

**The Language of Dreams: A Study of Transcultural
Magical Realism in Four Postcolonial Texts**

By

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<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
Abstract	1
Introduction	3
Magical Realism	8
Dreams	12
The Literature of dreams	16
Chapter 1: The Language of Magical Realism in Ben Okri's Novels	26
The Experiences of the Subconscious within Okri's Novels	29
The Fluidity of Boundaries	36
Metamorphosis in Magical Realism	48
The 'Nowhere Land' of Okri's Novels	53
The Journey Through Ben Okri	58
The Novel Through the Eyes of Azaro	63
The Cycles of Okri	69
The Interpretation of Okri's Dreams	72
Chapter 2: The 'Rememory' of Toni Morrison's <i>Beloved</i>	76
The Memories of <i>Beloved</i>	79
The Merging of Borders in <i>Beloved</i>	80
Transformation Through <i>Beloved</i>	93
The 'Nowhere Land' of Memory	97
<i>Beloved's</i> Journey	101
The Voices in Morrison's <i>Beloved</i>	105
The Cycles of Time	108
Reading the 'Rememories', Voicing the Unspeakable	113

Chapter 3: The Nightmares of Irvine Welsh	115
Levels of Consciousness in <i>Marabou Stork Nightmares</i>	119
Welsh's Binary Paradigms	124
Transmutation in Roy's Consciousness	129
The 'Nowhere Land' of Africa	133
The African Adventure	138
The Story of Roy's Mind	142
'The Abused Becomes the Abuser'	146
The End of the Nightmare	148
 Conclusion: A Global Dream	 151
 Bibliography	 154

Abstract

This research provides an analytical reading of four contemporary novels, in a transcultural study of magical realism and dreams. Two of the novels, Ben Okri's The Famished Road and its sequel Songs of Enchantment, examine dreams through magical realism in postcolonial African literature. The third novel, Toni Morrison's Beloved, is used to depict the use of memory within an African-American magical realist novel. And the fourth narrative is Irvine Welsh's Marabou Stork Nightmares, which focuses on the use of hallucination within what can be seen as a magical realist mode. The analysis of these novels examines certain aspects of magical realism, including the use of the subconscious, focusing primarily on dream, memory and hallucination.

In examining this topic, I aim to suggest that the use of the subconscious, within this literature, allows the writer to comment on a particular society. As can be seen in previous studies of magical realism, the writer is able to express his or her dissatisfaction with society by destabilising conventionally accepted truths. A writer can therefore convey a sense that the surface of a particular culture or society is a façade, disguising certain hidden truths, which require a more in depth examination, in order to more fully understand the workings behind that society. The subconscious works to reveal these hidden realities, and is therefore a mode of resistance in that it allows the writers an avenue through which to express their dissatisfaction with their particular society. This is achieved through the exploring and deconstruction of certain boundaries within the novels which, along with several other factors, essentially concords the magical realism inherent in these texts. It is additionally enhanced through the use of the device of the

subconscious, which allows the writers to transgress borders, and further explore their particular cultures.

Through the use of novels from various contemporary societies, I hope to establish the fact that the subconscious, and therefore magical realism, is a transcultural technique, in that it traverses a multitude of cultures, without being specific to any one in particular. While the use of dreams requires a culture specific interpretation, the use of the subconscious in this literature can be seen as a global technique of expressing dissatisfaction within these societies.

Introduction

The art of storytelling is reaching its end because the epic side of truth, wisdom, is dying out. This, however, is a process that has been going on for a long time. And nothing would be more fatuous than to want to see in it merely a 'symptom of decay,' let alone a 'modern' symptom. It is, rather, only a concomitant symptom of the secular productive forces of history, a concomitant that has quite gradually removed narrative from the realm of living speech and at the same time is making it possible to see a new beauty in what is vanishing. (Benjamin 87)

In his essay, "The Storyteller", Walter Benjamin discusses the art of storytelling, and its inevitable demise through the coming of modernity. Here, he examines the mode of the novel in comparison to that of narrative, and suggests that the process of storytelling is far more communal, while, "the birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual" (ibid.). This is one of the main concerns which a number of contemporary authors face, as they attempt to write in an essentially narrative based mode, but through modernity find it necessary to use the form of the novel. Thus, we are presented with the many contradictions found within the arenas of postmodernist and postcolonial writing. Before I examine these conflicts within these styles of writing, it would perhaps be best to first discuss the definitions of both postmodernist and postcolonial literature. Linda Hutcheon comments on postmodernist practice in general, writing: "As a cultural activity that can be discerned in most art forms and many currents of thought today, what I want to call postmodernism is fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political." (4) Although this is a very brief description, it is apt in its explanatory value. Bill Ashcroft supplies his definition of postcoloniality in the same vein, while simultaneously imparting a short account on the origins of this particular form of literature.

The idea of 'post-colonial literary theory' emerges from the inability of European theory to deal adequately with the complexities and varied cultural provenance of post-colonial writing. European theories themselves emerge from particular cultural traditions which are hidden by false notions of 'the universal'. Theories of style and genre, assumptions about the universal features of language, epistemologies and value systems are all radically questioned by the practices of post-colonial writing. (The Empire 11)

As can be seen, both areas of fictional work are essentially focused on the move away from dominant literary spheres, or at least on an attempt to recognise new, emerging forms of literature. As Linda Hutcheon notes, postmodernism "works within the very systems it attempts to subvert" (4), and the same can be said for postcolonialism. This echoes Benjamin's hypothesis of the storyteller, who makes use of the novel, but in an effort to relate a narrative form of fiction to the community. These paradoxes are recurring elements within postmodernist fiction, even including the forms that this fiction takes, as Linda Hutcheon describes in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*:

The borders between literary genres have become fluid: who can tell anymore what the limits are between the novel and the short story collection . . . the novel and the long poem . . . the novel and autobiography . . . the novel and history . . . the novel and biography . . . ? But, in any of these examples, the conventions of the two genres are played off against each other; there is no simple, unproblematic merging. (9)

For my purpose in the research I undertake, I would add to this list the novel and oral narrative, which continually find themselves combined, however problematically, in the contemporary literature under study. And Hutcheon is correct in saying that this does not lend itself to a simple merging, especially since, as I will demonstrate later, the transcultural¹ centres in which these novels are based are at the opposite end of the spectrum to the dominating presence of the west. Thus, a problem is presented. How do these writers transcend the boundaries of these two divergent centres of culture? How is it possible for them to achieve this transculturation? At least part of the answer is found in the emergent form of the postcolonial novel.

It is relevant, here, to place emphasis on the fact that postcolonial writers are not writing an African novel, as such. In a sense to do so would be impossible, as the literary form of the novel is of western origin, as Johan Jacobs suggests when he refers to "predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel" (199). Nevertheless, it is possible for these writers to use this form to create their own

¹ In the use of the word 'transcultural', I am referring to the idea of the crossing of borders, as far as culture is concerned, and using this idea to suggest that literary texts from different cultures utilise similar literary devices in order to achieve their purpose. The word also conveys a sense of a merging of cultures in this literature.

independent discourse, albeit the origins of the postcolonial novel remain in colonialism. Again, this echoes Hutcheon's assertion that postmodernism operates "within the very systems it attempts to subvert" (4). Many critics point out that postcolonial writing can never be entirely independent of its predecessor, colonialism, since this was the basis for the latter genre (Jussawalla and Dasenbrock 5), and as Ashcroft further notes below:

Post-colonial culture is inevitably a hybridised phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the 'grafted' European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity. . . . It is not possible to return to or to rediscover an absolute pre-colonial cultural purity, nor is it possible to create national or regional formations entirely independent of their historical implication in the European colonial enterprise. (*The Empire* 195 – 196)

Gerald Gaylard notes that African culture was an oral one², and as such, it was necessary for writers to borrow from the colonial authors in order to establish their own written tradition (*Broken Age*). Thus, we are able to isolate elements of postcolonialism within the work of Ben Okri and other African writers. With regard to the work of Okri, Ato Quayson writes: "With his title [*The Famished Road*], [he] makes an important ritual gesture towards the literary tradition he is elaborating as well as to the indigenous traditions and beliefs. From the very outset he pays homage to both" (*Strategic* 122). In other words, the title draws on both precolonial myth, in the form of the folktale concerning the hunger of the road, as well as the symbol of colonial heritage within the image of the road. This notion of incorporating elements of both precolonial and postcolonial heritages within the novel, is captured by Margaret Cezair-Thompson, as she says this of *The Famished Road*: "Thus colonial history is retold as part of a larger, timeless, indigenous discourse which acknowledges but does not stagger under the weight of Europe's colonisation of Africa." (43) The same can be seen in the writings of Toni Morrison, who discusses her attempt to make her writing more distinctive of her culture. "I try to incorporate, into that traditional genre the novel, unorthodox novelistic characteristics . . . so that it is, in my view, Black, because it uses the characteristics of

² However, it should be noted that an African written culture has long existed, as evidenced through the Timbuktu Manuscripts, which date as far back as the 13th Century. "The manuscripts point to the fact that Africa has a rich legacy of written history, contrary to the popular opinion that oral tradition alone has preserved its heritage." (*Science in Africa*, par. 5)

Black art." (Morrison, "Rootedness" 342) These writers are not abandoning the western technique, as it is a central part of their colonial heritage, yet they do use it as a palimpsest for their own cultural traditions.

Even though Morrison is an African-American writer, it is also plausible to consider her work as postcolonial, as Ashcroft asserts when he writes: "Feminist perspectives are of increasing importance in postcolonial criticism and indeed the strategies of recent feminist and recent postcolonial theory overlap and inform each other." (*The Empire* 31) He goes on to include Morrison within this group of feminist postcolonial writers. Moreover, Morrison believes that more credit should be attributed to African-Americans for their role in the formation of an American literary history. She asserts that many scholars maintain that the white male influence is largely responsible for this literature, and they therefore ignore the influence of the black community. This, she says, should not be permissible:

For some time now I have been thinking about the validity or vulnerability of a certain set of assumptions conventionally accepted among literary historians and critics and circulated as 'knowledge'. This knowledge holds that traditional, canonical American literature is free of, uninformed, and unshaped by the four-hundred-year-old presence of, first, Africans and then African-Americans in the United States. It assumes that this presence . . . which shaped the body politic, the constitution, and the entire history of the culture . . . has had no significant place or consequence in the origin and development of that culture's literature. (*Playing* 4 – 5)

This extensively portrays Morrison's belief that the African-American literary influence is not peripheral, but rather, is central to a more complete archive of American literature. Thus she is not only inscribing African-American culture into the more dominant western literary sphere, but she is also asserting this culture as one of the original elements within American literature. Morrison is therefore working within a similar framework as that of postcolonial writers, suggested by the following passage:

To give expression to colonized experience, postcolonial writers sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization . . . the myths of power, the race classifications, the imagery of subordination. Postcolonial literature, therefore, is deeply marked by experiences of cultural exclusion and division under empire. (Boehmer, *Colonial* 3)

This is precisely what Morrison has indicated is necessary in regard to African-American literature, and it is what she portrays through her own writing. The myth of literary power belonging to the white male is the type of colonization that she is contesting.

In returning to the novel, we can see that as a literary form, it has been widely used by postcolonial writers for numerous reasons. I have already discussed one of the reasons central to this use, that being that African narrative is fundamentally oral. Writers therefore made use of the novel as a means of furthering a tradition of African writing, using their orality as a resource to further enrich this new literary form.

Yet another explanation can be perceived when examining the writers themselves. A great many postcolonial writers, such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, as well as Ben Okri, were schooled in western institutions, and as such were educated through the novel, and exposed to techniques such as modernism. Elleke Boehmer develops this discussion, saying:

Montage effects and mythic adaptations were, as we know, championed by Anglo-American modernist poetry. This poetry, in particular the work of T.S. Eliot, formed a staple part of the university syllabuses with which most writers of independence came into contact. In literary circles from Ibadan to Wellington modernist techniques were popular. Writers turned to their own spiritual traditions, therefore, both as the source of a new national identity, and also as a mythic resource with which to structure poetic collages. (*Colonial* 204)

These writers were therefore creating works which drew on western teachings, but that nevertheless made use of precolonial culture. Jussawalla and Dasenbrock discuss this feature of postcolonial writing in the introduction to their collection of interviews:

During the period of colonialism, the dominant voices were writers from the Imperial power writing about the colonial peoples . . . After independence, to use Salman Rushdie's phrase, 'The Empire writes back.' It uses the language of the former colonial power, but it speaks in its own independent and quite original voice, often contesting the way it has been represented by the earlier writers. The writing that emerges in this process issues from a remarkably complex combination of cultures, as the postcolonial writers draw on indigenous traditions and languages of their own as well as on the resources of the tradition of writing in English. (4)

This passage serves to confirm the use of the western novel, but also suggests a rewriting of history, from the perspective of the native people, through a number of genres. An example of this combining of resources is evident in Ama Ata Aidoo's play, Anowa, where the protagonist, Anowa, "seek(s) to demystify, to remind the community of Africa's true past, involving slavery, and its present betrayal of the vision of a just and egalitarian society, which was promised with independence." (Innes 12) As this suggests, postcolonial writers may be expressing not only their view of the past, but also their community's disillusionment with the present state of independence.

Thus these writers, from different cultures, are essentially creating a form of the novel which is independently theirs, an established literary form which expresses and conveys the sentiments of the postcolonial environment. In order to achieve this, these writers have been required to develop distinguishing techniques of writing. One such device is that of magical realism. Magical realism serves as a medium through which these writers can express their own principles as well as those of their communities.

Magical Realism

Magical realism is a mode suited to exploring . . . and transgressing . . . boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic. Magical realism often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction. The propensity of magical realist texts to admit a plurality of worlds means that they often situate themselves on liminal territory between or among these worlds (Zamora and Faris 5 – 6)

Magical realism had its origins in Latin American literature, where it was frequently used to unify nations that were in states of inner conflict, due to the disrupting effect colonialism had on both culture and tradition. In an introduction to their collection of essays, Zamora and Faris describe the general features of this mode of fiction, as can be seen in the above passage. Their description, however, is not specific to Latin American literature, as it concerns a range of texts that employ magical realism. Nevertheless, the term magical realism has come to have a far more general meaning than was originally intended. For instance, magical realism served a very specific purpose in

postcolonial Caribbean literature, as it linked “social revolution to cultural tradition” (Ashcroft, Key Concepts 132). This allowed the local inhabitants a chance to express themselves through an independent dialect, thereby opposing the dominant colonialist voice. However, Ashcroft moves on to say that, “more recently, the term has been used in a less specific way to refer to the inclusion of any mythic or legendary material from local written or oral cultural traditions in contemporary narrative.” (Key Concepts 133)

The use of magical realism in African literature can be seen as a means of speaking out against colonialism, in a voice specific to Africa. The technique has been used by postcolonial writers to create an indigenous, independent voice within contemporary writing. It has also established a means by which they could assert a nationalist voice and resist colonialism. While Gerald Gaylard refers to this fictional mode as African fabulism, he does accept its common ground with South American magical realism. However, he does not believe that it should be acknowledged as the same mode of writing. While there are obvious similarities, he asserts that in Africa, this form of writing should be seen as independent of other magical realist writing:

Hence, the utilisation of ‘magical realism’ as a term to describe perhaps the key current in African literature today raises questions around the term’s strong association with fiction from elsewhere, the oblique relation between that fiction and African writing, the imprecision of the term and inability to evoke a sense of ‘something new in African fiction’. (Gaylard, “Meditations” 98)

Thus he establishes a term that he finds more relevant to this fictional mode: fabulism. Although I do not intend to dwell on the properties of this category, suffice it to say that it does share a number of characteristics with magical realism, while remaining independently African. Brenda Cooper, who also examines the workings of magical realism in African literature, says of the subject:

Magical Realism. Writers reject the label; many readers, mostly in Europe and North America, are fascinated by its overtones of exotic otherness. Part of its allure is its elusiveness, which enables it to be all things. Is it a mode, a genre, style, a politics? Is it only applicable to those parts of the world that have undergone colonialism of one kind or another? Given the looseness and scepticism surrounding the term, why retain it?

The concept of magical realism continues in usage because, midst all the confusion, it retains explanatory value. (Magical Realism 15)

Olatubosun Ogunsanwo rejects Cooper's use of the term, calling it a "serious misnomer" (Magical Realism 226), and instead cites Quayson's use of Harry Garuba's (1993) phrase, "animist realism", as being more appropriate for "Okri's fiction and such African literary work." (ibid.) However, in relation to the use of "animist realism", Christopher Warnes suggests:

that, while the term may describe quite well certain of the tenets on which Okri's narrative is constructed, as a neologism it is wholly inadequate to the task of locating The Famished Road in a category of literary discourse that would enable comparison with texts from other literary traditions. (106)

Thus, it seems logical to utilise the term magical realism, for the fact that firstly, it is explanatory, and secondly, it creates a comparative basis with texts from alternative literary traditions³.

With regard to Gaylard, he does suggest a use of fabulism, and therefore one of magical realism, in relation to African writing:

Here the prescriptiveness of the precise features of African realism can be seen as a response to the desperation of that time to throw off the yoke of the oppressor. . . . African realism was a buttress for the nationalist movements and sentiments which explains its leading role from the fifties and beyond. (Broken Age 19)

It achieved this by using the structure of the western novel, and integrating distinctly African narrative forms into it. An apt example of this is Amos Tutuola's The Palm-Wine Drinkard, where he uses techniques, such as the element of the hero, that are specific to an oral based narrative, and he incorporates them into the novel. This is oral-based in that the "heroic potential" of the characters are "partial inscriptions of communal values" (Quayson, "Esoteric Webwork" 153). These are further emphasized through the fact that

³ At this point it is necessary to point out that I am not attempting to disqualify the particular theories of any of these writers, or to detract from the significance of the indigenous narrative traditions of these novels. Rather, I am using the term, magical realism, in identifying common traits within a wide range of literature, enabling a transcultural study of this mode of fiction.

"the mythopoeic character derives strength from being a representative of a communal ethos." (ibid.) The implication is that the heroic character gains his moral fibre from the community, which is an important feature of narrative, as it focuses its attention on communal and moral lessons. This is substantiated by Gaylard's use of the term "fabulism", which is derivative of African fables, and these lend themselves to moral messages. This provides the reader with a form of literature that is western in origin, but distinctly African in form and content. Another central element of Tutuola's work is that of the esoteric. This too, is a fundamental element of magical realism, especially in the African context. It provides another dimension to reality, not so much in the fact that it is magical, but rather because it is merely a different domain within reality. In an interview, Ben Okri notes that, "An important part of my tradition is that we do not believe that the dead die . . . We believe that when people die, they go to another realm" (Ogunsanwo, "Intertextuality" 40). This sentiment is evident in the work of Tutuola and Okri, as well as many other African writers, and is further reinforced in the studies by Mary Chinkwita:

Historically, it has been believed that dreams have a purpose for mankind. Africans do believe in dreams because they believe their ancestors still influence the society and help and guide the living in their day-to-day activities. It is believed the dead, or the ancestors, are 'alive' somewhere and help the living in making decisions. (54)

This element is central to the fact that these writers are inscribing their own identity onto the western discourse of the novel, by including their traditional⁴ beliefs within their work.

The use of magical realism also provides a means by which these writers can convey a more realistic view of their own cultures and societies, which has previously been denied through the dominant process of colonialism. As Josephine Dandy suggests of magical realism:

⁴ While I realise that the term 'traditional' is not wholly satisfactory, as it creates a dichotomy between older, customary forms and the modern, and it is difficult to define, it cannot always be avoided, and does serve to illustrate the older form of customs. "After all, despite the manifold efforts to deconstruct them, terms like 'tribe', 'nation' and 'tradition' do not rest peacefully in their graves. Rather, they are still very much alive and evoked in everyday life." (Deutsch 2)

[It] shares many of the same concerns and techniques as post-modernism, but it is located within, and in particular exists as a result of, a specific social context, and is particularly concerned with the representation of the multi-dimensionality of that social context through art (9 – 10)

Magical realism, in African literature, often depicts this “multi-dimensionality” through the supernatural, and therefore underpins African postcolonial literature in a number of ways. Firstly, it illustrates a cultural and social belief that is a distinct part of the African tradition. Secondly, it provides a means to oppose colonialism, and the colonialist novel. As Gaylard writes, “it enabled writers to comment directly on colonialism.” (*Broken Age* 21) It also contested the colonial novel, in that it depicted the African cultural beliefs, and re-inscribed a tradition that colonialism had ignored.

Magical realism is an exceptionally broad field, especially when considering the variety of cultures that have made use of this mode of fiction, including the obvious Latin American texts, as well as Caribbean and Indian (Ashcroft, *Key Concepts* 132 - 133), and there are many elements which combine to create this literary technique. The main impetus of this research is that of the dream. This includes the exploration of other forms of experience within the subconscious, including hallucination, and memory. These two elements fall into the category of the subconscious as firstly, hallucination is frequently discussed as an extension of the dream, and secondly, memory, in the context of this research, relives the past, which has been buried within the subconscious.

Dreams

The archaeology of the dream means precisely to recover a buried reality, which is sometimes difficult to rediscover and recognize. The analysis of narcissism is indeed painful and is not always tolerated. The dream work represents a fundamental element of analysis, which consists in deciphering, interpreting, recovering the 'other language', and confronting the dis-illusion experienced when we realize that we are not as we would like to be. (Resnik 101)

Within the studies of dreams, by psychologists such as Freud and Jung, there is a notion of dreams as vehicles of the unconscious wishes and fears of the dreamer. To expand on this point, the conscious self suppresses desires which are unacceptable in the

eyes of society, and the subconscious⁵ releases these through dreams (Segal; Resnik). Thus it allows the dreamer to live out these desires in a way that is acceptable to the society, and consequently, it gives rise to a dream language. An aspect of this language is symbolism within the dream, and this is a significant factor in their interpretation, allowing us access to a more fully realized view of ourselves, as Salomon Resnik suggests above.

One point of view is that symbolic language is universal, and is therefore applicable to anyone's, or any culture's dreams.

Symbolic language is a language in which inner experiences, feelings and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world. It is a language which has a different logic from the conventional one we speak in the daytime, a logic in which not time and space are the ruling categories but intensity and association. It is the one universal language the human race has ever developed, the same for all cultures and throughout history. (Fromm 16)

While Erich Fromm's comment serves to demonstrate the value of a symbolic language that can be interpreted, both within our lives and our literature, it also, wrongly in my view, implies that there is only one symbolic language. However, Resnik provides a different reading of Freud, as he writes:

The interpretation of the dream is a search by two persons into the past-present of the individual and of the culture; it has something of the character of an anthropo-archeological research. Freud was very fond of archaeology, the 'logos of the arche' . . . ; he liked to discourse on what was old and hidden in our culture and in each of us. In a definition that became famous, he stressed the interrelationship between the personal dream and culture: 'The dream is personal myth and myth is the dream of a culture.'

Thus to interpret a dream would have a cultural implication. (9)

Perhaps these two explanations can be combined to suggest that while symbolism is a universal aspect of dreams, the symbols vary from culture to culture. Chinkwita, for example, provides a list of dream interpretations specific to a number of African

⁵ To further clarify this point, the unconscious is seen as that part of the consciousness which is concealed, while the subconscious is partially hidden, yet still affects the conscious self.

countries (71 – 72). This highlights, in my view, the supposition that symbolism is society, or culture, specific, in addition to being influenced by the period or time in which it is being interpreted. We therefore need to question how various interpreters use symbolic language, if it is seen as a universal given, or if they take cultural interpretations into account. Barbara Tedlock discusses her viewpoint on the history of dream ethnography:

While the earliest ethnographic studies of dreams were in a distinctly Freudian idiom, phrased as tests of his key concepts concerning dream symbolism among non-Western subjects, by mid-century dream ethnography had become part of a new subfield known as Culture and Personality, in which the manifest content of dreams was analysed, counted, and tabulated in various ways. By the mid-1970's a major refiguration of social theory and practice had begun, turning attention to the description of alternative meaning and knowledge systems in their own terms. In this new intellectual environment, ethnographers stopped treating dreams as though they were museum objects that might be arranged, manipulated, and quantified like items of material culture, and began to focus their attention on studying dream interpretation systems as complex communicative processes. (x)

Thus, we are able to see a change in the manner in which dreams of other cultures are approached, and thereby it is possible to understand the importance of culture specific interpretation. Magical realism, as a mode that encourages cultural independence, depicts a resistance of a generic interpretation of dreams in these texts, calling instead for a specific cultural analysis.

This broad question of the culturally specific relevance of dreams and their interpretation in contemporary literature is a fundamental part of my study. Dreams that appear in the literature of various cultures will display their own symbolism, and dream language. Toni Morrison aptly encapsulates this hypothesis when she writes: “The subject of the dream is the dreamer.” (*Playing* 17) In other words, the dream is relevant to that person, and by extension, that culture or society. Their interpretation relies on the reader's nuanced understanding of both text and context. With this in mind we can examine both the author's perspective and the social context of the dream within the text. This is not to say that the intention of the writers differs between societies or cultures, as their overall purpose is to expose certain elements that each society keeps hidden.

Nevertheless, the manner in which each culture achieves this is different. This research will therefore also emphasize the importance of the difference between cultures, displaying a need to maintain a culture specific interpretation. Again, Ama Ata Aidoo's play, *Anowa*, has relevance as it uses the dream to evoke a difficult meaning specific to the history of slavery with relevance to contemporary Ghanaians:

That night I woke up screaming hot; my body burning and sweating from a horrible dream. I dreamt that I was a big, big woman. And from my insides were huge holes out of which poured men, women and children. And the sea was boiling hot and steaming. And as it boiled, it threw out many, many giant lobsters, boiled lobsters, each of whom as it fell turned into a man or woman, but keeping its lobster head and claws. (46)

This dream examines the history of slavery and its effects within Ghana, and in this context, the dream is used in a broad sense to convey underlying tensions within a society that may not be able to be easily revealed in any other manner. Accordingly, this use of the dream suggests that our societies and cultures are not what they appear to be on the surface. As Resnik noted earlier, dreams enable us to confront "the dis-illusion experienced when we realize that we are not as we would like to be." (101) Dreams, therefore, often uncover the truth that is hidden behind the façades of our varied cultures, depicting the same goal as postmodernism and postcolonialism, that of questioning the reality in which we exist.

Through the idea of metamorphosis, which can be seen in the literate dream above, we can acknowledge that it appears in Okri's and Tutuola's narratives as an element of a multi-reality, in that the characters can move easily between the real and the esoteric, through the use of transformation. Dandy discusses Okri's work, in comparison to western thought, when she writes:

The (essentially Western) notion of a single truth or fact is challenged throughout Okri's writing by the assertion of the equal validity of fiction and myth. Thus, dreaming is merely another reality, and emerging from the realm of dreams is simply emerging to a new reality. (27)

As is implied above, African literature and that of "essentially Western" writing value dreams differently. While it is a separate and distinct element within western fiction, it is

simply another part of reality within the writing of postcolonial authors such as Okri. It is necessary, therefore, to take this into account when understanding the experiences of the subconscious of this "remarkably complex combination of cultures" (Jussawalla and Dasenbrock 4), and interpret their dreams accordingly. Thereby we can examine the contemporary societies in which these texts are set, looking beneath the surface, at the truth portrayed through the dream reality.

The Literature of Dreams

The goal of the third eye is to have the confidence to perceive the system and the humility to recognize that the vision of structure is mediated by the eye, in complex, but not altogether random ways. It is to dream of a better life and to embrace art and literature as part of this dream. It is to embrace the uniqueness of the fictional dream's poetry, language and logic. (Cooper, Magical Realism 14)

Being able to see with this third eye is part of Cooper's goal in her research into magical realism. It is the fictional dream which she mentions, that will open the doorway into this research. The texts that I am using in this study all display these experiences of the subconscious, frequently through dreams, but also through hallucination and memory. These experiences are portrayed through magical realism and, for the characters, they are merely another domain of reality that can be entered into as easily as the actual worlds in which they exist.

As I noted earlier, dream theory expresses the idea that dreams reveal unconscious desires that are unacceptable within the given society or culture. Thus, the dreams of the characters in these novels can be taken to express what the author feels about society, yet cannot directly say. There is a need to express sentiments in unobtrusive ways, such as through the use of dreams, within magical realism. "Magical realist texts are subversive: their in-betweenness, their all-at-onceness encourages resistance to monologic political and cultural structures, a feature that has made the mode particularly useful to writers in postcolonial cultures" (Zamora and Faris 6). While none of the authors in this research are directly threatened by censorship, they do express a need to convey the sentiments experienced in the time their novels are set. Okri writes from London, yet is dealing with

the postcolonial emergence of Nigeria into independence, and thus depicts a sense of uncertainty and fear of censorship within the country at the time that his novel is set. Cooper expresses this idea when she writes:

What this suggests is that, through an intellectual process of study, through the awareness of the exploitative role that others who have similar backgrounds to you have played, you can edit the script prepared for you and speak another role, one that understands power and oppression, even where you are powerful, even if you have not been oppressed. (Magical Realism 10)

Therefore, even though writers may not be personally marginalized, they may still be able to speak through the voice of the subaltern, and express their emotions and sentiments. By falling into the role of the marginalized, these writers are also able to convey, through subversion, their hopes for society. For instance, in Okri's The Famished Road, Dad goes to sleep because he is “redreaming the world” (480). This sentiment is also expressed in the theories of Hanna Segal, when she writes:

An effect of dream language is to disguise a distressing experience, but at the same time in the dream language is hidden an unconscious wish to change the painful reality, internal and external, into a glorious raffle. (11)

Thus the dream within the text illustrates the desire for change in societies, which perhaps cannot be expressed openly, as well as a desire to see beneath the surface into the reality of our cultures. This also has implications for African-American literature, as the influence of a black presence in both the formation of the country's history, and subsequently, the formation of a canon of American literature has been essentially ignored (Morrison, Playing 4 – 5, quoted previously). Even though desire for change may have been expressed, it was likely to be ignored, as it was overshadowed by what Morrison identifies as the ‘dominant views of the white male’. Although it may not be censorship as is understood in many African countries, the lack of acknowledgement would doubtless prove to be equally silencing. Thus these writers employ subversive tactics through the use of magical realism and the subconscious forms of dreams and memories.

In order to establish dreams as an element of the mode of magical realism, it is first necessary to ascertain common features of the two. Theorists have pointed out that a number of variations of dreams exist, such as the night dream, which comes about through repressed desires and what Segal calls “day-residue” (4), or the lucid dream, “in which the subject is aware that he is dreaming” (Green 15). Nevertheless, Fromm indicates, “Most of our dreams have one characteristic in common: they do not follow the laws of logic that govern our waking thought. The categories of space and time are neglected.” (15) This is common with what Gaylard refers to as the “nowhere land”:

The nowhere land functions . . . as an embodiment of the dissolution of distinction which is a prerequisite for a wider, larger connection. As a result, space is distorted, enlarged, reduced, folded. The nowhere land is a ‘common place’ spatial analogue for the pausal wellspring of reflective lessons and recreation and therefore, time is also altered (Broken Age 115)

Gaylard moves on to suggest that the “nowhere land” is frequently presented as a “labyrinth or ‘bush of ghosts’”, and he notes that this may be “an appropriate image of the mind” (Broken Age 116). This resonates with an image from Isabel Allende's The House of The Spirits, an example of Latin American magical realist literature:

It was a world in which time was not marked by calendars or watches and objects had a life of their own, in which apparitions sat at the table and conversed with human beings, the past and the future formed part of a single unit, and the reality of the present was a kaleidoscope of jumbled mirrors where everything and anything could happen. (82)

This passage gives a sense of what Gaylard is discussing, and the qualities of this “nowhere land” resonate sharply with the world of dreams that is presented in the theories of Fromm and Segal.

In view of the fact that I am not only discussing dreams within my research, but also hallucination and memory, it seems appropriate to introduce what Segal refers to as “phantasy”. It shares many qualities with dreams, and is discussed a number of times in Segal's work:

One could say that generally for Freud phantasy is pretty close to day-dreaming. It is a wish-fulfilling idea which comes into play when reality is frustrating. (16)

The view of phantasy that I present is that dreaming is but one of the expressions of unconscious phantasy. It has been noted by Freud that phantasies have the same unconscious content, and the same mechanism, the same formation, as dreams. One could say that they use the same language. When Freud discovered dream language, and the dream work, he discovered a dream world and a dream language which are with us whether asleep or awake – the world and the language of unconscious phantasy. (30)

With regard to this “phantasy”, and the theory surrounding it, it is possible to place memory and hallucination within this paradigm. Although they do not fall specifically into the category of dreams, they are compatible with the paradigm of the “phantasy”, set by Segal. This is particularly true when considering this “phantasy” within the context of the literature in which it is placed, and subsequently, within the mode of magical realism.

An important aspect of these modes of “phantasy”, as I remarked earlier, is the symbolism they incorporate and which provides the medium for their interpretation. This then contributes to the idea of dreams being an element used by magical realism. Symbolism is central to this mode of fiction, as Gaylard suggests: “The image or the symbol can provide a link between the ‘real’ world of the known and the otherwise unknown.” (*Broken Age* 104) Additionally, the idea of understanding dreams through symbolism reiterates the need for a culture specific interpretation. Symbols will retain specific meanings for certain cultures, creating a necessity to consider these details whilst interpreting that culture's dreams. Heike Harting discusses the symbolism expressed through the image of the chokecherry tree on Sethe's back, in Morrison's *Beloved*.

The chokecherry tree, whose fruit is poisonous and astringent, mainly occurs in the former American centres of slavery, Virginia and the Carolinas, where it is also called black chokecherry. This indicates a specific location, and therefore history, to which the metaphor refers. (25)

This portrays the concept of culture specific meaning, as the tree holds connotations of a culture of slavery, but would be meaningless, or at least have different connotations,

within, for example, one of Okri's novels. Hence symbolism, through magical realism and dreams, provides a method of portraying a culture specific meaning.

By making use of magical realism, and ultimately, these 'phantasies', to portray culturally relevant symbols, the author is creating a literary technique or device. Through this, s/he can communicate sentiments, or ideologies, that would otherwise remain unsaid, or at least would not provide the same nuance of meaning that the dream provides for the interpretation of the symbol. Memory, within literature, also works as a technique or device, in that it allows the character the opportunity to look back over the past. This serves to supply the reader with information, but is also relevant as the character may now see things differently. In the case of Beloved, Morrison may be suggesting that the past is too painful for the character to directly live, and therefore, translates Sethe's past story through memory, and not in present time. To elaborate, the reader is not directly witnessing Sethe's past, but rather experiences it only through her memory. So too can hallucination be considered in a literary technique, as it too expresses these unconscious desires. As Resnik notes, "In his hypothesis on the dream, Freud stresses the hallucinatory satisfaction of unconscious wishes – the basic notion of the genesis of dreams." (10) It is therefore possible to suggest that hallucination is part of the dream process, which can be witnessed in Welsh's Marabou Stork Nightmares, where many buried truths are expressed through hallucination. In relation to all three of these subconscious literary forms, one can examine the words of Jung: "Everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as a whole." (17) Whether it is manifested through dreams, memory, or hallucination, the purpose remains the same. Thus, these modes of experience can be used as techniques, and they seem particularly suited to magical realism.

This broad literary mode, then, can be found in the novel. In order to work with some breadth in this field, I have chosen a range of texts which allow scope for comparative research. As my four main, comparative texts, I have chosen Ben Okri's The Famished Road, and his Songs of Enchantment. These will be the primary postcolonial African novels which I will be studying. The third and fourth texts are Toni Morrison's Beloved and Irvine Welsh's Marabou Stork Nightmares, respectively. Both of these

novels are connected to Africa, as well as to magical realism. Welsh's narrative includes the visit to Africa, told from a white man's perspective, and part of the protagonist's subconscious reality is played out in the African savannah. Beloved on the other hand, takes place in America, but has strong ties to the African heritage, through the history of the Middle Passage.

All of the primary texts feature strong elements of magical realism, as they frequently move into the world of the subconscious. The Famished Road and Songs of Enchantment are stories rife with spirits, beginning with the protagonist spirit-child, Azaro. It is a novel which constantly combines the world of the real, and that of the supernatural, and often it is unclear where one world ends and the other begins.

The child protagonist of The Famished Road and its sequel Songs of Enchantment, is a character who moves freely between the 'reality' of life in a Nigerian ghetto on the verge of Independence and a supernatural spirit world, and it is through the creation of this role that Okri's narrative is able to flow so easily between the opposing worlds of the 'real' and the spiritual, which he evokes so powerfully in these two texts, and consequently between realist and non-realist modes of writing. (Dandy 24)

Morrison's text similarly moves between the world of the real, and the world seen through the memories of the characters, deconstructing any barrier between the two primary domains in the novel. The spiritual world in Morrison's novel is, likewise, without any distinct boundaries which would separate it from the real. In examining the mode of Morrison's writing, Linden Peach notes that:

Many postmodern and postcolonial writers, even allowing for the complex and contradictory ways in which these labels have been defined, use a variety of techniques to 'speak of the past', many of which are employed by Morrison herself – for example, parallel stories, diverse modes of communication, intertwining the historical with the private and / or the mythical and the 'realistic' with the fantastic. (22)

This indicates that not only does Morrison utilize magical realist technique, but also that of postcolonialism and postmodernism. Miki Flockemann makes the point that North American writers are not generally considered postcolonial, as this is not a third world or developing country. However, "one could argue that marginalized communities within

these countries exist in a Third world relation to the dominant hegemonies." (194) Additionally, Morrison's text displays "strategies developed to give voice to the native /other . . . , and to present "unofficial" histories which subvert the master narratives of dominant discourses" (ibid.). As such, it is possible to consider that Morrison is writing a postcolonial novel.

Welsh, Unlike Okri and Morrison, makes a distinction between the several realms defined in Marabou Stork Nightmares, using techniques such as accent and font size to depict his numerous realities.

I had always thought of my Ma as young and beautiful. Now she seemed to me to look like a twisted haggard old witch, staring out at me from behind a smudged mask of eyeliner. I noted the strands of silver in her long black hair.

She and the rest of them could fuck off. Ah wis going to be strong. Strong Strang. Ah wis gaunny make sure every cunt kent ma fuckin name.

Ah wis gaun . . .

DEEPER

DEEPER into the Marabou Stork nightmares. (89)

Nevertheless, Roy is still capable of moving between the three levels of reality with apparent ease, marking a similarity with magical realist texts, including those of Okri and Morrison.

Despite its origins, Welsh's novel can be seen to exhibit many commonalities with both Okri's and Morrison's work. Brenda Cooper expresses her views on the use of Africa as a setting in novels written from essentially colonial perspectives:

Within the context, however, of the representation of Africa, the search for a kind of authentic symbol, potentially falls back into lack of respect for the concrete reality of the people and the place, for the autonomy of the particular African moment that is being fictionalised. It potentially reverts to stereotype and generalisation, rendering a homogeneous Africa the playing field of European tropes, quests and inner journeys. (Weary Sons 133)

Nevertheless, there are still many elements of magical realism present. One of the most significant aspects of this is the “nowhere land” that Gaylard discusses. “Thus one of the most common fabulist images is that of the land outside of time, the nowhere land, the magical land. . . . the language of the nowhere land, the wilderness, is that of trespass, disorientation and lostness.” (Broken Age 111) This image is particularly strong in Marabou Stork Nightmares, and gives rise to many other fabulist aspects.

A specific explanation of magical realism is provided by Christopher Warnes, who writes that “magical realism [can be] defined as a mode of narration in which natural and supernatural are presented in a state of equivalence with one another.” (102) This is seen to be true within Welsh’s novel, as Roy spends equally proportional amounts of time between his three states of consciousness. Another point worth considering is that Welsh’s novel is not particularly suited to other modes of fiction which may share similarities with magical realism (Zamora and Faris 5-6; Warnes 4), rather it displays far more common features with magical realism itself. With regard to the use of the subconscious in magical realism, it can be clearly seen that Welsh is strongly contesting the norms of the society from within which he writes. This links his writing to postmodernism, and consequently postcolonialism, and while it is doubtful that Welsh could be considered a postcolonialist writer, it is possible to suggest that he is striving to convey his writing as postcolonial. This can be suggested in his use of a Scottish accent.

Whether written from monoglossic, diglossic, or polyglossic cultures, postcolonial writing abrogates the privileged centrality of ‘English’ by using language to signify difference while employing a sameness which allows it to be understood. It does this by employing language variance, the ‘part’ of a wider cultural whole, which assists in the work of language seizure whilst being neither transmuted nor overwhelmed by its adopted vehicle.

The introduction of language variance in this way could be seen to propose a metaphoric entry for the culture into the ‘English’ text. (Ashcroft, The Empire 51)

As with Morrison, this indicates that Welsh is providing a voice with which marginalized societies or cultures can speak out against dominant narratives (Flockemann). Accordingly Welsh, while evidently not postcolonial, may be appropriating postcolonial technique. His aim in doing so could be to convey the sentiment that he is writing through ‘English’ culture, while commenting on it. Consequently, in considering the

tenets of this novel, in relation to those of magical realism, I believe it is possible to accept a reading of this novel as magical realist. This marks Marabou Stork Nightmares as a text worthy of comparison with the novels of Okri and Morrison for numerous reasons. Additionally, it extends the geographical area of study, and therefore furthers the idea of examining literary dreams and magical realism in a transcultural context.

In order to establish this comparative level throughout this research, it is first necessary to create a grounding for the comparison. It is in this vein that I have chosen to start with the novels of Okri. They will be examined for their use of magical realism in the postcolonial African novel, by the exploration of various themes that run throughout both texts. This will be reinforced by the inclusion of the study of dreams and the esoteric in both novels. I hope to thereby ascertain that Okri's utilisation of dreams in magical realism provides an indepth look at the society of Nigeria, uncovering the hidden truths of this emergent independent culture. Through examining these two novels, it is also possible to gain insight into Okri's view of postcolonial Nigeria, and his hopes for this country's future. It becomes apparent throughout these texts that Okri offers a certain hope for the emerging modernity, as he suggests that while elements of the past may be lost, it is still possible to integrate more traditional aspects of life with the more modern, thereby creating a new identity, from both the past and the present.

The following chapter, focusing on Morrison, will explore the use of magical realism in Beloved, by examining how it works through memory, within the African-American culture. Morrison uses the idea of community to establish a sense of a re-telling of an African-American history which in turn serves to create a new identity within this culture. This new identity, as in Okri, does not ignore the past, but rather includes it to generate a new realisation of self. This novel will work as a comparison to Okri, by examining the same themes that were discussed in the first chapter. Thus this chapter will both research Morrison's use of magical realism and memory, and continue to establish these novels and literary devices as transcultural.

The final chapter on Welsh is a discussion of magical realism and primarily hallucination, but also memory and dreams. Welsh's writing examines more the individual than the community, but is also concerned with the comprehension and realisation of one's own identity. He achieves this by examining, and challenging,

modern society, by using techniques that include the use of the subconscious, which can be seen as magical realist. Again, this creates yet another comparison with Okri and Morrison, and further enhances the idea of a transcultural use of magical realism within these novels.

By examining certain similarities within these four novels, it is possible to depict a transcultural, literary use of magical realism and subconscious states, and while the esoteric is not always directly linked to the subconscious, there are many common factors between these two realms. Even though interpretation may differ between cultures, the use of dreams, or 'phantasy', in these novels works to convey a sense of the unseen realities hidden within our societies. The subconscious, magical worlds of the texts examine the inner worlds of the protagonists, and through them, their surrounding culture. The dreaming becomes a vehicle of cultural experience for both the individual and the community. As with *Beloved*, the past is often recalled through the subconscious in forms of either dreams or memories, and this too is relevant to the study of the texts and the cultures. Within all of these narratives, the image of the journey stands out strongly. While in the novels there is evidence of physical journeys undertaken by the characters, there is also the portrayal of a spiritual journey, a journey of, and into, the self. This is greatly aided by the concept of the dream, the memory, and hallucination, which all depict a journey of and into, the most inner subconscious self.

Chapter 1:

The Language of Magical Realism in Ben Okri's Novels

The Famished Road has been read as heir to a tradition of Nigerian writing of which Fagunwa, Tutuola and Soyinka are the most significant exemplars; . . . and as sharing commonalities with the projects of a global set of writers who engage non-realist narrative strategies, especially magical realism, in their writings. (Warnes 103)

Okri's use of magical realism in his novels The Famished Road and Songs of Enchantment serves to communicate to the reader the idea of a combination of worlds. Okri tackles issues of modernity, for example, the questioning of identity and knowledge, through the device of dreams. He is consequently suggesting that, while these issues must be dealt with by the country as a whole, the use of indigenous religious beliefs and spirituality need not be discarded. This is the main focus of my discussion in the following chapter: Okri's use of dreams, as a central part of his magical realist technique, and what purpose they serve in his viewpoint of postcolonial Nigeria. At one level, these dreams require a culturally specific reading as they continually link the traditional and the modern, to provide the reader with an understanding of Okri's hope for postcolonial Nigeria. At another level, however, these dreams can be linked to a broader understanding of culture and society, to further the concept of magical realism and dreams as transcultural.

The world of Okri's novels is not an easy one to grasp by any means. The Famished Road and its sequel Songs of Enchantment take place in a poverty-ridden area of Nigeria, presumably a compound in one of the cities. Although no specific time frame is provided, it is set on the verge of independence. The political powers in the novels, The Party of the Rich and the Party of the Poor, are fighting for dominance in the area. The colonial period is drawing to a close, yet there is still an influence from it. This does not show itself as political, yet makes itself felt throughout the novels in other ways. Modernity is asserting pressure on the country in its own ways, such as through the increase in the use of technology, and the decrease of the forest. The more traditional way of life is struggling to remain in place in Nigeria, as can be seen in the retaliation of

nature on the road that is being built, and through the presence of the spirits. The realms of the supernatural and the real are in a continual state of oscillation with one another. Azaro remains in the interstice between the two realms, as he is an *abiku*, a spirit-child, who has the ability to move between realms and through dreams, through no volition of his own. Rather it is inherent in his character as a spirit-child, who continually moves in a cycle of life and death. He is constantly haunted by his spirit-companions who try ceaselessly, and with no sense of morality, to get him to return to them in their spirit world. Dad and Mum work continually in order to afford a livelihood. They are troubled by Azaro's disappearances and illnesses, throughout both novels, and are themselves indisposed periodically. Madame Koto is many things in the novel, including a friend at some points, a witch at others, and a politician. These features, and others, create, on one hand, a sense of the hybridity that is postcolonial Nigeria. On the other hand these elements reveal a complicated narrative, where people struggle to understand themselves as well as the environment in which they live, where people try to come to terms with identity, and where their knowledge is questioned by the continual shifting of boundaries. Okri uses this work to explore a new age in Nigeria, where the past is no longer certain, and the future even less so, but where a new identity can be discovered.

This new identity is, in part, influenced by the precolonial traditions of this culture, and there are numerous critical texts establishing both dreams and the supernatural as central elements of an African tradition. There are strong beliefs in the existence of ancestors, and spirits, who inhabit a supernatural realm in this world. Thus they are able to contact and be contacted through the devices of dreams and visions. Nelson Hayashida elaborates on African religions in general, saying:

However material and concrete African religions appear at first glance, they are spiritual religions. Africans integrate with their total environment. Both physical and spiritual become possible as people relate to the ancestors, the divinities and to God. (41)

Okri is therefore drawing on traditional African beliefs through the use of dreams and the supernatural. He deals with a combining of worlds in his two novels, by examining Nigeria as it emerges from colonialism into postcolonialism, and with this, independence and modernity.

This modernity is not solely based in western modes of thought, even though it may seem to be dominated by them, but it is also linked to postcolonialism itself. As Stefan Helgesson suggests, the metropolis and the colony should not be seen as opposites, but rather connected through "a broader historical process, [which] links colony to modernity" (2). This is one of the more extensive topics in the following research, as a recurring question arises through the work of Okri: how does a newly independent country come to terms with issues that emerge through modernity, such as the questioning of both knowledge and identity? Helgesson quotes Marshall Berman, in an apt depiction of this African modernity:

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the new world . . . and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. (5)

This is one of the central dilemmas that Okri faces in these two novels, as he continually poses two contrasting elements and then combines them in a deconstruction of the paradigms which the characters face. In this way his ambiguity is not perplexing, but deliberate, as he suggests to the reader that a solution lies in the combining of worlds, rather than loss of one for the gain of another. He is constantly reminding the reader that the traditional need not be lost, but modernity can no longer be ignored, and thus a compromise is required. This compromise can be seen in the ever-changing and fluid development of an African tradition, and an African identity. In this manner Okri expresses a new hope for Nigeria in the combining of worlds and the discovery of new possibilities.

Before I begin, there are a number of points which require noting. Firstly, Okri's second novel, Songs of Enchantment, is generally given far less literary credit than its predecessor. This is due, I believe, to its ethical implications which denote everything as more moralistically oppositional than The Famished Road, where Okri is far more suggestive of issues rather than overtly moralistic. While I acknowledge this criticism, the second novel still aids this research in examining Okri's use of magical realism, and by extension, dreams. He may be using this device to create a sense of morality, yet his use of magical realism and dreams will nevertheless enhance this study. As such, I have

included this text in my work, and I move between both novels continually, in order to establish how Okri uses the techniques of dreams in magical realism.

Secondly, although Okri does not make use of dreams exclusively within his narratives, he does perceive the dream as another realm. We can consequently presuppose that he views them in much the same way that he would the supernatural. Thereby, the dream and supernatural realms within these two novels are simultaneously representative of the esoteric and the elements thus attached to magical realism. Quayson makes use of the term, esoteric, in looking at the duality of the real and supernatural within Okri's first novel (Strategic 102), and by using this term periodically throughout this work, I am indicating that it represents the liminal area between the tangible real and the domain of the spirit world, as well as the spirit world itself.

Thirdly, there are several different themes running throughout the novels, and as such, some may pertain significantly to more than one section within the subchapters on this area of research. Thus while I may continuously re-examine a number of these themes, it is to ensure that substantial emphasis is placed on these particular ideas within the various subchapters.

Ultimately, this chapter will serve as a basis for the comparison running throughout this work, and as such I hope to establish the primary assumptions on which this research is based. Thus, through this chapter, I hope to prove that it is possible to show that magical realism and the dreams of the characters in the novels, are an attempt to depict an underlying truth about the society being explored, and its complex identity.

The Experiences of the Subconscious within Okri's Novels

Dreams are part of reality. The best fiction has the effect on you that dreams do. The best fiction can become dreams which can influence reality. Dreams and fiction blur the boundaries. They become part of your experience, your life. That interests me. Dreams interest me. (Okri qtd in Wilkinson 82 - 83)

These are the words of Ben Okri, from an interview in 1990, after he had finished writing The Famished Road. Many of the sentiments that he expresses above are echoed in this novel, and its sequel, Songs of Enchantment. In both novels, the dream, and the

supernatural come across as being another realm within the world in which we live. Through the use of dreams, Okri achieves a number of things. The dreams and visions enhance the use of magical realism, while they serve to infuse the novels with a sense of tradition and custom. At the same time, they examine the consequences of modernity, thereby indicating a combination of worlds within postcolonial Nigeria.

Azaro, as a spirit-child, has no difficulty moving fluidly between the supernatural domain and that of the real. There are a number of passages which display this ability of Azaro's, taking place mainly in the forest and the marketplace.

Dad told me to stay there and wait for him. He went off and I listened to his footsteps recede into the forest.

A yellow wind stirred the leaves. Branches cracked. An animal cried out. . . . I waited. Noises accumulated in the forest. An owl flew over my head and watched me from a branch. . . . I waited, motionless. It began to drizzle. . . . A crack sounded, like a tree splitting, and I saw the owl falling, as though it had been shot in the mid-air of a dream. It landed on the earth and struggled, wings flapping feebly. Then it turned into a little pool of yellow water and evaporated into the air. (TFR 38 - 39)

Although the original passage is far more extensive, this extract serves to illustrate a number of points. Firstly, Azaro can easily move between the world of the real, and that of the supernatural. He is simply doing as his father says, and becomes a witness to these esoteric occurrences. Thus these two realms are not distinct spaces but merge into one another. Dandy describes these worlds, that of the "real" and the spiritual, as "opposing spaces [that] are by no means static, but are in a constant state of flux, expanding and contracting their pressures on the other so as to exist in a state of conflict." (24) She moves on to suggest that this conflict is representative of the larger conflict between the traditions of Africa and the west, a point which I will discuss later.

Another element of magical realism that is revealed in this extract is that, as Quayson suggests, Azaro is not consciously responsible for his entering into the esoteric. Rather, it is something that happens to him.

For Azaro the problem is that he does not always enter or exit these realms through acts of his own volition. The matter is often entirely out of his control. Rather, a spirit potential is posited

as inhering in all things and this potential is shown to be able to manifest itself arbitrarily. Because the narrative is focalised through the consciousness of the *abiku* child who is himself radically decentred, the whole work has a shifting and unsettling quality. ("Esoteric Webwork" 150)

This also reiterates Dandy's perceptions from the extract above, that these realms are constant, but their forces are continually fluctuating. Nonetheless, Azaro does enter into the interstices of other realms, not only while he is awake, but also through dreams and visions.

Throughout his novels, Okri uses dreams, to achieve many different objectives. The most obvious perhaps, is the dreams of the characters which allow them hope. Okri begins The Famished Road in the spirit world, and Azaro mentions that,

There are many reasons why babies cry when they are born, and one of them is the sudden separation from the world of pure dreams, where all things are made of enchantment, and where there is no suffering. (TFR 4)

Their world is obviously one of happiness, with an "aquamarine air of love" (ibid.), without the suffering of reality. Right from the start, Okri is asserting an idea of dreams as vehicles of hope, which have the ability to offer a new reality to people. Dad's re-dreaming of the world, towards the end of the first novel, displays a different means by which he could, and indeed tried to, offer a new hope to the people. His dream was to build a university for the beggars, and teach everyone to write, so that they would not have to be oppressed by those with power.

Azaro uses this idea of "re-dreaming" in the beginning of Songs of Enchantment, where he states that, "sometimes we have to re-dream our lives" (3). Besides suggesting an idea of the dream as being a hope or desire within the community, Okri makes use of the dream state in order to instil in the reader the notion of dreams as a vehicle of change. This hints at the idea of people changing the world for themselves, people recognizing "that there are more things to be done, dreams to be realised" (ibid.). Okri here, seems to be making a social statement through this abstract notion of dreams, that people cannot sit idly by, when they have a responsibility to themselves and their society or culture.

Apart from these more abstract meanings of the dream, there are also various episodes in the novels that deal with the actual dreams that Azaro experiences. It is necessary to clarify one point at the outset of this discussion, namely that while we may hear of Dad's dream, or enter Mum's, it is always told through Azaro. Azaro narrates to us what Dad tells him of his long dream at the end of The Famished Road, and we enter into Mum's dream, only because Azaro does so. We are even witness to Ade's vision of the future, because he involves Azaro in this vision. This occurs periodically throughout the novels, when Azaro experiences the dreams and visions of others.

All the lights in the houses along our street were off but I knew that no one was asleep. I knew it because there were no dreams floating about in that moon-dominated air. Usually dreams floated from their dreamers and entered the mind of other sleeping forms. Sometimes dreams were transferred from one person to another. I remember once entering the dream of the carpenter's wife, . . . who was dreaming the dreams of the tailor across the road who found himself in a land of birds (SOE 255)

In this passage, Azaro discusses dreams as tangible occurrences that can be seen and felt, albeit he may be the only character, that the reader is aware of, who can experience this. Yet this does reinforce Okri's viewpoint that dreams are a part of reality. More importantly, as far as the social implication is concerned, this extract depicts dreams as communal. They float around from one consciousness to the next, and become a part of everyone's thoughts. I feel that here, Okri is implying that the dreams that offer a new hope are the dreams of the community, suggesting a process of social growth and change.

The dreams in these novels assume many different forms, from visions to lucid dreams to hallucinations. While a variety of dreams will be discussed within this research, I hope to create a broad overview of some of the uses of dreams within the work of Okri, as well as the role of dreams in the structure of the book, from the following examples. This next dream sequence occurs towards the end of the first novel, when Mum is trying to find Dad while he sleeps.

I lay down, shut my eyes, and sleep came to me in the form of green moths. I followed them into Mum's dreams. It came as a shock to me to find myself in her dreams. She was a young woman, fresh and beautiful, with a white bird on her shoulder. She had antimony on her face,

magic charms round her neck, and a pearl on a string round her left ankle. She was wandering through a sepia-tinted village, looking for Dad. She saw him up a tree. She climbed the tree, but Dad jumped down and ran to the river. . . . Mum stood at the river-bank, preparing to jump in when I touched her. She was angry and said:

‘Get out of my dream. I’m trying to draw back your father’s spirit.’

I didn’t know how to leave. (TFR 478 – 479)

Although many interpretations and meanings can be derived from this dream sequence, for my purpose it serves to demonstrate, firstly, how Azaro is drawn into the dreams of others. He falls asleep and finds himself within his mother’s dream, through no conscious effort on his part. As he points out, it was a shock to find himself there, and he did not know how to leave the dream, implying that his presence is not deliberate. The second important factor is that this depicts how the dream only appears through Azaro, even though it is Mum’s dream. The reader is made a witness to the dream, but not through Mum.

Towards the end of Songs of Enchantment, Dad has a dream that he shares with Azaro and Mum. Again, this is narrated through Azaro, as Dad tells him the dream, and we receive it through Azaro.

‘Last night,’ he said, ‘I dreamt I was in a world of rainbows. There were beautiful trees everywhere and they knew the hidden cures for all human diseases. The trees could talk and they were telling me their life stories when a tall man with no eyes in his head came up to me and said: “Do you remember me?” “No,” I replied. Then he smiled and went away. A long time passed as I watched him go. Then people appeared and began to cut down the trees. The rainbows started to fade. The world became darker. (264)

The dream continues until the trees, and the rainbows, are no more. There is a visionary feel to this particular dream, as Okri is suggesting that this will happen with time. He is urging people to understand the possibilities of the future, and what changes may occur, even though it may be too late to stop these changes.

In both of the above dreams, there is a sense of community. In the latter it is obvious, as this dream has implications for the entire community, in that they may all be losing this world of beauty. In the former, however, it is slightly more obscure, as Mum

is searching for Dad, who is lost in his own dreams, in order to ensure that he does not get lost in this realm. This idea of individuals helping one another through the use of the subconscious recurs throughout both novels. In Songs of Enchantment, for example, "the whole community was dreaming [Dad] on towards [their] universal deliverance" (276).

Okri also makes use of visions and hallucinations within these novels to much the same end as he does dreams. They reveal elements of the esoteric, but also images of the past and future. After Azaro has escaped from spirits trying to kidnap him, he is walking down a road, tired and hungry, when he finds a plate of food that is an offering to the road:

I was so hungry that I ate what I could of the offerings to the road and afterwards my stomach swelled and visions of road-spirits, hungry and annoyed, weaved in my brain. . . .

The roads seemed to me then to have a cruel and infinite imagination. All the roads multiplied, reproducing themselves, turning in on themselves, like snakes, tails in their mouths, twisting themselves into labyrinths the road was the worst hallucination of them all, leading towards home and then away from it, without end, with too many signs, and no directions. (TFR 114 – 115)

One of the more prominent images in this extract is the road depicted as snakes, almost as a seething mass, which has African connotations. Again, this produces the conflict between Africa and the west, as the road is a symbol, often negative, of civilisation, while the snakes clearly represent Africa. Perhaps the road is also suggestive, as a symbol of the west, as having no particular direction, and while there may be plenty of signs, they do not lead anywhere in particular. Referring to this extract, Cooper notes that "the recent colonial road has brought a crisis of identity and direction." (Magical Realism 78) Thus Azaro finds himself "merely walking to discover where all the roads lead to, where they end." (TFR 115) This ambiguity surrounding the symbol of the road is indicative of confusion in the postcolonial African state, where the identities of old are questioned, and direction is uncertain. An image which relates to this sentiment, which Gaylard also focuses on, is that of the labyrinth, which he says, "is not a closed system. Moreover, the labyrinth is associated with the darkly wonderful and underworldly and is full of tricks, turnings, cul-de-sacs and surprises . . . perhaps an appropriate image of the

mind" (*Broken Age* 116). While this yet again points out the fluidity of the realms of the real and esoteric, it also suggests connotations with the mind, suggesting that this is a "phantasy" (Segal).

The vision, as a technique, is also used to cross boundaries of time, as is displayed one evening outside Madame Koto's bar:

I was standing there in the calm field of moonlight, . . . when I felt a concussive light in my head . . . In the horrible brilliance of that moment it seemed I crossed a threshold, a time boundary, adventuring into chaos and sunlight. Still spinning, I was startled by voices behind me. And when I turned around it was suddenly broad daylight. The afternoon sun was burning on the surviving bushes. The streets were populated with people I had never seen. Cars went up and down the perplexing crisscross of roads, blasting their horns. . . . Then Ade came up to me, his face long and lean, his eyes mischievous.

'What has happened?' I asked.

'Look,' he said, pointing at the chaotic grouping of bungalows and zinc abodes.

'Look at what?' I asked.

'The forest has disappeared,' he said, smiling in an irritating, almost patronising manner.

(*SOE* 105 – 106)

A prominent element of this vision is that Azaro, and Ade it seems, are witness to this image of the future. Throughout the novels, there is talk of construction work being done on the road, and trees begin to disappear, yet in this extract the entire forest has disappeared. Thus, this is clearly an image of what the future may hold for Nigeria. This vision indicates the blurring of boundaries within time, as Azaro slips between past, present and future, as easily as he does between real and supernatural. The implication of the vision, however, is that a way of life is disappearing in Nigeria. The forest in both novels, is symbolic of the supernatural, which is in turn a symbol of Africa and its cultural heritage. Okri is indicating here, that a more culturally orientated African way of life is being torn down to make way for a future of modernity, which is ultimately dominated by the west. It is this dominance that will inevitably lead to the destruction of the natural world, which is inextricably tied up with the world of spirituality.

Thus dreams, visions and hallucinations can be taken as literary devices within the novels, but also as part of a representation of an African tradition, as they are an integral

part of African culture. As Chinkwita notes: "Communication with ancestors through dreams plays a critical role in African culture. Dreams provide a medium through which the living may come in contact with the invisible or spirits." (60) Within this tradition that Chinkwita refers to then, these subconscious elements are merely another realm of reality. This is depicted in Okri's novel through Azaro, who moves fluidly from reality to supernatural, to dreams, to visions, of his own, of others, of the past, and of the future. The dreams and magical realism establish a sense of African tradition and community, by moving through both reality and the esoteric. Okri also strives, through the use of dreams as vehicles of hope, and through the actual dreams of characters, to build inspiration for Nigeria, in this time of confusion and questioned identity. These dreams, when combined with the encroaching modernity and technology, lead to an idea of a postcolonial African identity, which is a culmination of both the past and the future. One of the themes that Okri uses in this capacity is that of the road. It is used, through magical realism, to present this complicated array of worlds. In this way Okri illustrates his use of dreams and magical realism, to express his views of postcolonial Nigeria.

To exemplify Okri's earlier statement (Wilkinson 82 – 83), the supernatural, including the dream, is as much a part of reality for him, as being awake. Okri also believes that fiction can, like dreams, influence reality, and that is what his books move towards, a social awareness, and a new cultural identity. He partially achieves this through his fictional dreams, and the dream's deconstruction of the boundaries between reality and the esoteric.

The Fluidity of Boundaries

Magical realism strives, with greater or lesser success, to capture the paradox of the unity of opposites; it contests polarities such as history versus magic, the pre-colonial past versus the post-industrial present and life versus death. Capturing such boundaries between spaces is to exist in a third space, in the fertile interstices between these extremes of time or space (Cooper, Magical Realism 1)

This introduces a fundamental part within Okri's work, namely the many oppositions within the texts, presented through magical realism, which includes the

element of dreams. Okri frequently introduces these paradoxes, while at the same time, he allows for their boundaries to merge and blur, creating a destabilising affect. This deconstruction is used by Okri to suggest a need for the establishment of a new identity in Nigeria, which is a combination of seemingly opposing entities.

One of the more apparent oppositions is that between tradition and modernity, which is frequently compared to the opposition of the supernatural or dream world to that of reality. African heritage is steeped in belief in the supernatural as well as that of dreams, thus this binary opposition is closely linked to the destabilisation of the esoteric/dream world and that of reality. Tradition and modernity is also associated, respectively, with Africa and the West. While this is literally present within the novel, it is also noticeable, as I have suggested before, through the inscribing of African heritage into the colonial novel. To begin with, the presence of the West is depicted in the novel through the encroaching of modernity and technology, for example, on the forest.

Each day the area seemed different. Houses appeared where parts of the forest had been. –
There were signboards on trees. The world was changing and I went on wandering as if everything would always be the same. (TFR 104)

Later, Azaro has a vision of what this encroachment of the future could mean for Nigeria:

All around, in the future present, a mirage of houses was being built, paths and roads crossed and surrounded the forest in tightening circles, . . . There were birds' nests on the earth and the eggs within them were smashed, had fallen out, had mingled with the leaves and the dust, and the little birds within the cracked eggs half-formed and dried up, dying as they were emerging into a hard, miraculous world. Ants swarmed all over them. (TFR 242)

The poignant reality in this vision is that technology is destroying a way of life in Nigeria, and the ants seem representative of an indifferent reaction towards this destruction, which is as inescapable as colonialism. Throughout the novel there are many subtle indications of the modern influence within the country. It is apparent in the story that Mum tells Azaro, concerning a white man, who asks her how he can leave the country. She says she will help him, in exchange for his sunglasses. The sunglasses represent a number of concepts, according to Cooper. Firstly, they indicate hybridisation

between the old ways and the new, in that they symbolise “the masks of old syncretized with the changes brought by whites and by colonialism.” (Magical Realism 72) But, says Cooper,

the blue sunglasses are more than a simple reincarnation of the ancient mask. The sunglasses are, in fact, . . . a product of Western science and provide relief and comfort to Mum, whose hard days in the burning sun of the market are ameliorated by them. (Magical Realism 74 - 75)

Okri's stance is ambiguous in these instances as he is condoning the usefulness of western technology, yet also inscribing a traditional element on to the image. Although it comes across as an image that combines western and indigenous cultures, Mum has obviously gained both ‘relief and comfort’ through the use of western technology.

Another strong image of the combination of indigenous and western cultures, manifests itself in the form of the photographer's camera. It is obviously a product of western technology, yet Okri depicts elements of the supernatural through it.

When the camera flashed, followed by an odd explosion, ghosts emerged from the light and melted, stunned, at his feet. I screamed. The crowd laughed. The photographer took five pictures in all and ghosts kept falling at his feet, dazed by the flash. When he went to his studio to drop off his camera, the ghosts followed him. When he came back they weren't with him. He joined the boisterous merriment and got wonderfully drunk. (TFR 45 - 46)

The camera is obviously representative of the west, while the ghosts are part of an African heritage. By combining the two opposing images, Okri shifts the borders between Africa and the west. This image, therefore, illustrates how the real and the supernatural merge together, not as two separate entities, but rather as two parts of a whole.

Again, Okri's symbol of the road, which is in itself a paradox, represents both the encroaching western civilisation, as well as part of the African heritage. The novel begins with the lines:

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. (TFR 3)

This last sentence can be seen to imply that the road, as a colonial symbol, is devouring the African tradition. Cezair-Thompson takes another approach in her discussion of these first few lines.

The rotation of definite and indefinite articles (*a* river becomes *the* river which becomes *a* road which then becomes *the* road, harking back to that time when there was once *a* river), is language which subtly chooses the cyclical transformations of myth over the chronological sequence of history . . . The transformation that Okri describes is self-transformation. The road has not been built by anyone in particular; it simply 'becomes'. . . . But there is an even deeper irony here than the undermining of the road's function as a colonialist symbol. The origin of the "famished road" lies in myth, not history. And so the fate of colonialism in The Famished Road is that, not only is it disqualified in its claim to be a devouring force, colonialism itself becomes devoured, as mythopoeia overwrites history. (34 – 35)

This serves to demonstrate the African connection to the road, marking it as an African symbol, which includes several connotations of western culture. The paradox then, is that the symbol of the road represents these oppositions, while at the same time working to destabilise preconceived notions of this paradigm. As such, it also provides a lack of identity, within this postcolonial culture, as people struggle to come to terms with, perhaps not the loss of one system, or the gaining of another, but the incorporation of one into another. Within all of these images, the indigenous and the western are not two separate components, rather, the images combine these two extremes and blur the boundaries.

Okri's optimism in his use of the road as a symbol contrasts with Soyinka's deployment of the road in his play of that name. Biodun Jeyifo has pointed out that Soyinka's reference is to a bleak model of colonial and neocolonial society, "where the lies, the hypocrisies, and above all, the violence of *this* society stand most clearly revealed." (Truthful Lie 21) Okri however, infuses a sense of hope through his combination of both colonial and traditional in his symbolic usage of the road.

Another component of the opposition between Africa and the West comes through in Okri's writing. As Cooper points out, Okri left Nigeria at a young age to study abroad, yet his "work remains steeped in indigenous images and West African oral culture, as

well as in his sense of the transformations, degradations and poverty of his native Lagos.” (Magical Realism 67) Thus, his use of indigenous, traditional elements works to undermine the opposition, of tradition and modernity, within the novel. Dandy describes this aspect of Okri’s work, in relation to both magical realism, and Azaro, the spirit-child.

It is through the creation of this role [of the spirit-child] that Okri’s narrative is able to flow so easily between the opposing worlds of the ‘real’ and the spiritual, . . . and consequently between realist and non-realist modes of writing. These worlds are portrayed as separate (and yet at times overlapping) physical spaces in the novel, . . . expanding and contracting their pressures on the other so as to exist in a state of conflict, and this conflict echoes the essential dichotomy between the narrative traditions of Africa and the West which is discernible throughout Okri’s writing. (24-25)

The use of this “non-realist” mode works to destabilise the construct of a western realist canon of writing, as it combines these two realms. It is particularly important to point out that Okri does not try to work against the dominant form of colonialist literature, but rather uses it to establish a sense of Africa within its context, creating a form of writing similar to what Boehmer calls “cosmopolitan narrative” (Colonial 242). And, as Cezair-Thompson suggests,

The decolonisation of African literature, if it is to be a genuine movement and not the forum for a continuing engagement with the colonial legacy, must therefore not negate but rather subsume colonial history into the greater continuum of African history and African narrative whose beginning and end were never ‘imagined’ by colonialist writers. (34)

Thus it is possible to distinguish both the precolonial and colonial elements within the works of Okri, as he absorbs colonial history into the narrative of Africa. The use of narrative aids in the blurring of this opposition, as it is a form used within the oral tradition of African storytelling. Simon Gikandi mentions that, “as Ngugi wa Thiong’o has aptly observed, although the African novel is a borrowed form, its greatest debt to our oral tradition is narrative.” (Reading x) Once again, the boundaries are intermingled through the literary techniques that are used, allowing these texts to exist within the third space that Cooper discusses.

The next primary opposition, that between life and death, is central to these novels, as well as to the theory of dreams, as Resnik explains the link between life and death, dreaming and being awake: "To dream, to sleep, to close one's eyes to everyday life is also an experience of death, a journey to an unknown world from which one is never sure that one will return." (21) Okri explains his views on this opposition in an interview with Jane Wilkinson, although in this instance he is referring particularly to The Famished Road, which had recently been published:

One of the central oppositions in the book is the choice between living and dying. Remember there's a pact at the beginning with [Azaro's] spirit companions. This can be interpreted in many ways; I don't want to go into that now. What I'm trying to say is that because of the unique nature of his consciousness he is accompanied by certain forces. Madame Koto perceives him as a lucky child, as a magnet . . . What seems like a constant attempt to pin down his identity is just that all of these different phenomena are different attempts to pull him one way or another: towards life or towards death. And it is part of his choice that he always has to move towards life. (84)

Azaro's choice, however, is further complicated by his existence between two contrasting worlds: one of "pure dreams", and the other of poverty and suffering. Nevertheless, Okri notes that while suffering is a god in the latter world, "he's not the supreme deity. The higher deity is joy." (Wilkinson 85) This opposition relates to the entire country, which as Gurnah puts it, "can choose between dying or holding on to stay the course of Independence." (166) In my opinion, the novel voices its hope for the country when Azaro's friend, Ade, says: "Our country is an abiku country. Like the spirit-child, it keeps coming and going. One day it will decide to remain. It will become strong." (TFR 478) Although it will take a long time, the country, like Azaro, will choose to stay, and Okri is depicting this aspect of the society through the opposition faced by the spirit-child. The resistance of the country is portrayed through Azaro's choice to withstand the suffering, and not return to the spirit world. This opposition is not without irony, however, as Azaro is seldom without help, when he is required to choose between life and death. Thus the decision is not truly his, but instead falls to those who encourage him to live. For instance, in the beginning of the novel, he is captured by a cult of women, and although it is his intention to escape, he cannot do so by himself. Instead, he does so with the help of

a captive woman. When he is living with the policeman, he attempts to escape, as well as appealing to his mother to come and save him, and it is only through his mother and her efforts, that he is able to leave. On one occasion, at Madame Koto's bar, Azaro is given a pen-knife by a midget, and then he forgets about it. Later on that evening, he is kidnapped by spirits, and is to be taken back to his spirit companions.

When I had fought and my energy was exhausted and I couldn't do anything, I called to our great king, and I said:

'I do not want to die.'

I had hardly finished when the figure of the king appeared to me again and dissolved into the face of the midget. . . . Suddenly, I remembered the pen-knife the midget had given me and began another struggle to find it. I searched my pockets. I searched the sack, and couldn't find it. My fear became unbearable. Then a quietness came over me. I gave up. I accepted my destiny.

. . . I felt something metallic like a frozen fish banging against my head. It was the pen-knife. I wasted no time in cutting myself out. (IFR 112)

Again, it is through the assistance of someone else, in this case a stranger and quite possibly a spirit, that Azaro is able to survive. I am not suggesting here that Azaro does not choose life over death, but that he requires assistance in the fulfilment of this decision. It could be suggestive of his *abiku* nature, that he may not be able to fully defy death, or perhaps Okri is emphasising the necessity for Nigeria to work as a community in order to survive, and shape modernity, as well as retain elements from its past. Nevertheless, Okri once again blurs these boundaries between life and death, through the aid provided by the other characters. In so doing he is stressing the need for a communal effort in order for Nigeria to sustain this new identity.

The binary paradigm of light and dark forms the basis for this next opposition, which illustrates a number of components of magical realism, such as the real versus the spiritual, and dream realms. The world of spirits is represented through darkness, while the realm of the real is shown to the reader as light, and as Dandy aptly notes, "the battle between the worlds is a battle of light and dark" (31). It is equally significant that the forest is presented with dark overtones, as it is seen as the realm of the spirits within the

novels. When Azaro steals the fetish from Madame Koto's bar, he runs into the forest and experiences this element of darkness:

It was rapidly getting dark. The wind blew hard through the trees. Trees groaned, branches cracked, and the wind among the leaves sounded like a distant waterfall. Pods exploded from on high and one of them fell on my head, like a mighty knock, and I dropped to the ground. In the silence and darkness that came over me I found myself riding the invisible horse of the night. (TFR 138)

Thus, the image presented, is one of dark, noisy mystery, appropriate for the realm of the spirits. Throughout the novel, the dark is referred to almost as an entity, with its own power. This becomes more noticeable in Madame Koto's bar, which can be perceived as the border between the real and spiritual worlds. On two occasions at the bar, this ability of the dark is noted. Firstly, "The darkness outside spread indoors" (TFR 223), and later, Azaro is "watching the night spread its power over the sky." (TFR 249) Both instances portray the dark as having the power to move where it will. By doing this Okri is establishing the spirit world as having an authority of its own, which cannot be dismissed easily.

In The Famished Road, Okri stresses the point that boundaries tend to become blurred. The literary foundations of Africa and the West combine in this novel, shifting the boundaries of one another. Azaro may choose to remain with his parents instead of returning to his spirit companions, but he remains a spirit-child, able to travel into the world of the spirits. This again blurs the borders between the real and the spirit worlds. In regard to the light/dark opposition, Gaylard writes, "As in realism, fabulism is concerned with images of light and dark, but here the two interpenetrate to give images of black light, . . . Thus the virtual image of fabulism is a pixelated negative." (Broken Age 118) This becomes apparent in the novel, through one of Azaro's dreams, filled with contradicting lights and darks:

I seemed to scatter in all directions. I became leaves lashed by the winds of recurrence. I felt myself falling through an unbearable immensity of dark spaces and a sharp diamond agony tugged deep inside my lightness and I tried to re-enter myself but seemed diverted into a tide of total night and I fought and tried to be calm and then I felt myself falling with horrible

acceleration into a dark well and just before I hit the bottom I noticed that I was falling into the face of a luminous moon. The whiteness swallowed me and turned to darkness. (TFR 188)

This depicts the contrasts used between light and dark within the novel. There are several themes present within this extract, such as the spaces that he encounters, and the “winds of recurrence” which reflect the cycles within the text. Nevertheless, the central theme here is that of light and dark. As Gaylard suggested, the images are neither white nor black. Rather, they are a combination of the two, blurring the boundary, and deconstructing the opposition.

The Zimbabwean, Charles Mungoshi, presents another interpretation of this fluidity between light and dark in his short story, “Shadows on the Wall”. It deals with the life of young boy, in a rural village, and when he becomes unhappy due to the domestic situation at home, he turns to the shadows on the wall. He is able to distinguish patterns and voices amidst the shadows, and throughout the story, the images represented through the shadows are indicative of his emotions. He falls ill, remarking later that “I had given myself to the shadows.” (39) This next extract demonstrates how this world of shadows is portrayed.

I don't know how many days I was in bed. There seemed to be nothing. No light, no sun, to show it was day or darkness to show it was night. Mother was constantly in but I couldn't recognize her as a person. There were only shadows, the voices of the shadows, the lonely ories of the dripping wet fowls shaking the cold out of their feathers by the hearth, and the vague warm shadow that must have been mother. She spoke to me often but I don't remember if I answered anything. I was afraid to answer because I was alone on a solitary plane with the dark crashing of thunder and lightning always in my ears, and there was a big frightening shadow hovering above me so that I couldn't answer her without it hearing me. That must have been father. (38)

The child's emotions are depicted through the portrayal of shadows as warm for the mother, but cold and threatening for the father. More importantly, however, is the depiction of this opposition as shadows, which are dependent on both light and dark for their existence. Thus we are again presented with “a virtual image of fabulism (as) a pixelated negative” (Gaylard, *Broken Age* 118), and a subsequent deconstruction of the opposition between light and dark.

As I proposed earlier, the light and dark opposition in The Famished Road is representative of other elements, such as the real, opposed to the esoteric. This paradigm also relates to that of being awake in comparison to sleeping. This is not to say that Azaro needs to be asleep in order to enter the world of the supernatural, as we have already seen otherwise. My suggestion here, is that Okri has blurred the boundaries between being asleep and being awake, as he has done with the many other oppositions. This notion echoes what Green writes about lucid dreams:

Dreaming is usually defined by reference to its irrationality and discontinuity with waking experience. That is to say, the events of the dream do not obey the usual laws of the physical world and the subject does not relate what is happening to memories of his past life and of the normal world, so that the dream is 'discontinuous' with the rest of his experience. (15)

Green goes on to point out that lucid dreamers, on the other hand, maintain most or all memories of their conscious state, and thus "discontinuity of personal experience" is at a "minimum" (ibid.). Although this is not precisely what occurs within one particular dream of Azaro's, there is still a suggestion of this subconscious state. The dream occurs when Azaro is beaten by Dad, and he retreats into sleep, where he is convinced by a three-headed spirit to follow him to his spirit companions. Whilst Azaro is dreaming, things that occur in the real, manifest themselves in his dream, depicting the merging of the borders between sleeping and being awake.

'Are we travelling this road to the end?'

'Yes'' the spirit said, walking as if distance meant nothing.

'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.'

. . . Dad got up from his chair and stood over me. His breathing manifested itself as a heavy wind in the world in which I was travelling. The wind blew me on. I felt very light. Every time my exhaustion threatened to wash over me completely, this wind lifted me up in the air.

. . . Dad coughed, and I tripped over a green bump on the road. (TFR 327)

This depicts a state where the boundaries between sleeping and being awake are crossed, echoing the concept behind lucid dreaming. He is aware of his experiences within his conscious condition, and he recognises that it is Dad who is creating these manifestations within his dream. The margins therefore become flexible, and the oppositions are eroded away. As the spirit in the above passage notes, even though the world may seem to be created from paradoxes, “everything resolves”.

The final opposition that warrants discussion is that of different time frames. Okri continually obscures the boundaries between the past, present and future, creating once again a third space of existence within the novel. Again, this relates to previously mentioned dream theory, as dreams ignore a logical space-time continuum. Rather they move sporadically through space, and neglect the chronological order of past, present and future. This feature occurs throughout Okri's novels through the subconscious, as well as through various visions. I have already mentioned several examples where this occurs, such as when Ade takes Azaro into a vision of the future (SOE 105 – 106). In the first novel, these oppositions are once again blurred, and Okri epitomises the concept of Cooper's “third space”.

The world turned round. The night filled the room and swept over us, filling our space with light spirits, the old forms of animals; extinct birds stood near Dad's boots, a beautiful beast with proud eyes and whose hide quivered with gold-dust stood over the sleeping forms of Mum and Dad. . . . The darkness moved; future forms, extinct tribes, walked through our landscape. They travelled new roads. They travelled for three hundred years and arrived in our night-space. I did not have to dream. It was the first time I realised that an invisible space had entered my mind and dissolved part of the interior structure of my being. (IFR 445 – 446)

In this extract, time frames are not distinct, rather they integrate into one, where elements of the past combine with ones from the future and arrive in Azaro's present. This occurs in another instance, in Songs of Enchantment, when the community sees a procession of spirits passing through, “journeying to a vast meeting place.” (159)

I saw them with their celestial caravans of the forgotten and undiscovered African way, and maybe I marvelled. Behind them were the wondrous animals also forgotten to man, whose

legends are enshrined in the hieroglyphs on tree trunks, the old mighty trees that retain the stories of the land in their deep roots, always feeding our realities back into the womb of the earth. And then I saw many of the inhabitants of our area amongst the spirits of the great journey. (SOE 161)

Again, the forms of old are manifesting themselves within the present, and in the second passage, the people of the present are mingling with the spirits of old. These experiences do not take the form of dreams, but that of visions, and as Azaro suggests, they exist within a different space of reality. This space exists between the extremes of time, in which the boundaries are contested, and merged. Okri furthers this breakdown in the time opposition by not using any particular time frame within the esoteric sequences. The reader is not given any indication as to the length of time Azaro spends in the forest, or at Madame Koto's bar, or even in the marketplace. Events do occur, but their length is never specified. Quayson notes that: "this seeming teleological narrative impulse is disturbed by the constant recurrence of extended esoteric moments that do not follow any teleological trajectory." (Strategic 129) This works to destabilise any notion of time as ordinary within the novels, creating an opportunity for a fluidity of boundaries.

John Hawley remarks on Okri's paradigmatic deconstruction, saying:

As with Western postmodernists, the resistance to the fixing of boundaries is one of the strongest characteristics to emerge from Okri's discussion of his own work. His choice of a liminal figure like the *abiku* to serve as his spokesman, straddling both worlds and drawing power from both, summarizes his determination to imagine something new. (36)

Throughout the novels, Okri demonstrates this ability to collapse boundaries, which therefore allows some of the characters the ability to exist within a liminal space. To a significant extent, Okri uses the dream, and the vision, to accomplish this, in that they depict a traditional element within the narrative, while at the same time, discussing issues of modernity. Okri is therefore collapsing the ambiguity of these paradoxes, and suggesting that a new identity be formed within postcolonial Nigeria. This new identity is neither entirely traditional, nor modern, rather it is a combination of the two.

Metamorphosis in Magical Realism

Fiction concerned with destabilisation and alteration inevitably has transformation and change as its central thematic cluster, . . . Hence the preponderance of images of circularity, shock, impact, surprise, instability, arbitrariness, alteration, deviation, dodging, transgression, heteromorphism, monstrosity, uncertainty, birth and death in African fabulism. These images all challenge a simple Cartesian notion of identity, and decentre the subject so that knowledge and ontology are questioned. (Gaylard, Broken Age 106)

Many of these tropes are common with elements of dreams, as Resnik writes: "The dream stage is like a signifier undergoing constant transformation. It may be flattened, enlarged, blown up out of all proportion until it loses its outlines." (1) In looking at the novels of Okri, the idea of "transformation and change" can frequently be seen in the esoteric environment. There are many instances where transformation, or metamorphosis occurs within these novels, and the range is quite extensive. People transform themselves into animals, spirits transform themselves into people, and inanimate objects are given the ability to transform. This is indicative, as Gaylard suggests, of turmoil within the country, such as the change of political powers, and the disillusionment of many within the country.

The transformation that is perhaps the most representational of this political change, is that of Madame Koto's bar. Azaro makes many references to the changes it undertakes, such as in The Famished Road when he says: "It seemed that I had walked into the wrong bar, had stepped into another reality on the edge of the forest." (271). He is more clear about its ability to transform in the second novel, saying: "The bar had undergone another of its fabulous mutations." (SOE 36) These "mutations", as Azaro refers to them, are directly linked with Madame Koto's rise in political circles. She too transforms herself periodically, in accordance with her new political status.

Madame Koto is medicine woman, pregnant hag, witch, ambiguous mother, businesswoman, brothel queen and supporter of the political party of the rich. She is chameleon, changing faces, images, roles and functions throughout the novel. . . .

If Madame Koto's bar is an interstitial zone, a barometer of change, then increasingly she is depicted as having journeyed, through the bar, into the future of the new, corrupt politics.

(Cooper, Magical Realism 86 – 87)

Cooper goes on to suggest that even though these changes are occurring, and Madame Koto is becoming inextricably linked with politics, the image is ambiguous. Her bar remains on the border between the realms of real and spirit, and Azaro continually encounters spirits within her bar. We are therefore presented with an inevitable viewpoint of the future through the politics, combined with the traditional element and symbol of the past, in the spirits. Nevertheless, Okri constantly reminds the reader that the forest is also changing, roads are being built, and the trees are diminishing:

It took longer to get far into the forest. It seemed that the trees, feeling that they were losing the argument with human beings, had simply walked deeper into the forest. The deeper in I went, the more I noticed the difference. The grounds were covered in white sand. Piles of brick and cement were everywhere. (TFR 104)

The forest is going through a transformation of its own, and, as Okri suggests here, the realm of spirits may soon disappear. Perhaps Okri is insinuating that transformations are a warning, that once the spirit realm disappears, so too will the ways of old, leaving the country only with the corrupt politics of change.

Tutuola also makes use of the transformation of spirits in his narrative, The Palm-Wine Drinkard, where skulls, living in a community in the forest, rent human parts in order to travel into town.

As they were travelling along in this endless forest then the complete gentleman in the market that the lady was following, began to return the hired parts of his body to the owners and he was paying them the rentage money. When he reached where he hired the left foot, he pulled it out, he gave it to the owner and paid him, and they kept going; when he reached the place where he hired the right foot, he pulled it out and gave it to the owner and paid for the rentage. (19 – 20)

This continues until only a skull remains, jumping through the forest. This idea is repeated in Okri, on a number of occasions, where spirits are referred to as having human appearances, which are distorted. They have eyes in the wrong place, or walk backwards

or upside-down (TFR 15). There is also the feeling that these parts are borrowed, as in Tutuola's narrative, making the spirits seem as though they were disfigured, rather than simply not being human. Warnes discusses this link between the fiction of Okri and that of Tutuola, in relation to Quayson, saying:

Quayson's comparisons between Tutuola's work and *The Famished Road* are particularly fruitful in terms of understanding the ways in which Okri has appropriated and transformed the specific interweavings of real and spirit worlds found in Tutuola's folkloric worlds, and, more distantly, in Yoruba orature. (104)

This next passage is demonstrative of this interweaving as Azaro witnesses distortions taking place in the spirits' appearances, as they shift between their real and esoteric forms:

As I watched them, they began to transform, breaking out of their moulds. Their shoulders seemed momentarily hunchbacked. Their eyes blazed through their glasses and their teeth resembled fangs. I edged away, slowly, and found another corner, and stared intently at everyone. The clientele kept changing, becoming something other. What they were underneath kept emerging under the fleeting transparency of their skins. (TFR 135)

Again, we are given the impression that these spirits are borrowing their appearances. This serves to question perceptions and sight, and subsequently, it questions the notion of identity. This reaffirms the sentiments of Gaylard, not only through his view of change and transformation, but also that of the element of monstrosity, as being representative of "destabilisation and alteration". This too is resonant of Resnik's explanation of dreams, which are constantly transforming, indicating that the spirit world has strong links with dreams. This is extended by the notion that the spirit realm does not obey the logical order of time and space, which aids in the concept of destabilisation.

As I mentioned earlier, spirits are not the only agents of transformation within the novel, as people frequently undergo forms of metamorphosis as well. On one occasion, Azaro is running after his father, with three women:

The smallest of them was the herbalist and as she ran I kept noticing that her hands flapped in her black smock. It came as a surprise, a shock from which I didn't recover for a long time, to see her lift up into the dark air, as if the wind were her ally. Then the darkness increased round her, became concentrated, like a black smock of cloud, . . . Then I heard the clapping of great wings in the air above me and I saw a great eagle, black, with red eyes, take off towards the forest, into the night of mysteries. When we got deep into the forest we found Dad asleep, his back resting on the back of a baobab tree, with the herbalist standing over his haunted form. (TFR 405)

This passage depicts the otherworldly transforming ability of the herbalist, someone who is strongly connected with the esoteric realm. While this contains some importance in depicting the superhuman ability of this elder, there are two far more relevant human transformations within *The Famished Road*. The first occurs when Dad dreams that he "found [him]self on a strange island." (437) The people on this island are white and do not treat Dad well, yet after some time has passed he learns to accommodate himself to the island. In order to do this, he has to "shrink the continent in [him]" and the transformation occurs when Dad turns white. This implies that Okri is referring to the experience of being black in England, and perhaps relinquishing one's African identity. The second comes about through the story that Mum tells Azaro about the white man who wants to know how to get out of Africa. Mum helps him, but two weeks later, a Yoruba man encounters her in the market, and tells her he is the white man, and for him, five hundred years have passed⁶. In the first transformation, from black to white, Dad is humiliated, especially when Azaro tries to buy a newspaper from "his shrunken, icy white father who is a news vendor" (Cooper, *Magical Realism* 71). Cooper goes on to propose that, here, "the lesson about race is unambiguous . . . the familiar warning about not straying from one's own people and culture." (ibid.) The second transformation from white to black has various interpretations, such as the sunglasses given Mum by the white man, which I have previously discussed. There is one particular connotation, provided through Cooper, that has relevance here:

⁶ While I cited this example previously, I believe it is an important element of transformation depicted in the novel, and therefore needs to be re-examined in regard to this particular theme.

What we must also remember, in the context of the call to decolonize by way of the pre-colonial culture, particularly of the oral tradition, is that works that invoke it, partake of its style, invent variations of it, are simultaneously speaking in a coded shorthand of opposition to cultural imperialism and the onslaught of Western forms and genres. . . . There is, I think, a tension in Okri . . . On the one hand, he opposes the slavish imitation of Western forms and ideas. On the other hand, there is his love of change and celebration of the transformations arising out of interactions with other cultures. (*Magical Realism* 74)

Thus, as the white man transforms to black, he has learnt many lessons, and as Cooper indicates, it is Mum who has to readjust her thinking. She must learn “to ‘see’ the man again through the change in the colour of his skin, [and] to understand the riddle of time which has passed” (*Magical Realism* 73). Okri is suggesting that things change, especially in countries dealing with “destabilisation and alteration”, and as such, people will have to re-learn belief structures and thought patterns. However, I think it is important that Okri does not consider this as entirely damaging to the country. Rather he is capable of seeing new possibilities.

Azaro, through his nature as an *abiku*, has the ability to perceive these possibilities. He is capable of being within the real and esoteric, of seeing the past, present and future. Through him, Okri expresses this tension that Cooper refers to above. Azaro opposes any “imitation of Western forms and ideas” (Cooper, *Magical Realism* 74), but at the same time, he is able to depict Okri’s “love of change and celebration of the transformations arising out of interactions with other cultures” (*ibid.*). In the first novel, Azaro is provided with the opportunity to see a different reality, when he finds a mask in the forest and puts it on:

The curious thing was that there was something different about the clearing. It was both exactly as I remembered it and different. For some reason the place felt shaded even when there were no trees around. I stared about the clearing, trying to isolate what was different about it. I couldn’t. So I wore the mask and looked and saw that what was a clearing was in fact a village of spirits. In the middle of the village was a great iroko tree, golden and brown, with phosphorescent leaves and moon-white birds in the branches, twittering out the sweetest essences of music. There were rose-bushes in the radiant square. I saw skyscrapers and flying machines and fountains, ruins covered in snails and flowering climbers, grave-stelae, orchards, and a monument of a black sphinx at the gate of the village. (*TFR* 246)

Azaro sees this alternate reality within what he thought was only a clearing. Once again, within this other realm, images of the past, present and future are combined, as well as elements of the traditional alongside those of western civilisation. Okri is accepting the fact that the west cannot be denied or ignored, but is again suggesting a combining of the two, through the idea of metamorphosis. Thus identity and knowledge are questioned, through the use of transformation and metamorphosis, and a new identity within this postcolonial culture is being presented through Okri's combination of the seemingly paradoxical.

The "Nowhere Land" of Okri's Novels

One of the most common fabulist images is that of the land outside of time, the nowhere land, the magical land. This contrasts with the domesticated sets of realism and the pastoral/edenic which is abandoned and instead the language of the nowhere land, the wilderness, is that of trespass, disorientation and lostness. Moreover, as in Okri's The Famished Road and Songs of Enchantment, the nowhere land is often displaced from its traditional location as an unpeopled, unbuilt scape to the contemporary peri-urban, semi-modern. Sometimes the cityscape is an alienated nowhere land in its anonymity. (Gaylard, Broken Age 111)

The 'nowhere land' is a site closely linked to the subconscious, which is evident in their many common characteristics. Neither possess the laws governing time and space that exist within reality. Gaylard examines the use of labyrinths, noting their similarity to the mind, and both are an area where the protagonist is given the opportunity to reflect on the self, and to gain understanding.

Although there is substantial evidence within Okri's novels to suggest that the cityscape is indeed a nowhere land, there is also an indication that this magical land exists in other locations as well. Throughout the novels, Azaro takes to travelling and encounters many different locales. A great many of these fall into Gaylard's category of the "nowhere land". The forest, the realm of spirits, is an "unpeopled, unbuilt scape", and is central to the idea behind the 'nowhere land'. A feature of this land is the illogical progression of time, as I noted earlier, and the esoteric realm that exists within the forest illustrates a state of distorted time. Within Azaro's adventures into the forest, there is

evidence of the labyrinth, another strong aspect of this domain. Madame Koto's bar also displays elements of this phenomenon, as it promotes emotions of "disorientation and lostness". The road itself depicts strong ties with the "nowhere land", exhibiting elements of the labyrinth, and being lost. The combination of these elements work together to question both preconceived knowledge and identity.

The symbol of the road, although mentioned earlier, also works in conjunction with the theme of the "nowhere land" which talks of anonymity within its boundaries. Thus the wanderer of the road is given to questioning his identity. The road also depicts features of this land through its lack of destination, and labyrinthine qualities. Azaro's hallucination on the road (*TFR* 114 – 115), which I previously examined, serves to epitomise this quality, as this passage demonstrates the feeling of being helpless and astray in a wilderness, without knowing which way to go. The road, therefore, is an apt symbol of the "nowhere land", as it employs the many different qualities of this realm, while encouraging the need to question knowledge and identity.

The forest and Madame Koto's bar, as the border between the real and the supernatural, illustrates a "nowhere land" through the labyrinthine images, as well as its depiction as an unpopulated wilderness, encouraging notions of "trespass, disorientation and lostness". There is also a movement towards anonymity, as the spirits in the forest seldom acknowledge Azaro. In Madame Koto's bar, however, there are many occasions when the spirits are there to seek him out, and it is then that he retires to the forest to avoid being seen. After Azaro has stolen the fetish in Madame Koto's bar, the spirits in the bar give pursuit and follow him into the forest, where he intends to dispose of the fetish.

*I rode furiously and arrived at a place where all the winds of the world converged. The winds blew the army of statues one by one off their horses and they broke into golden fragments. Only Madame Koto, an implacable warrior, stayed on her horse and thudded after me. Just before she fell on me, it began to rain. The water, pouring down, gradually effaced her, beginning with her raised arm and her grim sword. (*IFR* 139)*

Thus all the spirits vanish, and Madame Koto dissolves, leaving Azaro alone, and anonymous.

The market place, as Gaylard suggests is another form of the 'nowhere land'. In its crowded capacity it leaves Azaro without any definite identity of his own. It is also a gathering place for spirits, who converge in order to "buy and sell, browse and investigate. They wander amongst the fruits of the earth and sea." (TFR 16) Thus, Azaro experiences many of the qualities that Gaylard confers on the "nowhere land". Amongst these are the aspects of disorientation and being lost.

Then, suddenly, with the sun burning itself into evening, with so many people around, everyone active, everything moving, I was overcome with a strange panic. I couldn't see a single familiar face in that jostling universe. And then just as suddenly, in flashes of lightness and dark, I began to see Mum everywhere. . . . I saw her all over the market, under strange eaves, in the wind that spread the woodsmoke and the rice-chaffs; I felt her everywhere, but couldn't break the riddle of the markets labyrinths where one path opened into a thousand faces, all of them different, most of them hungry in different ways. (TFR 162)

Even though this location is highly populated, Azaro still feels lost and without direction in this tangled wilderness of roads and stalls. Moreover, he is seemingly invisible to all these people, exemplifying his anonymity, while the cityscape is representative of technology and modernity. However, this still calls into question both his knowledge of the world, and his identity, as Okri suggests that the answer to the problem of identity in postcolonial Nigeria is not found solely in the modern world.

Azaro's dreams, and the dreams of others, also display many attributes of the "nowhere land". Logical time and space are neglected, much as they are within the realms of the esoteric. Azaro experiences the illogical progression of both time and space within dreams throughout both novels:

Sometimes when I fell asleep a lighter part of me rose up from my body and floated in the dark. A bright light, which I could not see, but which I could feel, surrounded me. I would be lifted out of my body, would find it difficult to get out through the roof, and would be brought down suddenly by the noise of the rats eating. Then I would sleep soundly.

One night I managed to lift myself out through the roof. I went up at breathtaking speed and stars fell from me. Unable to control my motion, I rose and fell and went in all directions, spinning through incredible peaks and vortexes. Dizzy and turning, swirling and dancing, the

darkness seemed infinite, without signs, without markings. I rose without getting to heaven.
(IFR 187 – 188)

In this passage, we are able to understand how Azaro is able to move through space within his dream. In a sense, he is flying, moving against any rational sense of space and gravity. Again, there is an impression of disorientation, moving without any awareness of direction. There is repetition of the fact that there are no signs or any indication of direction, reinforcing the impression of lostness. In the second novel, Azaro finds himself in the dream of the blind old man, which again has qualities of the “nowhere land”.

Everything had changed. It was a burning day, and the soldiers were clubbing men and women in a crowd. They hit the women until they became a mass of writhing worms. The pain went through me again and the scene transformed. And I saw men bound to stakes, the great ocean behind them, soldiers with guns in front of them.

‘Fire!’ the blind old man commanded.

And the soldiers shot the men for what seemed like three generations. (SOE 88 – 89)

This portrays the notion of an irrational time progression, as Azaro is not in the dream for an extensive amount of time in reality, yet sees a vast collage of occurrences. These take time within the dream, as is displayed when Azaro says that the soldiers beat the women until they were transformed, and that it seemed like three generations passed while they shot the men. These two passages demonstrate the idea that dreams take on aspects of the “nowhere land”, through time and space, and to repeat Gaylard, “space is distorted, enlarged, reduced, folded.” And since the “nowhere land” is a “spatial analogue for the pausal wellspring of reflective lessons and recreation . . . time is also altered” (Broken Age 115). This implies that lessons of the self are to be learnt through visiting this land, and through these lessons, a self-regenerative process is begun. This last extract also provides an historical insight into Nigeria, as it refers to the time of public executions in the early 1980’s, but is also suggestive of current violence in postcolonial African states. This is suggestive of moral implications, considering that it is from Songs of Enchantment, which often picks up on the moral battle between good and evil. As Okri often represents Nigeria through Azaro, he is indicating that both the character and the country stand to gain morally from this lesson. On a whole, Azaro is given fuller insight

into the world of humans, and human history, yet is also witness to elements of the supernatural, thus providing him with a greater acceptance of the hybridity of this postcolonial society, as constructs are destabilised and collapsed.

One of the first images of the “nowhere land” is provided on the first page of the novel, when Azaro is discussing why the spirit-children do not want to be born, and subsequently, do not want to remain in the world of the living:

There was not one amongst us who looked forward to being born. We disliked the rigours of existence, the unfulfilled longings, the enshrined injustices of the world, the labyrinths of love, the ignorance of parents, the fact of dying, and the amazing indifference of the Living in the midst of the simple beauties of the universe. We feared the heartlessness of human beings, all of whom are born blind, few of whom ever learn to see. (IFR 3)

This image is one of confusion, without direction. The “labyrinths of love” exemplify the idea of the “nowhere land”, and the fact that most people do not learn to see reiterates a sense of lostness. The spirit-children do not want to exist in this world where people stumble around without any clear sense of existence, merely taking turns in the road of life.

The above extracts also display features of the “nowhere land” through the disorientation that Azaro experiences. He is never certain of his whereabouts, and constantly portrays an emotion of being lost. This is indicative of the country as a whole, which is uncertain of the postcolonial political rule. As Azaro finds it necessary to continually adjust to his new surroundings, he also finds it essential to question his identity in regard to each new circumstance. Thus knowledge and identity, as he understands them, have to be reworked, and through this, Okri examines the problem of postcoloniality within Nigeria.

The Journey Through Ben Okri

It is . . . possible to suggest another application of the symbol (of the road) with reference to the human hunger for journeys and movement. It is not by accident that Azaro is persistently on the move, with an itinerary traversing both the real and spirit-worlds. But this hunger for movement is also a hunger for completion and meaning, something which the novel suggests is extremely difficult to reach. (Quayson, Strategic 122)

Throughout both novels journeys are a common theme. This is particularly true in The Famished Road, as is suggested in the title, which begins with the journey that Azaro must make in order to be born. The journeys which continue throughout both novels primarily consist of dreams or visions of journeys, which is suggestive of a search for a new self identity, and consequently a means of self-discovery for Nigeria.

One of the most significant journeys that Azaro undergoes, is the one where he adventures towards the spirit realm and his spirit companions, with the three-headed spirit. This passage is extensive, and as such I have selected three extracts, which will enhance this discussion of journeys.

I paid attention to the words of the spirit. And his words led me into a blue terrain beyond the hungers of the flesh. Sunbirds sang from branches. The trees were golden. 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.

'Everywhere. It leads to the world of human beings and to the world of spirits. It leads to heaven and hell. It leads to worlds that we don't even know about.' (TFR 326)

This first extract depicts the nature of the road, and its links to an African tradition, instead of depicting it as a primarily western symbol. The fact that the road has no end indicates its circularity, as it leads to all places in a continuous motion. More importantly, however, is the detail that the spirit brings to our attention, that this road leads everywhere, bridging the boundaries between real and spirit, and reinforcing the notion of the esoteric as merely a different realm. Nevertheless, the symbol of the road does still serve to remind the reader of colonialism, and the two interpretations present an image that is neither entirely traditional, nor modern. Thus the road presents a difficulty,

especially when trying to discover identity and meaning. The circularity of the image implies a difficulty in obtaining finality in this search for completion and understanding of one's self, and as such, Quayson's comment (*Strategic* 122) is reinforced through this particular facet of the journey.

This next episode occurs further on, where Azaro and the spirit encounter a group of people who spend their time constructing a road. Okri uses this to demonstrate the human weakness of not learning from one's own history.

I looked at the road with new eyes. . . .

'Why is it so beautiful?'

'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 do not know it.'

'So why don't you tell them?'

'Because they have the great curse of forgetfulness. They are deaf to the things they need to know the most.' (*TFR* 330)

Okri's words ring true for many different occasions in history, where people have not learnt from past mistakes, which results in destruction, or damage occurring to those people. The poignant truth of this, is that people only destroy themselves, having never learnt from history. Okri is also suggesting that these things are learnt in retrospect. The human race as a whole, searches for completion and meaning, and their journey is one of life, but as they do not, or will not, remember the errors of before, their search is a difficult one. The idea of the continued and repetitive building of this road, is suggestive of circularity, and a constant search for truth⁷, yet these people will remain building this road in their search for completion. However, this image is not entirely pessimistic, as Cooper suggests:

⁷ This has resonance with the philosophy of Derrida, who advocates the fact that there may be no one single truth (107 – 123).

While this universal road is a positive pathway, not populated by monsters, it is still portrayed within a mythical paradigm. The universal of greed is supplemented by the universal of goodness. . . . the depiction of the struggle to construct the challenges and dreams along our roads of life is by no means entirely false. (*Magical Realism* 78 – 79)

Thus, through this part of Azaro's journey, we are able to see hope, as well as a sad element of reality. The two contrast in a typically human contradiction; while people continue to build on their dreams and visions, they cannot learn from their past mistakes.

This last extract comes at the end of Azaro's dream, before he crosses into the spirit realm. The image is similar to that of Greek mythology, before souls cross into the underworld, and is indicative of Okri's blending of western and African traditions. In this passage, Azaro has nearly crossed into the spirit world, but "the old woman with the feet of a lioness" (*TFR*, 339) fights with the spirit that has taken Azaro on this dream-journey. The importance of the scene, however, is depicted in the simultaneous combining of the real and the supernatural realms of the novel:

The knife in Dad's hand descended swiftly, slashed the air twice. The herbalist released a piercing cry. The old woman struck the spirit at the same moment, with a mighty swipe of her weapon. Dad slashed the chicken's throat. The old woman severed the spirit's last head. The spirit fought vainly in the canoe as the chicken twitched. Its blood dripped on my forehead. The herbalist fell silent. The spirit's head, landing on silver, looked around, saw itself separated from its body, and let out its final scream of horror, cracking the surface of the river. The mirrors shattered. It became dark. Splinters and reflections caught in my eyes. (*TFR* 339)

This shares an affinity with the symbol of the road, in that it depicts a crossing of boundaries, those of the real and the spirit. Quayson explains this in some depth:

Here readers are placed in a position where they can perceive the operations in both realms simultaneously, almost giving them a visionary privilege in having access to dimensions of the incident unavailable to Azaro's parents. But this also implies that there is a continual inter-substantiation of the two dimensions of existence that is not always evident to the senses. The implication of this is that Azaro, and by extension the whole of nature, is located on a kaleidoscopically moving space in which the same space can be arbitrarily re-located in either world at any point in time. ("Esoteric Webwork" 151 – 152)

Many of the journeys that take place throughout both novels, traverse both the real and the supernatural realms, thus making this statement a relevant aspect of most of these journeys, even though it is more perceptible in Azaro's dream adventure. The two worlds, as I have noted before are not static, but continually shift and interact with one another. This does serve to create meaning in that a new understanding of these realms can be reached, leading to a greater comprehension of a perception of an African tradition, as well as that of an African modernity. Still, as Quayson has noted, this perception is not available to most of the characters. Azaro is provided with this "visionary privilege" but is essentially alone in this regard. Again, this obscures meaning for the characters, and completion in this journey is never realised, as Azaro wakes up in the realm of the real. Later on he refers to his journey, saying: "The doctors had pronounced me dead. But I had never really left the world of the living." (TFR 340)

Before he sets out on his adventure of his life, his king remarks to him, "You have to travel many roads before you find the river of your destiny." (TFR 6) This is a portent of things to come in Azaro's lifetime, as he does "travel many roads" and partakes in many adventures. More importantly, it harks back to the fact that the road was once a river, reaching far back into an African heritage. Azaro's destiny lies within this tradition, yet as the road is not only symbolic of Africa's past, Azaro's true destiny needs to be considered.

This road of life along which we all struggle and strive, is reinforced in the book by means of a liberating image of the road towards wisdom and transformation. This road too begins in the realm of the past and of tradition, but it is a road that embraces change and embodies not warnings, but their opposite . . . injunctions to explore and to grow. (Cooper, *Magical Realism* 79)

Azaro's destiny, then, exists in change and growth. Again, the similarity between Nigeria and Azaro, as an *abiku* is relevant and like Azaro, the country will one day decide to persevere in its chosen course (TFR 478). The implication here is that Nigeria is also travelling many roads, struggling to find her own destiny. That destiny, like Azaro's, encompasses change and growth. However, Okri also includes a global significance

within this image of the dream journey, as he includes implications for the human race as a whole. This is evident in the continuous building of what Cooper refers to as the "universal road", hence signalling the universal overtone in this representation of the road.

The figure of the photographer is central to the first novel, and he comes across as the personification of the symbol of the journey. He is self-exiled, and leaves "to travel all the roads of the world" and "take photographs of the interesting things [he] see[s]." (TFR 262) He shows Azaro many of the pictures that he has taken around the world, and we are offered this description of these images:

There were pictures of a fishing festival, of people on the Day of Masquerades. The Egunguns were bizarre, fantastic and big; some were ugly; others were beautiful like those maidens of the sea who wear an eternal smile of riddles; in some of the pictures the men had whips and were lashing at one another. There were images of a great riot. Students and wild men and angry women were throwing stones at vans. There were others of market women running, of white people sitting on an expanse of luxurious beaches, under big umbrellas, with black men serving them drinks, pictures of a child on a crying mother's back; of a house burning; of a funeral of a party, with people dancing, women's skirts lifted, baring lovely thighs. And then I came upon the strangest photograph of them all, which the photographer said he had got from another planet. It was of a man hanging by his neck from a tree. (TFR 263)

These images from around the world attest to the photographer's journeys. Many of these photographs are racially orientated, which indicates the photographer's interest in depicting reality, as well as a desire to reveal it to the world at large. Furthermore, the worldliness that the photographer claims, since he intends on travelling all the roads of the world, is displayed in the variety of these images. The description of the photographer given by Cooper is notably similar to Boehmer's portrayal of postcolonial writers. Cooper says of the photographer: "Steeped in the modern, he travels the paths of the world, seeking his own freedom and a global understanding." (*Magical Realism* 97) Boehmer presents this picture of writers in the postcolonial era:

In the 1990's the generic postcolonial writer is more likely to be a cultural traveller, or an 'extra-territorial', than a national. Ex-colonial by birth, 'Third World' in cultural interest,

cosmopolitan in almost every other way, he or she works within the precincts of the Western metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and/or political connections with a national background. (Colonial 233)

Thus Okri is embodied in the character of the photographer, and we are able to understand some of his desires for the country. While he knows that Nigeria can no longer return to its old traditional ways, it has not been completely colonised either. Okri's belief is that to fully colonise any country, it is necessary to permeate their aesthetic beliefs as well as the political and social arenas within that country. The traditions of postcolonial writers in Africa, therefore, were never entirely colonised.

As Gayatri Spivak, Ben Okri, Kwame Anthony Appiah, and others have stressed, moral and intellectual traditions were never as fully pervaded by colonialism as the authorities might have desired. The invasion of a people's cultural or 'aesthetic frames', to use Okri's phrase, was never total. (Boehmer, Colonial 245 – 246)

The journey that Nigeria must therefore take, is one with change as its central impetus, and growth at its end, however difficult these may be to achieve. The final destination that Okri has in mind, is the discovery of a new national identity which, like Azaro, can traverse the old and the new, the traditional and the modern.

The Novels Through the Eyes of Azaro

Azaro is a first person narrator, whose perspective dominates the novel. He is the receptacle for, and transmitter of, all the different stories, visions and possibilities. The novel buttresses Azaro's position as a narrator with a grid of extended metaphors and symbols of seeing, of eyes, masks and mirrors. Within Azaro's stories, there are other storytellers and perspectives. . . . By continuing to map the mosaic of many stories and visions, what does seem to emerge, as we shall see, is that the novel strives to see the world without illusions. This it does within a sophisticated understanding that the truth hides itself behind mirrors, masks and eye-glasses, and that reality is often not what it seems. (Cooper, Magical Realism 103 – 104)

Vision and perception are important elements within the novels, and Okri emphasises the varied and different perceptions displayed in the characters in the books. In both novels,

the entire story is told through Azaro. While we hear and see what other people may perceive, it is constantly via Azaro's narration. He relates to the reader the different scenarios that he encounters, but also the tales of others that have been related to him. We are witness to the dreams of Azaro, and the dreams of other characters, through Azaro, as I mentioned earlier, which extends the idea of seeing a hidden reality, as dreams portray hidden facets of the dreamer, his/her unconscious fears or desires. Okri uses this first person narrative to reveal his many realms of perception, thus contesting preconceived knowledge as it queries the perceptions of people, while also implying that there is a different way to perceive the world in which these characters exist.

One of the more obvious examples of this concept of perception, and how it differs from one person to the next, is demonstrated through Dad's blindness in Songs of Enchantment.

Dad astonished us that day. He swore that our room was the great atrium of a fabulous palace. The walls were draped with rich cloth. There were bloodstones in the eyes of warrior statues. The ceiling was glorious with royal chandeliers. Twinkling glass was everywhere, and even his three-legged chair was a mighty velvet sofa. And as he described the great atrium of his blindness, marvelling at how much and how miraculously our lives had improved, how our true royal condition had finally caught up with our poverty, mum looked at me with an expression that seemed to wonder if it wasn't better in some ways that dad retained his blindness and his enchanted palace rather than live again in the dreariness that sight would bring. (219)

Dad's blind world is so completely different from the reality in which they exist, and perhaps Okri is using this to suggest the possibility of hope. Dad's perceptions help him to see a dimension of reality that others do not perceive, and as Azaro suggests, perhaps it is better to live with these perceptions of reality, even though they may appear far-fetched, than live within their dreary existence. Dandy proposes that blindness in Okri's work is much the same as the dream or esoteric realms, in that it is an extension, or another dimension of reality: "Blindness is however portrayed as simply a different way of seeing in the text" (40). In that way, blindness and reality are oppositions in the text, and these are again merged in order to deconstruct the boundaries that exist around them. In a sense, Dad's blindness is more revealing than reality, and as such, can be seen "as

being more valid a means of communication than realism." (ibid.) This idea is further enhanced through the text. The first example comes when Dad visits Madame Koto's bar while he is blind:

while he stood at Madame Koto's barfront he actually thought he was before the palace of a diseased and hidden king. He saw masks riddled with holes everywhere and statues ravaged by woodworm. He abused the minions of the queen. – He shouted about a pool of blood in front of the monstrous palace which the sun couldn't dry. (SOE 216)

The pool of blood is from the death of Ade's father, and Okri is insinuating that the blood, which cannot be removed, will be a moral stain in front of the bar. Aside from this, however, is the representation of the bar as a diseased and rotting palace. This contrasts sharply with the later image of Dad's palace (SOE 219), implying a different moral order between Madame Koto and Dad. Quayson notes that the battle taking place between these two characters in the second novel, is significant of a battle between evil and good, respectively: "The object of the novel [*Songs of Enchantment*] is to stage the elemental struggle between the forces of Good, represented by Azaro's Dad, and those of Evil, represented by Madame Koto and the Jackal-headed Masquerade." ("Esoteric Webwork" 154) Dad's perception in the above extract depicts the 'evil' stemming from Madame Koto's bar, and therefore, this perception of the bar is more accurate than 'reality'.

This concept of sight is again perpetuated through Dad's blindness, when he says of a neighbour: " 'I never knew how ugly he was till I couldn't see him,' " (SOE 225). This statement is relatively self-explanatory, as it shows how it takes being blind to fully understand someone, or to see them truly, rather than looking through reality.

The photographer adds another dimension to this idea of seeing reality for what it is. The photographer exists in a form of self-exile, as he is in danger from the authorities. He takes pictures that represent the truth of reality, and as such, he presents a danger to the political parties running for the leadership of the country. An incident showing this occurs when the politicians give the community bad milk and the photographer is there to record it.

We were heroes in our own drama, heroes of our own protest. There were pictures of us, men and women and children, standing helplessly round heaps of the politician's milk. There were pictures of us raging, attacking the van, rioting against the cheap methods of politicians, humiliating the thugs of politics, burning their lies. The photographer's pictures had been given great prominence on the pages of the newspaper and it was even possible to recognise our squashed and poverty-ridden faces on the grainy newsprint. (TFR 156)

The images of the photographer stand against the methods of the politicians and, as such, he poses a threat to their continued dominance. The people of the community have seen that they can resist the politicians if they wish, and this establishes an even greater threat. These pictures depict the truth behind the bad milk of the politicians, and this serves to reinforce the threat of the photographer. It is important, however, that pictures do not always depict all the elements within the particular situation, and therefore cannot represent the entire truth. They depict what is in front of the lens, and there is little possibility of seeing the whole picture for oneself, unless one is a witness. Thus elements remain without the frame, which could possibly influence the comprehension of that picture. Another aspect which influences the photographs, is that people often pose for cameras, and the picture may therefore only depict the best qualities of those people. Azaro, for example, finds pictures of his parents when they were much younger:

In one of the pictures Mum sat sideways on a chair. She had a lot of powder on her face, and she had the coy smile of a village maiden. Dad stood next to her. He had on a baggy pair of trousers, a white shirt, and an askew tie. He had a powerful, tigerish expression on his face. His strong eyes and his solid jaw dared the camera. (TFR 33)

This is a far cry from the image now presented of his parents. His mother is a woman beaten down by the sun every day, and his father is reduced to working many hours, carrying heavy loads. While the picture may have been more realistic at the time that it was taken, it still only portrays one aspect of their lives. The photographs of Azaro's homecoming, in the beginning of the first novel, depict people that exist in poverty, yet force smiles for the camera, and Azaro uses the term "celebrating refugees" (TFR 91) to describe the image of the gathering. Cooper points out that the early pictures "enact the tension between capturing reality and photographic convention that codifies reality."

(Magical Realism 106) However, later in the novel, the photographer is more interested in capturing the truth. "What changes is that the photographer begins to capture not just portraits of families and groups, but the political scandals and corruptions of the new Nigeria about to emerge." (Cooper, Magical Realism 107) Although the photographer does not always gain a completely truthful interpretation in his pictures, he is a necessary element of this postcolonial society, as Cooper explains:

Because the degradation of society is almost total, events and people only exist if the camera creates and constructs them. But to destroy the photograph means there is no evidence, and no reality at all, as if the photographer had not been present. (ibid.)

Thus this mode of perception, however biased or prejudiced it may be, intentionally or not, is one of the major facets within the concept of seeing and perceiving.

These modes of perception run throughout both novels, and work to suggest that it is important to understand whose eyes we are seeing through. As I have noted, both works are told through Azaro, the narrator, but he also relates events to the reader, such as the stories and proceedings of other characters in the novel. Even the dreams of others are seen through his eyes. This indicates a certain bias, or colouring of the truth, as it is always Azaro's interpretation. Azaro the narrator is not a young child, but narrates his childhood through the eyes of both the child Azaro, and the mature narrator Azaro. Through the child, the eyes see a considerable amount, and Azaro may understand or have knowledge of many things, yet they remain the eyes of a child. The mature narrator has a deeper understanding of these things, and relates his emotional response, yet we still witness the novel through the child's eyes. The photographer, for instance, explains things to Azaro in a way that will protect him, when he sees the picture of a man that has been lynched. The photographer explains that it comes from another planet, and when Azaro wants to know why he was hanged, the photographer explains that, "they don't like piano music." (TFR 264) Cooper observes that the piano is representative of racial mixing with black and white keys, and the people who do not like piano music are therefore racist. This is a painless way of explaining this situation to a child, who may be hurt by the truth behind the lynching, yet Azaro explains it in this way to the reader. Thus

the child Azaro is coming through in the narration. Nevertheless, Quayson does remark on the element of the mature narrator surfacing in the text:

We are not told at which precise point in time Azaro decides to narrate his childhood, and though the narrative resides firmly in the consciousness of a child, the first intimations of a maturer sensibility are to be glimpsed in the observable contradictions between the 'I' of the narrating instance and the 'I' of the narrated events. (*Strategic* 125)

Although the novels are depicted through the perceptions of Azaro, we must also consider the point that Quayson makes above. There are two interpretations that need to be taken into account, that of Azaro as a child, and that of Azaro as a mature consciousness.

Although this story is presented from a singular perspective, it can be seen as the story of the entire nation. Azaro as the narrator, both as a child and as a mature individual, presents many images that can be interpreted in the context of Nigeria as a whole. Okri tells us that suffering is a central part of his novel, and the country:

Suffering is one of the great characters of the book, the different ways people suffer. It defines the boundaries of self but also breaks down the boundaries of individual identifications. So when Azaro sees Mum in all the market women, they *are* Mum. Any one of their children telling their stories would be telling a story just like this one, but with its own particularity. There are hundreds of variations, but there is just one god there, and that god is suffering, pain. (qtd in Wilkinson 85)

Because of this, Azaro and his family's story could be representative of any of the families in Nigeria at this time. This is stressed through Azaro who, as a spirit-child, has lived many lives before, and frequently refers to these instances such as the talking of 'many voices' (*TFR* 219) inside him, and later, 'all the narratives of [their] lives' (*TFR* 229). After Dad's long dream at the end of the novel, he says to Azaro and Mum, "Many people reside in us, . . . many past lives, many future lives." (*TFR* 499) By doing this Okri creates a narrative, not just for one specific family, but also for a community and a country.

Thus the novel is seen through the eyes of Azaro, a spirit-child, who can walk through both the real and esoteric worlds of postcolonial Nigeria. Through him, we are able to see into the lives of many others, both human and spirit, and this creates for the reader a greater understanding of the hybrid, changing world that is Nigeria. This theme, within both of the novels, encourages sight through eyes that perceive many different facets of reality, including both the modern technology which surrounds them, and the culture and tradition of older ways of life.

The Cycles of Okri

So Okri in The Famished Road . . . upends conventional chronology by introducing cyclical patterns and a seemingly irrational dream logic derived from Yoruba myth. The noisy congruence of disparate cultural forces, usually taken as characteristic of cosmopolitan narrative, in his work becomes a conduit into the more bizarre conjunctions of a feverishly visionary Africa. (Boehmer, Colonial 242)

By incorporating cyclical time, as well as other cyclical images including those of dreams, into the texts, Okri is able to suggest that a combination of the traditional and the modern is not impossible. The country need not move from one to the other, but rather can exist through the incorporation and use of both.

As I remarked earlier, Okri sees one of the main oppositions in the text as that of life and death. He extends this, saying: “That’s the opposition: infinity and human life.” (qtd in Wilkinson 84) This opposition is incarnated in the character of Azaro. He is an *abiku*, and therefore exists in a cycle of dying and being reborn, time and again.

The happier we were, the closer was our birth. As we approached another incarnation we made pacts that we would return to the spirit world at the first opportunity. . . . Those of us who made such vows were known among the Living as *abiku*, spirit-children. Not all people recognised us. We were the ones who kept coming and going, unwilling to come to terms with life. We had the ability to will our deaths. Our pacts were binding. (TFR 4)

Azaro, however, does break his pact when he decides to remain amongst the Living, and therefore stop the cycle of the *abiku*. This collapses the opposition of infinity and human

life, and Azaro as a spirit-child, exists in the infinity of that cycle, yet once he remains in the world he accepts human life. However, there is other evidence of spirit-children within the text. Madame Koto is pregnant with three *abikus*, and Ade, Azaro's friend is revealed as another one. These are cumulatively representative of Nigeria at this time of postcolonial pre-independence, as Cooper notes:

Nigeria is not only the wicked *abikus* in Madame Koto's belly, it is a combination of Azaro and his *alter ego*, Ade, the sweet ethereal spirit child who is determined to keep dying and returning to his spirit companions. (*Magical Realism* 91)

Nevertheless: "The relentless cycle of the *abiku* is undercut by Azaro's decision to remain in the land of the living." (ibid.) Thus Okri voices a hope for Nigeria in the character of Azaro. This image of the *abiku* is a relatively new concept in Nigerian postcolonial writing, especially when compared to the poem, "Abiku" by Wole Soyinka. This earlier writer does not suggest any hope in his spirit-child, and is adamant in saying that these children will always exist within these cycles.

In vain your bangles cast
Charmed circles at my feet;
I am Abiku, calling for the first
And the repeated time. (Stanza 1)

Once and the repeated time, ageless
Though I puke. And when you pour
Libations, each finger points me near
The way I came . . . (Stanza 5)

In these two verses, we are able to see the cyclical image of the spirit-child that Soyinka presents. There is no suggestion of a change of ways, and as such, Soyinka does not see any hope for Nigeria remaining, rather it will continue dying, time and again like the *abiku*. Okri's portrayal of Azaro contrasts strongly with the image in this poem, and the hope that he sees for Nigeria is apparent in this. However, it is necessary to point out that Okri does not think Nigeria will remain as it was, instead it will be essential for it to grow and change, much like Azaro has done by deciding to remain in the world of the Living.

The image of the road represents several tropes within this study, including that of the cycle. There are many instances in the novels where the road is described as having no particular destination, and, instead moves at once towards and away from Azaro's home, or Madame Koto's bar, as examples. The novels opening words invoke a number of symbols, such as the hunger of the road (TFR 3). This in itself is cyclical, as the hunger stems from the river, but later in the novel, personifies itself in the image of the King of the Road. Dad's story about this relates why the road is always hungry, and as such, people often leave offerings on the roadside. More relevant, however, is the image of the road existing as a whole, branching off throughout the world, but remaining one road. The road is also presented as a labyrinth at one point, leading in many directions, "like snakes, tails in their mouths" (TFR 114). This depicts a vision of the road moving in circles, and the traveller being stuck in this cycle. Cooper refers to the trope of the journey as being representative of both "a futile return in circles and also a road to a new destination." (*Magical Realism* 99) While this embodies the sentiment that the road is cyclical, and may have no point or ultimate destination, like the cycle of the *abiku*, it can be broken. Through this we are able to appreciate Okri's hope for postcolonial Nigeria. Cooper incorporates the notions of the cycle of both the *abiku* and the road:

The hope of the novel lies in Azaro successfully repudiating the *abiku* within himself and thereby, denying the inevitability of that mythical, Tutuolan road with its hungry waiting monster. . . . Here Okri appears to contradict earlier reservations and to assert passionately the possibility of change (*Magical Realism* 92)

The last concept dealing with cycles that I wish to discuss, is that of dreams. Azaro's dreams and visions often incorporate elements of cyclical time. Here he sees the past joined with the present and the future. They all appear to travel along the same time axis, and appear in the novels as a part of that time. This gives the impression that time is recurring, or moving along repeated spaces. For Azaro, this blurring of time is as natural as reality, such as on one occasion in *Songs of Enchantment*:

I sat on the platform of our housefront and saw the future invade our street. The invasion took place silently. No one noticed. (63)

This illustrates the way in which time works in the novels, moving backwards and forwards along the same path as the present, creating a feeling of cyclical, repetitive movement. This again, blurs the borders of time, creating once more the opposition of infinity and human life. Infinity seems a part of the everyday existence of Azaro the spirit-child, and as such, the opposition is deconstructed, and new possibilities seem available within this representation of postcolonial Nigeria. This includes a new identity which involves both the past and the future, though in this case, it is portrayed through the image of the cycle.

The Interpretation of Okri's Dreams

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 and he didn't like it. He saw a world in which human beings suffered so needlessly from Antipodes to Equator, and he didn't like it either. He saw our people drowning in poverty, in famine, drought, in divisiveness and the blood of war. He saw our people always preyed upon by other powers, manipulated by the Western world, our history and achievements rigged out of existence. He saw the rich of our country, he saw the array of our politicians, 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 the widening pit between those who have and those who don't, he saw it all very clearly. (TFR 492)

Okri is clearly presenting a story about the people of Nigeria, in which they must learn to adjust to many different aspects, beginning with independence in this now postcolonial state. With independence comes power to the nation, yet as Okri noticeably maintains, this power is now in the hands of people who care, not for the population, but for their own gain. This poses a problem for Okri, and he questions this change by means of various themes in his novels. He also queries the knowledge and identity which people have always seen as certain. Perhaps these are the problems of any given postcolonial society or culture, yet Okri examines it from the perspective of Nigeria. The above extract incorporates many of the problems that Okri raises in his novels, and perhaps obscurely, the solution to these issues. Colonialism has now come and gone, yet not

without affecting the country, and modernity and technology now pose another problem. Along with these is the divide that Okri mentions, and herein lies his solution. Throughout his writing, boundaries are continually established and subsequently deconstructed, as Okri implies that the resolution lies in the crossing of borders and the unification of people through previously preconceived paradoxes.

The use of dreams in Okri's work can be perceived as a literary device or technique, within the mode of magical realism. Through the use of these devices, Okri is able to cross the borders of tradition and modernity. The dream is an intrinsic element in traditional African beliefs, while Okri uses it to examine issues relevant to the ever-increasing presence of modernity and technology.

The use of paradoxes is also prevalent in these novels, as Okri is suggestive of the fact that neither tradition nor modernity need overthrow the other, as a compromise can be reached between the two. To this extent, Okri blurs borders and collapses binary oppositions, in an attempt to both discover a new system of knowledge, as well as to create a new national identity.

Through the theme of metamorphosis, Okri indicates change within the country, but also the fact that transformation is possible, without losing touch with the country's original identity. As such, Okri introduces the theme of the 'nowhere land', which provides the possibility for him to reflect on Nigeria. Okri uses both the esoteric realm and the cityscape to suggest that the country will not find its true identity either in tradition or modernity. However, a compromise of the two should be reached.

The idea of the journey again incorporates this idea through the symbol of the road, as it is representative of both colonialism and traditional African society. Moreover, it is also suggestive of a journey of self-discovery, and ultimately the discovery of one's identity. In the search for this identity, Okri suggests that perceptions are not always as they appear, challenging fixed notions, and encouraging a new manner through which to perceive the world.

The final concept that I have examined is that of the cycles in Okri's work. The main impetus in this section is once again the blurring of boundaries, on this occasion, those of time. This is a final reminder to the reader that a new identity need not move from one world to another, rather it can exist in both.

Okri may often seem ambiguous, as he constantly offers to the reader so many alternate and conflicting views, paradigms and realms. Nevertheless, this reading of his two novels, The Famished Road and Songs of Enchantment, suggests that this is not ambiguity at all. Instead, Okri can be seen as being in favour of compromise, and unification amongst the people of Nigeria. In order to accomplish this, the borders that Okri initially establishes need to be collapsed. Through this, a new understanding, a new knowledge, and a new national identity can be discovered.

This vision of Okri's has overtones of an African modernity, and to use Helgesson's example, "Reading gives on the one hand access to a certain amount of institutional power in modernity and a certain vision of progress, but offers at the same time a pessimistic view of what issues from modernity." (8) The modern world that Okri has envisioned through his fiction, is one of a combination of both precolonial and postcolonial worlds, and a realisation that colonialism is only one component within the entire narrative of Nigeria. While a new understanding of a Nigerian identity can be reached, there is nevertheless, a realisation that part of the original identity is lost. Although the overall impression of Okri's writing is that it is optimistic, there is a sense of poignancy in the inevitability of the loss of something that was. As Helgesson suggests, modernity brings with it both power and progress, but also the knowledge of what modernity is, and what will be lost because of it. It is obvious that Okri does not place much value in the postcolonial politics about which he writes, as is evident in Songs of Enchantment, which is morally representative of the corruption of the ruling party. Okri is additionally concerned over the loss of the tradition of the country, seen in his constant referral to the disappearance of the forests. However, his optimism is apparent, and as such one can view the novels as a warning, where Okri is suggesting that if the country hopes to escape the corruption, they must incorporate both the past and the present into a new identity.

The initial quote of this chapter, placed Okri's work within several literary traditions: a Nigerian tradition, a postcolonial postmodernist tradition, and finally amongst "a global set of writers who engage non-realist narrative strategies, especially magical realism, in their writings." (Warnes 103) Okri's magical realism and his use of dreams, establish him well within these first two categories. It is the intention in the rest

of this work to examine the transcultural nature, not just of Okri, but of magical realism and dreams as well.

Chapter 2:

The 'Rememory' of Toni Morrison in *Beloved*

While the classic slave narrative draws on memory as though it is a monologic, mechanical conduit for facts and incidents, Morrison's text foregrounds the dialogic characteristics of memory along with its imaginative capacity to construct and reconstruct the significance of the past. Thus, while the slave narrative characteristically moves in a chronological, linear narrative fashion, *Beloved* meanders through time, sometimes circling back, other times moving vertically, spirally out of time and down into space. Indeed, Morrison's text challenges the Western notion of linear time that informs American history and the slave narratives. It engages the reader not just with the physical, material consequences of slavery, but with the psychological consequences as well. (Sanders Mobley 192)

Through this shifting, elusive space, Toni Morrison's creates her narrative, *Beloved*. It is set in the United States of America, in the city of Cincinnati. Sethe and her children have escaped from the slave estate of Sweet Home, and have gone to live with Baby Suggs, Sethe's mother-in-law. She has left behind her a husband, who she will never see again, and several other slaves, one of whom is Paul D, who arrives at their house on 124 Bluestone Road, eighteen years after Sethe in 1873. He becomes the catalyst for the events that occur in the novel, from the incarnation of Sethe's murdered child, Beloved, to the horrific memories of slavery and its aftermath. The novel revolves around this small group of people, who have dealt with the hardships of slavery, and the ordeal of living with a baby ghost, and who must now deal with the memories of their years as slaves, and the reincarnation of that ghost.

Through this chapter, I intend to analyze Morrison's novel, on a comparative level with the novels of Okri. Thus I will discuss similar techniques utilised by Okri and Morrison, specifically the use of magical realism and the subconscious. It is through these devices that Morrison is able to retell the African-American history from a communal perspective, and thereby recreate an African-American identity. This chapter will examine how Morrison achieves this, but will also enhance the concept of a transcultural use of magical realism and the subconscious.

Morrison examines many issues in this novel, not least is that of the retelling of an African-American history, through the use of subconscious memory, and magical realism. As Morrison points out, this history has been predominantly ignored, or partially fabricated, by American literature. In her pursuit of this truth, Morrison delves into the culture and society of African-Americans, including the Middle Passage, the effects of slavery, and the communities that developed within this culture. The community in Cincinnati presented in the novel, is comprised of freed slaves, runaway slaves, and free African-Americans, along with a several white characters, creating a diverse, multi-faceted arena, through which Morrison is able to illustrate the society and culture of these people.

While her book engages with the cultural identity of African-Americans, it does not abandon the western origins of the novel. Rather Morrison, in the same vein as Okri, incorporates elements of both the western world and that of her own culture within this novel, thereby collapsing the boundaries of these binary oppositions. This destabilisation of borders, which continually comes into play in Beloved, is in itself demonstrative of magical realism, yet there are additional factors which also serve to mark this novel as magical realist. These include Morrison's ability to move between the real and the supernatural, as well as between the past and the present, thereby challenging preconceived knowledge, and identity. Perhaps more importantly however, is the view that Christopher Warnes asserts, that a magical realist text does not favour either realism or the supernatural, but rather portrays both equally (3-4), thus disqualifying the ability to categorise the text in any other genre or mode of fiction. As Morrison achieves this in Beloved, it would be possible to say that she is working within the framework of magical realism.

Nevertheless, Morrison deprecates this categorization of her work, as Micki Flockemann quotes, from an interview with Paul Gilroy: " 'Just as long as they don't call me a Magicam Realist . . . as though I don't have a culture to write out of' " (197). Her complaint is similar to that of Gaylard's, who claims that African writers do not work within magical realism, rather they are writing independently of it, and as mentioned previously, he refers to this as fabulism. Notwithstanding the fact the writers under discussion are producing novels that are unique to their own cultures, it is perhaps

simpler to use the term 'magical realism' with regard to their writing. While it is reasonable to understand that this term does invoke a number of connotations, it can still be seen as useful when trying to critically understand a text. "It is by no means clear that discarding the term would actually be desirable even if it were possible, for its tenacity is due in large measure to its explanatory value." (Warnes 3) Thus, despite the obvious problems with using such a term, it is still worth retaining as a means of critically exploring these diverse texts.

How then do we classify this novel? Morrison asserts that she does not want her writing to be categorised as magical realist, yet she demonstrates a number of techniques that are concurrent with postmodernist, and postcolonial writing. Hutcheon offers a description of "postmodern art", saying:

[It] similarly asserts and then deliberately undermines such principles as value, order, meaning, control, and identity (Russell 1985, 247) that have been the basic premises of bourgeois liberalism. These humanistic principles are still operative in our culture, but for many they are no longer seen as eternal and unchallengeable. (13)

This is resonant of what Morrison accomplishes through her novel, as she uses the western form of the novel to introduce these issues, and then moves, through a variety of means, to deconstruct these same issues. She effectively questions the principles that Hutcheon presents above, as well as asserting that they are neither 'eternal' nor 'unchallengeable'. Additionally, her style displays a tendency to use aspects associated with the postcolonial novel, as Rafael Perez-Torres indicates:

There is a crossing of genres and styles and narrative perspectives in Beloved that suggests it filters the absent or marginalized oral discourse of a pre-capitalist black community through the self-conscious discourse of the contemporary novel. The narrative emerges, then, at the point at which premodern and postmodern forms of literary expression cross. (92)

Thus Morrison utilises a form of writing that addresses a marginalised culture, through the use of a dominant literary structure. Through this she is able to retell the history of that culture and redefine how that culture's identity is conceptualised. Even though Morrison has denied being a magical realist writer, she does nevertheless, write within

this mode. She does, however, write through a distinctively African-American culture, in order to achieve an independently African-American individuality.

A part of this individuality stems from her use of memory as a device of mediation⁸. Through this technique, she is able to voice the unspeakable, in that she deals with aspects of slavery that have been predominantly peripheral before. This becomes a major theme in her story, as hardships of the past have been buried in the memories of the characters, and it becomes a painful process to relive them. But perhaps more painful and difficult is the fact that these memories must be dealt with in order for the characters to move on with their present. It is this voicing of the past, of the unspeakable tragedies that black people existed through, that allows Morrison to rewrite the history of the black American. It is also through these memories, that Morrison destabilises previously accepted concepts of identity, and black American culture.

The Memories of *Beloved*

But a tale is to be told, a narrative journey will go forth, and thus this shifting, unfixed textual folksong leaks out with soft, unfocused visions of warm and horrific memory. The memory of a white girl who helps Sethe escape; the memory of white boys who suck milk from her breasts; the memory of 'Schoolteacher' who, with a cowhide strap, carves out the tree on Sethe's back which, as she says, " ' . . . grows there still' " (17). All deferred, yet erupting in the presence of Paul D who embraces the tree on her back, her visible reminder of life and death . . . and hope (Bjork 143)

Morrison's strength in the subconscious lies not in dreams, but rather in the memories of her characters. Continually, she transports her readers through time, to the earlier lives of the now-free slaves. In this way she is re-telling the past from the perspective of the African-American, and providing the reader with a new history. This history additionally depicts the inclusion of the supernatural beliefs of the African-American culture.

The literary device of using memory shares many characteristics with that of the use of dreams. It is coloured by perception, in much the same way that a dream is

⁸ While Morrison utilizes memory rather than dreams, her purpose in doing so is similar to that of Okri's. Additionally, both forms (dream and memory) allow for the subconscious portrayal of unconscious fears or desires.

influenced by desire and individual perception. The rememberer will look back over time, and recall the incidents that have more significance for him or her. As Bjork notes above, these memories can be at the same time, beautiful and horrible. Sethe remembers the beauty of Sweet Home, the slave estate from where she escaped, even though she realises that it is merely an illusion, disguising the harsh reality.

She might be hurrying across a field, running practically, to get to the pump quickly and rinse the chamomile sap from her legs. Nothing else would be in her mind. . . . Then something. The splash of water, the sight of her shoes and stockings awry on the path where she had flung them; or Here Boy lapping in the puddle near her feet, and suddenly there was Sweet Home rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes, and although there was not a leaf on that farm that did not make her want to scream, it rolled itself out before her in shameless beauty. It never looked as terrible as it was and it made her wonder if hell was a pretty place too. (*Beloved* 6)

In this extract, it is plain that while Sethe would rather have no recollection of Sweet Home, she does remember the splendour of it. Throughout the narrative, there are references to “disremembering”, and this suggests that the characters do not want to remember the past, and they persevere in trying not to. This is presented as a difficulty, however, as can be observed in the above passage. The memories arrive, through no volition of the character's, much like Okri's Azaro, who has the ability, through no choice of his own, to travel through dreams and the esoteric. Similarly, Sethe, and several other characters, have no desire to recall the past, yet periodically, it recalls itself.

Once again, the borders of time are not static, but rather the past and the present intermingle. I will discuss this in greater depth later, but for now suffice it to say that memory is not static, and this in turn creates what Bjork refers to as “living memory”. Sethe shuts her past away in the hope that it will not catch up with her. However, she must now also consider her daughter Denver, who plays a part in Sethe's past as well. Bjork calls Denver an “inheritor-daughter” and suggests, “that part of [Sethe] continues to believe she must keep Denver “from the past that [is] still waiting . . .” (42).” (150) Nevertheless, as memory is presented as a continually fluctuating feature of the novel, it cannot be shut out. Instead, it is depicted as another realm within the narrative, similar to Azaro's dreams and the other esoteric encounters within Okri's novels.

This mnemonic and supernatural realm joins with that of reality when the ghost Beloved, takes on human form, and becomes the personification of memory. Her life is dependent on the “rememory” of Sethe, and thus she encourages her mother to retell her past. Sethe finds this difficult as she has endeavoured to “disremember” the past, yet she finds that she cannot help but tell Beloved about these memories. Denver, too, is caught up in this cycle as she thrives on the attention of Beloved, and finds herself relating her own story from Sethe’s past. This is not sufficient for Beloved, who finds memory a necessity in order for her to survive as this “living memory”, and this culminates in a destructive, but also liberating experience. Bjork explains this complicated aspect of the novel:

It is not, however, so simple as a mother’s adored presence that may sustain Beloved. As memory, she formulates within the burdens of both love and hate, hope and fear, pain and pleasure. Thus Beloved is not (nor has she ever been) an entirely beneficent presence in the house. She hungers equally for the memories of both life and death; her prompting, prodding, propelling of Sethe’s rememory requires a passive adoration / absorption as well as an actively malicious insistence for memory. (155)

This experience proves liberating for Sethe, as she is now able to tell her past, and therefore move on from it, but it also proves destructive through Beloved’s insatiable craving for these same memories. This facet creates an oscillating relationship between the past and the present, generating a system that is parallel to that in Okri’s work, which fluctuates between the real and the supernatural.

This system begins to demonstrate Morrison’s use of memory as a means of deconstructing the borders of time, as well as several other binary paradigms, in much the same way that Okri deconstructed borders through the device of dreams and magical realism. This can therefore be seen as a device of magical realism, establishing a channel for the retelling of an African-American history. The memories throughout the novel work towards a greater understanding of identity and self, as well as a more culturally significant comprehension of this passage of history.

The Merging of Borders in *Beloved*

All of Morrison's novels are, in a real sense 'historical novels,' quasi documentaries that bear historical witness. Her characters are both subjects *of* and subject *to* history, events in 'real' time, that succession of antagonistic movements that includes slavery, reconstruction, depression, and war. Yet she is also concerned with the interaction of history with art, theory, and even fantasy, for, in her terms, history itself may be no more than a brutal fantasy, a nightmare half-remembered, in which fact and symbol become indistinguishable. – Morrison always moves beyond the dimensions of the given, beyond the recording of fact, into an area that is at the edge of consciousness and experience (Rigney 61)

This passage describes the arena in which *Beloved* is set, bordering on history, yet also moving through the domain of fantasy and the supernatural. The memories in the novel are responsible for divulging the most historical information, yet as Rigney notes, these exist on the border of "consciousness and experience", and thus the past and present continue their dialogue with one another. Another strong opposition that presents itself, as in Okri's writing, is that between life and death. This is also linked to the above paradigm, through the memories in the novel, suggesting that the past does not die. The esoteric is very much an intricate part of this narrative, and once again, it moves along the same axis as the real, creating a fluctuating paradigm. The final opposition comes in the familiar form of black versus white, and subsequently, cultural oral custom versus colonial western fiction. Through these, Morrison blurs many boundaries, and moves to establish a magical realist narrative that examines the past and present cultures of African-Americans.

One of the most prominent oppositions in the novel, as we have already seen, is that between the past and the present. History in *Beloved* is examined through memory, presenting this first opposition of the characters' past and present selves, as well as past and present places. The past for Sethe is Sweet Home, and while it is one of the better plantations, in regard to the institution of slavery as a whole, it still invokes many unpleasant memories. Sethe's present is the house at 124 Bluestone Road, where she has tried to forget her past and leave it behind. The past and the present collide in the introduction of Paul D, one of the Sweet Home men. He initiates the turn of events leading up to *Beloved*'s arrival, by moving in and ridding 124 of its baby ghost. *Beloved*

herself is the incarnation of this baby ghost, and as such, is the supernatural embodiment of this paradox of past and present. Beloved is thirsty for memory, as she is the incarnation of it, and Sethe, who has been avoiding the past now finds herself relating memories to Beloved.

‘Where your diamonds?’ Beloved searched Sethe’s face.

‘Diamonds? What would I be doing with diamonds?’

‘On your ears.’

‘Wish I did. I had some crystal once. A present from a lady I worked for.’

‘Tell me,’ said Beloved, smiling a wide happy smile. ‘Tell me your diamonds.’

It became a way to feed her. Just as Denver discovered and relied on the delightful effect sweet things had on Beloved, Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling. It amazed Sethe (as much as it pleased Beloved) because every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost. She and Baby Suggs had agreed without saying so that it was unspeakable; to Denver’s enquiries Sethe gave short replies or rambling incomplete reveries. Even with Paul D, who had shared some of it and to whom she could talk with at least a measure of calm, the hurt was always there – like a tender place in the corner of her mouth that the bit left.

But as she began telling about the earrings, she found herself wanting to, liking it.

(Beloved 58)

It is obvious that for Sethe, recalling the past is a very painful experience, hence her attempts to disremember. With Beloved, however, it is different, and Sethe now grudgingly begins to share her past with her spirit-daughter. Beloved becomes increasingly dependent on these stories, even more so when she realises that she is beginning to collapse. Her tooth falls out, and she knows that soon other pieces of her would follow suit. She observes that “It is difficult keeping her head on her neck, her legs attached to her hips when she is by herself.” (Beloved 133) Thus she craves attention in order to remain as a whole, “living memory”. Once Sethe discovers that Beloved is her daughter, the situation becomes progressively more dangerous. She feels compelled to explain her past to Beloved, and Beloved never ceases to crave this information. Paul D also finds himself within this situation, needing to retell his past, yet instead, he keeps it to himself:

It was some time before he could put Alfred, Georgia, Sixo, schoolteacher, Halle, his brothers, Sethe, Mister, that taste of iron, the sight of butter, the smell of hickory, notebook paper, one by one, into the tobacco tin lodged in his chest. By the time he got to 124 nothing in this world could pry it open. (*Beloved* 113)

These encapsulate all of Paul D's memories, and like Sethe, he is persevering in disremembering his past. Bjork comments on the dangers presented in the novel, of not remembering, but also of living in the past.

As much as Sethe, Paul D drifts within the paradox of a past and present self and place. The past is a necessary part of the present self; their stories need to be acknowledged so that living possibilities may be conceived. Yet an immersion into the past can also create stagnation and distortion, and may diminish or deny living possibilities. (145)

This is the paradox that Morrison presents through the opposition of past and present, in that if the past is not told, and acknowledged, then the opportunity for living is that much less. However, if like Sethe, the past takes control of the present, the possibility of life in the present is also that much less. Bjork asks the question, "how do they attain dignity amidst the terrible paradox of a past and present self and place?" (161) *Beloved* is this "terrible paradox", signifying the fear of Sethe and Paul D, that the past has eventually collided with the present, however much they tried to resist this course. Morrison uses *Beloved* to combine and merge these two divergent poles, in the suggestion that the past cannot be ignored and forgotten, but instead should be recognized as a significant part of the present. This correlates with the idea of identity, and how it should be recognized as a part of the self which exists through both the past and the present.

In order to gain a fuller comprehension of the African-American cultural identity, it is important to examine the binary opposition of life and death. At one point in the novel, Sethe talks about Sweet Home, and how it will always be there, waiting. Denver remarks, then: " 'If it's still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies.' " Sethe replies to her, saying: " 'Nothing ever does,' " (*Beloved* 36). This is made in reference to a place and a social system within that place, and Morrison is commenting on the fact that this system, and the effects that it has had, will not cease to exist once slavery is abolished.

This is made more significant by the fact that the actual time level in which the narration in the novel occurs, is set around the time of the civil war in America.

This statement additionally sheds light on apparent cultural beliefs. It echoes strongly with the words of Okri, in an interview given to Ogunsanwo: "An important part of my tradition is that we do not believe that the dead die . . . We believe that when people die, they go to another realm . . ." ("Intertextuality" 40) Atwood remarks on a similar attitude depicted in Morrison's text: "The supernatural element is treated . . . with magnificent practicality . . . All the main characters in the book believe in ghosts, so it's merely natural for this one to be there." (144) This suggests that there are similar cultural beliefs displayed by Okri and Morrison, which extend onto a larger scale to incorporate the communities from which these two writers inherited their cultural beliefs. Morrison's narrative, Beloved, confirms this viewpoint in more ways than one, especially through the figure of Beloved herself. As the daughter of Sethe, who was killed by her when she was two years old, Beloved transcends death, and returns to her mother. Morrison illustrates this other realm through Beloved, in a confusion of words and images, but she makes it very clear that Beloved is returning from death to be with Sethe.

I am in the water and she is coming there is no round basket no iron circle around her neck she goes up where the diamonds are I follow her we are in the diamonds which are her earrings now my face is coming I have to have it I am looking for the join I am loving my face so much my dark face is close to me I want to join she chews and swallows me I am gone now I am her face my own face has left me I see me swim away a hot thing I see the bottoms of my feet I am alone I want to be the two of us I want the join I come out of blue water after the bottoms of my feet swim away from me I come up I need to find a place to be the air is heavy I am not dead I am not there is a house there is what she whispered to me I am where she told me I am not dead I sit the sun closes my eyes when I open them I see the face I lost Sethe's is the face that left me Sethe sees me see her and I see the smile her smiling face is the place for me it is the face I lost she is my face smiling at me doing it at last a hot thing now we can join a hot thing (Beloved 213)

The earlier phrases are memories from Sethe's own life, things that Beloved questions after her return, and the phrases strongly indicate Beloved's desire to join Sethe in life. The second paragraph in the extract illustrates that Beloved has come from another place

and arrived in the realm of the real. The strongest implication in this passage is the crossing of boundaries that occurs. Morrison destabilises any construct of an opposition between life and death when Beloved transcends these boundaries and passes from death to life. There is, moreover, an indication throughout the novel which suggests that Beloved has always been able to overcome the limitations implied by this paradigm. One of the first times it is mentioned in the novel comes when Baby Suggs has just died, and Sethe and Denver attempt to try and "end the persecution by calling forth the ghost":

So they held hands and said, 'Come on. Come on. You may as well just come on.'

The sideboard took a step forward but nothing else did.

'Grandma Baby must be stopping it,' said Denver. She was ten and still mad at Baby Suggs for dying.

Sethe opened her eyes. 'I doubt that,' she said.

'Then why don't it come?'

'You forgetting how little it is,' said her mother. 'She wasn't even two years old when she died. Too little to understand. Too little to talk much even.' (*Beloved* 4)

It is obvious from this extract that the crossing of boundaries is a common cultural belief among this community, or else Sethe and Denver would never attempt to call the baby ghost out. Furthermore, Beloved is depicted as a permanent presence in the house at 124, until Paul D evicts her. There is also a reference made to her being outside of the house, as Beloved thinks about the creek, "in the same place where, as a little girl, Denver played in the silence with her." (*Beloved* 241) Thus her presence is experienced throughout the recent past and the present of Morrison's narrative, and she becomes the embodiment of this merging of opposites. Death and life exist within her, much as they do in the social system of African-American culture, and through this, Morrison asserts a powerful cultural viewpoint of death as another realm moving parallel to the real.

The supernatural is also presented as an alternate realm, much the same as it is in Okri's narratives. As in his work, the characters exist in a world where the esoteric and the real exist with fluctuating perimeters, creating a continually shifting paradigm. In an interview, Morrison expounds on her feelings towards the realm of the esoteric, when talking about finding an "elusive but identifiable style" of Black literature. Even though this is not said in regard to *Beloved*, it still illustrates many similar attitudes:

Because of the construction of the book and the tone in which I could blend the acceptance of the supernatural and a profound rootedness in the real world at the same time with neither taking precedence over the other. It is indicative of the cosmology, the way in which Black people looked at the world. We are very practical people, very down-to-earth, even shrewd people. But within that practicality we also accepted what I suppose could be called superstition and magic, which is another way of knowing things (Morrison, "Rootedness" 342)⁹

The baby ghost in 124 exists as a natural entity, completely accepted by the other occupants of the house. Paul D is more surprised by the emotion of the ghost than the fact that the ghost is there at all. As he enters the house, he feels the presence of the ghost, and asks: "You got company?" The pool of red that encompasses him in the doorway makes him ask Sethe: "What kind of evil you got in here?" to which Sethe replies: "It's not evil, just sad." (*Beloved* 8) Denver will later say that the ghost is not sad, rather it is "Lonely and rebuked." (*Beloved* 13) This attributes to the understanding that the ghost is recognized and acknowledged by the characters in the novel as part of another realm that exists parallel to the real, colliding and merging with it periodically. This is not a unique situation either, as Baby Suggs attests to when Sethe suggests moving in order to escape the ghost:

'What'd be the point?' asked Baby Suggs. 'Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief. We lucky this ghost is a baby. My husband's spirit was to come back in here? or yours? Don't talk to me. You lucky.' (*Beloved* 5)

The belief in spirits is a common one, and the realm of the supernatural is thereby acknowledged through this acceptance. While this belief in the novel may have reference to the time in which the story is set, remarking on the many deaths bought about by slavery it is also an apparent indication of a cultural belief, which is made more significant by Morrison's explication of African-American beliefs regarding the supernatural. The merging of opposites establishes a cultural definition of an African-American tradition, which opposes elements of American literature, particularly that

⁹ Again, this reasserts Warnes (4) when he discusses the equivalent state of both the real and the supernatural, reiterating the magical realism present within the writings of Morrison.

which is based within a realist literary paradigm. It also works to create a cultural identity through the blurring of boundaries, an identity which is culturally and socially charged, and works towards a selective retelling of an African-American history.

The final opposition that I wish to discuss in relation to Beloved, is that of white versus black, which is also depicted through the element of western literary tradition in contrast to an indigenous African narrative style. As it is a slave narrative, the opposing forces of black and white will obviously come into play. However, there are a number of subtle allusions that indicate that perhaps these boundaries are also merging to some small degree. Mr Garner for example, is not the tyrannical slave owner that is stereotypical in many slave narratives. Instead, he asks the Negro men at Sweet Home for their opinions, he calls them 'men' rather than the usual 'boys', and he allows Sethe to keep her children. This is given a comparative base when Sethe discusses her own childhood on a large plantation:

Of that place where she was born (Carolina maybe? or was it Louisiana?) she remembered only song and dance. Not even her own mother, who was pointed out to her by the eight-year-old child who watched over the young ones – pointed out as the one among many backs turned away from her, stooping in a watery field. Patiently Sethe waited for this particular back to gain the row's end and stand. What she saw as a cloth hat as opposed to a straw one, singularity enough in that world of cooing women each of whom was called Ma'am. (Beloved 30)

In this image, the slaves are presented as anonymous beings, much the same as large herds of livestock, yet in this case, the mothers are not sole caregivers to their children. In comparison with this, Sweet Home and Mr Garner appear far more agreeable in the eyes of the slaves. Mr Garner even takes Baby Suggs to Cincinnati as a free woman, once Halle has paid her off, and it is here that the Bodwins come into the narrative. These white people assist Baby Suggs in her newfound freedom, and shift the boundaries, more so than Mr Garner, between black and white.

Mr Garner told the Bodwins that she was a right fine cook as well as a fine cobbler and showed his belly and the sample on his feet. Everybody laughed.

'Anything you need, let us know,' said the sister. 'We don't hold with slavery, even Garner's kind.'

'Tell em, Jenny. You live any better on any place before mine?'

'No, sir,' she said. 'No place.'

'How long was you at Sweet Home?'

'Ten year, I believe.'

'Ever go hungry?'

'No, sir.'

'Cold?'

'No, sir.'

'Anybody lay a hand on you?'

'No, sir.'

'Did I let Halle buy you or not?'

'Yes, sir, you did,' she said, thinking, But you got my boy and I'm all broke down. You be renting him out to pay for me way after I'm gone to Glory. (*BeLoved* 145 – 146)

Although Garner is obviously a decent man, as a slave owner, he is still no closer to understanding the moral implications of owning another human. This lack of understanding is additionally expressed through Garner, who sees himself "as [a] benevolent patron", and declares that his slaves are men, which ultimately is "permitting manhood but denying the expression of it." (Rigney 72 – 73) Other white people throughout the novel periodically demonstrate a different kindness towards the coloured people, such as Amy Denver, or the Bodwins, who assist some of the characters throughout the novel. Davis suggests that the identity of a black culture is not independent, as "Blacks are visible to white culture only insofar as they fit its frame of reference and serve its needs." (8) DuBois captures this attitude in his thoughts on "double-consciousness", writing:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eye of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, . . . an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (496)

This encompasses this paradox, displaying a need to understand one's own identity, yet constantly having to understand it through the eyes of another culture. Morrison attempts to give her characters the ability to understand themselves through their own eyes. In this

manner, the borders between white and black are slowly broached, and the paradigm slowly begins to collapse. This is obviously not a complete collapse, but Morrison begins to suggest that a collapse is possible. Through this, a new identity amongst African-Americans could be established, and exist on a par with other, broader American social and cultural identities.

This binary paradigm is representative of the larger opposition between the colonial west and the indigenous African customs of Negroes. Both have a place in Beloved, such as the indigenous element of "song and dance" (30) that Sethe remembers from her childhood, or the institution of slavery, a powerful reminder of the presumed dominance of the west. The novel itself is part of this concept, and Morrison explains her viewpoint on it in an interview:

For a long time, the art form that was healing for Black people was music. That music is no longer *exclusively* ours; we don't have exclusive rights to it. Other people sing it and play it; it is the mode of contemporary music everywhere. So another form has to take that place; and it seems to me that the novel is needed by African-Americans now in a way that it was not needed before . . . and it is following along the lines of the function of novels everywhere. We don't live in places where we can hear those stories anymore; parents don't sit around and tell their children those classical, mythological archetypal stories that we heard years ago. But new information has got to get out, and there are several ways to do it. One is the novel. (Morrison, "Rootedness" 340)

This is clearly a prevalent issue within postcolonial, magical realist texts; how is it possible to oppose a dominant western literary ideology without using the novel, which is primarily based within western literary theory? Although it is difficult, Morrison accomplishes this through creating a distinctive African-American voice within the novel, thus deconstructing the paradigm between oral and written literary culture. Although there are many western influences on the narrative, it becomes distinct through the use of African-American cultural elements, such as the power of song and voice. This is seen most clearly at the end of the novel, when the community of women gather to help Sethe in her crisis with Beloved:

Denver heard mumbling and looked to the left. She stood when she saw them. They grouped, murmuring and whispering, but did not step foot in the yard. . . . A woman dropped to her knees. Half the others did likewise. Denver saw lowered heads, but could not hear the lead prayer – only the earnest syllables of agreement that backed it: Yes, yes, yes, oh yes. Hear me. Hear me. Do it, Maker, do it. . . .

They stopped praying and took a step back to the beginning. In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like.

(*Beloved* 258 – 259)

Morrison moves the women in this extract, from prayer to sound, from a colonialist system back to the essence of their culture, which is sound. Morrison emphasises the fact that: "For a long time, the art form that was healing for Black people was music. That music is no longer *exclusively* ours" (Morrison, "Rootedness" 340). This implies that at one stage it was exclusively theirs, or at least an intricate part of their culture. Michael Titlestad argues that the use of sound plays a role in defining a community:

Acoustic signification, we might argue, orientates the social imaginary: it situates individuals through echolocation, but also integrates them into an auditory community (a congregation of listeners) that registers the succession of sounds as its perceptible history. (2)

Thus sound, and in Morrison's case song, works to shape the community through identification with the use of sound or song. The identity of this culture, therefore, has strong ties with music and song, and separates black American culture from white, yet at the same time, adds to an identity of America both black and white, thus destabilising the opposition. DuBois phrases it best, as he queries:

Our song, our toil, our cheer, and warning have been given to this nation in blood-brotherhood. Are not these gifts worth the giving? Is not this work and striving? Would America have been America without her Negro people? (510)

There are also strong oral implications presented throughout the narrative. The memories of the past are essentially a retelling of the experiences of each character through slavery, and as Bjork suggested earlier, in order to retain hope for the future, the past must be acknowledged. However, at the end of the novel the narrator warns the

reader that, "It was not a story to pass on." (*Beloved* 274), and yet has done so himself. Rigney agrees with this, but says of the narrative: "if *Beloved* is not, as Morrison writes, 'a story to pass on' (274), then it is certainly one to be sung" (8). The element of music is one that Morrison often incorporates into her novel, as Rigney elaborates on when she writes: "Sethe often recounts her 'rememories' in the form of songs, made-up ballads for her children, which constitute a transmission of history and of culture, but it is also her conversation, even her thoughts, that are musical." (ibid.) Morrison uses this technique to depict an essentially African-American identity, which relates to music being part of its oral culture. This creates a combination of the two arenas in which Morrison writes, that of the west through the novel, and that of indigenous culture through the oral narrative. Morrison picks up on this very element in an interview with Evans:

There are things that I try to incorporate into my fiction that are directly and deliberately related to what I regard as the major characteristics of Black art, wherever it is. One of which is the ability to be both print and oral literature: to combine those two aspects so that the stories can be read in silence, of course, but one should be able to hear them as well. ("Rootedness" 341)

Thus Morrison once again deconstructs the borders between western and traditional modes of thought, and creates in their stead, a new hybrid identity of the African-American.

Through this, as well as the many other oppositions presented in this novel, certain constructs are deconstructed, or at least destabilised. Importantly, through the undermining of these binaries, Morrison is able to come to terms with another paradox that seems to continually concern her. She is able to the voice the unspeakable¹⁰. This theme, as in Okri, relates to magical realism, which works through the collapsing of

¹⁰ Carol Boyce Davies relates to this idea of "voicelessness" in relation to Caribbean women's literature, where she notes that:

It is a crucial consideration because it is out of this voicelessness and consequent absence that an understanding of our creativity emerges. By voicelessness, we mean the historical absence of the women writer's text: the absence of a specifically female position on major issues such as slavery, decolonization, women's rights and more direct social and cultural issues. (1)

This depicts a transcultural relevance in women writer's speaking out against a dominant voice, and it has ties with magical realism, and postcolonialism, for this same reason.

boundaries, and the assertion of a new mode of thinking. Thus, Morrison suggests a unique identity, and knowledge of self, among African-Americans.

Transformation Through *Beloved*

Magical realism thrives on transition, on the process of change, borders and ambiguity. Such zones occur where burgeoning capitalist development mingles with older pre-capitalist modes in postcolonial societies, and where there is the syncretizing of cultures as creolized communities are created. (Cooper, Magical Realism 15)

Although Brenda Cooper writes this in connection to Third World development, it can be seen also to resonate with the world of African-American slavery, and the initiation of slaves into free culture. As they are moving away from slavery, there is a need for independence, but this is gained at the cost of finding independence amongst already established western communities. Cooper proceeds to point out that this change is chaotic, as some people will have more access to development than others, as well as having more access to education. This also proves true for the characters in Morrison's Beloved, who move from slavery to a free society, as a "creolised communit(y)" is created. Thus throughout the novel transformation is a regular theme, occurring in objects, places, and people, and relating to the past and present, and the supernatural and real worlds of the novel. Morrison thereby distinguishes this community as hybrid, and changing, ultimately representing a struggle to understand identity.

One of the more significant transformations occurs between Sethe and her spirit-daughter, Beloved. Both seem stuck in a vicious cycle, as Sethe tries to make Beloved understand the past and thus gets too immersed in it herself, and Beloved, who craves memory in order to survive, will not cease in this obsession. This cycle, however, seems to transform them, one into the other. Beloved grows as Sethe dwindles, and Sethe's role as mother decreases as Beloved gains more power within the household. Denver is left to view this transformation from the outside:

They grew tired, and even Beloved, who was getting bigger, seemed nevertheless as exhausted as they were. . . . Listless and sleepy with hunger Denver saw the flesh between her mother's forefinger and thumb fade. Saw Sethe's eyes bright but dead, alert but vacant, paying attention

to everything about Beloved – her lineless palms, her forehead, the smile under her jaw, crooked and much too long – everything except her basket-fat stomach. . . . She saw themselves beribboned, decked-out, limp and starving but locked in a love that wore everybody out. Then Sethe spit up something she had not eaten and it rocked Denver like gunshot. The job she started out with, protecting Beloved from Sethe, changed to protecting her mother from Beloved. (*Beloved* 242 – 243)

As Beloved becomes more demanding for the memory that she craves, and that Sethe is willing to give at this stage of events, their roles are reversed, and transformed. So too are their physical bodies transformed as Beloved swells, but Sethe and Denver both shrink. As Denver aptly observes, it is love that exists between them, yet this is "a love that wore everybody out." It becomes Denver's responsibility to provide for both mother and the "living memory" daughter, and she therefore undergoes a transformation herself. It is necessary to understand that Denver, too, has been trapped in the 'rememories' of Sethe, as Bjork points out:

Sethe's story, told in increments to Denver throughout her childhood, plays a central role in continually energizing Denver's vision of the world; she is the inheritor of a story that is modulated by pain and death and dreams of life. (149)

Thus, her transformation is significant in that she is able to escape the past that has been her life, even while it has consumed Sethe. She becomes aware of her need to look after someone else, because Sethe has become incapable of doing so herself. Denver transforms into the caregiver, the mother figure, who provides for others. It is the process of memory, of re-entering the subconscious, that inflicts this transformation on the women of 124. Beloved grows from the memories of the past, yet does not benefit from them, and Sethe, who is forced to bring out her 'rememories', becomes too involved in the past. She is finally presented to the reader as a re-embodiment of Baby Suggs in her last days, without hope for the present or the future. Denver's transformation is something positive however, as she comes to terms with her mother's past, and realises that it is necessary for her to leave 124, if she is to help either Sethe or Beloved. She recognizes the fact that the present is more important than the past, and it does not serve

to dwell in the “rememory” of something, but healthier to acknowledge it, and move on through life.

This is not the only change that Sethe encounters within the narrative, and she is sporadically used as a vessel of transformation by Morrison. In these instances, she portrays the transformation of memory, as frequently, elements of the past have transformed to their present state. This has resonance with dreams (Resnik 1) as the memories incarnated in Sethe also change and transform over time. The most prominent site of this mode of transformation is Sethe's mark of slavery, which comes in the form of the scar on her back. She refers to it as a chokecherry tree, and compares it to the mark that her mother had, signifying her as a slave. Sethe's mark is given to her by schoolteacher, and progressively changes throughout the narrative. Amy Denver, the white runaway girl, is the first to see it, and describes it to Sethe:

‘It’s a tree, Lu. A chokecherry tree. See, here’s the trunk – it’s red and split wide open, full of sap, and this here’s the parting for the branches. You got a mighty lot of branches. Leaves, too, look like, and dern if these ain’t blossoms. Tiny little cherry blossoms, just as white. Your back got a whole tree on it. In bloom.’ (*Beloved* 79)

Sethe continues to refer to it as a tree, even though she herself never sees it, and eventually it heals, leaving it without the blossoms. Paul D later looks at the tree, and provides his own mental description:

And the wrought-iron maze he had explored in the kitchen like a gold miner pawing through pay dirt was in fact a revolting clump of scars. Not a tree, as she said. (*Beloved* 21)

These various descriptions provide the scar with a number of connotations, and also a continual transformative quality. This depends not so much on the scar, even though it has changed in the time between the two descriptions, but more on the person perceiving the scar. Amy Denver extracts something beautiful from the image, a tree in full bloom, while Paul D's renders it as something dirty, and repulsive. While these are two different perspectives, Sethe hears Paul D's interpretation eighteen years after Amy's, and so for Sethe, the scar has undergone a transformation. Perhaps, these differing opinions are representative of two views of slavery, the ultimate cause of Sethe's scar. Or perhaps they

represent two outlooks on life, the first always in search of something worthwhile and beautiful, like the velvet that Amy is searching for, and the second, taking a pessimistic standpoint, continually seeing the worst in things. It is interesting that Amy is white, yet is capable of viewing the black body as something beautiful, while Paul D sees it as repulsive. This could be indicative of a possible transformation in the perceptions of white people towards African-Americans. Paul D's perceptions are only transformed towards the end of the novel. While, he still refers to the scar as wrought iron, indicating that his view on slavery has not altered, understandably, he does acknowledge that there is a possibility for the future. Thus Sethe's scar is a vessel for transformation, not in the form of the scar itself, but through the varying perspectives of slavery, for in the end, Paul D is correct in asserting that no good has come from that institution, but there may still be hope for the future. This may be demonstrated through the character of Denver who is herself transformed into an independent woman, marking a possibility of change and transformation in the new generation.

The final process of transformation is revealed through the esoteric, in the character of Beloved herself, and subsequently the house at 124. The narrative begins with Beloved as the ghost of a two-year-old, 'crawling-already?' girl, whom Sethe has killed in order to save her from slavery. She remains in the house as this spirit, for many years, until Paul D arrives, and tells her to leave. Not long after this, Beloved arrives at 124, as a spirit, yet in human form:

A fully dressed woman walked out of the water. She barely gained the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and leaned against a mulberry tree. . . .

Women who drink champagne when there is nothing to celebrate can look like that: their straw hats with broken brims are often askew; they nod in public places; their shoes are undone. But their skin is not like that of the woman breathing near the steps of 124. She had new skin, lineless and smooth, including the knuckles of her hands. (*Beloved* 50)

Her transformation is one from spirit to human, or to 'living memory', and she emerges from a realm beyond the living, as a fully-grown, unwrinkled woman. This transformation seems directly linked to the house at 124, as the voices outside seem to echo the power of Beloved, throughout the novel. The very first words of the novel give

testimony to the baby ghost's presence: "124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom." (*Beloved* 3) As the story progresses, the presence at the house becomes more and more noticeable. Stamp Paid tries to visit Sethe, at one point, as *Beloved* is attaining a greater hold over the occupants of the house. At this stage the voices have increased, and as Morrison writes: "124 was loud." (*Beloved* 169) The house then, is undergoing much the same transformation as *Beloved*, and in the end, as *Beloved* disappears, so do the voices surrounding the house. Stamp believes that the voices around 124 belong to "the black and angry dead." As he thinks back, he notes: "Very few had died in bed, like Baby Suggs, and none that he knew of, including Baby, had lived a livable life." (*Beloved* 198) Rigney considers this, in connection to *Beloved*, saying: "*Beloved* is an aspect of Sethe's self and of her lost heritage, but she is also the incarnation of the "Sixty Million and more" of the novel's dedication, victims of the effectively genocidal campaign that was slavery." (70) Thus the voices are linked to *Beloved* in this nature, depicting the many "black and angry dead" that suffered throughout slavery. However, the voices and *Beloved* disappear at the end of the novel, marking an end to Sethe's past, even though she feels lost without it.

The transformation that occurs within this narrative is subtle, yet undeniably present, showing the changes between slavery and freedom, and between the past and the present. As the culture in *Beloved* is demonstrative of Cooper's 'creolized communities', so too can this use of transformation be linked to magical realism, which "thrives on transition, on the process of change" (*Magical Realism* 15). It is also indicative of the struggle to discover identity and a knowledge of self, in an ever-changing and transforming environment.

The "Nowhere Land" of Memory

The language of memory and desire is [an] obstacle – now linear, now circular, now condensed, now displaced – that 'puzzles and repels' us (Merle Rubin); we sense we know, but do not know, what we are reading; our expectations for simple resolutions of plot line are dislodged as Morrison produces the experience of personal history . . . chaotic, fragmentary, arbitrary, seemingly directionless. (Bjork 146)

This description of *Beloved*'s memories links tightly with Resniks' theory of dreams: "The world of dreams is a living forest in which fantasy dwells in a state of riddle" (2), and although there is no specific place in Morrison's novel that could be referred to exclusively as a "nowhere land", the passage also resonates sharply with Gaylard's notion of the "nowhere land", which is an important factor in his interpretation of magical realism. There is a sense of little or no direction, along with aimless wandering, as well as a strong feeling of the labyrinth, with memories twisting and turning, multiplying and moving in on one another. This is provided by the many different memories within the novel, told by different characters, but often pertaining to the same event. Also, as Bjork specifies above, the memories occur randomly, much like Azaro's sojourns into the realms of the esoteric in Okri's novels. This leads to a feeling of lostness within the text itself, as the plot moves from the present to the past and back again, periodically and without warning. Time, or the lack of logical time, is also a central feature of Gaylard's concept, and time in Morrison's novel is constantly distorted and rearranged. Thus through the disintegration of chronological time there is an increase in the idea of moving aimlessly, or without predetermined direction, in large recurrent circles. This emphasises an idea of searching for both knowledge and individuality within this turbulent and uncertain meeting and blending of worlds.

There are several memories and events in Morrison's narrative which reflect the concept of the 'nowhere land' more specifically than others. One such occasion is Sethe's "rememory" of the Clearing, in which Baby Suggs, holy, "offered up . . . her great big heart." (*Beloved* 88) Although the connection is subtle, there is an indication of shared elements with the concept of the "nowhere land". The description of the path to the clearing is one such aspect:

When warm weather came, Baby Suggs, holy, followed by every black man, woman and child who could make it through, took her great heart to the Clearing – a wide-open place cut deep in the woods nobody knew for what at the end of a path known only to deer and whoever cleared the land in the first place. (*Beloved* 87)

On the surface, this illustrates an idea of arbitrariness, and directionlessness, as the Clearing is simply there, without any rational purpose, or objective. However, Gaylard

also says of this realm that it is a "spatial analogue for the pausal wellspring of reflective lessons and recreation" (Broken Age 115). Again this suggests a learning process within the 'nowhere land', and Baby Suggs is accommodating in this regard:

She did not tell them to clean up their lives or to go and sin no more. She did not tell them they were the blessed of the earth, its inheriting meek or its glorybound pure.

She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it. (Beloved 88)

Baby Suggs does not provide concrete direction for these people, and as such, adds to the concept of being directionless. However, she is seen as a spiritual figure within the community, and she does offer advice to the crowd on how to find the grace within themselves, as well as an opportunity for recreation, as she calls forth for the people to release themselves:

It started that way: laughing children, dancing men, crying women and then it got mixed up. Women stopped crying and danced; men sat down and cried; children danced, women laughed, children cried (ibid.)

This provides the community with the chance for regeneration, it also amplifies the theme of Gaylard's land, depicting an idea of anonymity as the people mingle and roles are transferred. Through all of this, identity and knowledge are queried, providing the characters with the prospect of re-finding themselves, but also for believing in future possibilities. This is especially true for Morrison's characters, who exist within a world that is confusing and continually changing.

Another example of this "land outside of time" (Gaylard, Broken Age 111) is 124, the house itself. There are occasions throughout the novel that create this feeling of the house on Bluestone Road, such as the spontaneous party that Baby Suggs gave, soon after Sethe had arrived.

From Denver's two thrilled eyes it grew to a feast for ninety people. 124 shook with their voices far into the night. Ninety people who ate so well, and laughed so much, it made them angry. (Beloved 136)

This works as an element of the 'nowhere land' as it occurs in a place where time does not seem to matter. Even though people are struggling to live day by day, Baby Suggs is still able to provide a feast in the midst of this. On the day following the party, schoolteacher arrives for Sethe and her children, and once more chronological time becomes confused, as the past seems to collide with the present. This is echoed towards the end of the novel, when Mr. Bodwin travels down the road to fetch Denver for work. Sethe sees the same image that she saw that day, and determines that schoolteacher has again come for her children. Once more, time is disjunctively represented, and 124 comes across as a space outside of time, where past and present merge. In the later stages of the narrative, after Sethe has discovered Beloved's true identity, all chronological and social structure seem to collapse entirely. Sethe ceases to go to work on time and is eventually fired, the three occupants of 124 eat as they like, when they like, until there is no food left, and Sethe dresses them in bright carnival-like outfits, so that Denver is referred to as having the "clothes of a hussy" (*Beloved* 250). Rigney comments on this disorder, with reference to Morrison's writing:

Particularly when women live communally without men, as is the case in all five of Morrison's novels, they operate outside of history and outside of the dominant culture, even outside of black culture. Perhaps because history as a progression has been so antagonistic, they live also on a different time scheme, without schedules, without clocks, eating and sleeping according to whim and nature rather than sanctioned custom, thus collapsing conventional temporal coherence. (75)

Thus 124 is again presented as a space without a specific time frame¹¹, and as is suggested above, Sethe and her daughters are not living within the codes of the dominant culture. More importantly, they are neglecting their own community by remaining within the house at 124, as a dysfunctional family. Additionally, they lose all sense of direction once they become engrossed in Sethe's "rememories", and it is only Denver, at this point, who succeeds in finding her way out of the labyrinth of the past.

¹¹ This resonates with Fromm's theory of dreams, where the "categories of space and time are neglected." (15) This depicts a link between dreams and memories and the purpose they serve within this literature, as both are utilised to depict this concept of the "nowhere land".

Although it is subtle, there is definitely a clear presence of this 'nowhere land' in Morrison's novel. This links Beloved with Okri's novels, as well as magical realism, as the concept of the "nowhere land" is incorporated into Gaylard's analysis of postcolonial African writing. This further strengthens the connection between Okri and Morrison, and marks the use of this technique as transcultural.

The "nowhere land" in Beloved is predominantly distinct in the memories of the characters, yet even within the other examples of this feature in the text, it is always presented in connection with these memories. Different characters are responsible for the memories of the Clearing, and the happenings at 124, and in the end, it is because of memories that Sethe, Beloved and Denver become trapped in the cycle of 124, as a space outside of time. Nevertheless, as through Baby Suggs at the Clearing, lessons are learnt, and for some, like Denver, a regenerative process is begun. In this manner Morrison makes a clear beginning into the search for, and comprehension of, African-American individuality, as well as a place within the world in which this community lives.

Beloved's Journey

Motifs of similar travels and journeys – the pilgrimage, the great march, the Middle Passage, the road or path connecting disparate realities or contrasting states of being (town and city, past and present/future, life and afterlife) – underpin the plot or provide a symbolic framework in a great number of postcolonial texts. (Boehmer, Colonial 199 – 200)

This is said in regard to primarily African postcolonial texts, such as those by Soyinka, Achebe, and also Okri, yet it rings true for the work of Morrison as well. Throughout Beloved there are many journeys taken, and paths travelled, by many different characters. The novel is written within a hybrid, changing society, and illustrates a different perspective of history, which has previously been predominantly related through the prevailing white culture. Moreover, it also examines African American culture, through the eyes of that society. In this manner, it is especially similar to the work of Okri, who not only depicts the struggle with colonial domination, but also the problems with an unjust post-independent government. The journey in both cases is presented through the subconscious, and in the case of Beloved, the journeys are presented through the

memories of each particular character. In this manner, the mnemonic journey becomes a search for a developing identity, and a means of coming to terms with the individual self, in a continually fluctuating world.

Perhaps the two most central journeys in Beloved are those taken by Paul D and Sethe, in their escape to freedom. Both travel different ways after they leave Sweet Home, and both eventually arrive at 124 in Cincinnati, although Paul D arrives eighteen years after Sethe. There are many other stories within the narrative, dealing with the different ways that characters move out from under the yoke of slavery. For example, Baby Suggs has her freedom paid for by Halle, while Stamp Paid changed his name, and walked to Cincinnati. It is through the stories of Paul D and Sethe, however, that Morrison conveys the harsher reality of slavery. One of the main causes for Sethe's desire to escape occurs soon before the slaves plan to leave Sweet Home:

Schoolteacher made his pupils sit and learn books for a spell every afternoon. If it was nice enough weather, they'd sit on the side porch. All three of em. He'd talk and they'd write. Or he would read and they would write down what he said. I never told nobody this. . . . To tell it or even think it. You don't have to listen either, if you don't want to. But I couldn't help listening to what I heard that day. . . . 'Which one are you doing?' and one of the boys said, 'Sethe.' That's when I stopped because I heard my name, and then I took a few steps to where I could see what they were doing. . . . 'No, no. That's not the way. I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up.'

(Beloved 193)

Sethe is determined never to allow her children to be treated as though they were animals, and she therefore escapes by herself while heavy with child, after loading her other children into a wagon. Sethe suffers greatly in her efforts to save her children the humiliation that she herself experienced. Thus her journey through hardship and pain is made for love, a love which may be too strong in a world where nearly everything is either given up or taken away.

Paul D's path leads him to Alfred, Georgia, where he is sold to work in a chain-gang. Here he is chained constantly to the other forty-six men, yet the entire gang manage to escape, and he finds himself amidst a group of renegade Indians, who refuse to accept the land handed to them by the government, choosing instead to remain in the forest,

again representing a space outside of the accepted social order. His journey passes through many twists and turns, until eighteen years later, he finds himself outside 124, looking for the people who knew him best. Paul D's journey is a search for identity, and a place where he feels that he belongs. This becomes apparent on his journey, as he remembers:

Once, in Maryland, he met four families of slaves who had all been together for a hundred years: great-grands, grands, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, cousins, children. Half white, part white, all black, mixed with Indian. He watched them with awe and envy, and each time he discovered large families of black people he made them identify over and over who each was, what relation, who, in fact, belonged to who.

‘That there's my auntie. This here's her boy. Yonder is my pap's cousin. My ma'am was married twice – this my half-sister and these her two children. Now, my wife . . . ‘

Nothing like that had ever been his (Beloved 219)

It is obviously important to Paul D to establish a connection, and create a place of his own, with someone who shares a form of kinship with him. It is apparent that Sethe and him have "got more yesterday than anybody" and towards the end of the narrative Paul D wants to establish "some kind of tomorrow" (Beloved 273) with her. Identity seems particularly important to Paul D, and is linked to the idea of belonging, and finding a place where he can be accepted.

Denver's journey is one that is central to the narrative, as it is one of self-discovery, in a time of changing turmoil, where the past and the present clash. Denver's own past is mixed with the 'rememories' of Sethe, some words of advice from Baby Suggs, and an encounter with a boy that closed her ears to the talk of the outside world. It was this last that taught Denver about Sethe's secret, and since this incident, so many years before, she did not leave the house. Now, however, Sethe and Beloved depend on Denver, and she is left with little choice:

The weather was warm; the day beautiful. It was April and everything alive and tentative. Denver wrapped her hair and her shoulders. In the brightest of the carnival dresses and wearing a stranger's shoes, she stood on the porch of 124 ready to be swallowed up in the world beyond the edge of the porch. Out there where small things scratched and sometimes touched. Where words could be spoken that would close your ears shut. Where, if you were alone, feeling could

overtake you and stick to you like a shadow. Out there where there were places in which things so bad had happened that when you went near them it would happen again. Like Sweet Home where time didn't pass and where, like her mother said, the bad was waiting for her as well. How would she know these places? What was more – much more – out there were white people (Beloved 243 – 244)

Denver's past has effectively created a terrifying vision of the outside world, yet it is through courage on her own part, and encouragement from the women of the community, that she persists at returning to the outside world whenever it is required from her. This begins her journey into her self, where she is able to understand and come to terms with her identity as a woman:

'I can't do anything, but I would learn it for you if you have a little extra.'

'Extra?'

'Food. My ma'am, she doesn't feel good.'

'Oh, baby,' said Mrs. Jones. 'Oh, baby.'

Denver looked up at her. She did not know it then, but it was the word 'baby,' said softly and with such kindness, that inaugurated her life in the world as a woman. The trail she followed to get to that sweet thorny place was made up of paper scraps containing the handwritten names of others. (Beloved 248)

It is also on the paths through the community that Denver once again encounters the boy who closed her ears all those years ago, with the question: " 'Didn't your mother get locked away for murder?' " (Beloved 104) This time his words have a different effect on her, even though he simply wishes her well. This time, his words "opened her mind", and it seems to her that the words "were what language was made for." (Beloved 252) Denver is learning through her own journey, that there is a self, and that her identity exists apart from her mother, and her mother's memories, which include Beloved. Thus she becomes a self-sufficient individual. As Rigney expresses it: "Denver is also Morrison's symbol for hope, for the bridge between alienation and community, for the survival of identity, associated as that always is with both race and gender." (60)

Through the image of the journey, Morrison expresses firstly a need for self, for love, and for identity. Through the character of Denver, Morrison depicts the completion of these, in the form of a journey, a journey of the search and discovery of self-identity,

and self-love. It is important that Denver accomplishes this through the help of the community, as Morrison is indicating that the community is a significant element of identity

The Voices in Morrison's *Beloved*

The drawing together of stories signals the primary strategy of Morrison's text. The novel works to weave together into one narrative stories seemingly as dissimilar as those Sethe and Paul D possess. Throughout, the text highlights the various processes by which stories, both traditional and contemporary, oral and written, are told. The tale of Sethe's escape and Denver's birth, the infanticide and the aftermath, are all told or remembered through the consciousness of various characters – Denver, Sethe, Stamp Paid, Beloved – as well as through the voice of the modern narrator who frames the entire narrative. (Perez-Torres 104)

Through the use of a multi-voiced narrative, Morrison creates the idea of a communal history, and one which can be examined from a number of perspectives. She is in fact suggesting that it is necessary to examine the memories of all of the characters in order to gain a more comprehensive idea of the history that she is retelling. By doing this, the reader is able to gain insight into a society and a culture that has previously been neglected, not just through the story of an individual but rather through that of a community. Unlike Okri's narratives, which are told solely through the perspective of Azaro, Morrison's narrative contains this multiplicity and complexity of stories and memories. Nevertheless, as in Okri's narratives, Beloved endeavors to uncover the reality of this world, which is a very relevant element of magical realist texts. Furthermore, the numerous voices within Morrison's text enhances the ability of this novel to speak out against the dominant voice, which for Morrison would be a racist view of American society, another strong aspect of magical realist writing. This again relates to Morrison's desire to voice that which has been unspeakable, as mentioned before in the discussion of the collapsing of boundaries. Here the story is told by an outside narrator, tapping into the thoughts and memories of all the characters. This serves to establish a coherent retelling of the history of this culture, further creating a more solid comprehension of that culture's identity.

What is similar to Okri is the notion that this story could belong to anyone of the people in that community, or indeed, any African-American community. It is Baby Suggs that says every house in the country is haunted, making their story less exceptional. And it is Lady Jones that remarks of Denver, that "Everybody's child was in that face" (*Beloved* 246). Instances such as these provide the novel with an integral element of the communal, in that this is not one person's story, but rather a community's story. This is further encouraged by Morrison's use of perception in the telling of the narrative, which relies primarily on the community within the novel to relate the story of *Beloved* to the reader.

Once again, the 'chokecherry tree' provides an apt example, in that it provides many different perspectives on slavery. It is also significant that Sethe can never view it herself, as it is on her back, and she therefore depends on the interpretations of others. She still calls it a tree, eighteen years later, because that is what Amy Denver saw in it. Yet this is not the only time in the novel where perceptions are transferred.

Was that it? Is that where the manhood lay? In the naming done by a whiteman who was supposed to know? Who gave them the privilege not of working but of deciding how to? No. In their relationship with Garner was true metal: they were believed and trusted, but most of all they were listened to.

He thought what they said had merit, and what they felt was serious. Deferring to his slaves' opinions did not deprive him of authority or power. It was schoolteacher who taught them otherwise. A truth that waved like a scarecrow in rye: they were only Sweet Home men at Sweet Home. One step off that ground and they were trespassers among the human race. (*Beloved* 125)

As Paul D observes, within slavery, they are given meaning only through the grace of others. They could call themselves men as much as they desired at the plantation, but once they were removed from there, they were no better off than any other runaway slaves. Thus Paul D questions if he was only a man because Mr. Garner named him one. Within the institution of slavery it is the perspective of one's master that matters, rather than one's own, and this is continually emphasised throughout the novel. Sethe finds herself being discussed as though she were an animal, and though she knows she is not, it is not her self-opinion that matters. Later, when schoolteacher finds her in Cincinnati, he

observes: "you just can't mishandle creatures and expect success." (*Beloved* 150) The perceptions of others are therefore continually transferred from one class to another, in this case, from slaveowner to slave, as Flockemann observes:

Just as Sethe's perception of self seems limited to her conception of motherhood, so is Paul D's dictated by his conception of 'manhood'. Throughout the novel we are aware of the conflict between the way the victims of slavery attempt to achieve selfhood in the face (literally) of the white slaveowners' definitions of them, and their alienation from a viable form of cultural expression. (204)

This is not an entirely pessimistic outlook, however, as Morrison provides hope in the figure of Denver, who is able to transcend the memories which have continually impacted on her upbringing, and establish an identity of her own.

Morrison also uses perspective to relate the various stories within the narrative, as many characters tell their own tales, but also add to those that have already begun to be told. Both Sethe and Paul D discuss their escape from Sweet Home, and because their tales differ in many regards, the reader is given a more comprehensive idea of the ordeal. The same is true for the murder of the "crawling-already?" child, where we are witness to it from the perspective of Baby Suggs, Stamp Paid, and Sethe. Sethe's account is more an explanation of why it happened in the first place:

Perhaps it was the smile, or maybe the ever-ready love she saw in his eyes – easy and upfront, the way colts, evangelists and children look at you: with love you don't have to deserve – that made her go ahead and tell him what she had not told Baby Suggs, the only person she felt obliged to explain anything to. Otherwise she would have said what the newspaper said she said and no more. . . . but she knew that the words she did not understand hadn't any more power than she had to explain. It was the smile and the upfront love that made her try.

'I don't have to tell you about Sweet Home – what it was – but maybe you don't know what it was like for me to get away from there.' (*Beloved* 161)

Sethe has a desire to help Paul D understand her choices, and perhaps she thinks he will because he has suffered through Sweet Home as well. Thus Sethe tells him that she committed murder to save her child from the pain of slavery, yet Paul D remarks that Sethe's "love is too thick" (*Beloved* 164). Nevertheless, this element of the story is

enlightening in that it provides insight into the horrors of slavery, but also the intention behind the act, marking this not fundamentally as murder, but rather as an act of love. Through the culmination of the many different pieces of stories, we are able to do as Harting suggests: reconnect the voices of the past, in order to create a more comprehensive narrative about the history of African-Americans (26).

There is also emphasis placed on the act of seeing, and the site of the eyes. Again, this relates to Okri, as he uses sight to suggest that one needs to look beyond the façade presented by society to the truth underneath. Paul D makes a special reference to Sethe's eyes, and the way that they changed because of slavery: "schoolteacher arrived to put things in order. But what he did broke three more Sweet Home men and punched the glittering iron out of Sethe's eyes, leaving two open wells that did not reflect firelight." (*Beloved* 9) It is also Paul D who places the most emphasis on sight, when Stamp Paid shows him a picture of Sethe from a newspaper clipping, which prints the story of her child's murder. Paul D knows that "there was no way in hell a black face could appear in a newspaper if the story was about something anybody wanted to hear." (*Beloved* 155) Thus he denies the fact that it is Sethe on the premise that, "That ain't her mouth." (*Beloved* 154) Because he wishes to deny that it is Sethe, he convinces himself, through sight, that it is not. This deception of sight is another recurrent theme, as continuously, things that appear beautiful are deceptively so. Paul D calls this the "Devil's confusion", as it "lets [him] look good long as [he] feel bad." (*Beloved* 7) This type of reference is made at several other points in the novel, and one such perception is found towards the end of the novel, as the community women go to help Sethe:

The singing women recognized Sethe at once and surprised themselves by their absence of fear when they saw what stood next to her. The devil-child was clever, they thought. And beautiful. It had taken the shape of a pregnant woman, naked and smiling in the heat of the afternoon sun. Thunderblack and glistening, she stood on long straight legs, her belly big and tight. Vines of hair twisted all over her head. Jesus. Her smile was dazzling. (*Beloved* 261)

Morrison is thereby suggesting that sight is not all that it appears, as it can be deceptive. Okri follows a similar train of thought in his narratives, and both authors imply that it is

not enough to simply see, but rather that sight, and consequently what we understand to be true, needs to be questioned.

It is through the numerous voices of the characters that Morrison is able to speak out against the dominant voice within the society from which she writes. This conveys a sense of magical realism, as she is exploring the borders of history within this society, and challenging them. Thus she is able to assert her own voice and the voices of her characters, which symbolise the African-American community, and in so doing, she is able to re-tell their history. It is also through the modes of perception within this novel that Morrison questions sight, but also emphasises the importance of knowledge, in order to gain greater comprehension of the African-American community.

The Cycles of Time

The rememories are surely intended to denote a form of racial memory, a knowledge which even future generations cannot escape or forget. Morrison has written that there is 'no time' in Beloved, 'especially no time because memory, prehistoric memory, has no time' (1990, 229). Sethe tells her daughter about the nature of time, the psychic law, not that history repeats itself, but that it exists as a place, a dimension, in the collective unconscious (Rigney 74)

As Morrison has indicated, the memories in Beloved do not choose time, they simply occur, randomly, and seemingly without purpose, linking them to several concepts of dreams. This constructs an impression of the recurring nature of these racial, cultural memories, which do not stay buried in the past, but rather continually return to influence the present. As in Okri, this cyclical time represents the blurring of boundaries, and the acceptance of both the past and the present. Once more, this is a central element of magical realism, as it is through this collapsing of borders that a new understanding can be attained. Morrison therefore is suggesting that an identity cannot maintain itself without both the past and the present being accepted as an intricate and essential element of one's individuality and sense of self.

Morrison uses language to convey this cyclical image of the memories, by employing prefixes to suggest a deeper meaning. The two most prominent of these are the 're' in "rememories", and the 'dis' in "disremember". The first illustrates the cyclical

motion through the recurrence of these memories. This is not the first time that they are occurring, rather they are repeated images, acting as a constant reminder of the past. This establishes, as Rigney notes above, another dimension in which these memories exist, not in the past but in a realm next to the real. This echoes the esoteric in Okri's world, as both run on a plane parallel to reality, which the characters enter frequently, and often through no volition of their own. This recurrence of the past is made obvious in the text through various situations, such as the returning of schoolteacher, when Sethe murders her child, which is replicated at the end of the novel, when Mr. Bodwin appears to Sethe as schoolteacher. Paul D also appears as a figure from the past, and essentially acts as the catalyst for the many recurring memories throughout the novel.

The latter is expressed in Harting, as she says: "To disremember constitutes the 'have not,' that is to say, a minus in her memory" (38). This is representative of what the characters try to forget, but also the struggle within Sethe between wanting to forget, and needing to remember. This struggle is further complicated by the fact that the past is "going to always be there waiting" (Beloved 36). It is another realm, that poses a relentless presence, and therefore cannot be escaped. This predicament is encapsulated by Sale, who remarks: "It is Toni Morrison's ambition to create a form, and a storytelling, that keeps alive the struggle to remember, the need to forget, and the inability to forget. Something terrible happened, and keeps happening, and it is not entirely clear what, or even when." (169) Thus Sethe will always fail in her attempts to disremember the past, as time repeats these memories.

As previously noted, the memories recreated in Beloved belong to the community, constructing part of a collective consciousness, and their repetition is displayed through the figure of Beloved, who relives her memories in the novel.

All of it is now it is always now there will never be a time when I am not crouching and watching others who are crouching too I am always crouching the man on my face is dead his face is not mine his mouth smells sweet but his eyes are locked some who eat nasty themselves I do not eat the men without skin bring us their morning water to drink we have none at night I cannot see the dead man on my face daylight comes through the cracks and I can see his locked eyes I am not big small rats do not wait for us to sleep someone is thrashing but there is no room to do it in if we had more to drink we could make tears (Beloved 210)

This extract depicts the passage on the slave ship, which Beloved could never have remembered as she was never a slave. This, then is the collective unconscious of the African-American, and which Beloved is privy to, as she is a part of this culture, and “retains a psychic racial memory of capture and transport, of slave ships and the Middle Passage.” (Rigney 74) Jung discusses this concept, saying of it: “The collective unconscious is common to all; it is the foundation of what the ancients called the ‘sympathy of all things.’ ” (136 – 137) In Jung’s opinion, this form of memory is linked to all people, and reaches back into the past, with memory and emotion for all things. Wertsch suggests that there are two versions of collective memory, the first being much the same as what Jung has offered, while the second, or distributed version “assumes that a representation of the past is distributed among members of a collective” (21) Nevertheless, it can be seen that both positions indicate a collective, communal remembering. Wertsch also suggests that “collective memory studies tend to focus on how efforts to create a usable past serve political and identity needs.” (35) Memory, within the text, can then be seen as part of a cultural location, providing access to that culture’s past, whilst working to establish that culture’s identity within the present.

The image of the cycle is seen in many different ways throughout the text. Slavery itself is a repetitive circle, through which few escape. This is present in the account that Paul D gives about the slave families which he comes across, where each generation repeats the past in the cycle of slavery. Sethe’s mother was a slave before her, and the cyclical nature of this institution is illustrated through an incident where she shows Sethe the scar that she carries:

‘She picked me up and carried me behind the smokehouse. Back there she opened up her dress front and lifted her breast and pointed under it. Right on her rib was a circle and a cross burnt right in the skin. She said, “This is your ma’am. This,” and she pointed. “I am the only one got this mark now. The rest dead. If something happens to me and you can’t tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark.” Scared me so. All I could think of was how important this was and how I needed to have something to say back, but I couldn’t think of anything so I just said what I thought. “Yes, Ma’am,” I said. “But how will you know me? How will you know me? Mark me, too,” I said. “Mark the mark on me too.”’ (Beloved 61)

Sethe's mother slaps her for this request because she has no idea what that mark indicates, being too young to understand the implications of such a mark. Nevertheless, Sethe gains her own mark, many years later, in the form of a "chokecherry tree", through whipping her. These scars, from schoolteacher's whipping, are the indications that slavery is a repetition, passed from one generation to the next. However, there is hope portrayed through the fact that most of the characters in the novel are free, either because they ran, or they were delivered out of slavery, thus breaking the cycle.

The remaining hope that Morrison expresses is done so through the figure of Denver, who is able to break through the cycle of the past, and continue with her future. Sethe is seen to adapt the cycle of Baby Suggs, who had given up her hope in the future, and decided instead to concentrate on colour, because it seemed harmless enough. Sethe does not express much hope in the future when Paul D visits her at the end of the narrative. She seems too tired for the task of continuing life, even though Paul D would like to make "some kind of tomorrow" (*Beloved* 273) with her. Sethe, however, does not sound convinced.

The final image of the cycle is expressed by the narrator, who tells the reader that "This is not a story to pass on." (*Beloved* 275) Yet the narrator has done so in telling us this story. The cycle may be broken in some small way, through Denver, or the slaves that have escaped slavery, yet the cycle is not overcome, and will continue through the narrative, and the collective conscious of African-Americans.

The one cycle that is broken is that of silence:

as readers, if we understand Toni Morrison's ironic and subversive vision at all, we know that our response to the text's apparent final call for silence and forgetting is not that at all. Instead, it is an ironic reminder that the process of consciously remembering not only empowers us to tell the difficult stories that must be passed on, but it also empowers us to make meaning of our individual and collective lives as well. (Sanders Mobley 197)

Through this remembering of the past and the influence it has on the future, the retelling of a history is made possible. So too is the establishment of a social and cultural identity, acknowledging both the past and the present, through the collapsing of the boundaries of time. Morrison is also able to breach the distance between the unconscious and the

conscious memories of the African-American community. This is depicted through her use of the memories of the middle passage, and thereby indicate a further use of the techniques of magical realism and memory. This provides insight into the novel in that it suggests that Beloved is a story of a community, more than an individual, and once again, through the use of this communal voice, Morrison is able to recreate an African-American identity.

Reading the “Rememories”, Voicing the Unspeakable

With hindsight, I think what's important about [Beloved] is the process by which we construct and deconstruct reality in order to be able to function in it. I'm trying to explore how a people – in this case one individual or a small group of individuals – absorbs and rejects information on a very personal level about something (slavery) that is indigestible and unabsorbable, completely. (Taylor-Guthrie 235)

If anything I do, in the way of writing novels (or whatever I write) isn't about the village or the community or about you, then it is not about anything. I am not interested in indulging myself in some private, closed exercise of my imagination that fulfils only the obligation of my personal dreams – which is to say yes, the work must be political. It must have that as its thrust. (Morrison, “Rootedness” 344)

The above are two extracts from interviews with Toni Morrison, which, I believe, combine to illustrate the nature of her narrative, Beloved. To begin, it is a novel that examines a group of people struggling with the reality of slavery, and subsequently, how they construct and deconstruct that reality around them. It is also a political narrative, one that examines the community of African-Americans, and through this their culture and society. This novel determines a need for an identity of African-American people, within a changing and hybrid society.

As we have seen, memory has an important function within Morrison's text, especially since it leads the way into magical realism. It is through memory that Morrison makes contact with the subconscious mind, as well as the esoteric element within the novel. Morrison uses memory to deconstruct the borders of time, thus creating Beloved as ‘living memory’, and shifting preconceived boundaries to allow for a new

understanding of identity and knowledge, within the culture of African-Americans. It is through this deconstruction, and reconstruction, of memory that Morrison is able to create a narrative that examines, politically and culturally, the institution of slavery and the society of African-Americans.

The central notion within the concept of oppositions in magical realism is that of deconstruction and subsequently reconstruction. This is particularly true in the novels we have examined in the first chapter, and still holds true for Beloved. The oppositions are constructions of western thought, such as that of past and present or life and death. They are seen as polarities, yet this magical realist text merges the boundaries between these apparently opposing forces, and thereby destabilises this thought pattern. Morrison is also able to use the device of magical realism to shift the borders of subconscious and unconscious memory, and in a similar manner, the borders of the real and the supernatural, thereby further establishing an African-American identity within the novel. Thus, preconceived knowledge is questioned, and a search is begun for a new identity within African-American culture, which marks this society as separate from, and independent of western culture.

Importantly, it is through this reconstruction of the African-American history, that Morrison is able to voice that which has previously been unspoken. She therefore creates an opportunity to re-examine identity and self.

Chapter 3: The Nightmares of Irvine Welsh

A dream is a complex scenic landscape, made up of several pieces: fragments of houses, bridges, figurative or abstract shapes, which are the expression of a world based on multiplicity, a world that does not respect the conventional rules and is organized 'in its own way', governed by the 'unreality' principle: unreality is merely reality that is different from daytime reality. (Resnik 135 – 136)

Throughout the novels I have examined, both those of Ben Okri and Toni Morrison, we have seen the subconscious landscape depicted as above, through both dream and memory. It is a place that does not abide by the laws of reality, but one that exists on a parallel plane to reality. The subconscious, or dream landscape presented by Irvine Welsh in his novel, Marabou Stork Nightmares, is just such a place. This chapter discusses Welsh's use of these devices, while working to establish this novel as magical realist, thereby furthering the concept of a transcultural use of these techniques.

Irvine Welsh is a contemporary novelist, based in the United Kingdom, and writing about a modern culture that has situated itself within the ever-growing cosmopolitan regions of the world. His novels examine the issues faced by the people inhabiting these cosmopolitan mazes; such as the drug culture that Trainspotting (1993) explored so powerfully. Marabou Stork Nightmares introduces a different problem faced in these modern times, that of identity, and the questioning of self.

This text is relevant to this research, as I feel it portrays a sense of magical realism, yet in a different context to both Okri and Morrison. While Welsh addresses a number of social issues with regard to an essentially western-based society, he does so by using techniques congruent with those of magical realism. He challenges the system within which he is writing (a feature common to postmodern and postcolonial writers), by deconstructing binary oppositions, by questioning preconceived knowledge, and by using a technique which examines the subconscious thoughts of the character. It may be possible to define this novel through any number of modes of fiction, yet, as Christopher Warnes suggests: "The key defining quality of magical realism is that it represents the fantastic and the real in a state of *equivalence*, refusing to privilege either one over the

other." (4) It is obvious that the levels of consciousness in Welsh's novel all play an equally central role, and for this reason, it is possible to say that Welsh's novel does not delve into fantasy, but rather, the third plane of narration exists as a dream reality, on a par with other magical realist texts. Furthermore, Zamora and Faris point out, that magical realism is used as a means to explore, and break through the boundaries within particular societies (5 – 6). Welsh certainly does examine the limits of his society, in his exploration of identity and self within the society about which he writes. Through his use of various magical realist techniques, he breaks through the boundaries, allowing a reading of the novel as magical realist. Therefore, I argue that this novel presents a further dimension of magical realism, and its use of dreams within the form of the novel.

I find it necessary, at this point, to briefly discuss the story line present in Welsh's narrative. By doing this, I hope to establish both a sense of what the novel is examining, as well as insight into my motive for using this novel.

Chronologically, the novel deals with the life of Roy Strang, a young Scottish boy who grows up in the Scheme. This is a lower-cost housing facility, in Edinburgh, with cramped spaces and little prospects. Roy's father is, as the narrator refers to him, a "basket case" while his mother "if anything, was worse" than his father (MSN 19). Roy shares this family life with several siblings, two of whom are from affairs his mother had with two Italian men, before returning home to Roy's father. This information is shared with the readers in the early pages of the novel, making them aware of Roy's dysfunctional domestic life. Part of Roy's childhood is spent in South Africa, due to his father's insistence that there are more opportunities to be had there than in the Scheme. These years of Roy's life include a sexually abusive uncle, an introduction to Apartheid and consequently the experience of racism. This phase of the novel also includes Roy's sighting of a flock of Marabou Storks attacking and devouring a colony of flamingos, an overall significant event in the development of the novel. After Roy's father has failed to achieve success in South Africa, he moves the family back to Scotland, where Roy continues through life, getting a job, and eventually joining up with a gang. This ultimately leads to the gang rape of Kirsty, a girl who interacts with Roy and the gang periodically. This is followed by Roy's subsequent deterioration, until he attempts suicide and finally falls into a coma.

Welsh uses this conceivably commonplace plot, to create another world, which takes place in Roy's unconscious mind, and integrates itself into this storyline. This fantasy world is set in the forests of Africa, and revolves around Roy's hunt for the leader of the Marabou Storks, relating this phase of the novel to Roy's earlier encounter with these creatures. The pack of Storks has been hunting the remaining colonies of flamingos, thereby reducing the numbers of flamingos in this region of Africa. It becomes Roy's aim to hunt and kill the leader of these Storks, in order to end the senseless destruction that the Storks are responsible for. Through this fantasy world of Roy's we are able to pick up on strands from his past, from the influential episodes in Africa, to his rape of Kirsty, and even to the moment before he enters into his coma. The character of Jimmy Sandison is a football player whom Roy views on the television as he is attempting his suicide. In his fantasy, Jimmy Sandison is transformed into the figure of Sandy Jamieson, Roy's imaginary companion and hunting partner.

The novel ends with Kirsty seeking her revenge on Roy as he finally wakes up from his coma. Her revenge takes the form of castration and suffocation, as she cuts off his penis and forces it down his throat. She also takes the time to remove Roy's eyelids to ensure that he suffers in a similar manner as she did, when he took part in her rape.

The novel obviously examines the larger cosmopolitan society within which Roy plays a role, but does so by moving through various subconscious realms. These predominantly include memory, where Roy is able to examine his past, and hallucination, where Welsh creates a metaphor of society within the African wilderness. The novel moves through these levels with little or no apparent structure or chronological order, continuously moving in and out of levels, leaving the reader feeling disorientated at best. The purpose behind this is to create in the reader a sense of what Roy is going through in his attempt to reach his own self-realization. This creates a stronger essence of magical realism within the novel, as the barriers between these levels seem to disappear with the same ease as Okri's barriers between the real and esoteric, and Morrison's borders between the past and the present. Furthermore, It is possible to take Welsh's use of this hallucinated fantasy level as a similar device to that of Okri's dream realm, and Morrison's use of memory. In this sense, the novel can therefore, also be seen to use

magical realist technique, and as such is a par, in many respects, with the novels of both Okri and Morrison.

Throughout this novel, Welsh incorporates a number of techniques into his work, from realist writing, to magical realist devices, creating a body of fiction that becomes difficult to categorise. Many of his techniques seem to include postmodern concepts, as can be suggested through Hutcheon's theory of the postmodern:

Because it is contradictory and works within the very systems it attempts to subvert, postmodernism can probably not be considered a new paradigm. . . . It may mark, however, the site of the struggle of the emergence of something new. (4)

Welsh, therefore, establishes a postmodern form of writing, that works from within the dominant arena, in order to subvert it. Additionally, he utilises postcolonial techniques, which I discussed previously, thereby allowing a marginalized community entry into the dominant culture, as well as providing them with an independent voice with which to speak out against the broader culture.¹² However, he also makes use of many devices which can be interpreted as colonially-based, such as the trope of Africa, and the dark other, being the African (Gikandi, Maps; Cooper, Weary Sons). What is his purpose in doing so? He is possibly using these ideas as a parody of a perceived colonial dominance, thus furthering his questioning of this system. While it is certain that he is aware of the techniques he employs, it may be that it is not his intention to create a magical realist novel, despite the fact that Marabou Stork Nightmares can indeed be read with this fictional mode in mind.

Through this chapter, I endeavour to produce a study of Welsh's writing that can be utilised as a comparative base for the magical realist work of postcolonial writers, using Ben Okri for the main comparison. In the case of Welsh's novel, I intend to focus on the subconscious fantasy through which Roy leads the readers. This level of narration within Marabou Stork Nightmares, as in the dreams of Okri's novels and the memories of Beloved, work to create a platform through which the author can covertly challenge the dominant power that is the concern of each writer. There are many further elaborations of

¹² Again, it is necessary to point out that Welsh may not be postcolonial per se, yet it is apparent that he has employed postcolonial techniques, in order to achieve a goal similar to that of postcolonial writers.

these techniques, which each subchapter examines, helping to create the comparative foundation upon which this research is based. Furthermore, I hope to demonstrate that the use of subconscious thoughts, as an element of magical realism, is widely spread, and not solely based within acknowledged magical realist writers, such as Okri. Rather, it is a development used amongst many authors, from Okri to Morrison, as well as Welsh.

Levels of Consciousness in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*

It could be argued that *[Marabou Stork Nightmares]* has three distinct narrations, where the same narrator tells three stories at the same time, but I prefer to call them three levels of narration because (a) they all have the same narrator and the same 'default' narratee (the reader), (b) as the novel proceeds, the narrative levels "interact" and reflect one another more and more and (c) there is textual evidence . . . to suggest that we are meant to see the three narrations as a series of connected levels. The top level and the middle level are, in any case, part of the same general fictional world (what Ryan 1991 would call the 'text-actual world'). . . . The deepest level of narration is distinct from the other two in that it is fantasy. . . .

The movements from one level of narration to another, sometimes forced by external stimuli and sometimes by connections made within the mind of the narrator, are clearly meant to be representative of a mind drifting towards, and away from, consciousness. (Short 308 – 309)

As this quote indicates there are a number of levels that the narrator operates on within the text. The first of these, that Short examines, is the "text-actual" world where the narrator, Roy Strang, is aware of his surroundings in the hospital. This occurs within the present of the novel, but as I suggest later, is not of primary importance to Roy. The middle level of consciousness occurs in Roy's past as he relives his childhood and adult life leading up to his attempted suicide. This level, then, is entirely based within memory, creating a biased perspective through Roy. The third level is the world of fantasy, or rather, Roy's fantasy, where he is on a quest to kill the Marabou Stork. This level shares several elements parallel to those in the magical realist texts that I have discussed thus far. As Short suggests above, the three levels begin as separate locations within the mind of Roy Strang, yet towards the end of the novel, they start to merge. This integration of the levels begins to show the development of magical realism within the novel.

These levels of narration combine to form the subconscious world of the narrator. Even the first level, although taking place in real time, is seen to unfold through Roy's subconscious thoughts:

Roy, I'm shining this torch
into your eyes. Pupil dilation
seems more evident. Good. Good.

FUCK OFF

— Definitely more of a response that time, Roy. It's probably just a reflex, though. I'll try it again . . . no . . . nothing this time around.

Naw, cause I'm too quick for youse, you'll never find ays in here. (MSN 5)

In the above quote the doctor is portrayed through the smaller print, suggesting that he is not on the same conscious level as Roy. The passage serves to provide apt evidence of the present time as it is seen through the perceptions of Roy, regardless of the fact that he is in a coma. He is still capable of realising what is occurring within present time, and responds duly to this, without emerging from his state, and therefore avoiding attention from the nurses. As Roy is the narrator, it is obviously understandable that he relates what is happening, but we are only privy to these happenings from inside Roy's mind. Thus, we are only given access to what Roy perceives, in this level, as well as the others.

The second level takes place in “text-actual” time along with the first plane, but revolves around the memories of Roy. Like Morrison, these memories create an important element of the narrative, as they tell a story of their own, depicting the world that Roy grew up and lived in. They also work as an explanatory base, portraying the many cumulative incidents throughout his life that result in Roy's present state of mind. One such incident occurs when Uncle Gordon takes Roy into the bush to see wildlife, and Roy develops indigestion:

Gordon pulled over by the side of the road and told me to lie down flat on the back seat. He started rubbing my stomach, feeling me, then working his hand slowly inside my shorts and down over my genitals. I just gave a nervous giggle. Part of me didn't really believe that this was happening. Then I felt a diseased spasm wrench through me and I began to tense up under his touch.

– It's alright, it's all connected up, he smiled, – the stomach, the bladder . . . I know what's wrong here.

Then he opened my trousers and told me that I was a good boy while he started stroking my cock, masturbating himself with his other hand. (MSN 71)

This sexual abuse of Roy as a young child results in Roy's abuse of others and his resultant guilt, which ultimately leads to his attempted suicide. Through this use of memory, Welsh establishes a story of cause and effect, that examines a number of social realities, such as the continuing cycle of abuse.

The final plane within Roy's subconscious is that of hallucination, and deals with the deepest recess within Roy's mind. This does not take place in the present time, instead it is moving through a space which seems to have no specific time frame. They, that is Roy and his imaginary companion Sandy Jamieson, exist within a wilderness in South Africa, depicting an image of the stereotypical white, colonial hunter. Together they are hunting for Roy's nemesis, the leader of the Marabou Storks. Although this level is purely a dreamscape, it does have strong ties with the "text-actual" levels, both of which influence the existence of Roy's fantasies in a multitude of ways. Not only do these planes continually interrupt Roy's adventure, but they also assert authority over the adventure itself, by integrating themselves into the third plane of consciousness¹³. This is particularly apparent towards the end of the novel when Kirsty, Roy's rape victim, visits him at the hospital. As he tries to escape her, and the storks that are simultaneously pursuing them in Africa, the three levels begin to fuse into one another:

I run and run until I can see nothing around me or ahead of me. Then it's like my lungs collapse and I black out. I have a pleasant image of the two of us, me and Dorie, at a club, dancing together, really high, I feel the music in me, feel the rushes, the uninhibited euphoria . . . I awaken and Sandy's kind face pulls into focus in front of me. Dust kicked up by a swirling wind stings my eyes and my throat. Sandy's got a shooter. It's a pump-action double-barrelled shotgun. – We have to go, Roy, he says. I get up easily and I see the lodge in the distance. We run towards it.

¹³ This has resonance with both Okri and Morrison, but more importantly with Green's theory of the lucid dream. (15)

– Lets get that fucking Stork, Sandy, we're so close, so close to solving the whole fuckin
 problem - - - coming up - - - so close to the surface - - - - - A total breakdown, Roy. I blamed myself.
 For a whole year I was no better than you, a fucking walking corpse. (MSN 230)

This extract incorporates all three levels, the third and most prominent deals with the escape from the Storks in Africa; the second is depicted through the image of Roy clubbing with Dorie, a girlfriend of his from Manchester; and the first is the voice of Kirsty describing her rape ordeal, once more depicted in the smaller font. This illustrates the use of all three planes within the text, and while distinguishing them from one another, Welsh also indicates that they exist as components of each other. The narrator is not, then, simply telling three alternate stories, but rather is telling one narrative with three intricate units, combined to provide a whole, which deals with the social issues that Welsh is discussing.

As can be seen in the above passage, Welsh makes use of a number of techniques in differentiating between these levels¹⁴. This includes the use of accent and font size. One indication of the blurring of levels, in the above passage, is shown towards the end of the extract, where Roy swears twice in a sentence, but the second "fuckin" takes on a more colloquial tone, by dropping the 'g'. The first level of narration is marked by the Scottish accent of his parents and other visitors, as well as a smaller font size. This, according to Short, indicates a sentiment of lesser importance, as though this level occurs in the background of Roy's consciousness (318). This is further emphasised by Roy's unwillingness to surface to this plane throughout the text. He continually desires to go "deeper" whenever he does ascend to this level, and is often aggravated by the interruption of this first level, as well as the second level, when he is in his fantasy world:

After circling around on a path on the periphery		
of the forest for a while, we eventually pulled		
into a yard. The lodge was a strange building,	k	– Still quite
constructed on stilts. The smell of diesel from	c	heavy aren't
our vehicle was overpowering. It smelt like	u	you, Roy?
hospit not hospitals - - - - -	f	Isn't he, Tricia?

¹⁴ Again, a clear difference amongst these novels is that the various realms are clearly differentiated in all three of the writers, yet in Okri and Morrison, there is no specific distinction made when the characters move between the realms, as there is in Welsh.

– Yes, he certainly

is . . . I feel really bad about us moving him into the corridor like this, Bev.

– I know Tricia, but it's only going to be for a couple of nights, then he'll have his room back. Won't you, Roy?

(MSN 39)

This displays his unenthusiastic attitude to move onto the first plane of consciousness, but also indicates that he is prompted to do so through a connection that his mind makes with this level. The smell of diesel from their vehicle in the fantasy world reminds Roy of the smell of hospitals, triggering his return to the real-time level, through no volition of his own. Again, this shares a connection with both Okri and Morrison, whose protagonists often move into parallel realms through no conscious decision on their part. Welsh uses the type size to indicate different levels of consciousness, but also employs the stylistic image, through the words, of Roy either ascending, or descending between his levels of consciousness. This can be seen in the above extract as Roy curses as he rises through the levels of consciousness. On other occasions, he moves back into his dream reality, and this is frequently shown in the text as, or variations of:

DEEPER

DEEPER

DEEPER (MSN 40)

This enables the reader to distinguish between the different levels, as well as establish Roy's state of consciousness throughout the novel.

The accent that Welsh uses in the second level is much the same as the first, only far more pronounced and colloquial. It uses a great deal of swearing, presumably to indicate the harshness of the Schemes where Roy lived with his family. Roy's memories of South Africa, during the years of Apartheid, contain several references to that country's contemporaneous terms of racism. Uncle Gordon lectures Roy about his familiarity with the household maid, resulting in Roy's use of the following terms:

We made up nasty songs with words like 'coon' and 'Kaffir' and 'nigger' in them and sang them lustily around the house. Dad and Gordon would laugh approvingly at us. (MSN 71)

The use of such colloquial terms (i.e. "coon", "Kaffir", and "nigger"), in both South Africa and Scotland, indicate the social attitudes prevalent among whites during these

times. In Roy's fantasy world, however, he chooses a completely different dialect, a form Short refers to as "a kind of upper-class between-the-wars RAF Biggles-speak, which is parodic of what might be called the 'English of Empire'." (316) This is presented through an upperclass register, which both Roy and the imaginary Sandy utilize:

- You've been at the wheel far too long, Sandy. I'll take over! I volunteered.
- Wizard! Sandy replied, pulling over by the side of the dusty track.
- A large insect settled on my chest. I swatted the blighter. – Yuk! Those insects, Sandy! How positively yucky!
- Absolutely, he laughed, clambering over into the back of the vehicle. – It'll be great to stretch these damn pins! (MSN 4)

This provides a sample of this manner of speech, and combined with the setting of Roy's fantasy, suggests a rather colonial representation: two intrepid adventurers in the heart of Africa, on their way to tame and colonise the land.

By using these various techniques, Welsh depicts the nature of the three levels of consciousness, while distinguishing them from one another as Roy moves between them. Although the third level shares the most commonalities with a magical realist text, there is a shared element in the memories of the second plane of consciousness, with Morrison's text, *Beloved*, as her novel is set, to some extent, in the characters' memories of the past. Nevertheless, *Marabou Stork Nightmares* remains a novel from the Empire in its heritage, and shares many attributes with other novels from this era, as I will demonstrate later. Thus, it is necessary to mention that, while there is substantial use of magical realist techniques, as well as subconscious modes, it is not as extensive as in the other texts that have been discussed.

Welsh's Binary Paradigms

Binary oppositions or structural analysis cloud our understanding of postcolonial relations, . . . because they are constructed on a logic that cannot sustain the capacity for human subjects to reflect on and transcend their conditions of possibility. (Gikandi, *Maps* 146)

While Gikandi writes this in relation to postcolonialism and Africa, it can also be seen to be true for Welsh's writing. There is substantial evidence of oppositions existing within Marabou Stork Nightmares, and up to now, all of the narratives examined have worked to collapse these binary oppositions. They have done this by blending the boundaries within particular paradigms, and destabilising the preconceived notions held in connection with each opposition. The deconstruction of these conflicting paradigms has subsequently questioned the construct of western knowledge. What does this mean for the novel of a Scottish man, when his work also destabilises the boundaries of his modernity?

A number of oppositions are present within Marabou Stork Nightmares, even though some are not as apparent as they are within the other texts discussed. The binary opposition of past and present is clearly illustrated, through the second level of narration dealing with Roy's past. The binary paradigm of Africa in contrast to the west is depicted through the constant interchange between the levels of narration, as well as Welsh's use of Africa as a colonial metaphor. The opposition between the real and esoteric is not as obvious, since, even though it is a clear opposition within the narrative, it is not presented as noticeably merging. This may be, in part due to Welsh's own cultural beliefs. While the supernatural has been affirmed as a part of both Okri's and Morrison's cultures, by the authors themselves, there is no suggestion that Welsh has similar beliefs, and it is therefore understandable that he will not include them to a similar extent in his narrative.

The first binary paradigm that I wish to examine is that of the past versus the present (which re-illustrates the same opposition that played a major role in Morrison's Beloved). The first evidence of this opposition is depicted in the second plane of consciousness, since it deals with Roy's past and his memories of his earlier life. At first this is a distinct level of narration, separate from the others. Roy relates his past to the reader in a chronological sequence, from his early childhood memories, to those of his adult life away from home, and finally the memories of his attempted suicide. It is at this point that the reader learns why Roy is in a comatose state. Soon after this, in the first "text-actual" level, the past personifies itself in the form of Kirsty, the rape victim. She is the reason that Roy has attempted suicide, and she is representative of the culmination of

Roy's past, from his abusive uncle to his rebellious, vengeful younger years in the Scheme. It is also at this point that the dream reality collapses, and collides with the other two levels of narration. Welsh thus collapses this past/present paradox, thereby imitating magical realist texts and creating a means through which he can query certain notions inherent in the society about which he writes. He destabilises this oppositional construct, enabling him to challenge certain modes of thought, and to comment on social injustices from within the arena of his culture. One such issue, which becomes more apparent as the novel progresses is that of abuse which, as Welsh suggests, has the ability to move through generations. By deconstructing these oppositions, Welsh is also able to imply that society needs to view such issues in a different manner.

The west is obviously a central element within this novel, as most of the narrative is set in the United Kingdom, and Roy spends the majority of his life in Scotland. However, there is a portion of the novel which unfolds in South Africa. Roy spends a part of his youth in South Africa when his family moves there, and although most of this is set in the city of Johannesburg, there are excursions into the wilderness. These take the form of short visits to the game reserves, where Roy develops an interest in wildlife, and also has his first encounter with the Marabou Stork:

The only thing which disturbed me was seeing a group of ugly birds waddling into a flamingo colony and scattering the beautiful pink creatures across the waters of a small lake. They just fled in sheer panic. I had never seen anything as horrible looking as those predators. They were like bent-over beggar-demons, their large beaks gave them a laughing look totally at odds with their dead eyes. I saw one of them trying to swallow a flamingo's head. It was a sick sight. The severed head of one large bird in the jaws of another.

– That's the Marabou Stork, my Dad sang triumphantly, drinking in the carnage through his binoculars, – like ah sais, the Marabou Stork. Bad bastards thaim, eh, but it's nature like.

– That night I had my first Marabou Stork nightmare. (MSN 74)

This is the first actual memory of Roy's that involves the Stork, and it has repercussions in Roy's third level of consciousness, his African adventure. This, of course, is the other section of the novel which takes place in Africa, and revolves around the hunt for the leader of these birds. The Marabou Stork can essentially be seen as the embodiment of the opposition between Africa and the west. To explain, the Stork is continually

described as a coloniser, moving into the territory of the local flamingos, destroying these flocks, and taking over the terrain. They also give the impression of dirty, destructive creatures, with no regard for the other animals in the surrounding areas. This can be interpreted as a representation of the colonisers of Africa. The storks therefore merge the borders of this binary paradigm, as they are a feature of African wildlife, yet portray the characteristics of western colonisation. Roy subsequently becomes the embodiment of this notion, as he is trying to kill the Stork in order to reduce its evil, yet towards the end he realises that the Stork is the manifestation of the evil inside himself. Thus it is evident that Roy is attempting to rid himself of evil, yet he never manages to kill the Stork. Welsh is thus commenting on the nature of colonial power, suggesting that it is inherently wrong, yet is as inescapable as Roy's own self-nature.

The next opposition is that of the real opposed to the esoteric, which is common throughout this study. It is prevalent throughout the Okri and Morrison narratives, as it represents an integral section of these two cultures, yet it is not as evident in Welsh, as there is no specific supernatural element in the text. However, the narrative does take place in Roy's mind, bringing into the picture a number of exotic manifestations, such as the Marabou Stork. In the novel, these exist only on the second and third planes of narration, both being levels within the deeper recesses of Roy's consciousness. As in Okri's work, the wilderness, or forest areas are home to the esoteric, creating a further, more distinct divide within the original opposition. Furthermore, the esoteric is depicted through many various forms, perhaps not supernatural, but rather, facets that would be out of place in logical reality. People appear to Roy in the third level, objects transform themselves, and the Marabou Stork, possibly the most definite esoteric aspect, is not simply an animal. Instead it becomes an intelligent creature, with human characteristics, but also primal instincts. In the following passage, Dawson recognises their more human qualities, but fails to realise that they are in fact still territorial hunting animals:

... but it's going dark again and I'm back in this room with Dawson and Sandy, cornered by the Storks.

– There must be some arrangement we can come to, Dawson pleaded with the dead-eyed beast, – I'm a man of not inconsiderable personal wealth. I have a family!

The large Marabou turned to its friends and squawked loudly. The air was raw with the sound of their hysterical screeches and floating feathers and dust flew, giving off a vile stench and irritating me so that I sneezed - - - - - Eh fuokin moved, Vet! Like ah sais, the laddie moved! It wis like eh sneezed or something! Roy! Kin ye hear ays! Ah'm askin ye son, kin ye hear ays! (MSN 224)

This extract displays the almost human quality of the Storks, in their understanding of, and response to, Dawson's plea. It indicates that these creatures are not merely animals, but rather a manifestation of the more repulsive of human qualities, and they exist within Roy's mind as esoteric incarnations of this sentiment. The other pertinent aspect of this passage is the merging of the "text-actual" plane with the esoteric level, evident in the comment Roy's father makes about Roy's apparent sneezing. This resonates with Okri's merging of the real and dream realms in his texts, specifically in Azaro's dream journey, where Dad's actions manifest themselves in Azaro's dream. Here, however, the converse is true as the actions in the third plane are visibly affecting Roy in the first level. Through this, Welsh closes the divide between the narrative levels, and consequently between the real and the esoteric. Once again this questions given knowledge of oneself, as the levels of consciousness, previously separated, now combine to depict a new comprehension of identity. Through the Stork, Welsh questions this notion of identity, and Roy becomes aware of his role, as a rapist, which places him on a par with the Stork.

The sun is rising behind me and my shadow spills out away from it, out in front of me. My spindly legs, my large overcoat, my massive beak . . . I have no visible ears, I never really had much in the way of ears, it was always my nose, Captain Beaky, they used to call me at school . . . it wasn't the ears, my memory hasn't been so good, nor has my hearing but I can think more clearly now . . . I have the gait of a comical scarecrow, I shuffle like an old man who has shat his pants. I'm so tired . . . I spread my large, black wings . . (MSN 264)

This point marks a merge between the level of hallucination and that of memory. Additionally, it describes the ultimate blurring of borders between the real and esoteric oppositional forces, as Roy becomes the Stork. Gaylard remarks on this characteristic of fabulism, saying:

If realism depends on a notion of reflection, then fabulism depends on the notion of the difficulty of reflection. Reflecting on reflection, what becomes the primary image is precisely

an image. Hence instead of the mirror (perhaps realism's primary imagistic trope along with visual aids such as binoculars, telescopes, lenses, glasses) fabulism substitutes the metamirror which is pictured as a virtual image or hologram. . . . Thus instead of the 'real' being a mirror it is a living other. (*Broken Age* 117)

The opposition is then strengthened by the existence of the other, the Stork, rather than being depicted as a virtual image. As the Stork's characteristics show themselves in Roy the borders are collapsed, and Roy, who is now able to accept what he has continually denied, truly learns his self-identity.

It is through these different oppositions that Welsh is able to question modern, 'civilised' thought, and the construct of an ostensibly western civilisation. His merging of borders allows him to interrogate the social structure from within which he writes. It is this juxtapositioning of these binary paradigms that probes into western knowledge in order to suggest that it may be flawed. This allows the reader to understand that it is possible to "reflect on and transcend [one's] conditions of possibility." (Gikandi, *Maps* 146)

Transmutation in Roy's Consciousness

In contemplation of self, Europeans are hungry for metaphors, which contribute to the ever-elusive search for life's meaning. This search, however, is surely an appropriate and spiritual endeavour? This is not so when Europeans, in their quest for meaning, manipulate Africa and Africans in order to represent metaphorically the most feared, untrammelled, unsocialised and 'uncivilized', buried aspects of their selves. (Cooper, *Weary Sons* 12)

There is no doubt that Welsh employs the technique of transmutation, most particularly within his third degree of narration, yet what is his purpose in doing so? Is it, as Cooper suggests, to portray the most barbaric features of the characters, and of Roy in particular? This seems likely from the revelations achieved through the various transformations. Yet it is also plausible to suggest that Welsh is commenting on the fact that not everything is as it seems, and he therefore illustrates this by transforming elements out of their generic context. This concept also relates to both Okri and Morison, who utilize transformation to much the same purpose as Welsh: questioning and establishing identity.

Transmutation, as an action, seems to convey a rather unnatural sentiment, as though it perhaps should not be happening, and this is certainly the impression provided within the first chapter of Marabou Stork Nightmares, "Another Lost Empire". Roy is relating events as they stand to the reader, when a nurse who is shining a torch into his eyes, in the "text-actual" realm, interrupts him. This prompts a series of events in his subconscious third level which Roy cannot control, that continually move from one transmutation to the next. Roy's girlfriend appears in the back seat, and proceeds to give Sandy oral sex. This exacerbates Roy's already confused mind, and results in the jeep fantastically transforming into some sort of flying craft:

Panic sets in as I realise the vehicle I'm travelling in is a structure now indivisible from my own body and we're dipping and flipping over, rising upwards in a shuddering rush into a buzzing wall of light – I regain some sense of control over the vehicle only to find out she's gone and Jamieson is sitting in the front passenger seat with me.

– It was getting a tad crowded back there, he smiles, gesturing behind us to a trio of Japanese men in business suits who are occupying the back seat. They are excitedly snapping with cameras and speaking in a language which I can't make out but which doesn't seem to be Japanese.

This is totally fucked. (MSN 6)

Roy's mind is obviously slipping out of his control, as these images fluidly change from one into another. This continues throughout this chapter, as Roy and Sandy look to set their craft down, and discover what at first seemed to be a "small settlement" altering before their eyes, "until we saw it as a giant metropolis." (MSN 8) Their craft has the ability to transform itself continually, as it changes its dimensions in order to fit into specific spaces. This continual sequence of changing, shifting elements serves the purpose of illustrating the complexities of Roy's mind. To further explain, this chain of events takes on the form of a dream, including that which Segal refers to as "day-residue" (4). This suggests that events from the day, and in Roy's case his first level of narration, influence the dream itself, or Roy's third level. In the "text-actual" realm, for instance, Roy's mother and father continually make reference to the "japs" around the hospital, and Roy therefore includes them into his dream-realm: the third plane of consciousness. Apart from this, Short suggests another reason for the descriptions of the

hallucinated world in the beginning of the novel, saying that they are: "indicative of a mind having some difficulty in getting going at the beginning of the narration" which "can be put down to a mind struggling to cope." (315 – 316) Welsh is preparing the reader for the rest of the novel by creating an awareness of Roy's problems, and indicating that this will follow the form of a search for the self. However, by doing this he comes close to Cooper's previous evaluation of European writers, who employ Africa in their search for self-discovery (Weary Sons 12). Nevertheless Welsh, similarly to Okri, conveys an idea that things need to be examined closely before they can simply be accepted, and he begins this process through this first chapter.

The next major transmutation occurs quite a distance into the narrative, once we have started to learn more about Roy and his previous life. It takes place once more in the dream reality, as Sandy and Roy sit down to drinks:

and now Sandy and I are drinking cocktails in a bar which is in a city which is possibly Nairobi or somewhere in Africa, not beautiful enough to be the Cape and this is all wrong because these two slags we saw on the road are in here and Sandy's being all smarmy and saying: - Can I buy you ladies a drink?

The slags flash predatory smiles at us.

I cut in, - No, you two slags can fuck off. This is just me and Sandy, mates like. We don't want youse cunts spoiling our adventure, spoiling our mission, spoiling our fun! It's just boys! Boys only, boys only, boys only!

I hear myself squealing petulantly at them. I fear that I've made a fool of myself in the bar, but it unsettles the women as they have dropped their disguise and are now giant praying mantises with blonde and auburn wigs, lipstick smeared on those deadly pincher-like insect jaws. (MSN 123 – 124)

Although there may be a number of alternate interpretations of the symbol of the praying mantis two possible representations are, firstly, the African wilderness, and secondly, the devouring hunger of women. This transformation, which takes place within his mind, is suggestive of Roy's impression of women. And perhaps Roy's view of women in this manner is indicative of what Cooper has called the "most feared . . . buried aspects of their selves" (Weary Sons 12). I would suggest that Welsh uses this imagery to insinuate that Roy is consumed by his guilt for the rape of Kirsty, and is therefore choosing 'boys

only' for his companions. Sandy is, after all, an archetypal male figure, based on a football star, who is adventurous, handsome, and lucky with women. Thus Roy distorts the women's features in his mind, and creates an image which is based in his fear of women, but one that will also allow him to elude them. This appears to have resonance with Freud's theory of castration anxiety, which bases itself in the male's fear of losing potency. This may be substantiated further by Roy's transformation in this scene. He loses his imperial accent, and finds it replaced with his own Scottish brogue, indicating that this event has connections with the second level of narration. This further illuminates the connection with Kirsty, whose rape, along with the subsequent events, resulted in Roy's present state. Roy's hallucinated transmutation of these women seems to stem from this factor, as well as a tell-tale statement that he makes when Sandy first notices the women, and Roy refuses their company: "In here I'm doing all the things I didn't do out there. I'm trying to be better, trying to do the right thing, trying to work it all out." (MSN 119) Thus Roy is in search of his self, and he is trying to avoid the women in order to not repeat any past mistakes, as well as to not digress from his mission. This takes the form of his pursuit of the Marabou Stork, the incarnation of his past evils.

Thus we arrive at our final transmutation that warrants discussion: Roy's change into the Marabou Stork. These fulfil his worst nightmare, and yet at the end of the novel, he finds that he has become like one himself, even in appearances. I have previously examined the scene of his change (MSN 264), and in it, his human characteristics take on those of the Stork's, and he is finally able to see himself for what he truly is, and understand his own evil. This is, as Cooper proposed, a discovery of the self, which portrays Roy as manipulating Africa in order to portray himself as "untrammelled, unsocialised and 'uncivilized', [the] buried aspects of [his self]." (Weary Sons 12) Still, Welsh does make a point of basing this discovery in Roy's childhood memories, where he first witnesses the Stork. It is then that he imparts to the reader the disgusting nature of this creature, basing this transmutation, not in Roy's fantasy, but in his past. Perhaps Welsh is suggesting that this metamorphosis is intended to portray Roy as a product of his past, but is using an image in Africa to achieve this.

Although Welsh has used the African wilderness to convey these transmutations, he has done so in order to remove each particular element from its natural environment.

He therefore enlightens the reader as to the changing qualities of these various elements. Furthermore, he assists his readers in questioning perception, as he suggests that people may not be what they appear to be, or perhaps what they portray themselves as. Again, this recalls the need to transform one's perception of both identity and given knowledge.

The "Nowhere Land" of Africa

We can see that although the categories that define Africa have remained the same – the continent is associated with instinctiveness and enchantment rather than reason and reflection – they are no longer conceived as the negative axiologies against which European reason and order are measured. The continent is conceived, on the contrary, as a figure of desire, especially the desire for cognitive and aesthetic values that transcend the prisonhouse of modernity and civilization. And thus the African other is now the figure through which the European subject simultaneously expresses its disenchantment with civilization and its desire for its lost moment of origins and innocence. (Gikandi Maps 180)

This description shares remarkable resonance with Gaylard's description of the "nowhere land", where the character moves in a land without logical time or space. It is also the location for an opportunity to reflect and regenerate. While there are several such locations in Marabou Stork Nightmares, the most prominent of these is the African forest through which Roy conducts his hunt for the Stork. However, Gaylard does mention that the cityscape is increasingly becoming a setting for the "nowhere land", and this too can be witnessed in Welsh's text, through both the Scheme and the larger images of the city. The final plausible site for this land is that of drugs, and although it may not be a prominent theme within the novel, it is still relevant to some extent. Through all of these various locations, we can see the 'nowhere land' come into play, as Roy "expresses [his] disenchantment with civilization and [his] desire for [his] lost moment of origins and innocence." (ibid.)

The African forest is consistently used as the site of self-discovery, according to any number of critics from Cooper to Achebe, in his critical essays Morning Yet on Creation Day, and it is this site that Welsh uses to express his sentiments. The third level of narration exists without the laws that govern time and space, and as we have previously seen, without any logic or reason (MSN 6). As Gaylard suggests, this land

without time incorporates a number of factors into it, creating a "language of . . . trespass, disorientation and lostness." (*Broken Age* 111) These factors are consistent with Roy's third plane of consciousness: the African wilderness¹⁵. Unlike Okri's and Morrison's protagonists, Roy and Sandy are set up as trespassers in this 'nowhere land' as, from the onset of their adventure they are repeatedly placed in contrast to the African inhabitants. They are set apart from these people by their imperialist accents, as well as their demeanour. They are presented as being out of place in this arena, which is further emphasised by those tropes of 'disorientation and lostness'.

The next morning we set off. The burning, sweltering sun had turned the dark continent into a vast furnace. I was weary and out of sorts. Nothing felt right. My bare legs in my khaki shorts stung with pain every time they came into involuntary contact with the hot body of our jeep. Avoiding such unwanted bonding was impossible when we were shaking in gravelly ascent towards the Alpine Moorlands, our four-wheel-drive vehicle still struggling to negotiate the rough surface and steep inclines. (*MSN* 37)

This extract conveys a sense of complete disorientation which is exemplified in the following paragraph in the novel, as it takes them into a utopia of sorts, without any logical explanation for this sudden appearance of paradise. Roy initiates this scene by qualifying this as the "dark continent", placing them in the site of Africa, but also using imagery such as the "Alpine Moorlands", which can be found in Europe, advancing their sense of disorientation. There is no stability at this time, as everything is shaking, and even the jeep itself must attempt to find a way through the terrain. And then the following paragraph finds them in a paradise. There is no rational sequence of time or space, and instead the reader is supplied with evidence of the European desire for aesthetic significance.

The idea of lostness can be interpreted as confusion or vulnerability, which is substantiated through the anonymity that Gaylard also proposes as an element of the "nowhere land". An example of this can be found in the text, where Roy's dream world begins to collapse as an influx of images from the first and second levels can be seen in

¹⁵ There are similarities between this wilderness and the clearing in the forest of *Beloved*, in that both portray strong links with Gaylard's "nowhere land". Nevertheless, in comparison, the two sites differ in their representation. Welsh's wilderness is somewhat untamed, and more symbolic of the dark continent, whereas Morrison uses a clearing in the forest, suggestive of a sanctuary, a pure and unspoilt place.

this one. As they look for the ever-elusive Stork, Sandy's persona begins to disintegrate, and Roy seems unable to cope with this:

I am losing it badly in here. Losing it as much as I did on the outside. In a strange split second I am back in the alley and the praying mantis is there, the one with the blonde wig and the lipstick on its insect jaws and it is holding up a red card. Sandy throws off his strip, close to tears, and exits the alley, comforted by Diddy, with Dawson shaking his head in disgust. . . . Then I feel the spray in my face and we are back on the ocean. . . .

I'm not feeling well here; there's a ringing in my ears and a strange, sterile smell in my nostrils. The smell of hosp . . . no fuck it, I'm in control here, I'm in control. Sandy's okay again, he's my mate, my guide. Me and Sandy, we're hunters. We're the good guys in this.

(MSN 161)

As Roy moves ever closer to the discovery of his true self, his conscious levels begin to move in on one another, and images from the past arrive in the present. This results in the confusion that Roy expresses, and the subsequent emphasis is on being lost within his own hallucination, even as he perseveres to regain control. This again echoes Gikandi's words in its signification of the loss of civilisation's appeal (Maps 180), as Roy struggles consciously not to return to the hospital. More significantly, however, Roy is searching for his lost innocence. It is this that he seeks in the destruction of the Marabou Stork, and it is also this that he never achieves.

Welsh makes use of the African forest in the manner that Gikandi describes, and through this, we are able to identify Gaylard's "nowhere land". However, Welsh suggests that the ideals sought in the "nowhere land" of Africa, are not gained, and ultimately Roy must return to civilisation in order to realise his fate.

The Scheme and the city are also elements of the "nowhere land", in the anonymity they provide, including depictions of the busy city of Manchester and the wasteland near the Scheme. These areas work towards establishing a lack of identity in that there is no individualism, and one person becomes obscured by the surrounding clutter, always present in these locations. Roy describes the Scheme, his childhood home in Scotland, with much dislike:

It was a systems built, 1960's maisonette block of flats, five storeys high, with long landings which were jokingly referred to as 'streets in the sky' but which had no shops or pubs or churches or post offices on them, nothing in fact, except more rabbit hutches. Being so close to those other families, it became impossible for people, as much as they tried, to keep their lives from each other. (MSN 19)

Thus the lives and existences of these people intermingle, removing any specific identity, and creating instead, one group from the Scheme, rather than separate people. Roy tries to escape this, and his guilt over the rape of Kirsty, by moving out of Scotland, to Manchester. Here he becomes a face in the crowd, where he can try to become anonymous, and forget his past. Both arenas imply a lack of identity, where one can simply fade into the crowd. At the scheme, Roy does not find much direction, and moves through his life without the certainty of knowing in which direction to turn. Once he tries to remove himself from this, he is faced with the disorientating crowds of the city, and the lostness that he cannot escape. These barren, yet seemingly cluttered, landscapes call into question identity of self, as one sees oneself as part of a faceless crowd, rather than an individual. Welsh is questioning the individuality of modernity, or perhaps the lack thereof, and querying the ability of people to realise their own identity, within this crowded landscape.

The drug scene, as I previously noted, is not one of great significance in this narrative, yet it plays a small part in depicting the combination of settings of the "nowhere land". These incidents occur in the second and third levels of consciousness, and Roy makes a point of noting that he does not often take drugs. In his memories, Roy's strongest affiliation to drugs comes in the form of the ecstasy pills he takes with Dorothy in Manchester. This creates in him a feeling of liberation, such as he describes on his first encounter with the drug:

I was lost in the music and the movement. It was an incredible experience, beyond anything I'd known. I could never dance, but all self-consciousness left me as the drug and the music put me in touch with an undiscovered part of myself, one that I had always somehow suppressed. (MSN 236 – 237)

Roy becomes absorbed into the music because of the drugs, which creates a whole new level of consciousness within his mind. This is again attested to in the subconscious third plane as Roy smokes marijuana with his dream companion, Sandy.

On our way up a particularly challenging incline, Sandy passed over the large joint he had been smoking. After a couple of enthusiastic tokes I was feeling somewhat out of sorts. Generally, when I take drugs of this type I can reserve a small central part of my brain for sobriety. This becomes a lens, through which I can, with concentration, view the world with a certain clarity - - - but it - - - was all fuckin falling apart effir jist one fuckin toke . . . this shouldnae be happening (MSN 38)

The emotions of disorientation and lostness are prominent in this extract, as Roy loses control and slips between levels of consciousness. His confusion is also obvious as he immerses himself into the drug landscape. Here space and time are negligible, as irrational and illogical thought take over. In the "text-actual" level, Roy is using drugs, to discover his inner self, and the scenes serve to depict elements of the "nowhere land", through the regenerative, learning process that occurs. However, Roy is also using the drugs as a means to escape modernity, again echoing Gikandi by conveying a "disenchantment with civilisation" (Maps 180). As before, however, these are not permanent solutions, as Roy begins to surface through his levels of consciousness. Welsh therefore suggests that civilisation cannot be avoided, and while Roy may gain from these reflective lessons, he cannot escape the inevitability of modernity and civilisation.

Welsh's use of Roy's African fantasy displays many commonalities with Gaylard's conception of the "nowhere land". It is a place where time and space do not follow the laws of reality, but where one may come to terms with identity and individuality. Nevertheless, it seems to be stressed that one cannot continually exist within this arena, as the modern world cannot long be ignored or escaped. Thus, while the 'nowhere land' of Roy's fantasy aids him in his search for self-discovery, it is also essential for him to come to terms with his identity in the realm of modernity and civilisation.

The African Adventure

During the entire trip my dreams stubbornly followed the tactic of ignoring Africa. They drew exclusively upon scenes from home, and thus seemed to say that they considered . . . the African journey not as something real, rather as a symptomatic or symbolic act. Even the most impressive events of the trip were rigorously excluded from my dreams. Only once during the entire expedition did I dream of a Negro. His face appeared curiously familiar to me, but I had to reflect a long time before I could determine where I had met him before. Finally it came to me: he had been my barber in Chattanooga, Tennessee! An American Negro. In the dream he was holding a tremendous, red-hot curling iron, intending to make my hair kinky – that is, to give me Negro hair. . . .

I took this dream as a warning from the unconscious; it was saying that the primitive was a danger to me. At that time I was obviously all too close to 'going back.' (Jung 254 – 255)

The above was written in Carl Jung's autobiography, and is his interpretation of a dream he had concerning a black man. At the time of the dream, as he notes, he is on an expedition in Africa, and he therefore believes that he must return to civilisation before he is in danger of returning to 'primitivism'. Although I am sceptical of this interpretation, it does pose a number of interesting questions with regards to the journey taken by the white European male into the "dark continent" of Africa. It is essential that we take into consideration the year in which it was written, and how white Europeans viewed black Africans for the majority of the twentieth century (DuBois). We can then ask, what does the journey through Africa necessarily represent to European writers, a return to the roots of oneself, or even the possible return to 'primitivism'? It is here, after all, that Roy meets his most 'primitive' form of self, the Marabou Stork. Is there a perceived danger among people who consider themselves to be civilised, that they will become 'barbaric' if too much time is spent away from 'civilisation'? Perhaps it would be best to examine the journey that Roy takes in Marabou Stork Nightmares, in order to clarify the answer to these questions.

Welsh makes use of the African journey to illustrate an attempt to return to innocence, or at least, as a journey of self-discovery. He does not wish to depict Africa as the cause for Roy's return to his barbaric primal nature, and instead shows the reader that, even though Roy has attempted to deny his true nature, he has always been the

destructive Stork, created through the civilisation from which he derives. Welsh establishes this conclusion through the many diverse journeys that he includes in his narrative. The most prominent of these is Roy's hallucinated journey through the African forest in pursuit of the Marabou Stork, and his consequent discovery that he is the Stork. However, there are other journeys that require additional discussion, such as those smaller trips that Roy took with Uncle Gordon, and the resultant consequences. This leads to the other principal journey that I wish to include, that of Roy's life, seen through his memories, which discloses to the reader an understanding of Roy's present. It is through these varied journeys that Welsh displays his social comments to the reader; not that Africa turns Roy into his primitive, barbaric self, but that civilisation is the cause of this barbaric tendency, amongst all the characters in the narrative. Welsh differs in this regard to Okri and Morrison, who focus more on the community than the individual. Nevertheless, all three writers utilize the 'journey' as a means of discovering identity.

Welsh's main journey, then, is the one that passes through Africa, as Roy attempts to relive his hallucinated life in a better manner than he did before his coma. The question that requires answering in light of this journey, is why does Welsh take Roy into the African forest? It is not to turn him into a 'barbarian', as Jung fears might happen, but rather it is to allow him to accept his identity in the representation of the Marabou Stork. This is obviously not the outcome that Roy desires, as he has been attempting to destroy the evil incarnate in the Stork. This situation can be illuminated through Gikandi:

Narrative still affirms the distance between Europe and its dark other, but the trope of travel no longer seems to ascribe a positive value to either entity; sometimes Africa and Europe seem to be defined by the same negativity, but their modes of darkness are not entirely the same; the glitter of European greed . . . is pitted against the ominous shadows of African barbarism. And thus we are left to operate in a state of limbo, in which neither Africa nor Europe can provide the European subject . . . with secure places of emplacement or a set of redemptive values. (*Maps* 178)

This encapsulates the premise behind Roy's journey to Africa; he tries to escape civilisation in order to redeem his life, and destroy everything that is evil to him. Instead he realises that he cannot escape his identity, or civilisation. At the moment of Roy's realisation in Africa, he is brought back to the "text-actual" level by Kirsty, who is

proceeding to murder him, as vengeance for his rape of her. At this stage the two levels combine in a conclusion to the novel:

She's going . . . don't go Kirsty, stay with me for a bit, see this through . . . but no no no I hear her hastily depart. Then I hear another voice, the hysterical screaming of Nurse Patricia Devine. She's watching me smoking my own penis like a limp, wet cigar, staring with horror into my eyes that cannot shut. I'm getting weaker, but I'm here now. I can move my lidless eyes, I can see my cock dangling from my mouth and I can see the scissors sticking out from my neck . . . Patricia runs to get help but she's too late because Jamieson's facing me and he's pointing the gun and I hear it going off and it's all just one big

Z.

(MSN 264)

This is the first time that Roy wakes up from his coma, where he is fully aware of what is happening in the present. Even though he is being murdered, he seems to accept it with a calm demeanour, as he acknowledges that he is in the present. His journey has brought him back to civilisation, where he is made to pay retribution for the crimes of his past. Gikandi's theory (Maps 178) is again relevant, as Roy is left in a state of limbo between these two realms, not finding his place in either, nor gaining any values by which he can redeem himself. This continual collapse of borders, as Roy and the Stork become one, and the levels collapse into one another, again depicts a magical realist technique, which further enhances Welsh's sentiments in the novel. Perhaps it is possible to suggest that Roy has achieved a self-realisation, but does Welsh intend for this to be redemptive? Welsh ends the novel with a capital 'Z', representing the 'Zero Tolerance' campaign which began in Edinburgh, and "believes that there is no acceptable level of violence against women and children." (MSN i) And so, even though Roy is able to come to terms with his own evil, he understands that he cannot, he will not, achieve this redemptive state.

It is through the smaller journeys in the novel, that Welsh makes a significant point. There are any number of examples, but perhaps those that are most prominent are Roy's childhood adventures into the South African game reserves with Uncle Gordon, and Roy's trips with the Casuals to football matches. I have already briefly discussed the

first of these (MSN 71), and it is during these trips that Gordon begins to sexually abuse Roy. Even though Roy's memories deny that any intercourse took place, we later discover that Gordon was in fact raping him. Gordon dies shortly after this, yet the abuse does not, as Roy replicates it in his trips with the Casuals. This group of young men find any excuse to fight with other football clubs, generally causing mayhem and destruction for the sake of fun. It is Roy's connection with the Casuals, as well as their abusive natures, that causes Kirsty's rape. Again Roy suppresses memories of his true involvement with the rape, implying that he was not as involved as the other Casuals, and that he did not in fact rape her. This is again proved false, as later in the narrative Roy is presented as one of the main instigators.

These are two of the main journeys which portray Roy's life as a sequence of events leading up to his present situation. Roy's entire past is based on moving from one place to another, in order to locate some place where he and his family feel at home. Roy's father is discontent in Scotland, and therefore moves his family to South Africa. This proves to be no more of a home for them than the Scheme, and soon they return to Scotland. Roy, however, is happiest in South Africa, clearly not because of Gordon, but because he feels more accepted there, and perhaps this is the reason for his return there, once he is unconscious, in an effort to discover some happiness, or at least a lost innocence. Nevertheless, once the family is back in Scotland, after the rape of Kirsty, Roy decides to move again, to escape his guilt and his nightmares, and relocates to Manchester. Here he realises that he cannot evade his past, and returns once more to Scotland, where he attempts his suicide. During the course of the novel, the reader also learns that Vet, Roy's mother, previously decided to try and escape Scotland by moving to Italy. She returns to John, Roy's father, claiming that "she'd got travelling out of her system" (MSN 20). Thus the entire narrative is preoccupied with the characters' aimless travelling in an attempt to find a place where they can be content. This has resonance with Okri's work, as Azaro continually moves along the road in *The Famished Road*, and is true for texts by a number of postcolonial writers (Boehmer, *Colonial* 199, 233). As Roy discovers in his third plane of consciousness, it is not possible to discover this place of contentment. Thus the characters exist in this state of limbo that Gikandi describes,

searching for their own space, but never finding it, or the opportunity to thereby redeem themselves.

It is through these various journeys that civilisation is marked as more barbaric than the wilderness of Africa. Each character displays a certain amount of random violence, from Gordon, who abused Roy, to Roy and the Casuals, who raped Kirsty, and finally to Kirsty herself, who murders Roy. Through the theme of the journey, Welsh is pointing out that this barbaric nature cannot be escaped, and it is through civilisation that this 'primitive' behaviour becomes apparent. The idea of the journey additionally serves to clarify the idea of self and self-identity, in that Roy comes to understand his identity through his journey. However, he is the only one who comes close to comprehending this notion.

The Story of Roy's Mind

It is this ability to take multiple viewpoints into account which allows us to narrate stories, oral or written, where a narrator, looking back on what happened, may take on the viewpoint of him- or herself at the time the events took place (event time) as well as the later time of the telling (coding time), or indeed, the viewpoints of some other person who was involved in the events described, and of the person listening or reading the story. Similarly, our ability to take the viewpoints of others into account helps us to characterise accurately the interrelation between levels of discourse embedded one within another (Short 313 – 314)

As with Okri's *Azaro*, Roy is the sole narrator in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, and it is through him that we are able to access his story. He relates to the reader the various events both actual, and fictional (from his dream reality), as well as the opinions of other characters. This last he achieves through supplying their conversations, or other forms of their speech. Additionally, the reader's viewpoint is also taken into account, as it interprets the narration. This interpretation, however, is primarily based on the word of the narrator, thus requiring a certain amount of trust from the reader. He or she base their perceptions on what the narrator relates to them, in order to be able to decode the levels of narration. Unlike *The Famished Road*, however, this trust is called into question in Welsh's novel, as it becomes apparent that Roy has not been truthful either to himself, or to the reader.

As Roy is the only possible source of information in this novel, the reader depends on him to deliver a narration of the events but these become distorted in Roy's mind. The first evidence that Roy's narration may not be entirely reliable shows itself early in the novel, as Roy remarks: "However, as my memory is practically non-existent, this could have been a few days ago or since the beginning of time itself." (MSN 4) This serves to set up the reader for further distortions of memory throughout the novel. The three most significant of these distortions, in my opinion, are firstly, Roy's denial of Gordon's rape, the misrepresentation of Roy's rape of Kirsty, and perhaps not as important, yet certainly relevant, Roy's psychological altering of his physical features, as will be examined later. These three combine to demonstrate that even though Roy may be the only narrator, he may not be as reliable a source as the reader hopes for.

We have already seen how Gordon's abuse of Roy began, and as the narrator, Roy does not deny that he was in fact abused. The nature of this abuse, however, is significantly played down. When the abuse first starts, in the beginning of the novel, the reader is led to believe that Gordon is only touching Roy, and masturbating over this, and Roy does admit that: "The things he wanted to do were getting heavier and I was getting more scared." (MSN 75) It is only towards the very end of the narrative, however, that Roy finally admits to himself, and subsequently the reader, that Gordon was actually raping him. While he is taking ecstasy he has a flashback of what Gordon used to say to him:

IT WON'T HURT ROY, YOUR UNCLE
GORDON WOULD NEVER HURT YOU
JUST LIE STILL PERFECTLY STILL NOW
ROY, OR THERE WILL BE BIG TROUBLE
WHEN YOUR DAD HEARS ABOUT THIS
SHUT UP YOU LITTLE BASTARD I'M
WARNING YOU SHUT THE FUCK UP
THAT'S BETTER THAT'S BETTER
THERE THERE THERE (MSN 253)

Although this does not prove conclusively that Roy was raped by Gordon, it does demonstrate the violent nature of the abuse. Shortly after this, however, Roy's mind

conjuges up a number of images, one of them being: "GORDON WITHDRAWING HIS BLOOD-STAINED COCK FROM A FRIGHTENED YOUNG BOY BENT OVER A WORKBENCH" (MSN 255) Roy has, no doubt, been submerging these images and memories within his subconscious, in order to forget the traumatic ordeal. Nevertheless, as Roy hides them away within his mind, he also hides them from the reader, consequently concealing the true nature of the society in which he was raised. It is only through the re-emergence of these memories, as Roy struggles to come to terms with himself, that this reality is revealed.

This occurs again, a number of years later in the story, when Kirsty is raped. Once again, Roy plays down his role in the event, as we first witness the rape:

I was standing in the corner shaking, wondering what the fuck ah wis daein here, as Ozzy had her next, then Dempsey, by which time she'd almost blacked out. –

– Nice n lubricated fir ye Strangy, Ozzy smiled

– Ah'm fucked if ah'm gaun in thair eftir youse cunts . . . I shuddered, trying to keep it light.

There wasn't a condom in sight.

– Nae cunt shites oot, Lexo growled

I unzipped my flies. –

I lay on her. I couldn't have got hard anyway, but I lay on her and faked it, thrusting rhythmically. (MSN 184)

Even though Roy initiates the idea of the rape amongst these Casuals members, by telling them of Kirsty's disdain for him, he seems only to have a minor part in her actual rape. As we learn in the final chapters of the novel, it is Kirsty who has been visiting Roy in the present time of the novel, as she plots to have her revenge. She has already killed Dempsey, and Roy is next on her agenda. All the while before she kills Roy, he is trying to tell her that it was not his fault, that it was the other members that were fully to blame. Kirsty, however, reminds Roy of his part in it:

– Remember when you put this useless shrivelled thing into my arse, Roy? I can't believe how this thing hurt me so much. Well, not as much as it's going to hurt you . . . remember when you put the mirror at the foot of that mattress to see my face as you forced yourself into my arse . . . remember what you said? Do you? You said you wanted me to look at you, and you wanted to

see my face. You wanted me to see Roy Strang. You wanted me to feel what happens to any cunt who fucks about with Roy Strang. (MSN 259)

Later, the reader is witness to Roy's recollection of this rape, as his true memory surfaces (MSN 261 – 262). After the court case Roy buries these memories out of guilt, refusing to acknowledge his full involvement in the incident. Yet this proves that, once again, the more disturbing areas of this society are concealed to the outsider. In both situations, the character being abused is threatened into silence, as we can see, for example, through Gordon's dialogue, which is played through Roy's subconscious (MSN 253). Kirsty, however, is not silenced, and she proceeds to take her rapists to court. Here she loses dismally, which only serves to deepen her depression, causing her to comment to Roy: "A total breakdown, Roy. I blamed myself. For a whole year I was no better than you, a fucking walking corpse." (MSN 230) The victim's self-blame is made more apparent when she tells Roy that no matter what the "Zero Tolerance" posters had to say, he still had the right to rape her, simply because he took the right. Welsh is making a serious comment about this society, as it conceals this reality from the outside world, the reality that the victim suffers far more consequences than the abuser. This is made very clear through the fact that Roy and his cohorts are not convicted for the rape, while Kirsty is left to deal with the aftermath by herself. This is explicated by the idea that the victim must not speak out, but if they do, they will only gain more pain and suffering.

The final distortion of truth that requires discussion, is that of Roy's physical appearance. Throughout the novel Roy refers to himself as having over-large ears, resulting in his childhood nickname, 'Dumbo Strang'. It is only on the very final page, when Roy sees himself as the Stork, that he realises he has been wrong. It was not his ears, but rather his nose, that was sizeable. As he now remembers, his nickname was "Captain Beaky" (MSN 264). Although this may appear less than significant, it is relevant to the discussion in that Roy refuses to perceive the truth. He distorts his own physical attributes in order to evade the inevitability of the truth. If he cannot notice the similarity between the Stork's beak and his nose, then it is less likely that he will see himself as the Stork. This truth, for Roy at least, is unavoidable, but whether or not the rest of this society will come to terms with their truth, is questionable. And even though this is something Roy cannot avoid, it is obvious that he can only accept his own evil

indirectly: "Nowhere in the novel does he appear to be able to confront his own evil directly, having to resort instead to the symbolic quest to kill the Marabou Stork in his fantasy universe." (Short 319)

It is through these distortions of the narrative that Welsh calls into question given knowledge and perceptions. How is it possible for us to believe something which only one person can verify? How do we know if that is the truth? Previously I suggested that Welsh criticises civilisation for the resultant barbarism present in the society depicted in his narrative. It is through the perceptions of Roy that we may now begin to understand how that civilisation conceals that 'primal barbaric' nature.

"The Abused Becomes the Abuser"

What we see again and again in the novel is a cycle of dreadful things done to one person which in turn either motivate appalling direct responses (cf. Kirsty's horrific killing of Roy or Roy's treatment of Winston Two) or lead to the abuse of others (cf. the way in which Gordon's mistreatment of Roy appears to lead to his rape of Kirsty). This cycle is, of course, well known in social work circles: the abused becomes the abuser. (Short 320)

This is the cycle that Welsh presents to his reader, from start to finish in his novel. It displays how one act of violence leads to another, which resultantly leads to the violence of a society. This cycle demonstrates how the past arrives at the present in the acts of violence, and how it will continue to do so, as one generation continually inflicts their brutality on the next generation. Okri and Morrison make use of cyclical time in a far more esoteric and figurative manner, and both use the image to suggest a recreation of identity. Welsh's use of the cycle can be seen as more literal, and there is little resolution, or promise thereof, to the continuing abuse about which he writes.

One of the most apt examples of this cycle of violence is depicted towards the end of the narrative. Just before Roy attempts to commit suicide, he is watching the television where a football player, Jimmy Sandison, is getting treated unfairly by the referee. Roy mentions that he has "never seen a man so shocked and outraged at what he felt was a miscarriage of sporting justice." He then remembers that the one person he has seen that "shocked and outraged" was Kirsty, which leads him to recall this cycle of violence:

I once saw a woman who was worse, much worse; I saw her face in court . . . then I saw
 DAD PUNCHING ME MA SCREAMING AT ME KIM'S GREETING FACE MY FISTS
 SPLITTING BERNARD'S MOUTH A MAN TWITCHING ON THE GROUND GORDON
 WITHDRAWING HIS BLOOD-STAINED COCK FROM A FRIGHTENED YOUNG BOY
 BENT OVER A WORKBENCH THAT BOY LOOKING AT HIS DISCARDED BLUE
 SHORTS AN EXPLOSION A HELICOPTER A KNIFE AT A LASSIE'S THROAT A
 SCARRED FACE BURSTING OPEN A KNIFE AT A LASSIE'S THROAT THEN

NOTHING (MSN 255 – 256)

Roy tries to end the cycle here, by attempting to kill himself. Yet as we know, he fails, not only to kill himself, but also to stop the abuse. Perhaps if he had died, Kirsty would not be able to exact her revenge on him. However, this revenge would not have died with Roy, as we learn that she intends to punish all of her rapists. Thus Roy's quest for "NOTHING", after he relives this cycle of abuse, is aimless. He cannot escape this process of violence any more than Kirsty. While we are witness to the many horrific and violent acts performed by the characters, Welsh does provide an element of understanding, whereby we come to accept, not what these people are, but rather how they came to be what they are. While this may enable comprehension, redemption would appear to be dependent on the individual and therefore, in most cases, unobtainable.

This is not a major topic within the text, yet is relevant in that it points to the social comments that Welsh is making. Firstly, Welsh notes that the violence displayed by one generation is inherited by the next, and secondly this society is blind to this fault. Although we may not feel inclined to blame Roy for the violence of the novel, he is by no means blameless, and it is necessary for him to accept this, in order to understand why Kirsty is killing him. Perhaps the violence will not end there, but Roy and accordingly, the reader, has still gained this insight into both this society and its modernity, as well as the individual.

The End of the Nightmare

In his interpretation on the dream, Freud stresses the hallucinatory satisfaction of unconscious wishes – the basic notion of the genesis of dreams.

But this way of interpreting the reading becomes too 'reductive'; it neglects the fundamental heritage of the classic view, which conceives of 'the dream as a message', a complex, vital message. The technique of the ancient oneiromancers . . . consisted of translating into conventional, comprehensible language the hidden, 'mysterious' meaning of the dream discourse. (Resnik 10)

The nightmares that Welsh integrates into his novel create a disturbing reality behind the social system through which he writes. Welsh uses his writing, through the technique of magical realism, to suggest that the society of his novel is not the image that most have come to see. Rather, he depicts a more realistic version of this culture through the use of Roy's dream reality, where perceptions become clearer, and a more comprehensive understanding of self and identity is possible.

Welsh is questioning the morals of today's cosmopolitan society, as he introduces issues such as the cycle of abuse, and the system of justice which favours the abuser over the victim. He is also raising the concept of identity, or rather the lack thereof, in a world where people live in "rabbit hutches" (MSN 19), and anonymity is easily acquired in the cityscape.

These concerns are illustrated by his constant juxtapositioning of Roy's past and present, with Roy's African hallucination. This last level of narration conveys a more accurate sense of Roy's identity, and sense of self, as he finally comes to terms with his true identity, at the point where he realises that he is the Marabou Stork. He has been hunting his own inner evils, and is only capable of accomplishing his goal when he accepts that this is his true nature. It is possible to suggest that Roy could not accomplish this within the confines of society, as it is inhibiting and does not allow one to fully grasp one's own identity. The cycle of abuse is not placated by the end of the novel, as Welsh indicates it is possible to stop oneself from abuse, but society at large cannot succeed in this endeavour. This is made poignantly clear, as Roy finally understands himself at the point that Kirsty is making real her revenge. It is through her character that the abuse will

continue, until she feels her retribution is complete. Nevertheless, the abuse will undoubtedly continue.

The use of Africa in the text is a central and interesting point, which requires some final definition. Many European writers use Africa as a scene of self-discovery, as the protagonists once again locate their roots. However, Welsh is using Africa as a metaphor to express his beliefs regarding the society about which he writes. He does so ironically, by employing images such as the colonial white hunter, and the poor, bedraggled locals. This is a colonial image of the African forest, further enhanced by the metaphor of the Marabou Stork, and its destruction of the flamingo colonies. While this may seem a typical scenario, Welsh is careful to point out that Roy has always been the stork, moulded by the modern society in which he exists, into the destructive force that becomes apparent to him in Africa. It is through this ironic imagery that Welsh creates an idea of western constructs being far more uncivilized than the African scene he presents through his writing.

Thus, I do not feel that Welsh is using Africa in the sense of rediscovering one's origins, rather he is utilizing it as a colonial parody. He does so in order to make more obvious the destructive nature of modernity, as civilisation is presented in the forms of both the white colonial hunter, as well as the colonizing, yet entirely destructive Marabou Stork. I think it is important to note that the Africa portrayed in the novel is not a true depiction, but instead a stereotypical image of the "dark continent". In this way, Welsh further enhances this ironic imagery, as if to suggest that a return to one's imagined origins is impossible.

Welsh establishes these points through his various techniques, including his use of hallucination and memory. It is these elements that tie in so strongly with magical realism, and connect this novel to those of Morrison and Okri. The second level of narration has obvious links with Morrison, as it takes place in Roy's past, while the third level has numerous similarities with Okri's esoteric realm. Perhaps the most relevant similarity, however, is Welsh's deconstruction of boundaries in an attempt to further critique the culture and society about which he writes, much in the same way that both Okri and Morrison examine their own societies. Nevertheless, a difference does present itself in the intended subjects to which the authors communicate. While Okri and

Morrison address the needs of marginalized communities, Welsh examines those of the individual. This is perhaps a noteworthy difference with regard to postcolonial and postmodern technique, yet it is also clear that although welsh may not be a postcolonial or magical realist writer, he has employed techniques from both within this novel. Thus, it is through the use of magical realism and dreams, that these writers share a common purpose, and generate an idea of magical realism as transcultural.

Conclusion:

A Global Dream

To recount a dream means to unveil oneself to discover oneself, to open oneself to others.
(Resnik 20)

Magical realism as a term is contentious. There are, as is evidenced within this research, several criticisms made of the term. Nevertheless, magical realism is useful in that it provides a means by which it is possible to examine a "global set of writers who engage non-realist narrative strategies – in their writings." (Warnes 103) It is through magical realism that we can compare the works of writers such as Okri, Morrison, and Welsh, as well as their uses of the dream within their narratives. And it is through this comparison that it is possible to reach an understanding of a transcultural language of dreams.

One of the main criticisms of magical realism is its lack of ability to provide originality to narratives outside of Latin America. As the term's popularity originated from this region, writers such as Okri and Morrison, for example, feel that to call their own work magical realist would detract from its indigenous status. However, Warnes points out:

There exists a large body of fiction – whether from Latin America, derivative of the Latin American style or having nothing to do with Latin America – that combines realism and fantasy, yet does this in such a way that the resultant mode or genre cannot be described as fantasy, science fiction, the uncanny, the fairy-tale, the baroque or with any other of the categories with which magical realism overlaps. . . . In the magical realist text, as Salman Rushdie puts it, talking of Garcia Marquez, 'impossible things happen constantly and quite plausibly, out in the open under the midday sun' ("Garcia Marquez" 301 – 302). Despite its many failings, magical realism is the only term in wide critical circulation that is capable of providing a name for this category of literature. (3 – 4)

Thus, the term magical realism allows one to categorise and examine a range of literature which does not fit comfortably into other genres. This enables a study of magical realism

as transcultural, and it is also through this term that a basis is provided for the research of dreams in literature.

The predominant form for presenting dreams within the novels under review is through that of magical realism. Okri's dreams were clearly within the same realm as the esoteric, the memories of Morrison's narrative intermingle constantly with the supernatural elements, and Welsh's hallucinated level, and that of memory, are those with the most magical realist characteristics. It is through these levels of subconscious thought that the authors are able to express their sentiments about the societies from within which they are speaking.

As is demonstrated in the main body of work, there are several common tropes amongst the four novels. That they all display some form of subconscious thought is given, yet there are several other common factors within these novels; factors which are common also to magical realism. The most significant perhaps, is the fact that each writer has deconstructed a set of binary oppositions, thereby enabling a questioning of preconceived knowledge, as well as beginning the process of creating a new identity. This element raises the idea of an African modernity within Okri's work, with a mostly optimistic sense of the future, yet occasionally there is a sense of pessimism in what the future may bring. The same trend can be detected in Morrison's *Beloved*, as it is necessary to accept the past in order to regain the future, but there is a distinct possibility of becoming ensnared in that past. Nevertheless, the main impetus of the novel is in finding a new identity, and moving on from the past while still being able to acknowledge it. Interestingly, in Welsh's novel, it is almost the opposite that is true, as there are significantly more negative overtones than positive. *Marabou Stork Nightmares* suggests that it is the inner self, rather than modernity, that is progressive, whereas Okri's vision sees modernity as the means of empowerment¹⁶. Welsh's Roy has gained the opportunity to accept his own inner nature, but society at large will never achieve this because of modernity. Morrison, however, suggests that the African-American culture will forever pass on the story of their enslavement, and while she suggests that the past should not be

¹⁶ Okri does understand that with modernity comes the destruction, or depletion of some of the traditional elements of the culture about which he writes. This is evident in the slow eradication of the forest which is representative of a more spiritual, traditional way of life. However, Okri's vision for modernity overall, remains hopeful.

forgotten, she does provide hope for the future, in the character of Denver, who is able to accept the past, yet has the ability to retain hope for the future.

It is through the dreamscapes of each of these novels that each particular author establishes their own concept of the society about which they write. It is additionally true that the subconscious realities within these novels are distinctly different from one another. However, the authors use both magical realism and the subconscious to convey the intention of the novel, creating a similarity in how each novel communicates to the reader. Furthermore, each of these novels deals with the idea of the individual, or group of individuals, coming to terms with their identity in relation to society at large. Therefore, it is possible to surmise, at least in the context of this research, that while the language of dreams is individual to cultures, the purpose of these literary dreams, to convey a truth about society or culture, is global.

To return to the words of Resnik (20), the authors have used the technique of dreams, memory and hallucination, to communicate their narratives to their audiences. In so doing, they have unveiled and shared the realities about which they write. The medium used to achieve this was the shared platform of magical realism and the subconscious, and while each of these writers had a distinct purpose for their novels, the overall goal was similar. Okri was examining Nigerian society, and searching for the possibility of a new modernity in that country, while Morrison was examining the past of African-Americans in an attempt to retell the history of that culture, as well as searching for a way for that culture to move forward from their past. Welsh, conversely, was examining the malevolence inherent in his society, and suggesting that until people learn to accept their inner nature, that society will continue in its cycle of violence. All three of these texts, however, have examined the realities of their societies, realities that are often hidden beneath the façade of that culture. Thus, while a culture specific interpretation is required for these literary dreams, there is a global purpose within these texts. Thus it possible to suggest that through these four novels, magical realism and dreams in literature can be perceived as having a global, transcultural function.

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