A POSTMODERNIST REPRESENTATION IN BEN OKRI'S THE *FAMISHED ROAD* AND *FLOWERS AND SHADOWS*

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIN IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER DEGREE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Declaration

I, declare that the work in this hereby dissertation titled: **A POSTMORDENIST REPRESENTATION IN BEN OKRI'S *THE FAMISHED ROAD* AND *FLOWERS AND SHADOWS*** has been carried out by me in the Department of English and Literary studies. The information derived from the literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this dissertation was previously presented for another degree or diploma at this or any institution.

TARR, Mathias **Date** _____

Certification

This dissertation titled "**A Postmodernist Representation in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* and *Flowers and Shadows*** by TARR, Mathias meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of Arts in English (Literature) of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

Professor Tainmu A. Abubakar Chairman, Supervisory Committee	signature	Date
Professor E.S Akuso Member, Supervisory Committee	Signature	Date
Professor T.Y Surakat Head of Department	Signature	Date
Professor Sadiq Z. Abubakar Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies	Signature	Date

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to God almighty and to the memory of my father, late Mr. Christopher, Tartenger Umua who, though without the benefit of formal education, was smart enough to ensure that I got the best, relative to his social and economic mobility. I am also grateful to my mother for her industry and resourcefulness which has ensured my social gentrification. You both are not accidents in my life. I thank God indeed and also am lucky to have you both as my biological parents.

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Abstract

This dissertation titled: **A postmodernist Representation in Ben Okri's The Famished Road and Flowers and Shadows** is premised on the argument that irrespective of their individual themes, novels are significant mechanisms of presentation or representation of thoughts and ideas through semblances circumscribed by narration or telling, all of which are contingent upon various representative modes. In the present context, postmodernist representation of necessity has been defined as an artistic as well as an aesthetic form to represent a social reality. When these attempts follow literary prescriptions, they are described as the literary representation of a given entity such as a nation, which is ultimately, the intersection between ideology and form in the text bringing out the salient issues – themes - into which the writing subject constantly disappears. This dissertation therefore demonstrates the relevance and applicability of postmodernist representation to the study of Ben Okris's The Famished Road and Flowers and Shadows. Okri appropriates materials and events using the protocols of narratology by refining and variegating the materials which appear aesthetically in their current literary form as novels. The findings reveal that; Postmodernist representation is of literary value on or about a topic, That the novel form is the best suited artistic form for the explication of postmodernist representation of the themes in the novels under study and finally, that Okri's The Famished Road and Flowers and Shadows are axiomatic of the centrality of Nigerian literature on postmodernist representation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This study is foregrounded using the theory of Postmodernism and literary representation as an alternative dimension to the regular critical methodologies of literary analysis and uses Ben Okris's *The Famished Road* and *Flowers and Shadows* as primary texts for substantiation and exemplification. Essentially, the history of the novel in Nigeria, from the earliest times to the present, has been an admixture of expository discourses on the social formation of the Nigerian nation state vis-à-vis the historical, ideological, social, and socio-cultural and economic confrontations and complexes that have ensued and are contesting for the 'soul' of the nation. Because literature itself is a social unit and cannot be said to be, strictly speaking, insulated from the society that produces it, the novel form has constantly been used to interrogate this social "warfare".

Our understanding of the novel in Nigeria, essentially therefore proceeds from the relationship between literature and history in the form of literary representation. This trend perfectly suits present argument of a postmodernist literary representation as found in the two novels under study as the two novels represents the dimensions that have come to be associated with the novel form in Nigeria especially taken from the argument of postmodernism as representing a very serious discourse in the social conditions of mankind in the aftermath of modern era and it does not really matter whether or not it is literature is fiction. Liman (1997) in Foucault and asserts that within the context of postmodernism and especially, postcolonial discourse, there is essentially power relations, especially, that of power and knowledge;

> The thinking subject (writer) collects the truth or facts that pre-existsin the world and package them or uncovers them in discourse. Discourse itself, its materiality and free play, is nullified. When applied to discourse, the various rules and

> practices of exclusion, in fact, designated systematically who may speak, what may be spoken, and how it is to be said….

That science questions the validity of these narratives is mitigated by the world of impossibilities which literature is noted for.

At each stage of Nigeria's historical, social, economic and political development, some novels represent these epochs and this has become Nigeria's literary trajectory in the novel form from the beginning to the present. Major historical events such as Colonialism, Independence, the Oil boom, the Nigeria Civil War, Military rule; have all been represented in the novel form and have also produced writers, with each interpreting the incidence according to his/her understanding of history and sometimes ideological leaning. Novels that have ideological blend, for example Marxism, which marked a fundamental epistemic departure from the basic traditional novel also entered the fray. For example Festus Iyayi's *violence* captures this ideological trend. The ideological novel tries to look at the structure of the society and also try to propagate the conditions of the masses, especially the less privileged.

Another dimension of the novel in Nigeria is the feminist strand. The feminist novel tries to speak on behalf of the woman bringing out the innate qualities and contributions of the woman beyond the seeming "conspiracy" pioneered by early writers. Overall, the unique thing about the novel in Nigeria is the style, plot, language and characterization. But, above all, there is a philosophical base for the existence of the novel in Nigeria. This is because the novel captures the unique milieu of some historical antecedents and variables (historical, political, social, economic and cultural). To this end, the novel in Nigeria is completely a discourse in literary representation.

The concepts of postmodernism and literary representation if firmly located within literature, broadly speaking and theoretically, will constitute a serious framework of literature and literary analysis, interpretation and the evaluation as well as application to literary works. Whatever it is however, literary criticism deals with different dimensions of

literature as a collection of texts through which authors evoke more or less fictitious world for the imagination of readers. We can look at any work of literature by paying special attention to one or several aspects: its language and structure, its intended purpose, the information or worldview it conveys or its effect on an audience. This is because, works of literature can be studied long after their first publication and the awareness of historical and theoretical context contributes to our understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of them. The contest by science against the legitimatization of literary narratives is also mitigated by narration. Liman (1997) in Lyotard asserts that;

> The narrative allows a society not only to define its criteria of competence, but to also evaluate according to those criteria what is performed or can be performed within it. The knowledge transmitted by narration is not limited to enunciations: it determines in a single stroke what one must say in order to be heard, what one must listen in order to speak, and what role one must play to be the subject of a narrative.

Foucault presents possibly the best definition of power relations inherent in postmodernism. He says, of literary representation as "Systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, and courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak." – andis mediated by discourse (emphasis mine). He talks about postmodernist discourse as a form of power. In short, by controlling discourse, one can create not only categories of thought, but also shape a society such as a literary political discourse.

Etymologically, according toHutcheon, (2004) postmodern literature is a type of literature that came to prominence after World War II and is defined as a form of literature which is marked, both stylistically and ideologically, by a reliance on such literary conventions as fragmentation, paradox, unreliable narrators, often unrealistic and downright impossible plots, games, parody, paranoia, dark humor and authorial self-reference. Postmodern writers tend to reject outright meanings in their novels, stories and poems, and,

instead, highlight and celebrate the possibility of multiple meanings, or a complete lack of meaning, within a single literary work. Postmodern literature also often rejects the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' forms of art and literature, as well as the distinctions between different genres and forms of writing and storytelling.

Hutcheon (ibid) list the following as some examples of stylistic techniques that are very often employed in postmodern literary writings:

1. **Pastiche**: The taking of various ideas from previous writings and literary styles and pasting them together to make new styles.
2. **Intertextuality**: The acknowledgment of previous literary works within another literary work.
3. **Metafiction**: The act of writing about writing or making readers aware of the fictional nature of the very fiction they're reading.
4. **Temporal Distortion**: The use of non-linear timelines and narrative techniques in a story.
5. **Minimalism**: The use of characters and events which are decidedly common and non-exceptional characters.
6. **Maximalism**: Disorganized, lengthy, highly detailed writing.
7. **Magical Realism**: The introduction of impossible or unrealistic events into a narrative that is otherwise realistic.
8. **Faction**: The mixing of actual historical events with fictional events without clearly defining what is factual and what is fictional.
9. **Reader Involvement**: Often through direct address to the reader and the open acknowledgment of the fictional nature of the events being described.

Many critics and scholars find it best to define postmodern literature against the popular literary style that came before it:modernism. In many ways, postmodern literary styles and ideas serve to dispute, reverse, mock and reject the principles of modernist literature. For example, instead of following the standard modernist literary quest for

meaning in a chaotic world, postmodern literature tends to eschew, often playfully, the very possibility of meaning. The postmodern novel, story or poem is often presented as a parody of the modernist literary quest for meaning. Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*and *Flowers and Shadows*are perfect example of this. In The *Famished Road*, the protagonist, Azaro's quest for knowledge and understanding results ultimately in confusion and the lack of any sort of clear understanding of the events that transpired. Same could be said of Jeffia in *Flowers and Shadows*.

Literary representation on the other hand could be said to be the human artistic effort to find a corresponding method of representing human activities and actions in words and writing generally. When these attempts follow literary prescriptions, they are described as the literary representation of a given geographical entity that could be described as the literature of that given locality such as Nigerian literature either in novel form, poetry or drama. The critics business then is to bring out the work's relation to this space, to reconstruct experience and thought from the intersection between ideology and form in the text bringing out its salient issues – themes - into which the writing subject constantly disappears (Tagoe, 1998) These two concepts of postmodernism and literary representation in the present context in the two novels under study therefore could be seen as any work of prose fiction written by a Nigerian or about Nigeria by a non-Nigerian but with the setting, characterization and theme on Nigeria's literary "space" and which addresses Nigeria's political, social, historical, psychological, economic themes and so on, that amounts to the sum total of Nigeria's "social formation" as a people.

On this premise, it is important that history and other residual worldviews are central to the novel in Nigeria for literary representation. History has been central to the emergence of the Nigerian novel. Just as the West Indies, the discourse on history while confronting fundamental assumptions behind European perception and interpretations of our history and

by extension that of Africa, really inspired the imperatives for redefinition and subjectification, which are basically colonial impulses. The beginning of the novel in Nigeria fits perfectly into Michael Dash's observation and cited by Tagoe, (1998) about the West Indian writer thus;

> …Traumatized by history, the West Indian writer is yet continually hunted by its specter and perpetually engaged with redefining it… the task of consciousness becomes necessary in a world that is the product of other's dreams….

From this modest beginning, the novel in Nigeria has grown to its present status encompassing ideological and several other residual worldviews to the point of examining our own social complexes as a people and country.Nevertheless, because these alternative worlds which literature creates are worlds devoid of impossibilities, it is a "willing suspension of disbelief" that we bring to bear on the reading of literature which is more than tactic acceptance that we are dealing with a world where everything is possible, a world that demands a totally different perspective must have been with man for centuries and it is quite obvious that only such attitude could have sustained the growth of the folk tale – a literary genre that offers the most distance – physical and cognitive - between its own worlds and our own. It is this realization that we are dealing with the world of the fantastic that makes us accept the fact that the tortoise could fly to heaven, that when it was in distress, it could speak to the wife on earth from heaven.

This is also the disposition that makes us believe that the serpent could emerge from the sea, borrow all human parts, don itself on princely robes and go out to marry the girl who has refused all human suitors and also Chief Nanga could instantaneously decree a coup d'état in his country and it will come to pass. The list is endless. Ben Okri also appropriates this style of the fantastic and impossible in *The Famished Road (1991).*

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ben Okri's writings have attracted a lot of critical attention especially *The Famished Road*.However, it has not been directly linked sufficiently as the direct representation of a postmodernist literary creation.This work therefore is based on the propositions that:

i. Postmodernist representation is the literary engagement in *The Famished Road*

ii. That the novel form is the best suited artistic form for the explication of the relationship between postmodernism and literary representation because of its capacity to appropriates multiplicity of characters.

iii. That Okri's novels used here are axiomatic of the centrality of Nigerian literature in a postmodernist era over nationhood and development.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The prose genre, which is circumscribed by a narration or telling, is the most evident of all forms of literary creations on postmodernist discourse about politics, culture, power relations, the economy and so on. In Nigeria, the novel form also bears testimony to this literary engagement. The aim and objectives of the study is, to simply prove that;

i. The novel form is a flexible and veritable source of discourse on postmodernism.

ii. Ben Okri appropriates the novel form because of its capacity engage all the literary nuances associated with the postmodernist era and reconstruct history and represent it in literary form.

iii. Postmodernist representation is a viable means of evaluating the thematic focus of the two novels under study.

1.4 Justification of Study

The justification for the study proceed on the fact that, the novel form, more than any other genre, possesses the capacity to do justice to the topic because of its narrative ability and multiplicity of characters. The novel form also has the capacity to subsume variety of themes and methodologies in a single novel to be able to extrapolate ideas and broaden the scope of discourse and opinions. The novel form also has the capacity to represent ideas,

thoughts and even idiosyncrasies of the fictional population in the novel's world of impossibility that in reality is the near ideal world. This study is therefore timely because it has justified essentially two things, namely; the novel form is now seen as a flexible and veritable source of postmodernist discourse and that Ben Okri uses the novel because of its capacity to reconstruct historical experience in literary form. Furthermore, the study is also an attempt to bridge the gap in the literary critical heritage on Ben Okri's novels and writings and also adds some new insights into the corpus of intellectual fireworks. Thus, apart from sustaining interest in, and continuing the debates on the application of postmodernist discourse and literary representation to texts under study, this study also attempts to settle some epistemological issues on the Ben Okri'stwo novels namely, the postmodernist nature of thematic issues on nationhood and development and thus, enrich Nigerian, nay African literature with analytical representation of the postmodernist discourse of history in literary form. This will also widen the understanding of this form of cultural production in this part of the world.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The entire scope of the work is limited to the novel genre and uses the concept of postmodernism and literary representation in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* and *Flowers and Shadows*. This is because, the advent of deconstruction theory in the late 1960s to be able to study the novel's multiplicity of meanings and ideas replaced structuralism's assumption that, a text's meaning could be found in the examination of its structural codes. This was challenged and replaced by the maxim of "undecidability" namely; no definite interpretation and this fit the argument that the novels under study are postmodernist discourse in literary representation. Deconstruction as much as postmodernism therefore declares that a text has an almost infinite number of possible interpretations. This is to say that, "the interpretations themselves are just as creative and important as the text being interpreted (Bressler, 1994). This method suits our

proposition that, the novel is, especially in Nigeria, an unending discussion about Nigeria within the context of postmodernist discourse.

1.6 Research Methodology

The predominant method used to execute this study is the qualitative method. This method utilizes the texts under study as its primary materials and secondary analytical methods using library sources, learned scholarly journals and internet search engines for further substantiation. It is adopted for its appropriateness and convenience in qualitative research. Kerlinger (1986) asserts that analysis of data is a process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modelling data with the goal of discovering useful information, suggesting conclusions, and supporting decision-making and or recommendations.

Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA, especially used in the humanities of which literary studies and research is one, is the range of processes and procedures whereby we move from the qualitative data that have been collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations we are investigating. Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) is usually based on an interpretative philosophy. The idea is to examine the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data. For example, by analyzing primary data (a literary text) the researcher may be attempting to identify any or all of the following;

- Someone's interpretation of the world,
- Why they have that point of view,
- How they came to that view,
- What they have been doing,
- How they conveyed their view of their situation,
- How they identify or classify themselves and others in what they say,

The process of QDA usually involves two things: firstly, writing and the identification of themes, secondly, writing of some kind is found in almost all forms of QDA. In contrast, some approaches, such as discourse analysis or conversation analysis may not require the

identification of themes. Nevertheless, finding themes is part of the overwhelming majority of QDA carried out today (ibid).

1.7 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is the background to the study which introduces the study and its problematic as the problem statement, including other preliminaries such as; justification, aim and objectives, scope, methodology and the theoretical framework. The chapter also discusses the theory of postmodernism and literary representation, the, origin and the basic arguments of postmodernism against modernism, the poetics of postmodernist discourse, the key assumptions of postmodernism and literary representation and postmodernism as the analytical framework for the study. Chapter Two is the Review of related literature which interrogates some intellectual views about Ben Okri's writings. Chapter Three discusses the theme of postmodernism and literary representation of Nigeria's social formation in *The Famished Road*. Chapter Four discusses the theme of Mythology of Nemesis represented in *Flowers and Shadows*. Chapter Five is the Conclusion of the work.

1.8. Theory of Representation, Postmodernismand Literature

David (1992) citing Lacan asserts that "…mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called as itself that is behind…. The most common intuition about literature is that it is a "representation of life." Unlike terms such as mimesis, representation has played a central role in the understanding of literature. Indeed, one might say that it has played the definitive role insofar as the founding fathers of literary theory, Plato and Aristotle, regarded literature as simply one form of representation. Aristotle defined all the arts—verbal, visual, and musical—as modes of representation, and went even further to make representation the definitively human activity: From childhood, men have an instinct for representation, and in this respect man differs from the other animals that he is far more

imitative and learns his first lessons by representing things. Man, for many philosophers both ancient and modern, is the "representational animal," 'homo symbolicum' the creature whose distinctive character is the creation and manipulation of signs—things that "stand for" or "take the place of" something else. Since antiquity then, representation has been the foundational concept in aesthetics (the general theory of the arts) and semiotics (the general theory of signs).

In the modern era (i.e., in the last three hundred years) it has also become a crucial concept in political theory, forming the cornerstone ofrepresentational theories of sovereignty, legislative authority, and relations of individuals to the state (Schram and Steen: 1992). As soon as we begin to use representations in any social situation—to claim, for instance, that this dab of paint represents the fact that this stone is in that place and looks like this—then representation begins to play a double role, as a means of communication which is also a potential obstacle to it (VanDijik and Kinstsch :1983).

Representation is an extremely elastic notion which extends all the way from a stone representing a man to a novel representing a day in the life of several Nigerians (such as the Famished Road) represents a whole series of events and the representational sign never seems to occur in isolation from a whole network of other signs. Aristotle says that representations differ from one another in three ways: in object, manner, and means. The "object" is that which is represented; the "manner" is the way in which it is represented; the "means" is the material that is used. But the "manner" suggests yet another feature of representation, and that is the particular way a representational code is employed such as Azaro in The Famished Road representing Nigeria. The "means" of literary representation is language, but there are many ways of employing that means (dramatic recitation, narration, and description) to achieve all sorts of effects (pity, admiration, laughter, scorn) and represent all sorts of things (VanDjijk: 1983).

Symbolic representations such as characters in novels, by contrast, are and must be based on the resemblance of the sign to what it signifies even on arbitrary stipulation; thus Azaro in the Famished Road may stand for Nigeria with all its characteristics because we can see the semblances and because in literature, we have agreed to regard it this way. According to (VanDjik: 1983) There is nothing, of course, to prevent any particular representation from employing more than one of these relationships: a written text may symbolically represent (describe or narrate or dramatize) an action, and it may also indexically represent "cause" of which it is an effect.

In a similar way, we might think of language as one medium of representation, "literature" as the name of the aesthetic use of that medium, and things like poetry, the novel, and drama as very large genres within that medium. One crucial consideration that enters into any analysis of representation is the relationship between the representational material and that which it represents. For Culler (1982), a stone may stand for a man, but how? By virtue of what "agreement" or understanding does representation occur? Semioticians generally differentiate three types of representational relationships under the names of icon, symbol, and index. An iconic account of the relation "stone-represents-man" would stress resemblance: a certain stone might stand for a man because it is upright, or because it is hard, or because its shape resembles that of a man. ("Mimesis" and "imitation" are thus iconic forms of representation that transcend the differences between media. Symbolic representations i.e characters in novels, by contrast, are and must be based on the resemblance of the sign to what it signifies even on arbitrary stipulation; thus Azaro in the Famished Road may stand for Nigeria with all its characteristics because we can see the semblances and because in literature, we have agreed to regard it this way.

It also important to understand, that the long tradition of explaining literature and the other arts in terms of representation is matched by an equally long tradition of discomfort

with this notion. Plato accepted the common view that literature is a representation of life, but for that very reason he thought it should be banished from the ideal state. Representations, Plato reasoned, are mere substitutes for the things themselves; even worse, they may be false or illusory substitutes that stir up anti-social emotions (violence or weakness), and they may represent bad persons and actions, encouraging imitation of evil and for Plato, only certain kinds of representations, carefully controlled by the state, were to be permitted into Plato's republic of rational virtue.

According to David (1992), there have been many other challenges to the notion of literary representation. Most of them, like prohibitions against idolatry or pornography, accept the basic model of the representational triangle but try to restrict or modify it in the service of some set of values. Thus, idealist theories of the arts will often posit some "higher nature" as the preferred object of representation and consign the representation of ordinary life to lower genres, such as caricature or satire, or some non-aesthetic genre, like "documentary or history. Realist theories of the arts tend to consign the idealist genres to the realm of "romance" and to see them as merely imaginary, fanciful representations. Both theories adopt the representational model of art: they simply disagree about what is to be represented (what Aristotle called the "object").

If representation sneak back in, it is likely to be turned backward: art imitates life, reality (nature, society, the unconscious) is a text, and there is nothing outside the text. Once this turn is made, then the opposition between "life" and "literature" which animates the traditional notion of literary representation begins to fall apart. But the structure of representation itself, as a relation of standing for, seems to come back with a vengeance. Concepts such as the identity of the text, the determinacy of meaning, the integrity of the author, and the validity of interpretation all play a role in the representational (or anti-representational) character of literary texts. The highly self-conscious fictive "labyrinths" of

Jorge Luis Borges, also employed by Okri with their pastiches of scholarly and historical documentation, deadpan realism, and bizarre fantasy, are often cited as paradigms of postmodern literary representation (Bakhtim, 1986)

1.9 The OriginsandBasic Argumentsof Postmodernismagainst Modernism.

According to Huyssen, (1986) the origin of postmodernism as a philosophical movement is largely a reaction against the philosophical assumptions and values of the modern period of Western (specifically European) history—i.e., the period from about the time of the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries to the mid-20th century. Indeed, many of the doctrines characteristically associated with postmodernism can fairly be described as the straightforward denial of general philosophical viewpoints that were taken for granted during the 18th-century Enlightenment, though they were not unique to that period. The most important of these viewpoints are the following.

1. There is an objective natural reality, a reality whose existence and properties are logically independent of human beings—of their minds, their societies, their social practices, or their investigative techniques. Postmodernists dismiss this idea as a kind of naive realism. Such reality as there is, according to postmodernists, is a conceptual construct, an artifact of scientific practice and language. This point also applies to the investigation of past events by historians and to the description of social institutions, structures, or practices by social scientists.
2. The descriptive and explanatory statements of scientists and historians can, in principle, be objectively true or false. The postmodern denial of this viewpoint—which follows from the rejection of an objective natural reality—is sometimes expressed by saying that there is no such thing as truth.
3. Through the use of reason and logic and with the more specialized tools provided by science and technology, human beings are likely to change themselves and their societies for the

better. It is reasonable to expect that future societies will be more humane, more just, more enlightened, and more prosperous than they are now. Postmodernists deny this Enlightenment faith in science and technology as instruments of human progress. Indeed, many postmodernists hold that the misguided (or unguided) pursuit of scientific and technological knowledge led to the development of technologies for killing on a massive scale in World War II. Some go so far as to say that science and technology—and even reason and logic—are inherently destructive and oppressive, because they have been used by evil people, especially during the 20th century, to destroy and oppress others.

4. Reason and logic are universally valid—i.e., their laws are the same for, or apply equally to, any thinker and any domain of knowledge. For postmodernists, reason and logic too are merely conceptual constructs and are therefore valid only within the established intellectual traditions in which they are used.
5. There is such a thing as human nature; it consists of faculties, aptitudes, or dispositions that are in some sense present in human beings at birth rather than learned or instilled through social forces. Postmodernists insist that all, or nearly all, aspects of human psychology are completely socially determined.
6. Language refers to and represents a reality outside itself. According to postmodernists, language is not such a "mirror of nature," as the American pragmatist philosopher, Richard Rorty, characterized the Enlightenment view. Inspired by the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, postmodernists claim that language is semantically self-contained, or self-referential: the meaning of a word is not a static thing in the world or even an idea in the mind but rather a range of contrasts and differences with the meanings of other words. Because meanings are in this sense functions of other meanings—which themselves are functions of other meanings, and so on—they are never fully "present" to the speaker or hearer but are endlessly "deferred."

Derrida, (1969) asserts thatself-reference characterizes not only natural languages but also the more specialized "discourses" of particular communities or traditions; such

discourses are embedded in social practices and reflect the conceptual schemes,moral and intellectual values of the community or tradition in which they are used. The postmodern view of language and discourse is due largely to the French philosopher and literary theorist Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), the originator and leading practitioner of deconstruction.

1.10 The Deep Structures of Literary Representations

Mithen and Gazzaniga make statements that represent complementary extremes in our current evolutionary understanding of the human mind. Mithen (1996) declares that "when thoughts originating in different domains can engage together, the result is an almost limitless capacity for imagination." Gazzaniga (1997) poses a rhetorical question "What Are Brains For?" The answer is "Sex." Both statements are correct, more or less, but neither by itself provides us with enough structure to build a usable model of literary representations. If we try to go directly from these statements to literary representation, we end up either with too little constraint, or with too much. If we take Mithen's statement alone, we end up with unlimited combinations of images that could only be catalogued seriatim. And if we take Gazzaniga's statement alone, we end up with some version of the simple proposition that all literary works are ultimately about sex, which they are written out of sexual motives, that they represent sexual relationships, and that they are read for the purpose, direct or indirect, of sexual gratification. Neither statement alone provides adequate structure, but if we combine them and mediate between them, we shall find that we now have the means for analyzing literary representations and for understanding the psychological functions of literature.

Throughout this work, the term "literature" will be used as a short-hand term signifying both oral and written forms of narrative, verse, and dramatic enactment. Writing is an extension of oral communication. Literacy is less than ten thousand years old, and it should be clear that no claim is being made here that literacy and its offshoots are themselves

adaptations. When reference is made of the adaptive functions of literature, it is to signify the adaptive functions of the oral antecedents of written stories, poems, and plays.

The same arguments that apply to these oral forms will be understood as extending also to their counterparts in written language. Mithen has assimilated and revised a central concept of evolutionary psychology-the idea that the human mind contains a rich array of innate structures that have evolved through the adaptive process of natural selection. Some of the most prominent evolutionary psychologists (Tooby and Cosmides, Pinker) conceptualize evolved psychological structures as "modules" dedicated to specific domains or adaptive tasks, for example, to visual cognition, mate selection, and predator avoidance. Drawing on recent work by cognitive scientists, mainly psychologists and philosophers, Mithen argues that between one hundred thousand and thirty thousand years ago, the human mind underwent a crucial phase of evolutionary development.

The modules dedicated to hitherto separate domains became permeable, and the mind began to make analogical connections among them. This reflexive capacity, which Mithen calls "cognitive fluidity," is a necessary precondition for the production of modern culture--for complex technology, science, art, and religion. The concept of cognitive fluidity brings evolutionary psychology into partial alignment with a set of ideas that has already been long-established in a field sometimes called cognitive linguistics or cognitive rhetoric. The seminal text in this field is Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Both authors have published subsequent work independently, and Lakoff has co-authored a book with the literary scholar Turner, who has himself published various independent works. Lakoff and Johnson argue that "our ordinary conceptual system . . . is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" and further, that we habitually use constructs from one "domain" of experience to talk about corresponding concepts in other domains (Johnson 1999).

Lakoff and Johnson are making a claim not just about the logic of specific figures of speech, as decorations or elaborations of isolated concepts, but about the elementary structures of whole conceptual systems. Propositions of this sort hold out the promise of situating literary analysis within some stable, empirically grounded and philosophically rationalized system of general knowledge. To connect literary study with cognitive science would be to render it thus far scientific--objective, progressive, and technical.

In the nearly two decades since Lakoff and Johnson made their argument, this promise has not been realized. The central problem the cognitive rhetoricians have failed to solve is that of grounding the concept of "domains" within some larger concept of human experience and cognition. In the work of Lakoff, Johnson, and Turner, the concept of domains remains nebulous and variable. They propose to establish order by identifying hierarchies of metaphors, but these hierarchies are themselves grounded in no larger or deeper set of regularities and can provide no stable basis of causal or systematic connection. The closest Turner gets to a systematic order is an apparently random list of categories that he calls "conceptual domains": eating, dress, learning, buildings, travel, combat, and plants. He makes no effort to correlate these domains with the concept of domain-specific modules in evolutionary psychology, nor does he provide any other rationale or organizing principle for the list. He says only that these categories are "basic source domains, grounded in our forms of life"

The failure of cognitive rhetoric is one of the most encouraging developments in the literary theory of the past decade. It is encouraging because the cause of failure is easy to diagnose, and the diagnosis points us very clearly in the direction we need to take. The one crucial element missing in cognitive rhetoric is an ordered system of domains; the necessary precondition for this system is a structured concept of human nature; and the source for this

concept is the study of the adapted mind--that is, the study of the evolved structure of the human psyche. One of the best pieces of evidence for this diagnosis can be found in the work of the cognitive rhetoricians themselves. Their own logic leads them inexorably to invoke the adapted mind as the site of metaphoric domains. They simply fail to carry through on their own logic. Johnson (1987) titles a book *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*.

Lakoff, (1999) affirms that "our conceptual systems grow out of bodily experience." He grounds all "*cognitive models*" in "experience"; and he grounds experience in "the internal genetically acquired makeup of the organism and the nature of its interactions in both its physical and its social environments" (xiv, xv). Together Lakoff and Johnson declare that "our conceptual systems grow out of our bodies" and that "meaning is grounded in and through our bodies". Turner (1991) follows these leads. He insists on the bodily basis of meaning and stipulates, "A brain is part of a body and in operation is inseparable from it. Evolutionarily, the brain exists only in order to serve the reproductive and metabolic body of which it is a part" (Turner, 1996).

Similarly, attempting to integrate cognitive psychology with literary analysis, Spolsky (1993) appeals to "the evolutionary history of the species" and to "the genetically inherited architecture of the brain". He argues, that once one has made any such appeal as this, the obvious and inescapable next step is the step toward human ethnology or human sociobiology, and it is a step that each of these writers fails to take. Their bibliographies contain almost no titles of books or articles on the evolution of human sexuality, human sociality, or human behavior of any kind. Their emphasis on "the body" has restricted itself largely to concepts of physical direction or orientation - concepts like up and down, and front and back.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) identify the idea of physical well-being as the source domain for concepts of morality and the idea of family structure as the source domain for concepts of political orientation. These concepts do not form part of a comprehensive conception of a species-typical motivational structure. On the contrary, Lakoff and Johnson reject the concept of a relatively stable set of species-typical characteristics. They argue that in biology, cognitive science, and neuroscience "human nature is conceptualized rather in terms of variation, change, and evolution, not in terms of a fixed list of central features". Given the relatively slow pace of evolutionary change, one cannot legitimately invoke evolution as an antithesis to the idea of a distinctly structured set of species-typical characteristics. The question is whether evolution has produced any such set of characteristics in human beings. The answer from evolutionary psychology is that it has.

In one broad and obvious sense, the problem presented by the failure of cognitive rhetoric is easy of solution. It is simply a matter of expanding one's reading to take in as much information as possible about the evolved structure of the human psyche. Lakoff, Johnson, and Turner are by no means wrong to emphasize the body and even to insist on the primacy of a few directional concepts that regulate physical existence, but we hardly need stop there in defining the architecture of human experience. We already have a large amount of well-documented information about the species-typical structure of human motives and concerns. The problem that presents itself to us is this: how do we connect our current understanding of species-typical motives with the concept of domain-specific reasoning, and further, how do we use these combined concepts for the purposes of literary analysis? The first thing to consider is the actual current status of our understanding of domains and modules.

At first sight, the theory of domains presents a jumbled array of possibilities, a mere disparate list of specialized cognitive mechanisms. For example, Tooby and Cosmides (1992) offer a list of special modules for the following functions: face recognition, spatial relations, rigid object mechanics, tool use, fear, social exchange, emotion perception, kin-oriented motivation, effort allocation and recalibration, child care, social inference, sexual attraction, semantic inference, friendship, grammar acquisition, communication pragmatics, theory of mind, "and so on." This is the sequence they themselves give, and the "and so on" signifies an open-ended series. Pinker, (1994) offers a similar list containing fifteen items. For someone who is concerned with analyzing the imaginative structure of literary texts, lists of this sort would probably not seem very helpful. Taking such a list as a guide, the critic could do little more than catalogue metaphors, a practice that would not take us beyond the kind of random analysis of metaphoric structures practiced by the cognitive rhetoricians. It takes us scarcely beyond the unlimited field of metaphoric particularities that has been thoroughly tilled by old-fashioned literary critics since the early decades of this century.

Faced with any such random list, the natural impulse is to start grouping items into larger categories. Among cognitive psychologists concerned with domain-specificity, there is still substantial controversy about the definition, number, and organization of cognitive domains, but there is also a fair degree of consensus about some of the main categories in which to group domains. The starting point for domain-specific reasoning has been the purely sensory modules, like that for visual perception, and the concept of a language module, derived from Noam Chomsky. Beyond these heavily studied modules, there is wide-spread agreement on the existence of at least three main cognitive domains: the domains of physics, biology, and psychology. (See Sperber 1994, Carey and Spelke, 1994, Cosmides and Tooby 1994, Mithen, 199, Pinker, 1997) The psychological domain is sometimes called the "theory of mind module," and it consists in the recognition of feelings and thoughts in other minds.

The domain of physics is the area in which we can locate the directional metaphors (up-down, etc.) that preoccupy the cognitive rhetoricians. By adding biology and psychology to the purely spatial sphere, the cognitive evolutionary psychologists bring us much closer to the range of subjects and motives that constitute the substance of most literary texts.

Assuming for the moment that there is adequate empirical support for the provisional grouping of domains into a few major categories, how does that advance the case for literary analysis? In order to make use of cognitive domains as categories of literary analysis, we have to correlate domains with some specific structure of human motives and concerns and locate the functions of literary representation within this structure of motives and concerns. Literature represents human motives and concerns, and it is written and read because it satisfies human needs. If evolutionary psychology can give a comprehensive explanation of motives and concerns, it should both provide taxonomy of themes in literary representation and also explain why people read and write and how literature affects them.

To begin with, how does a list of four or five major cognitive domains translate into a structure of human motives and concerns? At this point, we should recall the question by Gazzaniga. What are brains for? If we reformulate the answer in a less rhetorically striking way, we can say that the function of the brain is to promote *inclusive fitness*. The differential transmission of genes depends on the organism surviving long enough to reproduce, and in human beings it involves also parenting, collateral nepotism, and the successful negotiation of a social environment. These basic requirements result in behavioral mechanisms oriented to solving problems within a limited range of concerns. McCabe, (2005) identify four basic behavioral systems: survival, reproduction, kin assistance, and reciprocation. Following the same logic, Buss (1999) surveys the whole field of evolutionary psychology within a

sequence of book sections devoted to (in this order): survival, sex and mating, parenting and kinship, and group living.

Evolutionary psychologists emphasize proximal mechanisms of adaptation, and in this respect they distinguish their method from that of socio-biological thinkers who place a greater emphasis on the direct and immediate pursuit of reproductive advantage. Barkow, (1989), Symons, (1992), Tooby and Cosmides (1992) Evolutionary psychologists nonetheless recognize that all proximal mechanisms can have evolved only under the regulative force of inclusive fitness. Features of living organisms that are physiologically expensive and that display complex functional organization can have evolved only if they enabled the organism to pass on its genes more effectively than other, competing organisms.

Thus, Cosmides and Tooby, taking issue with the purely epistemological preoccupations of cognitive psychology, argue that "cognitive mechanisms capable of acquiring knowledge evolved solely because they sub-served a larger cognitive architecture that regulated behavior" The more closely any motive impinges on the elementary principles of inclusive fitness, the deeper it goes into the regulative structure of species-typical motives. The two behavioral systems that most directly impinge on inclusive fitness are survival and reproduction. Discussing a broad range of research into human motives, Buss (1999) observes that "power and love emerge consistently and cross-culturally as the two most important dimensions of interpersonal behavior". In the grouping of domains into four or five major categories, this whole primary set of concerns falls within the basic categories of "psychology" or "social interaction." Reproductive interests - sex, parenting, and family - form a clear and distinct subset of these categories. There is ample evidence for evolved cognitive structures that regulate these specific motives and concerns.

According to Bakhtin, (1986), in order to make any hierarchical principle of human motivation usable for literary analysis, we must stipulate that there is a fundamental parallel between the structure of human motives and concerns and the organizing principles of literary representation. Human beings living in a real physical world and interacting both with their physical environment and with other human beings form the central topic of all literary representation. Cognitive rhetoric emphasizes metaphorical relationships, but this elementary configuration presents us with a primary, literal order of representations.

Metaphors are diverse, but they have meaning and force only in the degree to which they reflect the elementary structure of human motives and concerns.In literature the most frequent and important themes are those that concern individual identity, sexual romance, and the family. Survival is the basis of all adventure stories, and by far the largest proportion of stories that are not strictly oriented to survival are organized around the mating game, the concerns of parents for children, and family relations generally. On the basis of such observations, we can propose a large generalization about the primacy of adventure, personal success, and romance within the themes of world literature, and this kind of generalization can in fact yield hypotheses that are testable through large-scale cross-cultural analyses of literary subjects, Wilson, (1993).

Both social and cognitive activity are a significant part of what is actually represented in literature, and they are inextricably intertwined with themes of personal power and reproductive success, but in literary texts they will almost always have less structural importance than the more primary levels of somatic and reproductive effort. That is, most plots will be grounded more deeply in issues of personal power and love than in problems of social antagonism, social affiliation, and the pursuit of knowledge about the physical and natural world. The broader biological and physical environments that constrain personal and

social interaction have their own affective values, and these values are registered in nature poetry and the description of setting. Much of the metaphoric elaboration of intimate human relations derives from images of the natural world. And conversely, virtually all direct representations of the natural world are intertwined and suffused with the images and effects of intimate personal relations.

Literature itself has until recently been the only great repository of information about human nature. Empirical psychology is scarcely a hundred years old, and much of the psychological theory in this century has foundered amidst the sensational and distorted speculations of Freud and the barren reductions of behaviorism. Throughout the greater part of our history, our best psychologists have been playwrights, poets, and novelists. When Hamlet tells the players that the purpose of the poet is to hold "the mirror up to nature" (III: ii), it is human nature he has most in mind. Literary authors have intuitively understood that the subject matter of literature is human experience, that experience is grounded in common natural motives and feelings, and that sympathetic response to the depiction of experience in texts depends on the common shared experience among authors, the characters depicted, and the audience. Understanding the inner workings of the mind has been the heart and soul of the literary tradition, as it no doubt was the heart and soul of the oral traditions that are the ancestors of all literate cultures.

Carroll, (1995) asserts that any psychological system could become the basis for an associated school of literary analysis, but only a Darwinian conception of the evolved and adapted character of the human mind can provide an understanding of human nature that is sufficiently profound and incisive to correspond with the intuitive understanding embodied in the literary tradition. In the middle decades of this century, literary critics sometimes used Jungian ideas of innate "archetypes" as categories for the analysis of universal human themes,

and these categories can be partially but very imperfectly correlated with the themes of evolutionary psychology. At present, overwhelmingly the most influential version of psychology in literary studies is the Freudian version. Literature itself appeals to a sense of human nature truer and deeper than Freudian doctrine, and evolutionary psychology has already corrected basic elements in the Freudian scheme of analysis. Wilson (1993), Degler (1991) Buss, (1999). Freudian readings of literary texts almost inevitably introduce distorting ideas of incest and castration anxiety, and a form of literary analysis that appeals to evolutionary psychology rather than Freudian psychoanalysis will have a vastly improved access to the deep structure of literary representations. Carroll, (1995), Brown (1983) argues that the idea of the self or of individual persons is a human universal, and Pinker (1994) includes it as one of the "modules" or cognitive domains. Among human beings, the sense of individual persons is the conscious correlative for the biological concept of the organism, and this concept is an essential precondition for the organization of behavior in goal-directed ways and for the interaction of individuals in social groups.

In literary structures, the idea of an individual self is indispensable to the organization of literary meaning. Characters in poems, plays, and stories are individuals, and authors necessarily present their stories from some distinct point of view. All emotion and cognition is organized within the individual mind, and the response of audiences to literary works is thus necessarily lodged in individuals, even when the response is collectively experienced, as in the audience of a play. For these reasons, the study of individual psychology is integral both to the Darwinian conception of human beings and to literary analysis.

The modern study of Darwinian psychology has tended to concentrate on the idea of human universals, and within the Darwinian community itself there has been controversy over the adaptive significance of individual variations. Theorists who believe that individual

variations are not adaptively important argue that adaptations display complex functional structure and that any such structure must be common to the species as a whole. (See Tooby and Cosmides 1990.) Other theorists seek to explain the adaptive value of variation within a given ecology. (See MacDonald 1995; Wilson 1993, Buss, 1999) For the purposes of identifying a species-typical human psychological design, the crucial point to be made is that human universals and individual variations are not mutually exclusive concepts. The dimensions through which individual identity is structured and in which it necessarily varies are themselves universals. These dimensions are part of the evolved structure of human nature.

Tooby and Cosmides (1992) argue that evolutionary psychology must work both backwards and forwards, from hypotheses about ancestral environments to predictions about evolved structures, and from observation of evolved structures to speculations about ancestral conditions. Any information on universal features of the human design, even if they have been studied by scientists indifferent to evolutionary psychology, provide substantive empirical data that can be used by evolutionary psychologists. One of the most important set of structures for individual identity are the five factors of personality.

These factors; neuroticism/security, conscientiousness/carelessness, and curiosity/dullness can be used for the comparative analysis of characters, authors, and audience response. Each of these factors can be described in ways that correlate with a biologically based understanding of human motives and concerns. The extraversion/introversion scale involves the elementary biological terms of organism and environment, measuring whether the organism is more responsive to external stimuli or, alternatively, more attuned to internal processes. In literary terms, the concept of organism and environment correlates with the concept of character and environment, and it is thus an

indispensable dimension for assessing literary situations. Agreeableness and antagonism identify the two possible extremes in social interaction. They thus reflect basic principles in the hierarchy of elementary regulative principles for human behavior. Neuroticism involves an array of traits that respond to danger and that are thus signals of threat to survival both of the organism and of his/her kin and social affiliates. Conscientiousness is a quality of character that is essential to personal success and to authority within a social group. Openness or intellect is a measure of responsive sensitivity to the whole range of environmental conditions, physical and social. According to Arnhart, (1998) These latter two factors, conscientiousness and openness, form the basis of the theory of moral psychology worked out by Darwin (1871) in *The Descent of Man*, and they remain basic parts of Darwinian ethical psychology.

Individuals vary in the degree to which they are extraverted or introverted, emotionally stable or insecure, intellectually open or dull, friendly or antagonistic, and conscientious or careless, but variations in these dimensions can be likened to variations in other adaptive features of the human design - for example, in keenness of eyesight or hearing, intelligence, physical strength, and sexual attractiveness. (Wilson 1993). The observation of such differences is part of the common experience of everyday social interaction, and evolutionary psychologists have now begun to make reasonable conjectures about the ways in which such differences can be integrated into other fundamental features of the human motivational system. For instance, Ashton *et al.* (1998) correlate differences of agreeableness and emotional stability both with sex differences and with differential dispositions to kin altruism and reciprocal altruism, (MacDonald 1995)

Buss, (1992) argues that the dimensions of personality in the five-factor system "summarize the most important features of the social landscape that humans have had to

adapt to." (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1985). If Buss is correct, and if it is also correct that literary texts reflect an intuitive psychological understanding of human nature, we can anticipate that literary representations will depict the way humans perceive individual differences and integrate their perceptions into elemental motives such as mate-selection strategies. For the sake of illustration, I shall cite here one specific kind of individual difference that enters into stories of female mate selection. Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* can serve as the main example. At the level of socio-biological themes of mate selection, we can see that the heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, marries a male, Darcy, who is higher in status than herself, and that he demonstrates his suitability as a mate in part by extending protection to her endangered kin (her sister Lydia).

At the level of resolution appropriate to personality theory, Elizabeth undergoes a process of sorting through the personality factors, learning to make allowances for the qualities of manner attendant on Darcy's introversion, and learning through her experience with Wickham the relatively small reliance to be placed on agreeableness when it is not accompanied by conscientiousness. In the largest thematic structure in the book, she rearranges her whole psychic economy to detach herself from her father, who is cultivated but careless, and to attach herself instead to the ethos of responsibility represented by Darcy. This psychological reorientation plays itself out in dialogue that is concerned with the functions of satire and humor, and thus with the tonal, literary dimensions that correlate with the psychological dimensions.

All of the characters in the narrative play the mating game, in accordance with socio-biological rules, but they also form a carefully constructed array of personality types within a psychological economy dominated by the lead couple, and they self-consciously assess one another on the basis of verbal and imaginative styles that reflect their specific psychological

constitutions. Similar kinds of intuitive psychological depictions are integral parts of the meaning system of most fictional narratives. The specific pattern used as the elementary structure of plot is by no means universal but is certainly very common. Personality factors can be used in the analysis of characters, authors, and readers. They provide points of entry into the values and sensibility of any given author and a means for assessing the evaluative response of audiences to any given author. For instance, Fielding and his protagonists are robust and good-natured, sensual but friendly and open, outgoing but a little lax in their moral fiber.

Rather than attempting to locate this configuration within some supposedly absolute standard of literary merit, we can instead understand that certain kinds of critical temperaments will respond to Fielding with genial warmth, and that others, more neurotically sensitive, withdrawn, and antagonistic, will find him an uncomfortable companion. Pater, in contrast, is introverted, sensual, and narcissistic. He has evoked a narrower range of sympathetic response, but he has a small, distinct cadre of like-minded readers-- for whom words such as "aestheticism" and "decadence" evoke no unpleasant connotations. The use of personality factors as categories of analysis need not pretend to be exhaustive. These factors can be combined with any array of significant traits--for instance, of sex or gender, age, social class, national or ethnic identity, and cultural period. (Sugiyama, 1996)

But if personality dimensions are in fact part of the evolved structure of the human psyche, they provide us terms that are in themselves important and that can serve as stable points of comparison. Pinker (1997: 315) observes that "cognitive scientists think of people as Mr X without the funny ears" and a similar observation could be made of the cognitive rhetoricians. If we accept the stipulation that the organizing principles of literary representation run parallel to the structure of human motives and concerns, we must also

accept an implication that takes us outside the range of conceptual analysis in cognitive rhetoric and brings us into the psychology of emotion. Motives and concerns are mediated not, in the first place, by conceptual patterns or metaphoric systems. They are mediated most directly by feelings or affects, by desire and fear, by pleasure and pain. Ekman, (1994) argues that "the commonalities in the antecedent events that call forth each emotion are the product of our evolution and reflect the most important or frequent events our ancestors encountered." Motives and emotions evolved together. Both have to be understood within the framework of evolutionary psychology.

Metaphors have imaginative and specifically literary value only if they are able to engage and evoke the subjective quality of experience. Feelings are the basis of tone in literary texts, and tone is the basis of generic structure. Working out from a concept of the evolved structure of human motives and concerns, we can derive a reasonable framework for analyzing both the subjects of literary representation and the emotional affects that give subjective value and meaning to represented events. To give value and meaning is to impose shape; it is to define what, subjectively, constitutes an "event."

In the study of emotions, as in the study of cognitive domains and personality factors, there is a good deal of controversy over the identification of the specific units of analysis and the larger categories within which they are grouped. There is nonetheless a fair consensus on certain core emotions, particularly on the six emotions identified by Ekman as having distinct facial expressions that are recognizable across diverse cultures. These six basic emotions are joy, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, and surprise. All of these emotions are essential components in the tonal and generic structures in literary texts. Sadness is the basis of elegy and tragedy; and happiness the basis of comedy. Surprise is essential to suspense, and anger

and disgust are the animating sentiments of satire. (On universal, species-typical emotions, (see Ekman and Davidson 1994; Lewis and Haviland, Pinker, 1994)

The main plot structures in literary representations map simultaneously onto elementary human motives and basic emotions. The story of growth from childhood to adulthood, the adventure quest, the romantic comedy love story, the saga of revenge, the drama of jealousy--all have their place in the structure of elemental human motives, and they each have their characteristic set of emotions. The reading audience characteristically participates in the emotional experiences of the characters, sympathizes with them, experiences anxiety and hope as their fortunes vary, and finally experiences satisfaction or disappointment at the outcome of the action. This much is much is represented in Okri's *The Famished Road and Flowers and Shadows*

The basic emotional trajectory of any plot can be modulated through any combination of other emotions. The joy and anxiety of a romantic comedy plot like that of *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, can be modulated by anger and disgust, fear, remorse, shame, defiance, gratitude, and compassion. The main plot structure nonetheless follows a primary emotional trajectory, and this trajectory serves as the principle around which all the other emotions are organized. In this respect, the emotional trajectory of a literary work is parallel to the representation of motives. That is, the array of incidental motives in any representation is brought into subordinate order to the elemental motives that determine the primary plot structure. Elemental human motives and emotions provide the deep structure of literary representations, and this deep structure serves to organize subordinate motives and subordinate emotions.

We trace from Mithen's appeal to cognitive fluidity: "When thoughts originating in different domains can engage together, the result is an almost limitless capacity for

imagination" Mithen, (1996). The range of metaphoric combination is limitless, but combinations become meaningful only by being integrated with the elemental structure of human motives and human emotions. Even the most fanciful and phantasmagoric literary texts--for example, Ben Okri's hallucinatory allegories of spiritual experience, *in The Famished Road*- speak to us and move us because their fantasies give metaphoric form to elemental passions and universal concerns-to themes of life and death, personal identity, sexual desire, parental affections, and to the love of friends and the hatred of enemies as represented by Azaro, Madem Koto, the photographer, Azaro's mother and father and a host of other characters in *The Famished Road and Flowers and Shadows.*

The question of the adaptive function of literature is at present highly controverted. Literary theorists who take fitness maximization as a direct motive speculate that the writing of literature is a form of social manipulation or of sexual display. (Constable 1997: Sugiyama 1996; and Miller 1998) From this perspective, writing is a means of attracting attention, enhancing prestige, and thus advancing one's reproductive prospects. The question of function is reduced directly to "ultimate" function, and the psychological functions specific to literature are simply passed over. Pinker (1997) follows the traditional division of literary function into two parts-use and pleasure, or instruction and entertainment. As instruction, he says, literature serves an adaptive function because it provides us with models for situations we might meet with in our own lives. As a form of pleasure, literature is a non-functional by-product of higher cognitive processes. In describing the pleasures specific to literature, Pinker, like Freud (146-47), suggests that literature is mainly a means of fantasy fulfillment. (Buss, 1999)

The argument being made is the way literature grounds itself in elemental motives and basic emotions which suggests a different hypothesis about its psychological function;

literature is satisfying - moving or disturbing - not in the degree to which it fulfills fantasy expectations - though it can do this - but in the degree to which it provides a sense of psychological order. It provides order by depicting the particularities of time and place - of cultural context, individual circumstance, and personal character - and by integrating these particularities with the elemental structures of human concerns. Through literature and its oral antecedents, we recognize the elemental structures of human concerns in our own lives and in those of others. We filter out the trivial and the tangential aspects of experience and see into the deep structure of our nature. And we not only "see"- not only understand objectively. Through stories and verse and dramatic enactments - whether written or oral - we realize our deeper nature in vividly subjective ways. Through such realization, we situate ourselves consciously within our environments and organize the feelings and thoughts through which we regulate our behavior. Literature produces pleasure, but it is not merely a "pleasure technology" equivalent to recreational drugs (Pinker, 1994). It is one of the primary means through which we regulate our complex cognitive machinery. It contributes to personal and social development and to the capacity for responding flexibly and creatively to complex and changing circumstances. (Dissanayake, 1992)

As Pinker argues, literature presents simulated (representational) situations through which we can model our own behaviors, but it does not only provide game plans for specific situations. It integrates emotional processes with elemental motives in highly particularized circumstances that we might never encounter-for example, the circumstances of being stranded on an island like those of Robinson Crusoe. The utility of reading about such experience does not depend on duplicating it in literal terms. Readers register the qualities of character through which Crusoe sustains himself in solitude, and they integrate these perceptions with the repertory of their psychological potentialities. Moreover, imaginatively assimilated experience serves not only to guide our own behavior but also to assess the

experience of others. In this latter regard, literature is a medium for cultivating our innate and socially adaptive capacity for entering mentally into the experience of other people. (Brown 1983 and Buss 1999)

The predominant forms of literary study at the present time offer unqualified assent to a "historicist" belief that all experience is determined by autonomous and historically unique cultural processes. (Dissanayake 1992; Carroll 1995; and Storey 1996) Such beliefs are parallel to the belief in cultural autonomy that distinguishes the Standard Social Science Model. (Degler, 1991; Brown 1983; Tooby and Cosmides 1992; and Federman, 1990.) Evolutionary psychology can revise such views by demonstrating that elemental, species - typical motives constrain all specific cultural forms. Of all competing theoretical alternatives, evolutionary psychology gives the most access to the elemental structure of human concerns. It thus offers the best available framework for understanding the psychological functions and represented content of literature. As a framework for literary study, evolutionary psychology can best fulfill its promise by integrating the basic principles of inclusive fitness with models for the analysis of personality and emotion.

1.11 Key Assumptions of Literary Representation

David (1992) has argued that, literary representation is understood to mean an action or word spoken or written on behalf of another and the “word” has been generally accepted as meaning some type of supreme consciousness-self-created, self-enervating and self-sustaining consciousness. It is simple and quite obvious: that man is a creative and imitative animal, but the point must be made which is that literature more than music, art or science, offers man the fullest possibility of realizing this potential. In literature, according to Foucault, (1972) the poetics of representation and discourse proceed on the following key assumptions; that,

(i) Objects so represented in literary text always exhibit traceable historical resemblance in putative contexts. (That is why we could agree that Azaro as an *Abiku* child in *The Famished Road* bear traceable resemblances with Nigeria)

(ii) In this context also, representation is a multi-voiced narrative texuality. This much corresponds with Mukarovsky's idea of "polyphonic or dialogic novel" which embodies diverse discourses that interact with, define, and are in turn shaped by their culture.

(iii) Literary representation is essentially panoramic in that it strives to provide its readers with a survey of the most important developments and events in history.

(iv) Representation is stylistically emploted especially metaphorically, thatseen something from the view point of another. Metaphor is therefore averitable means by which representation is achieved in a literary discourse.

(v) More importantly, representation embodies the life of the author, the social and historical situation which can be appropriated to unlock the textual meaning.

The nature of postmodernist representation analysis in a qualitative research method is to analyse the use of symbols in social contexts. It is also concerned with the creation of meaning through talk and texts analysis that provides insights into the way symbols are represented to help "shape and reproduce social meanings and forms of knowledge" (Foucault, 1972). Grounded in social constructivism, which emphasizes the socio-cultural interactions as sources of knowledge, the framework for representation analysis is based on the following three arguments according to Foucault:

- First, knowledge cannot be gained by pure objectivity as scientific and positivist researchers believe it can. A writer brings his or her own set of beliefs, cultural values, expectations, subjectivity and bias into the work when writing because he/she recognizes his or her own beliefs, and acknowledges how these beliefs, influenced by

his or her own personal, cultural, and historical experiences shapes interpretations of reality and knowledge.

- Second, reality is socially and culturally constructed. Unlike scientific approaches in which reality, ideas, or constructs (e.g. intelligence & attitudes) are categorized as naturally occurring things, in social constructivist or interpretive approaches, these categories and constructs are shaped by the language and since language is a socio-cultural phenomenon, our sense of reality is socially and culturally constructed. The goal of writer, then, is to give insights into the different views and perspectives of participants and how these views and perspectives are socially and historically negotiated.

- Third, in social constructivism, a writer is more interested in studying the language (discourse) and the role it plays in construction of meaning and knowledge in society. As such, the emphasis of such writing is placed on the discursive patterns of talk in societies, their impact on the formation and reproduction of social meanings and identities as well as their roles in empowering and disenfranchising institutions and individuals.

1.12 The Poetics Postmodernism and Literary Representation

The Poetics of literary representation is grounded in postmodernism, a paradigm that focuses on knowledge that comes to surface within the "negative conditions of the world and in the multiple perspectives of class, race, gender, and other group affiliations" (Foucault, 1972) These negative conditions reveal themselves in the presence of hierarchy, power and control and include the importance of different discourses, the importance of disenfranchised people and groups, and the presence of 'meta-narratives' or universals that hold true regardless of the social conditions (ibid). Thus, in postmodernist discourse, the critic is

concerned with how language is used in social and political contexts for ideological purposes and for reproducing and legitimizing power, and therefore "goes beyond the rhetorical or technical analysis of language or writing", but "to explore its social and political setting, uses and effects" (ibid). As such, there comes a need to "deconstruct texts" in the spoken and written language and to investigate, and bring to light hidden "hierarchies as well as dominations, oppositions, inconsistencies, and contradictions" (ibid).

Foucault, (1972) argues that the poetics of discourse as a framework of analysis in literature is not necessarily to provide "an account of every line of text under study" rather, it is more appropriate to select and extract sections of text that contain the richest source of analytical material. However, Foucault cautions that this should not imply that one should extract the sections that support the critic's argument, while leaving out the sections that are of contradictory nature. The interpretive processes that calls for close examination of specific texts "does not lend itself to hard-and-fast rules of method" (ibid). Foucault however, suggests some important pointers that could help with analysis such as;

(i) Identification of key themes and arguments;
(ii) Identification of associations and variation;
(iii) Examination of characterization and agency;
(iv) Attention to emphasis and silences.

According to (Hutcheon, 1988) the poetics of postmodernism is usually accompanied by a grand flourish of negativized rhetoric: we hear of discontinuity, disruption, dislocation, decentering, indeterminacy, and anti-totalization. What all these words literally do (precisely by their disavowing prefixes – *dis, de, in, anti*) is incorporate that which they aim to contest – 'as does, I suppose, the term postmodernism itself ' It would be argued that, postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges – be it in architecture, literature, painting, sculpture, film, video, dance,

TV, music, philosophy, aesthetic theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics, or historiography. Postmodernism cannot simply be used as a synonym for the contemporary and it does not really describe an international cultural phenomenon, it is primarily European and American (ibid). While all forms of contemporary art and thought offer examples of this kind of postmodernist contradiction, 'historiographic metafictions' are the most dominant. By this I mean those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive (such as *The Famished Road*) and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages. In most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative – be it in literature, history, or theory – that has usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic metaficiotn incorporates all three of these domains. Such labeling ('paramodernist' and 'midfiction') is another mark of the inherent contradictoriness of historiographic metafiction, for it always works withinconventions in order to subvert them. In postmodernism, the familiar humanist separation of art and life (or human imagination and order *versus* chaos' and disorder) no longer holds.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to Ben Okri's Background

According to Moh, Felicia Oka (2001), Ben Okri was born on 15 March 1959 in Minna, Nigeria, to an Igbo mother, Grace, and an Urhobo father, Silver. Okri's father, then a railway station clerk, soon left for England to study law. The rest of the family joined him shortly afterwards. Despite young Ben's protestations, the Okris returned to Lagos in 1965, where Silver Okri set up a law practice. While Ben Okri seldom reveals details about his childhood (unless perhaps his early memories of the Civil War), saying he 'would rather reserve that for the complex manipulations of memory that only fiction can provide' (Wilkinson 1992:77), he has extensively commented on his literary influences. They range from the African tales and legends his parents used to tell him to the European authors whose works he found in his father's library: Aristotle, Plato, Shakespeare, Dickens, Twain, Ibsen, Chekhov and Maupassant, among others. This double heritage, the intermingling of African myths and European sources, and the later influence of contemporary African writers, were to become major inspirations for Ben Okri's work.

Okri began writing articles and fiction in 1976, after failing to get a place at a university in Nigeria. He wrote a play and a novel while working in a paint company, and then moved to England, first to study comparative literature at the University of Essex, then to continue writing in London. His first novel, *Flowers and Shadows*, was published by Longman in 1980, and features a teenager's disillusionment with Nigeria's corrupt society, which, as he discovers, his own father is a part of. The story is, Okri insists, "not autobiographical *at all*" (Wilkinson 1992:79); unlike, perhaps, *The Landscapes Within* (1981), whose main character, Omovo, is a young painter living in Lagos. This novel, which

Okri was later to re-write under the title *Dangerous Love* (1996), may be considered an early artistic manifesto, for Omovo's approach to art seems in many ways to reflect the author's views on language and creation, as expressed later in the collection of essays *A Way of Being Free* (1997).

The Landscapes Within, as well as some of the short stories contained in *Incidents at the Shrine* (1986) and *Stars of the New Curfew* (1988) read as tales of a country, Nigeria, struggling with poverty, corruption, and sometimes war. These thematic interests were further developed in *The Famished Road* (1991), for which Okri won the Booker Prize. Based on the Yoruba myth of the *abiku* (the spirit-child who is born, dies and is reincarnated endlessly), the novel is told from the perspective of Azaro, a spirit-child who has decided to stay on earth. Throughout the book, the constant interaction between "reality" and the spirit world reminds one of African folktales as well as twentieth-century narratives inspired by the oral tradition, such as Amos Tutuola's. Ultimately, the myth of the *abiku*, who is infinitely dying and reborn, is intended as a symbol for the Nigerian nation. In 1993, *The Famished Road* was followed by a sequel (a "continuation of the dream", as Okri puts it [Mitchell 1994]), *Songs of Enchantment*; the *abiku* trilogy was later completed by *Infinite Riches* (1998).

In his 2002 novel *In Arcadia*, Okri turns to a European myth and describes a film crew's journey from England to Arcadia. Once again, art, if only through the multiple references to Poussin's *Les Bergers d'Arcadie*, figures as a central motif that allows the novelist to explore profound themes such as man's everlasting quest for happiness. The key role played by art and the imagination in the understanding and reshaping of the world is also explored in *Starbook* (2007), a fairytale-like allegory set in Africa during the early days of the transatlantic slave trade, and in *Tales of Freedom* (2009), a book that includes hybrid tales - which Okri calls *"stokus"* - combining features of the short story and the *haiku*.

2.2 Literature Review

Ben Okri has recently been acclaimed to be one of Africa's budding and emergent writers of his generation. His significant contribution to African literature has been recognized by both African and European critics. In an interview with Alastair Niven, (1996) Chinua Achebe suggested that the torch of Nigerian literature was currently being passed on from his generation to a new, younger generation of African writers. When asked to explain who represented this new generation, Achebe mentioned Ben Okri specifically. Achebe's tribute to Okri, therefore, not only draws attention to Okri's extraordinary talent, but it also signals the emergence of a younger generation of writers who are charting new directions for African literature. Stylistically Okri according to Busari (2010) clearly belongs in the vanguard of this generation, and his innovative literary experimentations have drawn increasing international attention to contemporary African literature.

In the past few years, Okri has received numerous international literary awards, including the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Africa, the Chianti Rufino-Antico Fattore International Literary Prize, and theParis Review Aga Khan Prize for Fiction, the Premio Grinzane Cavour, and the prestigious Booker Prize. In particular, critics have praised Okri for his ability to creatively experiment with new literary forms. Even though Okri's earlier novels are not nearly as experimental as his later ones, critics like Bamikunle (1996) and Zhu (2006) have shown that they develop unorthodox narrative strategies, that attempt to break from the tradition of social realism, which has dominated the African novel ever since it was first used by Chinua Achebe. Consequently, critics emphasize Okri's use of modernist conventions and make frequent comparisons between his first two novels and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. According to Fraser (2002), while their comparisons with modernism are certainly valid, Okri's restrained use of stream of consciousness and his exploration of

familial relations probably bear more similarities to Virginia Woolf's subtler modernist style than to Joyce's more aggressive experimentation. It is not until *The Famished Road* that Okri's writing really takes on the kind of epic grandeur, philosophical depth, and sustained experimentation found in Joyce. The main character in the novel moves back and forward, between human and spirit worlds especially, Azaro, the main character and narrator. Termed magic realism, Okri offers the reader a ghost story in modern grab, with details that are more likely to unsettle than delight.

Okri's middle works, *Incidents at the Shrine*and*Stars of the New Curfew*, have received less critical attention even though they represent a crucial phase in Okri's development as a writer. In the future, more critical attention needs to be given to these short stories in order to show how they create a bridge between Okri's earlier and later styles. In particular, greater critical analysis of *Stars of the New Curfew* would show more clearly how Okri has developed a uniquely African sense of postmodernism that derives from a creative extension of African folklore rather than being a derivative imitation of foreign postmodernist techniques. A few critics have begun this process, but there is still much more that needs to be done. For example, Alastair Niven's (1989) analysis of a short story from *Incidents at the Shrine* draws attention to Okri's increased mastery of narrative forms, and Fraser, (2002) and Cribb's (1992) essays show how *Stars of the New Curfew* explores more African narrative forms. While I share in these critical opinions, nevertheless, all three studies are partially flawed in their conclusions. Firstly, Niven's study and critique of Okri is not for Sfollowing the tradition of Achebe. It must be argued that what is however interesting about Okri's work is precisely the fact that it seeks to explore new directions. Therefore, to try to hold Okri to the standard of Achehe is, to misunderstand how his fiction inaugurates new aesthetic issues that require a new criteria of critical evaluation. Secondly, Fraser’s essay comes closer to the mark by emphasizing how Okri's fiction explores new postcolonial issues, yet it re-inscribes

these postcolonial concerns too quickly within Western debates about post-modernity, so it fails to adequately develop the African roots of Okri's new style. Lastly, Cribb's essay more carefully develops Okri's relationship to the tradition of Tutuola and the Yoruba novel, but it simply needs to go farther. Future critics would be wise to follow up on Cribb's essay and systematically develop the relationships between Okri and Tutuola to better understand how African traditions function in Okri's fiction.

Most of the critical analysis of Okri's fiction has focused on *The Famished Road*, which is unquestionably Okri's most important work so far, *The Famished Road* is clearly a literary tour de force that virtually defines the vanguard of contemporary African literature. There is something of a critical irony here that bears mentioning. Gerald Moore once claimed that Tutuola's style was a dead end for African literature because it would not be imitated. The Famished Road, however, has turned Tutuola's so-called dead end into the catalyst for exploring new aesthetic directions based on a broader understanding, of African folklore and less dependent on its imitation of the European novel. The powerfully unique style that Okri develops in *The Famished Road* has made Okri's work very difficult to categorize, though most critics describes it as an example of magical realism because it fuses a realistic narrative with a mythical one. For example, Ogunsanwo (1995) compares it to Gabriel García Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and Mahmutovic (2012) compares it to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*.

Certainly there is validity to these comparisons as evidenced by Okri's fusion of realism and myth, bold imagination, use of exaggeration and hyperbole, detailed description of uncanny events, and explorations of liminal zones and continually transforming characters. Nevertheless, Okri has tried to keep his work from being simplistically labelled as magical realism. In particular, it is essential to accept that Okri is not trying to create a world of magic

and myth that exists next to the real world as much as he is trying to extend our sense of the real world itself to include myths and magical events within it. If future critics want to continue reading *The Famished Road* as a work of magical realism, they would be wise to pay more attention to Okri's style and, at the very least, take the realistic dimensions of the work as seriously as the magical ones. Ideally, they should take Okri's efforts a step further to see the magical events as an African form of realism in which the magical world is part of the real world.

The second label that critics have attached to *The Famished Road* is postmodern. In particular, Hawley (1995) argues that Okri's works are postmodern because they mix genres, cross cultural boundaries, and intertextually parody both African and European traditions. Ogunsanwo, (1995) also argues that *The Famished Road* is postmodern because of its postmodern sense of intertextual parody. Both critics further emphasize that Okri's postmodern sensibilities derive from African as well as European sources. Ogunsanwo explains how The Famished Road is a parody of African myths and literature, and Hawley shows how its organizing principle derives from the widespread Nigerian belief in *abiku* spirit-children. These critics demonstrate, that Okri does not present us with an either/or situation: his narrative strategies are not either imitations of postmodern magical realism or sequels to Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. Rather, they bring both traditions together into a creative dialogue that reworks the one as much as the other.

It must be however be argued, that if future critics want to read *The Famished Road* as a postmodern work, they need to be much clearer about how its use of African narrative strategies and its exploration of African political issues develop a unique sense of postmodernism. Critics who are interested in looking at the postmodern condition from this genuinely cross-cultural post-colonial perspective will need to return to *The Famished*

*Road*repeatedly to unravel its many-layered mysteries. The key to understanding both Okri's use of magical realism and his use of postmodernism, therefore, is to read his works in the context of the Nigerian oral and literary traditions from which they develop.

While *The Famished Road* transpires in an unnamed Third World city, apparently based on the landscapes of the author's native Nigeria just as *Flowers and Shadows*, yet this is a Nigeria of the mind, as much as it is a place on the map, and it sets outs its boundary lines in folk tales, legends, rumours and incantations, rather than in geographical terms. *The Famished Road* starts it narration in a typical story telling-like manner;

> *...once upon a time, there was a road...and the road branched into several roads... and these were the myths of beginning...."These were not one amongst us who looked forward to being born,"* the narrator Azaro tells us at the outset of *The Famished Road."We disliked the rigors of existence, the unfulfilled longings, the enshrined injustices of the world."*

Azaro is an *abiku* or "spirit child," whose ties to the real world is weak. *"There are many reasons why babies cry when they are born,"* Azaro explains, *"and one of them is the sudden separation from the world of pure dreams."*

Azaro's parents can tell that their child has a precarious hold on life, and that he may return at any moment to the realm of the spirits. At one point, the youngster lingers between life and death for two weeks, and when he awakes he finds himself lying in a coffin—his parents had given him up for dead. Yet the death of a child may only serve as the Azaro's father works carrying heavy loads in the marketplace, and though he returns bent and exhausted from his labours, he still holds on to his dreams of a better life. Azaro's mother works peddling goods, and ekes out only the tiniest income from her labours. This family lives a hand-to-mouth existence in the direst poverty, and the cost of caring for their child's (and their own) ailments, as well as the ceremonial celebrations of recoveries, threaten to

exhaust their meagre resources. Creditors harass them. The landlord raises their rent, Political operatives and thugs bully them. All these are minor annoyances compared to the spirits, demons and monstrous creatures that constantly appear throughout Okri's novel. *The Famished Road* is not a typical book. Although almost the entire action of the story transpires in a small, impoverished village, (The Road). Ben Okri has overlaid a whole world (and otherworld) on to this modest setting. Amidst a literary culture in which fantasy and realism, myth-making and myth destroying, are often seen as incompatible approaches, this blurring of the boundaries is both pleasing and edifying.

The unveiling of wonder and the realization of ordinary events in an extraordinary light drives every attribute of Okri's novel. His characters are archetypes, who at first adhere to traditional roles until inspired or shocked into diverse strengths and weaknesses. Azaro's hard-working mother is introduced as a strong but straightforward character consumed with the usual cares of a loving maternal figure, until later when she becomes the rational and resilient backbone of the family as well as a source of creative enterprise. His father, on the other hand, impulsively turns from familial devotion one moment to spontaneous and often violent frenzy the next. Rather than portray a boxed-in and definitive impression of family, Okri explores the complexities of human character and how it transforms under the pressures and victories of existence, rendering the unpredictable.

Okri does not shy away from the issues which are brutally confronted in the text, such as poverty, disease, political treachery and corruption and so on and which remain especially important in regards to a contemporary audience. While much of his descriptions are metaphorical, drawing on mythical presences and epic scales, just as the ordinary is unearthed in raw beauty, so is the momentous oddly normalized, but without losing its impact. Azaro's bizarre interactions with the demons that haunt the forest as ecological doom

is foreshadowed, and the extreme melodramatics of village witch and pub owner Madame Koto – who takes on virtually supernatural proportions – as well as the local political parties' antics, reach a kind of hilarity which reminds the reader that this expected and best coped with by humour.

Okri's dealing with a food scandal – implemented by one of the parties who are inevitably indistinguishable from the other by the time the novel closes – and its parallels to toxic substances serve as an effective metaphor. And while taking on the form of parody, several characters expose and open up debate about how mental health itself – and lack of support – becomes a significant problem which tears apart families and the larger family of the community alike. But understanding of mental disorders is not embraced, and is attributed to the local lore instead where possession and intoxication are regular themes. While this is not an attempt at activism or awareness, it is Okri's tact in approaching a subject without the political correctness or process of "othering" but as yet another usual/unusual aspect of life which makes it so powerful.

Even in its bareness to an inexperienced reader, issues like food shortages, drought, landlord disputes, alcoholism, corruption, and sanitation are not meant to be defining (and therefore degrading) aspects of everyday life, but the way in which they are dealt with becomes a defining aspect of resilient character instead. Perhaps what is most revelatory about the novel is a passage in which Azaro expresses a capacity and awe for life which in itself could comprise the definition of life when he says:

> *It seems that our lives would know a new dawn, take on new colours of sweetness… The world was new to me, everything fresh. It was the earliest days of creation. I marvelled at cobwebs and cockroaches…The fact that human beings talked, laughed, wept, sweated, sang, without some visible thing which made all the animation possible…the fact that we can look out of our eyes, out of our inner worlds at people, but that people,*

> *looking at us couldn't see into our eyes, our thoughts, our inner worlds… With eyes wide open from a new fear of sleep, I looked at the world, I tried to see all that was in it, I embraced all things into my life. I hugged the alarming mystery of reality, and grew stronger.*

Whether it is this passage which renews in my eyes a way to see life, or how realism reflects the timeless poetic process itself, one cannot be sure. But each time one read it, it gives the reader something new and invigorating, and the rediscovery of language and the beauty of life itself continue to resonate with him/her long after this beloved book is returned to the shelf. Part of the reason for the ascendance of the novel form and the rise of realism and the almost complete deterioration to journalism was its desire to create a harmonious view point with which we can comprehend both our own world and the world of literature from the same cognitive lenses. But the literary act always starts on a presupposition of making the fantastic.

This gradual making ordinary of the folktale is also present in the history of man and his use of language and creation of literature. Man's imagination first concerned itself with the gods and with the mythologization of their activities. For doing this, no harm came to him. Then he decided to talk about man who had attained heroic proportions; of course, success emboldens the heart. Man then began to tell tales of men and gods and beast united in dialogue and actions, but that was not all. Little men, mean men, men who had no records of great achievements, these too were men and had to be talked about – and talk about them, man did. Paradoxically, this was the rise of a strand of humanism – man's celebration of himself. This is not suggesting here that all these took place in such a linear graphic form in the manner presented above, but we should not forget either that, as these things were happening people were at ease in that dispensation until Plato emerged on the scene.

Man was seen to be misusing the 'word'. Why should man portray the gods as telling lies, as falling in and out of love, and as engaged in acts of deception? Why must man

channel his imaginative capabilities towards the imitation of an imitation? The eccentric people doing that must be expelled from the ideal "Republic" However, if such imaginative men could talk of virtuous heroes, why not, they may be allowed a place in the republic. But that was in faraway ancient Greece and this need occasion no surprise. In a cosmology in which this world was seen as a corruption of a distant ideal one, what could one expect? Meanwhile, in near ancient Africa, in the main seen and understood as a representational art; representing life as it is, or better than it is, representing life in a realistic manner, in a nationalistic manner, in a romantic manner or even as representing the deep and embedded structures of human consciousness along with all our perceptual understanding of the world in here from. On the other hand too, literature has also been seen as the mythic, archetypal, and psychoanalytic representation of life. So when will the six blind men comprehend and present a total unified view of the elephant and literature and hence the Nigerian novel?

The answer is that, it is not a necessary literary virtue for all literary artists, theorists, and critics to comprehend all the various angles of literature from one single lens. Rather, what is needed is that, there is some meeting point about what makes literature an adequate medium for the representation of life, what makes it a fit instrument for a mythic recreation of life and also emotions. This lack of agreement makes the novel especially the Nigerian novel a discourse in literary representation and is a serious issue that literary theory and criticism must grapple with. Part of the contribution which this thesis seek to make, is to offer an explanatory model of literature and recognize that it proceed on the discourse platform, especially the novel. Literature is to be understood as a world of its own, a world characterized by the absence of the impossible, but a world which is significant to our own world. We may call this significance the relevance of literature, human relevance arising as a consequence of man's humanization of the word; a process in which in Judeo–Christian context according to Opata in his article 'Literature: Rethinking the Word' "was set in motion

when God gave Adam the go–ahead to give names to all the wild beast and birds of heaven". But the other world that is literature has its environment, inhabitants, culture and a way of communicative behavior.

But let us see the flaws in other ways in which literature has been seen to deepen the problematic of our argument. If we say that literature is a representation of life, we should also bear in mind that, not every representation of life that is literature; if we say that literature is fiction, not all fiction is literature; if we say that literature is the expurgation of emotion collected in tranquility, not every expurgation of emotion is literature; if we argue that literature is an autonomous verbal structure, not every autonomous verbal structure is literature; if we insist that literature is an act of freedom, not every act of freedom is literature; and if we are intent on persuading ourselves that literature is an institution; not every institution is literature. There is no doubt that a literary artist can consciously and deliberately use the literary medium to represent life, let loose his anger on colonial imperialists, lash out on his society's corrupt and unstable political order, let loose his emotion on his unfaithful mistress, or even seek to use the literary medium to inspire his people acquire critical consciousness and thereby embark on revolutionary action. Literature can be used to do all these and more, but no single view of this act constitute a definition or an explanation of what literature is.

Even when we agree that literature is constituted by its functionality, we shall still be hard put accepting all the various functions of literature as offering a sufficient explanation of what literature is. Thus, it might be an innocuous thing to say that literature should teach and please, but we may have a lot of literary works, which neither please nor instruct. Taking specific literary works according to Opata;

> *What Things Fall Apart does is part of what literature is;*
> *what Finnegan's Wake does is part of what literature is;*
> *what Waiting for Godot does is part of what literature is;*

> *what Song of Myself does is part of what literature is; and what A Modest Proposal does is part of what literature is. But no one of these things done by these works can be said to be literature. We definitely cannot mistake the parts for the whole.*

A point of departure is, then, not to look at the infinite things which can be achieved via the literary medium, but to consider what is it that makes literature a fit instrument for the realization of these diverse objectives. Before we can do this therefore, it is important to consider special language theory of literature, for it is often asserted that, the way the language is used to achieve aesthetic effect is more important than what is said. Foucault (1972) has argued that;

> *...The significance of any piece of literature must lie, supposedly in what the author says; yet every critic who is worth his salt has enough literary intuition to know that, the way of saying things is all important. This is obvious especially in poetry.*

That is the point precisely both in the west and in traditional Africa whether we are talking about the modern writer or of ancient tales and fables. The main difference is that, unlike the situation that is obtained in the west, in traditional Africa, occasions for normal and formal discourses were the natural habit of proverbs, anecdotes effective use of figurative language.

Probably we study some of these things under what we call "Orature" or Oral literature; we tend to assume that these genres were ab- initio, part of what our people regard as literature. This is mistaken assumption because, in traditional African societies, if a great man died you are more likely to hear that a big tree has fallen; if during a period of famine and austerity, you chanced upon sleek and fat man, and you ask him how he managed to survive, he was more likely to ask you whether you don't know that he was rainy season; if a man impregnated another's daughter , you are more likely to hear the offender having broken

a pot, and the father of the girl had to respond, you were more likely to hear him tell the offender to make arrangement of how the broken shreds were to be collected, if a man wants to take a wife and went to the house of the prospective father – in – law, you were more likely to hear him talk of something he had wanted that he had seen in the household. And of course the prospective father- in- law was likely to wonder aloud whether it was a cow or goat that was seen in his household. All this did not take place within the context of creating literature, but within the context of normal and formal discourse.

When we turn to songs, folk songs, particularly to minstrelsy, we would most likely find abundant evidence of rich figurative use of language. In contemporary times, the return of young undergraduate female chasers would simply be translated into song as the return of hawks or kites that carry chicken. Nevertheless, the fact that the people who sing such songs do not consciously consider themselves as being engaged in creating literature should not preclude the materials from being described as such. It is for this reason that literary compilers and critics who now collect some of these songs and sayings and call them traditional African poetry are partly correct in doing so. The point being made is that, if in the western experience, the aesthetic use of language was and is still considered to be the special privilege of literature, then, that is not true of the traditional African experience.

That is also another way of saying that; traditional literature and daily life have never been divorced in Africa, unlike in the west. But then even the west has found it difficult to classify early diaries, travel documents, letters and historical narratives in which are found abundant evidence of the profuse use of figurative language. For this reason, we are right in claiming that literature, whether poetry, drama or novel cannot be found in its privileged use of words to achieve aesthetic effects. So, what is it that makes literature a fit instrument for the realization of various objectives? The point has been sufficiently adumbrated, but we shall say again. Literature is a world of its own; a world where nothing is impossible, and

where ever you have a world which everything is possible, what you have is literature. It is a world in which a thousand years can be collapsed into a single day; a world in which space can be collapsed or expanded; a world in which the tortoise can beat the hare in a running contest.

All these are possible because literature is the highest manifestation of man's essential dualism of the God we see in man here on earth; and of man that is formed from dust or whatever. But it is also man reaching out towards godliness, man striving to be one with the 'word'; "let there be light and there was light". What a wonderful thing! Let there be a military coup d'tat in Achebe's Chief Nanga's country and there was a coup. What another wonder! Let us follow Adam and see what names he gives to wild beast and the names he calls them shall be so. Let us follow James Joyce, Gerald Manley Hopkins and Christopher Okigbo to see what expressions they weave to represent a congeries of ideas and they shall be so. What is then the difference between Adam and Humpty Dumpy? Man can use the novel to achieve a lot of varied objectives because it shows man trying to regain the 'word' that is literature and the creative consciousness, but is always been dragged back by the word, the consequence of man having had to humanize the 'word'. And so we must learn how to actualize the word and consequently, literature.

But any supposedly new explanatory model or paradigm for understanding a phenomenon should of necessity not only be able to throw more light on the phenomenon but also be capable of offering new insights into how outstanding problems in the conceptualization of the phenomenon under study could be solved. So, what has Nigerian novel and by extension Nigerian literature understood both as a world devoid of impossibilities and man's attempt to regain the creative consciousness got to offer us?

But first, to some outstanding problems of the novel and ultimately literature. Some of these problems include the following; the search for an adequate definition or explanation under

which all the genres of literature could be accommodated; the issue of reference as to whether literature has a referent or not; then the issue of truth in literature and the allied question of the epistemic value of literature; the issue of understanding the creative process; the issue of authorial intention in the interpretation of literary work; the issue of finding an adequate trans-historical definition of literature and literary work and so on. Before considering which insight this way of looking at literature can give into these several problems, it is also necessary to pause and ask ourselves whether this problems are germane to literature, whether in fact they are not pseudo – problems, whether indeed some of them are not particularistic to some culture, or whether indeed some of them have arisen from genuine and idiosyncratic concerns of individuals intent on pushing forward the frontiers of literary criticism and discourse.

If we take a figure like Plato, we find too much philosophizing, too much dissenting, but the question is, do we not still have critics who behave and still do behave like Plato? In short, the major difference between Plato and most contemporary literary critics is not only that, these critics have continued with a tradition which has its humble beginnings in Plato, but also that they are doing a professional duty. If most contemporary critics fail to engage in literary theory and criticism, most of them would not get promoted in their work places. This is not to deny the existence of a crop of scholars who genuinely want to advance the frontiers of literary theory and practice, that is irrespective of whether they are doing it as a professional duty or not. The point been made is that, this problems earlier on outlined are not necessarily problems of literature, they are rather contingent problems which literary theorists and critics encounter as they go about their normal literary practice.

The problem of literature strictly defined, would be the problem of creative and processual nature. That is, problems which literary artist and literary theorists' encounter in the process of their literary creations. These are problems concerned with the transformation

of experiences, visions, feelings and attitudinal dispositions into the literary medium. These are the problems really encountered by those involved in literary creations during the process of literary creation itself and arising from the intrinsic nature of literature. As such, they are not problems which critics think that literary artists have. They are not problems dealing with establishing the meaning of literary works and establishing how the stylistic devices used by the literary artist combine to give meaning to literary works.

It is literary critics and theorist that really have problems – problems generally concerned with the establishment of the human relevance of literary theory and practice. Note that, it is not an attempt to establish the human relevance of literature because even the most conscientious objectors to literature by the very act of objecting to it concede that, it merits their attention. Those who object to the relevance of literary theory and practice are the ones who really have to show the world that their own professions too have more human relevance. Thus, it is that, literary theory and practice has been most intimately connected with the social disciplines - Sociology, philosophy, psychology, history, religion, anthropology, among others. All these and more have been implicated in one way or the other with literary theory and practice. Indeed, it is also a fact that, literary movements have closely followed major social philosophies either to establish a parallel with or to react against such philosophies.

The current prominence which feminism and feminist studies enjoy for example in literary theory and practice is only one and the latest of such attempts by literary theory and practice to keep in trend with worldwide social and philosophical movements. Earlier and major literary outlook which parallel social and philosophical movements include realism and Marxist criticism; both arising from the influence of materialism and the rise and spread of Marxism. It is precisely because of these things that we say that most of these outstanding problems are far from related to literature. But they are such, in the first instance because,

literature as a world of its own has implication for all these activities concerned with the destiny of man in the world.

CHAPTER THREE

The Famished Road as a Postmodernist Representation of Nigeria's Social Formation

The Famished Road (1991) by Ben Okri is principally an attempt by the writer to situate the contemporary history of Nigeria within the context of a postmodernist political and social discourse. Taken on the level of magic realism, the novel is an exact replica of the bundle of contradictions; contradictions that could exactly be linked to the "social formation" of the Nigerian state ab-initio, largely seen historically as a colonial edifice due largely to the famous 1914 amalgamation of the disparate Southern and Northern protectorates by the then colonial authorities led by Lord Lugard. Nigeria has variously been labeled a "geographical expression", an appendage that has become necessary because of the social, political and historical contradictions that has trailed its sustainability, cohesion, social, political and economic progress as a nation state since independence in 1960.

The author in chapter one started the narration in a typical story-telling-like manner. Thus "in the beginning…' and progressed to include notable colonial historical icons

> *Who sometimes appeared in the form of a greatcat. He had red beard and eyes of greenish sapphire. He had been born uncountable times and was a legend in all worlds… one could pore over the great… invisible books Of life times and recognize his genius through the recorded and unrecorded ages…. There is anything common to all his lives, he essence of his genius, it might well be the love of transformation and transformation of love into higher realities (pgs 3-4).*

Lord Lugard has been credited with several colonial exploits from India to Africa on behalf of the British Empire and the "transformation" of the modern Nigerian state is also credited to his "genius" by the eventual granting of independence to Nigeria in October, 1960.

The Famished Road (henceforth TFR) is thus set on the eve of Nigeria's independence but uses the flash back and magic realism style to chronicle the long historical journey of modern Nigeria and proceed to almost investigate where according to Achebe "the rain started to beat us". Several other Nigerian writers have also used this style enmeshed in literary discourse however, one unique thing about Ben Okri and TFR is his ability to use the 'word' to represent graphically most of the incidences that preceded Nigeria's independence and within the life span of Nigeria. Some of these incidences seem unreal and magic realism has become a handy artistic tool for deployment via literary representation. Thus the author through the narrator has explicated in artistic representation;

> *There are many reasons why babies cry when they are born and one of them is the sudden separation fromthe world of pure dreams, where all things are made of enchantment…… we had the ability to will our death….but this time, somewhere in the inter space between the spirit world and the living,I choose to stay. (Pg 4-5)*

Thus, Nigeria was born and "these are the myths of beginnings" the desire of the author to chronicle these 'myths' of beginning proceed on the assumption that, literature is a social unit embedded in discourse and it cannot therefore be insular from the society that produces it. The style is deliberate and inventive. The novel is divided into sections which comprise of books and chapters and all together build up to a serious discourse analysis of the author's "commitment" with the country called Nigeria. Despite Okri's labouring to satisfy the foreign reader by explaining the etymology of 'Abiku' or unnecessarily interpreting the proverbs and aphorisms in the novel, the work does more than merely tell a story. It employs the use of myth to x-ray the 'famished road' of modern Nigeria. It may sound like a Tutuola tale to a casual reader, to a critical mind however, this novel through its style of myth and magic, makes an interesting and apt statement about Nigeria's social, political, religious and economic problems that have continuously defied solution. Okri sees Nigeria as an "Abiku"

that keeps being reborn and which produces a sharp distinction between opulence and poverty.

To be able to decipher these themes, the critical reader has to focus prominently on the internal dynamics of the text first by examining them and sometimes depersonalizing and ignoring the author by asserting the concept of individuality of the text-without encumbering the discourse with the particularities or idiosyncrasies of the creator. I have asserted elsewhere that, the style is deliberate. The deliberateness conforms to recent artistic thought especially modern theory and criticism. Modern criticism especially could be said to have started from the concept of phenomenology. Phenomenology is perceived "both as a critique of metaphysics and also a participant in the metaphysical enterprise (Howells). It is concerned with such philosophical concepts such as neoticoneomatic structures and morphe-hyletic, both broadly dealing with the logic of form and matter. The phenomelogical project was founded by the initial failure to reconcile the demands of structure with those of genesis. To understand the tenets of phenomenology, let us attempt its explanation. According to Hawley, (1995);

> *Phenomenology is a philosophy of Consciousness, which attempts to avoid the reefs of dualistic views such as empiricism and idealismBy putting aside all preconceptions about the relationship between the mind and world. It set out to rethink the fundamental distinction between subject and object, and to go beyond Naturalist's epistemology to describe Afresh how consciousness relatesto the world of phenomena.*

Because consciousness is always directed outside itself (intentionality), Husserl, the founder of phenomenology and a major influence on Derrida, described it as "true positivism". As a new way of perceiving thinking, phenomenology is valuable to the critic in the sense that it is a contrast with a departure from the natural attitude of experience and critical thinking.

If Ben Okri in TFR therefore regard Nigeria as a "phenomena" that artistically can be "deconstructed; it should proceed on the concept of postmodernist discourse because Nigeria's social formation and all the entities and groups that populate it have diverse experiences prior to its formation and any text that attempts a unified representation will fail. Moreover, arbitrary theories of language and literature are found to deconstruct themselves when placed side by side with binary logic.

Deconstruction, the most significant to all poststructuralists' theories of critical thought, considers the idea of a unified work as illusory because of textual indeterminacy. It is an extension of hermeneutics, and a reaction against structuralism and its certainties. Critics such as De man describe it as an "academic game" and a "terrorist weapon" while Christopher Norris described it as "the active antithesis of everything that criticism ought to be if one accepts its traditional values and concepts" (ibd) The major difference between structuralism and deconstruction is that, while the former emphasizes on the grammatical, the later concentrates on the rhetorical. Similarly, while the former finds order in a text, the later finds disorder and while the former finds meaning in a text, the later finds refutation or the tendency of the text's language to refute or deconstruct itself and deny the reader the assurance of a stable and identifiable meaning. According to Derrida, "there is nothing outside the text". By this he means that, language is incapable of representing reality, that any attempt to achieve reality through language is bound to fail since forms of knowledge are structured around a centre which Derrida describe as "point of presence" or "a fixed origin". The centre's function is to allow knowledge to be organized around an absolute truth, a situation that could apply to a legal document or medical diagnosis, not literature. The centre also functions as a limitation to available meaning thereby preventing a proliferation of meanings.

To the deconstructionist, the meaning of a text is always indeterminate, because each reading of a text is a transformational activity. A text contains hidden inscriptions and presuppositions as well as multitudes of contradictions. Hence the meaning of a text is just unfolding ahead of the interpreter. Derrida, cited by Hawley (ibid) uses the term "logo centrism" to mean the essential meanings that are supposed to exist prior to language and which form the basis for determination of meaning and knowledge in Western thought.

Deconstruction aims at dismantling such erroneous position. From this standpoint of deconstruction, our argument that, the Nigerian novel is a discourse in literary representation proceeds and Ben Okri's TFR is one out of the entire canon. Thus, a text should be perceived as an entity within itself and its interpretations should not be encumbered by unnecessary intrusive meanings. It is the text that speaks and no prior or external presence ought to be considered in its analysis. Ben Okri has simply added a fresh viewpoint to the already existing themes of political competition, the question of national cohesion or unity, violence and the sustainability of the dreams of independence and so on which abound in the Nigerian novel. For according to deconstruction, when a center is dismantled, no new center should be constructed, as is the case with psychoanalytic criticism. To Derrida, a text's self-destruction and internal contradictions result from an unending free play of language.

Since meaning is never fixed but constantly changing and proliferating, there is need for "dissemination", a process of harnessing scattered and potential meanings that arise from the text, because, texts subversively undermine their surface meanings and are always in a dynamic state of change. Derrida agrees with Saussure that, language is a system of differences (difference) and that we are able to arrive at meaning by differentiating one word from another. "hence we understand what something is by knowing what it is not". To Derrida, this creates more problems to the critic because "meaning is always in a state of contention and flux". Thus, the deconstructionist contests not only meaning but also the way

in which meaning is produced. Meaning it is always deferred and cannot be completely grasped because there is no fixed system of knowledge and therefore no finite, absolute meaning to a text. The deconstructionists believe that, there is a multitude of competing meanings to a text, each of which denies the primacy of the others. Because the author is no longer the source of meaning to a text, deconstruction becomes an accessory to the "death" of the author.

Some scholars argue that deconstruction is an attack on the author because it reveals the author's self-contradiction and self-deconstruction thus invalidating his supposed superior intellectualism. But to Derrida (ibid) the fault is not on the author but to the near limitless vitality of Language:

> *The writer writes in a language and in a logic whose proper system, laws and life by discourse cannot dominate absolutely. It uses them only by setting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system. And reading must always aim at certain relationships, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language he uses (of Grammatology).*

Attacks on the theory of deconstruction are many and varied, and address different parts of the theory. Fortunately, Gortschacher, (2005) has given us a comprehensive summary of the major attacks of this Yale School of Criticism;

> *Its opponents feel that it threatens the stability of the literary a Philosophical and professional nihilism, that it is too dogmatic, that it is willfully obscure and clique-ridden, that it is mostly responsible for the heavy emphasis on theory over practical criticism in recent years. Various critiques of deconstruction have pointed out that, deconstructive readings all sound oddly similar, that it does not seem to matter if the author under study is Nietzsche or Wordsworth.*
> *Furthermore, deconstructive readings have a tendency always to arrive at some point, and always seem to start out with a set conclusion, lacking any sense of suspense to the outcome of the reading. Yet for others, it is the sense of pursuing the theory's own play itself, and not attending to particular author, that makes it an attractive literary theory*

Again, our argument that the novel is a discourse in literary representation proceeds on the assumption that, it is necessary to recommend the application of supercritical approach to criticism. This means the absorption and adoption of identical theories in any critical evaluation of literature, applying all shades of interpretation to arrive at pertinent meaning, without confinement to the critical approach.

The theme of social formation and the apparent paradox that will arise from it in the life and sustainability of the Nigerian project finds expression right in the beginning of the novel.

> *You are a mischievous one. You will cause no end of trouble. You have to travel many roads before. You will find the river of your destiny. This life of yours will be full of riddles…. I was born not just because I had conceived the notion to stay, but because in between my coming and going the Great cycles of time had finally tightened around Myneck… I was answered with paradoxes. It Remains an enigma how it came to be that I was born smiling… being born was a shock from which I never recovered (pgs 6-7).*

Because of these paradoxes, some of which could be likened to dying and waking just as the biblical character, Lazarus, the narrator is named *Azaro* which is actually a cryptic corruption of Lazarus in the Holy Bible who died and was awaken by Jesus Christ. It can be argued conveniently that, the circumstances which gave birth to Nigeria did not proceed on compatibility of a common vision of its people but certainly the dream of others. The country Nigeria will metaphorically therefore die several 'deaths' and shall be reborn just as an *'abiku'*. The lack of a corporate vision will politically have a negative multiplier effect on the social cohesion of the country which will manifest in the lack of patriotism. This is apt because both leaders and the Nigerian subjects talk about tribes before the nation. Nigeria has thus become a Famished Road where everyone eats from but is never satisfied and this will be the story of Nigeria.

Early in the novel, flashes of trouble have started to be seen as some symbolic state institutions such as the Police clash with the people in an attempt to restore law and order

> *...We tore their colonial uniforms and sent them packing. They came back with reinforcement... when they had finished, fifteen men, three children, four women, two goats and a dog lay wounded along the battleground of our area... (pg 10).*

Not only that, we begin to hear of "bribery" as Azaro's father was detained by the police and the wife had to bribe the police before she could secure his release and to complement his already "diseased" condition on release, he went to work that day and found out that, he had been 'sacked' The author deliberately chooses on this family of very poor social status, though symbolic and contrasts them against that of the Police officer with whom Azaro received shelter during the riot;

> *And being at home was very different from being in the comfortable house of the Police officer. No spirits plagued me. There were no ghosts in the dark spaces. The poor also belong to one country. We didn't have a bathroom worth speaking of and the toilet was crude. But in that room, in our new home, I was happy because I could smell the warm presences and the tender energies of my parents everywhere (pg. 33).*

The above illustration depicts the social formation of Nigeria's social classes and the character of the Nigerian state which is dangerously anti-citizens both on the political and economic fronts. In book one, chapter eleven (11), the author has given us a glimpse into what would become of Nigeria after independence. Azaro's father had killed a big boar that could feed all invited guests to Azaro's return from his 'wandering' in addition to the rice that was prepared but as it turned out;

> *the rice was swiftly consumed, the boar disappeared into the capacious stomachs of the ravenous gathering, the soup dried out in the pots, and people stared at plates in drunken puzzlement... people had talked themselves into such a hunger that the food barely went round. Like the miracle of multiplying fishes in reverse, the food diminished before it got to the*

> *guests… discontentment spread… reminding us of the betrayed promiseof an abundant feast.*

The desire for independence of Nigeria from British colonialism and the agitations that preceded it was almost feverish in proportions. The notion that the Nigeria will accommodate all and its resources will derive on a single commonwealth of its entire people became a mirage as the common people are grossly discounted in all ramifications by the politicians and elites. This has necessitated discontentment by the social classes within the country. This trend has continued unabated and just as Nigeria poetry, the Nigeria novel has captured it. It is Donatus Nwogu who asserted that;

> *The poetry of West Africa has deepened in its mood of dismay, of fearful concern for communities that appear to have no way out of the catastrophic future, in spite of harsh experiences already undergone.*

These experiences have become the famished road of Nigeria's politics and there are several allusions in TFR to these. The author has attempted to look at Nigerian history through a kaleidoscope with patterns and fragment coming together; fragments and patterns which vanish with the nearest jiggle, to be replaced by another. The construction of this novel as an assemblage of these fragments is therefore deliberate. Even though, there are no clear cut suggestions for a way out of this mess; the author clearly demonstrate that the role of a writer is not to pester society, but to educate and to raise issues for debate and national discourse.

The argument must be made that, although set in a village and Lagos in a period well before Nigeria achieved independence, TFR shows the development of an "idyllic" country clearly in two sections divided into books and chapters which corresponds with stages in Nigeria's rise to its present configuration. But underlying the story's progress in time is a general conception of human history as a movement from the state of nature to a "higher" consciousness; it is a movement from relative stability of a rural culture to a state of

alienation, strife and uncertainty in the modern world. For Okri, all human beings (and societies) travel the same "road" and life is essentially a road enmeshed with 'powers' and we are forgetting these powers. 'Now, all the power that people have is selfishness, money and politics… the only power people have is their hunger… the world is tougher than fire or steel'.

Early in section one, book two, we begin to see signs of things to come in life on the "road". Strange characters such as Madame Koko with despised unconventional survival complexes that will undermine life on the 'road' begin to manifest. At the 'bar', a place notorious for its benign antics than consumption of alcohol owned and operated by Madame Koto, we begin to hear new words such as 'election', 'thugs' 'parties' and the attendant violence they unleash "deep in the country" which corresponds with the pre-independence election in Nigeria. This new vocabulary in the village or 'compound' mark a significant shift from the idyllic state to some sort of political transformation of life on the 'Road' and for the narrator, he learned much from the gossips at the 'bar';

> *I learned a lot about what was happening in the country through them I learned about the talk of independence, about how the white men treated us, about political parties and tribal divisions (pg 76)*

To also demonstrate and also confirm "how the white man treated us". Azaro's mother replied Azaro that she will apply "poverty" to a cut she sustained in a domestic accident when Azaro inquired of the medication she would use to treat her wound. This amply shed light on the social and economic mobility of Nigerian citizens; no thanks to British colonialism, before independence.

This was the pattern of power relationships and life that continued between the ordinary people and the political class and elites that emerged in post-independent Nigeria. The strategic interest of colonialism was to exploit rather than develop the colonies.

Education was in the strict sense of the word not anchored on the national interest of the colonies and was also regarded as a privilege and not a right. The consequence of this colonial policy could easily be discerned in the character of the national elites that emerged after independence; an elite that largely see itself as masters rather than leaders. Azaro's mother counseled Azaro to go to school and also partake of the "national cake";

> *You must like school. If your father had gone to school we wouldn't be suffering so much* learn all you can. This is a new age. Independence is coming and only those who go to school can eat good. Otherwise you will end up carrying loads like your father (pg. 93)

As the novel edges to the anti-climax in chapter five of book two, we begin to witness the crescendo of political activities on the ''road".

> *And everyone was staring at the spectacle of a Open-backed van with a megaphone. A man in Resplendent white agbada was talking with great Gestures… the inhabitants of the street crowded Round the van, hunger in their faces. Their children were in tattered clothes, had big stomachs, and were barefooted. 'what is it'? Someone asked politicians 'they want our votes' they want our money… they only remember us when they want our votes (pg 122-3).*

The contrast is clear; the social classes that would emerge in post-independent Nigeria and constitute its social formation are revealed. This will thus become the political character that will be sustained in the long run. This political character is partly colonial and partly self-inflicted. Colonial because, it proceeded on the colonial instincts of "we and the others" and partly self-inflicted because, upon independence, an independence achieved largely for the pure sake of being independent and not fought on any collective national vision; the leaders simply replicated this colonial instincts in the quest for power. This is amply demonstrated in their campaign slogans and message thus;

> *Vote for us we are the party of the rich and friends of the poor. If you vote for us we will feed your children; and we will bring you good roads, and we will bring electricity, and we will build schools and hospitals, we will make you rich like us. There is*

> *plenty for everybody, plenty of food, plenty of power. Vote for unity and power… to prove… we are giving away free milk, yes free milk from us courtesy of our great party (pg 123)*

As witnessed today, there is always the general suspicion between the political class and the 'subjects'. This is clearly demonstrated in the constant interjection of the "mocking voices" from the crowd to every promise made such as "we are finished", the poor have no friends", "to teach illiteracy" 'so you can see better to rob us!" and so on. The suspicion is not unfounded because from the beginning of 'politics' and 'elections' in pre-independence and post-independence Nigeria, political parties and politicians have harped on the same promises without delivering them to the people. They always traded on the weaknesses of the people namely, poverty and ignorance to discount them as could be witnessed in the milk episode. The free milk turned out to be poisonous and expired milk which the politicians traded for votes. The message and promises were so convincing that the people were bought over and the narrator confirmed that, despite their doubts;

> *On and on they went, crackling abundant promises to us, lunching future visions of extravagant prosperity, till they broke down the walls of skeptics'. The compound people abandoned their doubts and poured over to the magnified voice quivering in my ears, I went with them (pg123).*

Of course there were two parties. The party of the rich" and the party of the poor" and naturally, Azaro's father had his sympathy for "the party of the poor" but it was the party of the rich that distributed the "free" milk to the people. Azaro's relation supported the party of the rich so even in the family; there is a contrast in the social formation of individuals and their complexes. Azaro's father's relation who in a manner of speaking, is socially and economically mobile than Azaro's father naturally supported the party of the rich because "he had more money than Dad and lived in a part of the city that already had electricity" But

Azaro's father's disdain for the party of the rich and its associates is obvious and even extends to his relations who are members of the party;

> *...and at times it seemed they would fall on one another and fight out the battle of ascendancies ... He worked himself into a tremendous verbal campaign against the party of the rich and in the height of his denunciation, his eyes fell on the basin of powdered milk (issued by the party)... Dad came back with an empty basin and a wicked glean in his eyes" (pg 129).*

When sickness caught the people of "the compound" because of the milk, Azaro's father likened it to the general sickness in the world of politics, politicians and their antics thus; *The whole world is sick, but my family is well...That's how God reveals the just. By their fruitswe shall know them* only for him to realize that it's the milk and he *"cried in a moment's comprehension shouting to the whole "compound" THE MILK! IT'S THE MILK!*

> *In the meantime Dad was banging on doors rousing everyone, over time by exhilaration of his drunken discovery, shouting "they have poisoned us with the milk! Dad's statement became a cry of understanding that was carried from one mouth to another, almost a rallying call till the words gained ascendance over the ugly noises of vomiting... Dad made libitations to his ancestors long into the night ... we had survived what became known as the day of the politician's milk (pg 132).*

Though the politicians and politics have found their way into the people's lives in an infamous way and circumstance, they remained an integral part of the 'road's' journey to an independent 'modern' state. The novel then point towards the first seven years of Azaro's life before the pace slows down and the narration oscillates between Azaro's adventures in "real" world of Lagos ghetto life, where he and his parents struggle to make ends meet, and a different reality peculiar to Azaro's vision in which the very same places - the family's tiny room, the compound, the palm-wine bar, the road and in particular the forest - are at certain times crowded with bizarre spirits, grotesque human-animal hybrids and other kinds of supernatural elements.

Besides these intrusions from the spirit world and Azaro's mysterious visions and phantasmagorias, TFR depicts the strenuous life of Azaro's family and by extension the politically, economically and socially disadvantaged masses of Nigeria in abject poverty despite their enterprise, industry and ingenuity represented by Azaro's mother and father as she hawks paltry provisions to eke a honest/wing and Azaro's father who always carry loads in the market to earn a living for the family. By this depiction, the author has clearly taken sides with the masses as some other authors before him have done in the Nigerian novel. The Nigerian novel has thus become an agent of discourse on the social formation both in classes, political, social and ideological character of the Nigerian state especially if we accept the notion in literature that discourse refers to those social elements which are seen to be rule-governed and systematic but which do not occur at the level of the word or the phrase. Foucault (1972) admits that;

> *The term discourse is also used when we wish to refer to a piece of extended conversation this has some form of internal coherence many literary theorists use a slightly simplified definition of discourse to refer to a group of statements which are concerned with a particular subject area; for example, a discourse of feminity, or discourse of racism ... where discourse becomes defined as the language which occurs within a particular context.*

All discourses 0n postmodernism essentially proceed on the use of language and it is in language that 'context' can be located. Quine discusses the relationship between language and ontology. He argued that, language systems tend to commit their users to the existence of certain things. For Quine, the justification for speaking or writing one way rather than the other is a thoroughly pragmatic one. But few contemporary philosophers maintain that all philosophical problems are purely linguistic based. The view continues to be widely held that attention to the logical structure of language and how language is used in everyday discourse can often aid in resolving philosophical problems.

Part of the philosophical and epistemological concern of the Nigeria novel is the evolution of consciousness through human history. The evolution of consciousness through human history is marked by growth in articulate attention to the interior of the individual person as distanced - though not necessarily separated - from the communal structures in which each person is enveloped. Self-consciousness is co-extensive with humanity; "everyone who can say 'I' has an acute sense of self'' but reflectiveness and articulations about self takes time to grow but the Nigeria novel did grow in this sub-linear growth to its present state of inward articulation and reflectiveness; reflectiveness of social expectations and more crises of interior conscience of the self. The novel has thus become the mouth-piece of the literary intelligentsia contributing to the discourse on nation building and its social dynamics as witnessed in post-independent Nigeria.

The inward turn of the Nigeria novel has reported in detail the way in which narrative in the novel has become more and more preoccupied with and articulate about inner personal crises just as the stages of consciousness described in Jungian frame work by Erich Neumann in "Origins and History of Consciousness" (1954). A move toward self-conscious, articulate, highly personal, interiority.In Ben Okri's TFR, the narrative denouement and characterization of the main characters fall perfectly in this description. Azaro's father is highly articulate and largely offers insight through his comments about Nigeria and Nigeria's social psyche while Madame Koto is highly personal and only thinks about self and personal interest just as the politicians.

Azaro is always self-conscious as an *"abiku"* and will never forget his pact with the spirit world which makes him psychologically multi-located. By their self-consciousness, each of them suffers personality crises just as the Nigerian state. These interactions enter into ultimate human concerns and aspirations negatively and affect a comprehensive social vision for the Nigerian state and its social classes. How is this shown in the novel is through the

social formation of these social classes. The representation and depiction is clear, the load carriers at the market and petty traders are the masses; the politicians, the business men, and so on, all struggling for the soul of the 'road' in differing tactics to outdo one another. The narrator said of his father who is also a load carrier;*My wandering had at last betrayed me because for the first time in my life I had seen one of the secret sources of my father's misery (pg 149).*

This social classification is seen largely as Marxian because, most of these social groups operate on an interactive level as each needs the other but one of these groups seeks to dominate and maintain a predominant culture. The politicians need the masses for their votes and their labour and the masses also need the politicians who sometimes double as businessmen for jobs and patronage. The intervening vacuum is created by the absence of the superstructure, to live up to its billings to the people. As argued by Marxists, none of the social group is mutually exclusive of the other and this is the foundation upon which Karl Marx argue that, life is actually "a site of contest between social forces each pulling to their side" Some Nigerian novelist such as Festus Iyayi also view the Nigerian space from this perspective within literary discourse.

Just as insisted earlier, it is relatively difficult to accept literature as a mere concept just and so is the novel. In ordinary usage, they appear to be more than specific description, and what they describe is then as a rule, so highly valued that there is virtually immediate and unnoticed transfer of the specific values of particular works and kinds of work to what operates as a concept but it is still firmly believed to be actual and practical. Thus, it is common to see literature defined as fully central, immediate human experience, usually with an associated reference to minute particulars and details. By contrast, 'society' is often seen as essentially general and abstract; the summaries and averages, rather than the direct substance, of human living. Other related concepts, such as 'politics' or ideology, are

similarly placed and downgraded, as mere hardened outer shells compared with the living experience of literature. These experiences may not only be text bound. Literary texts need not have an autonomous existence of their own. They should have relevance to real life even if the style is encumbered with abstract ideas such as myth and magic as espoused in TFR by Ben Okri. Take the example of Azaro's father's family in the novel. Because of hardship due largely to the absence of quality education and regular paid employment, he was always angry with the wife. But the wife who is portrayed like the typical African housewife that she is, keeps her matrimonial vows, responsibility and loyalty above anything else. One such occasion was when Azaro's father slept the night out of the family house for unknown reasons and;

> *Mum became very agitated. What has happenedto him?... was he well?... what will I do if something bad has happened? How will I live? Who will take care of you?..when the cocks cracked the egg of dawn with their cries mum got out of bed washed her face, and prepared to go and search for Dad in the police stations and hospitals of the world... dad appeared at the door, where have you been my husband? We were so worried... don't ask me any questions, Dad growled, pushingMum away from him. (pg 151)*

Needless to say that, his action was unintended but spontaneous as Azaro's father registered his remorse and apologized immediately "forgive me, my wife, forgive me". This is what poverty could drive one to, anger and this has become an extended anger of the people against the politicians, for suddenly *"that evening, the van of bad politics returned*. This 'return' was an a admixture of vendetta and deceit because Azaro's father had earlier prophesied that, despite their victory over the politicians, they were likely to return better prepared for according to him;

> *Trouble comes after celebrationand victory"* and now they *came with bags of garri, but with twice thenumber of thugs. They had whips and clubs among the garri bags and seemed prepared for charity and war at the same time".*

Despite this show of impunity from the politicians, they would not just give up because the masses have something they need desperately; their votes and either by hook or crook, they must have them. This call for desperate measures and the politicians were up to the task. First they have to shift blame and responsibility of the poisonous milk to the rival party, "the party of the poor" in order to exonerate themselves and their party 'the party of the rich' 'the party of the poor was responsible for the poisonous milk, not us. *'Theywant to discredit us. The loudhailers cried"*

> *We are your friends. We will bring you electricity and bad roads, not good milk, I mean good roads, not bad milk…trust us! Trust our leader! Trust our garri! Our party believes in sharing the nationalGarri and … (pg 153)*

The promises this time failed to rouse the people for the discord and suspicion has already been sown between the two social groups- the masses and the political elites through the milk episode for;

> *People moaned round the vehicle… the thugs handed out pans of garri but no one came forward to receive any. The people massed silently round the van. It was as if a message was being passed around. There was something ominous in their silence.* And it was the thugs of thepoliticians that fired the first shot; *At that same moment the thug punched the Photographer whose nose started to bleed… and suddenly a stone smashed the van's window and undammed the fury of angry bodies… someone cracked the politician on the head and he screamed into the loudspeaker. The driver started the vehicle. It jerked forward and knocked a woman over… (pg 154)*

The scene was simply graphic as violence ensued and the people visited their anger on the politicians and their thugs in reciprocation of the politicians' antics through the "bad milk" and the rest of the story was captured by the press as it became an international news item evidenced by snap shots taken by the village photographer. But from then on, life on 'the road' was not going to be the same as the narrator found himself in the market where he

was looking for his mother. It is in the market that we hear 'voices' shed light on what awaits people on the road.

> *...strange things are happening to us. To our children they say he is looking for the spirit of independence which he lost when the white man came... strange things are happening. The world is turning upside down. And madness is coming... and confusion is coming. And war... and blood will grow in the eyes o*f men... (pg 167).

But if anything, the market typifies and symbolized the coming confusion to be associated with independence as political thugs aided by politicians carry their antics to the market editing non-party members from selling places and we hear a woman say *"the independence has brought ustrouble'.* A thug had commanded Azaro's mother *"if you don't belong to ourparty you don't belong to this space in the market. Everyone else in this partof the market is one of us. We don't want you here".* The end result of this argument was a violent encounter between Azaro's mother and the thugs but as usual, the thugs lost.

But a new chapter has been introduced in life on the 'Road', the theme of political violence. The author seem to be arguing that political violence is inherent in politicians especially Nigerian politicians because political power is still an alien culture to Africans considering the fact that the emergent culture of politics and elections was erroneously equated to 'war' as a weapon for the acquisition of political authority as was obtained in the formation of kingdoms that were now to be abandoned for "Nigeria".

> *That night I was listening in my childhoodhour of darkness to stories of recurrencetold down through generations of defiantmouths... I was listening to tales of inscrutable* heroes *turned into hard gods of chaos andthunder-when dread paid us a visit. The night brought the dread. It announced itself through piercing voices from the streetcrying and in lamentation at the repetition of an old cycle of ascending powers (pg 178)*

In this emergent culture of political power however, the demarcation is clear; the political elites and their thugs on the one side and the masses on the other and it is from the narrator that we understand who is losing the 'war' for the soul of the 'road';

> *I realized that antagonists were being repulsed. The people from the photographer's compound were in the vanguard. The dead were commonly on the side of the innocents. Voices I knew bravely cried, Fight them back! Fight for your freedom!Stone hem!They poisoned us with milk And words And promises and they want to rule our country! Our lives And now they attack us on our own street Fight them without fear (pg 181)*

In almost all violent encounters between these social groups in the novel, the masses always come out victorious and it is our argument that this authorial bias strikes the note of 'commitment' an argument at least within Marxists dialectics. Our intense and continuing argument about the relationship of writers to society often takes the form of an argument about what is variously called 'alignment' or commitment. It is a central proposition of Marxism, whether expressed in the formula of base and superstructure or in the alternative idea of socially constituted consciousness that, writing like other practices is, in an important sense, always aligned: that is to say that it variously expresses, explicitly or implicitly, specifically selected experience from a specific point of view.

Alignment in this sense is no more than recognition of specific means and specifically, in Marxist terms of class relations to specific situations and experiences. This recognition is crucial against the claims of 'objectivity', 'neutrality', simple fidelity to truth; which must be recognized, is a ratifying formula of those who offer their own senses and procedures as universal; According to Sarte; (1960)

> *It becomes more and more the habit, particularly of the inferior sort of literati, to make up for want of cleverness in their productions by political allusion which were and sure to attract attention.Poetry, novels reviews, drama every literary production teemed with what was called "tendency" ... a worthless fellow who, due to lack of talent, has gone to extremes*

> *with tendentiousJunk to show his convictions, but it is really in order to gain an audience.*

Paul Sarte further insisted further in "The purpose of writing", (1960); and in Sartre (1974) that:

> *If literature is not everything it is worth nothing. This is what I mean by 'commitment'. It wilts if it is reduced to innocence, or to songs. If a written sentence does not reverberate at every level of man and society, then it makes no sense. What is the literature of an epoch but the epoch appropriated by its literature.*

Writers necessarily involved with meanings, ''reveal, demonstrate, and represent; after that people can look at each other face to face, and act as they want ". (ibid: 25). Sartre was arguing against notions of 'pure art', which when they are serious are always forms (however concealed) of social commitment and which when they are trivial are simple evasion. These are the flexible formulations and qualifications of one style of Marxist thought, relatively close, in spirit, to what Marx and Engels incidentally indicated, moreover, within this general definition, as Sarte (ibid) further argued". *"Commitment… remains politically polyvalent so long as it is not reduced to propaganda'*

But of all, the most penetrating insight on the dynamics of alignment and commitment is offered by Raymond Williams (1977);

> *Commitment, strictly, is a conscious alignment, or conscious change of alignment. Yet in the material social practice of writing as in any other Social practice, what can be done and attempted is necessarily subject to existing or discoverable real relations. Social reality can amend, displace, or deform any merely intended practice and within this (at times tragically, at times in ways which tends to cynicism or active disgust) 'commitment' can function as little more than an ideology.*

Conscious "ideology" and 'tendency' supporting each other must then often be seen as symptoms of specific social relationships and failures of relationships. Thus the most

interesting Marxist position, because of its emphasis on practice, is that which defines the pressing and limiting conditions within which, at any time, specific kinds of writing can be done, and which correspondingly emphasizes the necessary relations involved in writing of other kinds.

Ben Okri's TFR is timed appropriately; Nigeria is undergoing some sort of social and political formation and new power relationships have to be defined by the social forces that populate the new space. The emerging political class and elites have to contest for hegemony and domination of the new Nigeria and so the sub-theme of "territorial hegemony" is added to the themes of social formation, political corruption and poverty in the book.

Book three of the novel dwells on this theme and it is largely from Azaro, the narrator that we are still confined for insights on life on the "road". The narrator had now grown to a state of deep and reasonable inward introspection *"for a while I ceased in my wanderings'*. The photographer and Azaro's mother are victims of this battle of hegemony. She is routinely harassed at the market and the photographer is constantly attacked by thugs from the "party of the rich*" "mum went on being harassed at the market. When she moved her stall to another part of the market the thugs would turn up, posing as potential customers"* and the photographer narrated to Azaro how he was attacked

> *as I came I hid in dark places and tried to be careful but as I neared my compound two people jumped on me and hit my head with a cutlass and stick… I shouted and they gave me as good a beating as they could before they ran".*

The author constantly referred to this battle of territorial hegemony as *"battle of ascendancy"* and when this continued on the 'road' someone simply called them *"madmen of our history… just waiting for a crazy war to come along".* This battle of ascendancies makes use of all weapons, conventional and unconventional, diabolical, treachery, manipulation and outright falsehood including harassment by every conceivable kind of tactics by the

privileged class and political elites denominated by thugs, landlords against helpless majority of the masses.

The landlord in addition to harassing his tenants for rent makes it mandatory for them to belong to his party- the party of the rich: and also vote for his "party man",

> *I have told this to all my tenants. Anybody who wants to live in my house, under this roof that I built with my own hands, should vote for my party… it's simple. All you have to do is press ink next to his name… and remember this: we have people at the polling station who will be watching you … whether you vote for our man or not we will win anyway. But if you don't vote for him there will be trouble. You might as well begin to look for another place… I am a peaceful man but the person who spoils my peace will find that I am a lion. I am an ELIPHANT. MY THUNDER will strike them (pg 198-99).*

The message in the narrative from here on is codified in the "them" versus 'us' schema; a political struggle to be worked out through the struggle in terms of negation and the social classes are clearly delineated. The militancy that is apparent is essentially a "positional-historical" ideology where peoples, families, occupations … are placed in a single continuum of criteria of complimentarity and frontal conflict. In this third section of the book also, the masses have become certainly more world-wise and in tune with the goings-on of contemporary politics as the emergent reality. This knowledgibility of the masses will question the notion that, the villagers and peasants are 'ignorant' of happenings in the world about them. This is demonstrated in their attitude towards politics, as they can see through the mask of the politicians and their antics. Azaro's father becomes correspondingly defiant and it is through him that we can deduce these new out-look of the masses and the narrator say of him thus;

> *He went around the compound saying this (even if they killed him he wouldn't vote for the landlord's party) some of the neighbors nodded when he made his declaration we may be poor, but we are not slaves (pg 203).*

As if the author urges the masses to "negotiate" themselves out of this "slavery" for no one else would, the carpenter denominates the resistance posture of the masses by refusing to leave Madame Koto's bar where the thugs of the "party of the rich" had cordoned to drink to the exclusion of other customers and with the active support of Madame Koto;

> *Go and drink elsewhere! Said one of the men.Why!'why not'because I built this bar'so what?'no one can tell me to get out of here 'is that so?'yes. (pg 224)*

This altercation was enough reason for the bar to come under heavy fight that ensued between the masses and the politicians' thugs and virtually damaging all its contents by which Madame Koto is the ultimate looser. It's a matter of violence consuming its supporter. The narrator summed it up as;

> *... I knew we were in the divide between the past and future. A new cycle had begun an old one was being brought to a pitch, posterity and tragedy rang out from what I saw and I knew that the bar would never be the same again (pg 220).*

But meanwhile, the photographer continued his antagonistic photographic campaign in the ensuing 'new cycle' of politics and violence in his hide and seek tactics;

> *I took photographs of women at the Market being attacked by thugs. Thewomen fought them back. I took pictures of riots against our white rulers. I took pictures of a policeman taking bribes. The policeman saw me and pursued me. I escaped (pg 233).*

I had earlier made the point that , the elites 'battle of ascendancies' for territorial hegemony by the politicians for a space to dominate the new Nigeria makes use of every conceivable tactics, this is confirmed in the selective rent hike for occupants in the landlord's property and as usual the 'divide and rule' tactic has been employed as a weapon. Following Azaro's father's obstinate rejection of membership of 'the party of the rich' to which his landlord is a stalwart, it dawned on him one early morning when;

> *We were struck by the sight of the man in ragged clothes who came in, looking around furtively... he was from thelandlord. He*

> *was the bearer of a message we were informed that our rent had beenincreased. Apparently we were the only ones to suffer an increment in the compound. After he had delivered the message, which included an option to move out if we didn't like the new rent… Dad sat in front of the table of food like a man who had been kicked in the ribs (pg 237).*

I have also made the assertion about the style of narration being codified in the "them versus 'us' schema, a struggle that is to be worked out in terms of negation of negation of the social classes and a positional-historical ideology. This assertion corresponds to Marx's argument that;

> *In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will relations which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of their relations of production constitute the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which corresponds with definite forms of social consciousness.*

The social consciousness of the masses suffer some 'negation' as some of them accept membership of ''the party of the rich'' clearly 'independent' of their will. This is because; the emerging superstructure denominated by the political elites has simply made life unbearable for them. This choice is simply 'indispensable' and thus reinforce our argument that, the militancy that is apparent is essentially a positional-historical ideology where peoples, families, occupations… are placed in a single continuum of criteria of complementarity and frontal conflict to ensure the survival of the superstructure. Darwin's idea of natural selection easily comes to mind, and in the new 'space', the contending forces even though, both Nigerians, the strongest will survive and establish its domination over the weaker- the masses.

This 'negation' for some of them is objective driven with material prospects which will only be guaranteed by mutual association with the powers that be. Madame Koto typifies

this aspiration and tendency. She is reported to have told the narrator, Azaro and philosophically too that;

> *You think because I sit here all day long, because I cook pepersoup and wash plates and clean the tables and smile to my customers, because I do all these things that I don't have plans of my own, eh? You think I don't want to build a house, to drive a car, you think I don't want servants, you think I don't want money and power, eh?... you think I want to live in a dirty area with no electricity, no toilets, no drinking water? If you think so you are mad!...Your people are not serious. You can sit in a corner like a chicken and look at me, but when the time comes you will remember what I am saying (pg 251).*

And this is the kind of individualized vision of each character in the book. Madame Koto's ideas about her possible upward social and economic mobility proceed on greed and selective material association with the political elites who she supports against the ordinary peoples despite their political brigandage and activities which emasculates the majority. The title of the novel as "The Famished Road'' becomes an ample metaphor to describe Nigerians and Nigeria which has got all the resources that could ensure material, physical and economic development of both the country and its peoples, but the 'movers' and 'shakers' alone continually eats from it and are never satisfied just as the Road where one million people can trample on it without the road complaining.

In book four, we begin to hear of ''connecting electricity'' and other infrastructural landmarks that were alien to the narrator signifying another stage of life on the Road and its peoples. Still the colonialists were in charge and responsible for these landmarks.

> *For a while I wandered up and down the streets … so I followed the edge of the forests and explored the paths that had completed their transformations into streets… I burst into a world I had no idea existed before. The forest there had been conquered… I asked them what was happening and they said the men were connecting electricity. They pointed to the pylons in wide open spaces, they pointed to the tents. I didn't know what they were talking so I watched in amazement (pg 277)*

Needless to say that, at this point however Nigeria was close to independence and political activities were at their zest. The politicians and their tugs continued their brigandage *"The thugs came again today.Election time is near"* Azaro was told by his mother. But the combined forces of colonialism and political thuggery wrecked havoc on the people except for a few such as Madame Koto who transformed materially and left some women wondering whether it's because;

> *That's what I heard and that she has joined the party? Not just that What else? hey have promised her contracts for what? For their celebrations and meetings We will be looking at her and She will become rich. She is rich already people say she is going to buy a car A car? And get electricity. Some people have too much and their dogs eat better food Than we do, while we suffer and keep quiet until the day we die… One day, by a quiet miracle, God will erase the wicked from the face of the earth… that's what my brother kept saying two months before he died.*

But for the author, our backwardness is self-inflicted and colonialism only complicated things by the introduction of westernized concepts of "development and civilization". Azaro was told by her mother how Africa's civilization, science and technology pre-dated that of the western world.

> *When white people first came to our land…. We had already gone to the moon….. they use to come and learn from us. My father use to tell me that we taught them how to count. We taught them about the stars, we gave them some of our gods. We shared our knowledge with them we welcomed them, but they forgot all this (sic). They forgot many things. They forgot that we are all brothers and sisters and that black people are the ancestors of the human race. The second time they came, they brought guns. They took our lands, burned our gods, and they carried away many of our people to become slaves across the sea. They are greedy.They want to own the whole world and conquer the sun. Some of them believe they have killedGod. Some of them worship machines.They are misusing the powers God gave all of us … learn from them, but love the world… Beauty will rule the world. Justice will rule the world (pg 283).*

This anecdote is a summation of what is responsible for the complex social formation in the present day Nigeria. All kinds of philosophies, ideologies, (economic and political), religions, science etc. introduced via colonialism and western education to Africa both through conquests and outright manipulation has to a large extent; obliterated our African essence. The cryptic reference to the kind of "gun-boat diplomacy" that was largely responsible for the appropriation of lands, territories, and eventually, the partition of Africa by western imperial powers is succinct. Though told by a largely illiterate housewife to the son, the renditions of historical discourse through orality is the power of conscience through deep introspection and the aggregation of cause and effect logic.

The process of acquisition of Political power and authority is alien to the African just as the westernized notions of God and religious worship. If the African is then "conscripted" into these and several cosmopolitan cultures of Europe, the apparent effect will be the disintegration of the center of the common African heritage. New alliances and power blocks will be formed; psychological and sociological complexes will emerge thereby forcing the people into complex social formations without regard and loyalty to Nigeria and indeed Africa. The effect is that, the social, political, scientific and cultural development of Nigeria nay Africa will be strangulated. The desire for individual human progress through culturally accepted conventions is jettisoned in the new or emergent cultures. Some characters in the book bear testimony to this assertion such as Madame Koto, the landlord, the thugs and politicians who have all thrown humanity and the dualistic nature of the African essence to the wind in the ensuing new "battle for ascendancies" This bear credence to the earlier assertion of the new struggle being worked out in terms of negation of negation by the competing social classes in the new Nigeria that is soon to emerge at independence. Colonialism has thus become our albatross. It has produced a political and economic entity that is like the road, always famished.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 A Postmodernist Representation of the Mythology of Nemesis in *Flowers and Shadows*

In *Flowers and Shadows,* Okri texualises mythology with protocols of narratology and linguistic *energia* such as storytelling mode, deformation or defamiliarization to represent the emerging characters in Nigeria's business world. He may perhaps be drawing on a personal experience as the author's biography reports that after failing to secure admission in some university in Nigeria, he took a job in a paint store "and it was here he gained knowledge of the business environment in Nigeria which is captured in *Flowers and Shadows". Flowers and shadows* (1980) is Ben Qkri's first creative artistic endeavour in the mould of literary representation and has paved the way for a literary style of utilizing residual creative imaginations and worldview and transposing them into artistic themes. The novel takes its material from the Greek mythology of nemesis to be able to represent a theme of vengeance popularly known in literature as poetic justice or a just retribution.

Flowers and shadows is set in Lagos, the commercial center of Nigeria and the story revolves around Mr. Jonan Okwe, some ruthless managing director of Afioso paints company who conduct his business in a mafia-like style and in the process eliminating many people whom he perceives as a threat to his monopoly of paint manufacturing, supply and distribution until some cold hands of 'cosmic roulette wheels' caught up with him. The novel is an admixture of themes but the one that is fully realized is that of nemesis.

Mr. Jonan Qkwe had lived a life of "fulfillment" through his treacherous business activities until nemesis caught up with him when his beloved son, Jeffia, fell in love with Cynthia, the daughter of one of his numerous victims. Qkwe had just secured the release of his son, Jeffia from police detention on allegation of murder. The circumstances of the son's detention are in themselves dramatic, a representation about the inefficiency of Nigeria's Police and their incompetence at unveiling crime.

Cynthia is a nurse in some unnamed hospital in Lagos where Gbenga, a victim of Jonan Okwe's business treachery was taken to by Jeffia after hired assassins of Jonan Okwe, his father, had beaten him to stupor (he eventually died). On their way, they both came across an almost lifeless body on the road whom Jaffia recognized instantly to be Gbenga, his father's manager who had earlier resigned from his father's company. Apparently, the father had been unconvinced by the reasons advanced by Gbenga for his resignation and thought, Gbenga having gained a lot of experience in paint manufacture and distribution would set up a rival paint manufacturing and distribution business that would break his monopoly and therefore, Mr Okwe arranged for his elimination.

This episode, apart from several other activities of Jonan Qkwe is the climax of the plot of the novel. This is because; Cynthia's father was also a victim of Jonan Okwe's Mafioso. The present victim (Gbenga) was taken to the hospital where Cynthia is a nurse in a state of comma and following the inability Jeffia and Cynthia to convince the hospital management of the victim's identity, the matter was reported to the police. The Police took the duo, Jeffia and Cynthia for detention and questioning and in the ensuing period, the two fell in an unquenchable love that is set to tear Jonan Qkwe's life and his entire business empire, which is his world, apart.

On their way home from the police station Jonan enquired after Cynthia who introduced herself as Miss Cynthia Oduko. At the mention of Oduko, Jonan's body language

and facial expression changed and almost spontaneously, what had happened between him and Mr. Oduke came alive. Mr. Okwe had framed up Mr. Oduko, Cynthia's father over an allegation of cheating and embezzlement, a charge for which Oduko was sentenced to prison. While in prison, he contracted some disease and upon release, he had no job to look after himself and the wife had earlier died while he was serving his jail sentence. All these were traceable to Mr. Qkwe and now Cynthia and his beloved son, Jeffia are in love. Instantly Mr Qkwe began to choke with guilt in the following philosophical rendition;

> *No son is ever free from his father's shadows. We all have intangible influences on those who have gone before. Nobodyis alone. Beside you, before you behind you are a thousand and one shadows you are heir to. It is always like that ...my Son, we are never alone and it will be a hard life... (Pg 158)*

It can sufficiently be argued that, the Aristotelian notion of catharsis of some heroic figure is represented in the above and that Mr Jonan has come to the full realization that his games are up because, the son, the wife and his entire world is coming to an end with this arrested development. He has been able is pass off amongst his friends, children and wife as a successful man but what lies beneath that "success" is soon to be revealed. This is because, Jeffia had already noticed the strange disposition of his father at the mention of Oduko's name and had already began to postulate instinctively to Cynthia about who might be responsible for Gbenga's death;

> *It's hard to guess... you know, nature sometimes has its injustices... because it's true. A man suffers for the sins of his father whichhe knows nothing about. The hardworking man suffers while the lazy lounge in abundance he never truly earned. The weak are oppressed while the strong go on in their oppression, evil rages on in spite of good .... (Page 161)*

The character, Mr Jonan Okwe can never be associated with anything ethically and morally upright. His Journey to success has a lot of seeming contours. He rode on the business proposal of Sowho, his cousin who had applied to the parent company abroad of a

paint manufacturing company as their overseas agent and franchise in Nigeria. Eventually, the company agreed to visit and conduct inspection on the warehouse facilities and requested Sowho to get his warehouse and other things ready.

Sowho could not raise the funds to take care of these requirements and instead of Jonan Okwe to come in as a partne, he raised the fund and setup Sowho on a journey to South Africa with a fake passport. Sowho was arrested and jailed on entry in South Africa. By the time he served the prison sentence and was released, Jonan okwe sat comfortably on the monopoly of paint manufacture and distribution in Lagos, carefully outdoing Sowho. Sowho retuned for his pound of fresh, they both had a fight and died in the process, this was not to be until Sowho infiltrated the company using some employees and also got other major stakeholders in the company and the labour union leadership to cause industrial havoc and eventual shut down of the plant. With this development, bankruptcy sets in and Jonan Okwe could not redeem his indebtedness to the bank where he had earlier received a loan facility for his business. All these came in one fell swoop and it was too much for Jonan to Swallow. He lost concentration and things fall apart.

But the question that should be asked is, what is the philosophical base for representing the mythology of nemesis to be able to study the nature of business men in Nigeria and elsewhere generally? The answer lies in part that one of the characteristics of literature is truth and *Flowers and Shadows* though fiction has the quality of truth. This is because, we can actually locate the major fictional character, Mr. Jonan Okwe to represent some people in the business world who believe in the manner and tactics of doing business the way he does. This conforms to what Charles Darwin calls "natural selection" The theory of natural selection simply proceeds on the almost nihilist logic that, the strongest will survive after the weaker ones have been eliminated. This in contemporary case has become

an extended metaphor to cover all activities of life be it politics, Religion culture, Economics e.tc

Beyond the surface, *Flowers and shadows* is an extrapolated discourse and representation that goes beyond the ordinary logic of the myth of nemesis as found in the *Flowers and Shadows* but is actually as eye opener and prescription for a human society where people will be very introspective to be able to question the logic and morality of their actions.

The writer, being a visionary and philosopher; could with benefit of a hindsight and clairvoyance see into the future and it is left for the society to reason along with him. To this end, Ben Okri had postulated a clear clairvoyant picture of what the political power and the business environment in Nigeria and elsewhere would look like in the future. Whether or not we see it today is a different ball game and argument. The resources of the country does not derive on the notion of commonwealth for all the citizens but a few privileged men and women who always discount the majority and that is essentially where'' natural selection'' comes in. It does not matter whether the weaker ones are alive or have been eliminated in the process of ascendancies.

Taken on another level of discourse in the myth of nemesis, namely 'evolutionary meliorism' *Flowers and Shadows* sound the trumpet of apocalypse on the horrendous and distressing nature of ambition. The novel presents Jonan Okwe's multifaceted Journey into the bowels of stardom. The narration is episodic and it is only the letter part of the novel that provides the reader with analytical expose of the major character's activities. Like autobiography, Okwe is the authorial figure that pervades the narration, the figure of *prosopopoeia,* a Greek term which means "face making" Digman (1990) posit that, the effort of an author to create a "face'' is to distinguish this central character and thus creating a pictorial image of the character. Meliorism is a philosophy that sees the society, despite its

infelicities as capable of improvement. It does not believe that, the extant situation of the society should be taken as mender to the future of that society.

According to Hale, (2010) meliorism is "the name applied to the belief that society has an innate tendency toward improvement and that tendency can be furthered by conscious human effort". As a result, the meliorist sincerely believes "in faith that by a frail and faulty efforts to heal the world, we move imperceptibly, toward a better world'' To be able to prove this, Ben Okri in *Flowers and Shadows* contrast father and son, Jonan Okwe and Jeffia Okwe(son) who are direct opposite of each other. It can be conveniently argued that, while Jeffia believes that nurture rather than nature is the primary moulder of personality and took more to his mother's counsel, the father is the opposite of this and believes that nature rather than nurture is the moulder of personality;

> *Jonan looked…with mild contempt especially at Jeffia…and concluded Would grow up soft and lazy like a woman…and soft in taste and values. He wondered how the sons of today could be as strong as the sons of yesterday…weak and short sighted (Pg175)*

Jonan outbursts above was when Jeffia and the mother were in the court yard brandishing flowers during a family outing which literarily demonstrate the 'apartness' of their world and also represented a codification of Jonan's Personality. Jonan Okwe's personality is a complete negation of the concept of human duality as propounded by Achebe while explaining in "Morning yet on creation day'' Achebe states while explaining "chi'' in Igbo cosmology that;

> *Whenever something stands, something else will stand beside it.Nothing is absolute. I. am the truth, the way and life would be called Blasphemous or simply absurd for it is well known that a man would worship ogwugun to perfection and yet be killed by udo*

Jonan Okwe believes in absolute "success" and also succeeding alone and this is the large image that is represented of his character throughout the narration, the figure of

"Prosopopoeia" and this is the effort of the narrator to create a "face'' which would distinguish him from others. But this effort essentially portrays Jonan Okwe's vanity because of his own high opinion of himself and achievements is not merely imprint or discretely veiled but is spread broadly across in a lonely grinded stupefaction of friends and villains and opponents that will eventually cost him his life but not before the emotional excruciating torture just to add vent to the message of a just retribution as found in the myth of nemesis.

The point must also be made about the transposition and representation of this myth's relevance in an Africa setting especially within the social milieu and back ground of the characters. Success in the Igbo cultural milieu is highly individualized and confers on the successful subject some degree of importance above his peers. Instructively, the clime of success becomes some sort of 'space' occupied by the successful personality who tends to hegemonies it, territorial hegemony, to speak. The author seems to argue that, this is anti-community as the community, Achebe would prefer to call it "land" outlives the people. Besides, the attempt to sustain hegemony brings about the social antics and vices used by Mr Okwe. It is the author's argument that, such tendencies will not 'miliorise' the society but instead polarize it and may even become socially and economically immobile. For the author, it is necessary to use such a combustible mythology to pass a cultural message to both man and community and only a language of the gods could fully express the nuances of the mythology more or can realized.This is reinforced by Achebe who has argued elsewhere that'' the writer's burden is to express our thoughts and feelings even against ourselves, without the anxiety that what we say will be taken as evidence against our race'' If it does not happen (turning the critical eye inwards) Achebe (ibid) believes'' the African writer was in the danger of becoming too fascinated by the yesterday of his people and forgetting the present'' The treatise continues;

> *Involved as he was with correcting his disfigured past he forgot that his past society was no longer peasant with Ownership of*

> *means of production, with communal means of celebration of joy and victory, communal sharing ofsorrow and bereavement; his society was no longer organized on egalitarian principle but cut between emergent crust of middlemen and the Masses were developing; their seeds being in the colonial pattern of social and economic development...*

The apparent refrain inherent in the above is that literature must aim to educate and of necessity must remain the conscience of the nation. It must constantly remind us of the history and where we as a people are coming from. It is only by this that literature remains relevant as a contributor to the national discourse over nationhood.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study is premised on postmodernist representation and it has utilized Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* and *Flowers and Shadows* for substantiation and exemplification. The key problematic of the study is to prove that postmodernist representation is the central thematic analytical framework for exemplification and substantiation and that the novel form is the best suited artistic form and means for the explication of postmodernist representation over nationhood and development, and also that Okri's novels utilized as the primary data for the study are axiomatic of the centrality of Nigerian literature in discourse over nationhood and development. The study also argues that the novel has a capacity to subsume various themes and sub-themes contingent upon its multiplicity of characters to anchor postmodernist discourse and that because literature is a social unit, it does not shy away from involvement in the discourse within the environment it is created. Furthermore, the study argues that irrespective of their individual themes, the novels under study are significant mechanisms of representation and presentation of thoughts and ideas through semblances circumscribed by narration or telling, all of which are contingent upon various discursive modes**.**

The analytical framework for the study is done qualitatively using the two texts as the primary data for analysis and exemplification. The Famished Road and Flowers and Shadows as can be seen from the foregoing analysis, form the basis of literary discourse and representation and also provides raw discourse data and the protocols of narratology. The study therefore concludes that firstly, the flexibility of the novelistic genre serve as the hubris of varied forms of experiences, and also a veritable instrument for discussing and interpretation diverse textual experiences on the Nigerian project, secondly, given this praxis, the novel under study treated not only divergent discourses and refrentialities but also

authenticates the claim that, in the process of writing, the text's materials have utilized the dynamics and poetics of discourse and representation, thirdly, in these instances, it is possible to situate the texts to some non-fictional discourses to which they invariably respond. Even though, the writer may have not set out to aim at exactitude or being faithful to what happened, the verisimilitude of their narratives has already demonstrated the discourse content inherent in them.

The quest for human relevance in literary theory and practice is, in a way similar to what philosophers are doing – be they philosophers of life, philosophy of art, of religion or science. For our purpose now, we can say that within the explanatory model of literature as a world devoid of impossibilities, the quest for human relevance is conducted through the attempt to established an analogous relationship between our own world and that other world which literature offers. We can take issues of reference, truth and the epistemic value of literature for example starting first with the issue of reference because, it is normally argued that, a literary work has no known material reference. But, somewhere along the line of this debate, some people are quick to point to historical names of persons, towns, and events which appear in the pages of literary works and this is not to deny instances of the presence of textual absences in some literary works. But all the same, those who still insist on maintaining that literature has no known material reference then encounter the existence of historical names in fiction by asserting that such instances do not account for the ontological coherence of the texts. But if we say that literature is a world of its own, it becomes a meaningless question asking for its referential realization. Asking such a question would be like asking about what our world refers to; of course our own world refers to itself just as the other world which literature creates refers also to itself, persons, and animals which populate both worlds. But it is only in the world of literature that we can have animals as unicorns and Pegasus –the types found in Ben Okri's world of *The Famished Road (1991)*

Whereas the other world which literature creates might not be the 'other world' in African cosmology, some pale resemblances to our own world must necessarily exist between the two since it is man who creates the alternative world which literature provide us. The fact that in both worlds we witness such common activities as quarrelling and fighting, love making and rearing of children, holding elections and fouling of electrons etc, is no sufficient guarantee for us to carry over our own epistemological orientation of this world to look for our type of material reference in the other world which literature provide us. Instead of asking; what literature refers to, we should be asking; how does this other world which literature offers relate to our own world.

The question of what do we as human beings benefit by novels and also this is what people mean when they talk about the entire epistemic value of literature especially within the context of a novelistic discourse. In our ordinary world, we learn quite a lot from what happens to other people and there is no cogent reason why we should not learn from what happens to characters in literary works granted that, literature has no reference, but that it rather has sense. Because what we learn in our world are things that make sense to us, not just things or ideas with identifiable referents. In addition to learning from the sense which is found in literature, it has also to be observed that, literature has an effective property. It has a way of affecting us emotionally apart from appealing to us intellectually. In short, the effectiveness which literature has as a vehicle for imparting knowledge resides in the fact that, it does not pretend to be a teacher delivering a lesson before its pupils, but secures the advantage of addressing us more intimately than the teacher can. Moreover, those abstract qualities such as courage, justice, ambition, freedom and so on stand a better chance of being fleshed out and illustrated in literary works such as the novel than in the classroom. We can learn from Ben Okri's *Flowers and Shadows* the graphic illustration of the consequences of ambition We can also learn from the metaphorical and proverbial traditional African wisdom

which can bring to bear on us the implication of the "kite perching and not letting the eagle also to perch" in a more lucid manner as Chinua Achebe does in *Things Fall Apart*. Even if literature is fiction, we can no learn from fiction. I do think that we should disentangle ourselves from mistaken Platonic poetics. These are the problems created by literary theorists and critics; rather than by literature itself. I think that, the proper function of literature is to remain true to its nature. In short, it has no other function except this. To also contest the preposterous posture of those who argue that, the functions of literature is to please and instruct, I do not think that such people would be able to sustain the argument about the function of this world of ours. The question is ultimately reducible to finding a divine purpose in our created world. In the wake of the general resentment and expression of doubt about why God allowed the unjust to prosper in this world, a great artist once set out to justify the ways of God to man and ended up creating a heroic and admirable Satan.

To be master even in darkest circumstances rather than a groveling servant in eternal blessedness, nothing can beat that. God, according to biblical account, looked at the world He created and was happy. In Tiv mythology, however, after God had stayed close to His created beings, He got annoyed, because one stubborn woman continued to disturb His sleep by pounding yam for food late at night. As a result, God withdrew to a distance far from the reach of man. Can these Gods have the same attitudinal disposition to the worlds they created? Can the inhabitants of these worlds find the same function in life.

The essence of these conclusive remarks is to illustrate how difficult it is to answer the question; what is the function of literature. It is certainly a metaphysical question that cannot be answered by making observational statements and sentences about the infinite things which literature does. Literature has no other function than to offer man the fullest opportunity to realize his creative potentials, potentials best realized through presenting to man an alternative world. It is mimetic no doubt, but it is not a mimesis of life; it is man's

will power, man's desire to appropriate that primordial essence of the world; Let the waters collect one side and let dry land appear! There is no other creative power can man exercise more than this. Only literature offers man the power and it finds its fullest expression in novels. Why, if I did not like my president and his government, I could create a fictive world in which he would be made to die on the stake, his body cut out into thirty pieces and distributed to all the states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory. This is exactly what Achebe did in chief Nanga's country of *A Man ofthe People*.

But I dare not make that proposition in normal daily discourse. But if I used the instrumentality of literature, say, the novel to do it, and did it the way literature ought to be done, I would have in substantial measure, done nothing and said nothing, but I would belabour literary critics and theorists to wrestle with my words and meaning, to find a meaning of the world I have created. This would have been done by severalcritics and my 'world' essentially turned into a discourse on literary creation and representation.

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