AbSTRACT:
Being included in or excluded from the European world in which they have relocated is a major issue that some African writers address in their writings. The host/stranger relationship that exists is something that is fundamentally performed in various symbolic ways that are captured in the rhetoric of these writings, and which deserve some critical reflection, especially because they reveal the experience of the politics of otherness in actual everyday practice. The article discusses the poetic responses of Femi Oyebode to the inclusive and exclusive shibboleths of his migration to Britain, and his return to his African cultural and historical values in an attempt to redefine his identity in the new contested cultural space. It is argued that more than exposing the attitude to difference as the main obstacle to intercultural understanding in the relationship between the migrant Self and the European host, the poet uses his narration of his African values as a means of undermining the perceived isolation and silencing of the migrant African Other. In celebrating Africa where he is located in Britain, Oyebode actualizes the notion of the ‘Third-World-ing’ of Europe – the transformative presencing of the Third World in the European space – within the domain of literature.
Introduction

The writing of Africa in Europe, by which is meant the representation of Africa, the re-creation of African cultural aesthetics and rhetorical practices, as well as the representation of Africa as a text performed within the European context, is a crucial issue especially at a time when the pressure to escape to Europe has increased in African countries. Given the growing disenchantment with political and economic life within many African countries, the fantasies that some Africans have about the West as the Heaven of Rest, a place where the good life is guaranteed, appears to be growing every day. Similarly, Africans resident in the West might, when faced with the realities of the host society, especially those that marginalize them, could also turn to rediscover and romanticize their Africanness. African writers resident in European countries might, through works reflecting their experiences of the European world, have some important frameworks of knowledge that could help us in comprehending the issue of the insertion of Africa in Europe and the problem of identity that attends Africa–Europe migrations. Rüdiger Kunow has drawn our attention to the fact that, from a postcolonial standpoint,

space is always already inhabited, “full,” and for that reason also contested. For such an organization of social and cultural space, the critical instant lies in the mo(ve)ment of transgression, the passage across boundaries, dividing lines, demarcations. Borders, limits, fault-lines of culture are in this perspective no longer merely the end point of a definable, circumscribed space, but in a sense its beginning, the point at which or from which the inscription of a revisionist, differential cultural location will have to start.¹

The transcultural is also the transgressive: it violates cultural boundaries, and creates a dialogism that challenges cultural hegemony. The return to African roots in the writings of Africans who have migrated to the West clearly represents the notion of “mo(ve)ment of transgression,” not only in terms of crossing cultural borders and seeking to reinvent the past that was left behind, but also in terms of the implied challenge and interrogation of the hegemonic Western value-system.

This article discusses the rhetoric of inclusion and exclusion of the African living in a European cultural context, as it is performed in the poetry of Femi Oyebode, a Nigerian who has lived in self-exile in Britain for many years.