

**African Dreamers' Redefinition of Home and the Shame of
Return in Imbolu Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers*
La redéfinition du chez-soi par les rêveurs africains et la honte
du retour dans *Behold the Dreamers* d'Imbolo Mbue**

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Abstract

This article investigates questions related to African immigrants' displacement, home and diaspora and their impact on identity construction and distortion of Nigerian immigrants through the examination of Imbolo Mbue's novel *Behold the Dreamers* (2016). In her novel, Mbue investigated the destructive effects of immigration on *Wanderers across borders*. Mbue's novel is chosen in this article to explore the cultural outcomes of immigration on immigrants and the hurdles they have to surmount to quench their thirst for the American Dream. This paper examines the Double Consciousness Nigerian immigrants suffer from which transform them into scattered souls between two *homes*. In order to thoroughly analyze the novel, New Historicism literary approach is used in order to provide an eclectic and holistic perspective of immigration, search for home and identity. Post-colonial theory was also used in order to highlight alterity and subordination of the African subject in his quest for identification with the white men's cultural values. At the end of this paper, we realize the renunciations African Dreamers have to deal

with in their pursuit of happiness and it also shows that *home* is ubiquitous and nowhere at the same time.

Keywords: immigration; diaspora; home; American Dream; shame of return.

Resumé

Cet article examine les questions liées au déplacement, à domicile et à la diaspora des immigrants africains et leur impact sur la construction et la distorsion de l'identité des immigrants nigériens à travers l'examen du roman d'Imbolo Mbue *Behold the Dreamers* (2016). Dans son roman, Mbue a enquêté sur les effets destructeurs de l'immigration sur les voyageurs à travers les frontières. Le roman de Mbue est choisi dans cet article pour explorer les conséquences culturelles de l'immigration sur les immigrants et les obstacles qu'ils doivent surmonter pour étancher leur soif de rêve américain. L'approche littéraire du Nouvel Historicisme est utilisée afin de fournir une perspective éclectique et holistique de l'immigration, de la recherche d'un domicile et d'une identité. La théorie postcoloniale a également été utilisée pour mettre en évidence l'altérité et la subordination du sujet africain dans sa quête d'identification aux valeurs culturelles des hommes blancs. À la fin de cet article, nous réalisons les renoncements auxquels les Rêveurs Africains doivent faire face dans leur quête du bonheur et cela montre également que le domicile est omniprésente et nulle part en même temps.

Mots clés : Immigrants ; diaspora; domicile; le rêve américain; la honte du retour.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Displacement troubles the ideas of citizenship and national belonging and offers to the noncitizen the freedom to be “out of place,” out of the familiar. The rate of immigration from African countries to America has increased significantly during the last century. Mostly, these people leave their countries seeking better life

conditions or escaping wars and turmoil. Our focus in this research paper is on the impact of displacement on the lives of those African immigrants who have left not only their countries but their old cultural and social ties seeking a new home and better life but unfortunately wind up falling in a dramatic identity uprooting accompanied by geographical dispersion.

African *Wanderers across borders'* quest for *home* and their struggle to carve a niche for themselves make them accustomed with the question 'Where do you come from?' and reply in countless, premeditated ways. Their past and their present are socially constructed and disputed by people of diverse identities and histories. The concept of diaspora therefore evaluates the experience of exile and cultural alienation. In addition to this, it provides us with features acknowledged by those living in diaspora.

The first characteristic is a homeland whether real or mythic, which is hardly ever overlooked and with which Africans pursue a new relation in their new land. After that comes the new life in a foreign environment and the associated alienation and hurdles that require a perpetual endeavor for identification, impartiality unfortunately, failure in doing so may lead to humiliation and shame of return. Finally, African immigrants tend to form an interwoven diasporic alliance with their homogeneous group with whom they share the same linguistic, national and cultural identities, integrated by collective memory. Diaspora, therefore, is a quest for an identity which is constantly contested and re-invented. (Geneviève Fabre, 2004, p. 2)

Nigerian writers, like many African immigrants, have embarked on a journey in search for a supposedly utopic land where they can create a *home* and desert another. These immigrants are pushed and pulled by a variety of factors including a

quest for trade, better education, political asylum and other reasons. African immigrants and Nigerians in particular believe in an Eden and an *Eldorado* called America. African authors are no exception, Chimamanda Adiche, for instance, in her novel *Americanah* (2013) portrayed these African dreamers by sketching characters who are living a fantasy of creating a new home in America. (Adiche, 2013, p. 3)

The renowned American Dream, which is deeply rooted in all immigration cycles, led to the appearance of the *African Dream* thus projecting the widespread quest amongst African youth to fantasize the *over there* as a land where streets are paved with gold where “people...did not visit America. They got there and stayed there until they could return home as conquerors, as green card or American passport bearing conquerors with pockets full of dollars and photos of a happy life.” (Mbue, 2016, p. 23)

Many key players had a huge role in the formation of this imaginary belief in America as a utopia; Hollywood movies, the internet, television have boosted this perception pushing Africans to embark on a doomed journey forgetting that crossing physical borders is much easier than crossing cultural ones. Nevertheless, African immigrants will definitely be subject to devastating identity crisis consequences.

In the selected short story, *Behold the Dreamers*, Mbue tried to highlight what hurdles Nigerian immigrants have to surmount and the impacts on their identity formation. Being a Nigerian herself, she succeeded in portraying the fragility of African immigrants (the Jongas) by contrasting them to native Americans (the Edwardes) She tried to take us on a psychological journey into her characters' mindset.

2. Defining the Dream:

Despite the held belief that James Truslow Adams was the first to propagate the phrase American Dream in his 1931 book *The Epic of America*, in fact it can be traced way back to the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The latter document assured that all citizens were endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, including life and liberty, and the pursuits of happiness. Ever since the start of the new nation, Americans have endeavored and sought their leaders to endorse the promise of the American Dream, guaranteeing fuller liberties and a better life for all. (White, 2011, p. 17).

The singularity of the *Dream* is quite misleading because the American Dream is rather a complex and a multidimensional one. The Dream might be described as a faith that anything is possible if one wants it badly enough. Notwithstanding, the historical reality reveals a series of more Dreams such as the Dream of upward mobility, the Dream of home possession, the Dream of racial justice, the Dream of religious freedom and so on. (White, 2011, p. 19)

Adams' first intention was to call his book *The American Dream* because, for him, nothing was more important than the dream of a happier life for all people regardless of their caste. This idea that shaped a nation led each generation to witness a bestirring of ordinary Americans to save that dream from any forces that intended to ruin it. Adams change of the original title into *The Epic of America* was in fact an act of defiance to the *Dream* and it also exhibits how deeply disillusioned he was by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, believing they denoted a betrayal of American traditions of autonomy and it unveils government's involvement in the

foundation of a soulless, materialistic consumer society and he died, thwarted with his country, in 1948. (Cullen, 2003, p. 34)

Regardless of the fact that many of us might have thought the American Dream had ended, Barack Obama's election marks a restoration of the Dream. In his victory speech, he invoked the national Dream and testifies to its endurance by referring to his own life's quest to become the first African American president. Obama reinstated the true meaning of Americans' liberty and creed as a motivation for men and women and children of a variety of races and faith to believe in a decent chance to climb the walls and achieve what they craved, be it wealth, rank, or imposing a name and thus becoming 'someone'. Notwithstanding, the American Dream became a major preoccupation for a variety of society's actors including journalists, politicians and writers to name a few. The major American writers who have engaged the Dream are Emerson, Whitman, Thoreau, Mark Twain, Henry James, Willa Cather, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, Hart Crane. Just like Obama, these writers affirmed that it is a requisite to have a nation in which all people are free to develop their peculiarities through prosperity, health, happiness and personal achievement. (Bloom, 2009, p. 17)

3. Home and the Departure Syndrome:

In her book *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldua wrote "I had to leave home so I could find myself...The body is the home of the heart. Flesh is the body of home. But what is home? Who feels at home while at home? I didn't leave all the parts of me: I kept the ground of my own being.... So yes, though 'home' permeates every sinew and cartilage in my body, I too am afraid of going home." (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 21) Immigrants are marked by their bodies not by the passport they possess and they are stuck with their foreignness and inevitably their *otherness*. So, both home and elsewhere are sites of dislocation. In her book, Anzaldua tried so hard to

trace the journeys of the body displacement and its spiritual and mental effects of belonging fully nowhere. Home for her is a place she can never exist in and must run away from, she carries home with her "I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry 'home' on my back". (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 22)

The Illustrious Adage "*Home is where the heart is*" becomes questionable since the definition of *Home* turns out to be dynamic and slippery. The Indian sociologist Madan Sarup reflects on the aforementioned adage by saying:

"But what makes a place home? Is it wherever your family is, where you have been brought up? The children of many migrants are not sure where they belong. Where is home? Is it where your parents are buried? Is home the place from where you have been displaced, or where you are now? Is home where your mother lives?" (Sarup, 1994, p. 90)

The immigrants in this case undertake multiple displacements across geographical, cultural and psychological boundaries and for these migrants, home is built on twofold: nostalgia and a sense of displacement; and belonging and alienation. When she started reminiscing her departure from Limbe, Nene, wife of Jende the protagonist, provided her own definition of *Home* as being some faraway "desolate" land that she wanted so badly to desert "Limbe was now some faraway town, a place she had loved less with every new day Jende was not there... the town was no longer her beloved *hometown* but a *desolate* place she couldn't wait to *get out of.*" (Mbue, 2016, p. 18)

Home for women characters in the novel has different connotations than men. As an alienated from a mother culture and *alien* in the dominant culture, a woman of color can never feel safe within her inner *Self*. She is trapped in between intersections and spaces of the two different worlds she occupies. Immigrant

women feel immobilized; they can't move neither forward nor backward in their hometowns since their sense of belonging is loosening every day. Neni was no exception, she too was like a turtle carrying her Home with her wherever she goes. She "go to bed and look forward to more of the same the next day because her life was going neither forward nor backward." (Mbue, 2016, p. 19) for her all she needs from Home is "a panoramic mental photograph of them knowing she wouldn't be missing them for too long, wishing them the same happiness she knew she was going to find in America... A year and a half later now and New York City was her *home*, a place with all the pleasures she desired." (Ibid, p. 19)

Even Jende, Mbue's protagonist, was delusional believing that America is his home now, since he made it to the USA, creating a home for himself would not be hard. He overlooked the fact that American immigration system would not go easy with him "there was nothing he could do. There was nothing anyone could do. No one could save him from American Immigration... he would have to go back *home*" this home that he fled in the first place doesn't seem to let him nor Nene to leave that easily. Despite the positive connotation of the word home which is defined as "a familiar or usual setting: congenial environment also: the focus of one's domestic attention" (Merriam-Webster, 2022) which is part of Jende's Dream but unfortunately Home for him is Cameroon which is the other half of the definition "to a final, closed, or ultimate position". (Mbue, 2016, p. 57) "He would have to go back home. He would have to return to a country where visions of a better life were the birthright of a blessed few, to a town from which dreamers like him were fleeing daily." (Ibid, p. 58) Home apparently has too many connotations as it doesn't only refer to 'where a person belongs' which is by all means a positive connotation because it is the only place where a person can live at ease, but for immigrants fleeing their 'Home' to somewhere else, a place where no one is familiar with their

identity, language, culture or religion but they still call it Home. "There's no place like home" has two meaning layers, it can mean: no place, wherever one goes, is similar to *home*. Therefore, just like *home, nowhere* is a location. Consequently, we can say that *home* is a fantasy land of dreams and desire, it is a nowhere, a utopia a place that immigrants long for but which is always lost in the very formation of the idea of home. From another view, nowhere morphs into *now here*. Therefore, home is now here and nowhere. (Friedman, 2004, p. 192)

4. Shame of return:

Jende's first intention was to leave Cameroon for the US and never return "He was leaving Cameroon in a month! Leaving to certainly not return after three months. Who traveled to America only to return to a future of nothingness in Cameroon after a mere three months?" (Mbue, 2016, p. 23) return for African immigrants is never part of their plans "Not young men like him, not people facing a future of poverty and despondency in their own country. No, people like him did not visit America. They got there and stayed there until they could return home as conquerors—as green card or American passport bearing conquerors with pockets full of dollars and photos of a happy life." (Mbue, 2016, p. 192)

The problem that arises from this vicious cycle, is the indisputable belief in the success of the journey. African immigrants neglect the probability of failure that might crash their sense of Self. In this sense, the sociologist Madan Sarup set boundaries between the physical journey and the journey of the Self. He stated that:

The travelling *self* is here, both the *self* that moves physically from one place to another, following 'public routes and beaten tracks' within a mapped movement, and the *self* that embarks on an undetermined journeying

practice, having constantly to negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between a here, a there, and an elsewhere. (Sarup, 1994, p. 22)

Jende's sense of self-worth, like that of his wife Nene, is dependent on his boss's, Mr Edwards, conception of success and manhood and therefore his approval. Frantz Fanon in this sense stated that the black man is in constant negotiation in search of identification. The black man loses his sense of self and identity since he can only identify himself through the eyes of the white man. Fanon also contends that the native even associate the term *man* with *white man* since he disavows himself as being a man. (Nayar, 2009, p. 217)

Jende, by all means, was "certain he wouldn't see Cameroon again until he had claimed his share of the milk, honey, and liberty flowing in the paradise-for-strivers called America." (Mbue, 2016, p. 23) his creed in the so-called *Eldorado*, was hindered by hurdles that he could never surmount.

Jende, just like all immigrants, is under pressure from his nucleus family, his wife Nene and his son, his parents and his community back in Cameroon. He is plagued by his family's, and his society's, measure of a person; the mighty dollar, the dream of "building a future". His shame, along with the sense of inferiority and inadequacy manifest in the need to prove *himself* to others, is evident in his statement about his country by saying that "It is nothing like America. I stay in my country; I would have become *nothing*. I would have remained *nothing*. My son will grow up and *be poor like me*, just like *I was poor like my father*. But in America, sir? I can become *something*. I can even become a *respectable* man. My son can become a *respectable* man." (Ibid, p. 40)

The Jongas' shame impels them into misconduct and guilt. Going back to Cameroon would be a shameful and disgraceful event for them "He'd done

everything the way he had planned to...they weren't going back to Limbe. Oh, God, don't let them deport me, he prayed. Please, Papa God. Please."(Ibid, p.66) The previous quotation is a revelation of the degree to which Jende feels incomplete and inadequate; he feels ashamed of himself for not being able to live up to the image of success drawn for him by both his society and his family but which has already been proven to be a "fake". (Bloom, 2007, p. 133) This sense of shame and inadequacy is deeply rooted in Jende's Self-esteem leading him not only to question his economic status but even his existence in the world that surrounds him. He interrogated his existence as a human-being "because in my country, sir...for you to become *somebody*, you have to be born *somebody* first. You do not come from a family with money, forget it. You do not come from a family with a name, forget it. That is just how it is, sir. *Someone* like me, what can I ever become in a country like Cameroon? I came from *nothing*. No name. No money. My father is a poor man. Cameroon has nothing" (Mbue, 2016, p. 40). Jende's self was stolen by his inherited, shame-ridden sense of identity.

The above quotation confirms Fanon's contestation that the only way of dealing with his inferiority, the native tries to be as 'white' as possible and even adopts western values, religion and language of the white man while on the other hand discards his own traditions. For Fanon, 'white masks'. However, this 'mask' over the black skin is not a perfect solution or fit. Fanon argues that the native experiences a schizophrenic condition as a result of this duality. The build-up of this sense of inadequacy and inferiority in the black man's psyche, argues Fanon, results in violence. (Nayar, 2009, p. 218) Jend too is trying to identify with the white man (Mr. Edwards) "Look at me today, Mr. Edwards. Driving you in this nice car. You are talking to me as if **I am somebody**, and I am sitting in this seat, feeling

as if **I am somebody**" (Mbue, 2016, p. 44) and admits not only his sense of inferiority and subordination but even his son's "And my son will grow up to be **somebody**, whatever he wants to be. I believe that anything is possible for anyone who is American. Truly do, sir. And in fact, sir, I hope that one day my son will grow up to be a great **man like you**." (Ibid, p.46) He even believes that just by talking to Mr Edwards he becomes a person and a *somebody* thus affirming his subaltern state (in Spivak's words) and that his very existence is heavily dependent on Mr Edwards' existence in his life.

From a psychological perspective, shame is a moral emotion of inadequacy, weakness, and powerlessness. Shame arises from passivity and helplessness, from a feeling of failure, a feeling that one amounts to less than one aspires to be, that one falls short of an ego ideal. Guilt, on the other hand, comes from action; one has done something wrong, and fears punishment. Guilt is easier to acknowledge than shame, since guilt reflects some power and agency, even if immoral and reprehensible. Acknowledging shame involves exposing oneself as weak and powerless, even defective, which may cause more shame (Rizzuto, 1991, p. 125).

In his most famous essay on theater "Tragedy and the Common Man," Arthur Miller tackled this idea of a person being displaced and torn away from a chosen self-image. He stated that:

The tragic feeling is invoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing - his sense of personal dignity [tragic] flaw, what he conceives to be a challenge to his . . . image of his rightful status...it derives from the underlying fear of being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world. (Palmer, 2012, p. 25)

Jende had a vision of what it is to be a prosperous human being, a person worthy of respect. Unfortunately for him, he realizes that instead of accomplishing this ideal, he realizes that it is beyond his reach:

He and his family would have to return to New Town empty-handed, with nothing but tales about what they'd seen and done in America, and when people asked why they'd returned and moved back into his parents' crumbling *caraboat* house, they would have to tell a lie, a very good lie, because that would be the only way *to escape the shame and the indignity*. (Mbue, 2016, p. 59)

Nene's, the female dreamer, is indulged in her conviction in America as a paradise for African people and as a land where happiness can be found easily though everything in the novel says the opposite. Mbue succeeded in portraying a contrast between her and Mrs. Edwards, Cindy. Being an American citizen and rich were never enough to grant Cindy happiness; "She tossed the phone aside again and sat with her left elbow against the car door...Jende thought he heard the sniff of a downcast woman fighting back tears" (Mbue, 2016, p. 36) this is a revelation of rich white people reality. As opposed to what Neni thought their life would be "Rich father, rich mother, rich husband. I'm sure her whole life she's never known what it's like to worry about money." (Ibid, p. 31)

Neni seems to forget all about the importance of family life and family members sticking together which is the case for her. She was very poor and uncertain of her future but still she was exhilarated with what she had "These days she sang more than she had in her entire life. She sang when she ironed Jende's shirts and when she walked home after dropping Liomi off at school...she sang walking to the subway and even sang in Pathmark, caring nothing about the looks she got from

people who couldn't understand why someone could be so *happy* grocery shopping" while Cindy "picked up the phone again" (Mbue, 2016. p33) to call a sort of 'Happiness emergency' contacting friends and relatives looking for someone to contaminate her with their happy life but eventually she winds up alone and "She sat quietly, looking out the window, watching *happy* people marching up and down Madison". (Ibid, p. 37)

In addition to the shame and guilt over their *paradise lost*, the sense of insecurity is everywhere and for everyone in the novel. Mbue intended to highlight the fact that insecurity and powerlessness isn't only bound for the immigrants in her work (the Jonga's) instead she wanted to show the readers that even those with social and economic status who were native Americans (the Edwardes's) are as insecure as the most vulnerable in America. The Jonga's are insecure about their illegal immigration status and are anxious of deportation and having to lose their *Eldorado: America*; while Cindy is insecure about her marriage and is afraid of losing Clark and thus losing her status as the wife of a man of high social status "Oh my God! Of course! Oh, gosh, that could be me ... I feel like it's going to be me one day, Cher. I'll wake up one day and Clark will tell me he's found someone younger and prettier, oh, God!... Yeah, out with the old, in with the new" (Mbue, 2016. p 79) Mr Edwards likewise has his share of insecurity, because the Lehman Brothers he works for is at the verge of bankruptcy, he is afraid of losing his wealth and all the privilege he was entitled to. All this gives us an idea of the powerlessness of all the characters in the novel no matter what social and economic status they belong to.

5. Hurdles to the Dream:

5.1 Cultural Hurdle:

African Dreamers' pursuit of the *Dream* is unfortunately hindered by obstacles each step of the way, be it racial prejudice, cultural or political. The principal among

them being racial prejudice. 'Race was so pervasive and integral to the society that there was no need to speak about it.' Therefore, race is a fragment of the conventional order of things that became unnecessary to mention it in conversation' (Chakraborty, 2015, p. 210)

Mbue's immigrants totally believed in the dream of becoming Americans but all along the novel we witness barriers all over the journey standing between them and their *Holy Grail*. Neni, for instance, started to realize that most people on the street were walking with someone who "looked like them...she saw people walking with their kind: a white man holding hands with a white woman; a black teenager giggling with other black (or Latino) teenagers; a white mother pushing a stroller alongside another white mother; a black woman chatting with a black woman." Most people were sticking to their own kind. She noticed that people preferred their kind when it came to those they kept closest since it was easy to do, instead of trying so hard to blend into a world one was never meant to be a part of. "She had her world in Harlem and never again would she try to wriggle her way into a world in midtown, not even for just an hour." (Mbue, 2016. p 86). Trying to fit in is what immigrants seek but fail considerably to do. Their sense of insecurity based on race, language or beliefs made them an impenetrable group which stalls their assimilation and thus standing between them and their Dream of being Americans.

Neni here is an exhibition of T. E. Lawrence idea of *transculturation* when he stated that "any man who belongs to two cultures ends up losing his soul." (Maver, 2009, p. 29) "She had her world in Harlem and never again would she try to wriggle her way into a world in midtown, not even for just an hour." Neni here contests the idea of hybridity which is the interaction or the process by which an individual negotiates his/her identity, learns new languages, adapts to new cultures, and, in

short, finds a way in a world of languages and cultures; a process which Neni seems to incredibly fail in following.

The idea of America as a Gold Mountain or Eldorado is deeply rooted in all immigration stories. However, these wonderers across borders are struck by the fact that cultural borders aren't as easy to cross as the physical ones. These immigrants' eyes are, in Russell Banks words, "peeled for the Statue of Liberty" but they when get to America they "get land deals and fast-moving high interest bank loans" Today's immigrants' experience is built upon the mythology of the American Dream which deals with cultural dislocation. (Muller, 1999, p. 2) Immigrants are after all others who because of their race, origins or culture fail considerably to fit into the mythology of the Melting Pot. major influences upon America's cultural self-comprehension, we can discern a submerged tension between one's commitments to the ideal purity of a local setting and to the epic multiplicity of the nation's pluralist composition, between America defined by place and America defined by people.

5.3 The Fear of the Invasion of the *Other*:

The steady flow of immigration as a result of changes in policy that began during WW2 has transformed America's demographic destiny. By 2056, only 2% whites will trace their origins to white Europe while 98% of the American population will trace their roots to Asia, Africa, the Hispanic World, the Pacific Islands and Arabia. (Spickard, 2009, p. 433) Russell Banks captures this exodus in his novel *Continental Drift*, whose very title draws a picture of this mass migration, by stating that "it's as if the creatures residing on this planet in these years, the human creatures...traveling sometimes as entire nations, were a subsystem inside the larger system of...drifting continents" and in Leopoldo Zea's words "The collapse of walls to let people out has given rise to new walls to keep people out". (Ramos, 2010, p. 14)

Jende, like all aliens immigrating to the US, is subject to American severe judicial system and he tried his best to win his battle by following all possible ways. He keeps following instructions from his lawyer Boubaker who suggested that "Asylum is the best way to get papier and remain in the country," (Mbue, 2016, p. 23)

All along the novel, Mbue portrayed the American judicial system as a monster waiting to devour helpless immigrants "the sites where many with aspirations for American passports gathered to find ways to triumph over the American immigration system." (Ibid, p. 24) which quite true since throughout its immigration jurisprudence, the U.S. Supreme Court has employed an abundance of metaphoric language to designate immigrants storming nations and aliens flooding communities. The language used in legal texts to describe immigrants as: aliens, a flood, and an invasion has a tremendous impact on natives and even on Immigration judges: "But who knows how those bastards at Immigration really think...but some of them are wicked people, very wicked. Some people in this country don't want people like me and you here." (Mbue, 2016, p. 56)

7. Conclusion:

To conclude, the search for a place in which happiness may be found is always a metaphor for the search to recover a memory of happiness. The journey that immigrants embark on in their pursuit of happiness is always a hazardous one, full of hurdles along the way that prove that crossing cultural borders is not as easy as crossing physical ones. In their search of a new 'home', immigrants wind up losing their sense of self, their identity and where they belong. All society actors tried to investigate these issues but novelists and those who have a first-hand experience, through literature, provided us with a vivid and thorough description of the

experiences and the profound identity alteration immigrants had to go through in their quest to carve a niche in a promised land called America. Through her novel *Behold the Dreamers*, Mbue provided a detailed description of the phases all along the way that African Dreamers encounter and their delusional belief in an America where everyone has his share of its milk and honey. Mbue also succeeded in portraying the inferiority complex and the subordination of the African (black) subject towards the white man and the shame of return to their mother lands in case of failure. We witnessed this through her major characters Jende, Neni and Mr Edwards who strongly believed in an America where wealth and happiness are accessible by everyone by unfortunately end up realizing that the American Dream is in fact a nightmare full of lies and a mirage of a better life and thus a better *home*.

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