

## **“Recalling-Is-Greatest”: Personal Memory and Lyricism in Toyin Falola’s *A Mouth Sweeter than Salt* and *Counting the Tiger’s Teeth***

Felicia Ohwovoriole, Ph. D.  
Department of English,  
University of Lagos,  
Akoka, Lagos.  
Nigeria.  
eruvwe2006@yahoo.com

### **Abstract**

The reflective disclosure of the past is a major trend in African literature as indicated in writers like Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thi-ong’o. Personal memory is also often employed aesthetically to mirror what is embedded in the past. Toyin Falola the author of *A Mouth Sweeter than Salt* and *Counting the Tiger’s Teeth* presents his childhood and teenage years, family history and the social and historical events of Ibadan, Ilorin and Ile-Ife, Nigeria. He also details his personal experiences as a witness to the Agbekoya rebellion of 1968–70. In presenting actions in the two self-narratives, Toyin Falola exploits the resources of indigenous and contemporary African songs, incantatory chants and transliterated version of many lyrics. He uses the lyrics to also investigate the symbolic meaning of words used in the past and reiterates the prevalence of songs in Yoruba culture. The lyrics link together many themes as well as serving as an avenue for community and individual expression. We have memorial songs, songs of rebellion, songs of sexuality and satirical songs which mock teachers, the police and government officials. Falola presents an inseparable relationship of mutual exchange between the oral and written traditions. However, our point of emphasis is to evaluate the context and usage of the lyrics and panegyrics in the two texts.

### Introduction

Pre-literate and literate societies evolved means of documenting personal and historical events with various forms of narratives and lyrics. As a historian who resides outside his indigenous community, the narrator's memoir combines history and other oral literary forms to produce two texts which have been highly acclaimed. To Iyasere, "the modern African writer is to indigenous oral tradition as a snail is to its shell. Even in a foreign habitat, a snail never leaves its shell behind" Iyasere, 1975:107. Okpewho distinguishes three main ways in which oral literature has been re-examined in written literature: translation, adaptation and exploitation. (Okpewho, 1992:293–327). Correspondingly Julien distinguishes four different ways in which orality can be inserted into writing: "retelling of narratives of the oral tradition", representation of everyday conversation or the inclusion of proverbs, tales, riddles, praises and other oral genres", "the adaptation of principles of oral narrative genres and "a rapport between addressor and addressee" In furtherance to this Julien also submits "the oral nature of novels refers to the representation of everyday conversation or the inclusion of proverbs, tales, riddles, praises and other oral genres" She argues further that "orality and writing are not two mutually exclusive realities but the two live together in a continuous interaction" (Julien 1992:27–28. Ong also projects the written word as a residue of orality; a manifestation of oral art form through technology. Most practitioners of orality in writing are literate and their works exhibit what Ong calls the 'literate orality' of the secondary oral culture. (Ong 1982:161). In a similar vein Finnegan maintains orality and literacy intermingle and

a poem can be viewed in print, read aloud, sung in musical setting, taken down in dictation, recited from memory, enacted as a theme with variations, celebrated in vanity publications, embellished in beautiful illustrated format — and all of these are accepted in at least some sense and some versions of the same thing. (Finnegan 2005:164–187)

In presenting his personal experiences, the narrator highlights the social and historical events in Ibadan and Ile-Ife. History as social and personal memory is often re-imagined to deal with present conditions to project a better future. Spargo asserts: thinking in terms of past, present and future seems natural, inevitable both on a personal level and in broader social, cultural terms. The past is, in a sense, over but in another sense it is only available to us, knowable as part of the present.(Spargo 2000) To Gakwandi, 'the African novel is a creative interpretation of history beginning at the time of the colonial occupation of the continent. Gakwandi 1977:24. Toyin Falola the

author of both texts under consideration in this essay fuses the past, present and future events. Da Sylva also observes that Falola's *Memoir* is both an exploration and a 'refracted' documentation of human experience (Da Sylva in Afolabi ed. 2004:737). The narrator exploits the resources of indigenous and contemporary African music — as in songs, poetry, incantatory chants and alliterative elements—and the resource of language — as in the use of proverbs, powerful imagery, symbolism, anecdotes and so on. A lot of thought provoking discourses are delved into — intrigues among wives in a polygamous set up, attitude of rich men who exploit the poor over land matters, marital infidelity in great details. Both texts; *A Mouth sweeter than salt* and *Counting the Tiger's teeth* present indigenous Yoruba structure, philosophy, belief system and religion. They are a classic admixture of history and literature. There is the presentation of the negative and positive aspects of his life to the reader. In between the story of his childhood and growing up years are lots of lyrics; about school, teenage observations, festival songs and incantations etc. His personal experiences are placed within a much broader context of Western Nigeria and Africa.

### Recalling and Memory

In African societies where writing did not exist, memory in spite of its limitations linked people to the past. Achebe indicates in *Anthills of the Savannah*, it is only the story that can continue beyond the war and the warrior. The story outlives the sound of war-drums and the exploits of the brave fighter. (Achebe 2001: 67). Obiechina also argues that "the story is a primary form of the oral tradition and a mode of conveying culture, experience and values. It is a means of transmitting knowledge, wisdom, feelings and attitudes in oral societies".(Obiechina 1993:123–140) Likewise, Scheub reasons:

the story teller is a creator, teacher and a guide to the society, who most regularly and persuasively touches every member of the community. S/he is a creator who moves behind the facts of history, and clarifies, defines, and elucidates the experiences of people, thereby sustaining the society's traditions, those institutions that give context and meaning to daily life. (Scheub 1996:149)

Songs are used to narrate the changes occurring within Yoruba communities. Information detailing the past is remembered in songs.

The author remembers so much within the limits that memory allows. The narrative begins with the relevance of memory and oral tradition to African societies. It demonstrates the importance of oral memory in understanding the African communal experience. Falola's account demonstrates how

Africans use emotional markers like dates of war, birth, and festive seasons to relate to the past and to the future. Memory and oral traditions serve as a signal to past events and the narrator has this to say about relying on memory, 'memory can be short; where death does not kill the man and his wisdom, old age will terminate the memory, incapacitate the brain, mangle the words'. (Falola 2014:37).

Falola notes that all Yoruba cities have their own panegyrics which he refers to as *oriki orile*. He defines *oriki orile* as a 'distillation of history, the compression of multiple events into lines that characterize the character of a city' (Falola 2014:53). the effect of his personal oriki has this effect on the narrator, 'the cognomen of Isola moves me to the dead, much closer to memory, opens the door to a history long forgotten, creates puzzles in language and vocabulary, and provides a daily mental exercise' (Falola 2014:38).

Children, lineages, clans, chiefs and prominent personalities have praise names which describe the circumstances of birth or character. Beier and Gbadamosi calls oriki 'a poetic phrase that is used to describe or praise' Beier and Gbadamosi 1959:12). Similarly, Bablola notes the importance of oriki

It is traditionally believed that the correct performance of oriki in honour of a progenitor gladdens the progenitor in the world of the spirits and induces him to shower blessings on his offspring on earth. The reciting or chanting of the appropriate oriki in honour of the ancestors of a particular family causes members of that family who hear the performance to feel very proud of their pedigree, and if they are then away from home, they also feel exceedingly homesick (Bablola, 1966:24)

Furthermore, Olatunji describes the features of oriki as poetry with

high incidence of nominalisations, preponderance of kinship terms, multiple reference to the subject, multiplicity of oblique references to historical and/or mythological events and fluidity of structure and content,(Olatunji 2005:87)

Through the use of songs, proverbs and anecdotes, Falola demonstrates how the Yoruba people preserve the past. The author recounts the 1968 peasant rebellion in Ibadan which forms the subject of the second text in this paper — *Counting the tiger's teeth*. The latter examines the nature of poverty in rural areas and presents the factors that led to the Agbekoya rebellion, how the event shaped his life as a young man and active preparations for war, war tactics and strategies and the loss and burial of his grandfather. Through the use of these lyrics Falola demonstrates how the Yoruba people preserve the past.

### Utilitarian Value and Permeation of Songs with Narration

There is prevalence of songs in both texts. Poets, fiction writers and playwrights have woven songs within their texts. As discerned by Abiola Irele:

‘in the quest for a grounded authenticity of expression and vision, the best among our modern African writers have had to undertake a resourcing of their material and their modes of expression in the traditional culture...the oral tradition continues to function as a fundamental reference of African expression and as the matrix of the African imagination. (Irele 2001:29–31)

Many texts are said to be saturated with songs. To Helen Mugambi saturation involves the diffusion of the text with song. It may be achieved by a systematic metaphoric use of song to pilot the plot or thematic content of the text. (Helen Mugambi 2005). This has also been demonstrated in the works of p’bitek, Wangusa, Anyidoho, Ngugi, Osundare and many other African writers.

A close look at the lyrics reveal they are in four broad categories—

1. Panegyrics/ Praise lyrics,
2. War/Incantatory Lyrics
3. Entertainment and Social lyrics,
4. Philosophical Recitations

These various lyrics and songs enrich the aesthetic value of the memoirs. It should be noted that the texts under consideration have more than fifty songs woven into them. Many incidents are commented upon by songs. The Agbekoya revolts are invoked in a variety of panegyrics. We also have a profusion of songs in the ninth chapter of *A Mouth sweeter than Salt* which indicates the creativity of the children of Ibadan in the 60s. *Counting the Tiger’s Teeth* is infused with lyrics of exaltation, celebration, admonition and actual dirges.

There is deliberate ‘othering’ of the English of many songs. This ‘othering’ involves transforming English into Yoruba idiomatic expressions. According to Mugambi, ‘othering’ is in many different ways including the direct quotation of songs in African languages and the deliberately ‘distorted’ translation of the song-texts into the colonial language. (Mugambi 2005). The indigenous songs have been translated for easy understanding to the reader. Sometimes the song texts are given in tandem with the Yoruba text coming first followed by English.

In *Counting the Tiger’s teeth* many of the songs are inherently religious and presented as prayers, libation liturgy, incantation, invocation of spirits or other ritualistic qualities of worship. Yoruba war poetics represented in *Counting the Tiger’s teeth* indicate the human dependence on gods, spirits,

supernatural forces and ancestors. The lyrics stress the virtues of group strength, heroism and patriotism. Some lines are punctuated with emphatic repetition, puns, proverbs, appellations, animal and plant imagery expressing imminent victory. Beier explains 'Yoruba poetic language is full of allusions and incomplete phrases which readers are left to complete in their own minds' (Beier, 1970)

### Categories of Lyrics

#### *Panegyrics/Praise Lyrics*

Everybody in Yoruba land has oriki by which he can be addressed and even have praise for non-humans. According to Babalola:

It is traditionally believed that the correct performance of oriki of a progenitor gladdens the progenitor in the world of the spirits and induces him to shower blessings on his offspring on earth. Songs are rendered in praise of lineages. As praise names are chanted, one has a sense of personal history and heroic exploits. (Babalola 1966:24)

Isola, the scion of Agbo  
 He who dreams daily of wealth  
 He who thinks daily of the good things of life  
 He who looks unto the sky and says, 'I can hold you if I want'  
 Isola, spare the sky

Isola, the scion of Agbo  
 Isola, spring to your feet  
 The guinea fowl flies up as free as the air  
 The woodpecker taps the tree with a rattling sound  
 Isola, heights never make the monkey lose his breath

Isola, the scion of Agbo  
 The Agbo who cages the tiger  
 Isola, the mighty tiger  
 The elephant that shakes to disturb the forest  
 The gallant masquerade moves, the crowd shakes  
 Isola, do not shake, do not move  
 Not to terrify the strong and the cowards

Isola, the scion of Agbo  
 If you shake, do not frighten me  
 Isola, if you move pardon me  
 The tiger, Isola

Isola who says he is not ready to marry  
 When he is ready  
 Girls will line the street from here to Hausaland. (*A Mouth Sweeter...*  
 p. 39)

The author's oriki indicated here maximizes his good qualities. He is likened to important animals such as the tiger and the elephant. The positive qualities of the woodpecker and the free spirited guinea fowl are also part of the subject's attributes. His movement is imposing and gracious like the masquerade. What is peculiar is that various forms of words can be added each time the oriki is chanted. A cognomen can also have words omitted with time.

Towns, cities also have oriki. An apt example is the one on Ibadan:

Ibadan, a city on the hill  
 The city of God's blessing  
 May the lord make you a blessed city  
 For indigenes and foreigners  
 Chorus: Shout joyfully  
 And join in the chorus  
 In glorifying our God in heaven  
 Almighty's blessing is with you  
 Ibadan, god will make you a blessed city

Ibadan, the city that welcomes visitors  
 Without forgetting its own  
 Let love reside here  
 For citizens and visitors alike  
 Chorus: shout joyfully etc

Ibadan, the city of warriors  
 Those who make you great  
 We all the citizens  
 Will not allow your honour and glory to perish  
 Chorus: Shout joyfully etc  
 I can see from the hill  
 How beautiful you are  
 Even if your river is not great  
 It still crosses the entire city  
 Chorus: Shout joyfully, etc

Ibadan the city on the hill  
 May the lord bless you  
 May all thy chiefs  
 Enjoy long life

Chorus: Shout joyfully, etc (A Mouth Sweeter ... pp. 388–389)

Geographical qualities of the town are spelt out. Reference is also made to its sanitary condition. Allusion is made to the restlessness of the indigenes whose passion for war is legendary. They cannot ignore situations that can lead to strife. In a similar vein the oriki of Ilorin is spelt out:

Ilorin, the city of Afonja  
 The mouth is much sweeter than salt  
 Only the person with two mouths can live in Lagos  
 One needs four mouths to live in Oyo  
 At Ilorin, the city of Afonja  
 Only the person with eighteen mouth (A Mouth Sweeter ... p.110)

An allusion is made to Ilorin's linguistic variation and connotations, which is melodious to the hearers when used in speech so much so that it is sweeter than salt. In a similar vein, 'At Ilorin, the city of Afonja/Only the person with eighteen mouths can survive'. The speaker also designates the songs of the *Almajiris* in Ilorin which contains prayers. Chiefs also have oriki. Reference is made to a chief who had short stature but would climb a tree and make a drummer stay below to drum his praises:

Ogunmola, the brave  
 He who does not know him is yet to meet him  
 He who has met him does not know him

Ogunmola, the brave  
 Ogunmola, of a civil fight he shall die  
 Die for sure, sure, sure.

Ogunmola the brave  
 He keeps kegs of powder a rolling, rolling, rolling  
 With a jackknife in hand he is looking heavenward steadily, steadily,  
 steadily (A Mouth Sweeter ... 61)

Ogundele, the husband of the black woman  
 Oko abuke, the husband of the light skinned woman  
 When Ogundele takes his morning shower  
 Seven women carry seven different soaps  
 Each begging, 'use mine', 'use mine'  
 Ogundele, three men combined into one



The husband of the tall and short  
 Lord of the fat and lean, mean and tough  
 A friend to the moon, a friend to the sun  
 Ogundele uses no whip on any woman  
 Only a weakling duels with a woman  
 What Ogundele uses is a woman  
 To conquer another woman (Counting ... 20)

Many of the praise poems extol the god ogun. Soyinka alludes to the multiple nature of the god in his essay 'And after the Narcissist?':

ogun is the antithesis of cowardice and philistinism, yet within him is contained also the complement of the creative essence, a blood-thirsty destructiveness. Mixed up with the gestative inhibition of his nature is the destructive explosion of an incalculable energy. Contradictory as they are, it is necessary to experience these aspects of the god as a single comprehended essence'. (Soyinka1966:58).

We have made sacrifice to Ogun  
 Ogun, the Lord of Ire  
 Ogun the flogger  
 Flog our enemies for us  
 Don't flog us  
 Flog the wicked, the unjust  
 Ogun, the tall man with a big mouth  
 Thousands of teeth that carve and bite  
 Ogun, bite our enemies with your teeth of arrows  
 Carve wicked men into small rocks (Counting ... 9)

Words are about to fall  
 They hit like rocks  
 Words are like eggs  
 When they break, they cannot be restored  
 In the presence of ogun  
 Silence, silence, silence!  
 Words of truth  
 To bring our final freedom  
 Ogun, the conqueror from the hill top  
 Will seal the words in blood  
 We work for Ogun  
 Ogun will work for us  
 After our mission is done  
 The world will be restored

We cannot restore the world  
 Without Ogun's help  
 Without my Lord's sanction  
 Ogun, we honor the mighty (Counting ... 12-13)

As stated earlier, various forms of words can be added each time the oriki is chanted. God and goddesses also have oriki as the oriki to ogun sango cited below indicates.

### *War/Incantatory Lyrics*

War songs are rendered in reminiscence. In the words of Deng 'a good song should move the audience toward its objectives. A war song must arouse a war-like spirit and a dance song must excite the dancers. (Deng 1937:93) Memory of Ibadan war songs is depicted with a sense of pride. The war song is linked to a nickname 'The courageous man who sees a war and ducks.

Before he stoops down,  
 Before he appeals to the chiefs  
 Execute him (Counting ... 10)

My lord is going to the field of the heartless  
 I said the field of the heartless, o! o! o!  
 Listen, my lord is about to move to the field of the heartless,  
 Where the parent of two will be left with but one,  
 Where the parent of one will be left all forlorn,  
 Let him whose mother forbids him to go return from following my  
 master,  
 My master, my Lord, the king of the camps  
 Let him whose betrothed is of age to be wed return from following  
 my Lord,  
 The lion of the Master of camps (p. 63)

Lyrics can be rendered to rebuke and also to warn. When the author's ancestor was going to war, a bard sang his praise poem and in the process highlights the consequence of wars — loss of lives.

War is worthy  
 It brings fame  
 A source of honor  
 Cowards, leave  
 Go sell weeds and dung (Counting ... 140)

E maa sa te le won  
 E maa le won lo nso

Won ti mere sa  
Eyi ti ko sa  
Kumo lori e

Pursue them  
Run after them  
They are on the run  
If he stops running  
Clobber his head (Counting ... 221)

There were more than a million soldiers  
And another million policemen  
He killed all of them  
Becoming king  
No one is superior to abinuwaye  
Whenever he hears the sounds of war  
His joy knows no limits  
'War is nasty', the mother said  
Abinuaye replied, in laughter, 'this is why I like it!'  
'War kills'  
He rejoiced: 'This is why I want to go!' (Counting ... 223)

### ***Entertainment and Social Lyrics***

The speaker remembers how useful songs were in academic activities and summarises the functions of the songs:

"The songs were creative; some were adapted from famous lullabies or even hymnal songs creatively used to assert Yoruba values. The themes were consistent: the value of education, the need to respect parents and school teachers and the need for community service. So much emphasis was placed on hard work, defined mainly in terms of gaining a Western education, that one had to sing about it daily (Falola 2014:247).

Awon omo alaigboran po nile iwe,  
Won ki I feti sile lati gbo tolukoo won,  
Boluko won ba kowe to ko raitin (writing) fun won,  
Ounje ni ronun won,  
Ka jeun, jeun, jeun, ka ma we.  
Ise, ise, iyen ni won fee se  
Dodo ati raisi (rice) ko gbodo koja firi  
Pounje ni ronun won,  
Ka jeun, jeun, jeun, ka ma we

There are too many disobedient children at school  
 They hardly listen to their teachers  
 When the teachers instruct in reading and writing  
 It is then they think about food  
 Let us eat and study  
 Work is hard for them  
 Play is their only passion  
 Plantain and rice must not pass by  
 They think only of food  
 Let us eat and study (A Mouth sweeter ... p.248)

Bom bom bom  
 Gbo bi ilu tin dun  
 Bom bom bom  
 Gbo bi a ti nkorin  
 Bom bom bom bom bom bom

Bom bom bom  
 Listen to the drum beats  
 Bom bom bom  
 Listen to our songs  
 Bom bom bom bom bom bom (A Mouth Sweeter ... 250)

O dowuro  
 Ki a sun re  
 Ki angeli Oluwa  
 Ko so wa po  
 Táyo táyo la nlo le  
 La nlo ile la nlo 'le  
 Kóluwa ko so wa po

Till tomorrow morning  
 May we have a good night's sleep  
 May the angels guard us  
 All together  
 We depart with joy  
 To go home  
 May the lord protect us all (A Mouth Sweeter ... 251)

A mi rele o baba  
 Olojo oni o  
 Ami rele o  
 Gbogbo eko ti a ko ninu ile iwe wa

Ma se jekeye esu  
Kos a won je lokan wa  
Amin o beni ko ri o

We head home, O god  
The lord who controls the day  
We head home  
All the day's knowledge  
Do not allow the satanic bird to eat it up  
Amen, so shall it be (A Mouth sweeter ...252)

A ki yin oluko wa  
Akoko ti lati lo  
Obi wa nduro de wa  
Aafe l'ole  
O digbose la n ki yin  
Kolorun se to ju wa  
Kat un pade pe l'ayo  
Odigbose

We thank you our teachers  
It is time for us to leave  
Our parents are waiting  
We want to go home  
We bid you farewell  
May God protect us  
Until we reunite in peace  
Bye bye (A Mouth Sweeter ... 253)

Ise agbe nise ile wa  
Eni ko sise a maa jale  
Iwe kiko laisi oko  
Ko I pe o ko I pe o

Farming is our main occupation  
Whoever does not work will steal  
Education without a hoe  
Is not enough, not enough (A Mouth Sweeter ... 256)

Many of the children's songs and rhymes are rendered by children at games. When the speaker's father purchased a car, it became a source of a satirical song:

Falola ra moto  
 Ko rale  
 Moto ti ko se gbe  
 Eemo, ki le leyi?

Falola bought a car  
 Rather than a house  
 A car that no one can live inside  
 What a mess?

Religious denominations were also a source of lyrics. Preachers would go from street to street urging people to wake up and pray. Some utterances are in form of prayers. The time for silent prayers gives the author an opportunity to make personal request. Sometimes the desire would be for yam pottage (asaro)

When the author's father passed away, lyrics is chanted to depict the sad mood and also to warn and advice his son:

Isola, run, run away  
 The river contains the scorpions that sting  
 The bank contains the bees that sting  
 There are night adders that can bite  
 Isola, look at the vipers  
 The crocodile is ready to swallow  
 Isola, leap  
 Be kind to the kind  
 Be cruel to the cruel  
 Do not say what is bad is good (A Mouth Sweeter ... 98)

Many children's songs and rhymes are rendered by children at games. Sometimes a song can be formed to praise technological feats such as the train. Recitations were made when the speaker and friends had to resort to charms to woo a girl.

The command to ogbo is final  
 The command to Ogbo is final  
 The command to Risi is final  
 Risi, you are for Sali  
  
 I, Sali, am a bag of goodluck  
 Good things follow me  
 Risi, follow me

Whenever the eluluu invokes rain, rain must fall  
 If a frog invokes rain, the rain must fall on him  
 I, Sali, invoke Risi, she must fall on me

I am reborn, reborn into good luck  
 Let all fortunes follow me  
 If a child sees honey, it throws away the bean cake  
 Today, new things must follow me  
 Risi must follow me ( A Mouth Sweeter ... p.317)

Erotic songs are performed during street carnivals for sheer entertainment;

The penis of the police is nothing but a belt (special purpose-festival)  
 Teacher's penis  
 Enveloped in chalk  
 Mechanic's penis  
 Full of soil  
 The motor driver's penis  
 Is as long as the sugarcane  
 The wife of the driver  
 Deserves commendation for her endurance (A Mouth Sweeter...376)

It cannot be  
 No enemy can conquer me  
 If the enemy approaches from the front  
 I will turn into a viper that stores its venom in front of its tongue  
 If the enemy appears from the back  
 I will become a scorpion with venom on its tail  
 If the enemy appears from the left  
 I will become a porcupine with needles that pinch  
 If the enemy appears from the right  
 I will become bees that sting  
 If the enemy comes from above  
 I will become the precipice that kills the mountain climber  
 If the enemy comes below  
 I will turn into a large ocean that drowns the swimmer (Counting ... 68-69)

Mo ti di omo a gbo 'sa,' mo sa  
 A gbo 'ya,' mo ya  
 Mo b'erin ja, mo d'eyin e mu  
 Mo b'efon ja, mo diwo e mu  
 Mo b'ekun ja, mo gba enu e mu  
 Mo leke won

I heard 'run,' I refused to run  
 I heard 'yield,' I refused to yield  
 I held the elephant's tooth to wrestle with it  
 I held the buffalo's horns to wrestle with it  
 I held the tiger's jaws to wrestle with it  
 I won (Counting ... 76-77)

Who stole my brain?  
 Lenle lenle n lere o; lenle lenle  
 He wears a long beard and a long gown  
 Lenle lenle n lere o; lenle lenle  
 He carries a strange book with his left hand  
 Lenle lenle n lere o; lenle lenle  
 He holds a big bell with the right  
 Lenle lenle n lere o; lenle lenle  
 Who stole my heart?  
 Lenle lenle n lere o; lenle lenle  
 Who stole my charms, my power?  
 Lenle lenle n lere o; lenle lenle (Counting ... 316)

### *Philosophical Recitations*

The memory of where he was bathed when he was labelled "Emere" flooded him on a revisit only to be met by modern structural changes in the place. His thought leads him to become philosophical in this chant:

The poor, the rich, and the powerful  
 All are six feet under, no more no less  
 One does not because of excess wealth  
 Consume more salt than others  
 A grave cannot be shallow because one is poor  
 The gate of heaven does not close because one is poor  
 The gate of heaven does not close because one is rich  
  
 God keeps five secrets  
 God, the mighty, the being without boundaries  
 The almighty keeps four secrets to Himself  
 He reveals only one to powerless humans: we will all die  
 Of the four no one knows  
 What will kill you?  
 Where will death get you?  
 When will you die?  
 Who is next that death will take?



Call the corpse  
Curse the corpse  
Salute the corpse  
Praise the corpse  
Thou shall get no answer  
He who comes to the world naked leaves empty  
Without a voice, a throat, a tongue, a mouth  
You call the dead in vain (A Mouth Sweetener ... 357)

Death shames all  
The warrior shall stumble  
The wise becomes a fool  
The genius lacks knowledge  
The rich man is gone  
You are short or tall, death does not care  
Death, the calm and silent water that drowns a man (A Mouth Sweetener ... 358–359)

Chief, the rich, the mighty  
Swallow your house  
Swallow the key to your house  
Take your wife to heaven  
Befriend your children, ask them to accompany you  
Hold a party in heaven  
Move your savings account to the coffin (A Mouth Sweetener ... 359)

There is no escape for the rooster  
The hawks are hovering above, looking for birds to eat  
The fox is hiding in the bushes, looking for food to eat  
The owner of the rooster is thinking of making a pot of soup with a  
Hen to devour pounded yam  
Put in a cage, termites and ants find an easy prey  
Released to roam, the fox and hawks rejoice  
There is no escape for the rooster (Counting ... 109)

No one hits an albino  
The favour of orisa  
Respect  
No one hits a cripple  
The favour of orisa  
Respect  
No one ties the hunchback with a rope  
The favour of orisa

Respect!

Do not try to catch a leopard by its tail

When you visit our leopard, leave your goats at home

He was so thirsty that he drank the river dry

Generalissimo! The sun that does not get tired

The moon that carries the night with it (Counting ... 134)

In the preliminary pages of the second text *Counting the Tiger's teeth*, the author pays tribute to his grandfather in a glowing panegyric. Using various epithets he invokes, calls him three men in one, a valiant hero, fighter on earth, a wise mentor, the ageless man, the itinerant sage, one who makes a decision and never looks back and a pathfinder. Likewise he entreats the admiration of Iya Leku in a hyperbolic manner. She is said to have feeble fingers that cut like knives, eyes that see beyond common sight. She is capable of holding dialogue with heaven and earth at once.

### Conclusion

Falola's texts have been energized by oral discourse such as proverbs, anecdotes and songs. He narrates his life story and comments on Ibadan history and the Agbekoya revolts for both individual and socio-political point of view. In doing this he narrates with a consciousness of his Yoruba heritage. The use of lyrics as deliberate technique in the texts has been beneficial to the reader whose interest is sustained. Emphasis on orality within the texts, takes into account the rich Ibadan and Agbekoya rich historical and cultural underpinnings that Falola deploys as he develops his memoirs. It has been clear from the discussion above that Toyin Falola texts have been comprehensively and competently written interspersed with oral traditional features with a purposive goal which is that of a multigenre

### References

1. Achebe, C. *Anthills of the Savannah* (London: Penguin, 2001)
2. Babalola, S.A. *The Content and Form of Yoruba Ijala*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966) 24.
3. Beier, U. and Gbadamosi, B. *Yoruba Poetry*. (Ibadan: Government Printers, 1959) 12
4. Beier, Ulli. *Yoruba Poetry*. (New York: Cambridge UP, 1970).
5. Deng, M. Francis. *The Dinka and their Songs*. (Oxford: Clarendon 1937)93
6. Falola, Toyin. *A Mouth Sweeter the Salt: An African Memoir*. (Ibadan: Bookcraft, 2013).
7. ———. *Counting the Tiger's Teeth: an African Teenager's Story*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. 2014).
8. Finnegan, Ruth. "The How of Literature" *Oral Tradition* 20/2 (2005): 164–187.
9. Gakwandi, S. *The Novel and Contemporary Experience in Africa*. (London: Heinemann, 1977)
10. Irele, Abiola. *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora*. (New York: OUP, 2001) 29–31.
11. Iyasere, Solomon O. "Oral Tradition in the Criticism of African Literature". *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 13.1. (1975)107.
12. Julien, E. *African Novels and the Quest of Orality*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1992.)3, 24–27.
13. Mugambi, Helen 'Speaking Song: Power, Subversion and the Postcolonial Text' *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*. September–December, 2005.
14. Obiechina, E. "Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel" *RAL*, 24 (4): 123–140.
15. Okpewho, Isidore. *African Oral Literature: background, character and Continuity*. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992).293–327)
16. Olatunji, O.O. *Features of Yoruba Oral Poetry*. (Ibadan: University Press Plc. 1984)87.
17. Ong, Walter. J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. (New York: Routledge, 1982). 161
18. Scheub H. *The Tongue is Fire: South African Storytellers and Apartheid*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1996.)149.
19. Soyinka, Wole. 'And After the Narcissist?' *African Forum* 14: 53–64, 1966.
20. Spargo, T. *Reading the Past: Readers in Cultural Criticism*. New York: Palgrave, 2000)

