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Crystallizing Idyllic Africa: Prophetic Myths in
Selected Fiction of Ben Okri

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Africa's intelligentsia, creative or critical, have always been yoked with the task of finding a framework that would provide some tranquility to this troubled region. From the self-narcissism of negritude to the aestheticism of post colonialism, the perennial issues of identity crises, brain drain, political impasse, war and starvation still loom large. This paper contends that, whilst debates continue to rage, it is pertinent to point out that with mythmaking certain ideals and contradictions about the future of Africa can be foreseen, anticipated and probably resolved. That disasters, economic failure, terrorism, kidnapping and religious crises are on the increase is because leaders and followers are not taking into cognizance certain archetypal patterns which forewarn of forthcoming events. Ben Okri, renowned Nigerian novelist, is adept in using myths suggestively to foretell the future because he sees certain recurring trends that are common to Africa's corporate existence. When viewed in mythical terms, these patterns could be predictive of crises, they could serve as warnings, or they could be suggestive of possible antidotes. Our choice of *Astonishing the Gods* and *In Arcadia* is thus motivated on the grounds that the texts symbolically foreground the use of myth as prophecy and that our shared memories are tools which African writers, like Okri, deploy to help reinvent new identities by way of explaining the future.