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**College of Graduate Studies**  
**College of Languages**



**Themes and Characterization in Ben Okri's novels**

**المواضيع والتشخيص في روايات بين أوكري**

*A Thesis Submitted in Fullfilment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of PhD in (English Language Literature)*

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## **Dedication**

**To the spirit of my parents.**

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## Abstract

Ben Okri is a British Nigerian talented and prolific contemporary writer of post-colonial and post-modern period as per his literary movement. He abundantly uses certain themes and characterization, such as themes of violence, poverty and corruption as phenomena which prevailed locally and globally. This research is an attempt to investigate themes and characterization in three of his selected contemporary novels: *“Flowers and Shadow's”*, *“The Famished Road”*, and *“Songs of Enchantment”*. These novels reflect post-colonial (social, political and economic) challenges that Nigeria had undergone. It is believed that Okri has used his themes and characterization harmoniously to convey the intended message to the readers. Concerning characterization, Okri's characters have dualistic roles. They are sometimes violent and sometimes normal, and they choose between good and evil through their behaviors and actions. A variety of descriptive approaches to textual analysis are used to investigate the themes and characterization. This is done via a close textual reading, historical analysis, psycho – analytical approach and a comparative method where it deems necessary to the selected novels. Concerning the questions of the study, It is proved through analysis and interpretations that Okri has certain themes and characterization features as well. In addition, Okri has contributed prolifically to African literary production. The study wraps up with some suggestions for further studies, such as; the theme of bad governance, the stylistic device in Okri's novels, as well as symbolism and personification and magical realism in Okri's novels.

## مستخلص الدراسة

الروائي البريطاني النيجيري بين أوكري كاتب موهوب ومعاصر وكثير الإنتاج الأدبي لفترتي ما قبل الإستعمار وما بعد الحداثة وفقا لنهجه الأدبي يستخدم بعض المواضيع وتجريد الشخصيات بغزارة مثل مواضيع : العنف , الفقر , الفساد كظواهر سادت محلياً وعالمياً – حاول هذا البحث دراسة المواضيع وتجريد الشخصيات في ثلاث من رواياته المعاصرة وهي: زهور وظلال , الطريق الجائع وأغاني السحر . هذه الروايات تعكس التحديات الإجتماعية , والسياسية والإقتصادية التي مرت بها نيجيريا في فترة ما بعد الإستعمار. ويُعتقد أن بين أوكري إستخدم المواضيع وتجريد الشخصيات بصورة متناغمة لإيصال رسالته للقارئ . وفيما يختص بالشخصيات , فإن شخصياته تلعب دوراً "إزدواجياً", فأحياناً شخصيات عادية وفي أخرى عنيفة وتختار ما بين الخير والشر من خلال أفعالهم وسلوكهم. استخدم الباحث طرق وصفية عديدة لتحليل النصوص المختارة وهذا عبر القراءة المتأنية , والتحليل التاريخي والنفسي والمقارنة فيما يناسب من نصوص.فيما يختص بأسئلة الدراسة فقد ثبت من خلال التحليل والشرح بأن لبين أوكري مواضيع معينة وملامح تشخيصية أيضاً" . بالإضافة إلى ذلك لقد ساهم أوكري بغزارة في الإنتاج الأدبي الأفريقي. إنتهت الدراسة بعدة مقترحات لدراسات أخرى في روايات بين أوكري مثل موضوع الحكم غير الرشيد , وأسلوب الكاتب , الرمزية والتشخيص, وأيضاً" الواقعية السحرية في روايات بين أوكري .

## **Definition of some key words, concepts, terms and abbreviations**

There are some key words, concepts, terms and abbreviations which of great value, therefore, they need to be defined so that, the reader can be acquainted to from the very beginning for smooth understanding to different textual analysis and interpretations.

***Theme***: A central idea that unifies an entire literary work.

***Characterization***: Aspects of a fictional person, behavior psychological...etc.

***Magical Realism***: The story is based on a fantastic idea, yet, on another level it is real.

***Surrealism***: To express in literature the work of unconscious mind.

***Abiku***: The spirit child that borns and dies repeatedly.

***Canon***: Refers to great books that consider central to literary tradition or genuine works of an author.

***Diaspora***: Refers to any displaced people.

***Bildungsroman***: An educational novel –details the development of the principal character.

***Yoruba***: A tribe found in the eastern part of Nigeria.

***FAS***: Flowers And Shadows.

***TFR***: The Famished Road.

***SOE***: Songs Of Enchantment.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The study under investigation deals with post-colonial African literature. It is about themes and characterization in Ben Okri's selected novels. It is divided into five chapters. Below is an introductory chapter in which comprehensive account is given on the background of the concept of African literature, its kinds, types of genres, the themes, the literary movements, terms and forms along with the importance of literature, the role of a writer, African writer as per generations. In addition to this, a brief account on Okri's works, themes and literary movement are observed by the researcher. Moreover, it exposes to the statement of the problem, the questions of the study, the objectives of the study, the hypotheses and the methodology.

#### ***1-0 Background***

To begin with, Africa is a vast continent. It is varied in terms of geography, cultures and languages. Its methodology reflects beliefs and values and stems out from its own setting, conditions and history. It is to be noted that, Africa has been experiencing tough times during pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods.

No doubt, Africa has emerged from slave trade, slavery, colonialization and the outcomes of these historical events, be, political, social or economic have made Africa suffer too much; so, its novelists and poets have continuously been endeavoring hard to x-ray these periods via exposing to miscellaneous themes' characterization and symbolisms.

African literature refers to literature of and from Africa. The term, African literature' covers a vast and complex of creative literary works, be, prose, poetry or drama. Literature produced in the African continent may be divided into three distinct and widely accepted categories: traditional African literature, new literature and modern African literature. Thus,

African literature is literature from Africa, either oral or written in African languages. Chinweizu(1985:19) explains that ‘African literature is a product of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’. It is written first in European languages, by and for westerners and African elites , its pioneers are Senghor, Achebe, Soyinka , Ngugi ... etc . It was created under colonial rule . It is to be noted that , African literature ( literature written by Africans , for African readers , in African languages is very old ). African literature (AL) is amixture of both factual and imaginative songs, poems , myths , epics , fables and philosophical conjectures . At the core of such stories are creation ; myths which give the members of society their identity and their historical anchor is the universe.

It is worth mentioning that African written literature has mapped itself on the literature world using oral tradition. This use of orality is what writers like chinua Achebe have used as justification for their writing in a European language , while dissenting voices of Ngugi WaThiongo ,Obi wali and others were calling for a rejection of English as a medium of telling the African experiences. Ashcroft etal (1989: 37) in his book, *The Empire Strikes Back* , puts it forward that " the crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post – colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the center and replacing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place .

Danjums Maryam (2015 : 8 ) pin points to the modern African fiction written in English . He states that, modern African fiction written in English has been hybridized of the interaction between indigenous forms of oral storytelling and the European literary culture whose place was framed by the European novel; however, are cross breeding occurred through the genre novel, and its result was a focus on the birth of a sense of postcolonial Negritude among the colonized Africa.

Another factor about literature is that, it deals with trauma in the context of African's moral imagination in this context. Rogers Kurtz (2014:39) argues that "by examining the social thought of African writes, we can refine and address crucial problems in trauma theory. modern African literature is a product of the ultimate traumatic experience , namely colonialism and the centuries of slave trade that proceed it , the other forms of racial subjection that attended and succeeded it ( including apartheid ) , the super power ( ideological ) global politics that marginalized neoliberal capital which relegates Africa and fuels amyraid of social , economic and political crises in the continent . Africa literary history offers us fresh insights into the possibilities for social transformation and healing.

There are so many traumatic events in the African countries. James, Gilligan (1997:5) stated that :

*Since the 1960,s many African states have failed to create viable institutions to lead to national integration and justainable socio – economic development – instead, military coups dictatorships, civil wars and political assassinations have dashed African people's dreams for smooth transition from colonialism – Authoritarian patterns of government become the way of ruling in the context of declining legitimacy.*

For centuries a majority of African countries experienced the traumatic and disastrous rule of tyranny whose common features have been mentioned by ibid (1997 :10) as follow :

*Absence of legitimacy and political accountability, the dictator's skillful manipulation of supernatural power, personal and kinship networks in the security forces, ruthless use of terror and institutionalization of political murders, hounding educated people to exile, and socio – political disaster and economic chaos.*

These personal dictatorship become the paradigm of African post – colonial politics that writers fictionalized and condemned. In this context the novelist Soyinka's *A play of Giants* (1984:17) indicated \ di Amin Dada (Uganda), Jean Bedel Bokassa (central African) Marcias Nguema (Equatorial Guinea), and Mobutu (Zaire). In his works Nurrudin Farah, the Somali writer unveils about the Machiavellian strategies African dictators share:

*fostering tribal divisions to remain in power and using “Dionysius Ear” to track opposition. In other words, the dictators set nets to practice espionage and surveillance censorship on writers and thinkers who often criticize them.*

Through out its era, African literature has exposed to various themes which reflect different situations and periods. The believe in togetherness and unity is one of main themes in African literature. It stems from ‘ubuntu philosophy’ as mentioned by Issifou (2012: 66-67), (one of the African dialects) that means "humanity to others". It is based on the belief that the self's existence is dependent on the other's existence " I am because you are, and since you are, therefore, I am" – This philosophy of being and becoming has been practiced in all African societies for centuries.

- Ubuntu, therefore, promotes a sense of unity, together-ness among the people of the world; most importantly it is against discrimination of any kind. Conflicts are seen to be also one of the main themes of the postcolonial era of African literature. The clash between African past and present is one of these conflicts. Also, there are other clashes such as the clash between tradition and modernity or the clash of cultures. It is to be observed that, within the Nigerian society there is a cultural clash because Nigeria is shaped by multiethnic groups, namely (Hausa, Igbo, multi, ethnic and Yoruba). As per the cultural clash and accepting other, Said (1991:95) in his book "Orientalism" observes that" the relationship between Occident

(west) and Orient (east) is a relationship of power, of domination, so, the western cultural hegemony despite of this reality ibid (1991:259) sees the matter from other perspective when writes about migrant position, in this sense he catches the position well:

*The more one is able to live one's own cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment and generosity necessary for true vision the more easily does one see oneself and alien cultures with the same combination of intimacy and distance.*

In the same scenario, the Sudanese novelist Saleh (1964:95) on his novel, season of Migration to the North x-rays a situation of cultures and belittling others.

For Saleh although the north educated him but kept him at a distance, the black English man', he remained the outsider, the other. That's why he retaliated when mentioned: "I came to you as an invader into your very homes, a drop of poison which you've injected into the veins of history".

In addition to these themes, African literature has other themes such as corruption, resistance, nationhood, disillusionment and betrayal. In this sense Ogunjipe (2004:9) explains that, prior to independence in 1960, literary production in Nigeria, and indeed Africa constituted an act of resistance against colonialism. The period of independence coincided with the process of decolonization that interrogates the concepts of nationhood and the national identities within the nationalist movement, the sense of hope and cohesion was strong that the coming years would promise prosperity, but something un expected happen. First Nigeria broke along its ethnic fault lines. Second, corruption rapidly crept into the fibre of this emergent nation-state. Consequently, hope vanished as quickly as it was conceived. Disillusionment replaced optimism, fear defeat trust, betrayal displaced comradeship, and the promise of aglorious future.

Moreover, language is considered as a theme of great importance among all these themes for English and French languages are used effectively to convey the African experience that has distinguished African literature from English and French literature properly and then has acquired the international attention. Politics is another theme that runs throughout the African literature during the colonial and postcolonial period. Above all the theme of identity is also an important issue that dominates most if not all the African writer's fictions of this era. It is to be noted that, the postcolonial writers employ utopia or magic to provide solutions to the complex post-independence dilemma. One of the most urgent theme of African literature is exile. In his book, *Culture and Imperialism*, Said (1993:343) writes about migrant position of intellectual and the novelists who are in exile, he states that:

*Exile, far from being the fate of nearly forgotten unfortunates who are dispossessed and expatriated, becomes something closer to a norm' an experience of crossing boundaries and charting new territories in defiance of classic canonic enclosures, however, much of its loss and sadness should be registered.*

In addition to the above mentioned themes, Bonnicia (2004:7) states other themes such as apartheid and corruption as subjects of postcolonial African writing. He affirms that, postcolonial African writing comprises a strong reaction against negative stereotypes constructed during the colonial period, African writers had to dismantle myths of African inferiority, assert African cultures, combat the apartheid regime in south Africa and criticize corruption in African countries.

African literature cannot be well described unless a considerable account be given or drawn upon the literary terms, forms and movements which prevailed during and postcolonial periods and played significant role in shaping the literary milieu.

In fact the cultural milieu worldwide has been affected by the domination of colonizers and by the new dawn of liberty that witnessed the emergence of voices from the former colonies and period of decolonizing of mind and self – awareness began. In this context, Guevara (1964:1) on his speech before the general assembly of the united nations stated that “the final hour of colonialism has struck and million of inhabitants of Africa, Asia and Latin America rise to meet anew life and demand their unrestricted right to self-determination and to the independent development of their nations”. As time goes on this decolonization of mind causes a revolutionary theory, consequently; different literary terms, forms and movements have been adopted and adapted. To name a few, post – colonial literature is a body of literary writing that responds to the intellectual discourse of European colonization in Africa, Asia Middle east, the pacific and other postcolonial areas throughout the globe. Another term is post-colonization it is a term which concerned with literature written in English in countries were or still are colonies of other countries. For the most, postcolonial studes exclude literature that represents colonizers viewpoints and concentrate on writings from colonized or formerly colonized culture.

In addition to these terms, post – modernism is another term which is defined as the sign of a recognition of in surmountable limits. These limits that become even more pronounced after the collapse of empire and the rise of voices that displace the centrality of western discourses. Modernism and post – modernism are governed by two different esthetic dominate, namely the epistemological problems and ontological ones. Africanness is a term which focuses on African identities and cultures. In this connection, Soyinka and Okri, among other, present arguments against a static essentialised notion of

"Africanness and argue for the fluid, dialogic and mutable condition of African identities and cultures

([www.academic.oup.com](http://www.academic.oup.com)).

Moreover, 'Blackness' is a term or movement which takes blackness as a characteristic for African novelists and Africa as a place are present forces in the novel. Another term is 'Negritude'. As Abiola (1977:20) defines it, "Negritude is the simple recognition of the fact of being black, and the acceptance of this fact of our destiny as black people of our history and our culture". In fact African writers in the French colonized Africa led this movement and formed a black aesthetics, that involved a heightened awareness of the greatness of the African past and African traditional culture.

Not only these terms and movements but also there are other terms, forms and movement, as well. 'Pan-Africanism' is a literary movement which draws on aspects of black Nationalism that focuses on the idea of Africa as a homeland for the black diaspora ( the word diaspora used in cultural studies to refer to any displaced people ). It is an attempt to unify Africa as both a continent and an area of geographical descent for the balck diaspora. It has a primary influence on Africans in the twentieth century in terms of socio political dimensions. It becomes a tool for self – governance,for continental solidarity, a concept that Appiah (1992:81) finds problematic:

*Despite the differences between the histories of British, French and portuguees- excolonies, there is adeep and deeply self-conscious continuity between the problems and the project of decolonized Africans... there is something disconcerting for apan- Africanist that what Africans have in common is fundamentally that European racism failed to take them seriously, that European imperialism exploited them .(this idea anticipates ) Achebe's question:"when you see an African what*



*does it men to a white man ". the presupposition that the African identity is , in part, the product of a European gaze.*

One of the significant terms which deserves shedding light on is hybridity. It is a post- colonial construct that aims at countering all binaries based on notions of ethnic, cultural, racial and political purity. It refers to the new trans- cultural forms within the conflict zones produced by colonization. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century England's political, social, economic, and ideological domination of its colonies began to disappear, a process known as 'decolonization' which is one of the main literary terms and concepts . Furthermore , 'Others' is seen as a literary term and as philosophical. concept called alterity where by the 'Other' are excluded from the position of power and viewed as both different and inferior. On the other hand, the term Abiku is a spirit child that repeatedly borns and dies. It represents Nigeria's ability to navigate between two worlds, the western and native. It's birth as Okri indicates coincides with the birth of the new nation. For Okri, Nigeria is metaphorically and Abiku child who comes and goes at will. Despite the sufferings. He believes in his novel the Famished road that one day :

*There will be changes... coups... soldiers every where... ugliness... blindness and then when people least expect it, a great transformation is going to take place in the world... suffering people will know justice and beauty. A wonderful change is coming from far away and people will realize the great meaning of struggle and hope, there will be peace (418)*

'Multiculturalism' is also seen as a term which is often used to refer to cultural diversity which includes language, race ethnic background, country or region of origin, dress, values religion and associated practices, social and community responsibility, sexuality, disability, notions of family, family responsibilities and political view. Caleb (2009:40).Defines Cluturalism as :

*“A system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their social-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within and inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society”* .

Furthermore, "Surrealism " is also a literary movement . As Goodman (2004:285) describes it. It is originated in France in 1920. "the surrealists attempt to express in art and literature the working of the unconscious mind.

Another literary term is 'Canon which in literature refers to great books. In this context Wolfreys (2011:336) points that:

*Canon originally referring to the books of the Bible that had been accepted by church authorities as bearing the word of God, the notion of canon in literary studies refers to great books or the works of others who are considered as central to literary traditions.*

Furthermore, 'Social realism' is of great importance to African literature. Adegbite (2018:31) in his book *Class stratification and Poverty in Nigerian literature*, states that, 'Social Realism' is a literary approach that analyzes society and its problems in Marxist terms.(i.e) oppression of the common man by his fellow Africans (proletarian), the class struggle, degeneration, corruption and moral decadence'.

One of the most important literary term and movement is 'Magical Realism' . This term is created by German historian and art critic Franz Roh in 1925. It became current in the 1980's. It took off as a powerful literary genre and a new literary hybrid. The story is based on a fantastic idea, yet, on another level it is real as Sutherland (2013:238) maintains. African theorist, novelist and critic Ngugi calls for the use of magical realism in the depiction of current African situation in literature.

On her book 'colonialism' and its effect on literature" Nighat (2014:ii) pinpoints to the fact that 'literature focuses on the bond and thoughts of the societies and records the historical process of change's. This citation reflects the importance and functions of literary which does not only focus on thoughts and recording the historical events, but it expresses values, pleasure as well as evaluating individual life for the benefit of the greater society and public awareness by giving new visions and dimensions. Therefore, literature should unite the writer with society in a process of reflection and comprehension. In his book ' Secure the Base' the novelist Wathiong'o (2016:122) states that:

*Literature provides us with images of the world in which we live. These images shape our consciousness to look at the world in a certain way.*

Ibid (2016:20) says the world in which Africa tries to find its place is one of contradictions. Technology is the best example. This situation makes him ask, where is Africa's place in this scenario? what is Africa in the global space ? Therefore', Literature promulgates the social and political predicament of the people. Literature is not equivalent to truth, but it constructs itself close to reality, so much that the reader can connect the issues raised in a text to regional and universal context. In this trajectory, Femi osofisan (2007:4) for one, has argued that literature must address the sociopolitical problems of the day, including, the abuse of power, wide spread poverty, and corruption in the public life, the suffering of the common people and so on' in order to be worthwhile . Thus, the function of literature is not state facts, but to reflect the society, in addition to educating and entertaining the reader. Moreover, the reader must be reasonably well informed about the political and social discourses on the fictional representations. In their book

literature as cultural memory in South Africa, Jonathan et al (1991:7) assert that :

*Literature is as important carrier and constructor of cultural memory, it is a cultural phenomenon that intersects with history. It is strategic because it helps human make sense of their world-narratives (whether literary, visual or oral form). This is an important resource for restructuring and recomprehending experience.*

For Ngugi (2012:16,17) in his book, *Globaletics and the politics of knowing*, literature is at the centre of the past, present and future, both in collective and individual senses. He asserts that :

*The novel mimics, contemplates, and unifies many elements of reality interims of quality and quantity. It helps organize and make sense of the chaos of history, social experience, and personal inner lives.*

*As a creative process, it mimics the creation of the universe as order from chaos.*

On his book, 'Fiction as political thought', Larry Diamond (1989:435) demonstrates on his own essay, we can also extract something from the sociopolitical domain for the analysis and better understanding of the aesthetic because fiction:

*May give us special thoughts and insights into how culture and history intersect with and reshape, or are reshaped by the lives of people, ordiancy and extraordinary. For these reasons, literature may provide a precious and indispensable window into a society, a people and an era.*

The above concept is clearly showing the task of literature which helps to provide not only insights into culture and history but also opens a window towards understanding the society and its era. Ibid (1989) cites in Chinua Achebe's 'Anthills of Savanna' (1987). He pinpoints to the question of knowledge in society and the fictions role, 'fiction is also an active influence, reinforcing or refashioning values, beliefs, ideas, perceptions and aspirations . The teller of a story can become a powerful

force in shaping the way people think about their social and political order, and the nature, , desirability and direction of change. In addition to all these, Quayson (2004:xv) encourages us to embrace the ideological notion of using the literature as a means towards social enlightenment .

Critics of different persuasion have commented on the role of the novel in the representation of society. Some focus on the aesthetic aspect, insist that the novel should emphasize on the social reality.

Orr (1977:4) focuses on both historical and social representation when he observes that:

*No sociology of the novel can exist without a historical consciousness for like its readership, every literary text has a historical location.*

*Aesthetic sensibility is inseparable from the experience of life overtime. What is read finds its aesthetic validity in what has been lived. The novel especially , has an enduring relationship to history and society, because there is no literary critic who can understand the novel by turning his back on society, and no social scientist who can understand modern society by turning his back on the novel .*

In his book, the novel and contemporary Experience in Africa, Gakwandi (1977:6) argues that ‘the ideal African literature novel is that type which contributes to the question of social and political conditions of the continent . (i.e) it examines the customs, convention, social institutions as well as political ones. Lukacs (1969:6) stresses the affinity between the novel and society. He asserts that ‘ society is the principal subject of the novel, that is, man's social life in its ceaseless interaction with surrounding nature which form the bases of social activity and with different social institutions of custom, which mediate the relation between individuals in social life. Social vision also finds its lack of criticism. In this respect, the novelist Soyinka

(1976:64) is on the view that, the reflection of experience is only one of the functions of literature, whereas Ogude (1990:11) in his book, *Ideology and Aesthetic, the African Dilemma*, is emphatic about the connection between literature, history and society. He criticizes African writers who fail to make their works socially relevant and regrets the loss of "authentic spirit" in such writers, and condemns their imitation to western tradition and disregard their African roots.

The connection between the novel and the society is also further highlighted by Vanpeer (1991:15). The focus should not be limited to their aesthetic values, it should also be directed at their sociological content To him therefore:

*The production and consumption of text and discourse serve particular purposes. Apart from aesthetic ones , which are studied in poetics and stylistics , texts represent social values and traditions and relate to ideological positions (which) originate in extra-textual structures of reality and society .*

On the other hand, Rockwell (1974 : 12) in her book, 'Fact in Fiction' ,she appraises the novel from a slightly different perspective . She focuses on the novel as a medium of exploring societal norms and values , To her "the novel is concerned with social reality in a special sense , it describes and defines norms and values , and presents its characters as actors in the demonstration of them . in his paper 'Fighting a partheid with word' , Achebe (2002 :9) is of the view that literature should be a tool for education , reformation and social engineering. Thus , art should be employed in the service of the society to create a different order of reality and as a means of inspiration .

The role of the African writer is of great value , therefore , it needs to be drawn attention to . Many critics acknowledge that in Africa the writer is basically a social reformer and his art is his weapon . Adebani (2014 :40) in his paper , 'the writer as social thinker' clarifies that , African writers offer the kinds of

abstractions comparisons , frame works and critical reflections on the African life , and the place of the African in the global context – without which it would be impossible to fully account for the nature of being , existence, reality and the nature and scope of knowledge in the African context . In his book ‘socio political thought in African literature’ G. Mutiso (1974 : 9.10) argues that :

*Studying Modern writers seek to continue cultural attitude. They are socially committed and therefore, write with this commitment in mind, because it has been the tradition of their culture to perceive the artist not as an individual but rather as a value creator and integrator.*

In his book, the African Novel in the 21 century, Emenyonu (2009: X) further commented that “the African novelist emerged as a true voice of Africans, and as the conscience and sensitivity of the society, boldly challenged untenable myth and stereotypes of Africa and Africans in the world”.

As per the writer’s job, Achebe (1987 : 29) says , “the writer cannot be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done . in fact , he should march right in front , for he is after all the sensitive point of his community . in addition to this , Nugubi (1989 : 22) stresses a sociological aim on the part of a writer and sees him as a reflecting mirror to social reality , because by his nature , the writer is a portrayer of a dynamic social change , a mediator between conflicting ideas of the society as well as amoral guide and social philosopher who seeks to reffect aspects of social reality .

The writer , Killam (1973 : Xii) argues that :

*Most African writes have felt from the beginning , and especially since the early 1950s, a special obligation to the societies in which they function , therefore , the writers express their hopes and fears and aspirations .*

Bayer (2001 : 138-143) in his ‘representations of political power in African writing’ . Argues that the trend that compels African writers to commit their art to political concerns will likely subsist for along while . Thus to him , “with no end of neo colonialism insight , post-colonial writing and criticism will retain a special responsibility for political involvement , which finds its cause in the specific political situation of the formerly colonized nation” Hamering on the same issue of social and political commitment of African writers , Achebe (1976 :113) depicts the situation and position of the first generation writers who had shown great commitment to the big issues of Africa . In this sense , Achebe states :

*It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant – like that absurd man in the proverb who leaves his burning house to pursue the rat fleeing from the flames .*

The novelist , Habila (2016 :10) a voice of the younger generation , upholds the same view when he sees the political responsibility of the writer as that of allegiance to the aesthetics of politics begun by the early generation of writers :

*They were writing against the whole colonial system , which was very repressive , very racist very dictatorial , They actually used to have congresses where they would address the political issues of the day .. so politics more or less becomes an aesthetic in African fiction .*

As per (www. The culture trip .com) there are some creative and best African writers that we should know along with their nationalities and their famous novels .On the top of these writers comes Chinua Achebe (Nigerian) writer of *Things Fall Apart* 1958 , Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigerian) writer of *Purple Hibiscus* 2003, Ayikwei Armah (Ghana) his most famous work , *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* 1968, Mariama Ba



(Senegal) her best novel so long Aletter 1981, Nurraddin Farah (Somalia) his novel , From crooked Rib 1970 , Tayeb Saleh (Sudan) , his masterpiece novel , Seasons of Migration to the North 1966 , Aminatta Forna (sieraleone) with her novels , The Devil That Dance on water and the memory of love 2010, Nandine Gordimer, (south Africa) her work , Burger’s Daughter , Alain Mabanckou (cangs) his novel , Broken Glass , plus his novel Black Bazar) , Ben okri (Nigerian) his famous novel , The Famished Road (1991) .

Of course , there are some other African writers who have been observed and recognized globally due to their creative writings , such as : Mariam Ba , Ousmane Sembene , Naugi Wathiong’s , Wole Soyrika , Helon Habila and others who have striven to stand against colonial rule and to address genuine issues via presenting serious and vital themes which help drawing attention to some global problems .

Critics have distinguished contemporary texts from the earlier ones by categorizing the country’s fiction into three generations irrespective of their stylistic device , thematie interpretations and ideological overlaps . in this context , Frederick (2011 :3) in his book, “the Biafra story The Making of African legend x-rays the following points by stating that , the first generation , born when the colonial event was in full force . It was concerned with the dream of Nigenerian as a nation . Its project was to remap Nigerian’s history . Notable members of this generation are Amos tutola (fiction) Wole Soyinka (drama) , Hubert ogunde (drama) Chinua Achebe (fiction) Ibrahim Tahir (fiction) , Flora Nwapa (fiction) T.M.Aluko (fiction) , John pepper clark – Bekederemo (drama and poetry) , Christopher Okigbo (poetry) Cyprian Ekwensi (fiction) and Elechi Amadi (fiction) . The works of the first generation African writers tend to invoke and celebrate Africa’s pastoralism and show how the colonial incursion eroded . Things Fall Apart of chinua Achebe , and

palm wine Drinkard of Amos Tutolo are the best examples . As , Adesanmi and Dunton (2005 :7-19) put it , members of the second generation of African writers were born late and witnessed the independence . they denounced the colonial rule , and mock the Nigerian leaders for subject the country to hostilities and political vices so early in its existence as a sovereign nation – state – notable members of this generation are : Tanure Ojaide (poetry) , Femi Osofisan (drama), Niyi Osundara (poetry) , Ben Okri (fiction) , Festus Iyayi (fiction) , Odi Ofeimuna (poetry) , Tayo Olafioye (fiction and poetry) , Wale Okediran (fiction) , Zainab Alkali (fiction) , and Buchi Emecheta (fiction) .

Members of the third generation were born after 1960 as Adeeko (2008 :10-30) puts it . Their writings “one massively overdetermined by the politics of identity in culture and transnational Frame” , and they remap “the tropes of Otherness” by questioning such totalities as history , nation , gender and their representative symbologies . Aside from Adichie , Abani , Atta , Ali , and Habila , Other members of this generation include Biyi Bandele (fiction) , Nike Adesuyi (poetry) , Dulue Mbacha (fiction) , Uzodfinma Iweala (fiction) , Olu Oguibe (poetry) , Akin Adesokan (fiction) , and many others .

The novelist , Habila (2011 :101) pin points to the reality of the third generation . He affirms that :

*The new generation had decided more cosmopolitan visions of the African condition , cultural production , and subjectivities of gender , class , and sexuality .*

It is worth mentioning that , African writers have played considerable role in bringing out African culture, customs , traditions and myths to the world through their creative literary art , be , poetry , drama or fiction . They address genuine issues through salient themes such as : post colonialism , post

modernism , diaspora , language , Africanism , Unity , Identity and alike .

The British Nigerian novelist Ben Okri is a prolific novelist of the second generation writers , stands out as a monumental figure and acclaimed writer among his Africans contemporaries. His literary genre includes : fiction , poetry , and essays His literary movement focuses on post modernism and post-colonialism and his fiction occupies a high position in African literature . Okri comes from an ethnically mixed background. He left his African home land and moved to England where he has been living and writing for over thirty years . Okri escaped into the first world out of a desire to discover and explore its mysteries . Finally , he made this world of paradoxes his home. From London , the writer has looked back at his former home land and narrate it in most of his novels and short stories (www.digital ocemspa.com) like many African writers who intelligibly treat African fiction as social statement and as a means of political re awakening . Okri has written works true to reality and at the same time complete in artistic sensibility . Kallim and Rowe (2000 :198) have observed that “Okri translates his remarkable knowledge of African cultures into arich array of images .

Okri has also been observed with his novels among the contemporary hybridized immigrant authors . As Ball (2011 : 237) puts it :

*The immigrant writers in the multicultural London mirror their own times and the places they live in and write about the world within the diverse cultural spaces that London provides . Novels of London immigrant are never simply about London . They are also about the homeland that connects to , contrast with , or otherwise frame the new metropolitan world”*

Despite of living in this new metropolitan world , they portray their home lands . The geographical distance between Okri who

lives in Britain and his birth place has led several critics to label him as “hybrid author” but Okri himself works to create texts that represent Africa from an African perspective, even though, the African novel is in fact a hybrid out of the African oral tradition and the imported literary forms of Europe.

Ben Okri hasn't only been observed by his themes which x-ray the ills of the African society, such as, poverty, violence and corruption, but also via his creative portraying of his characters which show that his Nigerian remains strong. He prefers to focus on transnational and trans-cultural themes many of which are Pan-African in nature. Most of his themes are preoccupied about exile, corruption, inequality and poverty. As K. Saranya (2016:1) depicts it, Okri portrays the social and political conditions inside his native Nigeria. The Nigeria Okri describes is dark and often violent, famished, chaotic and corrupted. That is why his fictional world is filled with the above mentioned ills.

Okri's selected novels under this study are: *Flowers and shadows* (FAS), *The Famished Road* (TFR) and *Songs of Enchantment* (SOE). In these novels, Okri calls up Nigerian people's awareness of their past as guide to their present. Each work extends his creative exploration of multiple literary styles, genres and tradition. Thus, he combines the conventions of the European Bildungsroman, with Nigerian English dialects and modernist narrative strategies to explore a modern, post-colonial context as in his first novel “*Flowers and shadows*” (FAS), (1979) which dealt with the difficulties of urban existence in Nigeria.

Okri's Novels or works portray the essential link in Nigerian culture between the physical world and the world of spirits which is apart of Yoruban folklore. Okri's characters are liminal, their identity is either destroys them or helps them. His characters take on mythical proportion and the readers know

them for their actions that for their inner thought process . This collection treats eclectic themes which are dispersed within Okri's fiction such as violence , corruption , poverty ...etc . In addition to this, his characters look on in wonder when electricity , outomobiles or other modern wonders arrive in their village . His characters understand the trends of events and strive to make change .

Okri's works condemn the spread of corruption and violence in Nigeria at the same time giving voice to the poorest , most powerless members of African community and describing the conflict and confrontation between indigenou traditions in post colonial Africa and western culture . Each of his fictional works exhibit remarkable achievements in expending on a mode of representation and the scope of conceiving African history .

To shed the light on the various views stated about Okri's techniques that he uses in his themes and characterization , miscellaneous interpretations and elaborations will be carried out . Okri seems to hold the keys to the universe “ the world is not as we see it , the world as we perceive it” Okri stated this point in conversation at university of lyon (2004) . Okri also hit on the same concept in his book TFR (2003) when he stated that as human “we need to develop a new seeing ...to look at the world with new eyes” ... to see with the heart , see right to the core .

Critics have praised Okri for his ability to creatively experiment with new literary forms where the themes and characters streamlining in aharmonical way . In an interview with Chinua Achebe , he 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 anew younger generation of writers who are charting new directions for African literature .

Okri has additionally received praise for his use of surrealistic detail, elements of Nigerian story telling traditions . In conversation with Vanity Fair’s Anderson , Okri says I ‘think one thing you need to know about Africa , for it’s a great literary tradition . it is impossible to grow in Nigeria without being told about the world . it’s the stories that introduce the world to you, So , in a sense you grow up in a mythologized universe . In an interview cited in ([www.Hongkong.journey](http://www.Hongkong.journey) to imagination.com) Okrio says :

*Story telling is the oldest technology in the world . As away of making sense of reality , to shape our future . stories affect the reality .*

In addition to the use of surrealism in his novel , he uses western literary canon . the word or the term canon as wolfreys (2011:336) points to in literary studies refers “to great books or the works of others who are considered as central to a literary tradition” . The canonicity of Okri manifests notably in his use of western literary techniques of Magical Realism (MR) .

MR is based on a rational view of reality and also on the acceptance of the supernatural as reality . Okri has been compared favorably to authors such as Salman Rushdi (Midnight’s Children 1981) , and Gabriel Gracia Marquez (one Hundred years of solitude 1967) for using MR in their novels . Okri’s novel (the Famished Road) sparks with Magical Realism. This matter also placing Okri’s works firmly within the tradition of post-colonial writing and favourably comparing them to those of such esteemed Nigerian authors as Chinus Achebe . Critics cite the universal relevance of Okri’s writing on political and aesthetical levels , as Okri’s has written “politics take their place beside myth and facts , each one in turn has ascedency . people can say this is a triumph for the African novel if it gives them

comfort , but I say it is a triumph for the imagination , for what Baudelaire calls voluptuousness , the textures of our sensuality” . However , Derek (1994 : 185) sees this matter differently :

*“The realism of Okri’s novels differ from that of his literary predecessors who have written novels based on in a more familiar reality that also confronts this political and economic strife in Africa from Ngugi Wathiongo’s Weep not , Child (1964) to Ayikwe Armah’s , The Beautiful ones Are not yet Born (1968) to J.M coetsee’s , Disgrace (1999)” .*

Some scholars and critics have noted that the seeming realism with which Okri depicts Abiku (the spirit child that born and dies repeatedly) as stated in his novel The famished Road (TFR) challenges the categorization as a post modernist However , for Okri , Nigeria is metaphorically an Abiku child who comes and goes at will . Despite the sufferings (violence , corruption , poverty) Abiku as Okri’s voice believes that one day :

*There will be changes .. coups .. soldiers every-where ...ugliness .. blindness and when people least expect it ; a great transformation is going to take place in the world ... suffering people will know justice and beauty . A wonderful change is coming from far away and people will realize the great meaning of struggle and hope , there will be peace , TFR (478).*

Okri himself describes his fiction as obeying a kind of “dream logic” that answers the question of what is reality. Okri describes this as per ([www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia)) as follows :

*“I grew up in a tradition where there are simply more dimensions to reality , Legends and myths and ancestors and spirits and death ... which brings the question : what is reality? Every one’s reality is different , for different perceptions of reality we need a different language . We like to think that the world is factual and precise and exactly how we see it , but something erupts in our reality which makes us*

*sense that there is more to the fabric of life , I'm fascinated by the mysterious element that runs through our lives” .*

Okri's language has been described as simple , lucid and image laden , it is use of language indicates his mastery of the English language and his indigenous language as well . Okri has eight novels to his credit , and two collections of poems and two collections of short stories , and a collection of essays .

Okri belongs to “Yoruba” (a tribe in the Eastern part of Nigeria . They have strong attachment to their ontological and cosmologic beliefs) .

To be familiar with Okri as a creative and prolific novelist is to grasp his techniques of writing setting from his vision in stating his themes and characterization .

In this dissertation , different views are carefully stated and discussed with sufficient interpretation from the text where the author uses to express his view points on various representations and situations that African experimented in general and Nigeria in particular .

### ***1-1 Statement of problem :***

Undoubtedly , in a world marks with variation and cultural domination , only the creative writing , logical justification and profound visions that can help probe up the work , can stand tall and attract the people . The researcher believes that , the best way to understand Ben Okri's work is to expose to his way of thinking stemming from his literary movement of post modernism and post-colonialism . So , the researcher states that having thorough knowledge of Okri's work and his aims of using certain themes (violence , poverty , corruption) and characterization will help removing ambiguity . To make this matter, possible, the researcher is going to do a comprehensive analysis of these two elements (themes and characterization) in the three selected novels, namely, Flowers and Shadows (FAS),



The Famished Road (TFR), and songs of Enchantment (SOE), Which are the base of this dissertation.

***1-2 Objectives of the study :***

The study under question endeavors to explore the themes and characterization in Ben Okir's three selected novels , namely , "FAS" , "TFR" , and "SOE" . In addition , the exploration of the harmonical uses of the themes and characterization in the selected novels . Moreover , it highlights the contributions of Ben Okri to African literature .

***1-3 Questions of the study :***

The study under investigation aims to answer the Following questions :

- 1- Are there any common themes used in Okris 's novels?
- 2- Are there any common characterization features in Okri's novels ?
- 3- Are the themes and characterization in harmony ?
- 4- Does Okri have any contributions to African literature ?

***1-4 Rationale of the study :***

The facts behind choosing these novels "FAS" , "TFR" and "SOE" they shed the light on the question of the study which concerns with themes and characterization in Ben Okir's novels. In addition , the three selected novels reflect the scenario and history of the colonialism and the civil war in Nigeria and the challenges the Nigerian faced interms of violence , poverty and corruption (political , a dministrative , moral , financial) which will be the intended themes of this research . Moreover , the author has artistically portrayed the characters who deal with dualistic behaviour and some times violent or ordinary and their identity either destroys them or help them and in a way that making the themes vivid and effective to draw effective to some irresolvable issues such as (violence , poverty and corruption) which are the topics of an hour now a days . Not only these , but also these three novels have received local and

international recognition and contributed to African cultural renaissance by questioning the politics of Nigerian in particular and the African post-colonial in general . so , this study is a contribution to review themes and characterization in the three selected novels .

***1-5 Significance of the study :***

The researcher believes that , this study under question has great significance because it focuses on one of the prolific and talented African writers who has globally been recognized through his thematic representation, characterization and his technique of writing setting from his literary movement of post modernism and post – colonialism which have created harmony in his novels . In addition , Okri is categorized as a contemporary hybridized novelist who has managed through his literary artistic and creative style of surrealism or magical realism to find a place on the universal literary scene . His themes touch human current problems directly such as identity, love, corruption, reality. poverty, violence and alike . Moreover, his writings have compelled the European and African critics to appreciate him as a creative novelist. consequently, he has received numerous international prizes , and his works have been translated into more than twenty languages . Furthermore, Ben Okri's is said to be the leading contemporary practitioner who has largely affected by the works of Amas Tutuola (one of the most enigmatic figures in the history of modern Nigerian literature) . Therefore , it is logical to benefit from his precious treasure of literary art and from his lively themes such as freedom , identity , violence , corruption , change...etc . Not only these but also his technique of depicting his characters is of great significance and creates harmony for the intended themes and characterization . These novels can be taught at schools and universities to instill the sense of belongingness and , unity and

identity in the coming generations. Besides , African leaders and politicians have to read these novels to find suitable solutions for the social , political and economic problems in their countries , such as violence (resulting from wars , sectarianism and tribalism) poverty due to instability and economic turmoil and corruption whether (political , social , administrative , moral of financial). So, this study is of great value not only for the students , leaders , politicians and readers as I have mentioned above , but also for critics who will dig deeper to bring out the dimond in Ben okri's novels as well as it is of great value to those who are concerned with literary studies world wide and because also this is the first thesis ever written in Okri's themes of (violence, poverty and corruption) in particular along with characterization. Other theses focus on other literary devices.

### ***1-6 Methodology:***

The method used for analyzing the intended themes and characterization in Ben Okri's selected novels (Flowers and shadows, The Famished road, songs of Enchantment) is of a descriptive analytatic nature which is totally based on close textual reading of the three selected novels. This method of (close textual reading) as Bennett and Doyle (2008:289) put it:

*“Pays careful attention to the new words in the passage. It assumes that the function of reading and criticism is simply to read carefully what is already “there” in the text”*

Basing on the above concept, the researcher is going to carry out a thorough reading to the selected novels, along with the relevant critical studies which will be the main source for consultation, as well as the main references and literary journal and websites (internet). Another approaches which are used in the analysis of these novels, are the psychological and historical approaches because the novels are of social and historical nature. As a matter of fact the psycho analytics approach is an

excellent tool for reading beneath the lines, it mainly depends on Freud's theory that interprets the human actions and behaviors because psychology has its impact on literature and literary criticism. The justification of using the historical method stems out from the fact that, it reflects the author's life and time on the life of characters in the work. So, the author in these novels, clarifies the time and places where the events occurred and their impacts on both themes and characterization. Other novelists similar themes, characters and critics views will also be shown or exposed to, for further analysis.

The population of the study is represented by the characters in the specified study texts. They are or they are not real human beings. The three selected texts "*Flowers and shadows*", "*The famished Road*" and "*songs of Enchantment*" are filled with various individuals struggle with different motives and views .

As a researcher, I have to admit that , my own approach to this thesis has been to select my texts from the area of African writing best known to me . I have not attempted to include all the works of Ben Okri with regard to themes and characterization. I believe that the novels selected adequately reveal some of the main themes that hold a fascination for and are of value to readers of African writing locally and globally.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### ***2.0 Introduction:***

This chapter contains of three main sections. The first section focuses on the theoretical Framework. This is done by investigating the historical background of the literary device ‘theme’ and its diverse definitions, its origin, types, examples of themes and how they are developed. In addition it deals with the background of the literary device ‘characterization’ and its various definitions, origin, types examples of characterization and how they are developed. The second section deals with the literature review in which a survey of the writings about ‘theme’ and characterization in Okris novels is carried out by other writers. The third section delineates the related studies (i.e) the attainable research, studies related to the topic under question. The chapter wraps up with brief summary with respect to the three main sections.

#### **2.1 part (1) theoretical framework**

In this section, the researcher indicates the theoretical framework of both devices ‘theme’ and ‘characterization’ and how they are developed, along with various views that probe them up

##### **2.1.1 Theory of ‘theme’**

‘Theme’ is very important device in any literary work. It is a central idea or statement that unifies and controls an entire literary work . theme is the author’s way of communicating and sharing ideas, perceptions, and feelings with readers. The theme can also be defined as the meaning of a story, what it reveals about human nature.

The ‘theme’ is a story’s underlying message, or ‘a big idea’.in other words, what critical belief about life is the author trying to convey in the writing of a novel, play , short story or

poem? this belief ,or idea transcends cultural barriers . It is usually universal in nature. When a theme is universal, it touches on the human experience, regardless of race or language. It is what the story means. Often, a piece of writing will have more than one theme (what is the theme in literature .[www.study.com](http://www.study.com)).

As per ([www.theme.wikipedia.org](http://www.theme.wikipedia.org)) in contemporary literary studies, a theme is the central topic a text treats. Themes can be divided into two categories: a work's thematic concept is what readers "think the work is about" and its thematic statement being what the work 'says about the subject'.

A theme is also defined as per ([www.litcharts.com](http://www.litcharts.com)) as universal idea, lesson, or message explored throughout a work of literature. One key characteristic of literary themes is their universality, which is to say that themes are ideas that not only apply to the specific characters and events of a book or play, but also express broader truths about human experience that readers can apply to their own lives. All works of literature have themes. The same work can have multiplied themes.

The most common contemporary understanding of theme is an idea or point that is central to a story, which can often be summed in a single word (for example, love, death, betrayal). Typical examples of themes of this type are conflict between the individual and society, coming of age; Humans in conflict with technology, nostalgia, and the dangers of unchecked ambition. A theme may exemplified by the actions, utterances or thoughts of a character in a novel. Such as the thematic idea of loneliness in John Steinbeck's *Mice and Men*. A story may have several themes. Themes Often explore historically common or cross culturally recognizable idea, such as ethical question, and are usually implied rather than stated explicitly (ibid).

Themes are sometimes divided into thematic concepts and thematic statements. A work's thematic concept is the broader topic, it touches upon (love, forgiveness, point, etc.) while its thematic statement is what the work says about that topic. For example, the thematic concept of a romance novel might be love, and dependency on what happens in the story, its thematic statement might be that "love is blind" or that "you can't buy love". Themes are almost never stated explicitly. It can be cited in theme([www.literarydevice.com](http://www.literarydevice.com)) that as a literary device, theme is the central topic or idea explored in a text, usually the theme of a work of literature can be stated in one word, such as "love" or "poverty". A work of literature can, and often does have more than one theme. The theme is generally not stated explicitly in the text, but instead is expressed through the character's actions, words, and thoughts.

Another definition of a theme as per ([www.pittsfordschools.org](http://www.pittsfordschools.org)) is the main idea or message conveyed by the piece and it is generally stated as a complete sentence, an idea expressed as a single word or fragmentary phrase is a motif.

A theme can also be defined ([www.avolottery.state](http://www.avolottery.state)) as the base of any literary work that acts as a foundation for the entire literary work. The theme links all aspects of the literary work with one another and is basically the main subject. The theme can be an enduring pattern or motifs throughout the literary work, occurring in a complex, long winding manner or it can be short and provide a certain insight into the story. Example: the main theme in the play Romeo and Juliet was love with smaller themes of sacrifice, tragedy, struggle, hardship, devotion and so on.

In literature and its writers: A Compact introduction to fiction, Ann charters and Samuel charters (2004:15, 16) define the 'theme' by saying that, the 'theme' is the generalization about

the meaning of a story. the 'theme' is the general idea behind the events of the plot that express the meaning of the story. 'theme' comes last in a discussion of the elements of fiction because all the other elements in a story must be accounted for in determining it. The structure of 'theme' of a story are fused like the body and soul of a reader. 'theme' is an abstract formulation of the authors vision of the meaning of life.

With regard to how the writer develops 'theme' for a story, poem or narrative?. this matter really comes down to what the writer believes about life. This will be reflected in writings. For a work to last, it needs depth, and depth in writing reflects depth in the writer.

'theme' is different from a moral message. The 'theme' is what a piece of writing is a bout . hamlet is a bout revenge. Othello, another Shakespeare play is a bout jealousy. these plays also both explore the theme of betrayal.

Theme can be identified in writing . this depends on what kind of work you are reading. Notifications tends to state its theme directly in the form of a thesis statement, introduction, or preface. Such themes are easy to locate.

Literary works, however, often have themes that are hidden beneath the surface. They are not directly stated. Like a detective you have to read carefully, looking for clues that illustrate your theme. You can find these clues in figurative language (symbols, metaphors, character development, conflict, setting and narrative point of view).

Themes do not have to be true in the real world. They are true in terms of the story they come from. That is, you don't have to believe the theme is true in your daily life, but if the story has been written such that the theme is obvious to readers, the theme is true in terms of the people and events in the story. Themes tend to be universal. Love for example is universal for each and



every person and in everywhere. Themes to be serious even in humorous works.

As per the origin of ‘theme’ , citation can be taken from([www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)) .

Theme is (n) noun. Early 14c, “subject or topic on which a person writes or speaks”, from old French ‘theme’ (13c, with silent-s-, indicating vowel length [OED], modern French theme), and directly from latin thema “a subject, thesis”, from greek thema “a proposition, subject, deposit”, literally “something set down”, from PIE “dhe – mn, suffixed from of root + dhe , “to set”, put, meaning “school essay” is from 1540s. As per ([www.wiktionary.org](http://www.wiktionary.org)) theme is from Middle English ‘tème’, from old French teme, tesme (French theme), from latin. Theme, from ancient Greek (thema), from tithema.

Concerning the types of themes. There are major and minor themes.

They are two types that appear in literary works ([www.literarydevices.net](http://www.literarydevices.net)).

A major theme is an idea that a writer repeats in his literary work, making it the most significant idea in the work. A minor theme, on the other hand, refers to an idea that appears in a work briefly, giving way to another minor theme.

As for the presentation of a theme, a writer presents themes in a literary work though, the feelings of his main character about the subject he has chosen to write about – similarly, themes are presented though thoughts and conversations of different characters.

Moreover, the experiences of the main character in the course of a literary work give us an idea about its theme. Finally, the actions and events taking place in a narrative are consequential in determining its theme.

In addition, themes have many functions. Theme as an element of a story binds together various essential elements of narrative.

It is often a truth that exhibits universality, and stands true for people of all cultures. Theme gives readers better understanding of the main characters' conflict, experiences, discoveries, and emotions as they are derived from them. Through themes a writer tries to give his readers an insight into how the world works, or how he or she views human life. It is worth mentioning that, theme is significant in literature. All works of literature contain some sort of theme. Themes are generally universal in nature, and related to the condition of being human. Thus, the theme in a work of literature crosses boundaries and makes a story meaningful to people to any culture or age.

Short Example of theme ([www.literarydevice.net](http://www.literarydevice.net)). Following are examples with corresponding themes in parentheses. Lonesomeness, fear, happiness, felicitation' gloom, cheerfulness, optimism, pessimism, hopelessness, irony, leadership, peace, war.....etc.

Alight also needs to be shed on some thematic preoccupation of Nigerian people live in poverty, misery, political oppression, economic exploitation, excess of the affluent, liquidation of humane Nigerian traditional values, and all forms of injustices which seem to be the focus of the Nigerian writers. Chris, Adetuyi (2017:22) states that, "the major themes in Nigerian literary works and how they affect the people and the society are varied and vast. The major themes include (Reincarnation, anti-conialism, religion, gender, feminism, manage, love, mortality, and politics among other".

African themes also include (conflicts, post-cerniatism, post modernism, Africanism, corruption, poverty, violence, alienation, language, racism, victimization, myth, identify) and a like .....

There are also some universal themes worth mentioning. A universal theme is an idea that applies to anyone regardless of cultural differences, or geographical location. Universal themes

are ways to connect ideas across all disciplines. It's a central idea about the human condition. It is a generalization about life or human nature; they deal with basic human concerns. A universal theme with generalization can serve as the organization element of unit of study. The examples are:

Abundance/ scarcity, abuse of power, action against apathy, beauty, corruption, courage, faith, family, fate, freedom, friendship, heritage, honesty, innocence, justice, love, loyalty, nature, obligation, perseverance, prejudice, pride, religion, revenge, security, survival, war.....etc.

### ***2.1.2 Theory of characterization***

Characterization is the most important element in the composition of any short story or novel. It is the process of conveying information about characters in narrative or dramatic works of arts or everyday conversation which is distinctive of each character according to way of expression which will help in portraying the characters or interpreting or communicating certain values and messages to readers.

Historically, realistic characterization has only intermittently been considered an essential part of good writing. At times when allegory and didacticism become more important than realism. Characterization disappears. For example. Chaucer's the Canterbury table, began in 1387, has considerably more individualized and realistic characterization than the anonymously written works which were composed only a few years later. Shakespear's works, written between the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, have subtle characterization while pilgrim's progress, written in 1678, has virtually none.

The term has its derivation from the word "character", which is etymologically, derived from the ancient Greek word "Kharacter". The earliest use in English, in this sense, dates from the restoration period, although it became widely used

after its appearance in Tom Jones in 1749(Astone and Savona, 1991 and Harrison, 1998).

Baldic (2001:37) says:

*“In literature, including African literature, a character is a restoration of a person in a narrative or dramatic work of art such as a novel, folktale, play or film. It is a mode of communication or vehicle which conveys special message from the author/narrator to the reader/audience which denotes that characters are the basis from which themes of a novel or work intentions of the author are drawn. Since 19<sup>th</sup> century, the art of creating characters, as practiced by actors had been called characterization”*

Character development is very important character-driven literature, where stores focus not events, but on individual personalities. Classic example in African literature include Solomon Mutsware's "Devil Thrown, (1956)". Wilson chakaip's "The lonely One of the ten arrows, 1958" and Wison katiyo's " A son of the soil, (1976)".

It is true to say that historically; stories and plays focusing on characters became common as part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic Movement and character-driven literature rapidly supplanted more plot-driven literature that typically utilizes easily identifiable archetypes rather than character development.

In African literature before colonialism, characterization served mainly as a didactical mode to perpetuate African's indigenous knowledge system and moral values. Even the first generation writers continued to use characterization as a didactical tool; but abusively as a tool to downplay African traditional religion and all traditional systems that belong to Africa.

Characterization has been use in African literature, particularly oral literature , since the time immemorial. As Baldic (2001:39) notes: "characterization was not only a subject or aesthetic

consideration but has positive epistemological and moral impact to the audience”

As cited in wikispaces.com Bernardo, (2013) says that,

*“What does characterization do for a story? In a nutshell, it allows us to empathize with the protagonist and secondary characters, and thus feel that what is happening to these people in the story is vicariously happening to us: and it also gives us a sense of verisimilitude, or the semblance of living reality. An important part of characterization is dialogue, for it is both spoken and inward dialogue that affords us the opportunity to see into the characters hearts and examine their motivations. In the best of stories, it is actually characterization that moves the story along. Because a compelling character in a difficult situation creates his or her own plot”*

Martin (1998: 7) explains the historical background of this term by stating that:

*“....since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the phrase ‘in character’, has been used to describe an effective impersonation by an actor. Since 19<sup>th</sup> century, the art of creating characters, as practice by actor or writers has been called characterization”.*

Here Martin seems to be more concerned with previous two quotations, the device of ‘characterization’ and its eventual development as a literary term. Indeed, the term has number of definitions.

Beaty (2002: 222) defines characterization as “the art of craft method of presentation or creation of fictional personage that involved in a similar process”.

Martin (1998: 51-2) on the other hand, defines characterization by saying:

*“Characterization is the art of creating characters for narrative including the process of information about them”.*

Senngupta (2011) is inclined to discuss characterization in Buzz.com. He thinks that: “characterization is one such literary device used randomly in almost every literary work to define the attributes of characters either directly or indirectly”.

Farlex (2009) as cited in Wikipedia Encyclopedia provides the following definition: “characterization is a representation of a character or characters on the stage in writing, especially by imitating describing actions, gestures or speeches”. However, Wiedhardt cited in ([www.readwriterthink.com](http://www.readwriterthink.com)) believes that: “characterization is the representation of persons in narrative and dramatic works”.

A close look at these definitions of the term ‘characterization’ will show that all the writers agree that the term characterization deals with a character or characters in a work or fiction. Both Beaty and Martin agree that characterization in an art. Senngupta considers it a device while Fletcher describes it as a representation.

Characterization is of two types: one is direct and the other is indirect. Senngupa (2000) cited in Buzz.com. He thinks that there are two types of characterization; firstly, direct characterization in which the author explains the personality of the character directly by defining its traits through adjectives and secondly, indirect characterization where the reader has to understand the nature of the character by his thought, aspect, appearance, role, actions and influence and relation with other characters.

Lyman (2001) cited in [Lyman@ksu.edu](mailto:Lyman@ksu.edu) believes that characterization can be direct or indirect, adding that direct characterization tells the audience what the personality of a character is, while in indirect characterization the personality of a character is revealed through the five different methods: speech, thought, effect of others on the character, actions and looks.

It is apparent that both Lyman and Senngupta agree on the two types of characterization. However, Senngupta differs from Lyman by explaining that direct characterization needs defining the traits of the personality by using expensive adjectives. It is also clear that both Lyman and Senngupta agree on things that are used in defining the character: speech, thought, appearance, actions and the attitude of others toward the character, to which Senngupta adds 'role'.

Let us move on to give a historical background of the word 'character' and show how a character is developed through a novel. Balic (2001, 37) explains that a character is the representation of a person in a narrative work such as a novel, a play or a film; it derives from the ancient Greek word, "character". Lyman (1990, 51-2) on the other hand, says that the word 'character' is derived from the Greek verb 'charassein' which means to mark with a cut or furrow. However, in ordinary discourse, as he claims, the term 'character' can take a verity of meaning depending on the context in which it happens to be used. He also thinks that the characters in fictional works are endowed with distinctive personalities and this fact has given rise to the additional sense of the term 'character' frequent in literary critical work.

It is obvious that both Bladic and Lyman agree that the term 'character', derives from a Greek work. However, Lyman believes that term 'character' is a derived of the verb 'charassin' while Bladic thinks that the word 'character' is derived from the ancient Greek word but he makes no reference to its part of speech.

It is also relevant here to mention the different types of characters in a work of a fiction. Senngupta (2011)-cited in Buzz.com-thinks that "A character can be a protagonist or antagonist. The protagonist is the person around whom the plot revolves while his\her opponent is known as the anatagonist."

William (2010)-cited in Bio, Wikipedia-believes that characters are categorized as round or flat and that every character in fiction must have its own complexities and uniqueness. Weidhardt (2005)-cited in About.com-states that:

*“Characters are of two main types: Firstly, he mentions the round or dynamic character which is the major character in a work of fiction that encounters conflict and is changed by it. It is more fully developed and described than the other characters. Secondly, he mentions the flat or static character which is the minor character in a work of fiction that does not undergo substantial change or growth in the course of the story”.*

Hoffan (1999:36) writes that:

*“Flat characters are two dimensional, in that they are relatively uncomplicated and do not change throughout the course of work. By contrast, round characters are complex and undergo development, sometimes sufficiently to surprise the reader”.*

It is obvious, then that William, Wiedhardt and Hoffan categorize characters as round and flat, while senngupta categorizes them as protagonist and anatagonist.

Regarding the development of character, it can be said that writers have employed different methods to develop the characters in their works of fiction.

Wilfried (2010; cited in ForganYozurt.com) thinks that character development does not mean a fully psychological profile and a writer does not need to reveal all the details in a fiction and take a hit at readability. In other words, he believes that the writer must not bore the reader with too many details but maintain consistency, and after all, keep a list of all participants. He concludes by saying that in order to develop a certain character, the writer has to make sure that the main



character is attractive to the relationship and adds certain features.

Emma (2011 cited in wikiHow.com) believes that there are five steps for developing characters; creating their personalities, their appearance, their names, the flesh of characters and the characters' responses that surprise the reader.

In this respect, Robinson (2010: 45) writes:

*“.....let the narrative develops for characters, physical description can be kept to a minimum. As for the development of a character's persona, let the course of events tell us who he\she is. How does he\she react to a situation? How does he\she speak? What makes him\her tick?”*

Whiteman (2006:45) states:

*“A character in a fiction can be developed by a lot of methods such as appearance by explaining or describing a characters' outlook so a reader can identify them relatively to other characters. Besides. He\she can be developed through actions and reaction and through how other characters see or treat the main characters”.*

It can be concluded that Wilfried is more concerned about the idea that writers should not bother the readers with details when developing a certain character, instead, they should stick to the main character and make it attractive by adding certain features to it. However, Emma and Whiteman seem to agree on specific points for developing a character; such as appearance and dialogues. They differ a little on others points; including creating a name. However, they also agree on responses as a way of developing a character. On the other hand, Robinson insists on decreasing physical descriptions in developing characters in a fiction, believing that this could be left for the events.

## **2.2 Part (11) Literature Review :**

A considerable number of writings have been attempted it discuss and analyze the issue of themes and characterization in Ben Okr's novels . So , these writings and views will briefly be

surveyed . It's to be noted that , Okri's works condemn the spread of corruption and violence in Nigeria at the same time giving voice to the poorest and powerless members of African community and describing the conflict and confrontation between indigenours tradition in post colonial Africa and western culture. Each of his fictional works exhibit remarkable achievements in expanding on a mode of representation and expanding the scope of conceiving African history . The crisis of democracy in Africa is allegorized with the help of the myth of the abiku and this fable in his novels , is without any doubt Okri's greatest achievement , Okri's believes that Africa as a continent lacks vision and this is clearly manifested in his thematic concerns and character delineation .

There is no denying among critics , the immense talent Okri is gifted with . His themes and characters could fit practically into not only Nigeria but also in any country in the world .

Critic Thomas (2001 : 13) remarks that :

*Okri's Skill is in taking the reader steady on , step by step as in matters of fact . away of grounding the most bizarre takes . We are told of men who are arrested as accomplices to their own robberies, of cars that drive in the air over rain , of earth that bites like insects of towns where everything is upside down and back wards , of winged people who come out of trees , they pified by the palm-wine tapster of the last story , Okri's heroes are not so much personalities as they are form of consciousness , thrown into regions where the out side world and the inner made with unchecked energy in awakening dream .*

The above remarks reflect Okri's skill .

As per Okri's narratives , it is quoted in ([www.shodhganga.com](http://www.shodhganga.com)) online site that :

*Okri's grapples with many issues through his narratives touching all major issues of social , political , spiritual and*

*environmental that plague contemporary post – colonial Africa . His texts are multi layered , complex and open-ended.* Critics Kolawole (2005 :9) , YoKenhinde (2004:94) and EbongMbipom (2011:62) suggest that :

*Literature is not only an imitation of life , but also a concept which derives from certain sustainable principles like post-colonial realities (human live , experiences and challenges) which reflect the socio-political and economic conditions that help in spreading violence , poverty and corruption ) as thematic pre-occupation . Therefore , post-colonial writers reflect all these issues and Okri is not an exception .*

Critic Nnolim (2010 :206) stated that :

*A though Ben Okri as “the harbinger” of the contemporary Nigerian novel , the link between the old and the new follows in the foot steps of the Nigerian authors such as Olorunfemi Fagunwa , Amos Tutulua , Wole Soyinka , and Chinua Achebe , while producing as a postcolomal author , Okri separates himself from the aims of his literary precursors” .*

Concerning Okri’s novels , the critic Asempasah( 2019 : 21) observes that :

*Okri’s novels can be seen as an intervention in a double sense , particularly *The Famished Road* . It registers the grim povesty and disillusionment with the nation-state in Africa as well as provides new concepts , idioms , and frameworks for re-imagining time , beginnings and redemption at the level of the nation-state and the individual .*

The inter textual dimension to Okri’s narrative is also probed up by critics . critic Ogunsanwo (1995 :42) contends that :

*What makes *The Famished Road* post colonial and multicultural both in form and content is precisely what makes it post-modernist that is response to “the need to clear one self a space” . By means of mythic narration , Okri clears space for the quintessential texture and structure of African folkloric narrative .*

It is cited in ([www.shadhganga.com](http://www.shadhganga.com)) online site about Ben Okri's reality and varied re-presentation that :

*Okri as a post-colonial from Nigerian takes Africa as his primary focus and delves on humanity as his basic theme . The settings of his stories are African with overt and covert reference to Nigerian nation .*

As per ibid , online site :

*Okri's works can roughly be categorized according to three phases . Each of which is marked by radical shifts in genre , style and narrative strategy . In each of his works , he returns to a consistent repertoire of common post-colonial themes , In particular , he critiques the all pervasiveness of corruption and violence in contemporary Nigeria .*

Let's move ahead to give another critic view in Okri's corpus . In this sense the critic Lim (1970:203) observes that :

*For the first time in modern Nigerian narratives , the magical , the improbable , the fantastical , the visionary , the prophetic , and the realism – oriented tend to emerge in Okri's corpus , in a way tremendously at variance with what is obtainable in Nigerian myths , Legends , and folktales .*

This actually places Okri within the Nigerian tradition , Yet exhibits his individual aesthetic and stylistic idiosyncrasies in the global platform .

Critic Quayson (1997:27) states that :

*Okri's as a cosmopolitan epitomizes the writers in the global village "these writers bring temporarily / permanently within the metropolitan centres , take up their pens to strip , metamorphose the local landscape and re-map the culture of these metropolis theme .*

Okri's fictional world is also criticized by Saranya (2016:1) who states that :

*Okri fictional world is filled with violence , corruption , poverty and legends , through his novels "The Famished Road" and "Songs of Enchantment" , he borrowed super-*

*natural elements from yoruban oral narratives with a move towards a mythical causality that conceptualizes modes of characterization and characters .*

It is mentioned in ([www.puneresearch.com](http://www.puneresearch.com)) an international journal in English that :

*The novelist and short story writer Ben Okri portrays the social and political conditions inside his native Nigeria . The Nigeria Okri describes is dark and often violent , chaotic , famished and corrupted .*

Shooting on the same direction , the critic Liman (1999:70) reflecting to TFR , comments that :

*The Famished Road is away of depicting the life of poor in Nigeria who are caught between the urge to live abetter life and the dilliculties of a system built on injustice and exploitation of aman by man .*

Moreover , Okri's focus has also been drawn attention to by critics . Wilkinson (1992 : 84) pinpoints to the fact that :

*Okri describes the uncertainty of Nigerian's tales , individuality and collectively . He focuses on Nigerian political system and its out comes . which represents on the following illls (violence , corruption and poverty) .*

Besides this , critic sangari (1987:157) confirms that :

*In his distinct type of magical realism which serves as a "third eye" in the novel the famished Road , Okri observes the realities of neo colonial political struggles and stresses the sociopolitical injustice , corruption , violence and poverty in his native post colonial Nigeria .*

The socio-political and historical realities of post-colonial are also reflected by critic Ogunsanwo (1995:48) , he asserts that :

*Okri transmits analysis critiques and even transgress the socio-historical realities of his nation through engagement with myth .*

I bid (40) states that :

*Okri's works promotes the notion that there is a multitude of ways of looking at the world and that all of them are equally valid .*

Okri's knowledge of African culture found its way to critics .

Kallim and and Row (2000:198) observe that :

*Okri translates his remarkable knowledge of African cultures into arich array of images and symbolisms to express his themes and characterization .*

African writers assert African cultures combat a parthied and criticize corruption – in this manner , critic Bonniaa (2004:22) exposes to it in this way :

*Post-colonial African writing comprises a strong reaction against negative stereotypes constructed during the colonial period . African writers had to dismantle myth of African inferiority , assert African cultures , combat the apartheid regime in south Africa and criticize corruption in African counties . Notable novelists : Tutuola , Chinua Achebe , Wole Soyinka . Ngugi wathiongo's , and Ben Okri are extremely popular and have gained international recognition .*

Critic also have their comments on Okri's creative writing . cooper (2006 :283) comments that :

*Okri's vision is that of an intellectual writer who has been exposed to the interpenetration of cultures in the global context .*

In addition to the above view with respect to Okri's creative writing , the critic Wilkinson (1992:27) pinpoints to the fact that:

*Okri's avoids disenchantment prose and instead , literally infuses his creative writing with enchantment . He imparts his most renowned narrative , The Famished Road , through the consciousness of abiku spirit- Child narrator , whose mystic focalization thoroughly disrupts any strict secular telling of history.*

Reading African reality , it is quoted in the Guardians weekly , Free spirit ([www.the\\_guardian.com](http://www.the_guardian.com)) online site that :

*Okri continues in his novels to capture the reality of Africa, he sees his books as “station on a journey”.*

Why Okri uses oral tradition in his novels ? critic choudhury (2014:3) stated that :

*Ben Okri is one of the contemporary Nigerian authors who incorporate Nigerian oral tradition in his novels to analyse the African society.*

Critic Lahiri (2001:8) observes that :

*Okri criticizes the hegemonistic politics of mainstream culture*

Furthermore , critic Rajakrishna(2001:46) states that , as a migrant writher in the united kingdom , Okri is :

*Geographical sense of distance and isolation enables him to view in perspective the predicament of his people who having lost their significant connection with the past and being confronted with sudden gaps and silences in their immediate view of reality one left to lead an empty life .*

Critic Derrida (1993 :125) argues that “something absolutely different haunts our realities , languages , writings , thoughts , and lives” .

Ying (2006:108) puts Okri’s experimentation with reality into context when she argues that :

*“the author sees no difference between human and spirit world , the animate and the in animate , life and death” .*

It is quoted in ([www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)) online site that :

“reading Okri’s novels is quite an experience , his books (novels) shift your perception of reality into other worlds of realities . Okri has the ability of making magic through his themes and characters where everything in life so romantic and so necessary to the evolution of human consciousness . He respects the African traditional spirituality” .

Critic Hobby (2006:81) is of the views that “Okri’s work deals with both historical and the supra historical, the universal .

Okri's main concern in the *Famished Road* becomes the concept of history . Okri himself admits that his novel is about history” . Critics also observe that , Okri employs myth , riddles , proverbs and legends in his novels ; According to cooper (1998:67) :

*Okri's work remains steeped in indigenous images and west African oral culture .*

Concerning the use of myth as an oral tradition technique in Okri's novel , *The Famished Road* , Soliman (2004:150) argues that :

*African authors not only use these oral traditions as away of identifying with their social and cultural beliefs but also see them as a medium for the historical documentation of folkloric materials which contributes to the process of building up the African collective memory that the colonial powers had tried to eradicate.*

Scholars like Quayson (1997) , Wright (1997) coope (1998) and fulford (2009) maintain that “Okri's use of the myth stem from the yoruba mythologies where spirits are part of the material world” .

Okri's realism has also been criticized . wright (1997 :185) asserts that :

*The realism of Okri's novels differs from that of his literary processors who have writtern novels based in amore familiar reality that also canfronts this political and economic strife in Africa , from Ngugi wathiong'o's Weep Not , child (1964) to Ayikwei Armah's The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born (1968) to J.M.Coetze's Disgrace (1999) .*

African realities of post-colonial time has also been reflected via using magical realism . In this sense , Bhabha (2000:7) pinpoints to the fact that :

*Since that 1950 magical realism , a widely Known post-modern narrative mode , has been utilized as an amazing weapon especially by the post-colonial authors like Ben Okri to represent the realities of the post-colonial countries of the*



*world . Because of its power of sociopolitical and cultural subversion and reformation. Taking advantage of the hybrid nature of magical realist texts , post-colonial others have attempted to create a “third space” .*

The above concept of Magical realism of Okri has also been exposed by critic Cooper (1998:1) . In her description of magical realism in respect to Ben Okri She calls it , “See with a third eye” . she adds that :

*Magical realism strives as greater or lesser success , to capture the paradox of the unity of opposites , it contests polarities such as history verses magic the pre-colonial versus the post-industrial , and life versus death , capturing such boundaries between spaces is to exist in a third space .*

In her books , The question of the Other : “cultural critiques of Magical Realism , Faris (2002:101) highlights the facts that :

*“with the publication of the Famished Road (1991) , Okri joined Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Suliman Rushdie to form the “holy trinity” of the field of Magic Realism” .*

Critic Quayson (2009 :172) observes that :

*“in The famished Road , Ben Okri uses the techniques of magical realism which are in harmony with Nigerian cultural beliefs and values directly drives his material from yoruba (a tribe in Nigeria ) mythology , west African oral tradition , conventional European realism and latin . Okri did this to investigate some certain areas of the African consciousness , such as the African power of imagination and creation and spirituality” .*

All the above critics are in the view that Okri has used magical realism effectively benefiting from African mythologies , and thus , finds a place for him with some pioneers of magical realism , notably : Gabriel Marquez and Suleiman Rushadie .

On the Other hand , critics and scholars have their views on Okri’s Characterization of his character’s actions and behaviors

It is to be Observed that , the setting of Okri's characters is not mapped on the basis of geography , occupation or time , but the wide spread intellectual and moral atmosphere .

Critic peek (1991 : 2) stated some facts about Okri's ability of choosing his characters . He comments that :

*“by taking positivists from our own way and adapting it to the new times , Okri acts as an African diviner , who is usually trusted to make good decisions and dole out sufficient knowledge in everyday issue and acts as a mediator , as Nigeria goes through transition from colonial to post-colonial . Okri's characters are themselves diviners” .*

Critic George (1991:107) commenting on the underscore of interconnectedness of myth and history focusing on the character of Abiku of Ben Okri's the Famished Road . He confirms that :

*“The employment of the artistic resources of the African oral tradition is addressing the contemporay social history of Africa continues to engage African writers concerned with creating an artistically authentic African Literature” .*

Let's move ahead to give another view in respect to Okri and his use of Abiku . Critic Deandrea (2001:1) offers insight of this matter by saying :

*Okri's use of the Abiku differs from his predecessors in asmuchas he found his magical – realist style with its co-existent national reality and spiritual world on Azaro's first person narration , since the child's contact with his original place is never severed and his perceptions therefore , constantly touched on both dimensions at the same time” .*

According to critic Moh (2002:90) “Azaro's continues births and deaths symbolize the political history of Nigeria and the Nigerian nation” .

Digging on the same concept , critic Elder (2009:11) expands Moh's contention by claiming that “Azero functions not only as a symbol of Nigeria , but even of Africa as a whole” .

The researcher is on the view that , the post-colonial African countries confronted with some social , political and economic barricades which hampered development and created political fragmentations , thus , leading to instability and chaos .

Another character who plays considerable roles in Ben Okri's novels , particularly , *The Famished Road* and *Songs of Enchantment* , is Madame Koto , who is in fact represents colonialization through her actions . Critic Washington (2005 :257) clarifies that , Ben Okri pinpoints to an important historical moment of British rule in Nigeria , through his character Madame Koto .

*Madame Koto's initial coquetry with power , politics and party of the Rich stands for the establishment of the British rule in Nigeria in the 1880's , the colonial period it self is represented by Madame Koto's rapid physical and spiritual growth which occurs "at the expense of her community" .*

According to A deniji (2008 : 204-218)

*"Okri employs the techniques of reflecting the social status of his characters through their physical setting . Koto is described as wearing blue wrappers , a red blouse and a filthy head-tie and she does manual jobs : she cleans her bar , serves her clients and prepares the food . But she is ambitious"* .

### **2.3 Part (iii) Related Previous Study**

***The first study:*** Obumselu, Ben(2011) Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* : Are-evolution .

This paper assesses positively the understanding of Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* . The Obumselu analyses the novel firmly in the context of Yoruba orality and in the tradition of New Age Spirituality . It points out that Ben Okri did not take his Yoruba material directly from traditional folklore but from secondary sources in which the myths and legends of the Yoruba have been modified and re-interpreted . In *The Famished Road* the

original folk narratives are further transfigured by close linkage with the myths and legends . The author in this article concludes, after a careful re-evaluation of leading episodes in the novel, that a broad late twentieth century context of existentialist thought and post-modern fiction is the proper background for appreciating a novel in which the extravagances of African folk art are adapted to contemporary myth of the culture hero .

***The second study:***

Taddesse, Mezegebua (2012, Dissertation) “A Comparative Study of Magical Realism in One Hundred Years of Solitude and The Famished Road” .

The author Taddesse studies the various literary topics set against Western Realism and Socialist Realism. Through this study area, Taddesse desired to fill that gap by comparing two novels from Colombia and Nigeria . He has tried to explore Magical Realism in the two novels one Hundred Years of Solitude by the Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez and The Famished Road by the Nigerian author Ben Okri . The study revealed that both novels have mostly used the same characteristics to construct the Magical Realist effect and their differences in this respect are negligible . Distinct characteristics of Magical Realism are used for the comparison of the two novels . The finding of the study has established that both novels have used similar techniques such as employing fascination of technology to create an aspect of Magical Realism . Other examples of such similarities are present in the study as well .

However the inner meaning of both the novels are different . Taddesse concludes that the techniques employed in both the novels are similar but each novel has its own distinct style .

***The third study:***

Mathuray, Mark (2015, Article) “the Famished Road after Postmodernism African Modernism and the politics of Subalternity” .

When Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* was published in 1991, it was met with great critical acclaim . Winning the Booker Prize for that year and emerging in Nigerian letters when the novel seemed to be on the decline , its arrival on the international literary scene secured its canonization . The author Mathuray has marked the significance of its publication coinciding with the period (1980s and early 1990s) .

The two critical projects dominated literary criticism : postmodernism and post-colonialism . He has followed the Derridean critique of Western logocentricism, Lyotard’s assertion of “the demise of metanarratives,” and the subversion of traditional hermeneutics, defined the epistemological and ontological field and scope of this new paradigm . Additionally the author has quoted the ideology of post-colonialism, as it became codified during this period by Edward Said , Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak . Thus , with this review of Mathuray’s article , he analyses that Okri joined Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie as urbane cosmopolitanism was made manifest in their choice of a specific form of the novel : magically realist and intractably postmodernist .

***The Fourth Study :***

Guignery, Vanessa (2015, Article) “Ben Okri: A Man of Many Arts”

The author Vanessa Guignery is Professor of English Literature and postcolonial Literature , France . Guignery has grown special area of interest towards Ben Okri. In this paper Guignery has strictly scrutinized Ben Okri as a veteran writer focusing on his rare works . She starts the article with the quote .

“I would Like to master the art of living ,” says Lao in *The Art of Magic* (45) . Guignery inspect Okri’s novels , short stories , poems , and essays from *Flowers and shadows* (1980) through *The Art of Magic* (2014) have all explored aspect of the art of living as experimented by the old and the young , the artist and the beggar , the war victim and the dreamer, the salve and the free woman . She has referred okri’s collection of essays *A Way of Being Free* (1997), with the note : “Living is a continual metamorphosis . Everything is change ; everything is relative” (54). This mutability , which effects all aspects of existence both in the real world and in Okri’s fictional worlds , explains why the art of living constantly needs to be learnt anew in accordance with the shifting circumstances of one’s surroundings and one’s surroundings and one’s condition . She finally accomplish with the verdict that who better than Ben Okri-an artist with roots in two continents , who has been experimenting with a vast array of genres and modes over some thirty-five years – to be attentive to this necessary flexibility and adaptability to change ?

***The fifth study:***

Vincent P.A (2015, Article) “Post-colonial as a Reading **Strategy:** Ben Okri’s “*The Famished Road*” .

This paper authored by Vincent , adopts post-colonialism as a reading strategy , by focusing, particularly , on post-colonialism as one of the most current of post-theories and as a peculiar literary theory which reflects or mirrors the conditions of ‘post-Colonial’ (third world) societies . It analyzes the characteristic features which Ben Okri employs in his literary text, *The Famished Road*. The paper aims at determining the extent to which these features reflect the postclonial literary ideal.

For easy and plausible analysis, the paper attempts an examination of the text through the paradigms of thematic concerns, formal techniques and discursive strategies. The

significance of the study is that it shows how post-colonialism can help bring out meaning of literary texts. The study finds that Okri uses meta-narratives to represent the imprint of the material forces of politics, economics and culture that act upon post-colonial societies within imperial framework. Within these, Okri reflects in post-colonial themes of dispossession, displacement, colonial and neo-colonial domination, post-colonial corruption, cultural fragmentation, change, problematic of post-colonial identity, alienation and exile.

#### ***2.4 Summary:***

Chapter Two is about theoretical Framework, literature review and previous studies.

In this chapter and particularly part(1) both themes and characterization as literary devices are well defined along with their origin, importance, types and examples.

In part (11) a considerable number of writings have been attempted to discuss and analyze the issues of themes and characterization in Ben Okri's novels. The critic's views, comments and interpretations in respect to these device have been exposed to along with the researcher's view.

In part (111) which is about related studies five related studies have been mentioned, namely. Ben Okri's *The Famished Road: Are-evaluation, A comparative study of Magical Realism in one Hundred Years of Solitrnde and The Famished Road. The Famished Road After post – modernism, African Modernism and the politics of subalternity. Ben Okri: A man of many Arts and post-colonial as a reading strategy: Ben Okri's The Famished Road.*

## CHAPTER THREE

### AUTHOR'S LIFE AND LITERARY CONTRIBUTION

This chapter deals with the author's life, critical reception and major works and themes.

#### *3.0 The Author's Life:*

As per ([www.Wikipedia.com](http://www.Wikipedia.com)), Ben Okri as a British Nigerian novelist, is a member of the Urhobo people; his father was Urhobo , and his mother was half-Igbo . He was born in Minna in west central Nigeria to Grace and Silver Okri in 1959. His father Silver moved his family to London when Okri was less than two years old. So that Silver could study law. Okri thus spent his earlist years in London, and attended primary school in Peckham. In 1968 Silver moved his family back to Nigeria where he practised law in lagos, providing free or discounted services for those who could not afford it . His exposure to the Nigerian civil war (1967) and a culture in which his peers saw visions of spirits at this time later provided inspiration for Okri's fiction According to Wilkinson (1992:77) Ben Okri seldom reveals details about his childhood (unless perhaps his early memories of the civil war), saying he'd rather reserve that for the complex manipulations of memory that only fiction can provide". At the age of 14, after being rejected for admission to a university program in physics because of his youth, Okri claimed to have had a revelation that poetry was his chosen calling. Okri 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 a major inspiration for Ben Okri's work. Okri Began writing articles on social and political



issues, but these never found a publisher. He then wrote short stories based on these articles, and some were published in women's journals and evening papers. Okri claimed that his criticism of the government in some of this early work led to his name being placed in a death list, and necessitated his departure from the country. In late 1970's Okri moved back to England to study comparative literature at Essex University with a grant from the Nigerian government. But when funding for his scholarship failed, Okri found him-self homeless, sometimes living in parks and sometimes with friends. He describes this period as "very, very important" to his work: "I wrote and wrote in that period ...if anything (the desire to write) actually intensified.

Okri's success as a writer began when he published his first novel "Flowers and Shadows", at the age of 21. He then served West Africa magazine as poetry editor from 1983 to 1986, and was a regular contributor to the BBC world service between 1983 and 1985, continuing to publish throughout this period.

For three years from 1988 , he lived in a Notting Hill flat (rented from publisher friend Margaret Busby) "I brought the first draft of The Famished Road with me and that flat was where I began rewriting it ... something about my writing changed round about that time . I acquired a kind of tranquility . I had been striving for something in my tone of voice as a writer. It was there that it finally came together .. That flat is also where I wrote short stories (stars of the new curview) .

His reputation as an author was secured when he won the Booker prize for fiction for his novel "The Famished Road" in 1991 Ben Okri is still alive and lives in London .

### ***3.1 Critical Reception :***

Ben Okri is quickly becoming one of the most acclaimed African writers of his generation , and his significant contribution to African literature has been recognized by both African and European critics . In an interview with Alastair Niveh , 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. Okri 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 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 Ayo Mamudu and Abioseh Micheal Porter 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*. 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 in the kind of epic grandeur , philosophical depth, and sustained experimentation found in Joyce .

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 reate 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 analysis of a short story from *Incidents at the shrine* draws attention to Okri's increased mastery of narrative forms , and David Richard's and T.J. Cribb's essays shown how *Stars of the New Curfew* explores more African narrative forms. Nevertheless , all three studies are partially flawed in their conclusions . Niven's study critiques Okri for not following the tradition of Achebe, but what is interesting about Okri's work is precisely the fact that it seeks to explore new directions . To try to hold Okri to the standard of Achebe is , to misunderstand how his fiction inaugurates new aesthetic issues that require new critical evaluation .

Richard's essay comes closer to the mark by emphasizing how Okri's fiction explores new postcolonial issues, yet it reinscribes these postcolonial too quickly within Western debates about postmodernity, so it fails to adequately develop the African roots of Okri's new style. 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, Olatubosun Ogunsanwo compares it to Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* ,and Jacqueline Bardolph compares it to Salman Rushdi'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 labeled as magical realism . In particular , he emphasizes that he 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 comments and, at the very least, take the realistic dimensions of the work as seriously as the magical ones. Ideally , they should take Okri's comments 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, John C. Hawley argues that Okri's works are postmodern because they mix genres, cross cultural boundaries , and intertextually parody both African and European traditions . Olatubosun Ogunsanwo 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 .

Consequently, 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 postcolonial 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.

### ***3.2 Major Works and Themes:***

Between 1980 and 1995 Ben Okri published eight works: five novels, collections of stories, and a volume of poetry. In each of these works, he returns to a consistent repertoire of common postcolonial themes. In particular, he critiques the ubiquity of corruption and violence in contemporary Nigeria, creates a voice for the poorest and most powerless members of African society, and explores the ongoing cultural confrontation between foreign and indigenous tradition in postcolonial Africa. Since these fundamental postcolonial issues have been repeatedly explored by many postcolonial writers, it is difficult to argue that Okri's works inaugurate new themes for African literature. As soon as one turns away from issues of thematic content and begins looking at issues of literary form, however, one notices that Okri's works immediately depart from the ordinary, predictable, and routine. Each of his works of fiction demonstrates a remarkable sense of formal experimentation, and each work progressively extends his creative exploration of multiple literary styles, genres, and traditions. Each time he revisits these common postcolonial themes, therefore, he finds extraordinary new ways to express them with greater insight, imagination and complexity. Taken together, Okri's fiction represents one of the most significant explorations of literary form in the canon of postcolonial African literature.

Okri's works can be roughly categorized according to three phases, each of which is marked by radical shifts in genre, style and narrative strategy. Okri's first two works, *Flowers and shadows* and *The landscapes within*, blend conventions of realism and modernism to explore the effects of modernization

on Urban Nigeria. In *Flowers and shadows*, he depicts the coming of age of Jeffia Okwe, an idealistic young Nigerian who aspires to be a teacher. Over the course of the novel, Jeffia struggles to retain his youthful idealism in the face of modern society's complex demands. He looks for familial intimacy in a home where business obsessions keep his absent father chained to the firm, and he seeks justice among legions of petty bureaucrats who are constantly trying to improve upon the colonial arts of corruption and hypocrisy. Along the way, Jeffia wanders through lust, love and the other common attractions of youth.

Jeffia's path toward adulthood is fairly straight forward, but Okri enlivens his description of it with several stylistic twists. In particular, he uses Nigerian dialects to express his characters' different social classes, he makes numerous references to art and painting to reflect on the nature and function of art, and frequently slips into stream-of-consciousness associations of surrealistic dream images to reveal the inner workings of his characters' different worldviews. Thus Okri effectively combines the conventions of the European Bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, with Nigerian English dialects and modernist narrative strategies to explore a modern, postcolonial context. Consequently, *Flowers and shadows* has many similarities with other postcolonial versions of the Bildungsroman such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* or Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. In many ways, it can be read as a retelling of the conflicts found in *Things Fall Apart* from an urban perspective. Consequently, it focuses on Nigeria's confrontation with the modern social, political, and existential conditions that have followed in the wake of colonialism rather than focusing on the original confrontation between colonizer and colonized. Okri presents a state in which

things continue to fall apart, but his idealistic young hero arrives at a more hopeful resolution than Okonkwo's tragic demise .

In *The Landscapes Within*, Okri continues to develop a comparable mixture of realistic narration and modernist stream of consciousness as he explores the inner life of a young Nigerian painter named Omovo. The biggest difference between *Flowers and shadows* and *The Landscapes Within* , however, is that *The Landscapes Within* makes the philosophical exploration of aesthetics more central to its narrative . By making his youthful protagonist an artist, Okri extends the generic conventions of the Bildungsroman toward those of the Kunstlerroman , which traces the aesthetic maturation of a young artist. Much like James Joyce's youthful artist, Stephen Dedalus, Okri's artist , Omovo, uses art as a way of creating order and meaning in a fragmenting world. Living the life of a lonely, uncompromising artist who is often at odds with his society , Omovo develops the detached observation and creative expression required of the artist. His aesthetic development culminates in a painting titled *Scums cape*, which portrays the miserable conditions of Nigeria's urban poor, but the painting is quickly censored and confiscated because of its powerful social criticism . Both Omovo's *Scums cape* and its censorship demonstrate how Okri adapts the conventions of the European Kunstlerroman to fit his own postcolonial context. Instead of describing some abstract theory of beauty, Okri's philosophical reflections on art emphasize the political dimensions of artistic production and destruction in a newly independent nation struggling to free itself from the quicksand of neocolonial authoritarianism . In *The Landscapes Within*, therefore, Okri not only reinterprets the Kunstlerroman from a postcolonial perspective , but he also subtly redirects postcolonial African literature by implicitly arguing that aesthetic responses to colonialism are as necessary as political ones. In this sense, *The*



Landscapes Within resembles other postcolonial variations on the Kunstlerroman such as Wilson Harris's *Da Silva da Silva's Cultivated Wilderness* or Janet Frame's *To the Island*. Both of Okri's first two novels follow a similar narrative strategy of creatively adapting European novelistic conventions to explore postcolonial issues. However, *The Landscapes Within* additionally expands the scope of postcolonial African literature by augmenting its political engagement of social realism with the kind of aesthetic engagement found in many modernist texts. Okri's next two works, *Incidents at the Shrine* and *Stars of the New Curfew*, mark a new phase in his artistic development. This second phase can be identified by two significant more with African narrative techniques. Okri himself has drawn attention to the importance of his shift to writing short stories by suggesting that writing short stories is an apprenticeship for writing novels. The short story provides an ideal opportunity for an author to perfect his or her mastery of plot, dialogue, and style. This sort of aesthetic development can be seen clearly in the enormous difference between the quality of the two novels that Okri wrote before his short stories and the quality of the third novel, *The Famished Road*, which he wrote after his short stories. More important, these collections of short stories mark a turning in Okri's aesthetic development because they increasingly use African narrative techniques as an essential aspect of their narrative strategy. *Stars of the New Curfew* particularly develops the rich imagination, complex mythical imagery, and episodic adventures that are also found in works like Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, Gabriel Okara's *The Voice*, or D.O. Fagunwa's Yoruba novels. This efforts to create literary forms modeled after the narrative strategies of African oral traditions continues another important aspect of contemporary postcolonial African writing because it attempts to engage postcolonial aesthetic forms as well as postcolonial

sociopolitical issues. By redirecting his experimental energy toward an exploration of African models rather than European ones, Okri prepared himself for a new stage of aesthetic development.

The rest of Okri's novels combine aspects from his two previous literary phases to produce a unique and complex narrative strategy. Okri's most important novel to date, *The Famished Road*, and its sequel, *Songs of Enchantment*, brilliantly demonstrate Okri's ability to combine the techniques of realism, modernism, and African oral traditions. In these two novels, Okri describes the adventures of Azaro, an Abiku spirit-child who equally possess a spiritual and an earthly dimension. An abiku is a child who has had a hard time deciding, that it wants to be born into a mortal existence, so it keeps coming and going between this world and the spirit world until it finally decides which world it wants to embrace. Usually a child is deemed an abiku when it is born to a woman who has had repeated miscarriages of children who die at a young age. The child who finally survives is called an abiku because it is believed to be the same spirit that tried to be born as the other children. Such reluctant spirits become abiku spirit-children when they finally develop the will to choose life, so parents often perform rituals or do special favors to persuade the abiku child to choose this life over its spirit life.

Like Okri's previous novels, these later novels also explore the consciousness of a child protagonist as he progresses toward maturity. The dualistic spiritual-physical nature of Okri's abiku hero, however, completely alters the trajectory of the Bildungsroman. Since Azaro has a dual nature, he must progress through both earthly and mythical realms so he can mature metaphysically as well as socially. Consequently, Okri greatly extends the narrative action of his later fiction to include mythical journeys, intense dreams, and other African rituals or

rites of passage. By extending the scope of the novel to include mythical dimensions, Okri participates in another redirection that is characteristic of contemporary postcolonial literature: he effectively redirects his narrative strategy to minimize the significance of the colonial master and maximize the experiences of the postcolonial subject. Instead of focusing on the colonial destruction of traditional African societies and cultures, therefore, he draws attention to their survival, albeit a precarious survival often lived on the threshold between life and death. Even though Okri remains keenly aware of the tragic destruction that colonialism continues to impose on traditional African societies, he refuses to let his characters admit defeat. He rejects the claim that colonialism has conquered, is conquering, or ever will conquer the deeper mysteries of the African spirit. By making his protagonist an Abiku spirit-child who chooses to live, Okri suggests that the African spirit can survive the seemingly endless cycles of colonial and neocolonial violence by choosing to reconcile its spiritual and physical dimensions. Similarly, Azaro's father defeats multiple colonial and neocolonial aggressors in a series of mythic battles that mix mythical solemnity with folkloric bravado. Azaro's mother also aids the survival of her family and community through her less spectacular, but more lasting, character traits: courage, perseverance, hard work, and common sense. Of course, there are also other characters who do not fare so well. Madame Koto, the purveyor of the local, Westernized bar, degenerates with each of her increasingly corrupt political and economic deals. Ade, another abiku spirit-child, chooses to return to the spirit world rather than endure the rigors of mortality; and Jeeremiah, an idealistic young journalistic photographer, is so regularly harassed by political thugs that he fades into the background and only pops out for sporadic moments to take a few photos before recommencing his perpetual journey from hiding place to hiding

place. Thus Okri faces the many possibilities presented by the postcolonial condition, but he seems to side with the characters who maintain an idealistic, spiritual perspective in spite of their difficulties.

In order to narrate such a journey, Okri fuses his earlier realist and modernist style with the mythical style that he developed in *Stars of the New Curfew*. This mixing of realism with myth and folklore creates a powerful dialogue between European and African literary traditions as it seeks to extend the possibilities of both traditions. Thus Okri extends his engagement of postcolonial issues to the realm of aesthetics by demonstrating that African sensibilities, cultural traditions, and narrative strategies will not allow themselves to be colonized by the literary norms of the colonial center. In some significant sense, therefore, the mature experimentation in Okri's later fiction represents a movement for cultural independence that parallels and complements the movements for political independence that swept the postcolonial world during the 1960s and 1970s. Okri's later fiction also exemplifies what Homi K. Bhabha describes as a postcolonial aesthetic of cultural hybridity because it explores the liminal border between diverse cultural traditions. In *The Famished Road*, Okri displays his own mastery of realism, modernism, and African mythical traditions, thereby demonstrating that these diverse cultural traditions can coexist within new hybrid forms. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., has accurately described Okri's unique style as "engagingly lyrical and intriguingly postmodern".

*The Famished Road* is clearly a literary tour de force that will soon become a classic of twentieth-century fiction.

Since *Songs of Enchantment* is a sequel of sorts to *The Famished Road*, the themes and techniques used in *The Famished Road* generally carry over into *Songs of Enchantment* well. The primary difference between *Songs of Enchantment*

and *The Famished Road* is that *Songs of Enchantment*'s narrative structure is simpler and more rigorously edited. Consequently, *Songs of Enchantment* is easier to read and understand, but at times this ease of access is paid for by a reduction in lyrical grandeur and philosophical complexity. Nevertheless, Okri's characters undergo many subtle changes and reevaluations in the second novel, and these reevaluations are integral to Okri's Afrocentric and mythopoeic worldview. They demonstrate how openness and transformation are central to both Okri's political agenda and his aesthetic experimentation. In imagining the history of African in terms of a mythical road that must always be kept open and characters who are always changing, Okri suggests that the survival and development of the human spirit require a continual openness to new possibilities. Similarly, Okri's radically experimental style promotes an equivalent openness for African aesthetics. Consequently, even though there are significant continuities between *The Famished Road* and *Songs of Enchantment*, the sentient reader must be very careful not to reduce *Songs of Enchantment* to a mere continuation of or sequel to *The Famished Road*. If *Songs of Enchantment* is a sequel, then it is a sequel in the sense that it keeps looking new possibilities rather than in the sense that it follows the same trajectory as its predecessor.

Okri's latest novel, *astounding the Gods*, continues to develop the same kind of spiritual, mythical vision and lyrical aesthetic that Okri develops in *The Famished Road* and *Songs of Enchantment*. Unfortunately, however, it lacks much of the political engagement, experimental energy, and complexity found in Okri's previous novels: its characters are less developed, its narrative structure seems more amorphous than complex, and its mythical vision fails to develop the same intensity because it is not as counterbalanced with a realistic

dimension. Nevertheless, even though Okri's latest works seem to suggest that his talent is waning, it seems unlikely that he will simply continue to produce simplified versions of his best work. Instead, it seems more likely that Okri is simply in a transitional period preparing the next evolution of his style. Okri is a fiercely intense writer who is still very young, and one should expect that *The Famished Road* will not be his last monumental work. Hopefully, it will not even be his best.

Always exploring new aesthetic possibilities, Okri has also published a volume of poetry titled *An African Elegy*. Throughout these poems, Okri meditates in various aspects of the human condition: love, solitude, pain, death, faith. In treating these themes, he moves seamlessly between philosophical reflection and the description of intimate details of everyday life. His rich lyrical voice once again demonstrates his ability to continually explore new literary forms, and his intense personal vision creates an atmosphere that is spiritual without being sentimental.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### ***4.0 Introduction:***

It is worth mentioning that , chapter four is the most important chapter in this thesis, this is where the themes and characterization of Okri's selected novels notably , flowers and shadows, The Famished Road, and Songs of Enchantment will thoroughly be investigated , extrapolated and analyzed through close textual reading , along with descriptive , comparative and psycho-analytic approaches and with reflection to historical approach which is a must not only because literary texts are historical production that reflect events , themes and characters but also they permit us to pay attention to their dialogical and dialectical dimensions . In these novels Okri depicts violence , poverty, corruption , death , ghosts and legends (from yoruba tradition ) Okri portrays four key moments in these novels to reflect Nigeria's history : these are : slavery (TFR and SOE) , The Independence (TFR), The civil war and The Nigerian plight after conflict (FAS) .

In this chapter the researcher is going to discuss and analyze first the themes of the selected novels, namely (violence, poverty and corruption ) the definition of each theme separately in each selected novel before analyzing it by showing the different ways Okri uses to express them to the reader (whether though extrapolation or symbolism...etc) this necessitates a close analysis to the contextualizations to bring out the intended messages .

As per the characters of these novels , each novel separately will be analyzed closely to show how the characters think , act and behave along with their relations to other characters in the novel and how they affect each other . In addition, how these two

devices (themes and characterization) are used harmonically. Okri uses surrealism in all these novels (He mixes phantasy with reality).

#### **4-1 Themes of (violence, poverty corruption) in FAS:**

To begin with, a theme can be defined as a central idea of statement that unifies and controls an entire literary work. It's the author's way of communicating and sharing ideas, perceptions, critical belief about life and feelings with readers.

As per the theme of violence it can also be defined as follow: violence is a dehumanizing process and causes social and psychological fragmentation in every nation.

It is a reactive process and is caused by social, political, cultural and economic conditions. Both colonial and the national politics are bound to violence. It is wonder as Niyi Akingbe (2016:2) states:

*Modern Nigerian political history is etched on the trajectory of chaos, anarchy and successive military coups since it obtained independence from Britain in 1960. Nigeria as a nation has a nebulous contraption in the minds of most Nigerians.*

In another context, violence can also be seen as a universal phenomenon. In this context Anifowose (1982:7) points out that:

*Violence has been used by groups seeking power , by groups holding power and by groups in the process of losing power , violence has been pursued in the defense of order by the privildge , in the name of justice by the oppressed and in the fear displacement by threatened .*

Consequently, African writers, including Ben Okri, have followed the course of African history characterized by violence, beginning from her encounter with Europe, through the different sociopolitical phases. Oppressive leadership has been defining feature of power relations between the ruling class



and the citizens, as may be underlined in the metaphor “power is might”.

#### **4-1-1 Flowers and Shadows (FAS):**

Before delving into discussion and analysis of this novel, a brief summary of the novel is given to streamline the concept and paving the way to the scene.

Flowers and shadows (1980) is Okri's first novel. It contains 208 pages of 24 chapters under the titles (presentiments, shadows, Darkness and Flowers). It is set in Lagos after Nigerian plight of civil war (1967 to 1970). It narrates the growth of Jeffia Okwe into adulthood as a protagonist. Jeffia represents the new generation that has necessary potential to bring about positive changes in the Nigerian society. Jeffia is the sensitive son of a corrupt ruthless business man, Mr. Okwe. Due to his ruthless and pitiless, Mr. Okwe is obsessed by all means. Driven by his fear of poverty and humiliation and in order to achieve his aim, he commits many mistakes and crimes and violence that lead to his tragic end. Jeffia discovers the nature of his father's business. This brings him in contact with the participants in this human drama, particularly Juliet, his father's former mistress. Jeffia falls in love with Cynthia. In this tragic soil, the flowers of Cynthia's love survive and the novel ends on a note of triumphant optimism. This novel is categorized as a bildungsroman novel because it deals with the formative years of the main character and his psychological development and moral education.

First the theme of violence in this novel (FAS) can be extrapolated from various contexts in this story. The book opens with a scene of violence. We witness the violent suffering and cruelty that a brown dog rescued by Jeffia undergoes: “one held the dog by the legs, while the other, it seemed, tried to stick a piece of wood up to its anus. indifferently, they watched it

struggle . The bigger of the boys held the dog's mouth to prevent it yelping. It was a small brown and white puppy, too small to fight back (FAS: 4).

The above scenario of violence reflects one of the facts mentioned by Okri in page (124) that “Lagos life was wild as fascinating, and as frustrating as ever. What the boys have done for the dog reflects the negative outcomes of the civil war in Nigeria .

Another scene of violence , Mr. Jonan Okwe said to his wife (p.40) : ‘somebody is poking sticks down my neck . I had a note from some anonymous person. From this text, the researcher has extrapolated that in the absence of law, everything is expected . The security situation becomes tougher and tougher and even the darkness holds some secrets and nobody is safe .

Violence is also manifested in other bitter situations in a dramatic scene exposed by Okri (P.55) ‘boys come to the parties with girlfriends. They drink heavily – dance – and fight . They kicked each other – Their shirts were torn, their faces bleeding and swollen – They felt foolish and went home’.

For me as a researcher this is apathy chaos and irresponsibility , and this definitely is of an off shoot of the tribal war which rampanted in Nigeria at that time .

In a similar situation of violence which spreads like fire in a bush. “Cynthia the nurse, saw several people holding weapons beating up some one, the man fell quickly , they ran away in a car. She ran towards the man to help him , to examine him , his nose was battered to blood and bones . There was a huge cut at the back of his head with lots of cuts and wounds laying unconsciously (P.55) .

One can easily understand from the above text that Nigeria was in that time really dark, chaotic and miserable. The situation above indicates that people adopt laws by themselves through

unbelievable means such as holding weapons and they shoot to kill without any mercy .

Not only the above mentioned contextualizations where violence has been extrapolated , there are other contextualizations well .

It happened that when Jeffia was driving, he saw Cynthia with a body lying on the ground, he felt with great fear ... Is it an accident ? A hit and run kind of accident ? some jealous husband's revenge ? or probably a setup of armed robbers? (P-55) .

The above mentioned questions by Jeffia , can be discussed in terms of chaos and repercussions / implications of the apathetic situation in Nigeria due to social intricacies , economic turmoil and political fragmentations .

In addition to the above mentioned contexts of violence as a theme in FAS , another scenario of violence is also found in (P-70), in which Mrs Jonan (Jeffia's mother) was worried and said to her son Jeffia when he came late time .

*Where have you been ? I have been so worried . He replied .  
"there was no need to worry, mum .*

*I was all right .*

*She said . Don't you read about all those kidnaps , highway robberies , and killings everywhere in the newspaper ? you are all I have got, eh .*

*The country is getting worse and worse everyday . Things are not as they seem .*

*You're got to be careful , eh .*

From this dialogical expressions between Jeffia and his mother (Mrs Jonan), it is crystal clear that violence has mushroomed in Nigeria , and the acts of kidnaps , robberies and killings have worsened the situation in Nigeria .

Furthermore, there is a severe violence took place between two brothers (Mr Jonan Okwe and his half-brother Mr. Sowho) it

ends in a car accident in which both of them passed away . It happens this way . Sowho came back to revenge from his brother Jonan Okwe (who has ruined his life) . when he arrives Jonan is absent and while waiting for him, he tells Jeffia :

*Jeff , do you know that your father is a wicked man ? His uncle spoke a gain .*

*The sins of the father are visited on the children ... have you heard that quote,eh ?*

*His uncle went on speaking , coolly, calmly .*

*Your father is going to suffer . The wickedness he has done will bounce back at him (167) .*

In the light of sowho's speech, one may notice that he comes to fight with his brother Jonan to take his revenge as he swore in a court ten years ago . when Jonan Okwe comes back home, Sowho is waiting for him in the sitting room . sensing the violence that is happening in the air , Jeffia shouts : "All of you are evil.." (171), And after pulling Jeffia out of the room, Jonan's determination to fight as a man to settle the matter with his brother is clear : "this is a matter for men not for rats" (171). Therefore , the bloody and senseless confrontation between brothers becomes inevitable :

*I know what you are here for , you coward ! He (Jonan) shouted suddenly ... you blind fool ... sowho went on calmly , I am not going to fight with a skeleton that doesn't know its flesh is gone ... I will only show you a mirror .*

*murderer ... murderer ... that's what you are ... just wait till the inspector comes ... you will know how sweet it is to go to jail , and we will distribute your company the way your father's property was ...*

*Jonan shouted and turned round and rushed for the Haoussa sword which hung on the wall ... He unsheathed it , shouting and foaming like a man possessed by demons .*

*I am going to kill you here now ... I will fling off your nick (173-174) .*

Their violent fight ends in a car accident in which both of them perish .

It is clear from this backdrop of texts that springs with violence , that , Ben Okri has neatly functioned his power of imagination and his surrealistic style to depict the theme of violence in a way that probe up with creativity to shed the light in these social and psychological ills such as (torture, fear, fighting , kicking , beating , holding weapons , armed robbery , kidnaping , murdering ...etc) .

The second important theme in the novel of 'FAS' is the theme of 'poverty' . poverty can be defined in many different ways . The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010:1146) defines poverty as :

*The state of being poor , condition of extreme poverty is a lack of something poor quality .*

In addition to this definition , The New Webster's Dictionary (2004:448) gives a similar definition of poverty . It states that :

*Poverty is the condition that relates to the absence of scarcity of requisite substances or elements ... poverty denotes a condition below that of easy , comfortable life . In every statement on poverty , the questions of lack is central . when a person lacks , he is unable to live a comfortable life . He is uncomfortable and is driven to do all sorts of crazy things in order to get himself out of the realm of poverty.*

According to James Baba (2011:37) in his book 'Class struggle'

*The tenets of human rights suggest that , all men are born equal irrespective of race, color, gender, religion and creed.*

*Class struggle in Africa is extricably linked to corruption , poverty and injustice .*

As Drubbel (2003:17) writes :

*Poverty is a shortage of income or resource necessary for minimum standard of living in a particular society ...poverty consists more of the physical deprivation , but even in the third*

*world , the economic expectations of the poor have been substantially raised by exposure of the mass media . poverty is in appropriate for living . In every man's life he dreams to be comfortable.*

As ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)) online site, poverty is:

*The state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of money or material possessions . poverty is said to exist when people lack the basic necessities of life .*

There are some texts in the novel of 'FAS' where the theme of poverty is shown.

It is revealed in (vii) of the book that, 'it was poverty that killed Mr. Jonan Okwe's father when he was still child'.

This is in fact a tough and severe situation which creates obsession and haunts every person.

In addition, when Jonan father was at death, his father spoke six words to him , and didn't finish the sentence . They were the words behind his life , Jonan said (p-9) :

*"My son , poverty is a curse ..." He was terrified of falling back into the poverty from which he had risen" .*

In another situation Jonan said (p-32) :

*Poverty makes people bitter .*

*About successful people .*

Moreover, Jonan Okwe has been driven by the fear of poverty . It was poverty that killed his own father when he was still a child. Due to this as can be extrapolated in text (p-11) 'from the day he was old enough to know what impossible things money could do , from the time his father died consumed by a mysterious plague , from the moment he realized the truth of his father's words that poverty was a curse , he always dreams of the big time' .

The above text indicates that, poverty hampers and restricts a person to achieve such ambitions and might also be a strong

motive to climb the ladder of success but by following illegal ways as happen to Jonan Okwe .

In page (205) Okri shows us a condition of one of the areas of slum ghetto which is called Alaba, ‘the streets were dusty and dirty , the children were playing about , some of them naked ... they were some stagnant pools’.

This is a reality of these areas after the civil war , an unbearable situation and the absence of services due to chaos and poverty as well as absence of leadership and governance .

The third theme under investigation is the theme of corruption which-is the dominant theme in flowers and shadows (FAS) .

Corruption whether (political , moral , administrative or financial) comes in different forms such as : bribery, lobbying, extortion , nepotism , influence pedding , graft and embezzlement .

Corruption can be defined as dishonest or illegal behavior especially by powerful people (such as government officials or police officers...etc) .

Sofia wickberg (2012 :2) confirms that :

Corruption hampers economic growth and increases poverty . In other words , corruption has consequences on economics and governance factor that result in poverty .

It is cited in ([www.wikipedia.ency.com](http://www.wikipedia.ency.com)) online site that “corruption is a form of dishonesty or acriminal offence which is undertaken by a person or an organization which is entrusted with a postion of authority , inorder to acquire illicit benefits of abuse power for one’s personal gain .

As it is cited in Eleen (2010:299) that ‘African writers reflected the socio-political events in their societies , particularly the theme of corruption’.

There are many contexts in this novel (FAS) reflect overtly and covertly this theme due to the fact that the whole system was collapsed.

Jeffia , the representer of younger generation said , (P-4) : “Ode has strong view : on the ills of society . May be that’s why he is going to be a reporter . But doesn’t strick him that by getting the job through his dad , he’s also contributing to the ills he talks so strongly about” .

As a researcher I am in a view that the ills he’s talking about includes corruption , violence and poverty . It’s clear that by having the job through his father , this is a nepotism which is one form of corruption .

In another scenario of corruption in form of blackmailing , Mrs, Okwe asked her husband Jonan Okwe (24) ‘why do you have to be worried if what you are doing is clean? You don’t need to worry , do you? Her voice was challenging .

He said : ‘ that goat (He means Mr. Gbenga) Knows too much about me and Afioso (the company) you read the papers every day . don’t you know about blackmail cases and other dangerous things that people do now a days? You should know better . let me tell you before you begin to preach, if anything goes wrong because one fool wants to resign , everything I have been working for all my life would sink with me . you are a woman, you don’t understand these things . There are something about myself and my business that people shouldn’t know about you hear ?

This is a clear indication that black mailing was practiced for gaining benefits .

In addition to the above situations , corruption in from of bribery was also prevailing in Nigeria. In a text (P-25) ‘people had been telling Mrs. Okwe all sorts of the things about her husband (Mr. Jonan Okwe), and she couldn’t ignore them any further . One night policemen banged on their door, and detained Jonan in connection with alleged fraud . It was traumic . The case never came out to court and he was soon released . He also has another woman somewhere’.



The above situation could be interpreted in the concept of practicing of gossiping and conveying news, the policemen are corrupted and everything has a price .

In another dramatic sense in which the policemen practice bribery without feeling guilty . The policeman asked Juffia about his licence when he (Jeffia forgot it at home) . The police asked him . where is your license ?

Jeffia said : I forgot it at home (P-35) in this scenario he remembered his father's words came to his mind .

*“never forget to carry your license with you when you are driving . we are in a sick society where nobody would hesitate to exploit you if you gave the slightest chance. Once you are caught without your licence, you might as well be in a boxing ring with your hands down . They will hound you till you grease their palms . watch it son , you still have a lot to learn .*

So , the society is sick , a moral sickness . Once you are caught and paid , it will repeatedly be done to you . There is a narrow escape . The police (35) , took ten Naira note from Jeffia as a fine , and said “we be friends , eh. That's how we get it on . part of the system , man can't live by...can't live by a uniform alone. It is clear from above text that , if the system is spoiled , then the whole society will get rotten .

Beside this , corruption also takes place inform of exploitation and black mailing . This time through a telephone and anonymous man said to Jonan (42).

*“I have a picture here that might interest you. It is the picture of you. Listen to this ... you naked on bed with a certain lady”. The man continued: honest to God, not until the newspaper gets them or until your wife and relatives Know about you. Jonan felt hot and sweat and said to the man. you are lying , there are no such pictures . Now who are you? I could get you arrested for this, you know the man said , is that so , Mr. Okwe? You want me to send you more than an anonymous letter? You want me to send a free copy of this shameful*

*picture to all your associates and enemies and publish it to the whole world.eh? Jonan asked him : What do you want? What's the price?*

The man replied . I want you filled with dread that's all .

It is obvious from above text that everything has a price due to this corruption .

In addition to this, people come to the parties with girl friends , they drink heavily, dance hold tight dance with an off and on disco light (P-45). Moreover , Cynthia the nurse a fraids of night shifts because some men would lurk about in the darkness waiting for one nurse or the other , like people waiting their turns at a prostitutes' den. Even some doctors were used to making passes at nurses . that last time one attempt it on her, she walked out and managed to get a lift home . Later she was threaten to resign (P-51) .

It is sure enough that even darkness holds some secrets due to chaos , prostitution and exploitation .

In continuation of malpractises in Nigerian society, Okri shows us another scenario of corruption of scandal happened to Jonan . Jonan had been blackmailed (P-60) ... naked blackmail was something he had never bargained for . It was a thing unusual attributed to fiction or to aspects of western life . There was a picture of him and a woman in bed ! un believable ! unthinkable! To make enlarged copies and paste them on walls! Who was this character? What did he really want? Was there some kind of Nigerian style Mafia?

The researcher believes that, lagos was in a real dilemma of social degradation which leads to the destruction of the whole society. In a dramatic situation, Jonan Okwe made an obvious confession to his son about his malpractices, corruption and his different ways that he uses in his work as a business man.

Jeffia's father said (74) : "my choice was wealth and power. I have had my share of the people who passed through my

fingers, but the price is un easy. My advice to you, son is to go your own way into life. Stand on your feet . find your own blueprints . Be a tough, unshakable man. But don't follow my example. I have made many mistakes and have many enemies” . Furthermore, in one of the contexts at page (108) Jonan said to Mr. Okporu an accountant of the factory, “there are certain things about your activities I know. I know you go around the junior staff and buy many gloves of paint in their names and sell them outside at a lower price than even our agents . Tell your newspaper friends to think before they published next time” .

An administrative corruption is also manifested in the following context. Jonan was deceived by some people (109) the company (Afioso) documents and reminders from the bank for loan repayments. In addition to bills, three air conditioners and office furniture, all were explosive, in addition to three false signators for collecting the goods which were never delivered to the company. He couldn't remember authorizing any local purchase”.

The assistant commissioner is corrupted , so he said(121):

“The wealthy had a lot of influence in the city. It is better for a person to be on their side. It is a kind of insurance”.

What a deplorable situation in this country (Nigeria). Things are mixed up no difference between the white and the black. The future so dystopian.

Beside the above mentioned realities of malpractices the banned drinks are also brought to the country by Mr. Doye an ex-commissioner and now he is a businessman (140). “He had been thrown out of office for malpractices and corruption.

In addition to the above type of corruption, Mr. Jonan Okwe visited his ex-lady Juliet . He said to her (151)

*“wherever the he-goat goes it leaves its smell behind. The only thing is you are not goat. You're perfume. I am not in for all*

*that game of hide-and-peek and secret bookings of hotels and all the rest of it. Don't let me lose my patience, Juliet, and started being violent with you. Tell me all about the pictures you took with me. Juliet, tell me all you know about the nasty pictures of us in bed. Aren't you ashamed ? why did you have to do it to me? Why? Is that how you repay me for all I have done for you?"*.

In the above context, Mr. Okwe thought that, it was Juliet who gave his pictures to the newspaper. That's why he wanted to find out. When she confessed, he killed her with cool blood as a price of giving his pictures to the newspapers. In such a society, no secrets can be hidden. It will be used against you when time comes.

There is strong connection between events in context at page (151) and the coming one, "It is revealed that, Juliet became pregnant while still at school, her father turned her out of the house , and drove her into the streets, telling her to go and find the man responsible. That man was Jonan Okwe, who at that time was a young university graduate" (153) .

"when her mother left her father, her mother married to another man and lived in England. So, Juliet travelled to lagos to live with her aunt in Ajegunle. After helping her to get of pregnancy, her aunt attempted to convert her into prostitution" (154).

The above mentioned contexts are all interwoven and pinpoint to the wrong doings of both Mr. Jonan Okwe and Juliet his ex. girlfriend, in which both of them have crossed the limits. This is truly a crime in letter and spirit and a bad example of what is going on in that society.

In (P155) there is also a fact about Juliet . she hated Jonan Okwe, she said to him bitterly : "*you are a wicked and selfish man . I have heard many of the things you have done to people. I regret knowing you at all . you, sowho, and the rest like you are scum in*

*society, walking all over people's lives. Your waterloo is just somewhere around the corner".*

My discussion to this point is this, Mrs. Juliet criticizes Jonan Okwe along with his brother and the other corrupted people for using their influence to spoil the society, she depicted them as scum in society, and informed him that his waterloo is just somewhere around the corner which means his end is near.

There is another episode in (P-161) about Jeffia, when he discovers the reality of his father deeds. He said to his mum "who told him (his father) that his dad was tired and busy and had more important things to think about. Look, mum. I'm no longer a child. Things are not right at home.

This can be discussed this way. It is hard for a person/ a son to know the wrong doings of his father. It is painful and might cause psychological tension. So, it is logical for Jeffia to stand up and seek to mend things at home before it is too late. As it is said by Okri in (P-169), 'When there is a thorn in the flesh, just remove it'.

The last episode about the theme of corruption is said by Jeffia about his father depicting him as one of Mafia bosses.

*"My father ... hard as a damant...sometimes he reminded me of what I had read about Mafia bosses".*

In the above context, Jeffia means to say that his dad is unusual because of the stereotypes of things he often commits .

#### ***4-1-2 The Famished Road (TFR):***

Before navigating deeper in the various contexts to discuss this valuable novel, there are some considerable realities worth mentioning to give overall impression. Okri's creative genius finds its manifestation in his novel 'The Famished Road' (TFR). It marks the zenith of his writing career so far. In addition to this, the crisis of democracy in Africa is allegorized with the help of the myth of the abiku and this political fable running

over the pages of the novel, is without any doubt Okri's greatest artistic achievement.

In an interview with Jane, Wilkinson (1992:86) Okri admits that his novel (TFR) is "about history .. History is actually in the book right from the beginning. But I prefer to say suffering rather than history". Hammering on the same concept, Fedric (1983:40) pinpoints to the fact that : "historicizing a text permits us to pay attention to its dialogical dimension". About Nigeria's political history and its civil War (1967-1970), Achebe (1998:7) sees that the word "tribe" is the most expressive of Nigeria's political history: "*We didn't stand too long in brother hood. Within six years we were standing on a soil soaked in fratricidal blood*".

A brief summary of the novel (TFR) is done as per following :

The Famished Road was published in 1991. It covers the length of a 500 page in eight chapters. It is set in the crucial and historical moment of Nigeria's emergence from colonial domination in 1960. It explores the transition to national liberation and it addresses the sociopolitical and economic conditions of Nigeria. It is narrated in the first person by Azaro, an abiku-child who repeatedly dies and is born. Okri's protagonist an abiku child-spirit chooses to live. Azaro's experience is articulated within a constellation of characters : his parents, Madame Koto, the photographer, the political parties. Azaro has a dual character and throughout the novel he witnesses many episodes in his journeys such as : violence, poverty and political corruption. Azaro's father defeats numerous colonial aggressions in a series of mythic battles. Azaro's mother also aids the survival of her family. Madame Koto (the bar owner) represents the colonial force. Ade is another abiku spirit-child who chooses to return to the Spirit world rather than endure the rigors of morality; and Jeremiah, a youthful utopian journalistic photographer is often harassed by political hooligans. Hence, Okri faces a lot of prospects

presented by the postcolonial state, but he appears to side with the characters who maintain an optimistic, spiritual stand point in spite of their initial troubles.

First, let's initiate the discussion with the theme of violence. 'TFR' explores the political violence that Okri himself witnessed at first hand during the civil war in Nigeria. The bitter fact is, violence at the heart of the ghetto is significant for two reasons: first, as it is set at the transition to independence, it conforms to colonial spatial rationality wherein the ghetto is the habitation of the native. As Fanon (1967:151) argues, the colonial world is a Manichean world (World of principles) with the native consigned to the ghetto, a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute without spaciousness". In his poem, An African Elegy (1992:41) Okri x-rays the plight of postcolonial Africa which resulted in violence, poverty and corruption that intensifies the suffering of Nigerian people.

The poem runs this way:

*"We are the miracle that God made  
To taste the bitter fruits of  
time We are precious  
And one day our suffering  
Will turn into the wonders of the earth.*

The novel introduces the theme of violence and a war-like scenes in the night of fire.

The violence broke between the police and the villegers (p.10) :

*"He harried a way and turned an hour later with three policemen. They fell on us with whips and cracked our skulls with batons"*

Azaro describes the above episode of violence and the coming one as well.

The viallagers take law by their hands, fight back and thus, the violence breaks out (p-10):

*"We fought them back. We beat them with sticks and ropes. We tore their uniform and sent them packing... when they*

*finished fifteen men, three children, two goats, a dog wounded a long the battle ground of our area”.*

It is aptly from the previous episodes that violence has become a culture in that society. So, where there is violence we can't talk about justice and equality.

In another violent scene in (p-11) as portrayed by Azaro, the protagonist: “The villages attack police vehicles, looted shops, then everyone began looting, burning and overturning things”.

As a researcher, I believe that the same phenomenon of violence of looting, burning and overturning things is a common shared factor not only within African countries but also it extended to all countries world-wide.

Not only the above contexts, but also there is a tough and violent episode takes place in one of the boxing rings between Azaro's father and the other wrestler in page (384):

“Dad was training, preparing himself to the boxing asif he had gone insane. He boasted that he could fight three people at once. When the boxing started, dad unceremoniously knock one of them flat out with an upper wrist to the jaw... it was a fierce fight”.

Another similar scene of boxing game takes place between Azaro's father and green Leopard. It starts like this at pages (392-393-396-397-398-402-403-404-405-406).

The trouble arrived when one of the men grabbed Dad around the neck and he lashed out. Shut up! the chief thug barked. There is going to be a fight. Throw it into the ring. Green leopard asked dancing around heavily, aiming a few trial punches at Dad's head from a short distance... Dad struck him fall in the face with a lightening jab... The first attack cried the old man... Dad pounced on him and unleashed a cascade again and again. Then proceeded to unravel a combination of hooks, upper wrist, right and left... Green leopard caught Dad with a punch of such malevolent power... Dad's face was swollen



beyond description, blooded and mashed... Destroy the tiger! fans shouted ... send one of your boys the next time you are fighting ... Dad turned to our direction, open his swollen eyes, and threw a feeble punch... then he kicked and struggled in the bed... The feature of an eagle were burned on our floor and nearly burned down the house, and the women rushed to him and Dad not knowing who they were ... suddenly I found myself fighting seven spirits (Dad said).

The above episodes of Azaro's father battles can be interpreted inform of fighting against colonial forces in the battle of liberation and decolonization.

In a situation which unveil about the colonial forces directly in page (447), Azaro says:

*"I saw limitless number of beggars, the one armed, one eyed, legless, all along the road, scattered bruised and beaten by Madame Koto's thugs".*

It is crystal clear that, colonizers have their thugs and hooligans who carry out their orders in letter and spirit without any consideration in this humiliation drama.

Furthermore, Azaro, the protagonist said (492):

*Dad was redreaming the world as he was slept, .. He saw the scheme of things and didn't like it ... He saw the world in which back people always suffered... He saw our people drowning in violence, poverty, draught, in divisiveness and the bloody of War... He saw people always preyed upon by other powers, manipulated by the western world, our history and achievements rigged out of existence ... He saw the array of our politicians, how corruptible they were, how blind to our future, how greedy they became, how deaf to the crisis of the people, how stony their hearts were, how, short-sighted their dreams of power. He saw the divisions in our society, the lack of unity, he saw all the women inheritors of the miracle of forbearance... He saw the wars in advance. He saw the economic boom in advance, the exile to strange lands, the*

*depleting of the people's will for transformation... He saw the emergence of tyrants who always seem to be born from the extremities of crisis. He saw their long rule and the chaos when they are over thrown".*

In the above contextualization, Okri speaks in the tongue of his protagonist, Azaro. He, Okri summarizes the whole problems facing not only Nigeria but also all other colonized countries, including, Sudan. Due to Azaro's dual identity and his travels journeys in different worlds, he gets to know the following realities: suffering of black people ( violence, poverty, draught, divisiveness). Manipulation of powers by western world and by their inheritors who have same mindset. Violent history and hidden realities, corrupted, greedy politician who are deaf to people's rights and needs, who have stony hearts, short-sighted as well as division in society, lack of unity, women suffering, wars, economic boom and emergence of tyrants, these are the traits of African countries, therefore the future looks dystopian.

The second theme is the 'poverty' in the novel of *The Famished Road* which in the road of colonialism and brings violence, poverty and corruption to the ghetto dwellers.

In their book, 'World Hunger' Moore et al (1998:5) clarify that, "historically, the 1980s, the decade preceding the publication of *The Famished Road*, was a terrible period for Africa. The continent was mired in severe economic and political crisis. This was exacerbated by drought and famine that led to the loss of millions of lives. The result was that poverty became endemic, resulting in the classification of many of these countries as among the poorest countries in the world".

The above mentioned backdrop is meant to pave the way for discussing and analyzing the theme of poverty. The very title of the book, *The Famished Road*, is first used by Wole Soyinka in his poem "Death in the Dawn", may you never walk/when the road waits famished, *The Famished Road* means a road of

poverty that waits its victims. The Road symbolical rule, the poor are manipulated by the rich politicians who don't provide basic needs for the poor, thus makes the lives of people wretched. As per ([www.punereaseach.com](http://www.punereaseach.com)) english an online journal "poverty is venom/ poison that kills the placid / quiet lives of Nigerian people".

The novel reveals the financial strength of Azaro's parents as fragile when he says they can't afford to finance the party after he woke up from his coffin (8):

*"my parents had given up on me for dead. They commenced the burial proceedings when they heard my fierce weeping. Because of my miraculous recovery they named me a second time and threw a party which they couldn't afford".*

In another episode, Azaro's family live in an abject poverty. He describes life in their slum as follows (32):

*"The room was empty ... long Columns of ants crawled along the sides of the walls, there were ant-mounds near the cupboard. stretched itself from dad's shoe, wall-geckos and lizard scurried up and down the walls..."*

Seeing his surroundings / ghetto dwellers in the compound, Azaro describes it as a nation of poor (33):

*"The poor belong to one country.  
Our surroundings were poor"*

Then he looks at the family photo hanging loosely from the wall and juxtaposes life they lived and the desperate situation they are in now:

*"There were smiles of shy sweetness on our faces as one stared at the photograph in that little room where the lamp produced more black smoke than illumination, I wondered where the sweetness had gone".*

The conditions of families due to poverty are also portrayed in various contexts at pages (70-78-80-81) Azaro says "the rat began chewing away at something beneath the cupboard". Dad

said: “the only power poor people have is their hunger”. Both Azaro’s dad and mum have exerted all their efforts to help the family to stand against poverty. “Dad worked hard carrying heavy loads at the garage and market places and he earned very little money. Out of what he earned he paid the creditors, what was left we could barely manage to pay the rent and eat”. “we had no light because we couldn’t afford a candle”. Azaro said, I heard my mum saying:

*‘I am going to warm the food*

*We hadn’t eaten since the morning.*

*We had been going to sleep on empty stomachs for days’.*

Azaro adds that, “mum went off to the market, went hawking her boxes of matches, sweets, cigarettes and adds and ends down the road on a quite empty stomach”.

In addition to these incidents and episodes of fighting against the trappings of poverty, “Dad, entering a grim mood, drank intensely and then suddenly began to sing beautifully”(45), Dad tries to cheat poverty in the following lines: “Dad plied the gathering with drinks, borrowing heavily”(44), in his poverty, dad borrows and shares with others’. In fact, Dad does all kind of odd jobs just to make ends meet (353), “He works as a load carrier, as a night soil man and later as a boxer”.

Moreover to these, there is no material resources, no money and no employment, these wanting to sell can’t do it because people are poor (51):

*“Mom was exhausted from the search for (job). That morning she brought out her little table of provisions to the house front... the dust covered our eyes. The sun merciless on our flesh, we didn’t sell a single item”.*

Even in the slum, the inhabitants are in a cycle of despair. Those with shops and business are a step away from being a beggar (53):

*“...they came black again, one after the other and reminded dad of how much he owed them and how this was a special case, and how hard things were at the shop, and so on”*

Okri wants to convey the fact that the agonising poverty and misery of ghetto dwellers stem from the rich politician’s lack of concern for the welfare of the poor. They are not provided even with the basic necessities for survival (375):

*“The Rain God was merciless for two weeks. It rained so much that the sky seemed to have become as inexhaustible with water as the seas. At night water leaked through our ceiling, which we soon discovered was full of holes. Mum had to sacrifice her basins and pots used for cooking to catch the water that dripped down... when more holes opened above us we had to keep moving the bed round the room. It got so awful that we couldn’t find a place that wasn’t leaking”.*

In another episode, the citizens do not have a proper drainage system. At the time of the rainy season, the rain water came to their home as an uninvited guest (358):

*“Our street turned into one big stream. Water flooded into our rooms from the gutters. Sometimes it rained so much the compound began to stink because of the water that flowed past the pail latrine ... those who could afford it built little cement dams in front of their rooms to stop the bad waters going in . The rest of us sat helpless in our rooms and watched the water rise.*

To my view point, these are the deplorable realities of ghetto dwellers that Okri wants to unveil.

Okri brilliantly exposes the disparity of the rich and the poor through a conversation among the ghetto men (323) : “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” .

Because poverty becomes a night more to my dad, he taked on grand schemes (408-409): “He talked on buying enough cement to build houses for all the larger families who lived in one

room”. “ He dreamt of opening massive stores that would sell food cheaply to all the poor people”.

The inhabitants of the street crowded round the van, hunger on their faces. Their children were in tattered clothes, had big stomachs, and were bare foot (144).

In addition to this, Okri tries to exactly expose the conditions of Nigerian slum through the following incident in this novel. “she tore off the back pockets of my shirt to patch the wholes in between the legs. She gave my shirt many different buttons” (322). This indicates that the ghetto dwellers have inadequate of proper clothing.

In another episode, Okri brilliantly exposes the disparity of the rich and the poor through a conversation among the ghetto men. “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(323). Moreover, women in the ghetto suffer a lot than their men. They struggle both in the society and in their family. Azaro’s mother prays for the welfare of her family:

*She prayed for food. She prayed for Dad to get well. She prayed for a good place to live. She prayed for more life and suffering to bear lovely fruits and she prayed for me. For three days Mum prayed on borrowed wine... Always the landlords increasing our rents... Always the strained smile of the hunger beneath the brave pride. Always the rats and cockroaches eating away at our dreams.*

Furthermore, every poor woman in Nigeria suffers like Azaro’s mother. Though they have no appetite, they work as provision sellers, and as daily wagers for the welfare of their families. The poor if they are hurt physically, they do not seek treatment which costs them money. They look for native treatment which costs nothing. This is obvious from the following incident (93): Mum moved about the darkness in silent complaining silence. She kicked something and cursed and sat down and I lit a match and saw blood pouring out of the big toe of her right foot... when

she came back she had washed the cut and I asked her what she had put on it. 'poverty' she said.

The cut still bled through the black stuff she had covered it with 'Ash, she said.

From the above mentioned episodes of different contexts, it is crystal clear that poverty is an endemic and causes psychus and might lead to un expected things. Therefore, Okri draws a clear picture through the eyes of Azaro the miserable conditions of social, political and economic after the plight of Nigeria and how the ghetto dwellers suffer too much due to chaos and lack of vision from the politician, and that's why the road is still hungry.

The third theme which deserves analysis in The Famished Road(TFR), is the political corruption in Nigeria .

There are some unescapable and inevitable realities with respect to the political, social and economic condition of contemporary Nigeria worth shedding lights on , particularly the ill- effects of politics that exploits the poor people in Nigeria, all these are done by the colonizers and their thugs as well as by neo colonizers (the black/ the inheritors of colonizers) (the Land lords, the rich people, debt collectors and politicians, so. The Famished Road (1991) is the first novel in a trilogy with the same title , with the sequential books, songs of Enchantment (1993) and infinite Riches (1998), all following the adventures of Azaro as the voice of Okri.

As per (www. Punereseach.com/English,online journal(2019) Nigeria is now rated as the third most corrupt nation in the world. It has always been in the catbird seat (in an enviable situation) because of its political instability and political violence. In fact politics has become a lucrative business project where people go for gain and not to render service .

According to ([www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org)) online site that, Nigeria used to be synonymous with corruption just a few years ago. By some

estimates close to Us 400 billion was stolen between 1960 and 1999 .

Azaro, the protagonist, have three eyes and one ear (493), is endowed with ‘the gift of seeing things from both the secular world and the supernatural realm.

Okri’s representation of the crisis of transition or the emergence of Nigeria as a nation-state are the activities Modame koto, the enterprising capitalist matriarch. These forces constitute the focus of Okri’s critique of the politics of postcolonial representation and economics.

The retreat of colonialism is marked by the advent of political parties.

The first episode which shows the political corruption is portrayed by Azaro. He said (122-123-124) “All the compound people were gathered at the housefront . All the housefronts of the street were crowded with people ... A man in resplendent white agbada was talking with great gestures. It was the first time I had heard such amplification of voice... The inhabitants of the street crowded round the van, hunger on their faces.

‘what is it ?’ someone asked.

‘They want votes. ‘They want our money’

The have come to tax us. I saw them hawking.

They keep giving reasons why we should vote for them. They only remember is when they want our votes. The man in the van spoke for himself ‘vote for us. We are the party of the Rich, Friends of the poor ...’

‘The poor have no friends, someone in the crowd said. ‘only rats’.

IF You Vote For Us...?

‘... We are finished , someone added.

‘...we will feed your children...’

‘...lies’.

‘...And we will Bringing you Electricity ...’



‘.... so you can see better how to rob us !

‘.... To teach illiteracy’ !

‘... And hospitals ... We Will Make You Rich Like Us. There Is plenty For Everybody. Plenty Of Food. Plenty Of Power. Vote For Unity And Dower’!

By this time the mocking voices were silent.

And To Prove To You That We Are Not Empty Words, Bring Your Children To Us. We Are Giving Away Free Milk ! Yes, Free Milk From Us, Courtesy Of Our Great Party’!

The man at the megaphone began shouting (124).

‘Don’t Rush. We Have Enough Free Milk For The Whole Country...

The Things Threw coins..(126)

Children searched the dust for hidden coins’. And the compound people got into heated discussion about which of the two main parties was the best, which had more money, which was the friend of the poor, which had the better promises. Dad tasted the milk and wrinkled his face. ‘Rotten milk ; he said ‘Bad milk’.(127).

Mum told how mystified she had been at seeing people sick everywhere (131), at the endemic vomiting along paths and house fronts. Consequently, Dad rushed out into the compound, shouting (132):

The Milk! It’s the Milk’.

They have poisoned us with the milk’.

The above mentioned episodes depicts the tactics used by the Party of the Rich to win the election at the expense of life of the ghetto dwellers, this definitely proves the type of political corruption followed by bad politicians who create riots by the thugs and landlords.

The political corruption is documented by the photographer who is also suffered due to the rotten milk, (132), he moved from house front to house front, holding his stomach, his face

wretched and pale. Bravely, he took pictures of the milk-heaps and vomit outside the houses, and get the woman and children to pose round them. He took shots of sick children. Due to this incident the street was angry and some suggested burning down the local offices of the rich people's party(132). They were angry but they were also helpless and they couldn't decide on the best course of action.

One way of tactics of bad politics is to blame the other side (party) and put your all malpractices on it. Azaro depicts the situation as follow: That evening the van of bad politics returned. I saw the van of the politicians who had poisoned us. They blared passionate speeches through their loudhailer. We listened in silence to the politicians of bad milk. We hastened as they blamed the other party for the milk(153) They said it was their rivals, the party of the poor, who had been impersonating them, pretending to be them.

*'They were Responsible For The Milk, Not Us. They want to discredit us, the local hailers eried. We found their statement very strange because at the back of the van were the same people who had come round the first time... Now they came with dogs of garri, but with twice the number of thugs ...*

*We Are Your Friends. We Will Bring You Electricity And Bad Roads, Not Good Milk. I Mean Good Roads, Not Bad Milk. The politicians mainted with great vigour. 'Trust Us! Trust Our Leader! Trust Our Garri! Our Party Believes in sharing The National Garri And...'*

*'Lies! Someone cried from the crowd.*

*'Thieves ! said another.*

*'poisoners!'*

*'Murderers!'*

The researcher is with the view that says politics has become a profitable business project where people go for gain and not to render services. The result is a deep sense of disillusimment, as

aptly expressed by Azaro's father. Dad said (96): "They have begun to spoil everything with politics'. Dad is not alone, in Madame Koto's bar, a client remarks how this independence has brought only trouble' (199).

Moreover, political exclusion is also practiced if they don't belong to the party of the rich. One of the thugs told a woman (168-169):

*'If you don't belong to our party, you don't belong to this place in the market'.*

*Where will I find another space?'*

*'Leave – Go ... We don't want people Like you'.*

*'You Are Not One Of Us'*

*'Everyone Else In This Part Of The Market Is One Of Us'.*

*'if you treat people like this, why should I want to vote one of you,eh?'* The woman asked.

*'Good Question'*

*'True'*

*'Leave'*

*'We Don't Want You Here'*

*'But, What, have I done?'*

*I pay my dues...I pay rent for this space, no body has ever complained about me...?*

One of the men kicked her and she didn't scream. Women began clearing their stalls. One of them said: This independence has brought only trouble'.

In addition to these, there are clear violations of human rights through torture and imprisonment. In a sorrowful situation, the photographer was released three days after he was taken away (154-155). He said 'he had been tortured in prison ... when he arrived, the street gathered outside his room to give him a hero's welcome ... He told us stories of his imprisonment and of how he had survived fiendish methods of torture inflicted on him to get out the names of collaborators, planners of riots.

Compelling the ghetto dwellers and terrifying them before elections by landlord if they don't vote for the party of the Rich. An episode narrates this matter.

The Landlord came to Azaro's house, but his dad isn't. First he came to take the rent as he said, second. I don't like the way my own tenants have behaved towards my party (198) : 'if you want to be my tenant, when the election comes, you have to do is to press ink next to his name. A simple matter. My party will bring good roads and electricity and water supply. And remember " we have people at the polling station who will be watching you. We will know who you vote for. If you don't vote for my man, you night as well begin to look for another place now and see if you can find another landlord as good as me. Tell this to your husband. And send my rent latest tomorrow mornings.

Apart from this, Madame Koto has security men who spy on people A few days later, I came upon Madame koto and three men (175). They were standing near a tree. They were involved in an argument. Madame Koto stopped arguing when she saw me. She made a movement towards me. I ran.... "catch him" she said.

The three men ran after me, but without much conviction. They soon gave up the chase. I didn't stop till I was near our compound.

Another context which shows political corruption in Nigeria at page (81). Azaro's Dad to his family said :

*"They have began to spoil everything with politics. Now they want to know who you will vote for before they let you carry their load. If you want to vote for the poor. They give you heaviest load. I am not much better than a donkey.*

Besides these nets of political corruption. "one of the politician was plastering money on the sweating breast of a woman who had dances..." (463). And the other politician pasted money on

her face when she perform an important dance (464). In addition to these, Azaro said (447).

*“I didn’t go to the bar. I saw her (Madame Koto) sitting outside on a high stool, surrounded by her prostitutes and the thugs.*

The above contexts aptly shows the extend of political corruption and social and moral decadence. The photographer said to Azaro (232): “I took photo graphs of women at the market being attacked by the thugs. The woman fought them back. I took pictures of riots a gainst our white rulers. I took pictures of a policeman taking bribes. The policeman saw me and pursued me. I escape He went on saying that, the rats are never satisfied(233). The rats are like bad politicians and imperialists and rich people. Moreover, insinuating that women led development is achieved in exchange for sexual favours, (294):

*“One day I will build my own hotel”*

*“How? Will you steal money”*

*“politics will give me”, will you fuck politics?*

*These are women at koto’s bar.*

In another context, Azaro was speaking about Madame Koto’s bar and the types of activities carried out by the party of the Rich and the role of Madame Koto as political incubator in this seenario (449):

*“There were yellow vans every where... curious perfumes floated over the road ... cars were parked along the lanes and side streets. Music rocked all right... The women were all over the place bursting with scandalous sexuality ... Different types of men were also there... the party was being thrown to celebrate koto’s attainment of new powers, the installation of electricity, the consolidation of her party connections, and to widen the sphere of her influence in this and the other realms.*

Promotions to higher ranks depends on loyalty to the political party and the ability to carryout its agenda. Azaro said (470):

“party chiefs, power merchants, warlords, always seek new additions to their ranks of warriors and hired protectors..”

Racial discrimination and nepotism are also practiced as part of political corruption, the white confessed about this favouritism (485). He said : “I became fevished in the head and later in fit of fury over small thing I killed my African servant. They arrested, I sat in a cell. Then, they released me because I was a white man.

Nigeria lacks the desire to change things for the better. If there is a will, there will definitely be away. But there is no will and the future a head scems dystopian. In this sense (451), Dad said “we can change the world” ! people laughed at him. That’s why our road is hungry from the very beginning’. Dad hollered. ‘we have no desire to change things.

Despite of this, Azaro’s friend, Ade concluded by saying (478): our country is an abiku country. It will keep changing. “There will be coups ... soldiers everywhere...ugliness... blindness. But one day it will remain.

The above back drop is an overall political situation and political corruption as a dominant theme that eats away the lives of people like a mysterious plague. Will there be light one day at the end of the long dark tunnel?

#### ***4-1-3 Songs Of Enchantment (SOE)***

Nigeria's political independence seems to have brought neither peace nor prosperity to the country, rather, it paradoxically has borne witness to political violence, poverty and economic stagnation and to what J.F Ade Ajayi, in Oko (2010:9) terms an 'obsession with politics' for its own sake. He says:

*‘The most fundamental aspects of post-independence Nigeria has been the elusiveness of development, however characterised ... that is to say, in many ways the quality of life of the average farmer and family in the village, or a worker in*

*the same respects, and in some areas, it's even worse than on the eve of independence. In particular, Nigeria now finds it difficult to provide for her populations sufficient food and energy resources for their basic necessities of life. Nigeria is yet to evolve stable political structures that are imbued with a sense of national commitment; notions of social justice, around which loyalties of masses could be mobilised. Rather, the un even development between cities and rural areas of the same region persists. In addition, the inequalities of income distribution that characterised colonial rule have tended to widen considerably since independence. As a result there have been civil unrest and civil war, and there is general less security for life and property. In a few cases, grotesque and abnormal regimes have emerged that prey on their own people rather than protect them or promote their welfare.*

This is also a point propped up by Achebe (1983:1) when he says:

*The trouble with Nigeria is simple and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigeria land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise the responsibility ...*

Before moving ahead, a brief summary of the novel songs of Enchantment worth mentioning for having clear picture of the novel.

Songs of Enchantment (1993), sets in a ghetto village after the Nigeria dilemma of the civil war. It covers 297 pages, with 4 books (each book contains a number of chapters). its journey narrated by Azaro in continuation of TFS as sequel along with infinite Riches (1998). This trilogy is the most engaging and interesting part of Okri's work to date. Azaro, the spirit child is the protagonist and narrator of the novel. Azaro makes physical, spiritual and political journey in the novel through various events in his village and his family. His family (Dad and Mum)

almost falls apart making the story more of a socio political allegory. In the first chapter of the book itself, they quarrel and Azaro's mother is driven out of the house. M.Koto's bar becomes the centre of all the sinister operations, and M.Koto becomes an ageless matriarch, a legendary figure whom no one sees with limitless power. She murders the villagers who turn against her. She is pregnant with three Abiku children who refuse to be born. The novel continues the clashes of the two political parties of Rich and poor. Azaro also narrates about his father that felt in love with the begger girl as well as about the death of his friend, Ade, and his father, Ade was killed by M.Koto's car and his father was killed by political thugs. Azaro is an eye witness of violence, poverty and political corruption in Nigeria. Madame Koto's death happens in the last novel in the sequel (*The Infinite Riches*). In short, in this novel there are a lot of mysterious spiritual situations.

Azaro as Okri's voice narrates the following issue by saying, My Dad said (126):

*'Africa is the home of the world, and look at how we live in this world. The people who had gathered round him stared at Dad as if he were both mad and amusing. 'Poverty everywhere, wickedness, greed, injustice all over the place, goats wanting to lead the country, cows running for elections, rats scheming to be governors. This could be the great garden of the earth, but it is now a backyard; cried Dad'.*

Despite the fact that, Africa is a cradle of civilizations with multitudinous of resources and can be God's paradise on earth, it has become a continent of ignorant, coward and short-sighted politicians who lack vision and spirit of change.

The first theme to be dealt with is the theme of violence which happens as an off shoot of chaos of the civil war.

Violence has intensified in Nigeria due to many malpractises such as: corruption, gases burning, starvation, death due to shoot



to kill, prisons, poisoned stuff, military coups and assassinations. Azaro narrates the following (89-90):

*'I flew into a world of violence, of famine, of pullulating hunger, with beggars swarming the city centre, with maggots devouring the inhabitants, with flies eating the eyes ball of the children who were half-dead with starvation, with traffic jams everywhere, and people dying of hypertension at their steering wheels, with gases burning in the air, multiplying the ferocious heat of the sun; With housing project built by corrupt businessmen collapsing and crushing to death their inhabitants all over the country, with soldiers going mad and shooting at people, emptying their guns at students, butchering their mothers, while roits quivered all over the landscapes; with the prisons overcrowded and excuting an unbearable stretch of excrement and blood; with children poisoned by their mother's milk ... The food spilled on them ... I saw soldiers in armoured trucks rolling into the city, I saw coup after coup, till our history became an endless rosary necklace of them, each new bead an assassinated head of state, or the secret numbers of failed coup-plotters, executed at dawn. I suddenly found myself on a battle ground deep in the country, deep in the dream of the unborn nation, and I saw a bloody war raging, a war without beginning and without end, whose origins formed a self-feeding circle like the oroboros.*

From the extrapolation, the above texts set direct illumination of the gloomy picture of the conditions of Nigeria and its inhabitants at that time.

In another situation which expresses the atrocity of violence and its impact on people, particularly when it becomes a king that tortures the citizens.

In this sense, Mum said (76):

*'The people didn't recognize death and didn't listen to his message ... soon things got so bad that the people no longer understood the language of trees and animals. They*

*no longer saw angles, and never existed. They no longer understood one another ... They became greedy. They broke into tribes. They had wars all the time ... But death became the king of the world. He was very wicked king. He punished human beings and trees and animals for every conceivable reason. His punishment was final’.*

The above text symbolises to the atrocity of violence which turns into death and finally a tough and merciless king who dominates each and every being with an ever lasting judgement. As a universal phenomenon, clash of political parties will never end due to different views on social, political and economic matters, and in many ways turn into violence and dirty games by thugs. The coming scenario is at (P.94). ‘party thugs continued to terrorise people. The world was at a new angle to the sky, but the old violence had returned. People were beaten at street corners for giving the wrong political passwords’.

What a laughable situation! And a dirty game played by political thugs who are functioned to create panic to those who oppose their political party or who have forgotten the political password.

Moreover, Azaro, the narrator expresses his dissatisfaction from chaos which created violence that makes life uneasy. Azaro said (P.151):

*‘the chaos made us brain-shocked; everywhere we looked our stunned brains conjured further devastations. The chaos made us hallucinate’.*

The above text indicates that chaos has become an obsession as well as a bogeyman.

Azaro, the protagonist, in his journeys continues to narrate about the two political parties of the (Rich and Poor) and the activities they carry out to win the elections. In this manner Azaro x-rays the matter this way (P.206):

‘Everywhere the thugs of the two parties clashed in their endless war of mythologies’.

The clash between the two political parties continued and intensified into a bloody violence as a result there was curfew.

Azaro said (P.246):

*‘The party of the poor had started their own brand of terror. They bang on the doors, disturbing the air with the noise of glasses breaking, talking drums stammering, and cow horns blasting the wind ... frightening us not to bury the corpse of the carpenter unless they were the murderers ... A new curfew had begun. The war of mythologies had entered a bloody-minded dimension. In fact it seemed that their new strategy was to out-terrorise the party of the rich ... But the real shock of it was that they used those methods against us and also used the dead body of the carpenter as a weapon in the battle of political ascendancies’.*

From the foregoing, it is aptly that, political parties use various strategies and tactics to win election, even though, through terror, mythologies and blood shedding.

The second theme is poverty. It is observable that the civil war in Nigeria throws its shadows on the economic situation which creates an unbearable and severe poverty which shatters the life of the ghetto dwellers and changes their features. In this regard Dad said (121-122):

*" poverty makes people strange, it makes their eyes bitter, it turns good people into witches and wizard ... he continued to say in the country I rule everybody would be a herbalist ... Everyone would have free education ... We would produce what we eat ... We would create things we need from our own natural resources ... "*

Okri wants to convey a clear message that, it is through clear vision we can get rid of poverty since each and everything is available in Nigeria. In Nigeria because of the abject poverty

many people became beggars who often go to places without being invited. Azaro depicts such an incident (7):

*“I went outside to our house front and saw that the beggars had gone. They had come uninvited to the party Dad threw to celebrate his great victory”.*

Due to poverty, Azaro's mother complains about their condition in the house despite of the hard work she performs and the sacrifices she makes to prop up the family. Mum said to Dad (11):

" you spent all your time talking about us, eh? Are we not beggars? Don't you hear how cracked my voice is? From morning till night I walked this ungodly city, hawking my provisions, crying out, while you slept like a goat for seven days". 'improve our conditions first, first,' mum said.

In additions to this, 'Mum was a sleep on the floor, under the shadow of the centre table (29) ... she had a thin cloth over her ... the flickering candle light, making the shadows and dance on the bare walls, illuminating the rafters and the cobwebs, revealed to us more forcefully the poverty in our lives'.

It is clear from the above context that Azaro's family lives in a miserable situation and the type of poverty they live in.

In another episode of the miserable condition depicted by Azaro, the narrator goes this way (34).

*‘Everything I saw my spirit away from the world: the poverty and the cracked huts, the naked children with sores and the young women who had accelerated in ageing, the men with row faces and angry eyes’.*

In fact when poverty prevails in a society everything is expected such as going naked because they can't afford to purchase cloths and even hunger changes their faces which becomes pale thin and their eyes go deep.

Due to poverty Azaro expects death is coming one day Azaro to his Mum (74):

*“We were so happy in our silence and with our poverty that one day I said to Mum: 'Death is coming’”.*

Furthermore, Azaro's father praises Africa is a home of the world in terms of civilization and resources, despite of that, it suffers too much. Dad said vehemently (126): *'Africa is the home of the world, and look how we live in this world. Poverty everywhere'*.

In a deplorable situation, Azaro describes the affects of the absence of rain in their area to the people, and animals as well. Azaro said with a shock (156): "there was no rain ... Hunger came amongst us and the children grew leaner ... The faces of the women grew longer ... The men became listless and pale ... There were no bird or animal cries from the forest".

Okri wants to say, when there is no rain, there is no life for all creatures. So, rain is life.

In continuation to the above context which depicts the affects of poverty on creatures, Azaro adds the following (158): *‘our hunger became so intense that we took to eating mouldy vegetables. We carved up the animals and roasted their flesh and stared into the night-fires, our faces dry and sweaty, our eyes un moving. The hunger made the world unbearable’*.

In an unbearable situation which makes one cry, Ade, Azaro's friend said (195-196):

*“The tears of a child dying of hunger in a remote part of the country can start a civil war ”. my destiny has been hidden from me and it was because of all the poverty, all the suffering in the world, the wickedness and the lies, it was because of all these that I didn't want to live. But now I know I was born to love the world as I find it, and to change it if I can”.*

Since poverty, suffering, wickedness have become realities, the only option is to work hard to sort things out if possible.

Azaro talking about his Dad and the effects of poverty on him (his Dad) (203):

*'Our hunger had driven him into a shameful line of work, as he came in drunk'.*

In a practical step towards ending hunger, the government declared war on poverty. Azaro said (207):

*"The government declared war on poverty and made us more wretched".*

There is nothing to indicate life in the ghetto areas.

In this sense Azaro said (297): "Mum looked around, and saw nothing. She saw nothing but the ordinary poverty of our area.

It is crystal clear that, poverty becomes an obsession in the ghetto area and Azaro's mother is an eye witness to the deplorable situation in Nigeria during that time of civil war and the economic turmoil.

The third most important theme in the novel of (SOE) is the theme of political corruption.

Before election, there are many political battles, hot discussions and promises made by politicians and leaders to attract the citizens hopefully to win the elections. Under the umbrella of the theme of political corruptions, I will expose various episodes from the text of the novel in which we will get to know many dirty games played by thugs of political parties of (Rich and poor) and because of this, political fractionalization shatters the community's cohesiveness and worsens the life of the citizens.

In an episode made by Azaro's father who has a political party focuses on visions and seeking solutions, but he makes falsepromises. Azaro said (7-8-15):

*"Dad promised to build a unique school to educate the beggars who had special place in Dad's political party (vision). Dad had great plans for them he often brought them bags of fish ... crowds of people all over the place were talking about politics ... about the forthcoming rally ... about those who had died in the political violence ... the beggars looked at*

*Dad with dull eyes ... it was clear that, they had reached a decision ... Dad tried to inspire them with his lofty schemes ... But they had heard his promises a thousand times and their faces registered no response”.*

The above texts can be interpreted this way, the politicians often deceive people by making sweet promises to gain elections. But their promises remain promises because they lack credibility in a worst political climate in a country where chaos and malpractices reach all society's sectors.

In another episode which reveals corruption and shatters families when political exclusion is practiced on society, and thus people find themselves in the street because they don't belong to the political incubation of the ruling party. Azaro says (32):

*"Mum went to the market place, she used to have a stall before, the thugs of politics drove her away because she hadn't joined their parties.*

Even political songs are used to praise the new era of money and power. In this manner, Azaro says (38):

*"Women sang quivering political songs that spoke of the new era of money and power".*

As a researcher, I believe that money melts and softens the hearts and it is the first window towards practicing corruption. Love of power attracts the spoiled and utilitarian of all races.

In addition to this, Azaro said (43):

*'The political leader commended his followers who shot down the living dreams of the nation'.*

The above text shows that, politics has become not only a bogeyman that terrifies people, but also a nightmare that steals the dreams of the simple people.

Moreover, corrupt politicians often seek to corrupt other. If a person refuses to join them and be corrupt, he or she will be

driven from his/her work. Azaro narrates such a situation when he said (45):

*There was once a man who suffered all the bad things that can happen to a human being ... He was a good man in a world full of wickedness ... He was sacked from his job because he refused to be corrupt.*

The above scenario is practiced worldwide by corrupt politician to stimulate the good people through dismissing from work or through bribery.

Political corruption continued to take place in the ghetto areas as stated by Azaro (67):

*“The day after Mum returned we heard that thugs of the party of the Rich had killed a man at the other end of our street. There were retaliations that afternoon”.*

It is clear from above that, the thugs are the trouble-Shooters and the striking force which are functioned by the political party of the Rich to carry out their dirty agenda.

In addition to this, Azaro narrates a situation and episode of how the party of Rich and power follow different methods of walking down streets at night terrorizing the ghetto dwellers, banging and shouting and threatening. This is done by the thugs, masquerade, and the supporters. Azaro said (71):

*“At night the masquerade of both parties bounded up and down the streets with whips and sticks and matches. Terrorizing us, banging on our doors, they shouted our names in guttural voices. They warned that had people watching us in the polling booths to report on who we had voted for in secret. The political masquerade, the thugs and the supporters invaded our lives and changed the air of the street”.*

At same page, Azaro describes a situation of how Madame Koto who represents colonialism had the ability of transforming her tactics, methods and strategies of winning people's hearts to support her political party.



Azaro said:

*“Her (Madame Koto) fabulous bar was now the ghetto headquarters of the party of the Rich. The people of our area avoided her bar. Despite that, she sent the children of five poor families to school. She gave a scholarship to a blind girl. Her fame (Madame Koto) spread all over the country ... Her legend had become so pervasive that we could no longer give her a human face”.*

As a symbolism of colonization, M. Koto was the master of masquerade. She wears different hats and masks to carry out her agenda upon depending on suitable time and place.

Corruption spreads and practices widely, in this sense, Azaro x-rays an episode by saying (75):

*“Corruption came upon the people and grew fat. The world turned upside down. Creation became confusion”.*

It is apparent that, corruption increased in the ghetto areas and had negative impact on people.

How alike are tonight and last night. The political corruption continued and people are beaten for giving wrong political passwords, and how Madame Koto changed her power and techniques depending on space, distance and silence. Azaro said (94-96):

*“Party thugs continued to terrorise people. The world was at a new angle to the sky, but the old violence had returned. People were beaten at street corners on space, on distance, on silence, which was why no one saw her any more.*

Moreover, Azaro depicts an episode of fear, expectation, nightmares and political exclusion. Azaro said (112):

*“I saw that other celebrations had begun. They had begun all over the city, all over the country, in small villages, in new ghettos, along the street and highways. The fourth coming election had already been fore-won. Fear and strange noises had swept the souls of country, and those who didn't have anywhere to hide were naked ... I found myself in the mind of*

*the masquerade ... I saw the world through its eyes. I surveyed its extensive, universal kingdom of fear. Dread for those who oppose, protection for supporters, nightmares for the silent. I saw far across the lands, into the heart of nations whose heart beats had accelerated and had been taken by the powers of fear ... All those who didn't support world lose their jobs, be thrown out of their houses for mysterious reasons, would come home to find that their houses had moved, and their wives or husbands deserted to better pastures”.*

As part of political corruption, a policy of stick and carrot is used, supporters will be protected, opposers will be dreaded, and the silent will be terrified, and political exclusion is also practiced.

In his journey, Azaro also saw (115) the invisible Masquerade of the western world, saw their worshippers of order, money, desire, power, and world domination. In the above mentioned scenario, Okri wants to state that one eye is not enough for seeing the reality of the world, that's why Azaro has a third eye which enable him to see the world in depth, in core ... Due to this, he sees the western world with its order, money, desire, power and above all its domination.

Furthermore, Azaro father talks about the types of corruption practiced by the political parties to win the election. Dad said (125) that as a people:

*“we must have more respect for death, that in the country he rules, he will make sure people don't take death too lightly. He lashed out at the political party for filling the people's minds with too many ambitions with greed and selfishness, promising them lands and cars and government jobs if they voted for them, instead of filling their minds with self-respect and regard for hard work and service and love, and with thoughts of how to make the people strong, healthy and well-fed. People would take the exercises everyday ... And rituals would be used for reasons that make us take life more seriously and*

*more joyfully, instead of being corrupted into instruments of terror”.*

The above text shows how the future must be and the country must be and how a terrifying person for gaining election is no longer workable.

In additions, Dad continued his speech on the impact of corruption, promises and fear. Dad said (131-132):

*“people need magic more than they need food ... people don’t know what they want, and that people must be kept ignorant ... Give them food, give them promises ... Without promises people go mad and they revolt ... people only understand fear ... once the people can afraid, you can make them do anything ... fear is the black stone in the brain ... Never allow the light to come on in the minds of the people. Or you have chaos”.*

Corrupted politicians in their political parties used fear as a tool against opposers to execute their agenda.

In another incident of corrupt politics of water poisoning, Azaro said (153):

*‘That same day four children died of water poisoning. Everyone complained of dizziness and something a kin to seasickness’.*

Not only the above mentioned episodes which expose political corruption, but also a cross-eyed man warned the ghetto dwellers not to trust political parties. Azaro said (194):

*“Across-eyed man warned us not to trust any of the parties, saying they could sell us to the world for their own purposes”.*

The above text shows apparently the dirty game played by political parties, they can easily sell people at whatever cost they like in order to achieve their intended purposes.

In addition to this, as said by Azaro (205) the people of our area learned a lesson from the drivers fate which they didn’t put into practice. ‘His fate was a warning that one mustn’t get too close to powerful people’.

It is indeed true everywhere powerful and influential people only seek their interests, they can easily dehumanize others and kick them out like dogs. Therefore, approaching the powerful people is like a two edged sword and one needs to be careful or else his/her fate will be Madam Koto's driver, who was killed in cool blood.

Politics has different faces and wears different hats and masks. The party of poor had started their own brand of terrors. Azaro said (247) :

*“They banged on the doors, disturbing the air with the noise of glasses breaking, talking drums stammering, and cows horns blasting the wind ... frightening us not to bury the corpse of the carpenter unless they were the murders ... the amazing intransigence of using the dead body of the carpenter as a weapon in the battle of political ascendancies”.*

It is crystal clear that there isn't any inviolability of the dead. This is a clear violation of human dignity and human rights as well.

#### **4-2 Characterization**

Characterization is the most important device in the composition of any short story or novel. It is the process of conveying information about characters in narrative conversation which is distinctive of each character according to the way of expression which will help in portraying the characters physically or in terms of actions and behaviors in interpreting or communicating certain values and messages to the readers .

Ben Okri uses various techniques to make his characters lively and dynamic. In this part the researcher is going to explain, discuss and analyze the selected characters along with their roles and how they are functioned to convey the intended themes. Each of the three selected novels will be discussed separately.

#### ***4.2.1 Flowers and shadows (FAS)***

This is Okri's first novel. It sheds the light on the consequences of Nigeria's plight that stems out of the civil war, as a result violence, poverty and corruption mushroomed intensively in Nigeria. These social ills as selected themes for analysis are dramatized by certain characters to help in throwing flash back to that historical moment through their actions and behaviors. The most prominent and main and influential character in the novel of 'FAS' is Jeffia Jonan Okwe. He is the protagonist of the novel. As per his physical description, action and behavior. He is a tall, nice son, as his mother describes him (p.18). He is kind person, he rescued a small dog from cruel boys, with good upbringing. He had attended the best schools, and had done well all along. He didn't seem to be turning out, he was different, not committing crimes, not ill dressed, not ill behaved. He was gentle and intelligent. Tall and bright for his 19 years, he had developed a sense of maturity, close to his mother, but his father is a way from him (P.19) although his father had given him the best education and good life. He had good thoughts, satisfaction (P.1) as well as helpful and understanding.

All the above texts (1-18-19) show the type of character is Jeffia. In addition to this, Jeffia was described by Jane (the nurse) as a handsome young man (p.59). Okri creates the character of Jeffia to represent the young generation who is to bear the responsibility of building the Nigerian nation. That's why Jeffia seemed to be an idealistic young man who would hold the values of the nation. Even in his actions, he was cooperative, initiative, kind and humanitarian. The incident of rescuing the puppy from the odd boys was the best example. Jeffia saw two boys torturing a dog under a whistling pine tree (P.4). One of the boys held the dog by the legs, while the other tried to stick a piece of wood up its anus, and watched it

struggle, the bigger of the boys held the dog's mouth to prevent it yelping. Jeffia rescued the dog from them. It can be realized that Jeffia is kind and sensitive by rescuing the puppy which was tortured by the boys, Okri wants to convey a message that among the devils and where moral degradation spreads there is a merciful person who keeps holding the good norms of society. In another episode, Okri shows that his hero, Jeffia had good performance at school (P.146). 'Jeffia was doing well in the school. In his result, he got A in Biology B in Chemistry. It was an excellent result. He was a good example of how a student succeeds by conscientious study and singular sincerity of purpose. This is the attitude to hold through life. Okri, intends to show that Jeffia as a promising man along with his counterparts that the future of building the country will depend on them, he could be a smart, sincere and with a motivated fact which says (p.158) :

*'success in life often starts from Success at school and it is always a product of hard work, determination, and a simple love of work'.*

The above mentioned text, incarnates the reality of Jeffia who is a hard working person, that's why he succeeds at his school. In addition, the school's principal said (159): 'while handing a prize to Jeffia (the first of his class); Jeffia was one the school's most promising students and that they were going to keep an eye on his future.

Another traits of Jeffia as mentioned at (p.44). 'Jeffia was abstainer from strong drink. He likes going to parties, but he doesn't like to be disgusting and misbehaving like his friends.

It is clear from above that, Jeffia was conservative, sociable and having good behavior.

All human beings having a sense of fear as a common shared element between them, and Jeffia is not an exception. Jeffia 'felt fear which he could not explained (p.59) when he saw his

father's friend (Gbenga) lying there on the bed, possibly dying. In a similar situation (71-72) when his mother conveyed to him the death of his friend Ode in a car accident. Jeffia screamed. No!! he shouted. Mum, no! it can't be true. Jeffia felt as if something vital and intangible had dropped out of his soul (72). He felt empty. Remembering his intimate and close friend enjoyed their friendship with its ups and down, quarrels and challenges. They were an inspiration to one another, setting goals, arguing, having big dreams about the future.

From the foregoing texts, it is apparently that, Jeffia had strong and good relationships with his friends, and Ode in particular. From the way he screamed when received his friend's death, from the way he felt empty, and from the way he remember his closed friend, Jeffia was in fact dependable and a big scheme for a country. In another episode (P.171). Jeffia also expressed about his feelings when he shouted at his father (Jonan Okwe) and his uncle (Sowho), at the time discovered their realities and their activities. He shouted: All of you are evil...'. Then his father said to him 'behave yourself ... Now go to your mother ... This is a matter for men ... not for rats'.

Jeffia's behavior of shouting at his father and his uncle, could be interpreted in the scope of telling the truth even against our beloved ones, because nation's building shouldn't be initiated with nepotism or favoritism.

Because of his idealism, Jeffia felt (132) a sense of conspiracy against him from people, events and society.

From above text, Okri expresses about the dark thoughts that come to every person who seeks to change the society and to stop the malpractices.

On the other hand, Jeffia had good relationships with his family members (father, mother) and his girl-friend (Cynthia). Jeffia said about his father (182):

*'Despite of his malpractices, he had been a dutiful to me. He took great care over my education. He was sometimes a lavish towards me and as much as he could He filled my wants. He was like a great Human institution'.*

It is clear that Jeffia loves his father, despite of the wrong doing his father committed: his father, too, loves him and provides all his needs. So, their relationship was good.

Concerning his relationship with his mother, Jeffia loves his mother too much, because she cares for him and often worries about him when he comes late. Both of them love flowers, and he likes her paintings. Jeffia commented on his mother's painting by saying (203). 'it looks surrealistic, Mum. I like those shades of color you gave the flowers'.

As per his relationship with his girl-friend Cynthia, Both of them love each other. Jeffia thought about Cynthia (195); 'in a sense we are alike: *'two young people who have come to terms with life as we see it, even if we don't understand what it is all about or where it is taking us. Strange how people comes into your life. We only met yesterday. At time comes when you don't try to understand these things. It is enough that they just happen'*.

Jeffia said (193): "I felt warm and free. Cynthia had that power of making me feel whole again". Due to his optimism towards life and in order to find serenity, Jeffia developed a certain contemplation towards the elements of nature (162). 'in a moment of contemplation he, looked through the window to the sun, the sky, the trees, the birds'.

In another episode, Jeffia often went to the beach to comfort himself (196) by 'seeing ... the crowd ... the sounds of winds ... the great ocean ... the great spaces ... the sky ... the waves. He came to a conclusion that everything had learnt that evening had its time and place. I had learnt too that I was an infinitesimal part of nature and that I could not possibly understand all the strange ways of life.



In brief, in the hustle of Lagos, a series of disturbing events strip the young Jeffia Okwe of his innocence and reveal the ruthlessness of his own father. The tragic climax of the tale leaves Jeffia cleansed of the signs of his father, ready for adulthood life and optimistic about the future.

The second important character is Jonan Okwe (Jeffia's father). Jonan Okwe is a successful businessman, who doesn't hesitate to use all the possible means to gain his success, wealth and power. He is tormented by his past legacy and his fear of failure. His obsession with material wealth, power and social status derives from his father's poverty and his determinations to fight against the humiliation that poverty can entail. His father dies in poverty (111): "the disease had eaten into his life, he was terribly alone in his plight. It was a lonely battle with an inexorable death". Before his father dies, he tells his son : "My son, poverty is a curse ..."(9). In fact 'his father's death had become a symbol of everything he dreaded"(173). It is crystal clear from the above background of Jonan Okwe that he used all he could do through violence and corruption to build up his fame at the expenses of his family because from the moment he realized the truth of his father's words, he always dreamt of the big time" (11).

Jonan Okwe is described as (18) a very functional man. He doesn't trust people, doesn't have many friends. He is a tough man. He seems to live all his life in the office. And that is why he is as successful as he is unhappy. He always (20) looks serious and business, like.

In addition, his previous mistress, Mrs Juliet describes Jonan Okwe (155) as 'wicked and selfish man and one of the scums in society and walking all over people's lives. And that his Waterloo is just somewhere around the corner'.

This in fact illustrates how tough and rough Mr Jonan Okwe, and how he plays and performs dirty operations against people. His Waterloo indicates that his luck is worse and his life has come to its end or his end is near.

Moreover, Jonan Okwe was a very corrupted person and deceiver. He deceived his half-brother Sowho (163-169), "the white man had written to Sowho that they were coming to Nigeria to survey the potential of the market. When they came he didn't have the money they wanted as a deposit. He didn't know that Jonan had been reading his diary. And before he knew what was happening, Jonan had edged himself into the deal. Jonan knew a lot of people: bankers, lawyers, businessmen, and politicians. He was able to raise the deposit. Sowho was angry when he found out but Jonan told him not to be foolish. What one of them owned was for both of them, wasn't it?. Finally the company was established. Gradually Jonan gained a lot of power and knowledge. With Sowho's help Jonan broke away from the company and used propaganda to destroy it. Later Jonan formed accompany and called it Afioso paints. As the profit grew, they built a factory and began manufacturing locally. Then a quarrel broke out between the half-brothers when Sowho wanted to be a director, but Jonan refused. Sowho accused Jonan of stealing the company from him. Jonan got angry. 'When there is a thorn in the flesh, he used to say, just remove it'. Jonan knew a couple of corrupted police officers. He framed Sowho for the theft and put him in a prison for six months. In the court Sowho swore to revenge.

In the scope of Jonan's malpractices, he deceived his half-brother and put him in a prison when his half-brother stood on his way. This indicates that Jonan loves power, money and social status.

He truly believes in his saying (when there is a thorn in the flesh, just remove it) that's why he excluded his half-brother to

climb the ladder of success. He is indeed a symbol of violence and corruption.

As per Jonan's family status. Jonan's family was rich. He had two cars (Mercedes and Datsun, and Mrs Jonan had a Mazda). They had a cook and a watch day (28).

This means that they live in luxury. In addition to this, 'the Okwe family made their way to relax in expensive hotels like I Koyi Hotel Bar. This was where they usually came to relax (138). It was a rich man's setting. A place for those who had money to spend.

It was the kind of place that tickled the Nigerian ego, the closet a approximation to visiting Europe in an armchair'.

It is obvious that, Jonan Okwe was rich and he enjoyed his life with his family, despite of the fact that, he gained his wealth through blood and odd deeds.

Jonan Okwe was morally corrupted and had bad behaviors. People had been telling Mrs Jonan all sorts of things about her husband (Jonan) and she couldn't ignore them any further (25). 'One night police men banged on their door, and detained Jonan in connection with an alleged fraud. It was traumatic. The case never came to court and he was soon realized. And also they said he has another woman somewhere'.

It is observed from the foregoing text that, Jonan indulged in malparctices, and bribery. He had the ability to purchase people by his money. Moreover, Jonan had 'become touchy (23) recently with controlled expression'. This shows that, he was easily got angry and behaved badly.

In another episode unfolded the masks of Jonan. When Mrs Okwe asked him 'why do you have to be worried if what you are doing is clean. He said (24):

*That goat (Mr Gbenga) knows too much about me and Afioso. You read the papers everyday don't you know about blackmail cases and other dangerous things that people do now a days?*

*You should know better. Let me tell you before you begin to preach, if anything goes wrong because one fool wants to resign, everything I have been working for all my life would sink with me. You are a woman, you don't understand these things. There are some things about myself and my business that people should not know about. You hear?*

One of his bad behavior is dehumanizing others. He described Gbenga as a goat. In addition in their business blackmailing was also practiced. This also indicates that Jonan (25) 'had built his success on so many wrong doings, so many that they become normal, insignificant. Jonan had made confession for his son about his malpractices and advice his son Jeffia not to follow him as example and to go his own way in life. This concept is revealed in the following texts. Jonan said to his son Jeffia (73-74):

*You are becoming a man ... there are a few things you ought to know ... the society in which we live is a complex one ... to get anything out of it you have to rise above the system ... you might not know what I mean, but some day you will. Today, one is either big or small, you either clutch at the straws or you swim. The choice is yours. We are in a large entangled web of law and disorder, power, waste, and misuse. And in this crazy society it is the power people that really count. All the rest are means to an end. My choice was wealth and power. I have had my share of the people who passed through my fingers, but the price is an uneasy. My advice to you, son is to go into life stand on your feet. Find your own blueprints. Be a tough, unshakable man. But don't follow my example. I have made many mistakes and have many enemies.*

This confession in the above texts summarizes the type of society in which Jonan lives in where there is no respect for law and people respect only wealth and power and he himself sank deeper into many mistakes and had enemies so, it is better for

his son not to follow his way of life. Jonan is example of violence and corruption.

In addition to the above, Jonan doesn't have mercy on people. Jonan ordered his driver to send the beggar man away from his car. The beggar only shook his plate, in which a few coins jangled (100).

Jonan is not only an exorable man, but also having tough inhuman behavior. This also was confirmed by Jeffia. He said (125): 'Dad behaving strangely'. This happened when Cynthia mentioned her name. Jeffia's father said: 'where do we drop her off?.'

Moreover, there was scandal and Jonan pictures in bed with his ex-mistress, Juliet was published on newspaper, due to this Jonan visited his ex-lady Juliet. He said to her (151):

*‘Wherever the he-goat goes it leaves its smell behind- the only thing is you are not a goat. You are perfume ... Jonan thought that, it was Juliet who gave his pictures to newspaper. Then he said: I am not in for all that game of hide- and- seek and secrets bookings of hotels and all the rest of it. Don't make me lose my patience, Juliet; tell me all you know about the nasty pictures of us in bed. Aren't you ashamed? Why did you have to do it to me? Why? Is that how you repay me for all I have done for you?’*

It is apparent from above that, Jonan was too corrupted along with his ex-lady, Juliet. This is a bad side of wealth and power. Furthermore, Jonan was iron-handed with his workers and had kept strict rein over annual increments (94). In addition, ‘one of his rules, was never to start a day with uncertainties’ (102). Not only these but also ‘he (114) never believed in formalities’.

It is realized that, Jonan had an iron-handed with his workers, and followed strange rules in his life such as never start your day with uncertainties, and he never believed in formalities. He is chaotic as Lagos at that time.

Despite of Jonan wealth, power and social status, he passed away with his half-brother Sowho when they fought each other and ran away in their cars, the cars involved in an accident and both died, and thus his waterloo ended. Jeffia received a phone call from Jefu, the assistant sales manager of Afioso paints who told him that 'after his father's death, the company has been taken over by Jeccaro and chief Hans ... his company had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and the circle seemed complete (191). 'That company into which my father had put all of his energy was responsible for so many evils. It had raised him from the gutter and had been responsible for his death. It had made him a powerful merchant, a steam-roller, crushing the lives of many. It had forced a wedge into the family. It had made him an intolerable egoist. Now it had fallen into the hands of the enemies'.

Undoubtfully, the above episode shows clearly how corrupted and how dangerous was Jonan. He was responsible for the death of many people including himself and his half-brother.

The third important character in the novel (FAS) is Mrs Juliet. She was described by Jeffia when he came to her house to bring the puppy (29):

*"when she opened the door wider Jeffia caught his breath. A pleasant sensation ran through him. He hadn't expected to meet a woman as beautifully-complexioned and as poised. He was over whelmed. There was a half-formed smile on her lips. Her attractive face was almost the kind you saw idealized in face-cream advertisements. Her hair was in curls, and her eyes held mild amusement at Jeffia's reaction. He surreptitiously glanced downward, noticing how her figure curved out into shapely hips and ended in smooth, long legs. The skirt she wore gave her a girlish look. Her head was*

*cocked sideways ... she had persuasive tone of voice ... she had a proud smile'.*

It is obvious from the above contextualization; Mrs Juliet was beautiful with attractive and proud smile, curled hair, wide eyes, and long legs. She was physically well built. In addition, she looked young in her skirt, she had a cocked sideways head and she had a persuasive tone of voice.

In another episode, Jeffia said (30): 'the fragrance of her perfume pervaded the room ... she told Jeffia how she lost Joey, her puppy. And then she said: 'you see, Joey is a part of me'. Jeffia felt it was very strange. The only time he had seen people make so much sentimental fuss about dogs was on the screen or on television when watching some western movie ... He looked round the room it was elaborately furnished, the floor so well carpeted so comfortably yielding, that his feet kept sinking into it. There were two fans, working full-time, in a mahogany cabinet. Her tastes were shown in the paintings and carvings that adorned the room'.

The second episode indicates that, Mrs Juliet loves animals and she is humanitarian- she lives in a luxurious house and she has splendid taste. It is clear from the above description that Mrs Juliet is an important woman.

As it will be revealed in the course of the novel. Mrs Juliet told Jeffia that (31) her puppy was given to her by her mother last year when she returned from England. Two weeks later her mother died in an accident. She added: Joey comforts me and is more a companion in many ways than human beings can ever be ... And finally she said to Jeffia (32):' I'm a businesswoman'. She knows Jeffia's father. It can be observed from above that she is English, and her mother passed a way, she cares for Joey because he comforts her and she is a businesswoman. Okri brings Mrs Juliet with all these descriptions to represent colonialism.

Moreover, Mr Jonan Okwe visited Mrs Juliet to ask her about the nasty pictures of both of them in bed because someone threatened him to publish them in the newspapers and to stick them on the walls. He said (152):

*'Wherever the he-goat goes it leaves its smell behind. The only thing is you are not a goat. You are perfume ... she said: what do you want with me, eh? What do you want? Jonan laughed breezily. Are you trying to be an actress with me? He laughed again. 'if it's me you want I'm not in for all that game of hide and seek and secret bookings of hotels and all the rest of it. Tell all about the pictures you took with me. She said: 'What picture? What are you talking about? He said: 'Juliet, don't let me start being violent with you, you hear'.*

It can be understood from the foregoing text that, Jonan knew pretty well that Mrs Juliet was responsible about the publishing of their pictures together in the newspaper. It is also indicated that both of them are morally corrupted. They are really well functioned by Ben Okri to play this dirty game and this shows the harmony of the themes and characterization.

The conversation between Mr Jonan and his ex-lady continued. He said to her (153):

*'Juliet, tell me all you know about the nasty pictures of us in bed. Aren't you a shamed? Why did you have to do it to me? Why? Is that how you repay me for all I have done for you? She pulled her head back, and looked away from him. She thought she had come a long way from shadows of her past. She told Jonan that, when she became pregnant while still at school, her father turned her out of the house, and drove her into the streets, telling her to go and find the man responsible. He was a young university undergraduate. She could remember particularly well what happened that night ... I'm responsible for the pregnancy? He had asked, smiling, when she told him. At first he denied then blamed her for choosing*



*the wrong time to do it. She told him she got rid of it by paying fifty pounds.*

It is also observed from above that, Mrs Juliet was a playful girl since she became pregnant, and her father was conservative that why he drove her out of the house. Now she wants to revenge from Jonan who destroyed her reputation. She, also, wants to destroy him by giving his nasty pictures to his enemies. This is also shown in (p:154) when she told him that his son Jeffia visited her, he shouted at her and said:

'you want to ruin my son. Don't let me see you near him again or I'll bring all hell on you'. At the same page, it was revealed that her mother had left her father. She was married to another man and lived in England. So, she (Juliet) travelled to Lagos to live with her aunt in A jegunle. After helping her to get rid of the pregnancy, her aunt attempted to convert her into prostitution. That's the best way to survive in the city, her aunt had told her, and even made arrangements for some men to come and inspect her. Juliet couldn't stand it. She ran away from her aunt and rented a room of her own. But things were so difficult that to get a job she had to pay the price. She made one suicide attempt but abandoned it at the last minute. She was a survivor'.

It is clear from above texts that Mrs Juliet had come across difficult time where everything had its price, even she tried to put an end for her life.

Furthermore, Mrs Juliet met Jonan for the first time at a cocktail party to celebrate the opening of a new factory, he arranged subsequent meetings. She became his mistress (155). He rented a flat for her, and took care of her financially. Jonan told her that, Sowho had been using her. She told him 'he was here a couple of hours ago. Jonan shouted. Why didn't tell me this before? Her eyes were cold. She said: 'because I hate you. You are a wicked and selfish man. I have heard many of the things

you have done to people. I regret knowing you at all. You, Sowho, and the rest like you are scum in society, walking all over people's lives ... your waterloo is just somewhere around the corner'. She said, bitterly. These are in fact the dark shadows of both Jonan and Juliet in Lagos after the civil war. Most if not all the society got rotten morally, socially and politically.

The fourth character who deserves to be described and analysed physically, behaviourly and in terms of action wise is Mrs Jonan Okwe (Jeffia's mother).

Mrs Jonan taught literature at a secondary school. She loved her job as a teacher (10). They called her 'ma' at school. She cares for the personal interests of her students. She had a light reputation as a teacher (144) in the school, she was very well respected. She likes painting and flowers (203).

It is realized from the above contexts that she had chosen teaching as a profession. As we all know that, the job of teaching necessitates patience and strong will.

A part of her work, she likes doing the washing herself (16). It gave her as she said, time to think and renew the events of the past week, also cleaning the house and tending of the flowers. In addition to this Jonan loved her. He felt in his bones that she had brought him good luck, and she still looked youthful and she was so sentimental (135) and sometimes pretentious about flowers. She had quiet good taste (132).

My interpretation to the above selected texts goes this way. Since she likes washing this indicates that she is patient and a hard working woman besides cleaning the house and tending the flowers. Mr Jonan loves her because she brought him good luck. He is a businessman has power, wealth and social status.

As per her physical description. Mrs Jonan had mahogany Complexioned face, with sensual lips, delicate nose, with sleepy eyes but frank and trusting (9). She was also described by her

husband, he said (132) he liked his wife's fresh face and decent behavior, and she wasn't the type to get into a frenzy of anger. (135). In addition to this, she had survived the rough journeys with her husband (Jonan) (61), and when things were hard, she was compassionate, understanding and helpful.

The above texts indicate that, she is beautiful, having good behavior, patient as well as compassionate, understanding and cooperative.

Mrs Jonan often worries about her son (Jeffia) particularly when he comes home at late hours.

She said to him (70):

*"Where have you been? I have been so worried. He replied. There was no need to worry, Mum. I was all right. She said ' don't you read about all these kidnaps, highway robberies, and killings everyday in the papers? You are all I have got, eh. The country is getting worse and worse every day. Things are not as they seem. You've got to be careful, eh".*

It is obvious that, Mrs Jonan loves her son and cares for him, that's why she is worried when he comes home late. She also warns him of the dangerous situation of the country. In fact Okri, wants to give a flash back to the violence and corruption and other ills spreaded in Nigerian community at that historical moment.

There is also other episode which shows Mrs Jonan love to her son (Jeffia). On Jeffia's twenty-first birthday his Mum brought him a suit and gave him a card which read (202): 'I'm proud of the man you are turning into'. Despite of the fact that, wealth, power and social status of her husband (Jonan), and his success as a businessman through many malpractices which all turned him into a paranoia, into an obsession, restless and uncompromising, Mrs Jonan still felt un easy with the luxury around her (12), however, she loves her husband (Mrs Jonan Okwe).

About her bringing up, her life journey and the tough time and challenges she had experienced.

Mrs Jonan thought of her past, her loneliness, and quiet despair she had known, the concessions and compromises she had always had to make to the world about her; the suppressed memories it always pained her to recall. She had security and relative happiness now, a great contrast to her life before she got married. She told her son that (8) when she was very young her parents went away, nobody knew where, and she was taken to an orphanage. Life there was tedious and sorrowful. Then she was taken by the rich widow and she spent most of her time in this woman's house; doing the house work, going to the market and cooking. In return she was allowed to attend the secondary school nearby. Yet her life in this house was worse than an orphanage. She was treated with condescension and contempt. When the rich widow died, she met Jonan at the widow's funeral and finally they got married. She added (203) she always seemed to expect disasters to be fall her, why she was always afraid of the future, always seemed to be holding her breath'.

The challenges that, Mrs Jonan had experienced, express the challenges that Nigeria had undergone. Mrs Jonan here functions as a symbolism to Nigeria and its suffering. Her fear of the future is logical, because in such deplorable and chaotic conditions, the future still holds some secrets, it might be dystopic who knows.

On the other episode, Jeffia said (199), 'A few days later after my father's death, words filtered to our ears that some of Dad's relatives had accused mother of being a witch. They said in their various ways that my mother had tied my father down in such a way that he didn't want to associate with his own people. Worst of all, they said she was the evil behind the deaths of my father and Sowho. That she killed them because she wanted to inherit my father's wealth. They even questioned why she had never

borne any other children for my father, and said that possibly it was because she ate her children in her womb'.

In fact Okri, wants to reflect some sort of mythologies to the story of Mrs Jonan by functioning her as a witch. This also reflects Yoruba's culture. African traditional communities believe in such practices of witchcraft and a like.

Finally, Ben Okri loves indulging into politics. He brought a situation of our bad political leaders. When Mrs Jonan observed the serene I Koyi surroundings that were exclusively for the rich with expensive houses, large tennis courts, large swimming pools and well kept gardens (10). 'she wonders how leaders of the country could claim to be in touch with the people's spirit when they were so far removed from their guttered word's.

This indicates without any doubt that most political leaders if not all of them are hypo crate and corrupted, they use various tactics to deceive the people, but they work only for their personal benefits.

The fifth important character in the novel is Cynthia. Cynthia was pretty and smart looking. Her eyes were gentle, strong and frank. Her face was smooth and fresh. Her nose was slightly appointed and gave sharpness to the general impression of her face. Her lips looked soft, small but determined. She never used make-up. She always looked relaxed and fresh. She was mature-she was self-reliant (83). She had character, Jeffia said silently (129).

The above contextualization have given full x-raying of Cynthia as beautiful lady, who is determined, mature, self-reliant with strong character.

Another context (51) describes Cynthia as 'a young nurse ... works in a clinic ... Afraid of night shifts because some men would lurk about in the darkness waiting for one nurse or the other. Even some doctors were used to making passes at nurses.

The last time one attempt it on her, she walked out and managed to get a lift home. She was later threaten to resign’.

Okri wants to convey a message that, woman work under difficult circumstances, and Cynthia is a good example. The society is corrupted, some men attack nurses at night to take them to prostitution den, even the doctors themselves are corrupted. This means that, there was no security. Despite of all these, Cynthia managed to keep her character intact.

In addition to these, Cynthia was supportive and having hope because she was optimistic. She visited her lover, Jeffia after his father's death and said, as Okri puts it (186):

*‘It's all happened already, Jeff. Nothing you can do will change things. You can't go on like this for ever. Regardless of what has happened you must go on living, you must face life for what it is, man. Reality is outside the door, you must stretch out and reach for it and adjust to it. She said, calmly.*

And in order to shake him into identifying himself, she took him to the hospital to see that suffering was universal (189), she wanted to make him look outside his own self into a world teeming with pain, loss, and hopelessness. That’s why she made him struggle in the bus to see those beggars, the dead, the starving, the deeply suffering and the hopelessly alone.

The above two texts (186) and (189) show another type of Cynthia's personality that was wisdom, hope, patient and far sighted. In addition, the examples of the beggars, the dead, the starving, the suffering these are clear indicators of lack of health care in a society lives in poverty, violence and political corruption as an off shoot of the civil war which resulted after the independence.

Moreover, Cynthia was one of those people who had been forced by circumstances to learn to be at home with the futility of things. The events of her life had taught her to leave a little mental gap for the unpleasant and the unexpected (53). She had

experienced more downs than ups. She had an attitude of quiet courage and resilience. She had learned to live with herself as she found it. At heart, Cynthia was a lover of life, a warm-hearted optimist for whom the sight of a sunset, or a moving song, or a sincere smile from a friend, held untold promises of future joy. In her relationships she was warm and gentle and only smile enigmatically when men with their various transparent tactics tried to break through the aura of aloofness she had built round herself (54).

The above texts, show that, Cynthia was matured protective with experience in life for various situation because of the circumstances around her.

As her family status, Cynthia's father was an example of self-destruction. He was a drunkard man. People used to avoid him (77) relatives, neighbors and friends. He had been jailed for a crime of embezzling some cans of paint. He claimed he was innocent, this was done by Okwe. He had a job as a laborer in a construction company.

The above quotation shows clearly that Cynthia's father is a lively example of self-destruction such attitude was expected where there was chaos. In another episode, Cynthia talked to Jeffia about her father (126). She said: 'his life began with his hard work and ended up in a jail'.

In addition to these, Cynthia didn't get on well with her mother. What shook her most was her father's imprisonment. Her mother didn't tell her about it, but told her that her father travelled. Cynthia pulled through with a combination of will, an ability to forget the unpleasant and in standing alone she learned to be self-reliant. she found a way to adjust to her life (78). She knew that somewhere in the future was a brighter day. She read various books, mostly inspirational books to console her (79). She stood by her father, taking care of the house ... cooking ... bringing in money for food and rent.

In fact Okri wants to show that Cynthia was an example of a new and young generation who was an eye witness to Nigerian's problems. A generation who holds hope, courage, optimism towards a brighter future.

Moreover, Cynthia had good relationships with people surrounded her, she brought love and smile to Jonan's family particularly to Jeffia and his mother she was in love with Jeffia.

*This is clearly seen in the conversation between Jeffia and his Mum, when Jeffia was singing as he went upstairs to the apartment (207)*

*Jeffia, is that you? My mother called. Yes, it is, Mum. I went on singing. 'you sound happy, Jeff, I looked at her face. It was flushed with the sun and looked lighter. Yes, Mum. I am happy. 'is it because Cynthia is coming today? She said smiling.*

The above text confirmed that both Jeffia and his Mum love Cynthia.

In another episode, Jeffia said (193):

*“Cynthia was pleased to see me ... we were alone ... she was closed to me and our hands were blocked as if they belonged together, I could smell her hair and her womanhood ... when she spoke her voice had a cooling clarity ... Cynthia had that power of making me feel whole again”.*

In another connected episode, Jeffia said (194), Cynthia, I think you are unique ... we leaned on a trunk of a tree, in each other's arms ... As I stood there feeling the warmth from her ... I wondered how powerful was that state they call love ... for I could hear its sweet music and feel its human personification ... she had brought me out of myself and filled me with possibility of happiness'.

The above two contextualizations show that, the encounter between Jeffia and Cynthia marks the beginning of their dating and love affair. Their love in the novel becomes the symbol of hope in an environment polluted by corruption, graft and



violence. It is the victory of flowers over the shadows, the victory of beauty over the ugliness (darkness). Their love as flowers show the optimism symbolized by both of them in a gloomy and exceptional conditions.

The final character who has its role in the affects of the novel and as a symbol of violence and corruption is Mr. Sowho (half-brother) of Mr Jonan Okwe. When Sowho paid a visit to his half-brother's (Mr Jonan) house. Jeffia said (164):

*'He was tall ... and spare ... he kept twirling his moustache and smiling ... He had rumpled forehead ... He was about the same age as Jeffia's father'.*

In another description in respect to Sowho's behavior, he was not trusted ... He was a snake, silent and deliberative ... He was a dangerous man to Jonan. He knew too many of Jonan's secrets just to throw in a letter of resignation and walk off (13-14).

The above description shows what type is Mr Sowho, He is described as not trusted ... like snake ... this means that, the man is dangerous and un expected he knew how to bite. He is violent and corrupted.

Moreover, Sowho said to Jeffia, (167), Jeff, do you know that your father is a wicked man. His uncle spoke again. 'the signs of the father are visited on the children ... have you heard that quote, eh?. His uncle went on speaking ... coolly ... calmly ... 'your father is going to suffer ... the wickedness he has done will bounce back at him'.

It's clear from above contextualization, Jeffia astonished to know that his father was wicked. A description that hides lots of things.

The story behind Sowho action and behavior start this way (168-169). 'The white men had written to Sowho that they were coming to Nigeria to survey the potential to the market. When they came he didn't have the money they wanted as a deposit.

He didn't know that Jonan had been reading his diary. And before he knew what was happening Jonan had edged himself into the deal. Jonan knew a lot of people: bankers, lawyers, businessmen, and politicians. He was able to raise the deposit. Sowho was angry when he found out but Jonan told him not to be foolish. What one of them owned was for both of them, wasn't it? Finally the company was established and with the help of Sowho, Jonan broke away from the company and used propaganda to destroy it. In disgust Mr Longhose sold off the company and went back to England. Jonan formed his own company and called it Afioso paints, later they built a factory and began manufacturing locally when the profits grew. Then a quarrel broke out between the half-brothers. Sowho wanted to be a director, not just a marketing manager. Jonan refused. Sowho accused Jonan of stealing the company from him. At first Jonan ignored him. Then Sowho seized vital documents of the company. Jonan got angry. When there is a thorn in the flesh, he used to say, just remove it. Jonan framed Sowho for theft and got the judge. Sowho got six months in jail. Sowho shouting in court that he would have his revenge'.

From the above texts, one can say that, there are a lot of problems, deceiving, wickedness, and corruption in business. Who could imagine a brother cheats his brother and puts him in a jail? Both of them are violent, having strange behaviors and deeds.

In order for Sowho to revenge, he (Sowho) started his revenge through blackmailing and dread, when he visited Mrs Juliet (Jonan; former mistress), he took some pictures of Jonan and the lady sleeping naked together on bed. She (Mrs Juliet) gave him these pictures also to take her revenge from Mr Jonan who impregnated her and left her suffer (41-42).

It is obvious from above, there is no friendship forever in the society that's full of bad deeds. Today's friend, is tomorrow's enemy and vice versa.

Moreover, to complete his revenge, Sowho visited Jonan and said to him 'I am not going to fight with a skeleton that doesn't know its flesh is gone ... I will only show you a mirror ... murderer ... murderer ... that's what you are (171) ... the two half-brothers fought and chased each other in their cars (175) in the darkness, their cars crushed and both passed away.

It is obvious from the above texts that, both brothers are violent and wicked, so, the final result was death to both of them. The message behind their death indicates that a new chapter of life in Nigeria will soon be opened, if such practices of violence and corruption come to the end.

#### ***4.2.2 The Famished Road (TFR)***

The first main character, protagonist and narrator is Azaro, the abiku, spirit-child Okri doesn't only reconfigure the nation-state as an abiku child but also presents the abiku phenomenon as the logic of history, time and beginning. As Asempasah (2019:54) puts it:

*"The Famished Road (1991) explores the transition of Nigeria's liberation or, in other words, the politics of nation formation ... The novel is narrated by Azaro, an abiku child, whose birth like Salim in Salman Rushdie's Midnight's children, coincides with the birth of the new nation".*

Azaro's nature, is an abiku-aspirit child who lives in both worlds, the real world and the mythical one; and believed by Yoruba tribe (any child who dies and is reborn several times into the same family). In the spirit of most allegories, the physical portraits of the characters are not really developed. Not

even the main character Azaro who chose to stay in the real world.

It is observed from the above mentioned lines and quotes, that an abiku is both child and spirit who lives into two worlds, the real world and the mythical one and he dies and borns several times.

Okri finds his hope for Nigeria's transformation in Yoruba abiku myth. This is what gave Africa the hope and courage to live despite the military, cultural, political, economic and social violence and poverty' its people have been experiencing for centuries. The Nigeria Okri depicts in 'TFR' has survived many seasons of suffering during colonialism and is still suffering under the local leadership.

Nigeria has experienced more military coup-delat than any other African countries. Each coup has taken the country back to where it just came from. The democracy this country has been yearning for has been delayed by the frequent bursts of the military into the political arena. The military has always used the politicians' greed and their inability to evolve as pretext to seize power and impose dictatorship. The result of those coups were massive violation of human rights. Different scholars have defined abiku in a variety of ways. For example, McCabe (2002:46) defines abiku as 'a child born to die' whereas Mobolade (2014:27) describes abiku as 'any child who dies and is reborn several times into the same family'. Also scholar Quayson (1997:122) describes abiku as 'a child in an un ending cycle of births, deaths and rebirth'.

Azaro makes many cyclical movements between living and dying. These movements represent the disturbing transformation of Nigeria in its post independence era. Azaro is the symbolic of the nation's struggle to come into and remain in existence. Azaro also operates as 'a metaphor of political disempowerment in Nigeria', which is revealed in the Nigeria civil war, military

regimes and the political structure. The road to a transformed society indeed is famished. The novel begins with an expectation for why Azaro's cyclical movement would be constant (3):

*'In the beginning there was a river. The river became a road and the road branched out to the whole world. And because the road was once a river it was always hungry'.*

Okri used the myth of the road to reflect several different meanings. The road symbolizes Nigerian history beginning from pre-colonial times until the present day. At the beginning of the novel, the road originated from a river, is introduced in its pre-colonial condition and becomes a vehicle to demonstrate the value of African traditions and wisdom of African culture. It is always hungry as it has lost its African origin and connection with the spirit world. As Cooper (1998:79) puts it:

*"The road embodies willingness on the side of the people to grow and cross various hurdles in order to reach that final destination".*

In the land of beginning spirits mingled with the unborn, Azaro said that they are in various forms (ibid)

*Many of us were birds ... We knew no boundaries ... There was much feasted much because of the beautiful terrors of eternity. We played much because we were free. And we sorrowed much because there were always those amongst us who had just returned from the world of the living. They returned for all the love they had left behind, all the suffering they hadn't redeemed, all that they hadn't understood, and for all that they had barely begun to learn before. There was not one amongst us who looked forward to being born. We disliked the vigours existence ... the injustice of the world, the labyrinths of love ... the fact of dying and living in the midst of the simple beauties of the universal. We feared the heartlessness of human beings, all of whom are born blind, few of whom ever learn to see.*

From the above text, we can observe that, the abikus have different forms such as birds with no boundaries because they enjoy having full freedom whereas the Nigerian people don't. The Nigerians live in injustice and fear. Human beings need to have a new way of seeing things. Okri wants us to develop a new way of seeing ... to see the reality ... to see in core and to see in depth. Okri's hope and goal in the *Famished Road* is to see with a new "third eye". To see the reality of violence, poverty and political corruption and how we get rid of all these ills. This can be done through will, change and vision.

In another episode, Azaro describes the circumstances of his separation from the spirit world as follows (6):

*'You are the mischievous one. You will cause no end of trouble. You will be protected and will never be alone. We all went down to great valley. It was an immemorial day to the music of gods, uttering golden chants and lapis Lazuli incantations to prepare us for our first contact with blood and earth. Each of us alone. Alone, we had to survive the crossing-survive the flames and the sea, the emergence into illusion. The exile has begun.*

It is clear that Nigeria still carries the weight of colonialism, just like the abiku child, post colonial destiny seems to still be tied to her colonial past. The suffering is still going on through blood, torture of the civil war and political instability.

Moreover, Azaro always fights death. At a point, he was left for death but miraculously rises from death which earns him the name 'Zaro' a short form of Lazarus (8):

*When I woke up I found myself in a coffin. My parents had given me for dead. They had commenced the burial proceedings when they heard recovery they named me a second time and threw a party which they couldn't afford. They named me Lazaro. But as I became the subject of much jest and as many were un-easy with the connection between Lazaro and Lazarus, Mum shortened my name to Azaro.*

The interpretation of the above quotation, can be this way. The unbelievable recovery of Azaro bears resemblance to the biblical story of Lazarus who was raised by Jesus Christ after he was pronounced dead by members of his family. Despite, the suffering, violence, corruption and poverty which stand as barricades for forming Nigerian nation and its way towards development, Nigeria will rise up again to find its main road for nation's formation, for stability and development.

The Famished Road contains several instances where Azaro interacts with the natural and the supernatural realms. In an episode of the market place, Azaro experiences both world, where he finds himself walking among real and spirit (p.15-16):

*I shut my eyes and when I opened them again, I saw people who walked backwards ... men upside-down ... women who had breasts on their backs, and beautiful children with three arms ... I saw a girl amongst them who had eyes at the side of her face ... I was so afraid and moved away when the girl pointed and cried: That boy can see us. They turned in my direction. I hurried away from the swelling market-place, towards the street ... That was the first time I realized it wasn't just humans who came to the marketplaces of the world. Spirits and other beings come there too. They buy and sell, browse and investigate.*

The above quotation indicates that, abiku has the ability of seeing the natural and the supernatural beings, and this what lacks the Nigerian who can't see the reality of their country.

In another episode, Azaro describes his utter discontent for the white man because he gives "bad tempered orders in an unfamiliar language. The road is (p.229-230):

*... their soul, the soul of their history. That's why, when they built along section of it, or forgotten words of their prophet and begun to think they have completed it, land quakes happen, lightning strikes, invisible volcanoes erupt, rivers descend on them, hurricanes hear up their earth, the road*

*goes mad and twists and destroys itself, or the people became distorted in the spirit and start to turn the road into other things, or the workers go insane, the people start wars, revolts cripple everything and a thousand things distract them and wreck what they built and a new generation comes a long and begins again from the wreckage.*

It is obvious that, the Nigerian road towards building their state is shaky, many obstacles and thorns are on the way to reach their final destination. The colonial degradation is always there to dehumanize the citizens who often forget about their history and this would lead to the civil war alike.

In an incident of a beautiful woman (p.307-308), Azaro was in the room and the next moment he said:

*I found myself wandering the night roads ... I walked through books and months and forgotten histories ... I was following a beautiful woman with a blue head ... She drew my spirit on to fountains of light and like music and abiku variations. A rough, familiar hand touched me on the shoulder. 'Where are you going, Azaro? It was Mum. That woman told me to follow her. What woman? There was no woman ... She lifted me on to her shoulder. And took me home ... Then all I was felt with was a world drowning in poverty, a mother-of pearl moon, and the long darkness before dawn.*

In Azaro's Journeys, he makes historical flash back of Nigeria's forgotten histories. Following the beautiful woman is a symbolism of following his country's history and its nature and when he comes to his consciousness, he finds himself living in poverty and under violence and corruption of the war, and he hopes for the new dawn of stability, development and democracy.

Azaro also describes what happened after he met with the three-headed spirit. Azaro said (p.326-327):

*I found the three-headed spirit sitting beside me, stayed silent ... your parents are treating you atrociously, he said. Come*



*with me ... your companions are desperate to embrace you ... There is a truly wonderful feast a waiting your home coming. I travelled on the wind of amnesia till we came to a mighty green road ... 'This road has no end', said the three-headed spirit. Where does it lead? I asked. 'Every where'. It leads to the world of human beings and to the world of spirits. It also leads to heaven and hell. It leads to worlds that we don't even know about ... We travelled the road ... The road kept changing. The road began to move. It behaved like a river, and it flowed suddenly became very difficult, and with each step I felt like giving up. I had thought the journey to the other world would be an effortless one. 'Are we travelling this road to the end?' 'Yes', the spirit said...But you said the road has no end'. 'That's true, said the spirit. 'How can it be true?'. From a certain point of view the universe seems to be composed of paradoxes. But everything resolves. That is the function of contradiction'. 'When you can see everything from every imaginable point of view you might begin to understand'. Can you?'*

It is apparent from the above question, Azaro makes travel to the mythical world and follows the road which has no end, and behaves like the river. All these are indication to the road of freedom, of development and might reach its final destination for nation's formation. Okri concludes that "when you can see everything from every imaginable point of view you might begin to understand". Moreover, towards the end of the novel, the myth of the road starts to present Nigeria/Africa. In one of his visions, Azaro sees a lovely jeweled road being built. The road has been built for two thousand years, but it is still only two feet long. When a generation destroys the road, a new generation attempts to rebuild it. The reason is explained by the three-headed spirit as follows (379):

*"Because each new generation begins with nothing and with everything, they know all the earlier mistakes. They may not*

*know that they know, but they do. They know the early plans, the original intentions, the earliest dreams. Each generation has to reconnect the origins for themselves. They tend to become a little wiser, but don't go very far. It is possible that they now travel slower, and will make bigger, better mistakes. That is how they are as a people. They have an infinity of hope and an eternity of struggles. Nothing can destroy them except themselves and they will never finish the road that is their soul and they don't know it. 'So, why don't you tell them'? "Because they are deaf to the things they need to know the most".*

In the quotation, the road being built seems to represent two hundred years of recorded African history. Each generation blames the other generation and pointing to their mistakes. The generations themselves are responsible for the destruction of the country. In this sense Adeniji (2011:67) states that:

*"African people struggle in vain to construct their history which has been injured by 'enslavement by African notables, colonialism by western imperialist adventures and neo-colonialism by the new African oppressors".*

Because of the above mentioned facts, African people could not be successful in the construction of national consciousness, social justice, political equality and economic development. Furthermore, Azaro's friend (Ade) sees chaos coming to the real world, but he also sees change, hope, happiness, peace beyond the chaos. He says (478):

*"There will be changes ... And then when people least expect it a great transformation is going to take place in the world. Suffering people will know justice and beauty. A wonderful change is coming from far away and people will realize the great meaning of struggle and hope. There will be peace. Then people will forget. Then it will all start again".*

As it seen above, there will be changes and transformation ... There will be peace and hope. It means that changes are expected to take place to create stability and development and

under the umbrella of peace there will be justice but this will not be the end, the problems will start again.

The second main character is Azaro's Dad/Father. He plays key role in the novel '(TFR)'. He is an idealistic load carrier who wants the best for his family and the community. He suffers greatly for this. Eventually becoming a boxer and later a politician. Azaro's father loves him deeply, but is often bitter at having an abiku and occasionally goes on angry and violent. He often prophesying things.

*There was a man a sleep on the chair. I didn't recognize him. He had a bandage round his head and his left arm was in a dirty sling. He was unshaven and his bare chest heaved as he snored. The small room was full of the mood of his sleep, of hunger, and despair, sleepless nights and the gloom, of candle smoke. On the centre table, in front of him, there was a half empty bottle of Ogogoro, an ashtray, and a packet of cigarettes. The man sleeping on the chair was like a gaint in fairy tales. His big feet were on the table. He slept very deeply, frightening me with the great movements of his chest ... the man woke up and he gazed around the room as if he had woken up into an alien world.*

It is Obvious from the above description, Azaro has met his earthly father for the first time. The quotation indicates that, Azaro's Dad belongs to the poor people who live in the ghetto area, instances of this: 'a bandage around his head and arm in a dirty sling, hunger, battle of Ogogoro (local drink). This also indicates that he is a hard working person and lives in poverty. Besides this, he is gaint (a big man) with a big and wide chest. His wakening up denotes to the fact that he is truly in another world of dreams or phantacies.

Azaro, went on describing his Dad by saying (29):

*"he has great bristling energies with quivering heart".*

The above quotation indicates that, azaro's father is a dynamic man with a strong and brave heart.

Azaro's Dad is ambitious person. He started his life from a load carrier, to a boxer and finally became a politician. Due to this he often participates in riots. In this context, Azaro said (30):

*"Dad disappeared. Mum went to search for him. In the police station in the centre of the city she was told that, Dad was there, imprisoned for taking part in the riots. He had been beaten by the police and there was an ugly cut on his forehead, bruises on his face and his arm hung beside him like a diseased appendage. The next day, after much begging and some bribery, Dad was freed".*

It is crystal clear from the forementioned text that Azaro's Dad was put in the prison, and was severely tortured due to the absence of justice and equality in the state of chaos, violence and insecurity. In addition, political corruption was also practiced, he wouldn't have been freed, if his family hadn't made much begging and some bribery. The quotation also denotes to the absence of human rights. Azaro and his family are functioned by Okri as eye witnesses to the violence, poverty and political corruption in Nigeria in its struggle towards liberation, transformation and development.

Because Azaro's father was strange to him, Azaro kept running away from him. His Dad said (34):

*"Why do you keep running away from me, eh? Dad asked with sadness. I said nothing. I stared at the faces of the compound men, big faces stamped with hardship and humor. That evening Dad became the guardian gaint who led me into the discoveries of our new world. We were surrounded by a great forest. Dad's voice quivered when talking about the forest, that one day there will be no trees, and this is where the poor people live. When he was silent. I started crying. He lifted me with his powerful arm and carried me on the rock of his shoulder. He made no attempt to console me".*

It is visible from the above quotation that, the compound people live in poverty, this is clearly seen in their faces, hardship and hunger. The forest indicates the rich vegetation, but sadly one day it will vanish due to the un planned cutting of trees by the colonializers and the new African colonializers. There will be no life when the forest disappear. Okri presents the forest to show the richness of the land which gradually disappears and thus people start suffering.

In another episode, Azaro's describes his Dad's behavior and action when he got drunk. As Azaro puts it (53):

*“Ademon of anger had got into Dad and he fumed and cursed all through the night. He smoked cigarette after cigarette creaking his joints ... He grumbled about how much he had helped people and how they had always stabbed him in the back”.*

The above quotation can be explained in the concept of betrayal. The ghetto people who belong to the party of the poor, didn't listen to Azaro's Dad who tries to organize them and advice them as a politician and they seem they would be deceived by the land lords and the political thugs of the party of the Rich. Uniting people as one group, as one black, is not an easy task.

Moreover, in another valuable episode where Okri through Azaro's Dad conveys a message of the value of myth of spirit world. Dad said (70):

*“Your grandfather is completely blind now. He is the head-priest of our shrine, priest of the God of Road. Anyone who wants a special sacrifice for their journeys, undertakings, births, funerals, whatever, goes to him. All human beings travel the same road. He paused. Then continued ... I was supposed to succeed him as priest but the elders of the village said: "your son is a fighter. How can a fighter be the priest of the Roads. Our old people are very powerful in spirit. They have all kinds of power. His voice was very sad. We are*

*forgetting these powers. Now, all the power that people have is selfishness, money, and politics”.*

It is obvious from above, Okri brings us through Azaro's Dad to the realm of spiritualities and the power exist within it and how the ancestors were powerful in their communities, groups, clans and tribes because they believed in spiritual world and it had direct influence in them. Comparatively, now days people resort to money and politics also power that's why they couldn't succeed to reach their final destination.

Furthermore, Azaro describes a painful episode where his Dad bears the load with dignity. As Azaro shows it (148):

*"I saw Dad amongst the load-carriers. His hair was white and his face was mask-like with engrained cement ... they loaded two bags of salt on his head and he cried 'God save me! ... The men insulted his ancestry ... The men loading him shouted about how he had been giving them a lot of trouble ... Dad still staggering like a boxer on under the onslaught of too many blows ... MOVE! MOVE ON! Said one of the loaders. Or You Want Another Bag, eh? Said the other. Dad trying to bear the load with dignity".*

It is clear that Azaro's Dad is brave and unshakable man. He caused lots of troubles to his enemies, therefore, they tortured him and even blasphemed his ancestors, they wanted him to give up. Despite of suffering and pain he beared the load with dignity. The country needs sacrifices and a good example to reach its final destination.

The final episode in which Azaro's Dad summarizes the problems facing the black people while he was redreaming the world as he slept. Azaro said (492):

*“Dad was redreaming the world as he slept ... He saw the scheme of things and didn't like it. He saw the world in which black people always suffered ... He saw our people drowning in poverty, in famine, drought, in divisiveness and the blood of war ... He saw people always preyed upon by other powers,*

*manipulated by the western world, our history and achievements rigged out of existence ... He saw the array of our politician, how corruptible they were, how blind to our future, how greedy they became, how deaf to the cries of the people, how stony their hearts were; how short-sighted their dreams of power. He saw the divisions in our society; the lack of unity; he saw all the women, inheritors of the miracle of forbearance ... He saw the wars in advance ... He saw the economic boom in advance, the exile to strange lands, the depleting of the emergence of tyrants who always seem to be born from the extremities of crisis. He saw their long rule and the chaos when they are over thrown”.*

It is observed from the above quotation, all the problems of Nigerian and the African countries without exception have been exposed to such as: lack of unity, poverty, famine, drought, divisiveness, manipulation of powers; corrupted politicians; women suffering, wars, economic boom and emergence of tyrants. These are in fact all the social, economic and political challenges which face African continent, therefore, these problems must be addressed, so that, the African countries will live in harmony, unity, justice, stability, transparency, development and good governance.

The third character is Azaro's Mum. She is functioned as a representative of women in Nigeria at that time. She works very hard selling anything she can get her hand on for the family. She is proud that Azaro is her son and she can do all she can to protect him. Okri presents Azaro's Mum to indicate that women were supportive and had their roles in the process of nation's building.

Azaro gives a description of his Mum when he gets up from a sleeping and she was having malaria. He said (P.53):

*“When I woke up, Mum was sweating and quivering on the bed. Dad had brought malaria medicines and bitter roots which were marinated in yellow alcohol. Mum's teeth chattered, her eyes were at odd angles”.*

The above quotation shows that as members of one family, they support each other. Azaro's Mum is badly affected by malaria. Her chattering teeth, sweating, quivering with strange eyes are examples of a suffering person. A traditional or local medicine of herbs is also used, this pinpoints to the Nigerian believes, customs and traditions in such cases.

Besides this, Azaro makes a flash back to the day when he was lost and how his Mum behaved. As Azaro puts it (P.31):

*“That night she was lamenting her condition, blaming herself for having lost the only child she had, a child who had chosen to live”.*

It is apparent that Azaro's Mum laments and blames herself for losing her child. This means that she loves her child who is the only one child and he prefers to stay in the world of reality rather than the world of spirit. She is also kind with a big heart and well conscious.

In another episode Azaro goes on to describe his Mum when she recovers and gets ready. Azaro said (P.129-130):

*“When Mum was ready she was entirely transformed. Her face sparkled with freshness, lipstick, and eye shadow. Her skin-tone had been soften with foundation and rouge. And I saw in Mum something of the innocent beauty that must have made the village air lustrous. When Dad first set eyes on her she looked radiant and every movement scented the room with her cheap perfume”.*

In fact Okri wants to show that Azaro's who represents not only the African women but also the Africa or Nigeria itself. So, her transformation from shape into another, from sickness and weakness to freshness and beauty, this what Okri hopes for



Nigeria through gradual transformation till it reaches its final destination of decolonization, nation's building and development.

In another sorrowful and heart breaking situation, Azaro's Mum sees what happens to ghetto's people.

He said (P.131):

*"Mum told how mystified she had been at seen people sick everywhere, at the endemic vomiting a long paths and house fronts".*

The above quotation throws a light on the incident of distributing poisonous milk to the ghetto people by the thugs of the party of the Rich, and the citizens are badly affected. This is one of the ways which are used by bad politicians to blame the other party as a tactic for gaining elections. So, Azaro's Mum is an eye witness to that deplorable episode.

Furthermore, Azaro depicts another case when he sees his Mum feeling tired and sacrifices a lot.

Azaro said (P.162):

*"I saw that her tiredness and sacrifice were not hers alone but were suffered by all women, all women of the marketplace".*

It is crystal clear that Azaro's Mum as a symbol of a hardworking African women bears the burden with patience and dignity despite of the atrocity and malpractices which are used by the political thugs to exclude her from place of work because she doesn't belong to their political party. A similar episode of exclusion was repeated at (P.169). Mum said to the thugs when they threw her things on the floor:

*"But what have I done? I pay my dues. I pay the rent for this space, nobody has ever complained about me".*

The above quotation shows favoritism on political ground. It also shows the absence of equality and justice. The thugs of the Party of the Rich practice political exclusion even if the citizens pay their dues and rent regularly. Okri brings this case to show

the malpractices carried out by the inheritors of colonializers against their own people.

At times of troubles people resort to prayings to find comfort, serenity hopefully to sort out their problems. This what Azaro's Mum did. As Azaro puts it (P.227):

*“Mum was alone in the room, praying to our ancestors and to God in three different languages ... The intensity of her pray overwhelmed the room. I listen to her calling for strength, pleading for Dad to get a good job, for us to find prosperity and contentment. She prayed that we shouldn't die before time, that we should live long enough for the good harvest, and that our suffering should turn into wisdom. Did you see the door? She asked suddenly, breaking out her contemplation ... I went out and looked but couldn't see anything because of the darkness”.*

It is realized from this quotation that, Azaro's Mum restarted to praying, contemplation and God to find solutions to the problems not only facing her husband and her son as family members but also for Nigeria. Praying from heart with full confidence on God through words of wisdom and begging intensity could bring answer for the problems facing people and communities as well. Her praying in three languages means the three main tribes of Nigeria.

Furthermore, Azaro's Mum advised him to be careful of the compound people by saying (P.228)

*‘One day they are our friends and the next day they are our enemies. She said: I was cooking food. I came to the room. When I went back to the kitchen someone had poured water on the fire. We were silent. I am now afraid to walk the compound at night. Who knows if they are poisoning our food, eh? I became afraid. Let's run a way I said. Mum laughed. Then she became serious. And for the first time I saw how the world had sharpened her features. Our destiny will protect us. Don't fear anything my son. The worst they can do is kill us. She paused.*

*'I am tired of this life any way', she said, eventually. 'I want to die'.*

It can be understood from the fore-mentioned text/quotation that there's no an everlasting friendship in the realm of politics. Today's friend is tomorrow's enemy and on the contrary. There are different reasons and ways for death, for instance, through war, poisoning, struggle for gaining freedom as in the case of Nigeria. Azaro's Mum by saying 'I want to die' it means she feels the disillusionment and the way a head towards nations formation is still long.

The fourth most important character in the novel is Madame Koto. She is functioned as a metaphor for the British colonial in Ben Okri's trilogy, and the main traits of her personality reveal the negative aspects of the British colonialization that marks deeply the history of the African states. Historically, more than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism. The Nigerian people were no exception. Their life was dominated by the British for more than 50 years.

At the beginning of the novel, Madame Koto is an ordinary and ambitious bar owner and herbalist who lives in a poor compound somewhere on the outskirts of an African city. Nobody knows who she is or where she comes from (P.93). In addition to this, she (P.36) 'serves drinks and pepersoup in her bar'. Besides this, (P.77) 'she has a room near the toilet. Her room is always blocked. In the afternoons she often goes to the market to buy ingredient for her evening's cooking'.

The beginning for her fame happened one evening as per following (P.37):

*There was a man who left the bar without paying money for his drinks and pepersoup. She lifted him up on her shoulders and threw him hard on earth. He stayed unconscious for a while. She proceeded and turned him upside down, emptying*

*out all the money in his pockets. She took what was owed her only and left him. The crowd was so amazed at the woman's performance. She said to the crowd. Do you want to drink or do you want to look?. That evening was the beginning of her fame. Every one talked about her in low voices. Her legend, which would sprout a thousand hallucinations, had been born in our midst-born of stories and rumours which, in time, would become some of the most extravagant realities of our lives.*

It is crystal clear from the above quotation that Okri focuses also on time transformation. It is obvious there is a transformation in Madame Koto's personality from an unknown woman who is ordinary and owns a bar to a legend and powerful woman and in no time, she astonished the ghetto people with her performance of being legend and powerful and thus, showing her real personality as a living reality of British colonialism in Nigeria and a nightmare and a source of hallucination.

Rumours about Madame Koto go round the the compound. The compound women said of Madame Koto that (P.100-101):

*'She had buried three husbands and seven children and that she was a witch who ate her babies when they were still in her womb. They said she was the reason why the children in the area didn't grow, why they were always ill, why the men never got promotions, and why the women in the area suffered miscarriages. They said she was a bewitcher of husbands and a seducer of young boys and a poisoner of children. They said she had a charmed beard and that she plucked one hair out every day and dropped it into the palm-wine she sold and that into the pepersoup she made so that the men would spend all their money in her bar and not care about their starving families. They said she made men go insane at night and that she belonged to a secret society that flies about in the air when the moon is out'.*

The analysis for the above text goes this way. Madame Koto gradually starts to change her personality and behavior from

being an ordinary women to a witch as rumors indicate. She is behind children's illness, men not getting promotions, and women miscarriages in the compound. Not only this but also she is a playful woman who makes men spend their money in her bar and spoils the young boys morally and finally she belongs to a secret cells whose aim is to destroy the country and its people and this what the colonializers often do.

Despite her reputation, she does good things, too (P.47): she comes to Azaro's parents feast with wine and food. Not only this, but also (P.56) she prays for the child when he is sick and helps Azaro's Mum when red smoke comes out of her. Besides this, she (P.51) lends money to Mum and Dad without asking it back like the other creditors do. Moreover, in exchange for her help, she (P.63) wants Azaro to spend some time in her bar because she likes him and believes that he has good luck and will bring the customers. In fact Okri wants to convey a message that colonializers have two faces, they provide help and services to win the hearts, and thus, bestow their ascendancy.

However, situation changes once politics appear in the compound (P.128). It is now that the real Madame Koto emerges from the darkness and she begins her astonishing domination throughout the trilogy. In this sense Azaro x-rays an episode of Madame Koto with some of her women friends from the compound, she uses to pay them and feeds them in exchange of information about politics. Azaro said (P.105):

*'In the backyard Madame Koto and some of her friends talked about politics ... about the thugs of politicians and how businessmen and chiefs sprayed money at parties and celebrations. Madame Koto fed them and they prayed for her prosperity'.*

In fact she exploits the hunger and bad conditions of ghetto women to bring her news of politicians, the thugs, the businessmen and the chiefs, and she pays them money and food.

This is definitely one way of spying on the citizens in order to divide the society into strata to capture them at the suitable time.

As Washington (P.2005:257) puts it:

*"The stages of her transformation from an ordinary woman of the compound into the rich businesswoman who serves the interests of the Party of the Rich and thus her own interests correspond to the three stages of colonialism in Nigeria: Madame Koto initial coquetry with power, politics and the Party of the Rich stands for the establishment of the British rule in Nigeria in the 1880s; the colonial period itself is represented by Madame Koto's rapid physical and spiritual growth which occurs 'at the expense of her community'".*

That's why as Azaro delineates it (P.124), 'she engages in negotiations, gathers the compound people around her and feels with dignity'. This of course indicates her upper hand, power and ascendancy. This concept is confirmed by Azaro also (221):

*'Get up, you ugly child. Get up and fetch water for my customers! ... I was too stunned to move. She grabbed me by the scruff of the neck'.*

The above quotation indicates that Madame Koto behaves strangely and shouts at people as if they were her servants. This order reflects a historical flash back about the relationship between the Master and his slave. In another incident in order to show her real self, she (P.211) 'forbids Dad and the carpenter to talk about politics in the bar, while on the other side she welcomes two representatives of the Party of the Rich into the same place. In another episode, Madame Koto (P.258) 'pretends in order to play her important customers' game: "she came out with a heavy face and re-entered with a big false smile".

The above forgoing quotation pinpoints to the fact that she practices hypocrisy.

Moreover, when Azaro returns to the bar after being absent for some time, he observes some changes in the bar and in her looks. Azaro says (P.239):

*“I tried to sneak past Madame Koto's place but she saw me, and said very loudly: 'Are you running from me again?'. She looked different. She wore a new expensive wrapper, coral beads round her neck, she wore eyed-shadow, which darkened her eyes, and powder on her face, beneath which her sweat run”.*

It is realized that Madame Koto gets richer and richer due to this there is a change in her behavior and her looks. She wears more expensive clothes and jewels and uses powder on her face as a make-up. This also shows that she reaches another stage in her ascendancy, wealth and power. Furthermore, despite of all these as Azaro clarifies it (P.249)

*“In her bar she counting money ... sweat ran down her hairline ... she would count a bundle of notes and then laugh ... she counted her money over and over again asif she had just woken from the nightmare of poverty”.*

It is apparently observed that Madame Koto doesn't expect to be rich in a shorter time through stealing resources of the country and enjoys in her life.

Furthermore, Madame Koto continues practicing her domination as a representator of colonializers throughout the trilogy (the three sequencing novels). Her death at the end of the trilogy marks the end of the colonialization and the birth of the new era.

The fifth important character in the novel is the photographer [Jeremiah]. He is a young artist. He lives in the ghetto compound. He brings the village to the rest of the world and the rest of the world to the village. He manages to get some of his photographs published, but practices his craft a great personal

risk. The photographer is a symbolism of journalism/ media and a defender of human rights. As Azaro puts it (P.45):

*The photographer from across the road turned up, wearing a white hat. His name is Jeremiah. Everyone seemed to know him ... some mocked his bad timing ... other argued him to take off his white hat and get drunk ... and the women wanted to know why he hadn't brought his camera. He went back out and soon returned with his camera. [we] organized ourselves for a group photograph. The photographer gave many instructions as he set up his camera ... proceeded to embark on his own set of dramatic poses. He made us say: 'Sheeze'.*

The above context shows that the photographer is sociable and friendly from his looks and behavior. In addition he knows his work pretty well. We refer to the compound people.

Subsequently when the photographer brings the pictures the creditors, landlords, the ghetto dwellers at the compound are present, Azaro depicts the incident this way (P.91):

*'The creditors became animated and talked about images of the celebration, how so-and-so looked drunk, how that person's eyes were shut like a rogue's. The landlord said why is Madame Koto's face like that? Madame Koto's face was smudged. She looked like a washed-out monster. She's a witch, one of the creditors said. We all looked like celebrating refugees. We were cramped, and hungry, and our smiles were fixed. We seemed a people who had never known happiness. The photographer was very pleased with the results'.*

The above quotation shows the professionalism of the photographer. He reflects through his camera the status quo of the compound people along with their poverty as an indicator to economic turmoil at that time. The compound people look like refugees and they look unhappy. Moreover, a part from his work, sometimes the photographer goes across the street looking for an interesting subject or stay at his studio (P.141):



*'The photographer pinned up some of the pictures of the celebration of my homecoming ... photographs of the chaos unleashed when the politicians came round with their rotten milk ... He was very proud of the photographs'.*

The above quotation denotes that the photographer starts getting in his profession. He shifts his attention from families pictures to political ones (the rotten milk incident). Besides this, the photographer makes a big leap when he documented the incident of the burnt van, due to this as Azaro confirms (P.154):

*"The police took him as a suspect. He was released after three days. He said he had been tortured in the prison as collaborator, planner of riots, enemy of the party and destabiliser of Government".*

The forgoing quotation denotes that there is a daring pictures of the burnt van, thus, documenting not only the chaos but also the political corruption in Nigeria. As a result of this heroic act, he is put in the prison and has been tortured. Another reading to this incident shows that he becomes a fighter against the tyranny in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the photographer's character begins to take another dimension after his political imprisonment. As Azaro clarifies this (P.155):

*"prison seemed to have changed him and he went around with a strange new air of myth about him, as if he had conceived heroic roles for himself during the short time he had been away".*

It is crystal clear from the above quotation that the photographer is changed into anew personality and with courage and maturation plays the role of the hero and the defender of human rights which have been violated by the colonializers.

The forces of darkness representing in Madame Koto and her thugs feel how dangerous is the photographer, so they want to

put an end for him. There was a cry at night and the voices began shouting (p.179):

*'kill the photographer! ... Beat him! ... Finish him of... Blind our enemies ...Destroy him...crush him and leave his body in the street ... let the birds eat him!*

*For mocking our party ... our power ... our leader!*

It is obvious that the photographer fights the tyrants with his camera and discovers all their corruption that's why they want to kill him and leave his body in the street as a lesson to any one stands against their party, power or leader will face the same destiny.

However, it seems that the compound people love the photographer and his heroic actions. The compound people also cried bravely to support the photographer (p.180-181):

*'Fight them back!. Fight your enemies! 'stone them!.*

*They poisoned us with milk ... with words ... with promises ... and they want to rule our country ... Fight them without fear!*

It is obvious that, the photographer's compound stand with him in his fight against his enemies who in turn are their enemies who want to rule their country despite of their political scandles and corruption.

In another situation, the photographer speaks to Azaro after his disappearance. The photographer said (P.189):

*'I heard all about what happened in the street. It is happening everywhere. One way or another we will continue to fight for truth and justice ... And we will win'.*

The above context shows clearly that the photographer reaches to a certain degree of maturation. He speaks out of experience and wisdom. He sees the only option for Nigeria to find freedom is through continuous fight for truth and justice and the final victory will be theirs.

Furthermore, Azaro shift us to another important matter when he (Azaro) sees that the photographer has new cases for his

equipment, and on his photographic encasement was written (P.230): 'the legend, white against the black leather: To Become A man'.

It is obvious that the above quotation x-rays the fact that the inscribed words To Become A man written on Jeremiah's camera show meaning of bravery, loyalty and maturation. In other words, Jeremiah uses this equipment to oppose tyranny of the politicians over his community and nation, signaling the way that resistance and defiance of oppression are themselves tools through which one matures.

In an important episode, the photographer tells Azaro that (P.232):

*“I took photographs of women at the market being attacked by thugs ... I took pictures of riots against our white rulers ... I took pictures of a policeman taking bribes”.*

This quotation indicates that the photographer goes on practicing his favourite hobby of taking pictures to reveal the chaos and atrocity of colonializers.

In another episode, he tells Azaro that (P.233):

*‘He can kill rats because they are never satisfied. They are like bad politicians and imperialist and rich people’.*

The above mentioned text shows that there is a common ground between the rats and bad politicians, colonializers and the rich people, all of them are not satisfied, always they want more and more, so, they must be killed. It is also seen from this quotation that the photographer develops new concepts to fight against colonialism.

#### ***4-2-3 Songs of Enchantment (SOE)***

The first character of great significance in the second sequel novel (songs of Enchantment) is Azaro/ Abiku – spirit child who cheats death and chooses to stay. He continues narrating about poverty, violence and political corruption in the ghetto

compound in Nigeria along with describing of other characters actions and behaviours in a world that keeps changing spiritually, politically, socially and physically. Azaro as a spirit child is an un willing adventurer into chaos and sunlight, into the dreams of living and the dead, and his spirit companion, Ade believes in invisible things. Azaro stops going to school because (4.5):

*'He sees strange things. He knows examination questions before they were set, and the answers as well...He prophecies of Nostradamus and the wild visions of Africa mystics and the theories of Pythagoras'.*

The above text illustrates the fact that Azaro apart of his duality of belonging to two worlds, he has the ability of prophecying things before they occur due to his further vision and up normality.

Azaro describes an episode of his Dad (the Black tygar) who loves Helen, the beautiful beggar girl with a bad eye and who is the leader of the beggars. Dad begged her to give him one last chance to fulfill his promise of building school for the beggars. Dad declared his fearless love to Helen, he said (14-15) :

*' I dream of you every day, my princess from a strange kingdom. Everyone else sees you as a beggar, I know you belong to a golden throne. You are mistress of beauty, princess of grace, Queen of the road'.*

Azaro's Dad loves a beggar girl and sees her as princess who deserves the throne and Queen of the road, this indicates that love doesn't know social strata. it also signals to the role played by the working strata since she is a leader who inspires and mobilized the poor, the wretched people in Nigeria it also shows that by becoming a 'Queen of road' she undertakes a great responsibility of leadership who has commands and courage to lead the beggars (the Nigerian people at that time) since they beg their rights, their freedom, their justice from the colonializes

and the neo-colonial masters in the battle towards decolonization, freedom, stability and development.

Azaro goes on to describe the events taking place in the ghetto compound. He sees crowds of people all over the place. As he puts it (P-8). ‘they were talking about politics...about the forthcoming rally...about those who had died in the political violence’.

It is clear that election brings violence as an off shoot of the tactics used by the political parties.

In his journeys, Azaro also sees gigantic spirits everywhere, they belong to the great spirits of Africa. As Azaro explains them (P-26):

*‘They were in the time we had been running civilizations had risen, had fallen, had disappeared’*

The above text shows that, through Azaro, Okri makes historical flash back at the time when Africa was the cradle of civilizations to evoke us to re-historising the events of our past and to take the lessons from them to know who we were and to bring the past into reality.

Azaro has a third eye. He is able to see almost everything in this sense Azaro said (P-31) : ‘Other times I could see into the past ... places I had never been to ... faces that were both entirely a lien and familiar ... I knew thing that I had never learnt’.

The above lines show that two eyes aren’t enough for seeing the reality. So, it is better to have a third eye.

The eye of imagination. The eye of vision which helps us to see the reality. To see in core ... to see in depth. Azaro also depicts the forest, he said (P-68): ‘The forest became dangerous...it became another country’.

The forest stands for the Nigeria land. It has gradually changed from a peaceful place full of harmony, peaceful coexistence and beauty to a dangerous place and it is no longer their country.

Azaro also describes how the masquerades of both parties bounded up and down the streets at night terrorizing the compound people and warned them, as Azaro Puts it (P-71) :

*'they had people watching us in the polling booths to report on who we had voted for in secret... The political masquerades, the thugs and the supporters invaded our lives and changed the air of the street'.*

The above lines reflect not only the violence mash rooming in that society but also the political corruption practiced against the ghetto dwellers.

In addition to this, Azaro x-rays a fearful episodes of many events which reflect the realities on the ground in Nigeria and in other African countries. Azaro said (P-89) :

*'I flew into a world of violence, of famine, of hunger...half-dead children with starvation ...people dying of hypertension...of gases burning in the air ...with soldiers going mad and shooting at people, emptying their guns at students ... with the prisoners overcrowded ...with children poisoned by their mother's milk...The food spilled on the floor and the guests trode on them... I saw soldiers in armoured trucks rolling into the city, I saw coup after coup, till our history became an endless rosary necklace of them, each new bead an assassinated head of state, or the secret numbers of failed coup-plotters, executed at down'.*

The above quotation can be analysed this way: Due to Azaro's dualistic nature, he often flies into different realms and sees through his third eye the miserable defacto of Nigeria and the Nigerian as well. This time he sees violence everywhere, the starvation and people dying of diseases and by the deeds of corrupt businessmen and how the soldiers without any mercy shoot people and students. There is violation of human rights, the prisoners suffer too much. There is no political stability in the country due to coups and assassinations.

Moreover, Azaro finds himself on a battle ground deep in the country, deep in the dream of the unborn nation He depicts it like this(P.90-91):

*'I saw a bloody war raging, a war without beginning and without end, whose origins formed a self-feeding circle like the oroboros... I was knocked about the old man's dream of a dying country that hadn't yet been born, a nation born and dying from a lack of vision, too much greed and corruption, not enough love, too many divisions'.*

Through his prophecy, Azaro sees a bloody war coming. A war without beginning and an end and like the oroboros(the mutant snake) a war that changes each and every time. Okri speaks out of wisdom by saying "a nation born and dying from a lack of vision". opens the Pandora box and the result will be horrible. Due to greed, corruption, absence of love and divisions as shared traits between most so called politicians often prepare the theatre for an unexpected events.

Azaro also portrays another episode of corruption where party thugs continued to terrorise people and the old violence had returned. He said (P.94) : 'people were beaten at street corners for giving the wrong political passwords'.

Azaro, also depicts another fearful episode in which Azaro sees the world through the eyes of masquerade.

Azaro said (P.112):

*'I saw celebrations all over the country.  
The forthcoming elections had already been fore won. Fear and strange noises had swept the souls of the country. Dread for those who oppose, protection for supporters, nightmares for the silent. I saw far across the lands, into the heart of nations whose heartbeats had accelerated and had been taken over by the powers of fear. All those who didn't support would lose their jobs'.*

It is obvious from the above quotation that despite the celebrations due to the forthcoming elections, fear captures the hearts of Nigerian particular those who oppose, those who don't support will be driven out from their jobs. In others words political exclusion is also practiced.

Moreover, Azaro in his journeys he sees the invisible Masquerades of the western world. As Azaro states (P.115):

*'I saw their worshippers of order, money, desire, power and world domination... I wept for my terrible fate ... I saw at once that if I lived I would have to struggle for ever'.*

It is clear that Azaro laments his fate of being in Nigeria/ Africa compared to what he sees in western world where there is order, desire, power and domination whereas in his country there isn't any desire. There is chaos, corruption, violence and poverty. So, the only option he is left with is to continue struggle for ever.

Okri said in the tongue of his protagonist Azaro(P.159):

*'Our wills Became Weak. We looked out at the world from listless eyes. We became ill for lack of dreams. We began to see holes in reality'.*

Here Okri speaks about the absence of will of determination as a base towards liberation and development. Africans lose vision, therefore, they can't see properly. They can't put things in their suitable places. As Okri himself puts it (P.23) 'maybe we need to keep looking at the world with new eyes'.

Besides these, Azaro talks about the secrets of the African way. He states that (P.159-160):

*'The way of freedom and power and imaginative life...The way that develops and keeps its secrets of transformation... the way whose centre growth from divine love, whose roads are always open for messages from all the sphere to keep coming through; the way that believes in forgiveness and generosity of spirit, drawing back to its centre the valuable truths in our stolen*



*heritage, our accomplishments denied by the dominant history of the short-sighted conquerors of the time'.*

The above quote shows how the African way should look like as not only apart of dream but as defacto. It should be the way of freedom, power, transformation, love, forgiveness and generosity. The British colonialism has stolen the African / Nigerian heritage of all the valuable things and accomplishments.

Moreover, Azaro depicts the episode of his friend Ade whose life is crashed by Madame Koto's car when he attempts to kill her. Azaro says (P.195):

*'I saw Ade with flowers around his neck. Ade threw a knife towards Madame koto. He managed to plant the knife into her arm...Madame koto's car crashed Ade's life. He died with a smile on his face. Ade said: I failed. He continued. I knew I would fail. My destiny was not to be an assassin, but a catalyst'.*

The above quotation explains that Ade's attempt of killing Madame koto can be likened to several attempts that Nigerian government has made to finalize the British domination through such actions. Ade's statement "I knew I would fail. My destiny was not to be an assassin, but a catalyst". It indicates that he hopes to be a motivator or an initiator of this cause which helps in putting an end to the British colonialism. In addition to these episodes, Azaro portrays a painful incident of Ade's father and his corpse. As Azaro puts it (P.212):

*'Ade's father (the fierce carpenter) holding a hammner, cried, all of you who killed my son – Beware! He rished into the bar and proceeded to destroy everything, shouting: Tear this Temple!... He tore down the banners and the political posters. Madame Koto's thugs killed him but his corpse is not buried ... The party of the poor announced that nobody should bury the corpse of the carpenter expect the murderer. But their protest yield no result'.*

The above quotation shows clearly that Madame Koto as a representation of colonializers orders her thugs to kill Ade's father who wants to retaliate from Madame Koto because she kills his son, Ade. It seems that the corpse is a general problem to the ghetto dwellers, it helps them at least to come together for a short time. The corpse symbolizes Africa it self.

Azaro also goes further to describe the ways and the horrible tactics used by the political parties in the compound. Azaro says (P.247):

*'Anew curfew had begun. The war of mythologies had entered a bloody minded dimension'.*

The above quotation indicates the importance of myths in the life of Nigerian people and they resort to it as a tool that help them to win their case.

The second character who plays great role in the events of the novel (SOE) is Azaro's father. He continues his struggle against the colonializers as he did in (TFR). Azaro's father is a hardworking man. He works as load carrier then as a boxer and finally a politician. He is not only responsible for his family (Azaro, and Azaro's mother) but also he feels he is also responsible about the beggars besides his big responsibility towards the community he lives in. As described by Azaro (P.7-8) :

*'Dad promised to build the beggars a unique school to educate them. They had special place in Dad's political party (vision). He said: they needed education the most. That is how the powerful people keep us down; he maintained. They keep us illiterate and then they deceive us and treat us like children. He talked of turning all the ghettos into special secret universities where the most effective knowledge in the world would be made available'.*

As one of the symbols of Africa, Azaro's father has further vision that's why he calls his political party a vision- Bringing school or universities for beggars and the poor indicates that education is the strongest weapon to conquer illiteracy and colonializers as well.

Azaro's father (The Black Tygar) goes on talking out of wisdom and his experience in life. Dad said (P.45):

*'The secret of strength as in the spirit. Life is often like fighting and sometimes you have to draw power from your eyes, or your toes or from your heart'.*

The above quotation indicates that spirit brings strength and that life is a continuous struggle and we can draw our power from our eyes and hearts. He means the power and ability to see the reality needs strong vision and insight and the heart, too, sees the reality.

In other episode Azaro's Dad said (P.102,121,123) :

*'Why don't we use powers wisely? He asked the room at large in the bar.*

*'We can use our dark and our magical powers to create good life for our people instead of oppressing them, starving them, or killing them, don't you think?...*

*'We must use our deep powers to get rid of poverty, not to create it... poverty makes people strange.. it turns good people into witches and wizards.. Dad went on with his speech, his voice rising in waves of intensity. 'in the country I rule, every body would be a farmer... would be a herbalist... Everyone would have free education... We would produce what we eat from our own natural resources... Dad spoke of making the nation learn the art of concentration... the people who would be in his government were not corrupt... the whole continent should be one great country.... Power should be about freedom and food not about frightening people into voting for one side or another'.*

It is apparently from the above quotation that the African power is represented in magic, so, it should wisely be used for making good life. It should be well functioned for education and for good governance.

Azaro's Dad went in talking about the country he ruled. He said (P.125) 'people must have more respect to the death, political parties must not fill people's minds with too many ambitions, greed, selfishness, promising them lands and cars and government jobs if they voted for them, instead of filling their minds with self-respect and regard for hard work and service and love and how to make people healthy and well-fed'.

In the above quotation Azaro's Dad speaks out of wisdom that people should respect death and politicians shouldn't give false promises, they should focus on love, self-respect, hard work and all the good values.

Azaro's Dad goes on to give his vision of how Africa looks like today. This is a cry for help. Things aren't in the proper manner. Dad said (P.126) :

*'Africa is the home of the world, and look how we live in this world.*

*'poverty everywhere, wickedness, greed, injustice all over the place, goats wanting to lead the country, cows running for elections, rats scheming to become governors. This could be the great garden of the earth, but it is now a back yard, cried dad'.*

Azro's Dad wants us to reclaim our past, the good old days when Africa was the cradle of civilizations with the availability of all natural resources. Instead of being the earthly garden, now Africa is a backward continent due to the lack of vision.

Moreover, Azaro's Dad also talks about the influence of fear on people. He puts it this way (P.131-132):

*'people only understand fear, once the people are a afraid you can make them do anything. Fear is at the heart of power.*

*Fear is the black stone in the brain... never allow the lights to come on in the minds of the people. Or you have chaos'.*

Azaro's Dad shows one of the tactics used by bad politicians and the political thugs is to create fear among the citizens. When people become fear then they can do anything with them. Azaro's Dad wants people not to afraid. He wants them to stand united if they want to resolve their problems.

In addition to these, Azaro said about his Dad (P.209):

'Dad's reputation as a slayer of giants and a conquerer of boxers from the spirit world made it hard to get the thugs to disagree with him... Dad called the thugs animals in disguise'.

The above quotation shows that Azaro's Dad fights against colonializers that's why the thugs of the party of the Rich who works under the guide and orientation of the colonialism and the neo colonial masters are in confront with him.

In another episode Azaro's Dad talks about being in an unrecognizable country. He said (P.323) : 'He spoke of being in an unrecognizable country where people were thrown in fires or thrown to crocodiles, in a city where the people lived in caves'.

The above lines show that the unrecognizable country is Nigeria because it lives under colonialism and its people face all types of torture and because of fear and poverty still some people live in miserable conditions.

In addition to these, Azaro's Dad talks about something's can make a stone cry. He added (P.261).

'A dry wind, a dying bird , the death of, a nation... The destruction of a people's history'.

The above lines show that even the heartless person can cry when realises that his nation dies... There is no spirit... no stuggle... no unity. The destruction of history makes people lose their direction, their good values that develop over the years and their personalities, too.

Furthermore, Azaro's Dad spoke about forgotten heroes He said (P.290).

*'Our forgotten heroes, those who win our liberation and light for us before we do, and that because of them we should live our lives with fire and love and wise hope'.*

The above quotation shows the importance of our heroes in our lives. We are better off because of their struggle through it we reach to our independence, liberation, freedom and justice.

Azaro's Dad has good relationship with his family members (His wife and his son, Azaro).

The third character, is Azaro's Mum. Azaro's Mum is a hard working woman who supports her family members (husband and son) with whatever she obtains from her daily hawking with her small items. She loves her family members. She often advices them.

In one of the episode, she talks to her husband to give care for his family rather than focusing on helping the beggars. She said (P.11):

*'you spend all your time talking about this university for beggars, but what about us,eh? Are we not beggars? Don't you hear how cracked my voice is? From morning till night I walked this ungodly city. Hawking my provisions, crying out, while you slept like a goat for seven days'.*

*'improve our condition first, first', Mum said'.*

The above quotation shows that Azaro's Mum is truly a hard African working woman who spares no effort only to help her family member's because they live in a deplorable and unbearable circumstances of abject poverty . she wants her husband to shoulder his responsibility.

In another episode, Azaro describes a situation of their living condition in their house. He said (P.29):

*'Mum was asleep on the floor, under the shadow of the center table. She had a thin cloth over her. The flickering candle light, making the shadows and dance on the bare walls, illuminating the rafters and the cobwebs, revealed to us more forcefully the poverty in our lives'.*

The above quotation reveals about the object poverty that Azaro's family lives in. They don't have beds, cloths and even food.

Azaro portrays a deplorable situation in the community that time of colonialism and bad governance. As Azaro puts it (P.32):

*'Mum went to the market place, she used to have a stall before the thugs of politics drove her a way because she hadn't joined their parties'.*

It is obvious from the above contextualization that the political thugs practice political exclusion against those who refuse to belong to their political parties.

In another episode Azaro describes his Mum when she rose from her sleep. He said (P.73): 'Mum rose from her sleep as if she were emerging from a mythic river. Her hair flowed brightly round her face. Her skin had been washed a marvelous roseate colour by her dreams. There was always an enigmatic smile on her face'.

The above quotation shows physical description of Azaro's Mum. She has long hair round her face with marvelous skin and a good smile. All in all, she's beautiful.

Azaro's Mum told him a story about death. She said (P.76):

*'The people didn't recognize death and didn't listen to his message...soon things got so bad that the people no longer understood the language of trees and animals...They no longer saw angles, and came to believe that such beings had never existed...They no longer understood one another...they became greedy...they broke into tribes...They had wars all time...But death became the king of the world. He was very*

*wicked king. He punished human beings and trees and animals for every conceivable reason. His punishment was final'.*

In the above mentioned quotation Azaro's Mum speaks out of wisdom. She speaks about death which is inevitable. She also speaks about believe, greed and the coming wars.

Azaro's Mum goes on speaking out of wisdom. She says(P.77):

*'God has put one new thing into people and that is love. If people find it in themselves and keep it, they can't die'.*

So, It is clear from the above quotation that Azaro's Mum speaks about the importance of love among people and people should care for it.

Azaro's Mum has good relationship with her family members. She loves her son and her husband. Her suffering is an indication of an African woman who supports her family in difficult times.

The fourth most important character in the novel is Madame Koto. She is a symbol of colonialism. She acts out her role as a dominant character perfectly. She is still wealthy and a witch. She continues her domination, transformation and acts of killings. Through her thugs she kills Azaro's friend, Ade and his father.

It is to be shown that, as mentioned by Azaro that, (P.28) Madame Koto's bar and house 'were fabulous encircled with red and yellow lights'. This indicates that she becomes wealthy.

Not only these but also as Azaro puts it (P.36), she has demonic power. She has bigger signboard, magical enclave, women working with her and music everywhere.' This also indicates richness and power. Moreover, Her shadow as described by Azaro (P.42) was everywhere. She stretches her power and her domination. Azaro describes Madam Koto's physical appearance. She becomes as he said (P.52) she 'possesses fat arms, beautiful skin, large face and big eyes'. This also shows the transformations which happen to her physical



appearance. Since she is the queen of the ghetto. So, she has the ability of changing not only her behavior but also her appearance, too.

In addition to these, she (P.54-57) becomes awesome, legend and like an ageless matriarch’.

She wears many masks and hats as well. Azaro said (P.71):

*‘her fabulous bar was now the ghetto head quarter of the party of the Rich. The people of our area avoided her bar. Despite that, she sent the children of five poor families to school. She gave a scholarship to a blind girl. Her fame spread all over the country. Her legend had become as pervasive that we could no longer give her a human face’.*

The above quotation shows that she is responsible directly about the party of the Rich. She supports it financially. She also has a good face. She sends some children to school or provides them with free scholarship. Therefore, she manages to spread her reputation.

In another episode, Azaro talks about what the people in the compound start whispering about in connection to Madame Koto’s absence. Azaro says (P.96):

*‘I heard people whispering that her power now depended on space, on distance, on silence, which was why no one saw her any more’.*

It is apparent that, rumors travel fast as people always say. Because of her power and domination she rules through the neo-colonial masters who become her hand, eyes and shadows. She gains the characteristics of a ‘Rain Queen’ or goddess, the bar brothel becomes her ‘Shrine’. Her new status brings about change in her attitude, too: The more powerful she becomes, the more mysterious and distant she grows. As confirms by Azaro (P.117) ‘Madame Koto was enormous and extremely beautiful. She wore a golden robe’. Moreover, Azaro describes her (P.171) ‘she invaded our dreams with waves of mythologies. She had

abnormal pregnancy, she made great transformation'. It is clear that, Madame Koto becomes a knight-mare to the ghetto dwellers, and every time gets into a new shape, this makes it difficult to be understood.

Azaro conveys a dialogue between the man and one of Madame Koto's employees at her bar. It says (P.52):

*'We have come to see Madame Koto, dad said.*

*Which Madame Koto? The woman asked.*

*Dad was confused.*

*'How many Madame Koto's are there?*

*'it depends'. The woman said.'*

The above dialogue indicates clearly that Madame Koto has multiple and parallel existences with many faces.

Historically, The British colonialism was in many countries and continents (Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and America).

In order to show her domination, power and existence, Madame Koto, made for herself holographic form in the bar. (P.216). when Madame Koto killed Azaro's friend Ade and his father (the carpenter). Azaro's Dad said (P.218):

*'Now I wanted the whole world to broadcast the fact that Madame Koto, queen of the ghetto, ruler of a new religion, had just acquired her most terrible adversary'.*

This shows that, despite of being queen of the ghetto as a new name to make her feel proud and at the same time presenting her new religion (Christianity) to convert people to it, she practices all her odd deeds and ascendancy. Her power is illusory as long as she uses it to do wrong. Madame Koto death is at the end of the last novel in the trilogy (Infinite Riches), where she has several funeral ceremonies in different places and no one knows where the body is.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

#### *5.0 Summary of the study*

The study under question aims to study themes and characterization in Ben Okri's selected three novels, namely: "Flowers and Shadows", "The Famished Road" and "Song of Enchantment".

The method used for analyzing the intended themes and characterization is of a descriptive analytic nature which is based on close textual reading along with historical and psychological approaches.

Okri became successful as a writer when his novel "Flowers and Shadows", his first novel was published he was 21 years old. But, his real success came with the publication of the novel "The Famished Road" in 1991, for which he won the Booker Prize for fiction. Okri is considered as one of the most African authors of the second generation writers in the post-modern and post-colonial traditions and his fiction occupies a high position in African literature been observed by his themes which x-ray the ills of the African society such as: violence, poverty and corruption in Nigeria but also via his creative portraying of his characters which show that his Nigerian root remains strong. Okri portrays the social and political conditions inside his native Nigeria. The Nigeria Okri describes is dark and often violent, famished, chaotic and corrupted. Okri uses new literary forms where the themes and characters streamlining in a harmonical way. He uses the surrealistic detail elements of Nigerian story telling traditions. He also uses the western literary canon of magical realism. In his novels Okri calls up Nigerian people's awareness of their past as guide to their present. They deal with post-colonial contexts. For example "FAS" deals with the social, economic and political difficulties of urban existence in Nigerian and resulted in violence, poverty and corruption.

Okri's characters are liminal. Their identity is either destroys or helps them as observed in Jonan Okwe in the novel of 'FAS' and also Madame Koto in 'TFR' and 'SOE'. Throughout the events readers know them for their actions and behaviours. In addition his characters look on in wonder when electricity, automobiles or other modern wonders arrive in their village. His characters understand the trends of events and strive to make change such as Jeffia and his mother and his girlfriend, Cynthia in 'FAS' and also Azaro's Dad and Mum and Madame Koto in 'TFR' and 'SOE'. He also focuses on African history.

There is clear self confidence in 'FAS' with which the author/Okri handles the characterization, and themes along with the events. For example, wealth, power and social status turned Jonan Okwe into paranoia, into an obsession, restless and uncompromising. To achieve this he became violent and corrupted. He also feared from poverty. His father told him that 'poverty was curse'.

The theme of corruption is not new to modern Nigerian literature. In many ways it can be said to be the dominant theme of Nigerian writing of the last thirty years or so. The corruption had started in the country since its independence from Britain in 1960. Corruption was endemic in the political structure from the very start partly because of the way that power was transferred' by the departing imperial masters, partly because of the nature of Nigerian life itself. Two successive military coups were followed by a bloody civil war within the first decade of independence. By the end of the civil war in 1970 Nigeria's most celebrated Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and others including Ben Okri wrote about corruption in their novels. This is precisely what happened. Throughout the 1970, Nigeria became legendary for the scale of its corruption, violence and poverty. This is the world of flowers and shadows.

In his novel 'TFR' that won the Booker prize for fiction, Okri also resorted to magical realism and history to express about his thematic preoccupation and characters delineation.

Particularly the themes of violence, poverty and corruption which reflect the conditions of events taking place in Nigeria due to the civil war.

Okri uses 'Abiku' term as spirit child that repeatedly borns and dies in his novel 'The Famished Road' and its sequel 'Songs of Enchantment'. Abiku represents Nigeria's ability to navigate between two worlds, the western and the native (the spiritual and the real). It's birth as Okri indicates coincides with the birth of the new nation. For Okri, Nigeria is metaphorically an Abiku child who comes and goes at will and at the same time functions as an eye witness to the atrocities and domination of the British colonialisation as well as an observer with his third eye to the ills of society (violence, poverty and corruption) taking place in the society as a result of the civil war that comes after the independence. Despite the suffering he believes in hope. As Okri puts it in *The Famished Road* (1991:418) that one day:

*'There will be changes ...coups...soldiers everywhere... ugliness...blindness...and then when people least expect it, a great transformation is going to take place in the world...suffering people will know justice and beauty... A wonderful change is coming from far away and people will realize the great meaning of struggle and hope, there will be peace'.*

It is also observed that, Okri sheds some light on the elections malpractice which is also the order of the day. People are not allowed to vote according to their consciences but are manipulated and deceived. Politicians exchange votes for gifts, ranging from milk to garri, money, etc. They go extra miles to win elections, visiting violence on the people using their thugs. In these novels violence is a weapon of politics. At the peak of

the campaign, two parties clash. This is represented in 'TFR' and 'SOE'. Everywhere the thugs of the two parties initiate clashes in their endless war of mythologies.

There is also the issue of witchcraft in 'SOE' witches, wizards and other strange things and beings roam the world of men. This leads to many unnatural situations in the society.

It is also observed that in 'TFR' and its sequel 'SOE' Azaro's Dad and Mum function as truly African man and woman who use all they have to struggle against colonialism. Dad is yet another symbolic character. He is depicted as the conscience of society. To change the situation, he adopts revolutionary tendencies and transformation from the load carrier to a boxer to politician who represents the poor and the down-trodden (the beggars and the compound people). He becomes a symbol of revolution against the landlord, politicians, Madame Koto, animals, thugs, spirits, etc. Dad fights injustice, poverty, corruption and deprivation. Okri uses him as a stereotype character who struggles against the political and economic system. Azaro's Mum symbolizes the suffering woman who possesses great moral values but decimated economically. She is transformed from her beauty into an ugly city woman by suffering, lack and hunger.

Furthermore, Madame Koto in 'TFR' and "SOE" represent symbol of colonialism. She leaves no stone unturned to practice her ascendancy in the society along with the neo colonial masters (the elites) have practiced all types of corruption and violence in the Nigerian society. It is also observed that the character of Jeremiah the photographer in 'TFR' plays a great role in documenting the events with his camera. He considers as a civil rights activist and also as a prisoner of conscience and functions as a symbol of modernization and media.

### ***5.1 Main Findings***

In conclusion, the thematic preoccupation of (violence, poverty and political corruption) and the characterization in Okri's three selected novels, namely, 'Flowers and Shadows', 'The Famished Road' and 'Song Of Enchantment' are believed to have played a great significant role in the events of the three novels. Throughout the novels, Okri with his surrealistic style and his deep vision expressed about his themes in a dialogical and dialectical manner whereby he also managed to extrapolate the realities of his home land and to rewrite history and to re dream the intended themes and the events in which there were harmony between the intended themes and the characters in their dualistic roles. Despite the fact that Nigeria gained its independence but it is still in a catbird seat.

### ***5.2 Suggestions for Further studies***

The study under question wraps up with some suggested recommendations by the researcher for further studies due to their significance such as: The theme of bad governance, the stylistic device in Okri's novels. Not only these but also symbolism, personification and magical realism in Ben Okri's novels.

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