



AFFILIATED SELF AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RELATIONS IN OKPEWHO'S *CALL ME BY MY RIGHTFUL NAME* AND ARMAH'S *OSIRIS RISING*.

Ngozi Jacinta Ozoh

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria.

Dept of English Language and Literature.

nj.ozoh@unizik.edu.ng

08036663456

Abstract

*The stories of Africans affirm a lot of economic, social and political changes from precolonial period to the present era. Africans migrate and most of them find themselves in dilemma and may rush back home. African migration is now in quadrangle form, in addition to leaving the country and working there, there is this last stage which is homecoming. Using qualitative method of research, this work examines the psychological dispositions of the characters at home (Africa) when they finally return home through a comparative study of Okpewho's *Call me by My Rightful Name* and Armah's *Osiris Rising*. Analyzing the work with trauma theory, the researcher looks at the relationship between the individual and his or her nation of origin and the working of filiation and affiliation in contemporary Africa. The findings reveal that transnational migration is a perennial issue in Africa and a lot of returnees face psychological issues that may be fatal.*

Keywords: *Migration, Homecoming, Dilemma, Filiation, Affiliation*

Introduction

Thomas Bonnici views a diaspora community as a 'many-tongued chorus' with their separate histories linked together. In his article, 'Caryl Phillip's *Crossing the River* (1993): Tensions in Diaspora, Displacement and Split Subjects' he writes that there are

two types of diaspora which are forced (involuntary) and modern (voluntary) diasporas (131). Migration reveals variety of experiences, a state of mind and a sense of identity. Migration is the movement of indigenous people or a population of common people to a place other than their



homeland region and its experience or tensions is all about what migrants face while in the diaspora and after they return to their motherland.

Academic discourse on diaspora started in North America among African descent - W.E. Burghardt Du Bois published *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903 where he writes that '... slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice....' (5). *The Negro* in 1915 and Carter G. Woodson founded the Association of Negro Life and History and a journal - The Journal of Negro history in 1915. Du Bois as a member of Pan African Movement, tried to bring Negroes all over the world together. After analyzing immigrants problems, Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folks*, chapter two declares that 'the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour-line' (9), wondering what the future of black folks outside Africa would look like as he writes

that the Negro is born with a veil and in 'a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness. ...One ever feels his twines - an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideas in one dark body...' (4). He goes ahead to write that '... the black man's turning hither and thither in hesitant and doubtful striving has often made his very strength to lose effectiveness, to seem like absence of power, like weakness. And yet it is not weakness, - it is the contradiction of double aims' (5). Compulsory and voluntary African migrations have been in existence for many years in different parts of the world. Compulsory African migration is the triangular system of diaspora which is between Africa, America and Europe and voluntary African migration which is popular



because of political, social, cultural and economic relations does not end at triangular system but adds one more system which makes it a quadrangle which is between Africa, America, Europe and back to Africa which is what the two novels under study is all about. The authors believe that slaves and African-Americans ought to look for their actual root and go back to Africa. Bernard Logan believes that the largest number of African migrants comes from countries with 'a large population; a pro-western, capitalist outlook; speakers of English, unstable economic conditions; ...and a colonial legacy that had not been too culturally dominant' (603). Two major events that have left a permanent and deep scar in the history of Africa and Africans are slavery and colonization. These two events are reflected in postcolonial literature which hinges on migration and African literatures. Slavery was the first means of contact the whites had

with Africans, this ugly experience according to Opatá Damain, 'leads one to a change of identity' (84). Slavery according to Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, 'enables an alternative vision of cross-culture fertilization, hybridity, and diasporas... chart the migration, displacement, borrowing, affinities and affiliations that link black intellectuals to the project of the enlightenment' (122).

Today, Africans still migrate to other countries - both African and non-African countries. Colin Palmer is of the view that immigrants face oppression and alienation in their new countries. The American president, Donald Trump expressed his feelings towards immigrants in his country. Shear and Davis in their article 'Stoking Fears, Trump Defied Bureaucracy to advanced Immigration Agenda' said that Donald Trump in 2014 tweeted 'Our government now imports illegal immigrants and deadly diseases. Our leaders are inept.' In the same article, the president



said that Nigerians would never 'go back to their huts' in Africa once they see America, According to Daily Sun, Friday, January 19th 2018, Donald Trump remarks that" once Nigerians had seen America they would never 'go back to their huts" in Africa (17).

Immigrants have emotional attachment to their ancestral home. The African diaspora under study here is the one caused by slave trade and colonization and voluntary movement of Africans (started in the 19th century). This constitutes millions of Africans who are united by racial oppression and they fight against it. They are challenged with the of realizing themselves as they brought their different culture, histories, ideas and worldviews with them and their influences depend on their experiences as slaves and histories of the societies where they come from. African immigrants in England, Canada, United States of America

and Germany form a distinct minority while they comprise the, overwhelming majority in Haiti and Jamaica. Therefore, blacks in America who usually occupy a minority status are seriously marginalized. Palmer classified African diaspora into six groups. Three groups belong to the prehistoric ancient times (formed before the construction of colonial states) and the remaining three belong to the modern times which are associated with the Indian Ocean slave trade to Asia, the Atlantic slave trade to the Americas and voluntary movement of Africans to different parts of the world. The last group is pertinent to this study. Orabueze carried out a research on the dispossessed in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* using a systematic critical approach to reveal the various causes, forms and consequences of dispossession even at home. She used Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach to



explain the intra-psycho forces in different characters in the two literary texts used for the study and Marxist critical model to look into political and economic dispossession of the characters. She equally uses Julia Kristeva's semiotic approach to show characters with psychological problems because they abandoned their culture. She arrives at the conclusion that the dispossessed are subjected to psychopathological disorders because of the dispossession challenges they face. Thompson in his research on 'The consequences of African American dispossession' looks at the 20th century African Americans who were confined to ghetto areas because of racial discrimination and in the latter part of the same century, deconstruction of black communities was carried out and it led to the displacement of large numbers of African Americans. His work looks at dispossession of blacks due to urban renewal and the problems blacks face

by this singular action. The study is meaningful to the present research because it talks about the physical psychological effect of the displaced Africans. This work examines two texts showcasing the major characters' psychological ordeal.

Trauma theory

Trauma theory came into existence in the 1990s by Cathy Caruth, Kali Tal, Geoffrey Hartman, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub with the publication of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*. Caruth in her book writes that trauma happens in such a way that 'it is precisely not known in the first instance - returns to haunt the survivor later on' (4), this shows the psychological dimensions of trauma. Tal's book examines how the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, sexual abuse and incest have raised serious debate in



American culture. The two books highlight the voices of the people that survive trauma. Mohd Nazri Latiff Azmi and Cathy Caruth suggest that trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language (58). Trauma theory is linked to different disciplines and fields of study like literature, history, psychoanalysis, sociology, anthropology, psychology and psychiatry which actually affect different areas of human experiences. Charles Graybell is of the view that trauma theory is concerned with how the traumatic experiences of authors have affected their literary works. Caruth explains that 'trauma is experienced as the literal registration of an event... Modern neurobiologists have in fact suggested that the unerring 'engraving' on the mind, the 'etching into brain' of an event in trauma may be associated with its elision of its normal encoding in memory' (152-153). Novels

therefore do this by describing the environment where the action (trauma) takes place to explain trauma in a literary work because the environment helps in evaluating the character's history and cultural history which actually defines the character's identity. Trauma novels portray serious fear in characters. Balaev defines trauma as

“...a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event thg disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society. The term 'trauma level' refers to a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or intense fear on individual or collective levels... (It) is the transformation of the self ignited by an external, often



terrifying experience, which illuminates the process of coming to terms with the dynamics of memory that inform the new perceptions of the self and world... The event may include... the intimately personal experience of female sexual violence....The idea that traumatic experience

pathologically 'f divides identity is employed by the literary scholar as a metaphor to describe the degree of damage done to the individual's coherent sense of self and the change of consciousness caused by the experience. (Internet)"

Consequently, in considering the discourse of postcolonialism within the two texts under

study, the researcher analyzes the texts as regards the relationship between homecoming and Diaspora. This is referred to as the major concern of the researcher to explicate homecoming tensions- identity, bad governance, displacement and dispossession as the major causes of trauma and themes when they return home in the postcolonial texts.

Effects of migration

'The 9/11 Terrorist Attack and Overseas Travel to the United States: Initial Impacts and Longer-Run Recovery' by Derekh Cornwell and Bryan Roberts is of the view that the American national security was negatively affected. The inflow of people from overseas to America dropped due to their questionable security outfit and the safety of international air travelers. Following 9/11, there was probably a decrease in tourism to the United States due to economic concerns as well. According to



Schüller (2016), 9/11 altered public perceptions of immigrants not just in the United States but also in Canada and Germany. Castanho Silva (2018), writes that xenophobic violence against immigrants escalated as several nations set more stringent immigration laws. ‘Xenophobia: A Pervasive Crisis in Post-Apartheid South Africa’ written by Bastien Dratwa on May 26, 2024 explains how South Africans ‘shut down immigrant-owned shops without offering any alternative assistance. The government also deported and detained migrants in refugee and asylum centers. While xenophobia has intensified in South Africa during COVID-19’. In the United States of America right now more restrictive and rigid rules are introduced by the day by Mr Trump – illegal immigrants are threatened to be deported. In an article titled ‘Trump signs order aimed at ending benefits for some immigrants’ by Elliot Spagat, Trump signed

an order to end government benefits for illegal migrants in the US (2025). Nadine Yousif in his write up ‘Six big immigration changes under Trump – and their impact so far’, on 25 January 2025 and updated on 27 January 2025, explained Trump orders which include deportation of migrants, Halting the processing of migrants and asylum seekers, Cancelling existing migrants’ appointments and others. In general, migration has a significant socioeconomic and political impact on both the countries of origin and destination as well as the migrants themselves (Appleton et al. 2006; Vinokur 2006; Zembylas 2012).

All these culminate to psychological issues on migrants which make them uncomfortable outside their countries and in their countries when they finally return home.

Return, Readmission and Reintegration

Nwt, Ast's grandmother, in *Osiris Rising* encourages her to search for her real self. Ast



decides to search for her identity and root after her Ph.D. in New York. This singular thought brought her home (Africa). She travelled down to Africa but her trauma started at the airport where she was arrested immediately she landed because an article 'who we are and why' is found in her possession. She is interrogated at the Airport and later taken to the Deputy Director of the country's security office for further questioning. Surprisingly, the DD (Deputy Director) of this security office is Seth Spencer Soja, Ast's former school mate in the university. Seth told her that the article she has is one of the series of such articles which work to discredit the present authority and it is his work as the Chief Security Officer to identify, locate, isolate and neutralize such people. DD warns Ast to stay clear From Asar (another of their classmate in US who is settled in Africa and a revolutionist), offers her well furnished apartment or villa with all

amenities and appliances but she declines his offer. Ast later settles in a hotel [Hapi hotel]. DD traces her to that place and tried raping her but did not succeed Cinque [Sheldon Tubman] is an African-American who comes down from America to help liberate Africa but after one year he gets broke and the security agents picks him up, sponsors him by giving him , comfortable accommodation. Cinque uses his place as an orientation center for Americans seeking African roots. There, Cinque practices, slave trade. Nazism, and negritude which against his original plan.

Ast finally meets Asar in Manda and secures a job in TTC Manda. DD later visits Ast in apartment in the college where he tries to rape her again but Asar came in to save her. She is again traumatized. Prof Woolley, a teacher in TTC Manda was bribed to report any development that could a threat to the government, to suggest ways to neutralize the



potential threats and to avenge the source of the articles by offering him an advisory operative in the new state rarity service with a regular monthly honorarium slightly above his salary as a professor, duties are Prof, wrote a secret report to SSS that Asar was the danger. He gave them Asar's profile. Ast and Asar later get married. On getting back they met the fake Ethiopian black American working for Ras (the wicked security government agent) on Ast's door claiming to be on transit on his way back to New York. He begs to stay with Asar for two weeks while he waits for his flight. Curfew was placed in town as the head of state escaped assassination by unknown hoodlums. The weapons used by the assassins were identified as an AK 47 semi-automatic rifle and assassins drop an article bearing the ankh emblem and a draft plan of a revolutionary takeover of the country. The plan bore a code named OSIRIS. DD leads his men to search Asar's apartment in the

presence of the VC and Prof. Woollen. On searching the house, fake Ethiopian's briefcase was found, opened and two large pairs of binoculars, two AK 47s and magazines are found inside. Another traumatic experience for Ast is that she is arrested while pregnant for Asar and is taken away to Bara. When Ast looks from her boat to see Asar, she shouts from her boat to tell Asar in his own boat that it is a set-up. But, it is too late; DD's men shoot Asar dead in her presence (another trauma). Asar *fell* into the water and was no more. Her husband is killed right before her.

Otis in *Call Me By My Rightful Name* is a black American who at his twenty first birthday starts hearing mysterious drumming which destabilizes him as it compels him to behave abnormally whenever he hears the drumming. This is the trauma that he could not understand and this traumatizes the whole family as his speech becomes



incomprehensible to other people. He hears messages concerning his origin all the time since he started being in trance. Doctor Fishbein, a psychiatrist advises them to go back to Africa as it is the only solution. ‘I think the solution to your son’s problem does not lie in this country... Dr Fishbein is certain that the cure for his son’s problem lies in Africa...’ (73). The trauma of going to Africa left Otis’ mother dumbfounded and frustrated as she believes that it is a ‘zoo’. Later, Mr Hampton, Otis and Dr. Fishbein visit Nigeria to look for Otis’ identity and understand Otis language when in trance. In Africa, Otis faces another kind of trauma as he fights as a teacher with other Nigerian teachers in Ogun State because they see him as ‘been to’.

Kehinde and Taiwo, believed to be Otis paternal grandfather’s sisters, explore Otis body and confirm that he is one of them because of the birthmarks found on him. The

twins finally interpret the chant p.142-143. Their brother was twenty one years old when he was captured that is Otis exact age now. For Otis to be normal again, he should remain in their place, learn their language, culture and finish his chanting (song) ceremony, he also learns about ‘Ifa’ To do this, the twins will arrange a repeat of the ceremony. Otis father and the doctor later went back to the United States of America. Otis stays in Ijoko-Odo from 1964-1966. Otis is initiated into the cult of strong men and the ceremony proper later took place with the trio-Otis and the twins chanting, they gave Otis a Yoruba name, Akinbowale, their brother’s name. The twins later died same day. Mr and Mrs Hampton, Dr Fishbein and Norma visit Nigeria during their burial ceremony because Mr Hampton [Otis father] would dance a special dance as the oldest surviving member of their family p234. Mr Hampton was given a chieftaincy title. Otis faces another trauma



when his new house in Ijoko-Odo [still under construction] is demolished by unknown men. Otis finally goes back to US on January 29th 1966. Oti's plan is to come back sometime and build a hall in their family land to be donated to the new administration as a public memorial in honour of the twins. The hall will be called 'Itayemi hall'. Norma and Otis later get engaged and while trying to protect the interests of blacks in America are arrested and rough handled by the police in the US. The return of Ast and Otis contradicts the circumstances and their expectations. The condition that they meet Africa in on their return is contrary to their expectations. Fazal and Tsagarousianou ask 'when does a location become a home?', how can one distinguish between 'feeling at home and staking a claim to a place as one's own?' (12) To them the relationship to many locations through geographical and cultural boundaries is essential in diasporic notions of home. To

Ahmed et al, imagined fragments are pieced together as a wholly imagined home (9).

Way forward

Education they say is the key to success. People being well equipped with education and good jobs will drastically reduce migration especially in the third world countries. Provision of education and good jobs might come from very rich individuals and not compulsory that it must come from government. Government should equally provide security for every individual to enable people feel at home and relaxed to pursue their dreams at home. Government should create awareness and sensitize the populace concerning the disadvantages of migration especially those who migrate through the desert out of desperation.

Conclusion

A predominant theme In African postcolonial literature is leaving home and returning home. It becomes necessary to ask ourselves



what 'home' and 'return' mean to the migrants and contemporary literature. For migrants to exercise peace of mind, they must actualize their dreams whether at home or in diaspora. Otis, Ast, Asar, Chip McAdoo, and Tim Dubitsky are happier with themselves for achieving their dreams but the psychological issues they all experience in Africa left them confused. Though Otis stays to fight his way through, Asar was killed and Ast is left more confused in Africa. The two protagonists come back to Africa to meet difficult circumstances but one common thing between them is that they all find it difficult to adapt to 'new Africa'.

References

- Appleton J J; Sandra L. C; Dongjin K; Amy L. R. (2006) 'Measuring cognitive and psychological engagement: Validation of the Student Engagement Instrument', *Journal of School Psychology*, 44 (2006) 427-445.
- Armah, A.K. (1995). *Osiris Rising*. Senegal. Per Ankh, Popenguine.
- Balaev. Michelle (2014). 'Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered' *Contemporary Approachs In Literary Criticism*. (Ed) New York, Palgrave Macmillian, 2014 pp 36-172
- Balaev. Michelle (2008). "Trends in literary Trauma theory", *mosaic* 41(2) Retrieved from <https://www.questia.com/read/191-232581188/trends-in-literary-trauma-theory>. 2008.
- Bastien Dratwa (2024) 'Xenophobia: A Pervasive Crisis in Post-Apartheid South Africa'. May 26, 2024. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2024/05/26/xenophobia-a-pervasive-crisis-in-post-apartheid-south-africa/&ved=2ahUKEwiLtNGfz9OLAxXoS0EAHQK9IHAQFnoECBMQAQ&usq=AOvVaw2a-7iH8qxABoWAPm4on7-z>
- Bonnici, Thomas.(2006)"Carl Philips's Crossing the River (1993): Tensions in Diaspora, Displacement and split Subjects'. *Dialogos*, Vol 10, num. 2, Brasil, Universidade Estadual de Maringa, 2006. Pp 127-148.
- Carter. Sean. (2005) 'The Geopolitics of Diaspora', *Area*. Vol 37. No 1, 2005, pp 54-63.
- Derekh Cornwell and Bryan Roberts (2023) 'The 9/11 Terrorist Attack and Overseas Travel to the United States:



- Initial Impacts and Longer-Run Recovery*.
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://ohss.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/9_11%252520and%252520Travel%252520to%252520US%2525202010.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwibuYyWy9OLAxWhT0EAHfQROA8QFnoECCUQAQ&usg=AOvVaw0ck_MoHjfrNII5MGfqNK_2
- Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt.(1976). *The Souls of Black Folk*, Atlanta, January, . Pp 1-34.
- Elliot Spagat,(2025). *'Trump signs order aimed at ending benefits for some immigrants'*
https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://apnews.com/article/trump-immigration-public-benefits-medicaid-parole-0b5c8045efcf4b4c865de606fee857b5&ved=2ahUKEwjcrjz9OLAxX1Q0EAHao3N5sQ0PADKAB6BAgTEAE&usg=AOvVaw3iqQ2u263oo0bZm8Fz_Tco
- Fazal, S. ; R. Tsagarousianou. (2002) *Translational Cultural Practices and Communicative Spaces*, *Javnost*, Vol IX (1), 2002. Pp 21-56.
- Logan, Bernard, (1987)'The Reverse Transfer of Technology from Sub-Saharan Africa to the United States', *Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol 25 no 4, p 603
- Nadine Yousif (2025). *'Six big immigration changes under Trump – and their impact so far'*,<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clyn2p8x2eyo&ved=2ahUKEwie4YSF0dOLAxUWWkEAHRJsGHAQFnoECBMQAQ&usg=AOvVaw2dMZ6LUBb4KaFaguIu67ZR>
- Okpewho, Isidore.(2004). *Call Me By My Rightful Name*. Trenton NJ, Africa World Press.
- Orabueze, Florence O.(2004). *'Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus: An Allegorical Story of Man's Struggle for Freedom.'* *Nsukka Journal of The Humanities*. 14, Pp 220-243.
- Opatá, Damain U. (1990). *'Chinua Achebe: The Writer and a Sense of History.'* *Eagle on Iroko: Selected Papers from Chinua Achebe International Symposium, 1990*. Ed. Edith Ihekweazu. Ibadan: Heinemann, 1990. Pp 56-69.
- Palmer, Colin.(2015) *'The African Diaspora.'* *The Black Scholar: Journal of Black Research*. Vol 30, 2000, Issue 3-4. 14th April, 2015. Pp 56-59.