

Unmasking the Gothic in Africa's Postmodern Crises in Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon* (2014)

¹Julius Kipkorir A. Chepkwony, ²Stephen Muthoka Mutie, ³Jane Wanjiru Mugo,
⁴Nicholas Kamau Goro

1. Department of Literary Studies, Turkana University College, Lodwar, Kenya.
2. Department of Literature, Linguistics and Foreign Languages, Kenyatta University, Kenya.
3. Department of Literary and Communication Studies, Laikipia University, Kenya.
4. Department of Literary and Communication Studies, Laikipia University, Kenya.

Abstract

This study is premised on a critical analysis of Okorafor's *Lagoon* (2014) as a Gothic text that mirrors the Africa's postmodern crisis of the twenty first century. As a literary space, the Gothic-postmodern genre invokes phantasmagoria and uses it as a crux to navigate the interrogation of the socio-cultural life. This article explores the Gothic through excavating social issues as espoused in the selected literary text that was primarily chosen since it chronicles the present day Africa's hauntologies. The need to analyze postmodern challenges requires a theoretical lens that roots for the merging of Gothicism and postmodernism. Thus, the theoretical framework that allowed the chiseling out of Gothic elements manifesting the postmodernist crisis for analysis and interpretation was located in the emerging theory of Gothic-postmodernism as propounded by Maria Beville. The theoretical framework allowed the selected text to be explored as a terminus of Gothicism and postmodernism. The study engaged an interpretivist research design of Okorafor's *Lagoon* (2014) and any other relevant secondary data that aided in interpretation of the issue at hand. The paper argues that Africa's Gothic provides a means in which the continent can inspect itself through exposition of crises. The self-reflectiveness and adaptability of the genre allows it to expose crises inherent in postmodern society. This paper concludes that there is need to re-examine how Africa negotiates through the various crises pervading the continent. A robust engagement on imagining a new order in creating a hybrid socio-political and cultural order for Africa to regenerate an ideal society is necessary. This paper is instrumental in rooting for the establishment of Africa's literary Gothic-postmodern tradition. Conclusions drawn will make significant contribution to the dialectics surrounding Gothic genre in African literature.

Key words: Gothic, Hauntology, magicality, phantasmagoria, Postmodernism.

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I. Introduction: Gothic-postmodern Genre

Literary texts embody the socio-cultural and political situations that mirror a given society in a specific historical epoch. There are important changes that morph society elucidating historical transformations. One primary role of a writer is to excavate the experiences individuals undergo and the changes that transmute society. Literary texts are social constructs that depict one mode of viewing the society. They do not emerge from void but from the interplay of social forces in society. Mimetic reconstruction of the nature of society can be traced to the classical writers, Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle in his *Poetics* (1994) posits that art imitates reality and the nature of society through recreation of social issues as they are or ought to be making literature central in mimetic representation of nature. Literature, therefore, connects with the real world through artistic (re)presentation of social realities. In other words, works of literature derive relevance and meaning from the interplay of socio-cultural, historical and political sensibilities. Aristotle takes it further that a work of art imitates nature as it should be. This shows that a literary artist reflects the nature of society through artistic reconstruction as it is, as it were or as it ought to be making literature to become central in mimetic representation of nature.

Literature uses different modes to reconstruct these salient issues that depict the transitional process in society: one of which is transcending the reality into phantasmagoria or Gothicism. The Gothic genre employs the use of ascension to the fantastical and magical in order to make what is impossible to be possible. This study is cogent with Beville's (2009) definition of the new genre: Gothic-postmodernism is "a hybrid mode that emerges from the dialogic interaction of Gothic and postmodernist characteristics in a given text" (pp. 8-9).

Gothic thus, exists and inhabits postmodernist literature allowing the two genres to conflate in elucidating issues affecting society. Gothic-postmodernist literature is a hybrid genre that is aligned to a theory propagated by Maria Beville in her text *Gothic-postmodernism: Voicing the Terrors of Postmodern Fears* (2009). It challenges known literary forms by creating a newer consciousness in narrativizing the concerns of the twenty first century. It is a space for interlocution and "...the clearest mode of expression in literature for voicing the terrors (crisis) of postmodernity: a mode that is far from dead and in fact rejuvenated in the present context of increased global terrorism" (Beville, p. 8) that include conflicts and wars. Africa is grappling with many challenges that result in people suffering.

Gothic genre, initially, was berated and regarded with contempt and scorn as writing only "fascinated by objects and practices that are constructed as negative, irrational, immoral and fantastic" (Botting, 2005, p. 1) as it was concerned with outbursts of emotions and feelings. The Gothic tradition is traced to a Germanic tribe, Goth, then traversed Europe and defeated the Roman Empire around third to fifth centuries. The Gothic was thus associated with "barbarous or uncivilized" (Botting, p. 3) conduct and connoted savagery. With time, the term has undergone changes in its connotation and meaning in general. This resulted from the revival of classical and medieval ideas and values during the Enlightenment era. The Gothic revival marked its recognition as a genre with the first Gothic fiction written by Horace Walpole; *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Text* (1764) forming the basic foundational aesthetics and elements of Gothic literary tradition. Gothic texts began to be embraced, accepted and recognized as part of mainstream literature. Gothic has become an active genre that rebounds with fear, horror and skepticism about subjectivity, identity and truth, which are core aspects to postmodernism. This shows how Gothic-postmodernism is adaptive to the social and political changes in the environment.

Gothic aesthetics have evolved with time to allow the literary structures and conventions to become distinctly identifiable. This included Gothic traditional tropes; "graveyard, the castle, spectres, monsters, corpses, monks and nuns" (Botting, 2005, p.56). These became central to formulating Eurogenic Gothic traditions which have seen its literary evolution through different Gothic genres which include: Victorian Gothic, female Gothic, postmodern Gothic and postcolonial Gothic among others. The evolution of the Gothic genre is inspired by the postmodern imagination to relate fantasy with reality and fiction, redefine how characters relate with reality and re-define the insensitive world that confronts alienation and death on a daily basis.

The versatility of the Gothic genre is observed when it mingles with postmodernism to come up with an in-between genre that mixes elements and mechanics that define its uniqueness. Texts that allow the marriage of Gothicism and postmodernism is what Beville (2009) refers to as Gothic-postmodern fiction. Merging with postmodernism, the Gothic genre's adaptability allows it to mingle with other genres. It serves to embody the concerns inherent in the postmodern society and mirrors prevalent society's contradictions and sensibilities. In the case of Okorafor's *Lagoon*, Gothic elements and mechanics intertwine in a way that helps to re-define the dark-light nexus, human-non-human, fantastical-reality, order-disorder domains characteristic of postmodern society. This paper seeks to explore Gothic-postmodern text as a textuality that amplifies present day society's fears and contradictions. The paper employed Gothic-postmodernist theoretical framework as postulated by Maria Beville. This allowed the paper relevant trajectory in the literary excursion of Okorafor's text, *Lagoon* as a Gothic text inhabiting postmodern space.

This paper contends that the world is drowned by myriad challenges that have made postmodern humanity question not only the doctrines but the social institutions and systems that govern relationships and human conduct. This has resulted in the postmodern characters seeking solace in self as they fortify their niche with self-gratification and self-aggrandizement. There are many crises that the world is facing in the twenty first century. Key ones include the collapse and shrinking of economies (which has made people to lose jobs), human rights abuses, terrorism, balkanization, fluidity and instability of ideals of democracy, soaring crime rates, ethnicity and racialism, gender insensitivity, sexism, moral decadence and of course the Covid-2019 pandemic that has ravished the world leaving many people dead. Most postmodernist theoreticians including Lyotard (1994), Baudrillard (1994), Derrida (2004) and Foucault (1980) hold on to the belief that a postmodern world is redeemable from the morass, crises and the postmodern decadence of the twenty first century. The changeability of human conduct is fueled by self-conceit, delusion, negation and unbridled greed that attest to the complexity of conformity to societal ethos.

II. Unmasking the Gothic in Africa's Postmodern Crises

Nnedi Okorafor who is from Nigeria, is an immigrant to America. She has suffered double marginalization; firstly, as an African and secondly as a woman. Her text is based on her African homeland where issues of culture, political conflicts and patriarchy have shaped her writing as they are harbingers of present crises in Africa. The text tells the story of aliens who land in Lagos from outer space. As they make contact with the land, loud noise reverberates and ripples through-out the country and the ocean causing water to

rise. Chaos and confusion ensues. One alien who lands at the sea shore first takes the three main characters, Adaora, Agu and Anthony into the water before allowing them to resurface. The extra-terrestrial, Ayodele, takes over all the communication gadgets and she informs the people of Nigeria that she has come in peace and brings with her a great future full of hope and grandeur. She possesses Gothic powers of changing her physical form. Her shape-shifting to dead humans, a lizard and at the end when killed, smoke is illustrative of this power. Nigeria's president is brought into the country sick, half-dead; half alive from a hospital in Saudi Arabia. Ayodele uses her mystical powers to restore his health. She then takes the president to meet with the Elders from the extra-terrestrial world under the sea. And when the president comes out, he is strong, resilient, determined and ready to lead his country with a conviction to fecundate Africa with optimism. The soldiers kill her physically and she turns into smoke allowing all Lagosians to inhale her and thereby, become half aliens, half humans.

Okorafor's deftness and subtle writing skill is witnessed in the way she weaves an undulating plot that is not only gripping but also spell-binding. Her style of narration of events reveals a talented writer keen on blending and amalgamating the physical and the fantastical realm. The distinctive quality of her artistry allows her to transcend physicality by locating her selected Gothic literary text within postmodernism. The intertwining of the two dissimilar modes allow Okorafor to not only to foreground the twenty first century postmodern concerns but to accentuate through artistic expression, the nature of life manifested.

The writer feminizes the negotiation of postmodern crisis through Gothic heroines elucidating their centrality in resolving postmodern issues. She incorporates Adaora, the lead female intellectual marine biologist and Ayodele, an alien, to weave the plot of the narrative. It is significant to note that Okorafor's *Lagoon* recreates through mimetic representation, the twenty first century society. The texts invoke phantasmagoria to reconstruct and depict a world that is contrastive to logical operations of a normalized world through magical transcendence. The Gothic genre:

... condenses the many perceived threats...associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption...(Botting, 2005, p. 1)

Okorafor offers Lagos as a divine ethereal locus. She deploys Gothic features and aesthetics to rekindle postmodern concerns affecting society. The text that depict Gothic elements and mechanics inhabiting postmodern artistic works is what Beville (2009) refers to as Gothic-postmodernist genre. What links Gothic and makes it exist in postmodernist literary works is fear, horror, terror and escalating anxiety. And as Gothic-postmodernist text, Okorafor's novel fuses and blends generic styles of Gothic genre and postmodernism "to materialize its own individual style of literature" (Beville, p. 125). Okorafor sets her narrative in Lagos "... the city where nothing works yet everything happens" (Okorafor, 2014, p. vi) depicting a postmodern dysfunctional system that becomes a focal point for both destruction and rejuvenation. It personifies a twisted universe where everything and nothing happens elevating it to a site where extra-terrestrials land.

Lagoon (2014) is a postmodern context that amplifies the disproportionate crises that afflict Africa. She elevates the lead female protagonists to become Gothic characters in an environment that is asphyxiated by postmodern crisis of varying proportions. *Lagoon* positions itself as a Gothic text that amplifies contemporary issues. The main characters, Adaora and Ayodele are Gothic female characters who exemplify resilience and enigma in the face of postmodern cultural alienation, misogyny anxiety and identity crisis. They are brought out as Gothic heroines who carve for themselves a niche flooded with determination and stoicism to emancipate humankind from socio-political and cultural entrapment. In their rise to celebrate the goodness that pervades humanity, they discard personal ambition and offer new hope to Africa.

Okorafor's *Lagoon's* engagement with Gothicism is evident when Okorafor creates an extra-terrestrial, Ayodele, who is initially described as smoke by the mute orphan while Fisayo, a postmodern anti-heroine, paints a picture of the creature being both smoke and the devil. This illustrates how the extra-terrestrial is regarded by humanity; with awe, condescension, wonder and unbelievability. At the individual level, Fisayo acknowledges her personal social crisis. She realizes that she has been a sinner. "Deep down she knew she was a sinner and there was nothing that would wipe that away" (Okorafor, 2014, p. 10). Ayodele's arrival opens Fisayo's mind to her evil postmodern existence as "one of the biggest sinners on earth" (Okorafor, p. 10). Her crisis stems from not accepting and reconciling with herself and her conduct. This makes her not only tremble but to harbor fragmented identity since she cannot reconcile with her postmodern sinned self as much as she tries to. She begins to hate herself and feels that her world is crumbling and tumbling down. She consequently, becomes "the loudest prophet of doom in Lagos" (Okorafor, p. 10). She even surrenders herself to be taken by the sea waters, but in vain. The extra-terrestrials landing in Lagos degenerate her mind to an extent that she identifies the vampiric Satan in the form of an alienated mute and dumb orphan sitting by himself. Her killing him demonstrates her crossing the boundary of sanity to insanity.

Fisayo is a distinct exemplification of Gothic's outflow of sentimentalism of anger and bitterness. Her perverse action of harlotry embodies the dark manifestation of her postmodern character which elucidates moral degradation and turns out her angst on herself. Her hopelessness is captured through her attitude to the city of

Lagos which to her is hopeless, void damned and irredeemable. And like the city of sin, she has emptied herself of human essence to an extent that her sadistic relish catapults her to become a murderess. Her postmodern transformation from a human with essence to an inhuman, unfeeling and epicurean being is not terrifying to her as she accepts and embraces wholly her new demented form. Her feeling of hopelessness is mainly because "she hadn't felt like herself" (Okorafor, p. 103). She feels she is not and will never regenerate into a newer being since her sins tie her to her past. She allows her feelings to be detached from her inner self as she remains unfeeling, fastidious, and indifferent. Her loss of self results from her past actions becoming her hauntology. This fragments her identity to an extent that she does not realize who she is.

Her self-loathe stems from feelings of worthlessness, vanity and self-debasement emanating from her degenerated morals of "selling my (her) body" (Okorafor, p. 104) which deteriorates both her mental and psychological states. As a postmodern villain her moral degeneration becomes her hauntology as it creates fear and horror of herself and her body. She gains intense fear of herself to an extent that she begins to hallucinate about apocalypse. To her the world is "...on the brink of rotting, of apocalypse" (Okorafor, p. 115). This fuels her primal rage and demented fury making her attempt to cleanse the city of sin. Her act of cleansing is demonstrated in her random killings which confines her to a liminal space of being and not being, presence and absence, hovering between the spectre of her old grotesque self and the reality of her psychopathic being. This makes her spiral out of the normative and transgress into the world of no return. She, therefore, ends in death as she is beckoned by Ayodele and is mystified into deadness being forced to go under the water. This completes her annihilation signifying "complete alienation of individuals in a finite world" (Botting, 2005, p. 52). Crossing the boundary of presence to permanence of absence, Fisayo joins the mute and dumb boy she has killed in spacelessness. She, therefore, exemplifies degenerative forces that become the twenty first century hauntologies: She first remains at the edge in between mortality and immortality, humanity and savagery enacting a type of death that is self-inflicted. Belonging to the realm of the living dead, Fisayo illuminates the Gothic motif of moral degeneration.

Fisayo, a postmodern villain, is a parody of social emptiness and vacuity. She harbors a personal postmodern crisis that allows her to become a shadowy figure whose personal sins degenerate her mind into psychopathic. Her view of the world and existence as morally rupturing makes her stand aloof and fragmented from other people and the society. As observed earlier, Fisayo considers herself a moral decadent with no voice for herself. She has no face to gaze at as she feels vile, filthy and morally debased. As a prostitute she feels the evil spirit lurking inside her essence and that the city in her own words, has swallowed her up. Her materialistic nature propels her to pursue immoral experiences of pleasure in Bar Beach, Lagos. This debases her as a sexual pervert and unmasks her ravenous appetite for material wealth.

Her hyperbolized view of Lagos as saturated with evil makes her surrender her flesh to the evil forces which have landed. It shows how she has gained no fulfillment and satisfaction in her emptiness and only revels in vanity and worthlessness. This too, helps to drain any humanity from her and she remains empty and hollow without human essence, spirit or soul. Surrendering her soul to the will of death allows her to become irrational, illogical and demented. Having alienated herself, she feels that her end was near. She imagines herself cascading a world of nothingness atoning for her sins as an insignia of retribution. Her chastisement of her amoral behavior forces her to drool for death. Her essence which has been delineated from her being haunts her to an extent that she is horrified and haunted by her sinned self. As she renounces her individuality she picks a gun to cleanse the postmodern world of presumable sins. Since she is dead while alive, she represents the Gothic living-dead. She possesses "grotesque fractured image...characterized as evil" (Beville, 2009, p. 66). She personifies the horrifying image of postmodern villain who is intent in killing and terrorizing others. Her focus on death points to an ironic inversion of the postmodernist's deconstruction of absolutist conceptualization of life. To her, death means immortality since her apocalypse is a newer beginning heralding new epochs and infinite possibilities of regeneration from the seeds of death which parallels the Messiah redeemer figure in the Bible.

It is noted that when she pulls the trigger, it is the mute and dumb orphan boy she refers to as Satan whom she first harvests as a fruit of her frenzied mind. In her animated and demented state: "Lagos is hopeless" (Okorafor, p. 155) and so is herself and her life; summing up the hopelessness of postmodern life. With self-repressed horror of herself, she ends up causing death and terrorizing others. This elicits an assertion that she is hitting back at the postmodern society that created her. Her being a secretary during the day and a prostitute at night personifies a facade of the postmodern human behaviour cementing the notion of hyperreal characters and erasing the illusion of totalizing morality which bullies people towards a given trajectory. According to her, innocence and sinning are facets of the same coin. Unrestrained ambition mutates characters into psychopathic beings where they regard death and life as one entity. In her killings, Fisayo gains personal absolution which allows her to dwell in limbo. This becomes a possibility when Ayodele, the alien takes her to the realm of nothingness: "Fisayo heard nothing, saw nothing and said nothing. She would never feel anything again" (Okorafor, p. 156). She undergoes a re-birth in another realm through a mass of water which Ayodele acknowledges to have taken her to eternity: "That's all she wanted" (Okorafor, p. 156). She spirals out of her

bestly nature to a Gothic realm of undeadness, consequently, epitomizing Gothic-postmodernist's aspect of "terror in the loss of reality and self" (Beville, 2009, p. 118) making characters undergo loss of sanity and essence through being deranged.

While Adaora, is half human, half spirit; Ayodele's existence is doubled to cross the boundary of temporal-spatiality; from an infinite outer space and a distant future to the present moment. Her existence is attributed to her creation in the spatial-temporality that is outside the confines of time. Her landing is promulgated through the earth's tremor and the deafening sound that blasts the otherwise convoluted environment populated by a sea of humanity. By allowing Ayodele to land in the postmodern city of Lagos, Okorafor manages to subtly expose the avaricious nature of human beings as they compete to exploit natural resources for personal aggrandizement. Lagos unifies aliens and humans, the future and the present and likewise animals and humans. Ayodele's "your land is full of fuel that is tearing you apart" (Okorafor, 2014, p. 91) is illustrative of how human voracity coupled with competition for maximum profit margins by multi-national oil companies have exploited the continent. Lagos, becomes a Gothicized city which provides a suitable milieu for intermingling and making a statement about a postmodern society. Being part of the present, Ayodele shows her magnanimity through her actions and words. She allows herself to manifest in a human body which parodies Christ's earthly existence. Ayodele intertwines the spiritual and bodily form of human beings. She turns out to be a man, a woman and even a thing at the same time since she is unfathomable. She defies description in language that can be understood. The mute and dumb boy first regards it as formless smoke that morphs to a woman: "It had become a naked dark-skinned African woman with long black braids..." (Okorafor, p. 9). Her Gothic ability allows her to cross the physical boundaries and parody known dead people is a testimony to her enigmatic personality. Yet, it is in her confession: "We do not seek your oil or your other resources...we are here to nurture your world" (Okorafor, p. 104). She is described as a creature with infinite possibilities of "making the world embrace and love everyone" (p. 59). A creature whose potentialities reverberate across the land.

The Gothicized extra-terrestrial becomes a Gothic logo-centrism or what Derrida (1978) calls "metaphysics of presence" (p. 281). She epitomizes a self-preserving identity whose universal locus is enigmatic, unfathomable, self-changing and adaptable. Because of her ability to cross the porous boundary of fantastical through her shape-shifting ability, characters in the novel define her as "a strange woman creature" (Okorafor, 2014, p. 9) whose stature is mythologized as that of Mami Wata: a water goddess. This comes about when the creature dives into the sea taking with her Adaora, Agu and Anthony. They also crossed the boundary as they were taken to the Gothic milieu under the sea where they were made "to answer a thousand questions... questions that made them laugh, cry and think..." (Okorafor, p. 14).

Tagged as a fish-woman, Ayodele lacks physical identity with which she can be identified. Changing her form from a terrestrial to a sea creature, then a human being makes her amorphous and ever-present in most events. A fantastical form without a concrete identity who becomes smoke upon her death is a testimony of her Gothic nature. Adaora, a postmodern character is unsure of the new creature despite taking her to her new laboratory. Being a marine biologist she wants to be sure of the creature. "Every time she looked at her, there was a disorienting moment she was not sure what she was seeing" (Okorafor, p. 16).

While occupying a liminal persona, Ayodele's enigmatic character is majorly seen in two folds: that of an alien imbued with Gothic aspects and that of human being. In order to understand and appreciate humanity, the alien becomes one of them and formulates a social construction of the world that supersedes apocalyptic visions characteristic of Gothic-postmodern works. She parodies Jesus Christ who had to be born as a human being in order to save mankind. Ayodele's existence is also tied to her becoming human in a postmodern social set up. Her confession that she comes in peace to free the earth of socio-cultural and political morass is striking. Being a representative of extra-terrestrial beings and having come from the future, Ayodele mediates between the two worlds; human and non-human, physical and spiritual. The dissolution of the two worlds and merging into a hybrid one comes through the disintegration and formulation personified by the loud explosive sound that temporarily shatters the rudimentary routine and peace in Lagos city.

Her indefinite physical form manifests her "paradoxical condition of liminality" (Beville 2009, p. 79) as she hovers between formless existence and physical form. The postmodern crises of greed, misogyny, hatred and intolerance forces her to remain a Gothic character whose description is not concretized in language terms. Ayodele represents a duality that is both contrastive and unique. She merges the normal and the abnormal; familiar and strange thereby becoming humanity's doppelganger. Being an extra-terrestrial in the first place elicits human's hidden or repressed fears, desires and gluttony. Her shape-shifting character conjures figments of riches. Moziz and his university friends, Tolu, Jacobs and Kola regard her as "the goddam, money-making alien" (Okorafor, 2014, p. 79). Their intention to kidnap her for a ransom echoes the twenty first century postmodern society ruled by unbridled desires and rich-quick ambitions. She, hence, is representative of a double; she has come for peace and harmony but she gains chaos and death. When Moziz and his friends attempt to kidnap her, she "... melted! Imploded. Disintegrated? ...Evaporated into something small on the floor. A green ... Lizard" (Okorafor, p. 84). As a Gothic character, she is doubled in a liminal space. Her duality

discombobulates her kidnapers to an extent that they call off their selfish mission "Moziz' mind was blank, his world shrinking down to focus on the impossible thing before him, the lizard-that-was-once-a-woman" (Okorafor, p. 94).

The transmutation from human to animal and back to human depicts the stark porosity of the boundary between the two realms: physical and numinous. The Christians too, led by Father Oke in their judgement regard her as "an abomination ... with a heathen face" (Okorafor, p. 85) and equates her to a devil. This mixing of two beings attempt to contradict and conquer each other and is the duality that Ayodele harbors. In her changeable corporeality, Ayodele doubles as a site of merging non-human and human characteristics depicting social postmodern conditions; deceit, self-conceit, intolerance that are repressed by human. Her doubleness is a Gothic manifestation of the twenty first century terror that elucidates fear of oneself, deep repressed desires and anxieties. While Fisayo stands out as an emblem; a trope of postmodern guilt, despair and fragmentation in society Ayodele symbolizes tranquility, promises of the future and a balanced complementary cosmic forces.

Epitomizing change, Ayodele is concerned about the political happenings in Nigeria. She takes Nigeria's president to meet with 'Elders' from the extra-terrestrial world in a bid to resolve political conflicts in his country. The Gothic rendezvous is set under the water. This makes the president undergo Gothicized transcendence in order to make it to the meeting. His Gothicized personality allows him to move freely in water to the rendezvous where: "he was suspended in what looks like a giant bubble of air" (Okorafor 2014, p. 202). On meeting the elders suspended in Gothic bubbles deep under the sea, the president resurrects with a baptism of Gothic sea water that rejuvenates his ideological and political transmutation. He undergoes a Gothic baptism that allows him to institute new changes: resuscitating the country's ideals, democracy and justice for all. The nature of human will and the mental aptitude presented through his speech which is televised to the nation soon after, depicts a new person intent on achieving the best for his country. It re-energizes his efforts to consciously galvanize greatness and grandeur and plenitude.

Ayodele, erases the physical form of Fisayo who is only fixated with glancing backwards at her past life which has consumed her being. Her erasure is made possible to allow integration of mores and ethos that generate formation of new realities and identities that belong to the future. As an ambassador of change, she disallows "irruption of fantasies, suppressed wishes and emotional and sexual conflicts" (Botting, 2005, p. 7) which are regarded as "a disruptive return of archaic desires and fears, the uncanny disturbs the familiar, homely and secure sense of the reality and normality" (Botting, p. 7).

Ayodele's divine death is regarded as sacrifice. In order to allow the country to regenerate and undergo revival, she undergoes "symbolic death" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 17) which makes her to decay and thereafter, resurrect since she is immortal. She becomes smoke and like the last sacrament of Jesus Christ, allows all Lagosians to inhale her thereby drawing into their bodies 'Ayodeleism.' They henceforth, become doubles, human and aliens. They gain hybridity status which makes them shed their old form. Ayodele in the text, consciously "strives for powers of immortality and self-determination" (Beville, 2009, p. 89) in her disintegration to smoke that is nowhere and everywhere at the same time. Ayodele's death comes as a result of postmodern villains whose fear of her overrides their reasoning. Allowing herself to be deadened is a demonstration of surrendering one of her doubles, her human form. Her confession to Adaora to allow her to leave and exit the postmodern world: "Let go of me" (Okorafor, 2014, p. 216) as she dies echoes Christ's "It is finished" words just before His death. It shows the crossing of boundary from physicality to divine and for Ayodele to numinous realm. .Adaora expiation has a Biblical connotation. She forgives the killers since they do not know what they are doing. This elevates Ayodele to a martyr, a sacrificial lamb who will fecundate the country. On the other hand, Ayodele decides to elevate herself through her ascendancy to a Gothic spiritual being as she deserts the physical world in a formless smoke.

This paper establishes that Ayodele, catalyzes the socio-cultural and political changes through her self-sacrifice as she turns to a wind of smoke upon her ascension from deadness to immortality. Her alienism saturates the city and allows all Lagosians to inhale; morphing them to new beings, half aliens – half humans. Her martyrdom becomes a stark reminder of the sacrifice Christ made on the Cross for mankind to live. Christ, while celebrating the Last Supper with His disciples, broke and blessed bread and wine and gave it to His disciples to eat and drink, symbolizing His body and blood which He was about to give to atone for the sins of humankind and His elevation to divine glory. In a sense, Ayodele's self-sacrifice is analogous with Jesus Christ's Last Supper and a promise of life, fulfillment and renaissance.

It is evident that Okorafor mimics the New Testament account of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to depict Gothic-postmodern aspect of Africa's resuscitation and a vibrant revivalism which is in line with Adaora's passion in recreating a new beginning. Ayodele's death is foregrounded towards the end of the novel as it is tied to change and newness. In dying, a new vibrant being shall sprout and flower into productive generative force. Ayodele's death as a sacrifice is symbolic as it helps to elevate the continent to resurrect with new ideals brought by the aliens.

Okorafor in *Lagoon* offers a narrative that creates and entrenches a sense of self-realignment for the national good of mankind. Ayodele holds the fate of human kind in her hands and the only viable option to effect change and harness her essence in humankind is through her ascendancy to her realm of extra-terrestrial. In the process of transiting the physical world, she dissipates “into a fog that they’d all inhale” (Okorafor, p. 223) and brings them shifts of changeability; erasing boundaries of the past and generating present and future Africa. The author redeems and fertilizes Africa’s growth and regeneration through the actions of Gothic-postmodern heroines who humanize socio-cultural and political sensibilities.

Okorafor cleverly brings the future to mingle with the present as the abhorrent past undergoes erasure. This is evident in *Lagoon* when Ayodele is brought from the future becoming a testimony of the future mingling with the present. Her remark “We come to bring you together and refuel your future” (Okorafor, p. 91) epitomizes change from the future. This is also affirmed by one of the focalized narrators, the Great spider, Udide Okwanka who asserts that her narrative mingles the “past, present and future” (Okorafor, p. 158). This is noticeable of Okorafor’s urgent need to invigorate Africa by giving it a new history that depicts a symbiotic relationship between the spirits, human beings and the inanimate. This allows a balance of cosmic forces within the African universe.

Okorafor’s *Lagoon* is set in Lagos Cosmopolis, artistically described as “...the city where nothing works yet everything happens” (Okorafor, p. iv). It is an archetypal postmodern city where aliens choose to land. As such, it amalgamates the water goddess (commonly referred to as Mami Wata), aliens, humanity, plants and animals in an interrelationship of beings populating Africa’s cosmological universe. The two main protagonists: Adaora and Ayodele are female Gothic-postmodern heroines whose mythical ability helps to illuminate Africa’s complexities and sensibilities within the current twenty first century dispensation.

As a setting, the city transcends single narrativization to become a doubled location that allows both human and animals to focalize the happenings. The Gothic destruction of the postmodern tarmac road when the Cosmopolis encounters the aliens is a means to destroy the old order and revitalize a new beginning. The tarmac road, epitomized by Lagos-Benin Expressway points to a future destiny that presently personifies deaths, rape, social conflicts and violence embodying bleakness, vacuity, emptiness and still births democratic ideals. Lance-Corporal Benson’s (a postmodern antihero) attempts to rape a drunk woman on the expressway makes this paper to concur with the attestation of Fisayo, another anti-heroine, about the city: “Lagos (is) eating itself” (Okorafor, p. 143) and indeed it elucidates Africa’s degenerative ethos that are witnessed through morass and social ills.

Lagos’ decadence is symbolized by Fisayo’s bodily space which is shown to be degenerate and beyond redemption. Fisayo represents an archetypal postmodern anti-hero who becomes captive of her past actions. She only seeks sanctuary in escaping the present. As a secretary during the day she degenerates to harlotry at night and makes visitations to Bar Beach to sell herself to the White tourists. And since she does not come to terms with her moral decay, her eventual destiny is mortality. She faces death through Ayodele who invites her to the depth of the sea. Likewise Africa needs to sprout from the ashes of historical injustices; slavery, colonial subjugation and imperialism to reclaim its future.

This situates Lagos as a semi-ethereal site where Ayodele fuses her alien form with human. She creates a mythological aura on herself when she morphs and resurrects as an immortalized character to make the past undergo erasure. This paper posits that her physical Gothic change to the past is Okorafor’s dexterous technique of humanizing historiography by allowing it to sprout within the present time. Ayodele’s generative potent image elevates her to a mystical figure who reaps time to fecundate Africa’s potential growth. This is well illustrated when she redefines and invigorates Africa’s politics through bequeathing Nigeria’s president with boisterous health, a regenerated mind and a resuscitated will power to lead his country to prosperity. His initial body was frail, weak and decaying; it personified hopelessness and deterioration to deadness.

Upon his health being restored and his life resurrected, he is given a new body reminiscent of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He acknowledges to his first wife, “She healed me, Zena” (Okorafor, p. 182). Indeed, he is presented by Okorafor as an image of death before life: “...so thin, so frail, so impotent in his white hospital gown. His skin was a blotchy mess. His eyes were rheumy and yellow ...” (Okorafor, p. 68). He is transported back from a Saudi Arabian hospital while unconscious and in a vegetative state. This paper concurs with Beville’s (2009) assertion that people inhabiting the postmodern world “have all been or are all ‘dead’ and are striving towards something new, some concept of birth.” (p. 121). When her ‘deathness’ is resurrected by the alien, he savors in glee and pride and is formulated with a stoic determination to institute political changes in the country.

III. Conclusion

Okorafor’s *Lagoon* attests to the postmodern undertones that mirror the society inhabited by salient unique issues. The continuum that mingles both Gothic writing and postmodern premise allows viewing of the world from a futuristic time frame. It reveals that the present world which belongs to posterity should be

bequeathed to them in a safe and secure manner. The spatial-temporality of Gothic-postmodern fiction allows the boundaries of events and time to overlap and fuse meliorating the reconstruction of societal transformations in a manner that brings hope and promise. The present and the future are brought to coalesce in the same way as the physical and the fantastical. When reality is suspended through the invocation of mysticism, time and space are dissolved to create room for advanced technology innovation as predicted in Okorafor's *Lagoon*. Events that happen outside the enclosure of the current moment are regarded as a liminal space of timelessness but build on possibilities in the present of the future Afro-time.

This paper contends that Okorafor's *Lagoon* through Adaora and the shift-changing female, Ayodele, have succeeded in depicting how female characters are agents of change in their own right. They amplify a new world order that is created out of selfless dedication, comradeship and high regard for each other which, according to Ayodele are absent among humanity. The female characters have also ignited polemics on the future of Africa in what is termed as Afro-future. What place does Africa hold as it scuttles into the future? Okorafor exposes the African continent as full of political and economic potentialities that are still untapped. As a mirror of Afro-future expectations, Okorafor consciously constructs the lead protagonists, Ayodele and Adaora as new crops of African leaders hacking the future to bring promises, greatness and grandeur of the African continent. Adaora's appointment as a scientific expert in the new hegemonic predisposition reflects on the new positive changes that heralds a new dawn. Gothic-postmodernism, consequently, becomes a mirror in which Africa inspects postmodern crises in order to find means of addressing them.

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