

- Egharevba, J. 1956. *Benin Titles*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
----- 1966. *A Short History of Benin*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.
Elugbe, B. 1986. *Comparative Edoid: Phonology and Lexicon*. Delta Series. 6. Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press.
Hartmann, R. R. K. and James, G. 1998. *Dictionary of Lexicography*. London: Routledge
Holmes, J. 2008. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. London: Pearson Longman
Melzian, H. 1937. *A Concise Dictionary of the Bini Language of Southern Nigeria*, London: Kegan Paul, Freuch, Trubner & Co. Ltd.
Ogbeiwi, I. O. A. 2022. *History of Oza, Nigeria: Inside the fascinating history, traditions and customs*. [Amazon Digital Services LLC - KDP Print US](#)
Omozuwa, V. E. 2010. *Edo Phonetics and Phonology*. Benin City: Ambik Press.
Stockwell, P. 2002. *Sociolinguistics: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge
Trudgill, P. 2004. *Dialects*, 2nd Edition. London: Routledge

Identity Discourse in Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

KWASU, Katung John (PhD Candidate)

Department of English and literary Studies,
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

kkatung@gmail.com

08178279246

&

Jumbo, Daniel

General Studies Department,
Federal School of Statistics,

Manchok

Abstract

Discourses on identity formation are replete with how rejection and acceptance in a particular society goes a long way in determining a person's self-esteem and sense of accomplishment. This paper interrogates unstable identities in the Africans domiciled in the diaspora. By adopting Karen Horny Strand of Psychoanalysis, it investigates the nexus between personal identity and collective identity and how both are problematized and constituted. The paper uncovers that identity for the African immigrant living in the diaspora is a construct, an idea of contestation that changes in response to the reality in the Diaspora. Identity for the immigrants is a strategy for survival in cases of hostility, racism in the Diaspora or disillusionment of the reality in Africa for the African immigrant living in the diaspora.

Keywords

Unstable Identity, Horneyan Psychoanalysis, Diaspora, Immigrant, Strategy.

Introduction

The subject of identity is succinctly explored in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* and is closely tied to the notion of being aware and attached to multiple societies mostly; Africa and the diaspora. This multiple consciousness inspires mutations in self-perception as a reaction to the psychological conflict, racial discrimination and the social conditions of the African immigrant living in the diaspora. There are close similarities between the experiences of Africans living in the diaspora that belong to the second generation of immigrants from Africa and that of African Americans - an offshoot of slave trade. These combinations or blends of worlds have dualised the identity of the aforementioned thus; making them to fight over the reconciliation of these worlds (dual-heritage) in accordance with the prevailing circumstances and historical influences. It is in line with this trend of thought that Dubois (1963: 215) posits:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that the Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both Negro and an American, without having the door of opportunity closed roughly in his face.

Both African Americans and African immigrants in the diasporas experience a conflict of affinity to dual and sometimes multiple societies. The fight to retain both creates the diaspora character, or characteristics. Gyasi (2016: 3) who was brought to the US as a 6-year-old lends weight to this saying: "I don't feel Ghanaian enough when I'm in Ghana, I don't feel American enough when I'm in America, and this straddling of these two worlds where I feel some kind of alienation from either side of things was really eye-opening." It is this feeling that creates a transient identity that attempts to pledge allegiance to conflicting cultures within the African immigrant's psyche. As Procter (2004: 109) posits, "we have moved from a time of stable, unified identities to unstable plural ones...identities have become increasingly unsettled." This is epitomized through most of the characters of the text under study. Although some of these African diaspora characters like Tess Onwueme (2016: 34) feel that "Anywhere I am, Nigeria is. I carry my cultural identity with me. So, when they see

me, they see Nigeria, they see Africa. I live it. I breathe it and I eat it...I live the values. I feel a sense of pride being an African.” A feeling of cultural estrangement sometimes sparks this feeling of cultural nationalism in African immigrants living in the diaspora. If the feeling of estrangement is allowed to wither away it couldn't have been a problem but it is the effort to resurrect the felt lost or eroded heritage that gives the African immigrant to the diaspora not only a double-edged identity but a double heritage as well. All of the effort put to reclaim, to reassert this past that form cultural history be it anthropological or political is what makes African immigrant to the diaspora not only interesting but relevant in the study of our changing world. A world of transnationalism as Selasi would have us believe in her TED Talk (2013). It is arguably comfortable to say Baldwin's (1967: 31) observations resonates with these points thus:

In some subtle way, in a really profound way, I brought to Shakespeare, Bach, Rembrandt, to the Stones of Paris, to the Cathedral at Chartres, and the Empire State Building a special attitude. These were not really my creations, they did not contain my history; I might search them in vain forever for any reflection of myself. I was an interloper; this was not my heritage.

On another scale, we see a rejection of Western values as not reflective of the African immigrant because it does not in any way protect or support it politically or give it credence on the body of the justice system. Sometimes it is this feeling of rejection and political inequality that gives impetus to institutionalized racism and injustice. A good example could be drawn from Coates reaction to his son, Samori, who anxiously waited for the indictment verdict of a White police officer who has shot and killed a Black boy and was disappointed that the white police officer was exonerated. In addressing his son, Coates (2016: 6) asserts; “You stayed up till 11 P.M. that night, waiting for the announcement of an indictment, and when instead it was announced that there was none you said, “I've got to go,” and you went into your room, and I heard you crying. I came in five minutes after, and I didn't hug you, and I didn't comfort you, because I thought it would be wrong to comfort you. I did not tell you it would be okay, because I have never believed it would be okay.” This emotional outburst echoes the Black condition of injustices in America, it also portrays situations where the black body comes prejudged, and as a result it is placed in needless jeopardy. It also depicts the fact that even the teenagers from an early stage have foreknowledge of what has been stacked up against them – being young and black. It is in line with this kind of consciousness that Cole (2016: 7) observes that being black forces one to bear the brunt of selective enforcement of the law, and to inhabit a psychic unsteadiness in which there is no guarantee of personal safety. He further states that; “You are a black body first, before you

are a kid walking down the street or a Harvard professor who has misplaced his keys.” There couldn’t have been a better depiction of the suspicions that follows the African immigrant – especially black, than in the words of Cole’s (2016: 4) personal experience in one of his essays:

There were a few glances at the hotel when I was checking in, and in the fine restaurant just up the road; there are always glances. There are glances in Zürich, where I spent the summer, and there are glances in New York City, which has been my home for fourteen years. There are glances all over Europe and in India, and anywhere I go outside Africa. The test is how long the glances last, whether they become stares, with what intent they occur, whether they contain any degree of hostility or mockery, and to what extent connections, money, or mode of dress shield me in these situations. To be a stranger is to be looked at, but to be black is to be looked at especially.

There is always a haunting feeling of being looked at with condescension, angst and disgust by the host society of the African immigrant. As Cole confesses; “I have experienced in my own body the undimmed fury he (Baldwin) felt about racism” (Cole 2016:7).

Ironically, Baldwin had dealt with similar confrontations during his stay in a Swiss village and the racist remarks that were thrown at him.

The psychical implications of all these societal happenings provoke a corresponding conscious and sometimes unconscious switch in allegiance or sense of belonging of African diaspora characters in respect to where they identify with at the level of their identity. Bulawayo, present in her novel a “literary psychography,” (Maiwada, 2001: 324) that reveals the intricate manifestations of identity on account of an overwhelming social pressure and the mental reception of the mind to such acts and exposure to multiple cultures. Her novel demonstrates how this becomes a frame that inspires the construction of the identity of the African immigrants living in the Diaspora.

The Poetics of Horneyan Psychoanalysis

As Horney (1885: 45) argues that the dynamism in identity formation is a defense mechanism in response to prevailing social reality. She postulates that the unconscious part of the human mind is associated with hidden conflict. This conflict spurs “constellation of defenses,” within the unconscious and these defenses contributes an integral role in establishing a fluid identity. Hogg and Vaughan (2011: 123) foreground the basis or foundation of identity thus:

Identities probably have their origins in the vast array of different social relationships that form, or have formed; the anchoring points of our lives, ranging from close

personal relationships with friends and family, through relationships and roles defined by work group and professions, to relationship defined by ethnicity, race and nationality.

The aforementioned shows the African immigrant endures the challenging process of cultural adoption, adaptation and identity construction. The polemics of race in the diaspora delves into the minds and psyche of the African immigrant and also justifies the correlation between race and self-perception at the level of identity. Identity could be self-selected; in this case identity serves as a defense strategy or escape route from perceive social tension and personal anxiety. Identity can also be attributed to oneself by others; mostly, the community that surrounds an individual.

Identity Crisis in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*.

These identity crises are enacted through the character of Darling, the protagonist in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*. This bildungsroman narrative is captured through the perspective of a young child's - Darling, formative years in Zimbabwe and her subsequent migration to America. As she grows in America and develops close ties with her acquaintances, she mentally endures a range of societal issues and neurotic traits in response to the social, cultural and political upheavals of the American society, which has a bearing on her sense of identity. It is on this note, that Helene (2015: 15) argues that "Darling regress to past memories as a way to cope with her present life. Darling has no sense of belonging to the spaces that surround her and is therefore an "existential outsider."

In *We Need New Names*, Bulawayo portrays Darling as a Character whose psyche oscillates between dual cultural societies. Her daily existence in America is punctuated by flashbacks to her time in Paradise and Budapest with childhood friends like Chipso, Bastard, Godknows, Sbhoo and Stina in comparison with her friends in America: Marina and Kristal. This spur hidden conflicts within the unconscious part of the mind that plays an essential role in forming her identity. When Darling arrives in America, she immediately registers her nostalgia for Zimbabwe. She finds the snow severe and strange. She feels alienated, experiences cultural shock and finds it difficult to connect with the environment. Darling becomes a neurotic that is afflicted with basic anxiety. Horney (1950: 368) defines neurosis as "a disturbance in one's relation to self and to others." The constellation of the pressure of cultural detachment and the attempt to decipher the workings of her new environment in America is responsible for her neurotic condition. This affects her sense of self and shapes her identity. She finds solace or a means of coping with this tension by reminiscing on where her mind finds peace. In comparing America with the Zimbabwe of her childhood, she said:

If you come here where I am standing and look outside the window, you will not see any men seated under a blooming jacaranda playing draughts. Bastard and Stina and Godknows and Chipo and Sbho will not be calling me off to Budapest. You will not even hear a vendor singing her wares, and you will not see anyone playing country-game or chasing after flying ants. Some things happen only in my country, and here is not my country; I don't know whose it is (p. 147).

After Darling's shift to America, she confronts the hostility of a serene and silent atmosphere, the discomfort of snow, which she describes as "white as a clean tooth and is also very, very cold. It is a greedy monster too." To manage this phase of strangeness, Darling identifies herself with her Zimbabwean roots. Here, her identity is solid and unflinching. Her psyche escapes the harsh environmental reality in America by identifying with the Zimbabwe of her past. Identity for Darling becomes a strategy for creating selfhood. There is an idealization of Zimbabwe in her imagination, and an emotive connection to the milieu that gave her an adventurous childhood. This is at variance to Darling dissociating herself from her host society. Bulawayo through the character of Darling espouses the fact that African diaspora characters at the initial stage of arrival to the diaspora maintain ties with their nationality, race, familial ties, old friendships and language and thus becomes frames that shape their identity. Sacks (2015: xxii), buttresses this in his analysis of the intersection that exists between identity and a person's physical environment. He argues that "neurology of identity" deals with the neural foundations of the self, the age-old problem of mind and brain. It is possible that there must, of necessity, be a gulf, a gulf of category between the psychical and the physical." Darling's attachment to Zimbabwean cosmology is emblemized when she laments the seizure of the bones that was meant to protect her at the airport. Her belief in this 'charm' is apparent in the way she mopes its absence. The bone was for her a "weapon to fight evil in America" (p.150). It also represents her connection and fidelity to home. Home is where she ties her identity to and home for Darling is a place that is engraved in her heart - Zimbabwe. Each passing day in America reminds her of what she is missing, thus Darling laments:

If I were at home, I know I would not be standing around because something called snow was preventing me from going outside to live life. Maybe me and Sbho and Bastard and Chipo and Godknows and Stina would be out in Budapest, stealing guavas. Or we would be playing find bin Laden or country game or Andy-over. But then we wouldn't be having enough food, which is why I will stand being in America dealing with the snow; there is food to eat here, all types of food. There are times,

though, that no matter how much food I eat, I find the food does nothing for me, like I am hungry for my country and nothing is going to fix that (p.153).

Darling craves for America for the kind of succor it provides at the level of opportunities. But psychologically America cannot feed both her restless mind and the gaps that are left from her being dislodged from her ancestral land. Thus, her relationship with America hangs on its ability to provide her needs.

Uncle Kojo is still loyal and identifies with his African roots. This becomes the source of his occasional wrangling with his wife Fostalina. He complains about her obsession with maintaining a slim body size. In his words, “there is actually nothing African about a woman with no thighs, no hips, no belly, no behind” (p.151). He strongly believes in the opinions of his kinsmen back in Ghana and relays to Fostalina their verdict concerning her body size saying; “last time I sent family pictures to my mother, she actually cried, Ah ah, my son oh, please, please, please feed your wife and don’t nah bring her here looking like this, you will embarrass us,” (p.152). At his private moments Uncle Kojo speaks his native language to himself. He condemns his son’s adoption of western pop culture especially, Tk’s habit of dropping his trousers down. Uncle Kojo’s psyche is entrenched in the Patriarchal nature of African societies, an attitude he exhibits in America. He constantly seeks ways to highlight his supposed superiority over Fostalina through his attempts to stamp his authority in the house. Darling narrates that the unfolding drama thus:

Uncle Kojo comes home from work and says to Aunt Fostalina, you know, me, I actually don’t understand why there is never any hot food in this house, Fostalina...ever since you started this weight thing you never cook. When was the last time we actually had a real dinner in this house, huh? You know in my country, wives cook hot meals every day for their husbands and children. And not only that, they actually also do laundry and iron and keep the house clean and everything (p.156).

Kojo usually reverberates and is transported into a realm that is far from America at the sound of Ghanaian music. Darling complains of this weird behaviour when she said “Uncle Kojo who is driving, nodding to that weird Ghanaian music that sometimes makes him forget himself, like maybe there’s something inside his head that’s calling him away to somewhere far.” But for Uncle Kojo, his identity is bereaved of any form of conflict. His loyalty lies in the Ghana of his mind. The anxiety that develops within him is an offshoot of the conflict in negotiating the ideal America he envisioned before coming to America and the reality of facing a racist America that rejects his kind. He escapes by identifying with Ghana to cope

with this rejection. His best moments in America are “whenever he is with someone from his country, everything about him is different - his laugh, his talk, his eating, it’s like something cuts him open to reveal this other person” (p.79). He becomes blissful and confident.

On another scale, Uncle Kojo belongs to the old brigades that are fully committed to the Pan Africanist struggle and the anti-imperial/anti-colonial struggle. It is this mind-set and coping mechanism that makes him to associate with and defend an African leader like Robert Mugabe by claiming he “is the only motherfucker with balls on our continent. Africa’s leading statesman!”(p.193). He celebrates Mugabe for opposing Western ideologies and dictates to African countries. This sense of commitment unveils and reveals his African identity. Bulawayo in *We Need New Names* highlights the difference in World cultures and how this has an impact in determining the identity of African diaspora characters. As Triandis et al observed; “Western cultures such as Europe, North America and Australia tend to be individualistic, whereas most other cultures such as those found in Asia, South America and Africa, are collectivist.” (Triandis, 1989; Chiu and Hong 2007; Heine, 2010; Oyserman, Coon and Kimmelmeier, 2002). These cultural features have a huge impact on an individual as she grapples to construct an identity. The African diaspora characters find themselves at a crossroads between these conflicting cultures. According to Markus and Kityama (1991:15):

People in individualistic cultures tend to have an independent self, whereas people in collectivist cultures have an interdependent self. Although, in both cases, people seek a coherent sense of who they are, the independent self is grounded in a view of the self as autonomous, separate from other people and revealed through ones inner thoughts and feelings. The interdependent self is grounded in one’s connection to and relationship with other people.

The African notion of communalism plays a huge role in shaping Darlings identity in America. Her psyche identifies with this spirit of togetherness at moments or events that bring together African diaspora characters. Her interdependent self finds happiness only at gatherings that foster intermeshing of various persons and celebration of African values and traditions. Darling observes, “The onliest time that it’s almost interesting here is when Uncle Themba and Uncle Charley and Aunt Welcome and Aunt Chenai and others all come to visit Aunt Fostalina. I call them uncles and aunts but we are not related by blood, like me and Aunt Fostalina are; I never knew them back home, and Uncle Charley is white, for instance. I think that the reason they are my relatives now is they are from my country too- it’s like the country has become a real family since we are in America, which is not our country” (p.161).

Here, they are united by a bond of language, race and culture that is alien to their American milieu. It is this cultural bond that Darling was referring to when she said:

The uncles and aunts bring goats inside and cook ezangaphakathi and sadza and mbhida and occasionally they will bring amacimbi, which is my favourite relish, umfushwa, and other foods from home, and people descend on the food like they haven't eaten all their lives. They tear off the sthwalala with their bare hands, hastily roll and dip it in relish and pause briefly to look at one another before shoving it in their mouths. Then they carefully chew, tilting their heads to the side as if the food speaks and they are listening to the taste, and then their faces light up when they cook home food (p.161).

This becomes their yardstick for seeking spaces that allows them to experience and practice the activities or ways of life that delineate their African identity, a life that replicates home. However, Darling's acculturation in America lends her a fluid or dynamic identity as she experiences a partial fixation with the American value system and begins to develop an American accent in her spoken English. She makes a conscious effort to maintain this accent. Her attitude gives credence to the assertion that "Identity or self-concept is worthless unless it is recognized and validated by others. Identity requires validation for it to persist and serve a useful function" (Swaann et al 1992; Synder and Gangestad 1982; Emler and Reicher 1995). Darling undergoes a self-transformation to be identified and accepted as an American. Her experience of racism subjects her mind to an irreconcilable conflict between her Zimbabwean roots and her adopted country. An idea of these racist encounters is projected when Darling said; "when I first arrived at Washington I just wanted to die. The other kids teased me about my name, my accent, my hair, the way I talked or said things, the way I dressed, the way I laughed...I just felt wrong in my skin, in my body, in my clothes, in my language, in my head, everything," (p.165). Being ridiculed by these kids gives Darling that feeling of self-deprecation. As a neurotic with the need for recognition, her social rejection in society and bouts of racism she endures makes her to begin to loathe her African heritage and all those features that link her to an African identity. She now aspires and craves for the American way of life and begins to enmesh herself in American popular art forms and American accents. She draws her inspiration from the crisis between Rihanna and her Boyfriend. Her newly found friends in America like Kristal and Marina introduce her to the world of porn movies in the basement of Uncle Koyo's house. She goes to shop with them and have recreational drives in Marina's mother's car.

In the Euphoria of this newly found way of life, Darling begins to distance herself from all that is African about her. She does not call her mother as frequent as she used to. Her

friends from Budapest are relegated from her consciousness. Darling unconsciously borrows TK's lexicon to express her anger at uncle K when she says; "leave me alone, motherfucker" (p.167). She aptly captures her unconscious conflict when she said, "it is hard to explain, this feeling; it's like there's two of me. One part is yearning for my friends; the other doesn't know how to connect with them anymore, as if they are people I've never met. I feel a little guilty but I brush the feeling away" (p.210). An earlier observation about the crisis of the individual-self by Dubois (1965: 215) lends weight to this when he posits "one ever feels his twoness-an American, a negro; two souls, two thoughts, two un-reconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body." It is this fight to maintain both a psychological balance and a physical one that characters in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* grapple with both at the level of language and behavioral patterns. We could confidently argue that while characters like Darling consciously fight with these 'unreconciled strivings', others are not even aware of it let alone fight because they have been unconsciously consumed by the 'greedy monster' which is both America and the American situation: adaptation, cultural pluralism and either the search or maintenance of identity.

Shifting Identity in Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

Aunt Fostalina displays elements of neurosis. Her unconscious is caught in an irreconcilable conflict between the ideal, which she seeks in America and her Zimbabwean heritage represented in language and etiquettes. Horney (1937: 41) observes, "as long as an individual live, s/he keeps evolving." There is a salient manifestation of this individual evolvment and conflicting attributes in Fostalina's identity construction. She embodies a contradictory identity by her actions and what she acknowledges or wants to be identified with. As a neurotic with the need for approval, Fostalina is resolute in her attempt to "keep up with the women on the TV-four-five-six, and walk, and walk" (p.149). There is a conscious attempt by Fostalina to cue into the current fashion trends in America, as well the obsession with body image. She downplays and discards Vodloza's bone that was the only weapon Mother of Bones got for Darling. She is far removed from the belief system of her Zimbabwean nation and views such charms as useless superstitious concoctions. She displays outright disgust for them saying; "What is this crap?"(p.150) and is quick to throw the charm away. Her condemnation of African values is a conscious signification of her American identity. However, the neurotic conflict in her unconscious exposes her liminal or transient identity. When she gets angry with her husband Uncle Kojo for prescribing domestic roles for her, she responds thus "Yes, in your country maybe, but this is America, and nxa ubon' engan'ulebhoyi lapha manj' uzatshetshela ngereza fanami!"(p.156), these highlight Fostalina's inner turmoil as the conflict within her unconscious mind reflects in her spoken language. She clings to the American way of life but expresses emotional issues in her native

language – which ironically is closer and real to her. She endures several hours of intense physical exercises to conform to the mainstream trends in America but is quick to summon her native language at moments of grief and disenchantment.

Bulawayo through the character of Fostalina, depicts how African American characters vacillate between dual and sometimes multiple cultures in determining their identity. Identity for them becomes an unstable and ever-changing phenomenon. In the case of Fostalina she consciously associates or identifies as an American and unconsciously acts as an African. When Darling first came to America, she observes that Aunt Fostalina “does not force or beat me up like perhaps mother of Bones would if I was not doing what they wanted me to do. She always asks me if I want to do things...as if I have become a real person,” (p.159). This is an image of Aunt Fostalina who is fully absorbed into the American society’s method of child upbringing in a family. It is the same Aunt Fostalina who Darling reports to have, “whipped me and Marina, sparing Kristal because she said she didn’t want to get into trouble since Americans call ‘whopping’ child abuse,” (p.277) after she caught them watching pornographic flicks. The inconsistency in her actions is a reflection of her dynamic and sometimes contradictory identity.

Also,

Fostalina while in America is drawn to African food and music. “When they cook home food, even Aunt Fostalina will forget she is on a fruit diet.”(p.161), and when “they play Majaivana, play Solomon Skuza, play Nduduzo Makhax, Miriam Makeba, Lucky Dube, Brenda Fassie, Paul Matavire, Hugh Masekela, Thomas Mapfumo, Oliver Mtshudzi-old songs,”(p.161). Darling narrates, “They dance strange. Limbs jerk and bodies contort. They lean forward like they are planting grains, sink to the floor, rise as whips and lash the air.”(p.162). Music and food reconnect the African diaspora character to Africa. Fostalina’s allegiance defies easy categorization. There is ambivalence in her identity formation or construction. She is subsumed in an identity crisis that shifts in response to societal happenings and her emotive connection, which is usually an unconscious response to politics, language and culture. Darling aptly captures Fostalina’s link to Africa when she observes, “she has this weird thing of constantly referring to back home when she doesn’t want to deal with anything” (p.165).

The conflict within the unconscious mind of the African diaspora character is reflected at moments of adversity; during their trip to Dumi’s wedding when Kojo almost kills a deer that crossed his path while driving, Uncle Kojo, Darling and Aunt Fostalina express their shock and fear in their languages. This sense of cultural plurality is also depicted when Darling reports that “Uncle Kojo is shouting in his language and Aunt Fostalina has woken up and is shouting in our language...and I am screaming” (p.168). Here, the African diaspora character’s unconscious induces an internal response through language in reaction to psychological pain and a host of other traits like the neurotic need for self-

sufficiency and neurotic need for prestige. In the case of Fostalina these neurotic needs are exemplified in Darling's words when she observes that when "she is speaking in our language now, which means the conversation is over" (p.189). Fostalina expresses her verdicts about issues in her Zimbabwean dialects. It is this language that assures her of a pride of place and completes her identity. Politically, Fostalina lives in denial of her Zimbabwean roots. She distances herself from the leadership of the country and its policies. She makes conscious efforts not to be aware of it. As a means of coping with the disappointments and shame she feels toward the political leadership in Zimbabwe, Fostalina avoids political news from home. This is demonstrated in Darling's assertion:

Two days ago, the president of our country came on TV during the BBC news. He was raising his fists and speaking, saying our country is a black man's home and would never be a colony again and what-what. Aunt Fostalina snatched the remote control from the coffee table, pointed it at the TV like it was a gun, and shot. We all turned to look at her, sitting there, shaking, her face suddenly ugly like she was chewing some thorns (p.192).

Fostalina disconnects from Zimbabwe once there is negative news or reports about it. As a neurotic with the neurotic need for prestige, she defends her self-esteem by exhibiting symbolic withdrawal signs. She dissociates herself from Zimbabwe, by switching off the television; her frown indicates her anger and disgust at a failed leadership.

Bulawayo in *We Need New Names* demonstrates how the quest for acceptance and approval among African diaspora characters impact their identity construction. African diaspora characters that possess the neurotic need for approval and recognition find themselves constantly switching allegiances between their ideal native societies and their adopted countries in response to the mental dilemma created by alternative cultures and societies. Marina's character fits into this role. A glimpse of her inner turmoil is revealed when she begins to feel like "the princess of Africa just because her grandfather was a chief...and she wears all these colourful traditional outfits, never mind they are ugly and make her look like an old woman"(p.199). Marina is drawn to her Nigerian roots because it gains for her recognition among her friends whose approval she seeks. But Marina battles with the feeling of low self-esteem and adopts cultural costumes and royalty as a form of defence and strategy of escape from her feeling of worthlessness.

When faced with psycho-social tension that arises out of her interpersonal relationships with her friends like Darling and Kristal, she feels threatened by her alignment to her Nigerian

roots. She battles intrapersonal conflicts within herself, and as a strategy of defense; when the issue of her ancestry is raised and mocked. She denies links to Nigeria. This is emblemized when Kristal attempt to educate Marina and Darling about the conventions of an American language system called Ebonics. Kristal depicts them as outsiders who lack genuine understanding of the language when she said, “but it be our own, naamean, ’coz we aint tryinna front” (p.222). She accused them of “tryinna sound like stupid white folk” and demeans the value and quality of the spoken English. Concerning Nigerian movies, she said, “Sides, you better not start nothin’. I’ve seen them Nigerian movies and y’all can’t talk period; why you think you have them subtitles? Well it’s kind of true, in a way. I mean, when I watch your movies I have to read the subtitles myself, even if they’re supposed to be in English” (p.222). Marina is swift to respond in defence when she said, “that’s ‘cause you are not smart. And what do you mean my movies, have you seen me in them, huh?” (p.222).

Darling and Kristal further exacerbate Marina’s intrapersonal conflicts borne out of attachment to dual identities when they accuse Nigerians of “419 shit...email scams” (p.223). Marina under this daunting peer pressure distances herself from her Nigerian identity and embraces an American identity, which assures her friends’ approval and society’s recognition. Her bond with her Nigerian identity becomes a relationship of convenience that can be discarded once it infringes on her self-esteem or personal liberty.

Conclusion

The African immigrant construct identities that change in response to social, cultural and situational occurrences. The analysis drew strength from Horney’s psychoanalytic tools and studies by psychologists and neurosurgeons. In discussing literature, African literature as the likes of Wa Thiong’o (1982:5) would argue does not exist in a vacuum but is given impetus by the socio-economic and political upheaval of that said society. On that note it would be tenable to also say the same about identity. As observed from earlier discussion, identity is shaped and given credence from multiple sources, backgrounds, encounters and orientation. Though they most times share certain similarities, they are individualistic and distinctive. They are each shaped by their personal rigors. Identity presents itself as a moving car with shifting gears. At one level, the politics and policies of the day determines how diaspora characters respond to their societies, on another scale, the socioeconomic state of these diaspora characters speaks on their behalf and drives them into either seeking greener pastures or blending in – or camouflaging, to society to attain these pastures, these doors of opportunities that Dubois speaks of. The bildungsroman narrative of Bulawayo through the eyes of Darling is very telling in its identity crisis, and how identity is a shifting gear in

adaptation, adoption, assertion, reassertion and reclamation of a misconstrued or distorted image of the African diaspora character. It shows how these characters struggle to live better lives and to avoid anything that drags them back to what they fear and have ran away from in the first place to live in foreign lands. It is by identifying and understanding the nature of identity, the contradictions beneath and yearning for acceptance that we begin to reason with some key characters' lack of identification or solidarity with either their countrymen or people of their racial extractions.

References

- Bulawayo, N. (2014) *We Need New Names*. London: Vintage Books.
- Baldwin, J. (1967) *The Fire Next Time*, London: Hutchinson.
- Dubois, W.E.B (1965). *The Souls of Black Folk*, New York: Avon Books.
- Gyasi, Y. (2016) *Homegoing*, New York: Alfred Knopf.
- (2016) *The Rumpus*, Autumn, No10.
- Horney K (1950). *Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle toward Self-realization*. New York: WW Norton.
- (1937). *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- (1939). *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- (1942). *Self-Analysis*. New York: Norton.
- Muazu, M. (2001) "The Self in Discourse: A Psychography of Odia Ofeimun's Early Poetry" in *Work In Progress*, No.12, Zaria.PP.143.
- Nahitsi, C. (2016) *Between The World And Me*. New York: Random House.
- Onwueme,T. (2016). "An Interview On Identity". Lagos, The Guardian Newspaper . Vol, No?
- Oyserman, D. (2007). "Social Identity and Self- Regulation". In A. W. Kruglanski and E.T. Higgins (eds), *Social Psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (2nd ed., pp.432-53). New York : GuilFord.