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Migration and the Anxieties of Belonging: Diasporic Identity in Ike Oguine's a Squatter's Tale and Cristina Farah's Little Mother

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Unbelonging.*

This article examines the aftermath of the movement of Africans to the West. Many Africans have continued to migrate from their African countries to Western countries for a variety of reasons; employment, education, exiles seeking asylum. Basically, the diaspora has morphed from involuntary or forceful migration to voluntary. By and large, this movement, which in a way is a self-displacement and forceful displacement, impacts the diasporans' attachment to their homelands and hostlands. The attachment or lack of it brings out the unbelonging and belonging to the homelands and hostlands. Diasporans are people who have migrated from their home of origin. These are people who are trying to assimilate and or attempting to settle in their new lands. This article is a qualitative and library-based research which aims to discuss Ike Oguine's a Squatter's Tale and Cristina Ali Farah's Little Mother. The study employs post-colonial and psychoanalytic theories within the interpretivist approach. This approach focuses on the meaning attributed to attitudes, relationships and occurrences. The interpretive method assumes that social phenomena are constructs that are negotiated and widely shared. This study focuses on the characters' sense of belonging and unbelonging to the homelands and the hostlands as well as their otherization. This study explores the prejudices, discriminations and racism the diasporans are subjected to which culminates into the unbelongingness. Consequently, the diasporans are subjected to alienation, which is a prime catalyst for otherization, marginalization, exclusion and segregation in Western countries. Besides, the people in the homelands might erase the diasporans from their memories.

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INTRODUCTION

In the year 722 Before the Current Era (BCE) Israel was destroyed by Assyria and the people fled to Judah, where they came to be known as Jews. When the history of this movement was written down between 640 and 610 BCE it was decreed of the Jewish people that "thou shalt be dispersion in all kingdoms of the earth" (Deuteronomy 28:25). From these very specifically Jewish origins the term has spread to describe the general experience of the large-scale geographical dispersion of human populations from a shared home-place as a result of violent and traumatic events. So, the scattering of Greeks after the Fall of Constantinople (1453), of Armenians after the First World War, and of Africans as a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade are all seen as archetypal Diasporas (Page and Mercer, 2018:1). The scattering herein is not voluntary but rather is as a result of displacement. Displacement is not an exciting process but rather torturous. Simply put, displacement is the forceful uprooting of a people from their original homes. It is subjecting a people to forceful migration. In this case, the Jewish people unwillingly moved out of their homes and their motherlands into the unknown diasporic conditions. The Jewish people's bodies were coercively detached from their homeland through the displacement perpetrated by the Assyrian people.

Moreover, Sri and Chen state that instead of seeking to assimilate, diaspora is a way of retaining the status of "other" among the established, of keeping alive the spirit of "otherness" in worlds that seek likeness and homogeneity. In the experiences of Africans, throughout the historical trajectory of which the Atlantic slave trade was a significant period, the blacks in the Diaspora have invariably been subjected to subtly communicated ascriptions of inferior status. This was because the dominant

discourse on Africans was predominantly Western, thus the concept of "primitive Africa" was "invented" which substantiated "philosophical interpretations about a hierarchy of civilizations" (Sri and Chen, 2010:753). The otherness entrenched in the diasporic life and the inferiority notions are part of the elements that build up a process of the diasporans' detachment. Otherness is an element within which diasporans feel alienated and subjected to the peripheries due to their idiosyncrasies. This element is therefore important to this study in understanding diasporans' belongingness to the hostlands. Besides, the 'other' is invoked by a negative lens. The lens of the host is replete of the undesirable imaginations about the Africans. The negative imaginations such as Africans are unhealthy, dying of all sorts of peculiar diseases, African women are oversexed, and African men are animals that have no love but only rape their women. The Africans are less knowledgeable or that Africans are unable to learn and match up the white race. Such imaginations are hypothetical perceptions that whites harbour even before interacting with the blacks. This negative hypothesis creates otherization before the arrival of Africans into the diaspora.

Essentially, Diaspora people "maintain a collective memory or myth" about their original land and regard their "ancestral land as the true, ideal home" which indicates a kind of unidirectional sense of belonging toward the homeland (Rahiminezhad and Arabian, 2015:538)

Consequently, Africa is often seen as a continent of mass displacement and migration caused by poverty and violent conflict. Influenced by media images of massive refugee flows and 'boat migration', and alarmist rhetoric of politicians suggesting an impending immigrant invasion, the portrayal of Africa as a 'continent on the move' is

linked to stereotypical ideas of Africa as a continent of poverty and conflict. In recent years, irregular migration from Africa to Europe has received extensive attention. Sensationalist media reportage and popular discourses give rise to an image of an 'exodus' of desperate Africans fleeing poverty at home in search of the European 'El Dorado'. Millions of Africans are believed to be waiting to cross to Europe at the first opportunity (Flahaux and Haas, 2016:1)

Therefore, in understanding this diasporic belonging and unbelonging, the reading and findings from Oguine's *A Squatter's Tale* and Farah's *Little Mother* are chiselled out, discussed and presented. This is in view of belonging, displacement and otherness. Ike Oguine is a Nigerian national while Cristina Ali Farah is an Italian-Somali national.

According to Waite and Cook, belonging is about the ways in which social places resonate with the stability of the self or with the feelings of being part of the larger group. Waite and Cook further argue that is there something about being a migrant or a child of a migrant that might shape the feelings of belonging in particular ways (Waite and Cook, 2011: 2).

Sigona, Gamlen and Liberato points out that the notion of belonging evokes an emotional attachment to a homeland, a place of origin, whether real or imagined (Sigona et al, 2015: XIX).

Questions of home and belonging can be complex for diasporans who migrated from their place of birth, but even more so for their children and descendants (Sigona et al, 2015:19). This belonging is an aspect that demonstrates the ties of the relationship of the diasporans and their home countries.

Subsequently, it has become increasingly hard to settle and assimilate in the host land; Diasporas are more likely to continue to focus on their erstwhile homeland. Many states are moving away from the idea of assimilating their ethnic minorities towards integrating them (Baser and Swain, 2010:38).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by the Post-Colonial Theory. The post-colonial theory holds that decolonized people construct an identity based on different cultural interactions. Fundamentally, this theory is anchored on the impacts of colonialism, imperialism and neocolonialism. Such gave birth to the concept of othering. This theory, therefore, is relevant to this study because movement, be it in culture, human movement, or postcolonial migration to a former colonial metropolis has always been central to postcolonial theory and particularly to its idea of othering. This basis inspired Onuh (2016) to observe that diaspora also has been one of the key concepts of postcolonial studies within this context of individual and collective journeys. Within the contemporary analysis, the diaspora has tended to be explored in terms of ethnicity, race, nationality and even religion. The deployment of a theory is paramount and expedient when considering the values and beliefs in studying a literary text such as a novel. It is needed to examine and bring to the fore the meaning within itself as any literary text contains its own meaning within itself (Onuh, 2016: 32). The post-colonial theory provided a good basis for extracting meanings within the text of Cristina Ali Farah's *Little Mother*.

This study equally employed psychoanalytic theory. Psychoanalytic therapy is the re-narrativization of a person's life. It has given much importance to the significance of the unconscious and thought processes. They believed that an awareness of this is therapeutic and vital to a healthy mind. Psychoanalysis emphasizes motives; it focuses on hidden or disguised motives which help to clarify literature on two levels, the level of writing itself and the level of character action within the text. Psychoanalysis emphasizes the subject and tries to explain the relationship between meaning and identity to the psychic and cultural forces. Psychoanalytic theory was propounded by Sigmund Freud. His ideas were first presented in 'The Interpretation of Dreams. It has often been assumed that the evidential basis for these theories came from his study of dreams. It is the mind in

which all our pleasant and unpleasant experiences are accumulated, synthesized and organized (Md, Hossain, 2017:42) The psychoanalytic theory therefore is crucial in interpreting the thoughts of characters. These mental experiences and or challenges manifest in various forms inter alia dreams, nostalgia and mourning. This approach equally helps to interpret the imaginations of the authors.

This, therefore, means that the two theories form a suitable body to necessitate the interpretation and explanation of this area of study by interrogating the characters, their language, and the symbolism. This also digs into the attitudes and relationships of the characters and the occurrences within the text.

Moreover, postcolonial theory is instrumental in the analysis of the physical migrations and the reasons for nudging such movements, based on the impacts of colonialism, imperialism, and neocolonialism, and how such impacts affected the identity and belongingness of the diasporans. The psychoanalytic theory necessitates the analysis of diasporans in regard to their imaginations, thoughts, and nostalgia.

METHODOLOGY

This study is situated within the interpretivist approach. Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) quoting Mason (2002) explain that Interpretivist-constructivist epistemology seeks to generate data from people themselves, aiming to get knowledge about how people perceive, interpret and understand issues that affect them in their contexts. Mason (2002) further argued that an Interpretivist approach therefore not only sees people as a primary data source but seeks their perceptions or the inside view rather than imposing an outsider's view.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design that is library based. This was within the interpretive paradigm. This approach focuses on the meaning attributed to attitudes, relationships and occurrences. The interpretive method assumes that social phenomena are constructs that

are negotiated and widely shared. Meanings are sought within contexts because people construct meanings and associate their own subjective and inter-subjective meanings as they interact with the world around them (Mugo et al, 2017:173). The study used purposive sampling to select the text. The purposive sampling technique allows the researcher to deliberately select texts that demonstrate suitable content for the area of study. The researcher selected Oguine's *A Squatter's Tale* and Farah's *Little Mother* as it has content of diasporic experience particularly on matters of belonging.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data analysis comprises a close reading and interpretation of the primary data. Content analysis, textual analysis, and historical context study were employed. Data from the texts are broken down into various segments: passages, quotations, images, symbols, and defining structures of stories for analysis. This leads to the interpretation and coding of data, thus resulting in deductions and generalizations.

RESULTS

The Relationship Between the Diasporans and their Homelands

The Africans leaving Africa and or living in diaspora invoke separation which consequently creates emptiness in their relatives, their spouses, their parents and siblings. This immediately puts a question mark on the identity of the journeying individuals. Fundamentally, the diasporans lose their physical attachment to their homelands. The belonging is only entertained by the mind. This however is gullible to fading off. They start to feel less belonging to their people. Ostensibly, the act of flying or journeying out of Africa into the diaspora is per se an act of alienation. This alienation is a huge margin that splits the direct contact between the people at home and those in the diaspora. This margin of alienation transforms the journeying Africans from an African image to a diasporan figure. It detaches them. They lose the African iconography. The moment the Africans get onto the plane or boat to the diaspora, they

start feeling this unbelonging which morphs into hollowness.

The hollowness or emptiness is so heavy that throws the diasporans and the people at home into suffering; the departure of the displaced persons immediately gives birth to emotional breakdowns and psychological tortures. The physical bodies wear off. One is deeply convinced that life will never be the same as the barrier erected alienates them just like in the case of losing a family member. In *A Squatter's Tale*, Robo blames her boyfriend Obi for abandoning her by flying to America. She laments loneliness and isolation as she miserably and wretchedly misses Obi. She confesses that she is in deep pain and can't imagine that they won't see each other soon. She feels the love they shared is thrown under the bridge by the separatist barrier. This in essence exhibits the beginning of the exclusion of diasporans from their people and or homelands. This feeling is buttressed by Obi ruminating over the distance between him and the people at home. He feels the impact of a robust barrier erected between all the diasporans and their homelands. This psychological and emotional grief is worsened by modern communication paraphernalia. "The telephone simultaneously reduces the distance between the exile and homeland and increases the pain of separation (Oguine, 2000:32).

Consequently, some displaced migrants die and only arrive in the diaspora as corpses. This is justified in *Little Mother*; many Somalis perish while in their horrible boat to cross over to Italy. Their jammed and overloaded boat capsizes and many of them drown and only a few bodies are retrieved from the sea. "Forgive me if I start in a roundabout way, but do you remember the shipwreck that happened a month ago? The bodies of nine Somalis that were taken to Rome?" (Farah, 2011:14). This is both physical and psychological separation and alienation. The bodies here are permanently excommunicated from their homelands. Nothing can reverse this, not even the gist of mundane communication. This is the most terrible way of being detached from the homeland.

Besides, Barni, in *Little Mother* further pontificates that a number of shipwrecks are never reported and therefore many Somalis die but are treated as garbage. Further, Domenica laments that their wandering in Europe and in the United States of America has culminated to physical separation; first from her father in Somalia. Then her mother in Italy, and eventually from everyone else including her beloved cousin-sister Barni. These scattering and subsequent separations are so painful that lead Domenica into bipolar disorders, some sort of schizophrenia. The unbelonging is herein expressed through the mental disorders. The detachment leads to physical pain and strain as conveyed by Domenica's self-body laceration. She cuts her skin open. No one can appreciate the act of losing blood. What of cutting self into wounds? Indeed Domenica goes through a painful moment. This is to mean that the wounds of lacking a physical home are so painful to bear. They are both in the flesh and in the mind. One simply suffers from the deficiency of the sense of belonging.

In *Little Mother*, the war in Somalia, snags the imagination and the thoughts and the urge and the efforts of diasporans to go back home. In fact, the war challenges the concept of home, or it uproots the essence of home in them. It invokes the unbelonging. This pains them to the core. It makes diasporans hold onto nostalgia as the means to belong to their natal home. Fundamentally, they feel uprooted from their motherland and consciously lament that the world is not concerned about the stability of their natal home. Barni cries about constantly wandering about, something she describes as having many places as home. She detests the many homes as they only demonstrate homelessness and the unbelonging. Domenica laments about seeing no sense in their natal home and complains of the ever journeying and staying in other people's houses, imagined homes. Taageere has no peace of mind because of war at home. He imagines that the time will come when Somalia will be home. "We carry our home with us, our home can travel," (Farah, 2011: 226). This is an illustration that situations in Africa, particularly wars and political witch-hunt can

permanently decimate diasporans' attachment to their homelands. Such situations can dilute the original concept that lies in a home.

Vivian, on the other hand, in *A Squatter's Tale* strives to escape the separatist barrier by converting her free time into letter writing to her people back at home. Her psychological attachment to the homeland reminds her of the long distance between Africa and herself. She expresses isolation, exclusion and dementia. Her communication and sending of money to her relatives play a great role in strengthening her bonds with her homeland. This is manifested through the responses she receives from her sister Isioma and their uncle. This engagement facilitates the inclusion of diasporans into the affairs of their homelands. It gives them a sense of belonging. "Darling (Obi), I (Vivian) know that you are thinking of my best interests, but this money I make doesn't really mean anything to me if it is not being used to help my people", (Oguine, 2000: 174).

Uncle Happiness in *A Squatter's Tale* despite leading a poverty-stricken life maintains a stable relationship with the homeland. He uses some of his meagre earnings to travel back home at least once after a long stint. He buys presents for family members, particularly his sister's family. "Uncle Happiness's bags and trunk brought for us the sort of fabulous riches you hear about in folktales," (Oguine, 2000: 3)

The provision of such gifts is the demonstration and or the commitment to belong to the homeland, Nigeria. His physical appearance at home builds a stable attachment to the homeland. Some, like Obi discovers that without sending money home, your people are likely to forget you. They detach from the diasporans. This forgetfulness is at first done consciously regrettably and eventually becomes unconsciously normalized. The latter culminates in diasporans being forever forgotten like in the event of death. Buried and forgotten. Therefore, diasporans must struggle to belong.

In *Little Mother* Foodcadde thinks of a time when he will go back home and reconstruct Somalia.

Foodcadde is hopeful that the Somalian war will soon end and accord him and fellow scattered Somalis an opportunity to physically belong. Meanwhile the forced migration has created a fettered relationship with the homeland. "Xamar , they have ruined you. Who will pay for the sins committed? City of mine, the city where they buried my umbilical cord. The city where everyone lived in peace and harmony, in safety and in freedom. Magnificent city on the African coast. My brothers, my parents and cousins all lived there. But because of the blood and strife these same brothers are fighting among themselves" (Farah, 2011:127). Xamar is herein symbolically used to mean Mogadishu which is metonymic to Somalia.

Consequently, diasporans crave to go home. They miss their homeland. They desire to physically belong. Ego in *A Squatter's Tale* dreams that soon her husband Ezendu will resolutely take her and their family back to Nigeria and never return to America. Uncle Happiness wishes to marry and settle in Nigeria. The diasporans' desire to re-establish and re-entrench their belonging roots deep into the "I (Ego) pray every day that we will go back soon (Nigeria)," (Oguine, 2000:123)

In *Little Mother* migration to Taagere is madness and a source of schizophrenia to him and fellow diasporans. Taagere is unhappy with the fact that he is a Somali, particularly when he remembers the war images! He gets demented and sick of such madness of exclusion and unbelonging.

Ultimately, *A Squatter's Tale* finds a way to express the value attached to the homeland by the diasporans. Whether one is economically stable or deprived, they feel happy and comfortable to associate with their homeland. This is an admission that without the homeland one's life is meaningless and useless. Home is the foundation of living. Ezendu, for instance is a successful surgeon in America, but his shining career as he confesses does not give him the home-comfortability. Therefore, diasporans, like Ezendu are gripped with bitterness about home. They feel disillusioned by the poor governance at home

Besides, diasporans nostalgically keep on thinking and or remembering about their homeland. In *Little Mother*, Barni and Domenica frequently write to each other in a way that reminds them about their childhood and how Somalia was a good place with good relations. The duo enlivened their nostalgic talks by getting some airtime for phone conversation since one is in America and the other in Italy, at least for five minutes every week. Through such communication, Domenica and Barni confess that they are able to re-establish and strengthen their weakened relations. They find solace and comfort and the assurance of their existence in reflective conversations. Besides, Domenica's thoughts about home and circumcision lead her to circumcise her little son. She buttresses her decision on the need for her son to belong properly to Somalia, without isolation. Nonetheless, Barni pontificates that nostalgic things are expensive. They hardly come by. This bleakness is due to the lack of an iota of assurance that they will ever live in Somalia again. She feels like war did not only displace them but uprooted them from Somalia ad infinitum.

In *Little Mother*, Domenica, upon arriving in Italy, while at the Airport, locks herself up in a washroom and cries for her relatives, herself and her country. She is saddened by the fact that she has run away from her home country and to embark on the journey of not only as a diasporan but also as a refugee. Domenica feels so devastated that she avoids her Italian mother at the Airport. Barni on the other hand has to avoid her emotional breakdowns by keeping herself busy. The stress of unbelonging is evident here.

Somalis find the venture in a forced diaspora as a harrowing experience that annihilates their belongingness. Taageere, in *Little Mother*, has no choice but to accept a divorce from his wife Shukri. This repudiation is necessitated by the distance between the two spouses. The erected barrier by the distance in between cannot allow family unity and love to bloom and flourish. In the process, Taageere befriends Domenica who again leaves him in America to settle in Italy. He is disturbed again. He behaves like an insane.

Diaspora drives them crazy due to the broken fabric of belonging.

Even though, in *Little Mother*, no diasporans travel back home as a demonstration of their commitment to belong and relate physically, whenever they meet in their wandering, they feel a sense of belongingness to the same ancestral home. Their meeting becomes the pillar of their hope that one day, one time and in a particular season, they will go back home "When Domenica Axad and I, his brother's only two sisters, arrive in the small village where he lives, he is overcome with emotion. He says to Domenica Axad: Go on, film this meeting of generations," (Farah, 2011: 227). The meeting though away from home symbolizes the type of bond that diasporans ought to establish with the people at home. But in this case, this type of relationship remains too vast to actualize due to the civil war.

The Relationship Between the Diasporans and the Hostlands and Otherization

Africans living in the diaspora are motivated by their desires to actualize their life dreams. They are driven by the urge to better their living standards. Others are displaced migrants. Nonetheless, one hopes for a better living in the diaspora. They therefore depart from their homelands with the hope of self-actualization. Obi in *A Squatter's Tale*, is filled with great hope that America through his friend, Hook is ready to shower him with wealth. He is happy to leave behind an obliterated Nigeria. Obi paints the picture of hopeful Africans who fancy a good relationship between themselves and the host countries. In essence, Obi views America as the sole panacea to his economic problems necessitated by the collapse of the BTF bank he worked for. Obi's fixated mindset represents those of the many Africans who seek opportunities in diaspora. Fundamentally, Obi is certainly sure that America is going to reconstruct his lost- affluent life. He is optimistic that American will accord him the good relationship that will see him grab a lucrative job basing on his academic merit as well as experience. Like many who endeavour in joining the diaspora, Obi, is

quite sure that his expertise and merits will be highly recognized and appreciated.

The Somalis in *Little Mother* though uprooted by the civil war, are optimistic that Italy which was their colonizer will provide a safe haven for them. At least armed with Italian language, the Somalis are confident and optimistic that Italy will offer them economic and education opportunities that will culminate in the reconstruction of their independent country. They are also hopeful that Italy will be able to directly engage in the cause of reconstructing Somalia. Taageere Barni and Domenica represent the hopeful diasporans in *Little Mother* who expect the Italian government to help restore Somalia to its stability, peace and harmony.

The hard truth is that upon arriving in the diaspora, things begin to fall apart. In *Little Mother*, Domenica upon arriving in Italy is psychologically disturbed and immediately cries. Her cries are a demonstration of the bleakness and desolation that the future holds for the diasporans. Taageere, upon arriving in Italy is immediately disappointed with the racist discrimination that Somalis experience. He thinks America is better and opts to fly out of Italy. "I like Italy, which is true. But the Italians seem to always want to show off, they are half Africans, half Africans like us, and yet they put on airs. They treat us like dirt, like trash, with a sense of entitlement," (Farah, 2011:73). Taageere smells the otherization of Somalis in Italy. Taageere, Domenica, Shamsa and Libeen feel rejected and have to try in other countries to seek for acceptance and inclusion. They want to have a sense of belonging in their respective host countries. They seek inclusion but encounter glaring exclusion and otherization. The worst of it all is that Domenica is even rejected by her own mother while in Italy. Remember that her mother is Italian. Her father is a Somali. Being rejected by her own mother throws her into dejection, exclusion, alienation and depression. Italy, though the colonizer of Somalia does not offer acceptance to Somalis. It goes against the expectations of the Somalis who anticipated a good reception and cordial relationship. They anticipated Italy to be their second home. They

thought that Italy was going to be their mother. Their assumption was wrong. Italians are meticulous in subduing the Somalis just like in their colonial time. Decent opportunities for Italians and poor ones for others, the Somalis as Taageere laments. Somalis are simply otherized. They are pushed to a feeling of unbelonging to Italy.

On the other hand, upon arrival in America, Obi, in *A Squatter's Tale*, is outrightly rejected by his own friend who had assured him of the better things in America. Obi's is stuck at the Oakland Airport as the Hook failed to turn up. Hook equally ignored Obi's calls. He did so tactfully so that Obi would think it was not intentional. This rejection by fellow diasporans is the tip of the iceberg of the enormous rejection that diasporans undergo. Obi's attempt to reach out to Ego for a welcome and accommodation hits a dead end. He starts to smell rejection and confusion reigns. He encounters exclusion right at the entry. Who is to be blamed? The Hook? The collapse of Nigeria's BTF bank? Or the decision by Obi to pester The Hook on the need to work in America? Or it is an experience that awaits every African who ventures into the diaspora? The answers are always found as one struggles to integrate into the host country. This is especially true when the mighty 'other' is decreed.

Whenever such rejection, exclusion, and alienation happen, one is left to wonder if at all they made the right decision in leaving their motherlands. They start to feel that they are not wanted. No one is ready for them; even their fellow diasporans are unwilling to welcome them. They are simply rejected. When Obi finally links up with his maternal uncle, Uncle Happiness, he is very shocked by the penury life that his uncle swims in. The house itself rejects Obi as it smells like a rotten rat and is so jammed that demonstrates hopelessness. The state of the house speaks a lot of exclusion and otherization and the unbelongingness that Uncle Happiness endures in America. Obi marvels and wonders if he is going to lead the same smelly and poverty-stricken life. He quickly gets to understand the reasons behind his uncle's bachelor's life. Life in the diaspora is

frustrating to the extent of subjecting one to a familyless life. It pushes Uncle Happiness into life without a wife or children and therefore, living in isolation and loneliness to old age due to the aftermath of otherization. It takes away the urge to belong. Obi begins to understand that is difficult to belong to America. Uncle Happiness does not belong to America. He belongs to the other.

In *Little Mother*, Taageere laments while in America, Africans a sense of belonging is curtailed. He laments that America has no ready house for Africans. That he has no option but to survive like an animal. “Your mind is taken up with what should I eat today, how do I survive tonight, will I find a place to sleep in peace? Like an animal slipping away, time and years go by, without realizing it, far from you all,” (Farah, 2011:71). The state of houselessness is the highest level of otherization, alienation and exclusion. Living in America and sleeping in the open is symbolic of the total alienation and rejection by the host countries. How can one belong to such a society?

Nonetheless, diasporans long for acceptance, recognition and inclusion. They have to struggle to integrate and identify with the host community. They must however stay in areas designated for others. In *A Squatter's Tale*, Ego confides in Obi that blacks have no space in the affluent residential Blackhawk and that her family is the only black family in that area. Ego furthers that even though she lives here, she doesn't attend residential meetings because of the segregation stereotypes and otherization meted out on her due to her skin colour. Ego and her family are excluded and othered by fellow residents. This is to mean that Ego's family does not belong to where they reside. Ego's plight shows how the blacks are marginalized by members of the host country. They are blatantly rejected and alienated. Ego tried a number of times to attend the meetings before she quit. Her efforts to integrate and belong to the group hit a cul de sac. The whites in their supremacy paranoia and imagination cannot allow her to belong. They curtail the belongingness of the diasporans.

Domenica in *Little Mother* in expressing the gravity of the rejection exclusion and otherization decides to cut her skin. Libeen sympathizes with Domenica, but he is equally disturbed by the exclusion and otherization and feels that Domenica is justified in digging into her skin and opening it up with incisions. “I can tell you that cutting became almost a morbid pleasure; I used to buy the blades at the supermarket, planning the time and place I would use them. They were, for the most part, linear wounds, clean cuts from which I watched the blood flow,” (Farah, 2011: 212). Besides, diasporans always find themselves on the periphery. In *A Squatter's Tale*, the affluent look of Ego's house, Obi feels like Ego and her family are at the core of the heart of America and that they are accepted and recognized particularly because of Ego's husband, who is a surgeon. Obi is disgusted and dejected when a white patient refuses to be operated on by Ezenodu due to his blackness. The patient others Ezenodu right before the junior white doctor. Diasporans' belongingness is indeed elusive. Furthermore, the exclusion is so grave that some diasporans end up living as vagabonds. Taageere laments in *Little Mother* that America has made him a vagrant. He affirms that he is now reduced to street life. “There I was in the middle of the road, late at night with my bag dripping all over the place. And while I'm there not knowing where the hell to go, sitting on the bench and in deep thought, I see this homeless man I know. And with this sadness I went around the city, dirty, unkempt, speaking to no one and I slept wherever I happened to be, just like a hobo,” (Farah, 2011:57). These are the horrible conditions that bar the diasporans' attachment attempt to the host countries. They illustrate the otherization and the unbelonging of the diasporans in the hostlands.

Besides, *Little Mother* Taageere like many diasporans finds the unbelonging necessitated by segregation. They are subjected to the worst jobs like a man taking care of children. A job that is poorly paid in America. This job sees Taageere divorced. “Being on one's own for a long-time sting like a badly treated wound. I lack endurance. I feel the need for roots, now, today. A family. A

family again. To feel like a man in a man's role. To take care of someone other than myself, to be a man worthy of trust," (Farah, 2011:63). The state of unbelongingness is hereby evident through the otherization that results in poor working conditions.

The exclusion and otherization are evident in diasporans' loneliness as Taageere confirms. This loneliness would be surmounted by belonging. Unfortunately, the unbelongingness becomes a source of diasporic depression "Ayaan, the wild one, an armoured leopard whom Domenica Axad befriends in Holland; Maryam, slightly touched in the head because Taageere explains, people who stay in exile for a long time end up going mad," (Farah, 2011:23). Likewise, Barni after having witnessed the nine Somali corpses lined up in Rome, her mind has never relaxed. "Intensity helps you think less," (Farah, 2011:16). The madness here explains the impacts of otherization and the segregation of the diasporans.

The exclusion and otherization exempt not the mulatto children. Domenica who is Italian-Somali is othered and excluded by her maternal relatives and her own mother. The unbelonging is exacerbated by the otherization "In class I was welcomed with lively curiosity at first, but soon I was relegated to the anonymous group of 'all the other children,'" (Farah, 2011:209). Barni buttresses the segregation and otherization by painting the rejection and stereotypic discrimination the diasporans are bequeathed in Rome without human dignity. "They land along the Sicilian coast; they are crammed into temporary reception centres. A few are allowed in for humanitarian reasons; they are released with very little money and no place to go." (Farah, 2011:26). Shamsa too suffers such segregation and rejection and otherization in Finland particularly because of having children in a foreign land. Such discrimination leads to some diasporans giving up. Ego quits her job after unrelenting mockery and ridicule sustained by white colleagues. She gets fed up with working in isolation and is denied the spirit of esprit de corps. This otherization gags her positive feelings towards America. Obi and Maina are equally

excluded and pushed to America's peripheries. The best jobs they can be accorded is security. No one cares that Obi holds a bachelor's degree in economics. The segregation and otherization sees Maina from Kenya drop out of Carl State Hayward University. Mozer, the manager reminds Obi that the African certificates are not of any significance in America. This only leads one to ask, how can you belong to America? This explains why Uncle Happiness fakes his belonging to America. He posits that he has no choice but to be happy even when America rejects and subjects him to the evils of otherization! He pretends that America is giving him the best life of his dream when he is actually a thief and a liar. "This country turns you into a liar and a thief, or maybe we are already liars and thieves, and this country (America) provides us with many opportunities to do those things," (Oguine, 2000: 199).

Moreover, the hostlands exclude and alienate and otherize black people from their social circles. Diasporans have restricted access to certain hotels, schools, hospitals and clubs. This discrimination thwarts their efforts to belong. To survive, diasporans have to endure alienation rejection and otherization. Even though, the diasporans accept the unbelonging, they do it grudgingly as demonstrated by Ego's decision to quit her job and Maina's imagination of setting up multinational corporations in America to employ no one else but the blacks.

Moreover, white supremacy as imposed by the exclusion of diasporans impedes the belonging of diasporans. The supremacy vis-à-vis inferiority heralds a frosty relationship in a hostland. This pushes diasporans to fake titles as when Ezendu introduces Obi to politician Prime as an international economist and leader of the youth movement. This surprises Obi but comes to realize that it was meant to combat the white supremacy paranoia and the otherization tendency that comes with it.

Therefore, the unbelonging and the struggle to belong to hostlands are well illustrated by the physical and psychological wounds that

diasporans bear. Domenica is an epitome of such wounds; she physically and deliberately lacerates herself due to the exclusion segregation, prejudice, discrimination, alienation and otherization she experiences. Such leads to her mental sickness.

CONCLUSION

The diasporans' exclusion from the homelands is quite evident. The imagination to venture into diaspora is at all times ideal. It is an idea that is appreciated by family members. It is an idea that is loved by the dreamer. It is an idea that even African countries appreciate as it means more foreign income. However, it starts to be an exercise of separation at the moment of its actualization. Right from the point of securing the necessary documents for travel, the sense of belonging to the homelands starts to dwindle. The dwindling grows into unbelonging. The unbelonging invokes the diasporans to initiate the means of recognition by the people at home. This becomes a disturbing process that traps one in the habit of negotiating to belong just like in the case of the vicious cycle of poverty. This homeland exclusion is however surmountable by the diasporans directly contributing to the economic well-being of their homelands as well as their people at home. At this point, diasporans' efforts result in inclusion.

Indeed, the diasporans 'efforts to integrate into the main hostlands' economy are a painful affair. It can only be likened to the attempt of a child to cure its wound by placing a hot potato on it. Many end up disgruntled failures. They feel that their hostlands have robbed them of their human dignity and nature and are rendered sub-humans or non-humans and or second-class citizens. This act of dehumanizing diasporans is aimed at their exclusion and subsequently denies them good life opportunities.

Otherization is a practice that sees diasporans pushed to the margins of the hostlands. It is entirely epitomized by the skin colour as a physical identity of the blacks. The practice of otherization invokes racist evils, segregation, prejudices, alienation, rejection exclusion,

stereotypes and the classification of blacks as second-class people from the dying continent. The efforts of the diasporans to surmount otherization are an affair of forcing a square peg on a round hole.

Diaspora, therefore, is an in-betweenness that the Africans venturing into it have to live on the see-saw of the imbalanced life. One has to try to fully belong to the hostlands and fully belong to their homelands. One acquires the diasporic status either voluntarily like in the case of Obi in *A Squatter's Tale* or by displacement like in the case of Domenica in *Little Mother*.

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