Assessing the Young Nigerian Woman in the Diaspora Using Audee T. Giwa’s
*From Fatika with love*

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Abstract  
The search for a greener pasture in developed countries is usually caused by unemployment or discontentment in underdeveloped countries. Poverty has been a menace in Africa and, over the years, people have been moving from one place to another; nationally and internationally. After immigrating into the desired location, the immigrant is faced with the need to blend into the new society. The paper applies Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of the ‘beyond’ to assess the motives of the young Nigerian woman in diaspora using Audee T. Giwa’s *From Fatika with Love*. The ‘beyond’ allows the individual to overcome obstacles in the present by drawing inspiration from the past and envisioning the future.

Introduction  
Poverty is, no doubt, an unbearable state. It causes one to take rash decisions in order to dispel or escape it. Poverty can result in cultism, prostitution, begging or doing drugs. Contentment is the best solution to poverty there is, but the most difficult and the most discarded. Ironically, other solutions apart from this are either precarious or futile. Therefore, if the space is hard of providing solution, jumping outside it can reduce the impact of the problem.

Migration comes in a variety of dimensions; exile, tourism, asylum-seeking, refuge, trade, scholarship etc. Migration from one place to another was much easier in the very past due to minimal competition especially over job opportunities and trade. Nowadays, there is so much competition. Hirst and Thompson (1999) as cited in Brubaker (2005:9) reports that “the world’s poor who seek work or refuge in prosperous countries encounter a tighter mesh of state regulation and have fewer opportunities…than they had a century ago”

Most blacks from Africa—Nigeria especially—chase any opportunity of securing a job or establishing a business in the Middle East. De Hass (2006) as cited in Marchand, Langley & Siegel (2015:14) reports that “the Hausas and other Muslim populations in the North are predominantly inclined to migrate to the Gulf States”. Gulf States, here, refer to Middle East countries of the gulf region. In this case, there were some who went for Hajj and decided to stick around in search for a greener pasture. They mustered all their cunning to evade the Saudi Arabian authorities from deportation. These people, poor or fairly rich, end up taking menial jobs or establishing shady businesses in the holy land.

In feminist notions, the young African woman is considered, if not the most oppressed, one of the most oppressed females around the globe. The initial feminist movement from liberation to equality is cooling off around the globe due to satisfactory results from advocacy. However, the development of the African nation is, uniformly, slow. Thus, most African societies are still considered patriarchal, Nigeria included. In light of the foregoing, this paper assesses the actions taken by young African women in order to overcome sexual and racial cruelty.
The concept of the ‘beyond’, as the theoretical framework, is taken from Homi K. Bhabha’s book, *Location of Culture* (1994). The word ‘beyond’, basically, indicates something that comes after. In Bhabha’s terms, ‘beyond’ is “neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past” (p. 1). It is an ideological concept in which the minority individual creates, out of temporal vacuum, a space that determines his being. The individual mixes the traditional past and the inspired future to inhabit present culture. This, as Bhabha argues, is where the “collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated” (p. 2).

However, the ambivalence between the traditional past and the inspired future leads to an unstable present. This is because tradition does not bestow a full form of identification, rather it introduces “other, incommensurable cultural temporalities” in restaging the past (p. 2). Thus, the ‘beyond’ connotes to the fact that historicity and traditional cultural orientation is unreliable. Therefore, inhabiting the ‘beyond’ is to redescribe the future-inspired present by revisiting the past, and to “to reinscribe our human, historic commonality” (p. 7). The future-inspired present is the mainstream global world where the enlightened thought of one society is considered a vision.

**Conceptual Clarification**

Although members of the African diaspora regarded themselves as homogenous, their experience of being in a new environment altered their way of thinking. Also, this does not mean that they absolutely share the same values. Patrick Manning (2003) posits that the originality of the notion (of African diaspora) lay in its emphasis on historically created populations that led to its reproduction and transformation over a long period and addressed gamut of issues from migration to cultural continuity to modern politics of the diaspora. From the above argument, the ‘ancestral diaspora’, even though were fully conscious of their own values, have assimilated the values of the alien society in which they find themselves in, thus, leading to the hybridisation of their indigenous values. Nevertheless, this new African diaspora experience, no matter how hybridised, is still ambivalent of its roots and post-colonial condition. Carole Boyce Davies (1996) argues that there is a major trajectory of Afro-diaspora culture which pursues the transformational through memory and vision without suggesting that they each share identical histories for re-formulating their existence.

The diaspora member is puzzled over deciding his identity because others like him are branded as outsiders or strangers. Like slavery, the negating factor of racism hinders the process of individuation in order to suspend the protagonist in an existential vacuum (Mehta, 2009). In contemporary times, most of the indigenes of the hostland still exhibit racial preferences over members of the diaspora. Therefore, blacks who go there for the purpose of getting a job either by qualification or discontentment in their homelands both suffer such bias by the citizens. Apart from the common citizens, firms, too, aggravate some form of bias. John Whitehead (2005) and Peter Bohmer (2005) reports that firms prefer white workers to equally qualified black workers which makes the white workers not to act in their common class interest. The blame, here, should not be on the whites who seem to be racists. Every individual would like to give back to his society. Therefore, firms established in a white-dominated society will, definitely, favour the whites.
pushes for the diaspora member to react. However, Mary C. King (2005:110) defends such reaction by the black: “It is…possible to see racial violence instigated by people of color against whites as a challenge…” Sometimes, the ‘people of colour’ feel a certain proximity towards the people of a fairer skin. As Fanon (1986:17) observes, “A Negro behaves differently with a white a man and with another Negro”.

Whitehead (2005:84) further argues: “The so-called black underclass culture is said to reproduce dysfunctional behaviors, such as living for immediate gratification rather than planning for the future, surviving on welfare rather than accepting a regular job…” This is a true confirmation of afro-pessimism. Most blacks feel that their country is not doing well in the sense of provision of jobs and reduction in poverty. The former is evident while the latter is largely the result of lack of self-reliance.

Increase in the demand of labour increases wage rates and vice versa. Timothy Bates and Daniel Fusfeld (2005) propose that “When any minority group is crowded into a relatively small number of occupations, wage rates are depressed in those occupations because of the artificially increased supply of labor” (p. 101). The depression of wage rates worsens when the supply of labour is not only coming from the indigenous underprivileged but the underprivileged immigrant. Mariem Mezghenni Malouche, Sonia Plaza and Fanny Salsac (2006:29) reports that “A number of empirical models have found that trade and migration are complementary”.

Young women are trafficked to border white countries in order to prostitute. It is understood that strenuous work or job is happily offered to the black, but why is sex a mediating factor between black and white racial hostility? Based on this, except gruesome sex, pleasurable sex is only fantasised. To support this view, Mehta (2009) adds that “the black female body suffers a dual alterity through the intersecting variables of racialization and sexualisation, thereby becoming the target of added sexual injury” (p. 35).

Black women’s resistance to racism is grounded in their relationship with their community to dislodge the prevailing geopolitics of rationality (Hornsby, 2005; Mehta, 2009). This is much like any other cause for resistance. Black women try not to only blend in but to form their own space in a racialised community they do not belong.

In an environment that does not give room for liberation, black women revert to other forms of entertainments. Hornsby (2005:386) supports this view that “black working-class women sought release from the daily drudgery of labor by seeking out entertainments…that encouraged creative and unfettered self-expression”. In these contemporary times whereby traditional performances are in the process of extinction (or no longer exist in developed areas), one cannot find other means of entertainment except (shameful) ones available in the alien (globalised) environment. In this case, black women in diaspora either strip themselves of their untainted orientation to the tune of the host society or end up melancholic.

Such invitation to the sexualised female body leads to adverse reactions like fornication and forced sexual interaction. While “indiscriminate raping” and the “framing” of the female worker is an integral part of being a house help, these female workers “mediated their sexuality to obtain favors for themselves” (Mehta, 2009:57). The cornering of the female worker is as a result of search for
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Young women are, often, carried away whenever they are given a glimpse of glamorous life elsewhere. Talle, who grows up in the village of Fatika, will, no doubt, be overwhelmed by the news of going to Amnisia. However, the twins, Kari and Kure, whose father is affluent, are in “instant euphoria” (p. 80). Their mother, Yarkuwa, calls Amnisia “abroad” (p. 79) in order to give the place higher priority, and also calls the news “God’s summons” (p. 80). Even though Yarkuwa is happy that “Talle is going away” she still wishes it was her daughters. It is clear that poverty is a secondary reason for risking the troubles of migrating beyond borders.

The female body is a target to most men. Talle, in the Arab country, attracts the sexual desire of her boss as well as the homosexual desire of her boss’s wife. Even without engaging in any sexual...
act, Talle is given some amounts of money by Zareefah, unknown to her, as a bid. Abumanaf, Zareefah’s husband, openly makes advances to Talle while giving her huge amount of money too. His belief is that African women are considered pleasurable. Talle, who is disgusted by such relationship, artfully escapes Abumanaf’s advances, and gives out the money to her co-maid who is a non-black woman. Upon reaching her destination, Talle deploys Yaryaya’s advice; she objects to her benefactor on continuing with the job of a housemaid and insists on taking up the kola nut business or a return home.

However, most young women change this indiscriminate sexuality to obtain favours. We have a preamble to this in Zeeza:

> Sometimes Zeeza dressed only in pants and brassiere, the she would put a thick pink overwear and proceed out! In disgust, Talle used to wonder why she bothered to put any underclothing at all. After all, their clients picked them up directly outside the house (p. 197).

These young women come from societies that frown at such behaviour. Talle is shocked when Yaryaya tells her that most of them (young women) who are brought to Amnisia in the name of business are gradually turned into prostitutes (p. 193). Whenever Talle’s roommates try exposing her into such life, she suns them.

Whenever young women are about to be initiated into such shifty business, they are, usually, forewarned although whatever the impending danger is, they are never told:

> Please, Zeeza, be patient with these people. They are very strange. Sometimes, they’d do things to you that you would find absolutely weird, but bear with them. Just think of the money you would make at the end of the whole thing (p. 168).

Therefore, unless one of these girls survives such peril and tells the story, aspiring young women would not know the dangers of such business. These girls are made to believe that they are inferior to the people of the hostland. Thus, resistance is the last alternative solution to whatever confronts them; their mission is simply to find a better means of livelihood than they have at home.

The negating factors of dislocation give a nostalgic feeling to the immigrant. Most immigrants who think that they have left a discontented life, later, become conscious of the contented life there is in the less-privileged (home) environment. Yaryaya who has been in Amnisia for a long time regrets not just running away from home but the very reason for running away:

> I have nobody in Nigeria that I can call my own. I ran away from home when I was quite young…the usual reason. Forced marriage. I moved from one town to another in the entire north, eking out a living in a way only an illiterate beautiful girl could. Here Yaryaya smiled at her memory. Then her face became cloudy.

> I wish I had listened to my parents (p. 194).

Even while regretting her actions, Yaryaya still re-lives the cheery, adventurous feeling for a brief time. Such situations are supposed to teach life lessons. However, the fictional name, “Amnisia”, given to the hostland connotes to the state of forgetfulness (i.e. amnesia). Yaryaya shows some resistance by running away from her parents.
Conclusion
Rumours about the abusive state of a hostland or the kind of jobs or businesses carried out there, usually, reach the ear of an intending emigrant, but the person responsible for the emigration of the ‘commodity’ gives ambiguous details about the purpose of leaving. Nevertheless, the young woman, who is a target of lecherous acts, is still invited to such illicit business. She, naively, becomes overwhelmed by the opportunity, but later regrets her decisions. Therefore, she retraces her past in order to pave way to a successful diasporic experience.

Audee T. Giwa’s *From Fatika with Love* presents the reader with a new diasporic experience of the Nigerian woman in the Middle East. Out of cultural orientation, it allows the young Nigerian woman in the diaspora to create a suitable space for herself in order to inhabit the present while overcoming its struggles of racial and sexual abuse. Although Homi K. Bhabha’s ‘beyond’ presents ambivalence between the traditional past and the future-inspired present, the partial form of identification bestowed by tradition leads to an appropriation of contradictory mainstream global culture.
Works Cited