

**THE CRUCIBLE OF MEMORY AND IDENTITY: NEGOTIATING
TRANSNATIONALITY IN JENNIFER NANSUBUGA MAKUMBI'S MANCHESTER**

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Abstract

The recent migration across continents has saddled literary narratives with the responsibility of creating a safe space for relieving the experiences of nomadic characters, as they negotiate life across borders and transnational cultures. Memory as argued by most scholars is pivotal in constructing identities whether personal, cultural or national. Narratives about movements from the global south to the West have underscored recollection as a quintessential form for psychic survival and reconstruction of identity. This research seeks to bring to fore aspects of personal or collective identities which are deployed by these migrant characters in Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's collection of short stories titled *Manchester Happened*. The impetus of the study is to examine the processes that necessitate recollection and reconstruction of identities. The study shall be guided by theoretical standpoint as propounded by Avtar Brah's concept of Diaspora Space and would be complemented by Pierre Nora's postulations in *Les Lieux de Memoir*. The primary text, a collection of short stories, was purposively selected as it engages a diverse account of the recollection of memories in the process of identity formation as these characters navigate new spaces. The study reveals that these characters in their quest to belong, manipulate their names, behaviour and social relationship for a new identity in the new world while relieving the old through memory, thus creating an unhomely feeling. It concludes that literature of transnationality carries within it a burden of memory.

Keywords: Memory, Identity, Diaspora, Migration, Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, Manchester Happened

1.0 Introduction

The advent of globalization has birthed a nouveau approach to literary criticism and literary studies. Literature of Anglophone African writers has lost its confines to artists who reside in African countries writing about African experiences and has been altered to include works created by writers who possess dual identities, whose literary productions reflect a transnational outlook. Migrant writers, a consequent nomenclature of cosmopolitanism, migration, and globalization, have developed a unique way of depicting the fluidity of memory, identity and transition, resulting in a new form of literary representation known as transnational literature.

Transnational literatures are literatures written by migrants whose second language is the English language, who have experienced firsthand, two cultures and creatively documented these experiences in English Language. They have a cyclic connection to two countries, at the least, and their literatures focus on traumatic memories of the homeland, identity, confusion on belonging and inerasable memories of national events as they negotiate new spaces. Transnational research focuses on ways migrant experiences are constructed through an ongoing connectedness between

the spaces, people, culture and institutions of origin and settlement (Vertovec, 2001, Conway D. & Leonard P. 2014). Also, the notion of transnationalism has been generally used to refer to migrants' ongoing ties with source countries and to place emphasis on transnational dimensions. There is the need to move beyond the nation state as the unit of analysis and explore linkages, interconnectedness of memory, migration, and identity between different localities in Europe and beyond. (Ruspini Paolo, 2023). This affirms that for a literature to be termed transnational it negotiates at least two countries, cultures and identities and these dualities may be recounted or chronicled in the place of settlement in a bid to belong and adapt to the new world. The aim of this research is to negotiate memory, individual and collective, as the melting pot for the ideation, conception and birthing of transnational identity using the multiple stories and characters created by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi in *Manchester Happened* and to highlight the inherent stories as characteristic of a transnational short-fiction. It seeks to validate and illustrate the influence of memory on the formation or deconstruction of identity in a diasporic context.

Exhaustive literatures abound as scholars attempt to define the concept of memory and identity whether in transit or in stasis. Memory, impacts on the formation of identity. The intangibility and fluidity of the concept of memory has made it defy straight cut definitions and categorizations. In literary studies, there seem to be a unique nexus between memory and literature, such that literature embodies a whole lot of remembering and recollections and provides an outlet of expression or the other. In almost every literary tradition, literary texts have engaged in a discussion of the implications, problems, and purposes of remembering. Literature participates in the processes of shaping collective memories and subverting culturally dominant memories by establishing counter memories, which seek to consider, for example, gender-conscious or ethnic perspectives on past events (Hunsu, F 2008). These memories are multifaceted and literature captures and creatively mirrors whether historic, individual, collective or cultural memory.

Over the years, scholars have attempted to define and categorize memory. Though not clear cut but these definitions are workable and can serve as references in literary criticism. For instance, memory, as an institutionalized entity, has been described as cultural when it exists in symbolic forms and creates a unifying identity for a group (Assmann, J. 1995; knutsdottir, V 2024). Traumatic memory is memory acquired from the human's experience with pain whether as a group or as an individual (Balaev, M. 2014). It entails the remembering of traumatic events. (Chow-Quesada, 2024). So, whether the group tries to forget the traumatic event, it exists in the collective unconscious and constitutes repressed identity. Collective memory can either be formed by first hand witnesses of past events, whether traumatic or political, and those without direct involvement who were told of the events. The latter solidarize with the original witnesses resulting in a unique blend of carriers of such memories. Those who witnessed and those who were told of the event (Saito, H. 2020) enhance the cooperate existence of the group. Other forms of memory are: cosmopolitan, transgenerational and post memory.

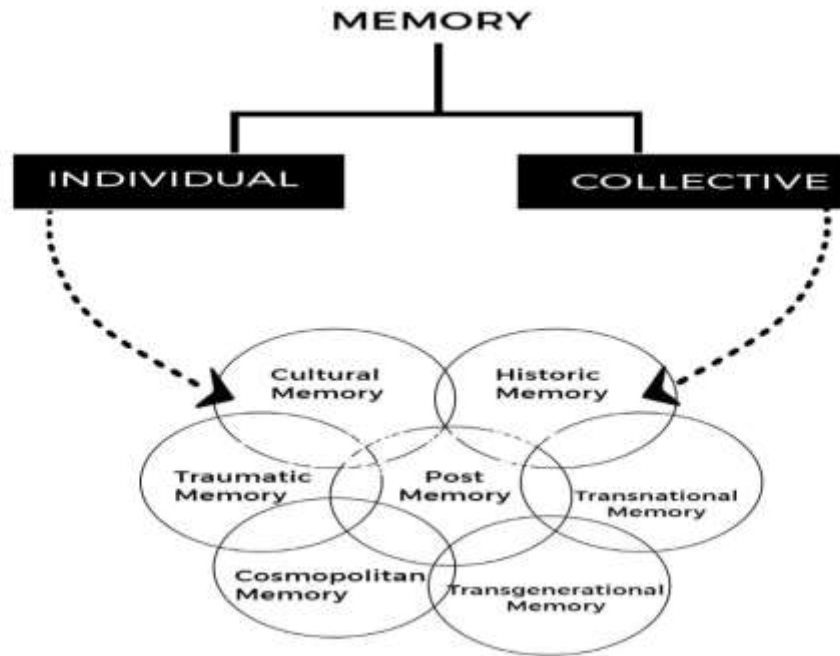


Figure 1: Source: Author

Figure 1 above mirrors the intertwine and fluidity of memory, making it a moot category in identity formation and reformation especially in transnational studies.

In this era of globalization, transnationality and trans-territoriality, issues related to identity, identity formation, identity crises become increasingly pivotal in discussions on memory especially in literary creativity. Whether collective, individual or transgenerational, identities constitute the basics for the instability of globalized and cosmopolitan characters as they trot across diverse cultures and different processes of remembering. Questions of identity are intimately connected with those of experience, subjectivity and social relations (Brah 1996:123). Hence, identity is neither fixed nor singular; rather it is a constantly changing relational multiplicity which at specific moments in the flux assume specific patterns, as in a kaleidoscope, against particular sets of personal, social and historical circumstances. (Brah, 1996: 123). This study focuses on how characters in the stories manipulate their identities and use memory to navigate belonging in a new world. As the stories are different, so are the forms of memory employed but the most resonating are the traumatic (in terms of political experiences) and cultural memories.

The complexity of identity webbed in memory and recollection especially when it is transnational or in transit conjures a complex interstitial crucible which Avtar Brah attempts a defining with the concept of Diaspora Space. Also, Pierre Nora underscores the crucible of memory as constituted in places, events and social experiences and these combine to reconstruct the identity of the transnational character in *lieux de memoire*. These theoretical postulations form the scaffold for the study.

2.0 Theoretical framework

2.1 The theory of *Lieux de memoire*

The theory of *Lieux de Memoire* is postulated by French Philosopher Pierre Nora as a follow up of the ideologies propounded in a trio volume of work known as *Realms of Memory* where Volume 1 is termed the descriptive sites of division and Vol II, the constitutive sites of tradition. This third site which constitutes the realm of memory is the symbolic sites of identity known as *Lieux de Memoire* where the French identity and memory is constructed collectively in images central to Frenchmen and are symbolic both politically and historically across the nation and these have shaped the memory and identities of the Frenchman alongside the French language. According to Nora, every site of memory is symbolic and can be described as an element of the collective identity of the people and these symbols may be official state symbols which may be imposed or constructed like the Pantheon and Eiffel Tower or the Joan of Arc, Descartes and the Gallic cock respectively. These symbols are objects of intelligibility for contemporary history and transnational memorabilia. This is because they are closely tied and highly primal to the national memory and collective identity of the people.

Deviating from French *Lieux de Memoire* to a more wholistic outlook, Nora, suggests that there has been wave of memory and recollection by many governments. While some focused on returning to a past that has been so repressed, and others to national heritage in a bid to revive traditions in all its forms. This national memory has congealed in a historical tradition, a historiography of landscapes, institutions, monuments, and language which the historian can treat as so many *Lieux de Memoire*. In these symbols we truly discover “realms of memory” at their most glorious (Pierre Nora, 1998). This idea of drawing from collective and national heritage as a form of identity construction, constituting both individual and collective identity provides the framework for the critical analysis of Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi’s collection of short stories titled *Manchester Happened*. The objective is to unravel how Ugandan characters in transit, negotiate new spaces by constructing new identities from both collective and individual memory, conjured from repressed memories of landscapes, institutions, monuments, leaders and language.

2.2 Avtar Brah’s Theory of Diaspora Space

Diaspora space for Brah is the location of complex interstitial space where an intersection of Diaspora, border and the politics of dis/location is made immanent. This space is a location where boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of us and them are contested in tandem with processes of racial formation, economic, psychic, cultural, political borders. This space to Brah, is an up shot of an underlying social, historical and economic conditions plaguing contemporary migration and diasporic identity formation and reformation. The complexity of this interstitial space is reflected in the actions and reactions of the characters poised in Makumbi’s stories as they navigate two worlds, one in their memory and the other in lived diaspora space. Issues of memory, identity and transnationality are pivotal in Brah’s Diaspora Space.

3.0 Literature Review

3.1 Traumatic Memory and the Shaping of Collective Identity

Trauma as a key player in identity formation has sparked so many scholarly debates. Traumatic experiences are not confined to individual psyches particularly those that stem from wars and dictatorial governments. They are replicated and inherited by families and communities. This reproduction results in literary narratives that offer shared remembrance, collective resistance and

collective scar bearers (Shah, Trisha 2025). The remembering of trauma is enmeshed in a collective process in the construction of identities in narratives. Writers, rather than present a veridical account of trauma or present an individual perspective, explore the collective to give a wholesome outlook to trauma. (Davies-Delano, L.R., Gullier, R. V. Keen, A. J 2024.) In contemporary narratives, writers portray traumatic experiences such as the criminal acts of totalitarian periods, the wars, the attacks, the camps and atrocities. All these leave a mark on the way a group look at themselves and others (Ogden P. 2021).

However, counter arguments exist on traumatic event as constituting collective identity. Studies into traumatic memory in collective sense has shown that it can unify or divide the group (Amwiine, Hassans 2024). It can be a two-edged sword. This stems from the idea of subjective remembering. When trauma is intense there are attempts to repress or annul it in order to avoid accountability and social justice. Hence when a group seeks reparation from trauma, its suppression may displease the direct victims (Amwiine, Hassans 2024, Hunter A. C., 2021). Traumatic memory can also divide a group when it comes in contact with modernization and globalization (Erll, A. 2020), but as true as these assertions may seem, it doesn't dispute the fact that traumatic memory can translate from being a mere historical event to becoming a myth. This inadvertently shapes the collective identity of the group. As the case with Uganda, the despotic and totalitarian leadership of Idi Amin alongside the intervening wars, constitute the group's traumatic memory and shape their identity.

3.2 Untranslatable Cultural Memory and Collective Identity

Broadly, identity serves as a medium for the orientation of humans whether collectively or individually in terms of the past or the future. Memory and identity operate at the individual, the social and the cultural levels (Assmann, J 1995). Divergent views abound as to the nuances of how cultural memory reflects a group's collective identity. Cultural memory is a form of collective memory. As an institution, it is exteriorized, objectified and stored away in symbolic forms (Assmann J. 1995). Similarly, Cultural memory is not an intrinsic property of persons but it is a relational social property developed and maintained in relation to cultural groups (Heersmink, Richard 2021). This emphasizes the fact that cultural memory resides within the collective experience of the group rather than the individual.

Also, cultural memory is fixed and untranslatable. It rests on fixed points in the past and galvanized in symbols, represented in oral myths conveyed in writings. They are stable and situation transcendent (Assmann J. 1995). In spite of its fixity, may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another. For instance, language as a cultural identity stores the knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity. So regardless of the location of the group, that is whether they are in diaspora, their language remains a fixed object of unification.

3.3 Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's *Manchester Happened*

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's *Manchester Happened* (2019), explores the lives of Ugandan migrants navigating the complexities of diaspora, belonging, and identity. Through a series of twelve vivid narratives split between Manchester in England and Kampala in Uganda, Makumbi examines how memory serves as both a crucible- a transformative space of trial and refinement – and a tether to transnational identities. These stories illuminate the dual existence of Ugandan

migrants who grapple with the pull of their homeland and the realities of life abroad, crafting a poignant counter-narrative to simplistic migrant stereotypes. Makumbi excels at capturing the here-and-there double consciousness of living between two worlds, a duality that memory both sustains and complicates. Also, others have argued that Makumbi rejects the ‘single story’ of migration, offering instead a kaleidoscopic view of Ugandan lives that defies reductive labels like “migrant” or “immigrant” (Noah M. Mintz). *Manchester Happened* illustrates how transnational identity is not fixed but fluid, reshaped by memory. It explores how migrants navigate belonging in multiple spaces; using memory to bridge temporal and spatial divides.

3.4 The Short-Story and transnational literary criticism

The short story can be described as a dense attenuation of narratology whose length is contradistinctive to the novel but is impressive and carries such lasting effect as a bullet. Although, it is small but it is powerful in itself (William Boyd 2004; Ailsa Cox 2022). O’Connor, F. (1963) distinguished the short story from the traditional novel by stating that the novel depends on the reader’s ability to identify with its protagonist while the short story is filled with a “submerged population...outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society, superimposed sometimes on symbolic figures whom they caricature and echo...” (O’Connor, F. 1963). This submerged population and symbolic representation of characters are clearly contained in the stories in *Manchester Happened*. There is careful selection of the population of characters in the stories and an entire lifetime of these populations are crowded into a few minutes. Makumbi craftily selects the angle from which to reflect this miniature but important timelines to enable the reader distinguish between past events, the present and the distant future and conceive of them as contemporaneous and make sense of the stories even as they end abruptly.

The transnational short story writer like Makumbi, weaves her craft through memory and constant recollections to illuminate experiences of both the African and Western cultures, employs personification and symbolic characters to evade the hegemony of the novel as there are no landings or denouement to the endemic crisis of identity and belonging. Makumbi in her twelve stories leaves the reader to decide what each metaphor connotes and what everything might mean.

4.0 Methodology

In this study, Jennifer Makumbi’s collection of short stories titled *Manchester Happened* is critically examined to foreground the interplay of memory in the formation of identity in transnational literary discourse. Secondary materials from literary theory, historical archives and anthropology are also exhumed to validate the standpoints in the primary text. *Manchester Happened* is chosen purposively for this study because Makumbi engages with transnational issues because of her experiences as a dual nationalist writer. Hence, to engage the stories in her collection aptly, in line with the research interest, the study employs a qualitative literary analysis of the stories and deep content analysis.

5.0 Discussions and findings

5.1 Cultural and Political Memory as identity in *Manchester Happened*

In the construction of identity born out of memory whether collective or individual, there is a recounting of symbolic places, events and national symbols which earmarks the group as distinct and these transnational characters carry within them a burden of this collective memory in order to retain their national and cultural heritage. Pierre Nora captures this in a nutshell that there is no

other cultural images of collective memory and identity than “the political symbolism with which history has continually invested... here traversed from east to west” (Nora, P 1998:x). This political collectively identifying the people is clearly implicit in the story of “Malik’s Door”. Katula, a Ugandan lady is first greeted with the political symbol of her country Uganda. Immediately she identifies herself as Ugandan she is always asked if she knows Idi Amin. This calls up images of the political history of her country. The narrator explains this collective cultural identity thus: “every time Katula mentioned that she was Ugandan, Idi Amin was thrown at her as if she was Uganda’s chief cultural export” (129). Though she was born after the deposal of Idi Amin, her nationality calls up that collective consciousness of the political history of her people. Furthermore, even in diaspora, apart from identifying the migrant through collective or historical artefacts, these national events also form the basis for the cartographies of other events. For instance, events or actions may be recollected as post Idi Amin or Pre-Museveni. In the story “She is our Stupid” Nnakimuli travels to Britain on a scholarship but had not come home to visit since she left. Flower never reached out to her people during the Idi Amin war or the Museveni war. These names conjure a collective recollection of the political history of Uganda and shapes the memory of the people. President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni through his “Bush war” ousted president Idi Amin in 1979 after about eight years of dictatorship, bloodshed and severity. His overthrow of power erased the tormenting memory of oppression of President Amin’s and Obote’s regime in Uganda. Nnakimuli never checked in on her people throughout these remarkable events, “she did not write, not even after the wars – the Idi Amin one or the Museveni one – to see who had died and who had survived” (170). The reign of these despotic leaders is very key in transnational literatures as they serve as memory at the same time cartographies of epochs and timelines for the migrant who is in cyclical touch with both worlds.

Also, language constitutes a safe space in diaspora as a symbol of nationalism and a creation of identity in the new world. The stories embody intricate aspects of Ugandan culture especially Luganda. Pierre Nora reiterates that French language is symbol of nationality especially in diaspora and extends it to other languages of other countries. In “Christmas is Coming” Luzinda’s house in England is an extension of Ugandan traditions, language, culture and music. In creating a transnational outlook there is hardly hybrid identity construction rather there is a pure and intentional transporting of Ugandan culture into British geographical space by transposing the elements of Ugandanness rather than blending to produce a hybrid identity. We are told that in Luzinda’s family house “loud music greets them. Chameleone is wale-waleing, imploring each of the African leaders – Kaguta, Kikwete, Kenyatta, Kabila, Kagame – as if they dance to his music. The house is packed. Smells of Ugandan food” (18).

Jose Chameleone is a Ugandan artist and musician who sings in Luganda, English and Swahili. The fact that he is *wale-waleing* means that he greets and addresses African leaders in his music. The popularity of Chameleone’s music represents a cultural memory which calls up images of home in order to maintain and keep hold of their national and cultural heritage there by affirming their identity. Also, to maintain their home identity and retain the memory of home, the Ugandans affirm that “*as soon as we close the door we lock English outside*” (19). This intentional use of the language as a symbol of their identity is highly characteristic and essential in the creation of transnational identity. Statements like “*customs tried to confiscate my grasshoppers at the airport. I said ‘Border Control my foot; you won’t control me.’ I sat down and started eating* (19) shows

the character's defiance in preserving his culture. By publicly eating grasshoppers, this character portrays the attitude of some migrants in transnational context:

Travel regularly back-and-forth between new homes and old, negotiating the cultural borders that divide them in increasingly nuanced ways. They bring with them perspectives that challenge a range of Western narratives – historical, political, economic, cultural, religious. And they explore the experience of conquest, slavery, genocide, cultural extermination, and the history of nation-building from the point of view of those who have been victimized by those forces. In so doing, they challenge deeply entrenched historical notions of Western privilege, and develop critical explorations of the impact of racial assumptions regarding white, Western superiority, countering fantasies of purity with the realities of hybridity and syncretism (Jay, P. 2021: 62)

The defiance of eating grasshopper at the airport and challenging the disgust of the British Border Control officer shows that in stamping transnational identities, white supremacist tendencies are vehemently opposed.

Makumbi's *Manchester Happened* as an embodiment of transnationality. She makes use of Swahili words and Luganda expressions to create a mixture of English and Luganda without interpretation. This is to subtly retain the memory of home and carve a unique identity for the *Ugandans*. For instance, the Ugandan crowd greeting 'Airiririr' with 'Ayii' (288) as response in England, also, the wailing cry of a widow in 'Let's Tell this Story Properly' 'Bazze wange' (254), present a complex mixture of Luganda and English as if both languages are the same within the text. It can be deduced that in conceptualizing memory and identity in a transnational context, there is a juggle, a negotiation of literal and cultural borders, whether these borders are negotiated through memory or physically, leading to a transcendental migratory experience which results in shaping or asserting of the characters' identity.

5.2 Renaming as Repression in Identity Construction

Naming transposes a noun from being a common noun to a proper noun and marks distinctively, such a noun from every other of its kind giving it a proper identity. The study of the practice of naming is pivotal in the social sciences and the humanities as it calls up a body of debates and counter discourses on its role and significance in the politics of identity construction or reconstruction, and belonging and assimilation in transnational context. Several scholars have viewed naming as an act that converts 'anybodies' into 'somebodies'; crucially, to become 'a somebody' is to have a place in society (Gertz 1973: 363; Clifton 2013:2). Others view naming as conveyance mechanism for information about the subject such as: the state of mind of the mother at the time of the birth of the child; the totem of the individual, and the subject's place of residence (Levi-Strauss 1996; Clifton 2013). It can also be added that names constitute transitional markers for transposition from one level to another or from a religious group to another.

In transnational discourses, migrant characters and population adopt names of their host countries as assimilation markers and these acts of name changing has raised questions such as: What is in a name?: What cultural links has naming with the home culture and what significance has the retaining or changing got to do with identity?: Is renaming a form of repressing memory?: What role does naming play in the process of assimilation?: Finally, what consequences or recompences are there when there is a forced attempt to bridge the gap between 'us' and 'them'?

This segment seeks to analyze the characters in Makumbi's stories who in a bid to close the borders of exclusion and bring about inclusion have changed their names and alienated themselves from their culture. The argument here is not whether naming brings about more cultural and social inclusiveness to the migrant or widens the gap but to x-ray the politics of naming and name dialectics in the face of immigrant pressures and its attendant consequences. In the story titled "Our Allies the Colony" we encounter the story of Abbey Baker whose original name is *Ssuuna Jjunju*. As an illegal migrant in India, Mombasa, he decided to change his name to an Arab name to enable him belong. In immigrant contexts, foreign sounding-names become markers of differentiation and may index stigmatized social identities (Bursell 2012; Obojska 2020), so, *Ssuuna Jjunju* becomes Abu Bakri during his sojourn in Mombasa because: he had named himself when he first arrived in Mombasa, even though he was not circumcised. Mombasa, especially the port, was run by Arabs Zanzibaris who had a deep mistrust for non-Muslims and contempt for Africans. Luckily, his skin tone was light enough to pass for Waswahili. Once he learnt the language, it was easy to pass himself off as Muslim. Soon, he was cursing and swearing like an Arab. When he arrived in Britain he changed Abu to Abbey like Westminster Abbey and Bakri into Baker like Sir Samuel Baker. But his grandfather had named him *Ssuuna Jjunju*.

Abbey's constant name changing practice is typical of transnational identity politics and as names are socially constituted symbols and products of diverse social relations and constructs, so is the name changing politics. For Abbey in Mombasa, since the power hegemony at the borders are anti African and Pro Muslim, in the politics of identity, *Ssuuna Jjunju* would heighten the axes of differentiation. Hence, to facilitate his integration into the host society, extinguish the endemic discrimination and boycott negative stereotypic identities and have a favourable chance at the job market, (Bursell 2012; Khosravi 2011; Obosjska 2020), *Ssuuna Jjunju* becomes Abu Bakri. This same strategy he adopts when he arrives Manchester.

However, as earlier stated the intent is not to ascertain the plausibility of name changing in the inclusion or exclusion of the migrant but to show how transnational identities are fluid and since "narratives provide a window to the study of identities" (Lanza 2012:286) we establish through these characters that the politics of identity exists in paradigmatic relations. We choose to establish two paradigms for the politics of naming in transnational literatures. The first is for the construction of a new self, one to be accepted and included in the very scheme of things in the host society. The second is a deconstruction of that which is originally presumed to be an acceptance strategy but is met with an endemic rejection, an ascribed otherness that burrows into the very fabric of the migrant causing an unhomeliness and conjuring all forms of repressed memories of the homeland. This fluidity of identity is seen when Abbey's son was named Moses by the mother and given up for adoption without his consent. He is faced with a blatant loss of kinship with his son if peradventure he grows up and begins to trace his birth parents. Abu Bakri or Abbey Baker automatically thaws out in the renegotiation process. *Ssuuna Jjunju* becomes the link to his ancestry. All forms of inclusion and politics of belonging becomes irrelevant, thus:

Abbey picked up a pen and opened a file. First, he wrote the child's name, *Moses Bamutwala Jjuuko*. Under FATHER, he wrote, *Ssuuna Jjunju*. In brackets, he wrote, *son of Mutikka Jjuuko of Kawempe, Kyadondo, Uganda*. He paused for a second and then he signed with the flourish of a man creating his self-worth on a piece of paper. He put the pen down and walked out (61).

His belonging no longer holds stake at this juncture. Abbey becomes a man whose lineage is about to be wiped out hence every form of Africanness and link to his lineage is to be brought to fore.

The changing of names in the politics of identity and belonging, the character of Nnakimuli presents a pathetic case of name-changing for inclusion but ends tragically in mental breakdown in the story “She is our Stupid”. Nnakimuli had travelled to Britain on scholarship as a teacher and had totally forgotten her people and changed her name to Flower. Flower marries a stranger and never cared to bring him home to her people, changes her identity to Mrs. Flower Downe and disconnects everything Ugandan from her memory. The concept of “identity is not as transparent or as unproblematic as we think” (Naidu S. 2019). It is a complex space where the sanity, emotional quotient and health of the migrant is tested and contested. The problematics of identity and disconnection from her people is reflected when she is placed in a mental asylum by her husband without respect for her family. She had embraced European culture abandoning that which is African. On her first visit, her “family didn’t know whether to unlock their happiness because when her father reached to hug her, Nnakimuli planted kisses – on his right cheek and on his left – and her father didn’t know what to do...and when Nnakimuli said her name was Flower, the disconnect was complete” (68). This disconnect is a function of the alteration of her naming identity.

Obviously, Flower’s insanity is symbolic of the fact that transnational identity is a practice that is always undergoing transformation. It is always in a process. Flower’s mental breakdown is a metaphor representing a breakdown of a straightjacketed form of identity construction. This is evident in her hallucinating chants, thus:

People fall mad in different ways. Auntie flower was agitated would not sit still, as if caged. ‘I am Flower Down, Down with an e.’ ‘who?’ family asked. Mrs. Down with an e.’ Family accepted. ‘I want to go.’ ‘Go where?’ ‘Let me go.’ ‘But where?’ ‘I could be Negro, I could be West Indian – how do you know? They let her go. Obviously, England was still in her head (172) This state of Auntie Flower is akin to Naidu S. (2019) analysis of “Let Them Call it Jazz” by Jean Rhys published in 1962 where he dissects the character of a young west Indian woman called Selina Davis whose experiences presents a disturbing image of migration as she experiences poverty, destitution and isolation. She seeks refuge in the house of a shady Mr. Sims and eventually suffers mental breakdown and ends up incarcerated in Holloway Prison. Mr. Sims may be comparable to Mr. Down with the e, because he may be just as shady Mr. Sims, as no responsible man marries a woman without consent from her family. According to Naidu (2019), this story is a bleak indictment of how a migrant character can be subjected to ‘misrecognition’ as with the case of Flower who is neither Negro nor West Indian.

Transnational identities are a fluid performative category and in constant mutiny rather than fixed and programmed and as such naming and name changing represents a crucial aspect of human identity and when in a new world, the tendency to mutate this naming strategy for belonging is employed by migrants. However, whether or not this name-changing propels a smooth integration into the host society or not is not at the core of this discourse. There is danger in adopting wholly a straightjacket identity in transnational discourse.

5.3 Symbolism and the complexities of memory, identity and belonging in *Manchester Happened*

Makumbi’s collection of short stories *Manchester Happened* embodies an array of personified and symbolic representations of the complexities of memory and identity in a transnational context. Characters are poised and their ordeals recounted in differing vantage positions, each of which, can be read at different times and can yield new meanings. Makumbi employs the use of fable in

the 'Memoirs of a Namaaso' to recollect life in Uganda in contrast with that in Britain through the voice of a dog as it opens thus: "my British name is Stow" (140). This exemplifies a complex identity crisis of this dog in a transnational context. To it, "that name Stow is full of lies" (140). This dog attempts to assert its identity as a roving animal rather than a pet by recounting its ordeal to Britain through memory. Unlike humans, Stow acknowledges the fraud in changing his name to suit the new environment. It was just a dog in Uganda "ferreting around roadsides, nosing, roasting under key Ugandan sun, the heat off the ground stewing my brisket, the next I was on a plane" (142). Its humiliation and change of identity start from the flight from Uganda to Manchester where a cat which seemed to be a pet but familiar with flights asks Stow a dog to "*shut up, you're on a plane, you're not going to die*" (141). But as the story unfolds Stow carries with pride its African identity as it refuses to be called a pet. It challenged his friend Orora thus:

Look, whatever your name, truth is: you are a pet I am a pariah. You enjoy captivity, I would die if anyone tampered with my freedom. You gave up ownership of yourself for food, we feed ourselves. You miss your human; to us, humans are the vermin destroying the earth. Tell me, what will I gain from being friends with you? I knew pets were dumb, but I'd never come across this version of dumbness. (145-146)

Stow recognizes this otherness but solidly affirms its canine qualities as more recognizable in Uganda than in England. To it "*England is outside reality; look at the creature you call dogs. Why is everyone so meek?*" (150). Issues on identity become a cause for concern for Stow and its resolve is to continue in its carnivorous nature. So rather than drink milk and eat pebbles in water or eat dog biscuits Stow forages the bin and feels like a Pariah in England. It refuses to be mutated or adjust to the new environment. This is in opposition to how Katassi in the story 'Manchester Happened' handled her transition from Uganda to Britain.

Katassi is a step-sister to Nambassa and she is sent to Britain to live with her sister but Manchester happened to her. She found it difficult to assert her African identity and, in a bid, to become more British, she lost her family. Her sister narrates that:

Katassi was a contradiction, like multiple personalities. The more I tried to help the more she lashed out. In her quest to fit in quickly, she dressed as if shock value epitomized Britishness. She acted out the way she saw teenagers act on soap operas. Do you know what a forced Mancunian accent with Ugandan inflections sound like? I think the harder she tried to sound like them, the more the kids at school rejected her. It happened to me. She then brought all the pain from school home to me (74)

Katassi's struggle with her African identity calls to mind the concept of culture shock as explained by Haldore Hanson. He speaks of culture shock as a common affliction among Americans who work overseas – an occupational disease, a state of depression triggered by anxiety from losing most familiar symbols of communication. These symbols include the myriad of ways we speak, we dress, we greet our peers and socialize. When one enters a strange culture, these cues change. One feels anxious. The reaction of most persons to this frustration is similar. He or she blames the surroundings that cause the discomfort: the host country must be bad because it makes the new comer feel bad. So, he grouses. Second, one's memories of home life become glorified. One forgets all the shortcomings of home, and remembers only the good things. The person becomes a superpatriot. (Hanson, H. 1986)

Makumbi captures this reaction to culture shock by asserting or denying of African identity as Katassi wrestles with her identity thus:

I could see her pain but there was nothing I could do. It is a phase every new arrival from home goes through out here...it is like withdrawal symptoms from drugs. You suffer alone. In this phase, many teenagers denied ever having been on the African continent. They faked British accents, changed names and became British-born. I knew a Jjuuko who turned Jukkson and spoke like a Jamaican. On the other hand, you had grown-ups, especially intellectual types, who reacted by becoming pan-African fundamentalists. I mean African, in-your face African...this transition shit can be so bad it kills families (73)

This position of Katassi is symbolic of the convoluted space of transnational identity formation and reformation and the pressures on the immigrant.

Worthy of note is the story of Katula in 'Malik's Door', whose immigrant life is forced into both physical and emotional exile in a marriage she entered for British citizenship. She is like Mrs. Sen in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*. Katula is married to Malik a devout Muslim but the marriage remains unconsummated for years and she is faced with the dilemma of leaving the marriage and losing her British citizenship or staying and remain in emotional torture and physical torment. Just as characteristic of short stories, the reader is left to solve the puzzle as the story moves on to another as is life. Katula's 'situationship' is akin to migrant characters who are not fully assimilated but cannot return home because of the uncertainties of home.

Finally, the collections of twelve stories in *Manchester Happened* present themes, characters and events that are symbolic of transnational literatures (Jay Paul 2021) as they pay attention to technological, infrastructural, economic and political developments that have made nation-state borders easy to navigate. These include airports, railway stations border stations, border crossing facilities and the bureaucratic structures they house are very ubiquitous in transnational literatures. These are interwoven with the daily lives of migrants, refugees, foreign students who uniquely navigate these institutional structures and at the same time attempt to carve a niche for themselves in the new world. In 'Malik's Door' Katula is said to be haunted by immigrations after her student visa expired, she had to relocate from her house and quit her job so as not to be deported, she had to look for a British husband and immigrant anxieties that came with living illegally as a migrant was depicted in the story.

In the story 'Something Inside so Strong (*Airport Diaries*, 2006)' the complexities and bureaucracy of borders and airports is captured through the character of Poonah who is an Aviation Security Officer. Security infrastructures that are typical of borders such as X-ray machines, walk-in metal detectors, body searchers and how these migrants navigate these electronic security devices, constitute her daily schedule; thus, confirming Makumbi's *Manchester Happened* as an embodiment of transnationality.

6.0 Conclusion

Transnational narratives have at their very core and essence memory which becomes the formative precipice of identity. Memory in literary and cultural studies extends beyond the acquisition of events and the storage, retention and eventual retrieval of such experience, it extends to the exploration of past historical experiences as they aid identity formation, reformation and in aggregate a complex repository of a cultural narrative tool. Memory is a contorted phenomenon which houses various forms and at the same time unique identities for the transnational character.

Broadly, memory could be conceived as an individual fount or a collective storehouse but what complicates memory is the fact that all forms of memory could be called up both individually or collectively; individually, enhancing specific identity construction and collectively, enforcing group identity.

In a nutshell, memory could be cultural when it is stored in symbolic objects, traumatic when it is captured in painful and tragic experiences, cosmopolitan when it recollects in solidarity the experiences of others, transgenerational when it is handed down from the original witnesses to their offspring, and transnational when it oscillates across national borders. All these, combine to shape the identity of the individual or the group.

As explicated in Makumbi's *Manchester Happened*, the collective memory of the migrants shaped their identity in Britain such memory as those stored in the dark era of Ugandans during the reign of Idi Amin and the 'Bush wars' of Museveni and the resultant coup d'état all form the identity of the migrants and even the dating of epochs. Also, Luganda serves as a diminutive cite for the perpetration of their collective identity since language stores cultural artefacts. Symbolically, in the politics of identity, naming and name changing can exert or extenuate identity and belonging in transnational discourse. It is pertinent to surmise, that Makumbi employs the short story as a tool to tersely capture the complexity of identity, memory and transnational discourses in literary narratives.

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