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TOWARDS NEGOTIATING SPACE/PLACE IN POSTCOLONIALDIASPORIC DISCOURSES: A STUDY OF ISIDORE OKPEWHO'S *THE VICTIMS AND* BUCHI EMECHETA'S *SECOND CLASS CITIZENS*

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we examine the root causes for which the African postcolonial subjects undertake the transnational or external dislocation, determining whether the massive flow of Africans from home to the metropolitan center actually fulfilled their dream. The socio-political, economic and cultural conditions of the displaced postcolonial subjects in their transnational space and their responses to the realities of this space are zoomed in by a postcolonial reading of Isidore Okpewho's *The Victims* and Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen*. The coast-to-coast dislocation phenomenon in postcolonial Africa and the ordeal encountered by postcolonial African people in their struggle to adapt themselves with these transnational spaces are examined. The intricacies accompanying the postcolonial immigrants in their host countries, the reactions of their hosts and the strategies of the immigrants constitute the research problem not only of their daily interactions with the different people and structures, but in the transnational political space. Employing the theoretical paradigm of postcolonial theory, this work hypotheses that Isidore Okpewho's *The Victims*, and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* are postcolonial narratives that discuss the complexities of transnational displacements and migrations on the existential conditions of the postcolonial subject, and that, Okpewho and Emecheta do not consider transcontinental movement of postcolonial African subjects a really helpful alleviation of their problems. Rather, the two focal authors see the movement of these postcolonial African subjects from the periphery to the metropolitan centre as creating new challenges for the migrants. The narratives, therefore, postulate with the use of characterisation, thematic manipulation, plot development, setting and style to demonstrate that postcolonial subjects should remain in their original space and make it better for their existential habitation.

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INTRODUCTION

The economic well-being of individuals and families is hugely influential in key decision, including changing jobs, moving to new neighbourhoods, responding to emergencies, and educating children. Okpewho and Emecheta, in their narratives portray inequalities in income and wealth distribution between racial groups (especially blacks and whites) in America. African American families have a fraction of white families' wealth, leaving them more economically insecure and with far fewer opportunities for economic mobility. Black households have endured a long history of racial segregation and discriminatory employment practices. They are significantly less likely to be home owners than whites, have less access to stable jobs and good wages as well as to retirement benefits.

Thus, a major preoccupation for them is how to negotiate a space or place where they find themselves. Thisarticle discusses this negotiation of space; the discussion is divided into two; Constructing Hybridity and Re-thinking Homeland in*The Victims* and *Second Class Citizen*. In Okpewho's *The Victims*, Okpewho presents a picture of Obanua who works restlessly to provide for his family but his salary is so insignificant that he ends up becoming the butt of his wives' as he jokes cannot cater for them or pay his children's school fees. In Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, Adah works quite hard to become a big woman but ends up in a mill with a very low wage with which to cater for herself and her children. Adah's house speaks for itself, "…a small two bed room house in the shabby quarter of the Negro", with no safety or potable water (1974, p.50). Her house is a replica of the ghettos in which many blacks live in the West. Africans face similar

problems in the different texts under discussion and the authors, Okpewho and Emecheta; seek to expose some of these ills. In so doing, they allow their characters to negotiate spaces in their different surroundings as it is going to be discussed in the first thrust of this article which is Constructing Hybridity.

Constructing Hybridity: In constructing hybridity, Emecheta in *Second Class Citizen*, presents events affecting members of the Nigerian diaspora. She also makes allusions to the experiences of racism, cultural differences, identity crisis and other sundry issues affecting Nigerians in a foreign country. Through her writings, she depicts the difficulties Nigerian migrants face when they are caught between two cultures as exemplified in the character of Adah Obi, the protagonist. This novel relates the struggles of Adah and her quest for survival, especially as they relate to the actualisation of her dreams; a journey that sees her grow into a woman and move from an elite position in her native Nigeria to a very poor class in a predominantly white European society. She struggles with motherhood, wifehood and with supporting her entire family alongside as an independent woman. Issues of race are relevant to her struggle. Being a black woman who must face racist experiences in England, she adopts a new identity and becomes a hybrid to succeed. Adah Obi suffers from the patriarchal and colonial discourses which are dominant in contemporary Nigerian and British societies where she is portrayed as the ultimate other due to her disadvantageous position as a black woman and an immigrant.

The rising number of African migrants to Europe and America has increasingly come to the fore in literature and specifically in representations of Africans in diaspora. This is an attempt to capture the often complex relationship immigrants have with their host communities and their experiences in trying to adapt to a new environment. In this vein, Emecheta in *Second Class Citizen* attempts to portray what it means to be a girl child in Nigeria in the early 1960s, and then compares the Nigerian society at the time with the English society. The structure of the novel is episodic. It starts with Adah's childhood, emphasising her early dreams and aspirations, and ends with her leaving her husband Francis. This is reflected in the way Emecheta titles each chapter; from the first, 'The Childhood to the final' (chapter thirteen) 'The Ditch Pull'. It follows Adah's progression through life in distinct chapters. Through Emecheta's use of Nigerian characters in *Second Class Citizen* she can be said to have represented the average experience of Africans living in the diaspora by highlighting common challenges caused by racism, differences in culture, and loss of identity. All these are illustrated by her use of literary techniques like characterisation, setting, language or dialect, parody or mimicry, and imagery. By using these methods, Emecheta depicts the hostility of the British society towards black immigrants and also vividly paint the struggles of those considered outsiders, who often face displacement and resettlement even in a new environment. She also explores the processes through which they become hybrids so as to create a space for themselves and their families. The narrative revolves around the protagonist, Adah, who goes through difficulties and despair and subsequent achieves life. The narrator uses the third person (narrative point of view and through) linear structure which Adah develops as a character, questioning the social values, norms and expectations of her identity in both societies. Emecheta uses the novel to show that representation plays a vital role in literature because it brings to the fore happenings in our immediate society and the surrounding areas and sometimes offers valuable perspectives within which to consider these events.

Also, looking at the racial situation in Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, one quickly notices that a lot has changed. The black consciousness as of then was still at its early stage and Africans or rather blacks in general, were seen by whites in their host countries as trouble makers and barbarians. To get a good house as a black at that time was not easy, even with ready money. Once the white landlord notices the prospective tenant's blackness, the space becomes unavailable. Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* shows this racial segregation when Adah goes out searching for a house to rent as it is written: "…As she opened the door, the woman clutched at her throat, her little mouth opening and closing as if gasping for air… she found her voice… that voice that was telling them now that she was very sorry, the rooms had just gone…Adah had never faced rejection in this manner… just because they were blacks? (1974, p. 85). Adah becomes so frightened that the woman will have an epileptic seizure when she enters the house. She sees the woman struggling for airas she tells them there is no house. Adah and Francis had never witnessed such direct rejection on account of their being black. Blacks are openly rejected in the West especially when services are to be rendered. Racial discrimination is visible in almost all spheres of influence in the West. Blacks are openly discriminated against, and as such, they become hybrids; that is, they blend White identity with theirs to form completely different personalities. Being hybrids, they take up new personality and accept their statues as the 'other' so as to get jobs from which they can earn a living for themselves. Diasporic experience is spread across the globe, from countries such as Nigeria and the rest of Africa to other continents like North America, Europe and Asia. Prior to the 1960s, some migrants already lived in Britain, especially in the London area. However, in the years that followed, the influx of migrants into the United Kingdom increased rather rapidly as they pursued the proverbial greener pastures, in search of a better life, different from what was obtainable in their home countries. Academic pursuit is one of multiple reasons why some people migrate. Emecheta, through her narrative shows that the era portrayed by *Second Class Citizen* witnessed a flood of people from ex-colonies into the metropolitan city of London. In chapter seven of the novel, entitled 'The Ghetto', Emecheta uses characterisation to summarise the reason behind the influx of Nigerians like Adah, Francis, Mr. Babalola, and Mr. Noble into England as it is written: These group of men calculated that with independence would come prosperity, the opportunity for self-rule, pushy vacant jobs and more money, plenty of it. One had to be eligible for these jobs, through these men.

The only place to secure this eligibility, this passport to prosperity, was England. They must come to England, get a quick degree in Law and go back to rule their own country... some of them actually made it... if they remembered their original dream, the dream of reading law…The dream of becoming an aristocracy became a reality of being black, a nobody, a second-class citizen. (1974, pp. 87-89). After independence, most people in Nigeria thought prosperity had come and also that it was time for self-rule which they thought would translate into plenty of jobs. Secure such jobs required studying in England to get a degree in law and returning home to rule the people. In all, very few immigrants succeeded in such ventures. In a significant way, Emecheta's characterisation, ranging from pre-colonial to diasporic characters also represents the essential peculiarity of Africans. In portraying Adah, she brings out some significant experiences which result from her efforts to find a suitable place for her family after they are forced to move out of a rented flat by their landlord. True to her roots, she takes the initiative to search for an appropriate place where they could live. Many of the troubles faced by black immigrants in Britain come from the fact that their race had been 'Othered'; described as savage and inferior to the white race. According to Said (1993), the western discourses of colonialism have historically and ideologically stereotyped and constructed non-western people as other, relegating them to a position of displacement and marginalisation. Stressing on Said's postulation, Hall (1990, p. 226) in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* also asserts that not only have western discourses constructed the subject position of the blacks as a position of marginalisation and inferiority, but they have also led the Blacks to internalise that positioning: Not only then, in Said's Orientalist sense, were blacks constructed as different and "other" within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes, but the latter also had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as 'other'. Every regime of representation is a regime of power formed, as Foucault indicates, by the fatal couplet, 'power/knowledge' he says this kind of knowledge is internal, not external. He writes that it is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the 'Other' of a dominant discourse and quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge', which is not only as a matter of imposed will and domination but by the power of inner compulsion

and con-formation to the norm. The idea of a fluctuating identity can be very powerful especially for a black person outside his/her ancestral home. This is because the process of trying to merge these two identities of home and diaspora is not a state that is deliberately chosen, and this point to its potential to change how people think of themselves because this inner expropriation of cultural identity cripples and deforms them but they still remain hybrids. If its silences are not resisted, they produce, in Fanon's vivid phrase, individuals without an anchor, without horizon, colourless, stateless, and rootless - a race of angels'(Cultural Identity and Diaspora 1990, p. 395). This construction of the non-white people, especially the Blacks, as the 'Other' eventually leads to racial exclusion. These colourless, stateless and rootless people take a new identity as they become hybrids.

Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* also portrays the experience of Nigerian subjects who have launched a journey into a world pervaded by social and economic inequalities. Emecheta uses Adah to illustrate that the oppression of the female child starts at home. Emecheta identifies Adah's mother as Adah's first contact with oppression. Because of this, a bad relationship exists between them; Adah finds herself unable to cooperate with her mother in any way. The narrator states that "the girl would lie, just for the joy of lying; she took secret joy in disobeying her mother" (1974, p.9). This situation of delinquency is brought about by the psychological oppression that Adah suffers at the hands of her mother. As young as she is she pretends to be who she not just to gain a bit of favour from her mother (Oppression of Women 1997, p. 466). In addition, after the death of Adah's father, her fortune in life takes a steeper downward turn because she is left in the care of her mother who is charged with making almost every decision for her. As a result of previous experiences, Adah knows that it is the end of the road for her educationally. Her mother is unwilling to work in order to earn enough money to send her to school and she makes a decision to find a husband who is willing to pay a high bride price for Adah. It turns out to be an unacceptable situation as all the suitors that come for her hand are old, bald headed men: "...because only they could afford the high bride price Ma was asking" (1974, p.20). Adah's mother accepts these bald headed men because of their money; men whom her daughter will not accept. Other passages in the novel attest to the oppression of the African woman, perhaps none more explicitly than an incident which occurs near the close of the novel where Adah's husband (Francis) demands that she should not practice birth control. She however defies his authority and goes ahead to get a birth control device because she knows that they could hardly afford another child. Moreover, her work is being interrupted by her pregnancies. When Francis finds out that she has gotten birth control device put without his consent as it is written "he called all the other tenants to come and see and hear about this great issue – how the innocent Adah who came to London only a year previously had become so clever. Adah was happy when Pa Noble came, because at least it made Francis stop hitting her. She was dizzy with pain and her head throbbed. Her mouth was bleeding. And once or twice during the proceedings she felt tempted to run out and call the police. (1974, pp. 160-161).

Francis calls all the neighbours to come and see an innocent woman who has been in London just for a year has become very clever. He beats her until she bleeds and contemplates calling the police but she has a second thought- if that happens what becomes of her given that she has no relative or friend around to live with. Adah has become a hybrid as she has taken a different personality by doing things even without her husband's approval. Francis publicly shames Adah by beating her in front of all the neighbours and the landlord for getting a birth control device. This incident inspires Adah to consider leaving her husband. She tells herself that she will not live with such a man. Everybody now knows that the man she is working for and supporting is not only a fool, but that he is too much of a fool to know that he is acting foolishly. (1974, p.161). Francis's tormenting of Adah is considered by the neighbours as madness because they do not see any reason why Francis should treat Adah badly. But all these give Adah the reason for constructing her hybridity. Emecheta, in *Second Class Citizen*, replaces the traditional African woman known to be timid, voiceless, helpless and vulnerable with a modern counterpart (Adah) who is confident, ambitious, innovative and resolute. Certain aspects of the novel are allegories for societal issues that penetrate the society immediately after independence. The lack of qualified workers able to fill the gaps left behind by the English colonisers and the search for better environment free of incessant corruption, female oppression, and a poor educational system are some factors that contributed to the influx of Nigerians into the western world. Thus, the novelist in her imaginative creation represents the plurality of discourses and social actions that Africans in diaspora experience. To appropriately explore this, Emecheta uses conflict to express the resistance the protagonist, Adah, finds in achieving her aims and dreams in a foreign land. Conflict is a discord that can have external aggressors or can even arise from within the self. It can occur when a subject is battling his inner discord, is at odds with his surroundings or is pitted against others in the story. As a result, Francis, Adah's husband is shown to be at odds with his surroundings. To fit into their new place of dwelling, African migrants frequently try to adopt some western values considered valuable.

This is portrayed by the Francis who wants his kids to fit into the Western system and forces them to learn how to speak English as it is written "…. One day when a friend and classmate of hers came to visit them…when her back was turned, the friend started to tease Titi in Yoruba, encouraging her to talk. Tired of Titi's silence, Adah's friend snapped at Titi: Have you lost or sold your tongue? You used to talk to me in Nigeria? Why don't you talk to me now? Then Titi, the poor thing, snapped back in Yoruba: Don't talk to me. My dad will cane me with the belt if I speak in Yoruba. And I don't know much English. Don't talk to me…. (1974, p. 59). Francis wants their daughter to start speaking only in English. The need for diasporic Nigerians to absorb some aspects of a new value system from their host communities pervades Emecheta's prose narrative. In the above passage, it is believed that this new cultural assimilation will make them appear more civilised even as this thought overlooks the fact that the people they strive so much to emulate cannot speak the language of the people they ruled. Thus, it didn't matter to Francis if Titi forgot her own ancestral tongue; all that mattered is that she be fluent in the language of the colonisers.Thus, the children become hybrids. Emecheta's representation of the characters in *Second Class Citizen* examines how some of these characters lose touch with their own identity by pretending for too long to be something they are not. Francis's behaviour is indicative of a typical migrant who is willing to go the extra mile to suppress his/her original identity and adopt one which suites him/her better in the new environment. From a postcolonial perspective, Francis, being a Nigerian in England, has a double identity as both a Nigerian and a 'wanna be' Londoner. He is a hybrid and it is the recognition of such contrasting traits that continuously weighs him down and reminds him of the need to engross more Western mannerisms. Like most immigrants from the ex-colonies, Francis realises that fitting into this new society would require the ability to use their language in an efficient way. In essence, *Second Class Citizen* is about more than just racial issues. It deals with all the ways people form their identities, what they put on and what they take off; the things they accumulate and the items they discard along the way. Migrants are the real subject of any postcolonial literature.

They face a double trauma about identity; they come from countries that have suffered colonisation and are given cause to question their identity again by leaving their homes and moving to a different place with a different culture. In the western world, they work underpaid jobs and their languages and skin colours are considered exotically fascinating, and at the same time ugly and primitive. Although Adah tries to resist this social attitude, the black community in Britain already seems to have accepted an inferior status. Black Africans commonly find white foster mothers for their children in an attempt to ensure they adopt English manners in total disregard for their native traditions. Adah reacts to this tendency among the immigrants in England as follows:

They say that in England Nigerian children have two sets of mothers – the natal mother, and the social mother. As soon as a Nigerian housewife in England realised that she was expecting a child, instead of shopping for prams, and knitting little bootees, she would advertise for a foster mother. No one cared whether a woman was suitable or not, no one wanted to know whether the house was clean or not; all they wanted to be sure of was that the foster-mother was white. The concept of whiteness 'could cover a multitude of sins' (1974, p. 50).

Nigerians in England bear double identities as they look for foster mothers for their children immediately they discover that they are pregnant. All they need is a white woman, whether she's clean or dirty; this idea of whiteness is what they want. The black children become hybrids even before they are given birth to. To make the assimilation process easy for their children, and for them to find their own world and structure their identities in the new setting, many diasporic Nigerian women advertise their need for a white foster mother, otherwise known as the social mother different from a natal mother (birth mother). This they do to hasten their children's incorporation into the white society at an early age. In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah's problems with identity begin as a child arising from a lack of consideration of her uniqueness and importance as an individual by traditional African culture. Thus, from the example, Emecheta shows the insignificance of Adah's birth to her family as she said "She was a girl who had arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth, she was so insignificant. One thing was certain, though: she was born during the Second World War (1974, p.7). The preference for boys over girls in African society is not just limited to the time of birth but continues through many situations in life such as in the field of education. As a member of the 'lesser'sex, Adah is deprived of an education and other facilities in stark contrast to her brother who is provided for and encouraged in his educational pursuits. Emecheta in the excerpt above explores how the girl child is viewed in an African setting. Adah's struggles begin early in her life.

After her father's death, she is taken into an uncle's home where she lives with her mother and is tutored to be a good wife, and not to be a woman of her own will. All she is allowed to learn are the responsibilities of a woman in the household and to the family. Emecheta depicts the second class position of the African woman who is not even allowed the freedom of travelling abroad, a privilege only granted to the male folk. This may be seen in Francis' reaction to Adah's desire to accompany him to London: "Father does not approve of women going to UK…it is allowed for African males to come and get civilised in England, but that privilege has not been extended to the females yet" (1974, Pp.24-34). More privileges are accorded to the boy child than to the girl child. A black woman faces even more marginalisation than a typical black man, a fact which Emecheta asserts in *Second Class Citizen*. She seems to be of the opinion that a black woman generally endures a greater level of discrimination than any other group of people in western countries and elsewhere. Not only are they at the bottom of the social hierarchy but they also have negative stereotypes attributed to them. Emecheta breaks this stereotypical chain as her protagonist succeeds in recovering her lost identity; the identity she lost as a result of her position as a black woman, the general social alienation of black people and dislocation due to migration into a foreign land as she becomes a hybrid. However, despite all of Adah's struggles as an African second-class citizen, she finally succeeds in carving out a space for herself, (a real home) and in building a secure sense of self-identity. Her western education and employment as a librarian at the American Consulate Library at Campbell Street in London open her up to a way to a new life as a promising writer. Though she struggles with her four children and another child in her womb, she takes charge of her own life as well as her children's single handedly in a foreign country. She struggles to belong in a foreign land. Hence, Adah can be said to have overcome the internal and external conflicts arising from her struggles with Francis and the psychological trauma she went through, and has finally carved out a place for herself and her children.

Thus, *Second Class Citizen* has been shown to be realistic in its representation of the immigrants' experiences in the West. It highlights the feelings and thoughts of Emecheta's characters. In order to locate a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, Emecheta uses the urgent need for accommodation by Adah to ridicule a part of British culture:

She knew that any white would recognise the voice of an African woman on the phone. So to eradicate that, she pressed her wide, tunnel-like nostrils together as if to keep out a nasty smell. She practiced and practiced her voice in the loo, and was satisfied with the result. The landlady would definitely not mistake her for a woman from Birmingham or London, yet she could be Irish, Scots or an English speaking Italian. At least, all these people were white (1974, p. 80). As a result of the various accents in London, Adah knows that her voice on the phone calling for the vacant room in Hawley Street will make it clear to the landlord that she is an African, so she immediately adopts in a new personality by changing her voice so as to increase her chances of getting the accomodation. With this in mind, when pursuing another opportunity, she mimics the London accent while on phone with the landlady to break the boundaries of her black identity which had been a great obstacle for social acceptability. Mimicry in postcolonial literature is most commonly seen when members of a colonised society imitate the language, dressing, politics, or cultural attitudes of their colonisers. By emulating the white way of speaking, Adah suppresses her own cultural identity. Another example is seen when Adah is getting ready to give birth to her fifth child. Recalling her previous delivery when she got no flowers or gifts from her husband like other white patients in the ward, she decides to mimic them this time:

Her baby was going to arrive in style… she addressed twenty greeting cards to herself, gave three pounds to Irene, the girl, and told her to post three cards a day after the baby was born. Two big bunches of flowers were to be sent to her, one on her arrival, with Francis's name attached to it with sentimental words. The other was to arrive at the hospital after her safe delivery. But if she did not survive the birth, Irene was to put Adah's children's names on it and make it into a wreath… (1974, p. 175). Most often, an immigrant goes to great lengths to be assimilated into the white system. Adah goes through the hilarious if not ridiculous process of addressing twenty greeting cards to herself because she feels that she is left out from the happy scenes going on around her. She imitates the white culture of sending herself cards and flowers so that others will believe she has a loving husband even though that is far from the truth. This shows that mimicry goes beyond impersonating someone or a group of persons. Hodgart in Satire: Origins and Principles throw more light on the issue of mimicry, saying:

Mimicry is an invasion of privacy, in that it destroys every man's private conviction that he is unique and inimitable: even though it may be affectionate in its malice, it is another weapon against human pride. The mimic must create a likeness, so that his audience shall recognise it; but he must not stop at mere impersonation, he must go on to produce a ludicrous distortion in which the compulsive gesture and tics of the victims are exaggerated. (2010, p. 121). The intent of mimicry, from Hodgart's postulation above, is to reduce human pride by outrageously imitating the likeness of the person one intends to mimic. It creates a likeness where the audience will think that it is true. Hodgart's assertion lends more credence to what Emecheta tries to portray in *Second Class Citizen*. The quest by immigrants to fit into what they see to be a dominant and more civilised culture affects them to the extent that it is now the case of the 'Other' striving to become like the westerners even if they have to mimic it. In the first pages of the novel, the reader comes across the comparison between 'Ibuza', the symbol of all native values left behind by the Nigerians, and Lagos, which is the symbol of civilisation established by the coloniser. For the natives, living in the city is a misfortune (1974, p.8). However, even this city is not considered to be civilised enough when it is compared to Britain. A native African who has simply visited Britain is regarded as someone superior and all others rush out to meet this extraordinary person that has experienced Britain. The

influence of having been to Britain completely changes the social status of the native people; these people are hybrids because they now have different cultures in them as it is seen in "….. The Ibuza women who lived in Lagos were preparing for the arrival of the town's first lawyer from the United Kingdom. The 'United Kingdom' when pronounced by Adah's father sounded so heavy…It was so deep, so mysterious, that Adah's father always voiced it in hushed tones, wearing such a respectful expression as if he were speaking of God's Holiest of Holies. Going to the United Kingdom must surely be like paying God a visit. The United Kingdom, then, must be like heaven (1974, p. 8).

The belief that the United Kingdom is a holy place results from colonial discourse. Once the native mind is thus colonised, the natives can never recognise the inferiority they assign to their own values, conditions and lifestyles. For this reason, one observes a great amount of mimicry in colonial society: …the women of Ibuza bought identical cotton material from the UAC department store...They dyed their hair, and straightened it with hot combs to make it look European. Nobody in her right senses would dream of welcoming a lawyer who had come from the United Kingdom with her hair left naturally in curls...It meant the arrival of their own Messiah (1974, p. 8). The native women prefer to look like European women in a sort of aspiration towards the allegedly higher values and standards of the supposedly superior civilisation. In other words, the immigrants simply mimic European manners and lifestyle, and confirm the inferiority of their native values, thus, constructing hybridity. In *Second Class Citizen*, Emecheta demonstrates, through her use of characterisation, setting, language/dialect, imagery, that there is a clear break between the London people imagine, and the London that really is. Their actual experiences in the city reveal a situation that directly contradicts that of their imagination. London for them has become a socially and economically oppressive place. In other to survive, blacks take on a new personality that is accepts the Whiteman's culture with their African culture; they become hybrids.

Constructing an identity should enable a peaceful co-existence, despite differences between both races. This encourages a harmonious life amidst the different cultures. According to Cornel West this consists of creative responses to the precise circumstances of our present moment – especially those of marginalized Third World agents who shun degraded self-representations, articulating instead their sense of the flow of history in the light of contemporary terrors, anxieties, and fears of highly capitalist cultures – with their escalating xenophobia against people of colour (Blacks) especially in American societies (Cornel West 2001, p. 257). This brings J. A. Cuddon to object to the ways in which developed nations, referred to as the First World (Europeans and Americans), in expanding their cultural values around the globe, impose their cultures and civilizations as the centre for developing nations to follow as the best references (J. A. Cuddon: 2013, p. 175). In *The Victims*, the word 'tribe' or 'primitive' for instance evokes in the novel the cultural stereotypes and racial denigration the white inflict on the black (2004: p. 75). In other words, it is against the cultural imperialism imposed by First World nations that Okpewho levels his criticism and then believes that constructing identity will be the best option for the blacks as is the case with Obanua. Obanua contructs hybridity by accepting hisresponsility as the head of the family. He takes a new personality to be able to cope with the tension in his family.

Again, it is prejudicial that centuries after the abolition of slavery and slave trade and more than fifty years after the end of colonization, Africans are still the subject of racial discrimination in American and European societies. Africans in the diaspora strive to stop racial discrimination but achieve little. Isidore Okpewho attempts to reposition the debate around the question of how to find an adequate postcolonial construction of hybridity that takes into account cultural pluralism and identity inclusion in a globalized world. The focus of Okpewho's analysis here is to answer the question: what is the ideological vision of the writers? As a creative writer, he thinks that Africans should construct their identities so as to be acknowledged and respected by other nations, while Africans should also respect others' cultures. To address this question, Isidore Okpewho creates Pearl, a character who is president of the local chapter of a group called the "Daughters of Africa". In the novel, the organization sets itself the task of redeeming the "true" facts of Africa's history and culture from the "tarnishment" of white prejudice, giving firm support to the call by Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) for a return of Negroes to Africa (2004, p.19). In other words, Okpewho tries to foreground pan Africanist ideals. Through Pearl, the novelist resumes the ideas of Garvey Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA):

If Europe is for Europeans then Africa shall be for black peoples of the world. Africa for Africans was Garvey's main idea. Though Garvey's movement failed, he did as much as anyone to draw the attention of the world, and in particular Africans to the problems of Africa (Michael Crowder 1990, p. 169). Pearl seeks to gather Black communities around the noble principles of unity, community, mutual understanding to dismantle European imperialist expansionist ideas and work for cultural renaissance (2004, p. 96). Pearl thinks that if the whites want "their" for them alone, then the blacks have no option than to make Africa for Africans. Although it does not work, he makes the Africa people to learn to be in unity. Ngugi wa Thiong'o states that neocolonialism is partly due to the succession of the cultural aspect of modern imperialism. Cultural control today has blunted perceptions and even feelings about those perceptions. "Cultural control? But we are no longer in the days of the French policies of assimilation or of the British educational policies of creating a compliant native middle class" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1993, p. 49). At a time when ethno-religious conflicts pervade the social atmospheres of many African countries and when racism against Blacks still hovers in the cultural practices of some American states, it is urgent to promote cultural dialogue and peace strategies by constructing hybridity in literary texts. It becomes necessary to stress that Okpewho uses his diction to display thematic concerns for the promotion of a new type of cultural dialogue that sees cultural differences, race, ethnicity and constructing hybridity in peoples as sources of enrichment, not of conflicts and divisions. If theoretically, inter-racial colonialism has ended, intra-racial cultural conflicts still abound.

In Okpewho's *The Victims,* Obanua thinks nostalgically of his life. The difference in attitude that results from generation gap - the class/gender situations - forms a complex aspect of his living; he constructs his identity in regard to the circumstances surrounding him. He accepts his poverty and is prepared to do any odd job to get some more money for his drinks. Also the change in the lifestyle of his son is very instrumental in that education sharpens the human mind. This charge is seen in the reading of the life stories of Ubaka. Nwabunor's son feels very dejected each time he is sent out of school because his father Obanua is unable to pay his school fees. With this situation, Ubaka constructs an identity for himself where each time he is sent out of school, he runs home and tells his mother, who joins him in crying and cursing his father for his irresponsible behaviour towards his family. The narrator says:

With tears streaming down his eyes Ubaka picked up his things from the groung. His friends helped him take up his things and hooked on his arm. They all had pity for him over many times. This, as well as sharing the pain of her son… slowly and crying still Ukaka left. There was no room for discussion. They all stood and stared pitifully and think arrogantly about Obanua in his absent… (1970, p. 22). Ubaka cries as he is sent out of school because of school fees. He is very frustrated and picks up his belongings as he leaves the school premises. The reader is likely to pity him, like his classmate do because he is constantly sent out of class. His mother, an arrogant woman, joins her son in weeping as they think very negatively about Obanua. As a result of the abject poverty that characterises many characters' lives,, Gwam exploits these poor masses by giving them jobs for which he ends up not paying them. In line with these struggles, Obanua works day and night but he is unable to take care of his family. As a result of his irresponsibility, Nwabunor becomes unbearable making Obanua to spend all his time in the beer parlour.

Eventually, it leads to the series of deaths at the end, masterminded by Nwabunor for fear that his son's position as the successor is threat from his son's half-brother. This action materialises with Nwabunor's poisoning of Ogugua, her son and daughters. In the process, Nwabunor's only child and son par takes unwittingly while Nwabunor, the procurer of the fatal poison, goes mad when her son also dies as a result of the poisoned food. Nwabunor's reaction is out of frustration and nostalgia.

As the family trauma gets to its peak, Ubaka's mother gets involved in a number of deaths. Nwabunor's action results from her emotional investment in the hint of her son's future being compromised. She discovers that when you are uneducated you confront severe pitfalls in life, like she and her husband do, as certain actions, including fighting with her husband continuously for days until she goes unconscious, show their low level of reasoning. With situations which family dialogue could have resolved result in serious fighting. This becomes part of their lifestyle; probably as a result of their uneducatedness they create an identity for themselves. She knows that her son's generation is different from theirs and achieving the fruits of education is the only way of trying to liberate themselves from restrictive situations in life. Nwabunor emerges as the modern woman who forges her life according to her own wishes as she wants her son to belong in the society where everything changes fast. She wants her son to be a hybrid, accepting the changes of the time and fitting in the society. She prefers to do all in her power to give her son and her family the best in life as it is written "… Nwabunor proved herself a very dutiful wife. While her husband went off to work, plying the roads to Benin and Warri, she traded in small articles and tried to supplement their living. But good luck hardly seemed to come her way. For some time she had been feeling her strength steadily reduced by some kind of internal weakness that taxed her breath at times and gave her pain around the heart and lungs…" (1970, p. 4).

Nwabunor struggles that her family should also belong. Okpewho's novel, like other African writers', is thematically rooted in the post-colonial African world. Through it, he explores concerns pertinent to this world and the many problems that beset it; such issues as the conflicting claims of the individual and the community, his ethnic nationality and the nation state, of social morality and personal expediency, identity and difference, tradition and change, and power and responsibility, all as seen in Nwabunor and Obanua's activities. In addition to these, *The Victims* also introduces and emphasizes other themes like honor, duty, orderliness, peace, reason, dignity, discipline, and the work ethic. According to Okpewho, fiction is a mighty anvil upon which to hammer out his philosophical and ideological vision of the good life and the compromises that are very often not made to ensure stability in personal, communal and national life. Like his contemporaries too, Okpewho assimilates historical themes and events into his fiction, but he attempts to distance and ingest them through his art. Okpewho gives his characters voice to articulate their aspirations, to tell their own stories, and the freedom to act out their impulses. In the novel, Obanua remains enveloped in a drunken haze from which he never awakes to see the tragedy that has engulfed his family. That is an identity he constructs for himself. The novel traces the course of his disintegration and his family's dissolution. The assertion of his individuality comes to the fore when he gets to work as the night watchman with the mission:

He had finally got a job, or rather picked up a job that had been lying around. Nobody wanted that job, nobody would touch it or come near it. But he had to grab it because it gave him a place to be in and paid his way…sinister picture as fearsome by day as it would surely be by night to those bold enough to pry. (1970, p. 92). Obanua gets a job which everybody is afraid to do as a result of the fearful sinister picture of some river goddess who visits the spot at night to disrupt the construction of the church building. Obanua surmounts all the odds to do the undoable so that he can have some money to support his family and belong to it once more as the 'head'. His wives consider him a 'weakly' because he cannot take up his challenges as a father and husband. He takes to drinking and keeping late nights as a sign of escapism. In constructing this identity of always staying out of the house because he could not meet up with their needs the author reveals to the reader the type of character Obanua is; he is weakly and irresponsible. At the beginning of the novel, Obanua is seen playing the part of the proper African man, when he takes in the second wife. Obanua's words demonstrate his metamorphosis as the African man. Nwabunor wonders about the sudden change in her husband as it is said "…Obanua Ozoma had decided that he wanted a second wife. He was a driver by trade, and had met his first wife, Nwabunor, in Aje, one of the villages on his route where he stopped to pick passengers or refuel or buy food. He had been consistently nagged by his mother, who was worried that her only son was almost in his middle age and had still not given her a grandchild, until he met a woman who made an unavoidable impression on him…(1970, p.4). Obanua takes in a second wife because of his mother's influence since Nwabunor has given him only one son, contrary to the so many Obanua's mother expects. Thus, Obanua proclaims his right to grow as a human being with his own rights and privileges and not just an Igbo man as tradition and society enjoined him to be. In the novel we see the African man coming full circle. He even allows room for his first wife to choose where she wants to stay; in the main house with him or in the spare room at the corner. His past experiences have taught him that life does not centre on his being an Igbo man. He finds a pleasant change incorporating new attitudes, which would have shocked even him a few years ago.

All he struggles to do is to belong in his own house, a feat whose difficulty is suggested in his son's protest when he asks him to get him water to bathe. His son says: "…was it not you I was talking to just a while ago and you wouldn't say a word" (1970, pp. 38-39). It does not make Obanua budge from his stand. He has begun to realize that 'women have options' men are like the difference barriers, Nwabunor is the stumbling block between him and his son. His son takes instruction from his mother and turns down whatever his father asks him to do. These are some of the instances that provoke a never-to-be-forgotten fight that lasts a whole night between Nwabunor and Obanua, heralding and dramatizing the total collapse of their domestic stability. This makes life difficult for Obanua as he loses total control of his wives and decides to marry a new one. In *The Victims*, events from the beginning of the text suggest the overall hardship. The protagonist, Obanua is frustrated by his inability to get a better job than becoming a driver. Yet, it is as a driver that he meets his first wife. Things do not proceed, and following his mother's influence, he takes another wife. He loses control of his family when his salary becomes insignificant to feed them or to pay for his son's fees. The constant mockery as mimicry connotes the ambivalent relationship between the coloniser and colonised; it also has a significant place in Bhabba's analysis. As Bhabba emphasizes, mimicry has a double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority (p. 88). As a result of mimicry, Obanua takes flight and leaves the battle front to his wives and the ferocious twins who add adolescent fanaticism to natural partisanship on the side of Ogugua, their mother, against the embattled Nwabunor.

The twins struggle to belong in the Obanua family; although they know Obanua is not their biological father. The mimicry their mother's co-wife when she fights with Obanua is observed as they say:

'Did you notice the way her neck was being twisted and she was screaming-'Yes- like a cock when the knife has been brought near its throat.' And the way he almost throttled her and her eyes were gleaming wide- 'like a scuttling rat when the cat has grabbed him in his claws. Frankly, I wish he had killed that evil woman.' 'Don't mind her. Hardly a day passes but she looks for one kind of trouble or the other and will never allow the poor man to go about his work.' 'One mind told me to go and help him tear the rest of her clothing to pieces and leave her there completely naked.' 'God saved you! She would have skinned you as soon as she recovered from the fight.'…. (1970, p. 17)

These twins are happy when the Obanua family is in total trouble. They describe and laugh at Obanua who presses his wife's neck in a

fight, almost killing her at some point. The narrator uses simile in the twins' account ('yes like a cock when a knife has been brought near its throat') to show how tense the fight between Obanua and Nwabunor is. The narrator continues with the simile saying '...her eyes were gleaming wide- like a scuttling rat when the cat has grabbed him in his claws'. These frightful images suggest that Obanua struggles to kill his wife each time they fight. The twins are evil as they even pray that Obanua should kill Nwabunor in the fight. To them, Nwabunor is a threat to their mother's happiness. As a result their stay in that house is at risk. If their mother is sent out, all of them will suffer the fate. They even take upon themselves to add more pain to her by stealing Nwabunor's money and goods from her kiosk, driving her further to a point of madness and paranoia. All she wants is to be discouraged and to quit the marriage; a situation that would eliminate resistance from a step-mother.

Ubaka, Nwabunor's teenage son and Ogugua's four-year-old son alone escape the blight. Miraculously, they cultivate an attachment too innocent and strong to be broken by their warring mothers. They really belong to each other and construct an identity for themselves. Bomboy, after been made to cry by Ubaka for maltreating a cat and his sisters, warns him never to go beside Ubaka again. It all falls on deaf ears as it is said:

…Then looking at their neighbours' compound she saw what was going on. With a broomstick in his hand Bomboy was stealing upon the little cat which was now leaving this house of perpetual yet familiar molestation and was trotting dutifully home to the owner's call. But just as he was about to lash out at the cat, his hand was gripped from behind by Ubaka who warned him to leave the witch cat alone. Somewhat frightened by the unexpected interception Bomboy shook… and began to cry. Both of his elder sisters ran out and took Ubaka to task for 'beating the poor little child for no just cause'…Ubaka left the two girls to themselves, took the little boy by the hand, and comforted him. (1970, p. 124)

Ubaka, who did not have any bad intentions but just to correct the brother, abandons his sisters who are talking and takes Bomboy by his hands to comfort him. He is of exemplary character as he hardly gets angry or upset. He even accompanies him in the digging of sand for Gwam although conscious that he will not have any payment. He just enjoys keeping the company of Ubaka. Despite the serious bitterness between the two families living under the same roof, these sons struggle to live as one in a family where hatred is deeply implanted.

Two old sisters who live next door to Obanua function as a chorus in the unfolding tragic drama. They observe and comment upon everything going on in Obanua's house and many useful insights are revealed through their comments. For example, one of the sisters comments that the members of Obanua household are "people who are merely the victims of their own fire" (1970, p.10). This influences the reader's perception of the action, because it comes from someone who has been a consistent participant. Constant struggles of belonging come in again because of the so much heat and passion; because a good part of the individual's communication is with the self, in an inner region of the mind cluttered up with the memory of injuries and suspicions; with no extenuations, no rationalizations, no excuses and no objectivities as events unfold in anunavoidable manner. Nwabunor takes Ogugua and her children unawares; they can hardly avoid her wrath because they do not expect her to get into their kitchen to poison their pot of food. Ogugua has always warned her children to be careful in their dealings with Nwabunor. Her advice to them during an argument the twins have with her goes thus:

Now don't let me see you again wasting your time on a useless argument when you should be doing what I asked you to do. If anybody calls you a thief you should call that person a thief also and do what you are doing, and let the person direct her attention to me. Now go ahead and do what I asked you and don't let me hear your voice again-both of you. The two girls exchanged glances, feeling more vindicated than reproached. (1970, p. 83)

Ogugua from the onset knows that Nwabunor does not like the twins. She warns them not to spend their time arguing with anyone. If someone called them thieves, they are to call the person a thief too. This advice is reminiscent of the 'an eye for an eye' system of justice. Ogugua tells them to always allow whoever comes after them with problems to direct the attention to her. Oga and Ndidi are badly brought up; they steal from Nwabunor's kiosk and mock at her each time she comes asking. Ogugua's myopia is apparent in non- exercise of a little more patience which would have permitted her hear her daughters argue over the items they have been stealing from her co-wife. She is so defensive. She does not want to question her daughters deeply to really know if truly they are guilty of the crimes. She becomes insulting and is prepared to pick a fight with Nwabunor over her daughters. The constant suspicious and anarchy between them leads to the tragic deaths at the end of the novel. Thus, Ogugua's twins are so entrenched in their mother's hatred of her rival that they open up their own front of attack. Obanua's irresponsibility as a failed polygamist is at the core of the tragedy, but Nwabunor's paranoia and Ogugua's insensitivity and provocations also contribute.

Similarly, Obanua's neglect of his children and wives is sharply contrasted with solicitousness of the old woman's goat. The most unforgettable image is that which brings *The Victims* to an end: "Above and beyond the silhouetted trees in the horizon black cloud figures drifted westwards, homeward round, like the sad profiles of a retreating menagerie…recaptures with great cuteness the underlying … creation, as if the tragic disintegration of Obanua's household is felt vicariously" (1970, p.155). The sad profiles of a retreating menagerie very felicitously describe the state of the doomed household as its members embark upon their final journey to eternity. The prominence given to the relationship between Ubaka, Nwabunor's thirteen-year-old son and Bomboy, Ogugua's inquisitive four-year-old shows how these characters struggle to belong in a household where hatred and jealousy have eaten deep into the souls of the other members. They really construct an identity for themselves different from their mothers' and sisters'. Indeed, the gentleness which pervades this relationship, in the midst of so much adult venom and viciousness, deserved self-congratulation. Ubaka's relationship with the other boys in their koso playing groups provides added points of identification for adolescence. Okpewho's success in establishing a balance between the interests of children and young people who succeed in constructing hybridity on the one hand and those of adults on the other hand, is major achievement of the novel. All in all, characters reconstruct hybridity when they are not really happy with their present situation. They get to accept their new personalities; that is with their own culture in them, they accept the new culture and become hybrids so that the society should accept them as far as certain societal issues as discussed above are concerned.

Re-thinking Homeland: The existence of racism as pointed out by Rev. Sharpton is evident in Emecheta's projection of the Nigerian diasporan experience in *Second Class Citizen*. From the era described in the novel to the present time, racism has remained an active bug ravaging foreign societies beneath a facade of tranquility. The discourse on racism is thus important in exploring the lives of Blacks in the diaspora. The belief that differences in physical appearance have something to do with differences in the behaviour, attitude, intelligence, or the intrinsic worth of individuals promotes racism, prejudice and animosity against people perceived to belong to other races. Thus, the second class treatment faced by black people abroad holds an important place in the context of Emecheta's novel. Both Francis and Adah face racism in many situations such as in hiring their baby-sitter, and in renting an apartment. The effect of this environment on the psyche is suggested when Adah finds that her sick son Vicky is being taken to a hospital named "Royal Free hospital". The name of the hospital seemed ironic to her since it appeared as though the hospital's treatment is simultaneously royal and free of charge. Adah refuses to believe this and doubts the treatment her son is to receive. She wonders if the hospital is only meant for second class people, the blacks: "Was it a hospital for poor people, for second-class people? Why did they put the word 'free' in it? Fear

started to shroud her then. Were they sending her Vicky to a second-class hospital, a free one, just because they were blacks?" (1974, p. 60). From instances like this, Adah re-thinks the perks of remaining in her homeland where everybody is treated equally.

The caution that characterises Adah's line of thought reveals the level of caution a typical black person in Britain takes when faced with an unusual display of kindness by the white or by British health system. Under normal circumstances, Vicky's treatment at Royal Free hospital would not have been an issue, but considering the constant maltreatment Black Africans endure from their White hosts, Adah's fear is understandable because the situation is difficult and confusing for her. After all the fuss made about lazy blacks and the segregated society, for the white man to seemingly turn back and offer treatment free of charge is incomprehensible to Adah partly because: "She had never seen or heard of a place where a child is given such close attention by adults, free. There must be a catch somewhere. By the time they arrived at the hospital, she was convinced Vicky's in nards were going to be taken away from him" (1974, p.61) Adah's fear increases as they get to the hospital and Vichy's in nard is taken. In a country where blacks are treated as the 'other', Adah really fears and wonders if they can really have anything free of charge.

This fear of accepting any form of kindness from the whites characterizes the prevailing situation in the west which in time affects the personal character of individuals by sowing seeds of distrust. The feelings expressed above, provide a peek into the psychological trauma that some of these experiences put Blacks through. Adah has never experienced this sort of service at home where it would have been understandable. She finds it difficult to grasp how the same people who would not rent out a flat to a black person can then turn and give the same individual free medical care. Hence, her doubts about this kindness.

Emecheta in *Second Class Citizen* uses different settings to relay specific messages make the narrative more complete. Set in post-colonial Igbo/ Yoruba society in Nigeria, the Caribbean and England, the novel covers a wide range of cultural issues encompassing Igbo male attitudes and the English treatment of black immigrants. These different settings are used to explore how immigrants in the diaspora battle with culture differences in their host communities and how their experiences abroad doffer from what they may be accustomed to in their ancestral homes. The issue of belonging cuts across different countries. Characters re-think home when – ever they face discrimination, as portrayed the texts studied. Chika Unigwe in Migration to Belgium (2013) highlights this problem of culture difference when she says:

In that first month of my migration, I was busy losing my voice in small imperceptible ways. I was finding that nothing I knew before seemed to be of consequence. Not language. Not social etiquette…J woke me up to have breakfast. I was not hungry and I told him as much. No, darling, he said. 'Everyone is at the table. They are waiting for you. Why? ' I found it baffling that I would be required to come down to breakfast- whether I was hungry or not- and certainly did not understand why anyone would wait for me before eating (2013, p.36). As a Nigerian Igbo married to a Dutchman and living in Belgium, Unigwe is confronted daily with the reality that her Nigerian cultural norms vary from her husband. Unigwe cannot come to grips with the traditions of the Dutch and is unable to grasp the strange custom of eating even when not hungry.

Adah in *Second Class Citizen* also experiences this culture difference firsthand when she leaves her childhood setting in Nigeria and goes to England:

In England, she couldn't go to her neighbour and babble out troubles as she would have done in Lagos, she had learned not to talk about her unhappiness to those with whom she worked, for this was a society where nobody was interested in the problem of others. If you could not bear your problem anymore, you could always do away with yourself. That was allowed, too. Attempted suicide was not considered as a sin. It was a way of attracting attention to one's unfortunate situation. And whose attention do you attract? The attention of paid listeners. Listeners who make you feel like you are an object to be studied, diagnosed, charted and tabulated. Listeners who refer to you as a case'. You don't have the old woman next door who, on hearing an argument going on between a wife and husband, would come in to slap the husband, telling him off and all that, knowing that her words would be respected because she was old and experienced… instead you have the likes of Miss Stirling, whose office was along the Maiden Road… (1974, pp. 72-73)

Adah's thoughts and feelings in diaspora are of no concern to the white community where she finds herself. Only paid listeners (psychologists) who would consider her a case are readily available. There is no one with whom to share her problems, unlike back home in Nigeria where people are quick to interfere in the private lives of other individuals. Emecheta explores how lonely the life of a Nigerian in diaspora can be. She examines the influence of a new culture on Nigerian immigrants and their personal reactions to it. She cannot go to any of the churches because they make her cry; it feels surreal to see such beautiful places of worship empty, whereas in Nigeria, you would hardly get a seat as a late comer. Instead, you would have to stand outside and follow the service, and would be encouraged to bellow out the songs that often take away some of your sorrows. In England you are robbed of such comfort. The atmosphere in Nigerian churches was always festive. Differences in culture thus affect all aspects of a Nigerian immigrant's life.

Emecheta's simple and intriguing use of language is seen in her portrayal of the different issues that the immigrant person goes through both at home and in the diaspora. In the context of postcolonialism, language often becomes a site and tool for both colonisation and resistance. In particular, a return to original indigenous languages is often advocated for since these languages were suppressed by colonising forces. So in most cases, the language is made to bear the burden (Ashcroft 1989, p. 38) of one's own cultural experience. Because of this, local dialects are incorporated in most postcolonial works such as Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* as characters are given native names and expressions in indigenous languages are used. Examples include: 'Ezidijiji ode ogoli, omeoba'- (Igbo) meaning, "When a good man holds a woman, she becomes like the queen" (1974, p.9); 'Iyawo' (1974, p. 92) - a Yoruba word for a young wife; 'Opoho' (1974, p. 103); the Igbo word for woman; 'Okei' (1974, p.103); the Igbo word for young man and 'Odo' (1974, p. 154); the Igbo word for mortar. Apparently, Adah has been exposed to these two languages and by (even if sparingly) using Nigerian languages, she identifies with them and they make her think of home.

Similarly, despite Aunty Uju's simplistic and starry-eyed view of her coming to America, Ifemulu gets there to discover that it is not just about getting a scholarship easily and getting to take care of Dike. Ifemelu faces the reality of America and lapses into depression, stopping even his communication with Obinze as seen in Americanah:

She was swallowed, lost in a viscous haze, shrouded in a soup of nothingness. Between her and what she could feel there was a gap. She cared about nothing. She wanted to care, but she no longer knew how; it has slipped from her memory, the ability to care. Sometimes she woke up flailing and helpless, and she saw, in front of her and behind her, an utter hopelessness… she lay in bed and read books and thought of nothing. Sometimes she forgot to eat and other times she waited until midnight, her room-mates in their rooms, before heating up her food, and she left the dirty plates under her bed…would feel a crushing urge to cry and the tears would come, the sobs hurting her throat. (1991, p. 156)

Ifemelu finds herself in a web of depression a few months after her arrival in America. Faced with the hurdles of trying to get a good job and schooling, she experiences first-hand what it means to be a penniless black person in America. After Ifemelu's escape with a

tennis coach who pays her $100 for a sexual experience, she is left psychologically wounded from the experience of exchanging her body for money, something she would never have thought of if she was back at home. Such frustrating images make her to think of home.

Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* also explores the issue of identity as an important theme. The plot of Emecheta novel follows Adah and Francis growing up and finding their place in the world. The novel is divided into segments of identity formation that reflect on the process through which the postcolonial migrant's identity emerges. It portrays the stages through which characters' identities are formed, including their time as native immigrants, their experiences as immigrants in America which make them to re-think of home, and (where applicable), their temporary or permanent return.

In re- thinking homeland, we better perceive Okpewho's logic that art should promote cultural dialogue; that it should disseminate ideas which bring people of the same and different cultures together (International Journal of Education and Research Vol. 3 No. 11 November 2015, p. 331). Karl Marx asserts that "The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it". Isidore Okpewho opines, on his part that every culture and civilization has its rightful place in the concert of world civilization(s). This ideological stand in *The Victims*thus suggests that African nations should make 'tabula raza' of the past and share with the world what Olugbenga Adesida and Arunma Oteh call "alternative visions of the future development from a globalized perspective" (Olugbenga Adesida and Arunma Oteh 2001, p.10), where characters can then re-think of their homeland.

Isidore Okpewho, by charging the fictional America's cultural imperialism with the responsibility of Africa' backwardness, also shows what challenges the African cultural difference should take up. Such which will help them to re-think of home are essentially three that is "….The intellectual challenge and the political one. The intellectual challenge envisions in the novel the ambitious legacy of the Age of African cultural renaissance in a new rapport with America and Western countries, a new way of shaping the modern world. Precious ideals like the dignity of persons, property security, and the popular accountability on democracy can be echoed around the world by Africans (Cornel West 1993, p. 258)

The intellectual challenge of Africa's development in Isidore Okpewho' ideology reduces the discrepancy between sterling rhetoric and lived reality. In the re-thinking homeland, the intellectual challenge also rests in how the novelist proposes a new conception of civilization, a secular humanistic one that, in the words of Cornel West, "can play an integrative role in cementing and stabilizing an emerging bourgeois civil society and imperial state (Cornel West 1993, p. 259)." To conceptualize his visions of the building of Africa, Okpewho has Otis say it is time for African writers, critics and artists to envision home and from their vision, flex their approaches widely, reposition the debates and analyses and in so doing, create in a new African world. The aim of that is to recast, redefine and revise the notions of identity, modernity, mainstream, margins, difference and otherness. By so doing, literature in general and African literature in particular will have reached what Cornel West terms "a new stage in the perennial struggle for freedom and dignity (Cornel West 1993, p. 267)." African writers will thus promote a prospective and prophetic vision with a sense of possibility and potential. To prevent past and present mistakes related to cultural denigration from happening in the future.

In Okpewho's *The Victims*, Nwabunor re-think home when things in her husband's house get worse. She can no longer bear the shame and suffering, nor can she bear the idea of her son's fortune potentially going to his step-brother. She materialises her plan because of Obanua Ozoma's weakness in the family. He is a weak besotted husband of two co-wives who fails to fulfill his obligations to his family as father and husband, whereupon his wives, Nwabunor and Ogugua, internalize their frustrations and embark upon a war of mutual destruction. She wants to belong in her husband's house and the coming of the second wife threatens her position. In addition, she has just one child and her mother in-law has been asking her to give birth to more children. At the end of the novel, she decides to go back to her family. As the narrator puts it:

Nwabunor was nervously stuffing her belongings into her box. She had not had the slightest sleep during the night, and could not even bring herself to wash her face this morning. Her preparation betrayed all the disorder that confused thinking could impose. 'come on, quickly,' she hurried Ubaka, who was equally busy packing in the last few things that he had not assembled the previous night…Before long she had dressed and brought all the rest of her things together. Then she and her son prepared to leave. She made a pad quickly and heaved the big box into her head, taking another bag in her hand. Ubaka put his little box into the bucket, and took the load on his head also. He and his mother left… (1970, p. 181-5)

Nwabunor's rushing is occasioned by her guilt. The narrator's provision of details also sets the scene for the attainment of the narrative's climax. Nwabunor packs all their belongings thinking of home because she knows she is not going to return, especially after poisoning Ogugua and her children. Things do not, however, materialise as planned. Learning of her son's partaking in the poisoned meal, she loses her mind.

Isidore Okpewho invokes nature in his exploration of human experience. Whether in their physical or literal forms evil and violence dominate the world of the novel. The violence affecting the main characters finds answering chords in the violence and upheavals in nature, which in turn prepare the atmosphere for the consummation of a frightful tragedy. This comes to pass because both wives struggle to belong in their husband's home and perceive that the best way to do it is to hurt each other in any way. Nwabunor, out of frustration and struggling to consolidate her position in her husband's house, kills her co-wife and her children and mistakenly poisons her only child. The result is her mental derangement. Nature seems to operate in tandem with man- made violence. Some rains in the novel become rainstorms, like the one that opens the novel and punctuates many of the incidents. However, the gentleness of Ubaka's life allows his death to be preceded by a heavy but smooth rain. When he dies at the end of the novel after learning of the numerous deaths in his compound, as the head of the family, he cannot withstand the shock. He really loves his home but cannot stay comfortable in it because his resources are limited to take care of two wives. The coloniser uses and drains him out, as, he works for the seven days of the week and receives, from his bossa pay package merely enough for him to buy his drinks. He comes back home empty and cannot meet up with his family responsibilities. He dies a very frustrated man who although at home, struggles under the family and individual circumstances that surround him. The colonisers enriched themselves in the detriment of the down trodden and Obanua is a clear example.

Besides, Obanua himself is a flawed character; an irresponsible husband and unworthy father. He is a polygamous husband who cannot provide for his family's necessities, such as food and adequate living space for the units that constitute the polygamous family. When Obanua plans to bring Ogugua home, Nwabunor rapidly packs her things with those of her son out of the second room joins Obanua in his room. As the narrator puts it:

One evening early in the following week, she began to pack her belongings into her husband's room. There were two bedrooms in the house, and a wife or wives would live apart from the husband, leaving it to him to 'call in' the woman on night he chose. But Nwabunor packed all her things out of the second room moved completely into her husband's room, making sure to take her son's things as well. He could sleep on a mat on the floor. (1970, p. 6)

It seems clear that Obanua's house cannot harbour two wives but he nonetheless goes ahead to bring in the next wife. Although he is at

home, life is not easy because they are exploited by the coloniser who occupies their lands with big factories like the one at which Obanua works like a driver. What he takes back home as pay is insignificant. He and his wives cannot survive on it. He tries at first to control his wives by giving a routine for cooking but the situation later deteriorates to an extend that he cannot provide food money and none of his wives respect or take commands from him. At work, Obanua becomes frightened when he thinks of going home; he does not want to go back home where he will not have food to eat and will meet two nagging wives. He ends up drunk and, getting forced out of the beer parlour, relies on his dutch courage to order his sleeping wives. The narrator describes the situation as follows:

'Obanua! Obanua!' she shook the stooping figure on the bench. 'Obanua! Wake up go home. Do you hear me? I say wake up and go home.' 'leave me alone, you-you foolish girl,' he babbled. 'Of course I hear you. Why should I not - hear you? Don't -bother me, you-foolish girl'…Then he rose unsteadily and ran back of his hand across his slimy mouth, his legs shaking like those of an unbalanced doll and nearby figures making multiple images before his eyes. …And when he finally got home, there was cursing and commotion enough to rouse even the most stony sleeper…Open the door before I tear you jaws apart! (1970, p. 52-3)

The author uses the image of a drunk to criticise the exploitation of the coloniser to the colonised, by suggesting that the colonisers have extracted all what used to be for the blacks then turned to employ them and around pay them meagre salaries that can only end up in beer parlours. In Obanua's household, nearness exacerbates the potential for hostilities; every slight gesture of antipathy is observed by the children, every whispered of obscenity is heard, absorbed and internalized, and facial expressions, which can be more devastating than wounding words are noted by the children and even by passersby.

Knowledgeable people in the community diagnose the crisis in Obanua's household as the result of the non- construction of hybridity. His wives and daughters do not want to accept their present condition and to take up the personalities they need to adopt under the circumstances, in order "Doctor" Nwosisi, the kindly quack who dispenses medicine to the villagers, admonishes Obanua's wives to "learn to be reasonable and live in peace" (1970, p. 25). Ma Nwojide complains that her son's family is in disarray because its members are "always . . . quarreling, fighting, cursing, slapping, scratching". She wonders that they are not all living in the forest with the rest of the beasts, which "would have been much better than that you expose yourself to a town of reasonable human beings" (1970, p. 35). Thus, when Obanua heads homewards after drinking, it is not because he thinks home is the logical place to go after a man is through with whatever occupies him. Unable to reason logically, he is, more than anything else, pushed home by his natural instincts. If he could bring himself to think, he would not want to go home. However, under the giddy circumstances, he can think of no place of escape.

The, overall trend therefore sees characters re-think the homeland whenever they are faced with difficult situations the only solution to which is returning back home. Even those who return and are not comfortable with the circumstances in which they find themselves still think of what to do with their lives. Home at times become unbearable as some characters find it very difficult to meet up with the cost of living required to maintain decent living standards. Even at home, the colonisers employ them, paying meagre salaries which don't do much to increase their chances of survival. But all in all, re-thinking homeland is a key feature of the diasporan experience for blacks.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article has been to prove that in every oppressed society, there is the need for liberation and that alienation produces an enabling ground for the ideal method of liberation. The impact of being alienated and dissatisfied with one's condition in life instills in the alienated person a will to fight for freedom. Taking into consideration the fact that literature does not exist in a vacuum, one would not be wrong to say that Blacks experience in America is a microcosm of what prevails in post- colonial and colonial settings where having lost their identity, Blacks fight for space either in America or back in Africa. This article uses one literary approach, postcolonialism, which argues that the margin and the center will emerge and will give birth or create a new space which can be looked upon in terms of politics. Using this approach, the novels have been analysed within the context of oppression, showing that it is an enabling ground to fight for liberation and space. Nigerian writers like Buchi Emecheta and Isidore Okpewho found themselves living abroad at the time of their country's independence. Such writers are entangled in the position of having to decide whether or not to return to their countries of birth. From their vantage point as outsiders, in respect to their previously-colonised home countries, the literary contributions of such writers provide vivid and revealing insights into the change from colonised to independent status. Emecheta and Okpewho are emblematic of two worlds, constantly shifting between Nigeria and the West, the colonised and the colonisers. This bi-cultural quality that both writers portray as immigrants in the West enables them to write with perspicacity and commitment."Towards Negotiating Space/Place". This article handles the construction of identity and the re-thinking of homeland. It recognises the role of individuals' and families' economic wellbeing to transition between jobs, movement to new neighborhoods, response to emergency and the education of children. Okpewho and Emecheta in their narratives portray that wealth in America is unequally distributed by race, particularly between White and Black households. African American families have a fraction of the wealth of white families, leaving them more economically insecure and with far fewer opportunities for economic mobility. From the above analyses, this study concludes that individuals will continue to displace themselves from one place to another either forcefully or voluntarily for various purposes. The likelihood of encountering oppression as a result of some societal norms which discriminate against particular sexes, colours or cultures is real. Such individuals still have the possibility to create space and an identity no matter where they find themselves. This article handles issues of space; as well as displacement and diasporic discourses in post-colonial narratives through the prism of Isidore Okpewho's and Buchi Emecheta's *The Victims* as well as *Second Class Citizen*, respectively.

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