PSYCHOANALYTICAL REPROACH ON MIGRATION EXPERIENCES IN CHIKA UNIGWE'S NOVELS

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Abstract
The phenomenon of migration is not new in Africa. The migration of African citizens to different climes has been influenced by the dynamics of social, economic, political and ecological conditions and processes. These experiences as re-presented in the oeuvres of Chika Unigwe – On Black Sister's Street and Better Never than Late present indicators that reflect the complex realities of the causes of migration and responses of migrants to the effects of migration in transnational boundaries. This paper evaluates migration experiences to identify what type of hybrid and connected spaces these migration experiences are producing, what segregated and integrated social worlds they are fostering, and how they are reconfiguring the African continent an around transnational borders. The paper identifies ambivalent psychological conflicts in ideologies such as gender relations, varying gradations of exploitations, dissonance arising from transcultural conflicts and the long for home in exile as experiences of migrants in the novels. The reproach perspective in the analysis of the characters in the texts point to the conclusion that migration rather plagues Africa and remains a significant phenomenon perpetrated against Africanism by Africans who should advocate fixing the African depreciating polity through psychological re-definition rather than migrating.
Keywords: *Migration, Cognitive dissonance, transnational boundaries, Transcultural conflicts, transcontinental environments.*

Introduction

African countries have witnessed a large scale migration from the continent to other countries in recent decades. This implies that for a long period of time now,

Africans have been caught up in the migration phenomenon as a result of changes in social, ecological, economic and political factors. This is also supported by the fact that humans are psychologically dynamic in nature and have continued to remain amenable to change in voluntarily and involuntarily ways. The basic cause of these actions remains the need to source for comfortable means and measures of survival in the struggles for the provision of food, shelter, clothing, and social security. Because the contemporary world that man inhabits consists of constant changes and movements leading to the blend of transcultural borderlines, Sten Moslund asserts that the world is experiencing "a massive international and transnational defeat of gravity, an immense uprooting of origin and belonging, an immense displacement of borders, with all the clashes, meetings, […] reshaping the cultural landscapes of the world's countries and cities" (2).meaning that the mobility of human beings from clime to clime is to ensure that their survival is achieved as they are willing to give up their uncomfortable locations for spaces which they perceive to be contented thereby partaking in the processes of cultural and identity erosion.

This activity of human dispersal to various parts of the world affects greatly the psychology, culture, philosophy, identities and personalities of people who migrate to these spaces. The emigrants continue to experience psychological and traumatic feelings as they are mostly not copiously accepted in or by the countries in which they migrate to. This affects in no small measure the originality of their personal psychologies. In Nigeria for instance, migration of especially young people into other climes is basically because they believe that their host countries are "realms of possibility, fantasy, with fulfilment where identities and fortunes might be transformed" (Ugwanyi, 251). The effects of these citizenship transversal of transnational boundaries causes a vigorous decimation of their personal psychologies as well as indigenous identities by rendering their cultural characteristics vulnerable to extinctive possibilities. This implies that indigenous languages and traditional practices are heavily influenced in this bid for survival, leaving the migrant in a stateless and dislocated form as a result of their psychological trauma.

The conditional motivating indices for migration have been identified by many critics as responses rather than influences. This means that people migrate to other spaces as a result of responses to certain social, economic, and even political conditions. International Organisation for Migration's *World Migration*

Report 2020 affirms this fact when it says that "the scale and pace of international migration is notoriously difficult to predict with precision because it is closely connected to acute events (such as severe instability, economic crisis or conflict) as well as long-term trends (such as demographic change, economic development, communications technology advances and transportation access)" (2). In as much as these activities are being influenced by human's responses to social issues, they heavily effect on the cultural composure of this fleeing Africans thereby altering certain context of spatial co-existence. Cultures are being influenced in an erosive manner while the experiences breed certain Eurafrican spaces that seem to leave gaps in the social worlds that these experiences create. In Africa, the scenario is ably captured by the declaration of the International Organisation for Migration above and has also been re-presented in literary spheres by African authors like Bessie Head, Buchi Emecheta, Doris Lessing, Alex La Guma, and Dennis Brutus and most recently Chimamanda Adichie as well as Chika Unigwe. But as Ben De Bruyn suggests, "one of the ways in which climate change manifests itself in contemporary culture, and contemporary culture shapes our understanding of climate change, is through real and imagined stories of human relocation" (1), it is pertinent to accept these stories as presented in the novels of these authors because they ultimately denote the real experiences of migrants whose stories are drawn from the societies where these authors derive these experiences.

In Omolola Ladele and Adesunmbo Omotayo's "Migration and Identities in Chika Unigwe's Novels", Chika Unigwe "engages constructively with the social conditions … her race in the diaspora. Unigwe is also interested in the conditions occasioned by physical, social and psychological relocation from the continent of Africa to other spaces" (53-4). By this statements, Omolola and Omotayo are not only interested in the causes of the actions of migrants as represented by Unigwe but also the complicating demographics of their art in relation to such rising issues as marginality, liminality, hybridity, identity, inter and cross-cultures, home and motherland and the intersections of these as they are re-echoed in diverse perspectives in the works of these writer (53). What appears to be skived is the current diversification of the ideas in the discourse of migration studies relating to how these rising issues are reconfiguring the spaces and social worlds of existence between Africans and their destination realms. Chielozona Eze also criticises the standards in the UN Declaration on Human Rights saying that the ideals of human rights and perhaps humanitarianism seem to be "…abstract

because they are general guidelines; they make sense only when they are applied to individuals in specific instances of intersubjective relationships"(91). It becomes impeccable to acknowledge in Chielozona's perspective that migrants' and migration experiences seem to be part of the specific exceptions insinuated in her postulation. According to Boehmer E, migrants tend to have "a double consciousness … the individual … experiences a dynamic tension, everyday between living 'here' and remembering 'there' i.e. between memories of place of origin and entanglements with places of residence and between metaphorical physical home" (2). This level of dissipative dual consciousness causes dislocation and personality disorientation. Sarah De Mul describes these experiences by the characters in Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* saying that they "suggests the descent into disorientation and denial of worth" (20) that migrants face in destination countries. In the face of the consequentiality of globalisation which narrows the world into a global village, why does a migrant develop a psychological feeling of cultural outlining when s/he migrates to another part of the same village? Consequently, there exist a misnomer and default in the process of integration of cultural diversities between migrants and destination of host communities. The international migration policy formulation bodies like the IOM have paid little effort toward enhancing the assimilation of such pressing cultural erosion; instead, they have given intense attention on migration figures as they rise and fall. This shortcoming is arising as a consequence from the definition of their policy documents which seeks to define what the term 'migrant' really is or should be. These perceptions do not recognize in the description, evaluation and consideration what 'migrants' physically undergo to actualise their purposes of performing the action of 'migrating'. According to the *World Migration Report of 2020*, while the New York Declaration acknowledges the similarity between 'migrant' and 'refugee' but has been met with a stalemate since the Global compact for Migration distinguishes these two groups as "distinct groups governed by separate legal frameworks" (298). These distinctions only acknowledges the application of the legal frameworks for protection or rejection of a similar category of humans seeking for better economic, social and political opportunities without critically examining the term(s) 'migrate' or 'migration' and re-considering the intent of migrants as it relates to survival cohesion even in transcultural terms. Andrea Pettrachi in a European University Institute working paper affirms the fact that policy makers of migration in Europe pay less attention to the context of migrants' transcultural positions stating that cognitive factors and strategic considerations are less

relevant in the immigration policy domain and that [policy] elites *necessarily* politicise migration under the pressure of increasing flows … most of the existing [policies] focuses on how ideas in the migration policy field are contested, but not on how understandings of flows and of public reactions are produced in the first place and acted upon. (1)

This implies that, decisions on issues of migration are majorly concluded without recourse to social and economic underpinnings that cause them, but are adopted giving prejudicial consideration to the effect of migration on 'underlying social systems'. Consequently, Michelle Leighton affirms that

> Migrant workers, regardless of status, often experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, based on gender, religion, race, nationality, and other identities. Gender discrimination is an underlying cause of gender-segregated labour markets and gender inequalities in terms of jobs opportunities and access to decent work, particularly for migrant workers (e.g. migrant women mainly working as care workers and domestic workers, migrant men working in high-skilled occupations or in construction). (4)

The consequentiality of these inequalities sends a growing concern toward reproach perspectives that can aim at addressing this perceived phobia toward migrants and migration largely. Thus, this paper seeks to explore Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* and *Better Never than Late* so as to evaluate Unigwe's demonstration of migration experiences to decipher plausible causes of migration in order to identify what type of hybrid and connected spaces are these migration experiences producing, what segregated and or integrated social worlds are they fostering, and how they are reconfiguring the African continent culturally.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framing
Migration is both a voluntary and an involuntary activity by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. Whether voluntary or involuntary, migration is caused by certain factors. According to Francis Cherunilam migration is caused by push and pull factors such as economic factors – (labour opportunities as a result of industrial and commercial plenitude), demographic factors - (population revolutions), socio-cultural and psychological factors - (psycho-social pressures),

political and institutional factors - (un-inclusive government policies), and miscellaneous factors (40). The International Organisation on Migration's (IOM) *World Migration Report 2020* also says the causes of migration are linked to "acute events (such as severe instability, economic crisis or conflict) (2). These factors are indicative of the African situation and are a pointer to the fact that Africans feel discontented with their social environment and therefore have to resort to the pressure of dissonance to migrate to societies with favourable opportunities. This discontent as a result of dissonance leads us to the theoretical underpinning for this paper – Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory. Leon Festinger developed the cognitive dissonance theory in 1957. The fundamental characteristic that the theory proposes is that actions can influence subsequent beliefs and attitudes. The main idea of the theory is based three fundamental assumptions which states that humans are sensitive to inconsistencies between actions and beliefs: there is recognition at some level in our psyche when we are acting in a way that is inconsistent with our beliefs, attitudes and opinion. For instance, if a citizen believes that it's wrong to be anguishing in total lack, and s/he finds he/r self-languishing in poverty, s/he notices this and is affected by this inconsistency. Secondly, the recognition of this inconsistency causes dissonance and motivates an individual to resolve to dissonance, and thirdly, the individual resolves the dissonance by changing his or her belief, changing his/her actions or changing the perception of action. Thus, in this case of migration, the causes of migration become the inconsistences; recognising them causes a change in action – migration.

Evaluating Migration Experiences in *On Black Sisters' Street* and *Better Never than Late*
On Black Sisters' Street discreetly reveals the experiences of four migrant women who enter Europe seeking to find better social and economic opportunities in Belgium. They end up becoming prostitutes. Although, their initial private drives differ to survive abroad differ, they are united by their obligation to Dele, a trafficker who is based in Lagos, Nigeria. He sends them to Antwerp where they are retained under the forceful care of a Madam, whom they work under as sex workers. Chisom who now becomes Sisi upon arrival in Belgium and who happens to be the most educated of the group, has left behind a family who expects that her stay abroad will uplift the family from lack. Efe who sacrifices her personality for her son L.I. who she begets out of wedlock, lives back home with her younger sister. Ama who is being sexually violated by a man she feels is

her father also leave for better opportunity with the 'help' of Dele. Joyce, was born Alek in Southern Sudan, she is the youngest of them. A survivor of wartime atrocities, including rape, is sent to Europe by his lover, Polycarp through Dele, where she is deceived and made to believe she will be working as a nanny. All the women are all plunged into shattered dreams where they lose everything including their personalities with Sisi first losing her life in the instance of her efforts towards ending her life as a prostitute. *Better Never than Late* showcases the journeys of Prosperous and Agu who are migrants from Nigerian seeking better lives in Belgium. The stories in the collection are centered on their explorations and scuffles for integration in the migration process to their destination country – Belgium.

As earlier mentioned, migration is fundamentally a voluntary and an involuntary activity which is majorly caused by the drive to search for better options of social and economic betterment. Thus, in Unigwe's re-presentation of the plight of the migrant, they are in search of favourable social and economic opportunities which seem to be absent in their home countries. The women are desirous of leaving their home countries because home does not to support favourable opportunities such that "nobody wanted to stay back unless they had pots of money to survive the country" (14). Sisi leaves Nigeria to Belgium and suddenly feels "…lucky to be [there], living my dream. If I'd stayed back in Lagos, God knows where I'd have ended up"(9) because "…the place has no future" (9) why? Dashed dreams by social forces like nepotism, corruption, and favoritism. The quest for better opportunities has been the derive f most migrants around the globe. Thus, by migrating, the drifters expect to meet auspicious opportunities that can encourage the achievement their selfhood. The International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) *World Migration Report 2020* says that the causes of migration are linked to "acute events (such as severe instability, economic crisis or conflict) (2). In this instance, the fictional illustration that Unigwe gives readers from the experiences of Joyce is enough to be acknowledged as the reason and cause of her migration. The severity of the situation prompting her migration decision cannot be worse than what she experiences in the hands of the soldiers. They kill her parents in her presence and brutally rape her, leaving her critically torn. Her experience in the refugee camp does not say anything different from what the soldiers do to her on the day of the murder of her parents, she migrates from the camp as a refugee to Europe. Agu and Prosperous in *Better Never than Late* are forced to the Europe voyage by the

bigotry in Northern Nigeria. By this example, the distinction between 'migrant' and 'refugee' does not surmount, they both assume the position of asylum seeking in the process of the search for selfhood.

There are also other personal intuitive motivations that push migrants. Ordinarily, people are innately willing to travel to 'oyibo land' to fulfil personal desires: "who did not want to go abroad? People were born with the ambition, and people died trying to fulfill that ambition"(14) regardless of the risks or consequences involved. But with the kind of absolute reality and condition that Chisom, Efe and Ama face from Nigeria, what option is left if the opportunity presents itself? For Ama, going away is an escape from private gendered harassment that has gradually demeaned her selfhood. For others, the desire to migrate is for the purpose of being able to make "…enough money, acquire enough material possessions, to be seen as successful" (*Better Never…*87-8). But there are separate worlds emerging from both migrants and host communities or destinations countries that are emerging. Majorly, there is no connection between the two worlds in the instance that there are cultural diversities between them. These cultural diversities have not been respected to foster connected spaces integrative existence. This can be summed up into the supposition that the social worlds created by these migration tendencies are quite segregated and can be viewed as racialised in cultural perspectives as they create an ambivalent inclination on the psyche of migrants.

This inclination can be viewed to be demeaning. For instance, identity dislocation continues to foster statelessness and displacement on the psyche of these migrants who have the notion that their destination countries have ideal spaces that can accommodate their culturally differences, yet, these experiences are mere fantasies. Chisom leaves Nigeria, arrives Belgium to become 'Sisi' – a designation occasioned by the circumstances she finds herself in, with no semantic underpinning. She feels that she would shed "her skin like a snake and emerge completely new. It would all be worth it"(14), but she is murdered by the same process that gave her the intuition that everything was formidable, she dies and cannot get cultural rites of burial as her African originality does. Unfortunately, the process does not accommodate her personality with her cultural rites but bestows on her the sensibilities of a mongrel. This is in addition to the continuous deprivation of cultural tenets such as access to dietetics. For instance, Efe feels disillusioned from her experiences on the kind of food she is

served on the plane and expresses this thus: "white people might be good at a lot of things, but their culinary skills left a lot to be desired: *No pepper. No salt. No oil. How can they call this food? It's like eating sandpaper*"(14). When she arrives Belgium, she assumes the realisation that, "Dem no dey like make we dey bring palm oil, but you no go get good palm oil from there. She dey miss Nigerian food. Very soon you go begin miss am, too"(14). There are no definite explanations to this absolute denial of cultural rights. In Germany, Prosperous and Agu "could not hope to get the kind of jobs they were after, working in bank or teaching, if they spoke neither Dutch nor French"(83-4). Consequently, Leila Hadj Abdou asserts that migration authorities are not "only doing poor research by adopting analytically flawed concepts … but they become accomplices in a neo-colonial system of oppression" (1) if they are not encompassing in their adoption of measures relating to the handling of migrants in the face of migration of contemporary social complications that the world currently already faces.

It is also pertinent to observe that there are worlds apart created migrants and destination communities which continue to promote exploitative opportunities which leave migrants deprived in their dream lands. This is evidently illustrated in Unigwe's depiction in the instance when and where Efe tells Joyce that "*Oyibo* policemen are greedy. They have big eye, they ask for free girls …a thousand euros. Ah!" (12)". This experience can typically be explained as a case of Gender Based Exploitation – (GBE) where the women have no other choice to pay as cost for their survival. In *Better Never than Late,* Agu asserts that "Germany is very hard for black men. Harder than Belgium"(5). This implies that the integration of migrants by authorities in this terrain seem a lot difficult. This can be affirmed in the context of the inadequacies of racially-corrected policies to the context of migration and migrants. This leads to the context of neglect of cultural diversities within the phenomena of migration.

There exists a general neglect for the cultural diversities that migrants arrive destination countries with. This is occasioned by the shortfall in or the absence of protection of migrants for further integration into their destination countries. Protection of migrants should typically include their human life and rights in relation to their access to opportunities that can aid their personal development, but efforts towards all these has been slow and inconsistent (John Bingham 1). Unigwe's depiction of this is visible in the treatment of death of Sisi, a

circumstance that would not be handled likely if she had died in her home country, Nigeria. Sisi has just died – a human being and all the girls can do is wonder: "what can we do? Who will you send the body to? And even if you knew her people, can you afford to pay for her body to be sent back to Nigeria?" (12). In *Better Never than Late,* when Gunter's grandfather dies,

> the whole thing had seemed odd to [Oge]. Nobody cried, at least not loudly, in church. It did not matter that the man was almost ninety; in Nigeria, there would have been loud wails for him. Here, tears were contained by handkerchiefs dabbing at eyes. At the coffee table, a practice that in itself bemused her, Oge had been shocked to see Gunter's mother and her siblings, whose father they had just buried, smiling, going from table to table asking their guests if they had enough to eat, to drink, as if the guests were the ones needing consolation and not they. (6)

There is little recognition for what people hold dear to their lives. Cultures are relegated to the backdrops as a result of the quest for survival such that identities become overridden by the cultures of destination country. This is another form of cultural oppression has its connection with postcolonial thoughts where otherness thrives. Invaluably, in cognitive psychology, this negligence to cultural diversities is also capable of arousing dissonance. This is a clear indication that the integration of these cultural diversities in the face of the growing possibilities of migration and migrant population is grim and should remain a point of call for all hands to be on deck to curb this menace. The low attention to this threat in the growing migration subject will emanate into possible cases of criminality involving deception, tricks, and ambivalent identities (apart from the disillusionment that migrants face) in order to meet with the demands of survival. Sisi creates a deceptive technique of legitimatising her identity to suit the standards for acceptance and integration into Belgium, her destination country. In order to achieve survival, she needs to create an untrue identity of herself, tell lies under some form of pretence such that their identities become defaced. This is what Sisi has to do when she goes to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for registration. She is instructed to "[t]ell them that you are from Liberia …Tell them that your father was a local Mandingo chief, and soldiers loyal to Charles Taylor came at night to your house and killed your family …. Look sad. Cry. Wail. Tear your hair out. White people enjoy sob stories"(19) flouting the realities of being originally Nigerian. In *Better Never than Late*, Agu and

Prosperous are compelled to fib in order to create an acceptable identity, "their passports say they are from Liberia and it occurs to her that, should she die, the authorities would probably contact the Liberian embassy" (113) indicating that her personality has been mutilated in this process of the quest for survival. Joyce is born Alek in her prime and has to become someone else in order to regain a 'whole' which can qualify her for survival. Her name is changed by Polycarp and Dele. This adds up to the ingenuities that the absence of migrant protection is consistently creating. According to the International Labour Organisation's estimates on migration workers, "in many countries migrant workers represent a significant share of the workforce and make important contributions to societies and economies, with generally higher labour force participation rates compared to national workers" (1). This is only a representation visibly depicted in situations where migrants are recognised, accepted integrated into the socio-economies of their destination countries, protected, and given opportunities to exist. John Birgham establishes that migrants spend and or invest 80% of what they earn in destination countries. The Financial Times reports that in the United Kingdom, 1 out of 7 jobs and businesses are launched or created by a migrant. With these contributions surmounting, there is every need to create a launch pad that critically protects the rights and personalities of migrants to avoid further disasters.

The reproach call in this paper is to authorities to acknowledge that individualities are ambivalently losing cultural identities in the face of migration hazards. For instance, In *Better Never than Late,* after their long stay in Germany, the characters still exercise the feeling and have the conviction that "*…Food tastes so much better in Nigeria! In Nigeria, people might not have much but they are always willing to help! Nigerians are so much happier than these oyibo people! Our people are resilient! Resourceful! Brilliant! The best ever!... Nigeria is a rich country! We export oil!* (20). Further, on the language barrier that denies them job opportunities, Agu and Prosperous nurse dissonance as they assert that "*We shouldn't have given in so easily. We should never have left. We would have been better off in Nigeria*" (11). The creation of this kind of authorial voice points to the fact that there is a cultural spatial difference between migrants and destination countries which rather discourages xenophilous notions thereby enhancing incoherent identities of the self.

Conclusion

To the African continent, migration of the young and old has remained a major concern that should be reconsidered critically. Apart from the loss and eroding cultural originalities and identities, the psychosocial effect these experiences of exclusion from global competitiveness in all spheres remain threatening as they are causing economic undergrowth to both Africa and destination countries and should poke the mind diversely in realms of introspection. This is because the problem of social integration remains a major concern that can breach the gap between migrants, migration and destination countries. And like Leila Hadj asserts, major destination continents like those in Europe, Asia, and America

> have to look beyond the nation state to truly unsettle common sense ideas about immigrant integration, and to understand the various underlying ends of immigrant integration projects. It is the understanding of these underlying purposes that, in turn, will enable us to make critical judgments about immigrant integration, providing one possible alternative path to the current complicity… (2)

This call is a bid to enable the consideration of the consequences and vulnerabilities that migrants' social insecurity has and is currently still causing. More attention need to be given, majorly in terms of research to understand the complexities of migrants and migration as a topical issue to ensure low risks are involved in the processes transnational transfers of citizenship to ensure smooth, efficient and safe migration of both culturality and individuality of the migrants. Issues such as gender and cultural exploitations need to be in the fore since cultures around the world are under pressure of extinction as a result of migration processes. These literary representations should also serve as a caveat to chiefly the young African population whose social responsibility has changed regarding their African nationality recently. Should we all relocate as sojourners and empty our own continent? Answers to this query should also provide responses to the fact that, if we are not Africans, what are we?

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