Collectors, Curators, Creators: West African Folklore, and Its Colonial Dislocation, Present Day Decolonisation and Contemporary Reclamation

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Nottingham Trent University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2025

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Acknowledgements

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisory team, Dr Amy Rushton, Dr Nicole Thiara and Prof. Andrew Thacker, for their expertise, guidance, unwavering support and for believing in my abilities when I could not believe in them myself. Thank you to the Arts and Humanities Research Council and Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership for funding this thesis, and to Prof. Philip Leonard and Prof. Nahem Yousaf for their guidance on this project when it was just an idea. Thank you to Dr Stephanie Palmer for her enthusiasm and thought-provoking questions during the mid-year review panels. Thank you to the Postcolonial and Global Studies Research Group at Nottingham Trent University for funding travel costs. Thank you to The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland for online access to Elphinstone Dayrell's manuscripts amid the COVID-19 lockdowns. Thank you to Scott Riley for his constant support, being a source of love and consistency, reading the entirety of this thesis, our debates concerning the use of the Oxford comma, and the pep-talks. Thank you to Kim Webster for being the best friend and ever-willing typo-finder a doctoral researcher could wish for. Thank you to Jackie Wynn for her unfaltering support, confidence in me, passing down her work ethic and teaching me resilience. Thank you to Claire White and Rachael Underwood for sharing my love of literature, recognising my potential, and inspiring me to re-enter fulltime education. Thank you to Molly Riley for gifting me *Love in Colour* without which this thesis would not have come full circle. Thank you to Karin Phillips, Alan Murray, and Tim Jones for being incredible teachers and making me believe that university was possible. Thank you to Rebecca Thurston for helping me realise just how far I have come, being the most understanding mentor and always cheering me on. And to Lorna, for teaching me patience, making me laugh, and not caring one single bit about academia and reminding me that sometimes I should not either.

Abstract

This thesis explores the curation, collection, dissemination, and reclamation of West African folktales, by focusing on Southern Nigerian folktales and the work of contemporary writers of Nigerian descent. Drawing on postcolonial folkloristics, the first chapter examines the methods and mindsets of Leonora and Andrew Lang who edited the Coloured Fairy Books (1889-1910), and coloniser folklorists, with a focus on Elphinstone Dayrell who edited *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* (1910) and *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* (1913). Chapter One argues that the acts of both curator and colonial collector dislocate the folktales included in their collections in more than one sense. The next chapter investigates the work of contemporary Igbo curators, Clifford N. Ugochukwu (*Folktales from Igboland* (2016)) and May Ikokwu (*Folktales from Igboland* (2021)), and their attempts to preserve the orality of the narratives whilst preparing them for the written form, arguing that whilst some dislocation is natural during this process, the efforts of the contemporary curators go a long way to remaining true to the stories' oral nature. Drawing on Indigenous, and postcolonial and queer studies, Chapter Three examines the reclamation of Igbo cosmology, via the ogbanje narrative, in Akwaeke Emezi's autobiographical novel, *Freshwater* (2018). Through exploring liminal spaces, embracing the old (Igbo cosmology) and rejecting the new (colonialism and Christianity), and the impact of this on the protagonist's mental health, Emezi reclaims the ogbanje narrative in a way that is both cultural and personal. The final chapter explores how West African folklore is reclaimed through the work of Lesley Nneka Arimah ('Who Will Greet You at Home' (2017)), May Ikokwu ('Lizard, Wall Gecko and the Leppers' (2021) and 'How the Tortoise was Taken Alive' (2021)), Nnedi Okorafor (*Who Fears Death* (2010) and *The Book of Phoenix* (2015)), and Bolu Babalola ('Attem' (2020)). With reference to postcolonial feminism, postcolonial folkloristics and African Womanism, this chapter demonstrates how these contemporary authors reclaim West African folklore by

invoking griotness, which allows the authors to rejuvenate traditional African storytelling, albeit in the written form. Ultimately, this thesis contributes to the decolonisation of folkloristics, and fairy and folk tale studies by treating these forms as integral to Anglophone literary history, particularly in making the connections between late nineteenth and early twentieth century folklore collection and contemporary literature explicit.

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Introduction

This thesis has a love of folklore at its core and every chapter is evidence of this. This is a thesis that explores various aspects of folklore but aims to do so from a postcolonial perspective, whilst shining a light on Southern Nigerian folklore, which has been somewhat neglected in a scholarly sense. I begin Chapter One by investigating the methods used by Leonora Blanche Lang (née Alleyne, 1851-1933) and Andrew Lang (1844-1912) when curating folktales for their twelve part series of fairy story books, known as the Coloured Fairy Books (1889-1910), and coloniser folklorist Elphinstone Dayrell (1869-1917) when collecting Southern Nigerian folklore for *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* (1910) and *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* (1913).[1] Subsequently, I examine how more recent publications of Igbo folktales, *Folktales from Igboland* (2016) by Clifford N. Ugochukwu and *Folktales from Igboland* (2021) by May Ikokwu, have actively attempted to preserve oral narrative tradition whilst simultaneously transforming traditional oral folktales into the written form.[2] Finally, I explore how writers of Nigerian descent have reclaimed Southern Nigerian folklore in their work through the inclusion of folkloric tropes, themes and traditions, and associated cosmologies.

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[1] A coloniser folklorist refers to a colonial administrator who collects and publishes the folklore of the countries in which they are stationed: see Sadhana Naithani, 'The Colonizer-Folklorist', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 34.1 (1997), 1-15 (p.1); Elphinstone Dayrell, ed., *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1910); Elphinstone Dayrell, ed., *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* (London: The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1913).

[2] May Ikokwu, ed., *Folktales from Igboland*, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021); Clifford N. Ugochukwu, ed., *Folktales from Igboland* (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016).

My use of the word folklore is in line with the Folklore Society's definition, which they use to describe the 'overarching concept that holds together a number of aspects of vernacular culture and cultural traditions and is also the name of the discipline which studies them'.[3] The Folklore Society's interest and expertise include 'traditional music, song, dance and drama, narrative, arts and crafts, customs and belief', as well as 'popular religion, traditional and regional food, folk medicine, children's folklore, traditional sayings, proverbs, rhymes and jingles'.[4] Folklore, to the Folklore Society, is thus an umbrella term, and I will be using the term in a similar manner to encompass and connect various forms of oral literature such as narratives, proverbs, songs and poetry, and their traditions with Igbo cosmology. My use of folklore is not meant to doubt or cast judgement on any belief systems but simply bring together those that share spoken origins. It is this working definition which crucially links Chapter Three, which concerns Akwaeke Emezi's *Freshwater* and its relationship to Igbo Cosmology, to the rest of the thesis, showcasing how folklore expands beyond typical oral literature and encompasses the native Nigerian belief systems. These cosmologies are very much part of and inextricably linked to oral literatures and share their spoken beginnings, making them very much a part of vernacular culture. Without the inclusion of Igbo cosmology, this thesis would be incomplete, much the same as Victorian and colonial folktale collections, edited by western curators and collectors such as the Langs and Dayrell, are without proper contextualisation and explanation of the tales' cultural origins.

In 1889, Andrew and Leonora Lang's first book of curated fairy and folktales from around the world was published by Longman, Green and Co. *The Blue Fairy Book* marked the start

[3] Folklore Society, *About* (2024) <https://folklore-society.com/about/> [accessed 2 December 2024] para. 1 of 9.

[4] Folklore Society, para. 2 of 9.

of a twelve part series of Coloured Fairy Books with *The Lilac Fairy Book* ending the series in 1910. In the same year, Andrew Lang wrote an introduction for unknown colonial administrator turned folktale collector, Elphinstone Dayrell's first collection, *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* also published by Longman, Green and Co. Subsequently, in 1913, Dayrell's second collection, *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* was published by the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. The Langs' curation and Dayrell's collection of tales are strongly connected to the penchant for collecting trinkets, such as souvenirs, in the Victorian and Edwardian periods.[5] According to Sara Hines, this kind of collection – or curation in the case of the Langs – results in dislocating the object or story from its origins, becoming part of a collection which takes precedence over the story itself as well as its origins.[6] This means that a story loses something just by being placed into a collection, suggesting that it is doubly dislocated when they have undergone censorship, triply when the story comes from a colonised country and collected and curated by the British middle class, especially colonial administrators and those with overtly racist attitudes, such as Andrew Lang.

In 2016, Dayrell, along with other coloniser folklorists, is then mentioned in Clifford N. Ugochukwu's collection of Igbo folktales that he had been told as a child, *Folktales from Igboland*. A collection of folktales by the same name was then published in 2021 by May Ikokwu, who also heard these stories as a child growing up in Southern Nigeria and put the collection together with the aim of preserving the Igbo storytelling tradition. J.O.J. Nwachukwu-Agbada provides an in-depth insight into the form, genre, and tradition of Igbo

[5] Sara Hines, 'Collecting the Empire: Andrew Lang's Fairy Books (1889-1910)', *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies*, 24.1 (2010), 39-56 (p.40).

[6] Hines, p.39.

oral narratives. Whilst they do not include every aspect mentioned by Nwachukwu-Agbada, Ugochukwu and Ikokwu have made commendable efforts to retain the orality of the stories in their collections, whilst Dayrell has not. Ugochukwu provides context in his introduction, as well as intertextuality, including songs and proverbs, whilst Ikokwu goes a step further by providing music scores and a CD, as well as songs and proverbs. The efforts made by Ugochukwu and Ikokwu expose Dayrell's lack of effort in retaining the traditions of the stories in his collection, with his focus being the readability for the British person reading them, whereas Ugochukwu has education in mind and Ikokwu's main aim is preservation of the storytelling tradition.

The contemporary writers of Nigerian descent are inspired by Nigerian folklore, using its tropes, traditions, and associated cosmologies to bypass colonial collection, and rewrite and create new versions for a contemporary audience. In *Freshwater* (2018), Akwaeke Emezi reclaims Igbo cosmology through the ogbanje narrative, whilst in *Who Fears Death* (2010) and *The Book of Phoenix* (2015), Nnedi Okorafor makes use of popular African folkloric traditions, themes, and tropes, combining them with real-life contemporary societal issues in order to bring folklore traditions into the future.[7] Meanwhile, Ikokwu's 'How the Tortoise was Taken Alive' and 'Lizard, Wall Gecko and Leppers' (from *Folktales from Igboland* (2021)), and Lesley Nneka Arimah's 'Who will Greet You at Home' (from *What It Means When a Man Falls from the Sky* (2017)) are new folktales – or myths as Arimah calls hers – inspired by those of the past but created for a contemporary audience for different purposes.[8]

[7] Akwaeke Emezi, *Freshwater* (London: Faber and Faber, 2018), Amazon Kindle e-book; Nnedi Okorafor, *Who Fears Death* (London: Penguin, 2010); Nnedi Okorafor, *Who Fears Death* (London: HarperColins, 2018), Amazon Kindle e-book; Nnedi Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2015).

[8] May Ikokwu, 'Lizard, Wall Gecko and Leppers' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn.

Whilst Ikokwu aims to preserve the storytelling tradition, Arimah aims to rejuvenate and modernise it in the written form. Lastly, Bolu Babalola's 'Attem' (from *Love in Colour* (2020)) is a reimagined version of 'Ituen and the King's Wife', a folktale which appears in Dayrell's *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria.*[9] Babalola updates and rewrites the tale in a way that reclaims women's autonomy and reappropriates the story for both Nigerian women and the Calabar peoples from whom Dayrell collected the story. The contemporary writers discussed here are thus reclaiming folklore in their own ways for differing reasons, but all do so because they hold a fascination for folklore and acknowledge its importance to Nigerian culture.

Some may question what the difference is between the contemporary writers' and Dayrell's actions. To me, the difference is in the way they have presented their work. Dayrell was collecting folktales from a culture to which he did not belong and appropriating them for a British audience, whilst the contemporary writers are taking parts of their culture and making them fit modern day experiences for themselves and others. The writers are upfront with the way they are playing with folklore, as they have inserted it into fictitious and semi-fictitious works, which automatically signal to the audience that there is some artistic licence taking place as they create worlds based on their own experiences of the world and folklore itself.

(Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.90-99; May Ikokwu., 'How the Tortoise Was taken Alive' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.242-247; Lesley Nneka Arimah, 'Who Will Greet You at Home' in *What It Means when a Man Falls from the Sky* (London: Headline, 2017), pp.63-78; Lesley Nneka Arimah, *What It Means when a Man Falls from the Sky* (London: Headline, 2017).

[9] Bolu Babalola, 'Attem' in *Love in Colour* (London: Headline, 2020), Amazon Kindle e-book, pp.66-87; Bolu Babalola, *Love in Colour* (London: Headline, 2020), Amazon Kindle e-book; Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife' in *Folktales from Southern Nigeria,* ed. by Elphinstone Dayrell (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2010), locs.679-714.

However, Dayrell is not entirely upfront about the work he has produced. Despite having briefly explained his methods in the 'Preface' to *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* – where he admits to omitting 'questionable matter' from the stories – we are not told exactly what these omissions are nor are we told their subject matters.[10] Alongside this, Dayrell did not write an introduction to his first collection, *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* leaving no clue as to his methods at all. Despite the censorship and lack of information, the stories that reside within Dayrell's collections are viewed as 'authentic'. Folktales collected by coloniser folklorists have been taken unquestionably and inserted into other, more recent collections, such as *African Myths and Tales* (2020), and Angela Carter's *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1990) and *The Second Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1992), later published as one volume under *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales* (2005). Carter viewed the tales in her collection as reliable representations of women in 'unofficial', oral culture, and takes this stance despite knowing the colonial circumstances in which they were collected, as evidenced by the notes section in each volume, which are meticulous.[11] The difference between the contemporary writers and Dayrell is thus transparency; Dayrell's collection feigns truth whilst there is no pretence surrounding the contemporary writers' work.

I had initially planned to write a chapter dedicated to Carter's curation of fairy tales.

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[10] Elphinstone Dayrell, 'Preface' in *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* ed. by Elphinstone Dayrell (London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1913), pp.i-viii (p.vi).

[11] See Nick Wells, Catherine Taylor, Josie Mitchell and Gillian Whitaker, eds., *African Myths and Tales: Epic Tales* (London: Flame Tree Publishing, 2020); Angela Carter, 'Introduction' in *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales,* ed. by Angela Carter (London: Virago), Amazon Kindle e-book, pp.14-30 (p.20); see Angela Carter, 'Notes on Parts 1-7' in *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales,* ed. by Angela Carter (London: Virago), Amazon Kindle e-book, pp.575-591; see Angela Carter and Shahrukh Husain, 'Notes on Parts 8-13' in *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales,* ed. by Angela Carter (London: Virago), Amazon Kindle e-book, pp.519-613.

However, the 2020 pandemic meant archives were impossible to visit and the chapter itself had to be archived, for now. I am not exaggerating when I write that without Carter, this thesis would not exist. I was finishing up the second year of my English and Linguistics joint honours undergraduate degree and pondering whether to undertake an English or linguistics dissertation, and ultimately chose linguistics. However, fairy and folktales had always been a fascination of mine and undertaking a linguistics dissertation meant finding another way to explore folktales within my studies. At the time, I had been reading through *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales* when I noticed that there was a place of origin listed underneath each fairy tale title, which prompted me to look at the notes section. After further research and investigation, I found that a lot of the 'original' collections were published under the names of colonial administrators but not as much was written about Dayrell as there was about Allan Wolsey Cardinall and Robert Sutherland Rattray. It was at this point that I realised I had found the subject for my 2000 word Postcolonial Texts Project, 'Oral Narratives as Women's Domains', which went on to evolve into my master's dissertation, 'Recovering Women's Voices in West African Oral Narratives', which paved the way for this thesis to exist and allowed me to explore the subject in great depth over the last five years.

My research contributes to the decolonisation of fairy and folktale studies through the examination of the methods used to curate and collect non-European (for lack of a better term) folktales. The main scholarly focus of fairy and folktale studies has been on European varieties from a feminist or psychoanalytical viewpoint.[12] For a long time, non-European

[12] See Marina Warner, *From The Beast To The Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (London: Vintage, 1995); see Donald Haase, *Fairy Tales and Feminism: New Approaches* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004); see Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (London: Penguin, 1991); see Emanuel K. Schwartz, 'A Psychoanalytical Study of the Fairy Tale', *The American Journal*

tales collected by colonial administrators had been neglected, receiving little if any scholarly attention.[13] Those that did focus on these stories, failed to explore the colonial power imbalance between collector and collected, as well as problematic methods used to collect and prepare the stories for western publication.[14] The history of folklore collection is thus Eurocentric in nature, having largely focused on western collections collected and disseminated by western men and publishing houses. The history of folklore collection and orthographical dissemination is usually traced back to the early 1800s romantic-nationalist movement in Germany, in which the Brothers Grimm emerged as a global influence.[15] 'The global history of folklore research', however, is just as 'Eurocentric in its approach', as it only really considers European folklore collectors who worked within Europe during the nineteenth-century, despite a large number of Europeans having collected folklore from other continents during the same century.[16] Much of the collection work undertaken 'outside the European continent was accomplished in the context of colonialism' and undertaken by 'non-folklorists', yet oral narratives belonging to peoples from non-European continents were 'collected, transcribed, translated, published, and discussed internationally'.[17] Despite this, 'folklore studies have not taken into consideration a major phase in the history of the discipline: folklore collection and scholarship in the colonial Empires, including the British Empire'.[18] Thus, 'standard practice' in folklore studies has been to examine the work of

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of Psychotherapy, 10.4 (2018), 740-762.

[13] Sadhana Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire: Colonial and Postcolonial Folkloristics* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), p.12.

[14] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.12.

[15] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.12.

[16] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.12.

[17] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.12.

[18] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.10.

colonial folklore collectors as separate from their official colonial positions.[19] With Southern Nigerian folktales in mind, I have made the link between the position of the collector and how and why they have collected folktales from the countries in which they were stationed. I have made appropriate conclusions with that in mind and have critiqued the universalisation of folk and fairy tales. Donald Haase makes his position clear when stating that fairy and folktale studies need decolonising as there is a scholarly history of universalising the folktale no matter from where they originate, meaning there is very little cultural context considered.[20]

I have made a conscious effort to both critique universalisation where apparent and emphasise the importance of context and cultural tradition. Both anthropological and folkloristic disciplines are known for their questionable historical methods, especially in colonised parts of the world.[21] However, 'since the 1960s, anthropologists have critiqued' and analysed colonial anthropological work, labelling it as 'largely subservient to the colonial power structures'.[22] Despite this, colonial folklore collectors have not been a notable part of the conversation.[23] Sadhana Naithani stresses that 'since the termination of the imperial rule in the middle of the twentieth century, British folkloristics has all but formally forgotten the colonial collectors from its history'. [24] In other words, whilst strides have been made to

[19] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.16.

[20] Donald Haase, 'Decolonising Fairy Tale Studies', *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies*, 24.1 (2010), 17-38 (p.20).

[21] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire*, p.12.

[22] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.12; see Tala Asad, ed., *Anthropology & the Colonial Encounter* (London: Humanities Press, 1995).

[23] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.12; see Asad.

[24] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.12.

acknowledge colonialism's impact in other related scholarly disciplines, the connection that exists between the act of collecting and colonialism has been neglected in British folkloristics, despite the emergence of relatively new postcolonial theoretical paradigms.[25] This is despite there being a great number of collections of folklore originating from many formerly colonised peoples, which were collected by colonial administrators, and 'remain the first and only record' of folklore belonging to said peoples and this includes the collections published under Dayrell's name.[26] There is therefore a need to confront the colonial relation to these collections, which have often been censored and appropriated for the consumption of people who exist outside of the folklore's culture.

Methodology

This thesis seeks to explore the ways in which Southern Nigerian folklore has been curated, collected and disseminated by European curators and coloniser folklorists, as well as how contemporary writers have reclaimed the folklore that has undergone colonial intervention. I have used a cross-disciplinary approach to do this. The first part of this thesis is heavily research-based, including that of an archival nature. Much of the information gathered concerning Dayrell has been taken from his manuscripts, provided electronically by The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, and other documentation, such as census, passenger, birth and death, law exam, military, probate, and colonial office records. I have done so in order to find out as much about Dayrell as possible so that a timeline of his life and career can be uncovered. Although the chapter on Carter did not come to fruition, I also undertook some archival research online at the British Library as

[25] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.12.

[26] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.12.

some of Carter's papers are available on their website. I had planned to visit the British Library to look at the Virago archives as they hold Carter's notes concerning both Virago Books of Fairy Tales. Unfortunately, the pandemic interfered with this as these archives are not available electronically due to copyright issues.

There has also been hours and hours of 'digging', whereby I have followed leads from one text that led to another in the hope that it will end in something useful. I was gifted Dayrell's first collection and came across Andrew Lang as he wrote the introduction to Dayrell's *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*. Other encounters happened by chance and coincidence. I visited Amsterdam in early 2020 where I found a copy of Clifford N. Ugochukwu's *Folktales from Igboland* (2016), which briefly mentions Dayrell in the introduction, and I was gifted *Love in Colour* by Bolu Babalola, in which Babalola rewrites one of the tales that appear in Dayrell's *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* for Christmas 2022. I searched for Ugochukwu's *Folk Stories from Igboland* to order a copy as a gift for a friend, and May Ikokwu's collection by the same name, published in 2021, appeared at the top of the search. It is evident that an emerging interest in Southern Nigerian folklore, both within the academy and in wider society, has helped my project become what it is today. Whilst it sometimes felt like fate as parts of my thesis are rather niche and unexplored by scholars, I realise now that I was not the only person who held a place in their heart for the decolonisation, preservation, and resurgence of these stories and this has made for a stronger, more relevant thesis.

For the most part, I have not compared folktales collected by coloniser folklorists to one another and this is a conscious decision. Previous experience, specifically my attempts at performing close readings of folktales from colonial collections for my master's dissertation, has taught me that it is not impossible to analyse them in conjunction with each other, but it is

more often than not forced and very difficult to do so if not critiquing the European influence. This is because it is impossible to know what has been omitted or censored. One cannot know what has been changed to suit a European audience and what has remained true to the culture from which the story originated. I have analysed one folktale in Chapter One, 'The Glass Axe', which has overt racist and white supremacist themes, and another, 'Ituen and the King's Wife', in Chapter Four in order to compare it to Babalola's reimagined version of it. I have analysed these stories to contextualise the environment in which non-European folktales are situated, further emphasising the argument that the non-European stories in the Coloured Fairy Books and Dayrell's collections are dislocated in multiple ways. After critiquing the ways in which the stories have been collected, edited, and censored, to analyse them as truly authentic pieces of Southern Nigerian culture would not only be problematic, but would contradict my own argument that colonial collected folktales are not reliable sources of cultural information.

For my last two chapters, I have taken a more traditional literary approach in that there is a large amount of literary analysis with a focus on a variety of literary theories, such as postcolonial, mental health, posthumanist, African womanist, Queer, and feminist studies. Chapter Three focuses on the reclamation of Igbo cosmology via ogbanje narratives in *Freshwater*. Here I utilise Victor W. Turner's concept of liminality to explore how Emezi claims and reclaims in-between spaces.[27] Alongside this, I consider Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of borderlands as both physical and metaphorical boundaries in-between which people can exist, and Nyk Robertson's use and modification of borderlands and liminal spaces, in which they posit in-between spaces can be places where you can remain both

[27] Victor W. Turner, *Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

temporarily and permanently.[28] I make use of postcolonial and mental health studies, consulting the work of China Mills, Frantz Fanon and Jean-Paul Sartre, among others, in order to explore the conflict between the old and the new in *Freshwater* and how this affects the protagonist's mental wellbeing as an Igbo ogbanje spirit raised in a Christian household.[29] For my last chapter, I have engaged with African womanism and postcolonial feminism, mainly through the work of Mary E. Modupe Kolawole, Obioma Nnaemeka and Ayub Sheik in order to contextualise and explore how Okorafor showcases women's contributions to oral literature, and how Babalola's work reflects precolonial Nigerian folktales.[30] Here, I rely on the information I have gathered about the Langs and Dayrell in Chapter One, in order to connect their actions with the work of the contemporary writers and explore how these writers actively reclaim and decolonise African folklore.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter One first examines the work of Leonora and Andrew Lang and their Coloured Fairy Book Series, before exploring Dayrell's two collections of Southern Nigerian folktales. I briefly cover how Leonora Lang's editorial contributions to the series were downplayed and

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[28] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontier,* 4th edn. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012); Nyk Robertson, 'The Power of Liminality and Borderlands of Non-Binary Folx', *Gender Forum*, 69 (2018), 45-59 (p.48).

[29] China Mills, *Decolonising Global Mental Health* (Hove: Routledge, 2014); Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004); Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Preface' in *Wretched of the Earth,* trans. by Richard Philcox, ed. by Frantz Fanon (New York: Grove Press, 2004), pp.7-34.

[30] Mary E. Mudupe Kolawole, *Womanism and African Consciousness* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1997); Obioma Nnaemeka, 'From Orality to Writing and the (Re)Inscription of Womanhood, *Research in African Literatures,* 25.4 (1994), 137-157; Ayub Sheik, 'The more than Beautiful Woman: African Folktales of Female Agency and Emancipation', *Agenda*, 32.4 (2018), 45-53.

credited to Andrew Lang in order to clarify my stance that both Andrew and Leonora Lang were responsible for the Coloured Fairy Books, despite only Andrew Lang's name appearing on the covers. I then explore the Langs' problematic approach to accreditation, which is often incomplete and often requires heavy research in order to decipher from where the Langs picked the stories. Next, I discuss how the Langs' censorship and appropriation is disguised as adaptation and how, by leaning into the Victorian concern with morality, they justify these actions through noting their child audience, which must be protected. With Hines' stance that collecting 'an object, or story, effectively dislocates it from its environment', I consider how the Coloured Fairy Books have not only been dislocated through simply being inserted into a single volume, but also by the collections being inserted into an entire series, which situates stories from colonised parts of the world, alongside those that celebrate racism and colonialism.[31] I ultimately argue that the Langs' unreliable approach to accreditation, questionable adaptations, story placement and Andrew Lang's covertly racist commentary towards stories in the Coloured Fairy Books and Dayrell's initial collection further contribute to the dislocation of the narratives included in the series.

The second half of Chapter One focuses on the colonial administrators who collected folklore from the countries in which they were stationed. I pay special attention to Dayrell here as not a lot has been previously published about him, but I also discuss the methods and mindsets of other, more well-known figures alongside him in order to provide a fuller picture of colonial folkloristics. I initially provide previously unknown background information on Dayrell, before exploring and critiquing his methods, arguing that despite them not being perfect or ethical compared to contemporary research methods, Dayrell had good intentions, especially

[31] Hines, pp.39-40.

when compared to some of his colleagues. However, intentions, no matter how well meaning, do not erase the legacies left behind and carried forward into the modern day. This leads me to argue that the stories curated by the Langs and collected by Dayrell have been misrepresented, dislocated, and colonised. Moreover, they are incomplete, unreliable representations of the cultures from which they originate and have contributed to the present day need to decolonise folklore and fairy tale studies, which have universalised non-European folktales and historically not considered the roles of colonial collectors in colonising them.[32]

Chapter Two explores two Igbo folktale volumes by Igbo editors, Ugochuku and Ikokwu, and compares them to Dayrell's second collection. I examine how Ugochukwu and Ikokwu make credible attempts to keep the orality and tradition of the folktales included in their collections alive, despite transforming them into orthographical stories. I argue that despite their efforts, something is always lost during this transformation, and this is a natural part of the process. However, this loss can be minimised by providing the appropriate contextual information and staying as true as possible to how the stories would have been told orally.

Chapter Three begins my exploration of how contemporary authors of Nigerian descent reclaim folklore in their work. I begin with Akwaeke Emezi, who reclaims Igbo cosmology through their autobiographical ogbanje narrative, *Freshwater.* Making use of Queer and postcolonial theories, I examine how Emezi uses in-between spaces to represent the internal conflict caused by the tension between the old (Igbo) and new (Christian) belief systems, as

[32] By 'decolonise', I mean 'decentring European practices, knowledge, power and dominance': see Alex Iantaffi, *Gender Trauma: Healing Cultural, Social and Historical Gendered Trauma* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2020), p.42.

well as the friction between Igbo and western ways of approaching mental health concerns. In this chapter I argue that, through their critique and exploration of how these issues manifest in the present day, Emezi refreshes and modernises the ogbanje narrative, thus reclaiming the ogbanje narrative itself but also the cosmology to which it is inextricably linked.

My final chapter explores how the contemporary writers invoke griotness when reclaiming Nigerian oral narratives and their themes, traditions, and tropes. A griot is a traditional West African storyteller and, knowingly or not, the contemporary writers display attributes that mirror a griot's role, and therefore invoke griotness. I examine the many and differing ways in which Okorafor, Ikokwu, Arimah and Babalola invoke griotness, including the use of the past, present and future; political interventions; and how women experience the world. I posit that invoking griotness allows the writers to create, recreate and reinvent and thereby reclaim a storytelling tradition that has been censored, appropriated, dislocated, and colonised. Initially, I examine how Okorafor, Ikokwu and Arimah consider the past, present and future in order to reclaim oral narratives. I study Okorafor's use of contemporary real-life issues, arguing that the inclusion of these issues enables her to invoke griotness by using precolonial folkloric traditions and raising awareness of present day happenings in order to create a speculative future for African folklore. From here, I explore how Ikokwu and Arimah make use of traditional form and theme in order to create tales that mirror the past but have been updated for a contemporary audience. The next section of Chapter Four explores how Okorafor showcases women's abilities to tell stories, which encompasses all forms and genres, allowing her to reclaim oral literature as African women's domains. Finally, I explore how *The Book of Phoenix* by Okorafor mirrors the reality of the colonial collection process, whilst Babalola rewrites the wrongdoings that occurred during it. I ultimately argue that these contemporary writers create a space in literature where stories are reclaimed through locating,

relocating, and decolonising an important West African cultural tradition.

Focusing on the methods and motives of Victorian curators and coloniser folklorists, the following chapter examines how West African folklore has been dislocated from its origins, both in Britain and abroad. Chapter One addresses why there is a need for the decolonisation of non-European folklore and aims to contribute to its decolonisation. The next chapter acts as an historical and contextual chapter, which adds value to the overall thesis as it exemplifies what the contemporary curators and writers are working with in terms of legacy and folkloristic dissemination.

Chapter One

Curating the Colonies, Collecting the Colonies

This chapter will explore how Leonora and Andrew Lang made a template for folktale curation, which others have since replicated, before examining the methods and motives of colonial administrators, who collected folklore in the countries in which they were stationed, using Elphinstone Dayrell as a case study. There is a direct link between Andrew Lang and Dayrell in that they shared a working relationship with Longman, Green and Co., and Andrew Lang introduced Dayrell's first edited collection of folktales, *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria.* The Langs, whilst working under a restrictive society in Victorian Britain, set a precedent when it came to 'adapting' stories for their twelve collections of curated fairy tales and folktales from around the world, popularly known as the Coloured Fairy Books due to their titles and brightly coloured covers. The first part of this chapter examines the methods used by the Langs to edit and censor the stories in the Coloured Fairy Book series of which many were of non-European descent. In this section I argue that the folktales included are dislocated from their origins in two senses: firstly, by simply being inserted into a book with stories from around the world, and then by being edited and censored so that they are made appropriate for British children.

Later Dayrell, the once district commissioner of Ikom, Southern Nigeria and Political Officer on the Anglo-German Boundary Commission, collected folktales for publication in Britain.[33] Dayrell's first collection mirrored the Langs' in many ways in terms of layout and appearance. The shared publisher meant that Dayrell's collection was modelled on the Langs'

[33] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.vi.

very popular and successful Fairy Book series, given the layout and appearance of tales, and scholarly references, etc., which differs significantly from his second collection, *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* published by the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, an institution that was more scholarly in approach. This is evident in Dayrell's accreditation of storytellers, the preface written by Dayrell and the appearance of footnotes. Although it is not perfect, an attempt has been made to credit the tellers.

The second part of this chapter examines the methods and mindset of Dayrell and other coloniser folklorists and the impact that had on their collections. Using Dayrell as a case study allows me to investigate a relatively unknown coloniser folklorist and to branch into others working in similar circumstances, providing an insight into the methods used by them to collect, translate, edit, and publish folklore from British colonies. Despite all of the stories in Dayrell's collections originating from Southern Nigeria, they are still dislocated. Firstly, because this happens somewhat naturally when transforming literature that is oral in nature into the written form; secondly, as with the Langs, the 'distasteful' topics have been omitted or censored; thirdly, whilst the stories are from the same area of Nigeria, they have been collected from different peoples with different belief systems, cultures, and traditions. Whilst this dislocation has happened, it is not assumed that it was intentional. In fact, collections edited by coloniser folklorists have been praised in the 'Introduction' to *Folktales from Igboland* (2016). Ugochukwu writes that the 'efforts of colonial administrators [such as Elphinstone Dayrell and Northcote Whitridge Thomas] and missionaries [such as G.T. Basden] helped to retain the [Igbo] people's interest in their oral heritage' by not only collecting and publishing folktale volumes but also including storytelling in the 'vernacular

syllabuses and schemes of work'.[34] This suggests that the opinion of Dayrell's folktale volumes is not black and white, and is thus much more nuanced than one might initially expect. It is the aim of this chapter to explore those nuances because it is not assumed that it was Dayrell's plan to actively negatively interfere with the culture from which the stories came.

The Problem with the Langs

Andrew Lang wrote, curated, and edited various works throughout his professional life as a scholar, historian, poet, essayist, novelist, journalist, anthropologist, and folklorist, and was an instrumental part of founding the Folklore Society, London. He is most well-known for editing the Coloured Fairy Books; however, my mention of 'the Langs' in the title of this chapter suggests there is another important piece of the puzzle, and that is Leonora Lang who married Andrew Lang in 1875. Whilst they had their own professional projects, the Langs frequently worked together, but their working relationship was not always equally credited, with the scales tipping in favour of Andrew Lang who was often given the credit for Leonora Lang's hard work. Andrew Lang is therefore best known for the Coloured Fairy Book series despite Leonora Lang having undertaken most of the editorial work without proper recognition.

The Langs did not actively collect folklore. Instead, they curated edited collections containing fairy stories and folktales collected by others. Although Andrew Lang's name is on the front cover of the Coloured Fairy Books, he was only heavily involved in editing the

[34] Clifford N. Ugochukwu, 'Introduction' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by Clifford N. Ugochukwu (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), pp.1-17 (p.14).

first four of the twelve piece series, with Leonora Lang undertaking the vast majority of the editorial work for the remaining eight. Whilst less well known, Leonora Lang was an accomplished author, essayist, editor, and translator in her own right, having written works of nonfiction, such as *A Geography, Physical, Political and Descriptive for Beginners: The continent of Europe* (1883) and the novel *Dissolving Views* (1884), as well as contributing to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Longman's Magazine*, *The National Review, The Art Journal* and *The Saturday Review.* Leonora Lang's translation works include Alfred Rambaud's *History of Russia, From the Earliest Times to 1877* (1880), Michal Tyskiewicz, *Memories of an Old Collector* (1889), and many children's stories, most notably for the Coloured Fairy Books. Leonora Lang was more than a 'translator' for this series and did most of the editorial work for the last eight collections, whilst Andrew Lang continued to be credited as the sole editor and was paid more than Leonora Lang for the privilege.[35] Andrew Lang was named as the solo editor of every Coloured Fairy Book but only took complete responsibility as an editor for the first four Fairy Books. After that, Leonora Lang took control of the series to the point where Andrew Lang later admits that the series is 'almost wholly the work of Mrs Lang'.[36] Despite Andrew Lang's admission, popular belief was and

[35] Toronto, Toronto Public Library, Letter to Louise Both-Hendricksen from Leonora Blanche Lang 12 Oct. 1912; quoted in Andrea Day, '"Almost Wholly the Work of Mrs. Lang": Nora Lang, Literary Labour, and the Fairy Books', *Women's Writing,* 26.4 (2019), 400-420 (p.401); Reading, University of Reading, Longmans Group: Invoice Lang's Violet Fairy Book; quoted in Day, p.403.

[36] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Lilac Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910), pp.vi-vii (pp.vi-vii); although Leonora Blanche Lang is not credited as an editor for the Coloured Fairy Books that were 'almost wholly' her work, I will list both Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang as editors as a way of righting this wrong. The texts include: Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Blue Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1889); Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Red*

is that Andrew Lang was solely responsible for the books and he also had a history of downplaying his wife's contributions to them.

Andrea Day argues that, in his prefaces to multiple Coloured Fairy Books, Andrew Lang presents Leonora Lang's 'adaptations and translations as manual [rather than intellectual] labour', resulting in him subordinating his wife's intellect to his own.[37] This 'situates the series [of Fairy Books] in a European fairy-tale tradition that privileges the voice of the white, educated male editor over those of women, peasant, and racialized storytellers', which is exactly how Andrew Lang viewed non-European peoples, which will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.[38] Andrew Lang does this by consistently downplaying

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Fairy Book, trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1890); Leonora Blanche Lang, and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Green Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1892); Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Yellow Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1894); Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Pink Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1897); Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Grey Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1900); Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Violet Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901); Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Crimson Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1903); Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Brown Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1904); Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Orange Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1906); Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Olive Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907); Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, eds., *The Lilac Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910).

[37] Day, p.401.

[38] Day, p.401.

Leonora Lang's contributions by listing her alongside the other translators, and not outrightly naming her editorial work as editorial work. Day spots a 'striking' contrast between his acknowledgement of Leonora Lang and the language he uses to credit other translators.[39] Whilst the other translators are acknowledged as professionals, 'Leonora's translations, editorial work, and authorship are misrepresented and reconfigured as spontaneous storytelling'.[40] This is clearly viewed in the verbs used by Andrew Lang. To him, the other translators 'translate' whereas Leonora Lang 'did the rest', 'told' the stories or the stories 'have been done' by her, creating an untrue clear difference in skill between Leonora Lang and the translators hired by the Langs.[41] Because of this, Leonora Lang's contributions to the Coloured Fairy Books were not recognised far beyond Andrew and Leonora Lang's respective deaths. In *English Fairy Books* (1954), despite acknowledging that 'most of the work of collecting and translating [for the Coloured Fairy Books] was done by Mrs. Lang and other helpers' in a footnote, in the main body of the book, Percy Horace Muir states that 'most of the donkey-work was done by [Andrew Lang's] wife'.[42] There is thus a clear issue here with crediting a woman for the full extent of her work, meaning there is not only a race problem, which will be discussed later in this chapter, but a gender problem within early folkloristics and fairy tale studies. The irony is that, at the time of writing this chapter, the work that Andrew Lang did the least work on is the work for which Andrew Lang is best

[39] Day, p.401.

[40] Day, p.401.

[41] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Brown Fairy Book,* trans. trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2010), Amazon Kindle e-book, locs.20-37 (loc.37); Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Orange Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2011), Amazon Kindle e-book, locs.104-106.

[42] Percy Horace Muir, *English Fairy Books 1600 to 1900* (New York: Praeger, 1954), p.168, p.107.

known. A legacy has been left behind by Leonora Lang but, even in the present day, it is still thought of as belonging to Andrew Lang, hence Carter crediting the Coloured Fairy Books as the inspiration for *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* in 1990. Carter states that her 'collection has been consciously modelled on those anthologies compiled by Andrew Lang at the turn of the century that once gave me so much joy – the Red, Blue, Violet, Green, Olive Fairy Books, and so on, through the spectrum, collections of tales from many lands'.[43] However, she does not consider the Langs' methods or attitudes towards the peoples from those lands, nor does she consider that much of the hard work was actually undertaken by Leonora Lang, despite Andrew Lang leaving clues in the prefaces to the Fairy Books.

Leonora Lang received no real recognition for her editorial role for the Coloured Fairy Books in her lifetime, and it is only due to the publication of Andrea Day's paper, '"Almost Wholly the Work of Mrs. Lang": Nora Lang, Literary Labour, and the Fairy Books' in 2017, more than one-hundred years after the last Coloured Fairy Book was published, that we know the true extent of her work. Although Leonora Lang deserves to be publicly recognised for her work, this does not mean that her (and Andrew Lang's) problematic methods cannot be critiqued and the pair held responsible for the resulting erasure and dislocation, which will be the subject of the next section.

The Problem with the Langs' Approach to Accreditation

Andrew Lang writes that tales in *The Red Fairy Book* will be 'less familiar' to the audience than those in *The Blue Fairy Book*, yet accreditation is not consistent nor is it always clear.[44]

[43] Carter, 'Introduction', p.20.

[44] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Red Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora

Some stories have no accompanying footnotes at all and important details are often missing, making it difficult to investigate.[45] This is true even in the present day when reliable search engines are our fully accessible friend. As a post-graduate researcher, I also have access to many scholarly databases but still it was a time consuming and often an impossible task that wasted a lot of precious time and energy. Some tales were easier to locate, whilst others required more in-depth research, but most were located eventually because of the clues and snippets provided; the rest were all but impossible to locate, simply because no information was provided by the Langs. This is especially true of those that had been translated or given a new title, such as 'The Wonderful Birch', which appears in *The Red Fairy Book.*[46] A footnote at the end of the story simply states that it is translated 'from the Russo-Karelian' but this story has proven impossible to locate, despite my best efforts and all the scholarly resources available to me.[47] It is possible that it came from an uncredited chapbook, 'small, affordable forms of literature for children and adults that were sold on the streets'.[48] For *The Blue Fairy*

Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 1996), Amazon Kindle e-book, locs.44-45 (loc.44).

[45] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Crimson Fairy Book*, trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1903), Amazon Kindle e-book, pp.v-vi (p.v).

[46] Anon., 'The Wonderful Birch' in *The Red Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 1996), Amazon Kindle e-book, locs.1976-2137.

[47] Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang, Footnote to Anon., 'The Wonderful Birch' in *The Red Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 1996), Amazon Kindle e-book, locs.1976-2137 (loc.2137).

[48] The British Library, *Romantics and Victorians* (2022) <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/chapbooks> [accessed 12 October 2022] (para. 1 of 12).

Book, Andrew Lang took 'Dick Whittington' and 'Jack the Giant-Killer' from their respective chapbooks, the former of which he credits the editors, Mr. Gomme and Mr. Wheatley.[49] 'The Black Thief and the Knight of the Glen' also first appeared in a 'little chapbook' called *Hibernian Tales,* 'the earliest known collection of Irish popular tales or märchen-collection in the field of Irish folklore'.[50] It has no listed editor and no date of publication but is thought to have been published prior to 1825.[51] After hours of research into the 'The Black Thief and the Knight of the Glen' with no luck, I finally came across a reprint of *Hiberian Tales,* called *The Royal Hiberian Tales,* which was published in *Béaloideas: The Journal of The Folklore of Ireland Society* in 1940. In his 'Editorial Note', Séamus Ó Duilearga mentions that after its publication as a chapbook, William Makepeace Thackeray was the 'next to make reference to it' in his *The Irish Sketch Book* (1842) (initially published under the pseudonym M. A. Titmarsh).[52] Those that are harder to track could have simply not been previously published in an official capacity prior to appearing in the Coloured Fairy Books. Either way, the Langs' methods when crediting their sources are questionable, making tales harder to trace but also harder for scholars to investigate and consider the methods of those who initially collected the stories alongside that of the Langs. It is worth noting that the invaluable digital resources from which I benefit and have used to trace possible sources, which make this kind of investigation much quicker and easier, were not available to the Victorian public at all. In fact, most scholarly databases are still not readily

[49] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Blue Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1889), p.vii (p.vii).

[50] Séamus Ó Duilearga, ed., 'Royal Hibernian Tales', *Béaloideas: The Journal of The Folklore of Ireland Society*, 10.1 (1940), 148-203 (p.148).

[51] Ó Duilearga, p.148.

[52] Ó Duilearga, p.148.

available to the general public, making the investigation very difficult even in the modern day.

The lack of a full referencing system does not just obscure tales from chapbooks. In *The Red Fairy Book,* we are not informed from where the German tales were selected. Instead, Andrew Lang simply states that they were translated from the language. The collection contains no footnotes, so we only have Andrew Lang's 'Preface' as a source of information, which is vague at best. Perhaps it is assumed that the Victorian reader would know that they had come from Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812) as it was possibly the most well-known fairy tale collection of the time. Luckily, the Grimms' tales are easy to track because of their popularity, even in the present day. Upon further inspection, it is clear that the Grimms' tales are not the only ones to be translated from the German language. Despite Lang not mentioning that Romanian tales appear in the volume, they are present. They were simply translated prior to the Langs' translations, having been selected from Mite Kremnitz's *Rumanische Märchen* (1882), a German translation of Petre Ispirescu's *Legende Sau Basmele Românilor* (1874). I have come to this conclusion due to Andrew Lang noting the use of a German translator, but he makes no mention of a Romanian linguist. The lack of proper accreditation thus leads to making a lot of plausible educated guesses, which could have been easily avoided if the Langs had included full names, titles and dates for the collections they had consulted.

Although most of the examples above come from *The Red Fairy Book*, the case is similar for every book in the series. *The Red Fairy* simply acts as a case study here due to limits on space. It is the second book in the collection and contains less information on tale sources and included tales that were harder to trace in terms of their initial written forms. Whilst Andrew

Lang only took full control of the first four titles, he still read the tales included and wrote the prefaces for the rest of the volumes before their publication.[53] In fact, although still incomplete, as the volumes go on, the accreditation does improve somewhat with the appearance of footnotes to most of the tales that provide at least a snippet of information. With Leonora Lang having taken over much of the editorial control of the collections at this point, we could speculate that this was her doing. Perhaps, the reason for the lack of proper accreditation is the fact the books are aimed at children, and Andrew Lang had assumed that 'dear mothers […] do not read his prefaces'.[54] Perhaps, it is simply assumed that the intended audience does not need to know the full information and interested intellectuals, such as those who are members of the Folklore Society, are knowledgeable and educated enough to know the missing information already. Proper accreditation is very important and not providing that information is considered plagiarism in the modern day, as well as a form of gatekeeping as you are not allowing others to consult the same source. Alongside this, poor accreditation acts to further dislocate the tales from their origins as it erases those who have told and continue to tell stories, much like censoring them for the British public also does, which is the subject of the next section.

Think of the (White) Children!: The Problem with 'Adapted' Tales

Dee L. Ashliman informs us that censorship – or adaptation as the Langs named it – was not uncommon in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with publication standards being

[53] Toronto Public Library, Letter to Louise Both-Hendricksen from Leonora Blanche Lang 12 Oct. 1912; quoted in Day, p.401.

[54] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Crimson Fairy Book*, p.v.

'exceedingly careful, even prudish'.[55] As a result, publishers and editors would bowdlerize or omit 'any potentially offensive words and episodes' from texts.[56] Rather ironically, Victorian scholars 'have seen no contradiction in their attempts to preserve common culture while avoiding that which was vulgar', with almost every major folk and fairy tale collection offering examples of censorship, omissions or – as Andrew Lang terms it – adaptations.[57] In other words: censorship was rife during the Victorian (1837-1901) and into the Edwardian era (1901-1914). As the Coloured Fairy Books did not escape this treatment, it is natural to question for whom the series is being appropriated. Andrew Lang makes it clear that the series has been produced for children, specifically white, British children. This is clearly stated in many of his prefaces through admissions such as Leonora Lang 'makes [the stories] up in the hope that white people will like them' and they have been 'adapted to the needs of British children'.[58] Andrew Lang's explicit racism towards non-European peoples and its implications will be explored in much more depth in the next section. For now, I will discuss it as it is related to the act of censorship and how more implicit racist and xenophobic undertones are used by Andrew Lang when justifying the need to 'adapt' the stories for the sake of (white, British) children.

Andrew Lang is upfront about the stories having been 'adapted', which makes one question where the act of adaptation ends and where censorship begins. In the case of the Langs, it is

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[55] Dee L. Ashliman, 'Tales Not Fit for Print' in *Folktexts: A Library of Folktales, Folklore, Fairy Tales, and Mythology* [online] < https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/censor.html> [accessed 9 October 2022] (para. 5 of 42); Dee L. Ashliman is an American folklorist at the University of Pittsburgh.

[56] Ashliman, para.6.

[57] Ashliman, para.6.

[58] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Orange Fairy Book,* loc.106; Lang, 'Preface' in *The Crimson Fairy Book,* p.v.

not always clear-cut. Whilst there are some explicit examples of censorship, which we will explore later, part of the problem is that Andrew Lang tends to use the verb 'adapted' fairly loosely and without a lot of context provided. He tells the reader that 'Madame d'Aulnoy's long stories [were] adapted by the translators' but it is unclear how exactly the translator has adapted them. The translator could have simply abridged the stories in order for them to become an appropriate length for the series or the stories could have undergone a complete overhaul in order to make them appropriate for a British, Victorian audience. In the case of Madame d'Aulnoy, a French Baroness who wrote literary fairy tales, it is likely that her longer stories were abridged as they are unlikely to have contained any unsavoury content that the Langs or the translator deemed unfit to be published, but this does not erase the lack of transparency. When it comes to his own contributions, Andrew Lang is much clearer about his actions, instead of describing himself as adapting 'Sigurd', he states that he has 'condensed' it from Mr. William Morris's prose version of the 'Volsunga Saga'.[59] Thus, Andrew Lang openly discusses the fact that the stories have been 'adapted' when referring to those that have been censored. Calling censorship an adaptation lessens the severity of the process. Adaptation has good, even exciting connotations: to adapt is to give something old a new lease of life. Censorship, on the other hand, has negative associations of suppression and a lack of freedom. Lang represents the act of adaptation as a positive necessity, which must be done in order to make the books and individual tales suitable for Victorian children, whose 'needs' are of the utmost importance:

> When the tales are found they are adapted to the needs of British children by various hands, the editor doing little beyond guarding the interests of propriety, and toning down to mild

[59] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Crimson Fairy Book*, p.v.

reproofs the tortures inflicted on wicked stepmothers and other naughty characters.[60]

Here, Andrew Lang justifies the actions of himself, Leonora Lang and their team in regards to censoring the stories by positioning himself as the protector of all things moral and right, thus ensuring that British children's 'needs' are met.[61] This singles out the needs of British children as different to those of the children who are from the places where they originate as Andrew Lang feels the need to '[guard] the interests of propriety'.[62] These needs are also positioned in a way that suggests that Andrew Lang views British values as superior to those of other countries, and the 'toning down' of tortures is necessary to ensure that these superior proprieties are passed down to and carried on to future generations through British children.[63] The foreign 'tortures inflicted on wicked stepmothers and other naughty characters' are thus viewed as a threat to the British way of life, which Andrew Lang views as having an unmatched sense of social decorum.[64] Foreign ways of life are thus seen as a threat to the British sensibilities and must not be allowed to interfere with it if it can be avoided. Andrew Lang makes it a moral issue, and moral concern was a preoccupation of Victorian England, with moral reform having been pushed forward by 'groups of concerned citizens [who wanted to] change moral values and to modify patterns of behaviour associated with them'.[65] The Victorian preoccupation with morality also bled into literature, and matched Aristotle's

[60] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Crimson Fairy Book*, p.v.

[61] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Crimson Fairy Book*, p.v.

[62] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Crimson Fairy Book*, p.v.

[63] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Crimson Fairy Book*, p.v.

[64] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Crimson Fairy Book*, p.v.

[65] M. J. D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and Moral Reform in England, 1787–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.1; Bin Xiao, 'Morality in Victorian Period', *Theory and Practice in Language Studies,* 5.9 (2015), 1815-1821 (p.1815).

belief that literature teaches and models moral being.[66] As a result, 'Victorian novelists chose to censor themselves in order to appease moral reform groups and the conservative sector of their book-buying public', thus censorship stemmed from pressure from 'public opinion, of middle-class morality, of the marketplace', rather than a tyrannical government.[67] The Langs censor their work in order to please the public, but they do not censor themselves as authors did. Rather, they censor the peoples and cultures from which these stories came in order to appropriate them for the white, British, middle class nursery, which will appease the middle class public who had most of the buying-power. Whilst Nora Gilbert posits that novels were not necessarily 'ruined by censorship'; instead, 'novels written in the nineteenth century were stirred and stimulated by the very forces meant to restrain them', but this was not the case for foreign folktales curated for publication in Britain.[68] Arguably, at least some of the stories in the Langs' collections were 'ruined by censorship' because those from whom the stories originated did not know the rules of British censorship in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[69] Thus, they could not collaborate with nor work around the rules of British censorship, unlike the British authors, such as Jane Austen and W. M. Thackery and Charlotte Brontë who were aware of the rules and worked creatively with and around them.[70] The Coloured Fairy Book tales were instead retroactively appropriated to fit the restrictive moral values of Victorian and Edwardian Britain. As stated earlier, this kind of censorship was not unique to the Langs. Some of the most famous collections, such as those edited by

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[66] Xiao, p.1815.

[67] Nora Gilbert, *Better Left Unsaid: Victorian Novels, Hays Code Films, and the Benefits of Censorship* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), p.2.

[68] Gilbert, p.2.

[69] Gilbert, p.2.

[70] Gilbert, p.2.

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm have also been subject to it. The unnamed translators omit about 'a dozen short pieces' and alter 'in a slight way, four other stories' in their 1853 English translation of *Household Stories*.[71] They state the reason for this is due to the possibility that 'English mothers might object'.[72] The translators, about whom not much is shared in the text, therefore recognise the need for censorship in order for their book to sell copies in England. They censor stories that originate from Germany in order to appease a British readership and make book sales. Furthermore, they explain that the need for this change is due to a clash in cultural norms, stating that 'the mixture of sacred subjects with profane, though frequent in Germany, would not meet with favor in an English book'.[73] As a country, Germany is thus situated as sacrilegious as its people do not know the 'difference between the holy and the profane'.[74] Whilst positioning Germany as having questionable moral beliefs, the translators promote England as having a superior sense of morality and religious compass as sacrilegious acts would not be favoured by the country's people. The translators are therefore biblical interpreters and gatekeepers of sorts – protecting the British from the questionable morals of the Germans. The translators therefore decide what is holy or not, and do not remain objective, inserting their own beliefs into the collections and stories they have translated, edited and censored, and the Langs take on the same role when translating, editing, and censoring the stories included in their series of Coloured Fairy Books.

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[71] The Translators, 'Preface' in *Household Stories Vol. 1,* ed. by Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm (London: Addey and Co., 1853), pp.iii-iv (p.iv).

[72] The Translators, p.iv.

[73] The Translators, p.iv.

[74] The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments, Authorised King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), I Ezekiel 44:23, I Ezekiel 22:26.

One could argue that the changes made to written fairy tales is no different to the evolution that naturally happens to the oral counterparts as they tend to change and evolve with each narrator. However, there is a difference here: oral narratives are changing and evolving perpetually; each version is ephemeral, whereas Leonora and Andrew Lang's adaptations are more permanent and have survived in the same form for over one-hundred years. The problem with this is that they are omitting and censoring stories that do not originate from their own culture and, by appropriating them for the British public, they are dislocating them from their origins. By doing so, they are imposing their own cultural norms and values onto the Coloured Fairy Book series, and this not only changes the meaning of an individual story and an individual collection but the entire Coloured Fairy Book series. Perhaps, if the subjects were too volatile, violent or scary for children, they should not have been in a book made for children in the first place, as put forward by George Gomme, the once president of the Folklore Society, London.[75]

Notably, the Langs' process did not escape criticism: George Laurence Gomme insists that the folktales that have been selected and published in this way have been 'maimed, altered and distorted in one direction clothed in red, blue, and green in another direction'.[76] Gomme's reference to colours of the books is as much of a direct reference to Andrew Lang as one can get without saying his name and with this, he makes his disapproval concerning the Langs' editorial methods very clear. He also suggests that guidelines for folklorists should be put in place by The Folklore Society in order to prevent this kind of methodology, stating that it is important that a folklorist accounts for the 'unpleasant sides of man's

[75] George Laurence Gomme, 'Presidential Address', *Folklore,* 5.1 (1894), 43-69 (p.69).

[76] Gomme, p.43; quoted in Sona Rosa Burstein, 'George Laurence Gomme and the Science of Folklore', *Folklore,* 68.2 (1957), 321-338 (p.331).

history'.[77] According to Gomme, whilst accounting for this so-called unpleasantness, a folklorist should not attribute it to 'inhuman or unholy motives' as it is his view that 'there is ample room left for a liberal view of human history'.[78] Gomme is therefore calling for a more sympathetic and less judgemental approach to folkloristics be taken, which is a jibe at Andrew Lang's comments concerning the stories collected to for the Coloured Fairy Book series. Whilst the Fairy Books were loved by the British public, hence their number and longevity, Gomme's opinion of the Langs' methods shows that there was professional contention concerning their work and how they went about it. Andrew Lang does print a retaliation to Gomme in *The Yellow Fairy Book*'s 'Preface' but does not directly address the accusation that he and Leonora Lang have 'maimed, altered and distorted' the stories within the series.[79] Lang simply asks 'where is the harm?', indicating that he saw no harm in publishing the series nor the methods that have been used to make them suitable for a young, British readership, which for a folklorist is problematic and questionable, especially considering the evidence that at least a portion of his colleagues viewed their actions as harmful.[80] This throws into question whether the methods used were simply a product of their time. If the Langs were being criticised, it is hard to conclude that the Langs did not know better, and the blame cannot be put solely on Victorian moral concern or popular opinion.

Earlier, I questioned when adaptation ends and censorship begins. It seems that the two are

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[77] Gomme, p.69.

[78] Gomme, p.69.

[79] Gomme, p.69.

[80] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Yellow Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2011), Amazon Kindle e-book, locs.93-132 (loc.103).

intertwined due to the Langs' loose definition of adaptation, which acts to cushion the blow and glosses over what is happening to these stories when they are 'adapted'. The 'think of the children' – or, rather, 'think of the white British children' – mentality also acts to justify the need for this process in order to protect the British way of life from foreign threats. Whilst the Langs saw no harm in the censorship carried out in order to appropriate the foreign stories for British children, it did not go unnoticed by Andrew Lang's colleagues at the Folklore Society, meaning that whilst a general readership might applaud the series, those who are experts in the field of folklore – his colleagues – were not impressed with the editing methods and decisions used by the Langs. The Langs' editing style has thus always been controversial to those who understand the significance of folktales. Andrew Lang's colleagues will likely also have had a problem with the lack of cultural and contextual information provided in the Langs' collections, which has resulted in further dislocation, which is explored in the next section.

The Problem with the Langs' Dislocated Fairy Tale Empire

Censorship does not exist in isolation and, as I have discussed in the first parts of this chapter, it also contributes to the dislocation of the individual tales and the individual collections but also the Coloured Fairy Book series as a whole. In her article 'Collecting the Empire: Andrew Lang's Fairy Books', Hines explains that 'to collect an object, or story, effectively dislocates it from its environment. Once the story is collected it is no longer an individual narrative, but instead becomes part of that larger collection. Collection, moreover, alters the object and its meaning'.[81] If the act of simply placing the stories into a collection results in the dislocation of a story, the dislocation of the stories that feature in Langs' collections is

[81] Hines, pp.39-40.

twofold due to the methods used to obtain, translate, and edit them before being placed in a collection. As examined in the last section, the stories have been censored and appropriated for white, British children, and thus actively had their meaning altered, leading me to refer to the series as a dislocated fairy tale empire.

If the act of inserting stories into a collection alone is enough to dislocate them, what happens when the individual stories originate from different countries and continents? In short, they are even further disconnected from their origins. The Coloured Fairy Books contain many stories from many different countries. As a result, there are stories that exist within the series that would not ordinarily communicate with each other, especially without important contextual information being provided, making the countries of origin an important subject to explore in relation to dislocation. In the first of the Coloured Fairy Books, *The Blue Fairy Book* (1889), most of the stories are of Northern European origins with the exception of three, which are from French translations of *The Thousand and One Nights* tales, edited by Antoine Galland.[82] The early collections remain Eurocentric for the most part but do start to include

[82] Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Paris: la Veuve Claude Barbin, 1704), I; Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Paris: la Veuve Claude Barbin, 1704), II; Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Paris: la Veuve Claude Barbin, 1704), III; Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Paris: la Veuve Claude Barbin, 1704), IV; Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Paris: la Veuve Claude Barbin, 1704), V; Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Paris: la Veuve Claude Barbin, 1704), VI; Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Paris: la Veuve Claude Barbin, 1706), VII; Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en*

more and more stories from the rest of the world as the series develops (please see Appendix A for a full geographical breakdown of the tales' origins).[83] Hines argues that the domination of European tales, along with the sparing inclusion of stories from 'all six inhabited continents' results in the series 'metaphorically representing Britain's political empire', and for the first five books, this just might be the case.[84] The collections that were published prior to 1900, as a whole, include fewer Non-European stories than those published in and after 1900. As white supremacist attitudes were embedded in British colonial attitudes, it is not surprising that this ideology appears throughout the initial Fairy Books. *The Yellow Fairy Book* (1894) includes 'The Glass Axe', a Hungarian tale where a prince is captured by a fairy who gives the boy a series of tasks and forbids him from 'speaking to a black girl he would most likely meet in the wood'.[85] When he meets the 'black girl', she helps him complete the

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Français, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Paris: *La Boutique de Claude Barbin, chez la veuve Ricoeur,* 1709), VIII; Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Paris: Florentin Delaulne*,* 1712), IX; Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Paris: *La Boutique de Claude Barbin, chez la veuve Ricoeur,* 1709), X; Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Lyon: Briasson*,* 1717), XI; Antoine Galland, ed., *Les Mille et Une Nuits, Contes Arabes Traduits en Français*, trans. by Antoine Galland, 12 vols (Lyon: Briasson*,* 1717), XII.

[83] Please see Appendix A for a full geographical breakdown of story origins.

[84] Hines, p.50; the six inhabited continents are Asia, Africa, North America, South America, and Australia and Oceania. The inclusion of stories from *One Thousand and One Nights* leads me to also include the term Middle Eastern; here, the tales that appear in the collection are thought to be collected by various collectors, mainly from Western, Central and Southern Asia, North Africa, making it of Middle Eastern origin with some Indian influence: Sharihan Al-Akhras, 'The Anima at the Gate of Hell: Middle Eastern Imagery in Milton's Paradise Lost' in *Translating Myth,* ed. by Ben Pestell, Pietra Palazzolo and Leon Burnett (London: Routledge, 2014), pp.43-59 (p.55); for a geographical breakdown of each Coloured Fairy Book collection please see Appendix A.

[85] Anon., 'The Glass Axe' in *The Yellow Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora

tasks set by the fairy, explaining that the fairy is her mother who has 'doomed her to wander about in her present guise'.[86] The 'guise' is presumed to be the girl's Blackness, which is later confirmed by the two illustrations that accompany the tale, with Hines arguing that these illustrations equate beauty with 'whiteness'.[87]

The first illustration shows a young Black woman holding up an enchanted rock, which she throws in front of the fairy to create a diversion after she catches the girl and the prince together, resulting in slowing the fairy down whilst the pair try to find a place of safety.[88] The prince eventually defeats the evil fairy, after which the 'black girl' is 'lo and behold!' transformed from 'the ugly monster' to 'the most beautiful girl [the prince] had ever seen'.[89] The second illustration, which follows the girl's transformation directly, depicts the Prince and a young white woman floating side by side in a body of water.[90] The main part of the Black girl's transformation includes a change in race and, whilst the girl is not described as white in the story, from the moment of the transformation, she is no longer described as the 'black girl' either; instead, she is referred to as the prince's 'bride'.[91] Hines also notices this transformation of race, noting that the illustrations are 'strategically' and 'intentionally' placed, leading me to argue that the placement of these illustrations after this racial

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Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2011), Amazon Kindle e-book, locs.2345-2465 (locs.2348-2349).

[86] Anon., 'The Glass Axe', loc.2381.

[87] Hines, p.43.

[88] Anon., 'The Glass Axe', loc.2410.

[89] Anon., 'The Glass Axe', locs.2454-2455.

[90] Anon., 'The Glass Axe', loc.2455.

[91] Anon., 'The Glass Axe', loc.2455.

transformation promotes whiteness as superior.[92] This is because the girl's transformation from 'an ugly monster' prior to her race change into a 'beautiful' princess once depicted as white, represents Blackness as a malformation.[93] In the story, Blackness is something which the girl is subjected to by the fairy rather than being part of who she is. It is something that is deemed undesirable and thus upholds the idea of whiteness being the superior and more desirable race. The collections contain stories that promote this ideology and thus pass down these 'British values' to the younger generation whilst exposing them to, albeit in the most controlled and British way possible, stories from parts of the world that either align with Britain's moral values or that Britain has colonised. This results in teaching the readers that they too are superior for simply being born white British, perpetuating this mindset to the next generation. The series therefore promotes the white supremacy that is so closely linked to the British empire, making the Coloured Fairy Book collections a celebration of empire and domination of non-white races. Despite the tale being Hungarian, 'The Glass Axe', is a prime example of imperial rule, which aligns with how the British built their empire, hence its inclusion in a collection published in Britain. Britain established themselves on a piece of land and enforced their way of life as the right way to live, leading to some colonised people internalising the empire's racism and resulting in believing that their race is inferior.[94] The stories have, as previously discussed in this chapter, been adapted for the British child,

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[92] Hines, p.43

[93] Anon., 'The Glass Axe', loc.2454.

[94] Yin Paradies, 'Colonisation, Racism and Indigenous Health', *Journal of Population Research,* 33 (2016), 83-96 (pp.83-84); Adam Z. Seet, 'Surviving the Survival Narrative: Internalised Racism and the Limits of Resistance Part 1', *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 12.2 (2020), 36-50 (p.38); Adam Z. Seet and Yin Paradies, 'Surviving the Survival Narrative, Part 2: Conceptualising Whiteness-as-Utility and Internalised Racism', *SAGE Open,* 57.4 (2021), 1026-1043 (1027).

meaning that it is likely that British ideologies have most likely been passed down to them.

From the publication of *The Grey Fairy Book* in 1900, the collections, whilst still being Eurocentric, do begin to contain more stories of non-European origins. This development coincides with the British political anxieties felt at the turn of the new century, suggesting that the Langs were curating collections that reflect the British empire as a way of easing the anxieties felt by Britain as it headed towards, entered, and lived through the new century in which the country feared for its hold on the rest of the globe. The anxieties concerning Britain's empire and its weakening political and colonial reputation as a global force were already growing. This was due to 'setbacks in a colonial war, competition in the international marketplace, challenges from global rivals, tensions in the social sphere' and, according to Dane Kennedy, the fear of national decline was 'measured most often in terms of imperial power'.[95] Rather than simply being a representation of the British empire as suggested by Hines, perhaps the Coloured Fairy Books are a projection of the anxieties felt at the beginning of the twentieth-century, reflecting the need to hold on to Britain's global power.[96] This is done through dislocating and forcing British social ideology onto world-wide folktales in a similar way to how Britain had dislocated and forced its social ideology onto many countries and their peoples on a global scale in an attempt to ease anxieties concerning Britain's national decline. Bringing all these stories together thus celebrates the idea of empire through curating and appropriating stories from around the world for the benefit of 'white people', which results in the dislocation and colonisation of the stories included in the series. It is through this celebration of the British empire that anxieties are relieved.

[95] Dane Kennedy, *Britain and Empire 1880-1945* (Oxon: Routledge, 2002), p.27.

[96] Hines, p.41.

Alongside the British empire's insecurities are Andrew Lang's overtly racist attitude towards Native American people as 'savages' in the 'Preface' to *Yellow Fairy Book,* the same collection in which the 'The Glass Axe' appears. Andrew Lang states that,

> This is contained in very old tales, such as country people tell, and savages, referring to,
>
> Little Sioux and little Crow,
>
> Little frosty Eskimo.[97]

Here, I argue that Lang purposefully misquotes a small excerpt from Robert Louis Stevenson's poem 'Foreign Children' from A *Child's Garden of Verses* (1885). Stevenson's initial stanza is actually as follows:

> Little Indian, Sioux, or Crow,
>
> Little frosty Eskimo,
>
> Little Turk or Japanee,
>
> Oh! don't you wish that you were me? [98]

Andrew Lang thus removes 'Indian', 'Turk' and 'Japanese', leaving behind only little 'Sioux', 'Crow' and 'Eskimo', and this is a clear indication of who he thinks the savages are, and that is Indigenous North American peoples. The Sioux refers to the 'alliance of Native American tribes who speak Siouan and 'who originated in the areas of present day Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa' and the Crow people referring to a Native

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[97] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Yellow Fairy Book*, locs.108-113.

[98] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'Foreign Children' in *A Child's Garden of Verses* (New York: Dodge Publishing Company, 1885), p.47 (p.47).

American tribe originating from Montana.[99] Eskimo is a more complex but just as problematic inclusion as the term conflates two groups of Indigenous peoples into one: Inuit and Yupik.[100] The name 'eskimo' was coined and used by European settlers to refer to those who 'inhabit northern circumpolar region ranging from Eastern Siberia to parts of the Americas (Alaska and Canada)' but never used by Indigenous peoples to describe themselves.[101] Due to inhabiting and originating from parts of North America, some Inuit and Yupik people can also be regarded as Native American, which is likely why Andrew Lang quoted the term 'eskimo' from Stevenson's poem. Andrew Lang is thus being strategic and has actively targeted Native American peoples, which is further confirmed by the fact that the only non-European tales included in *The Yellow Fairy Book* are those of Native American origin. Andrew Lang is thus very clear about which stories included in this collection are told by 'savages'.[102] The Langs' inclusion of Indigenous stories alongside those that favour whiteness and celebrate European colonialism works to further dislocate the Indigenous stories from their origins.

The Native American stories are not the only ones to be dislocated in this way, with Hines pointing out that 'The Dorani', a 'Punjabi story', exists amongst stories from *Contes Arméniens* and *Les Cabinet des Fées* in *The Olive Fairy Book*.[103] She suggests that 'the

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[99] National Indian Law Library, *Crow Tribe of Montana* (n.d.) <http://www.narf.org/nill/tribes/crow_montana.html > [accessed 10 October 2022] (para. 1 of 16).

[100] Sinchi Foundation, *Why We Don't Use the Word Eskimo Anymore* (2020) <https://sinchi-foundation.com/news/dont-use-the-word-eskimo-anymore> [accessed 21 October 2022], para. 2 of 7.

[101] Guy Gibbon, *The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p.1; Sinchi Foundation, para. 2 of 7.

[102] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Yellow Fairy Book*, locs.108-113.

[103] Hines, p.48.

originating culture of each story […] is secondary to the new location of the story in an international collection of tales being published in London'.[104] The same is true for the Native American stories, and others of non-European origin, that are situated in a collection that celebrates and rewrites Britain's part in Native American upheaval, oppression and dislocation. Thus, the Punjabi and Native American peoples are no longer the narrators or the subjects of their own stories as 'the story narrates the dislocation of stories' instead.[105] Once again, the stories from the rest of the world are more dislocated than their European counterparts. This time, it is Andrew Lang's overtly racist words and attitudes, and the inclusion of stories that reflect those attitudes that further dislocates non-European stories.

Andrew Lang's racist perspectives are not limited to the Fairy books. In fact, they are much more overt in the 'Introduction' he wrote for Elphinstone Dayrell's *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* published by Longmans, Green and Co., with whom, as previously mentioned, Andrew Lang had a longstanding working relationship. Andrew Lang has thus not veered away from publicly stating his thoughts and beliefs when it comes to Indigenous peoples and now Southern Nigerian people. He comments on every story briefly in a way that Others and exoticises them.[106] He views the folktales as exotic yet strange and intriguing creations, noting that the tales are 'full of mentions of strange institutions' and 'rare adventures', and that Dayrell's collection is a 'mass of African curiosities from the crowded lumber-room of the native mind'.[107] Andrew Lang also compares 'our' (the European

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[104] Hines, p.48.

[105] Hines, p.48.

[106] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage, 1994), Amazon Kindle e-book, pp.1-2.

[107] Andrew Lang, 'Introduction' in *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* ed. by Elphinstone Dayrell (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910), pp.i-xiv (p.ix).

varieties, such as German ‘Märchen or fairy tales’) stories with ‘their’ tales, instead of situating the folktales within their own culture and contexts, creating an ‘us’ and ‘them’ discourse through the mixture of his comparative approach to analysing the tales and his racist ideologies.[108]

Like many of his contemporaries, Andrew Lang subscribed to the comparative approach as a method of disentangling the meaning of folklore.[109] Amiria Henare explains that the ‘comparative method allowed anthropologists to collapse space and time by bringing the artefacts of temporarily and geographically distant peoples together for the purpose of cross-cultural analysis’, which is what Lang attempts to do with the Coloured Fairy Books and his analysis of Dayrell’s collection.[110] Further to Henare’s definition, Andrew Teverson states that the ‘kinds of judgement that are made using the comparative method will depend upon the scholar’s predisposition’.[111] What Teverson means here is that scholars will make judgements in terms of ‘where [tales] originally came from or the significance’ or ‘narrative transformations’, thus it is doubtful that Teverson is alluding to the kind of overtly racist and prejudicial judgements that Andrew Lang made regarding Southern Nigerian folktales, culture and peoples. It is not necessarily the comparative method that is the problem here. Rather, it is the ways in and means for which it is used by Andrew Lang; however, the method itself is not without its own issues.

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[108] Said, *Orientalism,* p.2. Lang, ‘Introduction’, p.ix.

[109] Hines, p.50.

[110] Amiria J. M. Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.215.

[111] Andrew Teverson, *Fairy Tale* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), pp.145-146.

The methods used and judgements made by Andrew Lang in order to analyse world folk and fairy tales have a negative impact as he provides little to no context and simply classifies them in line with those of European narratives. Whilst 'many interesting similarities have been discovered in the plots of stories to be found in Africa and elsewhere—in Europe, in Arabia […], in India, and, finally, in the New World, where they probably travelled with African slaves', there is a wider problem with this kind of approach when used to compare and classify non-European tales.[112] In a nutshell, the problem here is that this approach tends to be Eurocentric in nature due to the various classifications and indexes upon which comparative scholars draw being 'developed from a European data corpus and hence may not be applicable to non-western material'.[113] Ruth Finnegan specifically suggests that the comparison of motifs ('including plots, subject-matter, types of character and action, and so on') and attempting to trace those motifs to their earliest known form, which are both popular techniques when using a comparative approach, are problematic when trying to apply them to African oral narratives.[114] Whilst some motifs have been traced back to Africa, many motifs that are associated with African tales have been given 'a polygenetic origin or still remain to be analysed'.[115] Despite the popularity of this approach, 'not many systematic studies of the life history of motifs in African tales have been completed'.[116] Yet, 'plenty of preliminary material has been collected in that many editors of collections of African stories have said

[112] Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012), Amazon Kindle e-book, p.312.

[113] Alan Dundes, 'The Motif-Index and the Tale Type Index: A Critique', *Journal of Folklore Research,* 34.3 (1997), 195-202 (p.196); the most famous of these indexes is Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* in which the 'various "motifs" of "folktales" are listed for easy reference and comparison': Finnegan, p.312.

[114] Finnegan, p.312.

[115] Finnegan, p.312.

[116] Finnegan, p.312.

something about comparable motifs in Africa or elsewhere'.[117] Thus, even without Andrew Lang's racist statements, his use of comparative methods to analyse the Southern Nigerian folktales in *Folk Tales in Southern Nigeria* is problematic in and of itself given the Eurocentricity surrounding it.

An example of Andrew Lang's use of the comparative method intertwining with his racist attitudes is his analysis of the 'Slave Girl Who Tried to Kill her Mistress', which he claims is the 'Nigerian version' of a 'common waiting-maid tale' found in many other cultures, including the French.[118] However, he insists that the 'manners, customs, and cruelties' in 'The Slave Girl Who Tried to Kill her Mistress' are thoroughly West African, to which 'European influences [..] can scarcely do much harm'.[119] Lang thus begins by using the comparative approach by finding the story's 'type' in relation to Eurocentric measures, but continues to compare the two in a way that uplifts the other cultures – particularly European ones – by discriminating against West African cultures. This is the kind of 'us' versus 'them' attitude, that I alluded to earlier, which creates an image of European stories and culture as the civilised 'Occident', whilst the exoticised Southern Nigerian 'versions' become the inferior 'Orient'.[120] Said describes the Orient as relating to East Asia, the Middle East and sometimes North Africa, but Andrew Lang's attitude towards the West African folktales included in Dayrell's first collection reflects a similar Western mind-set as the Occident holds towards the Orient, as an exotic image of not only the folktales, but the Southern Nigerian

[117] Finnegan, p.320.

[118] Lang, 'Introduction', p.ix.

[119] Lang, 'Introduction', p.ix.

[120] Said, *Orientalism,* p.2.

people who produced them is created.[121]

Paradoxically, Andrew Lang's use of the comparative approach also results in the universalisation of the Southern Nigerian folktale. Universalisation is something Donald Haase argues has been a problematic tendency when it comes to tales from colonised parts of the world.[122] As to universalise is to generalise, Andrew Lang and his approach makes for a prime example of universalisation, as he likens the Nigerian folktales to Australian folklore and Indigenous traditions, Irish legends, Shakespearean plays, Greek Mythology, biblical stories (Judith and Holofernes), and German Märchen, and the Nigerian characters to well-known British figures, both fictional and non-fictional, such as 'Lord Bateman in the ballad, when Sophia came home' without providing any contextual information at all.[123] Andrew Lang thus universalises the Nigerian folktale, taking little interest in the cultures about which he writes, questioning the tales' plots, and belittling the people who created them.[124] For example, he does not consider the importance of the tortoise as the wise trickster character in Southern Nigerian oral narratives. Instead, he questions the tortoise's wisdom by stating 'the tortoise is said to have been "the wisest of all men and animals" [in the folktale]' before asking 'Why? He merely did not kill his daughter'.[125] As the tortoise is one of the most beloved characters in Southern Nigerian folktales, particularly in those of Igbo origin, Andrew Lang's questioning not only misses the point of the story completely but belittles one of the most prominent folktale characters. He also criticises the fact that Adet, the tale's

[121] Said, *Orientalism,* p.2.

[122] Haase, 'Decolonising Fairy Tale Studies', p.28.

[123] Lang, 'Introduction', p.x.

[124] Lang, 'Introduction', p.ix.

[125] Lang, 'Introduction', p.ix.

heroine in ‘The Tortoise with a Pretty Daughter’, has non-human parents, stating that ‘the tale would be none the less interesting, and a good deal more credible to the mature intelligence’ if she were given human parents.[126] Although he considers the fact that ‘fables around the world’ feature animal characters, he considers it a flaw when they appear as parents in Southern Nigerian folktales. This is perhaps because Andrew Lang considers orally told narratives an ‘ancient fashion’.[127] The fact that European folktales were no longer passed from person to person, whilst Southern Nigerian folktales were still orally disseminated in the early twentieth century, leads Lang to promote the idea that Europeans are more modern, whilst Southern Nigerian peoples are ‘backwards’, especially when it comes to their ways of telling stories. This is corroborated by his view that the inclusion of talking animals in folk stories was a ‘universal’ fashion ‘among Savages; it descends to the Buddha's fataka, or parables, to AEsop and La Fontaine. There could be no such fashion if fables had originated among civilised human beings’.[128] Andrew Lang thus considers Southern Nigerian people as uncivilised human beings as their storytelling fashion is more of a match for those told hundreds of years ago than those told by Europeans in the modern day. European folktales that feature animal characters are therefore acceptable because they come from an ‘ancient’ time but, because the Nigerian folktales are newly collected and still told in an old-fashioned way, Andrew Lang considers the people who created them ‘savages’ as civilised human beings could not possibly have done so in ‘modern’ times.[129] Andrew Lang’s racist approach to comparative methods thus makes for dismissive and uncontextualised analysis that paradoxically both universalises and creates ‘us’ versus ‘them’ discourses, especially in his

[126] Lang, ‘Introduction’, p.vii.

[127] Lang, ‘Introduction’, p.vii.

[128] Lang, ‘Introduction’, p.vii.

[129] Lang, ‘Introduction’, p.vii.

analysis of the Southern Nigerian folktales collected by Dayrell.

Next, I will focus on the methods of coloniser folklorists, with a particular focus on Dayrell, who has a direct connection to Andrew Lang. Dayrell's first collection was influenced by the Langs' series as is obvious by how the collection is presented – it is obviously aimed at the wider public and includes little to no scholarly practices, such as accreditation or contextual information regarding storytelling traditions. The Langs' Coloured Fairy Books, then, have inspired others to use similar methods. The next section will thus explore how coloniser folklorists, who have collected the folktales from the countries in which they were stationed, have collected and published folklore now that the investigation into the Langs has provided important contextualisation of what came before and what may have inspired those folklorists that came later.

Coloniser Folklorists

The term coloniser folklorist was coined by Naithani in relation to Richard Carnac Temple (1850-1931), a British colonial official who collected Indian folktales whilst stationed in Punjab.[130] Naithani does not use this term solely to describe Temple and extends its use to relate to 'other folklore collectors whose primary role was representing British colonial interests in India'.[131] I extend this further to relate to any official, who represented the interests of a colonial regime whilst also collecting folklore in and from the colonised country in which they were stationed. This chapter brings together the folkloristic, anthropological, and historical narratives concerning British coloniser folklorists, and their collection

[130] Naithani, 'The Colonizer-Folklorist', p.1.

[131] Naithani, 'The Colonizer-Folklorist', p.1.

methods, motives and mindsets, whilst shining a particular light on Dayrell, about whom not much is written by scholars nor has anyone outside of the academy taken a special interest in him.

Dayrell came from a comfortable, middle class family who once owned Lilingstone Dayrell parish land and property.[132] He was the eldest son of Edmund Marmaduke Dayrell and Isabella Ann Elphinstone-Holloway, with Edmund being the last of the Dayrells to own the Lilingstone Dayrell parish land and property, selling it once his children were grown.[133] Dayrell initially studied law and practised as a solicitor before enlisting in the British army at age thirty in order to take part in the Second South African Boer war in 1900, where he joined the Imperial Yeomanry Regiment on short-term service, meaning he was expected to give one year's service unless the war in South Africa lasted longer, which it did, ending in 1902.[134] After this, Dayrell was transferred to the Southern Nigerian Regiment, rising through the colonial ranks, being promoted to the district commissioner of Ikom in Southern Nigeria by 1910.[135] Prior to becoming district commissioner, Dayrell would have first been appointed as a district officer cadet where he would have undertaken two years of extensive training and examinations before being promoted to assistant district officer. The next step for promotion was district officer, then district commissioner, the rank we know for certain that Dayrell

[132] London, The National Archives, Census Returns of England and Wales 1881, RG11/1484, fol.44, p.16.

[133] Devon, Anglican Parish Registers, England and Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index 1837-1915, fol.5b, p.135; Devon, Anglican Parish Registers, Church of England Births and Baptisms, p.510.

[134] London, The National Archives, War Office, WO128-4845/16.

[135] 1910 is the year in which *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* and 'Some Nsibidi Signs' were published, both of which refer to Dayrell as 'district commissioner of Southern Nigeria': see Elphinstone Dayrell, 'Title Page' in *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* ed. By Elphinstone Dayrell (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910); Elphinstone Dayrell, 'Some Nsibidi Signs', *MAN,* 10 (1910), 113-114 (p.113).

reached even if the exact year is uncertain. Dayrell does not return to practicing law, nor does he return to live in England full time after being recruited. Although he frequently visits England, as shown by inward and outward passenger list records, he always returned to Africa, where he remained living and working until his death in 1917.[136] It also appears that Dayrell did not marry, nor did he have any legitimate children as records show he was unmarried at age thirty when recruited for the army and upon his death the sum of £432 (£40,042.39 today) was left to his brothers-in-law Joseph Baldwin Nias and Edward Percival Whitely Hughes via probate, suggesting they were his next of kin.[137]

Dayrell makes up not only a part of the history of colonial Nigeria but also of the colonial folklore collections that were collected abroad and disseminated in Europe. Whilst it is important that he be entered into the conversation, it is also important that he be discussed as part of the wider picture concerning the history of colonial folkloristics, anthropological studies and colonial officials' contributions to both of those disciplines, no matter how problematic. Some coloniser folklorists worked in a more official governmental capacity than others. Robert Sutherland Rattray, for example, was one of the first to be appointed to an official role in 1920 in the then-named Gold Coast (now Ghana), whilst colonial administrators who were first appointed to official roles in Nigeria include C. K. Meek, H. F. Matthews and R. C. Abraham.[138] Other colonial administrators, such as political colonial

[136] London, The National Archives, Board of Trade: Outward Passenger Lists, BT27-406, 525, 578/16/1, 798/1, 832, 862, 880,1205/73; London, The National Archives, Board of Trade: Inward Passenger Lists, BT26-263/14, 287/22, 321/30, 377/30, 548/29, 555/22, 605/101, 626/80.

[137] London, Probate Registry, National Probate Calendar: Index of Wills and Administrations 1858-1995, p.55.

[138] Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within: The Social History of British Anthropology, 1885-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.203.

officer Allan Wolsey Cardinall, were relieved from their official duties to work anthropological-related activities.[139] You may notice that Dayrell is not listed here, and this is because Dayrell did not act in any official capacity and died in 1917, before any official governmental roles were created. Despite this, Dayrell produced two volumes of folktales, with the Royal Anthropological Institute holding the manuscripts for the second volume, *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria.* He published two articles concerning Nsibidi Signs, an ancient Nigerian system of writing that uses symbols, in the Royal Anthropological Institute's academic journal.

The next section will provide a narrative concerning Dayrell, which aims, as much as is possible, to provide contexts for the previously colonised peoples and their traditions whose culture exists in the English language and was sold in foreign bookshops, as well as investigating the methods and motives of the colonial collectors.

Colonial Methodologies

As an unofficial folklorist, Dayrell would have been part of colonial British folklorists who Naithani states 'were pioneers in their own fields of folklore collection' and 'their motivations determined the tenor of folklore scholarship all across the British Empire'.[140] During Britain's rule in West Africa, stories were often collected by colonisers of no or varying amounts of training in folkloristics or anthropology. Naithani notes that one of the reasons for 'collection of folklore of the colonized was aimed at their better control'.[141] It

[139] Kuklick, p.203.

[140] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.25.

[141] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.15.

must be noted that there is no record of formal folkloristic or anthropological training when it comes to Dayrell and those that did receive training, such as Rattray, were a rarity. Most relied on previously published texts or made up their own rules, meaning the information provided regarding who they consulted and where was very hit and miss, and differed from coloniser folklorist to coloniser folklorist.

Dayrell does not provide information regarding his methods for *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*. An educated presumption is that, because Longman, Green and Co. were a non-academic publisher and the targeted audience was the general public, the publisher and possibly Dayrell himself did not deem it necessary. However, under a new, more academic publisher, the Royal Anthropological Institute, Dayrell's methods for *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* are mentioned briefly in his 'Preface'. Here, Dayrell writes that the 'folk stories have been told to [him] by natives of the various countries to which they relate in the Ikom district of Southern Nigeria'.[142] Furthermore, Dayrell makes note of those he consulted for his article 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria' in quite some depth and provides a list of 'countries' and 'districts' from where the people he consulted came:

COUNTRY	**DISTRICT**
Efik	Calabar
Enfitop	Ikom
Attam	Obubra

[142] Elphinstone Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 41 (1911), 521-540 (p.522).

Olulumo	Ikom
Inde	Ikom
Indem	Obubra
Ibo	Bende
Akunakuna	Afikpo
Inkum	Ikom
Adda	Ibo Tribe
Injor	Ekoi tribe, Ikom District
Ogada	Obtibra
Akam	Ikom District [143]

It is evident that Dayrell has consulted people from multiple places in Southern Nigeria when investigating Nsibidi signs. However, Dayrell only seems to have consulted, or at least only published stories told by, storytellers from 'Akparabong', 'Inkum', 'Ikom' and 'Okuni' for *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* based on whom he credits as the storyteller at the end of each folktale.[144] These credits also provide information regarding who was consulted. The five people mentioned are named as 'an Akparabong native'; 'Abassi of Inkum'; Ennenni, a dancing-woman of Okuni; Ewonkom; and an Ikom woman.[145] Abassi, Ennenni and Ewonkom are credited multiple times for multiple folktales in slightly different ways. For example, Abassi is also referred to as 'a native of Inkum called Abassi' and 'Abassi, an

[143] Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', p.522.

[144] Dayrell, *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* p.28; p.15, p.19, p.21, p.22, p.23, p.25, p.31, p.36, p.40, p.44, p.56, p.83, p.94, p.96, p.97, p.49, p.51, p.53, p.54, p.81, p.89, p.105, p.117, p.59, p.61, p.64, p.67, p.70.

[145] Dayrell, *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* p.28, p.15, p.19, p.21, p.22, p.23, p.25, p.31, p.36, p.40, p.44, p.56, p.83, p.94, p.96, p.97, p.49, p.51, p.53, p.54, p.81, p.89, p.105, p.117, p.59, p.61, p.64, p.67, p.70.

Inkum boy'.[146] As this happens with more than one consultant, I am eager to take the stance that Dayrell is referring to the same person in various ways. There are also two people who remain relatively anonymous: 'an Akparabong native' and 'an Ikom woman'.[147] Dayrell simply refers to these storytellers by stating from where in the Ikom district they came, which may mean that he was not overly familiar with them. This seems to be the case as he knows the names of those who told him multiple stories, whereas these people only told him one, and each is left nameless. In 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', Dayrell also mentions two more male consultants although it is likely that he consulted more, and they are named as 'Etima, a Calabar man' and 'Insoh Agara, of Okuni'.[148] He did also consult women for this article and his second collection of folktales, and their significance will be discussed later in this section after exploring Dayrell's methods when observing Indigenous Nigerian peoples. Declaring who told him information helps to situate the stories in his second collection in a way that Dayrell did not attempt to do for his first and the Langs did not do at all. By this, I mean that it provides at least some context concerning from where the tales have originated.

Whilst Dayrell credits those who told him stories, he also admitted to observing people without permission as he mentions watching a man from Okuni called Insoh Agara speaking in Okuni 'unnoticed by him' whilst he was communicating in Nsibidi with other members of the Nsbidi-knowing society'.[149] Dayrell did so knowing that 'the men who understand

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[146] Dayrell, *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*, p.15, p.19.

[147] Dayrell, *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*, p.28, p.70.

[148] Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', p.523.

[149] Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria',

'Nsibidi are very reticent about giving any information on the subject', which is unethical and does not respect the boundaries placed by the Nigerian people.[150] With other consultants, however, Dayrell built a rapport, stating that is 'it only through natives whom I have known several years that I have been able to obtain the signs now given'.[151] Dayrell explains that 'the men [whom he consulted] are most particular that no other natives should be near for fear they might tell other people' and the younger men were 'afraid that they might be fined or punished by the chiefs of the society if they were found giving information to strangers'.[152] It seems that the men had every right to be afraid, as Dayrell notes that one of the signs represents an 'Nsibidi chief who went mad and was tied up because the members were afraid that he might tell the women or the strangers the secrets of the [Nsbidi] society', further emphasising the repercussions that Dayrell's consultants faced and the risk they were taking by feeding Dayrell information. Just the potential threat of the chief telling outsiders the society's secrets was enough for action, suggesting that it could be dangerous for those who are part of the society to divulge information to outsiders.[153] Despite this, Dayrell continued to build a relationship with his consultants and they trusted him enough to divulge culturally sensitive information; thus Dayrell was deemed trustworthy by some, which portrays him in a positive light and suggests that he treated people well, which cannot be said of all district

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p.523.

[150] Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', p.521.

[151] Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', p.521.

[152] Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', p.521.

[153] Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', p.522.

commissioners in West Africa. Despite this, Dayrell's methods are questionable as seen by the covert observations and his willingness to let people put themselves at risk so that he can publish protected information, to which even Nigerian women were not privy, in Britain.

Because of their exclusion from Nsibidi Society, the women who knew Nsibidi were 'very few', evidenced by a woman whom Dayrell approached in Nkum, who had tattoos consisting of Nsbidi signs but did not understand their meanings.[154] Still, Dayrell found and consulted women who were familiar with Nsibidi despite them being a rarity, whom he referred to as 'a singing and dancing girl, of Okuni, called Ennenni' and an 'old woman, called Abbassi' from whom he also collected folktales for his second collection.[155] Unlike other coloniser folklorists, such as Rattray, Cardinall and Crooke, Dayrell was able and willing to consult women for both his investigation concerning 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria' and *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* which was not the norm. Whilst Cardinall does overtly state the gender of the person whom he consulted, he states that he approached 'hunters' and 'peasants', and only ever uses male, he/him pronouns to refer to them, suggesting that he exclusively consulted men.[156] Furthermore, there are many stories surrounding men hunting and teaching their sons to hunt, as well as derogatory stories concerning 'how evil comes to man through his dalliance with women'.[157] As these stories were 'not repeated to women nor told in their hearing', it is

[154] Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', p.523.

[155] Dayrell, 'Further Notes on 'Nsibidi Signs with their Meanings from the Ikom District, Southern Nigeria', p.521, p.523.

[156] Alan Wolsey Cardinall, *Tales Told in Togoland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931), p.217.

[157] Cardinall, *Tales Told in Togoland,* p.217.

obvious that these stories at least were not told by women.[158] Cardinall's sexist attitudes towards women could be what prevented him from consulting them. In his commentary on a folktale about a man who brought his dead wife back to life using a 'magic tail', Cardinall states that it is the 'innate stupidity of women' that allowed the wife to throw away her husband's magical power.[159] However, sexist attitudes as a reason for not consulting women is not a universal conclusion and could also be due to cultural reasons. For example, Rattray only consulted one learned Hausa man called Mallam Shaihu.[160] Storytelling in Hausa culture was gender segregated: men would tell stories in a public place, whereas women could only perform them in a private, domestic arena.[161] If Hausa women could not perform in a public arena, Islamic Hausa cultural traditions and laws would have prevented Rattray from consulting them. The lack of woman consultants and storytellers credited in colonial collections makes the women who were consulted for *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* significant, as these relations suggest that Dayrell was working within a culture with less restrictive rules for women and that his approach to collection was not limited by his potentially misogynist views. This suggests that Dayrell was willing to create rapport with people despite their gender, but it is important to remember that what Dayrell was doing was not entirely selfless; publishing folkloric and anthropological information had the potential to further a colonial administrator's career as it provided all-important information to Britain

[158] Cardinall, T*ales Told in Togoland,* p.217.

[159] Cardinall, *Tales Told in Togoland,* p.220.

[160] See Robert Sutherland Rattray and Mallam Shaihu, eds., *Hausa Folk-lore, Customs, Proverbs, etc.* (London: Abela Publishing, 1913), Amazon Kindle e-book.

[161] Sani Abba Aliyu, 'Hausa Women as Oral Storytellers in Northern Nigeria' in *Writing African Women: Gender, Popular Culture and Literature in West Africa,* ed. by Stephanie Newell (London: Zed Books, 1997), pp.150-156 (p.151).

that could be used against the colonised peoples.[162]

Preservation of native culture was part of the motivation for collecting folklore in the colonies, evidenced by Cardinall's note that he wanted to preserve the part of the ever changing way of life in Togoland and the Gold Coast as those native to the district 'have broken their traditions' and before long 'they will forget' them, while collecting was also motivated by career progression.[163] Whilst Dayrell, Cardinall and their colleagues may have had good intentions concerning preservation, they were also working for an institution that cared more about its own preservation than that of the colonised peoples and their traditions. Where the information collected by colonial administrators was useful, however, was in Britain's need to 'get to know the people brought under its control'.[164] This 'need' motivated Britain as a state to 'support' individual anthropological and folkloristic efforts indirectly, mainly by 'granting recognition'.[165] This recognition would primarily take the form of the officer being viewed as an expert in the customs of his stationed district and they would thus be called upon to act as consultants to the state when needed.[166] It is Britain as an empire and governmental institution that benefits the most here due to the collectors acting unofficially.

Collectors were not acting as an official government representative in this capacity whilst doing so and were not being directly supported or funded by the state, whilst the state uses

[162] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.25.

[163] Allan Wolsey Cardinall, *The Natives of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast: Their Customs, Religion and Folklore* (London: Routledge, 1920), p.3.

[164] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.25.

[165] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.25.

[166] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.25.

the information the collectors have gathered to further its political agenda at no extra cost to itself.[167] This does not mean that the collectors were unaware of this unwritten arrangement, however, and knew that they could still benefit from it. As a colonial official their main role is to uphold the state, maintain British rule and implement British laws. As a result, they have been willing to provide often sensitive information concerning colonised peoples to the state knowing that they would benefit from workplace recognition and perhaps career advancement through being viewed as an expert on the colony in question. For instance, after being made a government anthropologist, 'Rattray was called upon to play a major role in the golden stool controversy'.[168]

The Golden Stool is the symbol of divine power in Ashanti culture. It is said to be the seat of the king's soul, and sits next to the king's throne with the king being the only person allowed to touch it directly.[169] It is also said to house the nation's spirit, including the living, dead and not yet born.[170] The Golden Stool thus holds a lot of cultural and spiritual significance for the Ashanti people, so when the Governor of the Gold Coast, Frederick Hodgson, demanded to sit on it, the Ashanti people were unsettled and this led to the War of the Golden Stool.[171] In order to preserve the Golden Stool's sanctitude, it was put into hiding by the Ashanti people so that it would not be threatened by the British again.[172] However, road workers later

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[167] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.25.

[168] John Carmichael, *African Eldorado: Gold Coast to Ghana* (London: Duckworth Books, 1993), pp.176–77.

[169] T. C. McCaskie, 'The Golden Stool at the End of the Nineteenth Century: Setting the Record Straight', *Ghana Studies*, 3 (2000), 61-96 (p.71).

[170] Robert Sutherland Rattray, *Ashanti Law and Constitution,* 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.178.

[171] Carmichael, pp.176–77.

[172] Carmichael, pp.176–77.

discovered it and stripped the stool of some of its ornaments.[173] They were initially taken into British protective custody but later tried under Ashanti custom and sentenced to death until British authorities intervened and the road workers were banished instead.[174] It was Rattray's knowledge of and investigations concerning the history of the Golden Stool that 'laid the foundation of new relations between the [British] government and people of Ashanti'.[175] Rattray thus played a major role in the agreement to spare the lives of the road workers in return for an agreement that the British would not interfere in the matters of the stool in the future.[176] Before being promoted to government anthropologist, Rattray had been collecting folklore and writing about Ashanti peoples for a long time. It was this work that saw Rattray promoted to government anthropologist in the first place, enabling him to find a compromise between the British and the Ashanti when it later came to the Golden Stool. There are many benefits present here that would have created motivation for officials to collect, the main ones being preservation of the British Empire and self-preservation in the form of career advancement. Rattray's knowledge was used as a way for the British to show their authority and undermine the decision of Ashanti law, whilst Rattray's knowledge gained in an unofficial capacity has evidently led to him being called upon and being appointed as official governmental anthropologist. There are other ways that self-preservation and career advancement as a motivation can manifest; for example, Temple, known for collecting in India, 'was invited to deliver the inaugural lecture at the establishment of the Anthropology Department at the University of Cambridge; and William Crooke's anthropological

[173] Carmichael, pp.176–77.

[174] Carmichael, pp.176–77.

[175] Carmichael, pp.176–77.

[176] Anon., 'Robert Sutherland Rattray', *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 37.148 (1938), 325 (p.325).

questionnaire became an important source for the formation of census categories in India'.[177] These were opportunities that colonial officials who did not collect folklore or undertake other anthropological work simply did not receive, thus those who were driven to further themselves were motivated by these kinds of recognition by both the state and wider organisations.

Dayrell's case is notable as he very obviously put a lot of effort into his folkloristic and anthropological work, but it appears that he did not receive the same recognition as others did. This could simply be because Dayrell's work had taken place five years before the creation of an official anthropological role in Africa, but it is also possible that Dayrell suffered ill health, which frequently took him back to England after his last publication in 1913 after which Dayrell died only five years later. Although Dayrell would travel to and from England and Nigeria frequently from 1906 to 1910, he stopped travelling altogether from 1910 to 1913.[178] Notably, his folkloric and anthropological works were published between these dates, so perhaps Dayrell was busy trying to further his career and gain some recognition as other coloniser folklorists had. Coincidentally, the first time he is publicly named district commissioner was also in 1910. It is entirely possible that Dayrell had been promoted and taken on other projects, and that was why he stopped travelling as he had more responsibility, as well as extracurricular activities on which to focus. However, from January 1913 to February 1914, Dayrell made two long trips to England.[179] The first trip was five

[177] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.25.

[178] The National Archives, Board of Trade: Inward Passenger Lists, BT26-263/14, 287/22, 321/30, 377/30; The National Archives, Board of Trade: Outward Passenger Lists BT27-1152/68, 1257/49.

[179] The National Archives, Board of Trade: Inward Passenger Lists, BT26-548/29, 555/22; The National Archives, Board of Trade: Outward Passenger Lists, BT27-1152/93, 1208/75.

months long, from January to May and the next was four months long, from November to February.[180] He did not travel back to England until 1915, staying four months between April and August, and returned to England again in 1916 and stayed for three months, before returning to Nigeria in January 1917.[181] Dayrell died in Nigeria in December of the same year at the age of forty-seven.[182] The sudden resurgence in trips back to the UK, especially with the majority taking place within the same year suggests a change of circumstances for Dayrell, causing him to stop publishing, but keep his job in the colonial service whilst also being granted periods of extended leave. As Dayrell was only forty-seven years old when he died, it would not be entirely unreasonable to surmise that Dayrell had become ill and needed medical treatment that could not be offered in Nigeria, hence his frequent travels back to England. This would also explain the lack of ease in finding information regarding Dayrell as he had just started to receive recognition, but his work had been stopped abruptly for reasons that we can only assume at this point. Dayrell sought opportunities from outside institutions, such as Longman, Green and Co., and the Royal Anthropological Institute, whether for the wellbeing of the empire, self-preservation or preservation of the colonialist culture or all of the above. Despite whether Dayrell and others like him intended to or not, he was contributing to the colonisation of folklore, by simply collecting it, which meant it could be used to tighten the British colonial empire's control of the colonised masses.

From whom, from where and why Dayrell collected folktales are important pieces of colonial

[180] The National Archives, Board of Trade: Inward Passenger Lists', BT26 – 548/29, 555/22; BT27-1152/93, 1208/75.

[181] The National Archives, Board of Trade: Inward Passenger Lists, BT26 – 605/101, 626/80; The National Archives, Board of Trade: Outward Passenger Lists, BT27-1205/73.

[182] Probate Registry, National Probate Calendar: Index of Wills and Administrations 1858-1995, p.55.

Nigerian history, showing how pieces of Nigerian culture were colonised, reflecting the wider picture of the colonial regime in Nigeria. Even when the colonial collector has the best of intentions, there are negative repercussions, which change, appropriate, and dislocate the stories, which are censored and rendered incomplete. In the 'Preface' to *Ikom Folktales,* Dayrell states that 'in all cases [the folktales] have had to be translated by an interpreter, and frequently it has been found necessary to employ two'; however, he does not mention the interpreters by name.[183] Dayrell explains that he could not provide 'fairly literal' translations of the folktales during the translation process as this would permit a 'larger expenditure of time than [he has] at [his] disposal'.[184] As collecting folktales is not his full-time job and he is not receiving payment to undertake this work in any official capacity, this initially seems like a reasonable statement. He also notes that the number of languages spoken in the district would make this a near impossible task.[185] There is an insistence, however, that the stories had been 'set down' as close as possible to the way in which they were related to Dayrell, despite admitting to making changes to them.[186] He insists that 'the only alterations made' were those he thought 'necessary to render the tales into simple English' as 'bush English' would not be understood by the wider English-speaking world'.[187] This is something for which Dayrell received criticism when *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* was published as other coloniser folklorists, such as Rattray, approached folklore collection in more scholarly ways.[188] However, it is worth remembering that this was not Dayrell's full-time job, nor was

[183] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.i.

[184] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.i.

[185] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.i.

[186] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.i.

[187] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.i.

[188] See Anon., 'Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria (Book Review)', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature,*

he being paid by the Empire to undertake this work, making his time restricted and his access to resources limited. Understanding these circumstances does not negate how they contributed to the further dislocation of the stories he included and edited for his collections, but it does suggest a lack of malice in Dayrell's intentions.

Other unofficial coloniser folklorists did take the time to do what Dayrell suggested was not possible due to time constraints. Before acting in an official capacity, Rattray published two volumes of folktales in 1907 and 1913, respectively, and another in 1932 once appointed. Unlike Dayrell, Rattray received formal anthropological training at Oxford University, making his methods more 'by-the-book'.[189] Even prior to being an officially appointed anthropologist, Rattray's methods might be as close to ethical as collection and translation processes could be established during colonial occupation as can be seen in his and Mallam Shaihu's collection of Hausa folktales.[190] As a result, he was quick to critique the methods of other coloniser folklorists because they did not speak the native language of the people from whom they were collecting oral narratives and did not view these collected and translated tales as true to the culture, communities or peoples from which the stories originated.[191] Rattray was also an interpreter of Hausa, Chinyabi and Mole, meaning he was fluent in the 'original' languages in which the folktales were told. He was also working as assistant district commissioner in Ashanti (now South Ghana), and thus had access to an area with an

Science and Art, 110 (1910), 432 (p.432).

[189] Kuklick, p.315.

[190] See Rattray and Mallam Shaihu.

[191] Robert Sutherland Rattray, 'Author's Note' in *Hausa Folk-Lore: Customs, Proverbs, Etc.*, trans. by Robert Sutherland Rattray and Mallam Shaihu, ed. by Robert Sutherland Rattray and Mallam Shaihu (London: Clarendon Press, 1913), locs.84-170 (loc.101).

established tradition of Arabic orthography.[192] Because of this, Rattray was able to work with Mallam Shaihu, who first wrote the collection down in Arabic and communicated with Rattray in Hausa, in order to help him with the translation process.[193] Likely due to Rattray having received training, he also listed his methods clearly and acknowledged the work that Mallam Shaihu contributed to *Hausa Folk-lore*, even though Mallam Shaihu was not listed as an editor or author on the front cover, but is credited within the text, which has the effect of downplaying his contribution to the collection. There is, however, no note of censorship here, unlike in Dayrell's work.

In Dayrell's second collection, he writes that 'certain passages containing objectional [sic] matter have been omitted'.[194] As with the Langs, Dayrell was living in an era where morality was a huge concern, which led to censorship of many texts, including folktale collections, literary works and more. Some of the censorship would have been outside of Dayrell's control, and dictated by publishers and pressure from the middle class, book-buying public, meaning that Dayrell would have had little choice when it came to certain topics, especially with a more commercial publisher as Longman, Green and Co.[195] However, whilst censorship was still evident in his second collection, published by the Royal Anthropological Institute, choices were made to provide the information whilst cushioning the blow of inappropriate material. At the end of *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*, a folktale containing 'objectional [sic] matter' appears in Latin but does not appear in the manuscript itself, titled

[192] Rattray, 'Author's Note', loc.109.

[193] Rattray, 'Author's Note' loc.109.

[194] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.vii.

[195] Gilbert, p.2.

'Quomodo evenit ut Penis primum cum Vagina coitt'.[196] This translates to 'what happens to the penis sheath with a first coupling'.[197] Dayrell makes no comments or explanation as to why it appears in Latin when the rest of the stories are in English. However, it is likely that this folktale has been censored because it concerns what happens to the penis during the first experience of sexual intercourse, which Dayrell might have deemed too objectionable to appear in English, but worthy enough to be included in the collection in a censored way. Ennenni, 'a singing and dancing girl of Okuni' told Dayrell this story, which might have also contributed to it being censored due to the west's idea of gender and the belief that it is unladylike for a woman to talk of such things.[198] We can thus only assume that the reason for censoring the story is first and foremost for its content coupled with a woman having told it, as this would make it even more unsavoury for a western mindset in the early 1900s, especially in a society preoccupied with morality. The moral concern thus seeps into the creations of Southern Nigerian peoples, contributing to their further displacement as it interferes with important parts of Nigerian traditions in order to appropriate it for an audience that exists outside of Southern Nigerian culture.

Like the Langs, censorship is at least in part related to the era in which Dayrell was working. However, censorship was dictated by audience rather than legality, and *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* published by the Royal Anthropological Institute was aimed at a more academic audience who would have wanted to see the tales in their purest form,

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[196] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.vii.

[197] Anon., 'Quomodo evenit ut Penis primum cum Vagina coitt' in *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* ed. by Elphinstone Dayrell (London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1913), pp.100-101.

[198] Dayrell, *Ikom Folk Stories,* p.101.

especially if critiques of the Langs' Coloured Fairy Books and Dayrell's first collection are considered. In contrast to the Langs where we did not know what parts of the stories were censored and what was 'original', Dayrell produced a whole 'unsavoury' tale in Latin. Whilst this is very clearly a form of censorship, it meant that only those who were educated in the Latin language could read it, and it points clearly to the text's audience but also prevents those at whom the text is not aimed from accessing it, which is classist at best. The omissions, censorship and translation into standard English creates another layer of the stories' displacement. Having already been dislocated by being inserted into a collection, which is made up of differing Indigenous Nigerian peoples, being edited and appropriated for the English speaking world and prioritising their ease of reading and their sensibilities colonises the folktales just as much as the people who have created them. With this in mind, I will explore the colonial mindsets of those collecting folklore in the British colonies in the next section.

Colonial Mindsets

The mindsets of colonial collectors obviously differ from person to person, but this section aims to provide an overview of Dayrell's views towards the people from whom he is collecting folktales parallel to the views held by other coloniser folklorists and Andrew Lang in order to appropriately show wider society and the colonial mindsets towards Britain's overseas subjects. There is a 'popular image of European colonial administrators as men who were characteristically genial, kind-hearted, and unselfishly dedicated to the welfare of their African wards', thus suggesting that their attitudes towards colonised peoples were of caring and dedicated nature.[199] Felix K. Ekechi's study of district commissioner of Owerri, Harold

[199] Felix K. Ekechi, 'Portrait of a Colonizer: H. M. Douglas in Colonial Nigeria, 1897-1920', *African Studies*

Morday Douglas, however, tells a different story.[200] Many European colonial administrators, especially early officials, were often 'imperious and overbearing' as well as 'consciously callous and brutal' in their treatment of African peoples, as exemplified by Douglas.[201] Douglas was notorious for his mistreatment of Owerri peoples, with elders of the Owerri communities telling Ekechi that it is hard for an outsider to 'grasp the degree of [their] suffering and the fear that was generated in [their] minds'.[202] These fears were the product of 'the series of military aggressions [known as 'pacification' in official records] which Douglas and his successors directed against the different communities in the Owerri district for the purpose of establishing British rule in the area'.[203] Although it is not suspected that Dayrell used the same overt cruelty towards communities in the Ikom area, it is important to break the spell that promotes colonial officials as rescuers of native peoples when they were part of the wider problem, whether their intentions and treatment of colonised communities were good, bad or worse. It is clear through Douglas's treatment of Owerri peoples that his mindset towards them was the latter.

Unlike Douglas, Dayrell built rapport with peoples living in his district, with individuals feeling comfortable to divulge protected cultural information, such as the topic of Nsibidi signs, and information about their culture, suggesting that there is a correlation concerning administrators' interest (or lack thereof) in the culture of the colonised peoples and the administrator's treatment of and attitudes towards colonised peoples. In order to build

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Review, 26.1 (1983), 25-50 (p.25).

[200] Ekechi, p.25.

[201] Ekechi, p.25.

[202] Ekechi, p.26.

[203] Ekechi, p.26.

relationships, one would think Dayrell's treatment of colonised peoples could not have been outwardly callous or brutal. It could well be that Dayrell remained courteous to collect the information. It is also important to remember that whilst Dayrell might have been able to create a rapport with the people living in the areas in which he was stationed, he was still a British colonial administrator, helping to establish and impose laws, policies and make decisions that affected Ikom peoples yet have the interests of the British empire and not Southern Nigerian peoples in mind. There is also something rather unethical about Dayrell gaining people's trust only to publish the protected information divulged to him in confidence in *MAN* (now referred to as *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*). Dayrell's actions are especially questionable when considering that folkloric and anthropological information collected from colonised peoples was often gathered and used against the communities native to the colonies in the political interests of the British Empire.[204] All of this situates Dayrell's mindset towards the peoples from whom he was collecting as questionable. Whilst there is no outright evidence of mistreatment or bad attitudes present, his actions suggest that he did not always have the best interests of the Ikom peoples at heart and that they came secondary to his own interests and that of the empire's.

Although limited in amount, Dayrell's attitude towards Southern Nigerian peoples and culture appears in more subtle ways. As previously noted, Dayrell makes a distinction between standard English and what he calls 'bush English'.[205] He notes criticism which *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* received for not having a standard English version of a tale with an unedited, uninterpreted or untranslated version sitting next to it.[206] His use of

[204] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.25.

[205] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.vii.

[206] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.vii.

Standard English within the texts itself and his choice not to use bush English at all is not only a notable aspect of Dayrell's methods but also an example of his mindset towards the peoples of Southern Nigeria. Dayrell had the folktales interpreted into 'simple English' because he thought 'some of the stories as told would be quite unfit for publication' if left in 'bush English', which would 'not be understood'.[207] Dayrell includes an example of 'bush English' in his 'Preface' to *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* as an attempt to prove his point:

> "My father and father (grandfather) catch one man goat and one woman goat. They done born two piccane. One piccane done die and left one piccane. Them piccane, them left, born two piccane. My father and father done die and him brother take all them thing; liut he be big hunter man and no care them goat too much, so he done dash my father. My father catch one slave man, they call 'im Okon and he good man, so my father dash him them two goat. Okon catch wife and two piccane. One be mammie piccane. they call 'im Awa, she fine too much, when she done grow I marry her proper and take her brother Abassi for make my head boy. Last moon I send him Calabar for my canoe with twenty bag kernel and one puncheon palm oil. I tell 'im for factory and bring tobacco and cloth and gin. He done catch them thing and one night he stop for one country, lie no know how them call him. Them people come and thief them gin for night time but he no look them man cause he live for sleep, so I make them boy pay for them gin and now I want catch them thief man"'.[208]

Dayrell states that this is an example of 'a native' who is making a complaint because 'certain goods belonging to him have been stolen and he wants to have the thief punished'.[209]

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[207] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.vii.

[208] Quoted in Dayrell, 'Preface', p.v.

[209] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.v.

Whilst a collection of folktales written in 'bush English' would take time to read and understand, it is not indecipherable and a note to help the reader understand the alternative grammar and unknown words could have made the texts more accessible. Alternatively, as suggested by a reviewer of *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* Dayrell could have provided a 'bush English' version 'on one side of the page and a translation on the other'.[210] The problem here seems to be Dayrell's lack of time to do this, rather than bush English not being understood as he was not officially employed to undertake this work, nor was he being paid for his efforts.[211] In Dayrell's defence, he would not have had the only say in this. His first collection was published by Longman, Green and Co., who would not have been looking for works of anthropology but foreign stories that children could enjoy and that would make money. Dayrell's first collection was modelled on the Langs' Fairy books and aimed at the same audience, thus they did not have a scholarly audience in mind as explored in the previous section. Dayrell's options would have been limited in this case because he would have little say in how the collection was marketed and who wrote the introduction, their attitudes and how they would forever be attached to his work. Whilst I do not think Dayrell meant any direct harm towards Southern Nigerian peoples or their culture, there is evidence that he was a product of his time, which is not surprising given the wealthy, middle-class family from which he came, his level of education, military experience, and colonial position. It would be strange if he were in no way a product of his time. By modern standards, 'bush English' is a derogatory term, which refers to Nigerian Pidgin English and the notion is that those who use it and do not speak in the standardised version of English are uneducated.[212]

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[210] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.v.

[211] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.25.

[212] Jane Wilkinson, 'Nigerian Pidgin and Comedy', *Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente,* 41.4 (1986), 616-626 (p.617).

Whilst we can never know whether Dayrell's use of the phrase 'bush English' was intentionally derogatory, the fact that he deems the language 'unpublishable' suggests that the language is viewed as inferior to the standard variation.[213] As well as Dayrell's potential attitudes, these comments also uncover his intended audience: literate, English-speaking Britons and, by default, Europeans who use the English as a lingua franca, which is ironic considering how pidgin English was and is used as a lingua franca itself. Furthermore, as Dayrell states that 'in all cases [the folktales] had to be translated by an interpreter', one can come to the educated assumption that he did not know any of the native languages and was not able to fully understand 'bush English' without it becoming a chore.[214]

Dayrell also uses the example of 'bush English' to demonstrate 'a native's' long-winded way of talking as he writes that 'in several of them the greater part of the tale has nothing, apparently, to do with the main object, which frequently might be dismissed in a few sentences' and they 'can never come to the point at once but must always first beat about the bush'.[215] Whilst Dayrell uses these points to justify his methods, they tell us more about his mindset. He finds the way in which native people communicate tedious, with half of it unnecessary. Instead of properly analysing what they have said to provide a clearer meaning of a folktale, he is dismissive and simply decides what is important or not to publish without considering how it will impact the stories in the long term. Dayrell's attitudes towards bush English and 'the natives' who use it thus affect how he approaches editing a collection of their stories, favouring the English reader over remaining true to the ways in which the stories are told, which adds to the dislocation, appropriation and provides a misleading and

[213] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.vii.

[214] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.vi.

[215] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.vi.

incomplete representation of Southern Nigerian peoples.

Having previously and briefly discussed the suggested titles that appear in Dayrell's manuscript, I argue that the list proves his disloyalty to those who tell him stories. They are as follows:

> Native Tales of Cannibalism, Witchcraft and Juju from Southern Nigeria.
>
> Cannibalism, Juju and Poisoning in Southern Nigeria.
>
> Weird Practices from Southern Nigeria.
>
> Tales of Cannibalism, Juju etc. from Southern Nigeria.
>
> More Stories of Cannibalism, Juju, etc. from Southern Nigeria.
>
> Cannibalism, Human Sacrifices, Juju as Told by Natives of Southern Nigeria.
>
> Native Stories of Cannibalism, Juju etc. from the Cross River Southern Nigeria.
>
> Folk Stories from the Cross River Southern Nigeria.
>
> Cross River Stories of Cannibalism, Juju etc. Told by Natives.
>
> Tales of Cannibalism, Juju and Other Native Stories from the Ikom District Southern Nigeria.
>
> Cannibalism, Witchcraft and Juju on the Cross River, Southern Nigeria as Told by the Natives.
>
> Southern Nigerian Folk Stories Relating to People and Animals, Human Sacrifices,

Witchcraft, Cannibalism and Poison.[216]

These suggested titles, such as 'Native Tales of Cannibalism, Witchcraft and Juju from Southern Nigeria'; 'Southern Nigerian Folk Stories Relating to People and Animals, Human Sacrifices, Witchcraft, Cannibalism and Poison' play on the 'uncivilised' stereotype of African people.[217] By singling out what Sartre says the west sees as 'mumbo-jumbo', such as 'witchcraft' and 'juju', as well as what would have been viewed as 'savage' acts by the west, such as cannibalism and sacrifice, Dayrell's suggested titles Other the people and culture from which the stories came.[218] These titles become part of what Said calls the 'discourse of empire' or 'colonial discourse' in which the Orient (in this case Indigenous Nigerian peoples) is positioned the as Other in relation to the west and the way the west views itself.[219] Furthermore, these kinds of stories do exist within the text, but they do not appear enough to warrant including these themes in the title of the collection. For instance, 'cannibalism' is present in ten out of twelve of Dayrell's suggested titles when there are no more than two stories concerning it.[220] When it is not used, the practices of Southern Nigeria are simply

[216] London, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, More Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, MS 22, fol. 3v.

[217] Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, More Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, MS 22, fol. 3v.

[218] Said, *Orientalism,* pp.1-2; Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, More Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, MS 22, fol. 3v.

[219] Said, *Orientalism,* loc.168, pp.1-2; Shehla Burney, 'Orientalism: The Making of the Other', *Counterpoints*, 417 (2012), 23-39 (p.23).

[220] Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, More Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, MS 22, fol. 3v.

described as 'weird'.[221] The suggested titles thus reinforce the western idea that Southern Nigerian people are inferior, uncivilised, strange, and in need of western intervention as is also suggested by Andrew Lang in his 'Introduction' to *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*. Whether Dayrell meant to or not, he was willing to perpetuate negative stereotypes to sell the book of censored stories that belonged to other cultures, once again suggesting that Dayrell is willing to provide a misleading representation of Southern Nigerian peoples for his own gain.

Despite his willingness to use harmful stereotypes for his own gain, Dayrell never critiques the stories or the peoples from which they originated in an overtly derogatory way. In a somewhat surprising and unexpected 'feminist' stance, Dayrell compares the 'dowry' or 'bride price' to slavery:

> It is therefore often somewhat difficult to distinguish the difference between the dowry paid for a girl on her marriage and the price which was formerly paid for a slave, seeing that the inclinations of the girl are not consulted and she has absolutely no say in the matter of a choice of husband.[222]

Thus, Dayrell critiques the idea of the South Nigerian dowry by comparing it to slavery.[223] He compares the dowry to 'the price formally paid for a slave', alluding to the fact that it is an outdated process that does not happen in Europe anymore, thus subtly noting his

[221] Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, More Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, MS 22, fol. 3v.

[222] Dayrell, 'Preface', pp.iv-v.

[223] Dayrell, 'Preface', pp.iv-v.

disapproval of the dowry.[224] The reason he gives for this is that 'the inclinations of the girl' are not considered and she has 'absolutely no say' when it comes to a 'choice of husband', therefore uncovering Dayrell's potential belief that the girls' inclinations should be considered in the marriage process and his disapproval of arranged marriages.[225] Although Dayrell would have been unlikely to describe it as such, this is a western feminist standpoint that assumes that the girl secretly objects to her arranged marriage and that she is simply a passive participant. This kind of thinking is also a contemporary issue, according to Raksha Pande, and is seen in contemporary British newspapers where journalists 'elide arranged marriages with forced marriages and represent women in such marriages as victims of their culture who are in need of liberation'.[226] J. K. Puar refers to this representation as 'universal arranged marriage', wherein arranged marriages are viewed as 'a characteristic of patriarchal societies' and are conflated with the 'practice of forced marriage', even though research shows that arranged and forced marriages are very different.[227] Although Puar and Pande are referring to Asian communities in more contemporary times, the assumption that women have no autonomy in arranged marriages is also shared by Dayrell. The idea that women are passive in these kinds of arrangements is a common assumption of the west, and was also evident in the case of the Sati widow sacrifice, wherein 'the Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it', which was banned by British during early

[224] Dayrell, 'Preface', pp.iv-v.

[225] Dayrell, 'Preface', pp.iv-v.

[226] Raksha Pande, '"I Arranged My Own Marriage": Arranged Marriages and Post-Colonial Feminism', *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 22.2 (2015), 172-187 (p.172).

[227] J. K. Puar, 'Resituating Discourses of "Whiteness" and "Asianness" in Northern England', *Socialist Review,* 24.1-2 (1995), pp.21-53 (p.24); Pande, p.172.

colonisation of India.[228] However, the British never thought to consider that they might have 'actually wanted to die'.[229] Spivak posits that 'the abolition of this rite by the British has been generally understood as a case of "white men saving brown women from brown men"' and insists that the protection of women becomes a 'signifier for the establishment of a good society without considering the differences in culture'.[230] This attitude is very similar to not just Dayrell's but to the west and 'white' people in a more generalised sense, showing Dayrell as a product of his time despite his best intentions.

A key example of Dayrell being a product of his time is his continual reference to people who are Indigenous to Southern Nigeria as 'the natives': for example, Dayrell writes that 'Nsbidi signs 'Nos. 118 to 141' were told to him by the '**The native**, Insoh Agara, of Okuni,[who] is well versed in 'Nsibidi, and is also an expert in the secret pantomimic code of communication' [bold emphasis mine].[231] In their study of the evolutionary use of the noun 'native', S. Fitzmaurice reminds us that the word became associated with 'a particular kind of speaker, one who would assert that a native is of "inferior status": freq[uently] with a suggestion of inferior status, culture, etc., and hence (esp[ecially] in modern usage) considered offensive"'.[232] Although Dayrell's usage may not be considered 'modern', the notion behind the usage remains the same: the usage 'illuminate[s] the history of native in

[228] Gayarti Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), pp.66-111 (p.93).

[229] Spivak, p.93.

[230] Spivak, pp.93-94.

[231] Dayrell, 'Further Notes on Nsibidi Signs', p.523.

[232] S. Fitzmaurice, 'When Natives became Africans: A Historical Sociolinguistic Study of Semantic Change in Colonial Discourse', *Journal of Historical Sociolinguistics*, 3.1 (2017), 1-36 (p.7).

terms of Britain's history as an imperial power and her colonial possessions' because it alludes to '[a] member of the indigenous ethnic group of a country or region, as distinguished from foreigners, especially European colonists'.[233] Dayrell's use of the definite article before 'natives' further distinguishes between himself and other European colonists, and those who are Indigenous to the land which Europeans have invaded, because it symbolises generalisation and leaves no room for individuality. Although Dayrell never directly makes this comparison, it is also obvious that the binary opposition to 'the natives' is 'the non-native' – in this case Europeans. The fact that the European end of the binary opposition is never actually declared suggests that this is assumed to be the 'norm' and situates 'the native' as a test subject of sorts whose 'strange' traditions and way of life ought to be investigated. This opposition seeps into Dayrell's work on *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* and *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* whether it is consciously done so or not, rendering them colonised and infused with western bias. However, Dayrell is a lot more subtle than others, such as Andrew Lang, when it comes to his mindset concerning non-European peoples and their culture, but it does not mean that Dayrell's more subtle attitudes are not harmful.

The Langs' approach to editing collections of fairy and folktales has left a long-term impact, lasting far beyond their lifetimes. This has led to the dislocation of fairy and folktales world-wide as publishers have noted the success of the Coloured Fairy Books and attempted to capitalise on it by blindly mimicking them with little thought to how problematic they may be in terms of appropriation and censorship, leaving the stories included not only dislocated but colonised. Published by the same publishing house, Dayrell's first collection mirrors the Coloured Fairy Books. This collection, obviously aimed at a general audience, credits no one

[233] Fitzmaurice, p.7.

and provides no insight as to Dayrell's methods. Dayrell's second collection, published by the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, is very different. In it, Dayrell credits those who told him stories, writes a preface including some information on his methods, and, although very sparingly, provides a few useful footnotes. Dayrell's attempt is not perfect and there is little to no attempt to contextualise the stories, but the two publishers required and expected different things for their differing audiences. Despite this effort, the tales included in *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* are still very much dislocated in more ways than one, having had unsavoury topics omitted and censored. It is very clear that Victorian sensibilities and concern with morality that made up much of the time in which the Langs were curating their series bled into the Edwardian period, the era in which Dayrell was collecting and editing his volumes. This concern and the actions of the Langs and Dayrell has resulted in fairy and folktales from around the world being misrepresented, dislocated, colonised and appropriated, meaning they are not reliable representations of the cultures from which they originate and has contributed to the present day need to decolonise folklore and fairy tale studies. Bringing the Langs and Dayrell together has exemplified that a colonial frame of mind was present both at home and abroad, with similar methods being used to appropriate stories from around the world for a British audience. The most surprising finding here has been that Dayrell, whilst being a colonial administrator and still a product of his time, showed more acceptance and was more progressive in his attitudes towards Southern Nigerian peoples, than Andrew Lang whose views were overtly racist. Whilst Dayrell seems to be more progressive than most, it is important to remember that he also profited from and had an active role in upholding the British empire, which used the information he and his colleagues collected for its own gain, leading me to conclude that the colonial collection of non-European folklore is complex and imperfect. With the efforts of the Langs and Dayrell in mind, the next chapter will explore how more recent editors of Nigerian folktale collections

have made great efforts to preserve culture, tradition, and oral origins of Igbo folktales they have curated for their collections in ways that European colonial collectors have not.

Chapter Two

Igbo Folktales: From Mouth to Paper

This chapter explores three folktale volumes of two contemporary curators and one coloniser folklorist: *Folktales from Igboland* (2016), edited by Clifford N. Ugochukwu; *Folktales from Igboland* (2021) edited by May Ikokwu; and *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria* (1910), edited by Elphinstone Dayrell. As noted in the previous chapter, Dayrell was once the district commissioner of Ikom, Southern Nigeria, and collected and published two volumes of Southern Nigerian folktales whilst stationed in the area: his first was published by Longman, Green and Co., and his second Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. Dayrell fancied himself an anthropologist, and wrote articles concerning Nsibidi signs and their meanings, which were also published by the Royal Anthropological Institute. Unlike Dayrell, Ugochukwu and Ikokwu were born in Anambra State, Nigeria, and grew up in Igboland, immersed in Igbo culture.[234] Ugochukwu is an educator at both secondary and university level, as well as a writer and a curator of Igbo folktales. His first publication was an Igbo short story, 'Ebubedike na Igwekala' (1965). After this, he co-edited and published *Omalinze: A Book of Igbo Folktales* (1977), wrote *Isu Factor in Nnewi History* (2000), a work of non-fiction concerning local Nigerian history. Subsequently, he edited and self-published *Folktales from Igboland*, one of the texts on which my analysis will focus.[235] May Ikokwu worked in engineering until 2010 and founded the NGO Save Our Heritage Initiative in 2011 because of her concern that Indigenous West African cultures and their traditions

[234] Clifford N. Ugochukwu, *Clifford N. Ugochukwu* (n.d.) <https://cliffordugochukwu.academia.edu/> [accessed 13 June 2022], para. 1 of 1.

[235] Ugochukwu, *Clifford N. Ugochukwu*, para. 1 of 1.

were vanishing. [236] It is this concern that pushed her to put together and publish *Folktales from Igboland,* fearing that the Igbo tradition of oral storytelling would be lost forever without intervention.[237]

The respective collections of Dayrell, Ugochukwu and Ikokwu have been chosen for this chapter because they have varying levels of Igbo oral narrative tradition existing within them, despite being presented orthographically. Unsurprisingly, due to him being an outsider and a colonial administrator, Dayrell's collection does not include as much of a focus on their oral origins as those of Ugochukwu and Ikokwu. Dayrell is also difficult to include in every aspect explored in this chapter as his collection includes stories that originate from Southern Nigerian cultures other than Igbo. There are, however, Igbo folktales included in Dayrell's collection, as noted by Ugochukwu.[238] With this in mind, this chapter aims to compare the form and traditions of spoken Igbo folktales and their written counterparts. I will not only explore the consequences of transforming the oral narratives into written stories but also how the editors mentioned above have or have not tried to preserve the oral nature of these stories when transforming them into the written form. The analysis of Igbo folktales in a spoken context has been well-documented by J. O. J. Nwachukwu-Agbada, a Professor of African literature in the Department of English at Abia State University, who I draw upon frequently in order to make my comparisons. I ultimately argue that although writing the folktales down

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[236] May Ikokwu, 'About the Author' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), p.358 (p.358); see Save Our Heritage Initiative, *Home* (2024) <https://sohinitiative.org/> [accessed 5 April 2024].

[237] May Ikokwu, 'Preface' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.xxiii-xxiv (p.xxiii).

[238] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', loc.355.

essentially dislocates them, Ugochukwu and Ikokwu have made successful attempts to situate the folktales included in their respective collections in Igbo culture, thus keeping an all-important connection in ways that Dayrell does not. Dayrell's collection preserves little of the stories' orality, resulting in them being further dislocated from the culture from which they originate. In contrast, Ugochukwu educates the reader in storytelling customs and writes the stories in line with Igbo tradition, whilst Ikokwu provides access to the intertextual nature of Igbo oral narratives by providing song lyrics, music scored for the piano and a CD of music that accompanies the provided song lyrics. Whilst the attempts to maintain a connection to Igbo culture are admirable and, for the most part successful, it is important to acknowledge that something will always be lost when a literature that is oral in nature is manipulated into a different form. The contemporary curators discussed in this chapter do their best to mitigate the occurrence of dislocation by locating and contextualising the folktales within their co-occurring culture and traditions. Dislocation occurs simply when transforming oral forms into written and inserting tales into a collection, which results in the story becoming primarily part of a larger narrative concerning the collection itself.[239] I start by exploring how Igbo oral narratives begin, then move on to the characteristics of the main body before examining how they end.

Beginning of an Igbo Folktale

The majority of the folktales discussed in this thesis are what Chukwuma Azuonye calls *akuko-ifo*, which translates to 'tales of the land' and are known for their 'moralizing constructs of the imagination', with some of the contemporary texts relying on the strong

[239] Hines, p.48.

connection between oral narrative and Igbo cosmology.[240] The folktales tend to provide answers to questions concerning 'deeper aspects of the nature, and the meaning of human existence and the relationships between human beings'.[241] Azuonye insists that these folktales mirror the Igbo reality due to focusing on 'Igbo domains', such as the human world, the spirit world (*ala mmuo*) and the undivided universe (*elu na ala*), all of which are part of the Igbo cosmological system, showcasing how closely Igbo folklore and cosmology are interlinked.[242] Ugochukwu notes that there are three main categories of folktales that fall under the *akuko-ifo* genre of folktales: tortoise tales, etiological tales (which explain the origins of life), and didactic tales, which teach some moral lessons.[243] Despite different genres existing, Nwachukwu-Agbada suggests that all spoken Igbo folktales follow a similar structure or at least contain the same ingredients, which include proverbs to encourage audience participation; formulaic utterances; time and place of action phrases; songs; and a restatement and a moral, which are present in some of the written versions and not others.

Proverbs are used to introduce an Igbo oral narrative and are commonly omitted from written versions by European curators and collectors.[244] When narratives are performed orally, proverbs can occasionally be used by the teller to introduce and signal that a folktale is about to be told, and usually occur as a 'call-and-response pattern' – called 'mgbusu ufere' in Igbo

[240] Chukwuma Azuonye, 'Power, Marginality and Womanbeing in Igbo Oral Narratives' in *Power and Powerlessness of Women in West African Orality*, ed. by Raoul Granqvist and Nnadozie Inyama (Umeå: Umeå University Press, 1992), pp.1-31 (p.2).

[241] Azuonye, p.2.

[242] Azuonye, p.2.

[243] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.5.

[244] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.23.

– between the teller and the listeners, following this pattern:

Narrator: Agbara raa nsi,

If a deity begins to show off,

Audience: A gwa ya osisi e ji tuo ya.

You tell him the tree with which it was carved.

Narrator: A na agwa nti ma o geghi;

You tell the ear and it does not listen;

Audience: E bere isi; e bere nti.

You cut off the head; you cut off the ear.

Narrator: Isi kote ebu

The head that attracts the wasp

Audience: O gbaa ya.

Gets the sting.

Narrator: A nuo chaa ngwo;

You fish a tree's palm wine;

Audience: A kpe ya okpokoro.

You call the tree an empty log.

Narrator: E liwe uzo liwe ehi.

Tether a road and a cow.

Audience: Ma toro uzo ghara ehi.

I'll take the road and forget about the cow.

Narrator: A gbara aka na-azo ala.

You struggle for a piece of land without anything.

Audience: Onye ji ji ana-akonye.

He who has seed-yams continues to plant them.[245]

When used in lead-up to the folktale's performance, the proverbs aim to encompass the content and the moral of the tale about to be told. If this does not translate, it signals that the teller has not done a good job.[246] The proverbs can also be used by child narrators to test their popularity; if the narrator is unpopular, the audience will not respond to their proverbs.[247] A lack of audience participation usually occurs when two or more potential narrators are competing for the audience's attention at the same time, with the narrator who gains a response being the audience's preferred choice, thus acting as an 'audience check'.[248] The 'formulaic utterance' comes next, followed by the 'illustration' and a further proverb that is not meant to elicit a response, rather it is there solely to tie in with the story and can be accompanied by an upfront explanation.[249] Nevertheless, it is important that it is relevant to the story or the narrator will face the wrath of the audience.[250] None of the editors present use this exact formula to introduce their tales, but Nwachukwu-Agbada gives 'Nnyemaka Di N'Etiti Umuanumanu' or 'The Mutual Assistance among Animals' as an example of a folktale that begins this way, and an explanation immediately follows:

Ndi ilu turu otu ilu sl na onye bitechara ugba otu o Mri na-eji isi ekwe ala ekele.

Proverb-sayers say that he who must cut all branches of an ugba tree shakes the hands of the

[245] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.23.

[246] Adult narrators are usually invited to share stories and are unlikely to receive negative responses: Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.23.

[247] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.23.

[248] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.23.

[249] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.24.

[250] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.24.

ground with his head.

Ilu a putara na o bughi ogbe ugba dum ka onye na-ebite ugba nwere ike ibite.

This proverb means that it is not every part of the ugba tree that the tree climber can cut.[251]

Ikokwu might not use the exact formula as Nwachukwu-Agbada as they do not begin with a proverb. However each folktale in her collection begins with a formulaic utterance, and proverbs are included later in the folktales, which appears in both English and Igbo versions of the folktales:

Narrator: I have a story to tell you.

Children: Please tell us and make our hearts glad.

Onye Akụkọ: O nwere akụkọ m ga-akọrọ unu.

Ụmụaka: Biko kọrọ anyị, ka obi dị anyị ụtọ.[252]

Using a formulaic utterance allows the speaker to mark the beginning of a narrative and gain the attention of the audience in an oral, performative context.[253] The above utterance, however, appears in a written medium, published with the aim of encouraging Igbo parents to communicate folktales orally to their children and pass down the storytelling tradition, which

[251] Nwachukwu-Agbada, pp.24-25.

[252] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.22; Anon., 'Tortoise the Magician' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.3-11 (p.3); Anon., 'Isi Nke Mbụ: Mbe Onye Mgba'sị' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.12-19 (p.12).

[253] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.22.

Ikokwu insists is dying, to the next generation.[254] Formulaic utterances, when used by Ikokwu in a written context, thus have the same end result as in an oral context: to mark when the narrator (the parent or guardian in this case) will start a narrative and gain the attention of the audience (their child or children). Nwachukwu-Agbada provides a variation of this utterance, which is used if an adult is narrating to young people:

> Narrator: *Umuaka, o nwere akuko m ga akoro unu.*
>
> Children, I have a tale to tell you.
>
> Audience: *Koorg anyi ka obi dl anyi mma.*
>
> *Kooro anyi kama ya dikwa mma.*
>
> Tell us so as to make us happy.
>
> Tell us but let it be a nice one.[255]

Although different, the two variations are similar in sentiment. The difference may well be down to the smaller different communities that exist with the larger Igbo community due to it being separated by the Cross River. Just as there are variations in language use, there may be variations in tradition. According to Nwachukwu-Agbada, the formulaic utterance also differs if a child is performing an oral narrative. For example, a child narrator would say '*umunnem mumunnu m, o nwere akuko m ga akoro unu* (brothers and sisters, I have a tale to tell you)', and the audience would reply with '*Koorg anyi ka obi dl anyi mma; Kooro anyi kama ya dikwa mma* (Tell us so as to make us happy; Tell us but let it be a nice one)',

[254] Ikokwu, 'Preface', p.xxiii.

[255] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.23.

allowing a child performer to address the child audience as their equal whilst gaining their attention in order to begin their story.[256] Ikokwu only uses the adult-to-child utterance; she does this purposefully, as the reader of her text is assumed to be an adult and the audience a child or children. However, this results in an erasure of tradition and an important part of childhood socialisation in that performances by children for other children are not acknowledged or encouraged as they would be in a traditional oral storytelling setting. Unlike Ikokwu's collection, Ugochukwu and Dayrell's respective folktale volumes do not include adult-to-child or child-to-child formulaic utterances, and none of the editors include the audience interactions that usually follow the formulaic utterances. Nwachukwu-Agbada provides an example:

> Narrator: *O ruru otu mgbe.*
>
> There was a time.
>
> Audience: *Otu mgbe e ruo.*
>
> A time there was.[257]

As is seen in these utterances due to their call-and-response type structure, audience participation is a very important part of Igbo oral narratives and not including them in the written versions of the narratives results in silencing just how central audience interaction is to the oral tellings of Igbo folktales, and this is exemplified by how audience members also take part in Igbo folktale performances in other ways. For instance, audience members 'who [are] sufficiently confident of their knowledge of performance criteria' can make 'aesthetic

[256] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.23.

[257] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.24.

verdicts' on the performers.[258] This means that any performance is 'risky' and any 'violation of the order and balance in a folktale narration' will be subject to scrutiny and interruption from listeners of any age, signalling the importance of structure and form of the Igbo folktale in a performative, spoken setting.[259] Audience participation thus acts as a checks and balances type practice – making sure that the folktale 'aesthetic' is respected. Finnegan has gone as far as to say that 'participation of the audience is essential […] and without [audience participation], in many cases, the stories would be only a bare framework of words'.[260] It could be argued that folktales that have been written down are 'bare frameworks' of words as audience participation in the traditional sense is not an essential element of them but there are also other elements of the folktale that are not included in the written form that contribute to this.[261] For instance, Dayrell provides no cultural, political or traditional context, nor does he include any audience participation in the form of songs or proverbs in the folktales that appear in *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*, resulting in the stories becoming further dislocated from the culture in which they originate. There is no attempt on Dayrell's part to edit a collection of folktales in the written form that retain their oral origins, thus publishing what Finnegan would consider a 'bare framework of words'.[262]

Context is important to Igbo folktales. What might be considered simple animal tales can in fact be 'allegories of history', reflecting important stages of cultural evolution and use animal characters to guide listeners towards a 'communally preferred future social growth' and

[258] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.21.

[259] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.21.

[260] Finnegan, p.385.

[261] Finnegan, p.385.

[262] Finnegan, p.385.

without context, this important information would be missed and the folktale wrongly interpreted.[263] Animal stories as allegory is something that African writers employ in their work and adapt to fit the novel form, suggesting that folkloric genres and forms are alive and well in an African setting and that allegories of history are shown through the animal form. Although Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o comes from a Kenyan perspective, this is true of his novel, *The Wizard of the Crow,* which demonstrates the use of historically based allegory with the inclusion of folktale influence perfectly. After being imprisoned for the content of his first play, *I Will Marry When I Want,* which 'exposes the corruption in the postcolonial regime of Daniel arap Moi', Ngũgĩ wrote *The Wizard of the Crow,* a satirical and allegorical work, depicting Moi's political regime.[264] To do so, Ngũgĩ 'dexterously weaves around reality, fantasy, myth, history and legend in a way that is reminiscent of traditional stories'.[265] Because of its allegorical form, Ngũgĩ was able to use an oral narrative form to weave 'around reality, fantasy, myth, history and legend' in order to critique what he considered a corrupt and oppressive political regime and 'communicate his ideas and educate the masses in an effective manner', allowing Ngũgĩ to guide readers towards his 'preferred future social growth'.[266] Although we cannot categorise Ngũgĩ's work as Igbo, it does demonstrate how historical allegory is embedded into African stories. Even though Southern Nigerian folktales are vague in terms of time and place, Ugochukwu's collection does offer historical and

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[263] Azuonye, p.2.

[264] Mike Kuria, 'Speaking in Tongues: Ngũgĩ's Gift to Workers and Peasants through *MurogiWa Kagogo*', *Journal of Literary Studies*, 3 (2011), 56-73 (p.61).

[265] V. Sakthivel1 and K. Sathya, 'Indigenous Language as a Suitable Medium for Resistance against Colonial Oppression and for Reestablishment of Native Cultural Identities in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o Works', *Journal of Critical Reviews,* 7.13 (2020), 3098-3101 (p.3100).

[266] Kuria, p.61.

political stories. In 'Nwaezulu – The Betrayed Warrior of Iberedum', for instance, a lustful king is seduced by a series of enemy women who encourage him to kill his warrior son.[267] With the help of a 'witch doctor', the third woman is successful, and the result is catastrophic and leaves the king's land vulnerable to enemy attacks, which eventually leads to the king being taken prisoner, where his captors 'gouged his two eyes and tortured him to death'.[268] 'Nwaezulu' is one of the more explicitly political folktales but most, being allegorical, are more covert, making them hard to detect. It is therefore important to keep in mind that not all folktales are simply made-up stories and have a strong connection with political ongoings. Ugochukwu attempts to promote the political side of folktales in his edited collection by providing the important cultural, political, and traditional context in his 'Introduction', meaning that the folktales are at least placed within the culture in which they originate.

After a formulaic utterance, Igbo folktales often begin with a 'time of action' phrase, which makes up part of what Nwachukwu-Agbada calls the 'illustration' and sets the scene by providing a 'time and a setting'.[269] Although Ikokwu uses 'once upon a time' and 'a long, long time ago' and Ugochukwu exclusively uses 'once upon a time' ('*otu mgbe'*), there are other 'time of action' phrases, such as, '*o nwere oge o bu* (there was a time), *nu oge gara aga* (in times past), *n'oge gboo gboo* (in the dim past), or *otu ubochi* (one day)'.[270] Ikokwu and Ugochukwu use the time of action to remain true to the traditional structure of oral narratives,

[267] Anon., 'Chapter Six: Nwaezulu – The Betrayed Warrior of Iberedum' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by Clifford N. Ugochukwu (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), pp.58-67 (p.67).

[268] Anon., 'Chapter Six: Nwaezulu – The Betrayed Warrior of Iberedum', p.67.

[269] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.25.

[270] Anon., 'Leopard's Daughter' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.218-230 (p.218); Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.25.

which reinforces the story's sense of timelessness in the written form just as it does when orally narrated.[271] Teverson notes that the phrase 'once upon a time' manages the audience's expectations and prepares them for the fantastic rather than the realistic, allowing them to suspend belief for a brief period as magic becomes 'normative' and 'the ordinary rules are suspended'.[272] This suggests that fairy and folktales are merely works of fiction, and hints towards the theory that *sagen* and *märgen* (European legends and folktales) 'stand in opposition to each other' in folklore and fairy tale studies. The respective Igbo folktale collections of Ugochukwu and Ikokwu negate this idea as Igbo folktales and cosmology regularly intertwine. Hence the Igbo Supreme God, Chukwu, appearing in 'The Sacred Goat – How Diseases Came into the World', meaning the lines between legends and folktale are much more blurred in Igbo culture than in its European counterparts. 'Once upon a time' is thus more loaded than simply indicating timelessness and that a story is about to begin, and care must be taken not to view Igbo folktales as mere fiction due to the lines between legends and folktales being blurred.

As seen via the 'timelessness' denoted by use of time of action phrases, it is obvious that place and time is traditionally vague in Igbo oral narratives and is not usually specified unless stating 'one of the two of the principal seasons' in Igbo communities: 'dry' and 'rainy'.[273] Ikokwu makes mention of these two seasons only once in 'The Handsome Dung'. For instance, the narrator states that 'the date of the festival was usually held towards the end of the "August break" – a two-week dry spell during the rainy season', placing the story in one

[271] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.25.

[272] Teverson, p.56.

[273] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.25.

of the principal Igbo seasons and setting the tale's scene.[274] Ugochukwu's collection also mentions the 'rainy season', but it is not to state the season within which the story takes place as Ikokwu does. Rather, 'The Orange Market Dance Contest – How an Orphan became Queen' – a folktale a about a little girl whose parents died, leaving her and her siblings to fend for themselves, states that there is a 'rainy season' and that the girl and her sibling, 'gathered snails from the bush for their meat' during it.[275] Whilst Ugochukwu's version of this tale mentions the rainy season, it does not situate the tale but it does provide context concerning the different Igbo seasons. By not using it to situate the tale, as most folktales do not, according to Nwachukwu-Agbada, Ugochukwu is creating a version of the tale that remains timeless. As a lack of time is common in spoken Igbo folktales, the editors are staying true to the spoken form by not overusing it.

To further reinforce the sense of timelessness in an oral narrative, the following phrases are likely to be used: '*mgbe uwa ka di ohup / ka gba oto* (when the world was still new/naked), *mgbe ezi di n'ukwu ukwa* (when breadfruit trees dotted the entire earth), or *mgbe uwa di n'anyu isi* (when the world was still in darkness)'.[276] Whilst these are not used in the respective collections published under Ikokwu, Ugochukwu and Dayrell's names, they aim to draw upon the distance in time between when the actions within the narrative occurred and the present, when the tale is being told, thus setting the scene at the beginning of a folktale.

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[274] Anon., 'The Handsome Dung' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.59-67 (p.59).

[275] Anon., 'Chapter Seventeen: The Orange Market Dance Contest – How an Orphan became Queen' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by Clifford N. Ugochukwu (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), pp.150-157 (p.150).

[276] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.25.

By not including these phrases within the folktales that appear in the discussed collections, the editors are not shining a light on the time distance. As a single element that is missing, this does not affect a folktale in a significant way. When the missing elements accumulate, however, a lot of traditional elements have been erased in order accommodate the traditions of the written form, especially when the missing oral elements tend to be repetitive as the phrases discussed above may be considered by those who are not used to the nature of oral literary traditions but are used to consuming literature in the written form.

Part of oral folktales which are not deemed too repetitive in the written form are 'place of action' markers, which mark a folktale's location and are usually used to help set the scene at the beginning of a tale. The locations are vague in Ugochukwu's collection as they use place markers such as 'certain villages', 'the land of the spirits' or the 'animal kingdom'.[277] Ugochukwu's versions of the folktales tend to be set in the marketplace, village, town, or community square; along the road leading to the market or stream; along the riverbank, under a huge tree; or in farmlands or in the woods, or, on occasion, set in Chukwu's (the Igbo supreme god's) home in heaven.[278] This is in line with Nwachukwu-Agbada's description of 'place of action', which he describes as existing in 'human habitat' by using phrases such as '*n 'om obodo* (in a certain town or village), *n'otu obodo nta* (in a small community), *n 'otu umunna* (in a certain kin-group), or *n 'ala di anya* (in a distant land)', or 'far removed from the human world' and taking place in 'eerie' world, such as 'the land of spirits (*ala ndi rnmuo*), of animals (*ala urn~numanu*) or simply a "far, far land"'. [279] Whilst Ikokwu's places of action are often in line with those used by Ugochukwu and described by Nwachukwu-

[277] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.9.

[278] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.9.

[279] Nwachukwu-Agbada, pp.25-26.

Agbada, being mostly vague, set 'in the land of animals' and in a faraway time 'in the days when men and animals lived together, spoke the same language and did everything together'; 'in the days when twins were taboo' or 'in the village', there are deviations.[280] Instead, there can be scene setting phrases such as 'there was a king who had many wives'; 'Kite lived with his mother as an only child'; 'there lived a farmer'; 'Tortoise and Python had a wager about who is smarter'; and 'there was a young man named Ogini'.[281] Furthermore, they can also include specific mentions of real life places such as 'the thick forest of Erimma', 'the village of Ofulu' and 'Eri', which Nwachukwu-Agbada states are a rare occurrence in orally narrated Igbo folktales, hence only occurring three times in Ikokwu's and never in Ugochukwu's respective collections.[282] By keeping the place of action mostly vague, the editors are again retaining the timelessness of oral narrative from the outset when preparing them for the written form. As I have explored how Igbo oral narratives begin, the next section will

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[280] Anon., 'Tortoise the Magician', p.3; Anon. 'Leopard and Tortoise during Famine' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.169-173 (p.169); Anon., 'How the Tortoise Was taken Alive', p.242; Anon., 'The Great Famine' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.42-50 (p.42).Anon., 'Leopard's Daughter, p.218; Anon., 'Attack from the Air by a Demon Bat' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.150-159 (p.150); Anon., 'The Handsome Dung', p.59.

[281] Anon., 'Tortoise the Magician', p.3; Anon., 'Ndawi' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.196-201 (p.196); Anon., 'Why Kite Hovers over Burning Bush' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021, pp.208-217 (p.208); Anon., 'Obi and his Flute' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.20-41(p.20); Anon., 'Wager Between Tortoise and Python' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.76-89 (p.76).

[282] Anon., 'Baby from Smith' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu , 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.231-236 (p.231); Anon., 'Attack from the Air by a Demon Bat', p.150; Anon., 'Nw'ima' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.178-186 (p.178); Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.26.

examine the characteristics that appear in the main body of an Igbo oral narrative.

In the Midst of an Igbo Folktale

Two of the main characteristics found within the main body of an Igbo folktale are intertextual elements, such as the appearance of songs and proverbs, and the characters that appear within them. Oral Igbo folktales are rarely made up of just a narrative and usually include other forms of oral tradition, genre, and literature. It is rare not to witness the inclusion of music and song in Igbo oral folktales.[283] According to Ugochukwu, traditional celebrations are always accompanied by music, and the telling of oral narratives does not escape this tradition.[284] Ugochukwu posits that oral narratives usually consist of three main components: spoken narration, solos by the narrator and choruses by the audience.[285] The narrator's solo forms 'an integral part of the story telling' and the audience's chorus is taken at intervals, ensuring participation and interaction.[286] A chorus can include the repetition of the hero's name; the repetition of the nickname of the hero; a short, rhythmical phrase or onomatopoetic rhythmical sound; or a reference to an incident in a particular location.[287] According to Ugochukwu, songs in folktales also serve several purposes: firstly, 'the songs by narrators are used to stimulate the audience, to arouse and sustain their interest throughout the duration of the narratives'.[288] Secondly, the chorus sung by the audience encourages

[283] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.10.

[284] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.10.

[285] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.10.

[286] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.10.

[287] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', pp.11-12.

[288] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.12.

active participation and interaction throughout the narration.[289] Thirdly, songs and their choruses 'serve as effective language learning tools because they help the young audience to learn vocabulary of the language quicker and in a relaxed and conducive atmosphere', alongside helping children to master the tones, proverbs, riddles and the practical use of the language.[290] Fourthly, songs also 'help the [children] in particular to remember the stories more easily and aide the development of the children's memory'.[291] Lastly, 'the use of songs and choruses in Igbo folktales signifies just how important music is to Igbo communities and their traditions'.[292] In order to shine a light on this important intertextual component, song lyrics are included in both Ikokwu's and Ugochukwu's collections.

Ugochukwu retains aspects of the tales' orality by keeping songs within the folktales and providing the songs' lyrics and examples of audience participation. In Ugochukwu's collection, the storyteller's parts of a song appear under the heading 'song' and the audience's response appears under the heading 'chorus', for example:

Song	**Chorus**
Ebe nne m na-akpo m 'Anyanwu turu ozala!'	*Gbam sim!*
Whereas mother calls me 'Sun that Lightens the dark!'	
Ebe nna m na-akpo m 'Anyanwu turu ozala!'	*Gbam sim!*
Whereas father calls me 'Sun that Lightens the dark!'	
Ebe enyi m na-akpo m 'onuta O nuriwao!'	*Gbam sim!*
Whereas my friend calls me 'Her husband will be delighted'	

[289] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.12.

[290] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.12.

[291] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.12.

[292] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.12.

Ebe di m na-akpo m 'O bata O muriwa o!' *Gbam sim!*

Whereas my husband calls me 'The ever cheerful one'

K'Ogbenye no n'ulo na-akpo m 'Ukwa nwa Ogbejiri!' *Gbam sim!*

A mere house servant now calls me 'A breadfruit branch!'

N' Ukwa nwa ogbejiri ga-alakwo ebe ahu o siri puta o! *Gbam sim!*

So Ukwa Nwa is now going back to its source!

Ekene kenere m Elimma o! *Gbam sim!*

Greetings to dear Elimma!

O kelee Igbudu, o kelee Omambara o! *Gbam sim!*

Greetings to the crowd, greetings to Anambra River!

Ti tiko li m, onu m go lo lo m! *Gbam sim!*[293]

I've finished, my voice will soon be silent!

Here, Ugochukwu makes a true effort to not create a collection that is a 'bare framework of words'.[294] He does so through inclusion of key contextual information and song lyrics that appear in the main body of the tales, with both the narrator and audience's parts showcased. Ikokwu does not provide an in-depth contextual introduction as Ugochuku does, which is due to her intended audience. Dayrell's and Ugochukwu's respective audiences are those outside of the Igbo community, making contextual information concerning storytelling traditions essential in order to situate them. Whilst Ugochukwu provides this information, Dayrell does not, meaning he does not appropriately situate the tales within the culture from which they originate.

[293] Anon., 'Chapter Two: Anyanwu – The Beautiful Bride' in *Folktales from Igboland*, ed. by Clifford N. Ugochukwu (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), pp.23-31 (pp.28-30).

[294] Finnegan, p.312.

The audience is an important part of Ikokwu's mission, especially when it comes to audience participation, which we see through the inclusion of intertextuality. When it comes to this inclusion, Ikokwu goes one step further than Ugochukwu by providing formulaic utterances as mentioned previously, song lyrics with both the narrator's solo and the audience's chorus included, its scribed music, along with a CD containing 'native accompaniment'.[295] In this sense, the reader and the listener can always participate to the fullest and not just read the lyrics. In this instance, the reader becomes the narrator and the listener the audience, who can actively participate in the narrator's performance. Ikokwu also includes a 'task' section at the end of each folktale, reminiscent of the oral origins of these stories which aim to check the child's retention of the story and encourages children to interact with the proverbs that appear in each story. Ikokwu avoids, as much as she possibly can, publishing bare frameworks of words, thus intervening and actively trying to prevent any further erasure or dislocation occurring. It is important to note here that some occurrences of erasure and dislocation will be outside of the editors' control. For instance, the length of and the number of words included in the book will be at the publishing house's discretion, meaning the inclusion of every aspect of an oral narrative would be impossible. My point here is that there are clear differences in how the editors approach this, even considering the limits from external influences. Something will always be lost when transforming oral literature into its orthographical equivalent, but it does not mean that all has to be lost as exemplified by Ikokwu's commendable attempt to preserve the traditional oral aspects of the narratives in both English and Igbo languages, thus remaining true to Igbo cultural and oral tradition.

Ikokwu produces a written collection that attempts to mimic Igbo oral narratives by

[295] Nnaemeka Alfred Achebe, 'Foreword' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by May Ikokwu, 2nd edn. (Lagos: Origami, 2021), pp.xv-xviii (p.xvii).

incorporating a lot of important oral elements, such as song lyrics, music and intertextuality. Ikokwu's objective is revival, so by documenting the songs in a way that gives the reader access to the music as well as the lyrics, Ikokwu is preserving and promoting the importance of intertextuality within Igbo folktales, which allows for some of the oral aspects to remain intact when changing genre. In contrast, Dayrell does not include song lyrics or music in any of the folktales he published. This is most likely due to Dayrell not hearing the folktales in a traditional setting. Instead, Dayrell had folktales told to him by individuals with whom he had formed a rapport, thus could have simply not heard or known about the songs; however, there was a tendency for songs to be omitted from non-European folktales published by European collectors.[296] Whilst Dayrell may not have actively or purposefully omitted this very important intertextual element, the collections he edited have and continue to contribute to the displacement of Southern Nigerian folktales due to publishing incomplete adaptations, meaning that any aim of preservation failed from the offset due to a lack of due diligence. It is also worth remembering that these tales were not told in a traditional setting, and that may be the reason for more traditional formal elements not appearing in Dayrell's collection, but this does not negate the fact that the tales that exist within them are incomplete without those missing elements. Further to this, Dayrell's lack of inclusion of any intertextuality when they are so prolifically present in the stories published by Ikokwu and Igochukwu does suggest that at least some were purposefully excluded.

As discussed previously, proverbs are another intertextual element of Igbo folktales. Ukokwu and Ugochukwu both make use of proverbs in the main bodies of their folktales, but Dayrell does not. Not including proverbs not only erases the traditional intertextual aspect of the

[296] Dayrell, 'Preface', p.i; Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p 10.

folktale but also the performer's connection to the audience and the audience's contribution to the performance of the folktale, which is a vital part of an oral narrative. Finnegan states that 'oral literature is by definition dependent on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion—there is no other way in which it can be realized as a literary product' in a similar way that a theatre performance is dependent on the cast of the show.[297] Much like Shakespeare's plays, folktales – as a form of oral literature – were not meant to be read but performed; they are part of a tradition that is meant to bring together a community and be performed in front of, as well as involve, an audience. According to Finnegan, this results in,

> The connection between transmission and very existence [of oral literature being] a much more intimate one, and questions about the means of actual communication are of the first importance—without its oral realization and direct rendition by singer or speaker, an unwritten literary piece cannot easily be said to have any continued or independent existence at all.[298]

The performer, then, allows for the generational continuation of folktales, hence the performer and the performance being an integral part of oral traditions as they cannot exist independently. This brings into question if the written and translated versions of folktales, such as those published under Dayrell's name, which are traditionally a form of oral literature, can even be considered folktales at all. These orthographical tales have thus been displaced from their genre as they do not have an oral performer, as well as their communities of origin. The fact that Dayrell has not provided context concerning performances means that his adaptations are doubly dislocated as the role of the performer

[297] Finnegan, p.48.

[298] Finnegan, p.50.

has been erased entirely and this means that he has omitted an integral part of the narratives he has written down and published. It is more than just a contextual issue here and this is due to the reliance of oral literature on the performer and their performance for its continuation and its very existence.[299] When Finnegan's argument is considered within these contexts, Dayrell's turning an unwritten oral narrative into a written one creates a new hybrid genre that is both oral and written in nature but which eliminates the need for the performer, taking away an integral part of oral traditions and literature. This is due to the nature of oral literature being intended to be just that: oral and dependent on a speaker, not a writer. However, it is not this simple when it comes to other collections that contextualise folktales when presenting them in the written form and make a conscious effort to remain true to their spoken origins.

Whilst Dayrell makes no attempt to contextualise and situate the importance of performance to folktales in his collection, Ugochukwu attempts to do so by providing contextual information concerning the performance of oral narratives. As Ugochukwu's intended readership is those who exist outside of the Igbo culture, this is necessary and at least situates the folktales as a tradition within the wider Igbo society. On the other hand, Ikokwu's intended readership is those who exist inside Igbo culture and her collection is an attempt to keep the tradition surrounding oral narration alive out of fear that it will one day disappear. Ikokwu thus encourages performance but does not dictate how it is or how it should be done because it is assumed that the audience already knows, which also situates the folktales within Igbo culture. This approach also reinstates the need for a performer and audience interaction as seen through the use of proverbs and the exercises included at the end of every

[299] Finnegan, p.50.

story which includes a comprehension task to ensure the story is understood by the audience, a glossary task to ensure key words are understood and lastly an exercise that asks the audience to explain and explore the meaning of the proverbs included, for example:

> Explain the meaning of the proverbs:
>
> 1. When the dog enters the bush with a bag, no dung is left behind in the bush.
> 2. Wisdom is like a bag and everyone carries his own.
> 3. The miser who saved everything ended up with nothing.[300]

Although this is not a traditional element of an Igbo folktale, including this exercise at the end of each tale encourages participation in a new way that suits the written form and the context in which the tales from this book are likely to be performed – a parent to a child in a more informal setting, which have been traditionally held by mothers before books were needed. [301] Practising is also part of these informal sessions, as practice is needed if a storyteller is to be successful, and storytellers may try their stories out on parents and younger siblings.[302] Ikokwu's book thus encourages the informal setting with the hope of bringing back the more traditional settings, which would traditionally start after twilight during sanctioned market nights. [303] For example, in Imo, the Igbo sanction the Orie market night dedicated to telling stories to prevent 'idleness and unmerited relaxation'.[304]

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[300] Anon., 'Tortoise the Magician', p.11.

[301] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.22.

[302] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.22.

[303] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.22.

[304] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.22.

The characters that appear in Igbo oral narratives are just as important as the intertextual aspects. Ugochukwu states that human beings, animals and spirits (or divine beings) make the most frequent appearances.[305] The 'supreme God' Chukwu also appears in Igbo folktales, although less frequently.[306] Ugochukwu provides one folktale, 'The Sacred Goat – How Diseases Came into the World', that features the supreme God.[307] In this folktale, Chukwu rewards honesty over deceit when he is visited by two boys begging forgiveness for harming the supreme God's sacred goat.[308] The boy who is honest and accidently hurt the goat is rewarded with worldly goods for his honesty, whereas the boy who harms the goat purposely, but tells Chukwu it was an accident in order to gain the same worldly goods as the previous boy, unleashes diseases on the world instead.[309] This promotes the idea that if children are honest, they will be rewarded, and including a God as a character not only crosses the boundary between myth and folktale, but also adds weight to the story's moral, which appears at the end of the story. The moral is an important part of spoken Igbo folktales as it encapsulates the point of the story for the audience in line with desired cultural customs and traditions, including Igbo cosmology of which Chukwu is a part. By keeping the morals intact and portraying important characters throughout his collection, Ugochukwu is staying true not only to the oral origins of the tales but Igbo cosmological traditions, too.

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[305] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.8.

[306] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.8.

[307] Anon., 'Chapter Eighteen: The Sacred Goat – How Diseases Came into the World' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by Clifford N. Ugochukwu (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), Amazon Kindle e-book, locs.3226-3363.

[308] Anon., 'Chapter Eighteen: The Sacred Goat – How Diseases Came into the World', loc.3289.

[309] Anon., 'Chapter Eighteen: The Sacred Goat – How Diseases Came into the World', loc.3346.

Ugochukwu tells us that one of the most well-loved and frequent characters is the tortoise who exists in the ever popular Igbo tortoise trickster tales who is said to 'embody wisdom'.[310] Trickster characters are common in folktales from around the world, for example, the spider God Anansi in Ghanaian Ashanti folktales, who appears in tales such as 'Why the Jack Spaniard's Waist is Small'; the cunning hare in Wolof tales of Senegal, who appears in stories such as 'The Tricks of Leuk-the-Hare'; or the fox in medieval French, Dutch and English stories concerning Reynard the Fox.[311] Within Igbo folktales, the tortoise character plays this role, hence all Igbo 'trickery tales' featuring a male tortoise as the protagonist.[312] According to Ugochukwu, the tortoise is a 'selfish and egotistical', as well as a 'lazy but resourceful' character who is an 'amoral and sometimes cruel person'.[313] Despite the tortoise being depicted in these negative ways, he is well-liked by Igbo people, as shown by the Igbo saying that 'a tale without the tortoise is incomplete' and by the fact that more than a third of folktales are tortoise stories.[314] Multiple tortoise stories in Ugochukwu and Ikokwu's respective collections can be categorised as tortoise stories, such as 'Chapter One: Agu Tests

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[310] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.8.

[311] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.5; See Anon., 'Why the Jack Spaniard's Waist is Small' in *Two Anansi Stories Narrated by Baba Indaba: Issue Seven',* ed. by Anon E. Mouse (London: Abela Publishing, 2015), pp.7-8; see Anon., 'The Tricks of Leuk-the-Hare' in *Tales of Amadou Koumba,* trans. by Dorothy S. Blair, ed. by Birago Diop, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp.78-85 (p.78); see Emil Magel, 'Caste Identification of the Hare in Wolof Oral Narratives', *Research in African Literatures,* 12.2 (1981), 185-202 (p.185); Maia Adamina, 'The Priest and the Fox: Tricksters in Chaucer's Nun 's Priest's Tale', *Trickster's Way,* 4.1 (2005), 1-6 (p.1); see Graham Seal and Kim Kennedy White, 'Reynard the Fox (France)' in *Folk Heroes and Heroines around the World,* 2nd edn, ed. by Graham Seal and Kim Kennedy White (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2016), p.315 (p.315).

[312] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.5.

[313] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.5.

[314] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.5.

the genuineness of his Wives' Love'.[315]

Another notable Igbo folktale character, according to Ugochukwu, consist of spirits, who usually speak a human language; sometimes divine spirits speak in 'nasal twangs' as the spirit creature does in 'Obaraedo – The Disobedient Daughter':[316]

> *The creature spoke with a nasal twang, saying: "Child, who are you and what are you doing here? Who told you to come out at this hour of the day? Don't you know that this hour belongs to the spirits?"* [emphasis not mine].[317]

The same creature is described as 'looking like a human being without a nose', a trait that Ugochukwu describes is part of a consistent description in regards to spiritual characters in Igbo folktales, as they are depicted as 'having frightful appearances such as multiple heads or faces, noses, eyes, legs or hands, broken faces or limbs' but still behave like human beings.[318] Spirits, along with animals, are anthropomorphised and are capable of feeling complex human emotions and physical experiences, 'such as love and hate, weakness and strength, suspicion and trust, cruelty and kindness', hence the creature in 'Obaraedi' feeling 'angry' at the protagonist for disobeying her mother through leaving her house during the afternoon when 'marauding spirits' are wandering outside.[319] All characters, including humans, animals

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[315] Anon., 'Chapter One: Agu Tests the genuineness of his Wives' Love' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by Clifford N. Ugochukwu (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), pp.17-22.

[316] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.8.

[317] Anon., 'Chapter Seven: Obaraedo – The Disobedient Daughter' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by Clifford N. Ugochukwu (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), pp.68-74 (p.69).

[318] Anon., 'Chapter Seven: Obaraedo – The Disobedient Daughter', p.69; Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', pp.8-9.

[319] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', pp.8-9; Anon., 'Chapter Seven: Obaraedo – The Disobedient Daughter', p.70.

and spirits, live in societies with 'kings, rulers, elders, organisation and age grades, husbands, wives, children, lovers, friends and foes', and are depicted as living in both polygamous – as the king and his wives do in 'Omalinze – The Prince of the Despised Queen' – and monogamous, as the 'old barren couple' who long for a child do in 'Anyanwu – The Beautiful Bride' family set-ups.[320] Ugochukwu views these characters, their attributes, the ways in which they live and their relationships to and with each other as important aspects of folktales, which explains why he chooses to include them in his collection but also explore their existence within the folktales in his collection. As Ugochukwu's aim is to document and preserve these folktales as things of the past, he is therefore preserving what he thinks are the most important aspects as he cannot include everything in one volume. This is a tricky and impossible situation that cannot be avoided but it is a prime example of how the transition from mouth to paper naturally dislocates these folktales despite the collector's efforts to avoid it. Having explored key elements of the main body of an Igbo folktale, I will now explore how one is ended.

Ending an Igbo Folktale

The end of an orally told folktale is often marked by a 'restatement', which is usually avoided by non-Igbo editors.[321] A restatement is a way of 'summing up' a tale by providing a proverb or a moral.[322] As an example, Nwachukwu-Agbada notes that 'Obaraedo' concluded by an

[320] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.8; Anon., 'Chapter Twelve: Omalinze – The Prince of the Despised Wife' in *Folktales from Igboland,* ed. by Clifford N. Ugochukwu (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), pp.107-118. Anon., 'Chapter Two: Anyanwu – The Beautiful Bride', p.23.

[321] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.28.

[322] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.28.

'*ihe mmuta* (what is learned)' that states that children must always obey their parents, whereas 'The King that Ate the Sacrificial Yam', contains a moral that people 'must not be gluttonous'.[323] Thus, there is a difference between a restatement and a moral: a restatement acts as a conclusion, whilst a moral sums up what the audience should take away from the tale.[324] Didactic tales are the most likely to include a moral as they are famous for 'impart[ing] moral values' on the listeners, with the morals being stated at the end of each folktale.[325] The morals promoted in these folktales can include the 'implicit obedience to one's parents and elders and disastrous consequences of disobedience', the 'divine retributive justice for vices such as jealousy, hatred, wickedness, maltreatment and oppression of the orphan and less fortunate in society', 'divine rewards and heavenly blessings' and the insistence of following 'good' behaviours such as 'obedience, respect for others especially those in authority, honesty, kindness and truthfulness'.[326] Morals are often reinforced and promoted by the use of 'carefully manipulated antithesis' of behaviour and characterisation, such as the 'wealthy against the poor', the 'beloved wives against the despised wives' in polygamous family set-ups, and the 'beloved son against the hated son, or a beautiful damsel against her ugly sister'.[327] These contrasts are often seen in the reconciliation of appearances with realities and are present in all folktale volumes discussed in this chapter.[328] For example, in 'Omalinze– The Prince of the Despised Wife', the despised wife of a king, who is thrown out of the palace, turns out to be the most loyal and the only wife capable of providing a male

[323] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.28.

[324] Anon., 'Tortoise the Magician', p.9.

[325] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.6.

[326] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.6.

[327] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.7.

[328] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.7.

heir.[329] The most loved queens, however, mock her initially but later become her 'subjects' upon the discovery of the despised queen's prince and her return to the palace.[330] 'Omalinze – The Prince of the Despised Wife' thus denotes the idea that loyalty and patience are virtuous traits and ultimately will be rewarded. By including these themes and characterisation, the editors remain true to the format of the orally told moral tales. Notably, Ugochukwu's morals appear in the past tense, whilst Ikokwu's is in present tense. 'Obaraedo – The Disobedient Daughter's' moral appears as

> This folktale, which illustrates the belief of Igbo people in supernatural beings, witches, wizards, sorcery and traditional medicinal concoctions, was used in the ancient Igboland to instil implicit obedience to their parents in children.[331]

By stating that this tale 'was used' in 'ancient Igboland', Ugochukwu is implying that 'Obaraedo – The Disobedient Daughter' is a tale that is no longer told or is no longer used to teach the same moral teachings as it once was. Moreover, as every moral to every folktale is in the past tense in a similar way to the above example, there is a much bigger implication highlighted here and that is the telling of Igbo folktales, much like the time in which the folktales themselves are set, are also part of the past. As previously mentioned, Ikokwu makes her concern about oral narration of folktales fast becoming a thing of the past clear, attributing it to colonisation, the African diaspora, the introduction of western mass media to the Igbo way of life and continuing globalisation.[332] Ikokwu's effort, then, is to 'recreat[e]

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[329] Anon., 'Chapter Twelve: Omalinze – The Prince of the Despised Wife', pp.107-108.

[330] Anon., 'Chapter Twelve: Omalinze – The Prince of the Despised Wife', p.118.

[331] Anon., 'Obaraedo – The Disobedient Daughter', p.74.

[332] Ikokwu, 'Preface', xxiii.

what used to be part of the fabric of the [Igbo] nation', which is further illustrated by the use of present tense in each folktale's moral. 'Why Kite Hovers over Burning Bush's' moral states that 'anger is very bad' and that 'actions should not be taken when one is angry for fear that one might take a *rash* [emphasis not mine] and regrettable decision'.[333] Ikokwu's use of the present tense in line with the directive nature of the moral brings the telling of the tale into the present, which reflects her reason for publishing her collection, and that is revival, whilst Ugochukwu's is preservation.

Alongside the Igbo moral tales exist etiological tales (or 'why' and 'how' tales). These folktales tend to explain the 'origins or the beginnings of things or how things came to being'.[334] The ending of these tales differ to other tales, and will always be concluded by summarising the central point of the folktale - a restatement - rather than a directive moral, as 'The Bird that Speaks', for example, ends as follows:

> Site oge ahu, ndi mmadu na-akpacharazi anya ha n'iri anu nnunu. O bum na nnunu ekwuo okwu, a mara na a nagh eri ya en.
> Since then, human beings are often careful when eating birds. If a bird makes an utterance, you know it is not edible.[335]

As seen from the example provided above, the summary helps to further express the meaning of the folktale to the audience as it is a statement that explicitly explains why things are the way they are, which contrasts with the directive nature of other folktale morals. These

[333] Anon., 'Why Kite Hovers over Burning Bush', p.217.

[334] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.6.

[335] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.28.

folktales include myths of creation, the origins of hunger and famine or why or how death came to the world such as 'The Sacred Goat – How Diseases Came into the World', which explains how diseases were introduced to the world due to a young boy who attempts to deceive the supreme God, Chukwu.[336] By including both morals and restatements, Ugochukwu and Ikokwu are following the traditional structure of the spoken versions.

After the moral or concluding statement, orally narrated folktales will end with audience-participation to mark the ending of a narration, where the narrator will say '*Chaakpii, Chaakwi, Taakpii, Taakwii,* or *Ootii*!' and audience will reply '*Woo, Yoo, Haa, Oyoo*, or *Iyaa!*' to officially end a narrative.[337] Ikokwu, the only editor to do so, ends every one of the folktales in her collection with audience participation with the reader being prompted to read 'chakpii!' out loud and the listener being prompted to reply 'wor!', officially marking the ending of each narrative in a traditional way whilst appearing in the written form, thus oral traditions being perpetuated on paper.

In a traditional, public performative environment in line with Igbo traditions, an orally narrated tale that is told well and which is enjoyed by the audience will receive applause.[338] This applause is viewed as a 'safe arrival from a long journey', meaning a well narrated and performed folktale 'merits the teller [with] the Igbo greeting of *nnoa* (welcome)'.[339] Emenanjo asks the following questions regarding this subject:

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[336] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.6.

[337] Nwachukwu-Agbada, p.29.

[338] E.N. Emenanjo, ed., *Omalinze: A Book of Igbo Folk-Tales* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.xiv.

[339] Emenanjo, p.xiv.

> Is it not that the audience is welcoming the narrator from the world of make-believe to which his tale has forced him to travel? And are all folktales not set in worlds of make-believe? The world where men, animals, and spirits live cheek by jowl.[340]

Here, Emenanjo is proposing that folktales are a way of entering the different worlds that exist for Igbo people and the audience welcomes a safe return from the world of make-believe. It allows both the narrator and the audience to travel to these worlds and welcome and greet each other at each stop. Igbo cosmology also views 'men, animals and spirits' as living 'cheek by jowl', hence this being expressed and reflected in Igbo oral narratives.[341] The characters that appear in Ikokwu's and Ugochukwu's respective collections reflect this statement as they consist of human beings, animals or spirits (or divine beings) and, although less frequently, the 'supreme God' Chukwu.[342] As we have explored previously, it is important to keep in mind that some Igbo folktales use allegory rather than make-believe. However, two things can exist at once, and emphasising the journey to and back from the make-believe where spirits, humans and animals live together and communicate using the same language, albeit not always peacefully, is an important part of traditional Igbo folktales. By exploring the world make-believe, the editors are preserving the important tropes, themes, and traditions of orally told stories when writing them down.

Ugochukwu and Ikokwu make valiant efforts to retain the oral nature of the folktales they include in their collections. Ugochukwu does so by providing context, staying true to tradition, and providing intertextual stories which include evidence of audience participation.

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[340] Emenanjo, p.xiv.

[341] Emenanjo, p.xiv.

[342] Ugochukwu, 'Introduction', p.8.

Ikokwu, however, goes above and beyond to retain the orality of the folktales, providing us with stories in both English and Igbo; song lyrics, music scores and a CD; and including more traditional formal elements and intertextuality than the other two editors put together, and this is what makes Ikokwu's collection unique. In all of my research and in the many volumes of folktales I have read, I have never seen anything quite like it and Ikokwu's efforts are beyond commendable. Sadly, there is only so much orality that can be preserved orthographically, no matter how hard an editor tries, and this results in the natural dislocation of oral narratives when being taken from spoken to written forms. Dayrell, however, has dislocated the folktales in his collection in more than one sense. I have discussed Dayrell far less in this chapter than Ikokwu and Ugochukwu due to the lack of attempt to preserve the orality of the tales. To me, this speaks volumes as it indicates there was very little to work with other than to state that Dayrell made little to no attempt to retain oral tradition in his collection. This chapter shows that despite the natural dislocation that occurs, the editor can make a difference in how much damage is done as seen in the efforts made by Ugochukwu and Ikokwu who have actively tried to retain as much orality as is possible when working with the written form, thus decolonising formally colonised folktales.

As explored earlier in this chapter, the lines between legend and folktales are blurred in Igbo oral tradition. With this in mind, the next chapter will explore how Akaeke Emezi reclaims Igbo cosmology through their ogbanje narrative in their debut autobiographical novel, *Freshwater. Freshwater* showcases how spirits live 'cheek by jowl' with people in a real-world context, exploring how it impacts the protagonist's mental wellbeing in a society that has rejected and dismissed Igbo beliefs as 'mumbo jumbo' and embraced Christianity.[343]

[343] Sartre, p.19; Emenanjo, p.xiv.

Chapter Three

Reclaiming Igbo Cosmology

Content Warning

This chapter makes reference to topics such as mental health struggles, suicide attempts and suicidal thoughts, and rape and sexual assault.

This chapter will focus on how Akwaeke Emezi reclaims Igbo cosmology in their debut novel, *Freshwater* (2018). Emezi is a Nigerian and Tamil artist and writer who was raised within a Catholic household before moving to the United States of America to attend university. They identify as a non-binary Trans and ogbanje non-human and use they/them pronouns.[344] They have published three novels, *Freshwater*, *Pet* (2019) and *The Death of Vivek Oji* (2020), have written non-fiction and memoir work for *T Magazine*, *Dazed Magazine*, *The Cut*, *Buzzfeed*, *Granta Online*, *Vogue.com*, and *Commonwealth Writers*, and award-winning short stories. Emezi has been open about their mental health struggles and their journey towards self-acceptance as a non-binary Trans and embodied liminal being, which Emezi's debut, autobiographical novel, *Freshwater,* explores.[345] *Freshwater* has been nominated for, received, and been long and shortlisted for multiple prestigious awards, and is in early development as a TV series at FX, which Emezi is writing and executive producing

[344] Akwaeke Emezi, *Biography* (2020) <https://www.akwaeke.com/biography> [accessed 15 January 2021], para. 1 of 5.

[345] In *Freshwater,* the protagonist both identifies as human and an embodied ogbanje spirit, which is how Emezi also identifies. My use of 'embodied' thus applies to the ogbanje spirits that live within Ada's body and Ada herself. Being an embodied spirit can lead to mental health diagnosis in a western setting, especially being a person of colour and of non-European heritage, which Ada and the spirits fear in the novel.

with Tamara P. Carter.[346]

As briefly mentioned in Chapter Two, Igbo oral narratives are closely related to Igbo cosmology as the oral nature of Igbo culture means that there less of a separation between folktales, and myth and legends as there is in Europe. Instead, there are simply folktales that relate to the earth (*akuko-ala*) and those that relate to the land (*akuko-ifo*). Many *akuko-ala* folktales relate to Igbo deities, most prominently the earth mother Goddess, Ani, a key figure in Igbo cosmology. *Freshwater* revolves around Igbo cosmology and makes frequent mentions to Ani. Alongside this, Emezi creates an ogbanje protagonist called Ada. The novel follows Ada's life as an ogbanje being who does not die young and how existing as an embodied liminal being manifests and affects Ada's relationships, gender identity and mental health. The ogbanje spirits who live inside Ada start as a collective 'we', before two individuals break away from the collective when Ada experiences trauma, allowing them to take over Ada's body and to move to the forefront of Ada's consciousness. At this point, Ada begins to accept herself as ogbanje and her existence in a liminal space. Ogbanje are a prominent component Igbo cosmology, and has become a trope used by Igbo writers, such as Chinua Achebe (*Things Fall Apart* (1958)), and Buchi Emecheta (*The Slave Girl* (1977)) as a 'conceptual prism to articulate the complexity of the notion of "being" in Igbo society in particular and Nigerian society in general'.[347] Tina Magqa and Rodwell Makombe posit that Emezi views the notion of being as complex, and explores this notion through a queer lens. Further to this, Emezi also enters the conversation concerning the west's approach to and

[346] Emezi, *Biography*, para. 5 of 5.

[347] Tina Magqa and Rodwell Makombe, 'Decolonising Queer Sexualities: A Critical Reading of the Ogbanje Concept in Akwaeke Emezi's *Freshwater* (2018)', *African Studies Quarterly,* 20.3 (2021), 24-39 (p.25).

treatment of mental health conditions. Emezi reclaims the ogbanje narrative by linking it to conversations which are usually governed by the west, aiding in the decolonisation of mental health and queer studies.

In this chapter, I will initially explore how Emezi reclaims Igbo cosmology through examining the journey that Ada takes from the new – Christianity – back to the old – Igbo cosmology, and how the old and the new create conflicting realities for Ada that negatively impact her mental health. The novel's protagonist, Ada, is torn between the new and the old. The ogbanje spirits that exist inside her body are the old and have existed in Igbo cosmology long before the imposition of colonial invasions. [348] The new appears in the form of Christianity, a religion in which Ada is raised and believes during the early parts of the novel, before she becomes aware of her own ogbanje existence, including accepting the menacing spirits that live and exist within her and who are part of her. The ogbanje spirits state that 'when the transition is made from spirit to flesh, the gates are meant to be closed', but this does not happen to Ada, leaving the ogbanje spirits trapped inside her as she continues to live.[349] This has dramatic effects on Ada's mental health and identity in terms of the multiple selves that are created and 'born' through Ada's emotional needs, trauma, and gender identity as she grows into an adult. Emezi has said that Ada's mental health conditions are simply coming from a 'different centre', and *Freshwater* is their attempt to 'recentre' African narratives and Indigenous realities, particularly those of Igbo origin, that have been silenced and subdued by colonisation and western influences. [350]

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[348] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.385.

[349] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2476.

[350] Asian American Writers' Workshop, *AAWWTV: Fractured Selves with Akwaeke Emezi, Mira T. Lee & TANAÏS* (2018) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAfV1ZRhhfM> [accessed 1 December 2020], 32:59-

Next, I explore how Emezi claims in-between spaces, using Turner's notion of liminality, Anzaldúa's concept of borderlands, and Robertson's use and modification of both concepts. Whilst Turner describes the liminal space as temporary and not where people remain, Anzaldúa sees her concept of an in-between space – the borderlands – as a place where people do remain.[351] Furthermore, Robertson uses both of these concepts, building upon Turner's liminal phase and Anzaldúa's borderlands, and developing a notion that in-between spaces can be both permanent and ephemeral.[352] It is the idea that liminal spaces are both stable and transitional that allows me to read *Freshwater* as a narrative of reclamation, through which Emezi reclaims and adapts Igbo cosmology in a way that fits the contemporary world. The inclusion of the contemporary is not to say that ogbanje, non-binary and Trans people have not always existed; rather, it allows me to consider the impact of colonialism and its rigid ideas of gender on these identities and view them through a contemporary lens with these influences in mind. This section takes the stance that colonialism, its educational system, and its propagation of Christianity introduced rigid notions of gender to West Africa, and suppressed Igbo cosmology. By writing a narrative of how gender and being ogbanje impact one another and share a liminal space, Emezi reclaims what it means to exist within liminal spaces, but also what it means to embody liminality. This chapter therefore examines how Igbo spirits and people live 'cheek by jowl' in a real-world context just as they do in a folktale's world of make-believe, allowing the direction of this thesis to turn to the reclamation of Igbo cosmology as well as oral narratives, as both are

33:07.

[351] Turner, p.94; Anzaldúa, p.41.

[352] Robertson, p.48.

inextricably linked.[353] Exploring the reclamation of Igbo cosmology, especially through ogbanje spirits, showcases the complexity of Igbo folklore, but also demonstrates how colonial interference and western influence on Igbo society has not only created external but internal conflict. The internal conflict has outlived colonial rule, creating a need for reclamation of both the ogbanje narrative and the old, Igbo ways in a way that fits the contemporary, supposedly postcolonial world.

Defining Ogbanje, Exploring Ogbanje Narratives

Before defining ogbanje, it is important to note that it exists as part of Igbo cosmology. Although it is not certain when Igbo as a belief system came to be, we know that it has long been passed from one generation to the other in an oral form. Thus, it has been told orally alongside what the west would consider folktales. As such, the Igbo belief system exhibits a 'peculiarity' in comparison to other belief systems as it raises questions concerning the existence of human beings, meaning it is viewed more as a philosophy that denotes a way of life and being.[354] Igbo cosmology features multiple Gods, the most prevalent being Chukwu (the Supreme God) and Ani (the Earth Goddess), but also many non-human spirits, such as ogbanje, hence the focus of this chapter and Emezi's novel.[355]

Emezi's definition of ogbanje is notable for two reasons: firstly, because Emezi identifies as ogbanje but also because this definition is the one which they developed as they were living

[353] Emenanjo, p.xiv.

[354] Chukwuma O. Okeke, Christopher N. Ibenwa, and Gloria Tochukwu Okeke, 'Conflicts Between African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Eastern Nigeria: The Igbo Example', *SAGE Open* (2017), 1-10 (p.2).

[355] Okeke, Ibenwa, and Okeke, p.2.

and writing their ogbanje narrative. Emezi thus defines ogbanje as:

> an Igbo spirit that's born into a human body, a kind of malevolent trickster, whose goal is to torment the human mother by dying unexpectedly only to return in the next child and do it all over again. They come and go.[356]

Like Emezi's, most definitions focus on the coming and going of ogbanje beings. Misty Bastian, who has undertaken extensive work regarding the ogbanje phenomenon, also references the movement of ogbanje beings, describing them 'first and foremost, [as] "returning children"'.[357] Sunday T. C. Ilechukwu also points to this, stating that ogbanje 'cycle rapidly and repeatedly through birth and death', suggesting that this is due to the Igbo belief that 'ogbanje results from subversion of human destiny by wilful alliance of the new-born with deities who guard the postulated interface between birth and pre-birth (spirit) existence'.[358] This results in the process of reincarnation being disrupted by an ogbanje being entering the Igbo life and reincarnation cycle prior to birth, which is seen as 'unnatural' due to the child having missed important milestones, such as puberty, adulthood, old age, etc. but returning nonetheless.[359] The focus on coming and going is not to say that ogbanje beings do

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[356] Akwaeke Emezi, *Transition: My Surgeries were a Bridge across Realities, a Spirit Customizing its Vessel to Reflect Its Nature* (2018) <https://www.thecut.com/2018/01/writer-and-artist-akwaeke-emezi-gender-transition-and-ogbanje.html> [accessed 15 October 2020], para. 10 of 23.

[357] Misty Bastian, 'Narratives about Ogbanje (Spirit Children) in Southern Nigerian Popular Writing' in *Readings in African Popular Fiction*, ed. by Stephanie Newell (London: International African Institute, 2002), pp.59-67 (p.59).

[358] Bastian, p.59.

[359] Christopher N. Okonko, 'A Critical Divination: Reading Sula as Ogbanje-Abiku', *African American Review*, 38.4 (2004), 651-668 (p.654); it is important to note here that obanjeness is different to reincarnation as it

not mature: Bastian's informants are living and breathing ogbanje adults who have noted that they had childhoods 'marred by illness and odd sensations' but also 'relatively privileged' due to adults actively trying to persuade the ogbanje child to stay with them in the human realm. As adults, they find it 'difficult to act like ordinary people', and to form lasting and meaningful relationships, a subject that Emezi also explores in *Freshwater*.[360]

Although Emezi states that ogbanje 'come and go' in her definition, in *Freshwater,* they proclaim that Ada is 'not like other ogbanje'.[361] This is evidenced by Ada surviving beyond childhood without undergoing rituals that supposedly sever the connection between the child and the spirit world.[362] This usually takes the form of attempting to find where ogbanje have buried their *iyi-uwa*, which literally translates to 'an oath-of-the-world', which keeps the ogbanje connected to both the earth and the spirit world, and acts as a bridge so that they can return home upon their host's demise.[363] If the oath is destroyed, the ties to the child, earth and the spirit world are cut, meaning the child should live a full and typical life thereafter.[364] However, the spirits inside Ada bury their oath, which takes the form of an 'igneous rock' in the pit of her stomach, between the mucus lining and the muscle layer'.[365] This is one of the first hints that this ogbanje narrative is different to those that came before it, as the ogbanje have made it so Ada would have to be hurt in order for the connection to be cut, thus making

actively interrupts the natural life cycle.

[360] Bastian, pp.59-60.

[361] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.183.

[362] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.183.

[363] Okonko, p.654.

[364] Okonko, p.654.

[365] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.193.

it harder for it to be found in the first place and less likely that Ada's parents will do anything about it, unlike other parents of ogbanje children.

Ogbanje spirits do make appearances in other Igbo anglophone literature, and people born ogbanje are either saved through 'cutting' ties to the spirit world or die fairly young.[366] Chinua Achebe creates Ezinma, an ogbanje child and daughter of *Things Fall Apart*'s protagonist Okonkwo. Like Ada in *Freshwater,* Ezinma is a child who was born to die but avoids death; however, Ezinma's 'kinship with the spirits is broken', following the typical ogbanje survival narrative, and thus allowing her to live rather than carry on the ogbanje spirits' perpetual and torturous cycle of birth and death.[367] The Yoruba alternative to the Igbo ogbanje is abiku, which is the same concept under a different religion and name as both Igbo and Yoruba belief systems are of Nigerian origin. Ben Okri explores abiku through the protagonist of his novel *The Famished Road*, named Azaro. Like *Freshwater*'s Ada, Azaro is always fighting his 'spirit companions' as they want him to leave the land of mortals and return to the spirit domain with them.[368] Azaro refuses and survives but does so without cutting ties with the spirits who exist within him. As most ogbanje narratives explore the need for a 'cutting' in order to survive and remain in the mortal realm, as happens in *Thing*s *Fall Apart,* Okri's depiction of the abiku is similar to Emezi's as it explores what happens when ties to the spirit world remain, but the spirit child remains alive on earth. Similarly, to *The Famished Road* but contrary to *Things Fall Apart, Freshwater*'s protagonist continues to live whilst her ties to the ogbanje spirits remain intact, suggesting that Emezi creates a new narrative based in the modern day, one that allows them to reclaim the narrative for

[366] Bastian, p.60.

[367] Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Penguin, 2001), Amazon Kindle e-book, loc.953.

[368] Ben Okri, *The Famished Road* (London: Vintage, 1991), Amazon Kindle e-book, p.3.

themselves and others who identify as ogbanje.

As Emezi identifies as ogbanje, *Freshwater* must not be read as strictly fantasy in the same way as other ogbanje narratives can be as it differs from others in that it is considered a reflection of Emezi's reality. As explored in the previous chapter, folktales are not strictly make-believe either, due to the lines being between legends and folktales being blurred, and their connection to Igbo cosmology being inseparable. As *Freshwater* is an autobiographical novel, the lines between fiction and reality are also blurred, thus mirroring Igbo folklore and meaning that care must be taken not to label it as such.

Freshwater also shares similarities to Indigenous wonderworks, which are often mistakenly viewed primarily as works of fantasy but according to Daniel Heath Justice, 'they are neither strictly "fantasy" nor "realism," but maybe both at once, or something else entirely' and this is also true of *Freshwater.*[369] Both wonderworks and *Freshwater* explore themes concerning Indigenous or Igbo issues and trauma, and 'generally push against the expectations of rational materialism'.[370] For Emezi, this is especially true when it comes to challenging western reasoning within psychiatry, which puts physical, material matter ahead of spiritual existence. Emezi challenges this western philosophy by exploring the different centres through which Igbo peoples and their dislocated cultures and cosmologies materialise within a person on a spiritual level and come from within. For Emezi, this is their own lived experience as an embodied ogbanje spirit and the likelihood that this will be confused with westernised mental health diagnoses, which tend to take a social materialist standpoint without considering the

[369] Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Waterloo: Wilifrid Laurier University Press, 2018), p.154.

[370] Justice, p.154.

differing cultures from which colonised people come and how they may interpret symptoms differently. This is where the similarities between Indigenous wonderworks and *Freshwater* have the most in common as Justice notes that wonderworks are,

> rooted in the specificity of peoples to their histories and embodied experiences. They make space for meaningful engagements and encounters that are dismissed by colonial authorities but are central to cultural resurgence and the recovery of other ways of knowing, being, and abiding.[371]

Here, Justice could very well be writing about *Freshwater.* The autobiographical novel is specifically rooted in Igbo culture, its colonial history and Emezi's embodied experience as ogbanje, which have been dismissed by not only the west, but by some communities of Igbo peoples due to colonialism's influence on their culture. Emezi's ogbanje narrative is therefore just as central to the cultural resurgence and reclamation of Igbo ways of knowing and being through the ogbanje experience. Emezi does this through exploring their own ogbanjeness and creating a new autobiographical ogbanje narrative, one that is neither fiction nor non-fiction and both all at once, which is just part of what makes the text a fresh take on what has become a trope in Igbo anglophone writing.

Unlike *Freshwater,* many ogbanje narratives are strictly fantastical works with ogbanje characters being cleverly and subtly woven into works of fiction. For example, in Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1979), the ogbanje figure often appears in a less obvious way and receives some modifications which allows for it to fit the African American experience more appropriately. *Kindred* has been read as a phantasmic trauma narrative, incorporating the

[371] Justice, p.152.

novel's Black adult, time-travelling protagonist, Dana, as ogbanje. *Kindred* is often read as belonging to the science fiction genre, yet Butler always disagreed with this, claiming that the novel is 'obviously not science fiction'.[372] Stella Setka's reading of *Kindred* supports Butler's claim, as she sees 'Dana's time travel' as 'not [being] explained by science but rather by repeated life cycle of the ogbanje', through which Dana is repeatedly taken back to a pre-Civil War Maryland plantation owned by her white, Black-people-enslaving ancestors.[373] The ogbanje are part of the Igbo belief system that was interrupted by colonialism and has thus been reclaimed by African American and African writers alike. Butler reclaims it by taking an Igbo belief and modifying it to fit the African American experience, whilst Emezi reclaims it by making it fit the postcolonial Catholic Igbo experience, where it is dismissed and all but forgotten (in Ada's family's case, at least). Emezi's new narrative allows for a personal narrative to be explored as Emezi has said that the novel is part of their own journey in that it helped them explore their forgotten ancestral belief system and come to identify as ogbanje.

Written from the point of view of the ogbanje spirits for the most part, *Freshwater* gives the spirits a voice: first as the plural 'we' and later becoming two separate entities and speaking as individuals – Asughara and Saint. Vincent. Doing so places the ogbanje spirits front and centre of the narrative, giving them their own voice, which they are not usually afforded in other works of fiction. Emezi, however, explores what it means to be a liminal being existing as a 'plural individual and a singular collective', and this is what the next section will

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[372] Octavia E. Butler, 'Black Women and the Science Fiction Genre: Interview with Octavia Butler', Interview by Frances M. Beai, *Black Scholar*, 17.2 (1986), 14-18 (p.14); see Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred* (London: Headline, 2018), Amazon Kindle e-book.

[373] Stella Setka, 'Phantasmic Reincarnation: Igbo Cosmology in Octavia Butler's *Kindred*', *MELUS*, 41.1 (2016), 93-124 (p.95).

examine.[374]

(Re)Claiming In-Between Spaces

In *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967), Turner explores the concept of liminality in an African setting by studying an Ndembu rite of passage ritual in the Congo. To Turner, liminality is a temporary, transitional 'phase', meaning the 'liminal phase' is an in-between state within which one exists after leaving one state but before entering another during the right of passage.[375] The first phase consists of a 'behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions', whilst in the third phase, 'the passage is consummated' and 'ritual subject […] is in a stable state once more' and 'is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards'.[376] The middle, and what Turner calls the liminal phase, is simply a space where the ritual participant 'passes through on their way back to social structure' rather than a place where one remains.[377] Fetson Kalua observes how Homi K. Bhabha 'develops Victor Turner's key idea of liminality […] to explain the vexed, non-dualistic and shifting nature of identity in the modern (largely postcolonial) world'.[378] The third space, for Bhabha, is a space that exists because of colonialism, which forced colonised subjects into a new space where they could negotiate and verbalise their identity

[374] Asian American Writers' Workshop, 22:59-23:20.

[375] Turner, p.94; Robertson p.48.

[376] Turner, p.94.

[377] Turner, p.94.

[378] Fetson Kalua, 'Homi Bhabha's Third Space and African Identity', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 21.1 (2009), 23-32 (p.23).

and culture, alongside the imposed culture of the coloniser.[379] For Bhabha, this space is not a temporary one, but a place where colonised people remain and form a hybrid, more fluid identity.[380] Nyk Robertson also views liminal spaces as a place where people, especially non-binary folx, do exist and remain. Like Bhabha, Robertson believes that this space is forced upon people who do not fit into wider society – or a colonised society for Bhabha – and therefore need a third space to exist that is not on either end of a binary opposition, and they use the idea of borderlands to further elaborate on the idea of liminality.[381]

In *Borderlands/La Frontera: New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldúa defines the borderlands as 'a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary'.[382] Anzaldúa suggests that borders exist between nation states, specifically those borders between Mexico and the United States of America, as well as in a more metaphorical sense, such as those between male and female. Whilst Anzaldúa takes a physical and figurative approach to liminality and borderlands, Robertson takes a fully symbolic approach to borderlands and insists that,

> Non-binary folx exist in a place that borders the female space and the male space but does not cross into either position completely. Different variations of gender and gender presentation will be situated closer to one border or the other or may lie precisely in between the two. These variations create this space of borderlands where the subject is never completely defined.[383]

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[379] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.37-38.

[380] Bhabha, pp.37-38.

[381] Robertson, p.48.

[382] Anzaldúa, p.41.

[383] Robertson, p.49.

Here, Robertson is acknowledging that western ideology creates rigid binary ideas of gender and what it means to be a part of male and female spaces, whilst leaving room for liminal spaces and borderlands in between these binaries to exist. For Robertson, gender is a spectrum with people performing and presenting 'different variations of gender' and existing 'closer to one border or the other or […] in between the two' rigid borders.[384] Of course, these ideas rely upon post-structuralist ideas that are based upon western mind-sets and binary oppositions, but these western views on gender have been thrust upon West Africa through colonial rule. In pre-colonial times, Igbo people living in Nnobi had a more 'flexible' sense of gender which allowed for the acceptance of 'male daughters' and 'female husbands'.[385] These roles meant that first-born daughters could take on male societal roles in order to inherit land and then take on wives and become female husbands.[386] Arguably, this flexibility with gender roles was still operating within a binary patriarchal society, as female children would only become male daughters if there were no sons to inherit their father's land and were given little choice in whether they wanted these roles, sometimes being 'called away from their husbands' to undertake them.[387] However, Nnobi Igbo peoples were still more accepting of women taking on traditionally male roles and their new identity as male than the rigid gender binary introduced by colonisation and Christianity, suggesting that western ideologies have infiltrated Igbo communities.[388] These rigid, western binaries, which

[384] Robertson, p.49.

[385] Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 2015), pp.31-33.

[386] Amadiume, pp.31-33.

[387] Amadiume, pp.31-33.

[388] Amadiume, pp.32-33, p.125.

must be in place in order for liminal spaces and borderlands to exist, result in identities that exist in an in-between space being defined as Other and marginal, like *Freshwater*'s protagonist, Ada.

I thus posit that in-between spaces, such as liminal spaces, third spaces and borderlands, are fluid; they are places where one can remain with the possibility of that fixed state being the temporary option *and* where people exist temporarily on their way to a 'fixed state' of being.[389] Ada exists and remains within in-between spaces, but Emezi takes the idea of liminal spaces one step further than Robertson and applies the same notion to humanness. In their X (formally Twitter) 'bio', Emezi states that they are 'non-human', identifying as ogbanje, and transferring these identities to their autobiographical novel's protagonist.[390] Like Butler's 'genetically modified vampire' in *Fledgling,* who is 'neither human nor vampire, both human and vampire', Ada is neither human or non-human, and both human and non-human, meaning the text can be read through a posthumanist lens.[391] Pramod K. Nayar describes posthumanism as 'the radical decentring of the traditional sovereign, coherent and autonomous human in order to demonstrate how the human is always already evolving with, constituted by and constitutive of multiple forms of life and machines'.[392] From a posthumanist perspective, Emezi is decentering the ogbanje narrative but also what it

[389] Robertson, p.49.

[390] Akwaeke Emezi, *Akwaeke Emezi's X (formally Twitter) Profile* (2020) <https://twitter.com/azemezi?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor> [Accessed 1 December 2020].

[391] See Octavia E. Butler, *Fledgling* (London: Headline, 2005), Amazon Kindle e-book; Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), p.10.

[392] Nayar, p.10.

means to be human through Ada, who has multiple forms of life living inside of her, which challenges Ada's autonomy as a human. This places Ada in a liminal space where she has to learn to compromise with the spirits and accept them as part of her and herself as existing somewhere between human and non-human.

There are several in-between spaces where Ada and the spirits exist in *Freshwater*. Ada herself is a liminal being living in multiple liminal spaces, such as those that exist between life and death, the human and spirit world, and most significantly for this section, female and male. Anzaldúa tells us that it is possible to be a 'half and half', which she defines as being 'neither one [gender] or another but a strange doubling'.[393] She states that the people from her village spoke of a person who lived near her house being 'of the Others', meaning that for 'six months she was a woman who had a vagina that bled once per month and, […] for the other six months she was a man, had a penis and she peed standing up'.[394] 'Half and halfs' are just one example of a liminal subject, with Anzaldúa describing 'fragmented and multiple subjects that strategically deploy the relationships and even the contradictions among its various parts to deconstruct western narratives of identity based on opposition'.[395] This is particularly prominent in Ada's case as she is herself fractured, multiple and living between the oppositions that Anzaldúa and Emezi attempt to deconstruct. When discussing gendered borderlands, Anzaldúa insists that,

> There is something compelling about being both male and female, about having an entry into

[393] Anzaldúa, p.41.

[394] Anzaldúa, p.41.

[395] Lisa M. Walker, 'How to Recognize a Lesbian: The Cultural Politics of Looking like What You Are', *Signs,* 18.4 (1993), 866-890 (p.870).

> both worlds. Contrary to some psychiatric tenets, half and halfs are not suffering from confusion of sexual identity, or even from a confusion of gender. What we are suffering from is an absolute despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other.[396]

Here, Anzaldúa is noting the clash between 'psychiatric tenets' and a part of her culture – 'half and halfs'.[397] She is suggesting that the psychiatric tenets, which are mostly western in terms of popular and mainstream approaches, do not align with the way 'half and halfs' view themselves, thus suggesting that 'half and halfs' are not confused, but constrained by western rigidity when it comes to gender. It is this 'despot duality' that Emezi rejects both in their personal life and on behalf of their protagonist, evident by stating that their 'work is about inhabiting realities that people don't consider real or valid'.[398] To Emezi, these realities were part of an 'Indigenous belief system in Nigeria'.[399] Emezi believes that 'because [Nigerians] were colonized', they were taught to reject those realities, to not talk about them, while 'Christian missionaries declared everything that is a part of our traditional beliefs as evil and stigmatized' them.[400] By 'inhabiting realities' deemed 'other' or that have been erased by colonialism, thus being borderlands and existing in liminal spaces, Emezi reclaims the 'Indigenous belief system' that they say the missionaries 'stigmatized'.[401] Two Spirit people

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[396] Anzaldúa, p.41.

[397] Anzaldúa, p.41.

[398] Akwaeke Emezi and Sasha Bonét, *Inhabiting Realities: An Interview with Novelist Akwaeke Emezi by Sasha Bonét* (2018) < https://bombmagazine.org/articles/akwaeke-emezi/?fbclid=IwAR04lSwF6qeZm3molqoJ9KCs5naT3oK7Wi1MtUUqaWEyTYADSHt7IKH7gXk> [accessed 1 December 2020], para. 11 of 27.

[399] Emezi and Bonét, para. 9 of 27.

[400] Emezi and Bonét, para. 9 of 27.

[401] Emezi and Bonét, para. 9 of 27.

received similar treatment when they were labelled as 'berdaches' by the earlier colonial settlers in North America, a term that has since been rejected by Indigenous communities because of its colonial anthropological history and its meaning of 'male sex slave', thus being a Two Spirit person was stigmatised due to being viewed as Other.[402] Instead, 'Two Spirit' is now commonly 'used as an umbrella term for Native GLBTQ [Indigenous] people', but it is different than the more western terms gay, lesbian, trans, bisexual, or queer and is very much its own category, referring to a person who is neither male or female but also both all at once.[403] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson argues that

> Two-Spirit and queer bodies and the knowledge and practices those bodies house as Indigenous political orders were seen as an extreme threat to settler society, sovereignty, dispossession, and the project of colonization, colonialism, and assimilation.[404]

By linking ogbanjeism and queerness, Emezi is reclaiming the 'diversity, variance, spiritual power', which are part of both Igbo and North American communities, and which Simpson states were amongst the 'very first things colonizers sought to eliminate' when dividing and conquering Indigenous societies.[405] It is clear that Two Spirit people are reclaiming their own space, ways of being and their narratives in a similar way to how Emezi reclaims and

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[402] June Scudeler, 'Queer Indigenous Studies, or Thirza Cuthand's Indigequeer Film' in *The Cambridge Companion to Queer Studies,* ed. by Siobhan B. Somerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp.79-92 (p.80).

[403] Qwo-Li Driskill, 'Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances between Native and Queer Studies', *Sexuality, Nationality, Indigeneity,* 16.1-2, 69-92 (p.72); Scudeler, p.80.

[404] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), p.126.

[405] Simpson, p.126.

recentres the ogbanje narratives for themselves and others like them.

Although writing about the culture of Chicanos, Anzaldúa insists that Indigenous cultures view what the west considers 'abnormal' – especially in regards to gender – as a gift and part of this is the ability to cross over the binary – the borderland if you will – of male and female.[406] Margaret Robinson notes the existence of 'suprabinary genders (i.e., genders in addition to male and female)' has been well-documented in North America'.[407] Furthermore, for the last thirty years, 'Indigenous sexual and gender minority people have been identifying as two-spirit', reflecting the less rigid gender categories that existed in Indigenous and native communities before colonialism existed in North America and around the world.[408] 'The adoption of the term Two Spirit among Indigenous people has coincided with broader cultural shifts toward challenging binary categories of sex and gender', and has led to the embracing of 'third and fourth genders', much like Bastian has posited for those who identify as ogbanje, which will be discussed later in this chapter.[409]

Although existing in a different Indigenous reality, there were also more flexible attitudes towards gender in pre-colonial Igbo culture. As previously discussed, in Igbo culture, women could become 'male daughters' and 'female husbands' when there were no or few sons to inherit land, and would take on 'male roles'.[410] Whilst this does not suggest that there is an

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[406] Anzaldúa, p.41.

[407] Margaret Robinson, 'Two-Spirit Identity in a Time of Gender Fluidity', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 67.12 (2020), 1675-1690 (p.1677).

[408] Justice, p.104.

[409] Robinson, p.1682.

[410] Amadiume, pp.31-33.

in-between in terms of gender, it does show that a less rigid set of gender norms was in place and that the west has imposed rigid ideas of gender through the introduction of Christianity.[411] Like the half and half person living in Anzaldúa's village, Ada is 'of the Others' as she is ogbanje and 'to be ogbanje is to be categorised other', but also in terms of gender, which is linked to her ogbanjeness.[412] Whilst her gender does not change from male to female every six months as the half and half's does, she does exist in a space between them – in a third space – between one gender and another, where she can exist within a 'third gender' of ogbanje.[413] Misty Bastian categorises ogbanje as a third gender, suggesting that the ogbanje person's assigned gender is a 'sham'.[414] This, alongside Robertson's assertion that liminal subjects do exist and remain in liminal spaces, fits aptly here as a third gender for Ada consists of being somewhere in-between the two 'official' genders.

Ada's gender is portrayed as liminal with the introduction of Saint Vincent, who is born alongside Asughara and exists within her, but is not a 'godspawn', thus coming to life beside an ogbanje spirit, suggesting that they are twins of some kind, interlinking Ada's gender dysphoria with her ogbanjeness.[415] This occurrence reflects Misty Bastian's assertion that 'to be ogbanje is to be categorised as other – and to bring alterity home in a way that transcends the more ordinary, bifurcated "otherness" of gender', and suggests we could 'speculate that

[411] Christiana Ngozi Ikegwuonu, 'An Exploration of Gender System in Igbo Language', *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 9 (2019), 245-253 (p.252).

[412] Bastian, p.59.

[413] Bastian, p.59.

[414] Bastian, p.59.

[415] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1323.

ogbanje children fall under a third gender category, that of human-looking spirit'.[416] When Bastian's speculation is taken into consideration, Vincent's birth is more significant than it first appears, as he is initially contained in the 'marble of [Ada's] mind'.[417] If we take the stance that ogbanje, and therefore Ada, fits into a third gender category as suggested by Bastian, then Vincent's birth places Ada outside the gender binary and leaves her somewhere in-between the two socially accepted genders. Ada thus exists within a liminal space, in a borderland between male and female in a society that has rigid views on gender.[418] Emezi, then, is critiquing these concepts and institutions, and by doing so reclaims a piece of their ancestral belief system, as well as their identity, with the character Saint Vincent playing the main role in this reclamation.

For the most part, Saint Vincent exists in the 'marble of [Ada's] mind' because 'he couldn't survive her body', thus symbolising Ada's initially unrecognised male part of herself.[419] Instead, Saint Vincent 'preferred to move inside Ada's dreams' where he 'molded her into a new body there, a dream body with reorganized flesh and a penis'.[420] Saint Vincent, then, exists in his own liminal dream space, which allows for the co-existence of an in-between space that encompasses both aspects of Igbo cosmology and Ada's westernised upbringing. As a child, Ada 'liked being seen as a boy' because 'she felt like it fit' and she 'could move between boy and girl, which was a freedom'.[421] When Ada turned twelve years old, she

[416] Bastian, p.59.

[417] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1323.

[418] Bastian, p.59.

[419] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1323.

[420] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1332.

[421] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1346.

'started bleeding', her body started on a path of 'unnatural maturing' without her consent and 'everything was ruined', thus external influences encourage Ada to subscribe to one side of a binary once her body started to change.[422] Having been 'pushed into a space [that Ada and the spirits] hated, a marked plane that was too clear and too wrong', Ada learns to repress that side of her until Saint Vincent is born.[423] Once he is 'born' and named, Ada and Asughara find they are always conscious of Saint Vincent's existence; he is not hidden away in Ada's unconscious, even if he does remain in the marble, moving and existing in her dreams, for a while. However, they are not always conscious of what he symbolises or why he exists. Thus, Ada's dreams become an in-between space where the conscious and the unconscious can communicate. In this case, it is Vincent's ability to create 'a dreambody with reorganized flesh and a penis'.[424] In the liminal dream space, Vincent can be himself, and what his existence means in terms of Ada's non-binary gender identity, which she has not yet realised at this point in the novel, can be communicated. After all, even though they seem to be individual, Ada and the spirits also exist as one, and Ada is part of him. For Saint Vincent, the dream space is liminal in Turner's sense of the word as it is a space in which he exists temporarily until he, Asughara and Ada are ready for him to 'step into the front a little more'.[425]

When Vincent does come to the forefront of Ada's consciousness, he exits the dream space and places Ada into another liminal place between male and female, resulting in 'the body' they shared,

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[422] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1342.

[423] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1347.

[424] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1328.

[425] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1767.

> becoming unsatisfactory, too feminine, too reproductive. That form had worked for Asụghara—those breasts with the large, dark areolae and nipples she could lift to her mouth—but we were more than her and we were more than the saint. We were a fine balance, bigger than whatever the namings had made, and we wanted to reflect that, to change the Ada into us. Removing her breasts was only the first step.[426]

To Ada, the reduction of her breasts not only makes her more non-binary but also more ogbanje. Ada's breast reduction – or the 'cutting' as Asughara calls it – balances Ada and makes her more herself by bringing her closer to her ogbanjeism and its place in society as Other and as a third, non-binary gender.[427] Whilst this might seem strange due to the novel's focus on the internal, for Ada, these external changes help her to further transcend humanness and accept her non-humanness because the external – her body – finally matches the internal – her being of a third gender: an ogbanje. The operation thus helps to unite the three selves as one entity and balances out the hierarchy between them. They therefore exist as one and multiple at the same time, yet another liminal space within which they exist, and one in which Ada must accept her non-humanness, for instance:

> It was very hard, letting go of being human. […]. It was difficult to accept not being human but still being contained in a human body. For that one, though, the secret was in the situation. Ọgbanje are as liminal as is possible—spirit and human, both and neither. I am here and not here, real and not real, energy pushed into skin and bone. I am my others; we are one and we are many.[428]

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[426] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2019.

[427] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2019.

[428] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2422-2427.

Here, it is clear that, although Ada is not 'human', she appears as such, leaving her in an ambiguous space between the two, existing as 'both and neither' all at once.[429] Being ogbanje – a liminal being – means that Ada has had to accept that she is in between the binary of human and non-human, which has been difficult due to the polarising nature of the environments in which she has lived.[430] *Freshwater* is thus an ogbanje narrative that depicts the struggles that those who identify as such face if living in societies that refuse to acknowledge that they exist, leaving them to take an isolating and traumatising journey to discover who and what they are. Thus, by building an ogbanje narrative that centres directly around liminal spaces, embodying liminality, and what it means to exist within in-between spaces in contemporary society, Emezi reclaims what it is to be ogbanje in a world that views Igbo spirituality as 'mumbo-jumbo'.[431]

Ogbanje is to be Other but, in line with Robertson's viewpoint, liminality brings power. Once Ada accepts her ogbanjeness, her non-humanness, her in-betweenness, she finds freedom and power in being able to access the advantages of not being tied to rigid gender binaries or ideals concerning what is to be – or to not be in Ada's case – human, hence claiming these spaces and simultaneously reclaiming the ogbanje narrative. Once Ada accepts her non-humanness, although it was 'very hard, letting go of being human', it gives her the answers to her problems, and she learns to live peacefully with her internal reality. The idea of gaining power is new to ogbanje narratives, with most fictional ogbanje characters either dying young or undergoing 'cutting' ceremonies in order to expel the ogbanje from the body and carry on

[429] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2422-2427.

[430] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2422-2427.

[431] Fanon, p.201.

living.[432] Perhaps it is the acceptance of being a liminal being – the self-acceptance displayed by Ada – that makes this narrative different for Ada and allows her to live *and* remain ogbanje. There is another level of reclamation here, as the ogbanje's narrative itself is reclaimed for Ada and others like her, such as Emezi, who identifies as ogbanje. By claiming liminal spaces through an ogbanje narrative, Emezi reclaims both their own and Ada's identity as ogbanje, which comes with the acceptance of the old Igbo ways and rejecting colonial influences, which will be explored next.

Rejecting the New, (Re)Birthing the Old

Emezi is of Igbo ancestry but being raised Catholic in Nigeria meant they had to research Igbo cosmology when writing *Freshwater*.[433] This novel, then, can be partly understood as a record of Emezi's own journey with and towards Igbo cosmology. *Freshwater* suggests that Igbo culture and cosmology has been silenced, erased, or dismissed as 'mumbo-jumbo' – as Sartre puts it – before being replaced with Christianity, which continues to take precedence and impact on Igbo people's identity.[434] There has been a conflict between Christianity and 'traditional religion' since the beginning of British colonialism in Southern Nigeria, where Christianity was first met with resistance but spread quickly once missionaries reached

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[432] Bastian, p.60.

[433] Emezi, *Transition,* para.10 of 23.

[434] Sartre, p.19; this chapter is specifically referring to the South-East of Nigeria, which is predominantly made up of people of Igbo descent and is a predominantly Christian area. However, it is also important to note that Northern Nigeria is predominantly Islamic, and Christianity is not the only religion practiced in Nigeria with 53.5% of people identifying as Muslim, 10.6% as Roman Catholic, 35.3% as other Christian, and 0.6% as other as of 2018. These statistics are taken from: CIA, *World Factbook: Nigeria* (2021) <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/nigeria/#people-and-society> [accessed 19 January 2021], para.11 of 115.

people and missionary schools were established.[435] This conflict is something that Emezi has spoken about at length, having suggested that colonialism is the reason why Nigerian people are cut off from their pre-colonial culture and belief systems.[436] This is reflected in *Freshwater* through the arguments that take place between Asughara and Yshwa (Jesus), which is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.[437] Eventually, Igbo people moved into a 'third space', creating a hybrid form of Christianity that involved some Igbo customs whilst others were lost, meaning the old and the new may collide but they are not as binary as they may first seem.

Whilst Edward W. Said states that people exist between old empire and new state, these terms can also be used in a similar way to the old precolonial and the new (post)colonial and post-independence in the sense that they create an in-betweenness.[438] According to Said, the conflict between the old and new causes 'tensions, irresolutions, and contradictions in the overlapping territories shown on the cultural map of imperialism', resulting in 'the people' living in the borders existing in a liminal space where people feel out of place without a sense of belonging.[439] In post-independence days, people can feel this same placelessness for being considered different. To be ogbanje is to be 'other' and from Emezi's personal experience, so is being mixed race in Nigeria because they are not considered 'pure' Nigerian, whilst being regarded with suspicion in their mother's home country, Malaysia, because Emezi does not

[435] Edwin Anaegboka Udoye, *Resolving the Prevailing Conflicts between Christianity and African (Igbo) Traditional Religion through Inculturation* (Münster: LIT Verlag Münster, 2011), p.77.

[436] Emezi and Bonét, para 9 of 27.

[437] Okeke, Ibenwa, and Okeke, p.1; Emezi and Bonét, para 9 of 27.

[438] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.332.

[439] Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* p.332.

resemble her mother, resulting in feeling rejected by both places.[440] For Emezi and Ada, it is being mixed race but also ogbanje that causes tension as they are othered for both identities. This causes Ada to feel out of place, resulting in her finding a home in the United States of America, where she finds other displaced friends who understand and accept her.[441] The ogbanje spirits are also placeless, as they left their 'brother-sisters' and their home in the spirit world behind, and this causes tension between Ada and the spirits. Because Goddess Ala will not let Ada die (no matter how hard Asughara tries to manipulate Ada into suicide), they have to find a way to permanently exist within and alongside Ada as one being, even if it means that they remain unseen, which Asughara says is 'the worst part of embodiment'.[442]

The ogbanje spirits, starting as 'we' and later evolving into two distinct personalities as Ada grows older, develop the ability to take over Ada's body, moving to the front of Ada's consciousness as Ada moves to the back.[443] It is therefore evident that Emezi does not abide by the typical rules of the ogbanje, which are traditionally destined to die and be reborn, meaning Emezi modifies a specific part of Igbo cosmology by creating an updated narrative and reclaiming the old by doing so. For Ada in *Freshwater*, this did not come without tension between what I am calling the old and the new. I am using these terms because they grant more flexibility than the terms traditional and non-traditional do: whilst the old will almost always refer to Igbo cosmology in this context, the new can refer to almost anything Western

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[440] Akwaeke Emezi, *Who Will Claim You?* (2018) <https://www.commonwealthwriters.org/who-will-claim-you/> [accessed 21 December 2020], para. 3 of 32.

[441] Emezi, *Who Will Claim You?*, para 3 of 32; Bastian, p.59.

[442] Ala is another name used for the earth Goddess Ana, who is discussed earlier in this chapter. Emzi uses Ala throughout their text so my analysis will reflect this; Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc. 999.

[443] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.30, loc.655.

that has influenced Igbo culture through colonialism and globalisation, such as Christianity, education, and psychiatry and psychology. For the first part of this section, the old refers to Igbo cosmology – the pre-colonial – and the new to Christianity – the colonial. Ada's journey towards the old and away from the new takes place over four phases.

In the beginning of the novel, the rejection of the old is made obvious, with Asughara stating that 'a christ-induced amnesia' has 'struck the humans'.[444] This 'christ-induced amnesia' has been caused by colonialism, through which Christianity was introduced to Nigeria, making Igbo people forget about and, in some instances, actively reject the older Igbo beliefs and traditions.[445] The rejection of the old is best symbolised by Ada's father killing a python, a creature described as 'sacred' in Igbo cosmology and as being the flesh form of the earth Goddess Ala.[446] Ada's father, however, has rejected the old as he does not 'believe in mumbo-jumbo'.[447] Instead of seeing the python that appears in Ada's bedroom as Ala in the flesh, he sees it as a threat to his daughter's life and kills the python with a machete.[448] The goddess then 'dissolves' and retreats from Ada's father but also from Ada, which initially suggests that Ada is destined to be a part of another generation that will follow the new and reject the old.[449] Ada, however, is no ordinary child, and will not grow up to perpetuate the cycle of 'christ-induced amnesia'.[450] Rather, Ada is an ogbanje child and the spirits that share

[444] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.122.

[445] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.122.

[446] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.127.

[447] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.165.

[448] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.165.

[449] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.165.

[450] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.122.

her body will help rebuild the bridge to the all-but-forgotten beliefs of the Igbo people.

The ogbanje spirits have three births, hence the old being reborn. The 'first birth' happens when Ada is born and the gates remain open, allowing the ogbanje spirits to slip through and live within Ada.[451] According to Asughara, they were born for the second time when a young Ada first recognises that something else lives within her, and gives the then 'floating' spirits the names 'Smoke' and 'Shadow'.[452] Their third and most significant birth happens when the spirits become individuals with distinct personalities, and Ada names them 'Asughara' and 'Saint Vincent'.[453] The most forceful spirit, Asughara, states that she 'was just minding her own business as part of a shifting cloud when she was dragged into the marble room of Ada's mind' and as she 'tore through', Saint Vincent did too, thus being reborn as individuals rather than continuing to exist as part of a 'cloud'.[454] This rebirth is significant as it gives the spirits the power to come to the forefront of Ada's consciousness after the trauma that an abusive ex-boyfriend inflicts on her. It is trauma that births Asughara and Saint Vincent, but it is also trauma that creates a shift in mentality towards the old, with Ada's faith in Yshwa (referring to Christ) slowly dissipating 'ever since Soren' raped her.[455] This leaves Ada unable to 'kneel or press her palms together to worship [Yshwa] the way she used to' because 'it felt false'.[456] Ada's connection with Yshwa had thus been fractured, leaving room for the old to slip

[451] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2082.

[452] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.601.

[453] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.605.

[454] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1323; the marble is the place in Ada's brain where the spirits and Ada convene, and where Asughara convene's with Yshwa in this instance.

[455] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2110.

[456] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2110.

through the cracks of her fractured faith. Ada's acceptance of the old does not come easily. In fact, it is far from it, as Yshwa and Asughara fight over Ada in the marble of Ada's mind.[457] The old thus tries to force out the new, whilst the new is overly confident in its hold on Ada.[458] Asughara is threatened by Yshwa and tries to assert her dominance over him in the marble of Ada's mind by telling him that Ada is 'not talking to [him] anymore'.[459] The new – Yshwa – seems confident when it comes to his hold on Ada, replying to Asughara's threat with, 'she talks to me all the time'.[460] Eventually, however, Asughara wins this conflict and Ada does reject the new, proving Asughara correct when she tells Yshwa that '[h]e wasn't getting her back'.[461] Whilst Asughara and Yshwa fight over Ada, it is clear that both are still a reality for Ada, hence Yshwa remaining unforgivingly confident, having had a hold on Ada along with other Igbo people for so long, whilst the Igbo ways are almost forgotten. This is why it takes a long time for Ada to accept the ogbanje for what they are: both a part of her internal being and her ancestry.

It is Ada's acceptance of the old that allows Asughara to come to 'the front' of Ada's consciousness. This happens every time Ada is unable to cope with a situation, mainly sex after Soren rapes her. Although not completely selfless, Asughara steps in to protect Ada from further emotional distress. Once Ada has fully accepted the old as part of herself, Saint Vincent is allowed to move from Ada's dreams, where he lives initially, and into the forefront of Ada's being, which enables Ada to accept that she is Trans and gives her the

[457] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.921.

[458] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.936.

[459] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.936.

[460] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.936.

[461] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.936.

strength to transition.[462] Asughara and Saint Vincent see Ada's transition as a ritual, calling her breast reduction 'the carving' in order to become more masculine but stay just the right amount of feminine.[463] The acceptance of the ogbanje spirits, both Asughara and Saint Vincent, and coming to terms with being ogbanje herself leads Ada to explore her gender identity and become comfortable with parts of her body that she once considered too manly.[464] Asughara tells us that 'even the things that Ada used to dislike about her body had mellowed out' once Saint Vincent was allowed to come to the forefront of Ada's consciousness.[465] The 'broad shoulders and the way they tapered down to narrow hips and small buttocks finally fit', suggesting that Ada finally accepts and begins to like herself when she welcomes and accepts the ogbanje spirits as part of her and embraces the liminal space in which she exists.[466]

Ada's journey to reclamation is thus a personal one during which she has had to overcome the influence of colonialism in order to find herself through her ancestral belief system. When she lets go of the new and stops fighting against the old, ogbanje spirits with whom she shares a body, she finds equilibrium. This gives Ada the freedom to accept who she really is. As previously mentioned, this does not come without its challenges, and this takes a toll on Ada's mental health. Emezi has suggested that *Freshwater* is a story of spiritual embodiment, and not mental health, but that is not to say that they believe mental illness does not exist,

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[462] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1767; it must be noted here that even though Ada accepts her identity as a non-binary transperson (as Emezi describes her), she continues to use she/her pronouns.

[463] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2048.

[464] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2045.

[465] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2045.

[466] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.2045.

rather that they see it as emerging from a different centre, preferring to think of people whose minds are 'wired differently' as neurodivergent rather than mentally ill.[467] Ada is thus embodied by a 'plural spirit' and this 'manifests as neurodivergence', meaning Ada is experiencing her internal reality clashing with the external reality in which she lives.[468] Notably, Emezi views Ada's poor mental health – or neurodivergence – as an internal issue, rather than externally motivated, which is exacerbated by the external world and its inability to accept Ada's internal reality. Emezi suggests that embodied people have internal realities that are 'based in Indigenous spiritualities', but they cannot talk about their experiences because they're only given two options, both of which are 'pathological': you're mentally ill and need help or you're possessed by a demon and you need to be exorcised.[469] Following Fanon's assertion that 'alienation' occurs when colonised peoples are stripped of their Indigenous cultures, what happens when the community around you, who make up your external reality, has dissociated from an Indigenous belief system that makes up your internal reality?[470] In short, the answer is Ada, who is both isolated from her external reality and forced to live and interact with it every day. Emezi suggests that these clashing realities exist because of colonialism, which has forced western education and religion onto colonised people.[471] Colonisation is thus responsible for their rejection of Indigenous belief systems and creating such a negative association with it, resulting in the wider community punishing

[467] Asian American Writers' Workshop, 32:59-33:07.

[468] Asian American Writers' Workshop, 32:59-33:07.

[469] Asian American Writers' Workshop, 33:07; Emezi's use of 'Indigenous' is meant to reflect being native to a country in the more general sense, rather than using the term to refer only to those native to North America. Here in particular, they are talking about being Indigenous to Nigeria.

[470] Fanon, p.58.

[471] Asian American Writers' Workshop, 33:07

anyone who experiences a reality that is linked to it, hence the internal exacerbating the external.

In Ada's case, she is experiencing this internal reality alongside an external reality that is initially westernised Nigerian, and then west itself when she moves to the United States of America. Ada's internal reality must be kept secret, Ada can talk about her depression, anxiety and suicidality, but Asughara will not let her talk about the selves for fear of the violence that will be inflicted upon them in treatment facilities or by religious leaders who are willing to perform exorcisms.[472] Both of these options include 'detention, chaining, and violent treatment', which are 'pervasive in many settings, including state hospitals, rehabilitation centers, traditional healing centers' in Nigeria, according to Human Rights Watch.[473] When carrying out research regarding mental health and non-governmental organisations in rural India, China Mills finds that the people who are sectioned know that treatment facilities will not help them and patients will often pretend to 'get better' in order to be released from them.[474] Furthermore, if violence is involved in Nigerian 'treatment' centres, it would make it more likely that people would agree with the person carrying out the 'treatment'.[475] Non-governmental organisations also failed to acknowledge cultural differences, specifically concerning what they deemed 'visible' symptoms of mental health

[472] Asian American Writers' Workshop, 33:07.

[473] Human Rights Watch, *Nigeria: People With Mental Health Conditions Chained, Abused* (2024) <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/11/11/nigeria-people-mental-health-conditions-chained-abused> [accessed 7 April 2024], para. 1 of 68.

[474] Mills, p.108.

[475] Mills, p.108.

conditions, which included 'talking to oneself, laughing or singing wildly'.[476] In India, like other cultures around the world, talking to oneself was not necessarily deemed a cause for concern, but non-governmental organisations listed it as such, resulting in many people being pathologised and potentially misdiagnosed with schizophrenia, and often sectioned when there was not a need.[477] Misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatments have resulted in a resistance to pathologising the hearing of voices, with the Hearing Voices Network stating that 'the majority of people who hear voices have no mental health issue at all'.[478] Moreover, the Hearing Voices Network notes that diagnoses are a 'hotly contested area – with some finding that they are useful and others finding them a barrier to healing'.[479] Both Ada and the spirits are right to be cautious of exposing themselves to medical professionals, especially those of the western world who will not understand the cosmology from which they stem, resulting in pathologising and labelling Ada as mentally ill.

Contrastingly to the western medical viewpoint, Christopher I. Ejizu posits that the more religiously based act of 'casting out of evil spirits' has become widespread in contemporary 'Nigeria in churches like the Anglicans, Baptists and Roman Catholics'.[480] Ejizu reports that 'ogbanje […] is the most commonly reported problem in healing centers' and provides the example of a young girl named Christina. Christina had been taken to a psychiatrist at first

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[476] Mills, p.108.

[477] Mills, p.82.

[478] Hearing Voices Network provides support for those who hear voices, see visions, or have similar sensory experiences: Hearing Voices Network, *Basic Information about Voices and Visions* (2023) <https://www.hearing-voices.org/voices-visions/> [accessed 10 November 2023], (para. 21 of 27).

[479] Hearing Voices Network, para.21 of 27.

[480] Christopher I. Ejizu, 'Cosmological Perspective on Exorcism and Prayer-Healing in Contemporary Nigeria', *Mission Studies* (1991), 165- 168 (p.167).

but after there was little improvement in 'her condition', her parents decided to take her to one of the well-known prayer houses where Christina was diagnosed as being 'tormented' by ogbanje spirits.[481] The treatment details are withheld but Ejizu states that Christina stayed there for six months and was 'cured' then she left the centre, hence the spirit's being reluctant to let Ada expose their internal reality.[482] The internal and external realities exist at once for Ada and they do not always align, with the old – the Igbo – and the new – the western – realities constantly colliding with one another. The western reality exists in terms of religion as discussed previously, but also psychological treatment, education, and ultimately the legacy of colonialism in now independent states. There is also the internal reality of Ada's precolonial heritage, which consists of Igbo cosmology. These realities exist externally, but also appear internally through what Emezi calls 'the selves', including Ada herself, Asughara and Saint Vincent.[483] Saint Vincent, intriguingly, is also an island in the Caribbean whose Indigenous people refused and resisted European claims to it, meaning there were never any European settlers living on the Island but they did welcome shipwrecked enslaved people.[484] We could read Saint Vincent as a mental bodyguard of sorts, keeping the settlers – the external – far enough away, and encouraging Ada to reassociate with her lost self, with which western influences had led her to disassociate.

Sartre posits that colonialism forces the colonised people to become estranged from their

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[481] Ejizu, p.167.

[482] Ejizu, p.167.

[483] Emezi, *Transition*, para 10 of 23.

[484] Adrian Fraser, *Saint Vincent and the Grenadines* (2024) <https://www.britannica.com/contributor/Adrian-Fraser/4988> [accessed 7 April 2024], para. 1 of 5.

cultures and religions.[485] 'Colonial' and 'religious estrangements' work together to reinforce colonial ideologies, causing mental health issues as colonised people begin to 'disassociate' from the self.[486] Mills refers to the 'madness' caused by 'estrangements' as 'identity trauma' and 'identity violence' caused by the colonial encounter.[487] Mills also suggests that the 'psychiatric encounter: a "nervous condition"' – the disassociation – is also responsible for this kind of trauma and violence, making it 'both political and psychological'.[488] This is due to it arising when one's cultural resources have been eradicated (or almost) 'by the cultural imperialism of the colonizer, and when people come to think of themselves and act on themselves as though they are "mentally ill"'.[489] In his controversial 'Preface' to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth,* Sartre claims that the colonised person who is,

> tired of always being insulted by his demon, one fine day starts hearing the voice of an angel who pays him compliments; but the jeers don't stop for all that; only from then on, they alternate with congratulations.[490]

Here, Sartre connects the two previously mentioned 'estrangements' through a Biblical metaphor, suggesting that they work together to subdue the colonial subject.[491] First the colonial estrangement – the demon – works to oppress and 'insult' the colonised people, then while the colonised are in a phase of cultural transition, the angel – western religion –

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[485] Sartre, p.19.

[486] Sartre, p.19.

[487] Mills, p.108.

[488] Mills, p.108.

[489] Mills, p.108.

[490] Sartre, p.19.

[491] Sartre, p.19.

whispers ‘compliments’ in order to draw in the colonised peoples and convert them.[492] However, ‘the jeers’ don’t stop because colonialism does not end, and the angel and the demon begin to work together and congratulate each other on successfully disassociating the colonised masses from their own culture.[493] Sartre says the dissociation is,

> a defense, but it is also the end of the story; the self is disassociated, and the patient heads for madness. Let us add, for certain other carefully selected unfortunates, that other witchery of which I have already spoken: Western culture.[494]

Here, Sartre suggests that colonised people protect themselves through disassociating from the self as a defence in order to unconsciously aid self-preservation, and this, as a side effect of the colonial encounter, is detrimental to their mental health.[495] This defence has affected Ada as she has inherited the disassociation with which her elders have protected themselves and inadvertently encouraged the younger generations to do the same. This has led to multiple generations whose selves have been disassociated and have the potential to head towards ‘madness’.[496] In *Freshwater*, this means that there is a conflict present in the contemporary generation, as represented by Ada being tormented by the internal conflict between the old and the new, created by ‘the witchery’ that is western culture, which colonialism has imposed upon her, whilst attempting but failing to completely silence pre-colonial traditions.[497]

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[492] Sartre, p.19.

[493] Sartre, p.19.

[494] Sartre, p.19.

[495] Sartre, p.19.

[496] Sartre, p.19.

[497] Sartre, p.19.

The legacy of colonialism is evident in *Freshwater* most clearly through Christianity, as discussed in the last section. This shows that the earth mother Goddess, Ala, has been forgotten, as the python is the form she takes, making them sacred in Igbo cosmology.[498] Hence there is a conflict between what Sartre states the coloniser would call 'mumbo jumbo' (the precolonial belief system) and the Christian belief (the colonial belief system).[499] From Sartre's perspective, this would cause Ada great distress in her acceptance of herself as ogbanje as this is an Igbo traditional belief that has been stripped from her, meaning Ada's sense of self has been disassociated from her traditional culture with which it is a struggle to reassociate, hence Ada 'heading for madness'.[500] Ada has thus become alienated from herself but also from her ancestral belief system and way of life, as described by Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth* where he states that the 'native is a being hemmed in' by colonial structures designed to oppress.[501] Fanon insists that this alienation is not restricted to a period of colonialism but lives on beyond national independence, insisting that the political party that once stood for and represented the people's needs becomes 'a true instrument of power in the hands of the bourgeoisie, reinforces the machine, and ensures that the people are hemmed in and immobilized the party helps the government to hold the people down'.[502] The political party that once acted as a form of communication between the 'top' and the 'bottom', instead acts as a 'screen between the masses and the leaders', thus the party now helping to alienate

[498] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.165.

[499] Sartre, p.19.

[500] Sartre, p.19.

[501] Fanon, p.201.

[502] Fanon, p.171.

and 'hold the people down'.[503] In Ada's case, she is alienated from the Igbo way of life, including its belief system and its language, in independent Nigeria. This suggests that the political is also personal as it has the ability to influence the language people speak and the religion they practice. This influence on important aspects of culture denies younger and future generations of 'native' customs and traditions. Perhaps, if Ada and her parents had known more about their ancestral belief system, they would have recognised the ogbanje symptoms and come to that conclusion a lot sooner, saving Ada from the superfluous trauma she experienced in figuring it out.

According to Chidi T.Maduka, 'the [ogbanje] child […] constitutes a constant source of anxiety to his/her parents because of his/her idiosyncratic behaviour which may manifest itself in any form of mental or physical illness'.[504] For Ada it manifests as what is perceived by the outside world as mental illness. It is not my place to diagnose Ada (or Emezi by extension), however she does have many of the symptoms that would make western treatment systems categorise Ada as having a dissociative identity disorder. This disorder is characterised 'by a) the presence of two or more distinct personality states or an experience of possession and b) recurrent episodes of amnesia', according to *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5),* with the possibility of considering Ada's embodiment as 'mumbo-jumbo'.[505] *DSM-5* does indicate that 'the fragmentation of identity may vary with

[503] Fanon, p.169.

[504] Chidi T. Maduka, 'African Religious Beliefs in Literary Imagination: Ogbanje and Abiku in Chinua Achebe, J. P. Clark and Wole Soyinka', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature,* 22.1 (1987), 17-30 (p.18).

[505] American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* 5th Edition, National Institute of Mental Health, p.295; Sartre, p.19.

culture', providing 'possession-form presentations' as an example.[506] It also states that,

> [i]ndividuals with dissociative identity disorder experience a) recurrent, inexplicable intrusions into their conscious functioning and sense of self (e.g., voices; dissociated actions and speech; intrusive thoughts, emotions, and impulses), b) alterations of sense of self (e.g., attitudes, preferences, and feeling like one's body or actions are not one's own), c) odd changes of perception (e.g., depersonalization or derealization, such as feeling detached from one's body while cutting), and d) intermittent functional neurological symptoms.[507]

All of which could explain Ada's experiences as ogbanje due the inexplicable intrusions in the form of hearing Asughara and Saint Vincent's voices, especially the intrusive voice of Asughara in trying to convince Ada to attempt suicide and the alterations to sense of self that appear when Asughara takes over and performs sexual acts that Ada would not feel comfortable doing.[508] Whilst it is important to acknowledge the existence of this disorder, there seems to be a fine line between recognising and validating mental health concerns, providing a formal diagnosis and a treatment plan that will help them manage symptoms, and factoring in people whose realities are based in non-western belief systems. Emezi is not fighting or resisting the fact that disorders exist, they are simply positing that there are 'different centres' and Indigenous realities that manifest as mental health concerns, or neurodiversity as Emezi prefers to call it.[509]

It must be stated here that, although it is the basis for world-wide diagnosis, the *DSM-5* is

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[506] American Psychiatric Association, p.295.

[507] American Psychiatric Association, p.292.

[508] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.169, loc.1919.

[509] Asian American Writers' Workshop, 33:06.

also considered controversial given that an open letter signed by numerous mental health professionals urged the *DSM-5* taskforce to reconsider their 'intention to loosen and expand the criteria for a variety of diagnoses'.[510] For instance, there were fears that there would be a rise in children being superfluously prescribed atypical antipsychotic medication and the push for antidepressant prescriptions without therapies would be detrimental to people's wellbeing, something which China Mills finds is happening in rural India.[511] The other issue is, as Mills reminds us, that of the colonial history of psychiatry and its legacy in the contemporary moment, with Mills noting a Tamil-only-speaking patient of an non-governmental organisation in rural India, who uses the English phrase 'psychiatric patient'.[512] As these are the only words of English that the patient speaks, Mills infers her use of it 'hint[s] at psychiatry itself as being colonial, an alienating process where people come to understand themselves in foreign terms, a colonization of the mind'.[513] There are calls to recognise 'the harm' caused by western interventions and there have been concerns that the Movement for Global Mental Health 'discredits alternative forms of healing that are local, religious or indigenous'.[514] There is a real-life tension between the old and the new as it relates to traditional ways of healing and western psychiatry.

According to the author, a western perspective would also have had Ada institutionalised or

[510] Jill Litterell and Jeffrey R. Lacasse, 'Controversies in Psychiatry and DSM-5: The Relevance for Social Work', *SAGE Open* (2018), 1-5 (p.1).

[511] Litterall and Lacasse, p.2.

[512] Mills, p.1.

[513] Mills, p.2.

[514] Mills, p.3.

exorcised in order to be 'cured'.[515] Ada is therefore doubly dissociated from her culture and the contemporary world in which she lives that is dominated, once again, by the 'witchery' that Sartre says is western culture.[516] Emezi does not see Ada as in need of 'help' or in need of being fixed, rather Emezi sees Ada as needing to accept all of her selves, thus she also needs to accept her ancestors' traditions and herself as ogbanje. Ada's eventual acceptance of herself as ogbanje allows her to reclaim and readjust the reputation of a cosmology that was stripped from Igbo people through the colonisation of Nigeria and replaced with western ideologies and paradigms. One must further expand upon Sartre's use of 'witchery' in conjunction with western culture: Africa was been well-known for the 'colonial trope of the "African witchdoctor"', which has 'remained a fixture in the collective Anglo-American cultural imagination in the present day'.[517] Here though, the trope has been turned on the west, suggesting that what the west sees in Africa is more a reflection of the west itself than it is of African culture, reflecting Said's idea of the Orient being a reflection of the Occident.[518]

The friction between the ogbanje spirits and western culture is once again evident in Asughara's disapproval of western methods of treatment for Ada's mental health and her initial refusal to let Ada go to therapy, then preventing Ada from talking about her and Saint Vincent in case they are put in a 'fucking psych ward'.[519] In an attempt to go home to her

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[515] Barnard Center for Research on Women, *Chinelo Okparanta and Akwaeke Emezi: Reading and Conversation* (2019) < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7nlGTtH6FA&t=905s> [accessed 1 December 2020], 1:00:00.

[516] Sartre, p.19.

[517] Sartre, p.19.

[518] USaid, *Orientalism*, pp.1-2.

[519] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1781.

ogbanje 'brother-sisters' in the spirit world, Asughara takes control and has Ada attempt suicide by taking a 'whole bottle of cyclobenzaprine'.[520] Despite Asughara's determination to return home, Ada survives and, after this attempt, checks into a 'psych ward', which Asughara checks out of the next day for fear of Ada saying too much and being kept there indefinitely.[521] At this point, Ada does not understand that she is experiencing this because she is 'decentred', thus her struggles are coming from a different centre – her ogbanjeism – and only knows to turn to western treatments and strategies for help, such as therapy or being institutionalised, which will not help her. In fact, as Asughara is not happy about Ada seeking this kind of help, they are likely to make things worse, and make Asughara act out. The only way Ada finds peace is to learn to live alongside the other selves and recentre herself in line with her Igbo roots, rather than the new western ways of treating mental health concerns. Emezi thus reclaims the mental health narrative for embodied people, through Ada finding balance when she accepts the spirits and the cosmology of which they are apart and rejects the new, western pathologies that claim that she needs to be fixed.

This chapter has explored how Emezi reclaims Igbo cosmology in their autobiographical novel, *Freshwater*. Emezi has done so by refreshing and modernising the ogbanje narrative, which had become a trope in Igbo anglophone literature. Firstly, as explored in the first part of this chapter, '(Re)Claiming In-Between Spaces', Emezi reclaims in-between spaces, which I have explored through the concept of liminality, drawing on both queer and Indigenous studies in order to examine how Emezi reclaims and connects Igbo cosmology to queerness and non-humanness, which results in reclaiming the ogbanje narrative for those who, like Emezi, identify as so. Secondly, I have focused on how the old and new clash and collide

[520] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1772.

[521] Emezi, *Freshwater,* loc.1772.

with one another, the impact on Ada's mental health and the problem with western psychiatric care when it comes to treating those who are not from the western world. Using the postcolonial concepts of Said, Sartre, Fanon, and Mills, which relate directly to mental health under colonisation, I have examined how Emezi reclaims Igbo traditions through their updated ogbanje narrative through Ada's journey towards accepting the old, Igbo ways of being and knowing. Emezi's reclamation of Igbo cosmology and ways of being is inextricably linked to their reclamation of the ogbanje narrative, making the novel a story of both self and cultural resurgence. *Freshwater* is autobiographical narrative, which ultimately provides an example of how humans and spirits can live 'cheek by jowl' in the real-world as they do in the make-believe folktale realm, validating the Igbo experience of a westernised society that suffocates Igbo traditions and ways of life.[522]

Having examined how Igbo cosmology is reclaimed through Emezi's ogbanje narrative, the next chapter will examine how Okorafor, Arimah, Ikokwu and Babalola reclaim folkloric themes, tropes and forms in order to create new, and rewrite outdated, colonised narratives. The actions of these contemporary writers result in a rejuvenation of African storytelling in the written form, allowing for its preservation, renewal, and restoration, whether the author chooses to bypass or consider folklore's colonial interference of African folklore.

[522] Emenanjo, p.xiv.

Chapter Four

(Re)creating, Rewriting, Reclaiming

Content Warning

This chapter discusses genocidal rape, which some might find triggering.

This chapter explores how contemporary women authors of Nigerian descent invoke griotness by creating, recreating, and rewriting folktales, through the use of folkloric themes, tropes and traditions, in order to reclaim them. To do this, I examine Lesley Nneka Arimah's 'Who Will Greet You at Home' from *What It Means when a Man Falls from the Sky* (2017), May Ikokwu's 'Lizard, Wall Gecko and the Leppers' and 'How the Tortoise was Taken Alive' from *Folktales from Igboland* (2021), Bolu Babalola's 'Attem' from *Love in Colour* (2021), and Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death* (2018) and *The Book of Phoenix* (2015). There are a variety of ways in which the authors tell stories. The creative decisions the contemporary authors make as writers and the female characters they create showcase women's ability to create and disseminate stories, no matter the form used to do so. This sometimes bypasses the appropriation of oral narratives by coloniser-folklorists by shining a light on women's creative abilities as they existed in the precolonial past, postcolonial present and imagined future. Throughout, I examine how the writers invoke griotness. Okorafor does so through reflecting on real-life happenings of the past, where coloniser folklorists collected and disseminated African folklore, Arimah and Ikokwu create new tales inspired by traditional stories, and Babalola rewrites a colonised folktale through a feminist lens.

Okorafor is a Nigerian American writer of fantasy, speculative and science fiction novels,

novellas, short stories and graphic novels. She is the winner of Hugo, Nebula, World Fantasy, Locus and Lodestar Awards and recipient of the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature.[523] Meanwhile, Arimah was born in the UK and grew up in Nigeria, and is the recipient of the National Magazine Award, a Commonwealth Short Story Prize, an O. Henry Award and the 2017 Kirkus Prize the 2017 New York Public Library Young Lions Fiction Award for her debut short story collection, *What It Means when a Man Falls from the Sky* in which 'Who Will Greet You at Home' appears. [524] The next contemporary author, Ikokwu, is a fellow of the Institute of Humanitarian Studies and Social Development, and CEO and founder of the non-governmental organisation, Save Our Heritage Initiative, which focuses on preserving the vanishing culture of Indigenous peoples around the world.[525] Ikokwu has made it her life's mission to preserve Indigenous African cultures, and based her thesis, 'Promoting And Preserving the African Cultural Heritage as a Panacea for Socio-Economic Development of Nigeria; Challenges, Solutions and Recommendations' on the topic. [526] Finally, Bolu Babalola is a British Nigerian writer of 'books, scripts, culture pieces and retorts' about 'dynamic women with distinct voices'. [527] *Love in Colour* was a *Times* bestseller and was shortlisted for Waterstones Book of the Year, whilst her debut novel, *Honey and Spice* (2022), was a 'Reese Witherspoon Book Club pick and won the inaugural TikTok Award for Book of the Year'.[528]

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[523] Nnedi Okorafor, *Nnedi Okorafor* (2024) <https://nnedi.com/> [accessed 8 April 24], para. 1 of 4.

[524] Lesley Nneka Ariman, *About* (2024) <https://www.larimah.com/about/> [accessed 8 April 24], para 1 of 1.

[525] Save Our Heritage Initiative, *About Us* (2024) <https://sohinitiative.org/about-us/> [accessed 8 April 24], para. 1 of 1.

[526] Save Our Heritage Initiative, para 1 of 1.

[527] Blake Friedmann Literary Agency, *Bolu Babalola* (2024) <https://blakefriedmann.co.uk/bolu-babalola> [accessed 8 April 2024], para. 2 of 6.

[528] Blake Friedmann Literary Agency, para. 2 of 6.

These contemporary writers take the oral traditions associated with the West African griot and combine them with the orthographical, printed word of the west. In a sense, contemporary writers could be considered 'modern griots' as they pass on old stories as well as creating new ones, raising an awareness of current affairs, and incorporating song. As they do so in a written sense, whilst embracing the traditions of oral literature, I refer to them invoking griotness instead.[529] A griot is a West African traditional storyteller, stemming from ancient traditions, who travels from village to village, spreading news, telling tales, and performing songs.[530] Like other creative professionals, it would be easy to enter the writers discussed in this chapter into the category of 'modern griots', a term which has been employed by many scholars, journalists, music critics, and musicians and writers to 'often invoke a romanticized and historically static idea of the griot—the traditional verbal artist who, for over a millennium, has served as keeper of oral history, musician, singer, and instrumentalist'.[531] However, this would not only simplify the job of a griot but would represent the griot as a thing of the past.[532] Whilst the writers in question might have evolved from the traditional griot, they have not replaced them and do not do everything that a griot does in line with tradition. The concept of 'modern griots' is not a new phenomenon and is usually applied to African and African American rappers and could mistakenly be used to describe the contemporary writers mentioned in this thesis. However, the term 'modern griot' is somewhat controversial and implies that griots no longer exist, but Tang reminds us that

[529] Patricia Tang, 'The Rapper as Modern Griot Reclaiming Ancient Traditions' in *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World*, ed. by Eric Charry (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp.79-91.

[530] Tang, p.79.

[531] Tang, p.79.

[532] Tang, p.79.

griots are still active in West Africa and the term has the potential to overshadow the work of griots who exist in modern day.[533] Instead, I refer to the contemporary writers who create, recreate, rewrite and disseminate folklore as invoking griotness in order to reflect the similarities they share with griots without overshadowing the griot's existence. The next section examines how Okorafor, Arimah, and Ikokwu invoke griotness through exploring the past, present and future.

Griotness in the Past, Present and Future

In *Who Fears Death,* Okorafor directly addresses the griot tradition by creating a griot character who announces 'today I tell you a piece of the past, present, and future'. [534] Okorafor, Arimah, and Okokwu also tell us a piece of the past, present and future in their work but, rather than travelling around the African continent to tell stories orally, they disseminate stories orthographically. Okorafor plays with time in unique ways in *Who Fears Death,* whilst Ikokwu relies on the traditions of the past in order to deliver a future for the Igbo oral narrative, and Arimah creates something new out of the traditional for a contemporary audience.

Okorafor incorporates the present by spreading awareness of the atrocities of the South Sudanese Civil War in Darfur in *Who Fears Death*, and featuring genocidal, or weaponised, rape as part of Onyesonwu's origin story. Genocidal rape became a way of ethnically cleansing a particular group of people as the act of raping 'enemy' women results in making them 'untouchable' within their own societies and thus prevents reproduction or it

[533] Tang, p.79.

[534] Okorafor, *Who Fears Death,* p.92.

impregnates them, thus disrupting the enemy's lineage, especially when the opposing side's customs state that children belong to their father.[535] Silvia Federici reminds us that rape is not a new trend. It is a violent act that women all over the world have had to suffer or avoid, and one that has been used against women during colonisation in order to exert dominance, especially over women who did not conform to the colonial paradigm.[536] Citing instances including aboriginal women in 'the new world', as well as those who did not follow the gendered path which capitalism paved in the seventeenth and eighteenth century in Europe, Federici clearly views and evidences rape as long-time tool for exerting power over women, who would often be disowned by society after experiencing rape, resulting in a lot of rape survivors being forced into sex work in order to survive.[537] Okorafor is thus spreading awareness of a contemporary women's issue whilst incorporating oral traditions into her writing.

In the acknowledgements to *Who Fears Death,* Okorafor states that she was directly influenced by a '2004 AP news story' written by Emily Wax' called 'We Want to Make a Light Baby', stating that Wax's 'article about weaponized rape in the Sudan created the passageway through which Onyesonwu slipped into [her] world', hence the similarities between the real-life experiences of the women in the article and Najeeba's in Okorafor's

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[535] See Emily Wax, *We Want to Make a Light Baby: Arab Militiamen in Sudan Said to Use Rape as Weapon of Ethnic Cleansing* (2004) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A16001-2004Jun29.html> [accessed 2 November 2019]; Jennifer Leaning, Susan Bartels and Hani Mowafi, 'Sexual Violence during War and Forced Migration' in *Women, Migration and Conflict: Breaking a Deadly Cycle,* ed. by Susan Forbes Martin and John Tirman (New York: Springer, 2009), pp.173-199 (p.174).

[536] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2009), p.219.

[537] Federici, p.219; Okorafor, *Who Fears Death,* p.387.

novel.[538] This is Okorafor's way of incorporating the present and it is through the present that she creates a fictional future, which also incorporates folkloric and mythological traditions of the past. *Who Fears Death* is set in an African post-apocalyptic future and there is a civil war happening between Nuru and the Okeke peoples that stems from the Okeke people resisting the idea that they 'were born to be slaves of the Nuru'.[539] The Nuru and the Okeke are fictional tribes, who represent those fighting against each other in the Sudanese Civil War. In order to reassert their power over the Okeke, Nuru men use genocidal rape to interfere with the Okeke's bloodline. In the novel, Okeke 'custom dictates that a child is the child of her father', binding an 'Okeke woman who gave birth to an Ewu child [a child of rape by the enemy]' forever to her child's Nuru father.[540] The act of rape therefore continues to torture an Okeke woman as she is forever tied to her rapist and is reminded of this on a daily basis as this not only disrupts the Okeke bloodline but aims to 'destroy Okeke families at the very root'.[541] Okorafor is therefore inserting contemporary African issues into a novel that is inspired by and incorporates oral traditions, as seen through its storytelling as well as its inclusion of magic and sorcery, which are prevalent in African oral genres. *Who Fears Death* therefore exemplifies how Okorafor invokes griotness through spreading contemporary news of women's issues, whilst looking to the precolonial past in order to look into the present and the post-apocalyptic future.

On this subject, Miriam Pahl states that Okorafor explores the past through 'African traditions, beliefs, and mythologies and through merging these elements with futuristic

[538] Okorafor, *Who Fears Death,* p.387.

[539] Okorafor, *Who Fears Death,* p.16.

[540] Okorafor, *Who Fears Death*, pp.20-21.

[541] Okorafor, *Who Fears Death,* p.21.

technology and thus transcends the binary of temporality that African mythology is often subjected to'.[542] This is evident in *The Book of Phoenix,* as Sunuteel finds Phoenix's story in 'a tomb of old technology from the Black Days, the Times of the Dark People, the Era of the Okeke' that once spoke English.[543] Okorafor is introducing technology and a language that the audience uses in the present but is a thing of the past within the novel, playing with temporality and tampering with our sense of temporal stability. Language is a very effective way of doing this as in Sunuteel's times, English is a 'dead language', but he has been taught it by an immortal teacher.[544] Many years prior to Sunuteel finding Phoenix's recording, Phoenix uses technology 'to tell [her] tale' whilst using 'the old African tools of story: spoken words' because 'they are worthier of my trust and they'll last longer. And during shadowy times, spoken words carry farther than words typed, imaged, or written'.[545] Okorafor makes use of the past, present and future in a way that transcends how folklore has been treated historically: folktales were translated into standard English, written down for western consumption and published and disseminated in Europe, thus changing form and language, and often being appropriated for the white middle classes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[546] Here, we have a woman from the 'black days', telling her story – her own legend so to speak – in the 'dead language' of one of Africa's most prolific colonisers: Britain. The colonisers in this case are scientists working at LifeGen Technology, the corporation that creates and raises Phoenix and is to blame for unethical human

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[542] Miriam Pahl, 'Time, Progress, and Multidirectionality in Nnedi Okorafor's *Who Fears Death', Research in African Literatures*, 49.3 (2018), 207-222 (p.210).

[543] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix,* loc.80.

[544] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*, loc.96, loc.3315.

[545] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*, loc.214, loc.3315.

[546] Maria Tartar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* (London: Norton, 1998), p.13.

experiments. According to Ellen Eubanks, 'Okorafor draws attention to the continuity of the racial exploitation of slavery and colonialism in new forms such as medical abuses, the prison industrial complex, and the neocolonial control of multinational corporations', and this is evident by Phoenix telling us that most of the 'patients' living LifeGen's building, Tower 7, 'were Africans', apart from one Arab man, and a Caucasian woman who is part lion so 'technically part African'.[547] Okorafor therefore all at once confronts the past in terms of colonialism and slavery and the violence that colonisation brings into her imagined post-apocalyptic future.

Whilst Okorafor confronts present day issues in a fictional future, Ikokwu replicates folktale traditions in order to provide Igbo oral narratives with a future. Most of the tales in Ikokwu's collection are traditional folktales but it also contains two original stories written by Ikokwu herself. 'Lizard, Wall Gecko and the Leppers' and 'How the Tortoise was Taken Alive' are animal stories, which mimic traditional Igbo oral stories, most notably through Ikokwu's use of character types, genre and moral lessons. It is through replicating oral traditions and using them to create new folktales that Ikokwu invokes griotness. For example, in both folktales, Ikokwu anthropomorphises the animals, allowing them to communicate and converse using language and live in family units (i.e., the tortoise lives with his wife and children), which is a popular in Igbo folktales in order to address moral dilemmas. As previously discussed in Chapter Two, the tortoise is a famous and well-loved Igbo trickster character whom Ikokwu includes in 'How the Tortoise was Taken Alive'.[548] Keeping true to Igbo tradition, Ikokwu

[547] Ellen Eubanks, 'The Persistence of the Past into the Future: Indigenous Futurism and Future Slave Narratives as Transformative Resistance in Nnedi Okorafor's *The Book of Phoenix*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Arkansas, 2018), p.5; Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix,* loc.214, loc.1274.

[548] Ikokwu, 'How the Tortoise was Taken Alive', p.242.

creates a character that is 'very crafty' and 'takes advantage of others' by having him advise the other animals to not climb up the trees to pick ripe palm fruits and wait until they drop to the ground instead.[549] The tortoise thus creates an opportunity for him and his family to steal the fruits from the other animals farms in the middle of the night, which they would store in their secret bunker and have more of their favourite fruit to themselves at the expense of their neighbours.[550] Tortoise is ultimately caught and punished. In Ikokwu's second original story, 'Lizard, Wall Gecko and the Leppers', the Wall Gecko acts as the trickster despite not being a well-known character like the tortoise. The Wall Gecko takes advantage of the human Leppers' kindness towards him when entering the forbidden forest, and tricks them by promising to cure them of leprosy.[551] Instead, he steals from them, leading to the Earth Goddess Ana punishing the Wall Gecko by giving him leprosy and curing the Leppers.[552] The story tells us that Wall Gecko's 'friendship with Lizard ended' because of Wall Gecko's unkind actions towards the Leppers; he now spends all his time trying to win back the favour of humans by remaining close to them and living on their walls and staying indoors 'out of shame'.[553] Thus, in 'Lizard, Wall Gecko and Leppers', Ikokwu invokes griotness by utilising animal characters in order to create a story that mirrors a traditional Igbo etiological tale and carries the traditional past, which she views as in danger of being forgotten, in the modern day and beyond.[554]

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[549] Ikokwu, 'How the Tortoise was Taken Alive', p.242.

[550] Ikokwu, 'How the Tortoise was Taken Alive', p.243.

[551] Ikokwu, 'How the Tortoise was Taken Alive', p.242.

[552] Ikokwu, 'How the Tortoise was Taken Alive', p.243.

[553] Ikokwu, 'How the Tortoise was Taken Alive', p.243.

[554] Ikokwu, 'Preface' in *Folktales from Igboland,* p.xxiii.

Both of Ikokwu's stories also have similar moral lessons to impart to their listeners, making them both mirror traditional Igbo didactic tales, with the morals of 'Lizard, Wall Gecko and the Leppers' being 'never repay good with evil', 'treachery is a mortal sin' and 'always give thanks after acts of mercy'.[555] Meanwhile, the morals of 'How the Tortoise was Taken Away' are 'do not steal' and 'do not teach your children evil or bad things'.[556] By employing moral lessons, Ikokwu is invoking griotness by imparting wisdom that she thinks should carry through to the next generation. Ikokwu's aim by publishing her collection is to open Igbo storytelling to a new generation and keep the tradition alive.[557] The themes in this folktale are not contemporary like those addressed by Okorafor. Instead, Ikokwu approaches the folktales from a traditional perspective. Ikokwu keeps her folktales timeless by using 'once upon a time', representing the actions of the characters as strictly good or bad, and including a moral. Upon first glance, it would be easy to argue that Ikokwu bypasses colonial intervention, which all but ignored folkloric traditions as discussed in Chapter Two, in order to reclaim the Igbo storytelling tradition. However, she is aware of the impact that colonial encounters and globalisation has had on her and other cultures alike.[558] She is therefore attempting to counteract the negative effects of colonial intervention and its legacy on Igbo culture and communities, including the diminishing participation in storytelling whether in more formal or informal settings.[559] Ikokwu is reclaiming tradition and invoking griotness by preserving the folktale tradition for future generations who she fears would not otherwise experience it. Ikokwu's hope is that by forging a path for the art of storytelling and guiding it

[555] Ikokwu, 'Lizard, Wall Gecko and Leppers', p.98.

[556] Ikokwu, 'How Tortoise was Taken Alive', p.246.

[557] Ikokwu, 'Preface', p.xxiii.

[558] Ikokwu, 'Preface', p.xxiii.

[559] Ikokwu, 'Preface', p.xxiii.

into the future, the past will be preserved. In this sense, Ikokwu is actively decolonising the folktale. Alex Iantaffi reminds us that decolonisation involves 'decentering European practices, knowledge, power and dominance'.[560] Iantaffi is discussing decolonising our concept of gender and sexuality here, but it also strongly applies to European practices when collecting African folklore. The African folktale volumes collected, translated, edited and published under the names of European colonial officials are often the only accessible written versions available, meaning that European, colonial folktale volumes become the knowledge centre for those who are interested in world folklore. By publishing a collection of Igbo folktales, and including those that are only traditionally told, as well as those of her own making, Ikokwu is pushing for rejuvenation of the folktale whilst staying true to the folktale's origins. This decentres the European volumes, and recentres the focus on the knowledge of Igbo peoples concerning their own communities and culture, thus contributing to their decolonisation and providing them with a future.

Like Ikokwu, Arimah invokes griotness by taking folkloric themes and tropes and creating something new for a new generation. However, Arimah's motives are different as she does not actively set out to preserve the tradition of storytelling but inadvertently does so through rejuvenating old African tropes and themes and appropriating them for the modern day receiver, whether that be a listener or reader. In Arimah's short story, 'Who Will Greet You at Home', in order to have a child women must make a 'child' out of an inanimate object, have it blessed by a female elder and keep it safe for a year before it becomes 'flesh'.[561] 'Who Will Greet you at Home' is reminiscent of African folktales where a woman yearns for a child but is unmarried, so she either uses magic or is offered a child by a magical being.

[560] Iantaffi, p.42.

[561] Arimah, 'Who Will Greet You at Home', loc.1013.

'Tale of an Old Woman', for instance, follows the story of an impoverished, old woman with no husband or relations who is given multiple children by a magical tree on the condition that she does not scold the littlest child.[562] In the end, the old woman does scold the child, resulting in the children returning to the tree and leaving the woman to die impoverished and alone.[563] 'Who will Greet You at Home' is a modern take on this old tale: the young protagonist 'sells' part of herself (her empathy, happiness and joy) to 'mama' (her landlord and boss) in order for her inanimate child to be blessed and thus have the chance of it becoming 'flesh'.[564] The protagonist, Ogechi, a hairdresser who makes the baby out of hair, which in the story is not an appropriate substance with which to make a child, has to set the child on fire as it begins to eat and attempts to kill her, leaving her childless and alone.[565] Both of the women in the 'Tale of an Old Woman' and 'Who Will Greet You at Home' end up childless due to their own actions: the old woman's scolding of the youngest child and Ogechi, firstly making her child out of hair and secondly, making damaging deals with 'mama'.[566] Arimah claims that 'Who Will Greet You at Home' is a 'myth' of her own making, claiming that she wanted her myth to 'speak' to the contemporary world the way older ones 'spoke' to their respective generations, but without Arimah realising this, it also draws on and is inspired by those that have come before it.[567] Arimah's griotness is invoked

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[562] Anon., 'Tale of an Old Woman' in *African Folktales: Traditional Stories of the Black World,* ed. by Roger D. Abrahams (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), pp.57-58 (p.57).

[563] Anon., 'Tale of an Old Woman', p.58.

[564] Arimah, 'Who Will Greet You at Home', locs.1001-1003, loc.1113.

[565] Arimah, 'Who Will Greet You at Home', loc.1175.

[566] Arimah, 'Who Will Greet You at Home', locs.1001-1003, loc.1113.

[567] Deborah Treisman, *This Week in Fiction: Lesley Nneka Arimah on Imagining a Universe of Handcrafted Babies* (2015) <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/fiction-this-week-lesley-nneka-arimah-2015-10-26> [accessed 11 November 2019], para 1 of 11.

in the themes and tropes she uses to create new and reinvent older tales in the written form for a contemporary audience. There is a sense of renewal in Arimah's creation of this story, through its rejuvenation by the author, allowing for the stories of the past to be reclaimed and brought into the present for current and future generations to read and share. Kolawole suggests that renewal is happening all the time, especially by African women who are constantly inventing new and reinventing older folklore in African societies, suggesting that these authors are simply following a longstanding African tradition of women using their voices to keep the tradition alive.[568] A large part of this is considering the previous generations' contributions and the needs of current generations, and allowing future generations to carry narrative traditions forward, whether that be orally or orthographically.[569] Part of successfully incorporating griotness into their work means considering the past, present and future in order to reclaim oral narratives. With Kolawole's perspective on African women's contributions to African oral genres in mind, the next section will examine how Okorafor invokes griotness through women's experiences of and with oral narratives.

Women's contributions to African Folklore

When it comes to African women and their contributions to oral narratives, one must consider the bonds between women, as well as women's relationships with other women and the narratives themselves. For instance, Obioma Nnaemeka notices a lineage starting with African women storytellers and extending to those who write contemporary fiction.[570] She

[568] Kolawole, p.79.

[569] Kolawole, p.79.

[570] Nnaemeka, p.140.

posits that many women writers of African descent credit their mothers or grandmothers and their oral storytelling talent for their ability to create their own stories in the written form, suggesting that the ability to invoke griotness is a generational tradition passed down from mother to daughter.[571] Women writers of Black science and speculative fiction, fantasy, afrofuturism, and folklore-inspired genres take inspiration not only from their female relatives' and elders' abilities to create narratives orally, but also from themes, tropes and forms involved in these narratives, which are both obviously and subtly embedded into their writing. *Who Fears Death* demonstrates how Okorafor invokes griotness through showcasing women's abilities to tell stories and how that encompasses all forms and genres; for instance, Okorafor as the author writes, Onyesonwu's mother and the storyteller orally narrate; and Onyesonwu visually shows the people in the market her mother's rape, telling a story without having to outwardly narrate it. Onyesonwu becomes the storyteller of her mother's rape, which is also the story of her conception, not through words but through her magical powers by announcing: 'I won't tell you the words. Just know I spoke them'. [572] These words enable the people around her to witness her mother's rape first-hand, which both emphasises the significance of the bonds between women, specifically mother and daughter here, when it comes to storytelling, and how much more powerful their narratives are when that bond is intact, as Onyesonwu has the power to visually show people her mother's story.[573] Invoking griotness in this way allows Okorafor to think outside of the box, and expand on the traditions of the griot, whilst exploring the different ways stories can be shared. In *Who Fears Death*, sharing stories includes not having to speak them out loud.

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[571] Nnaemeka, p.141.

[572] Okorafor, *Who Fears Death*, p.151.

[573] Okorafor, *Who Fears Death*, p.151.

The story of Onyesonwu's mother's rape also becomes a folktale as it is initially told orally by Najeeba to Onyesonwu, thus being passed down to the next generation from mother to daughter, in the third person by an omniscient narrator as folktales traditionally are. This is significant because the rest of the novel is written in the first person from Onyesonwu's viewpoint. The change of person purposefully reflects both Najeeba's need to detach herself from the traumatic experience and resembles the oral narrative tradition, for which women in Africa are prolifically well-known.[574] This inclusion of contemporary, real world influenced issues and oral traditions allows Najeeba to narrate her own story on her own terms but also allows Okorafor's female characters to invoke a griotness of their own, a tactic not used by the other authors I discuss.[575] As women's contributions to oral literature have been subverted by European colonial administrators, as well as African men, this reappropriates women's contributions to oral genres, specifically narratives, as it bypasses colonial anthropological and folkloristic endeavours, which appropriated West African narratives, and gives a direct voice to the women who are responsible for creating and prolonging the life of a lot of the oral genres.[576] This means that by invoking griotness, and depicting the generational exchange of stories between mother and daughter, Okorafor is, according to Pahl, preventing 'an anthropological, immobilizing view'.[577] In African colonial history, anthropological endeavours that focused on the collection of mythology and folklore have attempted to preserve them but have very often resulted in stagnation, where the stories have

[574] Kolawole, p.76.

[575] This tactic does not occur in the other texts because the other authors do not write characters who tell stories for themselves. The other authors are invoking griotness, whereas Okorafor *and* her characters both invoke griotness.

[576] Kolawole, p.76.

[577] Pahl, p.210.

stopped evolving. Writing these narratives down, as with their European counterparts, can result in the circulation of specific versions of a narrative even when it no longer reflects or serves the community from which it originated, rather than growing and evolving alongside them.[578] Pahl points out, however, that stagnation does not have to be the only future available to oral literature. Okorafor's transmission of mythology and folklore into an imagined African future sidesteps the stagnation of these narratives caused by colonial folkloristics. Okorafor's prevention of an immobilising view very closely resembles Kolawole's view that this stagnation has not occurred in Africa, with African women still creating and rejuvenating African folklore and oral genres in the modern day, even if many oral genres are popularly associated with African men. [579]

Colonial folkloristics are not the only issue at play here, however, as Kolawole proposes that African men have also appropriated oral genres that are traditionally created by African women.[580] The appropriation of women's oral domains is evident in *Who Fears Death* as the man who rapes Najeeba sings ceremonial songs as he does so, which are overwhelmingly the domain of African women.[581] Nuru women are present at the mass rape of Okeke women by Nuru men and perform songs as it happens; the man who rapes Najeeba moves away from the women's melodies and sings his own song to mark the occasion, which 'bore more deeply into' Najeeba.[582] Whilst the presence of women and their celebration of men violating other women is purposefully jarring and uncomfortable, there is a less obvious issue being

[578] Pahl, p.210.

[579] Kolawole, p.78.

[580] Kolawole, p.74.

[581] Kolawole, p.74.

[582] Okorafor, *Who Fears Death*, p.19.

portrayed here. In most West African countries, songs are performed at ceremonies, births and other special occasions and are usually sung by women, being that they are typically a women's domain in African communities, and commonly used to resist oppression and celebrate special occasions. [583] Not only is he performing a violent act against an enemy woman, but he is appropriating the songs created and performed by women from his own community whilst doing so, signalling his lack of respect for women in general. Although Okorafor reclaims women's contributions to oral narratives, she also touches on the issues of African men taking credit for and appropriating women's oral genres. Kolawole reminds us that this is common practice with African men becoming associated with oral genres that are overwhelmingly the domains of African women, and Okorafor's work reflects this development.[584] It is also important to note the women on women violence that happens in this instance. Despite songs being women's domains, which are commonly used to fight oppression or celebrate special occasions, the Nuru women sing songs whilst other women are raped as if it is a ceremony to be celebrated, showing the complex social dynamics between opposing and same-sex societal relationships in *Who Fears Death*. Here, that important bond between women, as noted by Nnaemeka, can be easily broken during conflict, and can be used against other women when misogynistic views are internalised. This conflict is caused by Sunuteel, who wrote Phoenix's story and turned it into the Great Book to align with his view that the Nuru were superior to the Okeke, which was then used to justify the enslavement, oppression and torture of the Okeke people, leading to the bond between women, which Nnaemeka states is such an important part of women's oral literature, to become broken and leaving it open for men to appropriate and take credit for their oral creations.

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[583] Kolawole, p.74, p.76

[584] Kolawole, p.74.

Phoenix uses the African tradition of oral narration to tell her story by recording it, meaning it can still be heard years later. In this sense, Phoenix's life story becomes a folktale. Okorafor thus invokes griotness both through herself as the author and the protagonist telling the story. This extended folktale is told by a woman, which reclaims the folkloric space for women as it encompasses the history of not just the fictional Phoenix but nonfictional colonised African women through allegory. Like many African women of the diaspora, especially those sold into slavery, Phoenix has been dislocated from her country and culture. She was 'created in Tower 7 […] from the DNA of an African woman possibly born in Phoenix, Arizona', thus, like the child of a slave or a child born into a colonial environment never knows from where exactly she comes, meaning she has to create a culture of her own.[585] Phoenix thus uses the dead language to tell her story (the language of the coloniser), which signals that she is speaking from a distant time and place, whilst using an African tradition by doing so orally. Phoenix thus creates her own sense of culture through the literature she read whilst in Tower 7, having come across 'African' and 'Arab' myths, amongst other works of fiction and nonfiction.[586] The fact that she survived long enough to record and tell others her tale is a dedication to the many women who keep the tradition of oral narratives (among other oral genres) alive by utilising African tools alongside new technology and using the coloniser's language against them. Kolawole is insistent on oral genres being a way for African women to protest injustices that are enacted against them, and Phoenix's use of those traditions as a weapon against the oppression she has suffered is not all that different. Okorafor therefore invokes griotness in a way that reflects real life, which allows her to reclaim women's contributions to African folklore and oral genres that are

[585] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix,* loc.665.

[586] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*, loc.645.

rightfully their domains. This is not the only instance in which Okorafor mirrors reality as the next section will explore how Okorafor reflects the actions of coloniser folklorists in *The Book of Phoenix* before exploring Babalola's rewriting of 'Ituen and the King's Wife', a folktale which appeared in Dayrell's first collection of folktales.

Rewriting Colonial Wrongs

The Book of Phoenix reflects the real happenings of coloniser folklorists as Sunuteel finds the story in the form of a recording, listens to it, and then rewrites and disseminates it. Sunuteel's adaptation of Phoenix's story then goes on to become the Great Book – a holy book of sorts – which is used to justify the mistreatment of the darker skinned Okeke people by lighter skinned Nuru people. The dissemination of the altered version of the story in which Sunuteel has 'abbreviated ideas, chopped stories in half, summarised pain and suffering and joy, and reinterpreted and omitted' is not too dissimilar to the work of some coloniser folklorists.[587] As discussed in Chapter One, Dayrell openly admitted that he omitted anything he found problematic, which naturally leads to chopping stories in half, abbreviating ideas and reinterpreting the tales told to him before disseminating these stories in Britain. Whilst it was not used to enslave people as the Great Book in Okorafor's novel, the information gathered by coloniser folklorists was used to help oppress colonised peoples.[588] According to Naithani, there was a need for Britain to 'get to know the people brought under its control' in order to keep them under control, leading to the state to indirectly 'support' anthropological and folkloristic endeavours undertaken by its colonial officials by 'granting recognition' by being noted as an expert of their stationed district, being called upon when needed and given

[587] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*, loc.3312.

[588] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire*, p.25.

promotion.[589] The coloniser folklorists would move up the career ladder but also would have had their names on books containing stories belonging to colonised peoples, becoming immortalised as 'both Sunuteel and his wife' did.[590] This immortality is related to Sunuteel's rewriting of the Great Book and his wife's audio-narration, having left behind a legacy as it 'went on to be the most read book in the last hundred years'.[591] Although colonial collections would not have been the most read books in the last century, as the Great Book is in *Who Fears Death*, they have been consulted by more contemporary folktale curators, and the stories included in them republished beyond the collectors' lifetimes. For example, many of the stories published by Cardinall were republished in Carter's collections, which were curated for Virago, whilst Dayrell's were republished in *African Myths and Tales* (2020).[592]

In order to justify his actions, Sunuteel refers to Roland Barthes' essay, 'The Death of the Author', and has taken it much too literally. First, he lingers on the example quotation with which Barthes opens his essay: 'this was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings, and her delicious sensibility'.[593] Barthes provides this to be provocative and to ask to whom this opinion

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[589] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire*, p.25.

[590] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*, loc.3377.

[591] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*, loc.3368.

[592] See Cardinall, *Tales Told in Togoland*; Carter, 'Notes on Parts 1-7', p.580, p.587; Nick Wells, Catherine Taylor, Josie Mitchell and Gillian Whitaker, 'Biographies and Sources' in *African Myths and Tales: Epic Tales*, ed. by Nick Wells, Catherine Taylor, Josie Mitchell and Gillian Whitaker (London: Flame Tree Publishing, 2020), pp.942-946 (p.942, p.946).

[593] Honoré de Balzac, *Sarrasine*, trans. by Clara Bell (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2021), locs.551-560; Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in *Image, Music, Text,* trans. by Stephen Heath, ed. by Stephen Heath (London Publisher: Fontana, 1977), pp.142-148 (p.142); quoted in Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*,

belongs:

> Is it the hero of the story bent on remaining ignorant of the castrato hidden beneath the woman? Is it Balzac the individual, furnished by his personal experience with a philosophy of Woman? Is it Balzac the author professing 'literary' ideas on femininity? Is it universal wisdom? Romantic psychology? We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every paint of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative· where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.[594]

Here, Barthes is making us question to whom the opinion belongs before coming to the main argument of his essay, that the writer's identity is lost and thus the author is metaphorically dead once the writing is completed and disseminated. But instead of focusing on Barthes' questioning and his conclusion, Sunuteel focuses his attention on the quote itself. Barthes has chosen a provocative quotation purposefully. It is meant to stir up divisive feelings in order to grab our attention and allow for Barthes to make his point. Sunuteel forgets that this has been used by Barthes for this purpose, despite remembering other parts of the essay clearly, and instead recalls it as 'a poem or a bit of literature he'd once heard and always thought described the other sex so well', making the essay fit the preconceived notions he holds of women.[595] He then remembers an extract from 'The Death of the Author':

> "As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice

loc.3379.

[594] Barthes, p.142.

[595] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*, loc.3312.

> of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins".[596]

What Barthes means by this is that a text's meaning is decided not by the author's intention but by the reader's interpretation, but Sunuteel takes the death of the author literally despite having been familiar with the text. This is shown by Sunuteel remembering his teacher's referral to the '"Author is Dead" essay whenever anyone asked, "What was the author thinking when he wrote this?"'.[597] He then takes the idea that 'once the author wrote the story, the author became irrelevant. The author was dead' and uses it to excuse his omissions:[598]

> In The Book of Phoenix, this was certainly the case. Phoenix was dead. The story was alive, having separated from Phoenix as a child separated from her or his dying mother at birth. It was up to the reader to interpret what the story really was about. And in this case, the only reader was Sunuteel.[599]

To Sunuteel, if the author is metaphorically and literally dead, the story survives, and as he is the only reader, it is his interpretation and only his interpretation that creates meaning. Sunuteel thus takes the fact that Phoenix – the author of her own story – is literally dead as along with his misinterpretation of Barthes' concept of the metaphorical death of the author and uses them to justify his actions and to push forward his own agenda. In his first

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[596] Barthes, p.142; quoted in Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*, loc.3379.

[597] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*, loc.3321.

[598] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*, loc.3321.

[599] Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix*, loc.3372.

collection, Dayrell erases the people who told him stories by neglecting to credit them and it is his interpretations that are published in the volume. Likewise, although they could not have been influenced by 'The Death of the Author', the Langs certainly take a similar stance to Sunuteel as they do not take the author of the tales or the culture from which they originate into consideration when rewriting them. They also use their Coloured Fairy Book series to push their own agenda: for Sunuteel, it is that Nuru people are superior to Okeke, for the Langs, it is the white supremacist themes, as seen by the inclusion of stories that overtly support these agendas appearing in a fairy book series alongside those of non-European origin. The stories in the collections edited by coloniser folklorists and Victorian fairy tale curators have been widely disseminated and unquestioningly viewed as authentic, just as the Great Book has been in *The Book of Phoenix* and *Who Fears Death*. Okorafor therefore echoes what has happened to non-European folklore by European curators and colonial officials in order to reclaim the narrative and later rewrite the wrongs of colonialism and empire through rewriting Sunuteel's interpretation.

Sunuteel's rewriting left behind a need for correction, for another rewriting, undertaken by Onyesonwu at the end of *Who Fears Death,* to which *The Book of Phoenix* is a prequel. Onyesonwu rewrites the Great Book in Nsibidi and when doing so bestows 'thousands' of gifts on 'all women'.[600] Some women 'could turn wine to fresh sweet drinking water, others glowed in the dark at night, some could hear the dead. Others remembered the past, before the Great Book'.[601] Onyesonwu rewrites the Great Book in a way that liberates women, just as Babalola does when she rewrites 'Ituen and the King's Wife', a story found in *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* edited by Dayrell, and calls it 'Attem'. Whilst they rewrite their

[600] Okorafor, *Who Fears Death*, p.383; 381.

[601] Okorafor, *Who Fears Death*, p.381.

respective stories, neither Onyesonwu or Babalola ignore or erase what has happened to the stories in the past, instead, they bestow abilities on the women involved. Whilst Onyesonwu does this in the form of magical powers, Babalola does this by giving Attem the power and strength to grasp her autonomy from her husband, the king, and overthrow him in order to provide herself, her daughter and all of the women in her newly claimed kingdom with the ability to make their own choices. Unlike Onyesonwu, it does not take the death of Attem and her child in order to change things for the better. In this case, Okorafor invokes griotness by telling a story which mirrors the reality of and exploring the ways in which stories have been tampered with and how they have been rewritten, allowing her to reclaim the ways stories are told and who tells them without disregarding the reasons why they need rewriting in the first place. Whilst it is Onyesonwu who does so in Okorafor's novel, in the real world, it is Babalola who undertakes this task.

In her collection, Babalola reworks a colonised story initially collected and edited by Dayrell, and reworks it for the modern day, invoking griotness through allowing the story to evolve rather than stagnate as it has through colonial collection and western publication. Babalola does this by providing agency and autonomy to female characters and rewriting colonised stories in order to not only update them for a new generation but right the colonial, misogynistic wrongs that Babalola sees in Dayrell's version. Babalola invokes a griotness that is political at heart, whilst Dayrell's text fails to invoke any kind of griotness because he is considered an outsider. 'Attem' is a rewritten version of 'Ituen and the King's Wife', a folktale that appears in *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria.* The protagonist of both stories, Attem, a queen who is her king's youngest and favourite wife, is portrayed very differently in each story. Babalola reimagines many tales in a manner that means 'women were centred; it

was less about being chosen and more about their agency'.[602]

In 'Ituen and the King's Wife', Attem has little agency and cannot choose whom she marries, and her lack of agency is clear from the very start with the story's title. In Dayrell's collection, the story is titled 'Ituen and the King's Wife', whilst Babalola names her story after the female protagonist, Attem, which is indicative of Babalola's aim of centring Attem within the narrative and providing her with the autonomy that she was not afforded in Dayrell's version. The title 'Ituen and the King's Wife' centres Ituen, who is portrayed as a victim who was seduced by the king's wife. Attem is named as such in 'Ituen and the King's Wife', but her name is not used in the title at all, reflecting her lack of true autonomy whilst being portrayed as a predatory villain in the story. In 'Ituen and the King's Wife', Ituen is a scared young man who is controlled by and forced into a relationship with Attem, whilst Attem is portrayed as a selfish and predatory man-eater who uses men to get her own way. The story insists that Attem 'did not like her old husband, but wished for a young and handsome husband'.[603] Attem thus 'told her servant to go round the town and the market to try and find such a man'.[604] The man who the servant finds is Ituen, who is at first described as being 'frightened' and who refuses to visit Attem, 'as he knew that if the king discovered him he would be killed', whilst Attem is portrayed as a selfish young woman who only cares about her own needs and desires as a result.[605]

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[602] Bolu Babalola, 'Author's Note' in *Love in Colour* (London: Headline, 2020), Amazon Kindle e-book, pp.249-251 (p.249).

[603] Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife', loc.684.

[604] Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife', loc.685.

[605] Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife', loc.691.

Attem's attempt to keep Ituen in her room 'against his will' is an abuse of power in 'Ituen and the King's Wife', because Attem is a queen, who has far more social power and standing than Ituen.[606] Attem is portrayed as preying on an impoverished young boy for her own gratification because she is unhappy with her old husband. There are parts of the social structure that are not mentioned here, however. Attem is in a similar situation to the one in which Ituen is portrayed as being, but this is not explored or used to sympathise with Attem, who is very young herself and in an unhappy marriage with a much older and more powerful man than herself. Instead of this information being used to contextualise Attem's need to find a man of her own age with whom she can find love, she is represented as spoilt, ungrateful, selfish, and predatory, whilst Ituen is represented as the poor young man who is preyed upon and taken advantage of by a powerful woman, exposing a double standard within the tale. Moreover, the language used to describe Ituen in 'Ituen and the King's Wife' is paradoxical at best. In one sense, Ituen is portrayed as an innocent victim who is held 'much against his will', whilst the use of active voice conveys the opposite.[607] In Dayrell's version of the tale, 'Ituen stayed [in Attem's room] for two weeks, and then he said that it was time for him to go and see his mother', which gives him a sense of autonomy and whilst this may well be bad editing on Dayrell's part, it does suggest that Ituen had some choice in the situation.[608] At the very least, it suggests that Ituen is conflicted, and both does and does not want to stay with Attem, perhaps because he is poor and Attem is providing him with food and clothes but he is scared of being discovered by the king. Further to this, he is 'persuaded' by Attem 'to stay another week, much against his will', again exemplifying a contradiction and representing a conflict with Ituen as being 'persuaded' suggests that he initially wanted to leave and has had

[606] Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife', loc.698.

[607] Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife', loc.698.

[608] Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife', loc.697.

some choice in the situation, whilst we are also being told that he is held 'against his will'.[609] This conflict allows us to sympathise with Ituen as he is in a tricky situation in which he is not altogether comfortable, whilst slotting Attem into the villain category for putting him in the situation that makes him uneasy and leads to his demise after they are caught together. On the king's orders, Ituen is ultimately sentenced to death whereby he is tied to a tree and his lower jaw was cut off with a 'sharp knife' before being carried to the king as proof of his death.[610]

Dayrell edited, censored, and appropriated the folktales for British consumption as discussed in Chapter One, meaning the stories have been westernised and become a hybrid form which cannot be credited to a single country or community.[611] They thus contain western and African influences, whether that is explicitly apparent or not. *Folk Tales from Southern Nigeria,* from which Babalola took 'Ituen and the King's Wife', was published in 1910 and Nigeria had been under British colonial influence from 1861, starting with Lagos before moving further South, meaning that the British influence had fifty years to seep into Nigerian culture, including folktales and other oral genres.[612] This influence may well be why 'Ituen and the King's Wife' displays qualities similar to European tales that depict women who do not obey the rules as villains, such as evil stepmothers and one ponders if this is due to British colonial influence or if it is simply part of Nigerian culture. Alongside this, Azuonye posits that older Igbo folktales, known as *akuko-ala*, relate to Igbo Goddesses, most prominently the earth mother Goddess, Ani, whilst portraying women as powerful without

[609] Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife', loc.698.

[610] Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife', loc.710.

[611] Naithani, *The Story-Time of the British Empire,* p.4.

[612] John M. Carland, *The Colonial Office and Nigeria* (Stanford: The Hoover Institution, 1985), pp.1-2.

punishment.[613] Azuonye blames the prevalence of androcentricity and patriarchal themes in newer Igbo tales on European intervention and influence.[614] Whilst, in most cases, 'women are represented as passive and subservient, relegated to supporting the male protagonist or caricatured as the foreboding and evil witch archetype', Ayub Sheik reminds us that African tales in which women are not stereotyped do exist.[615] Dayrell's collections also contain these types, such as 'Of the Pretty Stranger Who Killed the King' in which an old witch transforms herself into a young woman, and seduces the tyrannical king and kills him, freeing the people of the kingdom.[616] This suggests that Dayrell's collection contains tales that are influenced by precolonial and colonial eras, especially when the representation of women is taken into consideration. 'Of the Pretty Stranger Who Killed the King' is an example of an older tale in which women are portrayed as more complicated and capable beings, whereas in 'Ituen and the King's Wife', Attem is powerless and voiceless.

Although Attem breaks the rules in 'Ituen and the King's Wife', she is still stereotypical in that she mirrors the stereotypical image of African women as 'voiceless, invisible, ignorant and dependent', hence her not being able to make her own choices without punishment.[617] When Sheik's ideas are considered, this makes 'Ituen and the King's Wife' part of the 'androcentric monopoly' in which 'power and social relations are realised and reinforced by stories that conclude in social sanctions, suffering and loss for breaking the status quo and

[613] Azuonye, p.2.

[614] Azuonye, p.2.

[615] Sheik, p.45.

[616] Sheik, p.45; Anon., 'Of the Pretty Stranger Who Killed the King' in *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* ed. by Elphinstone Dayrell (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2010), locs.726-751.

[617] Sheik, p.45.

upsetting entrenched phallocentric power positions' just as Attem does.[618] Attem is a beautiful young woman who has very little autonomy over her life and is in an unhappy marriage to an older man who she does not love but receives very little empathy or contextualisation. As I have explored above, Attem is portrayed as predatory and selfish and vilified for these traits when the actions of the king are much the same, but he is not vilified at all. In fact, he is portrayed as a victim who is betrayed by Attem; however, the king has married a much younger woman who is very unhappy and does not like her husband, which suggests that Attem was likely preyed upon in the same way that Attem has preyed on Ituen.[619] One might question why she simply does not leave despite her unhappiness, which is not explored in 'Ituen and the King's Wife'. She cannot leave and divorce a powerful king without repercussions, despite it being transparently stated in the tale how miserable she is, and this is evident by the violent punishment after being caught trying to momentarily find some escapism through her relationship with Ituen. Thus, it is fear for her life that keeps her in her marriage. This is very similar to Attem's attempts to persuade Ituen to stay with her for longer periods. At least in part, Ituen is afraid of repercussions from rejecting a queen just as Attem is afraid of rejecting a powerful king, and both are trapped in circumstances they do not feel they can safely leave. Attem is portrayed as only thinking about her own feelings and not Ituen's anxieties, but king's actions are very similar, and it is very clear that he cares not for her happiness. After sentencing Ituen to death, the king is initially willing to spare Attem's life, but it soon becomes obvious that it is for his own benefit as it is only upon seeing how upset and heartbroken Attem is about Ituen's death sentence. It is Attem's response to Ituen's fate that makes the king decide that Attem should suffer the same fate. The king is thus willing to let Attem live until he realises that she is in love with Ituen,

[618] Sheik, p.47.

[619] Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife', loc.684.

leading him to become 'angry' and, out of jealousy, he has his wife murdered.[620] He was willing to keep her alive for his own benefit as she was his youngest and most beautiful wife.[621] However, finding that her heart was with Ituen and not him, meant that this was not something the king's ego could handle, thus not caring for Attem as a person but what she can provide for him on a selfish level. It is also worth noting that the king has multiple wives, creating yet another double standard as it is deemed appropriate for the king to have multiple relationships and divide his affections among them, but it is not fitting for Attem to do the same because she is a woman but most importantly because it does not benefit the king. Attem is severely punished for thinking and acting in the same manner as the king whilst being a woman, and instead of being portrayed as a potential victim, Attem is represented as the villain who hurts both her husband and her love interest, and this is what Babalola perceives, which encourages her to invoke griotness by forming a feminist-inspired version of events.

As part of her reclamation of this tale, Babalola counteracts the 'androcentric monopoly' by intervening when it comes to Attem's 'suffering and loss for breaking the status quo and upsetting entrenched phallocentric power positions'.[622] Babalola begins this process by providing more context concerning Attem's side of the story than is afforded to her in 'Ituen and the King's Wife', including her socioeconomic background and the circumstances which forced her to marry the king. Attem's family had lost everything, leading Attem to marry the king to save them from destitution and slavery.[623] By providing more contextual information,

[620] Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife', loc.710.

[621] Anon., 'Ituen and the King's Wife', loc.679.

[622] Sheik, p.47.

[623] Babalola, 'Attem', p.72.

Babalola reclaims the story for Attem and other women like her through giving her choice in societies that actively seek to give women as little choice as possible. For instance, Attem's 'marriage to Offiong [the king] had happened because of her complete lack of choice'.[624] This is because Attem's parents were 'humble craftspeople' who found themselves in 'debt to the throne after they entrusted someone they shouldn't have with their life savings'.[625] The king's regime only gave Attem's family two options: 'to give up the compound that had been theirs for generations and live the rest of their days enslaved or run away' neither of which Attem saw as an option for herself, parents or siblings.[626] As far as she was concerned, her only real option was to seduce the king.[627] Once she has seduced and married the king, Attem seeks to make as many choices as is possible whilst living in a situation in which she had very little agency. She does this by persuading the king to grant her privileges not usually afforded to a seventh wife, such as visiting the market, which is her chance to access and claw back some autonomy by choosing new lovers.[628]

Babalola's Attem seeks out her lovers herself but is initially more intelligent about doing so than Attem in 'Ituen and the King's Wife'. Babalola's Attem takes multiple lovers and does so purposefully to avoid being caught by her husband and his guards until she meets Ituen. Bedding these men was 'her choice, a tangible flex of the only power she possessed' and all entered the situation willingly and about which they were discreet because 'they had been

[624] Babalola, 'Attem', p.72.

[625] Babalola, 'Attem', p.72.

[626] Babalola, 'Attem', p.72.

[627] Babalola, 'Attem', p.72.

[628] Babalola, 'Attem', p.70.

chosen by Queen Attem' and this was worth the risk of being caught and punished.[629] This gave her back a small part of the autonomy she lost when she married the king due to 'complete lack of choice'.[630] Babalola thus provides another dimension to Attem and the feminist lens, with other contexts considered, provides us with a very different view of her. Babalola's version of Attem contextualises her lack of choices as a woman in a patriarchal and colonial society. This contextual information was not afforded to us in 'Ituen and the King's Daughter' and, as a result, Attem became the villain and was punished so severely for trying to make her own choices in life that it ended with her death. Attem's 'expeditions' to the marketplace once a week gave her temporary 'choice, power and freedom', allowing her to choose and take on discreet lovers of her own choosing, and this eventually allows Attem to become the hero of the story rather than the villain she is portrayed as in 'Ituen and the King's Wife'.[631] This taste of freedom gives her the thirst for 'choice, power and freedom' to become a permanent fixture in her life, leading her to 'handle' a revolution and 'organise' a coup, which frees her from the king's grasp completely and provides her with the freedom to overtly and unapologetically make her own choices.[632] In her 'Author's Note', Babalola states that the stories she read and ultimately rewrote, 'were rife with misogyny and violence and were created within heavily patriarchal contexts' and she, as previously mentioned, 're-imagine[s] these stories in a manner that meant that the women were centred; it was less about being chosen and more about their agency'.[633] In this sense, Attem acts as an example of what is possible when women seek to have and successfully acquire agency over their own

[629] Babalola, 'Attem', p.73.

[630] Babalola, 'Attem', p.73.

[631] Babalola, 'Attem', p.73.

[632] Babalola, 'Attem', p.72; p.87.

[633] Babalola, 'Author's Note', p.249.

lives: revolutions are started and coups are implemented. Thus, by rewriting this story as Onyesonwu does in *Who Fears Death*, Babalola reclaims the life trajectory of women who are and were once deprived of autonomy and choice as Attem was in 'Ituen in the King's Wife', and this provides a brighter future for everyone, except those upholding misogynistic, patriarchal societies just as the king was doing. Babalola thus switches the unequal power and social relations apparent in 'Ituen and the King's Wife'. Instead of concluding it with social sanctions, suffering and loss for breaking the rules, she 'upsets the entrenched phallocentric power positions' and thrives because of it.[634] In this sense, Babalola's griotness takes the form of rewriting colonial wrongs and reclaiming the story in a way that acknowledges the colonial influences but takes it back to the precolonial.

As with any patriarchal society, Attem is initially limited in 'Attem' because she is a woman but, by the end of the story, Babalola has returned to the older, precolonial tales, where women are powerful, reclaiming folktales in a way that allows them to come full circle. This means that despite having undergone a journey through androcentric and suppressive story lines, the women folktale characters can regain their power and reinstate their mark on society. Thus, the struggle that women have experienced has not been erased by simply bypassing the colonial collection and influence on these tales but has been explored fully and allowed a happy ending. The ending is therefore reminiscent of older, precolonial tales as Attem starts a coup and overthrows the king, an ending which mirrors 'Of the Pretty Stranger that Killed the King'. A tale in which a stranger kills the king, and like Attem, saves not only herself but the wider society, and becomes the hero of the story, situating the king as the true villain.[635] The king has taken advantage of not only Attem and her family's financial situation

[634] Sheik, p.47.

[635] Anon., 'Of the Pretty Stranger Who Killed the King', locs.726-751.

but also the others who reside within his kingdom. Babalola exposes the king as greedy, unsympathetic and malevolent, whose father had a history of great atrocities, having 'killed and manipulated his way to the throne', meaning King Offiong's 'kingship was sired by blood'.[636] In this sense, the king is a personification of colonialism, whilst his father is the initial invasion which led the way for colonial rule itself. By personifying colonialism and its atrocities, Babalola finds a way of reclaiming the story by cleverly acknowledges this in a covert manner, so as not to put too much focus on acts and legacies of unjust colonial regimes, and focuses on the future, which is freedom, agency and independence as personified by Attem. This is a covert hint to the beginning of the story's orthographic journey, which exposes the colonial collector and the colonial regime in which he was a part. Babalola thus has an awareness of colonialism under which 'Ituen and the King's Wife' was collected and there is an attempt to put right the colonial and misogynistic wrongs that Babalola reads in Dayrell's version, meaning she invokes a griotness that is political. This is whilst Dayrell's text fails to invoke any kind of griotness because he is considered an outsider and thus views the story he has collected from that perspective and this is reflected in Babalola's rewriting. Initially, Attem is introduced in Babalola's short story in a similar way to how she is portrayed in 'Ituen and the King's Wife', suggesting that the lens in which Attem is viewed in 'Ituen and the King's Wife' is that of an outsider, represented by a female bead-seller at the market where Attem and Ituen first meet:

> The bead-seller rolled her eyes and kissed her teeth in a way that immediately informed Ituen that she was looking at a woman she either hated or wanted to be. When the bead-seller spoke again, her voice was no longer sweet. "That one, I don't know who she thinks she is."
> […]

[636] Babalola, 'Attem', p.73.

> The bead-seller continued, voice low and compressed with resentment, revealing intricate personal information in a manner only one's enemy could. "It is King Offiong's youngest wife, Attem. An insolent girl. During the Harvest Festival, the old king saw her dancing and immediately fell in love, so he took her as his seventh wife. You should have seen her dancing. Ah! Shameless. Right in front of the king, in front of his wives. I don't trust her. Now she moves around the town as if she owns it. She has become the most prominent wife. No wife but the first is permitted to travel to the market, and yet every Fourth Day she comes".[637]

Here, the bead-seller is describing Attem to Ituen upon his first sighting of the woman who will become his lover in a 'manner only one's enemy could'.[638] The bead-seller is resentful of Attem's position, and the apparent privileges afforded to her, especially when exceptions are made for her, which the seller feels Attem has not earned and therefore does not deserve as it breaks tradition. Attem is the seventh wife of the king but because of her youth, dance moves and beauty, she has been able to become the most 'prominent wife' and has used her wiles to persuade the king to let her attend the market once a week, despite tradition stating that only the first wife is 'permitted to travel to the market'.[639] The market woman describes Attem as 'insolent', 'shameless' and does not trust her because she is breaking the mould and interfering with tradition both in the sense of gender roles in terms of wider society and within the monarchy, making the market woman's perspective one filled with internalised misogyny and sexism, fuelled by the bead-seller's resentment and jealousy as she 'wanted to be' Attem.[640] The bead-seller is who I imagine Babalola envisioned telling 'Ituen and the

[637] Babalola, 'Attem', pp.69-70.

[638] Babalola, 'Attem', p.70.

[639] Babalola, 'Attem', p.70.

[640] Babalola, 'Attem', p.69.

King's Wife', with their words 'compressed with resentment', thus the story was spun in a way that saw Attem become the villain when there was more nuance to her story that remained unexplored, hence Babalola's reimagination.[641] Babalola goes on to explore and represent Attem from a different perspective that is not filled with jealousy and resentment that a girl such as Attem could have luxuries that are not afforded to every woman of her age and background. The bead-seller's opinion is an echo of Dayrell's version of the tale because it is an outsider's opinion of Attem from a person who does not know all the facts. Curiously and notably, despite Babalola aiming to reframe the story through a feminist lens, she has chosen to have the outsider's negative perspective be that of a woman, and this promotes how deeply colonial misogynistic and sexist views were held and even internalised by women who were encouraged to compete and resent rather than support each other. Whilst the outsider is the bead-seller in 'Attem', in 'Ituen and the King's Wife', Dayrell is the outsider. Dayrell's adaptation has suffered this doubly, both through the person, no matter their gender, telling the story and their potentially sexist ideals but also through Dayrell himself who edited, censored and omitted parts from the stories, potentially reinforcing and promoting, even if unconsciously, his own western and colonial ideals of women and their place in Southern Nigerian society. By turning the outsider's perspective into a character and providing us with a different angle, Babalola reclaims this Southern Nigerian folktale whilst also critiquing Dayrell's outsider status of coloniser. Babalola is subtle in her critique and does so in a way that exposes Dayrell as an outsider, and therefore acknowledges the folktale's history with colonisation. Babalola intentionally does not over focus on the colonial outsider, hence portraying the outsider as a local woman who shares a similar viewpoint to Dayrell's version of the tale, and this allows the tale to move away from the earlier and

[641] Babalola, 'Attem', p.70.

evolve into a new version of itself, which centres Attem and provides her with more options than the horrible fate she is subjected to in 'Ituen and the King's Wife'.

Although I have previously critiqued a lack of credit, I argue that Babalola's choice to list the source of inspiration as 'Attem: Ituen and the King's Wife, Calabar peoples, Nigeria' is more complex than simply not giving credit where credit is due.[642] By crediting 'Calabar Peoples', Babalola is providing those interested with details the story's origins and those responsible for its creation rather than shining a light on or giving credit to the colonial folktale collection of which this story was a part.[643] In this sense, Babalola is invoking griotness in order to reclaim the story on behalf of Calabar peoples by acknowledging that the colonial version of the tale exists but also letting us know that it does not belong to the coloniser. Babalola thus invokes griotness by reworking and updating 'Ituen and the King's Wife' in a way that is overtly political as she makes attempts to relocate the story by crediting the Calabar peoples, but also with her feminist views on Dayrell's colonial status and women's autonomy and experiences.

Babalola has reimagined stories in which women are empowered by their autonomy rather than punished because of it. Her collection provided her with 'the wonderful opportunity to play with myths, stretching them into newer versions and worlds far removed from where they began, while still ensuring they remained tethered to their roots'.[644] In the case of 'Attem', the roots consist of a misogynistic, patriarchal, and colonised society, which preys on the most vulnerable and strips women of their autonomy. By taking 'Ituen and the King's

[642] Babalola, 'Sources of Inspiration', p.252.

[643] Babalola, 'Sources of Inspiration', p.252.

[644] Babalola, 'Author's Note', p.250.

Wife', in which Attem is a selfish young queen who uses her privilege to prey on underprivileged young men, and recentring the lens through which we view Attem, Babalola is not only reimagining what can change for women when they fight for autonomy but also for the rest of society when the war is won. Furthermore, Babalola's confrontation of colonial practices shines the brightest light on those who most deserve it, such as those who have had to fight for agency and freedom, whilst still acknowledging and placing the blame for the interruption of these rights in the correct place: colonialism. Like Okorafor's Onyesonwu, Babalola has rewritten a wrong that was undertaken many years ago and, by doing so, has changed the story's future without erasing its past entirely. Whilst Babalola did not have to die to save women from oppression as Onyesonwu did, she has given Attem a future that she did not have in 'Ituen and the King's Wife', and once again exemplifies how Okorafor invokes griotness by reflecting real-life happenings in her work.

All the different ways in which folklore is reclaimed exhibits the role of contemporary writers of Nigerian descent in creating, recreating, rewriting and ultimately reclaiming African folklore in their work. This is a rejuvenation of traditional African storytelling, albeit in the written form, that allows for world-wide dissemination and allows for it to be kept alive, renewed and restored, whether the author acknowledges the colonial impact upon it or bypasses it completely. The contemporary authors have thus successfully invoked griotness in order to reclaim folkloric themes, tropes, and women's contributions to and colonial rewritings of African folklore. They have done so in ways that create awareness for contemporary issues, update it for present generation, preserve it for future generations, recognise women's contributions, and put right the wrongs of Victorian folktale curators and colonial administrators, which brings this thesis full circle.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have developed a narrative concerning Southern Nigerian folklore, and its curation, collection, dissemination, and reclamation. I began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the colonial mindset of the Langs as curators and the colonial actions of Dayrell as a collector, before moving forward in time to acknowledge the contemporary editors of Igbo folktales who have painstakingly attempted to preserve the essence of oral narratives in their written versions. From there, I examined the reclamation of African folklore in the selected work of contemporary writers of Nigerian origin: firstly, via Igbo cosmology and the ogbanje narrative in Emezi's *Freshwater*, then proceeding to explore how folktale forms and tropes are created, recreated, and rewritten in the work of Arimah, Ikokwu, Okorafor and Babalola. This thesis' cross-disciplinary approach gathers these individual threads across time and space in ways hitherto unexplored. By bringing together anthropological and historical perspectives with fairy tale and folklore studies, and engaging with postcolonial perspectives, I centre West African folktales as an integral part of literary history. In other words, the thesis connects the work of coloniser folklorists directly to contemporary works of fiction.

I set out to explore how Southern Nigerian folklore had been curated, collected, and disseminated, before investigating how it has been reclaimed in contemporary fiction. I found that the Langs' seemingly harmless fairy tale collections are not what they initially seem, despite being a 'foundational' template from which others have based their work, even in more contemporary times.[645] As well as being filled with overtly racist imagery, white

[645] See Carter, ed., *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales;* see Wells, Taylor, Mitchell, and Whitaker, eds., *African Myth and Tales.*

supremacist messages, and celebration of empire, the Langs' curation process set a precedent for 'cherry picking', rewriting, and inferring authorship of narratives from across the world. As such, Chapter One explored the Langs' curation process and subsequently the collection methods of Dayrell: despite not actively collecting folklore as Dayrell did, the lasting impact of the Langs' Coloured Fairy Books upon subsequent curation practice of fairy and folktales is widespread. One only has to conduct a web search for 'world folktales' to find dozens of recently published collections of dislocated tales – and it is the Langs who made this approach popular.[646] The Coloured Fairy Book Series was the first of its kind, born during the late Victorian era, which was in the midst of its penchant for collecting 'things', such as souvenirs, trinkets, stamps, and even stories.[647] However, collecting stories from around the world and inserting them into a series of collections resulted in the dislocation of the stories from their origins.[648] Furthermore, the Langs censored and rewrote the folktales that appear in their collections, often when they had already been translated and edited by another collector or curator. Alongside this, non-European folktales were placed beside those of European origin which openly promoted white supremacy and loyalty to empire, meaning they have been dislocated from their origins in more than one sense.

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[646] See Jane Yolen, ed., *Favourite Folktales from around the World* (London: Pantheon, 1988); see Joanna Cole, ed., *Best Loved Folktales of the World* (London: Random House Publishing, 1988); See Carter, *Angela Carter's Book of Fairy Tales;* see Rosie Dickins, Andy Prentice, Rob Lloyd Jones and Susanna Davidson, eds., *Forgotten Fairy Tales of Brave and Brilliant Girls* (London: Usborne Publishing, 2019); see Rachel Firth, Lan Cook, Andy Prentice, ed., *Tales of Brave and Brilliant Girls from Around the World* (London: Usborne Publishing, 2020); see Susanna Davidson, Mairi Mackinnon and Lan Cook, ed., *Tales of Brave and Brilliant Animals* (London: Usborne Publishing, 2023).

[647] Hines, pp.39-40.

[648] Hines, pp.39-40.

Dayrell, the focus of the latter part of Chapter One, also took stories belonging to various Nigerian peoples and placed them into a collection, and censored them where he thought necessary, dislocating them on multiple levels. Although Dayrell's first collection, *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*, appears to be *very* inspired by the Langs' Coloured Fairy Book structure (likely due to their shared publisher wanting to replicate the Langs' commercial success), Dayrell arguably had an imperfect but more mindful approach to folklore collection. Dayrell's mindset towards Nigerian peoples was much more progressive and accepting than Andrew Lang's, even if still problematic from a modern day perspective. Well-meaning or not, Dayrell's first collection offered no methodological context: storytellers and any translators hired were not credited, the exact origins of the tales are unclear, and there was no mention of Dayrell's approach to collection and editing methods. Dayrell's lack of voice, alongside Andrew Lang's very problematic introduction in *Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria*, leaves the impression that Dayrell aligned himself with Lang's bigoted mindset, which is not necessarily true. Dayrell's second collection offered more and gave Dayrell an opportunity to speak for himself through writing his own 'Preface', but it was still somewhat limited in terms of methodology. In his 'Preface' to *Ikom Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria,* Dayrell mentions the use of interpreters although they remain anonymous, he credits and names storytellers, and he admits to making omissions to and censoring the tales. The story's origins are also slightly more focused due to the concentration on the Ikom area but the peoples to whom the tales belong are not credited consistently. The methods of coloniser folklorists in general were not consistent, but it is in this inconsistency that we can see how their practice of collecting, producing, and circulating pieces of Nigerian culture reflected the wider colonial picture of Eurocentrism and resource exploitation. The Langs' and Dayrell's approaches provide us with the contextual background of how folklore and its associated tropes have come into literary existence, which

allows for connections to be made between their collections and the work of contemporary curators and writers who draw upon them.

Chapter Two explored the journey that Igbo folktales take when being transformed from oral to written forms for contemporary folktale collections. Ugochukwu and Ikokwu make efforts to keep the oral origins of the tales intact: Ugochukwu provides context concerning longstanding traditions and the Igbo folktale themes, form and genres, whilst Ikokwu incorporates song lyrics, scribed music, and an accompanying CD to allow full audience participation. Unlike Dayrell, who makes little to no effort to retain orality, both contemporary editors actively attempt to prevent any further erasure or displacement than naturally occurs when transforming oral narratives into the written form. Ugochukwu and Ikokwu avoid disseminating stories which are 'only a bare framework of words', which one could argue the Langs and Dayrell have done, and this serves to preserve, locate and even relocate the origins of and the folktales themselves.[649] Ugochukwu and Ikokwu's collections are significant updates to Igbo folktale history in that they offer an alternative to African tales collected, collated and disseminated by colonial administrators in the early 1900s and offer versions of Igbo narratives that more closely resemble traditional tales than those that have been altered and appropriated with the British public in mind. Thus, these contemporary collections are a more credible addition to written forms of Igbo, and more generally, African folklore, as they relocate Southern Nigerian folktales after they were dislocated in colonial collections.

For the last two chapters, I moved beyond folktale collections and offered examples of

[649] Finnegan, p.385.

present day literature that are influenced by Igbo cosmology, African folkloric themes and tropes, and Dayrell's first colonial collection directly. Beginning with the contemporary reclamation of Igbo cosmology, I have acknowledged how Igbo folktales are often seen as a world where people and spirits 'live cheek by jowl', which is particularly apparent in and relevant to Emezi's *Freshwater*, in which they explore what it means to be ogbanje in the modern day.[650] I found that Igbo cosmology makes up a large part of Igbo folklore, with older, precolonial folktales featuring gods and goddesses, and representing what the west would consider mythology or legends. In Igbo culture, there is not as much of a divide between Igbo folktales and legends as there is in European folklore. *Freshwater* is another example of how colonial interventions and globalisation have interfered with parts of Igbo culture. Emezi uses these impositions to show the effect they can have on a person's sense of identity and mental health, leaving them with no choice but to embrace and reclaim the Igbo way of life. Emezi focuses on the cosmological belief system via the ogbanje narrative, through which they explore liminal spaces and the friction that exists between the new and the old due to colonial interference. Emezi's reclamation centres liminal spaces and what it means to exist in the in-between spaces in the modern day. Emezi does this through creating a contemporary ogbanje narrative that confronts the internal conflict that emerges between the precolonial, Igbo way of life and the colonial in the form of Christianity, which will not allow Ada to simply be. It is Ada's acceptance of the old Igbo ways and rejection of colonial influences that allows her to find peace and live happily in her ogbanjeness, non-humanness and non-binariness. Like folktales, which have undergone changes due to colonial intervention, Igbo cosmology has undergone a similar journey, and Emezi explores this through the initial rejection of the old – the Igbo belief system – and the acceptance of the

[650] Emenanjo, p.xiv.

new – Christianity, introduced by colonialism, leading Ada needing to break down, reconstruct her identity by reclaiming the old, Igbo beliefs in order to heal her sense of self and mental health struggles. Ada must find equilibrium in terms of who she is as an embodied being, which means recentring her decentred self in line with the old Igbo roots, rather than the new, western ways of treating embodiment, more specifically hearing voices, as a mental health concern that needs treatment. By decentring the colonial narrative and recentring the contemporary Igbo experience within an autobiographical novel, I have argued that Emezi reclaims Igbo cosmology in the form of the ogbanje narrative, in a way that allows for both personal and cultural resurgence.

Rather than focusing on reclaiming cosmology, my final chapter explored how Okorafor, Ikokwu, Arimah and Babalola reclaim folkloric themes, tropes, and colonised folktales. I have found that they do so through invoking griotness, meaning they take oral traditions and renew and restore them, whilst exploring the past, present and future, celebrating how women contribute to and claim their space within contemporary narratives, and rewrite colonial wrongs. These contemporary writers are rejuvenating traditional African storytelling, though in the written form, in order to ensure its survival as the contemporary world threatens its extinction. Like Emezi, these authors have taken the old and the new and reworked them to make it fit the new generation. They have done so in ways that bring awareness to contemporary issues, preserve traditional storytelling traditions, credit and celebrate women for their contributions, and put right the wrongs of Victorian folktale curators and colonial administrators. Victorian curators and colonial administrators have censored, dislocated, and appropriated African folktales for a British audience, and the contemporary writers combat that by either acknowledging but not centring them or by bypassing the colonial intervention altogether. The contemporary authors are decentring the colonisation of African folktales and

celebrating traditional African storytelling in a way that suggests they are aware of the methods of coloniser folklorists and the need for decolonisation. Okorafor does this by mirroring the actions of coloniser folklorists through depicting Sunuteel rewriting the Phoenix's story and turning it into the Great Book in *The Book of Phoenix*, which Onyesonwu must put right by rewriting it again at the end of *Who Fears Death.* I have argued that Babalola is the real-world version of Onyesonwu, and her reimagining of 'Ituen and the King's Wife' is her way of acknowledging, confronting, and exposing the story's orthographic origins, whilst actively decolonising it and providing the story with a future where women are autonomous. As Babalola quite literally rewrites the colonial wrongs of a coloniser folklorist, her work returns this thesis to its starting position with the knowledge that this piece of work, thanks to the contemporary curators and authors, is also actively contributing to the decolonisation of West African folklore.

Following on from my thesis, it is my aim to produce a set of guidelines for publishers and editors of folklore collections. Inspired by the mistakes of Victorian curators and colonial collectors, and the commendable efforts of modern-day Igbo editors, this guide's main objective would be to situate the included folklore in order to limit or be upfront about any dislocation that has the potential to occur or has already occurred during the initial collection or curation process. The guides would encourage the exploration of any western or colonial intervention and urge editors to provide relevant contextual information and information concerning cultural traditions, as well as an overview of the chosen folklore's form, structure, themes and popular tropes. Including this information would help to situate the chosen folklore, prevent universalization, contribute towards decolonisation of the genre and showcase its cultural significance.

Folk and fairy tales in particular have been historically dismissed as a diminutive form of literature, if they have been considered literature at all, and those who created and told them considered 'savages'.[651] One of the most profound findings of this thesis is that folk and fairy tales should be read as literature and as a key part of literary studies and literary history rather than as a lesser form or solely as historical artifacts, which is how they have been popularly read and treated in and outside of academia. Folk and fairy tales are a significant form of literature and are one of – if not *the* earliest – forms of storytelling. They should be recognised for their contributions to literary history and their cultural importance, especially in terms of how oral literature has inspired and guided authors of written texts, which has been exemplified and explored in this thesis with the aim of celebrating Southern Nigerian folklore and the journey it has taken through the last three centuries.

[651] Lang, 'Introduction', p.vii.

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Appendix A: A Geographical Breakdown of each Coloured Fairy Book Collection

Fairy Book Collection	Origins of Stories
The Blue Fairy Book	Estonian, Greek, French, German, Norwegian, English, Scottish and Middle Eastern.[652]
The Red Fairy Book	French, Norwegian, German, Irish, English, Belgian, Russian, Romanian, and an adaptation of William Morris's version of 'Volsunga Saga'.[653]
The Green Fairy Book	France, German (including one by the Brothers Grimm and one literary fairy tale by Wilhelm Hauff, which is often mistaken for an Iraqi tale), Russian, Italian, Scottish, English, Chinese, and Romanian.[654]
The Yellow Fairy Book	Russian, German, French, Icelandic, Native American, Bukovinian, Estonian, Greek, Hungarian, Polish, Norwegian, and one from the Blue Mountains: New South

[652] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Blue Fairy Book,* p.vii.

[653] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Red Fairy Book,* locs.44-45

[654] For the German literary fairy tale included in *The Green Fairy Book,* see William Hauff, *Tales of the Caravan, Inn and Palace,* trans. by Edward L. Stowell (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg and Co., 1882); Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Green Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2005), Amazon Kindle e-book, pp.3-5 (p.3).

	Wales/Australian.[655]
The Pink Fairy Book	South African, Japanese, Greek, Danish (including one literary fairy tale by Hans Christian Anderson), German, Swedish, Russian, Slavic, Italian, Catalan (Spanish) and French.[656]
The Grey Fairy Book	Lithuanian, German, French, Greek, Libyan, Swedish, German (including one protonovel 'chapbook'), Italian, Portuguese, Belgian, South African, and Serbian.[657] Some stories are credited to the French Language collection *Les Cabinet des Fées*, which was made up of forty-one volumes published between 1785 and 1789, containing mostly French fairy tales, some literary fairy tales. All but the last four volumes also contained 'oriental tales'.[658]
The Violet Fairy Book	Estonian, Romanian, Serbian, Russian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Swahili (Kenyan), Ukrainian, Danish, Italian, German (including a literary fairy tale Wilhelm Hauff), Libyan,

[655] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Yellow Fairy Book*, locs.93-132.

[656] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Pink Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2004), Amazon Kindle e-book, pp.4-5 (pp.4-5).

[657] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Grey Fairy Book*, trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2004), Amazon Kindle e-book, p.4 (p.4).

[658] See Hensher, p.109; See Gevrey, p.42.

	Portuguese, French and Tunisian. [659]
The Crimson Fairy Book	Hungarian, Russian, Estonian, Italian, Finnish, Icelandic, Japanese, Mozambican, Danish, Egyptian and German (including one literary Fairy Tale by Wilhelm Hauff).[660]
The Brown Fairy Tale	Iranian, Native American, Indigenous Australian, French, Brazilian, Indian, Icelandic, South African, Finnish, Anatolian, Egyptian, Danish (including one literary fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen), Spanish, German (including a satirical retelling by Johann Karl August Musäus).[661]
The Orange Fairy Book	Zimbabwean, Pathan, Scottish, Basque, Danish, Swedish, Iranian, Moroccan; German, Slavic, Catalan, Native American, Celtic, Spanish, and French (including some literary fairy tales by Madame d'Aulnoy).[662]
The Olive Fairy Book	Turkish, Icelandic, French (including literary fairy tales by Anatole France and Count Anthony Hamilton), Indian, Sudanese, Danish (including one literary fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen) and Armenian.[663]

[659] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Violet Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 1996), Amazon Kindle e-book, pp.4-6 (pp.4-6).

[660] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Crimson Fairy Book*, pp.v-vi.

[661] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Brown Fairy Book,* locs.20-37.

[662] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Orange Fairy Book,* locs.71-104.

[663] Andrew Lang, 'Preface' in *The Olive Fairy Book,* trans. by Leonora Blanche Lang et al., ed. by Leonora

	Some stories are credited to the French Language collection *Les Cabinet des Fées*, which was made up of forty-one volumes published between 1785 and 1789, containing mostly French fairy tales, some literary fairy tales. All but the last four volumes also contained 'oriental tales'.[664]
The Lilac Fairy Book	Scottish, Portuguese, Indian, Swahili (Kenyan), English, Irish, Irish-Celtic, French, Finnish, Iranian, Indigenous Australian. and Welsh.[665]

Blanche Lang and Andrew Lang (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg, 2009), Amazon Kindle e-book, pp.9-13 (pp.9-12).

[664] See Hensher, p.109; See Gevrey, p.42.

[665] Lang, 'Preface' in *The Lilac Fairy Book,* pp.vi-vii.