Anna Swoboda, University of Silesia, Poland

The Non-Place and the Unhomely in Ken Bugul's Cacophonie

Abstract

The aim of the article is to analyze the connection between non-places (as defined by Marc Augé) and unhomeliness (as understood by Homi Bhabha) in Cacophonie by Ken Bugul. The Senegalese writer has been best-known for her depiction of a postcolonial subject, torn between the Western and the African world. However, her last novel thus far, which concentrates on the trajectory of a Senegalese protagonist living in Benin, sheds new light on the notion of migrant identity. The heroine, Sali, does not belong anywhere. Just like most previous Bugulian protagonists, she is always in transit: her identity is one of an uprooted, fragmented subject. By examining the protagonist's behavior in a public, archetypal non-place (an airport, a plane), as well in a private place (her house), the study strives to show Sali's perpetual state of unhomeliness.

Keywords: unhomeliness, non-place, postcolonial subject, Ken Bugul

1. Introduction

The postcolonial subject's experience of migration and homecoming constitutes one of the most important motifs in the contemporary African Francophone literature. In the words of Irène Assiba d'Almeida,[1] "even within globalization, which aims to annihilate space, the place from which we speak often influences how and of what we speak" ("Problématique de la mondialisation" 35). Ken Bugul, one of the most distinguished Senegalese writers, is often classified as a migritude author. Coined by Jaques Chevrier, the term – a portmanteau of the words migration and Négritude – expresses two contradictory desires and processes: migration and return to the home country (Malonga 1). The migritude is a type of self-writing, in which there exists "osmotic intensity between

the authors and their female characters" (Malonga 5). According to the critic, Le Baobab fou – Ken Bugul's first novel, published in 1982 – marks the beginning of migritude. Odile Cazenave notes that migrant female authors often construct literary characters whose identities are closely connected to their geographic location, entailing the modification of their status depending on their gender ("Roman africain" 50). She also argues that because of being marginalized, African Francophone female authors find themselves in a "paradoxically privileged position", which allows them to conduct a significantly more thorough introspection and analysis of social problems (Femmes rebelles 25). Other scholars, like Ayo A. Coly, agree that the author's gender is crucial in the analysis of postcolonial texts, as in the male dominated Francophone African migrant corpus, women are portrayed in a nationalist manner, as reproducers and guardians of national culture, which results in the creation of gender-specific narratives of home and nation. (XIV). However, Coly also argues that post-independence Francophone African migration "enacts the disappointment with and distrust of the postcolonial state but does not signify a transfer of identity allegiances and loyalties to a postnational third space" (XXIII). This claim seems to capture the essence of Ken Bugul's writing.

Indeed, the author in question creates auto-fictive texts, such as Le Baobab fou (1982), Cendres et braises (1994), Riwan ou le chemin de sable (1999), De l'autre côté du regard (2003) or Mes hommes à moi (2008), which all express the pain of a female protagonist, torn between Senegal and Western Europe. While publishing Le Baobab fou, the author, whose real name is Mariètou Mbaye Biléoma, was obliged by the editor to choose a pseudonym, since the book was deemed too scandalous for a Senegalese Muslim female author. She chose "Ken Bugul," which in the Wolof language literally means "the one that nobody wants" and it can refer both to herself and to her text (D'Almeida, Francophone African Women Writers 45). The pseudonym, a symbolic name given to children of mothers who have previously had stillborn babies, is a sign of protection from death and evil spirits, but it can also be interpreted as the author's lack of rootedness and belonging, expressed in her later novels. Le baobab fou was translated into English in 1991, under the title The Abandoned Baobab. The Autobiography of a Senegalese Woman, even though the writer herself uses the term "semi-autobiographical" and states that she interjects fiction into pure autobiography in such a way that the two are difficult to distinguish (Azodo and de Larquier 329).

The same motif of searching for a home, inspired by the author's biography, appears in her later auto-fictive works. As Christian Ahihou argues, all the novels published by Ken Bugul after Le Baobab fou can be viewed as a revision and rewriting of her earlier texts (26). Therefore, taking the mix between fiction and autobiography in most of Ken Bugul's novels into account, it is important to be aware of the author's trajectory while analyzing her auto-fictive female protagonists. Both the writer and her heroines have the same background: an eighty-five-year-old father and a neglectful mother, colonial education, incessant migration back and forth in their adult life, in a desperate attempt to belong somewhere. In some novels, like Riwan ou le chemin de sable, the protagonist seems to have settled in a given place, but then it becomes evident that her need to belong is never fully met, as it resurfaces in Bugul's subsequent works. The same mechanism applies to the Senegalese female protagonist of Cacophonie, Ken Bugul's last novel thus far, published in 2014. Just like the author herself, Sali moves to Benin, where she gets married and has a daughter. At the beginning of the novel, she is a sixty-six-year-old widow, who, after years of enjoying the status of a member of the local community, partly because of having a half-Beninese child, suddenly finds herself rejected by her in-laws without any explanation. While previous Bugulian protagonists would try to find their home in Belgium and France (which corresponds to the author's earlier life), Sali's struggles involve another West African country. Ayo A. Coly uses the author's pseudonym when he examines the protagonists of her first two novels, arguing that "Bugul's inability to inscribe herself into a place converts the successive places she inhabits in Senegal and Europe into non-places. As these locations turn out to be uncomfortable and ill-fitting spaces of identity that she cannot settle into, they become passageways to other places. The non-place is a place of negated subjectivity and unbelonging …." (4).

By examining the protagonist's relations to the public and private places presented in the novel, the present study aims to substantiate and develop the hypothesis that the Bugulian heroine's existence is bound to non-places and that, as a migrant, she feels unhomely not only in Senegal and in Europe, but also in Benin. To begin with, let us examine Marc Augé's theory of non-places and Homi Bhabha's notion of unhomeliness.

2. The Non-Place and the Unhomely: Theoretical Outline

As the argument regarding the connection between Ken Bugul's auto-fictive protagonists and Augé's notion of the non-place has already been presented (Coly 3–19), exploring it further will allow to prove that the heroine of the author's last novel continues to feel dislocated and rootless in African countries. Marc Augé's influential concept was developed in 1992 and continues to inspire research in different fields: anthropology, sociology, architecture, and literature.

Let us begin by examining the binary relation between space and place. Theorists such as Tim Cresswell, Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph valorize human agency in the creation of place, by defining place as space encountered and transformed by human perceptions, knowledge and memories of its use and function (Gebauer et al. 9–11). Michel de Certeau reverses this dynamic by differentiating place – static, stable and ordered – from space, which is a product of individual freedom (117–18). By taking this theory a step further, Marc Augé creates a vision of "the non-place, that is, a place which no longer confers the affect of place, and in the process crushes the creative and indeed anarchic spirit of de Certeau's notion of space" (Buchanan and Lambert 5).

This brings us to the opposition between Augé's 'anthropological place' and 'non-place.' He defines place as relational, historical, and concerned with identity, whereas a non-place involves neither of the above (77). Moreover, according to Augé, the word 'non-place' designates two realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations of individuals with these spaces (94). Thus, non-places "mediate a whole mass of relations, with the self and with others, which are only indirectly connected with their purposes. As anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality" (94).

As Gebauer et al. point out, the non-place is closely related to globalization, which has caused many standardized, faceless places to appear all over the world (8). Augé states that: "The non-place is the opposite of utopia: it exists, and it does not contain any organic society" (111–12). Therefore, Augé's idea of the non-place is not merely limited to a place of transit or commerce. Gebauer et al. talk about different types of 'placeless' places, including: transitional places, restricted places (such as gated communities), lost (forgotten, abandoned, marginalized) places, mediated places and imaginary places (13).

Furthermore, the proliferation of such non-places and the dwindling importance of anthropological places entail a new 'structure of feeling,' which "is characterised by inherent dislocation of the individual from time and place – as humans have traditionally known and understood these – and a general notion of uneasiness, rootlessness, and otherness following the sense of dislocation." (Gebauer et al. 10). Thus, Augé's approach is important for the understanding of Ken Bugul's Cacophonie, as his idea of the non-place reflects the condition of an individual whose identity is scattered, such as Sali. The protagonist's relations – or lack thereof – to all places result in their "transformation into non-places," as her needs to belong and matter are not met anywhere. It is not that the heroine merely moves from a given place to a non-place – she has never had a place to begin with.

The second notion employed in the present study is closely connected to the aforementioned understanding of the non-place. Unhomeliness signifies "the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world," wherein "the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (Bhabha 9). In other words, "the erasure occurs when individuals and communities lose their traditional, stable, homogenous ways of life" (Britton 120). This concept can also be connected to Augé's approach, since he argues that "[i]n the concrete reality of today's world, places and spaces, places and non-places intertwine and tangle together" (107).

Unhomeliness, characteristic of postcolonial experience, is particularly visible in the case of the Bugulian protagonist, who has never really belonged to a traditional, stable and homogenous environment. In Cacophonie, the recurring image of the canari en terre cuite – a clay water pot – symbolizes the anthropological place of identity. According to a Senegalese proverb, "If you get up from your clay pot, every clay pot on which you will want to sit will break" (Bugul 31). As Sali lost her 'clay pot' very early in life, when she was abandoned by her mother (Bugul 34–35), she remains deeply conflicted about her identity, lost in the world where no culture is her own. The protagonist constantly feels unhomely, which does not lead her to develop a hybrid identity, as her existence is based solely in non-places.

3. The Public, Transitional Non-Place

Firstly, let us examine a non-place par excellence – the airport and the plane – and Sali's behavior in these types of surroundings. Travelling back to Benin, after customs control, the protagonist, "distraught, moved over to a zone where she was neither inside nor outside, an isolation zone, an uncomfortable zone, a retention zone, like at the outermost point of Tarifa, where illegal migrants were neither let go nor deported" (Bugul 36). The comparison of the airport to a refugee camp indicates that Sali is far from feeling "the passive joys of identity-loss and the more active pleasure of role-playing" (Augé 103). By giving its user a temporary identity – in this case, the one of a passenger – and a relative anonymity, a non-place frees the user of their everyday responsibilities and problems. However, Sali is constantly reminded that she is different from other passengers. When she thinks of her flights to Africa, she mentions how everyone changes from their comfortable travel clothes to fashionable designer outfits right before the plane lands (Bugul 43). Returning home, African travelers sustain the myth of wealth and prosperity in Europe: they want to appear successful to their families, friends and neighbors. As the narrator points out: "Clothes don't make the man, as the saying goes: here, they did" (Bugul 44). The allure of the travelers impresses those who wait patiently at the airport in order to greet them:

> *Those people seemed to be waiting for someone, but actually, most of them were waiting for no one. They would come to admire the returning travellers, and they were all dreaming of leaving and coming back like them. Most people were only thinking about escaping from this chiaroscuro continent, about leaving, for any other place. (Bugul 40–41)*

The bystanders' behavior brings to mind the Fanonian discourse about the colonized subject, who wants to resemble the colonizer by his looks and the use of the French language (20). The passengers who come home, dressed for the occasion, enjoy a special status among their compatriots. Thus, they readily leave their temporary identity towards the end of the flight and 'become themselves' again. In contrast, Sali does not move from her seat: she is the last one to leave the plane and makes everyone wonder why she "has not put on her return costume" (Bugul 50). Unlike other travelers, Sali does not have anyone waiting for her and she has no gifts to declare. The protagonist feels isolated among those who are impatient to rejoin their "prisons" (Bugul 36). Thus, she is excluded from the community of ordinary people, for whom Benin

constitutes a true place of reference. It is also interesting that the heroine uses the word “prisons,” since Gebauer et al. remind that restricted places can be similar to some transitional non-places and functional places (airports, trains, hotels) where the users’ identity needs to be confirmed and access is limited (13). Therefore, Sali focuses on the ‘non-placeness’ of Benin rather than on its relational, historical and identifying aspects.

Characterizing a non-place, Augé mentions the contractual relations binding its user, visible in the plane ticket, the card to show at a tollbooth, the trolley in the supermarket. Non-places “have the peculiarity that they are defined partly by the words and texts they offer us: their ‘instructions for use’” (96). He mentions “the invasion of space by text”: the average user of a non-place is fabricated by signs and instructions, whereas the employers of a non-place are usually silent, or at least communicate in the same, uniform, machine-like way (96–101). However, at the Beninese airport, not all passengers are treated in an objective and professional manner. Even though she obtained a citizenship by marriage, Sali is interrogated by an officer, who claims that in order to hold a passport from Benin, she needs to speak the language (Bugul 36). Quoting Vincent Descombes, Marc Augé notes that “the character is at home when he is at ease in the rhetoric of the people with whom he shares life. The sign of being at home is the ability to make oneself understood without too much difficulty, and to follow the reasoning of others without any need for long explanations” (108). As Sali is leaving the airport, she is instantly reminded that she is and always will be a foreigner.

Moreover, written rules, like customs regulations, do not apply to everyone. While the protagonist is always asked about the contents of her baggage, richer and more influential passengers are never controlled. This only reminds the heroine about the depth of her isolation:

Sali was defeated. Wanting to be treated and considered as the privileged ones, while not willing to belong to their club – she could not do it anyway – that was the issue. She was different from them and that difference was unforgivable. How to explain to them that she had just arrived and that she wanted to leave again, but she did not know where to go? They were unaware that she was a prisoner of her appearances, whereas they were prisoners of their certainties and realities. (Bugul 38)

Throughout her life, Sali wants to be considered an intellectual, whose voice would matter to the powerful of this world (Bugul 79). However, in her autumn years, tired of keeping up appearances, she sees her acquired identities – of a liberated woman, a feminist, a diva, a sex symbol – merely as masks that she would put on in order to abide by other people's standards. Hence, Sali is neither an ordinary passenger, nor a privileged one: coming back to Benin, she is not greeted with greater respect. The only person she identifies with in the non-place of the plane and the airport is a despaired young man being forcefully brought back to Africa. This image is juxtaposed with the story of another man, immured alive in Kaffrine, Senegal. Sali puts herself in the place of both, as she feels imprisoned both while travelling and in Benin (Bugul 9–10, 15). In order to further explore the protagonist's lack of identity, the second part of the present study focuses on the portrayal of her private space as another example of a non-place, as well as on the protagonist's continuous feeling of unhomeliness.

4. The Private, the Non-Place, and the Unhomely

In Sali's words, "it seemed to her that there was no disconnection between her journey the other day and the return, as if the virtual space between the two had not faded. This time, she had not come back, she was in transit, and she had to decide on a departure with no return" (Bugul 18). The yellow house, which she had inherited, at first had the characteristics of an anthropological place of identity. However, in the words of Augé: "Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased; the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relation is ceaselessly rewritten" (79). The widow with a young daughter was granted all the privileges: her in-laws asked all the other women who had children with Sali's late husband to vacate the premises, as the protagonist remained his only lawfully wedded wife. Even though she had never learnt to speak the local language, Sali made efforts to integrate herself into the Beninese family: she followed the local rituals, helped her neighbors and socialized with the community. As it has already been mentioned before, since the departure of her mother, Sali kept searching for a place that she could call her own. Defining the concept of unhomeliness, Homi Bhabha states that "[t]o live in the unhomely world, to find its ambivalencies and ambiguities enacted in the house of fiction, or its sundering and

splitting performed in the work of art, is also to affirm a profound desire for social solidarity" (18). Following the protagonist's internal monologue, the reader is inclined to believe that the need to belong somewhere was her main motivation to get married, as the marriage itself only lasted a day (Bugul 152). After the death of her husband, Sali chose to make Benin her new homeland. In the yellow house situated in a little ochre town, "she thought that she could finally toss her bags of hardships, reach the other side of the troubled waters and stand on solid ground. And, brutally, one day, all that became merely a bitter illusion" (Bugul 11). At one point, Sali needs to face the fact that she might be evicted from the yellow house, even after having lived there for years. Alas, as Augé points out, "the possibility of non-place is never absent from any place" (107). Let us examine how the 'unhome,' where Sali had hoped to find social ties and acceptance, becomes a 'non-place' in a broader sense of the term.

When she is ostracized by her in-laws without any warning, Sali cannot comprehend their sudden change of heart. She suspects that the isolation might be caused by her independent lifestyle, but her questions are met only with silence or hostility. Explaining the notion of unhomeliness, Steven Flusty claims that it is "a condition of living unsettled in multiple places at once while being of none of them." He also states that "a life of unhomeliness entails an ever-shifting self in which what you are, what you know and what things mean must be continually reinterpreted in the light of whichever spatiocultural context you inhabit at any given moment" (110). Because of the language barrier and the insufficient knowledge of the Beninese culture, Sali's position in the society utterly depends on the goodwill of her new compatriots. Therefore, when she is treated as an outsider and her relationships with others become non-existent, the little ochre town becomes a non-place, similar to the airport:

> *She could not tell her doctor that she was not able to sleep those days. The doctor, like the gatekeeper, the neighbours opposite, the people that she would meet during her escapes in hotels, airports, streets, like those women opposite who braved heaven and earth in order to feed they children, only saw the ready-made smile plastered on her face, while she was screaming in silence, baring all her real and fake teeth. (Bugul 86)*

The protagonist finds no difference between the people she sees every day and those that she meets during her journeys. This fact is in accordance with the observation that the space of non-

place does not create a singular identity or relations, only solitude and similitude (Augé 103). Sali is in constant emotional and physical pain, resulting partly from her old age, but also from not being understood and truly listened to.

The use of the word fugue – escape – marks Sali's lack of security in the yellow house. Even when she does not travel, she incessantly wanders around the enormous, empty building, where only an observation window, through which she looks at the street, saves her from complete isolation (Bugul 125). She also has an obsession of plants, roots and holding onto things, which emphasizes her need to belong. The yellow house is surrounded with flowers, plants and trees, including a mango tree that grows together with a traveler's tree (Bugul 94). Moreover, when Sali thinks about where she could move after leaving the yellow house, she confesses that "Haiti seemed like a mirage, but that country was inside of her, and she appropriated it, in order to possess something she could hold on to if the moorings let her go" (Bugul 64). These images expose the fragility of the yellow house as a place of identity. Additionally, the idealized representation of Haiti and other places where the protagonist could possibly relocate remains in accordance with the concept of the imaginary non-place, which produces a myth and makes it work (Augé 95).

The notion of the unhomely, however, signifies more than just not feeling at home in a given place. In Homi Bhabha's understanding, the unhomely refers to the Freudian notion of unheimlich – the uncanny – which "is the name of everything that ought to have remained … secret and hidden but has come to light" (Bhabha 10). As Celia Britton explains, the Freudian uncanny is "a return of the repressed": the return in adulthood of something that was known in childhood. While Freud focuses on the personal, Bhabha extends this concept to the collective: "personal history cannot be separated from a collective history which is experienced as trauma and repression" (Britton 121). Like previous Bugul's novels, Cacophonie presents striking images of postcolonial Africa:

Those emigrants who were sending money could no longer return to their country: they were acting as financial security for their families. For those who managed to return, it was sometimes impossible to leave again. They could be held hostage, because of jealousy or by a family member who felt aggrieved by the distribution of gifts upon return: in some regions, that could be fatal … If the parents knew what most of those who did not return were experiencing back there, they would

discourage their offspring from setting out on that fateful journey, despite the corruption, the lies, the demagogy, the social injustice, the bad governance in the chiaroscuro continent. (Bugul 47)

The quoted passage evokes the trauma of the society affected by colonialism: those who emigrate to Europe are expected to provide for their families, even though they often struggle to survive themselves. On the other hand, the African continent, ravaged by poverty and ruled by corrupted leaders, also becomes a hostile place. This impossible situation of the postcolonial subject often appears in Ken Bugul's oeuvre. Sali, too, is deeply concerned about social issues, which are similar in Senegal and in Benin. She expresses those concerns in a conversation with her taxi driver – in her unhomeliness, she intends to 'shift' her personality in order to feel included. However, her attempt to communicate is instantly criticized. According to the taxi driver, the protagonist is not a part of "the people," because she has money and resources, whereas everyone else is merely struggling to get through the day (Bugul 48). Therefore, even though Sali herself remains a victim of the collective colonial past, she is considered different and privileged by ordinary people, which only reinforces the gap between her and the community in which she lives.

The second dimension of the uncanny – repressed personal memories – intertwines with the collective trauma in the analyzed text. When Sali comes back to the yellow house, she remembers how her isolation already began in her childhood. As a little girl, deprived of her mother's love and of strong family ties, she turned to the colonial school:

As far as Sali was concerned, she did not wear a bracelet nor an amulet … . She had already found refuge in the games of life and she was putting every ounce and fibre of her being into other points of reference that school offered her. The girls who stayed seated on their clay water pots were the raw material to be exploited, they were included in the projects to implement: they were to be made into women, spouses, mothers. The sooner, the better, as they said. But Sali was not a project, neither for her mother, nor for anyone. (Bugul 58)

Analyzing the protagonist's relationship with her family in Le Baobab fou and Cendres et braises, Ayo A. Coly mentions "the daugther of the nation's weak affective and emotional investment in the nation" (6). This is characteristic of all auto-fictive Bugulian protagonists, including Sali. The heroine of Cacophonie, ostracized from her community of origin, escapes to the colonial school,

which only traumatizes her further. Difficult memories and lack of communication with her Senegalese family make it impossible for Sali to go back there: even when she expresses the need to do so, she is ignored by her brother and uncle. Therefore, on the one hand, Cacophonie explores further the Bugulian leitmotif of childhood trauma and motherly abandonment. On the other hand, Sali's 'secret and hidden' emotions are brought to light by a new uncanny element: the phantom of her dead husband:

> *Why would her late husband have imprisoned her? She would talk to him, but he would not answer. And yet, he was there, every day and every night, with his smell from beyond the grave, his new smell … . She could not do anything without this haunting and troublesome presence coming to intrude. She would address him, ask him questions in order to liberate herself, but he would not react. He was there, in the yellow house, even though in the cemetery there was a marble plaque with his name on it, on an earthen grave surrounded with a little wall. (Bugul 122)*

The passage cited above marks Sali's uneasiness: she asks herself if the impasse that she has reached is not the fault of her late husband. Although the uncanny presence in the yellow house can be viewed as a supernatural element in the text, it may also be interpreted as a representation of the protagonist's repressed emotions. Sali feels imprisoned: she wants to start over, reinvent herself, or rather truly be herself, but her widow status and years of living in Benin prevent her from breaking free. The husband's phantom makes the heroine feel guilty and misunderstood; same as the people around her, he seems angry at her, but refuses to communicate the reasons behind her being ostracized. Thus, the unhomely in the text appears multidimensional: the collective and the personal become blurred in the protagonist's mind. It is also worth noting that the yellow house becomes a non-place: after all the years of living there, Sali did not manage to make it her own. When her history is suddenly forgotten and her relationships cease to exist, the building also stops to define her – it is no longer concerned with her identity. As Augé notes, the anthropological place is a place of meaning for those who live in it and a place of intelligibility for those who observe it (52). The sudden ostracism places Sali outside of this dynamic: again, she becomes a foreigner, an intruder. In that context, the heroine is torn between vacating the non-place and holding her ground to re-establish herself in the little ochre town. This dilemma is unbearable to her, as it is one between "leaving or dying" (Bugul 7). The yellow house becomes a prison – Sali thinks

obsessively about its walls raising higher and higher and fears suffocation. This is also reflected in the protagonist's body: the constant tension in her neck, her inability to scream, her nightmares. The title of the novel – Cacophonie – also emphasizes this issue. Among all the voices that can be heard, Sali does not find her own. She only has real conversations with the man who brings her plants towards the end of the novel and who, according to her in-laws, is her secret lover. The protagonist, unaware of their suspicions, is unable to defend herself – the yellow house becomes a trap, an unhomely "in-between reality" (Bhabha 13).

Finally, the reader learns that Sali never physically moves out of the yellow house – she gets fatally hit by a car in front of the gate. As the narrator concludes, "Sali was deceased, but she was not dead" (Bugul 197). This "decease," not synonymous with death, already appears earlier in the text. The heroine wants to go and declare herself deceased in the town hall – this can be interpreted as her "ticket" out of the Beninese non-place. Sali claims that she has never truly lived, so she needs to die for the world and become familiar with this 'other' inside of her (Bugul 129). Thus, the heroine cannot adapt to the hostile reality: her unhomely anxiety pushes her further and further into despair. Only when the protagonist abandons her body does she find true peace: she no longer needs a "clay water pot to sit on." When Sali remembers the words of her father: "Your country is where you feel at peace" (Bugul 199), she understands the necessity to leave behind her earthly flesh in order to start anew. Therefore, her spirit sets out on a journey to all the places that have shaped her identity in any way. Interestingly, all those locations – Senegal, Benin, Haiti – seem to become anthropological places again, as Sali travels through them and chooses a new name for herself – Salam – which means peace. Hence, the ending can be interpreted in a positive way, but it also highlights her firm rejection of the world where the protagonist has always felt oppressed. As it appears, in that world, as a living human being, it is impossible for Sali to ever feel at home.

5. Conclusion

All in all, the present analysis of the private and public space as non-places, as well as of the unhomeliness experienced by the protagonist of Ken Bugul's Cacophonie, reveals a portrait of a postcolonial subject whose identity remains forever torn. Employing the idea of the non-place as defined by Augé – a space that is not concerned with relations, history or identity – allows to see

that Ken Bugul's protagonist is a scattered subject, whose whole life is bound to such non-places. The novel contains images of typical non-places, such as the airport and the plane – anonymous and transitory, where everyone acquires a temporary identity of a passenger. On the other hand, the text demonstrates that a private space, like the protagonist's yellow house, can also transform into a non-place and that the protagonist's identity is never stable. As far as Sali is concerned, she feels equally strange and unwanted in the public and private sphere – in both, the heroine is singled out, viewed as different from everyone else, ostracized. This fact is related to the second issue studied in the present article – the notion of unhomeliness, entailing the uncanny confusion of the private and the public. Having lived in colonial Africa, Sali is a victim of the collective postcolonial trauma, whose consequences are still visible in everyday life. The people, both in Senegal and in Benin, have to cope with the destruction of local tradition, the poverty, the lack of opportunities and the responsibility to support their families while living abroad. However, Sali's personal story is further complicated by the fact that she had never felt that she belonged to her original culture. Rejected by her mother, she escaped to the colonial school, hoping to create a new identity. This coping mechanism of fleeing and reinventing herself reaches its culminating point when she moves to Benin without speaking the language or understanding the cultural differences. Sali's unhomeliness, whether she travels or stays put, is perpetual – in any place, the protagonist keeps evoking memories from her past, feeling uneasy and insecure about her current situation. As a postcolonial subject, just like other Bugulian protagonists, she can never completely settle in one place or cease to doubt her identity. As the author herself puts it: "I am in perpetual exile. Surely, I do not live anywhere. I carry my life with me" (Azodo and de Larquier 329).

Works Cited

Ahihou, Christian.Ken Bugul: Glissement et fonctionnements du langage littéraire. L'Harmattan, 2017.

Augé, Marc. Non-Places: An Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity. Translated by John Howe, Verso, 1995.

Azodo, Ada Uzoamaka, and Jeanne-Sarah de Larquier, eds. Emerging Perspectives on Ken Bugu l: From Alternative Choices to Oppositional Practices. Africa World Press, 2009.

Bhabha, Homi. The Location of Culture. Routledge, 1994.

Britton, Celia. Edouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance. University of Virginia Press, 1999.

Buchanan, Ian, and Gregg Lambert. Deleuze and Space. Edinburgh University Press, 2005.

Bugul, Ken. Cacophonie. Présence Africaine, 2014.

Cazenave, Odile. Femmes rebelles: naissance d'un nouveau roman africain au féminin. L'Harmattan, 1996.

Cazenave, Odile. "Roman africain au féminin et immigration. Dynamisme du devenir." Changements au féminin en Afrique noire, edited by Danielle de Lame and Chantal Zabus, L'Harmattan, 1999, vol. II, pp. 49–69.

Coly, Ayo A. The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood. Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures. Lexington Books, 2010.

D'Almeida Irène Assiba. Francophone African Women Writers: Destroying the Emptiness of Silence. University Press of Florida, 1994.

D'Almeida Irène Assiba. "Problématique de la mondialisation des discours féministes africaines." Changements au féminin en Afrique noire, edited by Danielle de Lame and Chantal Zabus, L'Harmattan, 1999, vol. II, pp. 27–47.

de Certeau, Michel. The Practice of Everyday Life. University of California Press, 1984.

Fanon, Frantz. Peau noire, masques blancs. Éditions du Seuil, 1952.

Flusty, Steven. De-Coca-colonization: Making the Globe from the Inside Out. Psychology Press, 2004.

Gebauer, Mirjam, et al. Non-Place. Representing Placelessness in Literature, Media and Culture. Aalborg University, 2015.

Malonga, Alpha Noël. "'Migritude,' amour et identité. L'exemple de Calixthe Beyala et Ken Bugul." Cahiers d'études africaines, vol. 181, no 1., 2006, pp. 169–78, www.cairn.info/revue-cahiers-d-etudes-africaines-2006-1-page -169.html. Accessed 2 Feb. 2020.

[1] Unless otherwise indicated in the works cited, translations of all citations from French into English are mine.



Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License