DISLOCATION AND STRATEGIES FOR BELONGING IN SELECTED SHORT STORIES OF NIGERIAN MIGRANT WRITERS

BY

JOY IKECHUKWU NWIYI
B.A. (Calabar), M.A. (Ibadan)
MATRIC NO.: 139521

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was carried out by Mrs. Joy Ikechukwu **NWIYI** in the Department of English, University of Ibadan

_____

Supervisor
Dr Adedoyin A. Aguoru,
B.Ed. (English) (Ilorin), M.I.R. (Ile-Ife), M.A., Ph.D. (Ibadan)
Department of English, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

DEDICATION

For you, Writer of time, Alpha and Omega.

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Joy Ikechukwu Nwiyi
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ABSTRACT

The dislocation of individuals from homeland and attempts to belong in transnational spaces in contemporary times have become significant aspects of Nigerian migrant prose fiction. This prose fiction has gained prominence following the re-invention of the homeland irrespective of the migrant status of its writers. Studies of these writings have examined the novel genre and the re-invention of socio-political realities, with little attention to the short story genre and its concerns with dislocation and belonging. This study, therefore, examined the creative impulses of five writers for articulating dislocation and how strategies for belonging in transnational spaces in the selected short stories are negotiated.

Postcolonial literary theory and aspects of the Freudian Psychoanalytic literary theory were adopted. Thirty three stories were selected from five short story collections based on the writers' migrant perspective and significant preoccupation with dislocation and strategies for belonging. The texts were: *A Life Elsewhere* (ten stories) by Segun Afolabi, *Voice of America* (six stories) by E. C. Osondu, *News from Home* (six stories) by Sefi Atta, *The Thing around your Neck* (six stories) by Chimamanda Adichie and *Short Stories* (five stories) by Chika Unigwe. The stories were subjected to critical and literary analyses.

Migration and its corollaries were significant aspects of these writers' creative thrust and sensibilities. Identifiable perspectives that attested to the writers' dislocation were prominent in the stories. Dislocation and the strategies adopted in order to belong were projected textually. Thus, the narratives were versatile in oscillating between different locations. Afolabi's stories projected a narrative style fixated with conveying the psychological effects of dislocation, and the dilemma of dual consciousness and belongingz that attends this. He emphasised the internal crises of characters by employing the technique of interior monologue. Osondu focalised socio-cultural dislocation and problematised the existential complexities that circumscribe living in Nigeria or the diaspora. His creative strategy sustained dystopic images from Nigeria as a rationale for transnational existence, stereotyping his narrative approach and preoccupation. In Atta's narrative approach, survival was imperative. She strategised the survival of her characters and highlighted the human condition in national and transnational territories. However, she maintained a critical stance in interrogating the homeland. Critical socio-cultural realities attested to Unigwe's involvement in the re-invented spaces that were negotiated. She explicably mediated the realities of two spaces through the use of juxtaposition, flashback and digression. Adichie problematised the characters' perceptions of transnational existence. These stories developed as subtle narratives that emphasised an awareness of the realities she re-invented.

Nigerian migrant short stories displayed fluctuating literary focus between homeland and diaspora, and the literary approach of the writers functioned as an imperative for interacting, surviving and belonging in transnational spaces. These stories were critical in understanding transnational interaction and its complex implication in contemporary times.

Keywords: Nigerian migrant writers, Dislocation and strategies for belonging, Transnational spaces, Short stories.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

A dynamic body of literature belonging to Africa is evolving fast from outside the continent of Africa. This body of literature by Africans is largely influenced by changes in global existence and the perception of same. It interrogates transnational existence as well as foregrounds images of post-independence Africa. Through the creative thrust of migrant writers who traverse new metropolis and their nations of origin (homeland), varied images which reflect migrants' experiences and creatively illustrate the complexities of straddling different worlds are projected. These complexities are a significant aspect of the migrant writers' creative impetus in an era when migration and the formations of new diasporas are receiving critical attention globally (Lucassen et al, 2010; King, 2012). It is appreciable that, belonging to these modern transnational peregrinations are writers and postcolonial intellectuals whose unique sensibilities and perspectives have been significant in representing the appeal and complexities of migrancy (Krishnaswamy, 1995; Boehmer, 2005; Akeh, 2006; Okonkwo, 2010). Writers of Nigerian descent seem to be at the fore of this burgeoning tr8end in Africa and this study interrogates selected contemporary Nigerian short stories, the writers' aesthetic choices which are interpreted and appreciated against the background of a significant relationship between these writers, their migrant exposures and creative representations. Modern migration and transnational interaction has been enabling for the significant representation of dislocation and belonging negotiated in Nigerian migrant short stories.

Migrants' dislocation from their nations of origin (homeland) and the attempts to belong in transnational spaces in contemporary times have become a significant aspect of Nigerian migrant prose fiction. These narratives have gained prominence following the re-invention of socio-political realities of homeland irrespective of the migrant status of

their writers. Krishnaswamy (1995:126) contends that "it is precisely as spokespersons for the dislocated and the disenfranchised that postcolonial immigrant intellectuals have gained legitimacy in the international media-market". This study suggests that, with the growing need to understand the contemporary movement and settlement of people elsewhere, in places other than their original homelands; investigating this *vis-à-vis* the implications and reflections in contemporary Nigerian literature is germane.

Dislocation and belonging have become significant concepts in global times with the migration of individuals across transnational borders from their nations of origin and birth. With an increase in dislocation and the otherness that this usually signifies, belonging and having a sense of place becomes important. Dislocation in migrant literatures signifies displacement and the uprooting of individuals from their homeland, and the complex corollaries that follow. Krishnaswamy (1995:139) describes dislocation as an absorbing process with many possibilities. She asserts that "dislocation actually opens up an abundance of alternative locations, allowing the individual to own several different homes by first becoming homeless". Furthermore, she suggests that the process of dislocation could be multiple—temporal, spatial and linguistic. Akeh (2006:4) describes dislocation as some sort of alienation from "home". He states, that it is an integral aspect of the creating process of migrant writings since dislocation entails "uprootedness" that comes with a "frayed sense of certainty and communal loyalty". These descriptions highlight the paradox of dislocation.

The concept of belonging remains an imperative where dislocation is negotiated and discussed. Belonging describes a sense of place the migrant longs for as a result of being "dislocated" from his/her previous location (homeland). Inglis (2010) points that, belonging could entail an individual identifying with one or more places. Furthermore, he adds that this could involve identifying with a geographical location, people, a place or a mixture of all of these. This makes Krishnaswamy's definition above significant.

Dislocation and the significance of belonging or having a sense of place have contributed largely to shaping the migrant writer and defining his/her art significantly. Also, these conditions have created an enabling milieu for imaginative Nigerian narratives

investigating homeland through juxtaposed images informed by exilic exposures. Consequently, the reflection of these narratives on the representations of African identities in the diaspora, the diverse categories of geographical/physical, cultural and psychological dislocations from the homeland and the implications in these writings are significant. Since migration comes with its attendant complexities, new encounters, awareness and identities, the inevitable processes of acculturation through consistent exposures remains inevitable. Nigerian migrant fiction also project the complexities associated with dislocation from homelands, the imaginings of homeland and strategies for belonging elsewhere. These concepts will be discussed more extensively.

It is from diaspora and transnational settlements that these narratives assume their prominence (Krishnaswamy, 1995). Thus, understanding the allure of globalisation from the world centres, modern migration and the formation of diasporas is imperative to this study. Considering the relatively permanent nature of geographical relocation that characterises migration (Kok, 2010), migration carries with it the concerted "renegotiation of the concepts of identity, belonging, and home" (Frank, 2008:1). Subsequently, the processes that affect the migrant's adjustment and settlement into new spaces become enabling for the formation of diaspora when stretched.

The continent of Africa, and Nigeria more specifically, continues to experience the migration of people from within it shores for reasons ranging from, but not limited to wars (Jones, 2000) to the quest for greener pastures (Aderounmu, 2007; Sheffer, 2003). This easily establishes as varied the reasons for these movements, and delineates them by these motivations as voluntary or involuntary. Falola (2008) asserts that, notably, more voluntary migration has been on the increase from the 1980s. The degree of voluntariness in migrating to foreign lands can be weighed against the backdrop of the presence/ absence of structures capable of offering citizens opportunities for meaningful existence within national territories. As a result, what may therefore be described as "voluntary" may betray a good degree of compulsiveness since individuals seem compelled to make choices under the pressure of absent basic amenities, security and probable sources of livelihood. Olaniyan (2003:8) elaborates further on the manifold processes that foster the advancement of these migrations, drawing particular attention to "the scale and frequency

of transnational movements since the 1990s—and the associated development of discursive articulations of such transnationalism—", and the plausible implications of more enduring developments that attend these transnational movements; Olaniyan (2003:8) asserts that:

> Exile, a kind of opting out or forcing out, reveals incommensurabilities of interests, hopes and aspiration between individuals and the nation-state, incommensurabilities that the state always denote as crises… Exile thus puts a perpetual question mark on the nation-state and its idea by revealing its jagged edges and bursting seams that cannot be disciplined into conformity.

In examining the rationale behind these movements and the decision to emigrate, the difference in expectations of nationals on one hand, and the nation-state's inability to manage these alongside its own perceived needs is significant. Exile therefore becomes not only an opportunity for the nationals' survival elsewhere, but exposes the incapacity of their original homeland. In certain ways, there always seems to be an inseparable and inexorable connection between dysfunctional systems in the nation-state and exile as a corollary. A combination of adverse conditions and the deteriorating conditions in the homeland could therefore be described as facilitating present-day life in the diaspora. Relating to this, Kehinde (2007a) also attests to the implicit nature of exilic writings to raise questions on the dynamics of politics, economy and cultures of postcolonial nations and the ongoing trend of globalisation. These conditions, the seeming disinterests of individuals in ancestral homelands and the need to evade it therefore remain a visible thrust in these contemporary literary works. This unfortunately, besmirches the image of the nation-state, reveals it as stifling and suggests implicitly that its present state is unsatisfactory and should be evaded. It would seem therefore that, while some migrations are forced, others are voluntary. These and more make up the background of developing multidisciplinary studies on the subject of dispersals (migration and exile), the formation of new "homes" outside national borders and permanent settlements or what may be known as diasporas in contemporary times (Kanneh, 1998; Sheffer, 2003).

The term "diaspora" is conceptualised in Greek and denotes the dispersion of Jewish communities outside the shores and land mass of Jewish heritage. Sheffer (2003)

however points that the concept has since the twentieth century lengthened its borders to accommodate even tribal, other racial expansions and settlements outside ancestral home spaces. In addition to memorable migrant thoughts and discourses that address the formation of the African American and Afro-Caribbean diasporas, the contemporary African diaspora includes lasting voluntary or forced exiles and new immigrants of African descent negotiating existence in other parts of the world (Sougou, 2010). This accounts for the proliferations of African diasporas worldwide. These dispersions and their different interactions globally have engendered Diaspora studies, with views that cover a wide range of disciplines ranging from orature, music, dance to literature being considered as significant modes that give expression to the diasporic experience and discourse (Fox, 1999). While the initial dispersion of Africans was interwoven with the transatlantic slave trade system in the Americas, a more contemporary mass departure of Africans from the shores of Africa and the possibilities associated with this are described by Okafor (2010:28) thus:

> The catastrophic collapse of the economies of most independent African nations has in recent times triggered another exodus from the continent. This time, however, the emigration is voluntary and involves the most educated members of the African states. This brain drain has over the years created a second African diaspora in America and the western world.

Broadly, the dysfunctional state of most African states may be a compelling explanation for the more current dispersal of Africans from their continent and the increasing quest to do so after the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, making a second exodus from Africa incipient. However, the contemporary African migrant seems implicated in this more recent movement considering the seeming availability of options unlike during Africa's foremost transatlantic movement. The contemporary dispersion of Nigerians to Europe, the United Kingdom, United States of America and other regions of the world, has necessitated the creation of a new African diaspora.

Relating the different forms of recent transnational interaction to literature and the implication for African writings, Boehmer (2005) attests to the period from the late 1980s through to the twenty-first century as witnessing a shift from nationalist narratives owing

to the divided, displaced, and uncertain geographic and cultural affiliations of writers. Accordingly, Boehmer (2005:227) proposes that:

> In the 2000s the generic postcolonial writer is more likely to be a cultural traveller, or an 'extra-territorial', than a national. Ex-colonial by birth, 'third world' in cultural interest, cosmopolitan in almost every other way, he or she works within the precincts of the Western metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and/or political connections with a national, ethnic, or regional background.

The importance of this "demographic shift" as she describes it becomes evident in the contemporary migrant writer's thematic preoccupation. Consequently, the postcolonial writer vacillates between the perspectives that are fundamental to the writer's commitment as a national of his/her homeland and at the same time, his/her interaction within transnational spaces. These interactions and shifting(s) have engendered ambivalence in the preoccupation and perspective of the postcolonial writer, whose writings exhibit the complexities that come from engaging socio-cultural realities, belonging to new metropolis and reaffirming national linkage through thematic thrust simultaneously. The emergence of this rather dynamic phase in Nigerian literature is significant as it signals the development of African literature towards what may be described as a more engaging and innovative dimension in its existence. At a glance, this growing shift in creative focus is placatory for Nnolim (2006) who interrogates the African literary scene since inception, its ease with cultural preoccupations and stresses the need for the African writer's works to respond to the events shaping his/her contemporary existence globally. Thus, Nnolim (2006:5) queries:

> What prevents the African writer in the 21st century from re-inventing Europe and from there developing an international theme in literatures. The Europeans wrote about Africa after a mere trip (Conrad), or domiciling there for a few years (Elspeth Huxley), why can't Africans write about Europe or America? We have travelled to Europe and America, worked there, studied there, married their sons and daughters and lived there. Are we so unreceptive not to observe, so blind not to see, so analphabetic not to write about them or about us in their midst?

With the flowering of transnational movements and interaction, Africa's twenty first century writers are making creative choices that project their awareness of contemporary existence as global citizens. Thus, as Boehmer (2005) posits, the postcolonial writer has become a prototype of heterogeneous conditions and exposures that significantly inform the changes and oscillations that his/her literary inventions must expressly convey in more contemporary times. Notably, she opines that this current trend of exilic writings seems to be the exclusive property of the post-colony. Krishnaswamy (1995:131) on the other hand asserts that:

> The rhetoric of migrancy, exile, and diaspora in contemporary postcolonial discourse owes much of its credibility to the massive and uneven uprooting of "Third World" peoples in recent decades, particularly after large-scale decolonization in the 1960s. As the euphoria of independence and the great expectations of nationalism gave way to disillusionment and oppression, emigration increasingly became the supreme reward for citizens of impoverished or repressive ex-colonies. Millions of people dream of becoming exiles at any cost, and many government officials make a living helping or hindering the fulfilment of this mass fantasy.

Fluid transnational borders and existence have been attractive and receptive to Nigerian writers. For instance, Akeh (2006) speaks of a growing Nigerian diaspora considering the strength of numbers of migrating writers from Nigeria and their apparent permanent residence in new locations. He asserts further that, the interaction of these individuals as a nation abroad and the recourse to Nigeria as homeland remains significant since they imagine home in various degrees, criticising or celebrating her contemporary realities from these new locations. He also points that this rather new generation of Nigerian writers explores complexities regarding their origin, identity and "home" significantly. Thus, the imagining and reinventing of the social, political and cultural landscape of Nigeria seems to be an integral part in the creative process of migrant writings. Akeh goes ahead to offer a rather perceptive position on why images from Nigeria and Africa at large are sustained in these writings. He claims that, the Nigerian and African ancestry, and the diasporic experience of this new crop of young Nigerian writers abroad informs their creative choices. Thus, this ancestral location remains an "inspirational location"

(Akeh, 2006:2) and aids the writer's memory grapple with specific realities of its absence, some sort of longing for it or its presence and its lingering images. The migrant writer's complex existence and the images reinvented project the gnawing question of identity which these writings engender. As a result, whether at "home" in Western metropolis, the migrant writer as Boehmer (2005) argues, seems to retain thematic and/or political focus that connects with his/her ancestral origins, its past, present and future.

Even though the trio, Chinweizu, Jemie, and Madubuike (1975) in "Towards the Decolonization of African Literature" argue stiffly that African literature must derive its significance from its writer's adherence to a set of prescriptions that project the creative commitment of the writer to things Africa and the African community, the subjects of concern for the migrant writer reflect more complex interests and perspectives that may not reflect the African community in this conventional sense but are imperative in contemporary times. In recent times, the African community has expanded to accommodate developing African communities in global spaces. Considering the African writer's transnational interaction, adhering largely to prescriptions that seek to exhibit the African writer's commitment through his work as a portrait of his communal affiliation has assumed a different course. Significantly, the African migrant writer's creative obligation seems to show more personalised but relevant portraits of engagement with an amalgam of communities that he/she belongs to and perspectives that are considered to have global relevance. Thus, literary relevance which takes into consideration the writer's immediate concerns as realities and the emphasis on the social function of art becomes fundamental in describing the African writer's literary commitment in contemporary times in place of a rigid adherence to prescriptions that seek to accentuate loyalties in certain ways to traditional African communities and systems.

As Boehmer (2005) asserts, contemporary African literature is marked by some level of uncertainties which have been informed by the shift in cultural and geographical affiliations of African writers who previously exhibited a preoccupation with nationalist narratives and communal solidarity. This departure in creative fixation does not seem to

absolve the African writer of his/her obligations; rather, it signals a commitment to a seemingly more significant pursuit considering changes in global existence.

Literary representations of Nigerian migrant writers have engaged vigorously and with creative insight the global existence of Nigerians across transnational borders. Given that Nigerian migrant narratives are today widely regarded because of their initial preoccupation with chronicling and berating the socio-political and economic realities of Nigeria, these writings also now project, rather vividly, with undertones of irony meshed in sarcasm, the disturbing realities of life at the centre for migrants from the peripheries of Africa. Thus, with a changing global context, the migrant writer evokes images of the difficult situations that migrants irrespective of race, culture, nationality and sex must negotiate to survive. These make the Nigerian migrant fiction a fusion of diverse experiences and encounters that engage African realities with a capacity to include tales of survival at "home" and abroad, of people with similar experiences as straddlers in transnational spaces (Kehinde, 2007a).

In its present phase, contemporary Nigerian fiction accommodates these new literary experimentations and its responsiveness to projecting modern postcolonial and global realities. Developing significantly, Nigerian migrant prose projects apparent trends in the works and creative perspective of writers in the diaspora such as, Segun Afolabi, Chika Unigwe, E.C. Osondu, Chimamanda Adichie, Sefi Atta, Ben Okri, Biyi Bandele, Helen Oyeyemi and many more. These writers are not only preoccupied with the narration of homeland but their complex identities, perspectives and new spaces. Whether in re-inventing homeland or new metropolis, the entire picture of their literary achievement seems to lie in their presentation of vivid images of a "home" they are physically dislocated from and also, a milieu they strive to be integrated into. Akeh (2006:14-15) asserts that:

> Younger Nigerian writers abroad are fiercely independent individuals who, however, also long to belong somewhere and experience the certainty and comfort of home…The evidence is that this diasporic ambiguity of catering for two locations is processed through several stages of engagement and/or disengagement…though they may

> become increasingly internationalist in their outlook, utterances and work. Some do become *home-obsessives*, operating a rather more conflicted subjectivity than may be evident, full of contradictory resolutions and representations. This position of the 'poor' writer abroad is, for the most part, governed by a distanced, sensitively managed and changeable commitment to home.

This peculiar positioning of Nigeria's migrant writers determines the creative preoccupation of their literary inventions and outlook as they grapple to express meaningfully their existence and involvement in different locations. While some might sustain their creative grip of "home" or home-obsession as Akeh points, others seem to lose touch, thereby sustaining an increasing cosmopolitan outlook as a result of their sustained immigrant exposure. In considering these "Young Nigerian writers abroad" (Akeh, 2006:2), Ben Okri stands out as one exceptional writer who narrates the homeland from the diaspora with utmost intensity. He remains prolific among these writers for his deft portraiture of homeland in his literary works. According to Akeh (2006:15) who elaborates on the Nigerian writer's literary flight, Okri could be described as "perhaps the model or pathfinder for the current wave of Nigerian diasporic migrations" and contemporary literary migrations as well, especially with his success at the Booker in 1991. In most of his fiction, Okri employs striking images to depict Nigeria's struggle with corruption and social malady, staying fixated with themes that portray Africa's debilitating post-independence realities. Innes (2007) posits that Okri uses magical realism, a literary genre that immerses the fantastic or mythical elements into seemingly realistic fiction to convey the social and political chaos in his home country, Nigeria. On the peculiarity of Okri's writing style and his migrant status, Akeh (2006) argues that Okri's style and preoccupation with the phantasmagoric, accommodates and expresses his peculiar position—a sustained geographical/physical dislocation from "home" for long-term residence in the United Kingdom. Thus, in his literary inventions, grave imagination, fictive spaces, lost memories, alienation and bizarre characterisation and other difficult representations that try to capture his "inspirational origins" are common, and as well do attest to his dislocation from it. Furthermore, Akeh (2006:15-16) insists that:

> Okri's canvas largely reflects the troubled memory of some lost ancestry and its alienating contemporary realities – his creative enquiry into possibilities for an aesthetic recovery from, or representation of, that loss. He is located in the British literary present as an establishment figure but still identified in terms of his creative struggle with a past that has not gone away. His life may no longer be dominated by that past but his work and literary identity are still being coloured by it.

Akeh's evaluation of Okri's literary journey projects his prolonged migrant exposure, the contemporary reality of alienation and belonging in various degrees to different locations and the implication for the literary inventions and identity of the writer. Okri won the Booker Prize for his novel, *The Famished Road* (1991), the story of Azaro, an Abiku ("spirit child"). Through this novel, Okri creatively reflects Africa's perennial realities though the character of the Abiku protagonist, Azaro. A number of Okri's works convey covertly messages about the need for Africa to tackle her many socio-political problems as well as project these complexities of Okri's dislocation and sense of place.

Irrespective of the individual motivation for migrating, the creative sensibilities of migrant writers project their narratives as transcending mere tools for asserting the cultural heritage of the post-colony to narrating the conditions of postcolonial citizens in national and transnational spaces. Thus, Sefi Atta, E.C. Osondu, Chika Unigwe, Chimamanda Adichie, Segun Afolabi employ a creative approach that is enabling in highlighting social realities, transnational interaction and the intrigues that define the migrant's complex existence. Significantly, Nigerian migrant narratives have become a narrative of home and the "home" away from it. This focal point is utilised in examining the reality of the social condition of people within the milieu of artistic representation. The creative foci of the texts studied project this complex bipartite literary posture.

1.2 Statement of research problem

The Nigerian migrant narrative has become a significant aspect of contemporary Nigerian prose fiction and transnational literary culture because of its connection with the rather crucial subject of contemporary migration, the creative and critical sensibility heightened by transnational migration. A number of studies have been carried out on the narratives

of Nigerian migrant writers. Some of them like Negash (1999) examine the socio-political realities in Bandele's earliest novels. He studies *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams* and *The Man who Came in from the Back of Beyond.* The study focuses on the significance of Bandele's representation of socio-political realities using phantasmic elements in these novels in spite of his existence in diaspora. Orabueze (2010) looks at "female complicity" and patriarchy in modern Nigerian society in Sefi Atta's *Everything good will come*. The study shows that Atta's work is influenced by the feminist ideology. Idowu-Faith (2013) examines *Americanah* but the study takes particular interest in the stylistic presentation of return migration in this text. The study concludes that with this structure and presentation in the novel, return migration is deliberately proffered by the author. Also, Sanja (2014) looks at racism and the politics of identity in *Americanah.* Umezurike (2015) examine resistance against the background of ideology in Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*. In this study also, Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* is also interrogated alongside Unigwe's novel. The study emphasises resistance as defiance to patriarchal order paying scant attention to diasporic concerns at the centre of Unigwe's novel.

Also, Wilson-Tagoe (2006) examines three recent African novels; Oguine Ike's *A Squatters Tale*, Abdulazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* and Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* within the scope of globalisation and theorisations on same. Paying close attention to the global motifs in these novels, the study explores the novels to determine how they stand as national or global representations. Okonkwo (2010) explores the immigrant's dilemma in Ike Oguine's novel. He interrogates the existential complexities of life in Nigerian, diaspora and projects it as a quandary which Africa's growing immigrant populace must traverse to belong, especially in America. The study emphasises that alienation and disillusionment are symptomatic of migration. Okafor's (2010) perceptive study of Okpewho's *Call me by my rightful name* interrogates the possible fusion of dual perspectives that ancestral heritage and exile/dislocation make possible: modern western medicine (clinical psychiatry) and the African (Yoruba Ifa) in investigating racial memory with the aim of ascertaining long lost roots of Africans in diaspora. Kehinde (2007a), Kehinde (2007b), Tunca (2010), Asoo (2012) and Maxwell (2014) seem to be

among the few scholars that have taken particular interest in the Nigerian migrant short narrative. Kehinde (2007b) explores the representation of social realities in Nigeria in the short narratives of Okri and Unigwe. Kehinde (2007a) and Maxwell (2014) examine the social corollaries of exile in Afolabi's short stories. Their studies show that migration is enabling for many social problems. Tunca (2010) examines Adichie's short stories significantly. Tunca pays close attention to the representation of food and language as significant in Adichie's preoccupation with transnational integration. The study shows that cross-cultural identities assume considerable relevance to these contemporary narratives. Asoo (2012) interrogates the major themes in Adichie's short stories with the aim of highlighting Adichie's panoramic treatment of social issues.

These studies have looked at the narratives of Nigerian migrant writers from significant perspectives; with most of the studies examining more frequently the novel genre and the re-invention of socio-political realities in Nigeria. However, adequate attention has not been given to the short story genre and its concerns with the representation of dislocation and belonging. This study, therefore, examines the creative impulses of five writers for articulating dislocations and strategies for belonging in transnational spaces in their selected short stories using an amalgam of postcolonial and psychoanalytic literary theories for textual investigation.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to employ Postcolonial literary theory and aspects of the Freudian psychoanalytic literary theory to interrogate Nigerian migrant short stories from five Nigerian writers and examine their preoccupation with dislocation and belonging.

1.4 Objectives of the study

This study hopes to achieve the following objectives: The first objective is to interrogate the short stories with a view to determine the creative representation of dislocation and strategies for belonging. The second is to examine the selected texts to determine sensibilities and perspectives in these narratives that are representative of the writers' involvement in the complexities of transnational existence. The third objective of this

study is to establish the possible patterns of dislocation and determine the significance of fictionalised representations of transnational existence for contemporary Nigerian fiction. Findings from this study should enrich ongoing diaspora studies, studies in contemporary migration and the implications for Nigerian's literature as representative of a national and/ or global literary legacy.

1.5 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is in its potential to fertilize scholarship on Nigerian migrant literature broadly and the short story genre in particular. Its significance also lies in its ability to project literature's potential to inform on the enduring impact of transnational existence and the related complexities that immigrants navigate. Through this study, the dynamic development of African literature that highlights homeland-diasporic relations is projected. The texts under study also demonstrate fundamentally a significant coherence in the creative imagination of these Nigerian migrant writers despite the different socio-political and geographical milieus of migrant existence that make-up their literary inventions. By interrogating the migrant experience, this research also serves its purpose in contributing to the current multidisciplinary studies on modern postcolonial migrations.

1.6 Research methodology

The choice of these texts is informed by their availability as formal collections of short stories and the versatility of creative pursuits in these collections. This study selects thirty three stories from five short story collections based on the writers' migrant perspective and significant preoccupation with dislocation and strategies for belonging in different spaces. Ten short stories are selected from Segun Afolabi's *A Life Elsewhere*, six respectively from Epaphras Chukwuenweniwe Osondu's *Voice of America*, Sefi Atta's *News from Home*, Chimamanda Adichie's *The Thing around your Neck* and five from Chika Unigwe's *Short Stories.* Although each draws on the unique sensibility and aesthetic choice of each writer; they share in common a creative focus driven towards the fictionalised representation of the complexities of migration and its significance in recent times. Thus, the stories that significantly capture the essence of the research and facilitate the research's purpose are used as data. These texts are subjected to critical and

literary analyses. Also, the study relies on available literature in, and related to this field of study as relevant in providing information for attaining the research's objectives. For instance, background studies from authors' biographies are significant in highlighting useful perspectives for appreciating these selected texts.

1.7 Theoretical framework

This study adopts Postcolonial literary theory, complemented with aspects of the Freudian Psychoanalytic literary theory. Postcolonial literary theory is employed to interrogate the texts as a part of the ongoing postcolonial discourse, and examine the features and preoccupations of migrant narratives that also make them an integral aspect of the postcolonial discourse. Freudian psychoanalytic literary theory is deployed to interrogate the narratives, characters in them, authors' biographies and authors' sensibilities to uncover the significance of creative motivations, latent meanings and implications for their literary works. We review these theories, to highlight their strengths for critical and literary analyses and their suitability for the present study.

Psychoanalytic literary theory is marked by variations from the contributions of different psychoanalytic theorists. It is however privileged by a unifying interpretative process which recognises and emphasises the importance of unconscious psychic mechanism as a prime factor in the development of literary and artistic inventions. Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Jacques Lacan are theorists closely associated with the development and practice of psychoanalysis. Despite their differing perspectives, their critical approaches in evaluating literature commonly examine the actions and experiences of characters in a work of art against a rather psychological backdrop which accounts for these activities and thus serve as the motivation for the creative process.

Barry (1995) outlines the major preoccupations of psychoanalytic literary criticism. However, he suggests that these concerns are largely typical of Freudian approach and practice. Barry points out that psychoanalytic literary criticism is preoccupied with the following: making distinctions between the conscious and the unconscious mind during literary interpretation, consequently associating the literary work's "overt" content with the former and the "covert" content with the latter, privileging the latter as being what the

work is really about, with an aim of separating the two. This critical approach also pays close attention to the unconscious motives and feelings of the author and characters alike; it strives to reveal the presence of the conditions, symptoms and stages that are associated with typical psychoanalytic emotional and sexual development and also seeks to identify the "psychic" content of the literary work. Thus, Psychoanalytic literary criticism focuses on one or more of the following in its analysis of literary texts: the author, with his/her life providing the background evidence needed for evaluating the literary work. The characters also are usually in focus. In Psychoanalytic literary criticism, the critic therefore analyses characters' behaviour and motivation.

The psychology of characters, the narration of the texts and the implications extend well beyond the imaginative formations of the characters in a psychoanalytic literary criticism. This critical approach therefore endeavours to project literature as the reality of some complex psychic processes which has the writer at its core. Thus, it emphasizes that a significant relationship exists between characterization in a literary work, the author's psyche and the society of the author which it considers influential in informing the entire story, even though the writer may be unaware of these impulses and drives in the creating process.

Postcolonial literary theory on the other hand gained prominence in the eighties and early nineties with the publication of different essays and seminal works. It has gained far-reaching influence through the works of Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Henry Gates Jr., Gayatri Spivak, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin and many others. Although Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* was published in 1961, decades before postcolonialism came into being, it has been described as one of the strong motivating forces behind the formation which developed via a continuum of cultural studies into postcolonial discourses and criticism (Jain, 1991; Faura et al, 1997). Said is described by Griffiths (1996:166) as the catalyst behind the colonial discourse and the eventual "use of terms like post-colonial to investigate a very wide range of social practices".

Ashcroft et al (1989) also posit that Postcolonial literary theory's emergence is as a result of the inability of European theories to cater adequately for the evaluation of postcolonial writings considering the peculiarity of the experiences, and the complexities of diverse cultures from which postcolonial writings emerge. European critical standards therefore become inadequate since they spring from a cultural milieu that is entirely different though disguised with "false notions" of its universal applicability. They further argue that, the inventive counter hegemonic discourses between the "centre" and "periphery", which establish the independence of postcolonial literatures, has sustained the innovation of exciting literatures from postcolonial regions and that the concerns with issues of identity crises from physical displacement and for many, linguistic dislocation and the possibility of recovery if at all, have been pivotal for describing postcolonial literatures, and the thriving of Postcolonial literary theory. Even though the critical approach's emergence is linked to the historical antecedence of the failure of colonial empires, and the attainment of independence, contemporary complications associated with increasing global encounters of cultures, novel appearances of colonialism and multinational capitalism makes this approach of literary criticism significant (Brewton, 2005).

Postcolonial literary theory therefore is involved with interrogating culture, language, identity, belonging, history and societal life in locales that emphasise the involvement of previously colonised people. In doing this, Kizel (2010:113) posits that postcolonial literary theory tends to project "a whole range of non-literary contexts in their interpretations of literary works". Thus, Okunoye (2008:78) states that postcolonial literary theory evaluates the indications of literary complexities in context and content of literature against the backdrop largely associated with the "response of the literary culture of postcolonial societies to colonialism and all that it precipitated".

The study finds that the postcolonial literary theory complemented with aspects of the Freudian psychoanalytic literary theory offers a framework for interrogating and articulating the migrant perspectives of these writers and their preoccupation with dislocation and belonging in transnational spaces. The writers' aesthetic choices can be interpreted significantly against the examined backgrounds of influential relationships existing between them, their migrant exposures and creative representations.

Postcolonial literary theory is employed to interrogate the texts as a part of the ongoing postcolonial discourse, and highlight the features and preoccupations of migrant narratives that also make them an integral aspect of the postcolonial discourse. Freudian psychoanalytic literary theory interrogates the narratives, characters in them, authors' biographies and authors' sensibilities to uncover the significance of creative motivations, latent meanings and implications of these literary works.

1.8 Delimitation of the study

The texts selected for this study are limited to the short stories of five Nigerian migrant writers who reside in diaspora. While stories set in diaspora are examined in this study, stories that examine migration and treat home-diaspora relations are also investigated. However, when stories set in Nigeria are examined, it is to project the writer's creative sensibilities, transnational posture and multiple belonging which informs his/her perspective and preoccupation.

1.9 Organisation of the study

Chapter one, the introductory chapter examines the background of Nigerian Migrant fiction, its emergence, and discusses briefly, the generic thematic preoccupations and the notable shifts in focus of contemporary Nigerian literature. It also highlights the purpose, significance and brief theoretical approach of the study.

Chapter two reviews a number of literatures on the relationship between African literature and important factors that have influenced its creation and also asserts its functionality. Also, the chapter undertakes a review of studies on the growing phenomena of contemporary migration and its significance in the Nigerian literary scene and the origin of the short story genre in Nigeria. In addition, this chapter examines extensively two critical frameworks: Psychoanalytic literary theory and the Postcolonial literary theory as relevant critical approaches for the texts to be investigated in this study. This critical review of literatures provides a background through which research gaps are identified.

Chapter three examines significantly dislocation, belonging and the corollaries that result in the quest for a sense of place in the worlds that migrants bestride. This chapter also examines selected short stories to determine sensibilities and perspectives that are representative of the writers' involvement in the complexities of transnational existence. It also draws on, and synthesises perspectives from Postcolonial literary theory and aspects of Freud's Psychoanalytic literary theory in the analysis of the selected short stories. This section also provides a brief review of biographical information—such as is available to be studied—on Segun Afolabi, Epaphras Chukwuenweniwe Osondu, Sefi Atta, Chika Unigwe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie whose stories are examined in the chapter.

Chapter four is a comparative study of the perspectives, sensibilities and creative approach of the writers; while Chapter five concludes the study with a discussion of the findings and the implications for contemporary Nigerian literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 African literature and historical experiences

> The historical experience in all its ramifications thus serves as a constant reference for the African imagination; this has a consequence for any form of criticism concerned with our literature. It is impossible, in the particular circumstances of its development, to ignore the specific historical and sociological references of African imaginative expression in the European languages, for these references have determined the genesis and evolution of the literature (Irele, 2001: ix-x).

A number of factors have influenced the growth and development of African literature into its present status and pursuit. These factors as well as the creative sensibilities of the African writer have contributed to asserting the functionality and significance of African literature over the years. Reviews of the circumstances that have shaped and enhanced the growth of African literature to its present status show that African literature has evolved from predictability through to a significant phase marked by innovation and experimentations.

Irrespective of the regional differences and the peculiarity of each region's response to colonial exposure, literary works from Africa display significant preoccupation with the historical encounters of the continent with the West. Although the historical journeys and pervasive encounters with the crudities of colonialism and other socio-historical events are captured across genres, this review examines significantly these occurrences in fictional representations from the continent. This in no way is intended to render as trivial the enormous representations of the refracted and reflected history, social and human

condition significantly captured in other genres across the continent. It is also acknowledged that while Anglophone Africa followed by Francophone Africa expressed vibrancy in producing much of Africa's literary works, Lusophone Africa did not gain popularity early or establish a significant presence on the literary scene till much later. However, with Nigeria at the fore, the Anglophone countries of Africa have stood out as Africa's most vibrant literary locations in all the genres (Julien, 1995; Owomoyela, 1993).

At the fore of Africa's literary journey and growth has been the "Scramble for Africa" and the political control of the continent of Africa by Europe which started gradually, climaxed in a large portion of African territories being annex to European empires as colonies by the 19th and 20th century. The Scramble which began simply from Europe's experience with previous years of exploration and adventure culminated in a complex relationship between the two continents and what is still known today as the empire and its colonies.

McConnel (2005) states that with the Congress of Berlin (1884-1885) the African continent was shared between European countries that showed interest in colonisation and the possibilities that colonising Africa could yield. While most Africans rebelled against colonialism and its different strategies of establishing European domination and rule, these territories were over-ran by the European powers that established their dominance and annexed it to the Motherland. Wright (2009) asserts that not only were the European powers fighting Africans to take over their territories, they also engaged themselves (other European powers) to ensure their stakes in Africa was secure. Thus, military might with modern weaponry perpetuated colonialism and made futile the several brave attempts of Africans to resist foreign rule. Europe's (Britain, France, Belgium, Germany and Portugal) desire to expand her territories to cover Africa was largely economically motivated. Thus, according to McConnell (2005: 2), Africa, "a land of immense space and rich with natural resources and agricultural potential" was to be exploited by these colonial powers.

Considerably, African literatures have had to engage these historical developments in the continent as subject matter with apt fervor. Consequently, the pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial, war and post-war era (for some countries) of the continent have provided raw materials for African literature to thrive. The difference that characterises these epochs and the distinct colonial experience of each African country remains significant. With different regional, national and ethnic experiences, African literatures historical and social experiences have been diverse.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the imposition of foreign cultures as superior way of life over African cultures and its corollaries were crucial issues that determined the African writer's preoccupation. Many lent their creative impulses to criticising colonial intrusion into the African cultural space as asphyxiating, destructive and misrepresentative, and have produced diverse literary reactions. Affirming African literature's relationship with historical events on the continent; Irele (2001) points that Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart* was one of the earliest literary reactions to colonialism. Irele (2001: ix) asserts that;

> Achebe's imaginative and ideological challenge of Western representations of Africa in his own work clarifies admirably the mental process that has attended the emergence of African literature in modern times. African responses to the pressures of colonial domination have found a privileged mode of expression in imaginative literature, which has not only registered the epochal significance of the encounter with Europe and its objective implications for African societies and cultures, but even more important, the complex relation of African experience to the norms and precepts commonly associated with the modern West, and ultimately their determination of the directions of African thought and expression.

Irele claims that Achebe's reaction to Western misconceptions and derogatory representations of Africa as exemplified by Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* played a significant role in motivating literary reaction and indeed, Africa's literary expression and thought. Thus, African literature between the 1950s and 1960s venerated and re-affirmed Africa's past while also highlighting the complexities associated with a ruptured cultural life that was influenced by colonisation as well as the consequences conveyed largely

through culture clash and denigration. Across literary genres and sub-genres, these concerns preoccupied the thematic focus of African writers such as Ferdinand Oyono, Mongo Beti, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Okot p'Bitek, Chinua Achebe, Dennis Brutus and many others whose works irrespective of the genre were significant for highlighting this era in Africa's history. For instance, Chinua Achebe's famous novel, *Things Fall Apart* published in 1958 gained widespread acclaim for examining the pre-colonial life and the historical intrusion of the British into traditional African society using the socio-cultural space of a fictional Igbo village (Umofia) in Nigeria. In this novel, Achebe highlights the impact of colonial intrusion, culture clash, the subservient position African cultural practices assume with it and the tensions that ensue as colonialism thrives in this previously pristine African community. Achebe projects these events as an integral aspect of Africa's history.

Achebe (1975) states in his seminal publication, "The novelist as a teacher" the duty of the African writer and the importance of this duty in helping African people understand and value their experiences and history. While highlighting the responsibility of the African writer to reflect the human condition in his society and educate the people, Achebe also unequivocally states the function of the African novel and its relationship with history. He emphasises that Africa's values and heritage are enshrined in her history and thus, every attempt to narrate Africa is an inexorable record of her history. Killam and Kerfoot (2008) have described Achebe's literary works as dynamic considering his dexterity in creating themes that highlight both communal history and political history through contemporary literary interpretation. Examining Achebe's literary focus also, Irele (2001:57) points out that, "Achebe's novels comprise not only a narrative of the perverse course of history in our lives as Africans but also a meditation on the imponderable nature of the historical process itself". Maleki and Navidi (2008:10) also assert that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* be regarded as "a literary preserver of the African social-cultural and historical value", considering his creative pattern and consciousness which emphasises societies heritage. Corroborating a similar line of thought Peters (1993) points that early fictional works are the author's deliberate attempt at presenting

significant aspects of his people's history from an insider's perspective. Peters (1993:19) puts it this way:

> Achebe's historical depiction did not end with *Things Fall Apart*. He had originally conceived the novel as an extended history that would end in the present, but instead divided the material and brought his first novel to a close with the beginnings of colonial rule… Eventually Achebe completed his history in a sequence of four novels, each set at a crucial moment in history…

Achebe's works capture the historical growth and development of Nigeria starting with its contact with the British and the clashes that follow (*Things fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*). Achebe's creative journey in this historical perspective terminates after he creatively projects the events before and after Nigeria's independence in *No Longer at Ease* and *A Man of the people* respectively. Largely, Achebe's literary and historical posture gives his works its sustained significance.

Amuta (1989) states that, African writers continually engage issues of socio-historically nature in their literary works. Compared to other established literatures, critics of African literature have in many decades exhibited a remarkable concern for the significant connection between literature and the circumstance(s) or events that characterise the environment from which these works exist. Consequently, African literature is easily evoked in literary spheres by the peculiarities of its literary features that are in agreement with the cultural and historical experiences of the people (Tremaine, 1978; Ojaide, 2009).

In East Africa, the *Mau Mau* uprising is regarded as a significant aspect of the people's history. The uprising was characterised by bloody land struggle and rebellion against British imperialist staged by the dominantly Kikuyu community of Kenya in East Africa. McConnell (2005) states that apart from the Mau Mau, Kenya had many African-right groups that appeared in the earlier half of the 20th century in response to colonialism. These African-right groups he holds were largely Kikuyu and although they engaged the British colonial government by asking for better wages for native peoples, they had in common their opposing attitude to imperialism. Thus, Kenya's Mau Mau uprising was a militant reaction by the natives to the many years of oppressive British rule. Anderson

(2005) also points that these uprisings have their background traceable to various incidences in Kikuyu history between 1920 and 1940. McConnell (2005) corroborating this asserts that, with building tension the British government was soon to acknowledge the great unrest among the Kikuyu population or be caught off guard completely. Branch (2007:296) captures the result of this tension and historical development thus:

> By the 1950s, the case for armed resistance to colonial rule was compelling. Mau Mau emerged from significant socioeconomic and political discontent, which connected the desperate poverty of the squatters on European farms in the White Highlands with the urban unemployed and landless residents of the Native Reserves…

While the uprising grew with the discontent of the Kikuyu and lasted from about 1952 to 1960, it was characterised by intense military conflict (which was dubbed "Kenya Emergency" by the British) as a means to crush the revolt (McConnell, 2005). This revolt against British imperialism in Kenya remains a notable event in the country's history. While some scholars suggest that these Mau Mau uprisings were not as successful as intended considering the casualties suffered by the Kikuyu community (Anderson, 2005; Branch, 2007), it remains significant that these uprisings and struggle to retain Kenya's rich agrarian heritage brought to light the heinous and destructive colonial agenda and strategies adopted to perpetuate same. Many native Kenyans lost their land and lives in the intense land struggle which eventually did not seem to yield the expected returns as envisioned by the Mau Mau militants, especially when Dedan Kimathi, the rebel leader and mythical figure of the struggle and other rebels were captured in Nyeri.

Dedan Kimathi (1920-1957), the rather militant leader of the Mau Mau was at the fore of the well targeted attacks against the British imperialist in the land struggle. Although he was largely labeled a militant and rebel by the British and her loyalist (Anderson, 2005), this historical and rather sensational figure in Kenyan historical struggle and life is the motivation for Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo's play, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*. In this play, he is projected as a national hero and mythical figure in Kenya's struggle for land with the British. However, with his capture in 1956 and execution in 1957, the rebellion was successfully crushed by the British colonial government.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo's play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976) mediates history as it captures historical realities of pre-independent Kenya. These playwrights closely identify with the significant historical events and place them as the aesthetic core and essence of this play. It is striking that the play which is written in four different movements, capture the different phases of inequality and social unrest generated from the uneven relationship between the British and Kikuyu people up until the early 1960s. Dedan Kimathi is placed at the centre of the conflict between Kenyan populace and the ruling colonial government. It is against this backdrop that Dedan Kimathi leads daring and successful raids on the colonial forces. Despite his various trials, Kimathi remains in the struggle, as revolutionary as ever, he sacrifices personal freedom for communal liberation until he is finally sentenced to die.

It is significant that the relationship between Ngugi wa Thiong'o's writings and the historical development of Kenya is an obvious one. Cancel (1998) asserts that the main thrust of a large percentage of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's works highlights the negative effects of the exploitation of the colonised and the alienation of Kikuyu people from their land. His novel, *The River Between* (1965) for instance, projects the historic Mau Mau rebellion of 1952-1956, in which the Kikuyu people violently rebel against the British's oppressive control and land grabbing in Kenya. These concerns are significant as Ngugi continuously reflects on the Mau Mau struggle and the corollaries of these developments in Kenya in different dimensions and makes them the aesthetic thrust of his novels: *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *Matigari* (1989). Ngugi demonstrates the rather destructive process of colonialism, Christianisation and clashes on Kenyan people and communities as he gives prominent place to the Mau Mau struggle as an integral aspect of Kenya's history in his writings. His writings further track the historical and political development of Kenya and the abusive structures which still remain apparent after his country's independence in 1963. Particularly interesting is Ngugi and Mugo's play dedicated to projecting Kimathi as the people's hero. Branch (2009:xii) asserts that despite precise attempts to silence "an inconvenient past, the history of the Mau Mau war became embraced" by different people in society from politicians to novelists and the academia. Furthermore, Branch (2009: xii) alleges that the "pro-

democracy activists turned to an ever more stylised and heroic Mau Mau to critique the elitist focus of Kenyatta and Moi. In the rebellion's history, these critics found a mirror to hold up against the growing prevalence of official corruption…". It is significant that these relics from the past are also held up in Kenya's literary works as a mirror to reflect and refract the nationalist ideals and political development of Kenyan's still defective post-independent society.

The policy of apartheid instituted in South Africa in 1948 which allowed the segregation of ethnic groups in South Africa and the tensions that followed motivated writers from this region. This policy grossly affected the non-white populace who suffered political, social and economic deprivations and oppression under their white minority oppressors who benefitted largely from the natural resources available in South Africa. Following the institution of this inhumane policy were series of violent reactions from Black South Africans some of which were, the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 and the Soweto uprising of 1976. Povey (1993:99) considers Richard Rive's *Emergency* (1964) to be rather significant since it employs as "its factual basis the happenings that followed the massacre at Sharpeville in 1960 and the state of emergency declared by the government in an attempt to control subsequent unrest". Though a number of novels were written as a result of the Soweto uprising also and were of importance to black African literature during this era, it is important to state that the short story was the strongest form of black South African prose (Killam and Kerfoot 2008; Povey, 1993). The reason for the success of this form in South Africa as some theories explain lies in the short story's brevity in form, an enabling feature which allowed the writer convey the message of his art within the brevity of time the short permitted in order to avoid the attacks that characterised the period. Povey (1993) argues that this perception is rather unfortunate as it does little justice to the essence and developments of the genre considering the fact that great masterpieces have been produced in even more tensed conditions and environments. He therefore insists that, the short story genre in South Africa was patronized because its brevity and anecdotal form conveyed effectively the representation of the human experiences from a personal perspective thus bridging the gap between the autobiography

and what he describes as "quasifictionional" which always seemed to characterise South African writings.

South Africa was marked by violence and unrest largely caused by inequality up until the early 1990s when apartheid was abolished. The system of *apartheid* was fore-grounded in South African literature in a number of ways as writers demonstrated keen interest in conveying the harsh political climate that has since shaped South Africa. Writers like Ezekiel Mphahlele in *Down Second Avenue* (1959), Peter Abraham in *Tell Freedom* (1954), Alex La Guma in *A Walk in the Night* (1962) reflect in their works a racially impaired South African society.

Killam and Kerfoot (2008:41) point that, white South African writers like Alan Paton, Nadine Gordimer, Athol Fugard and J. M. Coetzee took up the task of anti-apartheid writing also taking into cognizance the " the difficult role of the writer who attempts to represent the lives and experiences of subaltern others". Povey (1993) also states that, the development of the writings of these white voices was parallel to the growth of black writers in South Africa. However, he asserts that the vibrancy and passion in black writings seemed more suited and identifiable since they were projecting the black people's experiences and personal experiences. Thus, Owomoyela (1993:4) concludes that:

> In South Africa the history of literature has largely repeated that of other parts of Africa, with the difference that it has been more intense and more passionate because of the conditions imposed by apartheid. The all consuming claim of that system of official racism on the consciousness of African peoples, and consequently its recurrence as a theme in South African writing, are vividly evident in literary works.

Notably, South Africa's apartheid history seems to mingle and linger in her literatures, especially narratives, pointing to the earmarks of a colonial history of oppression like other African nation.

The assimilation policy, its entrenchment in Francophone Africa's system of education and its impact remains a notable feature of the literary works produced in this region of Africa where the French colonialists held sway. For instance, the writings of Ferdinand Oyono (*Une Vie de Boy* (1956), *Houseboy* (1966) and *Le Vieux Negre et la Midaille*, (1956) *The Old Man and the Medal* (1969)) are critical about the morality of colonialism and its rather oppressive nature. While Mongo Beti's works (*Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (1956), *The Poor Christ of Bomba* (1971) and *Mission terminee* (1957), *Mission to Kala* (1964)) satirically capture the significance of French colonial attempts at transforming Africans into French men. Later, with the impact from the Negritude movement, the reclaiming of an eroded African identity and the "misrepresentation of Africanity as the degenerate opposite of westernity" (Owomoyela, 1993:4) in francophone Africa became significant. Imperialism irrespective of its different presentations became a universal experience in Africa. Thus, African literature in many ways continues to attests to the lingering impact of colonialism.

Africa's movement for independence in the 1950s and 1960s is a significant aspect of her political history. After independence, the socio-political climate of the different nations became rather enabling, but not necessarily receptive to the production of literature exploring diverse subjects through various genres and forms of creative engagement. Owomoyela (1993) states that while the relationship between Europe and Africa has undergone many transformations in the past five centuries and shaped African literature, the last stage of these transformations which is described by the protracted process of decolonisation has been fundamental also in shaping the same in modern times. It is at this stage that African literature seems to have experienced its most remarkable growth, innovation and experimentations.

African literature witnessed tremendous growth and boost in publication at the outset of independence from colonial rule. Post-independent Africa has however been marked by various social, economic and political crises in all its regions. These upheavals have facilitated the destruction of African communalism, with emphases being placed on individualism and the thriving system of capitalism left behind by the colonialists. Thus, the continent remains bedeviled by gross mis-management of resources, corruption and

underdevelopment. Much of contemporary African literature reveals disillusionment and dissent with this present phase of African life. This accounts for the African writer's overt attempt at foregrounding the tension that exists within Africa and has become a steady feature in contemporary African literary expression (Agho, 1995; Griffiths, 2000). With the turn of the twenty first century, a preoccupation with current political and social problems remains evident still, and seems to be at the fore of the discourse in contemporary African writings.

African literature captures the deep sense of regret, the many reactions to disenchantment with the failures associated with African states' independence from colonial rule and interrogates neo-colonialism and the collective involvement of Africans in generating these tensions creatively projected. Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) highlights the historic re-emergence of military take-overs. Akwanya (1997) asserts that this novel meditates on the nation's history as *Things fall Apart* (1958*)* and *Arrow of God* (1964) do, irrespective of the modern scenery adopted in creating the story. The African writer's commitment to his society is pertinent and is projected by his thematic focus which sometimes seems to give prominence to issues of historical dimension. Lindfors (2010) affirms that this accounts for why, for instance, each of Achebe's novels engages strategically the diverse epochs in Nigeria's history.

In Nigeria, the Nigerian civil war (Biafran war) from 1967 to 1970 was a significant phase in the country's history. It also produced several works which embody the horrors of the war and their implications for the nation. Branch (2009:xvi) finds that, "… civil war has emerged from the margins of academic research to assume a central position within the study of political violence in the modern world. But explaining these conflicts presents a very different challenge to scholars than explaining international war…" It is therefore striking that after several years the Nigerian civil war and the discourse generated by the events that surrounded and complicated the war still generate so much tension and controversy. As Branch affirms above, the centrality of any civil war as a discourse and the rather challenging task of explaining aptly the intricate nature of a conflict of this nature remain enormous.

This historical civil war epoch in Nigeria is chronicled in several novels. Some of them include, *Sunset in Biafra* (1973) by Elechi Amadi, Isidore Okpewho's *Last Duty* (1976), *Survive the Peace* (1976) by Cyprain Ekwensi, Festus Iyayi's *Heroes* (1986) and many more which seem to influence the rather recent civil war novel, *Half of a yellow sun* (2007) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. These works project Nigerian literature's significant engagement with history.

Thus, it seems particularly impossible to ignore the historical and sociological circumstances and events that have significantly determined the evolution and development of African literature (Irele, 2001). These events have been impactful in determining the course of African literature and its writers' literary pursuit.

2.2 African literature, society and the evolving landscape(s)

Critical interests in African literature particularly emphasise the significance of literature through its potential to reflect considerably social vision. Relating to this, Quayson (1997:3) asserts that, "literature is analysed largely within a reflectionist paradigm, with all the implications of its privileged activity in showing up an unmediated truth believed to inhere in reality". For Quayson, appreciating literature seems to place emphases on its potential to convey possibilities that are significantly plausible and locatable within the sphere of recognisable reality. Literature captures diverse forms of interaction between the various components which influence man: people, society and the multiple reactions involving these interactions in society. Thus, there seems to be no end to its instrumentality in ascertaining societal trends and occurrences. Literature therefore articulates diverse aspects of human society, replicating social relations and interrogating activities and their significance in human existence. Arguably, this potential allows African literature to explore spatial, non-spatial milieus and other integral parts which in turn make-up the writer's creative canvas.

African literature's apparent ability to project a society, especially the immediate environment of the creative writer is highlighted in the several social images which it conveys. The varying emphasis on social art makes literature greatly important within the African literary context as it transcends mere entertainment to espouse the significant

moral and social views of the writer and his environment. With this in mind, Kolawole (2005) points out that literature is not only an imitation of life but a concept which derives from certain sustainable principles. The process of creativity and responsiveness which allow for the "refraction of social experience through the prism of the human imagination" (Amuta, 1989:70) makes literature significant.

The influence of society on the African writer's creating process is readily emphasised. Consequently, numerous scholars attest to the existing relationship between African literature and society. Obiechina (1975) in his *Culture, Tradition and Society in the West African Novel* examines the significant connection between the West African novel, society, culture and tradition; and asserts that cultural and environmental situations in Africa have been remarkable determinants in the West African fiction, conditioning extensively the thematic focus, content and distinctive features of the West African novel in particular. Obiechina (1975:3) submits that:

> The relationship between literature and society has long been recognized; but it has not always been fully appreciated how far a particular society both influences the themes and subject matter of its representative literary types and also profoundly affects their formal development. Though most commentators on West African fiction are quick to point out its main peculiarities, they sometimes fail to see that these are clearly determined by the West African cultural tradition and environment.

The critic draws attention to the consistent relationship between literature and society and particularly, the aesthetic configuration of West African literature which is traceable to the African social and cultural milieu. Amuta (1989) also corroborates this as he asserts that the artist mediates between society and his/her work of art.

Critical responses to African literature, it seems, must therefore take into consideration the socio-cultural phenomena that condition these writings and also provide proper perspectives by which their significance is appreciated (Obiechina, 1975; Amuta, 1989; Ojaide, 2009 and Iguanre, 2010). Ojaide (2009:10) asserts that, "since literature is a cultural production, it only follows that a people's narratives, poetry, and drama should be an expression of their culture's artistic disposition at its highest level. Failing to reflect

this cultural identity will fall short of the aesthetic, which is culturally conditioned". Communal beliefs, values, worldview, practices, systems and social behaviours therefore become identifiable as defining features of African literature and also elucidate why recreating society is significant. Examining canonisation in modern African literature, Ojaide (2009:5) emphasises the inextricable link between African literary works and the history and traditions that produced them. The scholar argues that:

> Many African literary works deal with subjects that in the Western canon will be described as "extra-literary," suggesting that they should not be legitimate concerns of writers. However, what is "extra-literary" to the Western critic is intrinsic to the African writer, who, because of the historical predicament and tradition, draws materials from the socio-political happenings around him or her. It appears, the Western definition of what makes literature is far narrower than the African concept of literature, which is inclusive of politics, philosophy, divination, mysticism, and so on.

Clearly, this alludes to the scope of socio-cultural relationship that distinguishes African literature from Western literature and again emphasises the formers treatment of systems, beliefs and activities that are peculiar to the African environment in their works.

Though the unique features of African literature have been explored extensively the generations of Achebe and Aluko and others writing from the African homeland, the contemporary African writer in diaspora seems to navigate towards a creative autonomy that allows literary inventions override subtle or overt forms of prescription closely associated with the African literary framework. Accordingly, Ojaide (2009:16) hints that many African writers abroad "appear to be less culturally inhibited and write about what writers in their new environments deal with", issues that would necessarily not fascinate their home-based colleagues. For instance, in the novel, *Americanah* (2013), the preoccupation with the touchy subject of hair texture, its significance in the politics of identity, the social construction of identity in a migratory age and other related concerns illustrate this.

Although the relationship between African literature and society has been sustained by the influence and tempo of social, cultural and political activities in the continent, it is imperative however to point out that this relationship seems to have assumed a convoluted perspective in more recent times with the volume of writings by Africans from outside its shores. Considering previous emphases on the social context and content of African literature, the discernible shift in the sensibilities of Africa's contemporary writers seems to highlight a change in focus. Thus, these contemporary African writings and the influence of transnational interactions on the changing visage of African literature must be acknowledged.

Towards this end, Nnolim (2006) is right when he proposes in his essay "African Literature in the 21st Century: Challenges for writers and critics", the widening of creative canvas to accommodate other possibilities where African literature negotiates trajectories of new societies, spaces and challenges without apologetic engagement with re-affirming African identity and culture. For Nnolim, African literature at its present stage should assume a more global outlook which must not be limited to the African soil and culture considering Africans' growing involvement in transnational interaction and associations. This ongoing process presents African literature as undergoing a paradigm shift.

Contrary to Alu's (2011) fears, Nnolim is far from prescribing a creative course for African literature in the twenty first century. It is pertinent to agree with Nnolim (2006) on the certainty of a changing African reality where Africans are familiarising within new territories and acclimatising to new identities and the implication of this for African literature. Thus, a creative focus which engages socio-cultural realities in transnational milieus therefore remains on par with communicating the social function of African literature and the relationship between African literature and society. Since African literature and criticism emphasise their function rather than focus on sheer aesthetic composition, adherence to the challenge of this nature, and the commitment to realistic reflections of milieus under creative interrogation would therefore accentuate the relevance of such imaginative inventions (Ngara, 1982; Anyidoho, 1989; Quayson, 1997; Kolawole, 2005; Nnolim, 2006).

Nnolim's *aide-mémoire* and proposition draws attention to an expanding African community outside Africa, and the creative writer's need to preoccupy his or her writing with this community, her challenges and complexities especially when he or she is directly involved.

Boehmer (2010:227) has in mind the literature of the expanding African community outside Africa in her reference to contemporary writings which are characterised by "international wanderings" and issues of cultural dislocation and ambiguous loyalties. She states that these writings are: "marked by the pull of conflicting ethics and philosophies—a potential source of tragedy—and often comically contrasting forms of social behaviour". The tragic and comic potential of these contemporary African literatures, it would seem, is facilitated by the significance of reinventing culturally indistinct images and narrating new discoveries in relation to contradictory socio-cultural interactions. Boehmer displays her awareness of the ongoing mutation in literary formations occasioned by transnational interactions and the inexorable question of African literature's acclaimed relationship with the African society, particularly in its rather conventional sense.

Having for over four decades focused on the socio-cultural and political landscape of Africa, Africa's literary landscape is developing in another direction, engaging experimentations and reflecting daring representations that are the imperative outcome of active transnational interaction. Nigerian literature is at the fore of this engaging phase of literary development, and is assisted by the West, who serves as a midwife in the publication, active circulation and even substantial recognition of these new writings (Krishnaswamy, 1995). Many theories have evolved with this literary development. Some have described it as literary flight, linking it with the brain drain and the unprofitable socio-economic conditions in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. These have been responsible for the "uprooting" and planting of African writers in diaspora (Boehmer, 2005; Akeh, 2006; Fasan, 2010).

Fasan (2010:41) recognises that the active community of Nigerian writers which could be found in Europe and America and the stiff competition they face in the light of new technologies:

> …a diasporic dimension (with all the apparent disadvantages and not-so-apparent advantages) to a literature and literary culture already threatened by and in competition with other educative/entertainment media, especially the World Wide Web.

Fasan's concerns are appreciated though but it need be affirmed that the evolution of this new African literary landscape is inevitable and the Nigerian migrant writer who lives in diaspora has to come to terms with both the change in global interaction and reflect these "diasporic dimension" as his/her immediate reality.

2.3 Conceptual perspectives on migration and diaspora

The ongoing process of global migration is marked by a number of complexities. Motivated by political upheavals, the process of globalisation and the increase in global interaction, migration has becoming a significant determinant in human existence in modern times (Lucassen et al, 2010). Inevitably, this process has also become an important aspect of African literature, giving it its significance in its present phase. Our study examines the contemporary movement of people across transnational borders (dislocation), the processes of integrating into new settlements (belonging) and the implication of the two for Nigeria literature particularly.

Migration is the movement of people from one geographical location to another. This movement could be temporal or permanent depending on the factors that motivated mobility or sustain the relocation. The word which has its origin steeped in ancient times and derives from the Latin verb *migrare* has been used to describe the phenomenon of human mobility by many researchers. Thus, it has been at the center of studies by demographers, geographers, sociologist and economist (Porumbescu, 2013).

Kok (2010) asserts that, the process of migration connotes a relatively permanent state of geographical (re)location followed by necessary restructuring and adjustments aimed at acclimatising to life in a new milieu. Also, with a similar view, Lucassen et al (2010:3)

describe the process of migration as "the ubiquitous phenomenon of human geographical mobility, its consequences and the reactions it provokes"; pointing out that, although the process of migration is as old as human life, the current global migration is quite diverse and as such has attracted much scholarly attention. Frank (2008) states that while the concept of migration is usually associated with a person's physical and spatial movement from one country to the other, or alternatively, from a rural to an urban setting; a migrant's movement from his/her place of birth could be a voluntary or involuntary attempt at escaping the harsh realities of the society or merely the quest for a better life. This relocation of persons is therefore motivated by a plethora of factors not limited to, but embracing the quest for agreeable socio-economic and political conditions, which continue to sustain the process. These movements are however not peculiar to this century (Jones, 2000; Gagiano, 2000; Sheffer, 2003; Cohen, 2008; Charles and Ikoh, 2010; Akhtar, 2011; King, 2012). Though migration has become attractive as a global trend, King (2012:5) argues that the process is riddled with a number of difficulties from policies and restrictions thus, "people are less free to migrate now than they were a hundred years ago".

Studies of migration and migratory trends present the process as more complex and significant than the "simple" act of relocating from, and being located in a new place that this indicates (Massey et al, 1993; King, 2012; Porumbescu, 2013). In the National Geographic publication—*Xpedition*, human migration is defined as "the movement of people from one place in the world to another for the purpose of taking up permanent or semipermanent residence, usually across a political boundary" (*Xpedition*, 2005:1). The crossing of "political borders" and the ineluctable corollaries make the process significant in human relations and migration studies considering its physical, social, cultural and economic implications. Porumbescu (2013) points that those who migrate are not necessarily the poorest ones in society; rather, they are individuals who are aware of inconsistencies; inconsistencies between their needs, expectations and the possibility of attaining them. Roving according to King (2012) is a natural human instinct. Therefore, it is normal to find humans migrating in search of better opportunities, food, conquest and resources. Thus, the rich world benefits largely from these human movements since they seem to offer the opportunities for meeting these expectations (King, 2012; Porumbescu,

2013). The variety of reasons motivating migration and the response to the allure of the "rich world" have been described in relation to Lee's "push" and "pull" model. Between the "push" from nations of origin and the allure ("pull") of a new location lies the consideration of the advantages versus disadvantages of such a movement (King, 2012).

King (2012) has written on the theories and typologies of migration and how to navigate this in view of the obvious complications and diverse presentations of migration presently. He suggests that while some mobility may be described by distance (internal or international) and time (permanent or temporary), others are defined by the coercion and need that necessitate the flight from nations of birth (voluntary or forced) and economic needs. These classifications he states seem useful in delineating the different types of migration but could be problematic in practice as migrants morph into other forms of migration. According to Cohen (2008), migration scholars grapple with differentiating forced from voluntary movements taking into consideration the influences that trigger these. However, he stresses that the gravity of trauma provoke by activities in the migrants nation of origin and other essential factors could be a necessary determinant in classifying the flight from home and formation of settlements elsewhere. Whether these movements are primarily voluntary or involuntary may be overlooked briefly. However, it is of essence to note that, more often than not, the process of migration is most times evaluated by the prospective migrant who tries to determine the advantage of this movement against the odds. And usually, the gains of migrating seem to outweigh the disadvantages (Sheffer, 2003; Cohen, 2008; Charles and Ikoh, 2010). This appears to be essential in understanding the processes that facilitate and sustain the growing impulses of a contemporary African dispersion and the inexorable implications.

The individual at the fore of the process of migration and the appropriateness of nomenclature is also a source of concern in migration studies. Porumbescu (2013:4) points that the term *migrant* may seem controversial in its usage for describing "whoever lives, temporarily or permanently, in another country, different from the one where he was born and has established significant social links with this latter country" considering the United Nation and Commission on Human Rights' perspectives in categorising citizens of other nations who have migrated for different reasons and now live under

different conditions outside their nations of origin. Porumbescu (2013:4) offers a holistic and less derogatory definition of the term *migrant* thus:

> ...as representing all the cases where the individual takes out of his own will the decision to migrate, due to motivations of personal interest and with no intervention from an outside cause that might have been decisive... The people who choose freely when and where to leave, though many times certain circumstances do squeeze them in this direction, are migrants.

This definition highlights the differences in the intention of individuals, the motivation and thus, the nature of the process. This also delineates between individuals who are not necessarily forced to leave their nations of origin or previous locations and people (refugees, émigrés, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and deported people) who "must" migrate considering the impelling and difficult situations that they are involved in.

Also, the controversy surrounding the description of a migrant, his/her status and the nature of his/her (dis)location in more contemporary times is illustrated by King (2012) who points that one form of migration could morph into another. Thus, a temporary migrant could become permanent as return dates are postponed until the return migration never occurs. Also, irregular migrants could formalise or regularise their stay in host countries as the opportunity arises. It is important to state that, politics plays an important role in determining the processes and flows of migration and how migrants are perceived since laws and the relative power of different interest groups determine individual's "right to cross a border legally" (Hagen-Zankar, 2008:8). Sheffer (2003) distinguishes between a migrant and a disporan. He states that, the time in which individuals settle into the hostland as well as other factors has a vital role in determining the conceptual difference between the two. However, he is quick to admit like King (2012) that although definitional borderlines are blurred, time seems to be the most significant determining factor. However, with the right processes on ground, migrants usually move to establish new diasporas or join existing ones.

Considering the relatively permanent state of geographical relocation that characterises migration (Kok, 2010), migration carries with it the concerted "renegotiation of the concepts of identity, belonging, and home" (Frank, 2008:1). Subsequently, the processes that affect the migrant's adjustment and settlement into new spaces become enabling for the formation of diaspora when stretched. As Krishnaswamy (1995:127) observes, "the critical centrality migrancy has acquired in contemporary cultural discourse raises important questions about the nature of postcolonial "diaspora,"…". Consequently, Massey et al (1993:431) assert, that "most of the world's developed countries have become diverse, multiethnic societies, and those that have not reached this state are moving decisively in that direction". As far sounding as this may seem, global migration is significant for producing these kinds of conditions. Thus, contemporary migration is diverse and more significant in its role in affecting the structures and complex nature of society (King, 2012).

While Geographer E.G. Ravenstein's theorisations in the 1880s form the earliest basis for modern migration theories and the attempt to understand the processes of human mobility, researchers attest to thriving international migration, fragmented theories and thus, insufficient information on the theorisation of international migration (Massey et al, 1993; Hagen-Zankar, 2008; King, 2012). Massey et al (1993:432) state that:

> At present, there is no single, coherent theory of international migration, only a fragmented set of theories that have developed largely in isolation from one another, sometimes but not always segmented by disciplinary boundaries. Current patterns and trends in immigration, however, suggest that a full understanding of contemporary migratory processes will not be achieved by relying on the tools of one discipline alone, or by focusing on a single level of analysis. Rather, their complex, multifaceted nature requires a sophisticated theory that incorporates a variety of perspectives, levels, and assumptions.

With the development of studies along the lines of migration and new conceptual frameworks, such as mobility, transnationalism and diaspora studies, King (2012) asserts that the study of migration has been considerably enhanced considering the relatedness of these frameworks and the opportunities made available for thriving interdisciplinary

approaches and studies such as this, to the study of migration. For instance, Seyhan (2001) asserts that the diasporic narrative has the potential to inform on the chaotic nature of global culture and transnational interaction in contemporary times. The concept of diaspora, its formation and studies derives a lot of significance in complementary studies with migration.

The question of how to fittingly define and conceptualise diaspora in modern times seems to exist as laymen and scholars alike consider and maintain its Jewish relations to be rather significant (Sheffer, 2003), while others now apply the term more liberally in a more metaphoric sense to different groups and peoples (Krishnaswamy, 1995; Cohen, 2008).

Firstly, it seems imperative to examine the origin of the term that has generated engaging discourses in recent times. According to Cohen (2008:18), the term diaspora is conceived in Greek and is found in the Greek translation of the Bible. He points that the term "originates in the composite verb *dia* and *speirein*, namely 'to scatter', 'to spread' or 'to disperse'". Cohen asserts that the term which has evolved through a history of negative usage conveying the ill-fortune, pain and affliction that characterised Jewish movement and settlements has moved into contemporary times to signify a new and astounding way of perceiving cultural differences and new ethnicities that have been enabled by contemporary and complex global migration flows. So while the origin of "diaspora" and the discourses generated by it remains in Jewish religious history, it presently transcends this (Cohen, 2008). Cohen's study on diasporas states that diaspora is enabled by the process of migration. He asserts that presently, diaspora can be categorised into the following groups with each deriving its significance from a voluntary or forced movement from homeland: Victim diasporas; Labour diasporas; Trade diasporas; Imperial diasporas and Deterritorialized diasporas (Cohen, 2008).

Krishnaswamy's (1995:128) assertion that "politically charged words such as "diaspora" and "exile" are being emptied of their histories of pain and suffering and are being deployed promiscuously to designate a wide array of cross-cultural phenomena" is

significant in pointing to the swelling scope of applicability of the concept and more. Corroborating this view, Seyhan (2001:11) asserts that presently:

> The term *diaspora* has moved into a broadly conceived semantic realm. Although it originally designated the forced dispersion of major religious and ethnic groups, such as the Jews and the Armenians, a dispersion "precipitated by a disaster often of a political nature" in the modern age, greatly diversified exile and ethnic communities, expatriates, refugees, "guest" workers, and other dispossessed groups sharing a common heritage have moved into the semantic domain of the term.

Highlighting the vast application of the term diaspora to diverse groups of people with shared interest and/or heritage and whose dispersion have been characterised by a similar pattern of disaster in contemporary times, Seyhan posits further that, the use of the term in describing these minority groups is often easily contested and in need of proof in strengthening the claim of dislocation and relocation.

Sheffer (2003) insists that the seemingly new emergence of interests generated by diasporas and its significance in contemporary times in relating to modern dispersions do not extricate the concept of diaspora from its rootedness in the distant past. He however acknowledges that the attention enjoyed by growing disaporas attests to the diversity and wider receptiveness associated with it presently. Owing to the diverse application of the term in recent times, Sheffer (2003:9-10) therefore seems to define and narrow his application of the term in modern times to include ethno-nationals. He therefore states that

> Diaspora is a social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homelands and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries.

Sheffer emphasises the permanent nature of movement from places of ethno-national origins and the formation of settlements in other countries that culminates in migrants

living and emphasising their difference as minorities in host communities. Imperative to Sheffer's study on disaporas are the political implications of these ethno-national settlement elsewhere for homeland and hostland(s) and the socio-political undertone which provide a multidimensional background to understanding the intricacies of individuals leaving their nations of origin to establish similar settlements where they live as minorities.

In more recent times, as Akhtar (2008:1) asserts also, the concept of diaspora has acquired a more profound meaning with the actuality of securing itself as a genre in literary studies and producing complexities like "dislocation, disintegration, dispossession and disbelongingness" to be confronted. Thus, he argues further that diaspora is defined by

> an emotional and psychological state of (a) strutting between two geographical and cultural states (b) struggling between regression and progression, dislocation and then, relocation. This continuum of perpetual shift between two states of dislocation and relocation makes one interrogate the sustainability of an individual in such a situation... The strategy that accounts for such cultural shock of a migrant as that he tries to construct multiple identity and develops a hybrid vision, which eventually becomes an ongoing process for adaptation.

Akhtar undertakes a detailed description of the term diaspora, the processes involved in geographical dislocation, the obvious and even subtle implications that follow. It is significant that, his definition of the term highlights the psychological import of diaspora that enables and sustains an enduring "regression" and "progression" and the sensibility that characterises such an existence. This "strutting between two geographical and cultural states and "struggling between regression and progression, dislocation and then, relocation" give migrant literature its creative intensity, form and significance.

Throughout this study, we use the terms—migrant, immigrant, migration, diaspora, disaporic, exile and exilic to describe people, processes and events associated with incidences of movements and dispersions from nations of origin to other nation across

transnational borders, be it as migrants, expatriates, expellees, asylum seekers and their establishment in new spaces and hostlands. Appropriately, we recognise, as do scholars, the vast application of the term "diaspora", "migrant", "exile" and the ongoing studies and debate by social theorists and scholars of diaporas which attempt to delineate the appropriateness of these usages in more contemporary times as we witness migrations and the proliferation of diasporas (Cohen, 2008).

2.4 The concept of migrant literature

Expanding transnational frontiers and their implications have enabled a thriving discourse on the movement of persons from one location to another. Coupled with the vibrant activities of globalisation and the interest generated by these internationally, migration, transnational existence and the interaction of people remain imperative to the formation and survival of diasporas from which migrant or exilic literatures derive their significance. This "scramble for the West" by Africans and its implications have occupied a vital position in charting the course of recent African writings from outside its shores. For instance, Mberu and Pongou (2010) assert that a well-developed culture of professional migration emerged in Nigeria post-independence and that by 1978, about thirty thousand Nigerian graduates from United Kingdom higher institutions were living outside the continent, with two thousand of them living in the United States of America. By 1984 however, the Nigerian population living in the United States had multiplied to ten thousand many of them being educated and highly skilled. Today, the numbers have multiplied tremendously with many also unaccounted for considering the illegal means which also complicate this contemporary "scramble".

Significantly, these transnational movements have set the stage for fictionalised narratives that unflinchingly unmask the labyrinth transnational straddlers must negotiate in their new spaces, with their changing identities and existence (Okonkwo, 2010). These narratives give evidence to racism in global spaces, the irrepressible processes of cultural fragmentation and assimilation which have produced culturally hybrid Africans, and enable the formation of new African identities in diaspora. These form part of the complexities that attend migrants belonging and surviving outside cultural and geographical milieus in global times. Therefore, the straddling and struggle for

integration into these new spaces remain visible realities of modern African fiction. It is against this backdrop that the literature attesting to, and negotiating transnational existence can be understood.

With the growing ability of migrants to assimilate customs in hostlands in mind, Seyhan (2001) attempts to delineate between the processes and factors that are vital in defining and describing literature construction in transnational spaces. She argues that although terms such as "immigrant" or "migrant" seem technically appropriate in describing the writings of immigrated writers who now reside in countries outside their nations of origin, these should be used with caution in describing these writings considering the possibilities that come with assimilation and the seeming integration of migrants that could occur. Seyhan therefore shows a preference for terms such as "diasporic", "exilic", or "transnational" above others as more effective adjectives for qualifying this literature. Her position and preferences are of essence. However, the extent to which dominant cultures are assimilated by a writer may not be significantly typical in voiding his or her migrant status and thus the literal sense of the word in describing this literature.

Frank (2008:2) refers to the body of literature highlighting issues of exilic experiences as "migration literature". He goes further to argue that this "refers to all literary works that are written in an age of migration—or at least to those works that can be said to reflect upon migration". He adds that there is "the need for a work oriented rather than an author-oriented way of reading and categorizing migration literature" (Frank, 2008:16). Frank argues for, and includes writers whose works reflect migrant experiences but do not necessarily have personal transnational exposure directly since they have not been geographical dislocated from their homelands and nations of origin in any way. He however summits that, "the point is that whether we favor social context or literary content/form, the distinction between migrant and nonmigrant writers becomes increasingly difficult to uphold" (Frank, 2008:2). Clingman (2009) argues in a similar line that a writer does not necessary have to relocate outside his home location to make his/her work transnational. He argues further that the question of literary form and feature rather becomes significant in describing this literature.

Transnational literature as a genre of writing operates outside the convention and scope of national canon. It focuses on concerns of deterritorialized individuals and cultures, emphasises perspectives and sensibilities of individuals and communities that are most times alienated from homeland and hostland (Seyhan, 2006). The form, like Clingman (2009) points out, is as integral as the travelling nature of these writings which engage different trajectories in preoccupation and the manner in which they are written in spite of the author's location. These realities make up the nature, and determine the scope of transnational literature.

Migrant writings are defined by certain forms and features. Pourjafari and Vahidpour (2014:680) offer a direction on their aesthetics:

> The term migrant literature implies that subject matter will be about migration and the culture and tradition of the host nation. However, the fact is that although the description of the migration experience and the difficulties of adaptation play a primary role in this literature, actually, migrant literature can be very diverse, either thematically or structurally.

Pourjafari and Vahidpour recognise both the essential and dynamic nature of migrant literature and its experimentation with complex possibilities generated by the writer's background experience of migration and dislocation from homeland. It is imperative to state that the diverse nature of this literature permits and thus enhances it thematic diversity. This accounts for the migrant writer's refraction and representation of the "home" dislocated from and "belonged" to in certain ways; and perhaps, a sharpened critical sensibility that comes with belonging to more than one location as in the case of Nigerian migrant writers.

For instance, in *Swallow* (2008), set in Lagos, one of Nigeria's busiest cities, Sefi Atta tells the story of two friends and working class ladies—Tolani and Rose who experience the hardship that characterises Nigeria's social life during its Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of 1986. Atta expertly creates the picture of the typical Lagos life with its socio-economic challenges and characters who anticipate a better life while the country undergoes economic restructuring. In this narrative, Atta's representations of a

city once-lived-in are significant as she explores the theme of class, morality and survival in the midst of these tensions. The events in the novel climb to its climax when smuggling swallowed wraps of drugs into Europe becomes a way of escape and survival. Rose follows this path and dies. Tolani who stays back says this about Nigerians who live overseas: "They were not the good citizens like those of us who stayed and suffered" (Atta, 2008:54). Although Atta seems to raise questions on the propriety of Rose's decision as a means of surviving Nigeria's harsh socio-economic realities, she derides hopeful citizens like Tolani who seem committed to living in Nigeria. Atta interrogates the country's social life and seems to presents it as the *raison d'être* for the nations ambitious migrating populace who would rather "escape" than stay "home" trying to survive. Exploring the preoccupation with home and exile in younger Nigerian diasporic writings, Akeh (2006) argues that representations of home and exile are ineluctable in these writing because of the peculiar nature of the migrant's experience of dislocation. Thus, these writers "remain" a part of and apart from their nations of origin. It is a myth then that the main focus of migrant writers is migration (Stanisic, 2010).

Pourjafari and Vahidpour (2014) explain it this way, irrespective of the spatial geographical location a migrant writer occupies, "in the mental landscape" the writer remains "connected" and thus "belongs" to different environments that demand his attention. Their conclusion is weighty. They state that: "Even if a writer intentionally attempts at justifying one end, simultaneously, but unconsciously, there arises a longing for the other" (Pourjafari and Vahidpour, 2014:685). Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic propositions assert that literature is the overt and conscious expression of the unconscious. Thus, the relationship of the writer to his/homeland irrespective of physical dislocation remains unconscious but is very significant.

Frank (2008) delineates the diverse thematic and structural configurations of migrant literature into two subcategories which are significant in understanding them. He explains that while the social level or context of the literature accounts for the theme and extratextual features of the work, the stylistic level is intratextual and concerned with the formal presentation of the writing. Thus, the extratexual examines the biography of the author, his characters, representations of migration, exile and its corollaries; the

intratextual examines the language, in-betweeness, rhizomatic and inconclusive form of the work.

Stanisic (2010) argues that the media, readers and literary critics alike have enhanced the popularity of migrant literatures nonetheless, and the inconsistencies in conceptualising literature written by migrants outside their nations of origin. He points that this background of diverse interests has popularised what he describes as three myths surrounding this literature. First, he seems to insist that migrant literature should not be regarded as an anomaly outside national literature since this gives it too much status as critics are haplessly fixated with the background and social status of writers. He also makes a case for writers who have migrated and choose nonetheless to speak on the subjects pointing to migration and related issues. He argues further that the subject of migration in relation to the literary premises of genre, style is more important than the background information from the life of the author. Secondly he argues that the migrant writer may not necessarily have a more interesting perspective on the issues of migration and thus the subject can be engaged by and "good" writer since migration as a subject can be treated as fiction.

Although Stanisic (2010) tries consistently to establish the irrelevance of these background details, he however concedes that these background facts, biographic information will always appeal to both readers and critics. It is significant to say as stated earlier that these details are an imperative in the making and understanding of migrant literature since it gives the work its essence and perhaps establishes what Quayson (1997:3) describes as "…unmediated truth believed to inhere in reality". These allow the writer to mediate and thus reflect a reality which he is significantly part of. In practice, a "good" non-migrant writer may not have this experience. Thirdly, he considers it a myth that migrant writers write in their native or ethnic language. He points that migrant writers do not necessarily have to do this to establish their status but that their referring to national or ethnic linguistic codes could be important when properly exploited.

Negash (1999) and Boehmer (2005) describe contemporary Nigerian writers in the diaspora and their writings as "migrant", pointing to their location in world/imperial

centres and metropolis as significant. This study considers the use of terms such as "migrant", "diasporic", "exilic" and "transnational" appropriate in describing literatures by migrated Nigerian writers, who have made their "homes" in the diaspora and now recreate realities about "home" and the transnational spaces they are involved with. This study therefore emphasises that the prevailing migrant status of the writer, the content and the sometimes oscillatory form of his/her work that indicates the negotiating of multiple spaces of involvement is imperative. Perhaps, more important than the most suitable term is the transnational context of the writer, the content and form of this literature which attest to the significance of peregrinations that characterise this literature, the significance of the aesthetic and global implications communicated in contemporary times.

Seyhan (2001:13) states that transnational writings could function "as important social documents of the culture(s) of dislocation and exile". Furthermore, she suggests that studies of these diasporic texts also serve as "condensed archives of national, ethnic, and linguistic memories" (Seyhan, 2001:13). This accounts for the realities that are expressed by the migrant writer through mingled feelings of nostalgia for the world left behind and the excitement at "belonging" in a new culture. The creative impulse of the writer who seems to be culturally at "home" sometimes and in reality, physically homeless accentuates these possibilities. Issues of familiarity and strangeness remain an impediment in such an existence (Innes, 2007). For this reason, the "impulse to write out of the experience of dislocation or estrangement is one shared by many immigrant writers" (Innes, 2007:182). Although the migrant experience may seem universal, the processes involved in conveying them creatively are motivated by individual differences thus, the varying levels of influence communicated and the patterns of creative expression.

Migrant fiction is a significant aspect of contemporary existence and to explore it effectively, its complex relationship with the boundaries of language and identity must be investigated (Clingman, 2009). Clingman notes that examining this is instrumental in understanding and evaluating the transnational writer's creative journey since:

> These works of fiction have entered that territory, telling the story of who we are, who we might become. Though they have entered, they have not traversed—crossed the space of navigation to some other side. Rather, they are in the space of crossing, confronting its unevenness, its obstructions, its gaps; they themselves *become* the space of crossing (Clingman, 2009:242).

Clingman emphasises the complex process of navigating that occurs in transnational literature. He argues that this process occurs "between inside and outside" (p.242), in individuals as well as the world. He points out also, that this seems to be a process that is never completely achieved considering the complicated nature of boundaries that must be continuously navigated.

According to Sougou (2010:13) "African diaspora subjects articulate identities constructed far away from their homelands or motherland both in fiction and critical theory". Okonkwo (2010:132) notes that, "African peoples' free-willed encounter with the 'New world'" not only enriches the twentieth century United States' sociological history but also contributes to studies in imaginative narrative that uncover the diverse experiences of these arrivals in their scramble for Europe. Nevertheless, Hale (2006:19) seems to warn that "our notion of diaspora, however, should not be limited to writers in Europe and the New World" since diaspora is expansive and that the African literary presence among other thoughts which are significantly African, can be found in global spaces other than Europe and the New World. Though Hale's submission that diaspora is expansive is valid, the focus of our study emphasises the Nigerian literary presence in the United Kingdom, America and Europe.

Boehmer (1995) asserts that postcolonial migration has gained critical attention in its pursuit, practice and in literatures. She notes that the novels of postcolonial writers now display fascinatingly sceneries that oscillate between different worlds occasioned by this "diverse movements of transcontinental drift" (Boehmer, 1995:232-233). These literary works engage in subtle confrontational discourse which challenges and unmasks the growing concept of globalisation and its concealed but uninterrupted veneration of the polarisation of the "Centre" and "Periphery" in diaspora and global spaces. Also, migrant literature focuses on national and historical rootlessness, and sometimes celebrates

political pessimism which could easily be interpreted as a decline in the vigour earlier expressed for political writings (Boehmer, 2005). This outlook is made possible by the location of the migrant writers and their commitment to these many spaces of involvement. Consequently, Seyhan (2001:4) posits that:

> Narratives that originate at border crossings cannot be bound by national borders, languages, and literary and critical traditions. Born of crisis and change, suffering alternately from amnesia and too much remembering, and precariously positioned at the interstices of different spaces, histories, and languages, they seek to name and configure cultural and literary production in their own terms and to enter novel forms of inter/transcultural dialogue.

Multiple belongings and the crises that attend this becomes the impetus that accommodates the migrant writer's attitude that bestrides the seeming disparate possibilities which his/her migrant status permits. In holding these worlds of the migrant together, memories play a vital role, connecting the past—national and personal histories to present existence to produce complex representations. Dar (2010:105) asserts that, "exile creates a special role for memory in the creative process which has serious implication for the writers' engagement with history". Taking into cognizance exilic conditions and how they become enabling for creativity, the writer's memory becomes vital in expressing personal histories of transnational encounters, nostalgia and bonds to homeland which are significant. Farah (1990:65) corroborates this when he asserts that, "memory is active when you are in exile, and it calls at the most awkward hour, like a baby waking its parents at the crack of dawn". He explains that he finds that in exile, "distance distills; ideas become clearer and better worth pursuing" (Farah (1990:65). Farah acknowledges that most of his significant writings have taken place in exile, outside his nation of origin.

Although Akeh (2006:36) seems to contend that, "there is no sense of an indifferent attitude to nation in these writings and utterances, not even for the most-lived-abroad among the writers. Not yet". He however concedes that, these writers' works show that:

> There are distortions in the memory of many of these writers abroad, depending on the extent of their alienation. In some, there are also early indications of a cosmopolitan

> taste or sensibility, but the loyalty is still to a purist construct – the nation, two nations in some cases, the nation of residence and also the remembered, and now increasingly mythic, nation of origin (Akeh, 2006:36).

This explains these writers' complex commitments. To suggest less would be to de-emphasise the complexity that is involved. Suffice it to say that when Nigerian writers in diaspora write about "home", it is their creative strategy of coping with and processing their dislocation from "home". And when they write about their new spaces, it is a reflection on the realities of their new existence. This is to say that, the migrant writer's status does not seem to restrict him in anyway but comes with, and offers possibilities from the various experiences compelling his/her attention and creative representation. These representations are therefore potent images and reminders that these writers "belong" somewhere other than their nations of origin and somewhere other than these new "homes". Krishnaswamy (1995:128) states that, "the figure of migrancy indeed has proved quite useful in drawing attention to the marginalized, in problematizing conceptions of borders, and in critiquing the politics of power". Boehmer (2005:230) thus argues that, " it is important to remember the apparently self-evident, but nonetheless significant fact that the emergence of migrant literatures in many cases represents a geographic, cultural, and political retreat by writers from the post-colonial world 'back' to the old metropolis".

2.5 Precursors of Nigerian migrant narratives

When Okonkwo (2010) alleges possible tardiness in the arrival of these narratives that represent the encounters of Africans in diaspora and the paucity of critical literary studies on same, it is because of the intensity of modern mobility of Nigerians in the 21st century and more significantly, the migration of the Nigerian writer in global times. However, with the present proliferation of Nigerian migrant narratives, and the presence of its writers on global stage; with the necessary critical steps, overcoming the challenge of paucity of critical studies on Nigeria migrant literature globally may not be so enormous.

Buchi Emecheta's writings serve as a precursor to the growth of migrant narratives in Nigeria. This is worth reviewing to some extent since her early fiction seems to be

Nigeria's earliest literary attempt at negotiating and representing immigrant life (Akeh, 2006). Born in Nigeria in 1944 to Igbo parents, Buchi Emecheta married at an early age, lived in Lagos and later immigrated to Britain in the early 1960s with her husband. Her marriage eventually failed and she became a student of sociology at the London University and also worked as a librarian. Her difficult experiences in London as an African woman, coupled with the subaltern roles of women in society became the motivation and background of her early writings—*In the Ditch* (1972), *Second-Class Citizen* (1974). Her novel *Gwendolen* (1989) set in Jamaica and London examines issues of migrant life in Britain. Emecheta also has to her credit *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), and *Double Yoke* (1982), narratives that have been significant in defining her writing career and preference for how women navigate their challenging lives in African societies, where cultural practices that foster sexual oppression and male preference place them at the receiving end. Emecheta's experiences in London sharpened her critical perspective on the socio-cultural practices of her people in Nigeria. She has been faulted for employing Eurocentric standards in examining African patriarchy and her male representations particularly (Prono, 2013).

In1972 Emecheta published *In the Ditch* after it had appeared in the *New Statesman magazine* and *Second Class Citizen* followed in 1974. In these her early narratives set in the 1960s, we find representations of immigrant life in London based on her personal experience as a struggling African woman living in London. However, like in most of her narratives, sexual oppression, female subservience and socio-economic plight remain central. Fraught with poverty, despair and humiliation, Adah the protagonist in *In the Ditch* struggles to fend for herself and her children after separating from her husband and this struggle for survival remains crucial throughout the novel. Jagne and Parek (2012:150) write that, *In the ditch*, Emecheta's semi-autobiography, the author tries to denounce some of these realities of "…unfulfilled women on the periphery of an affluent society". Thus, she interrogates the sexual and racial subjugation she experiences and the challenge of fitting into British society with these gnawing realities. Emecheta becomes even more autobiographical in her narration of Adah's migration from Nigeria and her experiences as a struggling African woman in her second novel, *Second Class Citizen*.

According to Killam and Kerfoot (2009:135), "Emecheta's fiction, seeks to account for the situation of African women in a changing world, whether in colonial Nigeria, traditional Igboland, or contemporary London".

Unlike in her early narratives, Emecheta examines closely the issues of migration, dislocation and transnational integration in her more recent novels, *Kehinde* (1994) and *The New Tribe* (2000), where the setting oscillates between London and Nigeria. With over two decades of living in Britain and engaging in creative writing, Emecheta's recourse to images and motivation from her Igbo socio-cultural background in her writings has remained considerably obvious.

After Emecheta, the spate and frequency of voluntary migrations of writers has been significant. Among these writers who have migrated to the West are: Ben okri, Biyi Bandele Thomas, Chika Unigwe, Sefi Atta, Chimamanda Adichie, Segun Afolabi, Helon Habila, Chris Ubani, Helen Oyeyemi and E.C. Ososndu. These among others are gaining literary grounds through more contemporary sensibilities and representation of the complexities of exilic life in literary expression. Since these writers occupy different creative eras in Nigeria's "Diasporic writings" as Akeh (2006:3) labels, he attempts to categorise them and thus situates Emecheta and her contemporaries (Osahon Naiwu, Wole Soyinka, Isidore Okpewho and Tess Onwueme) within the group of "earlier Nigerian writers" (3) and the more recent and obviously younger writers within the group of "younger Nigerian writers" (3). Akeh argues however, that, it is only recently that some of these writers (Okpewho and Onwueme) engage the subject of exilic experience in their creative pursuit despite their many years of residency outside Nigeria as writers. The purpose and focus of this study limits it to this group of "younger Nigerian writers", whose unique sensibilities, diasporic experiences and its corollaries are consciously represented with significant vibrancy through fictional narratives.

The corpus of African migrant fiction is characterised by its location and steady growth in diaspora and it is perhaps for this reason and more, as Krishnaswamy (1995:126) observes that "postcolonial immigrant intellectuals have gained legitimacy in the international media-market". This location in diaspora and its corollaries have become

indelible defining markers of this contemporary literary focus in Nigerian migrant narratives. Affirming the privileged position of the migrant writer, Negash (1999:79) opines that, "migrant or displaced writers have privileged themselves with a unique artistic consciousness, attributed to their homelessness which permits them to speak of matters of universal significance, and the (dis)location which allows them to see from inside and out". This Janus-faced consciousness accounts for the migrant writer's interrogation of homeland with the motive that seems to venerate exile and project the complexities of inclusion and belonging in these spaces.

This study emphasises the use of "migrant literature", to connote literary works so emphasised by the migrant status of its writer and its involvements with inflections thematically and formally indicative of belonging and interacting in more than one place ("here" and "there") other than the writer's nation of origin, and the writer's artistic perspective that enables him "to see from inside and out" (Negash, 1999: 79).

2.6 Situating dislocation and belonging in literature

Dislocation and belonging have become significant concepts in global times with the migration of individuals across national borders from their nations of origin and birth. With an increase in dislocation and the otherness that this usually signifies, belonging and having a sense of place becomes important. As expected, interrogating and appreciating the concept of dislocation and belonging in transnational spaces is imperative. Also, important is the growing need to examine the politics of place and belonging, especially among people who have been dislocated from their nations of origin willfully or otherwise.

Cristian Bocancea cited in Porumbescu (2013) asserts that cultural systems are affected by the process of migration and its corollaries and that the migrant's culture of origin occupies a secondary position as he/she works at integrating him/herself into a new culture. The process as noted is particularly complex and painful because it "supposes a de-location and a re-construction of codes, values and norms, ultimately a de-location and a reconstruction of his very identity" (Porumbescu, 2013:5). The modifications engendered by the process of acculturation become strategic with more permanent

contacts to ensure migrants intergration. Sociologists have differentiated between two kinds of acculturation processes, the material acculturation: when the migrant adopts in his public life the example from the dominant culture, while maintaining in his private and family life his original cultural codes; and the formal acculturation: when people in contact mutually influence either cultures to produce a new culture (Porumbescu, 2013). The formal acculturation usually does not seem to occur where you have a population of so-called first generation migrants, many of which the writers under this study are.

Ang (1998) asserts that, there are social mechanisms that affect people that have been constructed as different (foreign) in any given society. This "people who are positioned as 'foreign' develop all kinds of strategies to deal with it—some people will deny their foreignness, and self hatred is part of this, or they will try to assimilate into dominant culture as much as possible" (Ang, 1998: 153-154). Consequently, with the influence of the processes of migration and acculturation, the migrant's identity which is made up of his/her racial, cultural and ethnic identities is subject to change (Bhugra, 2004). It is against this backdrop that belonging is significantly negotiated.

Krishnaswamy (1995:135) asserts that "the experience of dislocation apparently gives the writer an enhanced ability to self-consciously reflect on the constructedness of reality". Thus, dislocation heightens the writer's sense of being, a being complicated by this displacement and attempts at belonging. The significance of this reality is captured in the migrant writer's creative representations. Akeh (2006) describes dislocation as some sort of alienation from "home". He asserts, that it is an integral aspect of the creating process of migrant writings since dislocation entails "uprootedness" that comes with a "frayed sense of certainty and communal loyalty" (Akeh, 2006:4). He states that the process of dislocation significantly affects a writer's perception and representation of "home". Akeh is better quoted at this point on the issue:

> Dislocation and its ambiguities remain primary constants in many, conditioning, if not determining, their creative choices and the changeable interests they allow to inform those choices...This conflicted sense of belonging continues to provide a dominant subtext for much of the work – the loss of home, the yearning for it, and, especially for those

> in long disconnecting residency abroad, the progressively increased perception of home as a place less known, not where they live, only an imaginary or imprecise construct of where they are from (Akeh, 2006:4).

Akeh attests to the influence of dislocation in migrant literatures. He finds that the duration of dislocation from homelands significantly strengthens the representations of "home" either as an imagination or reality. The former of the alternatives suggests itself in Brah's (1996:192) description of "home" as "a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of return…also a lived experience of a locality". More striking is his connection of a "complex sense of belonging" to this process of dislocation.

Krishnaswamy (1995) presents dislocation as an absorbing process with many possibilities. She asserts that "dislocation actually opens up an abundance of alternative locations, allowing the individual to own several different homes by first becoming homeless" (Krishnaswamy, 1995:139). Furthermore, she points out that the process of dislocation could be multiple—temporal, spatial and linguistic.

Inglis (2010:1) asserts that, "the question of what it means to identify with and have a sense of belonging to a particular place or locality has greater significance in an increasingly globalised world". To belong therefore, Inglis (2010) posits that the individual must identify with one or more variables. He adds that this requires identifying with a geographical location, people, a place or a mixture of all of these. However, Fenster and Vizel (2006:7-8) contend that:

> Construction of a sense of belonging to a place is not necessarily related to a coherent and solid aspect of identity. Rather, it may be a sense of attachment that is full of contradictions, saturated in feelings of rejection and otherness…Nonetheless, this attachment is powerful because it is experienced through many aspects of one's own identity.

Significantly belonging and having a sense of place is created by an amalgam of these possibilities that ineluctably are closely related to the emotion. Hall (2004) finds that,

delineating the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion is significant in conceptualising belonging and initiating the process. According to Fenster and Vizel (2006:9) belonging is an "evasive feeling", one synonymous with having a sense of place. Fazal and Tsagarousianou (2002:11) point to the complex nature of the diasporic notion of "home", stating that its "relationship to a multiplicity of locations through geographical and cultural boundaries", especially within the concept of contemporary diasporas make significant the subject of inclusion or exclusion which could emphasise an individual as either being dislocated from, or belonging in a specific location. So when an individual "belongs" to a location and if the location qualifies to be referred to as "home" is subject to many circumstances, and the outcome largely determined by the displaced individual. Thus, feeling at home and being at home remain two different possibilities in such a complex existence (Fazal and Tsagarousianou, 2002).

The quest for a sense of belonging usually seems sustained for as long as the migrant status remains. Acculturation therefore becomes a significant strategy if belonging must be attained. While, the embrace of universalism from sustained dislocation from homeland could signal integration, this may not be physical but rather psychological considering the sometimes scathing nature of dislocation. Rushdie (1984:12) describes these complex processes thus:

> It may be argued that the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity. Which seems to me self-evidently true; but I suggest that the writer who is out-of country and even out-of-language may experience this loss in an intensified form. It is made more concrete for him by the physical fact of discontinuity, of his present being in a different place from his past, of his being "elsewhere." This may enable him to speak properly and concretely on a subject of universal significance and appeal.

This accounts for the possibilities that are expressed by the migrant writer through mingled feelings of achievement and apprehension, of nostalgia for the world left behind and the excitement at "belonging" in a new culture (Innes, 2007). The creative impulse of the writer who seems to be culturally at home sometimes and in reality, physically homeless accentuates these possibilities. Therefore, issues of familiarity and strangeness

therefore remain an impediment in such an existence (Innes, 2007). For this reason, the "impulse to write out of the experience of dislocation or estrangement is one shared by many immigrant writers" (Innes, 2007:182). Since these experiences are significant to the migrant writer and his aesthetic task, the cycle of "discontinuity" and being "elsewhere" are significantly captured through narrative oscillations and creative choices that enhance a dynamic literary posture.

2.7 The short story in Nigeria

The short story is a concise prose fictional narrative. It is defined by its remarkable brevity that accommodates few characters and a terse narrative pattern. This prose form fosters the thriftiness of the narrative pattern and also influences through this distinct feature the rapid development of the characters, setting and narrative structure (Boyd, 2006).

Boyd (2006) states that, the origin of the short story as an art form, its development and rise as a fictional form could be traced to the 19th century. Thus, until about this century, the short story was not regarded as an art form or literary form. Furthermore, he asserts that although the short story gained popularity in the 19th century from "industrial and demographic" processes which invariably brought about the formal emergence of the magazines and periodicals, "the short story had always existed as an informal oral tradition" (Boyd, 2006:5). Perhaps, this is why Pasco (1991) asserts that it is difficult to defend the claims of the recent origins and birthplace of the short story. Thus, he concedes that the source and origin of the short story can be traced to the earliest days of civilization. Boyd (2006:5) argues that, "the anecdote, the fond reminiscence, the protracted jokes, the pointed recollection are surely the genesis of short stories we write and read today". He therefore proposes that this makes the short story "conceivably more natural to us than longer forms" (Boyd, 2006:5).

Charters (1998) states that, this brief fictional narrative often involving a unified episode derives much of its significance from the unity of effect this creates. Furthermore the scholar asserts that the concise and thus concentrated nature of the short story makes the form depend for its success on feeling and suggestion. This she states therefore makes the

short story not as comprehensive as the novel. Pritchett (1981) explains that while the novel is preoccupied with telling the reader everything, the short story focuses on one thing.

The short story writer's significant use of language considering the brevity of its form makes the narrative even more striking (Charters, 1998). A number of scholars have described the short story as being rather poetic in nature (Moffet and McElheny, 1966; Pritchett, 1981; Bradbury, 1988; Charters, 1998). Pritchett (1981: xiv) maintains that:

> …the short story springs from a spontaneously poetic as distinct from a prosaic impulse—yet is not 'poetical' in the sense of a shuddering sensibility. Because the short story has to be succinct and has to suggest things that have been 'left out', are, in fact, there all the time, the art call for a mingling of the skills of the rapid reporter or traveler with an eye for incident and an ear for real speech, the instincts of the poet and ballad-maker, and the sonnet writer's concealed discipline of form.

The poetic spontaneity that characterises the story-telling process in the short story projects the short story writer's comprehensive mastery of the fine details that communicate the message of the story and make every aspect of the narrative important. Thus, Charters (1998:3) points out that the short story writer "can impress upon us the unity of their vision of life by focusing on a single effect" just like the poet. This, the scholar states is achieved by the use of "language with the force of poetry" (Charters, 1998:3).

Onuekwusi (2000) has stated that, Roscoe's contention that African writers give up experimentations with the longer narrative form (novel) and focus on the short story, considering that it shares many features in common with the folktale is biased. He however points that, despite Roscoe's prejudice, his position highlights that the African short story has its antecedent in Africa's oral tradition. Even though the 19th century heralded the emergence of the genre in its present and more modern form, the modern African short story's origin is still readily associated with Africa's oral forms. Consequently, Onuekwusi (2000) asserts that the theories on the origin of the short story

in Africa have associated its origin and ancestry with the folktale. Furthermore, he states that, "the history of the short story in Africa dates back to the early 1940s. It was a natural development in an environment that was fast shedding the moults of oracy and putting on the garb of literacy" (Onuekwusi, 2000:15). With the growth of literacy, the gradual demand for entertainment for the literate reading populace became imminent. So, the short story took on its modern form as a genre. These stories captured in purpose and content the didacticism that was a dominant feature of the African folk tale (Onukwuesi, 2000). This accounts for the similarities between the predominant features of the African folktale and the short story which thrives on narrating and instructing on experiences and thoughts through a compact scope of narrative events. The vast oral tradition of Africa and its story-telling techniques therefore informed the short story's emergence and modern form in Africa. The modern short story however is very dynamic and can claim a wide spectrum of narrative techniques (Julien, 1983).

When Julien (1983) considers the similarities between the African tale and the short story, she argues that these similarities are better highlighted when each form is viewed without the influence of one on the other. However, she argues that in determining if these two forms share a greater affinity than the brevity of form, understanding the fundamental features of the tale becomes essential. She argues further that, the tale teller as well as the short story writer "confine their narrative to a narrow bit of experience" (Julien, 1983:149). However, its ability to convey realities beyond the narrative vision is by no means limited since it projects "glimpses of the nature of life and the human condition" (Julien, 1983:149).

The modern African short story has evolved from its traditional oral roots, developed and gained prominence through the significant activities of literacy that accompanied formal colonial education. The modern short story in Africa thus has experienced tremendous growth since the initial experimentations which signaled its rise in the 1950s. Cyprian Ekwensi, Abioseh Nicol, Taban lo Liyong, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Ama Ata Aidoo, Chinua Achebe and Nadine Gordimer are very often regarded as precursors of the short story genre in Africa.

Fayemi (1990) states that the short story in Nigeria derives its form from oral modes but has since grown through the written form, displaying varied dimensions of innovation and pursuit. She draws attention to the early forms of print media, the newspapers, journals, pamphlets, magazines coordinated by the schools, colleges and universities in Africa as contributing to the emergence and development of the short story. From modest innovations, the short story genre in Nigeria has gone through phases in its development with great influence from the growth in literacy invention and socio-political developments in national life (Fayemi, 1990).

The short story has suffered so much neglect in criticism. For instance, Feuser (1981) argues that a number of short stories by African authors had been published as early as 1928, thirty years before Achebe's novel, *Things fall apart* appeared in London. However, he asserts that the scant attention paid to the short story genre has relegated it as the footnote of the longer form (novel). Corroborating this, Grandsaigne and Spackey (1985:73) note that, "many critics seem so far to have paid little attention to the African short story…Despite the increasing importance of the production, they still relegate it to a very secondary position in the field of fiction".

Mintz (2013:4) states that the short story is "at once a vehicle of entry into single-author publication and a generally insufficient guarantor of further publication, a forum for experimentation and an emblem of high-art mastery". Mintz claims that this view seems to be widely held and thus, very influential in making the story writer compromises his/her preference and formal inclination for the short story for the longer form (the novel). These assumptions and misconceptions seem to have influenced the readership and critical appreciation of the genre significantly. This study views the short story genre in Nigeria as significant in conveying a good number of representations of migrant existence in recent times. It is imperative to look at the rise of the short story genre, its innovatory growth and patronage as a formal literary form in Nigeria.

Onuekwusi (2000:152) states: "this genre began to subsequently thrive not as a poor fourth to the novel, poetry, and drama but as an authentic genre properly motivated and propelled into its own course of development". Akpuda (2008) asserts that the

development of the short story in Nigeria and indeed Africa was facilitated to a large extent by the British Broadcasting Corporation's radio programme "Calling West Africa" which offered Ekwensi's short story, "The Half Baked Doctor" in 1941 and others subsequently the privilege of being aired. This encouraged pioneer African writers in developing the short story genre. Ekwensi continued to gain growing popularity through the 1940s with the publishing of his short stories, a development which was facilitated by the growing impact of his radio-stories (Akpuda, 2008 and Onuekwusi, 2000). Thus, Ekwensi's earliest experimentation with the genre seems to give him recognition as the earliest short story writer in Nigeria. Emenyonu (2000) also corroborates this as he acknowledges Ekwensi's contributory role to the rise and growth of the short story in Africa literature.

Cyprian Ekwensi's stories which explored his fascination with the growth of urbanization, its implications and the waning moral vision in society won him accolades and soon after some of his short story collections like, *The Rainmaker and other stories* (1965), *Lokotown and Other Stories* (1966), *The restless city and Christmas gold* (1975) and *The rainbow-tinted scarf and other stories* (1979) followed. Preceding these, were short stories Ekwensi had published in magazines since the 1945 (Peters, 1993). Peters (1993:16) argues that:

> Ekwensi shows himself capable of telling descriptions and interesting little episodes. But such faults as inconsistencies of plot, episodic and sometimes confusing narration, far-fetched improbabilities, gratuitous sensationalism, melodrama, and lack of a moral code of some sort—in other words, a combination of problems in artistry and vision— have led to its placement more within the category of popular fiction.

While Peters raises issue that may seem striking, putting Ekwensi's pursuit and his acknowledgement of an intended audience of simple masses into perspective, ignoring Ekwensi's contribution to fiction and significance on the Nigerian literary scene would be futile. Peters tries to drive home his point and thus goes ahead to compare Achebe and Ekwensi's literary craftsmanship. Asserting Ekwensi's literary contributions to the Nigerian and African literary corpus at large, Emenyonu (2000) decries the "dwarfed"

significance of this author who despite his contributions to Nigerian literature has had his achievements and literary effort relegated because of perceived bias from what he calls "external impressions" bothering on seeming inaptness. For him, this neglect signifies lapses in the Nigerian critics' opinions and pursuit. Also, P.O. Iheakaram cited in Asoo (2012:14) attributes this "dwarfed" criticism of the short story in Nigerian by the Nigerian critic to what he calls "the non-recognition of the short story as a form worthy of serious attention in our educational system". It is true that the short story does not enjoy the patronage by Nigerian school curriculum. Perhaps the genre's woes are much more linked to the larger populace's bias as described by Mintz (2013). Thus, while the short story generally goes unnoticed, the novel enjoys a place of prominence above the short story and other genres in Africa's literary circles (Asoo, 2012; Julien, 1983).

The short story is a significant genre in Nigeria and it has developed steadily. With the changing face of African life, the influence of the internet media, short stories have continued to thrive as single stories in anthologies, journals and online magazines, a trend which is rather popular today. Presently, the Nigerian short story has experienced a leap in growth following the introduction of awards for short story writing. The Caine prize has been quite significant in this regard. Named in celebration of the late Sir Michael Caine, former Chairman of Booker plc, and the 'Africa 95' arts festival in Europe and Africa in 1995, the Caine prize for African literature was conceived by Sir Caine before his death. Through the prize, he had hoped to encourage African writing in English and its growing recognition by bringing it to the fore of a wider audience. The prize which is worth £10,000 is awarded annually in his memory. As he intended, the prize is awarded for a short story, "reflecting the contemporary development of the African story-telling tradition" (The Caine prize). The first prize which was awarded in the year 2000 has since brought a number of Nigerian short stories to a wider audience and given Nigerian writers global recognition. Notably, Nigeria has been fecund, producing many new writers that make the shortlist and then go on to win the Caine prize for African short story. Helon Habila (2001), Segun Afolabi (2005), E.C. Osondu (2009), Babatunde Rotimi (2012) and Tope Folarin (2013) have clinched Africa's most coveted prize for the short story.

The literary innovation of the contemporary Nigerian short story writer has contributed to the development of the genre in African today. The employment of lucid imagery in projecting the writer's contemporary preoccupations within the compact structure of the genre has been significant. The fictionalised representation of complex migrant existence within the genre's terse structure also continues to give the short story its significance in recent times.

2.8 Theoretical perspectives: Postcolonialism and psychoanalysis

2.8.1 Postcolonial literary theory

Postcolonial literary theory gained prominence in the eighties and early nineties with the publication of different essays and seminal works. The theory which began from discourses which focused on colonised people and their composite experiences gained far reaching influence through the works of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Henry Gates Jr., Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, and the discourses these have generated. Although Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* published in 1961 has been described as one of the motivating forces behind interests in the discourse which developed via a continuum of cultural studies into postcolonial discourses and criticism (Jain, 1991; Faura et al, 1997); Griffiths (1996:166) describes Edward Said as the catalyst behind the colonial discourse and the eventual "use of terms like post-colonial to investigate a very wide range of social practices".

Post-colonies at the outset of colonial rule and freedom from Western hegemony have been embroiled in cultural, social and political complexities. Post-colonies continue to grapple with the impact of colonial disruption of social and cultural systems and the installment of Western structures which limited the colonies (now post-colonies) to subaltern positions through the creation of hegemonic dichotomies. With this, the colonial system internalised inferiority and the possibility of continued subjugation even after the oppressor has ceased to exist in some form (Specht, 2006). Postcolonial discourses have developed from and about the colonies with the aim of investigating the ruptured culture, identity, language, history, literature and experiences of previously colonised nations.

In their seminal publication which has become a framework for many discourses in postcolonial and cultural studies, *The Empire writes back*, Ashcroft et al (1989:2) state that they use the term "post-colonial" to refer to "all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to present date". Applying this to the study of literature, they assert that, post-colonial literatures have their distinct features because of the differences in the regions from which these works emanate. However, they share a common feature as literatures which developed into their present form from the colonial experience, and foreground the tensions and conflict with imperial power. These literatures presently seek to assert themselves above imperialist assumptions and misconceptions about them.

The implications associated with the semantic composition of the term "post-colonial", and the attempts to largely situate it within the period after colonialism, have generated debates that have enriched the postcolonial discourse and theory as we shall examine. Ashcroft et al (1995) assert that, situating post-colonialism within a time frame seems rather restrictive and limiting for implying only political independence and suggesting that colonialism has ended in its totality. They point that such a lay definition which emphasises the temporality of the word "post" is worrisome because it does not take into account the continuing, far-reaching effects of colonialism or the "overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination" (Ashcroft et al, 1995:2).

Also asserting the difficulty associated with the use of the term "post-colonial", William and Chrisman (1994:3) corroborates that "the persistence of neo-colonialist or imperialist practices in the contemporary world is very obvious, perhaps the most serious, obstacle to any unproblematic use of the term post-colonial". This position relates the use of the term "post-colonial" to connote the presence of traces and faces of imperialist/colonial practices globally. Notably, the difficulties associated with the concept are considered by Griffith (1996) who observes that some contemporary interpretation of the term predominantly in America, have signaled a shift in interest from the writings from regions other than England and America as earliest concerns of the concept did, to focus on the more complex issues like marginality and subalternity which have been

detrimental sometimes, considering the relegation of creative writing and critical studies that have emerged from these regions.

Hander (1997) also argues that a casual definition of the term "post-colonial", would offer little. She posits that the term "Post-colonial" connotes a society in the process of recovery from the catastrophe which engenders the interpretation of post-colonial literatures as resonating the struggles of the post-colony against the legacy of the imperialist. Considering Ashcroft et al's (1989) definition of the term, she states that:

> Undeniably this is on one level an accurate interpretation, but a danger lies in looking no further to explain the social and personal turmoil in ex-colonized nations. The danger is that other problematic, oppressive structures may be overlooked, that responsibility may not be assigned to the actual perpetuators (or perpetrators) of society's ills, often Africans themselves and even well-meaning, though misguided ones. Such oversight thwarts understanding of the complexities of the societies and persons depicted, and thus a basic goal of post-colonial writing, to make sense of the chaos of the societies it writes about, to identify real roots of problems, and to seek solutions, fails to be accomplished. Thus to restrict use of the term post-colonial to solely a framework for colonized-colonizer conflicts is too limiting (Hander, 1997:1).

With specificity on Africa, the above statement not only expresses reservation about what seems to be the usual perception of the term which emphasises the disruption of African life by colonial intrusion; and equally makes this disruption responsible for the present dysfunctional state of Africa. However, Hander (1997) implicates Africans in the dysfunctional state of their socio-political sphere, and puts forward the need for Africans to take responsibility also for their chaotic state of affairs rather than indulge in some "colonized-colonizer" tirade which the term could readily accommodate. On the contrary, Hodge and Mishra (1994:276) describe the term "post-colonialism" as an ideological conception which foregrounds "a politics of opposition and struggle, and problematises the key relationship between centre periphery". This colonial outlook and thinking of us/them, East/West, North/South, as Kolawole (2005) puts forth has enhanced the post-colonial discourse.

According to Ashcroft et al (1995:3), "the word 'post-colonial' has come to stand for both the material effects of colonisation and the huge diversity of everyday and sometimes hidden responses to it throughout the world". Consequently, post-colonial literatures do not simply consist of writings that chronologically come after independence but rather result from the ongoing "interaction between imperial culture and the complex of indigenous cultural practices" (Ashcroft et al, 1995:3). Furthermore, Thieme (1996:1) states that "post-colonial" is used to describe "writings and other forms of cultural production which display an oppositional attitude towards colonialism, which are to greater or lesser degree anti-colonialism in orientation".

It is therefore possible to view post-colonialism as a "continuum of experiences" in which colonialism is perceived as an agency of disturbance, unsettling both pre-existing "Aboriginal" discourse of cultures it penetrates, and the English discourse it brings with it (Ashcroft et al, 1989). Okunoye (2008:78) asserts that the term "post-colonial" goes beyond these to describe the "designation of a consciousness". A new consciousness which advocates for the advancement of previously colonised people. This "designation of consciousness" is conceived and retained in post-colonial literatures and arts which now provide an avenue through which the complex experiences of previously colonised peoples are documented and examined (Ashcroft et al, 1989).

Brewton (2005) asserts that even though emergence of post-colonialism as a critical approach is linked to the historical antecedence of the failure of colonial empires, and the attainment of independence, contemporary complications associated with increasing global encounters of cultures, novel appearances of colonialism and multinational capitalism makes this approach of critical study significant. Perhaps, these implications accounts for why Slemon (1996:178) asserts that: "probably no term within literary and critical studies is so hotly contested at present as is the term 'post-colonial'; probably no area of study is so thoroughly riven with disciplinary self-doubt and mutual suspicion".

The emergence and development of post-colonial literary theory according to Ashcroft et al (1989) has been necessitated by many reasons amongst the inability of European theories to cater adequately for the evaluation of post-colonial writings considering the

peculiarity of people's experiences, and the diverse cultures from which post-colonial writings emerge. European critical standards they argue are inadequate since they spring from a cultural milieu that is biased and entirely different though disguised with "false notions" of its universal applicability. Post-colonial literary theory may not be entirely independent of all the influences of Europe as may be assumed considering the platform these have provided for the development of the theory, the determinant role in the contemporary form and content of the post-colonial theory (Ashcroft et al, 1989). Perhaps, this accounts for why Krishnaswamy (1995:128) interrogates the frequency with which the postcolonial text is "approached as a localized embellishment of a universal narrative…", especially, with ongoing attempts to understand it through the postmodernist discourse. However, postcolonial literary theory creates a framework against which the people, experiences and literatures of the postcolony can be created, examined and understood.

The language of the post–colonial writer is a significant subject in this theoretical discourse. The linguistic and physical displacement of pre-colonial nations resulted in the disruption of indigenous codes of these nations who in most cases imbibed the coloniser's language. Thus, Ashcroft et al (1989:38) attest to "the crucial function of language as a medium of power", its ability to function as a tool of domination and freedom and therefore suggest that post-colonial writings which define a large percentage of contemporary African fiction define itself by seizing the language of the "centre", and replacing it with a discourse fully adapted to the colonised place or "doctored" to suit the expression of the realities of colonised peoples' experience. This according to Boehmer (2005) accounts for the preoccupation with innovating a rather representational vocabulary that is visibly indigenous but universally comprehensible.

Ashcroft et al (1989) state that, the abrogation or appropriation of the language at the centre to convey such experiences remains the viable options for writers from post-colonial regions. Furthermore, they suggest that while the former is "a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or correct usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in the words"; the latter refers to a process by which the language is made to 'bear the burden'

of the empire's cultural experience…" (Ashcroft et al, 1989:38-39). Since most post-colonial literatures are cross-cultural, the tension between the abrogation of the received language and the act of appropriating it to indigenous cultural usage are brought to bear in these literatures. Boehmer (1995:207) asserts that:

> The crux of post-colonial debates about cultural authenticity, hybridity and resistance is most prominently drawn at the point of the language choice. This, alongside the recovery of history, was one of the greatest significance in the nationalist writing of independence, and a key source of contention in the effort to define identity.

In abrogating the centre's language, these post-colonial scholars suggests the confrontation of received theoretical forms; undermining the notions of English as the core and other languages as peripheries. By constantly interrogating the dominance of the "standard", this theory establishes itself as counter-discursive. Beyond this, Slemon (1996:197) states that:

> The intellectual challenge for post-colonial critical theory is the attempt to come to know the story of colonial and neo-colonial engagements in all their complexities, and to find ways to represent those engagements in a language that can build cross-disciplinary, cross community, cross-cultural alliance for the historical production of genuine social change.

Whereas it started out as a counter-hegemonic discourse against colonial control and influences of Westernisation which attended this, post-colonial theory today traverses the borders of mere counter disruptive discourse against the subtle forms of colonial control of colonised regions of the world. This theory is significant in probing the post-colonies' contemporary existence and neo-colonialist structures. Boehmer (1995) draws our attention to what could be described as a rather feasible panacea for tackling the peculiar situation of third world nations. She, therefore, posits:

> For third world nations, decolonization can never be focused on primarily at a discursive level. Where, in many cases, autonomy has yet to be won, where power or less intact, where in the face of government corruption and state repression national independence has proved something of

> a farce—the struggle for self-hood is more than the subject of self-reflexive irony. In a third world context, self-legitimization is depended, and depends on, not on discursive play but on a day to day lived resistance, a struggle for meanings which is in the world as well as on paper (Boehmer, 1995:221-222).

The postcolonial discourse and theory is, therefore, multifaceted and very complex. It exhumes diverse discourses and counter discourses as a result of its socio-cultural and political diversity most especially in terms of dissimilar colonial experience and as a result emanates different reactions and counter-reactions. Thus, postcolonialism and the conceptual framework usually contained within it significantly interrogates postcolonial literature to highlight instances of resistance, new ways in which colonised people want to be perceived, the interrogation of new colonial (neocolonialism) agenda and it representations through unbalanced binaries such as us/them, centre/periphery, self/other and derogatory universal descriptions. Postcolonial literature from Africa engages creatively in this counter-discourse. Okunoye (2008) affirms that, the postcolonial literary theory is remarkable for its versatility in engaging and responding to the significant issues that characterise the literary culture of postcolonial societies.

Postcolonial literary theory is therefore discursive in practice, functioning through the reading and analyses of postcolonial texts interrogating the complex process of displacement, culture, language, identity, belonging, history and societal life in relation to previously colonised people. Kinzel (2010:113) asserts that in doing this, postcolonial literary theory tends to project "a whole range of non-literary contexts in their interpretations of literary works". Thus, the textual and extra-textual are significant in postcolonial literary theory since the representations of complexities in creative context and content of literature are investigated against the backdrop of the "response of the literary culture of postcolonial societies to colonialism and all that it precipitated" (Okunoye, 2008:78).

Nnolim (2006:7) asserts that postcolonial literary criticism as a new trend in the criticism of African literature is not likely to lead to a "critical *cul-de-sac*" considering its "tripartite implications of 'New English Literatures', 'third world literature', and

'common wealth literature'". These literatures which go by diverse nomenclatures, project a body of creative writings and discourses that interrogates forms of the colonial relationship; and also remain a dynamic feature of the post-colonial world (Boehmer, 2005). This study relates significantly with Ashcroft et al's (1995:2) assertion that:

> Post-colonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. None of these is 'essentially' post-colonial, but together they form the complex fabric of the field.

Thus, Postcolonial literary theory as a critical framework investigates the implications of colonial strategies and position and postcolonial literary response to these. It does this in relation to the integral aspects of existence of colonised people such as culture, language, history and other experiences that are conveyed without intervention. The examination of postcolonial literatures is therefore preoccupied with probing concerns of language, hegemony, binary oppositions, crises of identity, dislocation, place and displacement which remain major considerations in the colonised people (Ashcroft et al, 1989). Pourjafari and Vahidpour (2014) state that postcolonialism as a literary framework accommodates migrant literature aptly considering its ability to investigate migration, its corollaries and identify the complex realities that are involved both stylistically and thematically. Furthermore, they assert that since postcolonial theory examines marginal groups of society, interrogating migrant literatures remains readily implied in its focus.

2.8.2 Psychoanalytic literary theory

Having been greatly influence by Jean Martin Charcot, one of the best-known neurologists of the early 19th century, Sigmund Freud started private medical practice where he specialised in diseases of the mind and nervous disorders. His ideas rested on the activities of the conscious and the unconscious mind, development and influences of sexuality which he tied to the activities that had repositories in the mind. Freud's findings emphasised that some unconscious processes were responsible for the activities of the

human mind. These unconscious processes he believed played an important role in the ordinary activities of individuals, "forcing people into acts of forgetting, slips of the pen and tongue and seemingly insignificant accidents" (Rennison, 2001:17).

Psychoanalysis as a movement continued to thrive alongside the numerous publications that attended its findings. Although many psychoanalysts and contemporaries of Freud were influenced to a large extent by his findings, and the years of intellectual associations they spent with each other, the differences in approach and perception led to Freud splitting up with many of his associates, even earliest members of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society that was formed in 1908. The greatest of those breakaways was that of Carl Gustav Jung, one of Freud's youngest associates who had come under his significant intellectual influence. Although Jung expanded the margins of Freud's findings, he made known the variance in his perception of what seemed to him like Freud's over-stretched emphasis on sexuality, and sexual origins as adjudged primary cause of neurosis (Rennison, 2001).

Freud's studies and discoveries about the mind provide a framework for psychoanalytical studies globally. However, Freud's ideas have not been without allegations bothering on certain contradictions that exist within his findings (Storr, 2001; Rennison, 2001). Rennison (2001:30) agrees that "there are contradictions in Freud's writings but they are insignificant compared to the broad unfolding of his thought over his work life". Thus, despite the varied critical interrogations of Freud's work, it exhibits continuous relevance as foundational discourse for intellectual studies of the field of psychoanalysis. For instance, although Freud may not take credit for initial reference to the concept of the unconscious mind, his efforts at inquiring into the mental processes seem to outweigh the controversies (Rennison, 2001). Consequently, Freud's stance on the bipartite split of the mind into the conscious and the unconscious mind has generated plausible discourses on the motivation for seemingly casual human activities.

According to Rennison (2001), the unconscious processes as Freud conceived were the driving forces behind the conscious human mind and its activities. These included the disruptive materials and thoughts that sought emission from the unconscious mind to the

conscious mind. Through this "psychic mechanism", we find the influence of the unconscious exhibited through "Freudian slips" or more appropriately known as *parapraxis*, cases of forgetfulness, slip of the tongue, slip of the pen; cases in general where unintended materials make their way out of the unconscious mind (Barry, 1995; Rennison, 2001; Storr, 2001). This is one of the very familiar Freudian ideas with great relevance in literary criticism. This concept was introduced in his book *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. Freud opines here the exactness of the human mind thus the "errors" through tongue and pen slips and acts of forgetfulness are not mere acts of chance/mistakes. They are outburst of unconscious activities and motivations which are being processed in the mind and invariably seek expulsion into conscious spaces. Consequently, these seeming slips, forgetfulness and omissions convey shrouded meanings from the unconscious mind (Rennison, 2001).

Freud's studies also propagate the view that art and indeed literature is motivated and produced through the sublimation of unsatisfied psychic and emotional energy. This is in his opinion involved the channeling of sexual energies through the process which he called sublimation. In another stance, the gifted artist avoided neurosis (mild psychiatric disorder characterised by anxiety and depression) that resulted from repressing "unwanted" materials in the mind and perversion by redirecting these impulses in their work (Storr, 2001).

Freud views on the bipartite division of the mind are considerably linked with his position on the tripartite division of the mind also into the following: the *ego*, *id* and the *super ego*. The *id* which Freud described as the oldest part of the mind, acts as a base for the thriving of the other two. The *id* he also described as that primitive, dark and chaotic aspect of the mind that is a contrast to the *ego*. Freud's studies suggest that, the *id* thrives though instincts that crave expression through the pleasurable satisfaction usually, of immediate instinctive needs. The *ego* which is a part of the conscious mind is rational and utilises reason and the technique of delayed gratification to gain control over the *id* and most times suppresses these instinctive demands till when it is appropriate to have them satisfied. Freud's third aspect of the mind; the *super-ego* is made up of aspects of parental or natal prohibitions and standards that have been imbibed by the psyche which later

plays out as conscience. According to Storr (2001), the *super-ego* watches the ego through informed patterns of parental prohibitions, principles and standards that have been garnered from years of childhood dependency. These become part of the mind and eventually act as the sense of right and wrong whenever the ego seems to falter in maintaining apparent ideals.

The interest of literary critics in Freudian interpretation is motivated by reasons based on the unconscious which could be likened to the poem, novel or play which despite the unconscious appearances may not speak "directly and explicitly" but does so through subtle deployment of images, symbols, emblems and metaphors (Barry, 1995). Brooks (1987:337) also offers that part of "the attraction of psychoanalytic criticism has always been its promise of a movement beyond formalism, to that desired place where literature and life converge, and where literary criticism becomes the discourse of something anthropologically important". According to Storr (2001), although Freud was receptive to art in his time, had knowledge of, and love for literature, his valued attention and attraction was placed on the subject matter rather than on the style of the work. Thus, this made visible his penchant for the uncovering of "covert" meanings within a piece of art work. Since art communicates obliquely via the location of meaning in representations, this inexplicitness makes being "judgmental" the inevitable bane sometimes in psychoanalytic interpretations of literature (Barry, 1995). This particular situation may be responsible for some implausible interpretation given as the meaning to Freudian slips and literature by extrapolation sometimes. Perhaps, the development of the psychoanalytic literary criticism outside the corpus of literary and creativity studies may be responsible for what may described as the obvious pursuit of meaning above aesthetics and techniques that a work of art may divulge.

According to McCurdy (1950), since Freud's psychoanalytic note on *Hamlet* and his observation of the kinship between literary fiction and dream, several studies have appeared with the guiding principle of a literary work being the projection of the writer's personality. Thus, probing the dark corners of an author's individuality through his or her work usually results in two major findings. The first is that the author writes from the motivation he or she receives from his or her immediate environment, while childhood

and growing up experiences however seem to place a demand on the author in most cases. McCurdy's second observation is that an author's literary expressions seem to fall into a conspicuously related pattern. This accounts for the similarity in themes, style and characters, and explains why some authors seem to repeat or tell the same story in book after book (McCurdy, 1950). Storr (2001:96) argues in favour of Freud when he asserts that:

> The subjects, which an artist portrays, and the ways in which he chooses to present them, are often determined by his patrons and by the conventions of his time. But they are also bound to reflect something of his own personality and personal history, although he himself may be unaware of any such connection. Whether the subjects chosen are anything to do with repressed infantile sexual phantasies is more dubious.

He is quick to denounce Freud's significant association of human motivation with the sublimation of unsatisfied libido as responsible for producing all art and literature. He describes it as "dubious". Freud has also been criticized for his patriarchal attitude towards the women folk in general. His studies and treatment reports on female analysands have left nothing to be desired by his feminist critics. This counter-reaction to Freud's studies can be traced to Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969), which is an outright condemnation of the psychoanalyst as a primary source of patriarchal attitudes against women (Barry, 1995). This arguments and much else resulting from this in later years have contributed to the existing relationship between feminist criticism and the psychoanalytic criticism, and their approaches to literary criticism.

In the face of the criticisms that psychoanalysis may be labeled with, it should be acknowledged that Freud's studies motivated largely the significance given to the unconscious processes that occur in the human mind. His achievement is carried in his views that have influenced ideas about human motivations, behaviours and the implications they bring to the fore (Rennison, 2001). Therefore, "Psychoanalysis matters to us as literary critics because it stands as a constant reminder that the attention to form, properly conceived, is not a sterile formalism, but rather one more attempt to draw the symbolic and fictional map of our place in existence" (Brooks, 1987:347). Fromm (1966) asserts that, psychoanalysis shares a significant connection with the phenomena of art.

Furthermore he adds that, Psychoanalysis is positioned to discover the hidden realities of art contrary to the compelling overt presentation that is most times misrepresentative. Thus, he argues that the real shares a rather close affinity with the unconscious, while conscious content and representation is mere fiction.

Although this literary approach is marked by the variations of different psychoanalytic theorist, Psychoanalytic literary criticism is privileged by an interpretative process which recognises and emphasises the importance of unconscious psychic mechanism as prime factor in the invention of literary and artistic inventions. Barry (1995) outlines some of the major preoccupations typical of psychoanalytic textual analyses with particular emphasis on the views of the Freudian school of psychoanalysis. According to Barry (1995), psychoanalytic criticism is preoccupied with the following: making distinction between the conscious and the unconscious mind during literary interpretation, consequently associating the literary work's "overt" content with the former and the "covert" content with the latter. Psychoanalytic criticism privileges the covert content as being what the work is really about. This critical approach also pays close attention to the unconscious motives and feelings of the author and characters alike; it tries to reveal the presence of the conditions, symptoms and stages that are associated with typical psychoanalytic emotional and sexual development with the aim of identifying the "psychic" content of the literary work (Barry, 1995).

Psychoanalytical literary criticism is outstanding in probing the effect and weight of influence exerted by the activities of the human psyche on human activities such as literature. This theory presents a lucid picture of the correlation that exists between personality and literature. Psychoanalytic literary criticism therefore displays a propensity to uncover human drives and repressions; unmasking the hidden reasons for the specific character creations and portrayals in a work of art. In the light of these, a significant relationship therefore exists between the psyche of an author, characters and society of an author. Brooks (1987:339) insists that the recourse to psychoanalysis for the interrogation of literature is premised on its ability to explore "the deepest levels of meaning of the greatest fiction".

Feminist, Marxist and psychoanalytical literary theories have easily been coupled together because of their interpretative strategy which displays a preoccupation with uncovering the latent meaning of literature. In order words, they do not merely interrogate what the text says but strives to uncover what it does not say (Barry, 1995). This similarity has labeled them with what some have described as "hermeneutic of suspicion", a coinage by French philosopher, Paul Ricouer.

This critical approach therefore endeavours to project literature as the reality of some complex unconscious psychic processes which has the writer at its core. Thus, it emphasises a significant relationship exists between the characterisation, psyche and society of an author which it consider significant in informing the entire story though the writer may be unaware of these impulses and drives during the creating process.

Considering the controversies surrounding the conceptual and definitional background of migrant literature, who should engage in telling the experience of the migrant, a migrant or nonmigrant? Psychoanalysis uncovers and projects the significance of covert psychic processes activated by migration, the depth of dislocation, and the implication for and in the literary work. The significance of psychoanalysis in this study therefore lies in its potential to uncover the motivation for the representation of migrant characters, the complexities of dislocation and belonging by Nigerian migrant short story writers.

CHAPTER THREE

DISLOCATION AND BELONGING IN NIGERIAN MIGRANT SHORT STORIES

3.1 Introduction

A primary concern of Nigerian migrant short stories is the dislocation of individuals from homeland and the attempt to belong in transnational spaces. These writings focus on the complexities that result from dislocation and the quest for a sense of place in the worlds that migrants bestride. These narratives also highlight the fact that, the complexities of dislocation influences the sensibilities and perspective of its writers. Therefore, the stories are consistent in projecting fictionalised details of the writers' transnational experiences, attesting to the complexities of dislocation, belonging and homelessness, while continuing to reflect images from "home" in different ways that emphasise that migrants belong in homeland and hostland.

This chapter investigates how dislocation and belonging is projected in Nigerian migrant shorts stories and the corollaries which attest to these writers' creative posture. Also, this chapter examines these stories under different sub-headings that emphasise the writers' preoccupations. Despite the differences in these texts' settings, scope, writers' approach and form, the study argues that, the short stories share a connection in preoccupation thus, attesting to the existential quality of the issues examined in this study.

This chapter also provides a brief review of biographical information—such as is available to be studied—on Segun Afolabi, Epaphras Chukwuenweniwe Osondu, Sefi Atta, Chika Unigwe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie whose stories are examined in the chapter.

The short narratives selected for analysis have been purposively selected based on their availability as formal short story collections of these writers and the writers' deliberate

engagement with concerns and complexities associated with migrants' dislocation and belonging in different worlds. For the purpose of analysis, the short stories will be discussed, drawing on, and synthesising perspectives from Postcolonial literary theory and aspects of Freud's Psychoanalytic literary theory.

3.2 About the authors

Segun Afolabi (1966-) was born in Kaduna, Nigeria. As the son of a career diplomat, Afolabi has lived in Canada, the Congo, Indonesia, Germany and Hong Kong, places where official assignments took the family to. And now, he lives in London.

Afolabi won one of Africa's most coveted prizes, the Caine Prize in 2005 for his story "Monday Morning" which was first published in *Wasafiri* in 2004. Afolabi has a collection of short stories titled, *A Life Elsewhere* and a novel, *Goodbye Lucille.* Phillips (2006) asserts that the author's eclectic background and peregrinations are a significant part of his creative career and writings. Thus, he creates and explores the complex experiences of characters that are dislocated from their nations of origin. Afolabi has published a number of stories which reflects his rather eclectic background and transnational exposure. Stories from his debut collection of short stories will be examined in this study.

The stories in *A Life Elsewhere* span across the experience of migrants from different continents of the world and not just Africa. Afolabi's personal exposure to different worlds, nations and cultures accounts for his versatility on the subject of dislocation, homelessness, nostalgia and the ensuing paradoxes that define migrants' existence in his stories. While these short stories explore the theme of exile and those that originate from the process of exile, they covertly probe the existential comforts that "elsewhere" seem to offer. The characters in these stories strategize their belonging to new spatial locations and at the same time engage mentally the implication of their changing identities and the never-quite-complete process of integration.

Ten out of the seventeen short stories in Afolabi's *A Life Elsewhere* demonstrate profoundly the complexities of migrant existence. The stories in *A Life Elsewhere* seem particularly focused on narrating the experiences of migrants as they move from different

parts of the world to new settlements. However, a more critical look projects them as narratives that elaborate the complexities of transnational existence and the dilemma that complicates this wandering consciousness. Kehinde (2007a) observes that these nuances of hybridity and the preoccupation with issues engendered by dislocation include Afolabi within a migrant tradition and also attest to his distinctive role as a migrant/diasporan writer. Kinzel (2010) also asserts that Afolabi's fiction displays his involvement with, and attentiveness to the issues of translocation in global spaces and the attendant issues of identity, alienation and belonging, which inevitably are examined in his stories.

Epaphras Chukwuenweniwe Osondu (E.C. Osondu) was born in Nigeria. He lived and worked as an advertising copywriter in Nigeria for many years before relocating to the United States. Osondu's short story "Waiting" brought him fame as the 2009 winner of the Caine prize. Osondu has many of his stories published in journals, magazines and anthologies. He was a fellow in creative writing at Syracuse in 2008, and currently works as a professor of English in America. In 2010, Osondu published his debut collection of short stories known as *Voice of America*. His most recent work is his novel, *This house is not for sale* published in 2015.

E.C. Osondu's *Voice of America* is a collection of eighteen stories that projects the experiences of migrants negotiating dismal experiences in parts of African and the United States. *Voice of America* projects diverse representations of peoples' existence and the strategies they adopt in belonging. Osondu's anthology title is significant in announcing Osondu's creative perspective and the influence of a personal encounter of America. The stories in this collection project the migrant's nostalgia for homeland and sometimes an outright loathing for the existential differences that mark out homeland territories from diaspora.

Of the eighteen stories in the collection, Osondu devotes seven to exploring migrant life, while others read as the writer's creative gesture at problematising the social milieu of Nigeria in relation to life in the diaspora. In several of these stories set in Nigeria, such as "Our first America", "A letter from home" and "Going back West", he displays a conversance with the city of Lagos, which remains a microcosm representation of the

Nigerian society in the home-based stories. Interestingly, in some of these stories, the narrative keeps "in touch" with representations indicative of America.

Chika Unigwe (1974-) was born in Enugu. She spent her growing-up years in Enugu, Nigeria, and has lived in Turnhout, Belgium, with her Belgian husband and children, and in the United States. She studied English Language and Literature at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She also holds an M.A from the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium and a PhD from the University of Leiden.

Unigwe has authored fiction and poetry. However, her stories have won her most of her recognitions and awards. Some of which include: the 2003 BBC Short Story Competition for her story "Borrowed Smile", a Commonwealth Short Story Award for "Weathered Smiles" and a Flemish literary prize for "De Smaak van Sneeuw", her first short story written in Dutch. Her short story, "The Secret" was nominated for the 2004 Caine Prize (Chika Unigwe Website).

Unigwe writes in Dutch and English and her works examine loneliness, racial difference and illness. Her Afro-European background gives her stories its significance. *Phoenix* (2007) is Unigwe's first novel. It was originally published in Dutch as *De Feniks* in 2005. The story, set in Turnhout, explores themes such as grief, illness and loneliness, subjects that seem to linger in Unigwe's writings set in Europe (Chika Unigwe Website). Unigwe's more recent novels such as *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009), which won the 2012 Nigeria Prize for Literature and *Night Dancer* (2012), explore women's lives, choices and prostitution. *Black Messiah* (2014), Unigwe's most recent work is a historical novel based on the life of Olaudah Equiano.

In this collection simply titled *Short Stories* the complex sensibility of belonging in two nations is projected. Unigwe's stories project her Igbo-Nigerian sensibilities and her involvement as an Afro-Belgian. Of the six stories in this kindle collection, four of the stories are set predominantly in Belgium with oscillations to Nigeria facilitated through the use of flashbacks that allow her sustain the dilemma of her characters who must survive as migrants or as nationals in their country of birth.

The concerns of survival at "home" or diaspora are central to all the stories in Unigwe's collection. Whereas Belgium may be the predominant spatial setting of most of the stories, Enugu, where Unigwe's formative years were spent is consistently highlighted in the narratives. We examine five relevant stories from Unigwe's collection because of their relevance to the characters' experience and the tropes she employs that attest to her existence as an Afro-Belgian and a contemporary Nigerian writer.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (1977-) was born in Enugu, Nigeria. She is Igbo and grew up in Nsukka where her father worked as a university lecturer. After completing her secondary education and attempting to study medicine and pharmacy in Nigeria, Adichie migrated to the United State of America at a young age of nineteen. She attended the Eastern Connecticut State University and graduated with a degree in communication and political science. Adichie has also studied at the John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Yale and Princeton University. Adichie lives in the United States and visits Nigeria whenever the need arises.

Adichie's writing career has been quite successful. Her play, *For Love of Biafra* was published in Nigeria in 1998. This is one of her earliest works and it examines the Nigerian civil war. As a student at Eastern Connecticut State University, she started writing *Purple Hibiscus*, her first novel that was published in 2003. Her second and very successful novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* published in 2006 examines in detail the Nigerian civil war (Luebering, 2016). *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) is Adichie's collection of short stories. *Americanah* (2013) is Adichie's most recent novel in which she examines the politics of race and identity in America from the Nigerian immigrant's perspective.

A number of Adichie's stories have been published in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. These short stories can be found in journals and magazines. Her short stories significantly examine the experiences of the Nigerian immigrant in America and have been selected and short-listed for a number of awards (Killam and Kerfoot, 2008).

Adichie's collection of short stories, *The Thing Around Your Neck* has a dozen stories that examine issues that draw from Adichie's vast resource-base of a recognisable Nigerian consciousness, the significant sensibility that comes with living in America and experiencing Nigeria. In the twelve stories in the collection, Adichie examines issues through her privileged artistic position that purposively situates the narrative and characterisation within the social contexts of Nigeria and America.

Sefi Atta (1964-) was born in Lagos, Nigeria. She spent her early years in Nigeria and has lived in England and the United States where she has also schooled and worked. She divides her time between Nigeria, England and the United States. Atta is a former chartered accountant. She is also a graduate of the creative writing program at Antioch University, Los Angeles. Atta's short stories have appeared in journals like *Los Angeles Review* and *Mississipi Review* and have won prizes (Killam and Kerfoot, 2008). Atta has three published novels. *Everything Good Will Come* is her first novel, *Swallow* the second and *A bit of difference* her most recent.

Atta's collection of short story *News from home* is published in Nigeria as *Lawless*. The title of the collection published in the United Kingdom and United States, *News from home* projects Atta's sensibilities and news headlines as the motivation for most of her stories in the collection. Atta's stories can also be found in a number of online magazines and journals.

News from home is significant in highlighting several aspects of existence that emphasise the writer's conversance with the settings and story-telling process conveyed in her stories. The stories are reconstructed from headlines of newspapers with news from home. Of the ten stories in the collection, four of the stories focus on a context and setting that is described by its dominant transnational context and engagement. The author's preoccupations which are critical are not detached from Nigeria and Africa irrespective of the setting of the story. The central position of Nigerian immigrants as characters in these stories, maintain the connection of these stories with "home" and a

reality that seems easily accessible by Atta. Six of the twelve stories have a dominant Nigerian (or African) context.

3.3 Belonging: Identity and integration

Identity and belonging are imperative issues for a migrant writer. Nigerian migrant short story writers grapple with these concerns as well. These writers highlight in their works the complexities of belonging in hostlands, where racial difference makes it difficult to guarantee the migrant a sense of belonging. Therefore, the representations of reminiscences, differences and sometimes, the strategies adopted by migrants to belong in transnational spaces reinforce these writers' affinity with their preoccupations.

"The Curse", is a story set predominantly in Antwerp with flashbacks of Enugu. In this story, Unigwe examines the significance of living and adjusting as a Black/Nigerian immigrant in Belgium. While Oge, the protagonist shops in a boutique, she is closely monitored by a suspicious blonde boutique attendant. The blonde follows her around pretending to offer assistance as she tries to make a choice of what to buy. From their thoughts, complex mental images that project prejudice and suspicion are highlighted. Blonde does not think much of an African in a boutique as her thoughts reveal:

> "*Afrikaanse* woman, with jeans that look like they come from Wibra and a shirt that is frayed and faded, what can she want in this boutique? What can she afford?" Oge ignores her and feels a silk dress that looks like a nightie. The woman appears right beside her and without waiting for Oge to ask says, "three hundred euro, mevrouw", her voice comes out sounding like a toothpick being snapped in little pieces. Oge knows that she is making an effort to remain polite and she enjoys it. She wonders for how long she will remain polite. Oge walks to the opposite end of the air-conditioned shop and runs her hands against a skirt. The woman's bobbed hair brushes the back of her head as she comes and positions herself behind her, offering the price in a weary voice, "three hundred and fifty." Oge wonders if she thinks she cannot read. For Pete's sake, the price is hanging on it in neat dark print." I will take that", Oge says, feeling heady, the way her earning power makes her feel. But the woman smiles in amusement, and pretends like she has not heard her. She is sure that Oge does not have that

> kind of money to spend on clothes. She offers her the price again, loud and clear, her voice assuming the quality of a metal gong (Unigwe, 2011:51-52).

Blonde's voice is loud and mocking as she tells Oge the prices of the items. The narrative makes it possible for Oge to access Ms. Blonde's thoughts. This process is significant since it highlights the writer's migrant exposure and thus, a familiarity with sensibilities that betray mutual suspicion between the "Self" and "Other". Oge is rather disgusted than embarrassed when she draws out a bundle of currency notes to pay for the things she has bought. Financial security seems to offer some respite from the harsh realities that come with racism and the over-inclusive perception of the so called "third world" citizen by Europe. However, it wields insufficient power in stemming the racial suspicion. In another sad encounter, Oge is accused of shoplifting due to no fault of hers, but the cashier's, who had forgotten to remove a security tag on the item already paid for:

> The Manager had simply told her that there had recently been a spate of shoplifting by *vreemdelingen*, foreigners. Oge knew that she deserved an apology but she lacked the proficiency to demand for one (Unigwe, 2011:58).

This shop manager voices her suspicion unapologetically and emphasises Oge's "otherness" and foreignness as an excuse. Oge's experiences in Europe make her long for life in Enugu. Although she can afford the good things of life abroad because she is married to a wealthy Kingsley after breaking-up speedily with her boyfriend of three years, she seems to acknowledge that she is a stranger in this metropolis and to her husband even after five years:

> She was wrong about learning to love Kingsley. Loving somebody was not something one taught oneself to learn. She wished that she could but her heart remained obstinate and would not yield. It was set in its ways and raced whenever she thought of her boyfriend, Joe, the one she had left for Kingsley. At night when she lay beside her husband, she ran her fingers down his spine but it did not give her a shudder, not like it had with Joe. She could not say she was unhappy in her marriage. There was nothing to be unhappy about. Kingsley did not beat her. He did not begrudge her money. Every month he sent her to the

> Western Union at the train station with some money to send to her parents. She could not say that she was exactly happy either. Whenever she looked out the window of their wall-papered apartment and saw couples with happy faces, holding hands in a way that one could not doubt that they were in love, a lump as solid as a stone always rose from somewhere within her to settle in the middle of her chest (Unigwe, 2011:58).

With this, the narrative achieves an easy but symbolic equivalence between the protagonist's strange relationship with her husband and her sojourn in Europe after five years. Through the persistence of her thoughts, she divulges the internal conflicts which seem to problematise her choice of Kingsley as she remains torn between him and Joe, an old boyfriend.

The reality of being a migrant and the implications that abound in her daily experiences sinks into Oge. She even reflects on growing old in Europe. She also realises that she has neither been successful in learning to love her husband nor has she been so successful in unloving Joe, her former boyfriend. These reflections take her to Enugu which she engages mentally. She longs for the warmth of Enugu. The narrative examines the sensibilities of the protagonist, how she straddles the two worlds that complicate her existence as an immigrant, the identifiable differences and the challenge of integrating into this new city. Oge examines her affinity with Antwerp as she examines her relationship with Kinsley. At different points, Oge draws the distinctions repeatedly between her home in Enugu and the new city she now lives in:

> The sun is shining but it is as always a sun without warmth…Back home the sun always shone with an intensity that caused you to squint whenever you were outside…Here it is like a yellow plastic circle… (Unigwe, 2011:53).

> Quite an illogical world here…a world where dogs are carried and children are chained…A woman as old as her grand-mother, had introduced herself to her as Gina. Back home, older people did not introduce themselves by their first names…The first time she saw a couple kissing in

> public, she had felt shame on their behalf… (Unigwe, 2011:55).

These identifiable differences in the story highlights Oge's sensibilities is trapped between being an Igbo woman and having to adjust to aspects of life in Antwerp, some of which still leave her bemused even after five years. Oge points out the difference in the climate, social life and culture. Although some of the differences only seem normal and thus expected, some make the protagonist reflect subjectively on growing old in Europe. These differences constitute boundaries for the protagonist.

Thus, despite the apparent differences the protagonist observes, she resolves to negotiate them: "She can wear this new place as well as she wore her old home" (Unigwe, 2011:55) Appreciably, Unigwe's relies on her position which gives her access to two spatial canvases on which to explore these contrasts and make Oge's identify with them.

In Adichie's "The Arrangers of Marriage", issues of acculturation and assimilation are highlighted. Chinaza a, young Nigerian lady is married off to a Nigerian medical doctor in America. The newly married couple arrive New York together. This seeming privilege turns sour as Chinaza, the wife and protagonist of the story arrives America for the first time and struggles to reconcile her *Igboness* and Nigerian identity with her husband's attitude that attests to his acclimatising and Americanising as imperative in securing him a place in the mainstream of American life.

The story is the protagonist's personal encounter with her Americanising husband in the United States. These processes, as Chinaza observes and is told, are her husband's unrelenting attempt at diffusing cultural and racial boundaries, and fostering integration at even the oddest expense. "Dave" therefore becomes a complex epitome of migrant's recognition of boundaries in transnational existence, the straddling state and the desire to belong successfully.

These events culminate in the personal development and re-shaping of the protagonist's perception of America, her relationship with her Americanised Nigerian husband, her marriage and her personal struggle to reconcile these differences. Firstly, her new home

does not look like "those of the white newly-weds in the American films the NTA (Nigerian Television Authority) shows on Saturday nights" (Adichie, 2009:167). At this point the story implicates the media as giving impetus to migrant's expectations and confidence in the "pull" from natal spaces. This initial observation is inconsequential compared to the other discoveries she makes during her stay in America.

"Dave" like Oguine's protagonist, Obi in *A Squatter's tale* (2000) is desperate also to integrate into the mainstream of American life and culture. But unlike Obi, he adopts drastic measures targeted at eroding his Igbo/Nigerian identity. He changes his name from "Ofodile Emeka Udenwa" to "Dave Bell"; he puts a restriction on the use of the Igbo language at their home and outside and insists on his wife familiarising with America and having an American attitude. Unlike "Dave", Obi acknowledges that despite his efforts at belonging, he'll "always be more Nigerian than American" (Oguine, 2000:196). Dave's attitude however shows his seriousness in belonging in America as an American and not a Nigerian. He passionately describes his choices and strategies to his wife this way:

> You don't understand how it works in this country. If you want to get anywhere you have to be as mainstream as possible. If not, you will be left by the road side. You have to use your English name here (Adichie, 2009:172).

"Dave" assumes a central position in his marginality as he describes new ways of seeing, being and even speaking, if belonging in America is to be attained. He seems to suggest that belonging in the hostland is a key aspect of survival; and survival is important for the migrant rather than a national/cultural identity and arguments of loyalty that may not guarantee his stake in the stream of things. Thus, he becomes active as an "American" while his Igbo-Nigerian identity is made invisible and insignificant. Having attained a certain transnational status, he tries to "reform" Chinaza as a matter of duty and thus bridges the gap between her Nigerian identity and the new identity he thinks she must acquire to belong. "Dave" warns her with the example of a Spanish family, who speak Spanish as they shop in the cheap neighbourhood store:

> "Look at the people who shop here; they are the people who immigrated and continue to act as if they are back in their countries…they will never move forward unless they adapt to America. They will always be doomed to supermarkets like this." (Adichie, 2009:175).

Chinaza's husband dismisses these Spanish migrants and many others who retain their cultural and national affinities as unwise. On the contrary, it is significant that while Chinaza's husband works hard at adapting to America and changing his social status, Shirley, his neighbour is sorry that Americans have no culture. Shirley changes her name to Nia (a Swahili name), Likes Chinaza's Nigerian recipes and learns to speak Igbo.

Chinaza discovers that her new husband is involved in a sham marriage with an American woman who threatens to report him to immigration. She also discovers that "Dave" and Shirley were once involved sexually as her new friend opens up unashamedly: "I fucked him, almost two years ago, when he first moved in. I fucked him and after a week it was over. We never dated" (Adichie, 2009:185). These discoveries make the protagonist miserable as she weighs the options available to her in America. Chinaza's marital journey metaphorically and graphically depicts the tension and collision that results from migrants' involvements in two socio-cultural spheres.

"Two Sisters" is a story which is microcosmic in its representation of the interaction of races in global spaces in modern times. In this story, Afolabi examines the painful process of integrating into and belonging to a group of people who make integration difficult. Mr. Ooststroom, a Dutch finds himself trying to enjoy the company of some hostile picnickers he goes with, on a boat trip. The picnickers are of different nationalities. He is constantly rebuffed, and made to feel different and admit that he is some "Other". The boy narrator despite his young age, easily identifies their picnic space as hostile for the stranger in their midst, yet he cannot fathom why this is so.

Mr. Ooststroom whispers and does not speak very loudly throughout the trip. When he eventually does, his accent attracts the attention of Folake, one of the narrator's two sisters. She asks him questions about his place of origin and family. While he tries to

answer Folake's questions, some of the picnickers laugh at him. The narrator is sorry and cannot do anything to help Mr. Ooststroom's situation.

Weeks later, Mr. Ooststroom's image and dilemma is evoked by a school teacher who wears his kind of linen suit. The narrator at this point releases unconscious psychological tension by remembering the unfriendly encounter of Mr. Ooststroom with his sisters and other picnickers. When Bunmi and Folake return to boarding school in England, the young narrator remains with his mother and father in a large apartment. He recollects Mr. Ooststroom's experience and now identifies with a similar dilemma, a feeling of loneliness like Mr. Ooststroom's.

3.4 Marital and inter-racial concerns

Representations of marital and inter-racial relations are projected in a number of these stories to reinforce belonging in transnational spaces as a complex and distressing process for migrants. In Afolabi's story, "Mrs. Minter", Mr. Akinsola, the protagonist dreads living life elsewhere alone. His dreams reveal his deep fear. He is married to Shee from St. Lucia while he is of Nigerian origin. They have made their "home" in London. Overtime, events and ideas condense to signify and allude to his dislocation from home. He dreams often about the death of his wife. However, "it is always a relief to know she's alive" (Afolabi, 2007:183). Mr. Akinsola's dilemma is compounded by their different nationalities. They "were both strangers to the others country" (Afolabi, 2007:196). While they retain their attachment to their homelands and romanticize these, their apprehension is retained. Living in London therefore becomes the result of a compromise in spite of what Akinsola describes as a "pull that made it uncomfortable for me to be in England, an awkwardness in my geography" (Afolabi, 2007:197). Akinsola is dislocated from Nigeria geographically and this has been for many years. However, he struggles with his sense of place and belonging in London as he grows older because his natal bonds remain. He "settles" in London but cannot assuage the uneasiness that describes his existence. According to Kizel (2010:11), "translocation does not mean a complete rupture with the earlier spatial dimensions of one's life". He concedes to physical and eventual psychological dislocation from homeland as he muses:

> Only years later did I understand that there had been a great need then to make the choice to settle. No one tells you you need a firm sense of place in the world until it's too late and you're floundering-a poor skater on black ice (Afolabi, 2007:198).

Afolabi invariably bemoans the betwixt predicament of the migrant, the gradual loss and eventual psychological dislocation which seem to work at making permanent a migrant's dislocation from homeland and launch the complexities associated with migrant exposures. Akinsola remarks then that "England began to seem like a place that could become another home to me" (Afolabi, 2007:190). He re-conceives the concept of "home" by making it accommodate settlements outside natal spaces. This way, he attempts to ease the conflicts associated with nostalgia for homeland and the traded loyalties that are expressed in his settling into England.

"Gifted" depicts the deterioration of family life in diaspora. The protagonist of this story is Mrs. Odesola, a Nigerian migrant who suffers physical and psychological abuse in the hands of her husband. Mr. Odesola sometimes extends his unkind attitude to his young children. His bad temper and penchant for wife battery as the story suggests may not be unconnected with his new life "elsewhere". In the narrative, the frustrations and hostilities Mrs. Odesola experiences are closely associated with her family fashioning a new life elsewhere. Mrs. Odesola who is a rather unfortunate recipient of this strange change, pensively chronicles her experiences, reflects on her life at home and plots her return to Nigeria. She is lonely and finds a companion in Mr. Mihashi, her neighbour.

How families deal with, and survive the formation of their lives elsewhere is pivotal to Afolabi's narratives. In "Gifted" and "Mrs. Minter", he explores how families and couples particularly encounter life elsewhere. Despite the duration spent in diverse places, there is a lingering undertone and mood of dislocation, the consciousness of difference and the possible implication that is associated with being out of place.

"Arithmetic" is a psychological journey into a migrant's thoughts and experiences. Afolabi employs stream of consciousness which give us access into these experiences. Mr. Ajayi, a Nigerian migrant who is married to Alicia, a foreigner, is hounded by the

fear of separation. Through this marriage, Afolabi explores the apparent possibilities that migrant existence could accommodate. Ajayi is certain that he will not leave his wife, he is not certain that she will not opt out of their marriage. While the fear of separation is explored at different levels, this troubling emotion is detached from its real cause—the separation from home, family bonds and now, the possibility of a separation from Alicia; and placed on the possibility of an immediate situation as he watches children stray from their mother at a train station. Through this displacement, Ajayi's primary fear of separation is exposed. He muses:

> I am always worried about separation; people not making it to the doors in time, watching their companions disappear as the train starts to pull away…Still, there would be those awful moments. The lost child, the separation (Afolabi, 2007:56).

Here Afolabi projects the psychological negotiation of displacement. Ajayi like most migrants is psychologically hunted by separation and everything that is symbolic of this. In the story, Ajayi's past and the possibility of a future despite the uncertainties of life elsewhere are projected. Through flashbacks, childhood memories find a way of escape from the filters of repressed thoughts as the protagonist mulls over the possibility of a separation from Alicia, his wife. So, although these memories may appear like fleeting impressions from the past in the adult's mind, they often act as a "screen" to mask more painful memories (Rennison, 2001).

Osondu's "Stars in my mother's eyes, stripes on my back" narrates the marital experiences of an immigrant Nigerian family from the point of view of their young son. The young boy's mother demands that she be assisted by her husband with the house chores in order to meet up with an appointment. Her husband describes her as slow as she complains that he has just been lying around and doing nothing. This forms the basis of their misunderstanding and conflict as he retorts:

> "Don't tell me what word to use and what word not to use. So now I'm supposed to start cooking and bathing the child because we are living in America you stupid woman?" (Osondu, 2010:131).

While the father remains comfortable with his Nigerian cultural posture, Osondu suggests through the mother's demand for assistance and the conflict that ensues that, migration and the quest to belong in transnational spaces could generate cultural conflicts between migrants.

The young narrator watches as this misunderstanding between his parents on a Sunday morning degenerates into his father's physical abuse of his mother. The narrator's mother is however not as docile as Mrs. Odesola in Segun Afolabi's "Gifted" who rather plans her escape quietly and eventually escapes with her children from her abusive Nigerian husband. For Mother, coming to America is the "worst mistake" (Osondu, 2010:132) she has made. She demands for the phone from her son, the narrator and makes attempts to call for help but is again bullied by her husband:

> "If you invite the cops and for any reason I am deported from this country, you will spend the remaining part of your stupid life in misery—…" (Osondu, 2010:133).

She reneges and they live with a sense of false peace with their son serving as the go-between since they are no more on talking terms. These Nigerians in America are trying to come to terms with life in a socio-cultural setting where things work differently from the Nigerian socio-cultural environment they are familiar with. Belonging here means compromise for all the characters. In an atmosphere of subtle humour, Uncle Boateng, a Ghanaian family-friend steps in to mend the sour relationship by calling up lightly the implications of being an African in America, and having to behave just like Americans. He advises:

> "And as for you", he said…you have to start changing; you cannot go through America without America going through you. Even me, I'm changing…The rhythm of the drum has changed, and we the dancers have to change our dance steps" (Osondu, 2010:135-136).

Osondu exposes through this story what Boehmer (2005:227) describes as, "the pull of conflicting ethics and philosophies—a potential source of tragedy—and often comically contrasting forms of social behaviour", which must be subjected to adjustments if migrants must survive this existence. Uncle Boateng emerges as an insightful figure in

helping this family understand, negotiate their existence in America and the tension that results from dislocating cultural norms and the pressures that demand change. Through Uncle Boateng, the authorial comments resonate as recommendation for surviving America as he examines cultural dislocation *vis-à-vis* belonging.

The notion of cultural heritage and identity emerges in the story through Uncle Boateng who highlights in every conversation the differences between African and American cultures. Although he refers to the narrator as an "American boy" (Osondu, 2010:134), he is quick to remind him also that he is an African man and the implications of this by the customs of his people back in Africa:

> You are already a man, and by the customs of our people back in Africa, you should by now be preparing to go into the bush and catch an animal with your bare hands and return with it to show the entire clan that you have become a man. But we are in America, and killing a squirrel here is an offence. So your father and I have put heads together, and we have come up with an equivalent test of manhood for you… (Osondu, 2010:137).

Although Uncle Boateng however does not divulge what the test of manhood would be for an African in America, he communicates his concerns that they are Africans and hold different cultural notions from Americans. He exudes a confidence that comes with his knowledge of Africa, reminiscences of life at "home" and awareness of the American society. With Uncle Boateng's intervention, the family reconciles and the young narrator gains significant insight into their peculiar existence as Africans, migrants in America and the conflicts that are generated by two cultures in one space.

In "Thinking of Angel", the narrative is inter-mingled with the protagonist's reminiscences and temporal events that occur. Oge remembers the loss of a daring dear friend, Angel, the loss of her Belgian husband's affection and her sense of existence in a strange new place. When Oge's parents concede to her marrying Gunther, a Belgian, it is because they are devout Catholics and imagine that the country of their in-law has a high degree of piety. Their perception of Belgium is confirmed in the following discussion:

> "You say he is Belgian?"
> "Yes."

> At the confirmation, her parents smiled at each other, then extended the smile to Oge. "Belgium. Quaint little country," her father said.
> "Loads of cathedrals," her mother added, smiling reverentially at memories she was reliving in her mind. They had gone to Belgium for a weekend many years ago when her father was a medical student in the United Kingdom.
> "Churches at every corner," her father added (Unigwe, 2011:42).

Unigwe's use of irony and satire soon plays out in the narrative to contrast this perspective of a quaint and decent town. Not only is Gunther an atheist, Belgium with all it cathedrals does not sustain her parent's fantasies of unflinching morality. This provides the reader with a contrast between reality and the sustained fantasies about Belgium. Her husband is an atheist in this largely catholic country. The country is tainted with immorality with women trading their bodies legally through show glasses. People are also murdered and discriminated against. Oge sustains the fantasies of Europe/ Belgium back home with postcards and pictures that do not highlight these but lives in its abhorrent reality:

> She leans against the sculptures outside the cathedral, forcing a smile to stay on her face as the camera flashes. She tells them of the Heilige van Hasselt, the Belgian priest who has just been canonised in Rome. She sustains their fantasies of a country untainted by immorality. She does not show them Schipperskwartier with its girls in display cases, stomachs as flat as ironing-boards, ready to sell men their fantasies for a price. She says nothing of Emeka, the forty year old from Awka who belonged to the Igbo People's Union and whose body was found in a black bin liner near the train station in Liege. She does not say anything about the empty seats beside her in the train. She gathers words to fill the cards, but they are empty of the truth. They do not reveal the secrets that weigh on her back, heavy as a sack of cocoa (Unigwe, 2011:43).

With these contrasts between Oge's parent's expectation of Belgium and the reality she sees and experiences, Unigwe's protagonist stirs up empathy. However, this is not without the author's infused tone of ridicule that derides the stereotypes that are emphasised when Europe and Belgium particularly are mentioned. It is significant that Unigwe also projects the complexities of migrant existence that range from, but are not

limited to loneliness, cultural, social and psychological difficulties. For instance, with time, Oge and Gunther's differences become irreconcilable:

> Gunther never used to mind Oge making Igbo food. In fact, he used to enjoy it. And when they had European guests especially, he liked to show off his ability to roll *fufu* into perfect balls with his fingers… Now, he complains that it is hard to get rid of the smell of Igbo soup. He says the smell stays in the house, soaking the cushions and the rug, making it impossible for him to stay indoors (Unigwe, 2011:45).

Fragmenting marriage ties motivated by cultural differences, the preference for familiar meals and loneliness complicate Oge is sick with cancer and has no one to share with, not even with Lisa, her neighbour. According to Oge:

> Lisa. The closest thing to a friend she has here... Yet they are not friends enough to delve into each other's lives. They are not friends enough to go beyond teach [sic] other's kitchens. She is a constant reminder to Oge that the parameters of friendship are different here:
>
> Lisa=friend
> friend = (coffee) drinking partner (Unigwe, 2011:48).

Oge's definitional equation of friendship in Belgium is significant as it emphasises her loneliness and alienation from even the people she relates with. Their communication is shallow and centres on nothing of essence. This makes Oge relive her life in Enugu. Her friendship with Angel, the trust and affection associated with the familiarity of life in Enugu. Her relationship with Lisa seems to highlight the more serious issue about the possibilities of her potential integration in Belgium. Thus, her persistent reminiscence of Enugu and Angel's friendship seems worrisome. Significantly, she compares her friendship with Lisa with her friendship with Angel.

Unigwe shows her familiarity with socio-cultural spaces as an "outsider" and "insider". Her style projects the realist mode of the story through its dual spatial contexts, significantly sustaining the story's narrative ties between Belgium and Enugu through her

copious use of flashback. Unigwe's artistic focus however remains recognisable as she emphasises realities existing in these spaces beyond fantasies and (mis)conceptions.

"Waiting" tells the story of a Nigerian woman, Oge who waits in vain for her son to come back to life. Jordi, her son has been dead for six months but she keeps waiting, hoping for a miracle. The protagonist refuses to come to terms with the reality of Jordi's death, makes plans for Christmas and includes Jordi in them. She buys him presents from *Sinterklass* and longs for something they could do together as a family.

Oge reflects on her relationship with Gunter, reminisces the past, how she meets Gunter in a club on Zik's Avenue in Enugu with Angel and her boyfriend and they are fascinated to see "… oyibo wey dey dance like black man" (Unigwe, 2011:3). Gunter dates Oge for two years and then, he asks to marry her. Oge recollects the issues her parents raise when she tells them that Gunter was interested in marrying her. Her mother is worried that Gunter is a white man, uncircumcised and she would not be able to tell her friends that her daughter was getting married. Her father wondered if she had thought carefully about the outcome of marrying a stranger and moving far away from home. But now Oge reflects on some of these issues:

> She never watches TV with him, especially not when there is a comedy on because they do not find the same things funny… It had never mattered before: this difference but now, like all the other ways in which they are different, it bothers her and she wonders why she ever married him in the first place (Unigwe, 2011:2).

The differences in the inter-racial marriage between Gunter and the protagonist become amplified as she grieves. With Jordi's death, Oge becomes very lonely, emotionally and mentally distressed. She mulls over the words of her pastor who encourages her to have faith as a mustard seed if she must get a miracle: "Your faith must be perfect, the pastor says. Perfect faith works miracles" (Unigwe, 2011:6). So Oge keeps hoping. While Oge hopes for a miracle, six months after Jordi dies, Unigwe seems critical of Oge's pastor for offering her words that are inefficient in helping her manage the loss of her only child. Also, Oge reflects on the way Gunter speaks to her: "…when Gunter talks, it is to find

fault with her. His voice dogs her every step, telling her where she has gone wrong… (Unigwe, 201:5).

The change Oge perceives in her relationship with Gunter, is complicated by the loss of their only child, her loneliness and the strangeness of the life Belgium. His effort remains insufficient in consoling Oge who sinks into her grief and loneliness.

In "Imitation", a story set in the United States, Adichie examines the familial, psychological and cultural dilemma that migration engenders. She considers these issues by examining Nkem's experiences in America. Nkem is a wife and mother of two whose family is fast disintegrating because she makes her home abroad with her children, while her husband visits the family only two months in a year due to the constraint of his business. During these long periods of separation, their relationship and fidelity is strained. Nkem finds out from a friend who visits Nigeria that her husband, Obiora has an alleged young lover who has moved into their Lagos apartment with him. Nkem hides her devastation in her youthful reverie of indulgence with her married boyfriends as a single lady. Nkem feels guilty for perpetuating a similar evil many years back.

Nkem the protagonist and another Nigerian woman in America do not hide their displeasure with having their families split between America and Nigeria however; they strive to make the best of their predicament. The woman complains:

> Our men like to keep us here, she had told Nkem. They visit for business and vacation, they leave us and the children with big houses and cars, they get us house girls from Nigeria who we don't have to pay any outrageous American wages and they say business is better in Nigeria and all that. But you know why they won't move here, even if business were better here? Because America does not recognize Big men. Nobody says "Sir! Sir!" to them in America. Nobody rushes to dust their seats before they sit down (Adichie, 2009:28-29).

Although the rich Nigerian men who can afford the luxury of America are presented as indifferent, this Nigerian woman in the story gives us a socio-cultural perspective into this seeming aversion for living in America. This sentiment and more sometimes keep the

men from living in America with their families and integrating into the mainstream of the American society. Nkem no longer prides in the fact that she belongs to the league of fortunate Nigerians in America and America loses its place of importance in Nkem's life. Nkem realises that "America is marked by "the abundance of unreasonable hope" (Adichie, 2009:27).

At various moments in the narrative, Nkem tries to imagine and evoke the image of her husband and his lover in their Lagos apartment unsuccessfully. She however, takes steps to prevent herself from being dispossessed of her husband in Nigeria and does not give much thought to the re-acculturation of her children. First, she cuts her hair short and uses a texturizer when she hears that her husband's lover wears her hair short. And later, she makes a demand to move back to Lagos with the children at the end of the school year to secure her marriage. The impact of this separation engendered by migration makes Nkem consider the reality of a greater loss easily.

3.5 Children motif and experience in the short stories

Children motif and experiences are highlighted in some of the stories used in this study. These stories are narrated from the point of view of these young characters. These rather young or adolescent narrators' receptiveness of the realities they freely witness and attest to uncovers the significance of these stories. Osondu and Atta's choice of child or adolescent narrators in some of their stories is not a new literary practice. With this strategy, these writers provide a significant perspective from which human sensibilities could be viewed. This narrative approach also seems to be a conscious attempt by the writers to illustrate the sensitivity of young people to the complexities in society.

It is important to say, however, that when their innocence is heightened through their narrative portrayals, an amplified implication in the representation of reality is communicated. These stories assume their significance from the receptiveness of their narrators to the immediate reality.

In "Nigerians in America" by Osondu the young narrator tells the story of Nigerians living in the United States, their idiosyncrasies as African immigrants and their fraternal relations with other Nigerians. This story is told from the point of view of thirteen year

old Adesua who expresses an awareness of traits that describes Nigerians. Her awareness is acquired from what she observes and listens to from the discussions of grown-up-Nigerians who visit her father. When it is her bed time, Uncle Siloko makes an excuse for her. He tells her father that the only way she can acquire Nigerian wisdom is by seating at their feet. The visit of her father's friends and their discussions exposes her to the systems and things Nigerians have to navigate to integrate into the American society. She becomes informed that these issues range from sham marriages, job insecurity, racism, a soiled national image, credit card frauds, tax and insurance deductions that make living and upkeep in America challenging.

The Nigerians Adesua becomes acquainted with are her father's friends and relatives during the weekends. She is made to call her father's friends "Uncle" or "Aunty" as a mark of respect while she wonders at how they are related to her. During one of the weekends, Adesua discovers another strategy that the Nigerians in America use to belong in America. Uncle John Oba is involved in a sham marriage with an African American woman and he laments bitterly:

> …I don't know who I am anymore. That foolish African American girl Sheniqua wants to ruin my life…She called up the INS and told them that the marriage I contracted with her was fake. She told them that I paid her for the purposes of getting a green card (Osondu, 2010:97).

Uncle John is consoled and advised passionately by everyone present as they gradually change from lamenting the tough sides of being Nigerians in America, integrating into American life and culture and surviving America to the military government, the looting and social malaise in Nigeria. The visitors share the blame between the Nigerian military and the civilians who always seem to invite them to take over the government. Uncle Siloko is forthright in blaming the negative situation in Nigeria for making him migrate: "if not for them, what will I be doing in this cold country?" (Osondu, 2010:99).

The narrative is significantly patterned to identify with the experiences of Uncle Siloko. He has a one-semester lectureship position in a state university and lives with Adesua's family for a longer period than is expected. The narrator observes:

> Things appeared not be going well for Uncle Siloko in his new job. He complained to Dad about his students. They came to class with a hangover and hardly made comments or responded to questions. The worst part was that he had been assigned a female professor, Ava Wilson, as some kind of mentor but more of a supervisor. She was to visit his class and watch his teaching....He said that to make matters worse, he had found out that after insurance deductions, his take-home pay was going to be quite small, and not enough to take him home… I suspected Uncle Siloko was not going to be making contributions toward the rent, and this turned out to be true (Osondu, 2010:101).

The narrator's observation emerges to attest to Uncle Siloko's inability to cope with life in America. He cannot afford a decent accommodation for his family and upkeep with the wage he receives from the job. The once ebullient Uncle Siloko's decline is imminent and he wins the readers sympathy as we easily denounce the structures that make living in the West tough for African migrants. Uncle Siloko is disillusioned subsequently and must choose ironically, between a continuous stay on the economic margins in America, the land of opportunities which does not seem to offer him the success anticipated, and a return to Nigeria. Uncle Siloko cannot cope in America and so makes a bold return to Nigeria to contest Chairmanship election in his local government.

Osondu exposes through this story the strait of dislocation and the challenging encounters in the New World where migrants may not fit in easily or at all. The migrant's dilemma lies in the fact that transnational border crossing is complex. Osondu however uses the success and survival of others like Adesua's father to attest to the possibility of success in that same milieu. Home, the narrative seems to suggest through Uncle Siloko's return, may provide succour for toiling Nigerians in America who cannot fulfil the elusive "American dream". With Uncle Siloko's entrance into politics, however, Osondu plays down the opportunity of narrating the implications of returning from this sort of "failed" and usually unacceptable America voyage home.

In "Green", another story with a child narrator, Atta tells the story of a Nigerian couple who have spent their adult life in America and apply to have their resident status renewed. However, it is significant that their nine-year-old daughter is an American

citizen, sees herself as one but must face the reality of also having a Nigerian and African ancestry. Although they could easily be considered to be Americans, since their daughter is an American, their sense of belonging as Nigerian immigrants is unstable and can only be consolidated by "belonging" which only a green card can offer. That they belong after the Green card still remains questionable as Oguibe (2005:11) opines:

> That in every world city, every cosmopolis, there are two categories of inhabitants, two categories of cosmopolitans. There are those who walk with the steady gait of belonging, their feet solidly planted in the knowledge that they not only inhabit the city but own it as well as the world that defines it. And then there are those who walk with the mechanical uncertainty of all who pitch their tents on the sandy, tidal beaches of rented habitats. The people in the latter category may inhabit the world for which the city is a center but they do not define or own that world and as such. Whether they choose to acknowledge it or not, they live permanently on borrowed time and the succor and restfulness of home is eternally denied them. They may call the city home, but deep within them they know that home must feel different, no matter how vague and inchoate, even unsavory, it seems.

Oguibe's statement reveals the complex details of dislocation and attempting to belong outside ancestral homelands. This couple like most immigrants are excited about renewing their permit and stay in America. However, they remain aware of more significant details that define their connection with homeland irrespective of a resident permit.

Their daughter who is an American by birth seems to belong in America. She distances herself from their nation and cultural background. She says, "Green is for my parent's passport. Green white green is the colour of the flag of their country in Africa, Nigeria" (Atta, 2009:208). Although she denies being a part of her parent's reality, she struggles also with her hybrid status, as an American born by Nigerian parents and thus acknowledges the implication of this rather privately:

> What's it like being African? My friend Celeste asked when we used to be friends. "I don't know," I told her. I was protecting my parents, I didn't want Celeste to know

> the secret about Africans… Being African was being frustrated again and again when my teacher showed pictures of clothes from all over the world. When she showed the pictures of Africans…and everyone in class laughed (Atta, 2009:221).

From her childish perspective, the narrator enunciates the peculiarities of her family but is unable to express the significance of "being African" in America. This however does not flaw the narration as her innocence communicates the gravity of the sensibilities that are lightly expressed. What Atta achieves through this story which may have rather personal interjections from her experiences, is the ability to examine as well as acknowledge the "homelessness" of the migrant even in contemporary times when transnational borders seem fluid and accommodating.

The colour green is used as a motif to signify a variety of possibilities. The protagonist uses the colour to represent items and ideas that are of particular significance to her. At the end of the narrative, the protagonist has a vague understanding of her status as a second generation immigrant. She claims her American citizenship and consistently distances herself from the things that she perceives to be peculiarly African. Although this seems effective to the protagonist, the narrative derides the young protagonist's perspective with questions from school and friends about Africa and Africans. Atta problematises the notion of "belonging" in new spaces by rules of association, Green cards and permits as sustaining the immigrant straddling and complicating his/her homeless status.

Afolabi's "Two sisters" and Osondu's "Stars in my mother's eyes, stripes on my back" also employ young narrators in highlighting the distressing process of belonging in new spaces.

3.6 Journey motif in migrant narratives

Mobility is vital to the content and form of migrant stories. These narratives plot characters' journeys to oscillate between homeland and hostland and sometimes, memories and mental images of events that make the stories cumulatively affecting. In several of these stories, the journey between moments of memories and experiences is

condensed. Thus, the reality of a spatial/physical journey and a mental "flight" are made inextricable in appreciating dislocation and belonging in transnational spaces. Considering this explication, the journey motif is examined in the narratives below.

In "Something in the Water", Afolabi juxtaposes life "elsewhere" and "home". Femi, the protagonist has not visited "home" in twenty years. This journey "home" after twenty years with his American wife, Marcia exposes the depth in difference between a life elsewhere and "home". In this story, Afolabi attempts to redefine home. Femi's journey "home" exposes him to the severe socio-economic realities of his homeland. He struggles at a very emotional level with these realities since he still "belongs" in certain ways despite his rather permanent dislocation from Nigeria. Femi's emotions of anger, fear and sometimes disgust are intense. While Marcia, his American wife seems more accommodating in confronting the differences which both nations present, Femi engages in a mental struggle with what he assumes is past until he is overpowered by his emotions.

Femi's dislocation and discontent transcend mere physical alienation. At the beginning of the story we are acquainted with his physical dislocation which has lasted twenty years. Midway into the story, his loud stream of consciousness and reactions reveal his turmoil. When Marcia quips on arrival in Nigeria, "home sweet home" in excitement, Femi wonders:

> Home? He didn't know quite what she meant. The place you loved; that you returned to; somewhere that drew you back again? (Afolabi, 2007:172).

Femi moves to redefine home. He weighs this reality emotionally and seems to realise that his situation is motivated largely by his physical dislocation. Considering his predicament and the implications associated with the description of "home" in more contemporary times:

> He thought of the city back home. London. Its midwinter shiver. The snow and ice they had left behind. Home. When had that occurred, this subtle transference of affection for another place? Like a love, adulterous and unwitting (Afolabi, 2007:175).

Although Femi acknowledges the guilt associated with fleeting loyalties to homeland, Afolabi, through him seems to justify the migrant's physical dislocation and alienation. While physical dislocation may be wittingly and consciously engaged through travels and journey from the homeland, psychological dislocation becomes an unwitting process which often has its antecedent as the former. For Femi, diaspora is not horrible since it provides the things that make him secure in a world irrespective of if it is "elsewhere". Femi voices that he belongs elsewhere, has adapted and feels secure with his new "home". The story projects a migrant's perception of a sense of belonging and place in a globalised world. This perception of what and where home is as Brah (1996) asserts significantly influences the processes of inclusion or exclusion for migrants like Femi.

In Atta's "Twilight trek", the protagonist, Jean-Luc is fleeing Africa as an illegal immigrant, hopeful like others that he will cross the Mediterranean and enter Europe. As Jean-Luc attempts escaping the woes in Africa, he is reminded at various times that, the realities of human existence are universal. This makes him contemplate the expediency of his escape. The narrative introduces his mother through dreams and this becomes the authorial vehicle for raising salient issues on his illegal migration. In a dream in a hut in Gao, the protagonist's mother advises:

> She says that the lesson to learn is that the world is round, which means that if I run too fast I might end up chasing the very homeland I am running from. She lectures me even in my dream, my mother (Atta, 2009:91).

Through this dream, the deficient judgment of Jean-Luc and his other migrants are exposed. The harrowing encounters of the desert notwithstanding, the migrants stay hopeful for days, months and even years without arriving at *El Dorado.* This narrative makes attempts to juxtapose this migrant's journey with the Israelite's exodus through Patience, the migrant prostitute who narrates scenes from Israel's exodus from the Bible. This tale of biblical exodus is easily disregarded by Jean-Luc since his mother appears severally to validate tales of a growing exodus from Africa. His mother's tales seems to insist that, a modern African exodus exist and thus makes it pointless to rely on the more historical exodus which Patience narrates. Unfortunately, unlike the Israelite's exodus, this story highlights this seeming reality: that modern African exodus and migration is

marked by devastation and thus falls short of attaining any promised land since nothing is guaranteed. His mother warns again:

> This place is a no stop… it is anteroom to hell. It is where spirits wait to pass to the world. It is the only time left for those who have stopped living and are yet to be pronounced dead, the ground between madness and reason (Atta, 2009:97).

Quite clearly, his mother warns that illegal migration is characterised by a number of risks. She is precise about the risks which include death. Despite these warnings, Jean-Luc like other illegal migrants makes his choice, "the ground between madness and reason" (97).

Throughout the narrative, the characters live with the outcome of their choices which determines their fate. Obazee, the Nigerian graduate who leads the group of desert migrants has been on this desert trek for six years. All his attempts to cross the boundary into Ceuta have been unsuccessful because he is caught each time and sent back into the desert. He therefore emerges as the leader of the group from his years of experience and resilience and is symbolic of Moses on this modern African exodus. He however seems more interested in organizing the people through the desert trek than crossing over into Spain through Ceuta until the time is right as Jean-Luc observes. Obazee is quick to share his experience even from failed attempts with the protagonist:

> "See?" he says. "It's tempting, isn't it"? Twenty miles only. El Dorado. You can cross anytime if you have enough to pay a *samsara* to take you. The *pateras* carry more passengers. The Dinghies are cheaper but they capsize. People have drowned (Atta, 2009:100).

He gives Jean-Luc the options available but refuses suggest any route as the best. Significantly, the protagonist's naivety is highlighted. This gullibility further exposes him to loss and the possibility of being marooned in this African desert. Jean-Luc loses his money, the only economic means of navigating the desert borders between Africa and Spain to Patience his closest companion on the trek and a hopeful migrant because of his overtly trusting nature.

At the end of the story, the protagonist is unrelenting and indifferent in the face of the harsh desert condition and the uncertainty of that characterises this journey. At all times, he makes flawed decisions with grave consequences. Patience steals his money. He waits in vain for Patience to return with his money which she takes from his sneakers. The story ends just when Jean-Luc seems to have gotten the details he needs to cross the borders but this does not suffice. Atta seems to suggest that desert border crossing and the imprudence which characterises these movements from dysfunctional societies seem to carry with it the prospects of greater uncertainty and harm. This ending becomes strategic in representing the migrant's *El Dorado* as inaccessible.

"Last Trip" is another story in which Atta examines the adventures and risks of many migrations from Africa. A mother who works as a drug courier vows to discontinue her trade after this last trip. Each trip is her last trip. She has worked for Kazeem and his organisation of drug barons for thirteen years and wants to stop. On this last outing she bargains for more, a thousand US dollars extra. Kazeem is upset while she wonders if her life is not worth the extra dollars she demands for. Kazeem wants to pay her in kind, she refuses. "The man sees her as walking storage. He will pay more only if she swallows more" (Atta, 2009:156). So he insists:

> "Take it or leave it," he says. There are many where you came from."…
> "Use the boy if you want more money," Kazeem says.
> "I will pay you well for that. It is not as if he will know what he is carrying, with his mental condition, and no one will bother to check him at the airports. You'll see." (Atta, 2009: 157).

The protagonist agrees to Kazeem's side of the bargain and swallows one hundred and twenty seven wraps of heroine, half a million dollars worth of heroine. She also travels with Dara, her mentally retarded son on this last trip and uses him to divert attention. He becomes the perfect distraction for the suspicious and prying eyes of airport and anti-drug officials. She is hopeful that after this last trip, she and her son Dara will have a better life:

> After this last trip, she can afford to pay her rent. It is paid two years in advance…Of course, she has Dara's school

> fees to consider first…in less than twelve hours, she will have earned more money than most Nigerian women spend in a year (Atta, 2009:168).

The significance of this story lies in Atta's representation of homeland, its weak economy and thus the need to look elsewhere for a means of survival. While the story raises questions of morality, she also points to the risky journey some Nigerians make in search of a comfortable life. Atta does not seem to condemn the protagonist in her quest for survival. She rather seems to present women like "Simbiyat Adisa" as the most vulnerable in difficult socio-economic conditions.

The wandering sensibility of migrants who belong in more than one space, accounts for the oscillations between spatial and complex mental spaces. Thus, migrant characters move habitually between their present and past experiences; between homeland and hostland. This also accounts for the images of homeland and hostland represented in Nigerian migrant narrative.

3.7 Life elsewhere: Lust elsewhere

Prostitution and sexual representations are highlighted in a number of the stories in relation to the image of the migrant. Influence from transnational interaction and the liberal sexual orientations from the West accounts for the writers' forthright portrayal of these images. Therefore, sex and sexual relations are portrayed as imperative and gratifying.

In "Anonymous", Unigwe examines the toll of migration on a young woman who pays for a fake international passport, takes up another identity and travels to Belgium. She desperately leaves Nigeria for Europe and must brave certain experiences to enter and survive Antwerp. Although she now lives in Antwerp, the horrid experiences that are part of her existence remain with her as recurrent memories.

Frustrated with the reality of being a jobless Nigerian graduate, the protagonist makes travelling abroad her final option for escaping the grimness which Nigerian socio-economic life portends for her. When she meets Ikem, a Nigerian who resides in

America, his tales of America and the opportunities available particularly strengthen her resolve to leave the country:

> He told me of his home in Atlanta with its four bedrooms and a garden. He told me of his wide plasma TV, bigger than any I had ever seen at Mega Plaza. "It covers the wall of my TV room, *men*!" His stories fed my hunger for a better life away from the dust of Lagos. From the vicious mosquitoes, from the smell of death and decay which pervaded my father's one room *face me I face you* apartment where I still lived, cheek by jowl with rats and cockroaches...Ikem was the answer to my prayer (Unigwe, 2011:21).

Ikem becomes the metaphoric agent of America, calling her to experience its possibilities. While America is projected as a heaven, Ikem acts as its representative, intensifying the protagonist's perception of America and the longing to experience transnational life. Ikem's stories and the protagonist's desire to escape her horrible Nigerian existence makes the couple's relationship a reasonable venture especially for the protagonist. Their relationship blossoms into plans for a marriage which seems motivated by each character's selfishness. She signifies for Ikem a good sexual partner and tells her this after the relationship ends: "One had to be pragmatic, *men*. I don't even enjoy sleeping with Chinyere but she is a nurse" (Unigwe, 2011:22). Ikem for her is her link to America. Their relationship is however short-lived when Ikem meets and proposes to Chinyere, a nurse whose profession would translate to economic and social security in the United States for him. When she confronts Ikem, he tenders his excuse:

> One had to be pragmatic, *men*. I don't even enjoy sleeping with Chinyere but she is a nurse. And nurses are hot in America, *men*."…"Baby," he said, his tone amused, "a B.A in Linguistics won't guarantee you a well-paying job in the States, *men*. Baby, understand. Life in *Yankee* is hard, *men* and with a working nurse by your side, your life is made easier (Unigwe, 2011:22).

Although Ikem seems self-centred no doubt, his action attests to the strategies that must be engaged to benefit from the vast opportunities America and other Western metropolis are believed to provide. This unfortunate incident further strengthens the resolve of the

protagonist who vows decisively: "I will make it to America…" (Unigwe, 2011:22). She fails to understand Ikem's action, words and the realities beyond the immediate termination of the relationship and the opportunity of travelling to America.

With this resolve, she contracts the services of Kunle, a man who makes available passports and visas to desperate Nigerians seeking to leave the country. When the prospects of getting an American visa proves difficult, she ends up with a Belgian visa and a new identity, the name on the passport Kunle gives her reads: "Mary Eze". When she arrives the airport at Brussels, she is discovered to be in possession of a fake passport. To go free, "Mary Eze" succumbs to a quick session of sexual intercourse right in the immigration office with one of the officers:

> "20 minutes and you walk out. No?" he pants. He stands behind me, trousers down at his ankles. I imagine I have flown away and perched on the ceiling; watching this blue-eyed man and an African woman. I can feel the hardness of his manhood against my buttocks. He cups my breasts with his hands and groans as he comes. "aah, ooh, … Beautiful. Beautiful." Satisfied, he belts up and tears up the papers with my finger prints... Even though it hurts between my legs and my tear glands are swelling, I thank him (Unigwe, 2011:27).

The intercourse, an excruciating act done hurriedly against the table in this office gratifies the officer. Sex becomes imperative for "Mary Eze", gives her access to Belgium and her livelihood. Unigwe neither justifies the protagonist's actions, nor raises moral questions about the protagonist's trade in Antwerp.

The internationalisation of commercial sex work according to Onyeonoru (2004) has gained momentum since the 1980s with sex workers migrating from Latin America, Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa into Western Europe. He also points out that apart from being a means of survival, transnational sex trade intensely improves the social status of trafficked women and their dependants considering what the gains from foreign currencies with such a wide margin can do in a weak national economy.

When the protagonist however sees a Japanese couple with a sense of fulfilment in their relationship, she is reminded of the dissatisfaction that she feels from selling her body and she confesses:

> I walk behind a Japanese couple holding hands and giggling. They are young, probably in their teens. They have the confident gait of people in love. My ankles are starting to hurt in my high heeled boots…Anklets heavy as guilt. My stomach rumbles like the goods train that ferried coal from Enugu to Kanfanchan. I follow them into a restaurant and sit at a table dressed up in white, right beside theirs. If I listen hard enough, I can hear their conversation. But they speak mostly in their language. Later I listen to them *oohing* and *aahing* over their food as they reach the peak of their culinary orgasm. They look satiated. With life. With love. I am body's vendor by day. I am my body's vendor by night. Yet, I cannot buy that type of love. The thought depresses me. I walk out and am swallowed by the anonymity of the city (Unigwe, 2011:28).

"Mary Eze" is clearly discontented. Sex for her is not gratifying since she must make a living selling her body. With hard work by day and at night notwithstanding, Antwerp does not seem to yield the satisfaction she expects. The narrative makes her identify still with the struggle for survival in Antwerp; a struggle largely motivated by her determination to change her economic status. The narrative highlights her determination to survive at all cost. Through the events, the protagonist's reminiscences and her rather personal appraisal of the events at the end of the story, the protagonist's quest and journey is problematised. She is still dissatisfied.

It is significant that the protagonist is not given a name. Her character is defined within the trope of migration that leaves her faceless. She is nameless even in Nigeria. When she "becomes" "Mary Eze", the name inherited from the international passport Kunle gives her, she loathes it. However, it seems acceptable since it gives her the opportunity of another life beyond her immediate circumstance. She stays "anonymous" till the narrative ends as her true identity is concealed.

Unigwe engages the issue of prostitution from a non-derogatory perspective. She moves from the sense of a largely morally controversial act to establish it or at least present it in

rather casual terms as a "chosen" profession or means of livelihood. Usually, Unigwe's prostitutes are women whose plight she takes particular interest in. In two of her stories, prostitution becomes a means of surviving. An important aspect of Unigwe's treatment of the subject however lies in the absence of a precise moral statement as highlighted in "Anonymous" and her story, "Dreams" set in Enugu.

In "The Wine Guitar", Afolabi further highlights the dilemma of the migrant through the character of Kayode. Kayode is an old Nigerian immigrant who makes a living as a guitarist in a bar. He drowns his discontentment and disappointment with life after so many years "elsewhere" in the regular company of another old friend–Salbatore. His discontentment is facilitated by his losses which have become glaring and weighty as he ages. He loses his wife to "home", where she returns to after many years. He also loses "home" where he now merely refers to as "The place where they both had been born" (Afolabi, 2007:51). His dilemma as well as his evasiveness on the subject of "home" is intense considering that:

> His wife had returned to the place where they had both been born; he had not followed her even though she had asked him. He felt he had been too long now in another man's country; he had forgotten so much about himself, about the past (Afolabi, 2007:51).

Apart from the homelessness and disconnection Kayode experiences and expresses, the more enduring implications of his psychological dislocation is pervasive. He has no sense of belonging at "home" or in diaspora. Kayode's natal affiliations however remain the antidote for surviving his dilemma since fulfilment "in another man's country" eludes him. Kinzel (2010) acknowledges that a longing to return to, and indeed a return to the place left is typical and predictable for the migrant, he however argues that a return could be negotiated in terms that are not necessarily spatial considering the possibilities of expressing a location or place in both spatial and mental terms. He invariably suggests a mental return. Irrespective of Kayode's musings which express the weight of his predicament, he conversely declines mental returns and reminiscences that highlight his dilemma and inbetweeness. Yet he does not belong "elsewhere" or "anywhere". The gnawing that results from this dislocation at varied levels from home and family is

managed through personal indulgence in his now antiquated guitar music, wine and some sex. Kayode's life style is therefore the overt manifestation of his quest for satisfaction and an attempt to get along in the world (Kinzel, 2010).

In "The Visitors", Gerry and his girlfriend, Agnieszka visit Sonny. Sonny lusts after Agnieszka, his friend's girlfriend as he plays host to them. She is quite young and alluring and notices that Sonny stares at her all the time. When it gets too hot inside the living room and Agnieszka pulls her sweater, "the husband looked at her, at the cleavage she had kept hidden, the small yellow T- shirt, the horizon of midriff" (Afolabi, 2007:83). Lorna, his wife and Irene his mother-in-law take turns trying to stop him from staring at the girl and misbehaving.

While they wait for dinner, the visitors and their host revel in beer and whiskey and tell of the many countries they have been to and lived in. The evening's meal is uncooked and unpleasant. The visitors are unable to eat. They excuse themselves to use the bathroom, smoke cigarette and have sex. And when they return, they announce what they have been up to. Irene stares at the young girl with scorn in her eyes. She loathes their intimacy and is disturbed by the distance between Sonny and her daughter, Lorna.

The evening Sonny and his family spend with his friends exposes their homelessness and the many places they have lived in and been to. Agnieszka finds it difficult to state her nationality. Irene too, finds it difficult to say where she comes from. Irene says she is from Earling but quickly acknowledges that her parents are nationals of Dominica. Agnieszka enjoys the migrant's homelessness which makes her free from being defined solely by a place of birth.

In "The Long Way Home", the protagonist is a Londoner although he spent his formative years in Ibadan. He has a family and still has an affair with Eliza, his son's teacher. His relationship with Eliza is complex. He imagines that, it ensures his son is given proper attention by the teacher at his extra Maths lessons.

The protagonist recollects his ended affair with another woman he meets at a sales conference in Leeds. V, his wife finds out about the woman and threatens him with divorce. The three weeks old fling ends before it gets very serious. He compares these affairs and concludes that his wife is unaware of his involvement with Eliza. He wonders at his relationship with Eliza but does not know how it started and how to end it. He muses:

> I often imagine ways of ending it, but the deeper you are involved in something the more difficult it is to extricate yourself…It isn't realistic to expect to be ecstatic in life, for things to be perfect…I will eventually leave Eliza, V and I will have another child. It goes on and what seems like a crisis at one time will retreat to a duty corner of the mind (Afolabi, 2007:164).

Though the protagonist tries to weigh his actions, he seems to absolve himself easily of the uneasiness and guilt which should follow. This evokes images of a social culture which accommodates affairs and sexual escapades as a norm. When Afolabi examines these relationships, moral questions are raised but this is not the essence. Thus, the significance of these relationships in "Visitors", "The Wine Guitar" and the "The long way home", no matter how atypical attests to how characters survive loneliness and other existential complexities.

3.8 Hostland images in Nigerian migrant narratives

This section contains a study of short stories that highlight representations of the hostland and migrants' sensibilities in their new spaces. In "Monday Morning", Afolabi tells the story of a refugee family who are in search of a better life "elsewhere". Afolabi creatively explores the fundamental challenges of migration and integration in new spaces through this family's wandering sensibility. This family struggles between memories of a horrendous past of a war-torn homeland and a vague unknown future. Their apprehension is exposed even in this new location "elsewhere" as Father mentally appreciates his physical dislocation thus:

> He wondered at how beautiful everything was in this place with the whispering leaves and the green grass like a perfect carpet and the people so fine in their Sunday

> clothes. He thought, with god's help it can surely happen…it was difficult now to think of artillery and soldiers and flies feeding on abandoned corpses (Afolabi, 2007:2).

The serenity of the metropolis which epitomizes perfection for these immigrants stirs up optimism in this father who in no time attempts to repress the repelling images of previous existence. The plight of these immigrants like the others we see in Afolabi's other stories is complicated by the many levels of obvious retreat which the characters attempt. It is strategic however, that although Afolabi aids his character's "forgetfulness", the narrative voice retains this migrant's "past" and leaves it lingering. The turn to the metropolis for succour and solace from this story does not automatically guarantee these expectations. These migrants however repress the ugly images that define previous existence and work at belonging in this new place. Transnational dislocation offers escape for this refugee family no matter how temporal.

Afolabi's "Monday Morning" parades characters that are closely strung together by their migrant status which keeps them together as they navigate their new existence with hopes of integration. The Excelsior, the old hostel which accommodates them conveys metaphorically the growing world of migrants who "run away" from different places and seek out a new existence elsewhere. The characters in this story struggle to fit in despite obvious differences in language, culture and attitude. The Excelsior is symbolic of the paradox of the migrant's seeming escape and entrapment with the reality of a present past. The blandness that characterises this hostel coupled with the agony of others becomes an impulsive reinvention of past realities that these characters do not want to be reminded of. Consequently, their lives as migrants are complicated by fears of returning to the place migrated from as Mother accepts that:

> It was not like coming home when they returned to the Excelsior, the strangeness of the place and the noise of the people there discomfited them. A woman was crying behind the door of the room opposite theirs and they wondered, has she received some terrible news? Will she be returned to the place she had run away from? The hostel was a sanctuary, but it was also a place of sadness for

> many, and often it was only the children who gave it life (Afolabi, 2007:7).

Hostel Excelsior becomes significantly paradoxical as a sanctuary, marked by dual possibilities of escape and sadness. Krishnaswamy (1995) asserts that this dual possibility always exists within dislocation. With this strangeness that circumscribes the hostel, Mother easily defines home by what it should not be. Afolabi succeeds in highlighting the dilemma of an undesirable alternative.

In trying to circumvent the seemingly more bitter experience of their past, some of the characters give up their profession to eke out a living elsewhere. Father, who was a chef in his country and another who was an architect in his own country toil as labourers at a construction site. Afolabi however examines this family who grapple with the uncertainties and the possibility of further dislocation as they attempt to cross invisible boundaries in this city centre.

Father stretches his imagination and anticipation from the Excelsior to the glass hotel. With the glass hotel, another symbol, Afolabi metaphorically constructs the migrant's picture of socio-economic fulfilment and integration. Hotel Excelsior therefore becomes significant of a migrant's lingering experience, while the glass hotel remains the ideal to be obtained. Alfredo who quips: "We will…When…When will we go to the glass hotel?" (Afolabi, 2007:8) decides to make his aspiration a reality soon by running off to the glass hotel. At the hotel he is given access into one of the rooms by a hotel maid who speaks his language. The shared language becomes suggestive of affinity and gives this refugee family some sense of belonging "elsewhere". With this shared language, Afolabi opens the possibilities signified by the glass hotel.

While Afolabi makes danger, displacement and hostilities recurring patterns which the family must engage even in this host country, he seems to raise questions on human endurance as he suggests that escape from a horrifying past may introduce migrants to an uncertain present and the enduring possibility of a similar future.

In "The People you Don't Know", Afolabi, further heightens the descriptive possibilities that a life elsewhere could offer. Here, diaspora is presented as a metaphoric corrective

heaven. Leon is sent by his exasperated Father to stay with his half-brother, Bryant. This sojourn is targeted at reforming the character of Leon. This does not seem to do much as Leon returns with his idiosyncrasies. Typical of Afolabi's characters, he finds companionship in Mrs. Drexels who remains a passable acquaintance till he returns to his father.

In Osondu's "Welcome to America", the protagonist reminisces his arrival in America as a naïve graduate student armed with assumptions from home about America. The narrative pattern projects the protagonist oscillating between America and Nigerian milieus through reminiscences as he recollects mental images of home and his American encounters. The story opens with the protagonist acknowledgement of initial naivety. He recalls:

> When I first came to America to attend graduate school I lived in what was considered a rough neighborhood, but I did not know it then, having recently arrived from Africa, I had seen images of hood-wearing, gun-carrying figures on the television and assumed my neighbors were the normal people one expected to see in America (Osondu, 2010:155).

The protagonist's assumptions about America are communicated strongly here. This naivety foregrounds the entire narrative events in the story and contributes to the awareness and development of the character of the protagonist as his stay in America progresses. With naivety at the fore, he allows his little daughter become a regular guest at a halfway house:

> The building next to us was occupied by a motley crowd of middle-aged men and women who sat on camp chairs all day smiling vaguely and smoking. My daughter would wave to them and they would ask her to come over. She was two years old at the time…We would let her go and join them sometimes, and she would come back home smelling of smoke and loaded down with candy. My wife and I speculated about who they were. She said they must be member of a religious cult, since the all lived together. I told her that they were likely to be relations living in their family's house (Osondu, 2010:158).

The protagonist's narration reveals that his assumptions are fueled largely by the images of the home he has been relocated from. He recollects his growing up years in Nigeria, the summer holidays at the large family house in Lagos and the inflow of relations who were all managed by his grandfather. However, the cultural spaces abroad are different. This is America and these people are not family members but people undergoing reformation.

The notion of the immigrant's naiveté and its significance is expressed in diverse narrative events which form a chronicle of exposure to the dangers in America which the protagonist seems to emphasise alongside his gullibility. In America, he and his family without knowing have daily contacts with drug runners, a child molester and other delinquent individuals. The beginning of winter signals a growth in awareness for the narrator who goes down with flu. Without a personal physician, he contemplates his return to Nigeria. His wife however treats him successfully with a mix of Chinese herbal tea, guava and mango leaves from the trees on campus. This marks the height of his journey as a migrant as he recollects:

> Looking back on this incident now, I smile, I was being treated with the same methods that old herbalist from interior villages used to cure rheumatism and malaria in Africa, even though I was living in one of the most advanced countries of the world. For days I was weak, and my hands flapped beside me lifelessly. Could I have come all the way to America to be felled by the common flu? I recovered, and that illness may have marked the beginning of the end of my period of innocence (Osondu, 2010:161).

Osondu situates his protagonist within the exacting possibilities of America, complicates this with his naivety and a flu which makes him contemplate his America sojourn. With his eventual recovery, Osondu seems to adduce that he can then survive and negotiate an America existence. His initial experiences in the United States constitute moral education and orientation for the protagonist, a welcome of some sort to the world and phenomena that is conceptualised in "America". After this, his innocence gives way to exposure that allows him speak with multiple voices and at a vantage position; as one with an America experience.

At the end of the story and with many years of living in America, the protagonist's personal discoveries put America in a different perspective without the influences and assumptions from home. He loses his innocence and starts his journey towards integrating as a Nigerian migrant in America. He confesses that: "After living for some years now in America, I still consider those innocent years …as the happiest days of our lives" (Osondu, 2010:163) considering the difficulties associated with acclimatising and integrating with new spaces.

"The Thing Around Your Neck" by Adichie also examines the reality associated with living in America as an immigrant against the backdrop of the expectation of family members, friends and dependants. Twenty two years old Akunna wins an American visa and goes to live with her "uncle" who is already resident in the United States. The few days she spends in the United States introduces her to the migrant's ordeal. She becomes spatially homeless and emotionally distraught when her "uncle" tries to molest her sexually. She discovers that America has its unpleasant sides and realises like her "uncle" tells her that; "America was give-and-take. You gave up a lot but you gained a lot, too" (Adichie, 2009:116).

When Akunna loses the shelter and the comfort of the only relatives she knows in America, she remains brave. She ends up working as a waitress in Connecticut. The salary can only pay for her rent and not cover college fees or buy the handbags, shoes perfumes and clothes she had once agreed to buy for her friends and family when she got to America. She however works hard to send money home to her mother Nigeria. Although she does not show any disaffection for being in America, Akunna remains sensitive to condescending racial reactions.

When Akunna meets and dates Juan, a young white American she meets at the restaurant, she is not so lonely any longer. Their intimacy activates her sensuality and diverts her attention from the harsh realities she tries to negotiate daily in America. However, their relationship does not escape the bias and reaction of both whites and blacks who think they are abnormal and thus, unequally yoked. Akunna remains the most sensitive of the partners to these reactions:

> You knew by people's reactions that you two were abnormal—the way the nasty ones were too nasty and the nice ones were too nice. The old white men and women who muttered and glared at him, the black men who shook their heads at you, the black women whose pitying eyes bemoaned your lack of self-esteem, your self-loathing. Or the black women who smile swift solidarity smiles; the black men who tried so hard to forgive you, saying a too-obvious hi to him; the white men and women who said "what a good-looking pair" too brightly, too loudly, as though to prove their own open-mindedness to themselves (Adichie, 2009:125).

Although she experiences relief from the anxiety and tightening around her neck that comes with being a lonely stranger in America, Akunna lives in the reality of these reactions as they remind her of her foreignness. This relationship seems to relieve Akunna of the difficulties her migrant status exposes her to in America. This notwithstanding, the complex power play between existing racial dichotomies of "self" and "other" is expressed and acknowledged by both whites and blacks in this story. Akunna finds that explaining any racist's encounter to Juan, her American boyfriend is futile, "he did not understand" (Adichie, 2009:124). The protagonist shares a similar plight with Adichie's protagonist in the novel, *Americanah.*

When Akunna eventually decides to write a letter home, her father is dead. Her mother replies to say that her father died five months back. With her regular monetary gift, her family affords a good burial for her father. Akunna decides to visit home and cannot say if she'll return and if she does, if she'll return to her white lover. The story ends on a rather inconclusive note pointing to the vacillation that most times characterises transnational interactions.

In Atta's "A Temporary Position", a young Nigerian Economics graduate who works illegally as a temporary receptionist at a London firm narrates her experiences. Working illegally is not peculiar to the protagonist as she attests to a huge community of Nigerian immigrants engaging in questionable means for survival. Some work illegally, others engage in more fraudulent means of surviving. As part of her strategy in securing this

temporary position, she does not tell her employees that she is a graduate, has more 'A' levels and 'O' levels. She also tries to hide her Nigerian heritage until she is discovered.

In this story, though Atta admits through her protagonist that London is not perfect, Lagos is worse. She juxtaposes this metropolis with Lagos making London appear better in the contrast. Against this backdrop, Lagos appears in its grimmest form:

> In Lagos, a bomb would have to explode in people's faces before they change their daily itinerary. The normal routine was chaos: no light, no water and no use complaining…everyday in Lagos was defective (Atta, 2009:113).

London is boring and most times lonely for the protagonist. However, she loathes Lagos for its endless chaos. The paradox is apt as the protagonist remains dissatisfied with "here" and "there". Physically dislocated from home and dissatisfied with elsewhere, Atta highlights through this story the existential dilemmas and dissatisfaction that seems to characterise the immigrant's attitude. Perhaps no expression captures the critical description of life in diaspora by implication than the protagonist's thoughts which are described in the following way:

> London was predictable in a different way, in a ding-dong sort of way, like Big Ben making all that noise that impressed hardly anyone but tourists…London also made me call Remi after work, at home, and spend so long chatting to her that I tore up my parents' telephone bill- rather than hide it- after I'd paid it. London made me go to nightclubs and dance until I was almost deaf… "It's rubbish here,"… (Atta, 2009:114).

Although the earlier musings of the protagonist reads like a critical perception of the social life of Nigeria, Atta presents the protagonist as dissatisfied with life in London also while she struggles with finding a "suitable" place of belonging.

The protagonist endures the disdain she perceives at work. After two weeks of working as a receptionist, the protagonist discovers the many things she shares in common with her white colleagues: "I noticed crusty eyes in the mornings, laddered tights at the end of the day and dandruff on shoulders. They were exactly like me. Exactly, exactly." (Atta,

2009:110-111). Penny, her white colleague who does not think much of her engages her in conversation with the aim of demeaning her because she is black and without a degree. On this occasion, her questions reveal in them her intention:

> "Think you'll stay on?"
> "No, I'm joining an accountancy firm soon."
> "Really, which one?"
> "PW."
> "Ooh. As a receptionist?"
> "Audit trainee."
> "Don't you need a degree for that?"
> "I have a degree."
> "What in?"
> "Economics"
> "Really?
> "Really."
> "From?"
> "LSE." (Atta, 2009:122).

Clearly, the protagonist's answers put her in the same class with her English colleagues when she discloses to Penny that she has a degree and would soon be joining an accounting firm. This however results in another reaction targeted at the protagonist personality and nationality. Penny calls her attention to new headlines about Nigerian graduates in London, children of high ranking government officials who have been arrested for dole fraud. The protagonist feels ashamed that she is Nigerian and calls up Remi, her friend in Nigeria in the evening. Remi consoles her with the fact that not all Nigerians are corrupt. This however is not good enough for the protagonist who still feels "one kind" (124), the apparent result of Penny's consistent attempts at humiliating her.

Atta characterises Catherine, the protagonist's immediate supervisor at work, as Penny's foil. This character is significant since she gives the protagonist a chance to prove herself irrespective of her race and nationality. Her conversation with her is revealing at this point when she discovers that her receptionist is a graduate and would leave soon:

> "Really," she said, squeezing my shoulder. "I'll miss you.
> I hate to lose a good receptionist."
> I had tears. I would have given her a hug if that were professional
> (Atta, 2009:126).

Her attitude restores the protagonist's already failing self image and confidence. Their interaction around the office projects a mild conflict aimed at establishing superiority of "self" and inferiority of the "other". These narrative events stir the story towards its end as well as establish the temporary stay of the protagonist as a receptionist. Although Atta raises questions on corruption amongst Nigerians at home and in disapora, most significant however is her focus on the subject of racism as a persistent feature in transnational interaction which the immigrant must engage.

"The Shivering", is set on the campus of Princeton University. This story explores the complexities of migration. The narrative opens by providing useful information, revealing the basis for the relationship of the two major characters in the story. Opening with the tragic information from home: "on the day a plane crashed in Nigeria, the same day the Nigerian first lady died, someone knocked loudly on Ukamaka's door" (Adichie, 2009:142); this narrative keeps the reader anticipating events which are linked to Nigeria. On the contrary, the narrative events which follow focus on situating these two individuals who connect as acquaintances because of the things they share in common—their Nigerian nationality, loneliness and personal crises.

The knock on Ukamaka's door is from a man who promptly introduces himself: "I am a Nigerian. I live on the third floor. I came so that we can pray about what is happening in our country" (Adichie, 2009:143). Ukamaka is surprised that she is easily identified by another Nigeria as a Nigerian. She joins the stranger in a session of Pentecostal-styled prayer for her country which makes her shiver. After the prayers, Chinedu the Nigerian man still stands in her flat, while Ukamaka is also reluctant to ask him to leave. They both realise their need for each other's company. Chinedu is a standby for Ukamaka who still nurses the breakup with her ex-boyfriend, Udenna. She shares the realities of her failed relationship with Chinedu whose taste and class sentiments seems very different from hers and her ex-boyfriend. She is grateful that he fills Udenna's gap in some strange way and helps her in the recovery process even though he appears to be asexual. Chinedu on the other hand appears leaden despite his growing acquaintance with Ukamaka. He becomes inextricably overwhelmed by the realities he grapples with and decides to open up:

> "Look, Ukamaka, I have to tell you what's happening. Sit down..."
>
> "I am out of status. My visa expired three years ago..."
>
> "You're not in Princeton?"
>
> "I never said I was."
>
> "I'm going to get a deportation notice from immigration anytime soon. Nobody at home knows my real situation. I haven't been able to send them much since I lost my construction job. My boss was a good man and was paying me under the table but he said he did not want trouble now that they are talking about raiding workplaces."
>
> "Have you tried finding a lawyer?" She asked.
>
> "A lawyer for what? I don't have a case" (Adichie, 2009:163).

Chinedu depicts significantly the immigrant's tendency to conceal the dark secrets and difficulties that trail emigration and stay in the foreign metropolis. As the story progresses, he succeeds in attracting Ukamaka's sympathy. She however refuses to ask more questions since she perceives Chinedu has more information about his status than he is willing to disclose. Adichie however suggests through these two characters and their relationship that no matter the deficiencies, the vital place of acquaintance for immigrants in handling the difficulties that characterise their daily existence and the need to belong despite the varied reflections of dislocation is imperative. At the end of the story, Chinedu concedes to following Ukamaka to her church—the Catholic church which he does not hide his displeasure about. While at the Gray Stone Church, Father Patrick blesses the people with holy water as Ukamaka observes keenly:

> How much more subdued catholic masses were in America; how in Nigeria it would have been a vibrant green branch from a mango tree that the priest would dip in a bucket of holy water held by a hurrying, sweating, Mass-server...how people would have been drenched; and how, smiling and making the sign of the cross, they would have felt blessed (Adichie, 2009:166).

Chinedu's religion preference notwithstanding, the Gray Stone Church becomes significant in establishing his growing acquaintance with Ukamaka. Perceptibly, it also becomes a stiff reminder to Ukamaka that she is Nigerian and at home, things are done

differently. The narrative presents the interplay of differences through Ukamaka who observes and "voices" them. The authorial comment facilitated by Adichie's crisscrossed memories and news from home is subsumed within Ukamaka's "voicing" of these observed differences.

"On Monday of Last Week" Adichie tells the story of Kamara, a Nigerian woman who joins her husband, Tobechi in Philadelphia, after six years of waiting. Tobechi leaves Nigeria for America with a group of church members going on a conference. Determined to work hard, get a green card and send for Kamara, he soon discovers that life in America could be difficult. He drives a taxi for a Nigerian man who cheats all his drivers because they do not have the papers to work in America. Kamara waits anxiously till she finally joins him. When she does, she notices that he has changed and they have grown awkwardly apart.

Kamara gets a job when the opportunity to work as a nanny to an upper-class family shows up. She cares for their young son and is fixated with understanding his overtly anxious father and weird mother. Tobechi tells her not to mention her education but she does. Kamara's musings suggest that the narrative events revolve around her understanding America, Americans and the ways they behave. Kamara speaks of her experiences without necessarily divulging her personal feelings. Significantly, Adichie seems to suggest with this narrative the impenetrability of certain migrant experiences.

3.9 Images and news from "home"

This section focuses on how Nigerian migrant writers resort to images from homeland. It examines these writers' perspective, consciousness and the affinities expressed in their writings. "Our first American" is a significant story because Osondu creates an American immigrant in Nigeria as one of his major characters and through this story, projects dislocation and belonging as existential and universal. Set in Lagos, this story is also Osondu's attempt at refuting and destabilising conceptual presentations of America and the American. It is counter-discursive.

This story is set in Lagos, during one of Nigeria's military regimes. The characters are common Nigerian masses that live in a typical Nigerian street, populated by ordinary

people who make up a large percent of Nigeria's population. These characters share a lot in common, they are disillusioned, tell tales about each other and the malaise which characterises their country and affects them badly.

Mark, the American-immigrant in the story, lives off the fortunes of some pugnacious Lagos prostitute. His life in Lagos is circumscribed by disrepute. He is addicted to marijuana and club girls. Mark is a sacked bank staff. He was sacked because he was irresponsible, spent most of his time with club girls, was absent from work often and represented his bank badly. While Mark the American remains jobless, his neighbours and the members of his street have nothing good to say about him, they also wonder at why an American should be jobless like the teeming population of Nigerians. Apart from Mark and Beauty, the neighbourhood of common people is animated as they discuss the nation's social malaise, lack of jobs, power outages and especially, news of politicians apprehended with bags of money abroad.

As Beauty ekes out a living from sex trading, sometimes she must search many locations in Lagos for "business" which she may not find. Beauty is frustrated and unhappy that she may never attain the fortunes of her colleagues and girls who big American boyfriends take care of and end up marrying. She is unhappy that she is stuck with a never-do-well American boyfriend in the face of a difficult economy and must also fend for him. Wearied by the nature of her job and having to care for Mark, Beauty makes it clear to Mark, her American boyfriend that he performs below the expected standard as her boyfriend and as an American as she laments:

> Who is your baby, eh, please, I am not your baby, if I was your baby you will take care of me the way other big Americans who live in big mansions in Lagos take care of their girlfriends…? Laugh at me, laugh. It is not your fault. It is my fault for taking you into my house when the bank sacked you… If not for me, Beauty, you will be sleeping under the bridge like a common street boy… All my friends who are doing this type of my business, they have all married their American boyfriends and left for Kuwait, Venezuela, and Houston. Here I am suffering to feed you in this one room (Osondu, 2010:24).

While the above may not provide an acerbic critique of America in this story and everything that derives its impact from the concept "America", Osondu succeeds in satirising the West through the character of Mark by perforating consciously the bloated esteem and impression(s) citizens of former colonies have internalized in fostering racial complexes. Thus, the story slightly diverts its attention to consider Mark's immigrant status in Nigeria *vis-à-vis* the socio-economic quagmire associated with Nigeria's socio-economic life.

Beauty is a Nigerian, prostitute and also Mark, the American's benefactor. She describes him as useless: "you this useless American man, simply to get up from the bed and open the door is too much for you, look at how long I have been knocking, eh, and I have been out all night searching for what you and I will eat" (Osondu, 2010:25). She however works very hard as a prostitute and continues to care for him. When Mark is sick with typhoid fever and nearly dies, Beauty like most Nigerian masses cannot afford to take him to a hospital. She resorts to giving him traditional roots and herbs and he recovers.

Beauty and Mark's relationship is severed on grounds of suspicion which leads to her evicting Mark. He returns to a street hangout and is informed by an actor that a movie producer who specialized in shooting quick movies with substandard equipment sold in Lagos traffic was looking for a white man to play the role of a colonial missionary in an upcoming movie. He had previously casted albinos wearing wigs in the roles for white men but wanted a real white man for his new film. Without any formal training, Mark gets the role and plays it well and this marks his journey to fame. Mark finds fame as a Nollywood star and does not stage a comeback as expected by Beauty.

As an American, Mark integrates quite well into the mainstream of Lagos' social life. Beauty picks him up from the streets and when she throws him out, he returns to the streets. He is familiar with the streets of Lagos and the social atmosphere in the city so, he survives Lagos with all its complexities. Also, Mark knows where to find the club girls he patronises, where to find the marijuana he is addicted to and how to patronise the roadside food vendor. According to the narrator:

> He ate the same spicy food that we ate and would on occasion go with a bowl to the roadside food vendor, Mamaput. The people on the street said that any white man who eats pepper would never leave Lagos. This seemed true for Mark (Osondu, 2010:27).

Mark performs below the reader's expectation of an American. He is really "our first American" in this regard. He is also "our first American" to do so, when he seemingly neglects the prospects of staying in America when he has the opportunity to do so and rather returns to Nigeria. Despite the negative social images projected in this narrative, Osondu, raises questions on the prospects in our disconcerting socio-economic life, the one Mark returns for, and the other expatriates in "An incident at Pat's Bar", benefit from.

In Osondu's "A letter from home", a mother writes a letter to her son in America outlining the features of a good Nigerian in diaspora. The story is epistolary in form and captures the anticipation of migrant's dependants at home who sometimes contribute to the possibility of this transnational movement, and usually demand to see the gains of being affiliated indirectly with the West. She writes:

> My Dear Son,
> Why have you not been sending me money through Western Union like other good Nigerian children in America do? You have also not visited home. Have you married a white woman? Do not forget that I have already found a wife for you. Her name is Ngozi. Her parents are good Christians and her mother belongs to the Catholic Women's League like me. Please do not spoil the good relationship I have built over the years with Ngozi's parents (Osondu, 2010:45).

The mother has found her son a wife in Nigeria. However, she remains apprehensive that her choice of Ngozi may not be acceptable if her son has Americanised, lost his taste for African women and married a white woman. With his persistent silence, non-remittance of funds via Western Union and the tension this causes between her family and Ngozi's mother, she resorts to warning him of the implication of his getting lost culturally in America. The mother's concerns are not limited to probing the economic status of her son in diaspora which she expects should automatically influence her own economic status.

Her concern also reflects, though naively, on the possibilities of his integration into the mainstream of American life and culture, cultural loss and outright rootlessness. She wonders:

> Do you associate with other Africans so you can still remember your roots? Do you still find African foods to eat? Because I fear the white man's food will make you reason in the white man's ways (Osondu, 2010:46-47).

She is worried that American food will make him reason like an American and eventually imbibe American ways. The underlying mood of this letter should evoke nostalgia in its migrant recipient. However, its tone is amusing. Osondu sustains a sense of nostalgia in this story by evoking Igbo cultural conversational patterns. One of such strategies is the character's recourse to proverbs and Igbo lore to drive home her point. "My son, do not make me a laughing stock. *I beg of you not to let those who borrowed chewing stick from me to end up with brighter teeth and cleaner breath*" (Osondu, 2010:47). "Do not imagine that my ears are not filled with all manner of suggestions from different people… *the day an elephant dies is the day you see all kinds of knives*"(Osondu, 2010:49) The mother is symbolic of a system which sustains continuity in communal memories. She is a custodian of the indigenous culture of his people and thus reminds him of these details that are subject to loss as the migrant navigates new socio-cultural spaces.

In this epistolary story, this mother evaluates her son and his success against that of other immigrants, regarding family and sometimes communal expectations from anyone in diaspora. She pleads with him not to be like Kaka's son who goes to America with the community's funds, returns with a white woman and neither acknowledges his father nor the community as his benefactor. She tells him of successful migrants: Ogaga's son who went to Germany, Obi's daughter who went to Italy to work as a prostitute and Odili's son who went by road to Europe. The immigrants she mentions have material wealth as the evidence of their sojourn in diaspora. Even though one of the three returns as a commercial sex worker, she is celebrated by her community since transnational sex trade is a means of survival for sex traders and a source of improved social status for them and their dependants back home (Onyeonoru, 2004). Although these are projected as

examples of "good" migrants, Osondu gets the opportunity to satirise dependants who are materialistic and who put pressure on migrants.

In "Going Back West", Uncle Dele, a deportee from America, invests time, money and adopts various strategies in obtaining an American visa. Already a deportee from America he becomes rather desperate to return to America at all cost. His young cousin-narrator however holds him in high esteem and nurses a desire to travel with him to America. The narrator expresses this desire to his Uncle:

> Since it is so easy, maybe I can join you for the trip, I told Uncle Dele.
>
> No, you don't need to go with me—just read your books, and when your time comes you will come to America like a prince.
>
> Thanks, Uncle Dele—I know you will do your best for me, but promise you will not forget me when you go back this time (Osondu, 2010:73).

Hagen-Zankar (2008) assertion explains the significance of the young narrator's plea to Uncle Dele in this story, even in the event of an unsuccessful migration process. She states that, "after an initial phase of pioneer migration, migration becomes more common in the community" (Osondu, 2010:16) with experienced migrants helping intending migrants attempt the process. Even though Uncle Dele claims and shares the discovery of an "easier" route to America with the narrator, he discourages him from wanting to embark on the trip with him. In a simple narrative voice, the schemes Uncle Dele employs are brought to the fore and through him Osondu satirises Nigerians who are desperate to migrate from their country to the West and the dubious means that are available and employed in Nigeria to achieve this.

Daily after breakfast, Dele visits the criminal enclave Oluwole, where forged international passports and certificates could be obtained. His uncle warns him of the con men in Lagos Island but he pays no attention. Uncle Dele also declines his uncle's suggestions to defer this "American dream" and conclude his studies in the University of Lagos. He makes contact with a mischievous musical promoter and hopes to enter

America as a musician. This does not work. He borrows money from Maikudi, the moneylender to help him make payments to secure a visa and cannot pay back. Despite all his schemes, Uncle Dele is still refused an American visa. He becomes increasingly disillusioned and reacts by employing even more desperate measures. He takes to drug trafficking as a final alternative and is caught and executed by a firing squad. Dele's dreams of going back West ends on this sad note. The Jamaican reggae, Jimmy Cliff's song "Going Back West" is the proverbial motivation for Uncle Dele to return to America. Embedded in the dark narrative is the humour that taunts Uncle Dele's song motivation, futile effort and his trip back west to the very end of the story.

In "The American Embassy" set during the infamous Abacha regime in Nigeria, Adichie examines one of the many reasons why Nigerians seek to flee Nigeria for America—security. The protagonist's husband, a journalist with one of the Nigeria dailies indicts the erstwhile ruler and his government in a publication. The pro-democratic journalist exposes himself and his family to threats from the military government. He however escapes through a neighbouring African country but his family bears the brunt of his action as armed men barge into his Lagos home in search of him. When he is not found, his wife is assaulted and his four-year-old son murdered. To escape another possible attack, relocation becomes the solution to guarantee her safety and the unity of her family again. She is advised by family and friends on how to answer questions at the American Embassy:

> Don't falter as you answer the questions, the voices said. Tell them all about Ugonna, what he was like, but don't overdo it, because every day people lie to them to get asylum visas, about dead relatives that were never born. Make Ugonna real. Cry, but don't cry too much (Adichie, 2009:134).

The implication here is that, the protagonist must amplify her predicament in order to win the sympathy of the visa officers at the embassy and eventually an American visa. Laughable as this may seem, it also highlights the strategies Nigerians engage in order to flee the nation when the opportunity is presented. The suggestion notwithstanding, the protagonist's loss and the implication of using it becomes an irrational evidence to tender

when the protagonist applies for asylum. She is averse to describing the circumstances surrounding Ugonna's murder as evidence for obtaining an American visa even when she is prodded by the interviewing officer with an encouraging smile; "Can you go through your story again, ma'am? You haven't given me any details" (Adichie, 2009:139). Ugonna's mother responds by letting her thoughts stray and her resolve grow:

> She looked at the next window for a moment, at a man in dark suit who was leaning close to the screen, reverently, as though praying to the visa interviewer behind. And she realized that she would die gladly at the hands of the man in the black hooded shirt or the one with the shiny bald head before she said a word about Ugonna to this interviewer, or to anybody at the American embassy. Before she hawked Ugonna for a visa to safety (Adichie, 2009:139).

The protagonist is able to walk away from the opportunity of receiving an American visa in exchange of "evidence"—the detailed narration of her son's murder in cold blood. While Ugonna's mother overcomes this "temptation" of swift emigration from Nigeria of the 1990s, at the peak of Nigeria's military rule, Adichie seems to make ineffectual the myriad of unthinkable reasons and evidences that accompany the desperate quest for visas by Nigerians. The protagonist's apparent wrestle with the memories of her only child's murder and her walk-away keeps Ugonna's memory revered from the United States offer of a "new life" (140).

Atta's "News from home" is significant for exploring the differences between life at "home" and diaspora. The story is told from the perspective of Eva, a young woman who goes to America to work as a live-in nanny. This becomes a better life for her considering the inability of her country to cater for its own citizens. The story is complicated by the fact that she is from Nigeria's Niger Delta region from where the nation's wealth is derived but whose people ironically live in abject poverty. Eva suffers bouts of nostalgia and reminiscences that further complicate and magnify the differences between her homeland and the place she now lives in. Through Eva's reminiscences of home, Atta engages the narrative in evaluating Nigeria's Niger Delta question and the ripple effect of the varying faces and phases of Western incursion into the Nigerian polity. The

protagonist's reminiscences of childhood are revealing as she attempts to tell her people's perspective:

> When I was a girl, I was in love with every expatriate I came across in my hometown, Catholic priests especially. I thought they were as pure as God in their whites. I couldn't wait to hop on their laps... I cried for Mungo. I thought the native were wicked people, too ugly in the book illustrations. I grew up and missionaries like Sister left town. The only expatriates I came across worked for international oil companies- British, Dutch, Canadian, Italian, and American (Atta, 2009:177-178).

She confesses her childhood innocence and childhood fantasy of an "American wonder", a place she synonymises with heaven. She realises with time and with her migrant exposure that the expatriates she encountered are not "as pure as God" rather, they are in control of the lives and oil of these oil-rich but polluted communities for benefits. She identifies the systems of the West for what they really are; first, the missionaries who serve as a front for colonialist, expatriates and then oil explorers. Although Eva is "lucky to come to America and work as a live-in-nanny" (Atta, 2009:178), her mental oscillations between home and the reality of her American existence heightens the frustration her people experience.

Eva listens to news from home and about home and responds to them by reminiscing. Kinzel (2010) asserts that the longing to return to place(s) relocated from may be predictable for the migrant. However, he argues that this return could be negotiated in terms that are not necessarily spatial considering the possibility that a place could be expressed as both spatial and mental. Atta makes Eva return home mentally as she employs the use of flashbacks. Nevertheless, while Eva "returns" by keeping abreast of the news from home, she feels fortunate to be physically located in America. On the contrary, Dr. Darego whose family she serves views Nigeria as a "jungle" and never hopes to return to it.

Eva becomes more aware of her homeland and her new environment. The living condition in the Niger Delta communities is deplorable while the staff of the multinational live in affluence. Eva also learns that Madam Queen has mobilised women

to negotiate for the community's freedom from the detrimental operations of the oil company in their town. Eva also becomes aware of her "otherness" from the Nigerian-American children she cares for because the way she speaks. These events make Eva aware of differences, she reflects on her "otherness" and the complication of living in America when she is followed round a shop by a suspicious attendant:

> Will living here be different for me? Sometimes a shop assistance follows me in the store, and when I want to turn and scream, "if not for the havoc your people have wreaked in my country, would I be here taking shit from you?!" Then, on a day like this, I think of the guerilla politicos in my country, petroleum hawkers, who treat the land and people of the Niger Delta like waste matter. I look around the park, see trees I can't name, clear skies, smell the clean air in New Jersey that is supposedly polluted, and think, "Well, Gawd bless America" (Atta, 2009:188).

Although very conscious of her marginality, altering this position within the circumference of her immediate reality remains impossible. She again imagines her community, the polluted environment, lifeless seas and vegetation and compares these with the trees, clear skies and clean smell of New Jersey. This place is not like her homeland yet, it is supposedly polluted. Eva sarcastically proclaims a blessing on America and the West that have wreaked the Niger Delta people.

Eva resorts to staying in touch with home and the possibilities of change that comes with Madam Queen's effort. In "News from Home", the only source of happiness for the protagonist is the news she gets from home: that the women in her home-town bring Summit Oil operations to a standstill to press home their demands for a better life for their community. Eva and Mrs. Darego are excited when they imagine more possibilities when women unite. Angie's letter from home carries a sincere advice for Eva. She warns:

> Eve, you can't come back. There's nothing here for you…I hear they need nurses over there in America. You can always come home to visit (Atta, 2006:201).

Significantly Angie's letter presents the Niger Delta as complicated and defying swift solution. From the foregoing, Eva's resolve to stay in America is strengthened as she relives the reality of having "nothing" to go home to. She begins to map out plans for a

better life in America, a legal stay that would improve her economic status and sustain her status as a benefactor to her many dependants at home.

"Dreams" is predominantly set in Nigeria. This story by Unigwe examines marriage and the bane of widowhood in the Igbo socio-cultural milieu. In this particular story, Unigwe relates with the cultural mores of the Igbo community. The events in the story are narrated by the widowed mother of three. The story is set in Enugu and it outlines the cultural expectations within the Igbo socio-cultural milieu which Unigwe reinvents, reflects on and satirises. Before Uche meets and marries Obi, a rather wealthy man, she is regarded as a source of misfortune by her mother. This however changes when Uche gets a suitor. Based on this, Unigwe establishes the value placed on marriage and its significance. This emerges clearly through the swift show of affection that follows the news of Uche's marriage:

> She holds you close in happiness, pressing your nose against her neck (your mother is a few inches taller than you), and you fear she will suffocate you with her happiness. The happiness fills her arms with a strength that surprises you, and it is a while before you can extricate yourself from her embrace. You are embarrassed. It has been so long since she has hugged you. In fact, it has been such a long time that even though you try to remember it, you cannot (Unigwe, 2011:31).

Unigwe points that while Uche's mother reacts excitedly within prevailing socio-cultural expectation, Uche does not seem to relate deeply with the implication of being single which is regarded as problematic culturally.

Blessed with three children and the luxury of a very comfortable home, Uche's marriage to Obi seems to be a happy one until Obi dies at thirty six years of age. The event of Obi's death complicates the entire story, allowing Unigwe explore issues of death, widowhood and the relationship between in-laws. When a medical report and autopsy shows that Obi dies from a heart attack, it does not prevent his death from being associated with the usual suspicion that comes with death at this age in Africa. These trado-religious reasons however hold sway:

> "The doctors say he had a heart attack. The autopsy concluded that," you protest, but nobody is listening to you. Obi's incensed mother shouts above your voice, "You killed my son. Why did you not just stay with your water-spirit husband? Why? You may deceive everybody else, but you cannot deceive the prophet. He has seen you for what you are," she sobs as Obi's uncle assures her that you will pay for your evil. Evil of which you know nothing. How could you begin to pay for the prophet's imagination, an imagination as wild as his over-grown hair? (Unigwe, 2011:35).

The close correlation between the death of a young man and the trado-religious source of this misfortune is established. And Obi's young widow must bear the brunt as the named source of this misfortune. Here again, Unigwe seems to suggest the dictating potency of trado-religious beliefs. His relatives take over her young son and all his property leaving her stranded with her two female children. These phases of reality signal the making of a new Uche.

Although the story is told from the perspective of the young widow, the dark narrative mood of this story is tempered by the narrative voice that keeps from divulging personally the intensity of the dark episodes in this widow's account. Uche seems invigorated by the reality of her experiences and her dreams for a better life for her female children. Her portrait as a pitiable woman is therefore not sustained in the narration:

> You have no family to ask for help, and you have mouths to feed. You swear that your children must go to school. This has always been your dream, and one shared by Obi. You do not have to listen hard to hear him say, "*Uche*, our children must go to school until there is nothing more for them to learn. I want them to see the end of school." You cannot get a job because you have no qualifications. You do not have even a standard six certificate. Your mother always says that all a woman needs is a generous husband. She is wrong. A woman needs more than that. She needs generous in-laws too. Above that, she needs an education, a job, independence. These are what you want for your daughters. Your dream for them. It is this dream that pulls you into this blue-lit room that you rent while your

> daughters sleep in your other apartment at the other side of town. They think that you have a job helping out at the university hospital (Unigwe, 2011:36).

Several positions emerge from this assessment. The first and most significant is that the protagonist is set to evolve from her previous passive position and becomes more active in exploring all avenues that would guarantee her socio-economic survival. She realises that a man's wealth and a marriage do not guaranty the security of a woman like an education would. Uche works hard at improving her economic status, caring for her mother and sending her girls to school as a commercial sex worker in Enugu. It is significant that Unigwe raises salient points that insightfully probe and display her consciousness of predictable socio-cultural mores that affect Igbo women. With hard work, the young widow strategises and sets out to retire into a more socially acceptable trade:

> You count your blessings: your daughters are in a private school, your mother is being taken good care of, and your retirement plans are already in motion. You will be the owner of the biggest bakery in Enugu. You can already see the bakery, a white bungalow with "Dream Bread" emblazoned in red, a huge neon light lighting it up, its fame spreading from Enugu to Onitsha (Unigwe, 2011:37).

In many ways the ambivalence of narrated events in the story frustrates a simple moral implication in relation to the protagonist. As a lady, Uche's status is problematic. As a widow, she has it rough too. Her children must go to school and her mother must be taken care of. When she earns a living enough to start another trade, the narrative focuses on her survival. In this story, Unigwe seems to question the sole potential of marriage in according fulfilment to an Igbo or African women without an education or any form of economic empowerment. This is an important aspect in the story which Unigwe uses to re-focus on survival as the central idea of her story.

"Hailstone on Zamfara" is the story of a Muslim woman who awaits death by stoning. She has been accused of committing adultery by her husband with an unknown man and must die by stoning under the Sharia law instituted in Nigeria's northern state of Zamfara. Atta is critical about Nigeria's socio-religious systems. The narrative projects

these systems as prejudiced and significantly thriving among those who occupy the margins of the nation's socio-economic space—the poor and women. Particularly, Atta critiques the obnoxious practices in Nigeria's socio-religious life that stifles the survival and existence of woman and her potentials. Without a secondary education and being married at fourteen, the protagonist insists that her daughter, Fatima, must go to school:

> Make sure you get your education…Make sure it is in your hands, then you can frame it and hang it on the wall, and when you go to your husband's house, carry it with you (Atta, 2009:41).

The protagonist advises Fatima, her daughter to get an education and hang her framed 'education' on the wall. She acknowledges that Western education guarantees independence, self sufficiency and unrestricted development of potentials as we see in Mariam Maliki, the broadcaster. Through the person of Mariam Maliki also, her exposure and "freedom" as a Muslim, Atta raises questions on the provision and seeming enforcement of these religious injunctions on only people that straddle along socio-economic margins. Thus, the protagonist juxtaposes mentally the implications of religious practices among the rich/learned and poor/uneducated: "I thought hard about that. In our country, Sharia was a poor person's law" (Atta, 2009:43).

The protagonist becomes symbolic of those who occupy the margins of the Nigerian society and the difficulties they face because of their economic and social status. Atta's protagonist is afraid to die when she is 'found' guilty. Atta examines the strict implication of the Sharia law instituted in Zamfara and other Northern states in Nigeria. She considers the plausibility of liberation for her protagonist and others like her from this debilitating system through humanitarian activist and the media through the character of Miriam Maliki when the protagonist reflects on the reality of her death:

> "I am going to die," I said.
>
> She took my hand. "I will make sure people hear of you. Others have taken interest, not just me. Elsewhere in the country they are writing about you in newspapers…It is

> very likely that your life will be saved because of this. Have hope. You are a symbol" (Atta, 2009:41).

Although attempts are made to secure the protagonist's freedom from outside the state, the story seems silent on certainties. The narrative therefore emerges as a discourse resisting poverty, religious extremism and subjugation. Atta's characters engage in resisting asphyxiating norms that confine them to the margins of society. When resistance seems impossible, the characters accept the norms and follow through by enduring the unfortunate consequence since they must be considered to belong in these societies.

These narratives accommodate perspectives that highlight the dual spatial domains of creative association that serve as their canvas. According to Seyhan (2001), the dislocation of exilic writers from their nation of birth by years, decades or generations of involvement in transnational locations notwithstanding is incapable of eroding in its entirety the memories and images of nation which remain lingering features in exilic imagination. Akeh (2006) also points that although there are distortions in the memories of some Nigerian writers abroad due to the years of sustained geographical dislocation which determines creative tendencies indicative of cosmopolitan taste; he argues that creative loyalty "is still to a purist construct– the nation, two nations in some cases, the nation of residence and also the remembered, and now increasingly mythic, nation of origin" (Akeh, 2006:36). These complex creative postures make straddling a feature of these writings. An appreciation of existential implications of displacement as a universal feature in these narratives makes room for equilibrium (Seyhen, 2008).

CHAPTER FOUR

COMPARATIVE REVIEW

This chapter sets out to consider from a comparative perspective the creative approach of Segun Afolabi, E.C. Osondu, Chika Unigwe, Sefi Atta and Chimamanda Adichie in their short stories. It focuses on projecting each writer's personal creative sensibility in conveying the depth and complex range of signification of migrant existence in creative imagination. The preoccupation with the subject of migration and other issues deriving from the migration of people in contemporary times has significantly influenced the Nigerian migrant writers' creative imagination. The location in transnational space, the experience of belonging in a certain way and not quite belonging in the very integral sense that belonging connotes, stand out as common denominators of the Nigerian immigrant narratives under study. However, this study finds that when brought together in comparative study, the authors' different backgrounds and experience of dislocation sharpen their sensibilities and dynamic representation of dislocation and belonging. Nevertheless, a correlation in their migrant encounters exists and seems to attest to the complex and sometimes simple representation of migrant exposures and the significance of these in their writings.

Afolabi's stories are set primarily in London. The issues raised in Afolabi's narratives project the author's personal reflection on migration and the internalised crises of immigrant existence. This enhances the writer's effective construction of identity and the navigation of the complexities of belonging in these inextricable spaces that constitute the reality of the immigrant's experience. Afolabi however seems to focus almost unequivocally on the permanent possibilities of dislocation following the impact of unmediated existence in transnational spaces. Thus, while he projects his characters

negotiating these spaces, he almost seems to emphasise homelessness as a common denominator of transnational existence in contemporary times. Afolabi exemplifies how this rootlessness could be strategic in communicating belonging "elsewhere", thereby accentuating the implication of dislocation, the paradox of enduring possibilities of belonging and the startling possibility of homelessness which is implied. Afolabi's stories emerge as a focus on how the migrant experience is perceived and navigated personally, rather than on the horrors located within the entire migratory process.

Afolabi's creative perspective seems to stem from his background—being raised in a family in which exposure to different locations was an integral part of his family's life. Afolabi migrated to and lived in different cities of the world. Thus, if Afolabi in comparison to Atta, Adichie, Unigwe and Osondu seems less concerned about cultural ties as reflected through the sensibilities and representations projected in his stories, it is because of his personal involvement in the many peregrinations he has experienced and the outcome which closely identifies him as a citizen of the many worlds he has lived in.

Osondu's stories are set in Nigeria and America. These stories examine the existential complexities that circumscribe living at home or diaspora as a Nigerian. Osondu employs humour in communicating the essence of these stories as he investigates the social and cultural differences that are emphasised in the different settings of his narratives. Irrespective of the setting, Osondu's perspective sustains a Nigerian-American relationship in these narratives through representations that are indicative of these spaces.

Unigwe's preoccupation with the subject of migration examines aspects of her lived experience in Belgium. While migration is central, she emphasises difference in culture, landscape, attitude and the abiding reality of unvoiced misconceptions that many times complicates existing in transnational territories. Unigwe's narratives reflect her appropriation of images from homeland as she compares the socio-cultural implications of living in Europe. Unigwe's stories exhibit a strong consciousness that sustains her affinity as an Igbo-Nigerian with Belgium. Her stories are set in Belgium and Enugu.

Unigwe, it would seem, sustains an interconnection between some of the rather related stories like "Thinking of Angel", "Waiting", "The Curse" and "Anonymous". The stories are full of significant details that are ultra-specific to give away the migrant status, as well as the very socio-cultural sensibilities of the people and places she re-invents.

Atta's stories are set in London, America and Nigeria. Atta's stories are easily identified by their fixation with the survival of persons in national and transnational spheres. The social pessimism conveyed in her stories, especially those set in Nigeria and Africa is amplified by her critical perspective as a migrant. To Atta, Nigeria's social life is riddled with complexities that make it too complicated for those who occupy the margins of society to survive. Even though Atta creates characters that are discontented and seek to survive their immediate existence, their survival is determined by their choices. This invariably determines their fate, and makes them responsible. Atta's stories exhibit her preference for the plight of women, the poor and immigrant as "Others" occupying the margins of the societies.

Adichie's position problematises the sensibilities of Nigerian immigrants in America and their dependant. She puts into perspective Nigeria and America, and interrogates the social life within these milieus. Thus, whether Adichie's characters are at home, abroad or even at the point of deciding where to live, like we see in "American Embassy", she makes this irrelevant and rather emphasises peculiar Nigerian sensibilities and the apprehension that occur within the narrative. Adichie's representations seem informed largely by the writer's American experience developed into sensitive and subtle narratives that show conflict beyond content and thematic focus. Akeh (2006) elaborates that the peculiar position of the African writer abroad creates sensitivity about his/her marginality that results in the recourse to "home" for the formation of images for aspects of their creative invention. He points out that:

> For these new writers 'from' Africa, the continuing loyalty to, and engagement of Africa, or the reliance on African subjectivities for inspiration, seems determined by the marginality of their experience abroad. Three factors are indicated in this regard: there is a void, an absence, to be filled; there is a difference, an otherness to be explained

> and finally a politicisation of experience or location, which is to be engaged. These factors are differently evident in the writers, and depend on individual experiences (Akeh, 2006:37).

For Akeh, the reaction of the migrant writer to this marginality displays explicitly the hyphenated posture of the migrant writer and the implications which are conveyed through events and representations that seek to elucidate these complex involvements. The fixation with migration is therefore expressed more concisely as writers' examine issues of personal, national and cultural identity which according to Frank (2008:198) have "great significance to migrants as a result of their uprooting and national and cultural doubleness".

Within their preoccupation with dislocation and belonging, some of the stories of Osondu, Adichie, Unigwe and Atta seem to emphasise the potentially harsh realities of Nigeria and Africa (by extrapolation) that motivates migrants "escape" from the continent. Central to their stories are the existential complexities that circumscribe living at home or in diaspora as Nigerians. Hence, most of the stories examine the dynamics of existing at home or diaspora.

Afolabi's narrative style seems fixated with conveying the rather psychological details of dislocation, identity and belonging in migration. Thus, it seems Afolabi's narratives must be read with the intention of uncovering the writer's intended signification. Afolabi and Unigwe's narratives project extensively their characters' internal crises through musings and thoughts that develop their stories' plots.

The characterisation in these stories emerges from the motivation of authors' migrant sensibilities. Osondu, Unigwe, Atta and Adichie's characterisation of the migrant is one who is ill-equipped by misconceptions and high expectation that trail his/her migration to the centre or metropolitan city from his/her third world space. Usually, there is a sharp decline in these perceptions as the events in the narrative unfold and the characters become aware of other realities through the difficult lessons learnt from transnational existence.

Although the events and characterisation in Unigwe's stories may indicate the filtering of rather personal images and representations into her stories, she easily makes available other images that attempt to convey her distance from the narrative events. However, it seems we must acknowledge that her characterisation in three of the stories examined is of essence invented from the reality of personal experience. Many of Unigwe's protagonist are African women, Igbo women specifically whom she shares a cultural affinity with thus, her apt re-invention, interpretation and engagement with their peculiar sensibilities. With this, her stories become almost stereotypic with her characters always finding it difficult to integrate into Belgium and when, and if they do, the challenges that define their existence as people of a different race is amplified. Her fixation with distraught female characters is thus emphasised in her stories.

Afolabi's characters are migrants and refugees from different countries of the world. They are concerned with survival, belonging and the fear that goes with a consciousness of their otherness. To aid his largely pensive characters, Afolabi places them in relationships with acquaintances, friends and family. Sometimes the relationships are awkward. At other times, it is a relationship with other migrants that engenders an understanding and survival of their shared experiences in these new territories. In contrast, Adichie, Atta and Unigwe's characters are lonely immigrants or citizens of their nation. When they identify with a relationship, it is deficient and many times incapable of meeting their needs.

The characters in Osondu's stories are projected as hopeful. Some of these characters are migrants, dependants, deportees, prostitutes, professionals and students. These characters are middle aged and sometimes young adults who are involved in the existential complexities in their societies. These characters' reactions and attitudes are crucial in validating and driving Osondu's perspective of a decrepit Nigerian society and the migrant's experiences that he explores.

The existential implications of dislocation and belonging in transnational spaces constitute an impressive part of these writers' "personal history" and creative impetus (Storr, 2001). Despite the similarity in themes, the writers' dynamic representations of

dislocation and the strategies for belonging project each writer's narratives as having a conspicuous pattern.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The focus of this study has been to examine the creative impulses of five Nigerian migrant short story writers for articulating dislocation and strategies for belonging in their short narratives. Therefore, this study has focused on the representations of dislocation and belonging as complex processes in transnational existence. The study demonstrates that the short stories of Segun Afolabi, E.C. Osondu, Chika Unigwe, Chimamanda Adichie and Sefi Atta depict complex realities and perspectives elicited by the migration and the dislocation of individuals from homeland and attempts to belong in transnational spaces in contemporary times. In relating with being a/part of/from the nation, these writers articulate preoccupations and forms that convey these complexities. The study indicates that the short stories examined project diaspora and the lived experiences of these writers as offering a complex resource-base for literary innovation. This study establishes that these Nigerian migrant narratives oscillate between homeland and hostland.

The migrant writer's physical or geographical dislocation is identified foremost as a significant part of his/her creative motivation. However, a sustained migrant existence delineates, heightens and determines the writers' dynamic perspectives and sensibilities. It was also possible to show in chapter three the thematic unity in some of the narratives and the writers' versatility in depicting the complexities of dislocation and belonging in contemporary times. The study highlights each writer's unique focus on these subjects. Also, an overview of the dynamic perspectives and points of convergence exhibited by the migrant writers in their creative representations was provided in chapter four.

Nigerian migrant writers are involved in contemporary migration, dislocation and the quest for transnational integration. Thus, the study establishes that there is continuity in the social vision and focus of Nigerian migrant narratives despite the inclusive literary canvas that highlights concerns of universal appeal and attests to the complex realities of transnational existence. These narratives display fluctuating literary focus between homeland and hostland, while the literary approach of the writers function as an imperative for interacting, surviving and belonging in transnational spaces. These stories are critical in understanding transnational interaction and its significance in contemporary times.

Although this study explored five Nigerian migrant writers' representations of dislocation and belonging in short stories, it is important to state that, it did not investigate how these processes moderate the language in these narratives. It would therefore be interesting to explore the influence of hybridization on language and its significance in Nigerian migrant literature. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore how dislocation and belonging are explored across genres, especially in poetry. It would be exciting also to discover the functionality of Nigerian migrant narratives in multidisciplinary studies on the migration of Nigerians.

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