HOME AND BELONGING IN NIGERIAN DIASPORA LITERATURE: A STUDY OF BUCHI EMECHETA'S *THE NEW TRIBE*

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Abstract
Buchi Emecheta's novel, *The New Tribe*, is an interesting text that tries to generate discourse on questions of Home and Belonging in Diasporic situations. Few texts have captured the issues of identity, socialization and belonging as Buchi Emecheta's *The New Tribe*. The objective of the paper was to demonstrate that "home" was not necessarily homeland and that to belong to a host culture was a matter of one's ability to negotiate belonging and the host culture's ability to accept otherness, which aligns with Paul Gilroy's concept of conviviality and melancholia. Gilroy always argues that any British citizen holding strongly to the privileges of race and takes pride in England's imperial past suffers melancholia; but to accept the reality of the nature of the world as a village would lead to cheerful acceptance of other cultures in diasporic situations, that is, a convivial situation or conviviality. The study, therefore, adopts the convivial and melancholia theory by Gilroy to understand the diasporic conditions of some of the characters in the text, who are either Nigerians or are trapped in a hybrid situation of feeling British but are viewed as Nigerians, a situation the protagonist, Chester, finds himself. The study was largely qualitative.
Keywords: Home, Belonging, Diaspora, Conviviality, Melancholia

Introduction

Historically, the Jewish Diaspora essentially created the term Diaspora. It is derived from the scattering of the Jews by the Babylonians (sixth century BC) and the Romans (ad 70) (Rudolf , 98). The after-effect of over five hundred years of transatlantic slave trade can also be described as diasporic. All the same, today, the definition of Diaspora has taken different shades and colour. Still, there are many features which are important and which must be borne in mind in order to properly define Diaspora. One of them has to do with history which makes reference to homeland, which itself "defines a common point of reference for people *scattered by force*, who in consequence migrate, hold a *minority* status abroad, and establish a *transnational community* that persists over time and space" (Rudolf 98-99). Today the term Diaspora has become as dispersed as the dispersion it represents so much so that "its actual analytical value is doubtful" (Rudolf 99).

As James Procter puts it, 'Diaspora' can appear both as naming of a *geographical* phenomenon – the traversal of physical terrain by an individual or a group – as well as

a *theoretical* concept: a way of thinking or of representing the world" (Prochter ,151). As such, Mark Shackleton believes that "it is this latter epistemological sense of the term which demands that issues of diasporic imagination and representation are germane to everyone, rather than exclusively migrant descended or 'minority' communities" (Shackleton , 4). That is possibly why Avtar Brah thinks that both the physical and the imaginative spaces of Diaspora require the attention and participation of those who "are constructed and represented as indigenous" (Brah , 209).

Many Nigerians leave their homeland to other parts of the country and by extension other parts of the world for several reasons that range from educational to economic pursuits. It will appropriate to regard them all as constituting what we may regard as Nigerian Diaspora. Although they invest in the economic, political and social development of their host states and countries, yet they are not regarded as belonging to such states and countries; as such they lose certain rights and privileges citizenship; if it is in Nigeria, their identity is called to question – their tribe, religion and language; they are reminded that they are not natives. If it overseas, they contend with racism and discrimination among other things. And when then have lived outside their native homes or outside the country for a long time and come home they are quickly reminded that they were no longer in tune with realities at home and might no longer understand how things were done. From all the forgoing, it is a problem to identify where home is or where one belongs.

The specific objective of this study is to examine the experiences of the characters in the text under study and see how Gilroy's theory of conviviality and melancholia played out in their relationship with the dominant culture. The paper provides another perspective to the understanding of diasporic conditions from textual experiences. Such understanding can help in better appreciation of diasporic issues both within Nigeria and overseas. If it can make that possible, then policymakers can also learn something from it. This is possible, for as David Daiches puts it:

> Literature is a practical activity in any adequate sense of the phrase. Far from being a concern only of the specialist and the academician, it has been, in all healthy societies, a real part of the life of the people. To study the relations of literature and society is to see how one of the most important products of the human mind has been moulded by social conditions and has itself helped to mould those conditions; how men have interpreted the life of their age; how they have criticized it and commented on it and how at times they have been at its mercy; how the state of society can sometimes compel the literary artist to be false to his mission and sometimes it can give to his work a richness and universality and cogency that springs from contact with the most elemental facts of life - and death (12 - 13).

Literature Review

Diasporic situations of the colonizers and the colonized, migrants and indigenes, victims and victimizers have engendered a condition of "mutual transformations" according to Leela Ghandi in most societies (Ghandi , 129-35). But the question is

whether diasporic situations are only peculiar to imperial centers? Most postcolonial theorists as Homi Bhabha and Spivak insist that it is no longer possible to have, in imperial centers, a monolithic culture. In fact, Bhabha has always theorized a kind of cultural hybridity because it is almost impossible for dominant or oppressive cultures to singularly remain unaffected by the culture of those kept under, the subaltern as Spivak terms them; for, according to Bhabha, hybridity is "a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other "denied" knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority – its rule of recognition" (107).

Equally important is the condition of the postcolonial or the postcoloniality of the formerly colonized nations. Nigeria presents a special case of whether Diaspora "can be used, beyond the classic understanding of the term, as an analytical concept to isolate transnational markers of national integration" (Rudolf, 96). Before making Diaspora a tool of analysis, Mark Rudolf tries to differentiate the three concepts of the meaning. As he puts it:

> First, Diaspora is used to identify and describe a certain transnational group different from the current national majority within the nation-state. Second, it is used as a category of self-description and belonging that transcends time and space for certain individuals. In both of these cases diaspora ascribes special characteristics to a group. Third, there is the analytical use of the term, which differentiates it from the everyday uses above. This analytical meaning can be delineated by considering the historical origin of the term and then isolating and making explicit its constitutive features and comparing them in various contexts to determine what makes a group a Diaspora in one place and not in another. (96-7)

Typically, in Nigeria, which is a multi-ethnic society, one sees ethnicity as one of the conditions of Nigeria's postcoloniality. When people take recourse to their ethnic groups, moving from state to another becomes similar to migration to formerly imperial centers. This is even more reinforced by the Nigerian constitution which recognizes states or local governments of origin of its citizens more than a common Nigerian citizenship. Now, it is not enough to read all these theoretical positions. It is more important to experience the concept, Diaspora. And one can only experience it better as it plays out in Diaspora literature. In other words, it is in Diaspora literature, among other sources, that one can properly understand Diaspora issues or studies.

Diaspora Studies is inherently postmodernist as its discourses run the risk of taking nihilistic turns. Nihilism has infiltrated virtually every department of philosophy – from existential to moral, from epistemological to political, from ethical to post-modernist. Essentially, nihilism expresses the despair at the meaninglessness of existence, the baselessness of values, the nothingness of things, the incommunicativeness and unknowingness of knowledge. Nihilism is often associated with the German Philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche who believes that the deconstructive effect of nihilism, which eats into things like acid, is eventually going to destroy all the moral, cultural, ethical and religious edifices built by man, so that man would see that the world itself is a fable. If this is the case, that is, that we get to a point where we

begin to see that world as a fable, then there is a possibility that our ideas of nation and nation-states will disappear, so that we can truly say that we live in a globalized world. In that kind of world, maybe, migration will be accepted by all nations as normal and people can settle wherever they like; maybe during that time, laws that limit movement and access to jobs and opportunities will be abolished by nations. Yet again, there must be a fundamental shift in values and orientations so that human ego will be eliminated.

Somehow, though, it seems this is utopia because in such a world, those who can will have to be generous to those who cannot; but the failure of communism has shown that this is unlikely to happen. Therefore, the hard reality is that nations will be nations and they will make laws to protect their territorial integrity; they will make laws to protect local production and jobs; they will make laws that will favour their exports and imports; their scientists and thinkers will keep pushing the frontiers of knowledge in all aspects of life and those who know will increasingly protect what they know and use it to maximize wealth for their nations. As Walter Rodney puts it, "A society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment. This capacity for dealing with the environment is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology) …" (2-3). Nations may even drive politics to a dangerous end and formulate policies that may stabilize their nations but destabilize other nations. Economic hit men may be sent out to consciously destroy economies of nations and make them dependent on the strongest economies. War and conflicts may be engineered to destabilize nations. Leaders of nations may become increasingly democratic or despotic and persons may or may not become fugitives running away from their countries. Hunger and economic instability may push people from their countries to seek new lives in other nations. In short, migrations will happen!

When migrations happen, cultures come into contact with themselves. People may feel threatened in their homelands with the influx of people from other nations. Once that happens, it may then behoove nations to recognize the problems and deal with them constructively because what they may be dealing with diasporic conditions. What this means is that just as people are affected in so many ways – psychologically and otherwise – nations are also affected in many ways. This brings one again back to Gilroy's belief that any citizen holding strongly to the privileges of race and takes pride in his or her country's past suffers melancholia. As Mark Shackleton puts it, "Paul Gilroy in *After Empire* contrasts melancholic Englishness, morbidly obsessed with loss of Empire, with the convivial joyfulness associated with cultural diversity of British youth culture" (x)! So indeed, every society can overcome melancholia and embrace the conviviality of cultural diversity; for example, in Nigeria a man from Yobe cannot go to Enugu and live there without feeling he is in a strange place, and vice versa. Another man from the Niger-Delta feels alienated from the country because his homeland is destroyed by multinational companies exploiting or exploring oil.

To be dispersed, somehow, is to be displaced; therefore, to be in diaspora is to be displaced. As Cohen puts it, the word diaspora has long moved from the melancholic sentiments of displacement, alienation and exile associated with the ideal diaspora. Cohen recognises the difficulty in coming to terms with diaspora,

and as such, introduces conceptual categories to display the variety of meanings the word invokes (ix). Although Cohen sees a common element in all forms of diaspora; a community of people who live outside their natal territories and recognise that their traditional homelands are reflected deeply in the languages they speak, religions they adopt, and the cultures they produce, it is good to take this into consideration, however it is also important to go beyond it. As such he broke diaspora into five ideal types namely: victim, labour, imperial, trade and deterritorialised diaspora. Each of these categories underline a particular cause of migration usually associated with particular group of people. For example, the Africans through their experience and slavery have been noted to be victims of extremely aggressive transmigrational policies, or in the case of Indians, they are seen to be part of the labour diasporas because of their involvement with the colonial system of indentured labour. Cohen acknowledges that these categories are not mutually exclusive, and at any given moment, one diasporic group could fall into different categories.

However, like the above scholars stated, diaspora has grown out of proportion from the particular notion that it has to do with the Jewish dispersion. According to Bhabha (139) diasporas are: Gatherings of exiles and émigrés and refugees; gathering on the edge of foreign cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafes of city centers; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues or in the uncanny fluency of author's language, gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment of other world lived restoratively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present. This shows that diaspora covers a significant part of the life of any immigrant or person living outside his or her own place of origin. For Cho, Diaspora is a condition of subjectivity and not an object of analysis. It is for him a subjective condition marked by the contingencies of long histories of displacement and genealogies of dispossession. All the same, he believes that Diaspora emerges as subjectivity alive to the effect of globalisation and migration, but also connected to the histories of colonialism and imperialism. He also believes that Diaspora is not a function of socio- historical phenomena, but emerges from deeply subjective processes of racial memory, of grieving for losses which cannot always be articulated and longings which hang at the edge of possibility (34).

Okpeh argues that diaspora has overtime gained wider usage referring to the migration of people from their place or countries of origin to other parts of the world (15). For Brubaker, the term diaspora has continued to widen and he thinks that one element of the expansion in use involves the application of the term diaspora to an ever-broadening set of cases: essentially to any and every nameable population category that is to some extent dispersed in space (3). Indeed, diaspora involves concepts of identity and belonging. And belongingness becomes a vehicle for people to share their connections, kinship, shared values, cultural heritage, their similarities and differences – the important elements in identity formation (Guragaini, 51-77).

Cohen was among the scholars that first introduced the notion of victim diaspora. He acknowledged that while no enduring diaspora endures merely through such memory, still much of its life can be organised around commemorative functions. This

assertion by Cohen implies that for every diaspora or immigrant that has journeyed out of his/ her ancestral home to other place of dwelling, is either running from something or pursuing something. This is the case of the major characters in Emecheta's prose narratives. They migrate from the aftermath of colonialism to a place where they believe would hold better opportunities for them. Zeleza gives a broad definition of diaspora to encompass any populace that is spread across various parts of the world other than their original location. As he puts it:

> Diaspora is simultaneously a state of being and a process of becoming, a kind of voyage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving or returning, a navigation of multiple belongings, of networks of affiliation. It is a mode of naming, remembering, living and feeling group identity moulded out of experience, positioning, struggles and imaginings of the past and the present, and at times the unfolding, unpredictable future, which are shared across the boundaries of time and space that frame ‗indigenous' identities in the contested and constructed locations of 'there' and 'here' and the passages and points in between (1).

The various definitions and understandings of diaspora by different scholars regard diaspora as a certain type of movement of a group or individuals from their ancestral land to a more global/western setting. Therefore, to be in diaspora is to be a part of a larger group in transition, part of an alternative community within a larger national whole, and to be an individual who must feel the claims of various nations and cultures. Diaspora on its own then can mean different things to different scholars depending on the context of its usage.

However, when talking about diaspora in this work, we will refer to Connor's definition which is "that segment of a people living outside the homeland". (16) From researches carried out for this study, it has been observed that although the definition of diaspora differs from one scholar to the other, most of the scholarly definitions of the term gotten so far in one way or another regard diaspora as a kind of dispersal or movement of people from one location to another. However, some scholars like Baubock and Faist are of the opinion that diaspora has gone beyond this single trans-migrational movement and now covers a broad range of issues and histories. They assert that:

> The term diaspora, long used only to describe the dispersion of the Jewish people throughout the world, has for a long time elicited unprecedented interest, attracting the attention not only of the academic world but also of the media. In everyday language, the term is now applied to all forms of migration and dispersion of people, even where no migration is involved; this corresponds not only to the development and generalisation of international migration throughout the world, but also to a weakening, or at least a limitation, of the role played by nation-states at a time when globalisation has become a dominant process. (35)

Thus after the migration from the ancestral land to the global setting, black writers started to give voice to their experiences from the overseas space.

Discussion

The main character in Buchi Emecheta's *The New Tribe is Chester*, a black child who is adopted by a white family consisting of Reverend Arthur Arlington, his wife Ginny and their white adopted daughter, Julia. Chester is the only black child in the small English seaside town of St. Simon where he grows up. It seems from the work as if St. Simon is a racially tolerant society. Chester is accepted as the son of the Arlingtons; however, Chester doubts his place in the family. Chester is always selected to play the part of the leader of the three wise kings in Christmas school dramas because the kings are men from the Orient or East, and may have looked like Chester (Emecheta , 12). As a teenager, Chester works in a summer resort where he first encounters the Ugwu family, a Nigerian family on holiday at the resort, where Chester works; a family who Mrs. Miller (the mother of Chester's best friend) refers to as his own people (45): a reference that merely highlights the fact that although the people of Simon are not racists, yet somehow the people are still very conscious of race differences or belonging; for although Chester is the adopted son of the Arlingtons, yet he "belongs" outside the English culture in the minds of the people of St. Simon.

Chester is devastated when Julia, his adoptive sister, gets pregnant by Ray, Chester's friend. Although, he had been attracted to Julia sexually, yet, he fights the feeling for the fact that they are the children of the Arlingtons. The shame of a Vicar's daughter being pregnant as well as the fear of being married to Ray and thereby destroying her plans for a career in the future, Julia leaves home with the active connivance of her mother, Ginny. Her leaving depresses Chester and he makes the decision to leave the Arlingtons and St. Simon, moving to Liverpool and living with the Ugwus. It is a journey of self-discovery. The stories of Africa and Nigerian Prince required to come home to occupy his kingdom take over his whole being: he desires to go to Nigeria to find his kingdom and a home.

His living with the Ugwu family makes it possible for him to rediscover himself. He sees how much his culture is different from the culture of the Ugwus, who are Nigerians. Still, he is seen as not belonging to the English culture, which is white. Now the fact that the Ugwus live in England does not make them abandon their cultural practices. They have refused to get assimilated into the dominant culture, which also is not willing to allow them to integrate. In other words the Ugwu family lives in an adopted "homeland" but do not really "belong" to her.

Chester gets inspiration from the way Enoch manages his family by himself. Enoch mentors Chester and inspires him to continue with his education. Enoch is the first person to tell Chester that he is a Nigerian and not an English man (81). Emecheta reveals how group identity is built in Diaspora: a deliberate acceptance of difference as a way of retaining any vestige of "homeland" in a new "home". In such situations, it seems "belonging" is negotiated: it is negotiated in the sense that a group seeks to belong in as much as belonging does not totally obliterate their identity; belonging becomes a way of being that ensures that one gets what is due one without one

necessarily losing one's identity to the dominant group on the one hand. On the other hand, it becomes a way of fighting exclusion.

Chester has a strong memory of a Nigerian village implanted in him by his adoptive mother, Ginny, through a story she created herself when she is not able to find children's stories about Africa in England; it is this romanticized image that Chester tries to find in Nigeria. As the caretaker of the local youth center, Chester works with Jimoh who is in England to earn money before he returns to his family in Nigeria. The two swap passports and Chester goes to Nigeria in search of this rememorized village. Emecheta describes Chester's perceptions of Nigeria in terms that convey his position as an outsider. He is surprised by the world he encounters: it is not near what he had romanticized as "home" (115-125). It is here that Emecheta convincingly captures the disconnection between identities and their relation to the real. Chester eventually realizes that his memory of a Nigerian village is actually a memory of a book that Ginny had made for him as a child. Emecheta thereby interrogates the idea of family, "home" and "belonging" and sees these not in genetics and geographical location but as a phenomenon of the mind. However, why Ginny could be applauded for ensuring that her adoptive son, Chester did not lose his African identity by the African stories she consistently reads to him as a way of maintaining his (Chester's) African link, it could also stand to reason that she is in a way engendering Chester's quest for identity. It is also possible that deep in her unconscious feeling, Chester is still the 'other'. Yet again, adopting Chester, Mr. and Mrs. Arlington achieves Paul Gilroy's idea of conviviality.

Buchi Emecheta's, *The New Tribe*, can be classified among novels that Purabi Panwar classifies as novels of culture collision (186) As he puts it,

> The novels of culture collision "which is often marked by bewilderment, a sense of shock as withdrawal or adaptation," to quote Jasbir Jain ("The New Parochialism") as characters growing up in the adopted world learnt to cope with their problems, is a significant part of first and second generation diasporic writing. Farhana Sheikh's *The Red Box* and Meera Syal's, *Anita and Me* are some of the novels which can be included in this category. Novels which move out of both the culture of origin and that of adoption like Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* and Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land* are included in the narrative of a third space. (186)

When Chester lives home to Liverpool in search of the Ugwu family, he is merely looking for a way to get himself to experience life as an African to see if there is really anything different in terms of values from the values of an English man, which is unfortunately the only life he knows. He of course notices many cultural differences: Mr Ugwu shouts and scolds at his children to get them to do things in the house. This makes Chester wonder whether that is what real fathers do. (79) Mr Ugwu responds to Chester, saying "That's what I do with these two. They won't shift otherwise. I can't use psychology with them. You see that young one, Thomas, if I don't watch out he can set fire to the house just to see whether it would burn. Your father never raised his voice at you?"(79). Chester had never imagined himself to be an African, let alone a

Nigerian until Mr Ugwu tells him that and even tells him that he is one of them. (81) In the course of Chester's stay in Mr Ugwu's house, he learns many things about Africans. Mr Ugwu takes his time to orientate him in African cultural values: he even gives him an Igbo name Iloefuna; that is, may his lineage not go extinct. (86) But the fact remains that in Liverpool Chester finds he has little in common with the majority of the blacks he meets, apart from the Ugwus and Esther. Culturally he admits that he is more English than anything. (115)

The first persons children learn values from are their mothers. The writer Buchi Emecheta seems to be aware of this being herself a woman. She, having lived all her in England seems to be aware of the many challenges of voluntary migrants from Africa. Many of the women get divorced from their husbands; some remarry while some do not. Some come out of the marriages with children, as Emecheta did, while others do not. Those who have children but are able to find love again, may find out that their spouses may dislike the fact of the woman coming into their matrimonial home with another man's child. The woman might be forced by situation to give her child away for adoption as Chester's mother did (6-7). And once that happens, the child is left at the mercy of circumstances. And what will be certain is that the child will lose the opportunity of value transmission from the biological mother.

Now, the role of women in inculcating community or societal values in their children cannot be overemphasized. By giving Chester up for adoption, his biological mother merely abandons that role and leaves it in the hands of Ginny Arlington, an English woman; so naturally, English values will be inculcated into Chester. The complications come once Chester is not able to reconcile his *racial identity* with his *cultural identity*. Even when he makes the acquaintance of a black British lady, it still does not reassure him that he ***"belongs"*** to her cultural identity. And this is understandable because as Gay Wilentz puts it,

> Like their African sisters, black women in the Americas follow a tradition passed on from the same African fore-mothers; although enslaved, those women storytellers carried their culture with them in the form of songs, tales, and legends. Struggling to maintain generational continuity in spite of the break-up of families, they also maintained cultural continuity-telling stories of opposition late into the night, since tales of escape or African life were punishable offenses in slaves. (394)

In other words, Esther, the black British lady, has an orientation in terms of values that is African to a large extent, which Chester does not have. She "belongs" to a cultural identity which created itself upon dislocation from "homeland" through slavery. A new "homeland" had to be adopted and a cultural identity fashioned to inhabit the new "homeland". For them, England is "home" and they "belong" there. The White British have to come to terms with that as Gilroy (2004) argues, as indeed many have, hence, the adoption of Chester by the Arlingtons, a case of the convivial culture that emerges from such acceptance. As Esther, the black British lady, tells Chester, sarcastically, 'Oh, I see, you're looking for your roots …You don't seem ready to accept reality, Chester. We don't belong in Africa, we're British. Black British maybe, but this is our

home now.' (Emecheta, 113) When Chester tells her she is patronizing him, Esther goes ahead to tell him that she is sorry and never meant to be patronizing but she feels all those stuff about his African roots are quite outdated (113) Then she says, 'Look how black people have changed the face of British culture. Don't you want to be part of that?' (113) This brings one again back to Gilroy's belief that any British citizen holding strongly to the privileges of race and takes pride in England's imperial past suffers melancholia, which in postcolonial psychoanalytic thinking as Mark Shackleton puts it, "is linked to mourning, a shuttling to and fro between the past and the present" (x). As he further puts it:

> But the paradox of attempting to both remember and forget the traumatic past is not necessarily negative, as it proves to be the source of creative possibility in the key postcolonial work of Joseph Conrad, J.M. Coetzee, Jean Rhys and others. Paul Gilroy in *After Empire* contrasts melancholic Englishness, morbidly obsessed with loss of Empire, with the convivial joyfulness associated with cultural diversity of British youth culture. (x)

Apparently, as Shackleton further argues, "Gilroy adopts a Freudian stance in arguing that melancholic ghosts can be exorcised, which puts him out of step with most postcolonial theorizing on melancholia in which the ghosts of the past continue to make their presence felt. (x)

For Macleod, "Gilroy's body of work may be understood as distinctly diasporic in temperament as well as intellectual in character in its determinedly hopeful investment in contemporary youth cultures. These cultures, inclusive of many different kinds of people, are seen as making possible casual and vernacular political possibilities which challenge the formal protocols of state authority." (5). However, as he further argues, "Gilroy's vision of a convivial multicultural Britain, resourced by its diasporic condition, demands our assent; and as a utopian political goal, it is worthy of support. But as an evaluative tool of contemporary British multiculturalism, it seems worryingly inaccurate and unplugged from the realities of vernacular cultural life." (9) Instead, in his own opinion, "A richer, better informed, and more sensitive vision of England's multicultural realities can be found in the recent writing of Caryl Phillips, whose fiction, despite its predominantly still and sobering tone, provides a more considered illustration of a progressively utopian milieu." (9)

But, as Macleod believes, "Surprisingly perhaps, Phillips's writing restlessly exposes and imagines many vital, important, and hopeful possibilities which constitute an ethical *demand* for change." (9) In his opinion, "Rather than mistake the sights and sounds of multiculturalism, convivial or otherwise, as evidence of achievement, Phillips looks to the business of everyday life for the principles of a truly progressive and transformative prospect." (9) But, "Surprisingly perhaps, Phillips's writing restlessly exposes and imagines many vital, important, and hopeful possibilities which constitute an ethical *demand* for change. Rather than mistake the sights and sounds of multiculturalism, convivial or otherwise, as evidence of achievement, Phillips looks to the business of everyday life for the principles of a truly progressive and transformative

prospect" (Macleod, 9). Macleod believes that Caryl Phillips' recent novel, *A Distant Shore* (2003), which is organized into five sections "primarily juxtaposes the stories of Dorothy Jones, a retired music teacher who has just moved to a new housing development somewhere in the north of England, and Solomon, a refugee from Africa who has been forced to flee his native country due to the political situation there and has endured a difficult crossing from Africa to Europe as an illegal immigrant." (10) In the novel, Solomon, who is originally called Gabriel, ends up "in Stoneleigh far from friends and family: while Dorothy has lost her sister to cancer and her husband to another woman, Gabriel/Solomon has witnessed the murder of his family by Government soldiers and has endured the death of several of his friends as he has journeyed to Stoneleigh, where he works as a caretaker-cum-security man." (Macleod, 10) As is portrayed in the novel, "The lives of these two characters hardly touch: their friendship is brief and revolves mostly around the trips which Dorothy takes to town in Gabriel/Solomon's car, and any developing relationship between them is cut short when Gabriel/Solomon is murdered by local white youths and dumped in the local canal. Dorothy ends the novel silently in what appears to be a mental institution" (Macleod). In closing page of the novel, the character, Dorothy declares, "I had a feeling that Solomon understood me." (312) Macleod is of the opinion that the belief by Dorothy that Solomon understood her could not be seen in their relationship. He thinks that Phillips merely juxtaposed the narratives of how both Dorothy and Solomon ended up in Stoneleigh in order to leave "the reader with the task of considering the possible points of contact and connection between each troubled figure which open up across the seemingly impermeable borders of class, race, gender and nation." (10) He believes that,

> The novel's engagement with issues of national identity and belonging in a multicultural frame is begun in the novel's opening lines, narrated by Dorothy, in which the familiar parameters of nation, place and belonging are both established and confounded: "England has changed. These days it's difficult to tell who's from around here and who's not. Who belongs and who's a stranger. It's disturbing. It doesn't feel right" (3). It is tempting, perhaps, to regard this statement as a more modest companion piece to the vision of Smith's *White Teeth*, which may also seem like a novel about a changed place and the process of change itself (10).

In Emecheta's *The New Tribe*, we see an England, where a lot has changed so much so that a white couple, the Arlingtons, adopts a colored child and raises him as if he was their biological child. One sees in this what Gilroy hopes for England in his theory of conviviality. This, however, seems not to be the case in Caryl Phillips' *A Distant Shore*; for in the course of the narrative of one of the main characters in the novel, Dorothy, one sees that indeed not much has changed in England regarding the contemporary confusion about nation, place and belonging; for "Dorothy's deceased father, a war veteran and sinister patriarch, did not like travelling outside of England and had a problem with outsiders" (Macleod). Dorothy herself recalls him "bemoaning the fact that we were giving up our English birthright and getting lost in a United States of Europe." (27) Dorothy knows that her father was a racist. She knows that for her

father "being English meant no coloureds." (42) As Dorothy lets us know: "he regarded coloureds as a challenge to our English identity." (42) Therefore, for Macleod,

> Phillips counters those enthusiasts of England's multicultural present by reminding us that change may be more illusionary than achieved, and that there is something dangerous in cutting free the frenzied flux of contemporary life from the more responsible retrospection of the past which might reveal that the present is very much caught in the vice-like grip of old, enduring problems. In many ways the novel often articulates the "grim prose" of those lonely, dislocated and desperate lives. (11)

But the fact is that England does not really have a choice other than to accept its multicultural state. Pressing for the expansion of the empire has its own price apart from slavery. The consequence of all these is a multicultural society. Racism or white privilege and marginalization will only complicate issues.

Conclusion

If Chester in Emecheta's *The New Tribe* cannot find "home" in Nigeria, he should be able to find it in England. Here "home" and "belonging" are no longer necessarily where one comes from, but where the one feels really secure and fulfilled even if the one has to constantly negotiate "belonging". In West Africa, Chester becomes part of the background; everywhere he goes, people take it for granted that he is African. (Emecheta, 115) But "Arriving at the Lagos Marina, therefore, Chester was already filled with a sense of homecoming." (115) However, the horrifying experience he has in Nigeria allows Emecheta to intervene by implication, questioning thereby how a homeland can become home with so much insecurity. In Nigeria, everybody body who he comes in contact with wants to take advantage of him. They all believe that he is wealthy; and somehow, they see him as a foreigner, a European or American

For Enoch Ugwu, "home" is England, but "homeland" and "belonging" are in Nigeria. These categories may vary according to groups and individuals. Buchi Emecheta, the author of *The New Tribe*, was a Nigerian in Diaspora. She was also a British citizen. She was fully integrated in the British society owing, maybe, to her being a successful writer. She seemed to be one of those who found "home" outside "homeland" and she was also able to negotiate "belonging" in the British society, however difficult: negotiating "belonging" here means asserting one's cultural identity in the face of a dominant culture and making the dominant culture respect your space willingly or unwillingly; it is the ability to recognize that where something stands, another thing stands beside it (Achebe) and of course happily accepting that reality as it is.

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