

# QUEST FOR AN AFRICAN IDENTITY IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S *THE NEW TRIBE*

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**Abstract:** Slavery and colonisation have entailed horrible consequences for Africans. Thus, some of them were forced to leave their homelands to Europe and America. The sequel to this separation from their homes is the loss of their former identity; due to a difficult adoption of the new culture once in the host countries. Unable to adapt to a culture which most the time they do not understand, some of them do not hesitate to search for their original African identity. Emecheta's fiction, *The New Tribe* deals with a Nigerian young boy's quest for this African identity in a white community where he seems to be lost because of his skin colour. Using the postcolonial criticism as a theoretical tool for the research, we will examine the concepts of deracination, hybridity, racism to head for the concept of afropolitanism as it is perceived in Emechet's novel.

**Key words:** African identity, Afropolitanism, colonization, deracination, racism, slavery.

**Résumé :** l'esclavage et de la colonisation ont eu de lourdes conséquences pour les africains. Ainsi, certains parmi eux ont été forcés de quitter leur pays d'origine pour l'Europe et l'Amérique. La résultante de cette déportation vers L'occident est la perte de leur identité africaine au profit d'une nouvelle identité hybride, dû à une difficile adoption de la nouvelle culture une fois dans les pays hôtes. Incapable de s'adapter à la culture d'accueil, certains parmi eux n'hésitent pas à se lancer à la recherche de leur identité africaine originale. La fiction d'Emecheta, *The New Tribe* traite de la quête de recherche de cette identité africaine d'un jeune garçon d'origine Nigériane dans une communauté blanche dans laquelle il semble être perdu dû à la couleur de sa peau. Dans une approche postcoloniale comme outil théorique pour notre étude, nous analyserons les concepts de déracinement, d'hybridité et de racisme pour enfin déboucher sur le concept de l'afropolitanisme Comme cela se perçoit dans l'œuvre Buchi Emecheta.

**Mots clés :** Identité africaine, afropolitanisme, colonisation, déracinement, racisme, esclavage.

## Introduction

One of the serious problems generated by immigration remains the integration of the migrants in their host countries. In the international competitions, they are numerous, these African young boys, who defend the flags of European nations. But in the twilight of their careers, some of them face a real problem of integration in their host communities on the account of their separation from their former culture and namely, the problem of racism they are victim of. Finally, they feel themselves rejected in their host countries because they cannot adapt themselves to the new culture in which they operate.

Buchi Emecheta's *The New Tribe* raises the issue of this quest for African identity through the experience of the protagonist of the novel. Her narrative depicts Chester's quest for his Nigerian identity provoked by a race-based discrimination he is victim of in his white and adoptive family and community. The novel reveals another form of racism, so subtle that it can be ignored if the reader does not pay attention to the protagonist's reactions.

This article aims to show through the analysis of the concepts of the deracination, hybridity and racism how the novel heads for the concept of afropolitanism. It is centered on racism as a cause of deracination in *The New Tribe*, hybridity as an identity rebuilding and afropolitanism as a concept that can help redefining the identity of the African Diaspora and their descendents in their host countries.

Using the postcolonial criticism as theory, this article investigates racism as the main cause of the protagonist's deracination in his white and adoptive community epitomized by a damaging identity crisis. It also scrutinizes hybridity as means of rebuilding identity for the protagonist before raising the question about Chester's final identity.

## **I: Racism, Deracination and Identity Crisis.**

Racism is one of the first obstacles of integration and social cohesion in a hybrid community. It consists in categorizing people according to the colour of their skin, underpinned by an idea of superiority of a race over another one considered as inferior. For van Dijk, (1993), "racism means falsely attributing inherited characteristics of personality or behavior to individuals of a particular physical appearance. Furthermore, a racist is someone who believes that a biological explanation can be given for characteristics of superiority or inferiority supposedly possessed by people of a

given physical stock” (van Dijk,1993: 170). Drawing on the definition above, the study apprehends racism as a cause of discrimination and exclusion in a society composed of different races.

The consequence of this way of perceiving the race supposed to be inferior is the negative self-perception of individuals about their own personality. They suffer from what Erik. H. Erikson (1968) calls identity crisis, which “refers to the self-analysis that is conducted by a person about himself and also about the perception of himself” (Karthikkumar et al, 2018:340).

A community in which some individuals are categorized according to the colour of their skin is a society which suffers from racism. In such a community, individuals are discriminated and enjoy different status based on the colour of their skins. Generally, this occurs between Whites and Blacks. In *The New Tribe*, Chester Arlington as a Black among the whites in St Simon is depicted by Emecheta as character which is categorized according to his skin colour in his adoptive family. Fostered together with a white girl Julia Arlington, his family decides to bring him up by designing a special culture for him. The reason for this decision is “to try and keep alive for Chester some memory of where he came from” (Emecheta:8). The discriminatory and racist attitude of the couple’s decision comes from the categorization of Chester because of his skin colour. Julia, since she is white does not deserve the same attention. For the Arlington, there is a difference between the two children. Julia, the white girl is perceived as superior to Chester the Black boy. As depicted by the narrator, Chester is excluded from the family due to his skin colour epitomized by the frequently use of the expression “your people” (Emecheta: 12.). But the same expression has never been used to talk of Julia. This binarism set by the family shows that the couple Arlington apprehends Chester as child from an inferior race. He does not belong to their white society and as such, he must not be brought up like a European child meanwhile Julia, because of her white skin can be educated like a European girl. Chester has been constructed so that he cannot be integrated to the community of St Simon. Very early, he is educated and taught to be aware that he is inferior to Julia. During the celebration of Christmas nativity, a special role is designed for him. He is “king of Orient” (Emecheta:12), a term perceived by Edward Said as dominating when he states that:

Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient — dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling it: in short, Orientalism as a Western

style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said 1978: 3)

Chester is brought with a clear objective; make him notice his inferiority to Julia. A family in which two children are educated differently because of their races is a racist family.

It is not only the protagonist's family which is racist. The community of St Simon itself expresses the same otherness against Chester. In fact, a society that always makes a distinction between its members and those who are different from them by the colour of their skin, considers itself superior or pure. In such a society, individuals are discriminated. The majority hardly accepts the minority and perceives it as inferior and impure. In *The New Tribe*, Chester is considered as an intruder by the white community. They do not understand why as black, he is said to be the son of a white couple. The reason for this incomprehension about Chester's presence in St Simon is because "he was the only black boy in the community". (Emecheta:20). Alone among the whites, Chester is hardly accepted by his mates as one of them because he is Black. In this society, cultural background does not obliterate differences. To make him be aware that he is different from them, they clearly show him his place: "at school they say I can't be your child because I'm black" (Emechet:13.). This society conceives racial relationship in a context of otherness and domination. They know that both Julia and Chester are not Arthur's and Ginny's biological off springs. But Julia's presence in St Simon seems natural and normal because she has a white skin. For Chester, it is aberrant because he has a black skin. Without saying the word racism overtly, St Simon and Chester's adoptive family develop a racist behavior towards him because as stated by Brantley, "racism consists in the predication of decisions, policies, and behavior on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group. Racism can be both overt and covert" (Brantley,1983: 1605). The objective of this behavior towards Chester by his family and the community of St Simon is to show him that he is from a race that is inferior and different from Julia's race.

The trouble with the application of otherness to maintain the superiority of a race over another one is the uneasiness it creates in interracial relationship. Most of time, it is the minority which is negatively impacted. In this perspective, Samantha Loppie, Charlotte Reading and Sarah de Leeuw affirm that "Racism must be understood as something that is lived; it is experienced by individuals, families, communities, and nations through interactions and structures of the everyday world. The

truth is that the ideologies, social prejudices and words upon which race and racism are built do a great deal of damage.” (Loppie et al,2014:2). In the case of this study, Chester is not spared by the negative impacts of racism. And the one he suffers from is a confusing identity about his own person.

Identity crisis generates a kind of uneasiness experienced by the person who undergoes it. It is an internal conflict which only the victim can appreciate its impact. Baumeister et al (1985) conceive it in these terms: “The motivation crisis or identity deficit refers to the problem caused by an inadequately defined self. It is characterized by a lack of commitment to goals and values; the person lacks a basis for making consistent choices and decisions. An identity crisis arises when the person struggles to make such commitments (Baumeister et al, 1985:408).

In *The New Tribe*, the protagonist’s identity crisis comes from the ambivalence of his racial relationship with his fostered family and the white community of St Simon. Chester is considered by the Arlington as their son. Besides, he bears their family name and lives with them (Emecheta:13). They are responsible for his education and do what a family can do for the welfare of its members. In St Simon, no one has overtly treated Chester as black. He attends the same school like Julia and his friend Ray (Emecheta:11). But behind this silence about Chester’s skin colour, the narrator depicts a veiled race-based discrimination. While he is said to be an Arlington, this same family educates him differently because he has not the same skin colour with the other members. He is accepted among the whites at school, but considered as stranger because of his skin colour and this scene depicted by the narrator is significant in the way Chester is considered in the community of St Simon:

The headmaster and Miss Slattery gave each other knowing look. Chester felt the change of mood immediately and so did the whimpering pupils. He looked up from his painting and was confused. Julia, however, looked the headmaster straight in the eye and took her brother’s hand. Chester was different and Mammy had told her to look after him.” (Emecheta:11).

The boy is confused about his person. The consequence of this crisis about his own perception is the numerous questions puts to his parents about his real origins: “Dad, who is my real mother? (Emecheta:13). He does not understand his racial relationship with his family and his community. He has the feeling of being victim of exclusion in a society he thinks he is a full member like his

sister Julia. Chester's reaction against racism in this white city shows the negative impact of racism upon the individuals. From being excluded, the protagonist feels himself deracinated epitomized by his dream about his African kingdom (Emecheta:16). This dream is the psychological drawbacks of racism on Chester. In fact, Chester's identity crisis affects his psyche. He dreams of a kingdom located in a culture which is totally opposed to the Eurocentric milieu in which he operates in St Simon. The racial relationship between the protagonist and his family affects his personality and puts him in a position of deracinated and alienated. Beyond the psychological impacts, it is Chester's humanness which is challenged. He has a great difficulty to define himself in this society. That is why "it came to him forcibly that he had to leave home. He needed to know who he really was, to find a frame he could fit himself into." (Emecheta:39). He feels himself dominated, humiliated and devoid of humanness.

When a person is deracinated, he is confronted to a problem of integration and adaptation in the society in which he lives. Levi Gahman et al state that "Our contention is that deracination re-inscribes race by using it as pretext to judge Others abject or alien and cast them out." (Gahman, 2019:109). Without knowing, the couple Arlington has progressively cast Chester out by forcing him to leave St Simon for Liverpool in search for an identity because in St Simon, he is lacking in identity, one of the fundamental rights for human.

## **II: Hybridity and Identity Rebuilding.**

Hybridization occurs in culture studies when different cultures mix to form a new one. For Felipe Hernandez:

Rather than simply the straight mixture of two or more elements which form a new one, in postcolonial theory, hybridity has multiple connotations. It refers to the site of cultural productivity that emerges on the margins of culture, between cultures. As such, it is a space where cultural elements are continually rearticulated and reconstituted. Hybridity also expresses the process of re-articulation of culture, hybridization, a process in which cultural elements change in relation to themselves and to one another; they continue to hybridize. Hence, rather than disappearing in a merger, processes of cultural hybridization perpetuate difference and, indeed, multiply it. (Hernandez, 2010:58).

Hybridity appears as a construction of a new culture from different others. In this perspective it influences identity by changing and rebuilding it in another space that Homi Bhabha calls "the third

space” (1994) defined as the “precondition for the articulation of cultural meaning’ (Bhabha 1994: 38). For Bhabha both concepts have the same meanings, reshaping identities to promote differences. Hybridity can be considered as a redefinition of identity for the colonized or the oppressed person to avoid the disappearance of their identities.

In *The New Tribe*, Chester’s hybridization can be read as a redefinition of his identity stolen by racism and deracination he has experienced in St Simon. Emecheta’s narrative insists on Chester’s Eurocentric back ground opposed to his Nigerian culture. In fact, if Chester has to learn many things from Mr. Ugwu, the reason rests on the fact that his long stay in St Simon has given him a European identity even if his family and the community do not want to accept. His behavior and his habits are Eurocentric. So, Mr. Ugwu has to teach him how to be a Nigerian: “in my country that’s how a young person addresses someone elder but familiar [...]. As for helping you, I will do my best.” (Emecheta:83). To avoid the obliteration of his identity, Chester negotiates with Mr. Ugwu a new one by adding to his Eurocentric culture a Nigerian one which can confer him a new identity, since the one acquired in St Simon is denied. If he wants to be accepted and recognized as a Nigerian the solution for him is to negotiate another identity that stands between his Eurocentric background and his Nigerian origins. And the sequel of the novel shows that Chester’s hybridization has finally conferred him an identity recognized by his new adoptive community.

The way Chester is welcomed in his new adoptive family makes him discover another dimension of his own personality. Formerly excluded and marginalized, Chester for the first-time tastes what is called love as we learn from himself:

As the road cleared, Rufus turned his head and saw Chester. He pulled off his cap and ran towards him shouting: Dad! Dad! Chester’s here! It’s Chester, dad! Chester crossed the narrow road, and Rufus ran into his arms. He was overwhelmed at his reception. Mr. Ugwu came out from under the car, wiped his hands on his overall and took Chester’s hand, covering it in both of his and shaking it vigorously. Chester fought away tears. (Emecheta:77)

The young boy discovers what he has never experienced in his life in St Simon. He feels himself loved and accepted by a community. The cultural context set by Mr. Ugwu seems to fit him. The feeling of unbelonging that hunted him in St Simon has completely disappeared to give place to a young boy totally emancipated and accomplished taking fully part in his future. The lexicon to

which Chester is used to in St Simon about his personality has totally changed to give place to words more inclusive and unifying such as “you are a Nigerian, you are one of us”. (Emecheta:85-86) Progressively, Mr. Ugwu is building a new identity for Chester by encouraging him to participate in his family affairs and by teaching him some African traditional practices like the cooking of some Nigerian foods: “come into the kitchen and learn how to make kitchen stew and tomato puree – the first step to being an African in England” (Emecheta:84). The new cultural environment in which Chester operates is more inclusive. It is true that Mr. Ugwu is not his biological father, but the context set by this man to help him is so lovely that Chester feels actually at ease. He is at ease in Liverpool because here, interracial relationships are deprived of superiority and psychological oppression.

Liverpool, though a European city symbolizes a hybrid place in which characters experience the deconstruction of cultural binarism and racial discrimination. The racial issues encountered by the protagonist do not exist anymore. In this city, interracial relationships are based on equality and a mutual consideration. Being a Black in Liverpool does not bring any trouble to the African Diasporas which live there. As evidence, the novel does not mention any racial discrimination experienced by a given character. We understand now why many characters decide to settle here. In Liverpool we have an African Diaspora perfectly integrated among which we have Mr. Ugwu and his children Rufus and Thomas Ugwu (Emecheta: 87).

The “third space” (Bhabha,1994) in which Chester operates now has sent him close to his African identity erased by racism and deracination. In Liverpool, his psychological problem seems to be solved with the scarcity of his dream about his African kingdom. Here, hybridity is perceived as a therapy against racism and deracination. Chester, the introverted boy in St Simon, unable to make a decision by himself, is now healed and feels himself completely accepted by the black Diaspora.

In *The New Tribe*, the concept of hybridity goes beyond a merely identity rebuilding. It is perceived in the novel as a cultural context in which humanity regains its real value and meaning. In fact, a person whose identity is denied perceives himself as a person who is dehumanized. Without identity, the individual is considered as subhuman, In *The New Tribe*, Chester is denied this fundamental right that confers him one of his humanness. The racism he is victim of in St



Simon reduces him to the state of dehumanized so his psychological crisis embodied by his deceptive Kingdom he frequently sees. He lives with the couple Arlington but he is not integrated as an authentic member because he is perceived as someone different from them. We understand why when he saw Mr. Ugwu and his sons for the first time, he has been fascinated by their presence at the Clinton Chalets mentioned here by the narrator: “he was about to start towards the visitors, when a black man descended the coach steps. Chester stopped dead in his track. It was the last thing he had been expected to see. (Emecheta:33). Chester reacts in such a way because; he has never seen human beings with Black skins. He has thought at a given moment that he is not a human like the white people he sees in St Simon. The reason for this perception of himself is racism.

But the same character described in Liverpool is the opposite of the one depicted in St Simon. The reason for this sudden change in his self-perception is justified by a sense of humanity recovered by Chester. In Liverpool, Chester feels himself as true human who deserves a consideration. And this sense of humanity felt by him is expressed through his social emancipation and a self-esteem. In fact, Chester’s social life has deeply changed since his arrival at Mr. Ugwu. He helps the man in his garage and even obtains “a place as day student” (Emecheta:96). He even leaves Mr. Ugwu to take his own house, thing he has never done in St Simon. Concerning love, he is aware that Esther loves him. Rejected in St Simon, Chester is now fully accepted by the Nigerian Diaspora in Liverpool. The hybrid status Chester is experiencing in Liverpool has revealed him his real identity as a human being. What racism has stolen from him St Simon; Chester has recovered them owing to the hybrid context in he lives now. His dignity as a human has been restored by his integration to the African community which apprehends him as human being.

In *The New Tribe*, Chester’s hybridization has conferred him more than his identity; it is his humanness that he has regained through his integration to the Black community of Liverpool. Hybridity appears as a cultural space in which differences meet and mixture to create and preserve identity. Homi Bhabha is right when he admits that: “These “in-between” spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal - that initiate new signs of identity” (Bhabha,1994:1). We clearly see that Liverpool is deprived of oppression, discrimination and racism owing to its status as a hybrid city.

But as asserted by Felipe Hernandez, “Cultural hybridization, then, represents the constant, never-ending process of cultural interaction through which cultures continue to exist.” (Hernandez, 2010:59). If we consider this assertion, hybridity is perceived as a cultural space in which two or different cultures perpetually mix to form other cultures. In this perspective it seems that Chester’s travelling from Liverpool to Lagos and his return from Lagos to Liverpool can generate other hybridizations of his identity. Finally, Chester is suspected to be an afropolitan or an African of the world (TaiyeSelasi, 2005).

### **III: Chester: the Prototype of an Afropolitan Character.**

Coined by TaiyeSelasi (2005) and Achille Mbembe (2007), afropolitanism refers “to an Afro-cosmopolitan ethos of transcending national differences to forge multiracial communities.” (Balakrishnan, 2018:575). In this perspective, the new African community has its limit out of the continent. It encompasses the natives on the continent, the African Diaspora in the world and their off springs who claim their African origins, even if they have never been in contact with their homelands. But the notion of afropolitanism is oriented towards the African Diaspora and their descendants who toil to identify themselves in their host countries. Their long stay out of the continent and their multiple hybridizations seriously challenge their African identity. Afropolitanism is then “an attempt to reconceive of African identity - and ergo, of Africa - outside of racial terms.”(Balakrihnan, 2018:575). Here afropolitanism does not care about race. Its concern is the origins of the individual’s ascendants and his desire to identify himself as African who lives out the continent with a hybrid cultural background. Afropolitans are “not citizens, but African of the world” (Selasi,2005). This section of the study analyses the African identity the protagonist is looking for in order to see if Chester himself is not an afropolitan.

Afropolitanism as defined above is based on some criteria. Considered as afropolitans, the African Diasporas in the world and their descents who claim this African identity wherever they are in the world. Some of them have never set foot on the continent. Their quest is not to come back on the continent and live there. The crux of their quest is to be recognized as African, despite the place they dwell in the world. Here, the origins play an important role in the definition of their identities.

In *the New Tribe*, Chester is from Africa through his mother who is a Nigerian: “Chester’s mother is Nigerian. You need to be aware he is a black child.” (Emecheta:7). Chester is the descendent of a migrant in London. As such, he belongs to an African Diaspora which lives out of continent. Although he has never set foot in the continent, Chester has a link with Africa by his ascendant who is from Nigeria. But it’s too early at this stage of our analysis to conclude that he is an afropolitan.

Another important criterion of being afropolitan is the hybrid cultural ground of the individual defined by Selasi as follow:

They (read: we) are Afropolitans – the newest generation of African emigrants, coming soon or collected already at a law firm/chem lab/jazz lounge near you. You’ll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, e.g. Ghanaian and Canadian, Nigerian and Swiss; others merely cultural mutts: American accent, European affect, African ethos. Most of us are multilingual: in addition to English and a Romantic or two, we understand some indigenous tongue and speak a few urban vernaculars. (Selasi,2005).

In Selasi’s perspective of afropolitanism, those who are defined as such are made of different cultures. They are Africans born in their homelands or out of the continent, raised in Europe, Asia or America, work in France or New York and live in Canada. In Emecheta’s narrative, Chester is depicted as a hybrid character. Brought up in St Simon, he lives the city for Liverpool due to denial of his British identity obliterated by his black skin. In Liverpool, he rebuilds his identity by adding to his British culture the one acquired during his stay with Mr. Ugwu’s family: “I am learning to be an African, said Chester (Emecheta:97). It is this hybridization that reveals him his real identity. The novel also reveals that Chester’s father is from America. Not only is Chester culturally hybrid, but his origins are also hybrid: “your father is very much alive, apparently. He’s an American – he was in the US army over here when he met your mother.” (Emecheta:151). His mother comes from Nigeria, his African origins and his father is from America.

Another important criterion of being depicted as an afropolitan is the individual’s desire to claim his African origins. This dimension of the afropolitan is perceived in Selasi’s definition when she writes “they (read we) are afropolitan” (Selasi,2005). The use of the personal pronoun “we” can be read as a commitment from the afropolitan to define himself as such. It is quest for

identity, a decision made by the individual to identify himself as a person connected to African through his origins.

In *The New Tribe*, Chester's decision to live Liverpool for the African family in Liverpool can be interpreted as his desire to claim his African origins. In Liverpool, it is not only the black communities which live there. With his British cultural background, Chester could have settled in a white family in Liverpool since in this city, black people do not experience racism and discrimination. If, despite the hybrid context that reigns in Liverpool, he decides to live with Mr. Ugwu's family, the reason rests on his desire and his will to be considered as an African. Chester does not choose to be African by default. His decision is motivated by a real conviction if we consider his own words in the novel: "I want to visit Africa. Don't forget I'm Nigerian. (Emecheta:99). Regarding these words from Chester, we can draw the conclusion that his departure from St Simon to Liverpool is motivated by only one objective, regain his African origins and indentify.

Chester's second commitment to discover his African origins is justified by his tumultuous travelling across Nigeria in search for the accomplishment of a dream. The condition in which this search is conducted is the evidence of the protagonist's determination to find out where his origins are. His troubles with the guards at the Oba in Benin (Emecheta: 129), and his malaria bout in Lagos (Emecheta:144) do not discourage him in his affection for his homeland Nigeria: "I am home" (Emecheta:145). Chester, though born far from Nigeria and brought up by a European family, does not hesitate claims with proud and dignity his Nigerian origins.

In this section, the objective has been to analyze Emecheta's Character Chester Arlington in order to determine his African identity as perceived in the novel. The analysis has revealed that Chester is an African through his mother and American by his father. Culturally, he is the resultant of a British culture and the African one. The analysis has also revealed that Chester strongly claims his African identity. His departure from his white community to an African and black family in Liverpool is motivated by his determination to be identified as an African. If we consider this assertion by Simon Gikandi who thinks that afropolitanism "constitutes a significant attempt to rethink African knowledge outside the trope of crisis. [...] Instead of conceiving the massive migration of Africans to other continents and countries as a loss, the idiom of Afropolitanism

embraces movement across time and space as the condition of possibility of an African way of being” (Gikandi,2011: 9–10), we can affirm that Chester’s is an afropolitan. And it is Chester’s girlfriend Esther who well understood their new identities when Chester tells him that he is at home in Lagos: “No, Africa is no longer our home. We have stayed in the market too long, as Nigerian say. Our home is Liverpool.” The market here symbolizes the hybrid context in they have lived for a long time. Their origins are in Nigeria but they are so hybridized that their place is no more among their kinsmen.

### **Conclusion.**

The objective of this study was to show through the analysis of the concepts of the deracination, hybridity and racism how the novel heads for the concept of afropolitanism as perceived in Emecheta’s novel. In that sense, it has analyzed the reason which has generated the protagonist’s identity crisis, his desire to rebuild his African identity and how Emecheta’s narrative redefines him as an afropolitan character.

In *The New Tribe*, we have discovered that racism can take different form and impact individuals differently. The one Chester is victim of in the novel is very subtle. It is not based on a political system as it has been the case in South African and in the USA. Racism in Emecheta’s novel is based on attitudes towards the protagonist. Fostered like a white girl, Chester is excluded from his family and the community of St Simon by a binary attitude set between him and his adoptive sister Julia. The consequence of this racial exclusion upon him is identity crisis followed by a feeling of deracination. Unease face with this racism, Chester leaves his first family for Liverpool in search for an African identity.

The study has also shown that, once in Liverpool, Chester has discovered another aspect of his personality through a hybridization acquired during his stay at Mr. Ugwu. His uneasiness and his psychological crisis seem to leave him. His hybridization has conferred him an identity, but more than this, hybridity has restored his humanness stolen St Simon by racism. Socially and culturally, Chester has found a community in which he is accepted as one of them. Chester’s hybridization and his comfort in Liverpool have led the analysis to check the way he is depicted in the novel in order to see if he is not an afropolitan.

The study concludes that Chester is an afropolitan due to his hybrid background and origins, and above all, his determination to claim his African origins with proud. The psychological easiness and the proud regained by Chester are the evidences that afropolitanism can help many African migrants and their off springs to redefine their identities in their host countries.

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