

**THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION IN BEN OKRI'S *THE LANDSCAPES WITHIN*  
(1981)\***

Rosemary Gray  
University of Pretoria  
South Africa  
[prof.r.gray@gmail.com](mailto:prof.r.gray@gmail.com)

Abstract

This paper begins with an initial justification of the chosen title and argues for the idea of *The Landscapes Within* effectively becoming the eponymous hero of a tale, the trajectory of which is the inner workings of the mind of the artist-protagonist, Omovo. Then, drawing on Ben Okri's own sense of the incompleteness of this, his second novel, which he was later to rewrite as *Dangerous Love*, it invokes Milan Kundera's discussion of the significance of an 'unfinished' story in the sense of what has not been achieved. The critique of this novel focuses on the 'unachieved' in terms of its relation between Omovo's stolen and confiscated and unfinished paintings and Kundera's three new categories of art: the art of radical divestment, the art of novelistic counterpoint and the art of the specifically novelistic essay. It concludes by briefly justifying the paper's claim that, in this novel art, like philosophy, deals with inner reality, with 'the landscapes within'. 'Philosophy,' says Okri consciously articulating the artistic process, 'is most powerful when it revolves into story. But story is amplified in power by the presence of philosophy.'

**Key words:** creative imagination; Milan Kundera's *The Art of the Novel*; Ben Okri's *The Landscapes Within*; the 'unfinished' story

- This paper was made possible by incentive funding from the National Research Foundation, South Africa.

**Introduction**

The imagination is one of the highest gifts we have.  
Ben Okri, *A Way of Being Free* (1997)

*The Landscapes Within* (1981) can be read as an inquiry into the operation of the creative imagination. Ben Okri imagines ways in which to ameliorate multifaceted **losses** brought about by the bleak societal dysfunction in Nigeria, the country of his birth and, more importantly for my reading, the process of creativity. Citing the opening incident of the artist-protagonist's decision to shave his head, and soon thereafter standing in the rain savouring 'the flesh of his head tingl[ing]' (1981, 6), Alain Severac (1999, 76) notes that the 'scene

constitutes the liminary aesthetic statement' postulating 'a flayed sensitivity as a **prerequisite** of artistic creation'. In the context of Okri's claim in *A Way of Being Free* for the imagination as 'one of the highest gifts we have' (1997, 126, No.94) and the meaning of the Benin name Omovo – a (male) child from above,<sup>1</sup> the shaven head is a complex image: a signifier of loss, but also connoting a way of 'feeling the body from within' (Tolle, 2005, 78). The sensation allows the joy of Being to flow into everything; to embrace the power of now. It is akin to the meaning of "Waiting" in Christ's injunctions before the wedding feast to "Be like a servant waiting for the master", to keep one's "loins girded" and "lamp burning":<sup>2</sup> i.e., stay awake, alert, conscious, open for what Okri repeatedly refers to as 'The Moment' (206, 272, 286), This is metonymic for enlightenment or *satori*, a flash of insight.<sup>3</sup> The shaven head thus evokes 'the transcendence of the egoic mind and the possibility of living in an entirely new state of consciousness' (Tolle, 2005, 79), of re-dreaming reality.

In this novel, Okri claims to imagine 'two kinds of realities' (Wilkinson 1992, 80). On the one hand, there is the tale of life in the slums of Lagos and the socio-political situation in post-Civil War Nigeria. On the other, there is the tale of the young artist, Omovo, and the creative process in which he is intuitively involved. This paper focuses on the trajectory of the latter which is towards 'the moment' (272) when, in an epiphanic moment or *axis mundi*,<sup>4</sup> 'the landscapes **without** synchronise with the landscapes **within**' (206). The synchronicity effectively illustrates a specifically African perception of reality. Contrary to a reality which maintains 'clear ontological boundaries between what . . . is usually designated as observed and imagined experience, material and magical phenomena, and real and fictional worlds', **for Okri**, 'different and disparate worlds appear to coexist; there is an indeterminacy with regard to where literal reality ends and metaphor begins, a habitual elision of figurative and narrative space' (Wright, 1997, 140).

Notions of reality(ies) are explored and extended throughout the novel via the interplay between sharply etched reflection or daydreaming, and, an imaginative recreation in Omovo's mind and, thence, onto his canvass. This is not to suggest that the author set out deliberately to interrogate the creative process; rather that dreams create the kind of speculation that is most fruitful for artistic creation.

The pivotal trope (or figure of thought) is the interweaving of an ever shifting pattern of loss and revelation, experience and formulation, dream and reality. The novel is prefaced by two nightmarish dreams recorded in a real/fictive notebook; dreams which, in turn, become embedded in the text as a dreamtime echo of the novel's first climatic point at the end of Part One of this four part novel. The narrative incident as formulation of the dream is a night-time encounter with the mutilated body of a young girl child in a park bordering the beach by two lost youngsters, the lead character and his buddy, Keme, (not coincidentally, an artist and a journalist). The heightened sensibility of the telling, coupled with the epigraphic dreams, belie the possibility of this turning out to be a conventional Who Dunit! The body disappears; a brief newspaper article reports: 'it was probably a ritual killing'; while a policeman is quoted as saying 'that such murders were hard, almost impossible, to investigate' (1981, 67-68). The incident and its dream replay (begging the question of the chicken and the egg) leave an indelible 'stain' of 'guilt' (67) on the mind of twenty-year-old Omovo, exacerbated by his memory of having helplessly witnessed, at the age of nine, the wanton brutality of government forces against the Igbos during the Biafran war.

The initial dream is of an endless trek through a '*terribly* dark forest' (3 & 64; own emphasis), where trees became *coloured* mist then mutate into a vision of the faceless corpse. In the second interrelated nightmare, the artist is confronted by a huge, '*terribly* blank canvass' (*ibid.*; own emphasis). A kaleidoscopic milieu of '*coloured* mountains', 'turbulent

and calm seas' and 'primeval forests' form the backdrop for the appearance of the dead girl walking towards, but quite never reaching him, before he again wakes in shock with a sense of unutterable loss and 'a mad urge to capture' (*ibid.*) the elusive vision on canvass, a feat that he manages only towards the end of the novel – tellingly a painting, like the dream, 'without a face', entitled *Related Losses* (281), itself an echo of Omovo's painting of emaciated children playing around a truncated tree (5), that is stolen.

These dreams at once dictate the narrative thrust and tone of Okri's second novel becoming, in turn, simulacra for the mercurial nature of the creative process (of both painting and writing) reminiscent of Ted Hughes's poem, 'The Thought Fox'.<sup>5</sup> Okri's imaginative rendering of the workings of the subconscious mind penetrates deeply into the narrative thread of *The Landscape Within*, defining its section themes of Loss, Mazes, Masks and Fragments, and culminating in the focal character's brief insight into the meaning of 'The Moment' (286).<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, the novel offers an imaginary resolution to socio-political and personal conflicts: 'It's about **surviving**,' Omovo realizes, 'but it's more about becoming a life artist' (*ibid.*).

Coincidentally, when asked about the meaning of a particular tale likewise involving a dream that haunted him,<sup>7</sup> Milan Kundera ([1986] 1988, 132) expatiates on how to read an oneiric narrative, saying: '... the meaning did not precede the dream; the dream preceded the meaning. So, the way to read the tale is to let the imagination carry one along. Not, above all a rebus to be decoded.'

Okri attributes the oneiric records in *The Landscapes Within* to 'painter boy' (4, 35 & 197), Omovo, in Part Two of this novel. The dreams of the mutilated body 'haunt the novel and [are] returned to again and again' (Maya-Pearce 1992, 92). This recurrence is integral to the author's interlacetine<sup>8</sup> strategy, coupled as it is with Omovo's contemplation on and

recording/rereading of the dreams in a notebook. The dream invokes a fever-pitched urge to paint the mutilated girl, to exorcise the sense of helplessness, to erase both stain and war memory (noted earlier). And then, there is an internal reflection on a drawing Omovo had done at seven of ‘a series of squiggly lines that went round and round and formed different shapes’, which his teacher and his father had eulogised as capturing ‘life’ (95 & 96), but which he was never again able to emulate. The intrusive authorial voice explains why: ‘The boy somehow understood that he had done it once but could not do it again till he really knew how’ (96). ‘What he succeeds in finding out is only at the threshold of all that remains and calls him to discover’ (Adonis 1992, 62). I. A. Richards prefaces *Plato’s Republic* with a useful interpretation of the hermeneutic cycle, explaining that the Letter **A** signifies Being; an Idea; a Form, whereas instances of this letter – *á*, *a*, *a* – belong to the world of Becoming (1966, 6). His insight into lines, circles, triangles, such as those in the child’s painting, pertains:

The lines of geometry belong to the world of Being; those the geometer may draw to the world of Becoming. He uses them to help him to *think* about Forms—in the world of Being. Forms themselves are not able to be seen or drawn, but they can be thought of. (7; own emphasis)

Omovo is beginning to grasp the aphorism: “I know that I do not know.” So, far from developing into a *Bildungsroman*, the novel remains – and this is, paradoxically, its brilliance – an unfinished *Kunstlerroman*, climaxing in the young geometer/artist’s recognition of the elusive evanescence of knowingness: ‘I’m still learning,’ (286) Omovo explains to Keme before reading him Okur’s poem in which ‘Searching for bright pebbles/ and strange corals’ (*ibid.*) on the seashore as a small child, Omovo’s brother writes that the poetic persona sometimes saw them ‘hidden and clear’, but found ‘other things too/ like half-defaced sketches on the sand/ pointing a way through the tormented seas’ (*ibid.*). Here, the ‘half-defaced sketches’ encapsulate the illusory fleetingness of artistic insight: ‘The world of

Becoming is indescribable—except through Forms (Ideas) of the world of Being’ (Richards 1966, 7).

Earlier in the novel, Omovo shares a comparable moment of illumination/intuition with the young Ayo, son of the chief in the village near to the city of Lagos where Omovo has sought respite after triple losses: an evanescent vision of his beloved dead mother; losing his job, then his lover, Ifeyinwa, who has been shot in the forest near her home as a casualty of internecine strife. ‘I had an unconscious glimpse into [the imagination’s] profound and magical, solid and undefinable beauty; its strange and soundless music; its vanishing and unearthly lights’ (270). Attempting to recapture the ‘quintessential’ and ‘beatific’ vision, Omovo laments that he felt ‘desperate and empty . . . seeking for so much as another glimpse through the tiniest crack of that door’ (*ibid.*).<sup>9</sup>

The catalytic dreams/nightmares, and their incorporation into the narrative, are thus methodological, defining not only ways of seeing in this novel, but also ways of being. In *The Landscapes Within*, Omovo’s painting parallels his dreams as ‘a means to explore the deeper, more unconscious meanings and miasma of his life and the landscapes about him’ (85). His painting and, by extension, his dreams are ‘a part of his response to life: a personal prism’ (*ibid.*).

The landscapes within thus become axiomatic to both the narrative point of view and the novel’s symbolism, effectively supplanting Omovo as lead character, and making Omovo’s creative imagination, his heightened consciousness, the eponymous hero of this early novel. Omovo is essentially an awareness, a mode of perception: a presence rather than an agent; his brief ‘moments’ of insight evoke the Zen moment of no-mind and total presence, incomprehensible to the intellect. Both Okri’s title and the narrative itself tacitly refer to the ‘landscapes of the mind’ (18).

On his work shed door, Omovo's mentor, Dr Okocha, had painted an all seeing eye: 'a brooding green eye, with a black pupil and a gathering red teardrop' which 'stared all-seeingly at the teeming streets and back into its own darkness.' (35) This painting features on the cover of *The Landscapes Within* and seems to be an analogue for a public prism,<sup>10</sup> inviting the reader to peep into the culture as an honorary, but transient, insider. On a deeper level, the eye is a simulacrum for the mind's eye:

[T]he natural power to learn lives in the soul and is like an eye which might not be turned from the dark without a turning around of the whole body. The instrument of knowledge has to be turned round, and with it the whole soul, from the things of becoming to the things of being, till the soul is able, by degrees, to support the light of true being and can look at the brightest. (Socrates [518, 126 below] in Richards, 5)

The creative process is, for Okri, 'the inward visionary quest of the dreaming "soul" or creative imagination' that, he has maintained, 'opens towards infinity' (Wilkinson, 1992, 83). After completing his second painting and before it is confiscated by the authorities as unpatriotic (as 'caricaturing the nation's progress' [139]), Omovo intuitively 'that the future was contained somewhere in his mind' (139). Mystified by the furore that the picture engenders, Omovo states: 'I simply painted a scumscape as I saw it' (*ibid.*; own emphasis).

This metafictional text concerns itself with 'the imaginative realm, as opposed to the landscapes without, i.e. the physical world' (Tunca 2004, 96). Even the story within the story, an illicit love affair borne of innocence, is imbued with heightened consciousness. The brief union with Mr Takpo's young wife, Ifeyinwa, with whom Omovo shares a love of reading and art, is one of complementary spirits and yearnings. 'He became for her something of a spiritual husband, one that she only confronted fully in her dreams and fantasies' (103). Likewise a dreamer, Ife voices her grievance about her arranged marriage to an old and brutal man with 'You have your art. I don't have anything' (25), thus forging a link between the two narrative threads and the third person authorial voice.

‘The novelist,’ asserts Kundera pertinently in *The Art of the Novel* ‘makes no issue of his ideas’ ([1986] 1988:144):

He is an explorer feeling his way in an effort to reveal some unknown aspect of existence. He is fascinated not by his voice but by the form he is seeking, and only those forms that meet the demands of his dream become part of his work.

‘The writer,’ Kundera stresses, ‘inscribes himself on the spiritual map of his time, of his country, on the map of the history of ideas’ (*ibid.*)

### **An incomplete novel**

In his Author’s Note (1996, 325) to his rewritten version of the novel, Okri articulates his dissatisfaction with this novel: it ‘has continued to haunt and trouble me through the years, because in its spirit and essence I sensed that it was incomplete ...’ Not without irony, highlighting a link between the past and the present constantly found in Omovo’s visions, Okri has Omovo articulate the impossibility of completion in a brief reflection on slavery:

The seized sense of an unfinishable and terrifying portrait of humanity. Quintessential helplessness. Engrams of fulility . . . The ugly web of manipulated history; before and after; clarity and chaos; . . . The moment. A lie, an unreality, a deception multiplied by education; a charade called independence, a history internalized, a point of light forever vanishing. (272)

But Milan Kundera ([1986] 1988, 71) asserts, ‘all great works (precisely because they are great) contain something unachieved’.

This paper now explores the ‘unachieved’ in Okri’s early work in terms of what it reveals about the need for three new artistic skills identified by Kundera that, paradoxically, highlight the brilliance of the creative imagination at work in *The Landscapes Within*, and illustrate what Kundera finds inspirational about such works.



The first of these is ‘a new art of *radical divestment* (which can encompass the complexity of existence in the modern world without losing architectonic clarity)’ (Kundera 1988, 71).

‘Encompassing the complexity of existence . . . ,’ says Kundera, ‘demands the technique of ellipsis, of condensation’ (*ibid.*). As already intimated, the title of Okri’s novel is a poetic compression not of Western rationality, but of an African *Weltanschauung*. As Simon Schama (1995, 61) notes: ‘landscapes [for the African] are culture before they are nature’; they are ‘constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock’ and, by extension, paper – the art of ellipsis. For a writer such as Okri, existence in the modern world can best be understood through his literary representations of imaginary landscapes.

Other examples of the crucial art of ellipsis are what Kundera calls going ‘directly to the heart of things, harsh juxtapositions instead of transitions, and repetition instead of variation’ (72). The narrative begins *in medias res* with Omovo’s shaven head (already discussed). The central motif of the prefatory dreams is immediately juxtaposed with the opening gambit: ‘Omovo was just emerging from a long, dry season’ (1981, 4). That the focal presence is a dreamer, a pensive artist, is underscored by: he had ‘just finished the drawing’; by his being called ‘painter boy’; and then by the recurrent scum motif later externalized in his scumscape painting that he calls *Drift* (discussed earlier).

Countering Okri’s concern over the ‘incompleteness’ of this early novel, I argue that the addition of some thirty pages in *Dangerous Love* clouds the architectonic clarity of *The Landscapes Within* as does, for instance, the replacement of the subtly cryptic: ‘Manic silence. Voicelessness’ (289) after Omovo has recited Okur’s poem to Keme, with ‘Keme said he liked it’ (1996, 322) in the rewritten form. Omovo’s caricature of one of his work colleagues as the realization of his imminent dismissal dawns upon him underlines my point.

‘Drawing made him reminisce; it could be so lonely. In his mind rose the fleeting, blurred images of some of the things he had drawn and painted passionately in the past. He tried not to think about the things Joe had said and implied’ (199), becomes in the revision: ‘Drawing made him think. He thought about Joe, about his lost drawing, his seized painting, about Ifeyi[n]wa.’ (1996, 196) The original reminiscence leads to a stream of conscious recollection of ‘The Lost Horizon’ and its elusive catchy theme tune; the revision reads: ‘The cold office made him think of a second rate film.’ (*ibid.*) The later publication diverges from the more suggestive *The Landscapes Within* by repudiating the poetic imperative, filling the Iserian gaps, in favour of the automatism of novelistic formulae (i.e., following novelistic conventions of ‘present a character, describe a milieu, bring action into a historical situation, fill time in the characters’ lives with superfluous episodes’) (Kundera 1988, 73).<sup>11</sup>

Kundera’s second new art is that of ‘*novelistic counterpoint* (which can blend philosophy, narrative and dream into one music)’ (Kundera 1988, 71). *The Landscapes Within* epitomizes the polyphonic mode,<sup>12</sup> blending as it does dream/narrative/poetry and instinct/intuition/vision. An analysis of any excerpt reveals comparable counterpointing. Consider, for example, the artistic braiding when Omovo tries to explain what he has learnt about the idea of the Moment to his journalist friend. First, there is repartee as Keme presses Omovo to divulge what he has said about the Moment; then, a vision and finally a revelation which coalesce in ‘I thought I sensed a brilliant shadow of a god. I think I saw, instead, one of those rare faces horribly mirrored in us . . . But I’m learning something also though’ (286) leading to the bit about surviving and becoming a life artist, already quoted. The telling ends in Okur’s poem and the author’s pregnant interjection: ‘Manic silence. Voicelessness’ (quoted earlier). All facets are bound by a common theme: ways of seeing and ways of being. Moreover, here, the narrative sequence blends the four voices in an imaginative narrative quartet, no one voice dominating the novelistic harmony, for all four voices have been central

to the narrative throughout. Omovo confides in Keme, ‘the only other character in the novel who manages to keep faith and survive’ (Maya-Pearce 1992, 95). Omovo’s discussion with Ayo, referred to earlier, lends itself to the same kind of analysis of the counterpointed workings of the creative imagination.

The third new art that the unachieved novel calls for is ‘*the specifically novelistic essay* (which does claim to bear an apodictic [clearly demonstrated] message but remains hypothetical, playful or ironic)’ (Kundera 1988, 71). The prevailing question in this novel is couched in a novelistic essay on loss. The essay on loss incorporates a litany of losses:<sup>14</sup> including getting lost, loss of lives; wives; paintings; identity (the mutilated girl and Ife become faceless non-entities), fortunes; and loss of face; culminating in the piece of coral without its heart, which Omovo throws back into the sea at the close of the novel. The usage is, however, as much playfully connotative as it is denotative. The word ‘loss’ is woven into a complex tapestry of symbols and signs. This extracts its significance from its rational context and places it in a context accessible only through the interpretative imagination. Submerged by the indefinable, the metaphor of loss conceals more than it transmits, thus counterpointing the exploration of the other key abstract concepts: creativity, corruption, integrity and responsibility.<sup>15</sup> Maya-Pearce, by contrast, argues that it is a novel about corruption, the mutilated body being ‘the dominant symbol of the depths to which society has plunged’ (1992, 92).<sup>13</sup> However, the narrative is shot through with reflections on loss: the loss of a young girl’s life in the epigraphic dreams, reiterated at the end of Part One, culminates with Omovo’s painting of the dead girl without facial features.

The narrative strategy of reflection, coupled with a sometimes dialectic interrogation of ideas, permeates the novel. But, as Kundera points out ‘within the universe of the novel, reflection is essentially inquiring, hypothetical, while philosophy, far from being depicted as a coherent

philosophy of life within the cosmos or a blueprint for living remains an intellectual exercise, a paradoxical game, an improvisation' (1988, 78). Okri's novels are never 'a calculus of means and ends' (Taylor 1993, 319).

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, this novel deals with ways of seeing, ways of being; with subjects that can be thought about but cannot be known; with the fluidity of 'the landscapes within'. 'Creativity,' states Okri in *A Way of Being Free* (1997, 125) 'is a secular infinity'. His sense of the incompleteness is thus inevitable. The artist/novelist here, perhaps inadvertently, reveals the *inside* of life, not the *outside*. In this respect, to quote George Rowley (1947:3):

... the artist is akin to the mystic, but one who seeks "life more abundant" and the other becomes a creator. This creation is the product of the imaginative "wedding of spirit and matter" ...

The argument of this paper is that the novel is predicated on the autonomy of art and the autonomy of the real. To question the distinction between art and African reality is to ask a philosophical question. 'Philosophy,' says Okri (1997, 125), 'is most powerful when it revolves into story. But story is amplified in power by the presence of philosophy'.

Kundera elucidates on the mode of a novel such as this, on the significance of the oneiric narrative, saying: 'Imagination, freed from the control of reason and from concern for verisimilitude, ventures into landscapes inaccessible to rational thought.' (1988, 78) So, parcing Okri's reservations, *The Landscapes Within* is a compelling meditation on existence – ways of seeing and ways of being – through the medium of imaginary internal and external landscapes, seamlessly connecting consciousness and unconsciousness (cf. Smith 2000:4). As Wright (1997, 159 & 160) observes about Okri's writing:

There is . . . an inward movement away from protest and polemic and towards interior psychic healing; there is also a visionary introjection of the world into the artistic consciousness that places a tremendous emphasis on the redemptive energies of dream, myth and the imagination . . . For Okri, redemptive energy is finally not a political but a purely visionary, imaginative quality.

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## Notes

1 The *abiku* or spirit child exists liminally ‘somewhere in the interspace between the spirit world and the Living,’ says Okri (Ross 1993, 337-338); ‘lived simultaneously at different levels of consciousness and in different territories’ (Okri in Wilkinson, 1992: 83).

2 Eckhart Tolle cites the parable of the five careless women who do not have enough oil to keep their lamps burning in illustration. For careless, read unconscious; keeping their lamps burning is staying present; they miss the bridegroom (the Now or Okri’s Moment) and so too the wedding feast (enlightenment). *The Power of Now* (2005, 79).

3 Tolle (2005, 79) states: ‘Zen masters use the word *satori* to describe a flash of insight, a moment of no-mind and total presence . . . Presence is needed to become aware of the beauty, the majesty, the sacredness of nature.’

4 See Rosemary Gray. 2007. When Chaos Is the God of an Era: Rediscovering an *Axis Mundi* in Ben Okri’s *Starbook*. *Research in African Literatures* 44(1): 128-145.

5 I imagine this midnight moment's forest/  
Something else is alive/  
Beside the clock's loneliness/  
And this blank page where my fingers move. //Through the window I see no star/  
Something more near/  
Though deeper within darkness/  
Is entering the loneliness: //Cold,  
delicately as the dark snow/  
A fox's nose touches twig, leaf;/  
Two eyes serve a movement,  
that now/  
And again now, and now, and now //Sets neat prints into the snow/  
Between trees,  
and warily a lame/  
Shadow lags by stump and in hollow/  
Of a body that is bold to come  
//Across clearings, an eye,/A widening deepening greenness,/ Brilliantly, concentratedly,  
Coming about its own business //Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox/ It enters the dark hole of the head./  
The window is starless still; the clock ticks,/ The page is printed.

6 Elsewhere, Okri calls this ‘an Akashic Still Point’. See Rosemary Gray. 2009. Apologia pro Ben Okri’s *In Arcadia: A neglected masterpiece?* *English Academy Review* 26 (1): 41-52 (May).

7. The tale of Tamina on ‘the children’s island’.

8 The principal technique in the Anglo-Saxon epic, *Beowulf* is interlacertine. But despite the quest like quality of Okri’s narratives, his focal characters lack the epic stature of mythic or folktale heroes, ‘because there can be no heroes and no progress in the context of mass deprivation and total victimization’ that is “the anomic postcolonial world” Okri depicts’ (Wright 1997, 152).

9 ‘Nothing is wanted but the eye, which is the light of this house, the light which is the eye of the soul. This *seeing* light, this *enlightening* eye, is Reflection. It is more . . . it is what a *Christian* ought to mean by it and to know, too, whence it came . . . of what light even this light is but a reflection. This too, is THOUGHT, and all thought is but unthinking that does not flow out of this, or tend towards it.’ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*. Aphorism IX, p. 70.

10 Omovo’s painting and, by extension, his dreams we are told ‘was part of his personal prism’ (1981, 85). Significantly, the phrase is altered in the ‘re-writing and expansion (Jowitt 1996, 62) to ‘a personal and public prism’ (Okri 1996, 69).

11 In another example of Kundera's notion of the art of radical divestment so as to avoid losing the shape, the structural clarity evident in the original four, named Parts of the novel [Losses, Mazes, Masks and Fragments] -- rifts which enable the reader to step outside the novelistic framework -- is reworked into a somewhat less effective division into five, untitled Books.

12 'Polyphony in music is the simultaneous presentation of two or more voices (melodic lines that are perfectly bound together but still keep their relative independence)' (Kundera 1988, 73-74).

13 Maya-Pearce (1992, 92) argues that corruption is a basic feature of this novel: 'In . . . *The Landscapes Within* (1981), the central motif is the mutilated body of a girl in the park in Lagos which the hero, Omovo, and a friend accidentally stumble upon . . . This image haunts the novel and is returned to again and again. It is the dominant symbol of the depths to which society has plunged, and the central unifying device in the novel itself.'

14 In addition to multiple losses of life (the girl; Omovo's mother; Ife's brother drowns; she is shot, Keme's sister goes missing; Omovo's stepmother loses an unborn child; his dad kills Tuwo for cuckolding him) Okri includes loss of fathers (Ayo's and Omovo's imprisoned father loses himself, becoming 'a shrivelled presence' [282]); of jobs, fortunes, dignity, sanity, innocence, art works, and of country (Dele escapes to America, to freedom, but ironically, he runs, because he has impregnated his Nigerian girlfriend, and paradoxically, because he cannot wait to experience sex with a white woman!)

15 A major theme in the novel, which becomes more apparent in its rewriting as *Dangerous Love* (1996), is the artist's 'responsibilities' (278),

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Adonis (see Said)

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