

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology
of Egypt / Egyptology

IMAGINED COMMUNITIES: AN EXEGESIS OF NATIONAL
SCHIZOPHRENIA IN BEN OKRI'S INCIDENTS AT THE SHRINE

Fizza Rehman¹, Warda Abbas², Aniq Iqbal³

¹ Lecturer, Department of English and Literary Studies, University of Management and
Technology Lahore, Pakistan

³ Lecturer, Superior University Lahore, Pakistan,

Corresponding Author: ² Department of English and Literary Studies, University of
Management and Technology Lahore, Pakistan Email warda.abbas@umt.edu.pk

Email: fizza.rehman@umt.edu.pk aneeqa.visiting@superior.edu.pk

Fizza Rehman, Warda Abbas, Aniq Iqbal. Imagined Communities: An Exegesis of National Schizophrenia in Ben Okri's Incidents at The Shrine -- Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 18(17), 801-811. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Nationalism, Imagined Community, Nation State, Regionalism, Tribalism, Schizophrenia

ABSTRACT

Ben Okri has emerged as a prominent figure in Nigerian Fiction due to his artistic preferences and creative genius. He traverses deep into his mythical world and apprehends reality in an unusual way. His thematic concerns are corruption, moral degradation and Nigerian Nationalism. This research aims to discuss short stories in Ben Okri's *Incidents at the Shrine* (1986) in light of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* and Ernest Gellner's *Nation and Nationalism*. The argument is that the concepts of Nation and Nationality are locally, socially and historically rooted but they are too complex to fit into a definition. The state apparatuses not only claim Nationalism and human collectivities to be fundamental and essential for social existence but also propagate the idea of a homogenous Nation state, a linguistic entity having a separate historical past that withstands the tests of nationhood. These monotheist thoughts of the Nation- State crumbled it into regionalism and tribalism. Ben Okri realizes these definitions of Nationhood and National aspirations as false pretense in his Nigeria. Okri argues that language and ethnicity, cannot be fit in a permanent framework because they are ambiguous and shifting. Okri wants his reader to repudiate his psyche and perceive the actual meanings, the spiritual aspects of his symbols in the short stories.

INTRODUCTION

After World War II, major Nigerian political organizations influenced by equality and liberty of the West, demanded independence for Nigeria. Due to complicated Tribalism and regionalism, Nigerian independence and decolonization was never easy. Most of the problems in Nigeria including Regionalism took their root from colonization that propagated the idea of regional autonomy instead of unity. However, to rid their colonies of the colonial rule, the leaders who were the products of colonization introduced Nationalism. Nationalism has been described by Edward Saeed in his book *Culture and Imperialism* as a force that mobilizes and drives people of a common religion, language and history to resist “an alien and occupying empire” (223). Okri’s fiction sheds light on the fact that the Nationalists developed replica structures. The erasure of colonialism was apparent but not actual as new class-based exploitative hierarchical structures had replaced the old ones.

Nationalism as a ‘state of mind’ was conceived to be a deep attachment of an individual to his native soil, indigenous culture and local traditions. At the end of eighteenth century, Modern sense of the term ‘Nationalism’ was developed that demanded a ‘state’ that included the entire nationality. Okri not only argues that there are diverse forms of Nationalism but also challenges the concepts of National coherence and unitary language. Nigerian State Apparatuses manipulate and modify Nationalist ideology to ingrain it as a “source of cultural creative energy” and of economic prosperity in the psyches of the natives. His portrayal of the problems that plague the Nigerians and their country grappling with social, political and ethnic problems is ‘real’. Social chaos, economic dispossession, tribalism and political corruption are the thematic concerns of Modern Nigerian Literature. This research tends to envisage Ben Okri’s short stories from his collection *Incidents at the Shrine* in light of Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Community*. Okri opines that awareness of Nigerian past is a guide to Nigerian present. This research questions are: how Okri’s Native Nigeria is Nationally Schizophrenic? Why has Ben Okri suffused the extremities- the real and the exotic in the world of short-stories? Are Nations and National aspirations mere seductive dreams that are hollow from within? How do Nationalist ideologies legalize violence, exploitation and extortion?

Ben Okri in his short story collection, *Incidents at the Shrine* portrays a Nigeria that has not recovered from the trauma of the past. He uses symbolism and nightmarish images in the short stories that depict bizarre political and social conditions of Nigeria and its natives. The reader observes that Nigeria, “the most populous nation-state in Africa” is a chaotic, violent world of ‘madness’. Okri’s sense of African sensibility and reality is profound, he sets his stories in dream-worlds fraught with images of decay, ethnic hostility blended with Nigerian legends and mythology that make his fictional world ‘disturbingly fantastical’. Okri in his loaded and layered narrative questions what happened to Nigeria when it was left on its own? It ended up being a ghastly and ghostly landscape of minimal survivals. He gives an insight into a stranded situation of a nation.

This research argues that Okri attempts to display chaos of Nigerian nation after colonization, he pricks the bubble of illusion that Nationalism collects people together, the coherence of the nation is nothing but a façade rather this cohesion is artificial and imaginary. In her article, “Material Survival, Hierarchical Exploitation and Urban Space in Ben Okri’s *Converging City*”, Sarah Abdullah states that “Nigeria was a country which consisted of a variety of ethnic groups. Geographically it was divided with Southern and Northern provinces and the Lagos colony but ethnically there were as many as two hundred and fifty groups; each with its own set of customs, beliefs and language” (3). All of the short stories in *Incidents at the Shrine* are about marginalized individuals of underprivileged class upon whom Ideological State Apparatuses exert power using Nationalist ideology.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Civil war, “fratricide” in Chinua Achebe’s views, is a major tragedy in Nigerian history. In two of his short story collections *The Stars of the New Curfew* and *Incidents at the Shrine* Okri picturizes war, tribal massacres, diseases and decay and often depicts ethnic disparities manifested in dreams and visions, for instance, masquerades fighting each other and tearing their ‘Mother’ apart in an incestuous, bizarre and greedy rage. Okri’s portrayal of divided Nigerian territory, says Guo Deyan in his article, “Trauma and History in Ben Okri’s Fiction” actually unleashes the corruption of political figures “Their nation-destroying policies and their greed for power and wealth [that] fuel the hatred of people toward one another and ignite the civil war” (6). Okri opines that regionalism and tribalism stem from human greed for power and possession and Nationalist ideologies of homogeneity and monotheism are used by various socio-political institutions for the maintenance of hierarchical power structures to further their own ends in Nigerian Social construct. As a retaliation against the artificial idea of coherence of the Nation, Okri comes up with representations of Nationally Schizophrenic, delusional, chaotic and violent Nigerian landscape.

In Ben Okri’s writings, Magical realism has received attention by various critics. Okri’s blending of ‘supernatural’ with the ‘real’ has been widely discussed in research works that consider it an attempt to unearth Nigerian problems. K. Saranya in her article, “Mysticism and Magical Realism as Aesthetics of Necessity in Ben Okri’s Writings” opines: “Hidden histories reveal themselves; disparities converge and prayers go crooked in an unkempt, deregulated world” (4). K. Saranya’s article further sheds light on the fact that Ben Okri’s writing that ‘writes back’ to the colonizer is not an ideal but a truthful depiction of Nigerian traumatic history and brings about existential angst. This research deals with the concept of Nationalism and argues that even the Nationalist ideology has been opted from European models, the fascination still is with the abominable, and the Nigerian nation has not yet reterritorialized and decolonized its psyche and repudiated the ideology of the colonizers who have, in modern Nigeria been replaced by political figures. The lives of Okri’s mediocre characters ruptured by various ethno-linguistic, tribal and economic issues are anguished and pessimistic. They see through the Nationalist ideological control, observe incoherence and madness but do not dare to voice

them openly as their survival is ensured by their ambivalent, non-existent positions in the Social Construct.

Sarah Abdullah in her article, “Material Survival, Hierarchical Exploitation and Urban Space in Ben Okri’s *Converging City*”, discussing Okri’s short story *Converging City* from the collection *Incidents at the Shrine* opines: “The story is about a day in the life of Agodi, a shop-keeper who is trying to make ends meet against corruption and lawlessness. His goods are held by custom officials ... His church is not ready to financially assist him and some unknown burglars are threatening to rob his shop” (4). Hence, Okri’s protagonists are seen struggling in a competitive and exploitative urban setting and they succumb to this legalized system of exploitation formed by socio-political hierarchical structures that leave no chance for the individual to escape. In the lines quoted above from Sarah Abdullah’s article bring into light various Nation- State institutions and apparatuses that repress their individuals and desensitize them to others’ suffering. This strengthens the argument of this research that the concepts of a Moralistic society and homogenous nation are nothing but false myths. This artificially or imaginary nation tied together has been quite realistically portrayed by Ben Okri in his short stories as ‘unreal’.

Before analyzing Nigerian Nationalism let us first discuss the term Nationalism itself. Hobsbawm defines Nationalism as follows: “I use the term ‘Nationalism’ in the sense defined by Gellner, namely to mean ‘primarily’ a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent” (16). These thinkers envisage Nationalism as a political conceptualization and Democratic states in modern times have developed an idea of Nation-state for the Nation to have a sense of loyalty and cohesion towards the citizens and the state. Nationalism, during the 19th century achieved actualization in Industrial Western Europe and then was modified for Political identification.

J.F. Ade Ajayi in his article, “Nineteenth Century Origins of Nigerian Nationalism” distinguishes Traditional nationalism from the Modern states: Traditional nationalism includes movements of resistance to the initial British penetration and occupation, early revolts provoked by the imposition or operation of alien political or economic coercions. Modern nationalism includes sentiments, activities and organizational developments aimed explicitly at the self-government and independence of Nigeria as a nation state on a basis of equality in an international state system. (Ajayi 196)

This research argues that the modern sense of the word ‘Nationalism’ and Nationalist ideology has only been used by Nigerian State Apparatuses to exert control and exploit the masses through violence and extortion that has been legitimized in Benedict Anderson’s views. Even when there exists no exact definition of Nation, nationalism and nationality, this phenomenon continues to exist. Hence, the coherence is imagined, Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* reflects on this false pretense, he says, “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). This research discusses with reference to Okri’s short stories that the possessors are not even aware of the ones who are

dispossessed. Ben Okri represents a true Nigerian Community revealing actual oppression, violence and social chaos. Contemporary Literature of Nigeria, including that of Okri, pinpoints Nigerian problems mainly economic instability, corruption of the political figures (mimic men of the colonizer), insecurity and insanity that has taken over the entire Nigeria. African Messiahs, those who fought for spiritual ascendance and political liberation, Okri observes, have plunged the Natives into “a new cycle of pathos”.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary text chosen to conduct this research is Ben Okri's short-story collection *Incidents at the Shrine*. The secondary texts for this research are *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson and *Nations and Nationalism* by Ernest Gellner. This research employs a qualitative methodology to analyze four short-stories in Ben Okri's *Incidents at the Shrine* titled “Laughter beneath the Bridge”, “Disparities”, “and Converging City” and “Incidents at the Shrine” in light of Benedict Anderson's concept of Nation as an Imagined community. This research argues that the very idea of a coherent nation is a myth and the reasons for social chaos and political upheavals in Modern Nigeria are due to Nigerian State apparatuses that tend to erase and approbate Nigerian natives according to their monolithic belief systems. Okri argues that unity of such a nation is hard to achieve. This research, based on hermeneutic interpretations, argues that modern Nigeria is Nationally Schizophrenic and has not yet recovered from the trauma of the past. This research uses eighth edition of MLA.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

It is argued, by Post-Colonial theorists that West and its Literature invaded the sensibility of the African during their colonial rule in a way that they found their propositions utterly convincing. This attempted invasion of the colonizer then met resistance and Ben Okri emerged as a writer in Contemporary Nigerian Literature who not only resisted these invasions but addressed the problems of Africa that was to be made the new center. He observed that a new center and peripheries were formed in Post- Independent Nigeria after the colonizers went. A hierarchical structure was established that placed political elite minority at the center and the common underprivileged Nigerian man at the periphery.

Okri questions what ruptured the unity of these men trying to rid their territories of colonization? Perhaps the fascination and influence of the colonizers on the psyches of National leaders who were products of Colonialism in the region. Why did this Nation divided into ‘haves and have nots? Why did they Opted colonialist method of discrimination, domination and oppression? This research with reference to Ben Okri's short-story collection *Incidents at the Shrine* deconstructs the term nationalism and argues that National solidarity, loyalty and cohesion is nothing but a false pretense. There exists a communication barrier between the underprivileged strata and the elite minority in Modern Nigeria. Okri's characters have no access to meaningfulness and rootedness for personal and social stability, they are wandering, uprooted populations. The inhospitable world they have been thrown into does not require their participation in shaping their social spheres. Before his characters could recover

from post-colonial trauma, high bourgeoisie and political leaders have led them to a state of 'National Schizophrenia' that this research aims to focus on.

A reading of Ben Okri's short-story collection *Incidents at the Shrine* through the lens of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* unleashes the fact that Nation-State with its Political Nationalist ideology acts as a 'protection agency' that apparently offers security and socio-political stability to Nigerian individuals but actually repeats historical injustices, exploitation and extortion in Post-Colonial Nigeria. A number of critics agree that the modern sense of the term 'Nation' itself denotes citizen rights and rule of law but these are political ideals that not only grip the imagination of Nigerian underprivileged stratum but haunt them up to an extent that they become aggressive, violent people overtaken by insanity.

Benedict Anderson states: "The nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (7). Okri envisages Modern Nigerian society as an industrial, materialistic society. A faithful servant of the church, Agodi, the protagonist of the short story "Converging City" is ideologically, physically and psychologically subdued by hierarchical structures of Nigerian State institutions and organizations. Including Institutionalized religion that he relies on the most, he is exploited by custom officials and threatened by Burglars. Okri depicts how the Nation-state organizations distances and detaches itself from the individual who would scarify his life for their maintenance. This so-called comradeship is not horizontal, it actually follows Marx's vertical pattern of super-structure and base hierarchy.

Okri's characters either succumb to exploitation like Agodi or out of despair migrate and distance themselves, like the Taxi Driver in Okri's "Disparities", after realizing Nation and National aspirations as false myths: "Civilizations are based on an uneasy yoking of lies: and that is precisely when the sight of flowers and pubs and massive white houses and people depress me most" (Okri 37). Okri argues that these economic dispossessed when left all alone and excluded by the ones who had seduced them, suffer loneliness and experience feelings of frustration and disgust.

Konstantin Sietzy in his article, "A critique of Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities" states: "In conflicted nations, open nationalism is an important tool of promoting social cohesion for elites" (3). Okri's fiction highlights that it is difficult for the individual to understand Nation as an idea constructed to serve elite minority. Okri in his first short-story of the collection, "Laughter beneath the Bridge" writes "We all hoped someone would turn up to collect us" (1). Using powerful imagery of Vultures and the depiction of the scattered city with its maniacs, Okri represents Nigeria in an agonizing and excruciating pain, he opines that the Nigerian territory is being plundered and looted by the ones who had to ameliorate and alleviate these pains. Likewise, in his short story titled "Incident at the Shrine" Okri writes of quack Nigerian chemists bandaging the Native's wound. The scars and wounds left by colonization have been bandaged

by the Nationalists with an ideology that apparently recognizes mutual rights and duties of the members of the imagined community towards each other.

The ten-year-old, child narrator, in "Laughter beneath the Bridge", influenced by the soldiers breaking orders, has learnt that the only way to survive is to steal, break in and raid the nation that has been stranded by its so-called Messiahs. Individuals that inhabit his world at times appear immune and desensitized to the insanity and social chaos going on in Nigeria and at times shook by the stranded situation of the nation, they suffer emotional outbursts. Okri writes of horrendous situations, he says, "women weeping, children bawling, soldiers everywhere in battle dress and camouflage helmets, their guns stiff and strange" (4). The characters in this short story set during the civil War, are estranged not only from the Belligerent soldiers but from their own selves as well. Ernest Gellner states: "The state exists where specialized order-enforcing agencies, such as police forces and courts, have separated out from the rest of social life. They are the state" (4) The fear instilled in the psyches of the natives by the soldiers makes them stiff. Okri represents the Native Nigerians' fascination of dancing masquerades and the soldier's obsession with fighter planes to show that the psychological worlds that the soldiers and the common citizens inhabit stand in stark contrast to each other.

Ernest Gellner in the chapter "State and Nation" opines that Max Weber's definition of the state is that of an "agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence. Violence may be applied only by the central political authority, and those to whom it delegates this right" (3). Custom officials and institutions in Okri's "Converging city" are no less than Burglars who live on the money of men like Agodi suffering from economic trauma: "we are coming to rub you tonight. If you like call the police. Anytime is good for us" (Okri 29) Furthermore, Okri critiques the agents of the Nation-state apparatuses, policemen and the soldiers for whom violence has been legalized to exert control over the masses "the soldiers and mobile policemen thrashed out in every direction. They kicked the metalwork of cars, pounced on lorry drivers, and beat up people who seemed to be obstructing the traffic in any visible or invisible way" (Okri 30).

Both Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson consider Nationalism and its ideology to be a product of the Industrial and Post-Agrarian age. Gellner contends that "there is, once again, no option; but now the presence, not the absence of the state is inescapable" (5). On one hand the very idea of individuals without a nation strains modern imagination and on the other 'nation-state and nationalism has failed to ameliorate the socio-economic situations. Okri's protagonists in four of his short-stories exist as Frantz Fanon's 'Wretched of the Earth' in Modern Nigeria that appears to be entangled or tied together artificially. "Disparities" points towards the fact that natives cradled by the elite minority have a righteous image of Oppressors in their minds.

It cannot be overlooked that; the gaze and queer ways of the colonizers have been opted by mimic men. Instead of liberating the individual, they have actually enslaved him. Okri writes "those who had joined the army and promised good things and turned in the heat of battle and fired at their own men"

(10). Hence, the coherence and homogeneity of a nation is a façade. The truth is that Tribalism, regionalism and various ethno linguistic differences have resulted in Civil war during which the saviors have become exploiters. Okri suggests that after a long history of Colonialism and Slavery, Nigerian territory that had to decolonize its psyche, still grapples with various problems created by the political agencies of regionalism and tribalism. Okri deduces that these cities never 'converge', they curse the traffic jam that brings them together. Describing the politician's frustration of being surrounded by men of the lower strata, Okri says: "When he stared at the congestion all around him, he experienced a sudden panic" (31.) This makes clear that Inequality and Stratification exists in a world where everything has turned into an industry.

Ernest Gellner argues that the Nationalist ideology of the ruling class becomes the ideology of the masses. Their ideology is: "Nations maketh man; nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities" (Gellner 7). Quite similar to this ideology "Nations maketh man" is displayed a legend on the wall in the Short story "Laughter beneath the Bridge" that reads "Young shall grow" and propagates hope in Okri's world filled with anguish, destitution and filth and despair of the people of Nigeria. Okri's short story points towards the fact that this dream to evolve and to grow is hollow from within. The ideological Nigerian state apparatuses aim to cripple and enslave the young of the so-called nation, physically as well as psychologically. The young shall not grow until or unless this forest "riotous with insects" is cleared up (Okri 5). Likewise, in "Converging City" Okri represents the political leader as 'National Parasitic' who after enticing the people and plundering their resources abandons the country and the nationalist discourse. Here Okri's reader observes the myth of nationalism collapsing: "He had to think of his own embezzlements as well as the entangled safety of his embezzlements" (Okri 31).

Another problem is that "nationalism imposes homogeneity; it is rather that a homogeneity imposed by objective, inescapable imperative eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism" (39). Nations are represented as natural political destinies that had long been delayed whereas they reject polytheistic thoughts and obliterate cultures and traditions. Benedict Anderson is of the view that Agrarian society accepted polytheism and the modern "homogenous industrial community" of today has deprived Nigerian people of their language, culture and humanity too. Nationalist leaders exposed to industrial community and education of the West have ended up being treacherous and corrupt, they replicated the colonial structures of exploitation leaving the multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic people of Nigeria unemployed, starved and alienated as portrayed by Ben Okri in his short stories. Okri's alienated characters are least tempted by these political ideals of solidarity and coherence.

This section discusses Okri's portrayal of National Schizophrenic masses who are driven mad by the socio-political conditions. In the short Story "Laughter beneath the Bridge" Okri writes: "Hysteria blew along the streets, breathed over the buildings and huts" (10) The inhuman noises of people being murdered brutally and women raped violently, wailing not heard by the Nationalist Messiahs drives Okri's characters mad. Nigerian land is fraught with dead

bodies and reasons for their brutal murders are unknown. Furthermore, Agodi's economic trauma is seen as a form of National Schizophrenia in the "Converging City". The protagonist of *Incidents at the Shrine* suffers from an identity crisis and is haunted by the alien influence insinuated in his body. Nationalist dreams, haunt the migrant Taxi Driver of "Disparities" who is abandoned and left in despair. He says, "Hungry, wet haunted by the faces of the anguished Nigerian, I shouted: 'There is a quarter of a million pounds floating in the river'. ... The Thames soon swarmed with a quarter of a million pirates, rogues and hassled people who had long since had enough" (Okri 50).

Okri Splits the mask and unleashes the 'unreal' imagined nation: "The stream was full of corpses that had swollen, huge massive bodies with enormous eyes and bloated cheeks" (18). The gas masks worn by the respectable stand in stark contrast to the Grotesque masks worn by the Egungun. Okri envisages Modern decolonized Nigerian Nation and its natives clashing, whipping, toppling, cursing each other and talking incoherently. The staggering, starving man of the city that never 'converges' needs to be dumped on a street as he exists as a scum of the earth.

Interestingly, the characters in these four short stories realize the 'truth' at the end of their stories. Agodi's blindness is actually his actualization of reality at the end of the story he says: "God and Money were inseparable" (36). Likewise, The Taxi Driver in Okri's "Disparities" realizes, "I was entertained with the shapes of dogshit" (40). Okri's characters realize that fairytales were bludgeoned into them. These fairytales are actually the ideologies that the Nation-state ingrains in them, the dreams of equality and homogeneity, of creating a state where all Nigerian natives are to be given equal opportunities to grow individually and collectively as a Nation. Ernest Gellner argues that this is how Nationalism and its Nationalist ideology works: "upending of myths and the tremendous reversals and creating of new myths to enable people to become complacent again" (42). Okri argues that the need of the hour is to reject the ideologies of the monoliths, the political hierarchy and exploitative authorities and to show resilience against these products of Colonialism.

In his short-story titled, "Incidents at the Shrine" Okri takes his reader into a magically real world that offers psychological and spiritual recovery. Every Archetypal experience takes Anderson torn apart in multiple selves "Jeremiah, nutcracker, Ofuegbu and Azzi" and suffering from existential angst and identity crisis, into inner recesses of the self. Okri proposes the idea that the land itself will provide him answers even before he questions, return to the origins is the solution to the problems of the Native Nigerians who have worshipped sophisticated and elegant Monoliths. Okri's saying: "The world is the shrine and the shrine is the world" comforts not only Anderson who retrieves his lost consciousness but provides solace to the migrant Taxi driver as well. Okri's metaphoric rubbing of herbal juices in the body of the Natives is what Okri suggests as remedy for Paranoia, trauma and Schizophrenia. Okri shuns the social, political and religious institutions who propagate and inculcate National and religious ideologies in the psyches and generate conflict between different ethnic groups that destabilize the country. Okri says: "At night we listen to all

languages and philosophies, of the world. You must come home now and again. This is where you derive power you understand?" (64).

CONCLUSION

Without taking cultural differences into consideration, British merged multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Nigeria. The men with different voices but similar ancestry was further exploited by the mimic men who followed their colonial masters. Benedict Anderson talks of 'unselfconscious coherence' of the Imagined communities and Ernest Gellner says that the ideal situation would be that the "social conditions make for standardized, homogeneous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading entire populations and not just elite minorities" (56). Nigerian Nationalism and nationalist ideology that had earlier been used to resist the administrative actions and hierarchical structures of the British colonization, in modern Nigeria has been modified by the elite minority, who entice and allure the economic dispossessed and the underprivileged stratum, to further their own ends.

Community development and communal cooperation are not prioritized in this artificially tied Community. The nationalists, so called Messiahs have their personal political and economic interests whereas the disillusioned and embittered natives strive to make both ends meet. Okri is one of those writers who consider art to be "a means for social correction". He argues that in order to transcend the trauma it has to be relived. A close inspection of Okri's *Incidents at the Shrine* reveals that through art Nigerian artist becomes a psychotherapist for his Nigerian Natives and makes them come to terms with the harsh realities of their existence. Okri in his loaded and layered narrative questions what happened to Nigeria when it was left on its own? It ended up being a ghastly and ghostly landscape of minimal survivals.

WORKS CITED

- Abdullah, Sarah. "Material Survival, Hierarchal Exploitation and Urban Space in Ben Okri's Converging City." *Language in India* Vol. 17, pp.1-11.
- Ajayi, J. F. Ade. "NINETEENTH CENTURY ORIGINS OF NIGERIAN NATIONALISM." *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1961, pp. 196–210. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/41970978.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Community Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, London, 2006.
- Deyan, Guo. "Trauma and History in Ben Okri's Fiction." vol. 8, no.6, 2012, pp.48-55.
DOI: 10.3968/j.ccc.1923670020120806.1127.
- Hobsbawn, E.J. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780 Programme, myth, reality*. ed.2, Cambridge University Press, London, 2013.
- Mushkat, Marion. "Some Characteristics of Colonialism and Its Product African Nationalism." *African Studies Review*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1971, pp. 219–241. JSTOR, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/523824.

- Okri, Ben *Incidents at the Shrine*. Random House, 2015.
- Saeed, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage Books, 1994, p.223.
- Saranya, K. "Mysticism and Magical Realism as Aesthetics of Necessity in Ben Okri's Writings." *All International Journal in English*. vol.2, no. 4, 2016. pp. 1-9.
- Sietzy, Konstantin. "A critique of Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities." pp. 1-9.
http://www.academia.edu/5390312/A_critique_of_Benedict_Andersons_Imagined_Communities