Social Science, Humanities and Sustainability Research
ISSN 2690-3628 (Print) ISSN 2690-3636 (Online)
Vol. 3, No. 4, 2022
www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php/sshsr

Original Paper

Migration, Diasporic Realities and the Quest for Home in Chika Unigwe's On Black Sisters' Street and Yaa Gyasi's Transcendent Kingdom

Andrew T. Ngeh[1] & Sarah M. Nalova[1]

[1] Department of English and Cultural Studies, University of Buea, Cameroon

Received: October 26, 2022 Accepted: November 19, 2022 Online Published: November 25, 2022

doi:10.22158/sshsr.v3n4p42 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/sshsr.v3n4p42

Abstract

This paper preoccupies itself with a close analysis of the concept of migration, diasporic realities and the quest for home in Unigwe's On Black Sisters' Street and Gyasi's Transcendent Kingdom. Migration is a recurrent issue in the world today. Due to one reason or the other, people leave from one geographical location for the other—usually to Europe and America for greener pastures. The study investigates the socio-economic experiences of these African characters in the diaspora and the despair encountered resulting from dreams deferred. In this regard, this paper examines the disillusionment and frustration that characterize Unigwe and Gyasi's fictional characters in the selected works as they grapple with their expectations and the actual realities in the New World. The work operates on the premise that characters in the texts are induced and motivated by dreams of a better life to immigrate to Europe and America where they end up being trapped in hardship, culture shock and identity crisis. Guided by the Postcolonial theory, this study revealed that, one's perception of place in which he/she finds himself or herself is determined by the socio-cultural background of place/local; and that success is linked to mentality and personality. The study also found out that characters end up in disillusionment when their expectations are not realized, and this puts them in a melancholic state, hence, their decision to return home.

Keywords

Migration, Diasporic Realities, Home

1. Background and Motivation

In *Culture of Migration: The Global Nature of Contemporary Mobility,* Jeffrey H. Cohen and Ibrahim Sirkeci contend that, "lots of people talk about migration and lots of people talk about migrants. They are intrigued by the process and they want to ask questions about why people move (25). Migration is a recurrent issue in the world today. Due to one reason or the other people leave from one geographical location to the other—usually to Europe and America. As it is well known, traveling involves meeting different people from different cultural backgrounds. Culture, therefore, becomes a regulator of human life and identity. Migrants find themselves in culture shock when they get to the New World because of the power of the dominant culture. Europe and the Americas or United States which most Africans from Nigeria and Ghana travel to are indeed complex societies with multiple cultures.

The failed economic and political status of most African countries pushes people to migrate. Both men and women, young and old find it difficult to survive in the capitalist African economy. They give up their aspirations for a better life in their home country due to the harsh realities that surround their daily life. Migration becomes the one and only option for them to break free from the web of frustration, joblessness, persistent poverty, the quest for educational opportunities, agricultural reforms with disastrous consequences for rural areas, ethno-national conflict, election related violence, drug trafficking, and extremism. It is in this regard that T. Drusilla in "The Problem with African Leadership—Ethnic, Racial, or Sectarian Politics" argues that:

> …Africa and especially Nigeria has been plagued by bad leadership from 1960 till date. I believe that more harm has been done to Nigeria and Nigerians than any other trade policy of Western countries. Africans must learn to take responsibility for their actions; no Whiteman can create a war, or bad trade policy in Africa without willing participation of Africans/Nigerians. (par 2)

The wind of change that blew across the African continent after the independence of African countries has left Africans in a disillusioned state as their aspirations and euphoria have not been actualized. Crime, greed, corruption, and mismanagement of resources, are symptomatic of the socio-economic difficulties that have plagued the African continent. Frantz Fanon admits in *The Wretched of the Earth* that, "it so happens that the unpreparedness of the educated classes, the lack of practical links between them and the…. people, their laziness, and, let it be said, their cowardice at the most decisive moment of the struggle will give rise to tragic mishaps" (148).

It is this tragic mishap that has caused Africans to lose hope in the ability of their nation to provide them with a better life. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said notes that, "the nations of contemporary Asia, Latin America, and Africa are politically independent but in many ways are as dominated and dependent as they were when ruled directly by European powers" (19). The indigenous trust the people had for their leaders has been squashed. They feel betrayed by their own leaders who promised to be better than their predecessors. They actually do not reap the fruits of their labor. Chika Onyeani in *Capitalist Nigger* insists:

> In Africa, we are totally undisciplined. We have leaders who are not ruthless with themselves in pursuit of excellence but who are quick being ruthless to their citizens. Africa has been a disgrace to most of its admirers. The promise of independence which was supposed to usher in a period of prosperity and economic growth has not happened. Rather, Africa has been mired in all kinds of indescribable disorderliness brought about by people who have the mentality that the world owes them something… (11)

This economic and socio-political failure has pushed Africans to lose hope in their fatherland and believe in a far-fetched dream. Migrants more often than not tend to seek social, economic and cultural sanctuary in their travels. They have that passion to succeed and survive in their host country. The insecurity they face in their countries of origin pushes them to search for solace in other geographical spaces. These migrants leave behind families who look up to them in times of difficulties. This, however, makes them ready to do whatever it takes to survive and provide for their loved ones who depend on them. In a bid to meet up with such demands, migrants are left with no other option than to do menial jobs, and engage in shameful and mock marriages.

The paper attempts to answer the following questions: What are the circumstances under which characters migrate in Gyasi and Unigwe's texts under study? What diasporic realities do these characters' encounter, and how do these realities affect their identity? How do these characters negotiate a new identity in the dispensation of a 'third space'?

The analysis of this work is based on the premise that the desire for better living conditions and the fantasies of living in a continent whose streets are supposedly filled with "milk and honey" propel characters in the novels under study to migrate. These characters actually end up in a state of reconciling the experiences of the 'first space', the disappointment and perpetual trauma that inform and interrogate the 'second space' with 'unhomeliness' being a major threat. The encounters they face with new cultural values abroad greatly lead to an irresistible process of acculturation. As a result of this, some aspects of identity are bound to change, including the concept of self. Away from Homi K. Bhabha's notion of the 'third space', this study holds that in the 'third space' characters come to a state of re-awakening as they negotiate a new space and identity. There is subsequently the quest to belong which propels a successive return to one's roots.

2. Conceptualization

For the effective presentation and understanding of the work, there is the need for key terms to be defined. The terms "Migration", Diasporic Realities" and "Home" have been defined in this article for proper comprehension. *According to Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus*, "migration" is "the movement from one country, place, or locality to another" (520). Migration impacts on both the place left behind, and on the place where migrants settle. People have many reasons why they move from one place to another. These reasons may be economic, social, political or environmental. For migration to take place, there are usually push factors and pull factors at work. Push factors are the reasons that make someone decide to move

from his/her country of origin. Often, push factors are negative things such as unemployment, crop failure, droughts, flooding, war, poor education opportunities or poor services and amenities. Pull factors, on the other hand, are the expectations which attract people to the new place. They are usually positive things such as job opportunities, a better standard of living, better education or better healthcare. When economies collapse, there is scarcity of jobs and lack of employment opportunities. All these force people to look for other opportunities elsewhere. Surprisingly, migration also comes with strategies and one should note that people migrate to countries where they could benefit economically and socially.

In the context of this study, the functional definition of "migration" will be taken from *The Random House Dictionary*. It defines the term as "To go from one country to another, especially repeatedly and in a large group" (556).

The next term which is defined in this paper is "Diasporic realities". This term could denotatively be understood as the resentment and difficulties characters experience in a new environment. Bill Ashcroft et al, in *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies*, define "diaspora" as "the voluntary or forcible movements of people from their home lands into new regions…" (61). These critics emphasize the fact that, as a central historical fact of colonization, diaspora is a multifarious movements of people all over the world. Diasporic writing has mostly become a response to the lost homes and seems to focus on issues such as dislocation, nostalgia, discrimination, survival, cultural change and identity. Dislocation is one of the first feelings that haunt a diasporic community (Bharucha, p. 14)

Another term worth defining in this study is "Home". Rosemary Marangoli George, in the following definition, aptly explains the different levels of "homes". She explains that:

> Today, the primary connotation of "home" is of "private" space from which the individual travels into the larger arenas of life and to which he or she returns at the end of the day. And yet, also in circulation is the word's wider significance as the larger geographic space where one belongs: country, city, village, community. Home is also the imagined location which can be more readily fixed in a mental landscape than in actual geography. The term 'home country' suggests the particular intersection of private and public and of individual and communal that is manifest in imagining a space as home. (9)

Within George's definition are multiple ideas of home: a private space, a wider space beyond the confines of the private, a narrated home, and the home of the mind, which Salman Rushdie refers to as "imaginary home" (10). The private spaces or spheres define family dwellings which are the most significant "home country" referred to here. The term "home country", according to George, connotes the notion of belonging, having a home, a place of one's own.

In talking about the ideas of home and identity, Madan Sarup poses interesting questions: "What makes a place home? Is it where your family is, where you have been brought up? Is it where your parents are buried? Is home the place where you have been displaced to or where you are now?" (12). Sarup provides a cumulative answer to all these questions as- identity and roots. Roots are grown where there is a feeling

of acceptance and love; not where hostility and exclusion are meted out, where walls are not built and reinforced to keep the migrant out. Home can therefore either be the place you have been moved to or where you are born. Migrants' tendency to feel a sense of non-belonging is often informed by the conscious effort made by the indigenous groups to confine the exile into a margin, a state of otherness, in essence subjecting the migrant to subtle violence. Sarup says, "Home is (often) associated with pleasant memories, intimate situations, a place of warmth and protective security amongst parents, brothers and sisters, loved ones" (13).

3. Theoretical Consideration

The analysis of this paper is informed by the postcolonial theory. According to Bill Ashcroft et al. in *The Empire Writes Back*, the term "post-colonial" was coined in the historical and political science fields, following World War II. At that time the term had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the post-independence period but by late 1970s, post colonialism found its way into literary criticism, and the term postcolonial became thematic. As a concept, postcolonial studies became a methodology used to "address the cultural production of those societies affected by the historical phenomenon of colonialism" (7). It was used to "analyze the many strategies by which colonized societies have engaged imperial discourse" and "study the ways in which many of those strategies are shared by colonized societies, re-emerging in very different political and cultural circumstances" (ibid) where it was employed to analyze "various cultural effects of colonization" (9).

The postcolonial theory is apt for the interpretation of the concepts of migration, diasporic realities and the concept of home Yaa Gyasi's *Transcendent Kingdom*, and Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*. This theory is used because it will enable us explore the effects of the colonialism on the postcolonial subject and how this affects identity negotiation. It equally provides us with tools to deconstruct oppressing imperial ideologies and engage in questions about transnationality and hybridity that can re-invent the manner in which culture and identity are being viewed.

The theory analyzes the issue of double consciousness as the cause of cultural alienation, dislocation, and an unstable sense of self which instill in the Africans a desire to migrate to cities and industrialized societies, as this is the case in our texts under study. This feeling of being caught between two cultures and belonging to neither; of finding oneself trapped in a psychological limbo that results not merely from some individual psychological disorder but from the trauma of the cultural displacement where one lives is referred to by Homi Bhabha as "unhomeliness". Here, the Africans move from their underdeveloped countries of origin and migrate to Europe and America in search of employment and other basic facilities. While in the New World, they do not feel at home due to cultural displacement; they are hybrids as they do not belong to a particular culture. They move into a different culture yet they are not fully accepted in that culture thus, they become cultural refugees.

The concept of "migration" in postcolonial discourse possesses a wide range of complexities of meaning nowadays and is related to issues such as economic and social realities. Soren Frank refers to the modern

application of this term in literary studies as "the oscillatory and inconclusive processes that manifest themselves on different levels in the literary work, for example, in relation to personal, national, and cultural identity, language, narrative form, and enunciation" (8). When people migrate and come in contact with different cultures, they make their own culture known. In most cases, however, the migrants tend to syncretize these two different world views but still maintain their cultural identity.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Yaa Gyasi and Chika Unigwe in their creative imagination have attempted to demonstrate how contemporary problems plaguing Africa can no longer be blamed solely on time or history, but equally on place, that is, the way man deals with his environment and the natural resources found therein. They seem to be those writers who have shifted focus from time to place; they prove that the socio-economic and political situation in Nigeria and Ghana propels characters to migrate to Europe and America for a better life. However, the diasporic realities these migrants face leaves them in a sullen state as they grapple with the actual realities of the West. The feeling of 'unhomeliness' and the quest to identify the self, and feel holistically free and accepted for who they are pushes them to return to their roots. The paper is discussed in three thematic clusters— "Bad Governance and Economic Adversity", "Diasporic Realities and Deferred Dreams" and "Beckoning Homeland: Towards Communal Consciousness".

5. Bad Governance and Economic Adversity

Bad governance is associated with political factors that influence migration. These are reasons that are either influenced by government's bad policies, administrative practices or political instability that can cause people to leave their habitual residence to other countries. Civil wars, state sponsored and organized violence and political instability cause people to move to other countries. For instance, in countries like Nigeria and Ghana, violent conflicts, underdevelopment, poverty, political instability and corruption have forced hundreds and thousands of Nigerians and Ghanaians to migrate and settle in Europe and America. The political and economic activities of these countries have been perturbed by armed conflicts, poor governance, increased poverty and immense suffering with extensive human rights violations that cause extensive population displacement.

The economic space offers us a more insightful appreciation of the African experience as a push factor for migration. Bad governance and social unrest associate with all the places the characters find themselves in can be read as factors that cause Postcolonial subjects to disconnect themselves from one place to another, even if that new place is far away from home. This takes us to the relationship between place and history that Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin refer to in the introduction to *The Postcolonial Studies Reader,* entitled, "Place". They argue that, "Place is a palimpsest, a kind of parchment on which successive generations have inscribed and reinscribed the process of history" (392). This shows that the conflict between the neo-colonialists and the masses in Nigeria and Ghana portrayed in the texts under study is actually a simplification of the complex way in which history is embedded in place. This is so

because one cannot split-up the socio-economic and political malaise in contemporary Nigeria and Ghana and the Postcolonial world from the history of colonialism and make believe independence that followed. The pictures that Gyasi and Unigwe paint of Ghana and Nigeria respectively show that these countries are obviously experiencing a crisis. The characters in the texts under study have lost faith in the ability of the place where they are to provide them good life because of political instability and they hope to belong to another place where they can achieve their dreams.

Politically, Unigwe presents a Nigeria which is under political dictatorship. No history of Nigeria is complete without the reign of the military which has ruled Nigeria for the better part of its existence as a sovereign nation. These devastating interventions and interruptions in the politics of the nation have left many battered and frustrated. In Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*, Sisi's father is one of those who experienced the reign of President Obasanjo. The mismanagement of public funds left many families in perpetual poverty. The narrator posits thus:

> There was her father. He worked in the Ministry of Works. A civil servant, he had imagined that one day he would be able to buy a car. A second-hand Peugeot 504, but apart from a pay rise in his first year his salary had remained static even as the price of everything else rose. He could never afford a car. Especially not now that President Obasanjo had put an import embargo on cars older than five years, hot on the heels of his wife banning a certain type of lace she wanted exclusively for herself. (Unigwe, pp. 89-90)

Prior to independence, literary productions from Africa constituted an act of resistance against colonialism. The period of independence coincided with the process of decolonization that interrogated the concepts of nationhood and national identities. Within the nationalist movement, the sense of hope and cohesion was so strong that the coming years would promise prosperity, but socio-political and economic mishaps rapidly crept into the fibre of this emergent nation-state. Consequently, hope vanished as quickly as it was conceived. Sullenness replaced optimism; fear vanquished trust, betrayal evacuated comradeship, and the promise of a glorious future suddenly turned to a dreadful dream. According to Bernth Lindfors, the pre-independence dream of a brave new world turned into a nasty postcolonial nightmare" (22). Being a civil servant, Sisi's father has nothing to show for it. His life is a total mess as he cannot even afford the basic necessities of life, even owning a second-handed car is a luxury to him. This leaves him in a devastated state, he cries out:

> That president sef while people are busy killing each other he in senseless riots he is busy banning the importation of everything. Toothpaste. Chloroquine, soaps. Detergents. Envelopes. How am I ever supposed to buy a car? We thought we were suffering under Abacha. This is worse! At least a military dictatorship did not hide under cover of democracy. This is worse. (Unigwe, p. 90)

Bad governance has destroyed the African economy. In Nigeria as the text highlights, it is worse. Inhabitants suffer the effects of tyrannical rules as those in power seek only to enrich themselves and

forget about the wellbeing of the nation. Independence brought in transfer of power from the white masters into the hands of the native elite. The Independence struggle had raised high hopes, euphoria, aspirations and dreams in the people. The euphoria of freedom did not last long. New African elites soon took over and indulged in corruption as they were lured by megalomania induced by their new position. Successive military governments make the social, economic, political, and educational environments of Nigeria and Ghana unbearable to its population thereby pushing most of its citizens out of the country. Gifty's mother in Gyasi's *Transcendent Kingdom* dreams and wishes to "give her son the world" (Gyasi, p. 243). She hopes for a better future for him out of the webs and caprices of the devastating Ghanaian society. The narrator states that:

> …and so within a week she had applied for the green card lottery…my mother found out that she had been randomly selected for permanent residency in America a few months later. She packed with the little she owned, bundled up baby Nana, and moved to Alabama, a state she had never heard of but where she planned to stay with her cousin, who was finishing up her PhD. The Chin Chin man would follow later, after they had saved up enough money for a second plane ticket and a home of their own. (Gyasi, p. 16)

Gifty's mother does not believe in the possibility of giving her son Nana a good life in Ghana because of the adverse economic situation of the nation. Migrating to America is the only way out according to her. She is bent on escaping the snares of poverty. Since moving to Europe involves considerable cost, she intends to take her husband (The Chin Chin man) with them when the time is right; this is to say, when they are financially stable to afford his trip and get a decent house for themselves and their children.

Chisom in Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* who bloomed in aspirations after her graduation of getting a job in Lagos ends up disappointed at the state of affairs in Nigeria and decides to relocate abroad for a better life. "I'm glad I've graduated" (Unigwe, p. 18), she often said with such pride. The days after her graduation were filled with laughter and impatience to hit the job market. The narrator states:

> She did not need a clairvoyant to predict her future, not when she had a degree from a good university. She will get a house for herself. Rent somewhere big for her parents. Living with three people in two rooms, she wanted a massive house…she had envisaged her four years of studying Finance and Business Administration culminating, quite logically, with a job in a bank, one of those banks dotting Lagos like a colony of trees. She might even be given a company car with a company driver… (Unigwe, pp. 18-20)

Chisom's anticipated success is the only gate way out of poverty for herself and her family. Her parents depend on the benevolence of the government to give her a good job at the bank which will change their life for good. The difficult economy of Nigeria does not give them the pleasure of living their dream lives:

> Chisom was expected to have a house with room enough for her parents. A bedroom for them. A bed bedroom for herself. A sitting room with a large coloured TV. A kitchen with an electric cooker, and cupboard for the pots and pans and plates they would need. No more storing pots under the bed. A kitchen painted lavender…a soft, subtle colour that would make them forget this Ogba kitchen that was black with the smoke of many kerosene fires. A generator. No longer at the mercy of NEPA…they laughed and dreamed spurred by Chisom's grades…which were good enough to encourage their dreams. (Unigwe, pp. 20-21)

Chisom being the only child who has to help her parents, look for other means of survival when she could not get a job after two years of graduation from the university. Despite all her efforts, life becomes worse for the entire family. "…she had spent the better part of the two years scripting meticulous application letters and mailing them along with her resume to many different banks in Lagos" (Unigwe, p. 22). Her job hunting does not yield any fruit as she is not called for any interview. "It was as if her resumes were being swallowed by the many potholes on Lagos roads" (Unigwe, p. 22). This use of personification does not only portray the underdevelopment of the country but it also shows the gravity of unemployment that has ravaged the Nigerian economy as graduates cannot boast of putting their grades to use and serve their nation. "*I must escape*" (Unigwe, p. 30) Chisom laments. Chisom dreamed of leaving Lagos. *This place has no future*. She tried to imagine another year in this flat her father rented in Ogba. She tried not to breathe too deeply because doing so would be inhaling the stench of mildewed dreams (Unigwe, p. 18). Chisom makes up her mind to migrate to Belgium in search of greener pastures. Dele encourages her to make hay while the sun shines and leave Nigeria. He says "if you wan' comot from this our nonsense country, come see me make we talk" (Unigwe, p. 32). Being desperate Chisom accepts the offer without being exactly sure of how she will manage the expenses. Dele adds:

> I dey get girls everywhere. Italy. Spain. I fit get you inside Belgium. Antwerp. I get plenty connections there. Plenty, plenty…But I no dey do charity o. so it go cost you. Taty t'ousand euros it go cost you o…'Na when you get there, begin work, you go begin dey pay. Instalmental payment we dey call am. Mont by mont' you go dey pay me' He spoke through a mouthful of chewed corn…and spittle splatter onto the table… (Unigwe, pp. 34-35)

Dele's offer no matter how ridiculous is the best Chisom has got in two years after graduation with no prospect of a job. She agrees to send five hundred euros or a minimum of a hundred to Dele every month as part of his payment. "No try cross me o. nobody cross Senghor Dele" (Unigwe, p. 42) he warns Chisom. He praises himself thus:

> 'I get connections. Dat one no be your worry. As long as you day ready to work you go make am, you work hard and five hundred euro every month no go hard for you to pay. Every month I send gals to Europe. Antwerp. Milan. Madrid. My gals dey there. Every month four gals. Sometimes five or more…you be fine gal…make them come see your

> assets, as for those melons way you carry for chest…how you no go fin' work? ... But I swear, with your melons, you go dey mint money anyhow. (Unigwe, pp. 42-44)

Chisom leaves the shackles of hardship in Nigeria to embrace life as a prostitute in Antwerp. The narrator elaborates that "She was ready to set forth bravely into her future. And it was all thanks to Dele. She owed him her life" (Unigwe, p. 48). She changes her name from Chisom to Sisi. She adopts a new identity to be able to live a better life. "Chisom would be airbrushed out of existence, at least for a while" (Unigwe, p. 44). As a graduate, this is not the kind of life she wishes to have, but the situation in which she finds herself pushes her to take drastic measures to eradicate poverty from her family and put smiles on the faces of her parents. She hopes that when life favors her in Belgium, "she would set up a business or two. She could go into the business of importing second-handed luxury cars into Nigeria" (Unigwe, pp. 44-45)

Alek in *On Black Sisters' Street* equally finds herself in a refugee camp when soldiers killed her entire family in Sudan. She explains that, "In the night I couldn't sleep because of the cold. But also because we were leaving Daru for a refugee camp" (Unigwe, p. 187). Due to political instability, Alek's father wants them to move close to Khartoum and subsequently migrate to the United Kingdom or America. The devastating beginning of the war is highlighted in the text in the following words:

> The Sudan People's Liberation Army, which had been guarding the predominantly Dinka town, was withdrawing. There was a rumor that the Janjaweed militia were making their way to Daru. To sniff out the SPLA members. And to cleanse the city of its Dinka population. (Unigwe, p. 187)

Alek and her family witness and experience the brutality of the military. They are trampled upon and harassed by those put in place to ensure the safety of its citizens—soldiers. During the raid the soldiers forcefully get into Nyok's house (Alek's father) in an attempt to destroy and take life. In an authoritative tone they demand, "Where are they?'… 'Where are the rebels? Bring them out' Brrgghh. A kick against the cupboard door" (Unigwe, p. 188). Alek's father in great fear who hides his children in the cupboard insists that there is nobody in his house except himself and his wife. The narrator elucidates:

The soldiers wanted to ransack the room. To check every bit of it. Under the bed, the cupboard, the drawers, Between the books. Pa tried to stop them from checking the cupboard. It's just us, sir, honestly. There is no one else here. Just my wife and me'…her father's voice faltering…'please…pl…e-ase, spare us. A voice that did not sound like his…A stillness. Inside the cupboard, the smell of fear. Rising and rising. Then, a wail. Ma sounding bigger, louder. (Unigwe, p. 189)

Alek's mother cries out in agony when the soldiers shot her husband in front of her because he tries to protect his family. Her stubborn and consistent wailing attracts a bullet to her head as she too is shut dead by the heartless soldiers. Without any hesitation, Alek comes out of the cupboard and goes insane when she sees the lifeless bodies of her parents in the pool of their own blood. "Her parent's bodies were sprawled on the ground, an island between her and the soldiers. Her father's *jalabiya* was turning the bright red of a medicine man's. She looked away from the bodies. Quickly. And focused on the men"

(Unigwe, p. 190). The anger and pain she feels during this moment is unimaginable as she says "All I wanted was to be able to attack these men who had just blown my life away, as if it were a handful of dust" (Unigwe, p. 190). The pain she feels is added as these soldiers rape her in turns:

> He tore my dress. I fought, but he tore my dress. And threw me on the bed. She tried to bite him. He felt her teeth grazed his arm and slapped her. She dug her nails into his arm. Another slap. She aimed for his eyes. He pinned her hands down…she wanted to inflict a darkness on him he could never emerge from…A pain in her soldier. One of the other soldiers had hit her with the butt of a rifle…when he thrust his manhood inside her…Alek felt a grief so incomprehensible…one by one the other men came and thrust themselves into her, pulling out and coming on her face. Telling her to ingest it; it was good protein. Good food. Fit for African slaves…Alek had no idea how long she was left there. Naked. (Unigwe, pp. 190-191)

At age fifteen, Alek is ripped from her innocence by heartless soldiers who want to satisfy their greedy desires. Being vulnerable and helpless there is nothing she could do to help herself. When her brother comes out of the cupboard to help her fight, "A soldier aimed his gun at him and shot. Lifted him off his feet. Landed him with a *whack* on the floor. He did not make a sound. Not before. And not after" (Unigwe, p. 191). All these traumas put together propel Alek to migrate in search of security and economic prosperity.

6. Diasporic Realities and Deferred Dreams

People migrate for reasons best known to them; these could range from employment, education, health care benefits, and many other factors. However, the host country has its own challenges and short comings which affect migrants both socially and economically at different levels. Immigrants leave their host country for the New World with hopes of living a life of bliss but this is not entirely the case in some scenarios. Efe in *Unigwe's On Black Sisters' Street* had a perfect impression of Belgium—the country next door to London. The image she had buried in her head is far from the reality she is living now. The narrator explains:

> Before Efe came to Belgium, she imagined castles and clean streets and snow as white as salt. But now when she thinks of it, when she talks of where she lives in Antwerp, she described it as botched dream. She talks about it in much the same way as she describes Joyce in her absence: created for elegance but never quite accomplishing it. In this part of Antwerp, huge offices stand alongside grotty warehouses and desolate fruits stalls run by effusive Turks and Moroccans… (Unigwe, p. 24)

The impeccable picture Efe nursed in her mind is not what she actually meets. Living in Antwerp to her feels like a ruined and unaccomplished dream—the realty hits her on the face. She finds it hard if not impossible that offices could be close to warehouses and deserted fruit stalls. This looks strange to her because she assumed everything to be perfect in this part of the world. Sisi equally expresses

disappointment when she arrives her at their residence in Zwartezusterstraat for the first time as the narrator explains:

> The house itself was not much to look at either. Truth be told, it was a disappointment. A ground-floor flat with a grubby door and, as she would find out later, five bedrooms not much bigger than telephone booths. The sitting room was a cliché. An all-red affair except for the long sofa, which was black, and on the wall, right beside the door, a single thin mirror ran from the ceiling to the rug…Sisi was shown into a small room with a single bed… (Unigwe, p. 99)

The reality of the house Sisi will be staying with the other girls shocks her as she had envisaged herself in a rosy and blissful mansion in Belgium. The narrator paints her excitement thus, "when she got off the plane in Brussels, the remnants of her old life folded away in her carry-on luggage, and saw her new life stretching out like a multi-colored vista before her eyes…" (Unigwe, p. 98). This idea of a perfect life in Belgium starts becoming blur in Sisi's eyes when she meets the reality. As the narrator adds, "the Zwartezusterstraat wore the look of a much maligned childless wife in a polygamous home. No amount of light could lift it from the bleak neglect into which it had settled, a desolation which would only deepen with time" (Unigwe, p. 99).

Africans work as cleaners and caretakers alongside business men and women in Europe. Gifty's mother in Gyasi's *Transcendent Kingdom* works as a home health aide for a man called Mr. Thomas who makes life unbearable for her. She accepts the job because she does not have much of a choice. Gifty explains her mother's ordeal thus:

> Mr. Thomas was an octogenarian with early-stage Parkinson's disease whose tremors had not deterred his foul mouth. My mother wiped his ass, fed him, watched Jeopardy! With him…Mr. Thomas'…kids had hired five other home health aides before my mother. They'd all quit. (Gyasi, p. 27)

Gifty's mother holds on to her job despite the fact that it is a difficult task. She needs the money for her children's needs and she takes all the insults Mr. Thomas gives her in good faith just to secure her job. When she leaves Ghana to Alabama, she did not imagine life to be this hard that she will need to clean an old man's ass and get paid. Gifty feels sorry for her mother considering the nature of her job. The narrator expounds on the condition of Gifty's mother that "When she got home from work, feet swollen, arms aching, ears stinging with Mr. Thomas's abuse, Nana would already be in bed…" (Gyasi, p. 40). She comes home exhausted to the core and does not have time to spend with her family. Her husband the Chin Chin man's job is no better; he works as a janitor at a day care center and "he was paid under the table, seven dollars an hour, an hour a day, five days a week…" (Gyasi, p. 39). Gifty's mother goes through so much pain knowing that she cannot do the best for her children. Gifty explains that:

> My mother certainly wanted us to be successful, to live in such a way that we wouldn't end up having to work tiring, demanding jobs like she did. But that sale tiring, low-

> paying work meant that she was often too busy to know if we were making good grades and too broke to get us help if we weren't. (Gyasi, pp. 101-111)

Gifty's parents take their children to America to give them a good life but they get so carried away by their quest for a successful life that they do not even have the time to follow up the progress of their children in school. They actually go through a lot of stress to put food on the table for their children, yet their best is not good enough. Their jobs cannot take care of their household expenditures. Gifty's mother laments "These children are going to eat us out of home and house" (Gyasi, p. 63). Despite their efforts, the children still could not have enough to eat. Gifty explains that in an attempt to control the way they eat, their "Parents started hiding whatever food could be hidden…" (Gyasi, p. 63). Life becomes harder for them every day; Gifty feels pity for her mother who pulls out a bill from her purse lamenting that "We will all starve if we don't start making more money. We can't afford to live like this any longer" (Gyasi, p. 64). This shows the extent to which they are in difficulty, both husband and wife cannot boast of being able to properly take care of their home. Out of frustration and anger the Chin Chin Man reminds his wife that "You were the one who wanted to come here remember?" (Gyasi, p. 64). He reminds her of the decision she took without having a second thought—without thinking of the possibility of any stumbling block. Their life becomes a living hell as Gifty explains in the following lines:

> My parents started fighting every day. They fought about money, how there was never enough. They fought about time, about displays of affection, about the minivan, about the height of the grass in the lawn, about scripture. *But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh*. The Chin Chin Man hadn't just left his father and his mother; he'd left his country as well, and he wouldn't let my mother forget it… (Gyasi, pp. 68-69)

Gifty's parents become strangers to themselves as they start to fight over little things due to frustration. The life they expected to see and the wealth they expected to amass is not forthcoming so they all become angry at each other. The Chin Chin Man regrets his enormous sacrifice by leaving his country to come to America—a land which is strange to him. He cries out in regrets saying "In my country, people may not have money, but they have happiness in abundance…no one in America is enjoying" (Gyasi, p. 69). They come to the realization that America is a difficult place which has its own challenges.

In fact, Gifty's mother starts to rely on sleeping pills due to excessive working hours and stress. This, however, affects her negatively as she slowly becomes a shadow of herself and a stranger to Gifty. She recounts that:

> She stood there leaning against my doorframe for a little while longer. In those days, and still, I was always wondering how to be with her. Should I have gotten up and forced her into a hug? She told me she was going to take an Ambien. She left the room, and I could hear her rustling down the bathroom searching for sleeping pills she'd come to rely on to survive her many years of working the night shift…the Ambien made my

> mother loopy and mean. She would take one pill but wouldn't fall asleep right away. Instead she would wonder around the house, looking for trouble…On Ambien her words were always slow, slurred, like each one was dipped in the shocked sleep of that drug before it escaped her lips… (Gyasi, pp. 189-190)

Gifty's mother becomes dependent on pills to sleep and forget her stress and long working hours. According to her it is the best way to survive but little does she know she is harming herself slowly as she gradually becomes a stranger to her daughter who does not know how to act in front of her anymore. She drugs herself to find peace, rest and solace but it does not work exactly the way she anticipates as she becomes a torn in Gifty's flesh after she takes the pill. Even when she sleeps and wakes up, she is still out of this world as Gifty makes us understand:

> Whenever she woke up from the drug-induced sleep, she looked…a woman who had been dropped down onto some deserted island and told that she had only an hour to find water. Her eyes were wild. The pupils darted around, searching, searching. Watching her, I would feel like a lion tamer or a snake charmer. (Gyasi, p. 190)

The quest for greener pastures has created a tremendous impact on the transformation of Gifty's mother. She acts differently, and this scares Gifty who starts to feel like a lion tamer; her mother becomes wild and she has to give her sleeping pills. She even starts forgetting things after she wakes up: She asks: "Where am I?" (Gyasi, p. 190). When she is reminded by Gifty that she is at home, she screams in total dismay "No" and quickly goes back to bed. (Gyasi, p. 190).

In Gyasi's *Transcendent Kingdom*, Nana who is taken to America to be given the world does not live up to his expectations as he becomes a drug addict. Nana becomes addicted to OxyContin and his family only notices this after two months, being ignorant about drugs his mother assumed that it will soon come to an end—but it became worse. Gifty expounds thus:

> …What did we know about addiction?... I didn't really understand what was going on yet. I just knew that Nana was always sleepy or sleeping. His head was always nodding, chin to chest, before rolling or bouncing violently back up. I would see him on our couch with this dreamy look on his face and wonder… (Gyasi, p. 152)

Gifty wonders what is happening to his brother, and little did she know that she is slowly losing him to addiction. At a very tender age Nana is introduced to drugs and this makes him behave strange sometimes and Gifty is baffled by the fact that he is always in a drowsy mood with his head always nodding from one direction to the other. Due to shame and stigmatization, their mother decides that they keep Nana's situation a secret—"I knew without asking that my mother expected us to keep Nana's addiction close to the chest, and the secret ate away at me like moths in cloth" (Gyasi, p. 159). Nana's situation puts his family in a state of distress as Gifty explains:

> …there were times when my mother and I had been driving all over Huntsville for hours searching for Nana, times when I saw him strung out in front of the carp-filled pond at Big Spring Park when I would think, God, I wish it was cancer, not for his sake

> but for mine. Not because the nature of his suffering will change significantly but because the nature of my suffering would. I would have a better story than the one I had. I would have a better answer to the questions "Where's Nana? What happened to Nana?" (Gyasi, p. 160)

Gifty feels nothing but pity for her younger brother Nana who sometimes goes missing for hours and compels his family to walk and drive all over the city looking for him. She wishes her brother had a disease like cancer rather than for him to suffer, but for her sanity and to save herself from the shame of having to tell someone that her brother is a drug addict. Nana's addiction motivates Gifty in her neuroscientist studies, and she seeks to understand what is happening to Nana. She laments:

> Nana is the reason I began this work…this science was a way for me to challenge myself, to do something truly hard, and in so doing to work through all of my misunderstandings about his addiction and all shame. Because I still have so much shame. I'm full to the brim with it; I'm spilling over. I can look at my data again and again. I can look at scan after scan of drug-addicted brains shot through with holes, Swiss-cheesed, atrophied, irreparable. I can watch that blue light flash through the brain of a mouse and note the behavioral changes that take place because of it and know how many years of difficult, arduous science went into those tiny changes, and still, still, think, Why didn't Nana stop? Why didn't he get better for us? For me? (Gyasi, p. 160)

Despite the fact that Gifty spent a lot of time in the lab carrying out research to know how the brain could function in time of difficulty, she could still not find a way to help Nana out of his addiction. She wonders why he could not understand the suffering, pain, and the shame he is causing his family and actually stop taking opium. No matter what they do as a family it could be of no use to Nana as he is constantly being seduced by the fantasy he gets from drugs, he says "It feels amazing, like everything inside my head just empties out and then there's nothing left—in a good way" (Gyasi, p. 145). He is being consumed in his inner search for peace and happiness in a society that his mother wished would give him a better life. Gifty adds that:

> He'd been sober for maybe a couple of weeks, but then he didn't come home one night, and we knew. One night turned into two, turned into three. My mother and I didn't sleep for waiting. As the two of us drove around looking for him, I thought about how tired Nana must have been, tired of our mother washing him in bathtub like he'd reverted to his original state, tired of all the nothing in a bad way…he was gone, just gone. My mother wanted me to help her get him in the car…I kept dropping them, and then start crying and she would yell at me. The thing I will never forget is that people were watching us do all of this…we were three black people in distress. Nothing to see… (Gyasi, pp. 160-161)

Nana gets missing for days and puts his family in confusion leading to his search all over the street with passerby's looking at them in anguish. He disappears from the house with no word and clue to where he

is off to. He is found along the street in a terrible state and Gifty cannot hold herself from crying. Little did her mother know that her son whom he takes to America to give him the world has been totally consumed by addiction and there is no turning back. Gifty in tears says "I was sitting in the back with Nana's head in my lap…snuffling…we got to the house he woke up, but in a zombie-like way that people who got high woke up. He didn't know where he was" (Gyasi, p. 161).

The pain in which Nana puts her mother is unbearable. Anguish over takes her and she starts hitting Nana urging him to stop taking drugs—but he is far away in the land of the unknown that he does not even feel his mother's agony. The narrator states that "She started slapping him and he didn't even lift his hands to his face…he did nothing. 'This has to stop' she kept saying as she hit him. 'This has to stop. This has to stop.' But she couldn't stop hitting him and he couldn't stop being hit. He couldn't stop any of it" (Gyasi, p. 161).

Drugs consume Nana in a way that even his mother's tears mean nothing to him—it practically destroys his life and the well-being of his family. Out of frustration Gifty cries out "Dear God, I wish Nana would just die already, please just let this be over" (Gyasi, p.170). Gifty sends a heartbreaking request to God; she cannot stand the pain of her brother's suffering. Death, according to her becomes the only way to freedom and the restoration of peace in her family. As a Christian, Gifty believes that when her brother dies, he will leave behind all the tribulations of the world to a more welcoming and peaceful place where there is no pain, no sorrow nor addiction—paradise. It is based on this biblical premise that Gifty begs God to take her brother, perhaps to a transcendent kingdom. Gifty explains the effects of drugs on Nana thus:

> …his skin looked like (swallow)…his hair looked like (uncombed, uncut). I can tell you that he, always too skinny, had lost so much weight that his eyes started to bulge against the sunkeness of his orbital sockets…Nana started stealing from our mother. Small things at first, her wallet, her checkbook, but soon the car was gone and so was the dining room table. Soon Nana was gone too. For days and weeks at a time he went missing, and my mother went after him… (Gyasi, p. 178)

Due to excessive drug consumption, Nana becomes a thief—stealing from the same woman who has sacrificed her happiness for his. He moves from bad to worse, and there is nothing else his mother could do than to pray and wish he comes back home after his perilous adventures. Gifty cries out in pain that "Nana's addiction had become the sun around which all of our lives revolved. I didn't want to stare directly at it" (Gyasi, p. 144). Being totally damaged even his stay at home becomes dangerous to the family as Gifty explains:

> Those were the days of the broken things. Nana punched a hole through the wall. He smashed the television down unto the floor, and shattered every picture frame and light bulb in the house. He called me a nosy cunt the night I caught him raving downstairs, and my mother ran up so that the two of us could hide from him. We blocked the door to my room with a chair, but soon he was ponding against it "Fuck you both" he said,

> and we could hear the sound of his shoulders smashing against the door, and we could see the way the door wanted to give from his hinges, wanted to let him in. And my mother answered loud in prayer "Lord, protect my son. Lord, protect my son." I was afraid… (Gyasi, p. 179)

Nana becomes a threat to his family and a danger to the society. He becomes insane and destroys their belongings with no remorse and almost beats up his mother and sister. His mother out of desperation, panic and fear cries out to the Lord for help and protection. She still cannot believe what her only son has turned into—a barbarian and a torn to her flesh. Gifty laments thus "For years before he died, I would look at his face and think, What a pity. What a waste" (Gyasi, p. 145). Nana's excesses finally kill him, Gifty exemplifies this scenario as follows:

> How do I talk about the day he died?...we both stared at the clock, and then the door, the clock then the door. He didn't come in. we had developed a routine, an unspoken rule. Nana got two days before we hoped in the car and searched for him. He got four days before we called the police, but he had only come to that one, and that night was day one. We weren't there yet. We didn't know to worry, so when the police knocked on our door at about nine o'clock to tell us that Nana had an overdose on heroin and died in the parking lot of a Starbucks, we were blindsided. We'd thought our routine will save us. Save him… (Gyasi, p. 180)

Nana dies a shameful and painful death. Her mother breaks down and falls into the arms of depression. She throws herself to the ground, clawing at her arms and legs until she drew blood, crying out the Lords name "Awurade, Awurade, Awurade" (Gyasi, p. 184). We see the use of language abrogation and appropriation at this point as she uses her native language to cry and mourn her son. Nana's demise brings up a lot of uncertainty; he may not have ended up like this if he stayed back in Ghana with his father. The society in which he finds himself consumes him, and he slowly takes his life in a desperate quest to find happiness and uncontrollable excitement. No one, not even his mother could turn back the hands of time—to Ghana.

7. Beckoning Homeland: Towards Communal Consciousness

Migrants are usually left with no choice than returning home after being disillusioned and when their strategies of survival do not go as planned. They prefer to embrace the realities of their lives than constantly force themselves to fit in their host countries. While in America, Gifty's father in Gyasi's *Transcendent Kingdom* feels incomplete and wishes to reunite with his home country. The new life he lives in Alabama frustrates him and instills a feeling of nostalgia that he cannot resist. We cannot help but notice he misses his motherland as the narrator emphasizes: "The Chin Chin Man hadn't just left his father and his mother; he'd left his country as well" (Gyasi, p. 69). This, however plays negatively on him as he is not even totally accepted in Alabama due to the color of his skin, and the hardship he faces to take care of his family as a man, he cries out in homesickness:

In my country, neighbors will greet you by turning their heads away like they don't know you:

> In my country, you can eat food fresh from the ground. Corn, hard on its cob, not soft like the spirit of these people.
>
> In my country, there is no word for half-sibling, stepsibling, aunt, or uncle. There is only sister, brother, mother and father. We are not divided.
>
> In my country, people may not have money, but they have happiness in abundance. In abundance. No one in America is enjoying…America is a difficult place. (Gyasi, p. 69)

The double-consciousness of immigrants leaves them torn between two homes and reveals a serious contradiction at the heart of their longing to return to a place where they belong—as is the case with The Chin Chin Man. His repetition of "In my country" exemplifies the extent to which he deeply longs to belong to his homeland; he wants to enjoy the bounty and the happiness that comes with being where you are totally free and accepted for who you truly are. He finally returns to his land of origin in a somewhat cowardly way as he says "I'm going home to visit my brother" (Gyasi, p. 70). The Chin Chin man said and he never went back to see his family again. Once he is asked when he was going to visit them, he lies, Gifty says "Even after soon, soon, soon turned into maybe, turned into never" (Gyasi, p. 70). Their father care much about his live in Ghana than in America as he takes the bull by the horns and embraces who he really is. His reconnecting with his roots does not mean a complete return to the past or complete rejection of Western culture, but rather a negotiation of the two cultures.

Just like Gifty's father, Efe's body is in Belgium but her mind, spirit and soul are in Nigeria. She lacks concentration as she always thinks about her son L.I and wishes to reunite with him desperately. She does not feel complete staying away from home and this makes her to become a shadow of her own self. The narrator explains Efe's feelings thus:

> Efe said she wishes she could see L.I. She says that when she talks to him on the phone it's like talking to a stranger and that bothers her…she is worried that L.I does not think of her as a mother, even though Rita once told her on the phone that L.I. carries her picture to school, the picture of her in snow boots that she had sent home her first winter in Belgium… (Unigwe, p. 93)

Efe feels incomplete as a mother for leaving behind her son to embrace the snows of Belgium. The feeling of doubt if her son actually loves her and knows her as his mother keeps her restless to the point of her return to Nigeria. She expresses her fears with her son when they talk on phone thus "…I always feel like he wants to get off the phone, that he'd much rather be somewhere else" (Unigwe, p. 93). This feeling of detachment makes Efe to long for home and be a mother to her son who is gradually forgetting her. Christina Heckmann in "Concepts of Home and Belonging in Postcolonial Literature" holds that, "home has a significant function in our lives. Thinking of home, we associate notions like shelter and comfort and when we come home we want to feel safe and welcome" (par 1).

Gyasi and Unigwe examine issues of place and displacement as necessary evils which often lead to suffering, psychological anguish, and frustration. As characters move from their homeland to a totally

new locale, they face challenges that leave them with no choice than to choose between their going back to their roots or staying to wallow in perpetual frustration in the host country. Sisi in *On Black Sisters' Street* is not comfortable with the kind of job she does in Belgium and this plays negatively on her psycho-moral formulation as she becomes a shadow of herself and filled with regrets. The narrator exposes her feelings in the following lines:

> While she had never been comfortable in her job, there was now a certain aversion added to the discomfort. She could no longer bear to look at herself, not even when she was alone. When she took a bath, she sponged her body once without looking at it. Regrets assailed her day in, day out. She smiled, but behind that smile her regrets grew bigger and bigger, its shadow casting a pallor over her. She began to wish she had never left home, rueing the day she'd met Dele. Why had she gone to his office? Why had she been taken in by his promise of wealth and glamour? When a customer asked her to lie spread-eagled, while he yelled whore at her and jerked off to that, she felt something akin to revulsion. Her walks into Antwerp city increased in both frequency and length. She woke early and walked along the Keyserlei and the Grote Market. She made detours into the alleyways, discovering old buildings that held no real interest in her. (Unigwe, pp. 247-248)

Sisi wishes to return to her place of origin as she becomes a shadow of herself. The job (prostitution) she comes to Belgium to do does not give her any satisfaction as it becomes a torn in her flesh. This unfulfillment makes her feel betrayed, and she curses the day she met Dele to strike a deal with him for her to travel abroad. She regrets ever going to his office in the first place. Her body becomes her worst nightmare that keeps steering at her in the face, and she refuses to look at it directly because of her disappointment. All these put together rekindle regret in her—she wishes she did not undertake this adventure. This spirit of reawakening that strikes her makes her realize that she is better-off in Nigeria—where she at least had inner peace than in Belgium.

As a result of her restlessness, Sisi always calls home despite the cost. She calls because she misses home and wishes to reconnect with her lost self. Despite the fact that she gets to talk with her parents on phone, she still does not feel complete as she speaks in monotones:

> Yes, I'm fine.
> Yes, I started school.
> Yes, I work part-time in a nursing home.
> Yes, everything here is wonderful.
> Yes, I have made some friends.
> Yes, they are all wonderful.
> Yes, I never forget to say my prayers… (Unigwe, p. 260)

Sisi wishes to be on the other side of the call—home. Even though she has the rare privilege to talk with her mother, this does not stop her from having nostalgic feelings as she speaks in fragments. The narrator

explains Sisi's home sick feelings thus: "Sometimes…she called from her mobile phone…she telephoned home and tried not to think how much it was costing her. Cheaper to buy a calling card…but…the urge to call overtook everything else. Even economic sense" (Unigwe, p. 260). She feels empty knowing that she is not where her spirit wants to be at that moment.

Gyasi in *Transcendent Kingdom* also portrays the return to one's root for the purpose of reconnection. Gifty's mother sends her to Ghana for her to know her fatherland and possibly for her to understand her true identity. "I bought you a plane ticket to Ghana. You'll go there…" (Gyasi, p. 203), her mother says emphatically. Her return to Ghana paved the way for her to know who she truly is by meeting other members of her family she knew exist. She recounts that:

> I found myself on a plane, headed to a country I'd never been to before…the summer I went to Ghana was the summer I discovered that I had an aunt. When I arrived I was met not by my father but by a buxom, chatty woman whose face was the same as my mother's. The first thing my aunt Joyce did when she saw me was inspect my arm, lifting it up and flopping it back down against my side… (Gyasi, pp. 203-204).

Gifty meets her aunt for the first time in her life and it was an amazing experience. Even though she has never been to Ghana before, she does not decline her mother's request of her going there. His return enables her to identify with her people, visit places she never knew existed and reconnect with her lineage. She admits having learnt a lot of things back home as she explains, "That summer in Ghana, I learned to pound fufu. I learned to haggle at the market, to get used to cold-water bucket baths, to shake coconuts down from their trees. I developed an encyclopedia of knowledge…" (Gyasi, p. 207).

Despite a certain degree of success that migrants have in their host countries, there is this longing for home characterized by a bleakness and continuous want. This highlights a consciousness of the African heritage that they want to identify with. This journey of self-awareness has a critical ending that inspires Africans to have faith and confidence in themselves and keep away the complexes colonialism imposed on them and their continent. This end thus serves as a model of how Africans can move forward while still having faith in their identities, culture, and continent.

8. Conclusion

This paper examined migration, diasporic realities and the quest for home in in Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* and Yaa Gyasi's *Transcendent Kingdom.* The study was geared at exploring and exploiting the reasons why Africans migrate to Europe and America and the various socio-economic experiences they encounter in the New world and how this affects their sense of belonging.

The work looked at the political and socio-economic climates of the various settings of the novels in order to demonstrate how characters perceive the concept of place depending on the circumstances they find themselves in. It analyzed the political instability, and socio-economic hardships in Nigeria and Ghana as factors which cause characters to long for different identities. Furthermore, the study has

demonstrated how failure, stereotyping and racial discrimination dent characters' dreams to belong to the new societies that they migrate to.

Placing the texts under against the backdrop of the Postcolonial theory, permitted us to explore the effects of colonialism on the postcolonial subject and how this affects identity negotiation. It equally provides us with relevant conceptual framework to deconstruct oppressing imperial ideologies and engage in questions about transnationality and hybridity that can re-invent the manner in which culture and identity are being viewed. It examined how the shift from one's locality to a completely different environment shatters the character's sense of belonging in the host country.

The analysis has therefore demonstrated the fact that one cannot find a home anywhere he or she pleases. Gifty's mother for instance tries to find happiness by creating a new home in her host country and give her son Nana the world. Regrettably for her, the country she loves so much has no room for her and her family, as a result, she breaks down into depression and finally dies. Although in the postcolonial dispensation it is believed that home is anywhere you make it, Gifty's mother and a host of other migrants in the texts under study, do not succeed in making a home in Europe and America as they had anticipated. But in the African sense home is where you actually belong. Home, as the analysis has demonstrated, is a place that accommodates the characters holistically, that does not expect them to be what they are not. The characters are left with no option than to re-invent themselves by going back to their place of origin.

References

Gyasi, Y. (2020). *Transcendent Kingdom.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Unigwe, C. (2009) *On Black Sisters Street.* New York: Random House.

Secondry Sources

Ashcroft, B., Gareth, G., & Helen, T. (1995). *The Post-colonial Studies Reader.* London: Rutledge.

---. (1989). *The Empire Writes Back: Theory of Practice in Post-Colonial Literature*. London: Rutledge.

Cohen, J. H., & Ibraham, S. (2011). *Culture of Migration: The Global Nature of Contemporary Mobility*. Texas: University of Texas Press.

Drussilla, T. (24 Dec. 2006). *The Problem with African Leadership: Ethnic, Racial, or Sectarian Politics*. Nairland Forum. Retrieved December 6, 2021, from http://www.nairland.com/html.

Fanon, F. (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld.

Flender, M. (2019) *Narrating the New African Diaspora: 21st Century Nigerian Literature in Context*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Frank, S. (2008). *Migration and Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

George, R. M. (1996). *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth Century Fiction.* London: University of California Press Ltd.

Onyeani, C. (2012). *Capitalist Nigger: The Road to Success: A Spider Web Doctrine*. Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers.

Said, E. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Stuart, B. F., & Jess, S. (Eds.). (1983). *The Random House Dictionary.* New York: Random House.

David, C. (Eds.). (1993). *The Cambridge Paperback Encyclopedia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.