THE HEROINE'S MONOMYTH: A STUDY OF BUCHI EMECHETA'S *KEHINDE*

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Article Info	Abstract
	Classical and African myths and legends recognize and acknowledge male heroes. The male's role as protector and keeper of the traditions and cultures of the society accords him the opportunity to embark on heroic journeys. The female's role as caretaker of the family and the home makes her more docile. Using a close textual analysis on the content of Emecheta's *Kehinde*, from the perspective of the Hero's Journey (Campbell, 2008), the researchers bring to bear the heroic capabilities of females. The paper asserts that Emecheta fashions the protagonist's journey in a series of departures that help her obtain the ultimate boon. Kehinde's journey highlights the idea of racial discrimination, patriarchal and cultural shackles, freedom, identity as well as self-love. The paper concludes that the heroine undergoes a non-lineal and unpredictable journey to attain self-discovery, growth, and development.

INTRODUCTION

The study of the literature of the African people is foregrounded in the indigenes' needs to project their cultural, spiritual, and social existence to the world. The earliest periods of written literature in Africa saw an influx of male authors such as Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ayi Kwei Armah, and Amos Tutuola. Resultantly, the disadvantage borne out of this was the suppression of the female perspectives of the existence of the African people. For Julien (1995), what this "first generation of male writers" were interested in was criticizing the racism and oppression that was characterized by colonialism "as they pertain to men" – women were seen as mere helpmates and unable to formulate the "vision of independence." Fonchingong (2013) asserts that male writers, such as Achebe, wrote their works along the lines of macho heroism and masculinity in order to restore the dignity and pride of black people. Julien (1995, p. 300) explains that this approach lacks the presence of the female in its parochial focus on male resistance and emancipation. She opines that "what was missing, of course, in the early chorus of voices denouncing the arrogance and violence of various forms of colonialism were female voices.'

The Online Etymology Dictionary defines *hero* as a 'man of superhuman strength or physical courage'. He is a sort of demi-god, one who is more than human and transcends what is natural. In Greek mythology, he was of divine descent and had divinity in his genealogy. The existence of myths of heroes means that they appeal to our sense of upholding the concept of a hero and provide us with proof that there will be constant evolution and regeneration of society. For Jung (1971, p. 6), the hero is a god-man whose sole aim is to combat all forms of evil with the aim of saving his people. The definition of the myth has changed considerably over time as society constantly undergoes transformation. The advent of machines and other sophisticated gadgets provides a new sense of how the hero is viewed. The period following man's enlightenment allowed humans to explore their surroundings and understand who they were and what they could do to better their world. Thus, the modern hero is obsessed with finding solutions to problems that affect humanity: the attention has shifted from divinity to humanity.

Goldberg (2009) discusses transformations the hero has undergone since the mythological and classical eras. She unravels that Winfield and Hume (1970) and Fishwick (1954) propose six transitions the hero has undergone over the period. The hero has changed from being a *god-man* to *God's man* in the Middle Ages. The reference to such individuals as god-men meant they were from a generation of gods or had one divine being as a parent. Examples of such include Achilles of ancient Greece and Oko of Nigerian mythology, who became the god of

agriculture. The *god's man* served as an intermediary between the natural and the supernatural. They worked for man through the supernatural by fighting evil – such as dragons and seizing magical ornaments – to restore balance in the chaotic world. King Arthur, who pulled out Merlin's sword for his kingdom to succeed at war, is an example. The same thing can be said of Okomfo Anokye, who conjured the Golden Stool for the unity of the Asante Kingdom. The hero became the universal man in the Renaissance period when he began to pose and search for answers to questions about humanity. Hamlet, for example, searched for the reasons behind man's cruelty and woman's frailty.

The 18th century saw the birth of the hero as the *enlightened gentleman* who took up the cause of directing the history of humankind through knowledge and science. The heroes of this period, like Robinson Crusoe, used knowledge to make his life comfortable in a life-threatening situation on an island. The hero became a *self-made man* in the 19th century and established himself through hard work and determination. Silas Marner follows this path when he grows from being lonely and despised to a loving father to Eppie and a respected man in Raveloe. In modern times, the hero is referred to as the *common man*. Willy Lowman, in *The Death of a Salesman,* battles infidelity, financial problems, and dishonor, which are common to the modern man. The transformation of the hero, outlined, presupposes the constant metamorphosis of society through the engagements of their heroes. The importance of tracing the transformation of the hero is to keep track of the fact that the modern-day hero is close to us in our everyday lives.

The subject of the heroine was not of much interest in Western classical literature and African literature. The focus on heroes was on their physical outlook of strength and resilience. Their female counterparts were considered inferior to them. The heroine, however, has gained considerable recognition in recent literature, and the desire to document her exploits and experiences is on the rise. Writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Lise Vogel, Maria Mies, Simone de Beauvoir, and others have written extensively on the female and her inability to climb up to the rank of male heroes. Wollstonecraft (1972) notes that females were reduced in all aspects of life to observe and obey. For her, women were reduced to objects of gratification for men. Beauvoir (2011) argues that the definition of the word 'woman' by scholars has contributed to the female's inability to rise to the status of male heroes. De Beauvoir comments:

'The female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities,' Aristotle said. 'We should regard women's nature as suffering from natural defectiveness.' And Saint Thomas in his turn decreed that woman was an 'incomplete man,' an 'incidental' being. … Man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man.' And she is nothing other than what man decides…He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other (Beauvoir, 2011, pp. 5–7).

It can be said, therefore, that the female's inability to embark on heroic journeys may be grounded on the fact that it is outside the norms and the stereotypical definitions of woman. Many feminists around the world are bent on finding escape routes for females to exhibit their potential.

The works of many African female writers seek to provide a means for women to explore and transform themselves. In Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Girl Who Can* (1969), the story of the little girl instills in the female the ability to go against society's conventions and strive for the best. Other African female authors who fuelled the desire to make the female a heroine include Buchi Emecheta (*Second Class Citizen*, 1974), Mariama Bâ (*So Long a Letter*, 1981), and Chimamanda Adichie (*Purple Hibiscus*, 2003). The development of African literature to portray heroines serves as an example for the African girl child to discover her heroic self. Selasi (2021) suggests that these writings portray the real identities and conditions of African women. The African woman is bedeviled with issues of patriarchy, abuse, and diverse forms of otherness, which sets her on a journey of survival. Emecheta's *Kehinde* (1994) has been viewed by scholars, especially feminists, as a medium for the female to vent her anger against male domination and societal pressures. It is also a door for those who would want to escape from the shackles of culture and traditions that have subdued them to the point of disfigurement. Willey (2000) echoes the view that Emecheta's work serves as an exposition of the problems that women encounter and proposes solutions. She challenges the common patterns between individuals, society, humanity and nature, and men and women. The novel is, therefore, an attempt to expose the ills of stereotypical societies and find remedies for them.

Emecheta's works discuss the damning issues of motherhood and womanhood, class, culture, feminism, and the fight for the girl child. This paper presents a critical study of Buchi Emecheta's *Kehinde* from the theoretical framework of Campbell's (1968) hero's journey. Applying this theory to the character of Kehinde, the heroine brings to bear the various segmentations of Emecheta's work as a whole. Thus, in examining the experiences of the heroine as a journey, the researchers are able to compound and present militating factors against women's growth and development, such as class, culture, motherhood, and womanhood. It also

offers the opportunity to present a collective approach to these challenges. In the journey, the heroine is able to slay these dragons, surmount the supposed insurmountable, and create a life of her own.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Hero's Journey

Campbell (1968) proposes the theory of the hero's journey, which he believes to be the foundation of every myth or story. The hero's journey is a prototype of the step-by-step phase the hero goes through in order to come to a place of identity and independence. Raglan (2011) attests to the form of the hero's journey, which is invariably evident in all stories. He admits the various similarities in incidents, which he observed in his study of Oedipus, Theseus, and Romulus and several stories on Greek traditional heroes. Campbell (1968) documents these findings into his theory of the hero's journey. He explains thus:

> The mythological hero, setting forth from his common-day hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark (brother-battle, dragon-battle; offering, charm) or be slain by the opponent and descend in death (dismemberment, crucifixion). Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give him magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward…The final work is that of the return (Campbell, 1968, pp. 227-228).

The hero, by his own will or through the push of others, sets forth on a journey, facing various challenges to gain his reward. Vogler (2007) asserts that the story of any true hero follows the order of Campbell's (1968) hero's journey because they must undertake strenuous tasks in order to return with knowledge and treasure for themselves and their society. Shadraconis (2013) also notes that the hero's duty is to right the wrong in society. For Vogler (2007), the hero's journey has attained a universal status because it reoccurs in every culture at different times, and its basic structure remains unchanged. Noble (1994) acknowledges that for people who want to reach their own heroic potential, Campbell chronicled the usefulness of the hero's journey and the universality of the heroic ideal. Campbell's hero's journey proposes three major steps that characterize the hero's journey: departure, initiation, and return. These steps are known as the *nuclear unit of the monomyth* by Campbell.

Although Campbell's Hero's Journey is presented as a template for the journey of the male hero, it is adopted for this analysis because the elements of the journey, as prescribed by him,

can be used as a foundational structure to analyze the journey of the female. As noted earlier, Noble (1994) acknowledges that Campbell's documentation of the hero's journey provides a universal ideal for heroic adventures for individuals who want to attain their heroic potential. She adds that although the female's journey may be unique, Campbell's theory offers a frame for assessing the female's journey. This paper opines that though there is a heroine myth that is different from that of the male, they are both offshoots of the same branch because their differences lie in the deeds of heroism and not in the basic structure of heroism itself as proposed by Campbell in his work.

METHOD

This research is qualitative in nature and underlines its arguments on Campbell's (1968) theory of the Hero's Journey. Emecheta's *Kehinde* constitutes the data for this study. A close textual analysis is employed in the content of the novel in order to unravel the three principal stages of the journey to self-discovery and identity of Emecheta's heroine, Kehinde.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Kehinde's Journey to Self-Discovery and Identity

Emecheta fashions for us a story that is emotionally appealing, not only to women but also to people who have been betrayed and backstabbed by the cultural traditions of their homeland. These traditions serve as psychological and physical prisons, which are difficult to break free from. The threat of one's culture and background is evident in migrants staying in the lands they have migrated to to seek identity and a sense of belonging. The foreign land offers comfort, which to these migrants cannot be obtained from their roots. Instead, they prefer to be home in a foreign land rather than in a familiar place.

Kehinde's story is also wound around that of women immigrants who are faced with a myriad of problems in their migrated countries. The situation of these women is the inability to reconcile in their minds what is home to them. Though studies on diasporic literature have been geared towards migrating to the homeland to be connected on a more spiritual than physical level with one's cultural roots, most people have found the return uneventful and incapable of solving their problem of identity and belonging.

Kehinde's Departure

The heroine's heroic quest is unraveled through a series of departures that she undergoes to discover herself and her identity. Emecheta discusses seven departures of the heroine, from

the womb to London, in order to grasp the boon of her journey, which is identity and self-discovery.

The first departure Kehinde embarks on is from the womb. Here the infusion of magical realism by Emecheta to catch a glimpse of the struggle in the womb. Strecher (1999) defines magical realism as what occurs when a descriptive and realistic setting is occupied by happenings that are strange to believe. Through this technique, Kehinde can present in detail the circumstances in the womb and the importance of departing from the familiar place of dependence into the unknown world. The introduction of magical realism also accords the heroine with the luxury of a spiritual connection with her dead twin in order to gain insight into everyday happenings and give her a chance to be joined spiritually to her dead twin forever. In the womb, Kehinde describes:

> There were two of us in our mother's womb. We had no will of our own. We followed the rhythm of everything around us. Our food came from mother, and in return, we passed our waste back into our mother's blood (p. 17).

Emecheta's diction shows the heroine's helplessness right from birth. She was to follow the rhythm of everything around her and had no will of her own. In most African settings, the female has no will of her own and has to follow the rhythm of her environment. She is thus subjected to segregated gender lines. When Kehinde crosses over, she is rebellious and inconsiderate of the culture of her people. The lack of will and the absence of self in the womb act as a force the heroine has to combat to achieve the life laid for her by destiny – it is a call to adventure. Thus, the heroine journeys from inside the womb to the outside world to escape dependence and entrapment. She narrates:

> Together we fought against the skin that kept us captive. We wanted to burst out and escape into the open. We did not know what lay out there in the world, but anything, anywhere was better than where we were… Then one day, we laid siege on the skin wall that kept us enclosed. Frustrated, we banged and we shouted; and we kicked and cried in our limited space… Our mother, poor soul, must have gone through hell giving birth to us… They cut her open and I, Kehinde, the twin who follows behind, was taken out. My mother and my sister was dead. (pp. 17–18)

The personification of skin projects imagery of a prison warden whose sole job is to entrap a person and take away his freedom. The desire for escape is imbibed in words such as 'frustrated,' 'banged,' 'shouted,' 'kicked' and 'cried.' Laying siege against the personified skin is a direct representation of laying siege on patriarchal subjugations and dominance in the African culture. The chains of entrapment are broken, and not only Kehinde is free, but also the African woman.

The heroine's initial departure from the womb is sorrowful as she laments the death of her mother and sister. It appears that Kehinde's mother and sister had to pay a price with their lives for her freedom from dependence. In most African cultures, such children are perceived as evil. Kehinde, however, defends herself in this regard by asserting that she did not eat her sister in the womb as others have interpreted the other twin's death, and neither did she suck out the life of her mother because there was life enough for only one of them. The significance of this initial departure cannot be underestimated since it foreshadows the departures and initiations the heroine would have to undergo later in life in order to complete her journey. In this departure, it is evident that the heroine strives for independence from entanglement and seeks to establish her identity. She fights to stay alive in the womb because it is the only way she would be able to claim the things she wants to lay hold of.

After the death of her mother and twin, Kehinde is seen as an evil child. Nobody wanted to live with her until her aunt, Nnebogo, took her away to live with her. Thus, Kehinde embarks on another departure, this time from her accusers as an evil child. Nnebogo adopts her as her daughter. Later, when the heroine is five, she comes to know she is a twin. This revelation about her twin makes life a little bearable for her, but she still feels some distance between her and Aunt Nnebogo. Though the mystery of her strange behavior was uncovered, she still could not feel the maternal love between her and Nnebogo. She begins to ask questions about her father – she wants this enigma explained. Nnebogo tells her that her father is in Sokoto and that she has other siblings. Kehinde yearns to be with these siblings, leading to Nnebogo's revelation that Kehinde is not her biological daughter. Her sister, Ifeyinwa, tells her about how she ended up with Nnebogo:

> They believed you ate your sister in our mummy's tummy. The doctors told our mother to take something to purge you out, because if not she would die, but she said she wanted you to taste life. Since you carried your chi and that of your Taiwo, letting you die would mean killing two people. When she died giving birth to you, she gave you her chi also. Everybody was frightened of looking after such a child… But Aunt Nnebogo took you… (pp. 80–81)

The repetition of the devastating instances of 'kill' and 'die' emphasizes the assertion that others had to die for Kehinde to embark on this journey of life. The revelation of the mystery behind her chi and her other twin brings her in sync with the spirit of her dead sister. Taiwo, therefore, becomes the propelling force that pushes Kehinde on the journey of self-discovery and identity. The knowledge of the depth of the connection shared between the two propels the heroine to continue on her chosen path.

The heroine's journey has so far been characterized by several departures. The common denominator of these departures is the combined effort of destiny and the heroine to unravel the mystery of her life. The heroine comes across as one who will not relentlessly leave behind family and friends to achieve personal goals and aspirations. This analysis of Kehinde's several departures is akin to Pearson and Pope's (1981) argument of the first stage of the heroine's journey: 'exit from the garden.' In their assessment, it is imperative that the heroine undergoes this exit. The exit is important because it is through this process that she will be able to make sense of life. In staying back, she is burdened by her parents, friends, and society to conform. She is also able to distance herself from patriarchal control and cultural shackles that make her journey difficult. The exit is what Pearson and Pope (1981) believe will be beneficial to the growth and transformation the heroine seeks on her journey.

After Kehinde's return to Ibusa, she is sent to the nunnery when Ifeyinwa marries. There, she appreciates the secluded life she lives, away from polygamy, the extended family, and societal expectations of women. In Ibusa, she witnesses the marriage of her father to three women and the marriage of Ifeyinwa's husband to another woman. When she visits her sister in her matrimonial home, she abhors the life Ifeyinwa lives. Emecheta specifically contrasts the 'near clinical cleanliness of the convent' with the 'chaotic' and 'lack of privacy' seen in Ifeyinwa's house to highlight living a private, clean life as against the ills of polygamy. Her disgust for polygamy makes her accept Albert and marry him because he believes that 'polygamy was degrading for women.' In Albert, she sees an escape from what she abhors. Therefore, she agrees to leave with Albert for England in order to cement her step in totally eloping from her culture, one which endorses polygamy.

Kehinde's heroic journey is likened to that of the male hero but differs in its total subscription to the underlying principles of the hero's journey. According to Polster (2001), the male hero has, throughout history and legend, almost always separated himself from his family or close relations in order to make sense of his world and pursue the heroic path set for him. Though Kehinde follows this path, her journey diverges from that of the hero when she decides to continue with her journey even after attaining the boon of the journey. The male hero always returns with the boon of the journey, but Kehinde and most heroines stay at the place of initiation and continue to discover more of themselves. Thus, though the male, according to Polster (2001), chooses separation at the beginning of the journey, he ends up with attachment and bonding, while the female hero starts with bonding and attachment and gradually extricates herself in order to end up separated from both family and traditions.

In London, Kehinde and Albert practice a monogamous marriage where the wife has a say. Kehinde loves her current situation and feels her dreams have been fulfilled until Albert's sisters start enticing him with a return home to a booming Nigeria. Though Kehinde objects to this return, she returns two years after her husband has departed. In Nigeria, she becomes emotionally and physically detached from her husband, who has a second wife and child. Kehinde resolves to depart again to find herself and exert her independence away from her husband, his relatives, and her culture. Though Bimpe and Ifeyinwa call this act an escapist, Kehinde sees it as a decision to stay sane and independent. Ifeyinwa also accuses her of feeling 'for nobody' because she wants to take off for her freedom.

Chang (2004) comments on this deep-seated patriarchal notion of the woman staying for the sake of her children and family. She asserts that comparatively, women carry a lot of burden than men due to society and culture. For them to realize their true selves, they must liberate themselves from the obstacles of the patriarchal society. Kehinde decides to do precisely what Chang (2004) describes by rejecting the pressures and dead weight placed on her by her traditional culture. She unshackles herself and flees to freedom, a place she can call home. When she returns to London, she feels more at home than in Nigeria and proud of the choice she made. Kehinde's decision to separate from the stricture of her extended family points to circumventing the usual hero pattern of attachment to the family. This ignites a significant interest in Kehinde as a heroine who sets out on a unique journey of self-actualization and self-expression. If Kehinde's sister Ifenyiwa is not likely to reproduce a befitting heroine character, Kehinde does as she exploits the social mobility and choices opened to educated women irrespective of race or clime.

Kehinde's Initiation

The stage of initiation presents varied, daunting challenges. In *Kehinde*, the heroine faces three significant challenges at the initiation stage of her journey. She deals with rejection and isolation, polygamy and patriarchal control, as well as gender discrimination. Kehinde combats these challenges to lay hold of the ultimate boon of her journey. She begins a painful process of finding her identity. She learns to listen to her *chi* and, through unconventional means, learns about her twin sister and mother. She deals with the pain of not knowing why she always felt she had to do things in halves. At Ibusa, Ifeyinwa, her sister, and her father confirm that they have not seen her before because she was taken away after her birth. The heroine is taken away from her family and does not enjoy the love and protection that family embodies. She, therefore, relies on the spirit of her dead twin and the figure of a mother in Nnebogo. Nnebogo

becomes a source of strength and an anchor for Kehinde in her early years till eleven years – when she becomes old enough to battle the notion that she brought bad luck and isolation from her nuclear family.

Further, Kehinde faces the challenge of patriarchal control and polygamy. Prior to their relocation from London to Nigeria, she faced the challenge of aborting her baby to keep her job and her husband. During her pregnancy, Albert considers the possibility of Kehinde losing her job, which will lead to financial difficulties, as against the new baby. Albert proposes an abortion in order for her to keep the job. Women groups and feminists have argued for the freedom of the woman to choose what happens to her baby. Wolfe-Devine (1989) asserts that "Abortion has something further in common with the behavior ecofeminists and pacifist feminists take to be characteristically masculine: it shows a willingness to use violence in order to maintain control" (pp. 86-87).

Albert was determined to dominate Kehinde's resources through his display of masculinity and choice to abort the child. The dialogue between Albert and his co-worker Prabhu demonstrates the amount of power the male exerts over the female in some African marriages. The conversation is below:

> 'But you have two kids already, so why not this one?'
> Albert shrugged. 'This is not the right time for another one. I know abortion is wrong but we are in a strange land, where you do things contrary to your culture.'
> 'Was that what you had in mind? Abortion? What does your wife say to that? Our women can be difficult when it comes to things like that. A white woman, easy, she'll see sense'
> 'Er . . . I haven't even told her yet. But she will do what I say, after a lot of tantrums…' (p. 15)

Albert's certainty of Kehinde's acceptance of his stance shows the patriarchal evil Kehinde has to battle to gain her freedom and voice. Wulan (2023) asserts that in a world dominated by men, women are more disadvantaged. In another instance (p. 42), Kehinde complains about Albert's neglect of her sexual desires, 'as if she had no desires to be satisfied.' Albert is just interested in exacting his marital right of sexual intimacy from his wife, indifferent to her feelings towards the act itself. She recalls a situation in Lagos where Albert throws himself at her to demand sex after being absent for three days. Emecheta clearly chooses words that exude abuse and domination. This scene of marital rape is vividly expressed with the use of the words 'grip,' 'force,' 'impatient' and 'dissatisfaction.' The choice of words enforces dominance and highlights the begrudgingly devastating theme of the master and servant relationship in most African marriages. In most cases, the woman has no say in sexual relations, and before she

knows what is happening, the act is already over and done with. Their sexual act is devoid of foreplay and emotions - it is a rigid transaction that belittles the meaning of sex. This reverberates the idea of objectification of women in some marriages, where they are demanded to be passive even in sexual engagements (Dinurriyah & Jannah, 2023; Funnell, 2011) and the idea of marriage as a contract that breeds patriarchy (Agonito, 1977).

It seems Emecheta has all along been preparing Kehinde for a journey that will be equally difficult. When Kehinde moves from London to Lagos, she not only moves from being a financially independent woman but also from a monogamous marriage to a polygamous one, having to share her husband with everyone else. This cascades to a point where she believes she is no longer wanted. The feeling of neglect, rejection, shame, and dependence becomes constant in her journey. Kehinde's entire life force is sucked out by the combined effort of Albert, his family, and her culture. Mama Kaduna, Rike, and Ifeyinwa enforce the patriarchal stance and force Kehinde into acceptance. Murdock (1990) theorizes the *separation from the feminine* because it is the only door of escape for the heroine who wants to break the long tradition of women's acceptance of patriarchal dictates of their culture and traditions. The only option available to her to conquer these dragons and slay them is to separate herself and gain her freedom.

In these challenges and trials, Campbell (1968) proposes that the hero aims at obtaining an ultimate boon, which is the prime reason he embarks on the journey. Kehinde's boon is the freedom to live and independence from the patriarchal shackles of her society. Her mission has been to survive and live a happy life. In the womb and several other instances in her life, she realizes that departure is the key to survival. In Lagos, she learns that running away is the key to freedom, and in London, she learns that walking out is the only way to maintain her dignity and hold her head high. S. Chang (2004) argues that a female hero's task is to demystify the myths that entangle her. Thus, Kehinde leaves when she feels the wall is closing in on her to keep her sanity. When she later relocates to London, she tells her son, who has begun to show signs of patriarchal tendencies:

> That's one of the beauties of polygamy, it gives you freedom. I'm still his wife, if I want to be, and I'm still your mother. It doesn't change anything . . .
> 'I thought you were supposed to live for your children,' said Joshua.
> 'I did, when you were young. My whole life was wound around your need, but now you're a grown man! Mothers are people too, you know . . .
> 'So, now your life is full, you don't need your family any longer?' he pouted.
> 'Oh Joshua, of course I need you. I just don't have the energy to be the carrier of everybody's burdens any more. I sometimes need help too (pp. 138-139).

In this conversation, Kehinde lays claim to her right to be a woman. She repeats 'I' even at the very end of her journey to emphasize her desire for independence. Her demystifying the myth of maternal self-sacrifice and romantic love helps her make the best out of her life. She has undergone a transformation that was not present at the beginning of the journey. Her current demeanor now shows how important embarking on the journey was.

Education becomes another source of escape the heroine learns on the journey. Education offers her the opportunity to live in privacy at the convent instead of the chaotic scene at her family home. She is able to travel to London and earn enough money to cater to her family because of her education. When Kehinde feels cheated and betrayed by her husband in Lagos, she decides to better herself and match up to the standards of Rike, her rival, who is a lecturer. Bimpe is, therefore, equally happy that, in under three years, Kehinde can study to obtain her degree in London. It can be seen that Kehinde's journey is a personal one. Therefore, the boon she obtains is beneficial to her alone, contrary to Campbell's (1968) proposal that the boon is for the transformation of society. Kehinde's boon is for her personal use and enforces her journey of self-love and self-preservation.

Kehinde's Failure to Return

Campbell (1968) subscribes to the return of the hero to impact the boon on society. This return is significant for the development of the hero because it instills a new beginning and a transformation. This is, however, not the case for Kehinde. It has been seen that for the heroine, returning is not an option; instead, the separation or staying at the place of initiation allows the heroine to complete her journey. The heroine might never return because she keeps on fighting and slaying dragons in her way. This fight is evident in Kehinde's life. When she returns to Nigeria, she is not yet fully equipped to administer boons to her people. Thus, she is overpowered by her rival, Albert, Albert's sisters, and the cultural traditions of her people. In Lagos, she relinquishes her hold of her husband, her children, and her property and cannot fight to claim what is hers.

Kehinde decides to return to London to complete her journey in order to lay hands on the ultimate boon. When she goes back to London, she takes pragmatic steps to better her life and make amends. The first thing she does is to reclaim her house, then her freedom and independence. With her independence, she is able to love herself more and understand that she cannot overburden herself with the problems of the whole world. When she claims her right to be independent, she becomes human again. Kehinde's claim to humanity is the ultimate boon she lays her hands on. Through this process, she begins to dig out the deep-rooted patriarchal

seeds that Albert has sown in Joshua. Though Joshua sees this as rebellious, Kehinde believes it is the starting point for a change in her society. In her claim to humanity, Bimpe also learns that true freedom lies in following one's heart. It does not surprise Kehinde when Bimpe decides to stay back in Nigeria to do her degree to be with the man she loves.

Kehinde's return to London cements the relationship between her and her Taiwo and unveils her identity. When she travels to Nigeria, the bond between the two is severed as her twin opposes her decision. When she returns to London, the connection is restored, and she is able to gain the confidence to face life again. When she exclaims to Joshua that she wants to be human, it is her twin who urges her to maintain her stance and not relent in her decision.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented a critical study of Buchi Emecheta's *Kehinde* from the theoretical framework of Campbell's (1968) hero's journey. Specifically, it has studied the journey of Kehinde, the heroine, by tracing her journey to self-discovery and identity from the stages of departure, initiation, and refusal to return. The paper opines that Emecheta fashions the journey of the protagonist in a series of departures, which help her obtain the ultimate boon. The journey is thus geared towards highlighting the themes of racial discrimination, patriarchal and cultural shackles, freedom, identity as well and self-love. Further, Emecheta weaves a plot structure that is complicated and rests on the present. In the novel, there is no opportunity to dwell on the past. The only gateway opened is the now, where the heroine makes decisions that concern her present rather than the future. This structure gives Kehinde the opportunity to be carefree and bold in her decision-making. The said theory afforded the researchers a framework to project and highlight the heroic capabilities and actions of the female protagonist, Kehinde. These actions are unique, non-lineal, and unpredictable.

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