



**African Folklore, Traditional Religion, and Decoloniality: A
Critical Reading of Nnedi Okorafor's *Zahrah the Windseeker*
and *Lagoon***

Ananya Buragohain* and Lakshminath Kagyung**

Abstract

This paper situates African traditional religious practices, folklore, and decolonial traits in Nnedi Okorafor's *Zahrah the Windseeker* (2005) and *Lagoon* (2016) to examine how her writings serve as a medium to recover the indigenous knowledge system of the Africans while subverting dominant Eurocentric ideologies still operating against Black community. This paper sheds light on the contributions made by topical African writings in reviving the African archive of traditional beliefs, folklore, and culture. This paper contends that Okorafor's narratives have transcended the theoretical paradigms of resistive postcolonial representational praxis and binary epistemic related to Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism to explore new horizons associated with Black people's livelihood, future, nation-building, and identity. The selected texts are analysed by establishing points of convergence between the Postcolonial lens and decolonial theory.

Keywords: African Traditional Religion, Decoloniality, Eurocentrism, Folklore, Racism

Introduction

Through an overview of the content in academia and popular entertainment, it can be deciphered that Africa, African perspective, and African traditional religion have been stigmatised by the West

* PhD Scholar, Department of English, Dibrugarh University, Assam, India

** Assistant Professor, Department of English, Dibrugarh University, Assam, India

since the era of colonisation of Africa by European countries in the 19th century. This has promoted a problematised representation of African traditional beliefs, native African folklore, and Black communities' physiological traits on the global trajectory. Therefore, contemporary Black writers and critics, such as Nnedi Okorafor, Rivers Solomon, Toyin Falola, and Zeinab Badawi, have initiated the process of decolonisation in their works which not only subverts dominant Eurocentric epistemologies operating against Blacks but also asserts the cultural identity of the Black race by introducing the world to the age-old archive of African history, heritage, and culture.

Okorafor's *Zahrah the Windseeker* and *Lagoon*, in addition to participating in the resistive postcolonial representational praxis, authentically depict indigenous African customs and folklore, thereby, guaranteeing the reclamation of the voice of the marginalised section of the black race. The plotlines of these texts introduce the readers to traditional African beliefs and practices such as prayers to natural entities, veneration of native legends, and invocation of deities which reflect the cultural ambits of a section of Africans still adhering to African traditional religion (hereafter, ATR).

Okorafor's narratives illustrate the positive implications of introducing the young generations of Africa to their native repository of mythologies, oral traditions, and folktales because these become a reference for self-expression of Blacks. On a similar note, Peter Wuteh Vakunta in his book *Toward the Decolonization of the Europhone African Novel* (2023) remarks that: "Oral tradition cannot be dissociated from the written in the context of contemporary fiction writings in Africa because the majority of Africans who write are steeped in their indigenous cultures and tend to make use of oral motifs and images in literary creativity" (25). Thus, apart from engaging with the paradigm of binary epistemology of Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism, Okorafor's narratives authentically represent the current socio-political and cultural scenarios of African societies because it is imperative to focus on these dimensions while channelising revival of their native culture and heritage. Her narrative technique and captivating content suggest that contemporary African literature transcends the realm of resistive postcolonial

representational praxis and endeavour to explore the social, political, and religious aspects associated with growth and development of the continent.

Okorafor's *Zahrah the Windseeker*, an African fantasy novel, depicts the everyday encounters of an African girl Zahrah who has been blessed with the superpower to fly. Her native African bodily traits, such as dreadlocks and dark skin, often harbor racist remarks from others. The narrative follows Zahrah and her friend Dari's adventures in the Dark Market/forbidden market of their community. The readers, following their adventures in the Dark Market, come across a grim yet fascinating world of war snakes, gorillas, and demons. The plotline seamlessly blends elements from African folklore, indigenous medicinal practices, and ATR with a tradition of fantasy which helps reclaim a dignified space for the African heritage on the global dais and assist them in reconnecting with their native knowledge system.

Meanwhile, Okorafor's *Lagoon*, a science fiction (hereafter, sci-fi), illustrates how the three main characters of the novel—Adaora, Agu, and Anthony, who possess different superpowers like supersonic voice and strong muscle power, try to save the people of Nigeria during an unexpected encounter between humans and aliens in the region. This text has effectively represented the regressive impacts of the European belief system on the adherents of ATR. The narrative impeccably blends native African folktales with scientific interventions and political activities in Nigeria to portray the livelihood of people in Lagos in a realistic manner. *Lagoon* revived the essence of native African folktales and authentically represented Africa's pre-colonial history, traditions, and cultures to the global audience. The plotline depicts interesting episodes around African legends and deities such as Anansi- the trickster spider, Mami Wata- the water goddess, and Ijele- the grand African masquerade.

African Folklore and African Traditional Religion

Literary productions and popular entertainment representing African folklore and African traditional religion have been promoting solidarity and nation-building among Africans in the homeland and

in the diaspora. This channelises Black solidarity and consciousness on the global trajectory which are intrinsic aspects of Black livelihood. The knowledge system of a particular community/race is often designed to support the indigenous beliefs of the people belonging to that community/race which suggests the necessity to reconnect the younger generations of Africa to their indigenous knowledge system and native repository of folktales. This advocates the necessity to modulate the ongoing narrative techniques and content of African writings which are more susceptible towards resistive postcolonial representational praxis rather than authentically representing the social, political, and cultural aspects of postcolonial African societies. Joel A Adedeji remarks that folkloric literature often displays a variation in content, style, and format because the mediator handling it often re-creates it with skill and sophistication which leads to change (7). Meanwhile, a similar kind of modulation in narrative technique and content can be seen in Okorafor's texts, where native African mythologies and age-old traditions are finely blended with elements drawn from science, technology, and socio-political experiences of Blacks to portray an authentic image of the livelihood of people in contemporary African societies. Thus, Okorafor's works are worthy of an in-depth analysis because her narratives surpassed the paradigms of binary episteme and resistive postcolonial representational praxis, often followed by Black writers, to encourage her Black brethren overcome the trauma of colonisation and visualise a sustainable and technologically advanced future for themselves.

On the other hand, ATR fosters native African myths, legends, and traditions which are custodians of the adherents of ATR. Prominent critics Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* (2004) remark that: "The contemporary art, philosophy, and literature produced by post-colonial societies are in no sense continuations or simple adaptations of European models" (220). This suggests why recently emerging postcolonial literature from Africa is a product of the process of decolonisation which reclaim the cultural identity of the Africans and interrogate ongoing regressive socio-political tensions in African societies apart from subverting dominant Eurocentric norms. Accordingly, the recently emerging genre of African speculative fiction, which include sci-fi

and fantasies, combines elements from science and technology with native African myths, legends, and fantasies to emphasise how contemporary livelihood of the Africans is different from their earlier ways of living. Apart from channelling Afrocentrism, these narratives highlight the importance of valuing Black solidarity to design a sustainable and technologically advanced future for the Africans.

Jane Bryce contends that speculative fiction has its roots in the African way of storytelling that is associated with myth, orality, and indigenous belief systems (1). From a similar perspective, it can be argued that the selected narratives of Okorafor have been designed by following the African way of storytelling which relies on native African myths to reconnect the young generations of Africa to their indigenous belief system. Okorafor's *Zahrah the Windseeker* adapts the native African myth of Mami Wata, a water deity, who is still venerated by the followers of ATR in Africa. In one of the scenes, Dari and Zahrah talk about Mami Wata describing her as a powerful water deity, "Dari obsessed with Mami Wata Mambos women who honored a powerful water deity" (Okorafor 253). As per the records in the anthology *Africa: The Definitive Visual History of a Continent* (2024), Mami Wata is "a water spirit who is feared and venerated in West, Central, and Southern Africa. The spirit represents wealth and success" (Asaaju et al. 156). During the pre-colonial era in Africa, Mami Wata was highly venerated by the native Africans; however, with the advent of missionary expeditions such myths were declared insignificant and the followers of ATR were persuaded to follow Christianity. Okorafor's adroit way of reiterating the myth of Mami Wata through a fantasy fiction reflects her expertise as a conscious Black writer who recognises the importance of introducing the Black readers to the native African repository of oral traditions and myths. Her narratives subtly deliver the message that it is high time for the Blacks to reconnect with their native roots and reclaim the cultural identity which has been negotiated since the era of colonisation of Africa by the Europeans.

Moreover, European colonisation and Arab invasion adversely affected the African traditional belief system and led to the promotion of Abrahamic religion, Christianity and Islam, among the Africans.

This wreaked havoc on the ATR practitioners and disrupted the native storehouse of African myths and legends. Zeinab Badawi in the documentary video “Ancestors, Spirits, and God- History of Africa with Zeinab Badawi [Episode 8]”, uploaded by BBC News Africa, mentions that at present, out of the 1 billion population of Africa, only 15% of the total population are adherents of ATR while the rest are Muslims and Christians. Nigerian historian, Falola, in his book *Decolonizing African Studies: Knowledge Production, Agency, and Voice* (2022) also opines that “African traditional religion (ATR) has suffered from the impact of colonisation into the twenty-first century. The coming of European culture and Christian religion impeded the growth of ATR” (22). This validates how European missionary expeditions and Arab invasion shattered the ground that has been fostering African traditional religion, culture, and folklore. European colonisation of Africa not only destabilised the economy of the continent but entirely demolished the indigenous knowledge system, native epistemology, and religious beliefs of the Africans eventually problematising their cultural identity on the global platform. This also led to proselytisation and conversion of indigenous Africans to Christianity. *Lagoon* depicts how the African traditional knowledge system was completely destroyed by the European belief system that was once forced upon the Black Africans during colonisation. Missionaries indoctrinated the Blacks to follow the European belief system which was later on passed down to the next generations. This aided in the gradual evolution of the European belief system on the African continent. However, it became a major threat to ATR and black solidarity because it created a breach among the Blacks and divided them on the ground of their religious affiliations.

This ongoing deliberation between the ethics of Christianity and ATR can be seen through the character of Father Oke in *Lagoon* who is a devout Christian but also a fanatic who has failed to anticipate the real ethics of the Christian religion that intrinsically preaches compassion for others. He misuses his position as a bishop and creates his own set of racist and sexist parameters to criticise his Black brethren. He punishes the followers of the Church if they do not align with his conventional religious ideologies. He often manipulates Chris, Adaora’s husband, to abuse her and suggests him

to restrain Adaora from living an independent life. Interestingly, to end Father Oke's growing viciousness against the people of Lagos, *Lagoon* breathes life into the native African myth of Mami Wata. Mami Wata, in the form of a charismatic woman, visits Father Oke and hypnotises him to follow her to the Lagos seabeach which brings an abrupt end to Father Oke's regressive propaganda against the people of Lagos. Moreover, the deity persuades him to contemplate his actions against his own people. This forces him to self-confess and ask for forgiveness. He repents that during one of the sessions in the Church, he had abused a poor peasant woman only because his patriarchal mindset convinced him to do so: "Why had he slapped that woman so hard yesterday morning? Why had he slapped her at all?" (Okorafor 235). The arrival of Mami Wata, in the human world, to protect the people of Lagos from fanatic Father Oke suggests the grandeur of a native African deity over racist Eurocentric insolence still operating against the Blacks. This episode of *Lagoon* illustrates the necessity to subjugate such fanatics who explicitly promote racism and sexism against Black people.

Lagoon has also adapted and incorporated the myth of the grand masquerade Ijele who is a revered spirit of the Nigerians. The narrative of *Lagoon* is set during a period of crisis in Lagos, Nigeria following an alien encounter in the place. The crisis took a gruesome turn which gave rise to political duplicities, corruption, and violence. The intensity of chaos, political instability, and circulation of rumours went to such a great extent that life of common people was at risk. To settle the ongoing mayhem and violence in Lagos, Ijele, a native deity of the Nigerians, came to life and calmed down the situation. Ijele, in the form of an apparition, entered the computer screens of an internet cafe and crashed the files/documents circulating fake propaganda about the human-alien encounter. The deletion of those files/documents curtailed the intensity of violence and halted the growing atrocity among the people. Thus, the grand masquerade Ijele protects the people of Lagos from a probable crusade which otherwise might have claimed a lot of lives. Thus, Okorafor has adapted the myth of a native deity of the Nigerians to illustrate how a section of African people still choose to follow their indigenous belief system and seek protection from their native deities

rather than adhering to the religious ideologies preached by the colonial masters.

This also suggests that Okorafor imbibes a new narrative mechanism which has enabled her to use the genre of speculative fiction to explore and introduce the world to the untold pre-colonial history of Africa because the West has been modulating the history and heritage of Africa as per their concern. From a similar perspective, Patrick Chabal remarks that, “It has always been true that the West’s vision of Africa has been the product of its own imagination rather than that of a serious interest in what actually happens on the continent” (36). Thus, Okorafor opts for a decolonial framework in conjunction with the postcolonial lens to authentically represent the socio-political and cultural scenario of Africa apart from engaging with the resistive praxis of countering the West. This gives a new perspective to her works. Therefore, it is a thoughtful move by Okorafor, as a Black writer, to adapt elements from the native African archive of oral traditions and mythologies in order to portray the livelihood of the Africans in relation to the social, political, religious, and cultural dimensions of the continent.

Furthermore, Okorafor has characterised a spider as the narrator of *Lagoon*. This again directs us to West African legends where Anansi, the trickster spider, is considered to be an intelligent spirit and master of cunningness. In one of the scenes, in *Lagoon*, it has been mentioned that the narrator of the story is Udide Okwanka who is a spider, “I am the spider. I see. I feel taste. I hear touch. I spin the story. This is the story I’ve spun” (Okorafor 291). As per the records in the anthology *The Black History Book* (2021), “Asante oral tradition has it that the cloth’s patterns were inspired by the web of the spider Ananse, a trickster figure in Akan folk legends, who also crops up as Anansi in Caribbean folklore” (Blyden et al. 149). Meanwhile, similar findings, about the legend of Anansi, are also drawn by Sarita G in her paper where she mentions that:

In the folktales, he appears as a West African god who frequently assumes the shape of a spider and is considered to be the life force of all knowledge of all the stories on earth. But he is neither worshipped nor

has any shrines to his name. Anansi also appears as a trickster, a rogue, and an animal with human traits. (199)

Thus, Okorafor's narratives serve as a medium to introduce the young and upcoming generations of Africa to the lesser-known history, heritage, culture, and folklore of the continent. Her writings have the potential to educate Africa's youth to value their native roots, connect with the past, and map out effective ways to live an emancipated life. The future, as manifested in her narratives, should be furnished through scientific advancement and technological progression where the Blacks can experience liberation from the shackles of racism. The plotlines of these texts illustrate the genesis of a gradual shift in African writings where content, style, and narration equally contribute in capturing the attention of Black readers and thereafter, assisting them to comprehend the significance of reclaiming Black identity by cherishing the grandeur of indigenous knowledge system of Africa which is an archive of oral traditions, folktales, and medicinal practices.

Thus, Okorafor has experimented with the genre of African speculative fiction to formulate her content and convey her message through a fresh perspective to the global Black audience whose voice and thought-process are still subjugated under racial politics. Moreover, she has relied on the age-old native archive of Africa to draw images, interlink myths with futuristic approaches, and articulate the Africans' longing for a better future of the Black race. From a similar point of view, Kimberly Cleveland remarks that, "It is no surprise that in adopting science fiction conventions for African storytelling, African writers relied on an existing archive of images drawn from indigenous cultural forms" (xii). Therefore, it can be contended that Okorafor's writings are new narratives which have been addressing the topical issue of nation-building through scientific advancements apart from engaging with the postcolonial paradigm of countering the West. This suggests that Okorafor's texts are not archetypes of resistive postcolonial representational praxis but are new narratives designed through a fresh perspective which have been acting as a medium to recover the native African knowledge system apart from questioning the Eurocentric parameters overtly operating

against the Blacks. Furthermore, revered ATR practices, valuing Black solidarity, and cherishing Black consciousness are recurring motifs in her texts. This strengthens the decolonial viewpoint present in her works which undeniably questions the colonial gaze and reveres the culture, heritage, and traditions of the Africans. The readers can identify that the Black characters in the selected texts revere the richness of their traditional practices rather than conforming to Eurocentric norms. The selected texts of Okorafor demonstrate how the individuals of postcolonial African societies can experience a meaningful existence by restructuring their traditional belief system and reclaiming their epistemologies of the pre-colonial era. Thus, the decolonial aspect in Okorafor's texts broadens her perspective to identify new angles associated with the well-being of the people in Africa.

Contemporary Black writers are trying to master the technique of decolonising the mindset of the Africans by assisting them in unlearning and overcoming the racist and sexist parameters popularised by the West. Topical African writings, like sci-fi and fantasy, urge the Africans to shape a technologically advanced future that can empower them to live a sustainable life divorced from political instability and racial politics. It processes a whole new agenda to recover the intrinsic identity of the Blacks reinforced by their traditional knowledge system. The growing concern among Africans about their future initialised the process of decolonisation of language, knowledge, and epistemologies to challenge the Eurocentric narrative of racial hegemony and redefine the grandeur of indigenous knowledge system of the Africans. Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike contend that contemporary African culture is under foreign domination. Moreover, African culture has to destroy all encrustations of colonial mentality and thereafter, figure out new details for an African modernity (47). Okorafor's narratives reflect a similar ideology because postcoloniality is just a partial agenda in her works while her writings are more focused on representing the nuances of African perspective, intra-political scenarios, indigeneity, and livelihood of the people in Africa.

Thus, a sensible aspect of Okorafor's writings is her subtle representation of the socio-political and cultural scenario of

contemporary African societies to highlight how the natives are also struggling because of corruption, weak governance, and rifts among the followers of different religions. However, the futuristic viewpoint and optimistic approach in her writings differentiate her texts from the writings of other Black writers who are more concerned about countering the West and its Eurocentric ideologies. Her narratives are more concerned about highlighting the internal affairs of the continent while encouraging the Africans to create a better future for themselves by prioritising Black solidarity, scientific advancements, and good governance. Thus, Okorafor's works succeed to surpass the paradigm of resistive postcolonial praxis by highlighting the social, political, cultural, and religious aspects associated with Africans' nation-building.

Decolonial and Subversive Traits in Okorafor's Writings

Okorafor has adopted a technological lens to recover native African myths, ATR practices, and indigenous knowledge system among the Africans through her speculative fiction. Moreover, her narratives attempt to recover the African traditional medicinal practices which were once deemed demonic by the erstwhile colonial masters. Falola mentions that, "Traditional medicinal practices and indigenous religious activities were demonized and replaced with 'modern' Western medicine and religions" (101). Black authors are of the opinion that reviving native medicinal practices can also help in recovering and strengthening the indigenous knowledge system of the Africans. Moreover, the natives relate to it. *Zahrah the Windseeker* introduces the readers to the traditional medical system once followed by the native Africans. However, during European colonisation those procedures were declared irrelevant and demonic by the colonisers and were replaced with Western medicinal procedures. In one of the episodes of *Zahrah the Windseeker*, a gorilla named Obax brings Zahrah to his village in order to heal her injuries. The gorillas administer a traditional therapeutic medicinal course to cure her wounds. They first ask her to take a herbal oil bath and thereafter, prick her forehead with three pointed sticks. The traditional process administered by the gorillas helped her recover faster. Thus, *Zahrah the Windseeker* made an effort to introduce the current generation of Africa to the traditional medical system which

was previously deemed obsolete by the European colonisers. This will encourage the growth of consciousness among the Africans about their age-old medicinal procedures which were locally practised by learned persons to cure ailments of patients with the help of locally available herbs. Moreover, recovering the age-old medicinal system is another pertinent aspect associated with the revival of native African knowledge system.

Falola highlights that decolonising the epistemology of Africa can become a major start to re-establish the dismantled knowledge system of Africa and emancipate the psyche of the Africans from the predicament of racial stigmatisation. African writers and critics have used the literary platform to decolonise the psyche and epistemologies of Africans from dominant Western hegemonies. This will eventually channelise the growth of Black consciousness about their own culture and indigenous institutions which were demolished during European colonisation of Africa. An overview of the literary productions by several non-Black writers will permit us to argue that they have consciously stigmatised the physiology, medicinal practices, folklore, and indigenous epistemologies of the Africans in their writings. This provided enough space for Western ideologies to grow and evolve over time. Furthermore, this scenario convinced nearly everyone to believe that the West is superior and the rest should be considered inferior. Thus, as highlighted by Falola, Western languages succeeded to occupy the central positions in academia and socio-cultural domain while expertise in indigenous languages has been demarcated as a pointer of illiteracy (101-102). Falola aptly notes that “African renaissance emphasized on Africanized system of knowledge production that can attend to the demands of African reality: that is, the decolonization of African studies through its educational institutions” (7). Meanwhile, Ania Loomba, in her acclaimed text *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (2016), remarks that the line separating the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ is not fixed rather it is shifting (83) which suggests that the binary of self-other, established by the West, is still subject to change and there is ample space for the Africans to reclaim their cultural identity and marginalised voice. Thus, African literature often criticises the periphery status determined for the Africans by the West and Okorafor’s writings nevertheless highlight the same issue.

Thus, contemporary African literature seeks to educate the Black reader about his native African knowledge system, African culture, and ATR. These narratives not only subvert the attribute of the “other” endorsed upon the Blacks but also introduce the pre-colonial history of the Africans to global readers through a modernised lens that blends scientific advancements with traditional beliefs. Therefore, contemporary literary productions of Black authors and critics redefine indigenous beliefs and folklore of the Africans, furnished through African epistemologies, and operate as repellent of racist Western ideologies while contributing in the growth of African folk studies.

Furthermore, a particular race/community can safeguard its identity and heritage on the global stage if the individuals of that race/community value the history, culture, and folklore venerated by their forefathers. However, it is quite appalling that the history, heritage, and folklore of the once colonised countries are still stereotyped, stigmatised, and misrepresented by the West. It can be seen that several non-Black writers from the West deliberately stereotype the traditions and cultures of the Blacks. Similar findings are drawn by Anand Prahlad in his paper where he remarks that, “In the nineteenth century, most writings on Africana folklore were colonially inspired, stereotypical renderings of black people” (254–55). For instance, classic works by non-Black authors, such as Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (2010) and Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* (2006), disparaged the Blacks and their traditions. Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* has encountered serious criticism for its representation of the native Africans of the Congo basin. The novella portrayed the local Black workers of the European ivory company as barbarous and characterised them as helpless slaves of the white masters. It can be argued that Conrad’s narrative tried to create an erroneous supposition of the nature and mannerisms of the indigenous people of Africa by representing the Black workers as savages, niggers, and brutes. The racist terminologies used by Conrad to represent the Black workers illustrate his Eurocentric insolence. Conrad’s colonial gaze is reflected through the thought-process of Charles Marlow who is the narrator of the text. Marlow labels the Black workers of Congo basin as mere labourers who should be bound to work for a living. It is pertinent to quote a few lines from *Heart of Darkness* to delineate

how Conrad has used his narrative as a medium to represent the native Blacks of Congo basin as moribund non-being devoid of an identity:

These moribund shapes were free as air - and nearly as thin. I began to distinguish the gleam of the eyes under the trees. Then, glancing down, I saw a face near my hand. The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked up at me, and enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly. (19)

In one of the scenes, Marlow questions the value of a worsted worn by one of the Black workers on his neck. Marlow contemplates: "He had tied a bit of white worsted round his neck—Why? Where did he get it? Was it a badge—an ornament—a charm—a propitiatory act?" (Conrad 19). Here, Marlow, with his colonialist gaze, questions the value of the worsted worn by a Black worker and marks it as a mere piece of nuisance. However, the Black worker believes the same worsted to be a valuable token or charm and feels protected. Furthermore, it can be deciphered that Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* also has an underlying tone of Eurocentric insolence against people carrying Black legacy. Brontë's *Jane Eyre* represents a Creole, Bertha Mason, with animalistic and non-human traits. Bertha can be marked as a victim of racial stigmatisation and patriarchy. In one of the scenes, Mr Rochester, Bertha's husband, explains to his acquaintances that, "Bertha Mason is mad: and she came of a mad family: idiots and maniacs through three generations! - as I found out after I had wed the daughter: for they were silent on family secrets before" (Brontë 337). Thus, Brontë's text has represented a Creole woman as a non-human creature who attacks others and is devoid of any humanistic qualities. However, the same text portrayed a white woman, Jane, with great refinement and decency. This suggests that the narrative of *Jane Eyre* indulges in the binary epistemic of racial prejudice which condemns people carrying a Black legacy as non-humans and whites as ideal type. Thus, it can be concluded that at times, even academic writings are used as a medium to propagandise racial politics.

Furthermore, similar scenarios of misrepresentation of Africans and their traditions can be seen in films. For instance, *District 9*, a 2009 sci-fi film directed by Neill Blomkamp, portrayed a demeaning picture of the Blacks in the South African city of Johannesburg. Blomkamp, a non-Black director, portrayed the local people of Johannesburg as assailants, sorcerers, illiterates, and cannibals. The film was set in a period of political instability in Johannesburg, following a sudden encounter between the locals and a group of insect-like aliens. The sudden entry of the extraterrestrial creatures in Johannesburg territory incited a hue and cry situation in the location. Nnedi Okorafor, in her sci-fi *Lagoon*, questions Blomkamp's portrayal of the Africans as savages and their culture as barbarous in his film. On the other hand, *Lagoon* subverts and challenges Blomkamp's racist perspective towards Africans and represents the Africans' belief system in a dignified manner. The episode illustrating the debate between Mami Wata and Father Oke suggests Okorafor's deliberate attempts to subvert racist parameters of the West by venerating the indigenous knowledge system of the Africans. Thus, contemporary African literature in a very nuanced way writes back to the West while deconstructing dominant Eurocentric ideologies operating against the Africans on the global trajectory.

However, an in-depth analysis of recent literary productions by Black authors will enable us to establish that writing back to the West is no more the sole motive of contemporary Black authors. They are now more concerned about decolonising the mindset of their Black brethren from the trauma of colonisation internalised by them and thereafter, encourage them to pursue Black solidarity for a collective growth of the Black race. These works seek to serve as an eye-opener for those Africans who are still dealing with the implications of their dark past while helping them visualise a better future furnished through proper governance, technological advancements, solidarity, and revival of their indigenous knowledge system. Thus, decoloniality adds to the postcolonial traits in contemporary African works and Okorafor's writings nevertheless reflect the same idea. Okorafor has strategically incorporated elements from African mythology, native traditions, and technology to encourage her Black comrades to overcome self-doubt and collectively work for an

empowered future furnished through technological advancements. Moreover, it can be deciphered that as a Black author, Okorafor has consciously promoted the idea that a community's strength lies in its oral traditions, folklore, and heritage passed from one generation to another because these socio-cultural factors strengthen the identity of that specific community/race on the global platform. From a similar perspective, Sarita G remarks that, "Folklores handed down through generations either by word of mouth or through carefully stored scriptures form the very backbone of every nation's cultural legacy" (197). Thus, enabling the Blacks to reconnect with their native roots through literature—a creative way to foster solidarity among the Africans in the homeland and in the diaspora. This will eventually contribute to the revival of indigenous knowledge systems and ATR practices which were once deemed insignificant by the European colonisers.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that Okorafor's African speculative fiction illustrates a subversive tendency against dominant Western ideologies apart from operating as a platform that seeks to revive the indigenous knowledge system of the Africans. This can systematically guide the Africans to reconnect with their native roots, strengthen their intra-political ties, and reclaim a dignified identity in society. Moreover, Okorafor's writings promote the idea that a Black person divorced from his/her native roots eventually fails to reclaim a dignified space in any society across the world. This illustrates why contemporary African writings are reviving the forgotten history and heritage of Africa. Therefore, the aspects of subversion, decoloniality, and postcoloniality are recurring themes in Okorafor's writings. Her narratives authentically represent African history, heritage, and indigenous knowledge system on the global stage. Thus, Okorafor's texts, along with other such topical African works, are creating a remarkable contribution in the lives of the Africans because these works assist the Africans to visualise life through a modernised lens fostered by an optimistic approach. Therefore, promoting scientific advancement, good governance, and black solidarity for a better livelihood of Africans is a pertinent theme of Okorafor's texts.

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