

Trauma and Dispossession in Postcolonial African Narratives: Migrant Identity in Isidore Okpewho's "Call Me By My Rightful Name" and Buchi Emecheta's "Kehinde"

Irene Akumbu Wibedimbom

PhD, Department of African Literature and Civilizations, University of Yaoundé 1 (Cameroon)

Email: iremat36[at]gmail.com

Abstract: This article examines how trauma, dispossession, identity, cultural hybridity, and cultural displacement affect migrant characters in postcolonial literature, focusing on Isidore Okpewho's *Call Me By My Rightful Name* and Buchi Emecheta's *Kehinde*. It examines the authors' use of narrative strategies to highlight identity crises, cultural hybridity, and the psychological consequences of displacement. Employing postcolonial theory, the article argues that transcontinental migration creates new burdens for postcolonial subjects rather than alleviating their struggles.

Keywords: Trauma, dispossession, postcolonial migration, identity, cultural hybridity and African diaspora

1. Introduction

This article discusses trauma, identity, cultural hybridity, dispossession, and other challenges encountered by migrants in their new spaces in postcolonial narratives, emphasizing on voluntary and involuntary displacements, and cultural divide. It also addresses the issue of racism and conflicts in *Call Me by My Rightful Name* by Isidore Okpewho as well as *Kehinde* by Buchi Emecheta. Both writers use border crossing in postcolonial narratives to expose some of the difficulties migrants encounter in new spaces out of their homeland. Once they cross the oceans in search of jobs, ejected out of home by social upheavals or taken by force to work as slaves, they are caught up in traumatic situations within which they either negotiate a space for themselves or simply have to return home. Those who accept the lifestyle of the host country become hybrids. Okpewho and Emecheta explore the social structures as they explore the impact on their characters on the self and the internal dynamics of self-processes which have an impact on the self and behaviour of their characters. Identity is also explored as an inevitable imposition; an obligation made on individuals by forces, societal or supernatural, which are beyond their control and from which they have no power of escape, thus, making the individual to be in continuous search for their destiny. The socio-political, economic, and cultural intricacies accompanying the postcolonial immigrants in their host countries, the reactions of their hosts and the tactics of the immigrants constitute the research problem not only of their regular exchanges with the different individuals and structures, but in the transnational political space. Using the theoretical paradigm of postcolonial theory, this article postulates that Isidore Okpewho's *Call Me by My Rightful Name* and Buchi Emecheta's *Kehinde* are postcolonial narratives that discuss the intricacies of transnational displacements and migrations on the existential conditions of the postcolonial subject, and that, Okpewho and Emecheta do not consider transcontinental movement of postcolonial African subjects a really helpful mitigation of

their problems. Rather, the two focal authors see the movement of these postcolonial African subjects from the periphery to the metropolitan centre as creating new challenges for the migrants.

This paper therefore aims to examine the themes of trauma, dispossession, identity, cultural hybridity and African diaspora as experienced by postcolonial migrants, using the novels of Isidore Okpewho and Buchi Emecheta as literary case studies. This study highlights the socio-cultural and psychological realities of African migrants, contributing to broader identity reconstruction and transnational belonging in postcolonial literature.

This work is grounded in postcolonial the theory which is grounded in culture, human movement, or postcolonial migration of former colonial metropolis with the Diaspora as a major concept in its studies that focus on individual and collective journeys. Contemporary analysis of diaspora has tended to be explored along the lines of ethnicity, race, nationality and even religion. This is reasonable since the application of a theory expediently considers the values and beliefs within the studied text. The text itself brings to the fore the meaning within itself and especially the tune of literary text.

Some perspectives of postcolonial do not take into account the continuing, far-reaching effects of colonialism or the 'overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination' as discussed by Bill Aschcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, in 'General Introduction' (1994, p.2). The lack of scope in a rather simplified definition compelled Aschcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin to streamline the meaning of postcolonial, positing that, "the word 'post-colonial' has come to stand for both the material effects of colonization and the huge diversity of everyday and sometimes hidden responses to it throughout the world" (1994, p.3). In this respect, postcolonial literatures do not simply consist of writings that chronologically come after independence, but

rather result from the 'interaction between imperial culture and the complex of indigenous cultural practices' (1994, p.1). In this extended meaning, it is naive to think that colonialism can end abruptly as dictated by independence's inception. This reason is that colonialism brings new values, new beliefs, foreign languages, and alien traditions that cannot be shed off like the skin of a snake, tossed overboard and forgotten. Instead, it always leaves something behind, a scar or some form of colonial residue. Thus, Postcolonial theory involves discussions about experience of various kinds, migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experience of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. (1996, p.2). In the light of the above background, this study adopts the postcolonial theory to better evaluate and analyses the focal texts. The theory is based on otherness and resistance, and according to Ashcroft et al, it rejects the egregious classification of 'first' and 'third' world, and contests the lingering fallacy that the post-colonial is somehow synonymous with the 'economically underdeveloped.'

It is with these perspectives in mind that we subsequently shall investigate how Okpewho and Emecheta attempt to articulate the identity of the colonized people whose culture has been distorted and made inferior by the colonizing culture. In *Call Me by My Rightful Name*, Otis Tiger Hampton who is of slave descent living in America goes back to Nigeria, the land of his ancestors, in order to locate his roots and identity. There he assumes his rightful name Akimbowale. Otis's presence in Nigeria is to get a Yoruba name with which he needs to identify himself as a son of the soil before completing his grandfather's love song.

Postcolonial theory also covers concepts like hybridity, centre/margin, ethnicity and indigeneity, representation, subalternism, gender, and universalism. Hybridity, of particular note, refers to the integration of cultural signs and practices from both the colonizing and the colonized cultures. In "The Introduction to Hybridity" in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Ashcroft et al. state that, "...Hybridity occurs in post-colonial societies both as a result of conscious moments of cultural suppression, as when the colonial power invades to consolidate political and economic control or when settler invaders dispossess indigenous people and force them to "assimilate" to new social patterns. (1996, p.183). This is very common with black migrants who find themselves in a new culture and have to assimilate the culture in order to interact and cope with the new style of life. Sometimes they are given new names by their masters and are thus hybridized. Often, they do not know which culture to align with. They end up renegotiating space either in their country of origin or in the West.

Trauma, Dispossession, Identity, Cultural hybridity and African diaspora

Trauma, dispossession, identity, cultural hybridity and African diaspora are major issues in postcolonial studies. Trauma is a distressing experience that significantly disrupts an individual's emotional, psychological, or physical well-

being, leading to lasting effects. It's often a response to a harmful or threatening event or series of events. The characters in Okpewho and Emecheta's novels under discussion witness some of these traumatic situations. Trauma can be defined as an emotional response to a terrible event. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Long term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like nausea. In *Call Me By My Rightful Name*, Otis' grandfather passed through this shock as he is uprooted from his native land while performing a love song for his initiation. In *Kehinde*, Albert cannot accept the new order of things in the West, where a woman is equal to or even greater than a man. All these dispossession make the characters perpetually think of home. Dispossession, the action of depriving someone of land, property, or other possessions, is an issue Okpewho and Emecheta broach in their novels. Thus, trauma, dispossession, border crossing, cultural hybridity, identity as discussed in this article, will help to show how characters create a space in their new found homes and as such become hybrids – a process which is vital in identity construction. The result is a rise in the number of foreign nationals in different countries and the subsequent mixing of cultures. However, people remain largely ignorant of those citizens whose mother tongue they do not share. Thus, cultural expression can be an appropriate contribution that not only facilitates the integration of foreign nationals, but also sows the seeds of challenge to the general conception of the established world order in the individual spheres where the blacks are discriminated upon.

The colonized are obliged to abide by the new cultures immediately they find themselves in the West. Yet, a complete abandonment of their original cultures is neither straight forward nor fully desirable. In *Call Me By My Rightful Name*, Akimbowale, a Nigerian, is captured and taken to America to work as a slave and finds himself in this situation. His capture lays the foundation for his eventual trauma and subsequent dispossession. In this connection, Ifa narrates the thus:

Strange things have been happening lately: Black people have become increasingly uneasy. Marches and riots throughout the country, even in Boston. Police unleashing their wild dogs on marchers and swinging their truncheons freely on them, young and old alike. Many brothers and sisters wearing dashiki prints. Necklaces and amulets strung with bones and a shells...Otis wears one, but for him it is just the do of the day, with no cultural or racial significance. (2004: p.24)

Ifa's comments show the degree of black marginalisation and oppression in the West. Despite this form of marginalisation, blacks remain resistant and assertive in their society that traumatised them. Their dressings indicate that though far from their home countries, they still assert their cultural identity.

Otis' encounter with his forefathers also points to psychological trauma and cultural hybridity. The result from his ancestors' remains him that America is not his home.

Otis chants in strange tongues whenever he gets the sound of the African drum beats. The omniscient narrator notes that:

Something suddenly stirs in Otis. A doubt grows. He wants to listen but it is too deep inside. And he is at the wheel...the silence becomes too heavy. Otis turns on an FM station. The volume is loud. The pounding beats of a drum suddenly assail his car...He fumbles with the volume to reduce the noise...A strange sensation is creeping over him. Not of cold or of warmth. Some kind of agitation. First it's mild, but soon it grows to a throb. His hands and legs begin to shake...His lips are shaking, rattling some incomprehensible sounds. (2004: p.6)

Otis is traumatised by strange happenings in his life as a result of the African drum music. The beatings of the African drum suddenly make him lose control of the car. This periodical chant comes from the dispossession his grandfather encountered as he was taken to America by force to work for the whites. Each time he hears the African drumbeats Otis and his family experience renewed trauma. All these bring him and his parents to realize the height of marginalization of the blacks by the white. He is more traumatized as he knows nothing about his origin or about Africa, but is attacked in his dream by his grandfather, who after living in the Yoruba community for long, was uprooted and taken to Europe through slavery. He visits his grandson in the dream because he was deprived of the chance to perform a ritual of initiation through a love song. As such, he wants to instruct his grandson to go and complete the love song. This brings in the idea of nostalgia; Otis and his family feel compelled to return to their roots to rediscover their identities. Otis needs to search for his roots in order to be able to renegotiate a space for himself and his family. The narrator recounts Otis night time experience:

A voice came one night to Otis Tiger Hampton as he slept; it spoke in a strange tongue, with words to his effect: Ife divination was done for Oyepolu; scion of those who performed cult rites at Ife. He was told to visit his ancestral shrine and pays his respects. Once he did that, life would be good for him again. He did as he was told. Things become well for him. (2004: p.3)

The very strange voice he hears is no ordinary voice; it's a voice of command. The instruction issued must be carried out. The voice instructs him to go to a specific ancestral shrine to pay respect in order to restore normally in his life. In obedience to his ancestral voices, he becomes a hybrid as he takes on a new identity by travelling to Yoruba land and becoming initiated. He visits the ancestral shrine and performs the recommended rite. Dreams play a very important role in the lives of African people they used it as a vehicle of communication between the living and the dead. Otis's strong instincts make him conscious of a burden or duty he cannot discard. Thus, his travelling to Africa acts as a spring board for the creation of a new space and for reinstating his family's identity. The theme of symbiosis between the living and the dead is explored in Okpewho's novels. This is indicative of the fact that in many African communities, the dead are not dead; they are regarded as active family members who see better where the living are

blind, who always mean well for their progeny, and who speak to them through oracles or dreams. Shrines are created for them where palm oil is poured, goats and chickens are killed and their blood is poured as sacrifices intended to grease the link. This explains why it is of paramount importance for Africans to always keep in touch with their roots no matter where they find themselves. The bottom line is that migration does not make a Black white. It remains obvious that Africans hail from Africa, not from Europe or America as it is said "...How long have I been out?" A strange sensation is creeping over him. Not of cold not of warmth.... (2004, p.6). Otis wonders for how long he has lived out of home and away from his culture, following the strange sensation in him.

Buchi Emecheta's *Kehinde*, it is noteworthy that, during the 1960s and 1970s, substantial numbers of immigrants from Britain's ex-colonies in West Africa, especially from Nigeria, arrived and settled in Britain. Today, they constitute a significant portion of the ethnic mix in the multicultural country. Border crossing is reflected in *Kehinde* and it highlights how the concept of "home" is constructed in the case of male and female Nigerian immigrants in post-war Britain. Immigrant identity is seen in her novel as the process of cross-cultural alteration as experienced by post-war (Second World War) Nigerian immigrants in Britain. In fact, John C. Hawley suggests that the completion of the process of cross-cultural alteration by *Kehinde*, the protagonist of the novel, is also the resolution of Buchi Emecheta's own cross-cultural conflict as a Nigerian immigrant in London (1996: pp. 344-346). In other words, Emecheta's novels, *Kehinde* is most representative. The protagonist, *Kehinde* evaluates her experiences in both countries and chooses the one less emotionally distressing.

Emecheta's characters, *Kehinde* and Albert from the prism of cultural theory, experience the displacement and diasporic discourses which are examined via their relations to the "centre" (the whites) and the "other" (the Black) cultures. In this connection, Raymond Williams suggests that these constitute "the dynamic interrelations" in a given cultural process (1996: p.121). "Dominant culture", which is the white, may be explained as the most powerful and hegemonic culture in a given society in a given period of time. References to the "other" denote blacks and the cultural practices of the immigrant subject that belong to her/his culture of origin. However, some practices that are preserved by the immigrant may not be accepted by the dominant culture or, in Williams' terms, "(the dominant) cannot allow too much experience and practice outside itself" (1996: p.123). The consequence of this clash is a cultural conflict experienced by the immigrant subject. Emecheta divides her characters into two groups, one of which controls the other in all aspects. This is seen between the man and the woman and also between the educated and the uneducated. As concerns the man and woman, she presents *Kehinde's* case with her husband, Albert; for the educated and uneducated, she presents *Kehinde's* situation with that her co-wife. This shows the inequalities in society which then postulates the creating of space. In addition, Williams' argument is captured by Albert's story. Albert travels voluntarily to England in search for greener pasture in 1960. Even in the face of the odds and trauma, he

struggles to uplift his Igbo cultural identity in a society where anything black is considered negative and given the worst treatment. Albert cannot hold back his nostalgia about being a true African man. He confesses ‘...I want to go back to the way of life my father had, a life of comparative ease for men, where men were men and women were women, and one was respected as somebody. Here, I am nobody just a storekeeper. I am fed with just listening to my wife and indulging her... No, to be at home is better. (1994: p.35)

Albert’s trauma with the way things are been done in the West makes him fade up with his wife’s apron strings in Britain because she earns more than him and it is considered unmanly for a man to allow his spouse to be in control of financial issues in the home. Albert is frustrated as the wife becomes the breadwinner of their family. As a traditional Igbo man, Albert, awaits ‘an opportunity to reclaim his birth right’ (1994: p.35). Hesitant to accept the challenges in the West, he thinks of returning back home where he finally gets another wife, Rike, a young university lecturer. Through his diasporic experiences and trauma, Albert creates a new identity and becomes a hybrid by maintaining his identity as an Ibo with some traces of the Whiteman’s culture.

Kehinde’s rise as a result of her hard work makes Albert feel emasculated as if he is tied to apron strings in Britain, since she earns more than him. He blames his financial emasculation on migration, and decides to migrate back to Nigeria to renegotiate his space. Kehinde has to accept her new status that necessitates calling her husband ‘our husband’ (1994: p.71) and her children ‘our children’ (1994:p.87). This is because she is not the lone wife as everything that used to be hers is now divided between her and her co-wife. For an account of Albert’s experience of the adaptation process with reference to the model suggested by Winkelman, it is important to define how, as a character, he stands in this model. In this respect, Albert seems to be in “crises” as defined by Winkelman in “Cultural Shock and Adaptation”, where he explains that ‘...Things start to go wrong, minor issues become major problems, and cultural differences become irritating. One experiences increasing disappointments, frustrations, impatience, and tension. A sense of lack of control of one’s life may lead to depression, isolation, anger or hostility...’ (1994: p.123)

It appears that trauma and dispossession come from the continuous accumulation of different things. Difficulties with controlling emotions yield deep frustration and trauma. This is with *Kehinde*’s Albert while in Britain; everything he works for and depends on becomes a problem, given the tension and frustration emanating from his inability to control himself and even his wife. All through his stay in Britain, Albert’s attitude towards the host country is one of disowning and rejection, rather than adoption. Albert’s frustration state is perhaps best portrayed when he says that he is “nobody, just a storekeeper” (1994: p.35) Being taken care of by a woman because of the small salary, Albert sees himself very useless. With this situation in Britain, Albert thinks of returning to Nigeria to become “respected as somebody” (1994:p.35). In Nigeria, men are mostly respected. All these expressions show that Albert does not have an identity in Britain and that there; he is not recognized as a man since he cannot take care of his family.

The cultural differences are also disturbing for Albert as they traumatise him when he expresses them openly. When he voices his opinion about his relationship with the culture of Britain, he says: “...we are in a strange land, where you do things contrary to your culture” (1994: p.15). This strangeness manifests in the contrast which sees men who are very much respected in Africa, looked upon as subordinate in the West. In a similarly strange way, a woman is well protected and it is right for a woman to take responsibility for everything in the house if her husband is not up to date as does his wife. According to him, a man is the head of the home and should be the sole provider for the family. It is a common saying that, “what a man can do, a woman can do it better”. Perhaps this statement by Albert is the first expression in the novel of the clash of cultures which brings in the idea of his return or the creation of space. He wants to return to Nigeria where he will be looked upon as a king and can marry the number of wives he wants; where a woman is under a man, unlike in the West where Kehinde earns more than him and pays most of their bills. Albert feels weak for giving his position to the woman. He wants to return and renegotiate her space once more.

The importance of Isidore Okpewho work resides in its high quality and the contribution he makes to the variety, dynamism and vitality of African creative literature. His epistemological and self-conscious striving to illuminate African systems of belief and general worldview life and death as complementary and interactive phases of existence crystallises in the concept of reincarnation, as life and death are in reality only relocations and memories of previous incarnations are remembered. In tracing the whole stretch as an extension of the shrine of the river- goddess Ushe, Okpewho makes the African concept of reincarnation metonymic of a general African worldview. That is, reincarnation becomes representative of cardinal virtues characteristic of the African vision of life. In *Call Me By My Rightful*, Okpewho claims magical realism as a mode that abjures his objectivity, but even more importantly, it is a means of incorporating a distinctive African view of life as well as showing the possibilities in all human experience. Mimicry has been crucial in Homi Bhabha’s view of the ambivalence of colonial discourse. For him, mimicry is the process by which the colonised subject is reproduced as almost the same, but not quite (Ashcroft 1998). The copying of the coloniser’s culture, behaviour, manners and values by the colonised contains both mockery and a certain menace, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace (1998: p.86). In this guise, Bhabha asserts that mimicry reveals the limitation in the authority of colonial discourse, almost as though colonial authority inevitably embodies the seeds of its own destruction (Ashcroft et al 1998). But when the colonisers gaze at the colonised and see the mimicking colonised’s displacement of the colonisers’ gaze turned back on the colonisers, it alienates the colonisers from their confidence in their own essence, thus distabilsing colonialism itself. In response to this postcolonial tenet, writers like Isidore Okpewho have sought to assert the value of African culture by seeking and exploring the cultural identity of the African people. Over time, the search for identity has formed a major thematic preoccupation in response to this call. Emecheta in *Kehinde* treats patriarchy as social corruption at a personal level where Albert grossly

subverts his role as husband, father and member of the community. For example, one would expect that Albert Onwordi, Kehinde's husband, would fully embrace principles of justice when it comes to the wife's feelings and priorities. Having been dislocated from the Nigerian environment where women are not supposed to be heard, it would not be entirely unexpected that Albert should change and start looking at his wife as an equal partner.

At the end of Emecheta's novel *Kehinde*, there appears to be no redemption for Albert's scattered sense of self. He is painted as becoming morally decrepit and totally lacking in family values. Essentially, he is even worse than we see him in London. This is one contradiction of the diaspora that gives an opportunity for change only to women. In Lagos, Albert regains his concept of manhood and, ironically, loses every sense of direction, a semblance of which he seemingly had in London. As Kehinde visits him in Lagos, we read that "He looked more imposing than the London Albert ... and he exuded a new confidence" (1994: p.66). This essentially means that London was, for Albert, not a viable environment for self-fulfillment and freedom but was full of trauma. He only discovers when he returns back to Nigeria that life can be so enjoyable.

More still, Albert's 'negative' growth is highly inappropriate for a man for whom being in the diaspora should have been an eye-opener to the need for the displaced in the society, where women and men are equal partners in the social, political and economic sphere of life. His degeneration mirrors the degeneration of the society into a lower level of moral perversion where individuals who are supposed to have 'seen the light' are engulfed by the pitch of darkness and moral inferiority. It is noteworthy that, London is portrayed as critical to Kehinde's self-affirmation. She decides to hit back at Albert and his new bride, Rike, by going back to university and thus reclaiming her way in life. Getting a university degree (like her rival Rike) is Kehinde's way of gaining self-affirmation and trying to deal with her alienation from the Lagos reality she has so recently encountered. It is also a way of entrenching herself further in the London society. She decides to belong to the diaspora, and expects that Albert would be the one to join her in London, if he wants to. The London experience has alienates her and forces her to start looking at the social practices of the Nigerian society differently. Her view of family, propriety, morality and convention is also radically altered.

In addition, Emecheta's *Kehinde* can be looked as a middle class black woman of the diasporic community whose fortunes constantly ebb and flow. The novel exposes the postcolonial African dilemma in foreign lands amid other races and permits an understanding of the racial problems, such as the immigration the resultants brain drain and the emergence of the new hybrid community. The postcolonial situation existing in the society is also given through snatches of conversation in the novel as the Nigerian mania for loads of certificates and indifference to experience and its consequences leave characters like Kehinde and Albert without jobs which were traumatic. The low pay in Nigeria which leads to much brain-drain, and the hope that may be in the future things may change as there'll be fewer corrupt leaders in our part of the world,... which will stop our best

brains run away to work for the white man (1994, p. 124), all provide an accurate picture of postcolonial Nigeria. Such a political situation in the native land fuels Nigerian emigration into England. In the *Kehinde*, the Okolo family functions as the microcosm of such a new cultural mixture formed in the Britain of the late 1970s. The novel opens with a considerable time lapse after Albert Okolo and his wife Kehinde settle in the colonialist country and form part of the settler generation. Their son Joshua and daughter Bimpe are second generation immigrants, another distinct race in cultural history. The racial, gender and class problems they encounter as the story unfolds represent the African consciousness of the age.

Albert's complaints show that racial identity is another thorn in the flesh for migrant workers, a realization to which Kehinde comes when she returns to England after rejecting her husband and Nigerian life. She forgets she is a black and a hybrid, and sees herself as the white middle class woman. Seeing her situation her friend tells her '...You got that job a long time ago... You never know, with your degree you may even be regarded as being overqualified. An educated black person in a responsible job is too much of a threat. White people don't feel comfortable in their presence. (1994: p.125). It may be deduced therefore that blacks are marginalised in all spheres of life. Kehinde's friend makes her understand that getting her first job was due to luck because whites are not comfortable working with educated black women in responsible jobs since to them; they are a threat as they can take their positions. As a black woman, Kehinde realizes the trauma her grandmothers had undergone. She has to eat the humble porridge of the poor black woman in London, when she works in hotel service. She finds herself taking English lessons for a rich Arab's wife despite her violent dislike for the man and his rude behaviour. After all, even in the white world the sheiks —oil money makes people colour-blind (1994: p.126) and she has to stop before his superior status because of the humiliation.

In Okpewho's *Call Me By My Rightful Name*, the Hampton family is faced with a serious identity crisis for they are not completely accepted as Americans. They are constantly reminded of their slave backgrounds. This is seen in the following account of Jeremiah Hampton when he cries out '...The son of an Augusta share cropper and grandson of a slave, he learnt early in life to know his place but also to believe in his innate worth. ...So, unlike most households of their race and class, the Barclays — father, mother, and children — chose to call their maid Miz Odetta and rewarded her service beyond the terms of employment. (2004:p.16). Hampton asserts the identity of the blacks. He acknowledges with certainty an African nationality and believes he deserves a place in the West. Coming from a slave background and a God-fearing family that respects humanity, house-maids are treated with a lot of love and respect. Their family is a responsible one as they don't discriminate or have an appellation for their house maids like 'miz' which reveals that they are to the family. Again, even those who go to study in the West do not enjoy the same rights as their white mates. They are remarkably discriminated against. These Africans are denied their identity since anything black is regarded as negative. In this way, some of the Africans tend to abandon their culture and

adopt the white man's ways, thus creating a new space for themselves. The situation in which they find themselves in the West is traumatising.

Unlike Emecheta's Kehinde, Okpewho's Otis has no idea of his African culture or his past until he is visited in his dream by his grandfather. The Hamptons are a representation of Africans in the diaspora that have embedded Eurocentric notions that their culture is primitive and barbaric. Furthermore, African-Americans have a different accent and mode of life which also exposes them to marginalization. To the whites, Africans are responsible for their condemnation, and are expected to totally negate their African ancestry. With such negative tendencies, Mr. Hampton does not see why their past should hunt them after so many years. He questions why the black man's dilemmas in America must forever be pecked to Africa: "Haven't we lived in this land long enough to find our own solutions here?" (1994:p.60). This question depicts the magnitude of the problems facing Africans in America. The African and Indians, amongst others' are the "other". They face an identical problem as they are not integrated into the American community due to cultural and identity differences.

In *Call Me By My Rightful Name*, the reaction and effect of the sound of the African on Otis emphasize the agreement that, although Otis's grand- father was captured and taken to America, and brought up his own family long ago, they are not Americans. As a result of the constant embarrassment, Otis asserts longevity of stay in America does not resolve the lived experience of sleep-walking. Okpewho's intention to highlight the fact that an effective solution to the problem of African identity in the Diaspora is to reconstruct their physical and psychological states of being become apparent; the thrust seems to be that Africans need to come out of the western myth of inferiority, and fearlessly assert their own identity and bring the African culture to the limelight. This position springs from the fact that, the rights of every black man are limited. Otis, because of his black origin, cannot exercise his human rights in the west. As a black student, he cannot be elected as the president of the students' union since the blacks are looked upon as the "other"; "When the votes are counted, the white candidate is declared to have nicked the African by two votes" (2004:p. 24). As a result of this, the entire African student population at Bradley is up in arms, with some few foreign students and some Americans on their side. The commotion is so strong and widespread that the university has to summon the campus police to maintain order and ensure classes are not disrupted. He cannot lead in a completely white environment. Otis and his fellow blacks are always on the cross-roads, and often use every means to create a new space for themselves as the writer says '... Black people have become increasingly uneasy [With marches] and riots throughout the country, even here on Boston [and] Police unleashing their dogs on marchers and swinging their truncheons freely on them, young and old alike... Many brothers and sisters wearing dashiki prints. Necklaces and amulets strung with bones and shells'. (2004:p.24). The blacks resist the white marginalisation, which has caused them enormous misery and trauma by rioting. Coming to reality with their present situations, they put on 'Necklaces and amulets strung with bones and shell'. These represent Africa and putting them on

their necks shows that they want to resist the white race by telling them that their culture is important and most valuable. They uplift the African in heritage and the African culture.

The experiences of slavery instilled the spirit of extreme aggression against trans-emigrational policies. This has formed the basis of Africans in the diaspora. Otis in Okpewho's *Call Me By My Rightful Name*, says that "...I found these trips very enlightening, and I'll tell you why. When we were with Miss Wana in Ado-Etiti, she used the word like" Diaspora" quite often, referring to Africa in the U.S. and the West Indies as part of a larger culture that spread from Africa during the time of slavery". (2004: p.178). Otis' musings highlight the idea that his trip to Africa serves as an eye opener. Miss Wana, in Ado-Etiti, often used the word 'Diaspora' to refer Africa and the U.S and West Indies being. Otis Hampton's coming to Africa is a clear example to those other blacks in America who are able to trace their root back home. At the end, he is able to learn his culture and language and also live in a place which is call home. Otis is also named Akimbowale by the twins, Taiwo and Kehinde. He now bears his new name with pride, and has a sense of belonging. Otis is even envied by Mindoo who also wishes to trace his roots back in Africa. Otis successfully creates space which enables him to search for his rightful identity.

In the novels under study, blacks or the oppressed struggle to search for their identity, although they still have those traces of the European culture in them. They are "neither nor" and as such create a new space for themselves. Frantz Fanon says hybridity also has to do with '...Cultural politics of diaspora and paranoia, of migration and discrimination, of anxiety and appropriation ...is unthinkable without attention to those metonymics or sub- pattern moments that structure the subject of writing and meaning. Without the doubleness that I described in the postcolonial play of "...hybridizing of language activated in the anguish associated with vacillating boundaries-psychic, cultural, territorial- of which this speak"' (1986: p. 65). Fanon affirms that culture also places emphasis on the idea of hybridity, and argues that migration and discrimination come with fear which makes it very difficult for blacks to easily learn the new language, considering the distance from which they come; an aspect which plays much on their psychology, given their attachment to their culture and their country as a whole.

Mr. Hampton, a devoted black worker is discriminated against by the white. He earns a meager salary as compared to the whites performing the same job and regardless of his effort to do a perfect job. The whites know the black is sub - human; they are in the 'self' while the blacks are the 'other'. So they can never have equal right that is why Mr. Hampton is not given the same job opportunity as the white. While in Africa, the white are regarded as demi gods who have come with civilization and they often feel superior, thus creating a space for themselves. For instance, Mr. Bigelow and his colleagues work at the American Embassy in Nigeria; McAdoo and Dubitaky also serve as Peace Corps and teach in African schools. McAdoo enjoys the benefits of hybridity as he is married to a Nigerian, thus creating a new space for himself. In the West they are traumatised with the

happening of things but in Africa, they are treated with hospitality:

Kehinde takes one piece of kolanut from the plate and gives it to Otis, who for all practical purposes stands for their long-lost brother. She takes another piece for herself and gives a third piece to her sister, Taiwo. Then she passes the plate to Akinwunmi to distribute the rest as he sees fit... Dubitsky looks a little older than McAdoo, so McAdoo takes his share last. The visitors watch the volunteers, who are so strangers to local hospitality rites. (2004:p.151)

Africans are portrayed as living in harmony. The volunteers watch with admiration the hospitality that exists in the African community in the sharing of the kolanut among themselves. As a result of the love, the volunteers and the Africans shared so many things as McAdoo falls in love with Dubitsky although she is older than him. They end up as husband and wife. Thus, McAdoo creates a space for himself in the African community. He also takes on the Africa nuances, that is, their culture, their way of eating, and dressing. Although he maintains his European status, he has to create a new identity to meet up with the African economic exigencies. Therefore, whites easily create space for themselves because they hardly face any oppression or discrimination in Africa.

Karl Marx in his economic theory in “Das Kapital” stipulates that the rich will continue to be rich at the detriment of the poor. In line with this, the majority of young men and women from Africa who go to the Diaspora for greener pastures often end up receiving the worst from the white. They put in excessively long hours for very little salaries. They are discriminated against in all spheres of life. Fanon has asserted that, though thousands of people leave their homes to the new world for socio-economic survival, they often find themselves in appalling conditions where they end up in regret after losing their dignity and identities. Most often, they return to their homeland dejected. Isidore Okpewho and Buchi Emecheta in their writings present similar situations in which people find themselves wanting in the new world (the West) as a result of total rejection. This is the case with Albert’s family in Emecheta’s *Kehinde*. Kehinde Okolo migrates and lives in London for 18 years, with her husband, Albert, and their two children. Though she grows to appreciate the relative freedom and affluence she enjoys in London, her husband convinces her that the family should return to Nigeria, because: “...there is an oil boom in Nigeria, and that one can actually pick work up in the streets. Nigeria needs us. My sisters are thinking of our own good, you know” (1994:p. 3). Albert decides to return to Nigeria with his wife as a result of the oil boom to pick up an employment.

The protagonist in Okpewho’s novel, Otis, has a job in the U.S, but still joins the other blacks to protest against the poor treatment of black students by the whites. Blacks are not regarded as citizens and they are treated with disgust which is traumatising. They are neglected, and anything “black” is considered evil by the whites. The blacks needed human-right movements to negotiate for equal rights and fair

share of the socio-economic Spoils. This is also evident in Ingrid Hessian’s ‘Reveal Truth of Africa Oral Traditions’. He points out that the government does not often listen to the voices of minorities. He says the resulting political upheaval; protest and revolt are as a result of discrimination: “... tales that I have collected give me a tremendous amount of insight into what government needs to do to ensure peace and harmony by making sure that they guarantee something like an equal playing field for the various political communities with them” (1996: p.231). His profound collections contain useful insights which the government can use to bring peace and harmony, ensuring equality for all in the political communities where they live.

Again, Norma meets Mr. Barrett for more enlightenment about their culture. She comes from Jamaica but is not well informed about her culture. Norma’s search results from Otis’s attack each time he gets the sound of Africa drum music. No sooner does the music begin to play again than Otis Hampton goes into the “chanting spell”. Norman records on tape Otis’s chant which is played later on to his shocked parents. Otis’s father engages the services of a white psychiatrist Dr. Fishbein who tries to address Otis’s predicament. The chants are a reminder of an uncompleted love song which needs to be readdressed. Seemingly inexperienced about the chant, Dr. Fishbein manages to dictate “certain strands that led to the contiguous point in family history.” It is to show how firmly Africans are connected to their history as ‘...do you like drums... Not really, I don’t like drums that much... Otis shakes his head, rather forcefully, Fishbein scribbles eyeing him. Silence... Otis, I can see you don’t like drums. Is there anything about drums that turns you off...? Well, I don’t know. Maybe just the noise... Right as I recall, it was the sound of the drums that upset you on two occasions... do you hear this sound from somewhere... There is a man, or maybe a woman. Saying things. A man, yes, a man. But I haven’t a clue who he is. Yes, he’s dancing, and their’s music. Many people. It’s very confusing; I can’t make out their faces. Men and women. But I can’t figure out any of them. Go, they look so weird. And, and they’re all in a strange place.... (2004: pp.53-4). The writer uses imagery and hallucination to depict the power or influence of the ancestors on their progeny in Africa. Otis hears voices and also sees imaginary faces drumming and dancing the African drum music. It is here that they discover the need for Otis to return to his roots where he finalises the ritual left uncompleted by his grandfather.

Otis’s chants make his parents know some of the hidden truth about Africa. Mrs. Hampton, from a cinema, had thought Africa to be a place where people live on trees and move naked. She insists to follow her son where ever he is to go. Mrs. Hampton is prepared to renegotiate her identity as well as her son’s. Fishbein’s idea of directing the Hamptons to Professor Broadway was to help them come up with a solution of their son’s problem; he speaks a language they do not understand, a situation which really disturbs them. Broadway, as Fishbein puts it, is specialized in the Yoruba language since he had lived in Yoruba land and can direct them on what to do to get solution to their son’s problem. The tape is reduced to a script with the help of a dictograph, by Broadway. With the aid of both the recorded

oral chant and script, Professor Broadway is able to tentatively conclude that Otis's "heavily corrupted test" is Yoruba-based song, otherwise known as "orikiorile" (a lineage panegyric chant). Despite using the latest trend in error analysis and transformational grammar, Broadway fails to bring the script to good semantic health. As usual with scholars, he refers Mr. Hampton (Otis's father) to a more informed and experienced hand in the profession, Professor Bolaji Alabi as it is written: '...Alabi brought Hampton closer than ever before to a native African. With every statement the scholar made, Hampton became steadily attuned to speech habits he could hardly have given the time of day...' (2004:p. 69)

Professor Alabi helps pave a way for the Hampton family to come up with a lasting solution to their son's predicament. Later on, he resolves the riddle, and in a lengthy but highly explanatory letter, explains to Mr. Hampton the problem with Otis: his chant "originated from somewhere in, possibly among the Ekiti, an ethnic sub group in north east Yoruba land." As a result, Otis, his father, and the psychiatrist Dr. Fishbein travel to Nigeria in order to solve Otis's problem. These emigrants are favourably treated in Nigeria. As immigrants they need to negotiate a new space in order to search for Otis's root. As soon as the party gets to Akure, Otis's instinct comes strangely alive. Thereafter, Otis directs the rest of the group to the very spot in Ijoko Odo force near Ikere Ekiti where the three generations had earlier lived where Akinbowale was set upon by slave raiders and taken away as a captive immigrant to the USA. Africans were taken forcefully out of their village. With the help of an herbalist Akinwunmi, the "search party" is able to trace Otis's ancestral homestead in the village and curiously enough, the old twin sisters are still alive. The Hamptons' migration to Nigeria becomes very eminent as the family negotiates their space in the Ijoko Odo community. After all their traumatic situations, Otis renegotiates his space in the family circle in particular and the village in general.

2. Conclusion

In conclusion, trauma, dispossession, Identity, Cultural hybridity and African diaspora play a very vital role in cultural heritage. Characters find themselves in situations that make them think of returning. It is evident that filial relationship still exists between the living and the dead as Otis and Kehinde are visited by their dead loved ones; this reshapes their lives in one way or the other. Even those forced out of their fatherland also struggle to trace their roots. They fight to give their lives a meaning no matter the conditions. The African and West Indian cultural identities are, therefore, important in the development of some key characters and ideologies in the novels. Both authors' narratives are so vivid and passionately strong enough to completely wipe out the Eurocentric view that Africa is an embodiment of evil, and a land without culture. It can be affirmed that, Isidore Okpewho's *Call Me By My Rightful Name*, and Buchi Emecheta's *Kehinde* are novels in which the differences between male and female immigrants in Britain and those Black Americans who travel back to Nigeria in search of their identity are in terms of their experiences in the process of border crossing and creating of space, and the comparative success of female immigrants in

achieving cultural adaptation can be observed. In the novels, the main characters are depicted as being adapted into the socio-cultural environment of the host country, while the male Nigerian character seems to be reluctant in coming to terms with the cultural norms of British society.

Thus, *Kehinde*, *Call Me By My Rightful Name*, could be considered a study of the blacks of the diasporic communities whose fortunes constantly ebb and flow. These works give the postcolonial African dilemma in foreign land amid other races and permits an understanding of the racial problems, such as the immigration and the resultant brain drain and the emergence of the new hybrid community. The postcolonial situation existing in the society is also portrayed through snatches of conversation in the novels. Thus, trauma, dispossession, identity and gender consciousness of both male and female characters become very important wherever the characters find themselves. Every human being needs freedom and they have to work for it.

Notes

- 1) Culture ties the living and the dead
- 2) One can never discard from his/her root
- 3) Hybridity brings in identity crises and consciousness

References

Primary sources

- [1] **EMERCHETA, B. (1994)**, *Kehinde*, London UK, Heinemann Educational Publishers (African Writers Series).
- [2] **OKPEWHO, I. (2004)**, *Call Me By My Rightful Name*, Trenton NJ, and Africa World Press.

Secondary sources

- [3] **ABARBANEL, J. (2009)**. *Moving with Emotional Resilience between and within Cultures*.
- [4] **ACHEBE, C. (1973)**. *Hopes and Impediments*. London, Heinemann. Intercultural Education, 20, S133-S141.
- [5] **ALUKO, T. (1983)**, *His Worshipful Majesty*, London, Heinemann.
- [6] **Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., and Tiffin, H. (1998)**, *Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literature, The Empire Writes Back*, New York, Routledge.
- [7] **ASHCROFT, B. et al, (1995)**, *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. London: Rutledge.
- [8] **ASHCROFT, B. et al, (2007)**, *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. London and New York, 20, p.231.
- [9] **BAUBOCK and FAIST (ed). (2010)**, *Diaspora and Transnationalism*, Concepts, Theories and Methods. Amsterdam, Amsterdam university press.
- [10] **BASCH, SCHILLER and BLANS. (1994)**, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and the Deterritorialized Nation- State*. New York: Gordon and Breach Publishers.
- [11] **BEDANA and LAISHRAM. (2014)**, *Search For Identity and Home* in Buchi Emecheta's novel *Second Class Citizen*, Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 19 (5), 32-35.
- [12] **BISHOP, R. (1990)**, *African Writers African Critics: the Forming of Critical Standards 1947-1966*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.

- [13] **BHABHA, H. (1984)**, *The Other' Question*, New York, Routledge.
- [14] **BHABHA, H. (1994)**, *The Location of Culture*, London:, New York, Routledge, p.79.
- [15] **Cesaire, A., 1969**, *Return to My Native Land*. Penguin.
- [16] **Cohen, R., 2008**, *Global Diasporas: An introduction*.Routledge: London.
- [17] **Conrad, J., 1971**, *Heart of Darkness*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Norton Critical Edition edited by R. Kimbrough, p. 311
- [18] **Culler J, 2005**, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*.Oxford University Press: Oxford: OUP UK.
- [19] **Cuddon, J. A. (ed.), 2013**, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. USA: Wiley Blackwell.
- [20] **Durham, Meenakahi Gigi and Douglas M. Kellner, 2006**, *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works* Revised Edition. USA: Blackwell Publishing, p. 212.
- [21] Karl Marx 1867, "Das Kapital", Vol. 1.
- [22] **Said, Edward W, 1993**, *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage
- [23], **1993**, *Culture and Imperialism*. New York.
- [24] **UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001**. - West, Cornel "The New Cultural Politics of difference" pp. 256-267 in Simon During (ed.)
- [25] **Winkelman, Michael, 1994**, "Cultural Shock and Adaptation" *Journal of Counseling and Development: JCD*. Vol.73. Issue 2: 121-132.
- [26] **Williams, Raymond, 1977**, *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Online Articles

- [27] **Achebe, C. 2011**, "The Politics of Interpretation: The Novels of Chinua Achebe". *Modern Fiction Studies*, 37 (3): 459 – 470.
- [28] **Akill, S. 2015**, —Feminine Rites of Passage and Masculine Rites of Return: A Gendered Reading of Cultural Transplantation in Buchi Emecheta's *Kehinde*.
<http://yunus.hacettepe.edu.tr/~sakilli/emecheta-paper.ht> (accessed 5/10/2015) web.