

**STRANGERS IN A NEW LAND: AN ANALYSIS OF MIGRANTS AS “OTHERS” IN PAT
AMADU'S NO PAST, NO PRESENT AND NO FUTURE**

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Abstract

Africans transit en masse to Western world for myriads of reasons which are triggered by push and pull factors such as economic downturn, desire for better healthcare, foreign remittances, hunger for quality education, war refugee, political factors, oppressive military regime, forced migration, poor social services and religious conflict. These constrained circumstances have resulted in seeking for improvement in their economic lot. The phenomenon of migratory and diasporic trajectories which are as old as human history are witnessed by people who disperse across the globe to survive in better conditions compared to their current dilapidated and pitiable life. The study explored how Pat Amadu's novel, *No past, No present and No future* captured migration and the concept of Other. It examined how migrants are treated as sub humans and being seen as inferior and thus referred to as 'the Other', this virtually affects their total existence in a foreign country, in turn their hopes are dashed and they become disillusioned. The study adopts Frantz Fano's postcolonial concepts to explore the Othering of Africans when they migrate to the Western Countries. Frantz Fanon highlighted the dehumanizing aspects of colonial rule, the imposition of colonial identities, and argues for strong resistance. The paper concludes that there should be a concerted effort to bridge this inequality by creating employment and conducive environment so as to deter people from migrating.

INTRODUCTION

Africans conceive mobility as an act that is geared towards repositioning the feelings of hope and better life conditions. They engage in transitioning in order to reduce the states of despair, fear, poverty and economic hardship that are currently ravaging them. It is well recognized that most migrants are of the beliefs that their lives and those of their families would improve and so they are filled with excessive expectations and high hopes about the future that awaits them and cannot take it for granted. Thus they expect their well-being to improve over time during their stay in abroad, Fieldner(2019,15) citing Authur et al posits that they attempt to “share in global economic prosperity, something that has remained elusive for generations of Africans”. However, after they have taken several years trying to overcome the initial hurdles of the host country. They sometimes view their lives as not improving to their utmost expectation and therefore become depressed and disillusioned. They also discover that the reasons they were motivated to leave in the first place were not met. There are compelling and increasing aspirations of Africans that make them to relocate and seek for greener opportunities and this becomes a driving force. Collier (2013) argues that we are facing a veritable south-north exodus driven by poverty and income gaps, which threatens to spin out of control unless rights of immigrants are curtailed.

The concept of the Other refers to individuals or groups who are perceived as different or separate from dominant group in a given society. These “Others” are often defined in opposition to the dominant group, and their differences are used to justify unequal power relations and forms of oppression. There is the construction of an imagery binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonizes which served to justify the subordination of the later. Frantz Fanon as cited by Hassan perceives it as “not only me” he is the Other shows that way to maintain authority over the other. Hassan(2014:95-105) defines the Other as one who lacks identity, propriety, purity. One who does not belong to a group, who does not speak a given language, who does not have the same custom, the unfamiliar, uncanny, unauthorized, inappropriate and the improper. This construction of the other is a process of western demonization, which in itself expresses the ambivalence at the very heart of authority (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 2002, P.3)

The above connotes that “Other” entails a person who is treated as sub-human and does not have the capacity to belong to any meaningful society. This is the fate of the migrants who in all ecstasy leave their homeland in a bid to find a conducive and favourable environment and then bring the fortunes of their families to enviable heights. Ocho and William(2024:2) assert that migrants are being viewed through a negative lens, that not all migrants are warmly received by the communities and so are treated as “other”. In such instances, after being buoyed by their hope of a better life, migrants become segregated amongst host population or marginalized from economic activities, especially if they are refugees. This paper examined migration and the concept of Other in the Pat Amadu's *No Past, No Present and No Future* by drawing Frantz Fanon's postcolonial concept of *Wretched of*

the Earth in which he highlighted the dehumanizing aspects of colonial rule, the imposition of colonial identities and argues for strong resistance.

Abdullah (1996) introductory comment in Maddy's *No past no Present no Future* asserts "Maddy's text still remains an important signpost which brings together in a single narrative, the experiences of Africans in the continent and the diasporas ... it deals with the making/remarking of identity and consciousness. The politics of difference (xi). The introductory remark of this clearly highlights the journey of three young male protagonists, exploring their transnationalism and the experiences they encounter. Their desire to grow above the circumstances surrounding them is an important aspect of this literary text as the "Brother three" is an established indispensable motif signifying an established relationship between these protagonists in which they encourage one another to undertake this journey to better their lives.

Maddy's text is set in a fictional African state of Bauya and begins with three personalities who call themselves-the Brother three – Ade John who is from an upper ruling class, the lady's man, Santigie Bombolai born in a middle, the studious one and Joe Bengo from lower or poor background the sportsman. Maddy tells us that owing to disparity in background, the three young adolescence experience life together and promise to stick together as brothers. They are represented as inseparable but the circumstances outside Bauya do not allow them to keep their promises to one another.

THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THEIR NATIVE HOMELAND PRIOR TO MIGRATION

Brachet (2011:57) sees migratory movement as a mode of livelihood and security in what he terms "intercontinental economic migrants". This is sometimes caused by the deterioration of their family's life situation and so they are bound to take responsibility by deciding to migrate. Ade John is represented as the lady's man in the novel being from an elite ruling class of Bauya, he literally has it all. However, he has libidinous stunts with woman especially with Mary which results to pregnancy. Ade's sexual escapade with Mary leads to him being withdrawn from school because Mary leaves an implicating note against Ade blaming only him for being responsible for her pregnancy which she died while trying an abortion. His parents disown him and withdraw him from school regardless of being a smart boy. He gets a job in a railway station and from there he travels to London.

His quest for continuity in education was the driving force. He leaves Bauya to London and becomes very competent. He develops a sense of pride with his academic competence and achievements. His academic quest takes him to London and succeeds academically with great credit "Ade qualified as a Journalist. He got a good diploma and a certificate in international law. He phones Santigie and tells him about his success and his plans for the immediate future" (Maddy, 1996:149) with this success, he pressures Santigie to desire his own academic success (Maddy, 1996:139)

Santigie Bomba

This young adolescent is represented as a responsible young man who is born in a middle class. He is to succeed his father as chief but his father's demise while he is still in school leaves his dream incomplete. He is forcefully withdrawn from school after his father's death and later joins Ade to work in the railway station. He later leaves to join his friend Ade in London to continue his education and their friendship (Maddy, 1996:60). He takes up the responsibility of sponsoring himself academically. His trip to London is fully sponsored by himself.

Joe Bengoh

This is the third male protagonist of the novel, he is born in a lower classless society with his parents being drunkards and not able to care about his welfare (Maddy, 1996:4) writes:

He reflected on his parents. When they were alive he was never at home with them. He did very little housework. He only came to the house when he was hungry and when he wanted to sleep. His parents never bothered with him. They let him have his own way and he lived as he liked. He was a bully and a troublemaker on Charles street. ... 'My parents were illiterates, and illiterates don't make wills. They were drunks. They drank everything and left me nothing. Not even the hut.' He smiled to himself. A mischievous smile. My father destroyed my mother; my mother inveighed against my father. Thank God they are dead. I will not be like them. I am free of their influence now, and those beriberi- women.

Their death paves way for Joe to escape and makes his way to the mission house where he hopes to become like Ade and Santigie (Maddy 1996:4) he is born to a drunkard parents that fails in their parental duties. Their death becomes a relieve to Joes that he celebrates (Maddy, 1996:3-6). He immediately goes to the church house where the boys he admires live in a bid to escape child abuse that he would have suffered from a foster parent in St. Charles street. (Maddy, 1996:5). He develops a close bond with Ade and Santigie and they form "the Brother

Three”. He even adopts Ade’s birth certificate along with Santigie. He so values the friendship as he never really had close relationship in the past considering where he comes from. He holds unto this new friendship whole heartedly however, Joe’s poor background makes him develop complex issues (inferiority complex). He battles with indecision and does not know how to face from classless background. From the foregoing experiences of the three protagonists in the African continent it is evident that each one of them has a strong compelling push factor that led to their quest for migration.

ASPECTS OF ORDERNESS IN DIASPORA

Jankulouska and Denkousk (2023:47-50) opined that otherness is used for those who occupy the subordinate position in society, which have been presented as inferior in terms of knowledge and abilities, which implies that they need the leadership of those who are by definition more capable, more educated, more advanced, more civilized, more merciful. They asset further that otherness in postcolonial criticism refers to colonized people who are marginalized by the imperial i.e any area that is not part of European soil is considered inferior, dangerous and less valuable. This depicts the fate and experiences of these protagonists who migrated from their various ugly situations in Bauyan to London in order to escape from despair, poverty, violence and environmental degradation. They have high aspirations and perceptions that they would automatically improve in their education and make them their bonding stronger.

Ade John

The aspect of being treated as being inferior and sub human by the whites makes Ade to adapt their lifestyle and sensibilities. He develops a sense of pride with his academic competence. He tries to resent his friends who later joined him in London because he feels successful and better in his academic prowess (Maddy, 1996:139) This makes him tower above everyone; that he not only limits his friendship but he treats his male friends with contempt. Maddy (1996) writes:

Ade get up from his chair and, like a dignified conservative viewing the world of his workers, walked slowly towards the drinks table, hands tightly interlocked with his lady-friend by his side ... Joe looked over to where Ade was sitting quite detached and uninterested, completely involved in his girlfriend. (119-121)

Ade tries to be whiter than whites in order to feel among. He copies and lives like whites, discriminating against blacks so he would not be discriminated against. Because Ade feels he occupies a subordinate position in the foreign country based on the treatment he gets from the whites. He tries also to adopt their mannerisms and abandon his culture, even denying his family just to feel among. He does not want to be regarded as a Bauyan man. He wants to live and behave like whites only. He so reluctantly sends his parent invitation for his wedding. “Ade had reluctantly sent his parents an invitation card on the insistence of Bodily” (maddy, 1996:149). He wants a white lady and literally denies his culture and his people.

‘I try not to meet them. I avoid them. I run away from them. If I want to meet Bauyans and talk and gossip, I will go back to Bauya. Here I am interested in making future for myself. I want to meet the English and know them as they are. As they have never been presented to us. I want to learn. ... I don’t think I can learn from Bauyans. (Maddy, 1996:81)

More so, he claims to be who he is not in attempt to win the love and respect of the white lady he wants to marry. He tells her so many lies and claims to be what he is not that he even asks santigie to lie on his wedding to impress people. Ade John having integrated his personality with whites decides to see his people as the Other, being inferior, subhuman and marginalizes them. He forgets where he hails from, his customs, his culture as well as his family, to assume a new identity and a new personality. He adopts the personality of the white he has amassed the traits and characters of the whites and so treats the Bauyans, A country in Africa as subordinates. Ade possesses these attributes so as to dispel the fact that he is being treated as the Other He hates talking about his place and his people; like he is ashamed of them.(maddy, 1996:202)

I ask him about Africa. But he always snaps and gets angry and irritated.’ She had said it all before she realized she had talked too much. ... ‘Maybe he is ashamed to tell you how things really are.’ ... ‘I don’t understand.’ ... ‘I did not expect you to understand. If Ade had been willing to sweep away the cobwebs so that you could see that we keep bush spiders for pets in Bauya, you would have had no trouble understanding me.

Santigie Bombolai

Santigie comes from a polygamous home, he has nothing much to look back on exception of his mother. His father’s demise shatters his dreams of success in Bauya. He takes up the responsibly of sponsoring

himself to London to continue his academic pursuit. He values friendship and knows how to maintain it as he cares for Joe. Maddy(1996) “you know we are brothers three for all time. Friends may come and friends may go, but we stay together for all time”(57). Academically Santiago while in London has a lacking, his failed attempts to succeed academically makes him feel like a failure and inferior when compared to Ade. He automatically becomes a nationalist. It preaches and promotes hate against whites. Holding them solely responsible for his academic failure Maddy(1996:108)

Joe sat up as if waking from a deep sleep. Santiago’s voice went on: ... ‘Europeans resent me because I am black. They mistrust me because they think I have a black brain, black feelings and emotions, black thoughts and imaginations. They refuse me a place in their society because I study their culture. I acquire their education, European education. But no sooner is it me, black me, than education is a black one.’ ... Ade and Joe had never heard Santiago talk like this before. His voice was aggressive. He spoke like a man possessed. There was a sense of defeat and inferiority about him. Ade was sitting quite a distance away from Joe. He was leaning back quite comfortably, at ease. Joe tried, from where he was sitting, to look at the faces to the right and left of him. Their faces were full of expressions that made no real sense to him.

He feels his skin colour interferes with his academic growth and this makes him hateful and revengeful. He decides to get back at white race by sexually exploiting their women “In Santiago’s case, it is your white race which has become his victim. Your sex” (Maddy, 1996:199). He makes it his duty to sleep with different white women every other night and he rough handles them and whispers dreamy things into their ears in his language. He promotes black culture by preaching hate against the whites. He is proud of his culture that he fails to interact with people from his side. He even speaks and sings in his language during his prayers (136-140) he does all this in an attempt to relieve all his beautiful moments in Bauya.

Joe Bengoh

Originally, Joe does not have a functional family, so he does not know exactly what family is being from a poor background which was the motivating factor to migrate to London. Joe struggles academically due to his skin colour. He is constantly denied a role in theatre and relegated to the background because the whites assume he has a poor mastery of the language, however, he never stops working hard. He does not feel competent enough because of his skin colour and huge economic crises he literally calls himself a failure. He suffers rejection in school due to skin colour although he tries to improve by working twice hard to be academically successful. “Your work has improved greatly all around Joe ... the staff are happy at your work. You have improved immensely”(Maddy,1996:142). However his deep financial crisis hinders his progress compelling him to give up his academic pursuit (Maddy,1996:170-171) Joe travels to London in wild ecstasy to better his living condition having come from the classless background. He is seen as the Other and ill treatment was meted to him as a result of his skin colour in his academic pursuit. He still feels lonely and sees himself as a failure in all ramifications. Maddy (1994:144) writes.

... ‘No brother, no sister, no mother, no father. Relations nil. I am a lone wolf, born into this world alone; to travel to the world alone. Should I fail, I will complain to no one and no one will regret my having wasted their money or disappointing them. Joe the orphan. Born to toil, to wander. A stranger to all.

Conclusion

Jilan shash citing Hegel asserts that Othering entails processes and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any full range of human differences based on group identities. The three protagonists under study in Maddy’s text actually experienced the horrific treatments of the occidends in their host country. The Africans in diaspora are labeled, perceived, and treated as fundamentally different, separate and inferior to the dominant group based on their nationality which leads to the protagonists being marginalized, discriminated and oppressed. Therefore, the root causes of migration should be addressed, some strategies like reduction of poverty, promotion of social integration programs, campaigns to combat xenophobia and discrimination, encourage empathy about migrants’ ordeals and enact laws and policies that protect migrants rights should be imbibed and adhered to

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