

**NEGOTIATING CONTEMPORARY BLACK FEMALE DIASPORIC
IDENTITIES IN SELECTED FEMALE AFRICAN WRITERS' FICTION**

OMOTAYO, ELIZABETH ADESUNMBO

14PBC00837

OCTOBER, 2020

**NEGOTIATING CONTEMPORARY BLACK FEMALE
DIASPORIC IDENTITIES IN SELECTED FEMALE AFRICAN
WRITERS' FICTION**

OMOTAYO, ELIZABETH ADESUNMBO

MATRIC NO: 14PBC00837

BA, English, University of Ibadan, Ibadan

MA, Literature in English, University of Ibadan, Ibadan

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D) IN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND GENERAL STUDIES, COLLEGE
OF LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENTAL STUDIES, COVENANT UNIVERSITY
OTA.**

OCTOBER, 2020

ACCEPTANCE

This is to attest that this thesis is accepted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in Literature in English in the Department of Languages and General Studies, College of Leadership and Developmental Studies, Covenant University, Ota.

Mr. John A. Phillip
(Secretary, School of Postgraduate Studies)

Signature and date

Prof. Abiodun H. Adebayo
(Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies)

Signature and date

DECLARATION

I, **OMOTAYO ELIZABETH ADESUNMBO (14PBC00837)** declare that this research was carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Omolola A. Ladele of the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Lagos State University, Ojo - Lagos and Prof. Charles O. Ogbulogo of Department of Languages and General Studies, College of Leadership and Developmental Studies, Covenant University Ota. I attest that the thesis has not been presented either wholly or partially for the award of any degree elsewhere. All sources of data and scholarly information used in this thesis are duly acknowledged.

OMOTAYO, ELIZABETH ADESUNMBO

.....
Signature and date

CERTIFICATION

We certify that this thesis titled “**Negotiating Contemporary Black Female Diasporic Identities in Selected Female African Writers’ Fiction**” is the original research work carried out by **OMOTAYO ELIZABETH ADESUNMBO (14PBC00837)** in the Department of Languages and General Studies, College of Leadership and Developmental Studies, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria under the supervision of Dr. Omolola A. Ladele and Prof. Charles O. Ogbulogo. We have examined and found the research work acceptable as part of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in Literature in English.

Dr. Omolola A. Ladele
Supervisor

.....
Signature and Date

Prof. Charles O. Ogbulogo
Co-Supervisor

.....
Signature and Date

Prof. Charles O. Ogbulogo
Head of Department

.....
Signature and Date

External Examiner

.....
Signature and date

Prof. Abiodun H. Adebayo
Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies

.....
Signature and Date

DEDICATION

To God Almighty, the Jehovah El Shaddai

The all sufficient One

To my unforgettable late father, Deacon Julius Adeagbo Afonja

To my darling mother, Mrs. Janet Arinade Afonja

To my devoted husband, Prof. Ayodeji Omotayo

And to our adorable daughter, Oluwasefunmi Ayomide Omotayo

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This modest achievement I owe to God Almighty who has been my source through it all. He has provided all I needed to get to this stage even in the face of several challenges. Whenever I had doubts and fears, He stepped in and steadied me and His words that “there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding” (Job 32:8) energised and gave me creative impulse.

It is the norm that an accomplishment of this nature will be due to the efforts of many people. I start by acknowledging the Chancellor of the great Covenant University, Ota, Bishop David Oyedepo; the Vice Chancellor, Prof. AAA Atayero; the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof. Akan B. Williams; the Registrar, Dr. Oluwasegun Omidiora; Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies, Prof. Abiodun H. Adebayo; Sub-Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies, Prof. Obinna C. Nwinyi; Dean, College of Leadership and Developmental Studies, Prof. Olujide Adekeye and my Head of Department, Prof. Charles Ogbulogo for providing an enabling environment to accomplish this study.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my two supervisors for their contributions to this research effort. Dr. Omolola Ladele has been great with her guidance, patience and has challenged me in many ways since year 2016 when she took me under her wing and we began to work on this. Prof. Charles Ogbulogo, my co-supervisor has made tremendous contributions to the outcome of this study. Dr. Tuesday Owoye, one-time head of my department and now Postgraduate co-ordinator in the same department has given unwavering support at each stage of the process. I must also acknowledge Dr. Edith Awogu-Maduagwu whose Globalisation course was the catalyst I needed to research on the new African diaspora. I extend my sincere appreciation to Prof. Innocent Chiluba, all academic staff of Department of Languages and General Studies and all faculty members of College of Leadership and Developmental Studies whose constructive criticisms enriched this study.

I express my profound gratitude to Prof. Aderemi Raji-Oyelade of the University of Ibadan who read this thesis and offered useful suggestions and Dr. Adewale Ajayi of the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro who helped to edit it. I must offer my gratitude to the immediate past Rector of the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, Dr. Raheem Oloyo, the incumbent Rector, Arch. Olusegun Aluko (PhD), my former HOD, Mr. Bamidele Okuwoga and all colleagues in the Department of General Studies for their unflinching support and encouragement. I appreciate

the co-operation I have enjoyed from my colleagues in English Unit of General Studies Department, Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, who are also co-travellers on this quest, Messrs Biodun Oluseye and Victor Idakwo. You both share in the success of this accomplishment.

To all who have supported this work one way or the other and have given needed help to ensure its realisation such as Prof. Adeleke Fakoya, Drs. Steve Ogunpitan and Wunmi Oni-Buraimoh all of English Department, Lagos State University, Mr. Tinu Omolodun, Mrs. Ronke Omotayo, and the Dean of my school at the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, Dr. Mukail Akinde, I offer sincere thanks and gratitude.

And last but not the least; I am grateful for the support of family and friends who spurred me on whenever I encountered challenges. I am thankful to my caring and benevolent brother, Adeyinka for his financial and moral support, my other siblings: Adenike, Adegbite, Adetoro and Adetutu for their love and interest in seeing this accomplishment come true. My mum, Arinade Afonja, has been my silent prayer warrior and source of strength. My darling daughter, Oluwasefunmi was helpful with online materials from her university's e-resources and was committed to seeing the quest come to a successful end. My devoted husband, Prof. Ayo Omotayo has been my number one pillar of support: thanks for believing in my ability, thanks for your moral and financial support, thanks for staying up some nights to keep me company as I worked and thanks for reading the thesis over and over again and for making it better. I remember sadly the transition of my beloved father, Julius A. Afonja midway into the process. I wish he was still here to share in this moment. I hope I have made him proud with this modest accomplishment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
COVER PAGE	i
TITLE PAG	ii
ACCEPTANCE	iii
DECLARATION	iv
CERTIFICATION	v
DEDICATION	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xi
ABSTRACT	xii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Migration, Diaspora and Identity: The Nexus	3
1.3 African Migrations: Historical and Major Phases	18
1.4 African Writers, Migrations and Some Literary Expressions	22
1.5 Contemporary Female African Novelists, Migration and Identity	27
1.6 Statement of the Research Problem	33
1.7 Aim of the Study	36
1.8 Objectives of the Study	37
1.9 Research Questions	37
1.10 Significance of the Study	38
1.11 Scope of the Study	39
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	41
2.1 Scholarly Review of Contemporary African Migration	43
2.2 Defining the new Afrodiaspora Fiction	47
2.3 The Feminisation of Migration	61
2.4 Postcolonial Feminism / Third World Feminism	64
2.5 Globalisation and Diaspora	80
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	84
3.1 Research Design	87
3.2 Sources of Data	88
3.3 Data Analyses	89
3.4 Justifications for the Selection of Authors and Texts	90

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	93
4.1 Emerging Identities of Contemporary Female Migrants	93
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	102
I Expressions of Exploitation of Black Women’s Bodies and Identity Change in Unigwe’s and Darko’s Novels	104
II Negotiating Identity through Assimilation, Acculturation and Resistance: The Case of Adichie’s <i>Americanah</i>	124
III Transnational Identity in Atta’s <i>A Bit of Difference</i>	140
IV New Names for New Identities: Bulawayo’s <i>We Need New Names</i>	151
V The American Dream vis-à-vis Identity Change: Mbue’s <i>Behold the Dreamers</i>	167
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	181
6.1 Summary	181
6.2 Conclusion	182
6.3 Contributions to Knowledge	185
6.4 Recommendations	185
WORKS CITED	187

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ABOD</i>	<i>A Bit of Difference</i>
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<i>BTD</i>	<i>Behold the Dreamers</i>
<i>BTH</i>	<i>Beyond the Horizon</i>
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	Cable News Network
CMC	Computer Mediated Communications
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
<i>OBSS</i>	<i>On Black Sisters' Street</i>
<i>TBP</i>	<i>The Bride Price</i>
<i>TSG</i>	<i>The Slave Girl</i>
<i>TFA</i>	<i>Things Fall Apart</i>
<i>WNNN</i>	<i>We Need New Names</i>

ABSTRACT

In spite of a plethora of studies on the new African diaspora, very little appears to have been done to reflect the literary and cultural dynamics of contemporary migration. Most of the studies have focused on the economic and sociological dimensions of contemporary African migration to Asia, Europe and America. It is in the creative and imaginative literature that the identities of contemporary female African migrants are made manifest in an unhindered form. This work explores the impacts of migration and globalisation on the identities of contemporary female African migrants as represented in the novels of female African writers that are synchronous to the contemporary wave of African migration to the West. The interrogated works are: Imbolo Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers* (2016), Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference* (2013), NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013), Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (2007) and Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* (1995). The texts have been analysed through a close scrutiny of first-generation female African migrants in the selected novels, using critical postcolonial feminist concepts of 'subalternity', 'otherness', 'liminality', and 'hybridity.' Findings reveal new hybrid identities of the female migrants negotiated through the processes of assimilation, acculturation and resistance. Also, there is a new process of re-enslavement of some contemporary female African migrants who have been trafficked to Europe. Some of them find themselves as indentured sex workers in the West with their bodies portrayed as sites of various layers of subjugation. The female migrants in the novels reflect new identities negotiated on lived experiences, factors of race, gender and the dynamic mix of different cultures. Based on the findings, there is the understanding of experiences of migration as causative in identity alteration of contemporary female migrants of the new African diaspora. Some of the reconfigured identities reinforce the primordial slavery and racial antecedents of their forebears of the old African diaspora. Also, globalisation aided by technology and computer mediated communication is leading to identity alteration of contemporary female African migrants. Future studies can address corollaries of both old and new African diaspora in the West and in other places in order to deepen the understanding of the gendered nature of the migration phenomenon.

Keywords: African diaspora, female African migrants, female African writers, identity negotiation, identities, migration