MIGRATION, DISILLUSIONMENT AND DIASPORIC EXPERIENCES IN CHIKA UNIGWE'S *PHOENIX*

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Abstract
The study entitled "Migration, Disillusionment and Diasporic Experiences in Chika Unigwe's *Phoenix* examines the idea of migration, the trials, ordeals, and vicissitudes that African migrants go through while abroad. It explores the factors that force migrants to scatter across foreign countries, including civil strife and forced displacement, insurgency, religious heterodoxy, political persecution, economic and educational reasons, exile, and asylum, among others. From the analysis, it is revealed that all the characters became disoriented and traumatized as a result of their trials and ordeals, coupled with failed dreams. It also reveals that the trials and ordeals of migrants leave them emotionally traumatized, psychologically disoriented, and psychically dehumanized. As a talented writer, Chika Unigwe shifts attention to the experiences of Nigerians in the diaspora. The novel portrays the realities of life rather than fantasy. The writer succeeds in presenting realistic accounts of what happens to Nigerians when they migrate to foreign nations. The responsibility now lies with readers and critics to read, appreciate, comprehend, comment on, and analyze the text using different and engaging critical approaches available to them.
Keywords: Diaspora, Disillusionemnt, Trauma, Culture, Migration, Hybridity

Introduction

A writer is usually seen as an observer in a society which he writes about. Writer is mostly a partaker of the events of which he writes about. Consequently, the Diasporic Literature writers have a great influence on the diasporic heritage in African writings. Diasporic or expatriate writing deals with native culture, language and identities written by the writers who live outside or away from their native country but their works would be related to their homeland, these writers are frequently lost in thought with the elements of nostalgia as they put themselves in a new place and culture which leads to a sense of loss and alienation. As a result, they started to record/narrate their experiences in the writings which is labelled as Diaspora. Diasporic writing remains the outsider looking in at the new culture but it is also an outsider to the homeland, looking in at a part of space that has changed in their absence. Diaspora Literature thus, involves an idea of a homeland, a place from where the displacement occurs and narratives of harsh journeys undertaken on account of economic compulsions. Basically Diaspora is a minority community living in exile. The word 'Diaspora' is traced back to its Greek root and to its appearance in the Old Testament (Deut: 28:25) as such it references God's intentions for the people of Israel to be dispersed across the world. *The word* with the Judic History, mentioning only two types of dispersal: The "Jews living dispersed among the gentiles after the captivity" and The Jewish Christians residing outside the Palestine. The dispersal, initially signifies the location of a fluid, human autonomous space involving a complex set of negotiations and exchange between the nostalgia and desire for the homeland and the making of a new home.

The term diaspora 'was initially and originally used to describe the process in which the Jewish community were uprooted from their homeland. This word is now applied as a metaphoric designation" for expatriates, refugees, exiles and immigrants. It refers to the work of exile and expatriates and all those who have experienced unsettlement and dislocation at the political, existential or metaphorical levels. Globalization has produced new patterns of migration and provoked divergent responses worldwide. The seemingly homogenizing effect of globalization cannot hide the different reponses it has prompted in the various regions within its reach. Questions of diaspora arise with particular force: tensions between internationalism and nationalism; the relationship

between place and identity; and the ways cultures and literatures interact. New patterns of mobility are being drawn on the familiar landscape of migration and exilic exclusions.

Migration from centres of capitalist economies to cosmopolitan pockets in the margins (first to 'second' or 'third' worlds), migration from deprived economies to lands of opportunities ('third' and 'second' worlds to 'first' world, or margins to the cosmopolitan centres within the 'third' world), seem fertile ground for new forms of identity politics. New articulations of diaspora, necessarily overlapping with familiar ways of conceptualizing it, have found their ways to literary writings.Different responses to migration, whether as an attendant phenomenon of globalization or a consequence of political persecution, ethnic cleansing or natural disasters are articulated in literature produced in places where diasporic communities exist. The interaction between the 'host' and 'immigrant' cultures, complicated by translation, asks new questions of identity politics and the issues involved. It also problematises conventional notions of literariness, bringing to the fore an urgent need to re-explore the ways in which aesthetics, politics and ethics intersect, and cultural differences delineate patterns of such intersection. It also asks new questions of how culture and literature interact, more particularly, how the overlapping of old and new patterns of voluntary and forced migration is re-mapping cultural and identity politics, literariness, and literary texts. Questions of identity politics arise out of migration, diaspora and exile. Identity politics driven by migration, diaspora and exile have in turn mapped literary imagination and produced literary writings of distinct characteristics.

The concept of Diaspora has become an informing principle for exploring works from a variety of geo-political locations. Reading texts in relation to a diasporic context is useful since it points to interrelatedness across geographic boundaries while simultaneously foregrounding the discreteness of linguistic, cultural and geo-political contexts, traditions and experiences. Rather than focusing on the familiar crises of alienation and globalisation, the focus here will be on exploring' the 'in-between spaces' opened up as a result of the diasporic experiences.
According to Cornel Ujowundu;

> In the tradition of Christianity, the fall of Satan from the heavens and humankind's separation from the Garden of Eden, metaphorically the separation from God constitute diasporic situations. Etymologically, 'Diaspora' with its connotative political weight is drawn from Greek meaning to disperse and signified voluntary or forcible movement of the people from the homeland into new regions. (68-69).

Under colonialism, "Diaspora" is a multifarious movement which involves: firstly, the temporary or permanent movement of Europeans all over the world, leading to colonial settlement. Consequently, the ensuing economic exploitation of the settled areas necessitated large amount of labour that could not be fulfilled by the local populace. This led to the Diaspora resulting from the enslavement of Africans and their relocation to places like the British colonies. After slavery was outlawed, the continued demand for workers created indenturement labour. This produces large bodies of the people from poor areas of India, China and others to the West Indies, Malaya Fiji, Eastern and Southern Africa, etc. These lies a difficulty in coming to terms with Diaspora, and as such it introduces conceptual categories to display the variety of meanings the word invokes. Robin Cohen conceptualises Diaspora as Victim Diasporas. Labour Diasporas. Imperial Diasporas, Trade Diasporas, Homeland Diasporas, Cultural Diasporas. Though in the age of technological advancement which has made travelling easier and the distance shorter, so the term Diaspora has lost its original connotation, yet simultaneously it has also emerged in another form healthier than the former. At first, it is concerned with human beings attached to the homelands. Their sense of yearning for the homeland, a curious attachment to its traditions, religions and languages give birth to diasporic literature which is primarily concerned with the individual's or community's attachment to the homeland. The migrant arrives 'unstuck from more than land'. He runs from pillar to post crossing the boundaries of time, memory and history carrying 'bundles and boxes' always with him, while holding unto the vision and dreams of returning to his homeland as and when he likes and finds fit to return.

The longing for the homeland is countered by the desire to belong to the new home, so the migrant remains a creature of the edge, 'the peripheral man'. According to Naipaul, the Indians are well aware that their journey to Trinidad 'had been final' but these tensions and throes remain a recurring theme in the Diasporic Literature; so too in the African literary sphere where the African writers abroad showcase their everyday struggle with the present existence and desire and dreams to reconnect with their past. Of course, millions of Nigerians have emigrated and a good number of others are still migrating to other parts of the world. These migrants and their descendants living in countries outside Nigeria make up the Nigerian diaspora. Early approaches to Nigerian diaspora were mainly focused on involuntary actions and decisions which deal with forceful uprooting of Nigerians to serve as

slaves in the West. This is illustrated in the autobiography of Olauda Equaino entitled *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olauda Equaino* and in the historical narrative of Bishop Ajayi Crowther. The account of their lives is imbued with a sharp critique of slavery and its effect on the individual.

The concept of diaspora has also been examined in relation to cultural, political, social, educational and literary representations, among others. Some examples are Simon Hall's *Culture, Identity and Diaspora*, Vertovec's *The Political Importance of Diaspora* and Panossian's *Between Ambivalence and Intrusion: Politics and Identity in Armenia* (1998) to mention a few. Although each one of them has adopted different historical and theoretical modalities, they have a common denominator: the opening of the term that once had been thought of as embodying a specific referent. This primary concern of these revisionist projects has been paralleled with the conjunction of the emergent schools of thought which includes post-structuralism, deconstructionism and post-colonialism, among others. They experimented with the creation of theoretical possibilities towards a proliferation of meanings and usages of the term in many aspects of human life. Such attraction also reflects the enigmatic power of the term as a constitutive aspect of human life. Fernandez for example, perceives diaspora as a notion that stimulates research in all directions as well as having a power to discover gaps and interrogates the nexus necessary between theory and practice. She believes that:

> diaspora can be managed meaningfully if we understand that it is in itself an open-source and that any attempt to limit its scope or its definition transgresses the boundaries of both its conceptual and epistemological framing. Diaspora is derived from the idea of scattering of seeds. As such the concept must be allowed to take root, transplant, cross-fertilise, rather than fossilise. (7)

Thus, in considering the history of diasporic literature, Abu-Shomar in *Critical Spaces of Diaspora for Liquid Post- Modernity* is of the view that:

> Literature of diasporas is an offshoot of diasporic experience. The assumption is that, for long, literature has been an integral part of postcolonial and diasporic experience which appears to be instrumental to our study of societies, cultures, historical momentum, and above all the critical discourses we sanctify to understand the human conditions (1).

In other words, the way the author in this study engage with the diasporic text might be broadly understood as an attempt to take in hand a revisionary approach to the stance of knowledge production and meaning-making in contemporary times. As Maniam (qtd in Dalai 2008, 8) declares: to understand the symbiosis between diasporic experience and the literature that grows in it, literature becomes a _device to decode the epistemology of diaspora (18). Diasporic literary experience appropriates reality not as an authoritative end, but rather as an ongoing process with heteroglossic and polyphonic implications and intentions. As the influence of diasporic literature is growing, it is pertinent to examine the contributions of diasporic writers not only to the literature of their homeland but also in the global context.

For example, in his *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism"*, Salman Rushdie perceives meaning as;

> a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people loved; perhaps it is because oursense of what is the case is constructed from such inadequate materials that we defend it so fiercely, even to death (73).

Maniam perceives the intersection of diaspora and literature as "a powerful apparatus in discovering the power of the text to decode the epistemology of diaspora. For him, fiction has been the exploration of the past, present, psychology, conflicts and ambitions of Indian diaspora" (218).

The theoretical frameworks for this study is Identity theory**.** According to Henry Patrick in Identity theory, the core of an identity is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associatedwith the role and its performance. These expectations and meanings form a set of standards that guide behavior. In addition, as McCall and Simmons make clear, the naming within identity theory includes all the things, including self and other that take on meaning in relation to our plans and activities.More recently, identity theorists have drawn on this meaningful relationship between persons andthings to incorporate the concept of resources, things that sustain persons and interactions as a central component in identity processes (Freese and Burke, 1994). Burke notes that "Much of the meaningful activitywithin a role that is governed by an identity revolves around the control of resources" (19);this feature as much as anything, defines social structure.

Identity theorists conceptualize the person identity in a manner similar to social identity theorists.The person identity is the set of meanings that are tied to and sustain the same way as Deaux believes that some person identities pervade all the membership groups to which one belongs. Stets attempts to link person identities to role identities by arguing that "the two may be related through a common system of meaning: the meanings of role identities overlap" (51). For example, a masculine gender (role) identity is linked to a mastery identity,"I am a competent person" through the shared meaning of control. Therefore, when one person acts to control another, this action is performed in the service of both a role and a person identity.Stets observes that when the meanings and expectations associated with role identities, individualsmay act without regard to the role identities so as to maintain person identities.

In identity theory, scholars have been concerned more about understanding the effect of persons'positions in the social structure on the likelihood that those persons will activate one identity ratherthan another, and less about the impact of the particular situation on that process. In connection with this concern, the idea of commitment to an identity was introduced into identity theory. Commitment has two aspects according to Stryker and Serpe. The first is quantitative- the numberof persons to whom one is tied through an identity. The more persons one is tied to by holding anidentity, he more likely it is that the identity will be activated in a situation. In brief, the stronger the commitment, the greater the salience is made to focus on its probabilistic nature, it becomes a characteristic of theidentity, not of the situation. Employing the view, identity theorists distinguish between the probability that an identity will be activated and that an identity actually will be played out in a situation.

Diasporic Experiences in Chika Unigwe's *Phoenix*

Chika Unigwe's *The Phoenix* is a novel that focuses on the existence of torture, a life of agony, the living dead and the full effects of untimely death on the bereaved ones. The novel records how Oge, the protagonist-narrator, feels after the tragic loss of her son, Jordi Eze Wouters.

In Unigwe's *The Phoenix*, the main issue remains the accentuation of the hostile condition Nigerians in an alien host nation face. Loneliness, as hinted earlier in this study, is a kind of disease, like cancer. However, it is obvious that Oge's role in the novel, as against that of her husband, is well worth the consideration we shall give it in this paper. Like the phoenix, Oge's life is indeed filled with amazing stories. The phoenix, an amazingly large bird of a timeworn fable, is believed to have burned itself after it reached 500years of age. It later arose from its own ashes and whenever it is mentioned in literature, the symbol of death and resurrection is evoked in the mind of the student of literature. The death of Oge's son and news of her diagnosis did not overshadow the fact that Unigwe presents her as a courageous woman in the novel.

In terms of structure, the novel is divided into eleven (11) chapters. The writer does not mark out the novel by denoting the chapters with proper title headings and chapter numbers, but one cannot fail to observe the eleven different sections/chapters as they are clearly indicated in the novel. The first chapter of the novel introduces the readers to Oge, in a train. She is embarking on a journey to the hospital where she is eventually diagnosed with cancer (22). This chapter begins with a one-word sentence: Damascus. And she refers to that fearful journey to the hospital as a "Damascus trip." This Damascus trip helps in revealing that the protagonist is not only a mother who loses her son, it also reveals that she is faced with a potentially terminal disease. She is likely going to die, like her son. Through discussion between Oge and other characters in the train, we learn of the ignorance of the Europeans who think that Africa is beautiful but poor. Contrary to their belief that Europe is a lot better than Africa, Oge knows that the house she shares with her husband in Belgium, Europe, is only as big as her father's guest house back home in Enugu, Nigeria

The novelist further reveals more about this woman's bravery and courage after the doctor drops "the word" about her cancer status. The information she gets may have sent a chill from the tip of her toe to the roots of her hair but she is determined to stay alive and mourn the death of the lovely son that she has already lost to the cold hands of death. Furthermore, we read of the queer system of giving birth and mothering in Europe, or what Oge calls Western curse. The new system in Europe, France in particular, is for women to give birth "under X" thereby producing children who are "floating, rootless, with nowhere for their tentacles to grasp" (37). In Africa, the reverse is the case, as women are always ready to take care of children, such that "when one mother is tired another takes over." In fact, there were several pairs of eyes watching each child in Africa.

The novelist also focuses specifically on how a character known as Angel is cremated after her death. Her mother and others around her believe that" it was AIDS that killed her" (61). Angel's death makes Oge to recall how her own son is cremated after he died. The strange reaction of Gunter, her husband, after he learns of her pregnancy is one of the major issues that are raised in chapter five. Oge's husband never really wanted to have a child with

Oge as shown by his action. He quickly cremates the boy's body after he was confirmed dead without informing his wife. She is left to imagine what was in the urn in the Vitrine in the sitting room. The urn, of course, had the dead boy's ashes. The narrative continues to dwell on the urn and what is in the urn in chapter six.

The narrator, who also doubles as the protagonist, focuses on issues of her Christian faith in chapter seven. She believes that her dead son will one day walk back to her alive by virtue of some "miracling" (113). She always speaks of the boy in the present while her husband talked about the boy in the past: "Jordi was a beautiful baby" (126). And this made Oge to hate her husband the more, as we read in chapter eight. On the first Christmas morning, after she learns of how cancer is eating her up, she discovers that the hatred has still not abated (130). Emphasis shifts to the visit of Oge's mother to Belgium in chapter nine. After arguing for days (and weeks) about the impropriety of his mother -in-law's visit, Oge's husband finally caves in. At least her coming would help "coax Oge into accepting" that Jordi is dead.

The story reaches its end with Oge's mother making her (Oge) understand that the boy's death does not signify the end of her own life. At least she has the cancer battle ahead of her, she accepts her fate. The internet becomes her refuge as she starts searching for information about cancer. This is the first major step she takes in her fight against the dreaded disease.

Oge's a young Nigerian who gets married to a whiteman from Belgium in Europe. She relocates with her husband to Belgium. On getting there, she realises that she needs to learn a new way of life from what she has been used to in Nigeria. Cultural and traditional differences leave her in a state of confusion. She conceives and gives birth to Jordi which is an accomplishment in a foreign land. However, Jordi dies when he falls from the stairs in his school. Oge refuses to accept that Jordi is dead. She continues to tell herself that he is asleep and will soon wake up. Oge becomes shattered and cannot control her mind. This act greatly irritates Gunter, her husband and it begins to tear up their marriage. Another issue is that she battles with a dreadful disease like cancer which takes over her and negatively affects her marriage. Gunter seems not to be able to put his wife back on track. The gulf between them widens when Gunter decides to cremate Jordi. To Oge, this culture is strange to her. In this vein, she becomes completely devastated. Her mother's intervention helps her to remove the burden of her son's death and restore her marriage.

To be able to access a woman's life succinctly, three basic areas are key, which are marriage, womanhood and motherhood. In most female writings, marriage is usually presented vividly as a tool for female enslavement. Marriage appears to be a battleground where her strength is shown as a wife and a mother. To further buttress this point, in Africa, marriage is every woman's greatest aspiration, while childbearing is a mark of fulfilment. Society expects women to pass the test of fertility and at the same time have children of both sexes because in Africa, according to Chukwuma in Imoh, "fertility is a continental flag and childlessness a terrible curse." At this juncture, one cannot fail to infer that the power of culture and tradition goes a long way in defining what obtains in different environments. In *Phoenix,* Oge finds herself in an environment, Belgium different from where she grows, Nigeria and learns the culture and tradition of womanhood. As she marries Gunter, a foreigner and moves to Europe, her African cultural and traditional expectations of a woman begin to crumble fast. She is alone without anyone around her to teach and guide her in the new environment's expectations of married woman. As she applies the teachings of her indigenous cultural and traditional expectations of a woman, wife and mother, she is met with disappointment. She becomes frustrated and disillusioned which makes Gunter tell her: "You need psychiatric help! You need counseling! He screamed back his eyes bulging out like a frogs". Jordi can't ever come back. He is ashes, he's gone! I do not care what any tin god tells you." (129) From the foregoing, it is depicted that society often defines as mad those whose speeches and actions do not align with acceptable standards, conventions and modes of behaviour of their community.

The locale setting of the narrative moves from rural area to an urban setting. Oge shows her state of evolving from passivity and acquiescence to self-assertion and even rebellion as the White culture allows. In the process of her battle against patriarchy (Gunter) following Gunter's cremation of the corpse of their late son, she starts to lose her consciousness to depression and battles with cancer: "it had started the day of Jordi's funeral… when the urn arrived with Jordi's remains, and he told her what it was, she had gone livid with rage." (149) From the following, Oge sees no reason for Gunter's action. This is strange to her cultural inclination of burying a child. She interprets this act of his differently, due to cultural differences. The same thing happens when she loses her son, Jordi. She remains alone to mourn the death of her son. In African tradition, people rally round such a woman to comfort and counsel her to get pregnant quickly so as to forget the demise of the other son. The narrator states that:

> Nobody should mourn the death of a child alone, she had told Doc. But he had told her that Oge was married to a European, and they did things differently. People who had coffee and tea at funeral were bound to mourn in a different way. (140)

In African culture, the reverse is the case; a bereaved person expresses his/her grief and people rally round such to console her. Soothing words are given to help them recover psychologically and emotionally. The following captures the cultural differences; "A wife who did not collapse in loud tears accompanied with the necessary moaning and praise- singing at a husband's burial was simply announcing that she was responsible for his death (140). From the foregoing, people of different cultures see things from different points of view. This is the reason why Oge finds it difficult to understand her husband, and Oge misunderstands her husband. She takes his calmness at the face of their son's death for an attitude of indifference. This behaviour really hurts and torments Oge, but her impression about her husband's behaviour at the death of their son is false. It is a problem of cultural differences.

Furthermore, migration in the era of globalisation is at the peak of human existence. This is as a result of insecurity situation in third world nations. According to Oguibe (2004), people leave their countries for another not because home is inhospitable, but because they are under the leadership of selfish people who do not mind destroying the country and her citizens. The rigours of political instability, hardship, economic instability and poor living condition are some of the reasons why people voluntarily or involuntarily seek greener pastures. In Unigwe's *Phoenix*, living in the diaspora is a pivotal point. A sense of exile is equally worthy of note.

In *Phoenix*, when Oge remembers that in her homeland, such a disease as cancer will be refuted by saying "return to sender" (26). When her friend Angel dies of HIV/AIDS, Oge's mother counsels her by telling her that: "fantasies die… Realities live", Oge, fantasies die "Realities live". Then he had put the coin in your palm and walked out of the room. The coin was dull. Fantasies die. Realities live. (67).

Oge holds a strong affiliation with her homeland that she recalls her parents, especially her mother; her friends, growing up in Enugu as well as her past life. At this point in Oge's life, she craves for female bonding; her mother and her late friend. This is a tenet of womanism. The relationship that will help her at this level of psychological pain, goes beyond what her husband can offer her. Motherhood and sisterhood are well explored to fill a vacuum in Oge's life. She tells these experiences in a painful, injurious and frustrating manner. Oge suspects her husband, Gunters is into an illicit relationship but cannot prove it saying: Often you want to cry. You had no physical proof that Gunter was seeing another woman, yet you were certain that he was. Women always know when their partners are cheating on them. It is an instinct those women are born with; your mother said all the time" (70) Oge further says; "You missed Angel. You missed not having friends" (73) "You were never lonely in Enugu. Here, loneliness has become your way of life. (74)

Oge has an impression that is false about her husband about infidelity. This eventually turns out to be wrong. Her mother's intervention helps to restore sanctity in Oge and Gunter's marriage. The interaction between two or more different cultures is an experience for migrants. As people cross into different borders and cultures, so also different languages are crossed. As Brah explicates: "multiculturalism carries the distinctly problematic baggage of being part of a monitorising impulse" … and used as synonym for minority cultures." (229-230) Therefore, interference with another language, culture and people brings about a different identity which is responsible for changes in the image of people especially women. This situation becomes antithetically complex as the migrant is neither here nor there totally. In *Phoenix*, many things become strange to Oge. Due to the fact that she gets married to a man from Belgium, she needs to adapt to her new space. For this reason, the syndrome of never completely here and most definitely not there (hybridity) comes to play. Oge finds it difficult to completely adapt to the ways of the whites. She often times have reasons to remember her homeland. The kind of friendship between Oge and Lisa cannot be compared with that of her late Nigerian friend Angel. Oge tells of her experience with her Belgium friend: "You were not friends enough to go beyond each other's kitchen. You could not tell her about Gunter. Or later, about your cancer. She was a constant reminder that the parameters of friendship were different in your new environment". (75)

She further explains the strange way of friendship in her new environment. "they marked their boundaries and it was difficult for an outsider to penetrate: husbands held wives across their waists as they strolled. Parents held on to children." (73) Lisa's friendship with Oge is such that she is not interested in sharing her friend's grief or sorrow. She defines the limit to their friendship as well as the tempo. Lisa tells Oge about her parents and how they separate from each other. Oge receives this piece of information to mean Lisa cannot be as supportive as a Nigerian friend:

> Lisa told you all of this without crying. She delivered this bit of information in such a way that you knew, without her saying anything of the sort that you were not to ever refer to it again. You also knew at that moment, that she was telling you that she did not have any room left to carry another person's grief. She had enough of her own sorrow to last her a lifetime. You knew, even before she went back to her normal questions, that she was making a tacit agreement with you that you were never to bother each other with your personal emotional baggage (78)

From the above, it is seen that the type of friendship in Oge's homeland is quite different from what obtains in Belgium with Lisa. Looking at culture through the diasporic space, Brah (1996) defines culture as the play of signifying practices; the idiom in which social meaning is constituted, appropriated, constructed and transformed; the space where the entanglement of subjectivity, identity and politic is performed. (234)

The interplay of one's religion, beliefs, dressing and language takes an important position in locating the cultural bearer. Similarly, culture is a tool for identification. It also reveals the politics of identity and belonging. In the case of a migrant, a double cultural identity might be imbibed and embraced. This double identity and consciousness become joining two different cultures in one individual. Cultural belongings are very crucial to identification; it is an attempt to kick against the process of exclusion. To defend this, they accept elements of the new world culture as a way out of marginalisation. This situation creates a new image in the protagonist (Oge).
Oge finds some things in her husband's country as different. These scenarios make her feel aloof most times. For instance, no guest can just visit uninvited, whereas, the reverse is the case in Nigeria. This cultural difference is shocking to Oge as she declares: "Your father-in-law called a week in advance to arrange a visit. Gunter will note it in his diary. He would tell you, Darling, Pa is coming on Saturday. I have asked him to stay for supper." (74)
Oge sees another difference in her husband's culture when Lisa tells her:

> I never get lonely, she said smiling and kissing Pipo, her black Labrador which walked into the kitchen at that moment. "Pipo keeps me company, don't you beautiful? I would go mad, gele, if I had to live all alone" Pipo brought out a long tongue dripping with Ogbono-like saliva and licked her face. Lisa called him a good boy and rubbed his head. (75)

Oge then concludes that if her mother or father sees such an action of someone kissing a dog, "she would classify her as disturbed." (75) Another instance of clash of cultures Oge identifies, has to do with the number of children whites give birth to. Oge tells Lisa that "she comes from a large family and she has three brothers and a sister". Their conversation goes thus:
Do you come from a large family?
"Yes"
"Oh Very African"
She smiled across a coffee mug. Black. No sugar. No milk.
"How many brothers do you have?" She pressed on.
"Three"
"Sisters?"
"One". (43)
Lisa replies Oge that she is the only child and that "one child is enough for us in this country. We do not have the stamina of African mothers." (43) As far as Oge is concerned, the white women should have more children than African women. However, due to dwindling economical situations, Africans are imbibing this concept of few children. How much more trouble did it take to raise a few more children when one had everything to ease the job for them: Washing machine. Drying machine. Self-cleaning oven. Food in tins. Drinks in cans. Microwave oven. Running water. Electricity. Everything conveniently packaged in this place of convenience. (43)
Due to loneliness and a nostalgic feeling, Oge declares: "I am looking for my old life" (104) Oge becomes really homesick that her hope suddenly becomes a dream and fizzles away. She experiences stress and tension, yet she cannot return home as a divorced woman:
But where will you move to? You could not move back to Nigeria. Your parents would not welcome you back with open arms. A divorced daughter! Anyway, how could you move back home after six years of marriage? (106)

Divorce is alien to African culture as it is seen beyond the fusion of the bride and the groom, but the two families are joined together as one. Therefore, when a problem arises between the couple, settlement is the most appropriate solution. From the above, Oge has to imbibe some aspects of her husband's culture to give peace a chance. Gunter equally exemplifies this trait when they are preparing for their marriage; he has no choice than to purchase all Oge's family demands. By the time Oge listens to her mother and accepts that which Gunter tries very hard to pass across to her; that Jordi is dead, Peace returns into their relationship and their marriage. Eventually, a nearly

disintegrated home and marriage goes through a healing process as Oge states: "Last night, for the first time in an entire year, Gunter and I slept close to each other." (183)

Conclusion

African literature has, no doubt, achieved a significant milestone, especially in the postcolonial era. Upon the attainment of independence and self-rule by most African states, the literary preoccupations and attention of many African scholars and writers were no longer dominated by the quest for political freedom and socio-cultural emancipation from European imperialism. Rather, they shifted to new areas of interest that focused more on raising the social consciousness and awareness of the people of these newly independent states. One of the numerous issues that these African writers have sought to bring to the fore is the question of home, belonging, identity renegotiation, and how these can help foster peace, unity, and development in a heterogeneous society such as Nigeria, which reflects one of the features of African society.

While some writers have merely paid lip service to this pressing issue, others have, through their writings, committed themselves to the fight against every form of marginalization, subjugation, discrimination, and relegation of non-indigenes, also known as settlers, in states other than their ancestral homes.

This paper sets out to examine the diasporic challenges and experiences of Black migrants in other parts of the world with reference to the selected novel under study. The novelist's artistic response to the experiences of migrants benefits from personal experiences as immigrants in some of these countries. This explains their narrative passion and their physical and psychological proximity to the characters and the events that affect them. Their exploration of various aspects of the diasporic experience provides different perspectives and images of the countries involved, ranging from the depressingly negative to the endearingly positive. However, their crucial pan-African advice for immigrants is that they should take advantage of the positive opportunities that the diaspora generously presents while giving back as little as possible in ways that may compromise their cultural dignity.
The novelist portrays the lives of Nigerians who have lived overseas and attempted to imbibe Western culture more intensely than the Westerners themselves in order to survive in a hostile environment. The novel exposes how self-conceited some individuals become in their attempts to speak, dress, and live like white people. They acculturate themselves into the white man's lifestyle to the extent that they lose touch with their own identity. They become what the Igbo call *usu* (the bat), which, according to folktale, belongs neither to terrestrial animals nor to birds. Having lost their pride of place, they pass through many difficulties, including death, in their struggle for survival and self-identity. Their search for identity narrows down to the quest for survival and the effort to fulfill their responsibilities. The principal characters in the novel demonstrate how determined individuals can be in their search for identity and dignity.

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