*Writing from the Diaspora in African Literature* Master 2

Lecturer: DJIMAN Kasimi, Professor

F*é*lix Houphouët-Boigny University of Cocody-Abidjan

Department of English

Objective:

Theory-based, this course actually comes in the wake of the one dealing with postcolonial theory. Put differently, il will draw heavily on that theoretical framework to make sense of the present topic, i.e. *Writing from the Diaspora in* *African Literature*. The purpose therefore is to highlight the specificities of a cast of African writers living abroad, be it in the UK or in the US. In other words, what does it mean to write from abroad?

**Outline:**

-Preliminary Words

-Literary Hybridity

-Cultural Intermingling

-Migration

-Existential Anguish

**Preliminary Words**

Diaspora is defined by Wendy Knepper as ”movement, migration or scattering of a people away from an ancestral homeland.”

As to Walker Connor, the term refers to the “dispersal of a people from its original homeland.”

**Literary Hybridity**

-For Homi Bhabha, the term hybridty encompasses the blending of two things which are originally different. In that respect, African writers living in the diaspora profusely take advantage of this technique as it is pervasive in their literary output.

* Languagewise

-their literary texts are written at once in English, the language of the former coloniser and also in African languages

-verbal level: elements of African oral traditions are being put into English, thereby creating a kind of English as the new Englishes

-phonological innovation: the presence of new sounds in what is referred to as Standard English

-phonetic innovation: English words are being pronunced with African flavour. Elleke Boehmer speaks here of “cultural boomerang or switchback.”

* Magical Realism

-For Ann Bowers, it deals with miracles and extraordinary talents such as the appearance of the dead in the realm of the living

In a nutshell, what literary hybridity is all about is that between the Tree, which has to do with filiation, writers from the diaspora have chosen the rhizome, which is in keeping with alliance and its subsequent notion of plurality.

**Cultural Intermingling**

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said said ”no one is today purely one thing.”

-Drawing on this statement, African writers are advocating cross-cultural identities. In that sense, one can argue that diasporic identity is ambivalent. This is what Homi Bhabha terms “ the third space of enunciation.”

-Globalising view of identity and culture akin to a form of cosmopolitanism

-transracial humanity which consists in dismantling racial borders

-Interculturality understood as relationship between cultures

**Migration**

To migrate is to move from one place to another.Specifically, migration here has to do with transnational movement, i.e. from one country to another.

-Diasporic writers are preccupied with this concern, as they seem to be the living reality of this phenomenon (they have moved from their country of origin to settle down away)

-Migration is a trope ( a rhetoric figure) used in a non-literal way with a view to dismantling borders (be they real or symbolic)

-this issue is twofold here:

 1. Type

 2. Expression

* Type

-It deals with the elite: ”brain drain”

-writers are emphasising that “ brain drain” is a living reality as those who are leaving are far from the riff-raff

-ordinary citizens can no longer be exclusively attached to their original land

* Expression

-One can speak here of a transnational space in that we are no longer dealing with one space. In postcolonial terms, the Center and the Periphery are at once emphasised

-Movement of people: it is a two-way movement as it involves going to the Center and going to the Periphery

**Existential Anguish**

Though diasporic writers are doing theit utmost to deal with the building of a globalised identity, one should not overlook to lay the emphasis on the problems they raise in their literary output. This is what existential anguish is all about.

-such issues as precariousness of life and job issues can be addressed

* Life precariousness

-the training received in the periphery is undermined as it lacks the recognition of the Center

-Liminality(Bhabha)

-cultural ape as it destroys the original culture. This is what Djiman Kasimi terms “identicide.”

* Job and Racism

-Colour difference is an issue. In other words, people are praising the notion of purity, nativism. As such, they are refusing to go beyond what Homi Bhabha calls ”original narrations.”

-This is also seen through the type of jobs. Quite often, we are dealing with menial jobs

**Bibliography**

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, *Purple Hibiscus*, 2003

Barrios, Olga & Bells, Bernard (eds.), *Contemporary Literature in the African*

 *Diaspora*, 2001

Emecheta, Buchi, *The New Tribe*, 2000

Knepper, Wendy, *Postcolonial Literature*, 2011

Okri, Ben, *The Famished Road*, 1991