CHAPTER 3

Folklore and the Novels of Amos Tutuola and Ben Okri

> …it should be realised that most of…African literature and history is still unwritten, and is stored in the minds of…drummers, singers, traditional priests and old people who are mostly illiterate. Unless we capture this vast storehouse of memory soon on paper and tape recording, it will be lost forever. (Davidson Nicol, *Africa: A Subjective View*, 66).

> The writer of fiction can be and must be the path finder. (Ngugi wa Thiongo, *Decolonising the Mind*, 85).

3.1 Introduction

Folklore is found to be a favourite indigenous resource for an African novelist that s/he draws on for moulding the aesthetic concerns in novel writing. This chapter shows that the use of folkloric elements is a strategy in the construction of narrative in the novels of Amos Tutuola and Ben Okri. It shows that the elements of folklore in the novels provide a framework for stylistic experimentation of the literary genre. It also argues that instead of the oppositional tendencies between the oral and the written as mutually exclusive modes of narrative, the selected novels posit both modes as mutually sustaining. It shows that folklore not only serves as a tool for self-expression, but is also employed (in the novels) to reflect the changes in the social and cultural scenario of contemporary times to which the writers respectively belong.

By incorporating the oral traditions of West Africa in their writings, Tutuola and Okri have created a body of literature that expresses a West African consciousness and sensibility. Both the writers' use of folklore is intricate and varied. Hence any analysis of the novels selected for this study is incomplete without an understanding of the unique sensibility that each of them expresses through their utilisation and employment of folklore and indigenous resources vis-à-vis their times and changing social situations. To establish the importance of the oral tradition in shaping the creative literature by West African writers, John Ramsaran refers to the Conference of teachers of English held in the Institute of Education and the

Department of English, University of Ibadan, between 26 April and 1 May 1965. Ramsaran highlights the conclusion of this conference which settles that "The traditional material of folktale, myth and legend is so intimately connected with the life of Africa, that some knowledge of it is necessary to have an intelligent understanding of certain areas of African creative writing" and that quite a few writers of today must be "influenced consciously or otherwise by the work of traditional artists like story-tellers and praise singers" (Ramsaran 17).

Chinua Achebe manifestly expresses his belief that the task of a novelist in an African country like Nigeria is to teach. That is, s/he has a particular responsibility to "shape the social and moral values of a society— the philosophy, beauty, poetry and dignity of which have been downgraded by longstanding years of Eurocentric fabrication" (Achebe 1988: 87). Achebe's Kenyan counterpart, Ngugi wa Thiongo writes in a more polemical vein entrusting upon the novelist the arduous and challenging task of playing the role of a pathfinder of the society (Ngugi 1986: 85)[1]. One could say that, as pathfinders in the newly independent states of Africa, the writers are to provide a proper direction (through the art of writing) to the society for expressing its ethos and adequately reflecting the tendencies of the new society in which they live.

Although the occurrences, experiences, ramifications, and implications of the colonial encounter are different in the different colonies, all of them have one abiding commonality. This common element could be identified as change; in other words, the changes at various levels of society arising out of cultural contact or interaction. After going through the colonial experience, none of the colonies could remain immune to acculturation nor could go back to their so called pristine precolonial condition. Changes are found to occur at the level of culture, politics and economy and the novelist is required to reflect the new tendencies of the new age. Under the circumstances, the task of a novelist to teach and to function as pathfinder acquires immense significance and enormous dimensions. To perform such a challenging task, a host of writers including Achebe and Ngugi[2] are found to have taken recourse to folklore or indigenous resources.

Whether the motive of Tutuola and Okri as novelists is only to teach or instruct (as Achebe urges) is a debatable issue. However, a reading of the selected texts in this chapter shows that their effort is to present a different way of perceiving the world via myths, legends,

stories and riddles—all of which are aspects of folklore. Keeping Ngugi's edict in mind, one could say that the vigour of folklore in their writings lends an African character to the novels.

3.2 Folklore and the Written Narrative

Folklore and its various derivatives viz. folk art, folktales, folksongs, folk narratives, are substantially studied under the label of oral literature. While the term folklore is understood in the broad sense of all forms of orally transmitted tradition, including material culture, its central emphasis has commonly been on verbal genres. As such, folklore has long inspired the study of forms that might otherwise have remained hidden to scholarship, resulting in "colossal efforts in collecting and analysing narratives, poetry, song, riddles, and proverbs under the head of oral literature" (Finnegan 311). The term oral literature has been central to the analysis of many unwritten forms in Africa. It normally refers to such genres as narratives, myths, epics, lyrics, praise poetry, riddles, proverbs, word play, and others. Richard M. Dorson outlines four broad sections of folklore which include oral literature, material culture, folk custom and performing folk arts (Dorson 1972: 2). The use of the term folklore in this chapter takes into account all these factors pointed out by Dorson.

The term literature, derived from the Latin 'litterae' (which stands for 'letters') stands for a primacy of writing. 'Oral literatures' thus seem to be a contradiction when posited against it. However, oral literature whose forms (different forms of oral literature are folk narrative, folksong, and folk poetry which include elaborate romances or epics or short anecdotes and rhymes, brief genres like proverbs and riddles, local and regional turns of phrase), sources, legitimacy, authority, and audience draw upon oral traditions serves as a gateway for the varied narrative modes of postcolonial literature. In most cultures of Asia, Africa, and South America, there exists a rich and varied oral tradition (as pointed out in Chapter 2). Stories are told, legends enacted and historical events performed in community settings. Oral literature is a binding factor that ties a postcolonial writer to his roots and shapes his creativity in a mode of literary expression. Thus the presence of the elements of folklore is a central feature in postcolonial literature. It is found that the novels selected for this study are strewn with proverbs, riddles, legends, beliefs and customs of traditional community. The literary and the folk elements conflate in a single space in such novels.

Dorson maintains that oral literature can and frequently does enter into written literature (Dorson 1972: 2). Moreover, there are many qualities of narrative, form, and imagery that clearly overlap between the written and the spoken word.

In the earliest evidence of literary activity, from the Dead Sea Scrolls, to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Old Testament*, and Homeric epic, features like repetition, parallel constructions, episodic structure, rambling speeches, or apparent digressions are found to be common. At the same time, these seminal works pose problems in form and style that are only answered when scholars see them as products of oral societies. Walter Ong in his seminal work *The Presence of the Word* hypothesises that there is an entirely different sensory mode of perceiving the world. He argues:

> Oral societies were based in an orally and aurally dictated environment that was three dimensional and founded on sound and its various emotional/intellectual properties. The literate world had evolved into a visual culture, depending on the private and isolating environment of reading and writing to keep history, store knowledge, and even to argue ideas. The oral world was a communal one, where ideas had to be voiced in order to be understood, argued, and perpetuated. In the literate world, ideas flowed in books and on paper, and they could be read repeatedly for understanding and critical analysis. The spoken word was powerful, though once spoken it disappeared. It is difficult for someone to say the exact same thing more than one time. Therefore, ideas were subject to perpetuation only if they were spoken over and over again (Ong 1967: 115).

In the Indian context, orality held sway over traditional societies. *Nada* or *shruti* (sound) are the basic elements that constitute the verbal act of narration or performance. In the traditional system of education prevalent in the *gurukuls* (where the guru and his disciples stayed together in the former's home or *aashram*) knowledge was transferred by the word of the mouth leading to the preservation of the time-honoured wisdom of a civilisation.

In spite of the age long oppositional tendencies between the oral and the literary, a study of postcolonial literature from India, Africa, Latin America show that the native folkloric elements play a vital function in shaping the formal and thematic aspects of literature emerging from these erstwhile colonies. Brenda Cooper aptly says that contemporary African writers, almost without exception, incorporate elements from the oral tradition, ranging from

"using the stories to illustrate moral points, to echoing the worldviews of the stories, to incorporating narrative devices and strategies into their fictions, along with all the other traditions and influences which have moulded them, and which they select and transform" (Cooper 1998: 40).

In his novels, Chinua Achebe has made the proverb a central device to showcase the rich folklore of his community. In Wole Soyinka, Yoruba folklore—myths, songs, rituals, and others— is appropriated within modernist literary techniques to create a unique framework for his novels. In Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Wizard of the Crow*, the narrative mode used is that of the fable — a popular narrative mode to which every Kenyan is acquainted right from their childhood in the story telling sessions at home. This is a kind of 'effort' made by Ngugi to shift the novel closer to an African audience, particularly comprising the non-literate section of the Gikuyu community. In *Petals of Blood*, Ngugi draws more on traditional verbal material than in the earlier novels. Ngugi uses it to enforce a sense of the community derived from a system of village ethics which suppresses individualism in the interest of the common good. An episode from Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* could be cited here to illustrate this point. During the ceremony of the making of the first Theng'eta, Njuguna and Nyakinyua organize an 'opera of eros'—a manifestation in the novel of the villagers acting in a communal way. To celebrate the harvest collectively, the young and the old move to the rhythm of the chants and perform a chorus:

> Mother ululate for me!
>
> Mother ululate for me!
>
> Or do you leave it to strangers and foreigners
>
> To ululate for your son's homecoming?
>
> All women now ululate the five Ngemi for a boy newly born or one returning from wars against the enemy of the people….Under the emotion of the hour, Munira suddenly tried a verse he thought he knew. Njuguna and Nyakinyua were making it sound so easy and effortless. But in the middle he got confused . Njuguna and Nyakinyua now teamed up against him:
>
> You now break the harmony of voices

You now break the harmony of voices

It's the way you will surely break our harmony

When the time of initiation comes.

But Abdulla came to his rescue:

I was not breaking up soft voices

I was not breaking up soft voices

I only paused to straighten up

The singers' and dancers' robes (Ngugi 1977: 249).

In the course of the song, the history of the village and the villagers moves forward from the dim mists of early times to the present narrating the changes which rend the society. This depicts Ngugi's 'effort' at bringing the novel closer to the lives of the peasants and workers of Kenya. The story in *Devil on the Cross* is presented as an oral narration by a traditional artist who declares himself to be a "Giccandi Player" and a "Prophet of Justice".

The 'folklore' performs several societal functions. On one hand, it constitutes living representations of significant cultural information: history, values, instructions, and ritual activities. On the other hand, they are a dynamic form of entertainment embedded in speech, song, dance, tales and other narratives viz. myths and legends of a particular community. The elements of social function and aesthetic pleasure combine in the folklore to make it a highly representative body of cultural expression. Culture being a dynamic entity, is susceptible to social change; it is not a static phenomenon. When appropriated into the written narrative, the elements of folklore are given a different attire and form catering to the demands of a changing society—a society moving towards literacy and modernisation. In the novels selected for this study, it is found that elements drawn from folklore act as a revitalising agent in shaping the narrative and in the appropriation of the novel in Africa.

3.3 Folklore and the African Novel

It is interesting to observe the interaction of folkloric elements with written genres—especially the novel. Very often, the presence of oral forms in written literature was understood simply as the importation of such elements into the written form. Critics like Eileen Julien, drawing on the debates on orality and literacy have changed this perception. Julien says, "Oral forms cannot simply be imported into writing but must be invented anew through the artful management of linguistic style and register" (Julien 35). The way in which oral and written forms intertwine is multilayered and needs to be the subject of detailed study if one is to capture the intricacies of African cultural production. The novel in Africa should not be viewed as an isolated enterprise. It is thematically as well as technically shaped by the social relations and cultural modes of expression (that is, the folkloric elements of Africa) into which it migrates. Again, drawing on Davidson Nicol's observation in the epigraph, it could be said that with changing times and changing social relations the literary could exert a potentially beneficial and positive impact upon the oral forms. Nicol's statement very categorically lays bare what might be lost to the world if the myths, legends, folktales of Africa remain only in the minds of its traditional retainers. It could be said that instead of a conflicting relationship, folklore and the novel in Africa display a symbiotic relationship—one enriches and sustains the other. In a similar vein, Karin Barber, a noted scholar of Yoruba literature, has suggested that the field of African cultural studies is somewhat artificially divided between studies of oral literature on one hand, and on the other, analyses of mainstream canonical writers working in Europhone languages (Barber 1997: 27). Sean Kane describes how myths were told in hunter-gatherer cultures, "Beyond community", he says, "but not far beyond it, there is nature. For the oral societies that lived by hunting and fishing, nature was the very source of voices. It was like a huge infinitely resonant drum. From it came the startling noises—the thunder and howling winds imitated in the sounding of rattles and drums of village celebration, noises meant to catch the spirit world" (Kane 1998: 190-91). The voice of nature, as Kane sees it, could be heard in Okri's novels. *SB* which retells a story received by the narrator as an inheritance from his mother and acquaints the readers with this animate world of nature:

> On full moon nights, the wise ones claimed that the trees whispered stories in abundant darkness. "These stories took form and wandered about the world and one day would take a life of their own" (*SB* 4).

However, as Kane puts it succinctly, "history has been brutal to nature and therefore brutal to myth, which has been defined by the Latin equivalent of the Greek word *Fabula*, a persistent lie…the assumption of human power we loosely call anthropocentrism" (Kane 1998: 190-91). On the other hand, Isidore Okpewho defines myth as "a creative resource" from which "the larger cultural values are derived" (Okpewho 1983: ix). The nexus between myth and national reconstruction is made unequivocally in his writings. In his study *Myth in Africa*, Okpewho explains the relationship between myth, as the creative resource and 'the oral tradition and culture':

> Up until the last two decades, distinguished European historians and social scientists contended that, in view of the absence of written records in tropical Africa dating from the pre-colonial past, the African could not be said to have any history of account or even a sense of it; the history of African nations could therefore only be traced from their colonial or commercial contacts with Europe… African historians have reacted with just pique against this gross misapprehension of their origins. In doing so they have put considerable emphasis…on the evidence provided by their oral traditions as proof positive of a past that dates well before the European violation of their cultural integrities. African creative writers have equally felt the urge to exorcise this cultural embarrassment (Okpewho 1983: 155).

Ekwutosi Onwukwe observes that the term 'folklore' has acquired a variety of meanings down the ages. However, in common parlance, the term could be understood to denote the "traditional expression of a people as seen in their proverbs, songs, tales, legends, myths and riddles. In the African context, the folklore could be said to form an inviolable part of the life of the community. It is a favourite recreation to many people and a means of educating the young, especially within the fold of the community. The folklore in traditional African societies has a highly educative value. It imparts knowledge on the group's history, values of warfare, morals, wise sayings etc" (Onwukwe 1-3). Emmanuel Obiechina maintains that folklore "embodies the values and attitudes (of a people) in its proverbs and fossilised saying, its belief in myths and religion, and its consciousness of its historical life, collective outlook and ethics, in its legends, folktales and other forms of oral literature" (Obiechina

1975: 27). From its very nature then, folklore, educates one in the way of the life of a people—the societal set-up, social values, taboos, sanctions and others. Obiechina goes on to say that even the introduction of elements of the Western literary culture has merely modified traditional oral culture but has not destroyed the consciousness derived from tradition. This chapter shows that writers like Tutuola and Okri who attempt to represent West African cultural life within a contemporary or historical setting via the novel, attempt to do so through the oral tradition and folklore of West Africa, because it best expresses the West African consciousness and sensibility. In other words, the writers are involved in transporting the oral tradition of West Africa into a non-native literary tradition.

Both Onwukwe and Obiechina rightly argue that the hold of the folklore is not restricted to the villages. Even city dwellers partake of the pleasures of the folklore because they constantly visit their villages on festivities, weekends and vacations. This explains the presence of folkloric materials in the novels of many African writers who are city dwellers (like Okri). The folklore then could be seen to form a part of the modern life in Africa. Critics like Eustace Palmer in *The Growth of the African Novel*; Ngugi in *Decolonising the Mind*; Dathorne in *African Literature in the Twentieth Century*; Ato Quayson in *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writings* and Anjali Gera in *Three Great African Novelists* have attempted to show the nexus between the introduction of literacy and the rise of the novel in Africa (a novel is meant to be read).

On the other hand, Michael Crowder is bitterly critical of the African writers' use of folklore in the novel. His arguments are based on the fact that the modern novelists cannot embody oral lore in a literary form—the novel—that is foreign to native culture. According to him, Achebe's work is weakest at points where he attempts to introduce folklore, for instance, in his use of proverbs (Crowder 120). William R. Ferris (Jr.) opines that Crowder is the only literary critic who feels that traditional lore is by nature foreign to the modern African novel, and that, its treatment of the conflict between traditional and modern culture is superficial (Ferris Jr. 28). From the literary approach, Cyprian Ekwensi strongly disagrees with Crowder. Ekwensi agrees that with changing times different kinds of transitions have taken place in the African societies and that the modern writer does not create in the same context as the traditional tale-teller or singer. That the context has changed, however, does not imply that the

two are unrelated. For Ekwensi, "the modern writer has a role parallel to that of the traditional bearer of folklore" (Ekwensi 1963: 217).

John Ramsaran in "African Twilight: Folktale and Myth in Nigerian Literature" observes that "the folktale is the most neglected aspect in the developing literature of West Africa, although it is the most vigorous form of expression in the cultural life of the people" (Ramsaran 17). This, he argues, is because of the age old association of the folktale with a largely non-literate society, that the sophisticated writers deliberately tend to by-pass it. This point of view totally ignores the significance of folk tradition as one of the major impulses of literature. This stance could be countered with reference to Tutuola's statement where he stresses on the_irrevocable presence of folk elements in writing, "I wrote *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* for the people of the other countries to read the Yoruba folklores […]. My purpose of writing is to make other people understand more about Yoruba people and in fact they have already understood more than ever before" (Tutuola quoted in Lindfors 1980: 229). This shows that Tutuola's role is that of an artist in a society heading towards literacy—a society in transition. In such a changing society, Tutuola, the novelist is seen committed towards preservation of cultural values. He achieves this by infusing elements of folklore (oral tradition) within the receptacle of the novel (written medium). Here Lindfors' observation could be suitably applied to say that "by keeping one foot in the old world and one in the new while translating oral art into literary art, Tutuola bridges two traditions. Herein lies his originality" (Lindfors 1973: 59).

The uniqueness of Tutuola's work rests on his ability to assimilate elements peculiar to the oral tradition to elements peculiar to the literary tradition: in other words, to impose a literary organisation over oral narrative material. Thus, Obiechina sees him as a representative of a transitional stage in the formal artistic evolution from a purely oral narrative tradition to a purely literary narrative tradition (Obiechina 1980: 105). Writing on the threshold of the twenty first century (another transitional period), Ben Okri is found to employ folklore to analyse the fate of Nigeria as a nation and to present a critique of contemporary postcolonial socio-political reality.

3.4 Folklore as a strategy of narrative construction the novels of Amos Tutuola and Ben Okri

This section examines the uses of folklore as a strategy in constructing the written narrative in the selected novels. It shows that the novels of Tutuola and Okri open up new vistas for exploring aesthetic directions based on a broader understanding and utilisation of various aspects of African folklore and less dependence on imitation of the European novel. The opinions of different critics and academicians show that they have a keen interest in the relation between oral tradition, society and the novel in African contexts. They have shown how elements of folklore provide a medium for stylistic experimentation expanding the horizons of aesthetic concerns in novel writing in Africa. William Bascom says that in non-literate societies folklore is virtually identical with culture, whereas, in a technologically advanced literate society, it is only a fragment of culture[3]. This stance could serve as an index for examination of folk materials in the African novel. **Section 3.4.1** studies one of the vital means of cultural transmission in oral societies—that of storytelling—within the written medium. It shows that the written narratives not only derive force from stories but also act as a receptacle for them by allocating storytelling a new space within the literary. **Section 3.4.2** studies the application of folklore in the novels in presenting a different way of perceiving the world via. myths, legends and folktales. It also shows that the folklore aids in stylistic and technical concerns of novel writing in Africa. **Section 3.4.3** studies the literary arena as a space for articulation of ideological, moral and ethical matrix of the traditional world as well as concern over degeneration of traditional ethics and morality. **Section 3.4.4** shows that the elements of folkore are used to reflect and comment on the changing times and the corresponding changes in cultural practices, habits and manners. The last two sections also bring out the ambivalent attitude of Tutuola and Okri towards culture contact.

3.4.1 (a) Storytelling and the Literary Narratives of Tutuola and Okri

In the African societies storytelling has been one of the most popular, entertaining and instructive means of making connections with the past, cultural heritage and ethos of indigenous communities. Notwithstanding the longstanding dichotomies between the spoken and the written, it could do well to say that the native folkloric elements of the once colonised cultures go a long way in shaping the formal and thematic aspects of literature in the liberated

colonies. It seems, therefore, natural that the first generation of writers like Tutuola (Nigeria) and Raja Rao (India) derive their aesthetics from an indigenous mode of narration—storytelling. Central to the story telling tradition is the story teller. As Harold Scheub points out:

> Storytellers in Africa have traditionally been a major means of making connections with the past, of enabling members of audiences to view themselves and their worlds within an ancestral context, a context that makes sense of their world, that charts their lives for them, that records and manipulates their movements through the great changes that mark their arc from birth to death (Scheub 2004: 443).

In the process, the story teller, imparts moral and ethical lessons and acts as a guide to his listeners. Ama Ata Aidoo says in an interview: "I come from a people who told stories. When I was growing up in the village we had a man who was a good story teller. And my mother 'talks' stories and sings songs" (Aidoo qtd. in James 1990: 19). Chinua Achebe explains, "I have always been fond of stories and intrigued by language—first Igbo, spoken with such eloquence by the old men of the village…" (Achebe 1988: 22).

The importance of storytelling in indigenous African societies has been emphasised by Ngugi wa Thiongo in *Decolonising the Mind*. Recalling his own childhood experiences, Ngugi says:

> I can vividly recall those evenings of story-telling around the fireside. It was mostly the grown-ups telling the children but everybody was interested and involved. We children would re-tell the stories the following day to other children who worked in the fields picking the pyrethrum flowers, tea-leaves or coffee beans of our European and African landlords (Ngugi 1986: 10) .

This shows how the informative value of the folklore is transferred by the word of the mouth. In its legends and folktales one gets a kind of historical view or background of his people. S/he learns about the feats of their renowned forefathers and the history of their race.

Walter Benjamin in his essay "The Storyteller" considers modernity to be a violent incursion leading to the disintegration of "tradition" in the twentieth century. According to Benjamin, the impact of modernity as experienced during the first half of the twentieth

century was so radical that it created a sense of complete rupture from the past. He writes that "[a] generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body" (Benjamin 84). Benjamin observes that one of the most representative figures of the past world that has vanished with the arrival of violent modernity is the storyteller. The storyteller, as described by Benjamin, is in essence a pedagogue. He retells stories from the past by interpreting them in the light of the present situation and thereby making them "useful": "The usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another case consist in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim. In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers" (Benjamin 86). His act of storytelling thus establishes a dialectical relationship between the past and the present. Tales culled from the past and delivered in the form of proverbs, maxims, and counsels become useful and practicable in the present moment. In making use of these tales, however, the present also re-enacts the past and is enfolded within it. For Benjamin, the repetition of the past in the present and the continuous enfolding of the present within the past forms what he terms an unbroken "chain of tradition" (Benjamin 97). Apart from the relationship that the storyteller establishes with the past and tradition, Benjamin's essay also focuses on the relationship between the storyteller and the listeners, since the act of oral storytelling presupposes a "community of listeners" (Benjamin 90). Like the chain of tradition, which mediates between the past and the present, this relationship is also interpreted dialectically. It is as part of a community of listeners that the storyteller gathers the various proverbs, maxims, and legends that he passes on to a new generation of listeners and potential storytellers by repeating stories of the past. Hence, the storyteller and listeners are perceived by Benjamin as forming a homogenous and unified community with shared values and collective experiences that can be taken up and transmitted as stories by anyone within it (Benjamin 90). By foregrounding the figure of the story teller and the processes of storytelling, Tutuola depicts a traditional African world and also allocates a different space to storytelling within the written narrative.

Okri's storytellers are faced with new challenges and new set of circumstances brought about by modernity and urban living. Story telling no longer remains an enactment of shared values and collective experiences. Values and experiences are now determined by

differing social positions, power and material achievements. A sense of loss of glory of the pristine past and the deterioration of the traditional community life at the behest of modernisation, consolidation of political power and the consequent exploitation of the masses could be perceived in the tone of the stories in Okri's *Famished Road* trilogy. His stories lack the mood of jubilation and celebration which are characteristics of Tutuola. One could say that Okri explores the role and function of the story teller in an urban backdrop.

With changes in the social set up where the individual has to move away from community life in villages to distant urban settlements, where literacy becomes essential for survival in a cash-based economy, storytelling also shifted its space from the oral to the written. Within a changed space, the stories acquire different attire where the various aspects of performance (viz. the narrators' gestures, dancing, body movements, changes in voicing and facial expressions, skills in mimicry of people and animals) are made redundant. For the literate urban dweller, stories appropriated into the novelistic genre could provide an alternative to the traditional art and entertainment. This kind of a shift is also symbolic of cultural change—the shift from spoken to written.

It could be said that storytelling establishes a link between the ethos of a traditional community and a modern context when depicted through the medium of the novel. Therefore, it could be argued that the written narratives of Tutuola and Okri not only derive momentum from folklore but complement it by serving as a medium of its expression and preserver of traditional culture.

Pointing out the storytelling impulse in Tutuola, Bernth Lindfors describes him as a "raconteur of Yoruba tales" (Lindfors 1980: 253). Anjali Gera calls him a storyteller par excellence. She argues that Tutuola remains a 'storyteller' of Yoruba tales despite his use of the written medium (Gera 37). Pointing out the chief influences in his writing Obiechina says that his qualities of excellence are "largely obtained from the living traditions of village story-telling" (Obiechina 1980: 105). From these observations it could be argued that Tutuola's literary paradigm is evocative of an oral narrative tradition. This does not mean that Tutuola the novelist is inattentive to the written form. In his works, the ethical concern of the traditional artist coexists with attention to the written medium. Tutuola's position of a literary artist and storyteller is aptly summed up by Anjali Gera's observation that "while retaining

the sensibility and role of the storyteller, and preserving the folktale perspective, Tutuola moves closer to the novel tradition…there is a perceptible movement towards a more unified structure than oral narrative permits… [and] a greater attempt to bring into control the haphazard connections of oral narrative" (Gera 37) .

It is found that in *TPWD*, the narrator strikes an immediate rapport with the reader in the manner that a story teller does with his listeners. The sentences are long with a few breaks (full stops) in an attempt to hold the attention of the readers (listeners) which is a requisite element in good story telling. To suggest a flow/continuity between ideas and sentences, Tutuola makes abundant use of words like 'as', 'so', 'but', 'then', 'after' in the beginning and within sentences[4]:

> **So** my father gave me a palm-tree farm which was nine miles square and it contained 560,000 palm-trees, **and** this palm-wine tapster was tapping one hundred and fifty kegs of palm wine every morning, **but** before 2 o'clock P.M., I would have drunk all of it; **after** that he would go and tap another 75 kegs in the evening which I would be drinking till morning. **So** my friends were unaccountable by that time **and** they were drinking palm-wine with me from morning till a late hour in the night (*TPWD* 191-192; emphasis mine).

The novel abounds with sentences and ideas conjoined in this manner. Again, when the tapster dies and his friends depart, Tutuola hints on the moral that one should be wary of summer friends—practical knowledge that the folktales impart. As mentioned in the preceeding pages, one could find within the frame narrative, a number of minor narratives that expand the frame work of the novel. Here it would be useful to refer to an observation made by Sherryl Takacs in "Oral Traditions in the Works of Amos Tutuola". Takacs observes that Tutuola is a modern folklorist born into the fast changing world of colonial Yorubaland. He points out that Tutuola's narratives show that he "works within the range of…folklore. In folklore and especially in oral storytelling, plot is incidental and plot structure is therefore loose and episodic" (Takacs 392). Thus, one could find that digressions, which form a quintessential feature in storytelling, are essential in the Tutuolan narratives including *TPWD* to drive home a central point. This is what critics call the drinkard's fulfilment of his 'quest' of meeting the tapster and his transformation from a sloth to an enterprising individual after undertaking these journeys. Some of these digressive minor

narratives are the episodes with the Complete Gentleman; the Three Good Creatures; the Wraith Island; the Journey to the Unreturnable Heavens Town, the Faithful Mother in the White Tree, the Red People in the Red Town, the Invisible Pawn, the Wise King, the Drinkard and his Tapster in the Deads' Town, the episode in the Hungry Creature's stomach, the Mountain Creatures in the Unknown Mountain, the famine in his native town and his role in helping the townspeople. It is significant to note the distancing of the central quest by the minor narratives on account of the time required for the drinkard to solve various issues and face new circumstances. This distancing from the central quest is important because the time spent in between helps to bring about the required changes in the drinkard's personality. For instance, the time spent in his in-laws' town helps to change the drinkard to a hardworking man:

> I spent three years with him in that town, but during that time, **I was tapping palm-wine** for myself, of course I could not tap it to the quantity that I required to drink; my wife was also helping me to carry it from the farm to the town (*TPWD* 214; **emphasis mine**).

The values of his community are instilled in him. Moreover, the drinkard also learns how his father might have suffered when his own son Zurrjir drinks all the palm-wine he had tapped and creates havoc in the kitchen. Again in the 'Wraith-Island' the drinkard becomes a farmer and plants many kinds of crops—a task which perhaps he never performed while in his native town. Moreover, when they are rendered penniless after willfully abandoning the half-bodied child, the drinkard (now as an enterprising man) successfully runs a ferry business along with his wife for one month and is able to earn a lot of profit.

The frame narrative in *MLBG* entails the perilous misadventures of a young boy in a frightening and alien bush inhabited by ghosts and his attempts to make good his escape back to his native town. Several minor narratives are made to operate within this frame narrative. These include the story of the burglar-ghost, the Super Lady, the cousin ghost, the television handed ghostess and others. Catering to the popular taste, Tutuola draws extensively from the oral culture and tells stories about smelling-ghosts, river-ghosts, homeless ghosts, armless ghosts, burglar ghosts, spider-eating ghosts of alarm-bush, short-ghosts of the 13th town, ghosts of Nameless town and Hopeless town, the ugly ghostess, the jocose ghostess, the

television handed ghostess among others. In spite of infusion of the digressive minor narratives, Tutuola attempts to achieve some kind of organisation of the plot through the over arching frame narrative. Gera insists that through the frame narrative, these digressive minor stories are redeemed from turning into a mere collection of folktales strung together and enhancing the chances of the narrative turning haphazard. The "frame", as Gera argues, interacts with the constituent "inner stories" to form a singly-knit, full plot akin to that of the novel (Gera 40).

The frame narrative of *FWJ* is built upon a series of story-telling sessions. The frame narrator, the old chief, tells of his adventures in the form of a story that requires him several nights to complete[5]. This shows that the "frame" interacts with the constituent narratives to generate continuity between the stories. It also shows Tutuola's literary acumen while handling folkloric material. All the storytelling sessions in *FWJ* are conducted in a particular ceremonial pattern. The villagers/listeners who gather in the house of the old chief are served palm-wine in the beginning of the session and the end is marked by singing, dancing, playing musical instruments and merriment. Tutuola uses the first person omniscient narrator in this novel. In a story telling session, the narrator always has more power over the narratee as he knows what is to be told, "…I advise everyone of you to pay attention to it so that you may be able to sort out the useful senses which, I believe, will be useful to you in future" (*FWJ* 12). This shows that in the manner of a folk-tale, Tutuola's tales also contain a moral, didactic and ethical element.

Tutuola, the story-teller par excellence, as Anjali Gera calls him, is found to retain and heighten the interest of his listeners in the story by leaving a lot to the readers' imagination by his typical "I could not describe them here" after detailing certain aspects of a place or a curious creature (the hungry creature, the red fish and red bird, the unreturnable Heaven's town, the creatures inside the bag of the huge monster during their return journey from the Dead's town and others). This pattern is uniformly maintained throughout the novels.

With the nuances of his storytelling, Tutuola could be said to have anticipated post modern tendencies. In a very striking incident in *TPWD*, the drinkard gets utterly confused as he is asked to judge two cases. Unable to pass a judgment, he calls upon his readers/listeners to come up with an acceptable solution. By leaving these stories open-ended (typical of

postmodernist fiction), Tutuola anticipates readers'/listeners' participation in constructing the stories. This expands the scope of his stories and also shows that there is room for manipulation[6].

> So I shall be very grateful if anyone who reads this **story-book** can judge one or both cases and send the judgement to me as early as possible, because the whole people in the "mixed-town" want me very urgently to come and judge the two cases. (*TPWD* 292; **emphasis mine**)

This excerpt shows that Tutuola regards his work as a story-book and indeed *TPWD* teems with stories drawn from the folklore of West Africa.

Okri says, "We live by stories…we also live in them" (*A Way of Being Free* 118). In his essay, "The Joys of Storytelling" included in *A Way of Being Free* Okri says that, "a story can corrupt a people or redeem it. Arguably the continent of Africa has too many competing stories, and is waiting for some grand narrative integration…the capacity of narrative to transcend cultural barriers, to body forth in fiction the aspirations of the whole of humanity, is one of its most encouraging qualities" (*A Way of Being Free* 119-20). As a writer with allegiance towards oral tradition, Okri's art of storytelling in the selected novels seeks to embody the aspirations of mankind including the miserable and the downtrodden.

Okri's narrator in *SB* is a fusion of the traditional storyteller (who critiques the ways and manners of contemporary society) and the self-reflexive postmodern artist, as he says, "History is replete with monstrosities that shouldn't have happened. But they did. And we are what we are because they did" (*SB* 8). By depicting the condition of women and slaves, he presents a critique of the society where gender and class discriminations are rampant.

In *SB*, the narrator gets the story as an inheritance from his mother. The novel begins as in a typical storytelling session; it is a narration of a previous narration, "This is a story my mother began to tell me when I was a child. The rest I gleaned from the book of life among the stars, in which all things are known" (*SB* 3). Towards the end of his narration, the narrator speaks to his reader-audience in the fashion of a story teller who has just completed his tale and intends to impart some guidance to his listeners:

> How did this tale come down to my mother, this tale that she began to tell me when I was a child? Somebody has to create a myth....Someone has to project a story into the future. This is how a fragment of that legend came down to me (*SB* 415).

Two stories, one, of the prince and the other, of the narrator run parallel and are connected together when the latter declares to have derived his lineage from the former, "He was my mother's ancestor" (*SB* 4). In a way, the narrator tells his own story; the story of his own tribe.

In Okri's *TFR*, stories serve as a potent tool to lure Azaro back to life from his delirium when the three headed spirit almost succeeds in taking him away to his spirit companions. Dad whispers into his ears, stories about ancestors who had left their original land and made a strange place their home; about his grandfather who fought a spirit of the forest and was made the Priest of the Shrine of Roads; about gods who divided the universe between the land of spirits, the land of humans, and the infinite regions of heavenly beings and who gave in all realms a special homeland for the brave, and others. In the latter part of the novel, it is again interesting to see the kind of books that Dad chooses to consolidate his philosophy on building a nation for the poor. Under the spell of contemplating a utopian ideal for his country, Dad listens to Azaro's reading of a number of books from different cultures and particularly falls in love with *Arabian Nights*—a story containing many stories.

In *SE* it is Dad who tells endless stories: the man who suffered all the miseries in the world, the story of how Death was conquered by a small bird, the story of the hunter, the stories that Azaro fails to remember as they were told when he was in a bitter mood against Dad—the teller. The road-river analogy in this novel is extended by one more step and applied to 'story'. Interrupted by Mum during the course of a story-telling session, Dad chides her saying, "A story is not a car…. It is a road, and before that it was a river, a river that never ends"[7] (*SE* 267).

Whether it is Mum or Dad, all are shown to depict an affinity for storytelling. Paradoxically, it is Mum's 'story about the stomach' that feeds Azaro when they have no food for dinner. Dad narrates his prison experiences in the form of stories to the compound men in a very animated fashion, "Dad got to a point in his narration where he thought it necessary to

illustrate a particular action. He leapt up from his chair, bristling with good humour, and began marching up and down, stamping his boots on the earth, swinging his one good arm, dangling his head, shouting war charges in seven languages" (*SE* 41). Stories exist in the bar—of politics, thugs of politicians, businessmen and chiefs spraying money at parties and celebrations. Azaro listens to Mum's stories of aquamarine beginnings, the wisdom of old songs, songs of work and harvest, and the secrets of heroes. While Mum tells him stories of the community (kept alive through tradition), new stories are woven and songs composed simultaneously in the world outside to mark the ascendancy of the political parties. There is also the story of how death was conquered; the story of the King of the Road, the story of the white people, the story about rain and the rain god and others associated with folk belief.

Okri's "Acknowledgements" in *IR* indicates that the novel draws heavily upon *The Crest and the Hide*—a collection of **oral African tales** compiled by Harould Courlander; and Graham Greene's anecdote narrated in 1989 at the Oxford and Cambridge Club, on which Okri bases the 'Rain Queen' Story. This shows the importance attached to oral literature in the writing of the novel. It could therefore be said that the "invisible books" (*IR* 149) refer to communal memory that serves as a reservoir of oral narratives.

The flare for story-telling is found to exist throughout *IR*. It could be observed that the novels serve as receptacles to contain innumerable and inexhaustible numbers of folktales and stories. Within Azaro's stories, there are other storytellers and perspectives. The story of a chief and frogs, the story of an African emperor and a wild boar, the story of the Rain Queen, the story of an elephant that gets killed, and a number of stories told by compound people about Mum and her organisation of the downtrodden women.

Like Tutuola, Okri is often found to edge the stories with a moral lesson. While winding up the story of the King of the Roads, Dad warns Azaro of the perils on the road, "that is why a small boy like you must be very careful how you wander about in this world" (*TFR* 302). An interesting feature found in this story is that under the guise of story-telling, Okri details numerous beliefs associated with sacrifices made to the roads.

It is found that Okri's novels are strewn with stories of which many are derived from legends and folktales of Africa. Others are stories shaped by the political, cultural and

economic environment in an urban world that shape human experiences and have significance vis-à-vis contemporary society. Stressing the importance of stories in a society, Okri sets a "challenge for our age and future ages". It is "to do for storytelling what Joyce did for language—to take it to its highest levels of enchantment and magic; to impact into story infinite richness and convergences" (*A Way of Being Free* 111).

The function of the storyteller in a traditional set up has been aptly expressed as that of one who "moves them [the audience] into antiquity, scrupulously making connections between past and present, and in that nexus shapes their experience of the present" (Scheub 2004: 442) . This again shows that storytelling is not merely for recreation. The informative and instructive value of the stories is transferred by the word of the mouth. As seen in **Section 3.2** the task of storytelling within the written mode is a challenging one as the teller/writer is inevitably distanced from his audience/readers who are now not restricted to the community (as in case of a typical storytelling session within a traditional social set up) but drawn from various cultures and communities across the globe. Notwithstanding this challenge, the African writers of English expression, especially the ones chosen for this study are found to derive inspiration and momentum from folklore in moulding their literary art.

3.4.1(b) Storytelling within the literary medium and Collective Memory:

In traditional societies, appeal to memory is made by relying on "recalling rather than written documentation" (Gera 36). In the absence of oral transmission, collective memory would suffer a setback. It could be said that Tutuola and Okri appeal to collective memory through the use of folklore in the written medium.

Harold Scheub says that "the storyteller unlocks a people's collective memory, allowing listeners to both celebrate and revel in their past" (Scheub 2004: 443). In Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, the importance of memory is stressed by the Abazonian elder. As a representative of a non-literary society that relies on memory (recalling) for its sustenance, this elder recognizes the need to 'recall' the stories of the community:

> It is the story, not the others, that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort, without it, we are

> blind. Does the blind man own his escort? No neither do we the story, rather it is the story that owns us and directs us (Achebe 1964: 144)

The narrator in *SB* tells the readers how the art of storytelling was born (*SB* 416). To preserve the memories of its elders and its traditions from being eclipsed by the 'white' powers, the tribe of artists create a new art form—that of storytelling. This new art form enabled the tribe to preserve its memories:

> The hidden masters [of the tribe] maintain still that nothing is ever lost but abides in the dreams of humanity, and in the **infinite story**, in the infinite book among the stars (*SB* 412).

Therefore, the introductory line where the narrator tells his reader-listeners that it is a story bequeathed to him by his mother, could be seen as an attempt to pass on the story to posterity—a task that the narrator now takes over from his mother.

Whether articulated through the written medium or through the oral, the purpose of storytelling is cultural transmission and preservation of continuity between the past and the present. Obiechina maintains that the oral medium relies largely on human memory for the preservation and transmission of the cultural repertoire, and so develops elaborate mechanisms for helping the human memory. These include ritualisation of belief, actions and concepts, routinisation of everyday actions, fostered by the homogenous nature of beliefs, sentiments and attitudes (Obiechina 1975: 33). Face-to-face contact, shared customs, beliefs, and sentiments which are important factors of storytelling through oral transmission are made irrelevant by the written medium. Cultural transmission through the written medium relies on written records. It is more elaborative, exploratory and experimental than the oral tradition and leads to greater diversity of beliefs, sentiments and attitudes. Where the oral tradition ensured relative stability in the living conditions and customs of non-literate people, the introduction of literacy has brought new cultural elements, new beliefs and moral values, new attitudes, new technological skills, new aspirations, new ideologies and new outlooks.

The anxiety over the loss of collective memory as articulated by Tutuola is mitigated by his storytelling efforts through the literary medium. The Tutuolan anxiety over loss of communal/collective memory[8] is reiterated and its effect exacerbated in *IR*— the last novel of

the *Famished Road* trilogy. Here the cause of anxiety is the result of the imposition of an incomplete and non-inclusive history written by the Governor General intended to oust the true story of a people and their ways. This is presented as a potential threat to collective memory as this fabricated history would be documented as the official history of a nation. This is why Dad (a preserver of traditional ways in *SE* and *TFR*) is presented in this novel as incapable of comprehending the language of his father—the Priest of the Road, who advises, sings, tells proverbs and parables and talks to him in a "vanishing language". That Dad is unable to understand the idiom of his ancestors is symbolic of upsetting of the old world order—a divorce of the new generation with tradition and indigenous culture. One could find that when locked up in a cell and beaten ruthlessly, Dad hails his ancestors to derive strength and mental fortitude; the call is left unanswered as "none of his ancestors gave any sign that they heard him" (*IR* 54). However, through Dad's prayers, Okri presents a gamut of chieftains highlighting their legends and achievements, lest they are forgotten—Aziza, the road-maker, who built roads over marshes; Ojomo, the image-maker, who tamed the spirits of the valley and could discern the shapes of the ever-changing gods; Ozoro, the warrior-blacksmith who survived wrestling with the fabulous spirits of two oceans, killed five white men and stopped seven bullets, and so on.

In a society heading towards literacy, Tutuola makes the literary narrative a preserver of folklore. Entering the literary arena a few decades after Tutuola, Okri presents the problems of culture and identity in a postcolonial nation and shows how fabricated documentations could be countered and scrutinised through an incursion of folkloric elements into the literary narrative. Okri's invisible cities in *AG*, invisible spaces in *SB* and stories in invisible books in *IR* obliquely stand for Africa, African culture and African myths and legends respectively that has been represented in a fabricated manner in imperial documents. Mungo Park in *Travels in Africa* points out:

> the oldest Nigerian civilisation known to archaeologists is the Iron Age Nok culture of the Benue plateau…almost contemporaneous with the Greek poet Sappho.…An imperialist myth once prevailed to the effect that the communities occupying this large area had no literature or philosophy…from the time of the Arab incursions into the north around 1000 CE, literature flourished there, though the principal means of cultural transmission, especially in the south, remained word or mouth" (Park 305).

The imperial world however has been reluctant to acknowledge these facts. To illustrate this blind spot, Okri uses the motif of invisibility to articulate the hidden and suppressed world of African culture. Here the Governor General's fabricated and documented history is shown as a murderer of collective memory which derives its shape from oral transmission. Against the monopolising nature of recorded history as that of the Governor General, Okri demonstrates the power of stories. Stories in Okri, Fraser argues, are the 'receptacles of meaning'. He argues, "…stories are the opposite of names, because they distil a transforming capacity possessed by events and people that is forever carrying them beyond any possible nomenclature" (Fraser 11).

To display the fabrications of recorded/documented history, Okri in *IR* shows two simultaneous histories (of the same nation) under the process of construction. One is manufactured by the English Governor-General after destruction and burning of all incriminating documents of his colonial rule and erasing the memories of slave trade. This results in an incomplete and manipulated story of the nation, which is allegedly, the official history. The other is, "our true secret history" (*IR* 128) woven by an old woman in the forest—a history that is "the epic narrative of our lives" (*IR* 131); it is officially unrecorded but tells tales about a community not incorporated in the official version. The Governor-General's version that would now tell the past, tradition and culture of an African nation, begins with the coming of the white men. It therefore deprives them of language, poetry, stories, architecture, civic laws, social organisation, art, science, mathematics, sculpture, abstract conception, philosophy, history, civilisation and above all humanity. In performing the dexterous feat of writing history of a 'soon-to-be created' nation, he reinvents the geography of the country and the whole continent. He redraws the continent's size on the world map, making it smaller and odder; changes the names of places, redesigns the phonology of African names, softening the consonants and flattening the vowels, thereby altering their meanings and affecting the destiny of the named. He reinvents the names of fishes, bees, trees, flowers, mountains, herbs, rocks, plants, food, clothes and rivers:

> The renamed things lost their old reality. They became lighter and stranger….They lost their significance and sometimes their shape…they suddenly seemed new to us—new to us who had given them the names by which they responded to our

> touch…he invest[ed] us with life the moment his ancestors set eyes on us as we slept through the great roll of historical time. With a stroke of his splendid calligraphic style, he invested us with life. History came to us with his Promethean touch… (*IR* 127).

In writing history, he renders invisible all African accomplishments, wipes out traces of ancient African civilisations, rewrites the meaning and beauty of African customs, abolishes the world of spirits, diminishes their feats of memory, turns African philosophies into crude superstitions, rituals into childish dances, religions into animal worship and animistic trances, art into crude relics and primitive forms, drums into instruments of jest, music into simplistic babblings; so that "as he rewrote our past, he altered our present" (*IR* 128). This fanatic frenzy of documentation of the administrator is countered by the proclamation of the first guide in *AG*, "When you stop inventing reality then you see things as they really are" (*AG* 49). Posited against the official history of the Governor-General, the old woman narrates a different history. This history is referred to as a 'story' woven in the form of a cloth (long cloth of stories) where one thread is intricately connected to the other, hinting that "no one race or people can have the complete picture or monopoly of the ultimate possibilities of the human genius alone" (*IR* 128). In a striking contrast to the official version, the old woman weaves legends and moments of history lost to her people; bawdy ancient jokes; drinking songs; the songs of wind; songs of history; riddles that have never been solved; ways of speaking to the spirits of ancestors; the music of the dead; melodies of interspaces; divination by numbers and cowries and signs; numerological systems for summoning the gods; stories and myths; philosophical disquisitions on the relativities of 'African Time and Space'; theories of art and sculpture; secret methods of bronze casting; forgotten items of meteorological discoveries; and most importantly, she records oral poems of famous bards whose "words had entered communal memory, whose names had been forgotten…but whose true names lay coded in their songs" (*IR* 130). She also weaves what the Governor-General effaces—the nightmares of colonisation. One could say that Okri shows through the old woman, that the Africans have a cosmic unity with their surroundings— a cosmic unity which is expressed through various elements of the folklore which the so-called written history often fails to register.

It could therefore be said that the elements of folklore are employed in the written narratives to recreate collective memory of a people and to make them relate to their roots.

3.4.2 Folktales, Myths, Proverbs, Riddles and the Literary Narrative

This section analyses the employment of various aspects of folklore viz. myths, legends, folktales, riddles, songs, rituals and beliefs in the selected novels of Tutuola and Okri in presenting a unique African reality and in creating a unique framework for their literary discourse. It argues that through their use of the narrative paradigm of folktales and myths, Tutuola and Okri allocate a literary space to the texture and structure of African folkloric narrative. Ogunsanwo maintains that the African oral tradition, expresses a sense of a shared phenomenal world (both ordinary and extraordinary) to which there has always been a communitarian claim. The literary endeavour of traditional literary artists like Amos Tutuola "could be seen as textualisation of the shared heritage of folklore with creative refashioning leading to artistic transmutations from the oral into the written literature" (Ogunsanwo 46). He further argues that Ben Okri, who is a more sophisticated writer, "follows the postmodern re-contextualisation of historical or literary antecedents or referents. In his literary narratives, Okri inscribes the folktales while strongly questioning and contesting the literary aesthetic of truth-telling practiced by his predecessors like Achebe and Soyinka" (Ogunsanwo 47).

In the traditional societies of Africa, elements of folklore provide a popular medium for experiencing reality. The folktale, as Palmer argues is a common property belonging to the people as a whole; it is an expression of their culture and their social circumstances (Palmer 1979: 30). The teller of folktales is well aware that the framework of his story is already known to a majority of hearers. Therefore, his reputation as a teller would depend on the inventiveness with which he modifies and adds to the basic framework of the tales. For within the basic framework, the teller is allowed considerable room for manoeuvre. In the first chapter of *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi says that there are good and bad story-tellers. The former could tell the same story over and over again, but, it would always be fresh to the listeners. Such a teller could also narrate a story told by someone else, while making it more alive and dramatic (Ngugi 1986: 10). Tutuola, one could say, is one such teller of tales. Inheriting the basic framework, he refashions the old tales incorporating innovations and his own message. Eustace Palmer rightly comments that Tutuola's claim to "greatness lies not in

the originality of his imagination but in the skilful remodelling of old tales […]. Tutuola is[…]a brilliant teller of folk-tales" (Palmer 1979: 12).

Bernth Lindfors argues that, "It is not difficult to prove that many of the folktales Tutuola uses in *TPWD* exist in Yoruba oral tradition….The celebrated passage in which a "beautiful complete gentleman" lures a baby deep into the forest and then dismembers himself, returning the hired parts of his body to their owners…appears in at least seven different versions in Yoruba folktale collections (Lindfors 1986: 9). According to Jack Berry, "the tale of the magical food-and-whips producer is very widely distributed in West Africa, as are the tales of ogres and other supernatural beings" (Berry 12). Alice Werner reports in her study of African mythology that stories of people who have penetrated into the world of ghosts and returned "are not uncommon" and that shape shifting transformations are not only present in many folktales but also "are believed in as actual occurrences at the present day" (Werner 119). Again, Onwukwe observes that "folktales and legends have themes which are moralistic" (Onwukwe 5). He maintains that tales with the demon lover or husband as motif are usually told because of the warning they give to people about the dangers of marrying complete strangers; and tales about the housewife who envies her co-wife are told because of the moral they teach about the evils of jealousy. Tutuola's *TPWD* and *MLBG* make use of these didactic folktales.

Harold Collins assigns the episodic plot in Tutuola's novels to his adaptation of the structure of the folktale in his literary narratives, "Tutuola's episodic structures…accurately reflect the structure of the folktales that have inspired him. Furthermore they fit very ancient folklore patterns" (Collins 46). Moreover, the quest pattern which is basic to his novels is derived from the structure of folktales. Lindfors argues that "his [Tutuola's] method and content have not changed much over the years…a hero or heroine sets out on a journey in search of something important and passes through a number of concatenated folktale adventures before, and sometimes after, finding what he seeks" (Lindfors 1986: 10). Though this pattern is found to vary from one novel to another, Tutuola never abandons it entirely. Thus, it is found that the content and narrative pattern in Tutuola's novels is adapted from the framework of the folktale. With reference to Okri's *TFR*, Ogunsanwo states that many popular folktales are reworked and seamlessly built up to constitute the novel's central action

which is presented in the mythic form (Ogunsanwo 50). For instance, the episode dealing with the "beautiful woman with a blue head" who lures Azaro into following her is a skilful reworking of a popular African folktale meant to caution young people, especially young women against heedlessly following strangers because they appear attractive. This is also found in the Complete Gentleman episode of *TPWD*.

Onwukwe observes that "myths abound all over the world and their function is to explain things—natural phenomena, origin of things and apparent mysteries in the human world" (Onwukwe 9). In *TPWD* the episode with the old man who asks him to trap death in a net is a rendition of the story of death's entry to the world. Therefore, with this story, Tutuola explores another element of the folklore— the myth. Myth-like elements are also found to operate in other minor narratives. In the episode where the famine occurs, there is a story about the origin of famine as a consequence of rivalry between 'Land' and 'Heaven'. The manner of narrating this story has the effect of a myth upon the listeners/readers, "In the olden days, both Land and Heaven were tight friends as they were once human beings… (*TPWD* 296). Again, the story of the origin of the human race is found in the episode with the 'Red Creatures' which is also narrated in the manner of a myth, "…in the olden days…the eyes of all the human-beings were on our knees,…we were walking backwards and not forwards as nowadays…" (*TPWD* 255). Since myth has universal acceptability and is popularly believed to be true, hence to focus on the veracity of his myth-like stories, Tutuola repeats them across texts. The same story of all creatures having their eyes on the knees is repeated in his next novel *MLBG*[9].

Proverbs and Riddles which are an integral aspect of folklore are found in abundance in the novels. Riddle is a tool for learning. The learning imparted through a riddle is "not morals but what could be called nature study—a kind of scientific knowledge" (Onwukwe 11). The riddle session is a brain storming session where one is required to think fast in order to make quick and sensible association in answer to the question. For instance, when the Red Lady takes the drinkard and his wife to the Red King, the wife says that this journey would be "a fear of heart, but would not be dangerous to the heart". The implication of this riddle is understood after the drinkard kills the two fearful (the Red Fish and the Red Bird) creatures and saves the people of the Red town without himself suffering any harm.

Proverbs contain the wealth of wisdom of a community. Stressing the importance of proverbs in folklore, Chinua Achebe says that proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten (Achebe 1958: 4). Onwukwe opines, "it is a mark of wisdom and outstanding linguistic ability if one is able to use proverbs to garnish conversations….One can be instructed in wise and rational behavior through the proverbs" (Onwukwe 10). Proverbs are a striking feature of Tutuola's works. Takacs observes that "every episode in *TBAH* opens with a proverb which the particular section illustrates and requotes within the actual adventure to make their didactic nature even more emphatic" (Takacs 395). For instance, when the huntress realises she has forgotten her juju, the reader is reminded along with her that, "A snail never leaves his shell behind whenever he is going on journey" (*TBAH* 22). *TBAH* is strewn with proverbs—a testimony to the rich folklore of the Yorubas: "a person who chased two rats at a time would lose all", "the half killed snake is the most dangerous", "beard is the sign of old but moustache is the sign of insult", "it is after the elephant is dead when everybody will go near it and cut its flesh", "cat never touch the ground with its back whenever it falls", "we must first greet the mother of a new born baby for safety delivery whether her baby would still die soon or not" and others.

In his literary narratives, Okri incorporates native oral tradition, especially in his use of myths and folktales. As both the writers emerge from a common cultural base, that is essentially West African, it is unlikely that one will remain uninfluenced by the other. It is found that Okri's world is heavily influenced by that of Tutuola. A very conspicuous difference found in the novels of the two writers concerns the setting or backdrop. Lutz Rohrich says that the local landscape often creates a standard for a region's narratives (Rohrich 179). While Tutuola's world is populated with bushes, forests, hunters, ghosts, spirits, Okri presents these elements in a more urban setting. It is found that his use of myths and folktales serve to depict the condition and problems of a modern and decadent Nigeria. Gera argues that "the modern writer's apprehension of myth is different from that of the traditional individual….Myth is available and effective even in modern Nigerian society as a coherent and valid system of beliefs and attitudes (Gera 43). It is thus found that Okri accepts the philosophical assumptions of myth for interpreting and confronting the present reality. Felicia Oka Moh argues that Okri takes a historical overview of Nigeria's experiences through his use of myths and symbols (Moh 72).

Taking a cue from Onwukwe's definition of myth (quoted above), it could be said that Ben Okri's *TFR* has unmistakably and conspicuously a myth-like beginning, "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). In *Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt,* Robert Armour argues that the ancient Egyptians believed that life originated out of primordial waters called Nun (Armour 7). Similarly, the ancient beliefs of amaZulu of South Africa hold that human life originated from the banks of a reeded river (Kunene 1981: 3). This terrain of primordial origins is well articulated in the opening paragraphs of Ben Okri's *TFR* where the narrator describes it as a watery "land of the beginnings" where "spirits mingled with the unborn" (*TFR* 3).

This introductory myth is repeatedly referred to by evoking the origin of the road as a river. In one of his drunken hallucinations, Dad says that "the road changed to a river" (*TFR* 111); during one of the listless wanderings in the forest, Azaro says, "I ran till the road became a river…" (*TFR* 132). It is found that taking recourse to myth, Okri sets his narrative in a mythical time-frame. As a result of this, "the creative imagination of the narrator does not have any constraints or obligations to a time-bound image" which is a necessary feature in a conventional realistic prose narrative (Okpewho 1980: 15). Okri's use of Yoruba myths does not merely involve textualisation. Rather, his literary use of Yoruba myths calls for a critical re-evaluation enabling one to see their multiple dimensions (Ogunsanwo 49).

The mythical evocation of the road as a hungry river is applied to connote the political condition of the Nigerian nation that has "unjust predatory rulers who exploit the masses" (Moh 73). This folkbelief in the famished nature of the road is repeatedly referred to in the trilogy. On reaching home, Azaro is severely beaten by Dad. The latter in an angry tirade acquaints Azaro with the commonly held notion of the famished nature of the road, "The road swallows people and sometimes at night you can hear them calling for help, begging to be freed from inside its empty stomach" (*TFR* 142). This belief holds good for the narrative because during his wanderings, Azaro actually comes across a part where he steps on "an enamel plate of sacrifices to the road…rich with the offerings of fried yams, fish, stewed snails, palm oil, rice and cola nuts" (*TFR* 134). The custom of appeasing the road by offering sacrifices operates viably throughout the novel. In his journey with the three-headed spirit who

lures him to the pleasures of the other world, Azaro says, "The world kept changing. The road began to move. It behaved like a river, and it flowed against the direction of our journey" (*TFR* 376). One of the realistic descriptions of the road changing into a river is offered by Azaro during a heavy downpour when water floods the earth:

> I feared the heavens would unleash so much water that the earth would become an ocean….The road became slippery. The earth turned fast into mud….the road became what it used to be, a stream of primeval mud, a river. **I waded in the origins of the road**… (*TFR* 330; emphasis mine).

Catering to the reliability of the myth, the famished nature of the road is brought out during the very same downpour at one of the Road Construction sites where a white man has been inspecting the progress of the work. As he stands on a log of wood placed over the pit where the workers dredge up sand, looking at something through a pair of binoculars, suddenly the earth proves treacherous and moves:

> The white man shouted, his binoculars flew into the air, and I saw him slide away from view. He slid down slowly into the pit, as a stream of water washed him away. The log moved. The earth gave way in clumps and covered him as he disappeared….They [workers] rushed down the side of the pit to try and find him. They dug up his helmet, his binoculars, his eyeglasses, a boot, some of his papers, but his body was not found. Three workers volunteered to dive in and search for him. They never returned. **The pit that had helped create the road had swallowed all of them** (*TFR* 331-332; emphasis mine).

In *IR*, the road is given a mouth that keeps "opening and shutting" (*IR* 17). The multi-dimensional interpretation that a myth could hold (argued by Ogunsanwo) is seen to operate here.

In a new urban setting, Okri shows the creation of new myths in a new political era. *TFR* teems with stories about Madame Koto—stories that verge on myth. The display of drama outside her bar where she tosses and hurls off a rowdy customer transforms her to an awful figure. It is from this point onwards that she is given the status of a figure in a myth. The myths and stories surrounding her life are so numerous and fabulous that they serve to distort forever the people's perception of her reality. The myths wherein she is cloistered

confer upon her an ambiguous identity. There are conflicting and contradictory stories about her—each story presenting a different picture of Madame Koto, "it began to seem that there were many Madame Kotos in existence" (*TFR* 429). At one point, while eating pepper soup in her bar Azaro notices that "she had a little beard" (*TFR* 101). A bearded woman, one could say, is reminiscent of the witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and very categorically, a customer affirms this, "She's a witch" (*TFR* 107) as her photograph emerges as a smudged washed-out monster, a cross between a misbegotten animal and a wood carving. In the sequels, Madame Koto becomes a living myth. She is mythologised as everyone talks about her whereas she herself becomes almost inaccessible and hence invisible. In this context, her proclamation in *TFR* to Azaro that, "Now I am here…tomorrow I am gone" (*TFR* 290) is almost prophetic. Only her powers are felt by the ghetto dwellers. Even her bar assumes an uncanny atmosphere rooted in another world, "Madame Koto's bar seemed like a strange fairyland in the real world, a fairy land that no one could see" (*TFR* 242); and her death in *IR* only serves to magnify her myth. Here one could say that along with the new stories (like the story of the blue sunglasses that Mum tells Azaro and his friend Ade) and songs of a new world (those composed by the blind old man with his harmonica), new myths are also created.

The traditional means of entertainment by telling stories, jokes, riddles and so on, is very categorically evoked in the party that Dad and Mum throw to celebrate Azaro's return. The oldest man in the compound releases a torrent of proverbs, riddles and anecdotes. Dad in a philosophic speculation during the party says, "life is full of riddles…" (*TFR* 48)—an observation that is reflective of the cultural life.

AG too has a myth-like beginning where the narrator is found to state overtly the significance and value of oral culture and collective memory:

> Their lives stretched back into the invisible centuries and all that had come down from those differently coloured ages were legends and rich traditions, unwritten and therefore remembered. They were remembered because they were lived. He grew up without contradiction in the sunlight of the unwritten ages… (*AG* 3).

SB has multiple layers of meanings; apart from being a modern day parable, it is a reflection on socio-political and cultural processes. The apparently mythical landscape which

provides a backdrop for the operation of the parable, is revealed to be 'Africa' (*SB* 65). It is an epic of Africa where the fate of the land depends upon the fate of the maiden and that of the prince; here, the superhuman interacts with the human for propagation of the culture of the tribe. *SB* could be seen as a novel in the grand tradition of myth-making exemplified in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Midnight's Children*. In the task of myth making Okri very deftly presents three phases of the Africa—precolonial, colonial and post colonial. Okri tells the story of the conquest of Africa and African cultural heritage by the white winds and the white spirits. The consequence of the blowing of the white wind proved to be disastrous as it wiped away the memories of the elders. In its forceful melee the white wind scattered the tribe, its dreams, people, and its arts:

> They became etiolated, and slowly vanished in the mists of time. Their shrines turned to dust and returned to the air....The full force of the white wind descended on the kingdom of the prince and wiped out great areas of the past, and wiped out memory, and dissolved many traditions. And then the white spirits came and the land lost the spring of its ways. Forgetfulness followed and new ways grew over the oblivion of the old ways (*SB* 410-1).

The postcolonial scenario showing recovery of old ways and memories is aptly brought out by Okri's reference to historians who arrive in the land of the prince centuries later to find out a rich artistic heritage and seek explanation for it:

> For a long time it did seem as if all was lost. But, after a century a myth began again in the minds of historians and artists who sought an explanation of how such a rich artistic heritage came to be, and how or why the community that created it so suddenly and completely disappeared. Its legacy was now spread throughout the world, enriching the hearts and dreams of strangers and the secret children of the tribe all over the globe (*SB* 412).

Okri's use of folkloric mode of narration aims at a more comprehensive representation of reality than permitted by the stylistic propriety of the conventional realist novel. Ogunsanwo sees Okri as a "veritable postmodernist" whose narrative technique and method seek to explode the myth of a centralised sameness that privileges the Eurocentric ideology while "silencing by inclusion" the uniqueness of African culture (Ogunsanwo 50). This

technique of questioning reality while 'silencing by inclusion' is found in his use of the motif of invisibility. The unnamed protagonist in *AG* sets out on a quest to find out the "secret of visibility" when he discovers that he is 'invisible' in the sense of being absent from history books. He journeys to an island where everyone, like himself, is invisible and nameless, "It was in books first he learnt of his invisibility. He searched for himself and his people in all the history books he read and discovered to his youthful astonishment that he did not exist" (*AG* 3). The island in *AG* is nameless because it does not exist for the visible world; however, this island has its own legends which are kept hidden, "We have our legends about what lies below, but the legend takes the form of a riddle which you must answer before you can be admitted into the place" (*AG* 16). This shows that the legends are revealed only to the chosen few. In a way, it is a dig at the European civilisation with its predilection for documentation. Okri maintains the secrecy of the legends to paradoxically arouse the readers' curiosity for the hidden world that does not find representation in documented history, "When you make sense of something, it tends to disappear. It is only mystery that keeps things alive" (*AG* 30). In *SB* as well Okri very skilfully maintains secrecy of initiation rites and arouses curiosity at the same time:

> About initiations we ought to be silent. They are often sacred and private events. What rituals are wrought there belong to the initiated and should not be bared to the irrelevant scrutiny of a curious and sensation seeking world. People destroy the power of initiations when they reveal them to outsiders and to those who are not undergoing such rites (*SB* 207).

IR shows Okri as a postmodern artist in that the novel institutes a teleological question at the very beginning, "Who can be certain where the end begins?" (*IR* 5). *IR* articulates Okri's obsession to question and scrutinise recorded history. Paul de Mann argues that in any event, postmodernism has been able to "throw up" the observation that the "master narratives" with their "desire for a unitary and totalising truth" (qtd. in Ogunsanwo 41) seek to exert power and control over other cultures by smoothing over cultural differences and distinctions under the guise of universalising, homogenous values. It is in this postmodernist spirit that Okri has attempted to challenge and debunk the legitimising narrative archetypes of Western culture and its dominant ideology (Ogunsanwo 41).

The *Famished Road* trilogy deals with the folk belief of the abiku child that has deep communal and socio-cultural implications. Ato Quayson in "Magical Realism and the African Novel" says, "Belief in the abiku phenomenon is widespread in Southern Nigeria with the name 'abiku' being shared by the Yorubas and Ijos while the Igbos refer to them as ogbanje. It acts ethnographically as a constellar concept because it embraces various beliefs about predestination, reincarnation, and the relationship between the real world and that of spirits. In terms of the rituals that are geared towards appeasing the abiku, the concept also implies a belief in the inscrutability and irrationality of the unknown (Quayson 2009: 172). The working of the abiku consciousness shapes the narrative structure of the trilogy as it shifts from one reality plane (conventional realistic description of the world) to another (mythopoeic description). Events like Dad's boxing practices and bouts, political campaigns, and happenings in the ghetto form the mundane setting of the novel. These are presented in the form of the conventional well-made realistic narrative but presented through Azaro's abiku consciousness, sights and escapades rendered in the mythic form. The abiku phenomenon not only shapes the mode of the narrative but is also used to highlight one of Okri's central thematic concerns. The abiku condition is used as a symbol of the nation's historical experiences, "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). Felicia Oka Moh observes that "Azaro's life which is a chain of endless recurrences is like the nation's history of stories of recurrences revolving around patterns of hopes and betrayals" (Moh 77). Historically, Okri depicts the conflicts of a postcolonial society, the challenges of the new nation and the crisis of the postcolonial state in the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War. The abiku status of the nation corresponds to the historical event of Biafra's secession marking the "second watershed in nation formation" (Nwakanma 7). This shows that like Tutuola, the structure as well as content of Okri's literary narratives are influenced by different aspects of folklore.

From the above analysis it could be said that the literary narratives of Tutuola and Okri are informed and shaped by modes of narration derived from Africa's tradition of folktales, oral and mythic narratives. Again, by the extensive use of the framework of folktales and myths, different aspects of oral tradition are preserved within the literary.

3.4.3 Traditional Values and the Literary Narratives of Tutuola and Okri

This section argues that with Tutuola and Okri, the literary narratives become a device for voicing concerns relating to preservation of traditional values and apprehension over decline and decadence of traditional ethics and morality. The threat to traditional values under the onslaught of modernisation is aptly summed up by William R. Ferris (Jr.). He maintains, "the changes that have appeared in Nigerian life as it has shifted from tribal culture to urban life has resulted in the destruction of traditional culture with nothing to replace it" (Ferris Jr. 34).

Emmanuel Obiechina maintains that traditional life in pre-colonial Africa subsisted on "the collective solidarity of people who shared common customs and beliefs and an identical world-view…the value which sustains the society is collective responsibility, the responsibility of the group for the lives and well-being of the members. In both personal and social relationships, everything which disrupts the orderly life of individuals must be removed or set right. There is tremendous respect for customs and tradition….The individual values most admired are **sociability, prowess, courage, integrity, piety and industry**"….The first setback to such a society occurs with the undermining of collective solidarity and tradition and therefore the matrix that holds the pre-colonial society together" (Obiechina 1975: 219; emphasis mine).

The chief function of the traditional artist, as Daniel Kunene urges "is the preservation of social and communal harmony by upholding and celebrating the values cherished by his society" (Kunene 1976: 244). In line with Kunene's stance, Anjali Gera opines that Amos Tutuola "earnestly discharges these duties…a serious concern with values prized by the Yoruba society" could be discerned in him (Gera 37).

It is seen that as a "traditional bard" (Lindfors 1980: 235) and literary artist, Tutuola plays a vital and responsible role in a period of transition when the people were gradually moving away from their ethno-communal base towards modernisation and urbanisation. In *FWJ*, Tutuola traces the origin of the Yorubas and the intricacies of their tradition and cultural life: the types of houses they built; daily tasks of the people; the specialty of their tribal marks; the kinds of dresses and ornaments that married and unmarried women adorn themselves with;

the modes of play, entertainment and amusement which mostly includes fables, folklores, proverbs, riddles etc. after completion of the day's work; means of communication and beliefs. Tutuola however adds with a note of lament that "all these things are still existing but are gradually dying" (*FWJ* 8). In the course of the adventures of the old chief as a young man, it is revealed to him that Oduduwa, the father of all Yorubas is also the father of the Alake of Abeokuta, Alafin of Oyo, Owa of Ilesha, Alaketu of Dahomey and Olubini of Benin (*FWJ* 108). Here, one could see Tutuola working as an astute artist to disseminate information related to his community. Further, Tutuola gives an account of the various gods and goddesses worshipped in a traditional society viz. 'god of small-pox', 'Ifa' the god of oracles, 'Songo, the god of thunder and his wife Oya who live in the town named Ede', 'god of iron', 'god of river, 'goddess of diamonds' (in *SSDJ*, p.101, Tutuola again accounts the different gods worshipped in traditional societies. The old lady gifts Simbi 3 gods— the god of thunder, god of famine, and god of iron. These gods help the people of Simbi's town when they need help and Simbi becomes famous in her town); various traditional drinks in addition to palm-wine like 'guinea corn-wine', 'bamboo-wine'; the proper way to salute a Yoruba elder and others. The narrator in Okri's *SB* is also found to give an account of the different gods worshipped in the tribe of bronze casters (this tribe at an allegorical level, is the artisan of a pan-African culture) —god of interpretation, god of questions, god of harmony, god of memory, god of mysteries, god of love, god of thunder, god of sacrifice, trickster god, god of illusions, god of transformations and chaos, god of humour. Thus Tutuola's commitment towards preservation of cultural values (as argued in section 3.3) is fulfilled by infusing elements of folklore and traditional culture within the receptacle of the novel (written medium).

Tutuola's responsibility pertains to "preservation of social and communal harmony while celebrating individual achievement" (Gera 39). For example, one communal code which is found in most of his novels, including the ones taken up for this study, is the idea of individual labour. William Bascom, in his anthropological study of the Yorubas declares that, "up to quite recent times, the concept of wage labour was unknown in Yorubaland" (Bascom 1969: 20). Tutuola, however, portrays a situation where hired labour has come to be known. The Drinkard in *TPWD* and Simbi in *SSDJ* are basically consumers with no work to do except to drink and to sing. On the other hand, the young boy's mother in *MLBG* is described as a

petty trader selling her articles in various markets and returning home in the evening or the next day if the market happened to be far. She is described as a "hard worker" (*MLBG* 17).

The narrator in *TPWD* says:

> I had no other work more than to drink palm-wine in my life […]. My father got eight children and I was the eldest among them, all of the rest were hard workers, but I myself was an expert palm-wine drinkard. **I was drinking palm-wine from morning till night and from night till morning […]. But when my father noticed that I could not do any other work more than to drink,** he engaged an expert palm-wine tapster for me; he had no other work more than to tap palm-wine everyday (*TPWD* 191; **emphasis mine**).

Simbi on the other hand is as idle as the Drinkard:

> **She was not working at all except to eat and after that to bathe and then to wear several kinds of costliest garments**. Although she was a wonderful singer whose beautiful voice could wake deads and she was only the most beautiful girl in the village (*SSDJ* 17; **emphasis mine**).

However, Tutuola's protagonists are round characters undergoing change and transformation to emerge as a new individual. In the ultimate phase, they are no longer the lazy lethargic types but are resolved to work for the benefit of the community. Thus Simbi metamorphoses into a hard-working lady during the course of her journeys. In the town of the Multi-Coloured People, Simbi takes to farming to earn her daily bread; from the effeminate and lazy girl, she is transformed to a "lady of strong physique" (*SSDJ* 54). The old chief in *FWJ* has some striking resemblances with the protagonists of *TPWD* and *MLBG*. Like the young boy in *MLBG*, the seventy-six years old chief states that he did not know the meaning of 'good' and 'bad' when still a young boy; and confesses that he used to be very lazy and seldom helped his father in the farm or fields (like the drinkard in *TPWD*):

> ….But as the sons of a hard working man are always proved to be lazy, rascal etc, so **Alabi and I were so lazy that we never helped him in the farm**. Of course, I was not interested in farming as from beginning (*FWJ* 12-13; **emphasis mine**).

However, like the drinkard the circumstances make him turn over a new leaf when he has to toil labouriously looking after the cola-nut trees of the 'Jungle Witch' and sell them in the market. The occurrence of the famine in *FWJ* is repeated as in *TPWD*. However, this time instead of the magic egg what the people are given is a magic box that pours out food and drinks in inexhaustible quantity. But just like the magic egg, it is not replaceable. Yearning for another of its kind is tantamount to severe punishment in both cases. This again drives home the Yoruba work ethics that laziness has to be punished.

The individualist enterprise of Tutuola's protagonist is always conjoined with a social relevance towards the end and the individual is ultimately reintegrated into the society. The protagonist always seeks to help the community with the rewards he has gained in the course of his/her travels. The Drinkard invokes his magic egg to satisfy the material needs of the community. Young Simbi obtains a promise from Dogo, the Kidnapper, not to threaten the security of her village henceforth. Adebisi's manly enterprise is enriched with social significance as she rescues a group of people from the clutches of the pigmies. The adventures of the old chief serve as practical lessons of instruction to the community on the values of courage and industry.

Again, in *SSDJ*, the communal code requires that the young ones must not disobey their elders. But if Simbi is to experience life in its fullness and realise herself, the code must be broken. Simbi leaves home deliberately against all advice, to broaden her horizons. In the first encounter with Dogo, Tutuola brings out her arrogance and awareness of the superiority that wealth and position confer. However, Simbi's reintegration with the society is effected when having killed the satyr, she returns home much wiser, less obstinate and determined to be more obedient to her mother.

The "ethical bias", as Anjali Gera terms it, is evident in all of Tutuola's writings (Gera 39). For instance, in the episode as the wood-cutter's wife, Simbi happens to be a virtual captive with him. One could say that Tutuola could have ended the 'episode of the wood-cutter' when Simbi escapes from his trap after he is blinded by her curse. But the episode is extended further to clarify an ethical position. The wood-cutter regains his sight a few days after Simbi leaves him; Tutuola makes his blindness (punishment) temporary because he had saved Simbi's life in an earlier instance.

It is found that in *TBAH* Tutuola takes account of the way in which time is apprehended in the traditional environment of the community. A cultural mode of nomenclature is applied to evoke the importance of the days and it could be said that this system of nomenclature evokes the traditional significance of each day of the week. For instance, Monday is the Day of Light, Tuesday is the Day of Victory, Wednesday is the Day of Confusion, Thursday is the Day of New Creation, The Day of Trouble is Friday, Saturday and Sunday are respectively the Day of Three Resolutions and the Day of Immortality. A cultural conception of time, Obiechina observers, "depicts the shaping of human experience in traditional society" (Obiechina 1975: 122). Thus, one could trace a cultural relevance when Adebisi sets out on her journey on a Thursday—the Day of New Creation that symbolises hope and has victory over the pigmies on a Tuesday.

From the above analysis, it could therefore be said that through his literary narratives, Tutuola upholds traditional culture, ethics and morality of the Yoruba community.

In traditional African societies the hunter occupies a place of reverence and respect for his virtues of courage and bravery. Ato Quayson in *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writings* points out that in Yoruba culture, hunters are highly regarded as heroic role models (Quayson 1997: 50). In this connection, Abiola Irele also puts forward the idea that the hunter represents the ideals of manhood in traditional societies for his unique combination of physical and spiritual energies (Irele 1990: 180). It is found that all of Tutuola's protagonists depict the qualities of a hunter either throughout or at some point of time during their adventures. Adebisi, the huntress in *TBAH,* one is informed, belongs to a family of hunters; her father is the "head of hunters" of his town:

> My father was a brave hunter in his town. He had hunted in several dangerous jungles which the rest hunters had rejected to enter or even to approach because of fear of being killed by the wild animals and harmful creatures of the jungle (*TBAH* 9).

In the absence of her brothers, who are trapped in the jungle of pigmies, Adebisi takes up the family's hunting profession and retains the honour of her father in the town, in spite of his initial reluctance as "the hunting profession belonged to men only" (*TBAH* 17). Adebisi's

initiation into hunting is marked by an elaborate ritualistic ceremony which is meticulously described. All the hunters, old men, women and children of the town participate in it. This symbolises the acceptance of Adebisi's decision by the society. Eustace Palmer, though highly critical of the work as having strung together a series of fantastic adventures, nevertheless, sees Adebisi as a woman set out to demonstrate the woman's ability to hold her own in an otherwise exclusively man's world, and it is significant that "the sphere in which she attempts to prove it, is that of hunting which, in the African context especially, is a masculine preserve" (Palmer 1979: 30). Even the young boy in *MLBG* who is often intimidated by superhuman forces becomes a hunter in the 13th town of the Bush of Ghosts. Again, it is a prince in the guise of a hunter who rescues Ashabi from the clutches of the 'Jungle Witch' before she could be turned into an ostrich. Before the actual story-telling session starts in *FWJ*, the old chief gives a brief account of his native town Abeokuta wherein he traces the genealogy of the Yorubas (his community) as hunters.

As in Tutuola, in Okri's hands also, the novel becomes a device for voicing concerns regarding preservation of traditional values and practices which are fast fading in a society facing modernisation; both are found to talk about decline and decadence of traditional culture. In *TFR*, Okri evokes traditional values through the image of an elderly man. Azaro's grandfather is spoken of as a very powerful man. As the priest of the God of Roads, he is able to walk without any aid though completely blind. Voicing Okri's concern, Dad as a mouthpiece says, "our old people are very powerful in spirit….**We are forgetting these powers**. Now all the power that people have is selfishness, money and politics" (*TFR* 84; emphasis mine). In contrast to community life in villages, the city is compared to a veritable 'hell' (*TFR* 83).

Obi Nwakanma in "Metonymic Eruptions: Igbo Novelists, the Narrative of the Nation, and New Developments in the Contemporary Nigerian Novel" observes that Okri's novels depict the crisis and challenges in a postcolonial society which manifest the sense of "marginality and disempowerment experienced and lamented" (Nwakanma 12) by men who were erstwhile revered in traditional societies. It is found that Okri evokes the figure of the 'hunter' to depict decadence of traditional virtues.

Physical virility, strength and courage are revered in traditional societies as found in the case of the 'hunters' in Tutuola's novels or the 'wrestler' (Okonkwo) in Chinua Achebe's *Things Falls Apart*. Though Dad has the potential of both the hunter and the wrestler (earlier in the novel, Dad kills a wild boar to celebrate Azaro's return; as a boxer he is named Black Tyger in his village), he suffers only shame and humiliation in a society where it is the people with money who can wield power. Unlike Tutuola, the hunter in Okri (Dad) has to toil laboriously to make both ends meet. He lacks the reverence and awe that traditional society confers on hunters. This shows that in a modernised society (a city) the hunter has little role to play; his status has undergone substantial change with changes in time and changing cultural values. His energies are now put into earning money to eke out a living. As a fellow in the compound urges Dad, "Why don't you join the army, use your muscles….It's only here that you are strong" (*TFR* 80). Certain avenues for manifestation of his physical prowess in the city give moments of shame and humiliation to Dad. One such moment in the novel is when Dad is laughed at as he has to carry heavy loads to feed his family:

> Dad was still staggering **like a boxer**, under the onslaught of too many blows, when the loaders dumped the second bag [of salt] on his head for the second time….And as the salt poured on his shoulder, tears streamed from his eyes and **there was shame on his face** as he staggered right past me crushing me with his mighty buckling feet. **He appeared not to have seen me** and he struggled on, **trying to bear the load with dignity**, weaving in the compensating direction of the load's gravity (*TFR* 175; emphasis mine).

In *SE* Dad is presented as a preserver of the traditional ways. As an undeclared and unacknowledged ruler of his country, Dad conceives idealistic visions for a utopian country where he would outlaw the killing of antelopes, lions, leopards and elephants. Everybody would be a farmer and herbalist and would study the numerous philosophies of the land: "We would produce what we eat. We would produce things we need from our own natural resources" (*SE* 122). He is also found to lay down the importance of rituals for they make one "take life more seriously and more joyfully, instead of being corrupted into instruments of terror" (*SE* 125). Pitted against such idealistic thoughts, one could find the new world order coming down heavily upon the old; its destructive powers resulting in "broken masks, abandoned jujus, useless heads of wooden carvings, disintegrated statues of minor gods" (*SE*

150)—all symbolising wreckage of traditional culture. Against the 'forgotten gods' of the community, Okri shows the Jackal headed masquerade as an 'acceptable god' of the changing society and in lieu of the forgotten folk songs and work songs, the infernal music of the blind old man's harmonica is presented as fitting to the times. The historians of the new age argue bitterly with the mythologists; journalists mock griots; and the secret police hound the story tellers.

The photographer who displays ample courage in recording and preserving the riots against the rulers and atrocities committed by the thugs of the Party of the Rich tells Azaro, "I used to be a hunter" (*TFR* 270). As a hunter, he is a representation of courage. However, his courage is rewarded by wrecking and breaking down his house and glass cabinet where his photographs are displayed:

> His room had been wrecked, his door was broken down, his clothes shredded, his mattress slashed, his available pictures and negatives destroyed, and some of his cameras broken up….His glass cabinet remained permanently shattered. It looked misbegotten. **It became a small representation of what powerful forces in society can do if anyone speaks out against their corruptions** (*TFR* 214; emphasis mine).

His courage is little respected; he is pursued and beaten up by policemen and thugs of the rich politicians. Dad who loudly declares his political commitments and affinities to the poor, and refuses to vote for the Party of the Rich is tormented in ways more than one. The landlord, an ally of the rich increases their house rent; it becomes impossible for Mum to trade in the market as the thugs pester her on account of Dad's political deviance; the thugs mark their door with a machete and smear it with the blood of a wild boar; above all, the thugs attempt to murder Dad as he refuses to vote for them. The courage of both Dad and the Photographer is crushed to the ground in a society where only money can fetch respect. In *SE*, the hunter who succeeds in killing one of the white antelopes (which otherwise cannot be apprehended) is run over by a political van. His death could be seen as a very oblique, symbolic and shocking rendition of the new world order crushing down the old one.

Brenda Cooper observes that *SE* has clear overtones of Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* and his African 'Way', the idealised purity of precolonial Africa (Cooper 1998: 113). And so Azaro sees in the great procession:

> illustrious ancestors with caravans of wisdom, old souls who had been reborn many times in the magical depths of the continent, and who had lived the undiscovered secrets and mysteries of The African Way—The Way of compassion and fire and serenity….These spirit-masters of the spirit universes brought The Way which had since been corrupted by succeeding generations, by greed and decadence, blindness and stupidity, by vulgar kings and dim-witted chiefs, corrupted and turned into sinister uses in the eternal battle of ascendencies. These invisible masters brought fragments of the Original Way in their silent procession, drawing back to its centre the valuable truths in our stolen heritage, our dispersed legacy, our myths coded with wonderful secrets of living, our splendid feats of memory and science and mysticism, art and learning, poetry and thriving in a universe of enigmas, our accomplishments denied by the dominant history of the shortsighted conquerors of the times. I saw them with their celestial caravans of the forgotten and undiscovered African Way, and maybe I marvelled (*SE* 159–61).

The ruin of African culture by the colonial rulers is symbolically represented by the felling of the massive iroko tree accompanied by the weeping of the spirits of the forest, "men were shouting everywhere and the noise of weeping sounded all around like a giant in agony" (*IR* 95). This 'host of angry spirits' unleashes its ire on the woodcutters, retarding them mentally for turning profane what used to be a pious and 'sacred grove'. The general effect of cutting down of trees is depicted through the sudden maddening increase of heat. While the ghetto dwellers bear the brunt of the administration's action, the Governor-General's wife is shown lying semi-conscious under the electric fan.

The decadence of traditional values is again emphasised in *SE* when the women of the forests (who are seers) sing of the forgotten ways of the ancestors, warning the people "not to change too much" (*SE* 159). The changing times is more pronouncedly depicted with Madame Koto ascending in terms of financial powers and Mum in terms of the prophetic. In a clarion call to the ghetto dwellers, the herbalist, who once prophesises over Madame Koto's car, says:

> Return to the old ways….Return to the ways of our ancestors! Take what is good from our own way and adapt it to the new times. Don't follow the witches and wizards. Watch them carefully. Watch these powerful people with all your eyes (*SE* 172).

One mode through which Okri articulates his concern for traditional cultural values is through the technical device of the paradox. Okri's penchant for paradox shows that he is more at home with the post-modern literary world[10]. With reference to *AG*, Kehinde maintains that in a postmodernist vein, the novel plays on paradoxes: silence is a communication code, lightness leads to heaviness, the simplest things are riddles and paradoxes, to cross the bridge (of emotions), one must hold it up (Kehinde 37).

It could be said that employing the device of the paradox in *AG*, Okri mocks at the West's ultra-fast pacing rush for progress and advancement. This is found in the novel when the unnamed protagonist experiences a "paradox of motion" (*AG* 26). In his effort to cross the bridge, the faster he runs or swims, the slower he moves/progresses. That the bridge is composed of "emotions", "light air" and "feelings" is an oblique reminder to do away with the bourgeois West's philosophy of facts. The protagonist learns that what one thinks "is what becomes real" (*AG* 46). The relativity of affairs is seen as the essence of living. This is Okri's postmodernist attack on Europe's reality-creating monopoly.

Another dig at the colonising powers is found in *AG* when on the day of the 'most beautiful rituals' in the invisible island, the inhabitants pledge to initiate on earth the first universal civilisation of light and justice (*AG* 131). Activities such as sculpting, story-telling, and poetry were the most preferred forms of treatment of ailment, "When healing was required the sick ones lingered in the presence of great paintings" (*AG* 69). This obliquely shows the priceless value of tradition and culture of the invisibles that have remained invisible because they are belittled by the documenters who know the 'secret of visibility'.

Felicia Oka Moh argues that Okri "dramatises the influence of city on morality…the urban slum recreated in Naturalistic detail informs and conditions the lives of the ghetto dwellers" (Moh 143). Thus, the basis of traditional society pointed out by Obiechina pertaining to the 'responsibility of the group for the lives and well-being of the members' (quoted at the beginning of this section p. 71-78) is thwarted under the new system. With the fading of traditional set up, "the political climate is marked by duplicity and hypocrisy" (Moh 100). Decadence of traditional morality is seen in the milk doling episode in *TFR* where the milk does not give nourishment to the people. Moh says "Those who take the milk become

sick just as those who place their hopes on the promises of the dubious politicians become disenchanted (Moh 98).

The analysis here shows that Tutuola and Okri evoke the ethos of a traditional culture and values within the space of a literary paradigm. Thus, the literary arena provides a suitable space for articulation and preservation of the ideological, ethical and cultural matrix that held the traditional world together. It also allows space for articulation of apprehension and crisis over potential disintegration of traditional value system and morality.

3.4.4 Culture Contact and Society in Transition

This section shows that as socially conscientious writers, Tutuola and Okri employ the folkloric elements in their novels not only to present the ethos of a traditional world but also to depict and comment on their contemporary times and changing socio-cultural situations.

In the chosen novels, the gradual and continuous replacement of traditional artefacts by western artefacts is depicted in a very vivid and conspicuous manner to suggest a changing world and time and the corresponding changes in cultural habits and behaviour. By its generic nature, as Rohrich maintains, "folktales have always, at all times adapted to the current picture of reality taking new shape again and again, enabling newer interpretations and displaying a different relationships to reality in every historical epoch" (Rohrich 215). Especially in Tutuola's *TPWD* it is found that the modern gadgets find their way into the refashioning of the folktales. Thus, Tutuola conditions the old tales to reflect the changing times. Felicia Oka Moh argues that through the creative use of folklore especially, myths and symbols, Okri depicts the problems besetting the Nigerian nation from the pre-colonial period to the present (Moh 72)—a period of transition. She further points out that the myths and symbols drawn from folklore to portray the transitions in society through time include the myth of the mighty green road and the symbols of the abiku and the old-man-child (Moh 72).

The changes at various levels of society arising out of culture contact as a result of the colonial experience is found to occur at the level of culture, politics and economy and the novelist is required to reflect the new tendencies of the new age. 'Culture contact', as Obiechina observes creates "ambivalences of individual behavior as well as conflicts and tensions in social relationships" (Obiechina 1975: 201). The study in this section shows that

through the use of folklore in their novels Tutuola and Okri faithfully articulate the changes taking place in their contemporary society on account of culture contact.

Contact with the western society becomes characteristic of the culture of Tutuola's times. This contact finds expression in Tutuola's refashioning of the folktales. It is found that as Tutuola reworks upon the tales of his community, he makes abundant references to modern gadgets. The entry of these appliances in the day to day life of the African communities is an indicator of influence of the Western culture and changing times. Emmanuel Obiechina observes that the traditional African folktale is "a very free narrative form and the narrator has ample scope to incorporate whatever elements within the experience of community he thinks will make his story effective… even though Tutuola's stories refer to a remote age, the fact that he was writing in the second half of the twentieth century meant that he would have to incorporate some modern elements which have become a part of the everyday reality of Nigerian life" (Obiechina 1980: 104). It is found that the drinkard's son, the half-bodied baby, speaks with the voice of a telephone. Again in another episode when it becomes difficult for the couple to travel both on road on account of havoc created by gangs of highwaymen and in bush because of unaccountable boa constrictors and dangerous spirits, the drinkard transforms himself into a "big bird like an aeroplane" (*TPWD* 223; emphasis mine) and flies away with his wife. In the White tree with the faithful mother they get treated in a hospital of the wounds inflicted by the creatures of the unreturnable Heaven's town.

The use of guns and gun powder by the ghosts in this text is a testimony of European contact in West Africa and could be seen as a comment on the affairs of the contemporary real world facing transformation and modernisation. Again, the protagonist in *MLBG* knows the use of petrol as he compares the 'flash' (that emits fire) in the eyes of the Flash Eyed Mother to inflammatory articles. The fire from this flash could light firewood and hence is used for cooking. At night, this fire would generate a 'flood of light' to illumine the town; this is how the residents of the 13th town saved on electricity. Currency is referred to in terms of cowries as well as pounds. In his sojourn with his wife, the Super-Lady, the protagonist is given fine clothes to wear which costs 100 pounds. The point in his journey where he has to choose between the 'golden', 'silverish' and 'copperish' ghosts his heart throbs repeatedly as if someone were sending messages by telegraph. When the homeless ghost takes the protagonist

away inside a log of wood, the former cries. But his voice appears to the other ghosts as a kind of radio and they dance to the tune of his shouts and cries. In the 18th town of the Bush of Ghosts, he is received by a ghost whose throat sounds as a motor horn**.** Later there appears a ghostess whose palms are like television so that one could see what might be happening in a distant place. In this context it is useful to refer to Lutz Rohrich's stance that "culture contact does not necessarily lead to rationalisation of the magical view of reality. Instead technology itself becomes a marvel and only reconfirms the old world-views's belief in wonders" (Rohrich 101). In *FWJ*, the protagonist sells the diamonds that he brings from one of his adventures to construct a storey (building) with many flats. The king of the town of pigmies wears spectacles for poor eye-sight. On their way home from the jungle of pigmies, after vanquishing the latter, Adebisi and the other rescued hunters in *TBAH* eat a kind of fruit that tastes partly chocolate and partly ice-cream. Simbi and her kidnapper Dogo are familiar with the concept of police as the latter says, "it is impossible for a mother to see the captor of her daughter without arresting him to the police" (*SSDJ* 18). There are technicolour lights in the hall of the Faithful Mother of the White Tree which change colours at five minutes' interval (*TPWD* 249).

In Tutuola's tales African beliefs and mythology prevail but not without the influence of Christianity (another offshoot resulting from contact with Europe). Obiechina points out the historical fact of co-penetration of Nigeria by the British administration and Christian missionaries (Obiechina 1975: 223). The co-penetration results in culture contact at two levels: administration and religion. In *MLBG* societal changes at both levels are depicted through the protagonists' experiences in the 10th town of ghosts. One could find churches, schools and Crown Agents in the 10th town, and the Rev. Devil giving a baptism to initiate the protagonist into the community of ghosts.

The coming of Christianity focuses on the changing scenario. Tutuola retells the folktales in a way to present contemporary reality. In Nigeria, the Methodist Church had one of its first mission stations in Abeokuta. The Methodist Church has been at the fore-front of spiritual and social transformation by spreading spiritual holiness and investing in medical health services and socio-economic welfare of the people. The Church placed a strong emphasis on education. Throughout the country the Church established numerous schools

from kindergarten through primary to secondary schools and theological institutions (Sundkler & Steed ed., *A History of the Church in Africa* 224-236). The service of the cousin ghost in the 10th town mirrors the endeavour of the missionaries in Nigeria:

> Immediately I died in our town, I went to several towns which perhaps would be suitable to establish **Christianity** works…As you know that before I died I was one of the staunch members of the **Methodist Church** in our earthly town and I am still praying to God that I shall carry on the services until the last day, which is the **judgement day**…because I could not die again for the second time until that day…I was preaching from house to house, encouraging and explaining **what is God** to these ghosts…After the sixth month that the church was opened, I converted it to both **church and school**. I was also teaching the ghost children of this town how to **read and write** and also **scripture** which is the main subject (*MLBG* 147;**emphasis mine**).

Interestingly, in the above excerpt, the cousin ghost talks about the judgement day and several rituals and ceremonies are found to operate in accordance with Christianity. For instance the burial ceremony in 'The Spider's Web Bush' is depicted as a very ceremonious occasion. A carpenter is appointed to make a solid coffin, a resurrectionist is present and the ghosts are supposed to reach Heaven after death.

Change at the administrative level is depicted through the practice of slave trade. The young boy is forced to enter the Bush of Ghosts after a slave war breaks out in his village. Even in this bush, he is made to work as a slave by his master—the king of the smelling-ghosts in the 7th town of ghosts. He is first changed to a monkey and made to pluck fruits for the master and friends; next he is transformed into a horse and the master rides him to long distances to meet his friends and acquaintances. Thereafter he is transformed into a camel and made to carry heavy loads to a distance of twenty to forty miles. As a means of transport he is not only used by the master's sons but also by the entire village which leads him to work from morning till night leaving no time for rest. The protagonist is also sold twice in the market: first, as a slave-cow in a market in the Bush of Ghosts and later as a slave in the world of man. Here one could say that Tutuola uses the other world as a mirror image of the real world.

In Okri's *SB* the overthrowing of traditional administration by the 'white wind' is shown as the prince is sold as a slave in a distant and faraway land, "He was caught, chained, gagged with a metallic contraption, and bundled off on a long trek across the Savannah to a waiting ship where, in its hold, he found a thousand others" (*SB* 408). The "white wind" in the novel (*SB* 246-8) allegorically refers to the phase of colonialism; the disappearance of the "gods...trees, philosophies and traditions" (representative of indigenous culture), depict the onslaught on native culture brought about by the spate of colonialism. Therefore the white wind is referred to in terms of a plague, "The white wind was the first sign of the plague that came upon the land" (*SB* 246). The "white spirits" (*SB* 247) and the "cloud-coloured men" (*SB* 271) are the colonial masters and there is a strong hint of the practice of slave trade:

> The white spirits had come into the kingdom and bought and kidnapped the strongest and bravest of the land and carried them off in great ships to distant places...they were dragged off to ships in which they vanished. Only those survived who were hidden from the famous coasts and ports, where the white spirits did the best of their inhuman business in draining the kingdom of its young, of its future hope, the pride and glory of the land, the strong, the brave...the gifted ones of the happy land (*SB* 247-8).

In Okri's narratives, the pull towards the artefacts of the western culture is seen as in Tutuola. However, in Tutuola the characters are shown to be fairly familiar to their use; while Okri makes his characters bathe in their novelty. In the celebration of Azaro's return, Jeremiah, the photographer is able to draw the attention of the celebration to his camera. The ghetto dwellers immediately abandon singing and dancing (traditional form of entertainment) to pose for a photograph. That the camera is a new entry in the life of the ghetto is more strongly emphasised when the spirits in the room too display their curiosity:

> After much prancing and mystery making, as if he were a magician, the photographer lifted up his camera. He was surrounded by little ghosts and spirits. They had climbed on one another to take a closer look at the instrument. They were so fascinated by the camera that they climbed on him, hung on his arms and stood on his head (*TFR* 56).

Later the camera is regarded as a "magic instrument" that makes things real (*TFR* 213). Again, the first impact of the megaphone on the ghetto dwellers is very vividly described, "the

crack of an iron ruler shot through my head and ended between my eyes. The room swayed. The crackling voice outside spoke from an elevated stationary position" (*TFR* 144). Here, reference could be made to Lutz Rohrich's stance that many black people call the radio "the voice of clouds" because of its demonic inexplicability (Rohrich 144). The connection of electricity (for the first time in the ghetto) in Madame Koto's bar is evoked as performance of a magical feat. The ghetto people are baffled by the unknown and unseen source responsible for the illumination, "those who went into the bar, out of curiosity, came out mystified. They couldn't understand how you could have a light brighter than lamps, sealed in glass" (*TFR* 427). Further, Madame Koto's car—allegedly the first in the ghetto, gives the impression of the "affectionate face of an enlarged metallic tortoise". The first car-wash is executed in a ceremonious manner with the herbalist chanting prayers and blessings of a long life for the vehicle and people revelling in an intoxicated air of celebration. *IR* depicts the incomprehensibility of the complex machinery meant for cutting down trees. This could bring to one's mind the analogy between the 'bicycle' and 'an iron horse' in *Things Fall Apart.*

Pointing out the manner of depiction of culture contact in *TFR*, Brenda Cooper identifies a 'tension' in Okri. She observes that on the one hand, Okri opposes the slavish imitation of Western forms and ideas. This gives rise to the search for a pure, pre-colonial past, linked to projects of national reconstruction. On the other hand, there is his love of change and celebration of the transformations arising out of interactions with other cultures. With respect to *TFR*, Cooper argues that, "if the tortoise is representative of traditional wisdom, then, second and contradictorily, the blue sunglasses are more than a simple reincarnation of the ancient mask. The sunglasses are, in fact, even more than the postmodern recognition of the relativity of perception; they are 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" (Cooper 1998: 74) .

In their portrayal of socio-cultural change fostered by culture contact, one of the differences observed between the two writers is that Tutuola's community has common experience of war, famine and celebration. But in case of the younger writer, money and power creates two factions: the Rich and the Poor and their experiences of life are simultaneously different. In *TFR*, the changing times are correspondingly reflected through

changes in Madame Koto's bar. From a thatched hut offering palm-wine with a lizard fetish on the wall meant to attract customers, the bar gradually graduates to a well constructed space selling beer; while the walls are adorned with Coca-Cola posters displaying half-naked white women (also intended to attract customers). As Azaro's narrative runs through the sequels, the escalating powers of Madame Koto are recurrently used as pointers to evoke the changing society. In *IR* even the fortunes of her bar-maids, servants and prostitutes are on the rise. With the money earned in the swelling liquor business, these 'early denizens' of the bar are now boutique-owners, powerful market-women, hoteliers and restaurateurs.

Okri depicts a changing political order in *SE*. In keeping pace with this newly emerging political order, the cultural world also undergoes transition. If the folklore is a representation of the way of life of a people, it could then be said that this changing time also produces new forms of expression that reflects its own spirit. These new forms of expression supply 'new angles' (*SE* 93) of looking at the world. This stance could be substantiated with the episode in the backyard of Madame Koto's bar where the blind-old man dancing in the vigour of a wild-young man orchestrates dance movements and party chants to a group of young women dancers, preparing them for the upcoming political rally:

> He led them through the Peacock dance, the dance of the Jackal, the movements of the Bull, and the cornucopia dances they must perform so flawlessly behind their leader on the night of the great political rally. With the exemplary vigour of a bull-leaper, he displayed the requisite motions....He made the women stamp to the war songs and the party chants with mad and unbounded energy (*SE* 104).

Here, the frenzied movements of the old man and his group with the bacchanalian party chorus could be contrasted to the Theng'eta making ceremony in Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* (Section 3.2) where communal harmony and group solidarity are held in high esteem.

In line with Moh's argument (articulated in the beginning of this section), it is found that Okri employs the trope of the abiku (folk belief) as a political metaphor to conceive a new nation on the verge of birth. This new abiku nation[11] is conceived by the abiku child, Azaro, in a dream as a "dying country that had not yet been born, a nation born and dying from a lack of vision, too much greed and corruption, not enough love, too many divisions" (*SE* 91). The potential advent of a new era unleashing a gush of excruciating horrors is

conspicuously depicted in the chapter-titles like "Dark New Age of Enchantments", "New Angles of the World", "The Masquerade's Kingdom" and others. The changing time and its trepidations are depicted through the eyes of the abiku child:

> I saw soldiers in armoured trucks rolling into the city, I saw coup after coup, till our history became an endless rosary necklace of them, each new bead an assassinated head of state, or the secret number of failed coup-plotters, executed at dawn (*SE* 89).

The abiku who can foresee the future says how unlike the past, the people in the new nation could no longer be the maker of their own lives; he could see how the power of the new age and its accompanying forces control the destinies of the people, "how it manufactures reality, how it produces events which will become history, how it creates memory, and silence, and forgetfulness..." (*SE* 115). Thus, one could say that Okri uses the folkbelief of the abiku to focus on the changing cultural and socio-political aspects.

It is therefore seen that the folkloric elements are employed in the novels of Tutuola and Okri not only for self-expression, but also to comment and reflect on changing times and changing socio-cultural scenario.

As storytellers within the literary medium, both Tutuola and Okri display their literary acumen. Some fundamental aspects of postmodern literature viz. open-endedness and self reflexivity could be seen operating in Tutuola's narratives in retrospect. It is seen in section 3.4.1 (a) that Tutuola does not end some of his stories and seeks the readers' participation in construing them. The element of self reflexivity also operates in Okri's narratives as Azaro puts into question the veracity of his own narration, "rumours changed the appearance of reality. I cannot be considered a reliable witness either…" (*IR* 335). To show that no narrative is conclusive, Okri also subjects the old woman's tapestry to scrutiny as she weaves a myth about, "how the white people were invented" (*IR* 145). Against the totalising influence of recorded history, Okri demonstrates the power of stories. In *SB*, stories are shown to contest and interact with each other allowing the play of multiplicity of meaning, "The maiden loved this working on cloth with her mother, and they laughed often and told stories and challenged one another in images and inspiration" (*SB* 314). Section 3.4.2 shows that the folkloric

elements articulate an "African ability to view reality" (Ogunsanwo 47) and provide a framework for literary experimentation. The "ambivalent attitude" towards culture contact as argued by Obiehina is found in the study from section 3.4.3 and 3.4.4. While both are apprehensive about loss of traditional values, their attitude towards displacement of cultural artefacts is that of "accommodation, synthesis or selection" (Obiechina 1975: 211).

Being deprived of classical literary tradition, African literature tries to adapt the expressive means of the folklore to its needs. This task is complicated by the fact that African literature and folklore exist in different languages. The transference and consolidation of the artistic methods of folklore in the English-speaking literature of Africa was for the first time (and successfully) accomplished by Amos Tutuola. While many have commented on the significance of folklore in the African novel in the English language, there is also a complementary relationship. In an era where primacy is laid on writing, the novel becomes a medium to record the way of life of a people—especially in the countries with a colonial past—through its myths, beliefs and folklore. It could therefore be argued that there exists a symbiotic relationship between folklore and the novel. One sustains the other through changing times.

3.5 Summing Up

This chapter examines how the elements of folklore go into the making of the written narrative. A writer does not write in vacuum; both Tutuola and Okri are acutely alive to their contemporary realities. This chapter shows that as socially conscientious writers, their use of folklore as a strategy of narrative construction. It serves as a medium of self expression as a commentary on changing times and situations.

In all the novels the act of story-telling is highlighted. Stories are found to play a set of functions—to make moral/didactic comments; as a medium of entertainment; to disseminate knowledge about the legends and glories of the past; and the like. The novels serve as receptacles to contain the folktales and stories. The writers are found to make abundant references to myths and riddles. Particularly in Okri's *TFR*, it is found that myths and stories of the bygone world coexist with the newly created stories and myths of a society under change—a society heading towards a new political order and modernisation.

The chapter reveals that with both Tutuola and Okri the novel becomes a device for voicing concerns relating to preservation of traditional values and practices and apprehension over decline and decadence of traditional culture. The replacement of traditional artefacts by western artefacts depicts a changing world and time and the corresponding changes in cultural habits and behaviour.

While Amos Tutuola, in most of his novels, does not magnify the socio-political elements of his consciousness except at the symbolic level, Okri plays strongly and overtly on the need to conscientise the people against allowing the seeds of socio-political menace to be sown in the society. The open condemnation of societal misdemeanour by Azaro and Dad could be cited to justify this stance. Through the 'invisibles' in *AG*, Okri teaches the visitor-protagonist the principles of an ideal civilisation; Dad throughout the trilogy articulates his vision of an African utopia and his dream to provide all the amenities to the downtrodden, viz, the beggars.

Through the employment of folkloric elements in their novels, both are found to pose disquisitions on the relativities of "African Time and Space" as an alternative to the standardised norms of Western literary models. In the next chapter which deals with the leitmotif of journey, such relativities and their significances are studied.

The transition from the 'oral' to the 'written' mode and from 'traditional' social set-up to a 'modern' society, in the context of Africa, is crucial, intricate, controversial and at the same time phenomenal, necessary and significant. A reading of the chosen texts show how these phases of transition have been intensely and vividly reflected by Tutuola and Okri using the folklore vis-à-vis the changing tendencies of changing times. This chapter shows that irrespective of time, folklore and its various aspects continue to be a useful resource in moulding an African sensibility in the African novel in English.

NOTES

1. Although Ngugi is substantially concerned with the language issue, such concerns are beyond the scope of this study.
2. As novelists, both Achebe and Ngugi have demonstrated how this task could be appreciably accomplished. Achebe does it by using narrative to critically reinstate the culture and world

view of the colonised to its rightful place; Ngugi, by bringing the genre (novel) closer to recognisably indigenous modes of expression— forms of oral narrative, the conversational tone, the fable, proverbs, songs and others.

3. William Bascom in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, eds., David L.Sills and Robert K. Merton, p. 496.
4. This is similar to Raja Rao's stress in the preface to *Kanthapura* that punctuation marks imbibe break in flow or continuity of narration.
5. This reminds one of the framework of *Arabian Nights* where Scheherazade narrates stories across several nights to the king.
6. Of its many characteristics, a postmodern narrative or literary work tends not to conclude with the neatly tied-up ending and highlights the 'fictionality of fiction'. A detailed study of postmodern literature and postmodernism is made in Linda Hutcheon's *Politics of Postmodernism* and *Poetics of Postmodernism*.
7. In *TFR*, this idea of the story is reiterated by a tortoise to Azaro during his wanderings in a forest that no story would ever be finished (p. 550). In the African folktales, as maintained by Ernest Emenyonu in the book *African Literature Comes of Age*, the tortoise is representative of wit and wisdom. Therefore, it culturally viable that in one his dreams in *SE* where he sees himself in a classroom, the teacher is a tortoise. Further, there is traditional wisdom and storytelling in the form of the tortoise of oral tradition. A speaking tortoise poses a riddle to Azaro, the answer to which is the philosophical cornerstone of the story of *TFR*, "All things are linked".
8. Tutuola's anxiety referred to in p. 5 of this thesis.
9. The story features in *MLBG*, p. 52.
10. This is more so in Okri's case than Tutuola as he is Western influenced, has lived mostly in London, he is eclectic, multicultural, and genuinely hybrid talent.
11. Ade, Azaro's abiku friend states in *TFR* that our country is an abiku country.

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