

# DISLOCATION AND DEFENCE MECHANISM IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN* AND CHIKA UNIGWE'S *ON BLACK SISTERS' STREET*

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## Abstract

This study undertakes a critical examination of the theme of dislocation and the different levels of defence mechanism in Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (OBSS) and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* (SCC), employing Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory as a theoretical framework. Utilizing the qualitative content analysis method, the research investigates the multifaceted forms of dislocation experienced by the female characters in the chosen literary works and explores the different levels of defence mechanism they employ in response to their dislocation experiences. Through the thematic and textual analysis, the study reveals similar forms of dislocation, encompassing spatial/geographical, socio-cultural, and psychological dislocations in both texts, while linguistic dislocation is found in OBSS. The analysis also reveals the following levels of defence mechanism: repression, projection, sublimation, denial, and displacement, and argues that by the circumstances of their dislocation, the female protagonists are already jinxed to the extent that their defence mechanisms are not commensurate to the overwhelming tragedy into which their lives have been entangled. The study therefore concludes that the female migrant characters are mere ill-fated pawns in the chess of life, who struggle to retain their sanity as strangers in the much stranger 'worlds' they migrate into.

Key words: Dislocation, Defence Mechanism, Psychoanalytic theory, tragedy, repression

## Introduction

Literature, in a broad sense, has continued to develop in strong fidelity with the socio-cultural sensibilities as well as other emergent globalization factors that define different peoples and generations. In contemporary times, discourses on climate change, dislocation, migration, identity crises, and terrorism, among others, have taken the centre stage in literary criticism. In the same vein, post-colonial Nigerian novelists have deployed their creative works to explore the experiences of migrant Nigerian characters who travel to Europe and other western countries for studies and in search of greener pastures. A defining feature of these novelists is what Dagnino refers to as their “the transcultural” nature. According to Dagnino, transcultural writers are “imaginative writers, who by choice or by life circumstances, experience cultural dislocation, live transnational experiences in multiple cultures, geographies, and territories, expose themselves to diversity and nurture plural, flexible identities” (1). Although Dagnino’s description focuses on the writers, but we extrapolate some relevant words that also aptly describe the female protagonists in Buchi Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* (hereafter, SCC) and Chika Unigwe’s *On Black Sisters’ Street* (hereafter, OBSS). The female characters in the two texts could be described as transcultural characters who have to leave the shores of their home country, Nigeria, for one reason or the other, to different countries of the West. For example, Ada in SCC migrates to the UK to join her husband (Francis), and also to further her studies. Sisi, Efe, Ama, and Joyce in OBSS travel to Belgium because Dele promises them good jobs, although they do not know that he is a ruthless human trafficker who ‘exports’ them basically for sex trade and for his personal aggrandizement. The nature of the migration of these female characters could be subsumed under dislocation.

The concept of dislocation holds a pivotal place in post-colonial Nigerian migrant prose fiction, emphasizing the multifaceted experiences of individual characters moving across borders. It encapsulates not only the physical uprooting and alienation of an individual but also the intricate emotional states of estrangement, unsettledness, unease, or disorientation. In this context, dislocation refers to the displacement of individuals from their homeland and the intricate consequences that ensue. Krishnaswamy intriguingly frames dislocation as “a transformative process, one that unfolds a multitude of alternative locations, allowing individuals to claim several homes by first becoming homeless” (139). Furthermore, Krishnaswamy adds that the process of dislocation can manifest in various forms—temporal, spatial, and linguistic. Akeh describes dislocation as “a form of alienation from the notion of home, an integral facet of the creative process within migrant literature since it involves up rootedness, accompanied by a frayed sense of certainty and communal loyalty” (4). To cope with their dislocation experiences, migrant characters can employ certain defence mechanisms.

Within the realm of psychoanalysis, the term defence mechanism refers to “the human psyche's response to levels of stress or anxiety” (Purwo and Andayani 1). Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic model studies the structure of the human personality and places defence mechanisms at its core, providing insights into how the human mind copes with inner turmoil (Clarke 60-61). The concept is connected to the structural framework of the psyche, as delineated by Anna Freud, which comprises the Id (the unconscious reservoir of drives and instinct which are defined by human insatiable desires and instincts); Ego (which operates in conscious and preconscious levels of awareness.); and then the Super-Ego (this is the conscience which is defined by family and societal norms, values and ideals which constantly sensor the ego) (5). This structural division aids in elucidating how defence mechanisms operate (Freud 7). In essence, defence mechanisms are driven by the Id's impulse to alleviate stress,

with the Ego meticulously assessing actions, considering moral input from the Super-Ego, and moderating the Id's impulses. The diversity in sources, actions, gratification rates, and other factors give rise to various types of defence mechanisms (Purwo and Andayani 2). Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis also treats such types of defence mechanisms as denial, fantasy, compensation, projection, displacement, sublimation, reaction formation, regression, and repression.

The female characters depicted in the selected literary works experience a spectrum of dislocation, stemming from diverse circumstances and motivations. To effectively navigate the challenges posed by their dislocation experiences, these fictional characters, like real individuals, turn to the Freudian components of the human personality—the Id, the Ego, and the Superego. It is essential to recognize that defence mechanisms are not limited to the realm of psychology but also find resonance within the context of literature. As Adler aptly observes, psychological intricacies, including defence mechanisms, manifest within literary works, serving as mirrors to reality (4-7).

Therefore, this study scrutinizes the female characters in SCC and OBSS to uncover the defence mechanisms they employ in response to their complex dislocation experiences, shedding light on the intricate interplay of Freudian psychology and literature. The aim includes to identify the motivations for migration among the female migrant characters; analyse the various forms of dislocation experienced by the female characters in the selected literary works; examine the defence mechanisms employed by each of them in response to the dislocation experience and then evaluate the effectiveness of those defence mechanisms *vis a vis* their peculiar circumstances.

### **Theoretical Clarifications**

The study adopts Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis as its theoretical framework. Sigmund Freud, an Australian neurologist and psychoanalyst (1856-1939) was regarded as the father of psychoanalysis,

as he was the first person to explore the human (un)consciousness. Freud began his psychoanalytic research after the intriguing experience of Dr Josef Breuer with a patient simply called 'Anna O'. The patient suffered from physical symptoms which showed no apparent physical cause.

Through the study of the patient, Dr Breuer discovered that her symptoms reduced when he helped her recover traumatic memories of experiences that she repressed or hid from her conscious mind. Freud was invited by Dr Breuer to work in the latter's laboratory at the University of Vienna. It was Freud who finally persuaded Dr Breuer to publish the details of Anna's illness and treatment (Launer 465). From there, Freud began to use psychoanalysis to treat patients with psychological disorders. He developed a method of 'treating nervous patients medically' through a 'mere talk' (Freud, 1963). Freud's 'talking cure' involves listening to neurotic patients' talks about their past experiences, wishes and emotions. As they talked, Freud made observations, which prompted him to further studies.

In his psychoanalytic studies of the human behaviours, Freud classifies the human psyche into the preconscious, conscious and unconscious. While the preconscious contains "memories, thoughts, feelings, which we are not aware of presently, but can easily be retrieved" (Orabueze 32), the conscious part is the home of conscious events which humans are aware of. On the other hand, the unconscious is the part of the mind which is "very deep in the individual's mind, and we are unaware of its existence" (66).

From these three parts of the human psyche, Freud derived the tripartite parts of the human personality: the id, the ego and the super-ego. The id is congenital: it can be seen as a "reservoir or container of instinctual and biological urge" (Kassachau 271). The id houses unconscious human desires. The instinctual desires of the id are further divided into two by Freud, namely: the Eros and the Thanatos. The Eros is "the uninhibited sexual instinct proper and the instinctual impulses of aim-inhibited love ... [and] also the self-preservation

instinct” (Freud, *The Ego and the Id* 37). On the other hand, the Thanatos is the death instinct which leads to destructive impulses. The Eros perpetuates and unifies life, whereas the Thanatos leads “organic life back to its inanimate state” (Freud, *The Ego and the Id* 38). The Eros contains sexual desire and narcissism, while the Thanatos is most clearly seen in aggression which is “the destructive and the mean representative of the death instinct” (Freud *Civilization* 69). The priority of the id is wish-fulfilment; it aims at uninhibited gratification in spite of external demands (Wright 17). The id operates on what Freud calls the “pleasure principle” whose aim is “to satisfy [individual] desires and instincts without [being] conscious of the social conventions or moral restraint” (Amari 9). The “the pleasure principle tells us to do whatever feels good” (Klages 63). An individual may be out of step with moral mores if the innate cravings of the id are not checked, and that is why the superego is necessary.

The superego is “the source of conscience and of high ideals” (Kasschau 16). It operates on morality principle. The moral standards and ideals of the superego are acquired from the society. The superego represses the desires or drives of the id, as those impulses are not acceptable in the society. In order not to be a social misfit, an individual’s superego civilizes and idealizes his behaviours, and transforms the ego’s principles from realistic to idealistic (Amari 9). The superego redirects the instinctual aggression of the subject inwardly, forcing the subject to act in accordance with parental and societal law, and whenever he transgresses, the superego punishes him with those laws (Gordon 8).

On the other hand, the ego is the conscious part of the personality structure. The ego “controls the approaches to mobility – that is, to the discharge of excitations into the external world; it is the mental agency which supervises all its own constituent processes, and which goes to sleep at night, though even then it exercises the censorship in dream” (Freud, “*The Ego and the Id*” 3951). The ego is the rational and thoughtful part that operates on reality principle. Though

the ego doesn't eliminate the instinctual desires of the id, it "satisfies [those] desires in realistic and socially appropriate ways" [Amari 9]. Lastly, the ego is what strikes a balance between the demands of the id, the superego, and society. The ego does this job by what Anna Freud calls defence mechanisms. Anna Freud built her contributions on Sigmund Freud's [her husband's] concept of the ego. According to her, "the individual ego selects now one defensive method, now another ... in its conflict with the instincts and in its defence against the liberation of effect" (A. Freud 32). The defence mechanisms include denial, fantasy, compensation, projection, displacement, sublimation, reaction formation, regression and repression. Based on the texts for the analysis, repression, displacement, sublimation, projection and denial are selected because they are relevant to this study.

### **Repression**

It is used by the ego to stop the disturbing or threatening instinctual desires from becoming conscious (McLeod). In repression, the ego uses some of its energy to prevent anxiety-arousing memories, feelings and impulses from entering consciousness (Smith qtd. in Orabueze 69). For instance, a boy expresses his Oedipus complex, and a girl, her Electra complex because the complexes are unacceptable desires. However, when repression become excessive, it results in illness called neurosis (Adjoe 36). To avoid neurosis, individuals develop other mechanisms, such as displacement or sublimation, to cope with the psychological stress.

### **Displacement**

This defence mechanism shifts instinctual desires to acceptable or less threatening objects. Unacceptable impulses are redirected towards objects that are less offensive or threatening to avoid social punishment. In other words, in displacement, the "energy of the id is displaced from one object to another, more acceptable, object" (Kasschau 273-274). For instance, an employer who is angry with his

boss can shift their anger to a customer in a sort of transferred aggression.

### **Sublimation**

The ego develops sublimation to re-channel “drives that cannot be given acceptable outlet” (Hossain 42). Sublimation involves transformation of negative emotions or instincts into positive emotions or actions. It involves transferring instinctual impulses “in conformity with higher social values ...” (A. Freud 52). For instance, a husband angered by his wife can take a walk, instead of shouting at his children playing outside (as in displacement) or beating the wife. Though displacement and sublimation appear similar, as both involve transfer to something else, the former is destructive, while the latter is constructive and more acceptable.

### **Projection**

This is when a person assumes that those impulses coming from his mind are not his, rather, they are coming from other people. Setianto (17) exemplifies this situation using a case where some people assume that people dislike them, but in reality, they are the ones who dislike themselves.

### **Denial**

Denial is a psychological mechanism where the mind consciously avoids acknowledging external sources of anxiety. This sets it apart from repression, which involves refusing to confront internal sources (such as desires). Denial is widely recognized as one of the most frequently employed defence mechanisms, with Freud offering examples like reassuring children that medicine doesn't taste bad to prompt them to deny the anxiety-provoking truth that the medicine is bitter (Purwo and Andayani, 2).

These concepts or different types of defence mechanism form the suitable theoretical framework for analysing the dislocation and



defence mechanisms of the female characters in our selected novels. Their dislocation experiences predispose them to anxiety and stress, and they, in turn, have to respond through Freudian defence mechanisms. By employing Freudian theory as a lens, this work aims to give more insights on the dialectics of dislocation and defence mechanisms as portrayed in *SCC* and *OBSS*, through a qualitative textual analysis.

### **Textual Analysis**

Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* (*SCC*) (1974) and Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (*OBSS*) (2010) are two well-received novels that have attracted a reasonable amount of critical attention. For instance, in *SCC*, Ada, the protagonist, is a girl-child born into an African patriarchal society. By the timing of her birth, she is seen as unfit for the position of a first-born in a culture that gives premium and preference to a son as the first child. For this, her birthday is not recorded anywhere because it is insignificant; by being a woman, she is a sub-human being, not minding her position in the family. That is why Francis, her husband, considers himself a first class sex, and expects subservience from Ada both in Nigeria and in the UK; and by being an immigrant, she is a second class citizen in London. By the circumstances of her birth, Adah's experiences shed light on misogyny, maternal oppression, self-assertion, and the dialectics of the power of women's voice as well as the socio-cultural impediments of the African girl-child *vis a vis* the racial discrimination against African immigrants in the diaspora.

On the other hand, in *OBSS*, Chisom (Sisi), Ama, Efe and Alek (Joyce) by a conspiracy of fate travel to Belgium to engage in commercial sex work in Antwerp's red-street district. Their journey is orchestrated by different precarious situations that define their lives in their home countries. For Chisom, it is unemployment after years of graduation from the university; for Ama, it is sexual abuse of the incestuous magnitude; for Efe, it is abject poverty and hardship after the death of her mother; and for Alek, it is the Sudan Civil War victimhood. The

girls labour in sex trade to pay huge debts that hang on their necks, in the guise of the financial burden incurred to procure their travel documents, transportation, accommodation and feeding in Belgium.

In this section, we undertake a further study of the texts with specific focus on the various forms of dislocation experienced by the female characters and the defence mechanisms they use in response to the dislocation experiences. To this end, we have structured our analysis into two subheadings and contextualized the entire study within the Freudian psychoanalysis.

### **The Forms of Dislocation Faced by the Female Protagonists in *SCC* and *OBSS***

In the two novels, dislocation takes centre stage, albeit in different contexts and for different reasons. In *SCC*, Ada experiences spatial/geographical dislocation in her journey from Nigeria to England. In *OBSS*, Sisi (formerly Chisom), Efe, Ama and Joyce experience spatial dislocation as they are trafficked from Nigeria to Belgium, separated from their homeland (Nigeria and Sudan – for Alek). Although the protagonists from both texts are spatially dislocated from Nigeria to Europe, the countries they travel to differ. Besides, the reasons for the dislocation also differ. For instance, Ada travels to England to join her husband, Francis, and to further her education. On the other hand, Sisi, Efe, Ama, and Joyce travel to Antwerp, Belgium under the guise of getting good jobs as Dele (the pimp) tells them, “As long as you dey ready to work, you go make am. You work hard and five hundred euro every month no go hard for you to pay” (*OBSS* 41).

However, the girls, when they arrive in Antwerp, discover that they have been trafficked for prostitution. Their experience is unpalatable as they need to satisfy different clients and pay exorbitant fees to Dele to offset the cost he incurs to bring them there. For Ada, her experience in England is also distasteful. Firstly, Francis has changed; he treats Ada without care and love. Francis can only rent one

small room in a public residence, housing many tenants. There is no kitchen and the bathroom that is downstairs, detached from the main building. Ada and her family are not able to good a more befitting and affordable accommodation because of racism. All the white owners of the houses for rent make it clear that they do not need black people as tenants.

In addition, the characters in both texts experience socio-cultural dislocation. Ada's move to England brings about socio-cultural dislocation. She faces racism, isolation, and a struggle to find her place in a foreign culture that does not fully accept her. Her homeland becomes a distant memory, and she struggles to find her place in a foreign land. The first thing she notices is the change in Francis' behaviour; he does not take things as an African any longer. For instance, Francis asks Ada, "Who is going to look after your children for you? I can't go on doing it; you'll have to look for someone" (SCC 44). He throws this question at her because he has been the one looking after the children when Ada goes to work. In her utter dismay, Ada discovers that looking after children is a problem in England as she cannot easily combine it with her jobs. In addition, most white landlords do not like African children in their neighbourhood. That is why Francis' landlord and landlady "had resented Francis' idea of bringing his children to England in the first place. They had warned him that it was going to be difficult for them" (SCC 44). Ada is even advised by her fellow Nigerians to send her children back to Nigeria, but she refuses. The only solution for her is to get paid baby minders. Later she employs Trudy who is not able to take proper care of her kids, Titi and Vicky. Rather than take care of the children, Trudy always leaves them to play in the rubbish dump. Consequently, Vicky is diagnosed with virus meningitis.

In *OBSS*, the girls experience socio-cultural dislocation in lifestyle. When they discover that they have been tricked into prostitution, they have no option than to accept the lifestyle, to the extent that Efe even dreams of replicating that lifestyle by "... acquiring

some girls, becoming a madam herself" (278). They have to accept their fate because if they refuse, Dele will unleash pains on them. The narrator tells us that the young ladies reside in a house on Zwarte Zusterstraat, colloquially known as "black sisters' street," and engage in sex work in Antwerp's red-light district, the Schipperskwartier. Prostitution for the girls is sheer socio-cultural dislocation, as they engage in a trade forbidden in their tradition. They cannot even proudly tell their people in Nigeria the nature of their job in Antwerp. For instance, when Sisi calls home, she tells her parents: "Yes, I'm fine. Yes, I started school. Yes, I work part-time in a nursing home. Yes, everything here is wonderful. Yes, I have made some friends. Yes, they are all wonderful ..." (OBSS 260). These are just lies because she is neither in school nor does she have a legitimate job.

This brings us to the difference in socio-cultural dislocation faced by the characters in both SCC and OBSS. In the former, the socio-cultural dislocation is more social, as Ada finds it hard to adjust with the nature of new family values for blacks in England. She also faces racism which compounds her situation. In OBSS, the characters also face social dislocation as they are isolated and marginalized in Antwerp. They exist on the fringes of society and engage in sex work in the red-light district. Their socio-cultural dislocation is compounded by the stigma and discrimination they encounter. However, the socio-cultural dislocation faced by the girls in OBSS is a moral kind; the girls are morally dislocated from the culture of their homeland where sex is seen as moral debasement.

Furthermore, Ada and Sisi, Efe Ama and Joyce face psychological dislocation. In OBSS, the trauma of the characters result in profound psychological dislocation. They grapple with feelings of powerlessness, shame and emotional burden as a result of their involvement in commercial sex. The narrator presents Sisi's inaugural meeting with her first 'client' in the following words:

Dieter [her client] got up and motioned for her to follow him. This is not me. This is not me. This is a dream. She tottered behind him,

averting her eyes from his buttocks.... In a toilet cubicle, Dieter pulled his trousers down to his ankle...Sisi shut her eyes ... she tried to wriggle out of his embrace. She did not want to do this anymore.... He held her close. Pushed her against the wall, his hands cupping her buttocks, and buried his head in her breast.... His penis searched for a gap between her legs ... inaugurating Sisi into her new profession. And she baptised herself into it with tears, hot and livid, down her cheeks, salty in her mouth, feeling intense pain wherever he touched, like he was searing her with a razor blade that had just come off a fire. (212-213)

Evidently, their moral and psychological dislocation is absolute. The girls have to bear the psychological burden from unfriendly male clients to the ruthless syndicate involving Dele, Madam and Segun, their executor. The violence gets to the climax when Sisi's attempt to circumvent the inimical terms of the contract and break free from the demeaning profession, leads to her gruesome murder (293). Her delusory belief that distance will protect her from Dele's harm turns tragic when the soft-handed and innocent-looking Segun brutally kills her with a harmer and a nail.

In SCC, Ada's sad experiences from racism, and Francis' maltreatment of her, take psychological toll on her. Throughout the novel, Ada experiences emotional dislocation as she suppresses her desires and dreams to conform to societal expectations. Her emotional dislocation is as a result of the conflict between her inner aspirations and the external pressures she faces. She is a victim of misogyny, racism and domestic violence. In one of the instances of physical abuse from her husband, "Ada was happy when Pa Noble came, because at least it made Francis stop hitting her. She was dizzy with pain and her head throbbed. Her mouth was bleeding" (SCC 143). The maltreatment gets to an unbearable point where she sues for assault, divorce and maintenance payment. But this fails, too, because Francis denies that Ada is his wife. He tells the court that they are never married and challenges Ada to produce their marriage certificate. She does not know

that Francis has already burnt their marriage certificate including all their children's birth certificates. The magistrate rules that the children should be in Ada's custody while Francis pays maintenance fees. But the psychotic Francis says that he wants the children to be sent for adoption. Ada feels dejected and exhausted. She walks out of the court hungry, tired and a psychological wreck.

However, Ada does not experience any linguistic dislocation, such as the girls in *OBSS*. This is because she is educated through the medium of the English language while in Nigeria and English is also the native language used in England. So, she does not have problems communicating in English. On the contrary, the characters in *OBSS* experience linguistic dislocation as they communicate with clients and navigate a language barrier. Apart from Sisi, the rest of the girls are secondary school dropouts. Worse still, the English language in which they have acquired the basic education in Nigeria, is not one of the official languages in Belgium. This dislocation worsens their vulnerability and sense of estrangement. The linguistic dislocation affects even their names as Chisom becomes Sisi while Alek becomes Joyce, for socio-linguistic convenience. This signifies a linguistic loss of identity. Their language use oscillates from English to pidgin to transliteration, in order to communicate effectively.

### **The Defence Mechanisms Employed by the Female Protagonists in Response to their Dislocation**

As dislocated characters, the women in both novels have to resort to different levels of Freudian defence mechanisms. Ada represses her feelings of dissatisfaction with her marriage to fulfil her role as a wife and mother. She suppresses her emotions to maintain a semblance of family stability. This repression allows her to navigate the challenges of her immigrant status and marital challenges. But her repression is not redemptive as Francis persists in the domestic violence and in making Ada's life miserable. In *OBSS*, repression plays a vital role as the characters bury their traumatic life deep within themselves. They

repress the moral anxiety that comes with being prostitutes. The defence mechanism allows them to continue working in their harrowing circumstances without confronting the emotional scars of their past. For instance, Sisi's (Chisom's) dream of becoming a banker and finding fulfilment in life is now reduced to the following:

She did not even want love. She was not looking for marriage. Just customers who would tip enough, pay enough to get her out of the booth which was giving her cabin fever. She needed lots of customers if she was going to build the house she wanted for her parents. (253)

The same applies to the other girls who have to re-structure their initial lofty dreams to other versions which are more suitable to their prevailing circumstance: for instance, "Joyce says she wanted to be a doctor. 'Dr Alek, that was how I saw myself. I thought I would marry, give my parents grandchildren, work in the government hospital. Now I think I'll settle for maybe a boutique. Or a huge supermarket in Lagos'" (243).

However, as the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that repression has its limits, and these suppressed memories resurface, leading to emotional breakdown. Therefore, they resort to another level of defence mechanism called projection. In SCC, Ada through projection, redirects her racial frustrations towards her husband, Francis, who becomes the target of her emotional stress due to her unfulfilled dreams and dissatisfaction with her marriage. Another projection target for Ada is Trudy, her baby minder. Ada shifts her marital frustration to the lady. When Vicky becomes sick, Ada is sent for and he is taken to Royal Free Hospital where she is diagnosed with virus meningitis. Ada goes to Trudy's house in anger, almost smashes her head with a carpet sweeper and threatens to kill her if anything happens to Vicky.

In *OBSS*, the women project their anger, fear and frustration onto their exploitative pimp, Dele, blaming him for their predicament, dislocation and the hardship they endure. In addition, through flashback, the girls in *OBSS* project their stress and anxiety on the men who have offended them back in Nigeria. For instance, Ama remembers how her step-father, Brother Cyril (an assistant pastor), who presents himself to outsiders as a pious man of God, sexually abuses her at Enugu, before her first dislocation to Lagos and then to Belgium. She projects the experience on him when “Anger spasmed through her body and exploded from her mouth in, ‘You call yourself my father? You call yourself a pastor? You disgust me! *I na-aso m oyi*” (147); and also on any man who claims to be a pastor. For her: “She had had enough of preachers and pastors” (144). Ama sees her step-father as the origin “of the anxiety which kept her up, most nights, unable to sleep, afraid...” (145) while in Enugu. Ama, fleeing from the site of the traumatic abuse dreams of achieving financial independence at Antwerp through prostitution. She reasons:

Brother Cyril had taken what he wanted, no questions asked. No please or may I or could I. discarding her when she no longer sufficed. And strange men taking and paying for her services. And it would not even be in Lagos. But overseas. Which earned you respect just for being there. (166)

Sublimation is another defence mechanism used by the female protagonists to cope with anxiety and stress. Ada in *SCC* engages in sublimation as a creative outlet for her inner most but unmet desires. She channels her frustrations and aspirations into writing her novel, *The Bride Price*. This act of creation allows her to express her inner thoughts and emotions indirectly. In *OBSS*, Sisi also engages in sublimation. She re-channels her anxiety and stress from the harsh realities of sex life into her constant outings into neighbouring towns where “[s]he was anonymous” (258) and enjoys the liberty to fantasize: “On such days she walked into shops and smiled at shopkeepers – who,



eager to make a sale, smiled back, all sweetness and light. She was somebody else, with a different life. She lived out her fantasies” (255).

These excerpts show that the only solace which the female characters can use to forget their miseries from sex work is the hope of a brand new wealth. The wealth will make them to forget their past suffering.

This attempt to wilfully forget the past reflects in the use of denial by Sisi, Efe, Ama and Joyce. They make conscious effort to deny the harsh realities of their situation as sex workers. They try to maintain a sense of normalcy and hope for a better future by denying the severity of their ordeal, as we read in the following:

They were getting on with their lives, preparing for the future, after Dele, mapping out the blueprint for who they wanted to be once they left the Schipperskwartier. Ama had been in Antwerp for almost six years. Efe going on seven. They had repaid quite a large amount of their debt to Dele. Efe believed that within the next two years, she would be free.... (278)

Denial also features in SCC as Ada initially denies her own stress and anxiety from marital disturbances, convincing herself that she can find fulfilment in her role of a wife and mother. She tries to find comfort in taking care of her children even when Francis keeps on beating her. This denial helps her navigate a patriarchal society that helps women to conform to certain roles.

Moreover, both novels demonstrate displacement as a defence mechanism. In SCC, Ada displaces her aspirations onto her children. For instance Ada informs her husband thus;

If you really want to know, I brought my children here to save them from the clutches of your family, and, God help me, they are going back as different people; never, never, are they going to be the type of person you are. My sons will learn to treat their wives as people, individuals, not like goats that have been taught to talk. My daughters...They will marry because they love and respect their men,

not because they are looking for the highest bidder or because they are looking for a home... [SCC 118]

While the quote is an instance of displacement, it reflects Ada's sad experiences in the marriage. Therefore, the displacement is meant to transfer her expectations of an ideal marriage to her children since hers has been an unfortunate one. Her consolation is that her children will do better. In *OBSS*, the female characters dissipate their emotional needs onto each other. They form a surrogate family, finding solace and support among themselves, which helps them to cope with their traumatic experiences and isolation. This happens after the death of Sisi. As the remaining three women adjust to their new surrounding; they form a bond, finding solace and support in one another. This is captured in the following episode:

Ama impatiently lights another cigarette then immediately squashes it into the ashtray. She is crying. "Come here," she says to Joyce and Efe. She stands up and spreads her arms. Joyce gets up and is enclosed in Ama's embrace. Efe stands up too and puts one arm around each woman. Their tears mingle and the only sound in the room is that of them weeping. Time stands still and Ama says, "Now we are sisters." (290)

In addition, Efe displaces her anxiety and stress from prostitution in Belgium by taking consolation on the expectation that the money she makes from it will give her son a good life in Nigeria. She muses as follows: "LI [her son] would get a better life. Go to school, become a big shot, and look after her when she was old and tired. LI was a worthy enough investment to encourage her accept Dele's offer" (*OBSS* 71). By displacing her sad experiences on giving her son a good life, she relieves the trauma that she experiences from her sex work.

## Conclusion

The study examined the theme of dislocation in Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class*

*Citizen*, utilizing Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory as a theoretical framework to analyse the different types of defence mechanism adopted by the dislocated female characters as a response to their precarious life experiences both in their home country, Nigeria (and the Sudan, for Alek), and in the diaspora. Qualitative textual and thematic content analysis was adopted as methodology which enabled a comprehensive and insightful interpretation of the primary texts. The analysis revealed diverse forms of dislocation faced by the characters in both texts. These dislocations encompass spatial or geographical dislocation, socio-cultural dislocation, psychological dislocation, and notably in *OBSS*, linguistic dislocation. Ada in *SCC* has her own dislocation experiences as she migrates from Nigeria to England contending with challenges such as patriarchy, racism, domestic violence and struggle to find her identity and fulfilment in an alien culture. On the other hand, the characters in *OBSS* are subjected to spatial and other forms of dislocation through human trafficking, separating them from their homeland and coercing them into the sex trade.

The analysis revealed repression, projection, sublimation, denial, and displacement as the types of defence mechanisms which the characters employed at different levels of their experiences in order to come to terms with their prevailing realities. The analysis of dislocation and defence mechanism in both texts offers profound insights into the intricacies of the human psyche when confronted with conditions of displacement and adversity, whether it be through spatial, socio-cultural, psychological, or linguistic challenges. Both novels underscore the deep impact of dislocation on individuals and the defence mechanisms they employ as strategies for survival. These mechanisms provide temporary relief for the female characters in the texts but the dislocation has already predispose them to tragedy, owing to the decisions they have to take at one point or the other in their lives. Sisi's brutal murder exposes the remaining girls' vulnerability and also

concludes their psychological defeat, while Ada's loss in the court signals her own psychological defeat.

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