipation of their failure. Fálétí focuses on the burden of indebtedness:

*Gbogbo ohun tí wọn ti n rà yìi*  
*Àwìn ló jẹ́ o,*  
*Wẹ̀n n fì owó sí sí lura wọn.*

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4 It bears noting that in this poem, Fálétí refrains from any mention of the husband of Ìyá Àjàṣẹ́, and his social role in raising the children. There are two ways to approach this significant paternal absence. On the one hand, social expectation in Yorùbá places the burden of child upbringing on the mother. In which case, the good child belongs to the father while the bad is due to the inadequacies of the mother. On the other hand, the Yorùbá adage sees the mother as *wúrà* (gold) and the father as only a lackluster *jígí* (glass). Thus, the eight children in “Èdá Kò Láròpin” ensure that they facilitated a befitting burial for their mother even at the cost of insolvency!

*È jòwò, è bá mi síwó òhún jàre,  
 Kí a moye tó jé  
 Kí a tó tún máa wí tiwa lọ;  
 Èkìní jé sílè mẹwàá,  
 Èkejì jé òkẹ́ méjì,  
 Èkẹta jé pọ̀n-ùn kan òyìnbó,  
 Èkẹrin jé òkẹ́ mẹfà,  
 Gbogbo rẹ́ jé òkẹ́ mẹ̀rìnlá,  
 È wo owó bí ó ti ní yí lura wọ̀n!*

All they have been purchasing  
 Were all purchased on credit,  
 They were piling the shillings on each other.  
 Do please help me count the amount,  
 So that we know the totally tally  
 Before we go on with the narration:  
 The first is ten shillings,  
 The second is two cowries,  
 The third is one English pound,  
 The fourth is six cowries,  
 Everything amounts to fourteen cowries,  
 See as huge debts roll on one another!

And all these attempts at backstopping imminent shame by exploring social resources were attended in equal measures by behind-the-scene mockery, and the readiness to exploit the bereavement as opportunity for gain. It should be noted that “È dá Kò Láròpin” is situated within a particular period in Yorùbá history when money, monetization, the market, and the process of accumulation were already firmly grounded within the Yorùbá traditional social structure. The inevitable result was social differentiation into the rich (*olówó*) and the poor (*òtòsi*) as well as the emergence of the unbridled quest for profit (Adébáyò 1994, 387). This is quite different from the class stratification structured by relations to political power and social influence. Thus, we can begin to place in proper perspective the role that money plays in this poetic narration, and the huge social significance of indebtedness which Fálétí alludes to in lines 250 to 261, and 444 to 446.

But then comes the poetic twist in the tail of the narration. After each of the children has called on their social contact for a bail out based on their assumed credit worthiness, the eight and last child contributed his own suggestion towards the achievement of a befitting burial for their mother. His wise counsel is: Rather than consume the entire products procured in debt, why



don't we give the choicest parts of the cow to those who matters in the community, from the head of the house (*baálé*) to all the men and women of the house and community. The gamble pays off, and after the hugely successful ceremony, the *baálé* summons his wives and all significant others, and asks for means by which they can all repay the good gestures from the celebrants. The eight children get more than enough cash gift to repay their indebtedness!

All along, and right from the title and the opening of “Èḍá Kò Láròpin”, Fálétí signals us to a different intention with the narration. For him, even those impoverished and considered without means by the society are really not without hope. And this is especially so within a context, like the Yorùbá traditional society, where people look out for each other. So, despite the bad stations of the eight children in life, people—and the children's wisdom—came to their rescue. Social reciprocity in Yorùbáland is founded on the strong kinship system that sees everyone connected by shared descent, marriage and even co-residence as *omọ ilé* (children of the compound/house) with a *baálé* as the head (Nolte 2016, 184). This is further complemented by the various cooperative societies whose expressed objective is to assist members socially and economically. It is within this context of social reciprocity—in “Ọjọ̀ Ìláyẹ̀fun”—that Lààlà adroitly rescued his mentally challenged friend, Sàngódòkun, whose lucidity failed him when both of them were at Sangodokun's in-law's house. While everyone is making merry, the bride's mother goes into the room to get the yam flour for the meal, and finds Sàngódòkun swallowing the raw yam flour! In her surprise, she turns to raise the alarm, and stumbles into Lààlà. And since the friend is not lacking in cultural wisdom, he quickly gives an on-the-spot explanation of Sàngódòkun's strange behavior:

...*Àbí àwa lẹ̀ n dáná fún?*  
*Bi ẹ̀ bá wí ni, à bá tí jẹ́ kí ẹ̀ dáná*  
*Nítórí òní ọjọ̀ Ìláyẹ̀fun nilé wa.*  
*Bí a bá tí láyẹ̀fun ká mumi sí i ni.*

Is it us you are preparing the meal for?  
 If you had informed us, we would have prevented it  
 Because today is the Flour-Licking-Day in our house.  
 Once we finished liking the flour, we simply drink water.

In “Tẹ̀ Gbẹ̀gbẹ̀ Níwọ̀n”, Fálétí furthers what we can call his social philosophy by espousing a communitarian argument within which an individual is one whose individuality finds meaning within the context of mutual entanglement with others. And to make this point, Fálétí deploys what we can call the “meal metaphor”:

*Bí a lówó,  
 Bí a lólá,  
 Èniyàn là á fi í mọ̀.  
 Kò séwébẹ̀ tí kò fẹ́ ní láárí,  
 Àyè ló gba gbòòrò,  
 Tó fi ní fà kálẹ̀;  
 Ilẹ̀ ló gbàlasa,  
 Tó fi tẹ̀ rẹrẹrẹ̀ níwájú olóko.  
 Ẹ̀ máa rántí:  
 Iṣu nìkàn kiyán,  
 Ìlása nìkàn kọ̀bẹ̀;  
 Oḳyó m bẹ̀ nílẹ̀ yìí—ọ̀bẹ̀ náà ni.  
 Tètẹ̀ m bẹ̀ nílẹ̀ yìí — ọ̀bẹ̀ náà ni.  
 Ogùnmmọ̀ m bẹ̀ nílẹ̀ yìí — ọ̀bẹ̀ náà ni.  
 Ẹ̀gú sí igbá àti tibàrà  
 Wọ̀n m bẹ̀ nílẹ̀ yìí — ọ̀bẹ̀ náà ni.  
 Ìlása kò lè dá dunbẹ̀ lẹ̀bẹ̀rọ̀  
 Àfi bí a méguúsí sèlása kó tó doge  
 Ìwọ̀ nìkàn kọ̀bẹ̀,  
 Ìwọ̀ nìkàn kọ̀:  
 Ilása, tẹ̀ gbẹ̀gbẹ̀ níwọ̀n,  
 Ìwọ̀ nìkàn kọ̀bẹ̀,  
 Tẹ̀ gbẹ̀gbẹ̀ níwọ̀n.*

Whether we have money,  
 Or we are wealthy,  
 It is for the sake of the people.  
 There is no plant that does not want to prosper,  
 The gbòòrò vegetable had so much space,  
 And is able to spread itself around;  
 The okro has sufficient space,  
 To spread around before the farmer.  
 Always remember:  
 The yam alone does not make the pounded yam,  
 The okro alone does not make the soup;  
 There is the jute leaf—it is stew in itself.  
 The tètẹ̀ vegetable is available—it is stew in itself.  
 The ogùnmmọ̀ vegetable is also available in the land—it is stew in itself.  
 The igbá melon and the ibàrà melon  
 Are available in the land—they are stew in themselves.

The okro cannot make a stew on its own  
 Except it is mixed deliciously with the melon.  
 You alone cannot be the stew,  
 You alone cannot:  
 Okro, thread softly,  
 You alone cannot be the stew,  
 Thread softly.

With this poem, Fálétí rebukes the atomistic arrogance of modern individualism that stands aloof in a pigheaded defiance of the ontological gregariousness of humans. In 1974, when the poem was written, the individualist philosophy that rode on the back of colonialism had already taken hold through a relentless urbanizing imperative that undermined the collective structure of the kinship system. While Fálétí recognizes the individual as one, he insists that to be wealthy or rich only has meaning when it devolves to the community good.

Akinsola Akiwowo critically unpacks this ontology of communal beingness through his sociological adaptation of the *àsùwà* principle in the *àyájó asùwàdà*. The *àsùwà* principle is an ontological one that speaks to a bonding together of all things in nature. All things in creation, according to this principle, exist in coexistence in order to achieve purpose and goodness:

It was with the principle of *àsùwà* that the Heavens were established  
 It was with the principle of *àsùwà* that the Earth was created  
 In *àsùwà* forms all things descended upon the earth activated by purpose  
 Complete and actuated for a purpose was *iwa* at its first emanations  
 It was by *àsùwà* the *Orí* was formed in order to be the Father of all  
 ...  
 All goodness together formed an *àsùwà*  
 When the assembly of hairs was complete  
 They took over the head  
 ...  
*Àsùwà* is what the bees are  
*Àsùwà* is what the *ado* bees are  
 The *eeran* leaves grow in *àsùwà*  
*Àsùwà* is what broomsticks form  
 It is in *àsùwà* that the *eeran* leaves grow in the *aare*  
*Àsùwà* is what the *elegiri* birds form  
 It is the coming together of a multitude of men  
 That we know as warfare  
 It is as *àsùwà* that one encounters the grassland

It is as àsùwà that locusts invade a farmland  
 Alásùwàdà, it is You I call  
 To send all goodness to me  
 All forms of àsùwà, depart from me.

Within this creation principle, individuality is melded into a cohesive community in a dynamic network of interdependent social relations. An individual cannot hope to survive on the basis of its own autonomous uniqueness, except to the extent that it coheres into an organic oneness with others. Aisuwa, in sociological terms, undermines the purpose of Olódùmarè for creation. In Fálétí, we have a sense of the àsùwà principle as a communitarian dynamic within which cultural and social entanglements do not just entangle but leads to self-realization for the individual.

This argument is further buttressed in “Şàşoré”, Fálétí’s deeply metaphysical poem that relates his cultural knowledge to a philosophical belief in àyànmó (destiny). Şàşoré, the protagonist of the narrative, has fallen on hard times. He therefore makes the hard decision to abandon Kòtòńkan where he leaves in search of greener pastures elsewhere. When he gets to the border of Réfúréfú, the messengers of the king of the town arrest him and take him to the palace. Before Şàşoré arrives at the border of the town, the *babaláwo* (diviners) have, through Ifá divination, counsel that Réfúréfú can only become peaceful and flourishing again if the Èléwí, the king, is ready to divide his entire wealth into two and give half of it all to a particular stranger that will cross their border. Thus, contrary to Şàşoré’s apprehension that he is to become a sacrificial lamb for the gods, his fortune suddenly becomes transformed for the better. And the town of Réfúréfú equally witnesses a similar transformation. But it was not long before tragedy strikes again for Şàşoré. Detractors catch him at his usual prayers and tell the king.<sup>5</sup> The following is the prayer Şàşoré is caught with:

*Ni Şàşoré bá jí láàárò kùtùkùtù,  
 Ó mú obì méjì, ó fì kanrí, ó fì kányá,  
 Ó fì kan gónógórí esè lẹ̀mẹ̀ta  
 Bí í ti í ẹ̀ níjọ̀ tó ti délé ọ̀ba,  
 Ó n wá n ẹ̀dúrà, ó ní,  
 “ibi tóri mi yì yòd bá gbé sunwọ̀n  
 Kẹ̀sẹ̀ mi ó dákun kó sin mí débẹ̀ kedere.*

5 We immediately see the similarity at this point of the narrative with a similar fate suffered by the biblical Daniel in the hand of King Darius in the Book of Daniel, Chapter 6.

So Šàsòrẹ́ woke up early in the morning,  
 And took two kolanuts, touched his head and chest,  
 And also touched his leg thrice  
 As was his practice since he came to the house of the king,  
 He then made his prayer thus,  
 "Wherever my Orí will be more pleasant  
 Let my legs take me there surely.

When the king hears this, he becomes sorely incensed simply because he takes Šàsòrẹ́'s prayer as an affront against the wealthy status conferred on him. The Èlẹ̀wíí immediately commands that Šàsòrẹ́ be bound hands and legs and stuffed into a bag that is to be dumped into a boat and left to drift on the river. The current then takes Šàsòrẹ́ far beyond Rẹ́fúréfú into another town where several people are already laying siege to the river, waiting. Immediately, they sight the boat bearing Šàsòrẹ́ and unbind him, he is carried aloft as the king of Àlé Ọ̀yun. Šàsòrẹ́ has just stepped into another fulfillment of an Òrúnmilà prophecy that the river will bring along a new king for the town! And when the coronation day arrives, it turns out that the Èlẹ̀wíí of Rẹ́fúréfú is one of the surrounding towns that bring tribute to the king of Àlé Ọ̀yun! Thus, to further the implication of Fálétí's communitarian philosophy, the "Šàsòrẹ́" narrative simply insists that our life prospects, either as an individual or as a community, can intersect not only the life prospects of compatriots alone, but also those of strangers. Social reciprocity therefore enables us to deeply appreciate the extent of Yorùbá open-mindedness. In "È dá Kò Láròpin", it is that social reciprocity that entangles eight children not only with other *omọ ilé*, but also with non-*omọ ilé* like the Fulani herdsman that gives out a cow on credit.

In "Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun", Fálétí's communitarian ethic evolved into a friendship dynamic whose tragic turn took the life of an intrepid historical hunter who was bent on avenging the death of a friend. When hunting the beast that killed Ináólají, his friend, Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun reinforces his resolve with other hunters. However, while he is locked in a fierce fight with the beast, and he calls on the other hunters to come to his rescue, one of them mistakenly shoots him rather than the beast that the bullet is meant for. In the first place, we have in this poetic narration, an instance in which friendship serves as a strong individualist counterpoint to communal resignation:

*L'Adébímpé bá yàkísà fẹ̀rẹ̀gẹ̀jẹ̀*  
*Ó nujú nù, ó dáké ẹ̀kún*  
*Ó ní ẹ̀kún kò ì yá, ó DOJÓ ÒKÚ BÁ BỌ OKO.*

*Ó ló òjò tọ́dẹ́ bá tọkọ̀ bọ̀ láìrinnà.  
 Ìgbà tó dúrèní  
 Wọn ní kí wọn ó lọ sípà ọdẹ;  
 Adébímpé ní kí wọn ó má mà sípà ọdẹ  
 Ó òjò toun bá bọ̀ èlujù  
 Toun bá pẹran tó pòrẹ̀ òun.*

Adébímpé then tore off a huge rag  
 Cleaned his face, and stopped crying  
 He said it isn't time yet to weep, it is when the corpse return home  
 When the hunter returns home without knowing.  
 On the fourth day,  
 A eulogy for the hunter was proposed;  
 Adébímpé said that was needless  
 Until he returned from the deep forest  
 Where he intended to kill the animal that took his friend's life.

On the other hand, there is also the issue of cosmic (in)justice in this tragic narrative. Why would intrepidity on behalf of friendship and of justice be so repaid? The ancient Greeks and Romans, from Epicurus to Cicero, and from Plato to Seneca, all composed serious and poetic discourses that bring together virtues, love, and the highest life in the understanding of what friendship is. For Lorraine Pangle,

The phenomenon of friendship, with its richness and complexity, its ability to support but also at times to undercut virtue, and the promise it holds out to bringing together in one happy union so much of what is sweetest in life, formed a fruitful topic of philosophic inquiry for the ancients (2003, 1).

It is however Aristotle, in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, that gives us the most detailed and fundamental discourse of friendship not as mere sociability but as the highest manifestation of love. In Aristotle, we encounter the understanding of friendship as “an absolute necessity of life”:

No one would choose to live without friends even if he had all the other goods. Indeed, rich people and those who have attained high office and power seem to stand in special need of friends. For what use is such prosperity if there is no opportunity for beneficence, which is exercised mainly and in its most commendable forms towards friends? Or how could their prosperity be watched over and kept safe without friends? The greater it is,

the greater the danger it is in? In poverty, too, and in other misfortunes, people think friends are the only resort (Aristotle, 2004, 143).

Contrary to the seeming utilitarian end of friendship in this passage, Aristotle situates the discussion of friendship in his book on ethics because friendship for him constitutes one of the highest zeniths of a moral life. In fact, for Aristotle, friendship completes justice and even transcends it. While the highest form of justice is friendship, good friends do not need justice (ibid, 144). Justice is transcended in virtuous friendship because friendship is worthy in and of itself, and because it is not a matter of law but of character and choice (Pangle 2003, 7). Unfortunately, however, as Fálétí demonstrates in “Adébímpé Ọ̀jẹ̀dòkun”, virtue is not always conducive to happiness, contrary to Aristotle’s arguments. Pangle asks: “Can a life spent pursuing justice answer our longing for justice, or is justice mainly good because it secures the peace and order that lay the groundwork for happy lives?” (ibid) How should one read the tragic ending of Adébímpé on behalf of his friend? This definitely was a virtuous act (even if foolhardy), but could we say Adébímpé died a happy person? Lààlà also does his duty to Ẓàngódòkun, even though there was no happiness in the incidence for both of them. In Olátúnjí’s analysis, even though Adébímpé died, he did his duty not only to his friend, Ináólají, but also to the other hunters that the beast could have killed had he released it from the stranglehold. Adébímpé himself exits life with a fatal sigh:

*Adébímpé ní kí ẹ̀ má kèè mọ̀,  
 Ó ní àìmàsìkò ló m bá wa jà ọ̀jàrẹ.  
 O ní bi a bá mọ̀jọ̀ à á kú,  
 Bí a bá mọ̀jọ̀ à á rọ̀run-  
 Kí lọ̀dẹ̀ n wá nínú igbó  
 Tọ̀dẹ̀ gbégi lóri,  
 Tọ̀dẹ̀ gbégi lóri tó n pegi rẹ̀ níbọ̀n?*

Adébímpé said not to weep again,  
 We lack the understanding of the time, so we worry.  
 He said if we know when we die,  
 If we know when we return home-  
 What would the hunter be doing hunting  
 Piece of wood on his head  
 Piece of wood that he calls a gun?

## Conclusion

We began this essay with the suggestion that Fálétí could be regarded as a Nietzschean value-creating poet with the capacity to create cultural and social profiles. In Fálétí's poems, we see a philosophical sensibility that demonstrates not only a deep awareness of the intricate spectrum of the Yorùbá culture, but a fundamental narrative explication of complex elements that bring the Yorùbá into social and national relationship with *àjèjì* (strangers) and *ará oko* (foreigners) in a communitarian framework that is open-minded and does not embrace only compatriots alone. Fálétí's poems therefore afford a trajectory of thought from sociology to culture to philosophy that could be drawn upon to rehabilitate the thorn fabric of the Yorùbá nation, especially within a compromised postcolonial reality in Nigeria and Africa.

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