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THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN DEVELOPMENT: THE PORTRAIT OF AFRICAN DIASPORIC INVOLVEMENT IN AMMA DARKO'S *BEYOND THE HORIZON* AND AKACHI ADIMORA-EZEIGBO'S *TRAFFICKED*

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Abstract

Critics of every literary persuasion acknowledge the relationship between literature and the society which brings it into being; with the view that literary art is not merely for its own sake and intent, but also a potential tool for the development of humanity. Diasporic issues are global phenomena which centre on the experiences of people who leave their homelands in search of greener pastures, which amount to crisis and estrangement. The study investigates the issues of disenchantment of the twenty-first century African women characters in the fictional works of Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*, who interact with diasporic environment, as well as the survival strategies they employed in relation to aggression, segregation and discrimination. As a study of diasporic experiences, this paper adopts postcolonial concept as the theoretical basis for the evaluation of how the female characters in the selected novels contend with the challenges of human mobility from the postcolonial standpoint; investigates how the environment shapes and influences their temperament. The study concludes that the relationship between literature and discourses like diasporic experiences is for self-identity and transformation. Finally, the paper reveals that the causes and effects in relations to diaspora experiences for individuals who leave their country in search of greener pastures remain as outsiders in terms of the sagacity of belonging.

Keywords: Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, Alienation, Amma Darko, Migration, National Development, Victimization

Introduction

The issue of migration is one of twenty-first-century global phenomenon and a prominent concern in contemporary literary discourse because of the challenges of mobility of human nature. Migration is the movement of a person or individuals from one geographical location to another because of diverse reasons and it allots the traveler an immigrant status, depending on the type of residential permit. Migration, internal or external enables one to relocate within a state or states, a country to another country, or continent to a different continent. It means that the relocation could be permanent or temporal depending on the entry permit and it has to do with the laws of the land.

The twenty-first century has witnessed massive inter and intra state, nation and continental movements of people; resulting in different forms of exploitation and victimization due to the differences in the laws, protocols and conventions of the new location. For instance, people travel from place to place as an avenue to escape from wars, poverty, natural disasters (flooding, earthquake, erosion, oil spillage, drought, famine, etc), violence such as abuses in marriages, children exploitations, human trafficking, religious and political conflicts. Other reasons for travelling could be to acquire higher educational qualifications, job opportunities, better wages and employment opportunities with the aim to attain a better lifestyle. Jack S. Buckler notes that "decisions made on

economic grounds precluded other reasons for migration” (116). It shows that people travel to places other than theirs, especially to foreign countries mainly for socio-political, economic, cultural and religious reasons that are attributed to bad governance of their nations and it also underscores the issues responsible for the movement and the experiences represented in the selected novels *Beyond the Horizon* and *Trafficked*.

Arguably, other contemporary African writings like Chimamanda Adichie's novel, *Americanah* and her short story collection *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Sulaiman Addonia's *The Consequences*, Ike Ogunne's *A Squatters Tale*, Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigai* have explored the experiences and themes of migration. However, this study examines the novels *Beyond the Horizon* and *Trafficked* from an inventive approach in representing the journey motif and the issues of diasporic status. Attention is also focused on the agonizing and dehumanizing treatment of African migrants, particularly of the female protagonists in foreign lands.

This study asserts that the role of literature in terms of development refers to literature as the most efficient medium of manifesting African culture and civilization. It is against this background that this paper is anchored on the portrait of African diasporic involvements in *Beyond the Horizon* and *Trafficked*. Accordingly, it prompts this paper to state here that literature is not just a work of art which simply entertains; it is similarly, a means of expressing philosophies, viewpoints, social values as well as didactic messages. In this connection, we can comfortably state that literature is a medium of articulating contemporary actualities through the elucidation of the socio-cultural and political understandings of a particular society; since literature is the mirror of the society, it edifies humanity through knowledge of its subject matter.

Conceptual thrust

As already hinted, the twenty-first century is an era that has perceived one of the considerable issues of globetrotting because of the consciousness of change. People relocate from place to place, people travel to foreign nations mostly for a change of environment and to seek for a better lifestyle not minding the dangers involved in what MaryEllen Higgins describes as “from Negritude to Migitude” (18). Explaining the nexus between “Negritude and Migitude”, Higgins sees Negritude as “the historic art of resistance inspired by an outdated philosophy of essentialized origins” while Migitude shows the shift on the “notion of rootedness” that is, from local to diasporic issues (19). The change from the issues of local to foreign matters is the product of over-dependent syndrome of developing nations like Nigeria on foreign interventions, due to leadership challenges that result in questions of corruption, unemployment and mismanagement of resources. It shows how African leaders underdeveloped the continent and the resultant effect are agitations, nepotism, tribalism, killings, kidnap, rituals, trafficking, while others escape to foreign nations to seek for help.

The *Dictionary of Sociology*

explicates that in issues of migration, it is typical to differentiate “push from pull factors in the analysis of migration” (110). The former as we as made to understand involves unemployment of migrants which are frequently inducing factors of migration, while the latter involving economic growth in the host country are factors which inspire migration. The Dictionary of Sociology goes on to add there are substantial literature on rural-urban migration in emerging countries, and this has established the prominence the frequency of migration out of specific areas of origin (110).

Implicated here is the pull factor because the aim is to escape the realities of the home nations to search for better living because of bad leadership in developing nations. The experiences of migrates come with mix feeling because while some migrant travel with proper documentation, others mostly the desperate ones smuggle themselves through borders and other illegal ways that are likely to either truncate their journey or face severe hardship.

It is the drive for better living that in recent times propel the youths, who are the working class to crave for foreign trips, with or without the requisite qualifications to gain employment and on arrival to their destinations suffer disillusionment because of laws governing such countries. These journeys show the younger generation's desperate quest for greener pastures in developed countries. The opportunity for the movement spans from the gaining of scholarships for higher education, medical care, poverty, political and religious upheavals and other

prospective ambitions. Though, there are extreme situations like the outbreak of war that forces people both old and young to relocate to states or nations that are relatively peaceful.

The movement of the working class to relocate to developed countries therefore increases the press for human resources. As highlighted in Blocker's assertion, the probabilities to seek for jobs and acquire houses in such locations "suggest hypotheses which may illuminate unexplored dimensions of the migration experiences" (130). It means that the increase in the number of the working-class in foreign nations is the basis for the exploitation because the circumstances of the migrants and the desperate need for survival and it lead to exploitation.

Lloyd Nhodo et al argue that the quest for change is the major inducement for displacement and it leads to the physical and psychological violence, "thus turning displacees into victims of development (229), and that the insensitivity and guilt of the government in power and is "influenced by political motive as opposed to genuine desire to improve the lives and livelihood of those affected" (231) for of personal interest. Frantz Fanon contends that the dependency complex on foreign countries is an upshot in "latent forms of psychosis that become overt as the result of a traumatic experience" (68). Alan Lawson maintains that mimicry is one of the fundamental principles that underscore "part of the repertoire of the settlers" in foreign countries by African migrants (1215), as global concerns of contemporary writers and the issues of diasporic experiences.

Unequivocal examples are *Beyond the Horizon* and *Trafficked* because both novels narrate the socio-political and economic affairs of developing nations and Nigeria in particular, whose citizens are leaving for foreign countries to face horrific experiences of survival and victimization. The issues of endurance and discrimination feature prominently in the stories because of the ordeal African migrants, who embark on journeys to foreign countries encounter and the anguish of ill-treatment, a situation Ugwuanyidele Maxwell describes as the "implication of diaspora centrism" (72). Maxwell explains that contemporary African authors explore the dynamism of humans to change and that humans progress to the limit to guarantee that their existence is attained even including relinquishing some distressing locality an area which they sense is secure (72). This means that people travel to foreign countries to search for better opportunities, especially when their home countries are devastated with issues of bad governance mainly caused by massive corruption.

Theoretical framework

The Postcolonial approach is the theoretical framework which provides the analytical value for this paper. Scholars who embrace the postcolonial critical theory perceive literature as an expansive practice utilized in but not limited to such discourses as migration, resistance, race, gender, class, diaspora, and hybridity. As Rasiah Sugirtharajah asserts, postcolonial theory is a branch of study that is "not monolithic" but relatively a discipline of study which offers and takes care of a diversity of interests and contrary positions (7). Viewed as an interdisciplinary field, postcolonial theory thus permits varied subject matters on the crisis of identity as the shaping dynamic of the diaspora outlook. As a field of study, Postcolonial diaspora literature mirrors human activities and portrays norms, cultures, temperaments, beliefs and sociopolitical realities within the new environment it tries to reflect.

In their own right, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin delineate postcolonial theory as "migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe ... and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being" (2). As a further source, Postcolonial philosophy also contends with the difficulties of altering time to create a future (Ashcroft et al 35). Implicated here is the fact that postcolonial theory focuses on the movement or migration of individuals into a new location which is constituted of different cultures and various races.

The postcolonial theory (post-colonialism) according to Lisa Given is a wide-ranging hypothetical method that scrutinizes the past and present effect of colonialism and racism on the sociopolitical and economic structures (650). Simon Gikandi sees it as the necessity of victims of colonialism to attain an distinctiveness unadulterated by western notions or metaphors (2). Homi Bhabha maintains that, postcolonialism, allows for the imbalanced and lopsided changing aspects of social depiction intricate in the challenge for political and social power in the contemporary world structure (qtd in Gikandi 615).

As a modifying condition, Ashcroft, Tiffin and Griffiths see postcolonial theory as, a mode of interpreting writings of both colonizing and colonized ethos to derive thoughtful consideration to the insightful and

inevitable effects of colonization on literary production and other forms of literatures (192). For their part, Jim Parson and Kelly Hardings maintain that, postcolonial theory demands for fairness and articulate social and psychological grief, exploitation, brutality and enslavement imposed on helpless victims of colonisation worldwide via confronting the authority of **the** domineering viewpoints as well as striving to alter and embolden the downgraded and subservient (1). Implicated here and for our purposes, this study advocates Parson and Hoardings' Postcolonial theory which strives to give voice to the oppressed and necessitate justice for the diaspora; as a consequence of the interaction with the colonizing nation.

Textual Analysis

We shall now turn our attention to the discussions of African diasporic experiences by referring to the lives of the protagonists of the novels, as well as the contributions of the novelists in explications of African females' diasporic experience for edification readers as significant to the transformation and construction of identity for Africans.

The Dynamics of Survival and victimization in *Beyond the Horizon*

Readers are made to see that Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* spans beyond African migrant's experiences abroad to show that the issues of survival and discrimination are also witness in the home front though with different dimensions. Clearly, the story starts with Mara, the female protagonist recalling her calm disposition and taste of oval shape objects, during her days at the village. As narrative states: "I like oval things....Truth is, I just like oval. I find them serene and they dispense more sympathy to me than other shapes" (1).

Subsumed here is a symbolic style of diary report technique and in the first-person narrative pattern to show the adjustment mechanism to conditions over time. It is a memory recall of elliptical images that reoccur not too frequent but show the consciousness of the peaceful nature of humans. She remembers the transformation of events over a given period and the changes from inexperience, naïve and ignorant village girl obsessed with things with particular form.

Mara's experiences shows a typical Ghanaian rural community girl, whose ordeal commences from home before getting to Europe because of the bitter treatment she received from the men she encounters. It began when her father took advantage of her grimness and set the motion and foundation of the commercialization of his daughter. As her mother announces: "Your father has found a husband for you" (4). To this Mara laments "Who enters into an arranged marriage with Akobi (4). It shows the issues of patriarchal domination and extreme traditional values system that show the subjugation of the girl child.

In the story, Akobi is a young man, in fact he is: "the first child of Naka to earn a Form Four General Certificate" (5) living in an urban area because he is a "messenger clerk at the Ministries" (5). Akobi was not satisfied with the meagre salary he receives from the ministry because of his rank as a junior staff. With the aid of an agent, Akobi was able to travel to Europe with the intent of making more money. Akobi was wrong because when he finally arrives Europe, despite the ordeal in the passage to his destination Europe and did not turn out as planned. On Akobi's invitation, Mara leaves the village for Europe to join her husband. Mara too was let down because it is an adventure of entrapment as she experiences another form of displacement abroad, which is cultural disparity between Western and African socio-cultural, political and economic sensibilities because the German laws allows prostitution unlike the African tradition.

The aim is not to show that the entire journey to Europe is berated as illegal trips, full of deceit and exploitation; but to point out that most of the people who embark on such journeys are desperate young people whose hopes and aspiration for a better lifestyle goes beyond their immediate domain and are forced into slavery. It shows that the economic situation is the major reason for the deceitful attitude of the unsuspecting victims. Deceit and lack of contentment is the drive for the migration to European nations to find delight. At a point, Mara lost her identity completely because of survival strategies of becoming a prostitute against her wish, which is the reality, dilemma and ordeal most African migrants encounter in their quest for foreign jobs. As this long quote discloses:

This woman whose passport you used, has permission to live here in Germany ... Akobi has permission to live here. And me too... My wife... is working hard to get plenty money to marry a German man so that she too will have no problem living here... But because many of us have sold our properties and inheritance and taken money from every member of our family just to come here to work in factories we heard at home were in abundance and needing workers. You have to come here to know that it is not true... German people are themselves without jobs. (77)

From the excerpt above, it shows the true situation of Mara's misfortune because she has to use someone else's identity to remain in Germany.

In the end, we note that Mara finds her voice in the midst of the challenges and she concludes by stating that; she had given out directives for a "small cement house" to be bought in town for her two children, so that when she sinks "too deep beyond help" her children will at least have a suitable dwelling to live in. As she adds, "material things" are all she could offer her children. As for herself, the narrative goes on to intimate us; there was "nothing dignified and descent left of" her to give to her children (140).

Finally, in rounding up this section of the paper, attention must be drawn to the fact that even though, there are traumatic experiences, it is hoped that living among sophisticated people in Europe influence positive changes of mindset. The experiences of incessant abuses, battering and selling of valuables, back in Africa provide insight into the grimness of material acquisition. Thus, Darko's novel demonstrates enough cases to suggest cultural conflict and allusion of foreign culture to the African culture.

Diasporic Experiences in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *trafficked*

Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* explores the twenty-first century diasporic concerns. Ugwanyiidele Maxwell opines that contemporary literary works focus on the "implication of diaspora centricism and migration on the psychology of the individual" (72). In Tanure Ojaide assertion: "African writers have become part of the worldwide phenomena of migration and globalization with attendant physical, sociocultural, psychic, and other forms of dislocation, which permeates their individual writings" (43). Focus is on the state of mind of migrant because of the severe treatment inflicted on the victims in their new home. Maxwell clarifies that emigration from one's homeland to strange land is often traumatic due to the hostility from the host countries (73). It is for these comfortable circumstances that adage: "there is no place like home", "home is where the heart is", "home sweet home" become applicable. Apart from the psychological and mental torture, the migrant suffers alienation and disenchantment as a diasporic person.

Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* addresses issues of trading with humans and its trauma on the victim because of the bargaining strategies of traffickers. Most of the victim of human trafficking are females and are used for prostitution; that is as sex object for the men's pleasure and the financial reasons. In recent times, boys are also used as sex slaves but not as rampant as the girl child. The story commences with Nneoma, the heroine highlighting from a plane: "The plane descended gently, a silvery mechanical bird in the afternoon glare ... A young woman, who had hardly said a word throughout the flight, stirred and pulled gently at her seat belt but she did not unbuckle it yet" (1). It shows present-day story of the African youths, who believe in the get-rich-quick syndrome or to make money at all cost.

The story is about Nneoma, whose crave for material wealth motivates her to embark on the foreign trip rather than marry Ofomata, a young prince of Ihite-Agu community. Nneoma took advantage of disagreement between them and decided to abscond with her friend to Lagos and then to Europe via the Mediterranean experiences. Nneoma in company of the six chosen girls were forced to take an oath before migrating to Europe in the guise of engaging them in teaching jobs overseas. In fact, on arrival in Italy, Nneoma realized that she is being trafficked, but after six months she was deported to Nigeria. Nneoma could not return to her community because of shame and remained in Lagos, in the facilities and training provided to empower herself on skills. In the course of training, she coincidentally ran into Ofomata, who strongly believe she is alive and that someday they will meet again. With time, they both reunite, and Nneoma also reunited with her family members, who had long lost hope that she was alive.

Evidently, the political instability of a country is largely the cause of the movement of people from one area to another. Nneoma in spite of the opportunities, other girls will wish to have, for the reason that she was beautiful to the admiration of the young men in the community; however abandoned all the privileges and without informing her family escaped to Europe. Blocker Jr. declares that “decisions about mobility were considered by the vicissitudes ... economy and the convolutions of political struggle to protect their constitutional rights” (115).

She was finally deported to Nigeria, as she rightly says that “‘trafficked’ and ‘deportees’, for both described her situation” (13). But for the stigmatization attached to deportees, Nneoma and some others refused to return to their home towns but squat in facilities of non-governmental organization.

Finally, Nneoma psychologically accepts and come to terms with the circumstance and summons courage to visit home to reconcile with her family and Ofomata, who is one of the suitors that had promised to marry her even before she disappeared to the foreign land. Ofomata accidentally encounters Nneoma again in the university campus and renew their relationship, which spurs Nneoma to visit her family because there is no place like home. On this note, the story concludes by informing us that Nneoma and Ofomata rekindled their love again” (311). The two lovers forgive each other and put the past experiences behind and plan for a better future, in which both will appreciate and respect the opinion of the other.

Comparatively speaking, the novels *Beyond the Horizon* and *Trafficked* show similar types of experiences of migration in the twenty-first century. Both narratives display the enduring drive of persons to go across political frontiers into different regions and societies. The push and pull factors are responsible for the migrants’ involvement in prostitution, which dominated the debate of the novels.

In novel *Beyond the Horizon* and *Trafficked* the heroines Mara and Nneoma were forced into prostitution. In the case of Mara, she was first exploited by her family members; in particular, her father contracted the marriage on her behalf for his selfish reasons. In *Trafficked* Nneoma the heroine rejects several suitors who ask her hand in marriage in the village but opts for foreign trip to her destination in Europe via the Atlantic and Libya. In this connection, Gayle Rubin, a feminist anthropologist argues that; the trade of women should not only be viewed as an overwhelming and evocative notion which locates the subjugation of women around social systems, rather than a biological one. But that attention should be focused definitively on women’s subjugation within the traffic in women (779).

It shows there are certain socio-cultural circumstances and events with which the trafficking of the African woman occurs. In the novels under study, the protagonists, Nneoma and Mara display the naïve and idiotic character traits. Their inability to discern fantasy from reality results in the defeatist attitude during the revelation of the ingenuity to the victims. The stories share similar yet different traits of abuse and victimization from the opposite sex mostly due to economic reasons and it leads to severe traumatic experiences from their abductors.

Conclusion

The study critically examined the problems of migration, which is a global phenomenon. The study identified modern African novelists, as radically portraying contemporary concerns such as migration and neo-slavery and its psychological effects on the migrants in their new found homes. The study highlighted the reasons of migration as echoed by modern African writers and the focus on the political social and economic actualities of the post independent states of the African nations. The *Beyond the Horizon* and *Trafficked* are significant works within African continent that reverberate the detrimental policies of African political leaders. These novelists have used their creativity to profoundly add to the diasporic dimension for a new future and change in the socio-political systems of the African continent by shaping the lingering effects of colonial sensibilities.

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