

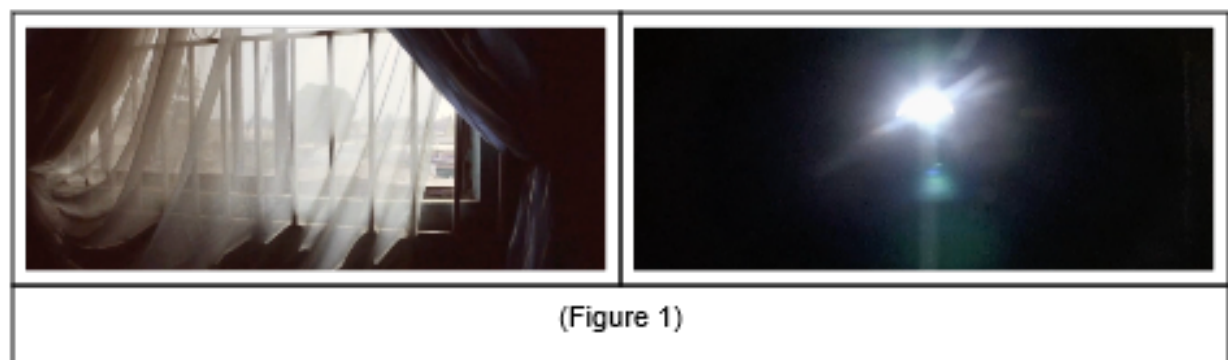
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The Migrant Dream

In this paper, we analyse *Becky's Journey* (2014) as a personal narrative to expand on the themes of mobility, gender and law, utilising Khosravi (2007) and Gamburds' (2000) works to provide a deeper sociological understanding of how migration transcends physical movement to reveal socio-political nuances.

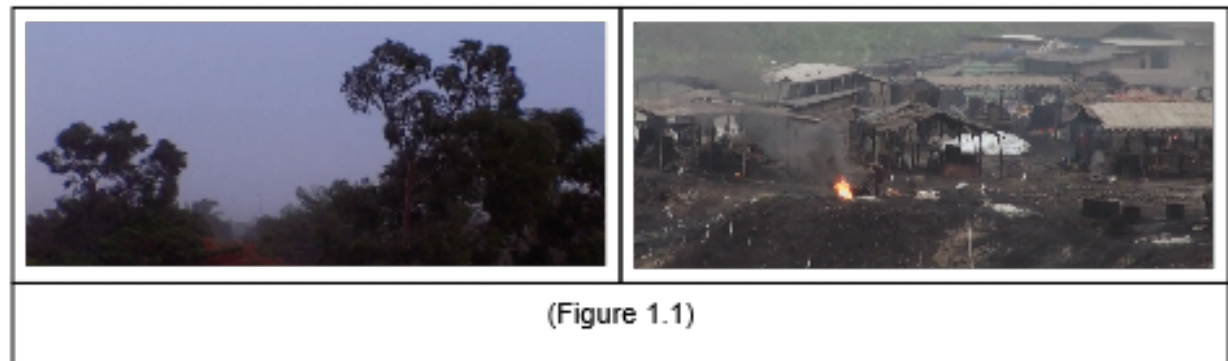
Khosravi (2007) posits border crossing, a form of mobility, "reinforces and challenges our social and political status". The film relates back to Khosravi's understanding of border crossing where 'border rituals' take place. These rituals "reproduce the meaning and order of the state system with its own rite of sacrifice" – clandestine migrants. In the film, these ritualistic sacrifices manifest in the deaths of Becky's fellow travellers, a boy and a mother (Maureen) in labour. [good example](#)

Becky laments Maureen's death in a montage depicting white curtains swaying and a white light in the darkness, following the birth of the child (Figure 1). Juxtaposition of light and darkness evokes a trade-off in her journey.



In the journey back to Nigeria, a montage of trees swaying in a thunderstorm and a dilapidated village is depicted (Figure 1.1). Here, a man is seen burning an animal. The artistic choice of editing footage of the environment seemingly reacting to death and birth aligns with the "modern sort of divine sanctity" in border rituals that Khosravi (2007, p. 330) speaks of. Moreover, the imagery of a man burning animals parallels the "animalisation" of border transgressors and ritualistic sacrifice in "illegal" journeys. [very effective attention to detail in making your point](#)

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perhaps you mean aspirations for social mobility?

Becky's social mobility is also depicted in the film. Leaving Nigeria symbolised chasing her dreams and challenging cultural and gender norms. She challenges the socio-political status of women confined to domestic work with the "gendered division of labour" (Gamburd, 2000). As Khosravi outlines, "border zones offer sites for work which may not be acceptable in the homeland" (Khosravi, 2007, p. 328). Becky overturns general distaste towards the sex-work industry and sets out to work as a prostitute in Italy. She adorns return prostitute migrants, stating that they are "beautiful" and "sexier than ever". The shot cuts to Becky walking past anti-sex work banners, impervious to the propagation of sex work as "anti-academic" and "anti-excellence" (Figure 2).



Becky perceives prostitution as her only way of attaining material prosperity and financial independence. She asserts a certain "sense of assurance and dignity" similar to the housemaids in Gamburd (2000)'s work.

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do you think she was empowered? or is it that she didn't see herself as a victim needing to be saved - which counters assumptions about someone in her position... but is that being empowered?

However, as empowered as Becky was, her mobility was restricted by legality. While Becky fought for her autonomy, the illegality of her mobility put her life at risk and failure to reach her destination. Becky's mobility is constantly negotiated: one that is self-autonomous, yet non-authorised. Her journey entailed much suffering, revealing the stark dichotomies in our world where "freedom of mobility for some is only possible through the organised exclusion of others (Cresswell, 2006, p. 233, as cited in Khosravi, 2007)". The film affirms the assumption that female migrants reassume roles as housewives due to persisting traditional gender roles (Gamburd, 2000). The only work available to her relies on her sexuality due to gendered constraints. In the film, Becky's recounts of returning back to Nigeria after unsuccessful journeys are followed by cuts to her shopping for ingredients, cooking and staying home with her family (Figure 3). Here, Becky reassumes her gender role in the domestic sphere.



(Figure 3)

Becky's arduous journey exposes the underlying structures which exist and limit her transborder mobility. The socio-political construction of borders reveal how governments exercise their power and influence to limit mobility. This is primarily done through the structure of passports and documentations, which filter undesirable people from transmitting through borders. Yet this is ambivalent - the permeability of borders is contingent on the presence of a bribe, regardless of the

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legitimacy of the passport.

and places in Europe where bars for entry are set to exclude most "Inclusive exclusion" is reflected in how Nigerian bureaucracies create high barriers of entry and accessibility to obtaining passports (Khosravi, 2007). Mobility is only made accessible to higher social class individuals, effectively constricting lower class citizens from travelling. In the film, Becky can only resort to 'illegal' travelling, where the inequalities of mobility are underscored, accentuating the role of border restrictions on transborder, and hence social mobility.

The film directs us to the theme of imagination. It solely depicts Nigeria and omits any footage of Italy - leaving all vivid conception of Becky's destination to what she imagines and frames it to be. This idealisation of Italy leaves us with a larger disparity between the elevated destination and the forlorn situation of migration in Nigeria, alluding to the futility of the American Dream.

The film ends with a point of view shot of a moving truck, symbolising a continuance of her journey. Unfortunately, Becky's journey ended in 2016 - the same way as Maureen did.



Word count: 750 words

References

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