

SC2217 Visual Analysis Group Project: *Becky's Journey*

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Becky's Journey highlights the perils of being an undocumented migrant. While dominant assumptions of migration are usually solely tied to economic motivations, the film counters them by highlighting Becky's perspectives in the domains of mobility, gender, and law. In our analysis, we highlight the complexities of migration and the role that personal desires play in challenging dominant narratives of migration. Additionally, visual strategies such as clips, music and mood are analysed, which effectively appeals to viewers' emotions, allowing them to envision and sympathise with the migrants' arduous experiences.

To begin, the film depicts various loopholes in state control and management. Identification documents are tools used by states to control the movement of people and goods. According to Torpey (2018), one of the reasons for state control is to keep undesirable people out of the state. Despite this, undocumented migrants like Becky seek alternatives to transit the border through bribery and change of transportation means.

good analysis of the way the film nuances our understanding of smuggling as a complex market with a wide variety of actors through Khosravi's work

Additionally, human smuggling is a complex market and has various actors involved who conduct sequential operations on different levels (Khosravi, 2007). During Becky's second migration attempt, several parties were involved, such as the smuggler David, different truck drivers at various locations and the madam who sponsored Becky's trip. All

parties contribute to Becky's migration at different stages. The use of eerie background music during their seven-day trip in terrifying weather conditions effectively forewarned suffering ahead. This was followed by video clips of bumpy car rides indicating the extremely rough journey, successfully highlighting the dangers of human smuggling.

Furthermore, *Becky's Journey* sheds light on the motivators that lead migrants to endeavour on treacherous treks toward Europe from a woman's perspective. The film showcases various billboards (see fig.1 to 4) raising awareness on sexually transmitted diseases, prostitution, and human trafficking, which highlights a serious concern for the migrants' safety. However, Becky perceives prostitution as a personal choice and **a bargain**, *great choice of word - some elaboration would have been great!* contrary to the general perception that associates prostitution with human trafficking. Becky's stance is in line with Khosravi's (2010) ethnography, which highlights how human smuggling is repeatedly misrepresented as "mafia-controlled criminality" (Khosravi, 2010, p.323) and is usually undistinguished from human trafficking when in fact, it is a "multifaceted and complex market for highly differentiated services" (Khosravi, 2010, p.323).

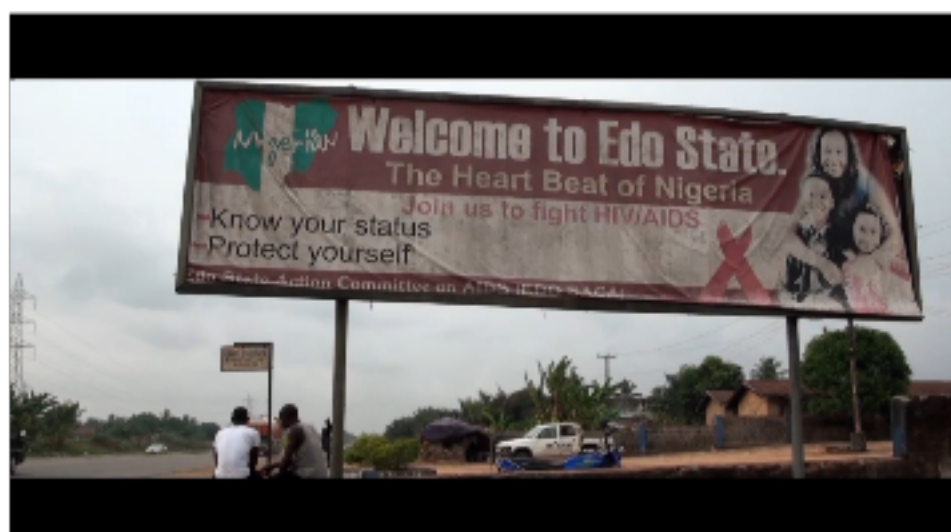


Fig.1 Billboard raising awareness on sexually transmitted diseases

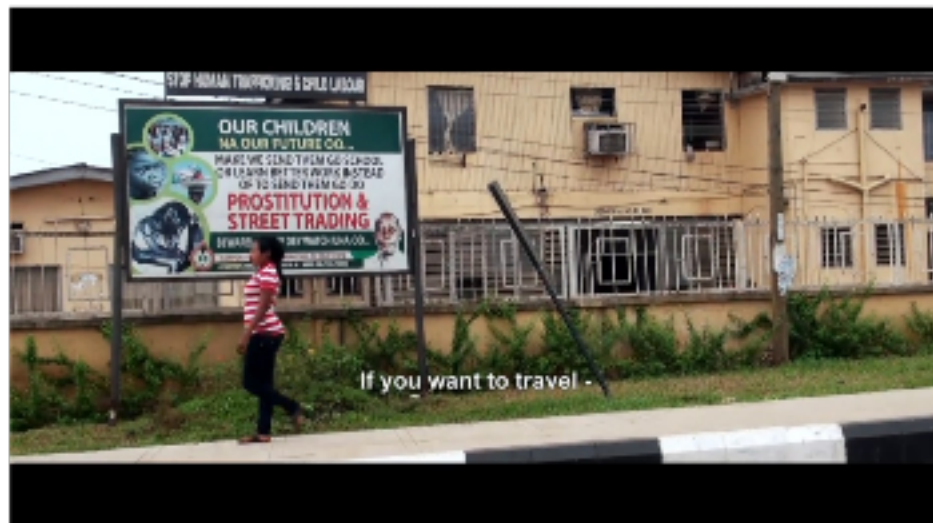


Fig.2 Becky blatantly walking past a billboard disapproving prostitution



Fig.3 Billboard disapproving prostitution and human trafficking



Fig.4 Becky rejecting prostitution as human trafficking

Despite the perils of migration, Becky, like many other female migrants, is willing to take risks in hopes of a brighter future. According to Shah (2006), economic factors, although significant, are not the only motives for migration. Some other motivators cited by Becky include her desire to travel overseas due to the unfulfilling life in Nigeria and the intriguing success stories of other sex workers who returned from Europe. Understanding the intersecting driving factors that contribute to the migration of Nigerian women despite the danger is pertinent to addressing the vulnerability of female migrants and developing an effective intervention strategy that protects the safety of these migrants.

Lastly, *Becky's Journey* evokes sympathy through the hardships and dangers she faces. By learning of her motivations to migrate, the film encourages its viewers to sympathise with Becky. This is similarly depicted in the film *Sent Away Boys*, where Punjab men face numerous hardships migrating to Western Countries (Gill, 2016). In both films, viewers come to understand how the romanticisation of the West motivates migration. In contrast, the visual depiction of Benin's crowded streets and Becky's reflection on its poor economy aids readers in understanding her desire to move. Essentially, the films portray the migrants with such high hopes that we expect them to succeed and thus sympathise with them upon failure. The soft and sombre music used in situations where Becky finds herself deceived accentuates her helplessness and effectively stirs pity in viewers. However, Becky's continued determination to migrate overseas leaves viewers both in awe and sympathy as she strives for her dreams.

isn't it interesting that in both films we don't actually "see" the desired destination - what do you think this means? how would you read the film in that aspect?

she's not a sex worker yet!

Nonetheless, it is impossible to disregard the dangers involved in the migration of sex workers. The first-hand account from Becky, focusing on her expressions of disappointment and hopefulness, provides a clearer picture of the entire situation and her mixed feelings on the treacherous journey. The film also indirectly critiques the lack of legal structures to control movement across borders as it inadvertently perpetuates the sex trade and aids in exposing women such as Becky to dangerous travel conditions. Essentially, the film reminds its viewers that while the porosity of borders can offer migrants alternative avenues for work and personal fulfilment, it also renders them more susceptible to legal and physical dangers in their journey across borders.

The conclusion is great - it actually draws out the overall nuances and messages of the film by pulling together the different strands you have highlighted. Well done in a short piece!

Word count: 747

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