'POURING ACROSS BORDERS': FALSE EUROPE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF RETURN IN IFEANYI AJAEGBO'S *TENT 59*

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Abstract

Nigerians are leaving the country in large numbers due to the increasingly harsh socio-economic and political situation, insecurity, and various other reasons. They leave with the illusory notion that things are better in Western countries. This paper explores the skewed notions by many Nigerians that migrating to Europe offers a way out of poverty for them and their loved ones. This paper aims to demonstrate through the experiences of the characters in Ifeanyi Ajaegbo's *Tent 59* that socio-political and immigration factors often constitute barriers to the attainment of a better life in the West by many African migrants. The paper draws from some postcolonial concepts like otherness, and marginality and also, Paul Gilroy's postcolonial concepts of melancholia and conviviality to examine Ajaegbo's novel. This paper concludes that leaving Nigeria for the West in search of a better life is not as easy as many Nigerians often imagine.

Keywords: Migration, otherness, marginality, postcolonial melancholia, conviviality.

Introduction

Migration to Europe and North America is considered a way out of poverty by many aspiring African migrants dissatisfied with the socio-economic and political realities in their home country. The grim socio-economic and political situations in many countries on the continent are fuelling migratory desire in many Africans both young and old and it is pushing them to pour across borders in search of better social and economic opportunities in the West. Many Nigerians are desperate to

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throw away the garbs of poverty so much that they are willing to take the perilous route to Europe. A large number of Nigerians feel the path to socio-economic mobility is bleak if they remain in the country and so they seek to escape to countries that promise them hope of a better life. So despite the huge number of human lives that the Sahara-Mediterranean route has claimed as regularly reported in media outlets and the harsh restrictive measures put in place by many European countries to discourage illegal migration, thousands of migrants from the continent remain largely undeterred as they keep trying to get into Europe. Political leaders in many countries in Africa have repeatedly failed in putting the right infrastructure in place to discourage the people from fleeing. Many migrants leaving Africa for countries in Europe and North America may not do so if they can attain a considerable level of social and economic fulfillment in their home country. This paper explores the diverse reasons why Africans are living on the continent in search of a better life in the West.

In Nigeria just like other countries in Africa, many people especially young adults are becoming increasingly disillusioned as the policies of successive governments have done little to advance their social and economic aspirations. So many young Nigerians will readily jump on any opportunity to migrate to countries where they believe their dreams of a better life can be realized. The loss of societal hope is the underlying factor that is pushing many African migrants to the West in pursuit of social and economic emancipation. Ashcroft (2009) aligns with this position when he argues that the melancholic predicament of people may push them to flee their homeland due to harsh social and economic situations or as a result of political oppression by state power. Zelaya (2010) on the other hand, asserts that the pull factors from the receiving countries can be credited as the reason why individuals migrate from their natal country.

Due to the near inhabitable environment in many countries in Africa, people are increasingly desperate to migrate to Europe and North America not just through the official channel but also, through unofficial and perilous routes. The image of African migrants portrayed in the media and public discourse in the West tends to deprive them of

their humanity and their stories. African writers therefore according to Feldner (2019, p.108) deplore the social function of literature which offers a "better understanding of the phenomenon of migration, which in the media is usually depicted either in the form of sober and abstract data or in a simplistic manner that leaves no room for the complexities and subtleties involved." The writer's task is to imaginatively recreate different perspectives of life whose aim is to give a human angle to a story. The concern of this paper is to explore the fictional perspective of the 'complexities and subtleties' of the migratory trajectory of migrants from Africa as they seek a better life in Europe.

In the first decade of this century, Nnolim (2010) tasked African writers to embrace the reality of the twenty-first century by writing about Africans that live in Europe and America because writers from the two continents equally wrote about the African people and the continent. Ojaide (2008) argues that due to the phenomena of migration and globalization, African writers have written about emigration and reverse migration in their novels. Mukoma wa Ngugi equally (2020) notes this shift in the works of younger writers such as NoViolet Bulawayo, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and many other writers of African descent that dwell on the theme of migration and its attendant consequences.

Ifeanyi Ajaegbo is one of the African writers who took up Nnolim's challenge. Ajaegbo's *Tent 59* is a sad commentary on the failure of governments in Nigeria to put in place the socio-economic and political structures that may curb the exodus of Nigerians to the West in search of a better life. Migrants often experience disillusionment when they arrive in Europe because they do discover that the reality of life is not exactly how they imagine it to be as depicted by the experience of the protagonist in *Tent 59*.

This paper, therefore, explores the factors that often constitute a barrier to the migrant's realization of his or her aspirations and the possibility of reverse migration when they realize that things are not the way they imagine them to be when they get to Europe. While some migrants probably out of shame decide to stay behind, others for various reasons do return to their country of origin. The paper examines

the experience of Ajaegbo's protagonist in Europe and how that may have influenced Zino's decision to embark on reverse migration to Nigeria.

The paper employs postcolonial concepts such as marginality, otherness, and also, and Paul Gilroy's (2004) concepts of postcolonial melancholia and conviviality to examine the experiences of the protagonist and the other characters in Europe. Marginality is how in a given society, the actions or policies of the dominant members tend to exclude other members from accessing the common resources. *Otherness* is the situation in which a certain group of people is made to feel that they do not belong to a particular society. Postcolonial melancholia to Gilroy is the feeling of animosity, aggression, and resentment directed at the foreigner *other* by the natives in post-imperial urban areas and postcolonial cities elsewhere. Conviviality on the other hand according to Gilroy is the fostering of harmonious cohabitation in a multicultural society. These postcolonial concepts are significant in the textual analysis of the notion of false Europe and the possibility of return in Ajaegbo's novel.

'Pouring Across Borders': False Europe And The Possibility Of Return In Ifeanyi Ajaegbo's *Tent 59*

In his debut novel, *Sarah House,* Ifeanyi Ajaegbo examines the issues of prostitution and human organs trafficking in Nigeria while his second novel, *Tent 59,* deals with the idea of illegal migration through the Sahara Desert across the Mediterranean Sea in the hope of a better life in Europe by the protagonist Zino and his friend, Mado.

Socio-Economic Related Disillusionment In Africa

Many socio-economic factors trigger migratory desire in Zino and one of the factors is the disturbing attitude of his father Papi towards his mother and everyone in his family. Papi does very little for his family but he often comes home to dispossess his wife of the money she makes from trading all day in the market. In one of the attempts to forcefully take money from his wife, Zino inadvertently hits his father and flees their one-room apartment to stay in an uncompleted building. Sele,

Zino's elder sister, seeks him out days later and she can persuade him to leave for Europe.

Europe, Zino believes offers the chance for economic empowerment and social improvement. He feels if he is economically empowered he will provide the financial support that his father is unable to provide for the family. He admits later to himself in the story that, "I knew why I left Nigeria. I did not want to be a failure like Papi" (p.144) just like Okonkwo's driving force for success in Achebe's (1958) *Things Fall Apart*. In that sense, Zino's desire to migrate is in line with Whitehouse's (2013) position of how economic aspiration in certain situations is driven by social forces. So the reason why people migrate cannot be reduced to economic factors alone. There are social, cultural, and political factors do motivate individuals to move from one location to another.

The high unemployment rate is another factor why Africans are pouring across borders to Europe as depicted in the novel. Zino is unable to get a job many years after his university education. Mado his friend who could not further his education beyond secondary school is equally unable to get a job. The situation is stifling for both the educated and not-so-educated job seekers to the point that the only sensible option as Pfalzgraf (2022) asserts in such a situation is taking flight from such an environment. Zino and Mado embark on the journey to Europe defying the deafening risk along the way because they are driven by the illusion that everything will be alright when they get to Europe. What propels the two friends towards Europe is the illusory notion of a better life rather than proper information about the reality of life in Europe Jung (2020) argues that migrants often decide to travel without proper information relating to the conditions and available opportunities in the country of destination.

Pouring Across Borders In Search Of A Better Life

All over the continent, people are driven largely by desperation according to Ramsey-Kurz (2020) to abandon their home country and risk everything for life elsewhere with the hope that things will be better as Zino affirms when the bus arrives in Agadez, "I saw the whole of

Africa in the faces of the migrants in the compound, I also saw the failure of the continent in the dejected and hopeless looks in their eyes. The faces of those leaving the compound to continue their journey towards Libya and Europe glowed with radiant hope" (p.33). The whole of Africa that Zino refers to are people like Sadia, the woman from Sierra Leone that he meets and befriends along the way, Boubacar, Lamine, and thousand of faceless others who he believes that "even in their countries of birth, lived at the fringes, while the rest of the world stood by and watched them die and did nothing" (pp.101-2). Sadia flees her country because of war. *Tent 59* highlights social and political crises as some of the issues pushing people away from Africa to the West.

The novel paints a heart-wrenching fate of many nameless and faceless migrants who experience unimaginable anguish and in the end died unmourned along the way with their dreams, hopes, and aspirations en route to Europe through the Sahara Desert and across the often treacherous Mediterranean Sea. Ajaegbo draws attention to the horrible experiences of many African migrants who due to the restrictive immigration policies in many European countries, choose to go through a most perilous route that will take them through Libya, which is an inhospitable place for black African migrants. Mbembe (2019) corroborates this position when he states:

> Europe would have to implement deadly policies, which by the way are already experimented with in those laboratories that the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert have become. According to various figures, something like 34,000 people have already lost their lives over the last few years trying to cross the Mediterranean; this is without counting those who have met their end in the Sahara Desert, or those who are the subject of new forms of enslavement and capture in lawless places such as Libya, where Europe is funding militias and encouraging them to capture would-be African migrants to detain them in makeshift camps or sell them into slavery. (p.16)

Mbembe's statement foregrounds the plight of many black African migrants who are held captive in concentration camps scattered across Libya and then sold as slaves even in the 21st century. It is in Libya that Zino gets separated from Sadia because of the Islamic injunction that men and women cannot go into the same bus but events later indicate that she may have been sold as a sex slave. Libya is depicted in the novel as an unfriendly place for black migrants as seen in the way Zino, Mado, Osaze, and many others are treated. They are subjected to the most appalling and dehumanizing conditions in the concentration camp and later sold as a slave to a Libyan who harvests black migrants' organs to sell in the international black market. It is the timely arrival of Kemal, Zino's migration broker, who saves him and Mado from the butcher's knife but Osaze unfortunately is not so lucky.

Black African migrants are designated as the 'unwanted' and there seems to be a deliberate policy as Mbembe further asserts that they must be tracked, apprehended, and eliminated. The dreadful and near-death experience of Zino and many of the characters simply affirms Mbembe's assertion of the fate of black African migrants who try to go through countries in North Africa, especially Libya to Europe. Thus, leaving Libya alive and getting into the boat to Europe is a huge victory in itself for Zino and Mado. The novel depicts the horror that black migrants face in Libya and it is a warning to all aspiring migrants from sub-Sahara Africa to think deeply before embarking on the journey from Libya to Europe.

Dreams Of A Beautiful Life Beyond The Watery Borderline

To many African migrants as captured in Ajaegbo's novel, the Mediterranean stands between them and the hope of a beautiful life. The Mediterranean Sea is indeed significant in many ways, not just as the inhibiting space between migrants from Africa and the dream of a beautiful life in Europe but as the liquid borderline not just between two continents but between two starkly different worlds. It is the stark contrast in terms of socio-economic opportunities between the two continents separated only by 14 kilometers that are pushing people from Africa to pour in large numbers into Europe undeterred by the

media reports of countless tragedies of boat mishaps that have claimed thousands of lives. The illusion that anyone can achieve socio-economic success continues to pull migrants from Africa and other parts of the world towards Europe.

The Mediterranean Sea proves true to its name the "Sea of death" as many migrants in the boat with Zino died when their boat capsized including Mado. Zino and some migrants are rescued and many days after at a camp in Lampedusa, he battles for his own life due to exhaustion when he tried to save Mado. It is a changed Zino that wakes up at the temporal migrants' camp in Lampedusa. The migratory experience is indeed capable of altering the perception of a migrant about the world.

Through Lazare, a journalist originally from Somalia working for an international media organization, Zino gets to know that life in Europe is not the way it is generally touted by migrants from Africa. He realizes that even though he is in Italy but due to his status as an undocumented migrant, he and other migrants may be deported back to Africa if their application to stay in Italy is not accepted by the Italian authority. The way a migrant arrives in a particular society determines whether that migrant is allowed to stay or be deported back to his or her home country. This revelation shakes Zino greatly and it dawns on him that the trouble getting to Europe may just be in vain.

Zino's realization of his fate as an illegal migrant in Italy reads like a warning to aspiring African migrants against embarking on illegal migration to the West without the necessary documents as this may lead to their deportation back to the very place they are running away from. The novel buttresses the fact that irregular migration will result in the socio-economic marginality of the migrant in the host country as he or she is designated as an undocumented migrant and therefore, relegated to the margin of the new society. This marginal position may deny the migrant the social and economic opportunities available in the host society. Zino and the other migrants experience a marginal condition which Kretsedemas and Capetillo-Ponce (2013) explain as the situation in which the migrant is physically present within the national border of a country but he or she is on the socio-economic and cultural margins

of the mainstream society. This arises from the conferment of the status of the unwanted other on migrants by the natives in the new environment according to Bhabha (1994, p.96) due to "an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity."

Zino discovers that his position as the other in the Italian geographical space will limit the degree to which he can fulfill his dreams. His cultural, racial, and ethnic differences place him in the marginal position of his new society and it ensures in many ways, his socio-economic immobility. Lazare tells Zino that despite his qualification and laudable work as a journalist, society still does not want people like him and other black migrants from Africa and this is down to their otherness. Said (1978) argues that each age and society has a way of designating those they consider to be the others and the designation implies differences in human relations also according to Appiah (2018, p.94) "differences always carry some risk of creating ill will." The conversation between Lazare and Zino brings out the political undertones of Europe's immigration policy and how the migrants are tagged as unwanted intruders that must be kept out of Italy and the spatial realms of other European countries:

> 'It is a political issue?'
> 'Yes. European politicians win or lose elections on their stance on migration. It is now a cornerstone of their election campaigns.'
> 'Those are the ones that don't want us?' I asked.
> Lazare thought for a second.
> 'It depends on the country and their disposition towards migrants. We are a blessing and a curse at the same time, but more the latter than the former, they seem to think.'
> 'What do you think?'
> 'What I think does not matter. Neither does what you think.'

> 'How can they see us as a curse?'
> 'They think that when we come here, we take their jobs, their land, and their women. We eat their food. They are forced to share what they would have kept to themselves – water, power, and social amenities. They think we also come with our problems, crime especially.'
> 'But we also work. We contribute to the development of their society,' I pointed out, not sure I should be angrier at Europe for rejecting me, than at Africa for turning me into a reject of the world. In the end, I was too drained to be angry either way.
> 'Some of the politicians think so. Most of them want us out. They do not want us in their cities; they do not want us in their villages. They do not want us to come, because we bring the disease of Africa with us.'
> 'Is it you saying that, or did they?'
> 'Maybe not in the same words, but that is what they are saying.' I said nothing for several seconds. (Ajaegbo, pp.192-3)

It is not just the politicians that want to keep migrants out of Italy but also the people as the utterances and immigration policy of the political class tend to reflect what the people want. This attitude reflects Gilroy's concept of melancholia which is the inability of some individuals in postcolonial cities to live with alterity. Melancholia thrives along racial lines in which differences are a recipe for fear, hatred, and resentment. According to Gilroy, citizens of post-imperial countries or former colonial powers such as Spain, France, Britain, and Italy consider people from former colonies as unwanted intruders because of their deposition to crime.

The prejudices expressed against foreigners in many Western countries are not without justification. The criminal activities of members of the Naija Crew like Omorege, and Eko in *Tent 59,* or those of the street clan like Ikenga, Mascot, and Ray in George's (2014) *Woes of Ikenga* leave nothing to be desired. The underground dealings of the Naija Crew or the street clan portray migrants in a very bad light to the natives and certainly add to the resentment, anxiety, intolerance, and fear expressed towards foreigners in many Western societies. While migrants like Lazare, Jallo, and Zino create a desirable image of *others* in Western countries; it is a completely different image that Halid, Eko, and Omorege present to the natives. They export their deformed mindset of making money in underhand and questionable ways in their new environment. While some migrants resort to the legitimate path to economic emancipation others like the Naija Crew in *Tent 59* and Ikenga and his cronies in George's novel feel that engaging in illegal activities is the sure path to financial independence in the West. The actions of migrants like those of the Naija Crew equally act as a barrier to other migrants who try to access the economic benefits of the host society.

Failure Of Hope In Europe

The unwelcoming attitude of the 'antagonistic authorities' is not only exhibited by the young man at the registration Office but also expressed in the Italian soldiers' deportment towards the migrants. Zino expresses ambivalent feelings of admiration and disappointment towards the Italian soldiers stationed at the camp as he observes that:

> All of them watched the migrants coming out of the tent with hunger in their eyes. A hunger to inflict pain not because the victim did anything wrong, but out of hatred. I steered clear of the nearest soldier…. Turbulent thoughts filled my head, among them questions I wanted to ask the soldiers in the compound. Why do you hate us so much? Why do you think we deserve more agony after we ran here to escape the pain in our homelands? I would never know the answers. I swallowed the questions. Disappointment slowly replaced the anger. I had

> expected the Italian soldiers to be more civilized than the Libyans. They were Europeans. I thought about the hatred in the eyes of the soldiers until Lazare came in the night. (Ajaegbo, pp.197-8)

Gilroy's (2004) position on how racial differences often lead to intolerance in a multicultural society reiterates Said's (1978) argument about how difference often creates hostility. When Zino and the other migrants are transported to another camp, the road is blocked by protesters who "were all white, and all Italians" (p.216) chanting no more migrants. The mainly white Italians that block the road in the bid to deny movement to the trucks conveying the migrants is an expression of postcolonial melancholia which to Gilroy is the "unsettling experience of exposure to otherness" (p.77) as demonstrated by the protesters. What the protesters scrawl on the placards that they carry such as "Migrants are Vermin. Migrant, Thieves, Fraudsters, and Rapists. Kill All Migrants. Migrants should All Perish in the Sea" is a strong indication of how unwelcoming some Europeans are of migrants. Zino observes that the "words on the placards dripped with hatred" (p.218) and Gilroy asserts that the feelings of intolerance, anxiety, fear, and hatred expressed by a group towards those who are not like them is a barrier to "communicate or act in concert across racial, ethnic, or civilization divisions" (p.70). The attitude of the white Italian protesters is a strong reflection of what Gilroy (2004, p.111) refers to as postcolonial melancholia which is an expression of intense feelings of "resentment, rejection, and fear at the prospect of open interaction with otherness." It is an indication that Europe and many postcolonial societies as Gilroy argues are not responding well to diversity, plurality, and difference. The melancholic expressions of animosity, resentment, and hatred shown by the protesters to Zino and the other migrants in the postulation of Gilroy undermines social cohesion and in many ways, do not foster cordial interaction in a multicultural society, unlike conviviality that promotes tolerance, hospitality and mutual care in a diverse cultural setting.

Zino's crime is not remaining in Africa but having the audacity to appear in Europe and so in the eyes of the white man at the center, he commits a crime that makes him repulsive. He finds himself hating the young man and other Italians for despising migrants, especially the ones from black Africa but he is equally not oblivious to the fact that since he arrived in Lampedusa, some Italians have equally shown him affection unlike the white man at the center, "Then I remembered Katerina and her smile. She was also Italian. And she was the direct opposite of the young man behind the desk" (p.194). Just like bad migrants, there are equally good natives like Katerina who welcome migrants. Her disposition toward Zino and the other migrants is in sharp contrast to that of the blond-haired Italian at the registration center. Thus, Katerina represents the type of native who according to Gilroy "helps instead to cultivate the everyday ordinary virtue involved in managing healthier relationships with otherness that are not deformed by fear, anxiety, and violence" (p.149). She is the type of native in a multicultural society, just like Judith in Mengestu's (2007) *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*, who can be an instrument in fostering Gilroy's concept of conviviality which is the situation where people from diverse racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds can cohabit and interact in harmony in postcolonial cities around the world.

Apart from helping Zino to work through his grief, the friendship with Lazare and Katerina also enables Zino to understand the immigration process and his chance of staying or being deported back to Nigeria. He can navigate the liminal space he finds himself as an undocumented migrant who arrived in Italy with the guidance of these two. They act as a strong and reliable support network for him as he admits, "I would never have known the names of the camp I had been in if Lazare and Katerina did not tell me. They would just have been places I stayed at on my journey across Italy. Most migrants lived in limbo; a long period of uncertain waiting…. Every other migrant was caught in the never-ending in-between time of waiting until the government decided their fate" (pp.252-3). Zino's unresolved immigration status means he hovers between staying in Italy and being sent back to Nigeria.

False Europe: Illusion And Reality

The realization that he cannot fully achieve his goal of leaving Nigeria because of his immigration status makes Zino begin to let go of his illusion about life in Europe. Reality eventually sets in and he begins to judge things as Said (1978) notes usually happen when people are far away from their cultural home "with the spirited detachment and generosity necessary for true vision … as a way of seeing familiar things in a new way" (p.259). He begins to perceive things in contrast to where he comes from and as he does this, his illusion of Europe begins gradually to dissolve.

Zino finally realizes after a while that the image of Europe that he shares with his friend, Mado is different from the reality when he arrived and he now possesses a new perception that poor people abound in all countries of the world and that things are not exactly the way one's see them from afar:

> I had withdrawn to thinking about Europe and my place in a dream that was gradually turning out to be a nightmare. The allure of a better life in Europe had been a lie. My family had been poor back in Nigeria, but we had never lived in a place like this. I could not remember anyone who did. There could be such people back home, but at least, they were in their own country. They were not strangers. They were not unwanted people … When I left Nigeria, I thought that only Africa had worlds of darkness and poverty. I had been in Europe long enough and had seen migrants from so many countries, to know that this was not a fact. Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and everywhere on earth had these worlds in them. (pp. 260-1)

Zino's experience punctures his illusory bubble of life in Europe. He concludes that "This was not the Europe of my dreams…. This was still Europe, even if it was not the one I had dreamt of" (p.272). He comes to realize that there is a disparity between dreams and the actualization of those dreams in a society that designates one as the

other. After a while in the host society, it also dawns on many migrants that the dream of a better life whether in Europe or America is not attainable to everyone.

Zino also finds out that some Italian police officers are equally as corrupt as their Nigerian counterparts. Halid, a greedy and corrupt North African, gets Zino arrested for insisting that he and the other migrants be paid the agreed wage for working on a tomato farm that Halid hired them to work. It is somehow obvious that Halid bribed the police officers to teach Zino a lesson. The interrogation of Zino at the station equally reveals the negative stereotype of Nigerians by some Italians when he admits he is from Nigeria, one of the policemen mutters loudly, "Thieves" (p. 277). The negative perception of the police officer of Nigerians and equally other black migrants without making an exception is akin to what Fanon (1967, p.189) alludes to as the "vast number of expressions that make the black man the equivalent of sin. In Europe, whether concretely or symbolically, the black man stands for the bad side of the character."

Zino manages to save a four-year-old white boy, an only child from a burning house as he leaves the confines of the police station with Lazare. He dashes into the burning house not because he feels that such a heroic act may fetch him a residence permit but because he acknowledges the humanity of the little boy and the anguish he perceives in the boy's mother. In the boy's mother, he recognizes his mother, Mami, and also a desire to keep the boy from certain death the way he could not do for Mado and possibly Sadia. He sees the life of the boy just like that of his close relatives and friends. At that point, what is important to Zino is simply his shared humanity with the boy rather than the various things that often divide people along ethnic, racial, and religious lines. Thus, he acts in a way that Gilroy advocates is "a mature response to diversity, plurality, and differentiation" (p.109) in a multicultural society. He becomes a reluctant hero in the city, Italy, and around the world. In his dialogue with Lazare after recuperating from the injury he sustains from rescuing the boy, he voices his intention to return to Africa to create awareness among Africans especially the

youths about the danger of embarking on illegal migration to Europe and more importantly, that Europe's riches are not for everyone.

Zino can discard his initial illusion of Europe as a land where one can practically pick gold on the street. At the end of the novel, he seems to be cured of his illusory notion of the West as the site of abundant wealth and due to his experience, he considers himself to be in a position to enlighten other young people from the continent. When Lazare asks him whether he likes Europe, he replies, "I don't. It is not the Europe I saw back in Africa" (p.294). So to Lazare, Zino is in the position to tell young people in Africa the truth about illegal migration and the true situation of things in Europe since he has experienced it. Zino wants to be the one to enlighten other young people because:

> Most of the people (he) met in the Sahara and in the Mediterranean were young people. Mado. Osaze. Ousmanne. Sadia. Boubacar. They had all been young. And they had all perished, lost to the lure of a false Europe that still glittered all over Africa…. With each second that passed, and each day, I loved Lazare's idea, to tell the truth about the migrant experience in Europe to young Africans. They would not be welcomed when they got here if they ever did. They would not find streets of gold, with jobs hanging from the streetlights. This was the truth no one told Mado and me before we left Nigeria. No one told us about the danger and the death. If we had known this, we would never have plunged into the Sahara. We would have stayed home, and worked towards a better life, no matter how difficult it would be. He would still have been alive if we did. (pp. 294-5)

Zino is aware that even if he is granted permission to stay in Italy, he will still not be fully integrated into the society mainly as a result of his race, and also, his position as the unwanted other will never be completely erased. Europe loses its appeal and he notes that his existence in Lampedusa or any other part of Italy if he chooses to stay will always be problematic. What pushes him away are those barriers

to full socio-economic integration such as racial profiling, his marginal space as the other, and the policies enacted to keep migrants out of Europe. His intention to embark on reverse migration seems not to be a permanent one as he will be moving around the continent creating awareness to deter young Africans still "pouring across borders like a living stream of humanity in trucks, pickups, and buses that would overturn in the Sahara, and boats that would capsize on the Mediterranean. In between these two points of death, they could be "harvested" in Libya" (296), and all this for the illusory quest for a better life in Europe.

Conclusion

Ifeanyi Ajaegbo's *Tent 59* offers a harrowing perspective of the illegal route many African migrants take to Europe in the quest for a better life and the reality of life as a migrant in a society that may not recognize the humanity of the racial other. This paper examined the issues driving Africans to the West and concludes that to stem such a movement, the African political class must create the enabling social, economic and political environment that will discourage the people from embarking on such a dangerous journey. The paper also examined the reality of the life of many African migrants who can reach Europe and through the experiences of the characters, reveals that Europe is not exactly the earthly paradise that many Africans imagine it to be. Aspiring migrants must possess the proper information about the social, economic, and political state of things in the country of destination before embarking on the journey to Europe or any other part of the world. The paper concludes that migration due to certain socio-economic and political barriers in the host country may not bring about social and economic mobility for every migrant.

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