Published in *BELL New Series 2: The Language / Literature Interface* (2004), pp. 85-101.

Ben Okri's *The Landscapes Within* and *Dangerous Love*: Vision and Revision

Daria Tunca

Université de Liège

Abstract

In 1981, Nigerian author Ben Okri published *The Landscapes Within*, a novel about a young painter's life and creative aspirations. This work, in Okri's own words, "continued to haunt [him] and trouble [him] through the years, because in its spirit and essence [he] sensed that it was incomplete." Therefore, he published a revised version of this early book, under the title *Dangerous Love*, in 1996.

By way of introduction, this article will briefly outline the meanings of these different titles. Then, starting from a close reading of the narratives, I shall argue that the major factors of differentiation between the novels are not to be found on the level of plot, but mainly lie in the importance given to certain statements, metaphors, and the degree of accomplishment of the painter's work. Importantly, these modifications are paralleled by significant stylistic changes.

If language plays a determining role on the formal level, it will also be analysed as an important thematic concern of both the author and his protagonist. Indeed, the second version of the novel questions not only the appropriateness of English in post-colonial African settings, but also the relevance of language in general as a medium of artistic representation.

Creativity is a secular infinity.

Ben Okri, *A Way of Being Free*.

1 Introduction

In 1981, at the age of 21, Ben Okri published his second book, entitled *The Landscapes Within*.[1] In 1996, five years after winning the Booker Prize for his critically-acclaimed *The Famished Road*, Okri released a "re-writing and expansion" (Jowitt 1996: 62) of his 1981 novel, under the title *Dangerous Love*.[2] The writer expresses the reasons for his revision of the work in an "Author's Note" at the end of the 1996 edition of *DL*:

> In 1981, I published a novel called *The Landscapes Within* ... . That early work ... has continued to haunt and trouble me through the years, because in its spirit and essence I sensed that it was incomplete ... . I had wanted to write a novel which celebrated the small details of life as well as the great, the inner as well as the outer ... . The many things I wanted to accomplish were too ambitious for my craft at the time. (*DL*: 325)

In *Dangerous Love* Okri did not really try to change the story told in *The Landscapes Within*, for the major factors of differentiation between the novels are not to be found in the plot: the main characters and the chronology of events are similar. Rather, the differences lie in

the addition of or in the importance given to certain statements, events, conversations, metaphors, the explicitness of theoretical considerations and their manifestation in the artist-hero's mind as he tries to find a way of capturing his vision on canvas, and the degree of accomplishment of the young painter's work. These changes are, perhaps inevitably, paralleled by stylistic ones for, experience and "craft" aside, Okri's only means of broadening the scope of his first novel remains language.

2 From *The Landscapes Within* to *Dangerous Love*

The first modification strikes the eye even before one opens the book, since the title has been changed from *The Landscapes Within* to *Dangerous Love*. The title of the original novel, as suggested within the narrative itself, refers to the "landscapes of [the] mind" (*LW*: 168), i.e. the imaginative realm, as opposed to the landscapes without, i.e. the physical world. The name of the revised version has a rather sentimental resonance, but it suggests much more than the one-dimensional type of love found in romance novels. In *Dangerous Love*, the relationship between art and love has been significantly altered since *The Landscapes Within*; love is no longer appended to, but synonymous with, the stimulation brought about by artistic creation. For example, in *LW*, Omovo, the main character, who has just been told by his mentor, Dr Okocha, that his painting may be exhibited at the art gallery, experiences an intense feeling of joy: "He felt wonderful. It was the same lightness he felt when he saw Ifi [i.e. Ifejinwa, the woman whom he is in love with]; but this was more upwelling and complete in itself" (*LW*: 37). In *DL*, the clause "but ... itself" has been left out (*DL*: 28), thereby erasing the distinction between the two feelings. Accordingly, then, Omovo seeks a more profound sentimental involvement with Ifeji(n)wa[3] in *DL*. This difference in attitude on Omovo's part is noticeable in several passages. For instance, the statement found in *LW*, "[Omovo] knew how far he wanted to go with [Ifejinwa]: occasional companionship, that was all" (*LW*: 145), has been considerably altered in *DL*: "Occasional companionship, an intense and distant friendship, decorous on the outside, was all he could ask from her. He wanted more, burned for more" (*DL*: 142).

Jowitt aptly highlights the importance of this link between love and art in *DL*:

> The two themes [i.e. "Okri's interest in the artist's consciousness" and "the conventional love story"] interact in an obvious, public way that by sketching Ifejiwa Omovo attracts attention to their relationship; but at a deeper level too they are meant to connect because the image of Ifejiwa takes over as the inspiration for Omovo's creativity. (Jowitt 1996: 63)[4]

In *DL*, contrary to *LW*, Ifeji(n)wa remains, even after her death, a source of artistic inspiration for Omovo: when he tries to paint the features of the little girl whose body he found on the beach, he "keep[s] Ifejiwa's face in mind," and he later "complete[s] ... seven Ifejiwa paintings" (*DL*: 314). Since love and artistic inspiration interact in a more straightforward manner, the *Dangerous Love* of the title can be seen to encompass Omovo's love for and physical attraction to Ifeji(n)wa, but also the various dangers involved in the transposition of feelings into art, as Omovo's works often lie at the source of his problems: not only does his sketching of Ifeji(n)wa arouse the suspicion of her husband, Takpo, as Jowitt has rightly pointed out, but Omovo's painting "Drift" is also interpreted as an attack on the political leaders of the country and leads him to be interrogated and warned by the authorities. Moreover, as the following analysis will attempt to demonstrate, the artist, in his exploration of the physical and imaginative worlds, ventures beyond the safe boundaries of the *hic et nunc*.

3 The landscapes within and the landscapes without

In both narratives, Okri depicts "two kinds of realities" (Wilkinson 1992: 80). On the one hand, the novels focus on life in Lagos and the political and social situation in Nigeria. On the other, they revolve around Omovo and the creative process in which he is constantly involved. The young painter works in a to and fro movement towards "the moment" (*LW*: 272; *DL*: 293), the fleeting seconds "when the landscapes without synchronis[e] with those landscapes within" (*LW*: 206). The vision that reconciles these two dimensions is rendered with considerably more detail in *DL*. This more accurate depiction was certainly one of the author's main reasons for revising the novel. However, this "moment," which may be described as a brief, personal feeling of fulfilment, is also closely linked to a full exploration of reality, a fact which is more apparent in the second version of the book. For instance, by re-establishing the chronology of events, *DL*, contrary to *LW*, draws a clear parallel between Omovo's charcoal work "Related Losses" and the scene that he witnessed earlier (see *DL*: 6). Moreover, the artist's "responsibilities" (*LW*: 278; *DL*: 307), a major theme in both novels, extend more significantly beyond the boundaries of the self in the later version: in *LW*, "[Omovo's] painting [i]s a part of his response to life: a personal prism" (*LW*: 85); in *DL*, his art has become "a personal *and public* prism" (*DL*: 69, my emphasis). Such insistence on the artist's social duties and need to act undermine the views of critics who consider the Omovo from *The Landscapes Within* "[a] Narcissus [who] derives immense pleasure from standing back to watch himself at work painting" (Mamudu 1991: 85). Conversely, it confirms the opinion of others, for whom the young painter "increasingly learns ... that for his actions to be more meaningful he has to do more than express a symbolic disgust with corruption" (Porter 1988: 204).

Since, according to Okri, Omovo's role as an artist is to organize the chaos of life in Lagos (Wilkinson 1992: 80), the prominence given to the landscapes without serves to emphasize the necessity for his intervention. This is perhaps best illustrated by the continuous insistence on poverty. This theme, symbolized by the scumpool and illustrated by the filthy state of the communal bathroom, pervades both *LW* and *DL*, but is made more explicit in the latter. For example, the cluster of compounds in which the story unfolds, located in Alaba, is repeatedly referred to as a "ghetto"[5] in *DL*, a word which is absent from *LW*. Also, public matters such as the destructive effects of former colonial policies are more emphasized in the second version of the novel. For instance, in an added section, the white man is blamed for causing the land dispute that leads to Ifeji(n)wa's death. (DL: 282)

4 Language and representation

Another important consequence of colonialism, already deplored in *LW*, is that the younger generation has lost touch with African cultures and languages:

> [Okoro:] "... I have almost forgotten how to dance our native dances ... ."
>
> [Omovo:] "Okoro, it's not only you. I can't speak my language well now. I speak a counterfeit. I will soon have to relearn it the way I once learned English. You have forgotten your dance, I have forgotten my language. How did this happen to us? My father said when he was five years old he could speak our language better than I can now. We have been selling our souls without knowing it." (*LW*: 180)

This extract calls for two important remarks. The first concerns the presence of the word "native"; the second, which will be discussed later, is linked with the use of English by the characters.

First of all, in this passage as in many others, the word "native" has been substituted by "traditional" in *DL*. These two terms appear to be used interchangeably in *LW*, which can be confusing for the reader. Thus *LW* contains phrases such as "traditional wrapper" (*LW*: 108) but "native marriage ceremony" (*LW*: 229), "traditional work songs" (*LW*: 93) but "native songs" (*LW*: 93). As the following table demonstrates, both words are also found in *DL*, but they have undergone redistribution (see Table 1):

	LW	*DL*
(1) native in *LW* => traditional in *DL*	(a) native music (88) (b) native songs (92) (c) native dances (180) (d) native song (225)	traditional music (71) traditional work songs (74) traditional dance (181) traditional song (223)
(2) native in *LW* => Igbo in *DL*	(a) native song (14)	Igbo song (12)
(3) native in *LW* => (x) in *DL*	(a) native dance (19) (b) native doctor (74) (c) native marriage ceremony (229)	began to dance (15) herbalist (60) marriage ceremony (229)
(4) native in *LW* => native in *DL*	(a) native doctor (54) (b) his native Urhobo language (148)	native doctor (42) his native Urhobo language (143)
(5) (x) in *LW* => native in *DL*	(a) (x) *(passage added in DL)* (b) (x) *(passage added in DL)*	native chalk (220) the natives (267)
(6) traditional in *LW* => traditional in *DL*	(a) traditional wrapper (108)	traditional wrapper (90)
(7) traditional in *LW* => (x) in *DL*	(a) traditional peacock fan (18) (b) traditional work songs (93)	a fan of peacock feathers (15) *(phrase deleted)*
(8) (x) in *LW* => traditional in *DL*	(a) (x) *(passage added in DL)*	traditional movements (132)

Table 1. Distribution of the words "native" and "traditional" in *The Landscapes Within* and *Dangerous Love*

In *LW*, the adjective "native" is used in its broadest sense, meaning both "from a country or region" and "traditional" (see (1), (2) and [3]).[6] Its occurrences are much more restricted in *DL*. Several reasons may have motivated this change: first of all, this term, beside the definitions mentioned above, also has the dismissive meaning "from a non-Western country." Importantly, then, the word "native" has been replaced by the much less ambiguous "traditional" in (1). By doing so, Okri rejects the initial Eurocentric perspective

and a possible association of African culture with primitiveness. Secondly, by using the term "traditional," the author may also have wanted to oppose traditional to modern Nigerian society and insist on the discrepancy between the ancestral values associated with an idealized pre-colonial past, and the chaotic post-colonial present, a gap which is strongly felt by his characters. On one occasion, "native" has been replaced by "Igbo" (see [2]), in the sentence "Dr Okocha softly sang an Igbo song" (*DL*: 12). This may be significant too, for the old painter's ethnic identity plays a major role in his understanding of Omovo's memories of the Civil War, during which Igbo people were massacred.

In certain passages, the term "native" has been left out altogether (see [3]), for example in the description of Omovo's father's luxurious clothes and exuberant attitude when he is about to go out with his wife. In *LW*, he does a "dainty little native dance" (*LW*: 19) and in *DL* he simply "beg[ins] to dance" (*DL*: 15). Similarly, his "traditional peacock fan" (*LW*: 18) is turned into "a fan of peacock feathers" in *DL* (*DL*: 15). This deletion may be paralleled with the shortening of other descriptions in *DL*, perhaps judged to be instances of unnecessary embroidery by the writer, who wanted to convey his ideas in a more straightforward manner. In this passage, the fact that the dance performed by Omovo's father is a "native" one and his hat a "traditional" one may not be directly relevant, for the point is not their "authentic" nature, but their luxury and, in view of the man's financial problems, the idea that they may serve as a disguise. Significantly, Omovo perceptively "s[ees] beneath the dignity, the fine clothes, and the feathered hat to the bright crack within and a threatening void" (*DL*: 16). For similar reasons perhaps, the word "native" has been deleted, and not replaced by the expected "traditional," in the description of Ifeji(n)wa's wedding ceremony. Her marriage may be considered, above all, a sacrifice, a charade, a "foot forward into a landscape of losses" (*DL*: 80) in which tradition has no place.

The word "native" has been kept or used in added passages (see (4.b) and [5.a]), either because there was no ambiguity possible or because the adjective "traditional" would have been inadequate, as in "native chalk," which refers to a particular variety of the mineral found in West Africa, and in the noun phrase "his native Urhobo language." In this phrase, "native" collocates with "language" to mean mother tongue, and the presence of a possessive adjective excludes any negatively connoted interpretation of the word.

"Native" is also used where the term "traditional" would have been confusing, as in "native doctor" (see [4.a]). The presence of the word "traditional" in this context may have called to mind the phrase "traditional medicine," often used to refer to European conventional medicine. The term "native doctor" does not refer to traditional African methods either, but is rather associated with supernatural powers, since the "native doctor" hired by Keme's family was supposed to find their missing daughter (see *LW*: 54; *DL*: 42), and the one whom Blackie, the wife of Omovo's father, went to see in *LW* was to "divine what had made her lose her baby" (*LW*: 74). In *DL*, this designation, in the description of Blackie's attempt to discover the reason for her miscarriage, has been changed to "herbalist" (see [3.b]): when confronted by Omovo's father over her "strange trips" (*LW*: 74; *DL*: 60), in *DL* she merely "confesse[s] that she ha[s] been going to see a herbalist to find out what ... made her lose her baby" (*DL*: 60). Therefore, even if her actions are surrounded by mystery in both versions, the word "herbalist" in *DL* may possibly refer to local traditional medicine, since the verb "divine" found in *LW* has been replaced by the more neutral "find out."

The term "native" has, conversely, also been added in *DL*. It is used with a strong racially and culturally offensive connotation when a white businessman, sitting at a table in the posh restaurant where Omovo is eating, enquires about the local population: "What about the natives?" (*DL*: 267). In the same spirit, one of his business partners replies that

Nigerians are "very civilised ... . A friendly people" (*DL*: 268).[7] Considering this addition, Okri's use of the word "native" in narrative sequences to refer to African traditions, as in *LW*, would have been misplaced.

As stated above in relation to the conversation between Okoro and Omovo, the English language plays a significant role in both novels. In *LW*, it is synonymous with artificiality and unnaturalness. Its American variety is spoken with much enthusiasm by Dele and Okoro, who long to leave Nigeria for the United States. Their 'American dream' is, quite literally, a means of escaping reality: Dele, whose girlfriend is pregnant by him, attempts to flee from his responsibilities in Nigeria to "partake in a grand spirit of progress", "take heavy pictures of [him]self ... with white people" and "move ... only with heavy white chicks" (*LW*: 126). For Okoro, who is overwhelmed by traumatic memories of the Civil War but unable to express them through art as Omovo does, going to the 'New World' is a means of escaping the past and keeping death at bay.

Furthermore, English, which was imported into Africa by the colonizers, is not seen merely as a second language whose use is restricted to education and administration; it has nearly taken on the function of a mother tongue. It is, beside art, virtually Omovo's only means of expression, and it evokes imposition, even imprisonment: "The English language leaves him [Omovo] empty and deeply tainted: he cannot think freely" (*LW*: 261). This raises a major problem, since Okri, who is in many ways attempting to capture a vision similar to his character's, is writing his novel in the very language in which his hero feels trapped. This paradox is partly resolved in *DL*. First, although Dele still sees America as the ultimate modern state, "God's own country" (*DL*: 112), he now imagines himself "shaking hands with black Americans" and dating "white women, black women, Spanish women" (*DL*: 112). America has suddenly become racially diverse, and as a consequence, American English is now also the language of ethnic minorities. In other words, the United States is still the land of freedom and success, but it has ceased to be the exclusive domain of the whites. Moreover, despite fantasies still present in *DL*, Dele's aim is no longer to leave for good the "struggling backward place" (*LW*: 126) where he lives but instead, he wants to "study hard ... learn all their tricks ... come back and make a contribution to [Nigerian] society" (*DL*: 113).

In *DL*, the younger generation's inability to speak African languages is still associated with a deep sense of loss but, importantly, language in its widest sense is also put into question:

> He [Omovo] prayed for all the faces he had ever seen. He began to recall the faces, to shore them against his terror. And the faces became crowds. He could not name them, could not give the faces names ... . Language failed him. There were things he wanted to say, songs that were breakers of spells, songs his mother had taught him, songs that were parts of stories told under moonlight in the village. He couldn't sing the songs in English. The space that the language filled created a new emptiness. He couldn't sing them in his language either. And so he could not keep back the crowds he had imagined into being. The crowds welled up in him, talking all at once, shouting, arguing, but no words came from their mouths. Their gestures were dramatic, they were passionate, they spoke three hundred and fifty-six languages simultaneously, and were not heard.
> The yearning to hear them, to be heard, the desire to speak and to be understood in a language that flowed naturally, clamoured in his being.
> A voice within him said: "You need a new language to be heard." (*DL*: 275)

While English, still referred to as an "imposed" language (*DL*: 294), is inadequate to describe African reality, it may be argued that even African languages show limitations because the

"stories told under moonlight in the village," the lost traditions they embody, are no longer suitable to describe contemporary society. In fact, all existing means of oral communication, symbolized by the "three hundred and fifty-six languages" spoken by the crowd, are somehow inefficient, silenced in their own multitude. A "language that flow[s] naturally" and that would be able to convey the totality of Omovo's vision still needs to be invented. It is not likely to be found in a collective, oral code such as English for, as Okri puts it, "the highest things are beyond words" (Okri 1997: 89). Rather, this new, personal means of expression which Omovo longs for can perhaps only be achieved, or indeed approximated, through a creative (rather than mimetic) approach to visual art.

This transposition of 'yearning' into action, of vision into reality, is seen as an unending process of discovery to which the artist has a duty to submit. This is undoubtedly the message behind the quotation "In dreams begin responsibilities" (*LW*: 118).[8] In *DL*, Dr Okocha corrects the sentence to "In visions begin responsibilities" (*DL*: 101),[9] thus further emphasizing the importance of the conscious mind in this process. The difficulty of transposing dreams or visions into action parallels that of transforming the impermanence of experience into the permanence of pictorial representation. The problematic aspect of this process is suggested by the fact that most works of art, even Omovo's, remain incomplete, "poor reproduction[s] of imagined reality" (*DL*: 155). For example, the drawing which Omovo did as a child, praised by his father and his teacher, and which consisted of a "series of squiggly lines that went round and round and formed different shapes" (*LW*: 95; see a longer and different version in *DL*: 76), illustrates his ability to capture "life" (*LW*: 95). Importantly, however, the young Omovo tries to reproduce the drawing but, as he is incapable of doing so, "underst[ands] that he had done it once but could not do it again till he really knew how" (*LW*: 96). In *DL*, the impossibility of holding on to moments of insight is made more explicit by the fact that his early drawings physically disappear, as they get lost in the move from Yaba to Alaba (see *DL*: 77). This means that, up to his second "Related Losses," all his major works vanish from sight, since they are either stolen, seized or lost. Moreover, Omovo's horrified reaction when seeing his painting of the scumpool "for the first time ... from distant, unfamiliar eyes" (*LW*: 45) at the exhibition also emphasizes the difficulty of capturing reality, of representing "things [that] are there and then ... are not there; things [that] are what they are and then ... are not what they were" (*LW*: 154). In other words, it is not easy for art to be relevant in time because it depicts a reality that is ephemeral and ungraspable. Counteracting these forces of loss may well have been one of the motivations behind Okri's attempt to 'redeem' the first version of his novel. Arguably, language plays an important part in such an enterprise, for the author, by reassessing the adequacy of his earlier representations, is led to question the relevance of the words he wrote.

5 Art and remembrance

Just as art seems to approach the 'truth' but cannot hold on to it firmly, Omovo oscillates between vision and a "kind of void" (*LW*: 154). He constantly explores "landscapes of possibilities" (*DL*: 196), but his moments of revelation come and go like the waves of the ocean, which also seem to have a language of their own. Appropriately, the sea appears to be a symbol of permanent movement and endless possibilities in the poem written by Omovo's brother, Okur:

> *Sketches on the sand*
> *When I was a little boy*

down the expansive beach I used to roam
searching for bright pebbles
and strange corals
Sometimes I saw them hidden and clear
but I found other things too
like little half-defaced sketches on the sand
pointing a way through the tormented seas. (LW: 69)

The "*sketches on the sand*" are associated with exploration, "alternatives ... other ways to the sea" (*DL*: 256). In *LW*, their "*half-defaced*" state seems to indicate that they may eventually be swallowed by the tide or blown into nothingness by the wind. This ephemeral nature reminds one of the fleetingness of experiences and visions, and of the passing relevance of artistic representations.

The "*tormented*" seas suggest at once restlessness and constant movements like those of the imagination, but also menace and death. Ifeji(n)wa's obsession with drowning and her propensity for being "afraid of water" (*LW*: 136)[10] may indicate that she senses the danger of such exploration.[11]

The beach, which lies at the frontier between two elements, conceals pebbles and corals, "*hidden and clear*" treasures which may be regarded as catalysts, intermediaries between reality and visions. Omovo experiences a very short but extremely intense moment of insight on the beach, just after being given a coral shell by Ayo, the son of the old chief who has rented to him the room in which he is staying while at the seaside (*LW*: 269; *DL*: 290–91). That evening, his observation of the shell in the semi-darkness triggers "the moment" (*LW*: 271; *DL*: 292).[12] Also, it is significant that it is precisely on the beach, the boundary between the continent, suggestive of steadiness and reality, and the sea, which can be paralleled with the world of the imagination, that Omovo and Keme find the mutilated body of the little girl. In fact, the girl already appears on the very first page of the novel, in an "extract from a notebook" (*LW*: 3; *DL*: 1) which the reader later discovers to be Omovo's. When the two young men stumble upon the corpse, the girl is projected from the initial dream into the reality of the narrative. The 'real' experience, then, is but an echo of the past: seeing the little girl "br[ings] back to [Keme] the horror of losing both his father and his sister" (*LW*: 59), while Omovo experiences a "frighteningly sharp *déjà vu* sensation," "as though all this had happened before in some other place, in some other time" (*LW*: 59). This impression of flash-back is conveyed by the structure of the novel, since Omovo's dream of the girl is presented to the reader before the discovery of the body, as a premonition of sorts, as if "the future w[ere] contained somewhere in his mind" (*LW*: 39). Then, the very same extract is presented as a reminiscence, at the end of the first section, emphasizing the artist's ability for remembrance as well.[13] Later on, the abstract and the concrete mingle again, as the body disappears without a trace and the reality of the whole incident on the beach is put into question.

Just as the body vanishes from the beach, the girl's features dematerialize in Omovo's mind. He cannot remember them (see *LW*: 140) but somehow they recurrently intrude upon his thoughts: in *LW*, Omovo involuntarily transposes Ifejinwa's face over them (see *LW*: 140); in *DL*, he sees "the dead girl's face in Ifejiwa's features" (*DL*: 135). The girl remains in this transitory, immaterial state until Omovo captures her in his painting. Importantly, in *LW*, Omovo is unable to draw the girl's features, and she remains "without a face" (*LW*: 281) in his "Related Losses." This is also the case in *DL*, but in the second version of the novel, Omovo completes his painting seven years later. This featurelessness may be a reminder of several other 'losses' the young artist has suffered: his late mother, whom "he no longer

remember[s] as a face or a body" (*LW*: 260), his brothers, whose faces he has "totally forgotten" (*LW*: 134), and even a corpse he saw during the war, whose face and eyes he "could never remember" but "never forgot" (*LW*: 117). Omovo's remembrance of a dead Igbo man he did not even know may hint at the fact that the artist's responsibility extends beyond his personal experience. This idea is even more strongly emphasized in *DL*. In this respect, it is significant that Okur's poem, which was discussed above, has been altered:

When I was a little boy
Down the expansive beach I used to roam
Searching for strange corals
And bright pebbles
But I found sketches on the sand
While voices in the wind
Chanted the code of secret ways
Through the boundless seas. (*DL*: 57)

The poem differs from the earlier version in three major respects. First of all, its title, just like the names given to the different sections of *LW*, has disappeared. As a consequence, the act of naming artworks, which suggests fulfilment and, to a certain extent, completion, remains the prerogative of Omovo within the narrative.

Secondly, the "*tormented*" seas have become "boundless," perhaps to suggest an analogy with the "silent immensity of the sky" (*DL*: 27). Already in *LW*, Omovo often loses himself in the contemplation of the "dome of the sky" (*LW*: 37) which is, like the "dome of his head" (*LW*: 37), seen as a possible container of answers. Ifeji(n)wa's brother, after sinking into madness, also stared at the sky before committing suicide (see *LW*: 91). In this respect, it may be argued that the hallucinations induced by his apparent mental instability are, just like Omovo's visions, a way of seeing beyond the superficiality of the world. Consequently, madness and inspiration are far from being antagonistic. In fact, the term "vision," a key word in both novels, encompasses the definitions "ability to see," "image that one has for the future" and "hallucination" (see Sinclair 1995).

Thirdly, the phrase "While voices in the wind / Chanted the code of secret ways" seems to parallel another major addition in *DL*. In the second version of the novel, the seaside town to which Omovo retreats towards the end of the story is a port formerly used for the transit of slaves (a fact which is not mentioned in *LW*), and it is described as a "town haunted by slave cries from its shore" (*DL*: 299). Interestingly, the town is identified as Badagry in *LW* (*LW*: 259), but only referred to as "B-" in *DL* (*DL*: 272).[14] This anonymity may perhaps be a way of suggesting that the slave trade which took place there is not restricted to this sole location. These events may also have acquired a representative value in temporal terms because, although they occurred in far-off times, they have been repeated in history, for Africa has become "the trampling ground of foreign powers" (*DL*: 294). The contemporary relevance of this experience of human suffering may also be suggested by the fact that "B-" is pronounced like the verb 'be', synonymous with existence. Finally, the absence of a complete name may express linguistic abduction, and may serve as a reminder of the imposition of the English language on African peoples. It might even evoke the slaves whose names were erased by their masters and lost into the anonymity of history.

In *DL*, slavery is a key element in the exploration of the past, which is in itself a stepping-stone to the understanding of the present world. The importance given to slavery and history in the second version is illustrated in the modification of the dream which Omovo envisions during his stay in Badagry/"B-." In *LW*, Omovo reports to Ayo that, while

asleep, he wandered down a corridor and past a door, through which he glimpsed something "profound and magical ... quintessential and beatific" (*LW*: 270). He kept on walking and arrived at "a place where the spaces seemed to divide themselves into many indeterminate directions" (*LW*: 270). In *DL*, a description of the dream as Omovo experiences it precedes the account to Ayo: passing the door, he is overwhelmed by a similar feeling of bliss, but he then wanders through history, strolling through "strange towns down whose streets slaves were dragged screaming ... places where the populace dug the earth for gold and where the elite ate the gold ... towns that reincarnate in different places through time" (*DL*: 286–87). Slavery and colonialism and, on a larger scale, history and collective experience, contribute to the establishment of a connection between past and present. Omovo appears to be gifted with an acute perception of this link, whose knowledge is necessary to initiate change. Importantly, in *DL*, "the moment" (*LW*: 272; *DL*: 293–95) is described as a time where "past [meets] present, present [meets] future" (*DL*: 293). Its description has been significantly lengthened and altered in *DL*, as more concrete and detailed references to slavery, corruption, famine and political chaos pass through Omovo's mind. This passage seems worth quoting at length:

> *... the prayers of slaves – the betrayal of ancestors – the treachery of leaders – the lies and the corruption of the old generation – their destruction of future dreams – they raped our past, we rape our future – we never learn our lessons – history screams and ghettos erupt with death and maddened youths – they scrambled for our continent and now we scramble for the oil-burst of Independence – traitors and disunity everywhere – those who are deaf to history are condemned to be enslaved by it – enslaved by ourselves, our attitudes, our tribal madness, each for himself – the smiles of the rich grow more predatory while children weep their lives away burning in infernos of hunger and disease – ... we can't escape our history – we will dwindle, become smaller, the continent will shrink, be taken over, swallowed, pulped, drained, by predators, unless we transform – in vision begins – in vision begins responsibility – ... in vision begins action – in action begins our destiny – for the things that you do change you – and the changes affect the things you do – and to him that hath shall be given – seek and ye shall find – to him that hath not shall be taken from, even that which they haveth – you either become, or you die – ... I came here to escape and I find our past waiting for me on these shores – now we are the trampling ground of foreign powers – ... our resilience is our weakness – ... and I am here on these shores, in this strange town, weighed down by ... the creative dangers of thinking in an imposed language – betrayed by language – erased from history – deceived – as children, we read how the whites discovered us – didn't we exist till they discovered us? – ... transfiguration – transfigure the deception multiplied by education – all education is bad until you educate yourself – from scratch – start from the beginning, from the simplest thing – assume nothing – question everything – begin again the journey from the legends of creation – look again at everything – ... USE EVERYTHING WISELY – EVERYTHING HAS SIGNIFICANCE – (DL: 293–95)*

This extract comes from a longer sequence, which is divided into three sections. It is undoubtedly one of the most important parts of the novel – first of all, because it is very dense on the level of content, and secondly, because this density is supplemented by stylistic techniques which make the passage very intense as well.

The noun phrases, verbal forms and sentences which constitute the vision are connected (rather than separated) by dashes, which have replaced the full stops and semi-colons found in *LW*. The chosen punctuation visually ties the different phrases, as though they were links forming a semantic chain. It also conveys the rapidity of Omovo's sequence of thoughts, a most literal stream of consciousness, producing a sort of domino effect as the young man "tumbles ... into wells of knowledge" (*DL*: 295). It may also be pointed out that in

DL, contrary to *LW*, the use of italics is restricted to this sole passage. This introduces a typographical contrast with the rest of the novel and sets Omovo's revelatory moment apart from all the other events in the narrative.

Beyond the connection provided by punctuation, the ideas found in Omovo's vision are all linked, directly or loosely, either on a semantic or on a syntactic level. For instance, in the sequence "*the betrayal of ancestors – the treachery of leaders – the lies and corruption of the old generation*," the meaning of "*betrayal*" intersects with that of "*treachery*," and that of "*treachery*" with those of "*lies and corruption*." Strings such as "*in vision begins action – in action begins our destiny*" are internally connected by the repetition of the last element of the first sentence at the beginning of the following one. Syntactical arrangements are also used to link ideas, since parallel structures such as "*betrayed by language – erased from history*" lead the reader to establish a semantic connection between the former and the latter phrase.

The final dash, which also replaces a full stop found in *LW*, seems to indicate an absence of finality, since "[v]isions are always incomplete" (*DL*: 295). However incisive, Omovo's revelatory moment, even when acted upon, will never lead to full accomplishment, for the ultimate essence of creation can be approached but never reached.

The influence of the King James Version of the Bible is also strongly felt, for the sentences "*and to him that hath shall be given*," "*to him that hath not shall be taken from, even that which they haveth*" are found, sometimes in slightly modified versions, in the Gospels according to St Matthew (13:12, 25:29) St Luke (8:18, 19:26) and St Mark (4:25); the sentence "*seek and ye shall find*" is also found in Matthew (7:7) and Luke (11:9). The choice of the King James Bible is not coincidental, since it was the version preached by the early missionaries in Africa, and it is still very influential today. The quoted extracts, whose archaic forms contrast with the language found in the rest of the vision, seem to intrude suddenly, unconsciously, upon Omovo's thoughts. The word-for-word rendering, punctuated by the incorrect form "*they haveth*" (instead of "they have"), seems to indicate that these lines were at some point learned by heart. This may serve as a reminder of the mental colonization of African children through the 'educational' system. I do not, however, believe that Okri wants to subvert the Biblical message itself; rather, he may wish to underline the pernicious effects of passive instruction and mental manipulation. Indeed, the chosen sentences, in their Biblical sense, broadly suggest that initiatives bring about results: these ideas are echoed in other passages of Omovo's vision, such as "*in action begins our destiny – the things that you do change you – and the changes affect the things you do.*"

The sentences "*as children, we read how the whites discovered us – didn't we exist till they discovered us?*" clearly allude to the fact that Africans have been deceived into believing they had no history prior to European arrival. The deception has been "*multiplied by education*," for even though it was originally instilled by the colonizers, it has been perpetuated by mentally enslaved Africans whose "*resilience is [their] weakness.*" A more positive, alternative path, which Omovo seems to be following, consists in "*educat[ing] [one]self – from scratch*," which suggests that one should relinquish intellectual gregariousness, discover the world and the past anew in order to change the future. Omovo can be seen to establish this link between the past and the future, between vision and action, by staying in Nigeria to "bear witness ... provide the continuity" (*DL*: 267). This road to artistic accomplishment which Omovo has taken, this journey beyond superficiality and across the boundaries of time, involves emotional distress: it is "the most terrible path" (*DL*: 267).

Omovo, as a critical autodidact, learns by observing both African art and the works of "his four great affinities" (*DL*: 201), i.e. Da Vinci, Brueghel, Velasquez and Michelangelo. Importantly, he finds inspiration in artworks from the past and from elsewhere but he does

not "[look] at them as much as bounc[e] them off into his own world, his own realities" (*DL*: 201). In other words, his vision, and the new language he attempts to create to convey it, benefit from the fruitful experience of others but eventually go beyond the works and words of his predecessors. This idea finds expression when Omovo names his painting:

> He gave the work a title: "The Beautiful Ones" ... He was about to complete the sentence, but changed his mind. He wanted to use his own words. After a few seconds he wrote, "Related Losses." (*DL*: 314)

The spelling "Beautyful" in *LW* (*LW*: 281) makes even more obvious the connection with Ayi Kwei Armah's novel *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Omovo eventually gives up the intertextual reference and chooses to call his painting "Related Losses," echoing the title of his own stolen work. Remembering losses, saving the past from forgetfulness, appears to be one of the artist's major tasks in *LW* and *DL*. In the later version of the novel, as the added references to slavery suggest, this aspect seems to have acquired a supplementary, historical dimension. Unsurprisingly, the more mature Okri also insists on the value of experience in understanding the world. In *DL*, Omovo makes changes to his painting, an act which strikingly reminds one of Okri's reshaping of *LW*:

> ... seven years later, after he had completed his seven Ifejiwa paintings, when he had seen more, suffered more, learned more, and thought he knew more, he [Omovo] made certain changes to "Related Losses," vainly trying to complete what he knew was beyond completion, trying to realise a fuller painting on a foundation whose frame was set forever. Succumbing to the dangerous process of looking back, making himself suffer a long penance for a past artistic shame at a work unrealised by youthful craft, and under the pretext of wanting to re-educate himself in the form, he quite radically altered the painting ... . He blotted out the unnecessary symbols that were not part of the original experience. He made the trees denser, and allowed the girl's body more dominance. He made a phantom figure brood over her, the figure of an ancestor or of the unborn. Then he painted for the girl a bright yellow dress. He made her mutilation obscenely beautiful, as if she were giving birth to a monstrous mythic force; a messy, almost messianic birth from a flowering wound ... . Then, finally, he created for her a sweet pair of eyes, a beautiful little nose ... and thick proud lips, sensual, silent, beyond speech, self-communicative. (*DL*: 314–15)

The parallel between an author and his character is a dangerous one to make, yet the passage "when he had seen more ... painting" appears to be the novelist's justification for the rewriting of the novel, all the more so since it bears similarities with Okri's "Author's Note" at the end of *DL*:

> The many things I wanted to accomplish [in *LW*] were too ambitious for my craft at the time. I came to see the novel as the key to much of my past work, and perhaps also to my future, and became sure that it would not let me go until I had at least tried to redeem it ... . *Dangerous Love* is the fruit of much restlessness. I hope that I have, at last, managed to free its spirit. (*DL*: 325)

Vain attempts at completing and "redeeming" a past work are also apparent in Omovo's initiative. The girl represented in his painting, and by extension the anonymous dead of his first version, are finally given a face in Omovo's more accomplished work. The dead body giving birth evokes regeneration, reconciliation between life and death, a cyclic representation of existence. Ugliness and beauty are reunited in the oxymoronic "obscenely beautiful" mutilation, and the past and the future are also interwoven, as suggested by the confusion of "an ancestor" with "the unborn."[15]

6 Narrative and stylistic variations

The fact that Omovo, when revising his painting, has "blotted out the unnecessary symbols that were not part of the original experience" (*DL*: 315) seems to suggest that he wants to 'condense' the formal aspects of his work. In this respect, the connection between Omovo's revision of the painting and Okri's rewriting is much less obvious, but it should also be explored. Even though the writer has, like Omovo in the narrative, deleted some of the elements which gave room for interpretation (such as the titles of the sections) and shortened certain descriptions (such as that of the opening dreams, one of which has even been left out), the novel has been lengthened with a number of additional narrative sequences, and the introduction of extra themes such as slavery, for instance, may at first sight be seen to increase the complexity of the matter rather than simplify it. Conversely, however, I would like to argue that these additions contribute to giving the novel a greater sense of clarity and cohesion. For example, the references to slavery which have just been mentioned highlight a link between the past and the present which was already found Omovo's vision in *LW*, but in much more opaque terms:

> The seized sense of an unfinishable and terrifying portrait of humanity. Quintessential helplessness. Engrams of futility. Subverted vision of wrecked hope ... . 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 internalised, a point of light forever vanishing. (*LW*: 272)

Even if this is only an extract from "the moment," its description in *LW* is much more compact than that in *DL*. Admittedly, some of the historical references are quite clear (the "charade called independence" obviously refers to Nigerian independence in 1960), and some of the phrases even correspond word for word to those found in *DL* (e.g. "a deception multiplied by education"), but the terms used in *LW* are more elusive, and the most obvious semantic links found in the later version are absent. As a consequence, the ideas are enumerated in a much more fragmented manner, and connections are more difficult to establish.

Another instance which seems to suggest that the lengthening of the narrative provides greater transparency is the rendering of Dr Okocha's advisory words to Omovo (see *LW*: 117; *DL*: 99). Okocha's comments are presented with more details in *DL*, thereby helping the reader to develop a better understanding of Omovo's predicament.

Many of the narrative additions also seem to serve a 'linking' function. For example, it is reported in both versions that Tuwo, one of the compound men, once pursued his wife with a knife (see *LW*: 109; *DL*: 91). The incident is given an additional coda in *DL*: as the wife is about to leave, she is "heard to utter the ominous curse that one day someone would chase him around with a machete as he had chased her" (*DL*: 91). Her prediction anticipates the moment when Omovo's father kills Tuwo with the announced weapon (see *DL*: 304). Similarly, Omovo has a dream in which he sees Blackie, his father's wife, having sexual intercourse with Tuwo (*DL*: 260). This 'premonition' materializes when his father surprises the couple in the bathroom (*DL*: 303). These narrative echoes seem to reflect a concern for either cohesion or explicitness, perhaps to contrast with the descriptions of Omovo's more complex and momentary feelings.

As these examples indicate, the novel appears to have been fleshed out on the narrative level, but the converse act of 'condensing', referred to earlier, is also noticeable in the book. It is mainly to be found on the level of style, which, except for the rendering of

Omovo's moment of insight, is much more concise in *DL*. *LW* contains many series of coordinated verbs and adjectives, such as:

> (1) ... I was walking and walking and walking and walking ... (*LW*: 3)
>
> (2) Words, words, words assaulted him till he screamed and screamed implosively. (*LW*: 44)
>
> (3) [Her bosom] heaved slowly, rising and falling, rising and falling. (*LW*: 89)
>
> (4) ... his soul seemed to expand to include all that was beautiful and hidden and mysterious and whole and radiant and pure. (*LW*: 200)
>
> (5) The compound shrieked and jangled and twanged and soughed and stank unbearably. (*LW*: 218)
>
> (6) He was shouting and shrieking and crying and cursing and mad. (*LW*: 277)

In *LW*, the use of coordinated sentences seems to serve various purposes. First, the repetition of identical elements, coordinated by the conjunction "and," highlights the continuous (see [1] and the second part of [2]) or repetitive (see [3]) nature of the movements or actions. Moreover, in (2), the absence of a conjunction between the elements which make up the subject create an oppressive, assailing effect, as the extract describes a period of time when Omovo feels suffocated by all the pretentious art theories he hears about at the exhibition. All the repetitions discussed above have been discarded in *DL*: sentence (1) is shortened to "I was walking" (*DL*: 1), sentence (2) to "Words assaulted him till he screamed implosively" (*DL*: 34), and "rising and falling" occurs only once in (3) (*DL*: 72).[16]

Interestingly, in (4), (5) and (6), the coordinated elements refer to simultaneous, and not consecutive, series of actions or entities. Sentence (4) seems to evoke the awkward transposition of impalpable sensations, of the "visionless awareness of the unity of things" (*LW*: 200), into writing. Since the passage occurs when Omovo has just recited Okur's poem, the multiple adjectives probably describe the corals, pebbles and sketches on the sand which his brother refers to. However, Omovo's overwhelming feelings remain elusive, for the long series of adjectives does not allow the reader to visualize, or form a concrete picture of, anything beyond the objects described in the poem.

Sentence (5) may also be seen to express the difficulty of capturing accurately a multitude of simultaneous sensorial perceptions, whether they be auditory, as is the case for the first four verbs, or olfactory, as is the case for the last one. The meaning of the verbs and their syntactical arrangement create an atmosphere of panic in the compound as a nightsoil man, exasperated by the mockery he endured from the compound children, has put down a bucket full of excrement at their parents' housefront. The reigning chaos is also suggested by the use in the sentence of the ambiguous word "compound" to refer both to the people living there (whose shrieks produce jangling, twanging and soughing noises) and the vicinities (which stink unbearably).[17]

In sentence (6), the coordination of the near-synonymous verbs "shouting," "shrieking," "crying," even "cursing," which describe Omovo's fit of madness as he learns of Ifeji(n)wa's death, also give an impression of intensity. The series of present participles is unexpectedly interrupted by an adjective, introducing a sense of linguistic disruption which may perhaps be seen to parallel Omovo's raving state of mind.

This coordinating technique, mostly found in *LW*, highlights the linguistic limitations which constitute obstacles in the rendering of the overwhelming richness of visual representations, of sensorial oppression or of intricate feelings. It finds its most striking

occurrence in a 36-line sentence (see *LW*: 220–21) which describes Omovo's fortuitous witnessing of a ritualistic ceremony. In this passage, the personal pronouns "he"/"him" and the possessive adjective "his" are italicized[18] and stand out from the rest of the text, maybe to indicate that Omovo is an intruder or displays self-consciousness in this strange universe.

While the description of this unusual encounter has been lengthened in *DL*, the long sentence and the italicized pronouns have been left out. Repetitions and coordinated structures are not totally absent in the second version of the novel, but they are used in much lesser quantity and sentences are, on average, shorter. However, verbless sentences also appear to be fewer. As a result, the style may be described as plainer, less 'aggressive', leaving an impression of steadiness and equilibrium.

In fact, the style of the narrative is on the whole more economical than in *LW*, but the description of Omovo's moment of insight has been lengthened and enriched. It may therefore be suggested that what has taken place is a complete inversion of the stylistic balance between the narrative frame on the one hand and Omovo's moment of revelation on the other. This may perhaps be seen to reflect the author's greater mastery of his art, since a better understanding of artistic creation may have enabled him to describe this process in a more composed way and portray its result more elaborately.

Conversely, there are also stylistic convergences between the novels, for some options are found in both *LW* and *DL*, as for example the use of direct discourse to render some of Omovo's thoughts.[19] These interludes regularly suspend, rather than interrupt, the narrative flow, and allow the reader to have direct and limited access to Omovo's mind, in a manner which seems to parallel the intensity and fleetingness of the artist's visions.

Beside this use of direct discourse, another striking feature found in *LW* is a sudden shift to the present tense, which occurs on three occasions (*LW*: 256; 261; 281), as Omovo approaches the moment when he "begins to paint" (*LW*: 281) the little girl. The use of the present evokes the synchronicity which takes place between the "landscapes within" and the "landscapes without," as experienced by Omovo in the narrative. Also, importantly, it suddenly projects the whole universe of the book, the expression of the author's "landscapes within," outside fiction, into the "landscapes without," in this case the reader's physical and temporal worlds.

By contrast, *DL* only contains a single switch to the present tense, in the description of "Related Losses":

> She was like a hallucination, a dreamed being, in a naturalistic landscape. A beautiful, bloodied, intensely coloured being. Her dress is torn. There is blood on her breasts, on her clothes. The area of her upper thighs is a stylised mess of mutilation. He painted a glimmering cross round her neck. (*DL*: 314)

The abrupt shift to the present here may indicate that Omovo relives the moment when he finds the body, and it also encourages the reader to visualize the painting. Finally, the vision, now immortalized on canvas, may be seen to have transcended time.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, Okri's revision appears to follow the same development as that of its main artist figure. Indeed, as Omovo sees the world more clearly, the novel is also more explicit, more cohesive, and provides more detailed descriptions of key concepts and experiences. This evolution is perhaps best symbolized by the important changes made to two climactic moments in the novel, namely Omovo's sexual experience with Ifeji(n)wa and his most intense moment of insight, both of which are rendered in greater detail and contain more

poetic images in *DL*. The resulting impression of balance and maturity is paralleled by a much less tormented style.

Crossing the border, bridging the gap between the physical world and that of the imagination, lies at the heart of both novels, but the later version suggests more strongly that this quest entails a need to transcend the boundaries of time as well, as the introduction of the theme of slavery indicates. The artist's task thus consists in a two-way transposition, starting with the absorption of the sights and sounds of his environment into his mind, followed by the materialisation of his feelings, thoughts and intuitions into the concrete world again. This challenge is also the one taken up by the author of the books, who has set himself the metacreational task of describing this process in writing. As this article has tried to demonstrate, language plays a central part in the novelist's ambitious project, for his words on the page take on the same function as his character's paint on the canvas, namely that of endlessly, perhaps vainly, attempting to express an intricate creative vision. Ultimately, Okri seems to suggest that creation is an unending journey and the artist, maybe, a traveller, walking on a road to infinity.

Notes

* An earlier version of this article was part of an MA dissertation presented in August 2003 at the University of Liège. A shorter adaptation was also read at the 2003 BAAHE Annual Conference (University of Ghent, 22 November 2003). I would like to thank Prof. B. Ledent for her advice and support through all these different stages.

1. Further references to this novel will be made in the text with the abbreviation *LW*.

2. Further references to this novel will be made in the text with the abbreviation *DL*.

3. The character is called Ifejinwa in *LW* and Ifejiwa in *DL*. In both versions of the novel, her name is said to mean "there's nothing like a child" (*LW*: 98; *DL*: 79). She will be referred to as "Ifeji(n)wa" in the text, except in quotations, where the original spelling found in the novels will be kept.

4. Robert Fraser also insists on the importance given to love in *DL* (Fraser 2002: 34).

5. This term is to be understood in its social rather than ethnic sense.

6. All definitions of "native": see Sinclair 1995.

7. A short description of this scene was already present in *LW*, but the dialogue between the men was not rendered (see *LW*: 255–56).

8. Robert Fraser notes that "Dr Okocha attributes these suggestive words to 'an Indian poet' [see *LW*: 119; *DL*: 101]; in fact, they make up the second epigraph to the volume *Responsibilities* (1918) by the Irish poet, W. B. Yeats. No source has been found for this quotation; the current opinion among scholars is that the words are Yeats's own" (Fraser 2002: 32).

9. In *DL*, both versions of the quotation are found in Omovo's vision on pp. 293–95.

10. This is even more explicit in *DL*: she is "afraid of the sea" (*DL*: 129).

11. In *LW*, and more noticeably in *DL*, Ifeji(n)wa is an intuitive, insightful character whose sensitivity parallels Omovo's. It is strongly suggested that despite her interest in literature, she is never allowed to develop into a writer because she is a woman, as her activities are entirely dependent on her husband's goodwill.

12. Mamudu also establishes a link between the coral shell and Omovo's moment of revelation: "it is with it in hand that [Omovo] goes out to encounter, indeed attain, the experience which he calls *The Moment*" (Mamudu 1991: 86).

13. Omovo's ability to anticipate and remember may also be symbolized by his shaven head, a traditional indicator of grief. Indeed, although the result of an 'accident', it may be viewed as a way of both remembering his dead mother and anticipating Ifeji(n)wa's death. Moreover, it may be suggested that Omovo's shaven head somehow develops his senses and allows him to discover reality more fully: as he returns from the barber's, he experiences the "fine and shivery sensation" (*LW*: 6) of the rain falling on his skull.

14. It should be pointed out that the theme of slavery is indirectly present in *LW*, since the full name of the city of Badagry is provided. However, the link with slavery may be seen to be much less straightforward in *LW*, since the identification of Badagry as a slave port requires a certain degree of familiarity with colonial history.

15. This element was already present in the painting in *LW*. We may suppose that Okri kept it for the final version of the picture in *DL* because he viewed it as particularly relevant.

16. Sentences (4), (5) and (6), which are about to be discussed, have also been significantly shortened in *DL*.

17. This remark may call for a few words of explanation: the result of Lakoff's test to distinguish vagueness from ambiguity (Lakoff 1970) and the application of Quine's definition of ambiguity (Quine 1960: 129) reveal that the term "compound," just like the word "neighbourhood," is ambiguous. An ambiguous term may not (except perhaps for playful or humorous purposes as appears to be the case here) encompass several of its meanings within a single occurrence. My argument is that Okri achieves a stylistic effect by ignoring this rule deliberately: the 'incorrect' use of the word "compound" creates a semantic clash and leaves an impression of grammatical clumsiness particularly appropriate for the description of a scene of panic.

18. Except on two occasions, in the phrase "his lonely and futile and unuttered supplications" and the clause "the strophed sounds of nocturnal animals came kindly back to him" (*LW*: 221). I must admit that the reasons for the absence of italics in these particular cases evade me.

19. These sequences are a little less numerous in *DL*, in which they are no longer italicized but introduced by inverted commas.

Works Cited

Armah, Ayi Kwei. (1968) *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. London: Heinemann.

Electronic Text Center (University of Virginia) *The Bible: King James Version*. <http: //etext.lib.virginia.edu/kjv.browse.html> (accessed 23 July 2003).

Fraser, Robert. (2002) *Ben Okri: Towards the Invisible City*. Horndon: Northcote.

Jowitt, David. (1996) Review of *Dangerous Love*. *Wasafiri* 24: 62–63.

Lakoff, George. (1970) A Note on Vagueness and Ambiguity. *Linguistic Inquiry* 1: 357–59.

Mamudu, Ayo. (1991) Portrait of a Young Artist in Ben Okri's *The Landscapes Within*. *Commonwealth* 13.2: 85–91.

Okri, Ben. (1981) *The Landscapes Within*. Harlow: Longman.

Okri, Ben. (1996) *Dangerous Love*. London: Phoenix.

Okri, Ben. (1997) *A Way of Being Free*. London: Phoenix.

Porter, Abioseh Michael. (1988) Ben Okri's *The Landscapes Within*: A Metaphor for Personal and National Development. *World Literature Written in English* 28.2: 203–10.

Quine, Willard Van Orman. (1960) *Word and Object*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Sinclair, John (ed.). (1995) *The Collins Cobuild English Dictionary*. London: HarperCollins.

Wilkinson, Jane (ed.). (1992) *Talking with African Writers*. London/Porthsmouth: Currey/Heinemann.