

Writing Fuji, Narrating Self: A Conversation with [Tunde Busari](#)

1789 is well-known as the year of the French Revolution. Because socio-economic inequality, injustice, and violence against the poor are humanly transnational, the French Revolution inspired several uprisings in Latin America during the 19th century. As an undergraduate student at the University of Ibadan between 1999 and 2004, I remember that student union leaders derived much of their anti-institution vocabularies from the Cuban revolution and viewed the revolutionary ideas of Thomas Sankara as a turning point in the long history of radical approach to equity and justice. Although many of the student union leaders (the so-called apprentice leftist revolutionaries whose role models include Franz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral, Hugo Chavez, and Malcom X) in the pre-2004 era are now bourgeoisies, their unmaking doesn't refute an indisputable fact—revolutions are contagious.

Beyond the French Revolution, another incredible thing happened in 1789. That year, Olaudah Equiano became one of the first Black persons to publish a book. Titled, "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African," Equiano's book is more than a narration of the horror of human servitude; it contributed to the fight to abolish slave trade and slavery. Stylistically, the book sets the tone for how to write about the self. In self representing his experience across physical and cultural geographies, Equiano wrote Africa and the Atlantic World into a much broader history of culture and social change. This approach has remained the standard for (auto) biographical narratives since the 18th century—even though African oral tradition dating to centuries has similar pattern.

It is within this context that one can best appreciate "My Journey with Barry Wonder," a new book by distinguished journalist Tunde Busari. In writing about Barrister from his own autobiographical gaze, Busari, who studied history at the Obafemi Awolowo University, introduced an uncommon type of popular writing. Right from when he first saw Barrister play in the 1970s to 2010 when Barrister passed on, to 2021 when memorialization politics took an interesting dimension, Busari sets a new standard for journalistic writing that is rigorous in its understanding of people, events, and places, and deep in its appreciation of the ties that bind human history. In Busari's meticulous hand, unknown ideas are unmasked, dormant histories received life, previously untapped materials are unveiled, and Barrister is reinvented. Even the most arrogant academic would respect Busari's brilliant exposition, which reminds me of pre-Internet journalistic writings that read far better and are more thoughtful than many of the so-called academic publications of today.

I became Busari's Facebook friend in 2018. In late May 2021, I ran into him in the best place to meet serious minds—the library! I went to the Nigerian Tribune library, a day after arriving in Nigeria, to perfect my registration to do research and shoot my documentary there. I recognized him, but it took him a while to recognize me, not only because he couldn't believe I was back in Nigeria, but also because I was in my Ibadan-State-of-Nature---unpretentiously raw, like a good amala buried inside a thick abula! We spoke extensively about his book, I visited his office, we met at social events, and finally, I got him on the set of the Fuji documentary in November.

### Appreciation

I shot my interview with Busari at the J.F.Ade Ajayi's library in Ibadan. I'm grateful to the librarians for allowing me to use the iconic home of one of the most iconic personalities in the history of academic writing about Africa. My relationship with Busari is more than that of a

researcher and an informant. It has grown to become one of the best I could possibly imagine. A Thank You is not enough to appreciate him. For copies of "My Journey with Barry Wonder," call the following numbers: 08060057000, Lagos; 08032117982, Ogun; 08035475400, Osun; 08033938351, Kwara; 08033144602, Abuja; 08095002769, Oyo.