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FINAL MASTER'S PORTFOLIO

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A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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with a specialization in Literary & Textual Studies

December 12, 2019

Dr. Khani Begum, First reader

Ms. Kimberly Spallinger, Second reader

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Analytical Narrative

When I began my journey to obtain Master's degree in English at Bowling Green State University in the Fall of 2016, I began with the strong objective to obtain not only a certificate but also strong knowledge in the Literary and Textual Studies area of specialization. From the beginning, I was determined to take advantage of the resources that the department possesses in terms of its faculty and their works in theory and race studies. Prior, I had an undergraduate background in English and Literary Studies and was fascinated by the pungent cultural criticism that postcolonial theory offers the third world continent of Africa. I therefore set out to obtain further knowledge of the theory and its application to African literature, and other texts from places and people with shared colonial experiences. Over four semesters of coursework in the program, I have had the privilege of learning under professors who have helped expanded my knowledge of various literary and critical theories, including postcolonial theory. I have also received extensive training in the analysis of works from diverse theoretical and cultural contexts, situating texts within scholarly, historical, and cultural conversations. This portfolio, therefore, reflects the result of the cumulative interest I drew from the program.

In the course of the MA program, I have taken courses in literary theories, race studies, and seminars in special topics and periods in literature and culture. The multidisciplinary approach to the MA English program enabled me to take classes from departments in School of Culture and Critical Studies. One of those classes was Theories of Race, Ethnicities, and Multiculturalism thought by Professor Timothy Messer-Kruse. This course enabled me to find connections between settler-native colonial relations in colonial Africa, racial experiences of black people world over, and Center-Margin relationship between the White West and Third World Countries or colored people. Relatedly, In the Spring of 2017, I took class, "Introduction to Theory and

Criticism," taught by Professor Piya Pal-Lapinski. In the semester-long course, I was exposed to major canonical theoretical texts and moments and their influences on contemporary literary studies and criticism. Of the many theories explored in the course are postcolonialism and cosmopolitanism- and its many regional derivatives. Through the course, I came across the concept of Afropolitanism- cosmopolitanism with African rootedness- for the first time. For the course' final paper, I decided to explore the Afropolitan theory and how works of diasporic African writers express the Afropolitan theoretical sentiments. This paper would initiate my intention to write a thesis on the Afropolitan temper in African diasporic fiction. This portfolio therefore includes three chapters of what initially would be a thesis work, a summation of my analytical understanding of the postcolonial theory, its theoretical offshoot of Afropolitanism, and how these theories find expression in diasporic African writings. Included also in the portfolio is a paper I wrote for the Black Films class I took in the Spring of 2018 with Professor Khani Begum, revised and presented at the Fall 2019 Midwest Modern Language Association Conference at Chicago.

The first piece in the portfolio is the first chapter of the thesis titled Afropolitan Temper in Contemporary Diasporic African Fiction: Narratives of Belonging and Home in Teju Cole's *Open City* and Taye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go.* In the chapter, I explain both texts selected to be interpreted through the theoretical tenets of Afropolitanism as works of contemporary diasporic African writers primarily concerned with identity negotiation in the Western space devoid of true cosmopolitan spirit. The chapter offers a comprehensive introduction to the studies, explains the study's preoccupation, methods and proposed theory. The chapter also offers a robust background to the scholarly and theoretical conversation around which the study purports to make a contribution. I establish in this thesis chapter that although scholarly attention around

diasporic African writing is already huge, most interpretive efforts around these works romanticize the idea of home in the Negritudinal fashion of the Afrocentric past. Whereas this mode of interpretation is valid of the nostalgic tropes explored by exilic writers from the 80s through to the turn of the millennium, contemporary diasporic African writings have moved on to a more complicated engagement with 'home' and this require a more complex analysis. The Afropolitan theory, therefore, offers a more complicated, perhaps more appropriate, interpretive paradigm.

The second piece in my portfolio attempts a comprehensive review of literature on the theoretical concepts of Postcolonialism, Cosmopolitanism, and Afropolitanism. The piece was originally written as the second chapter of my thesis and it interrogates the recent popular critique of postcolonial theory as irrelevant for the interpretation of the contemporary cultural order of globalization and global migration. Through my interpretation of the many arguments and contemplations around theories such as postcolonialism, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, Afropolitanism, and diaspora studies, I find that transnational theories, including Afropolitanism are offshoots of the postcolonial theory. Therefore, I make a counter-argument to scholars who believe that postcolonialism, like some other theories, is already spent considering the peculiarity of the contemporary world. More tellingly, African literature has always followed familiar tropes of either identity re-assertion, cultural ambivalence, neocolonial exploitation, underdevelopment of the African continent, and the attendant misery on the people. These are arguably fallouts of the colonial contact that Africa had with Europe and the enduring legacies of this historical experience. Colonialism may have ended in Africa but Africa's position within the global order is still largely determined from the perspective of a people in need of western salvation and civilization. Thus, African migrants and their descendants remain, in the view of the white

majority race of the West as people fleeing who do not belong, irrespective of their western birth and upbringing. Descendants of African migrants of the 70s and 80s are currently scattered all over Europe and America. Many in this group understand that their parents are from various African countries but know no other country than their countries of birth. Irrespective of their embracement of their countries of birth as home, however, these people are constantly reminded of their difference and unbelonging. Therefore, the intellectuals and writers among this group confront with the question of "who are we?" The answers that eventually came from Taye Selasi is "We are Afropolitans- Africans, not citizens of the world." (Salasi, 2005) From this simple narrative of the descent into the Afropolitan theory and identity, I conclude in the chapter that Afropolitanism arose from the imbalance of race relations that African migrants experience in the contemporary West.

In the third piece in my portfolio titled Open but Racist? Teju Cole's *Open City*, the Black Migrant, and Cosmopolitan limit in Western Urban Centers, I analyze Teju Cole's novel, *Open City,* using the Afropolitan theoretical paradigm. Teju Cole, like Chimamanda Adichie, has constantly denied any deliberate attempt to express Afropolitan sentiments in his art. However, Cole acknowledges the existence of the racist system in Western spaces and the effects this has on African migrants irrespective of their status. In my analysis of his novel, I make a contrary argument to Cole's denial of the Afropolitan inspiration to his work. Through a close reading of *Open City,* I establish elements of sense of unbelonging, search for self-identity, and interrogation of the 'openness' of the city, and complication to the notion of home in prevalent Teju's art. Many scholars and reviewers analyze *Open City* as the author's exploration of the history, culture, and wonders of Western urban cities, suggesting that the work only documents the openness of the city through a flaneur character. I depart considerably from this mode of

interpretation, arguing that *Open City* is an irony, an implied anti-thesis, right from its title. I argue that, with the experiences and struggles of main character, Julius and other African migrant characters in the story, Cole demonstrates the openness of the city of New York and Brussels through the possibility of migration. In the same breath, Cole demonstrates the closeness of the city through moments of racial hostility and inequality, suggesting boundaries between the immigrant and the host population. As such, I conclude that Afropolitan politics pervade Teju's work, against his constant denial of such temper and popular reading of the work as more cosmopolitan than Afropolitan.

The fourth and final piece in my portfolio is one of the position papers I wrote on one of the film texts required for the Black Film Seminar class I took with Dr. Khani Begum. In the paper titled "Celebrate Our Ways": Africanisms as Resistance Tools to Culture Death in Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust,* I examine how Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* exemplifies a graphic retelling of the ways that African cultural patterns circulate through the networks of black transnational and intranational migrations. The paper raises the questions: What functions do African traditional beliefs serve in the lives of those descendants of former slaves at Ibo landing? Of what value is embracement of the mainstream American culture to the empowerment of African Americans? It interprets Africanisms in *Daughters of the Dust* as tools of resistance against culture death and identity loss that racism, labor exploitation, and other forces of modernity strive to foist on the diaspora black people. As its conclusion, the paper argues that *Daughters of the Dust* archives a vast repertoire of trans-Atlantic memory, evidences the survival of African culture in African-American literature, and essentially educates on the migrations of such aesthetic forms from the South to the North of America, and of course, to the rest of the world.

For all of the works I have selected for this portfolio, I have had the privilege of review suggestions from my advisor, Dr. Khani Begum, to whom I am immensely indebted for her patience and constructive criticism. Through Dr. Begum's invaluable corrections and suggestions, I learned a great deal in syntax, ordering of ideas, and analytical depth. The review process, therefore, developed me in the art of argument making, ordering, as well as grounding.

Although I have taken classes in American and European literature in the course of my MA program, my intellectual engagement and scholarly interest has revolved principally around race relations, race theories, postcolonialism and diaspora studies. All these, I believe, reflect in the works I have selected for this portfolio. Looking back, I realize that I have learned and develop a great deal, especially in the area of theory interpretation, familiarization with canonical figures and texts in critical theories. Having taken classes in Middle Eastern literature and film, South Eastern migrant literature and minority American literatures, I found lines of connections among thematic concerns in works of writers and producers of these identities. I therefore intend to engage more in comparative analysis of diasporic works of Third World writers and film producers with a view to exploring issues of racial inequalities and global imbalance in the 21st century globalized world. Similarly, I have had the privilege teaching two composition classes in the course of my study. These classes not only offered me an opportunity to develop and hone my teaching skills and persona, they also provided learning moments for me as far as the art of writing is concerned. Going forward, I hope to engage in further reviews of contents of this portfolio for publication opportunities, and develop more on all the great skills that this program has afforded me towards preparation for a lifelong career.

Afropolitan Temper in Contemporary Diaspora African Fiction: Narratives of Belonging and Home in Teju Cole's *Open City* and Taye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*

Introduction

For decades, migration has been an important part of African history. And since literature serves as a veritable compass with which social realities are navigated, it is no surprise that the phenomenon of migration and its attendant social conditions have, at different epochs, inspired the emergence of a body of literature that reflects the experiential effects of global and intercultural movements on the lives of migrants. As Sara Marzagora notes, the earliest documented form of migration in Africa is the Trans-Atlantic slave trade that recorded the transportation of millions of Africans to Europe and the Americas through the Middle Passage. Slavery, the social phenomenon that resulted from this form of migration and diasporic experiences, generated its own body of literature. This literature was largely characterized with the horrors and de-humanizing experience of slavery and quest for freedom, among other themes. The experiences of this group of migrants were captured in some autobiographical works like *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, related by Himself* (1770), Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano, The African Slave, written by Himself* (1789) among many others.

In modern times, on a different note, relatively voluntary mass migrations have become a global experience. From the twentieth century to the present time, the world has witnessed a significant wave of migration. In many Third World countries, the early post-independence period bred migrants who were forced out of their home countries by economic, political and social turbulence and instability. Many Third World citizens find themselves steeped in the quagmire of post-independence disillusionment and neocolonial misery. Hence, they find

alternatives through migrating to First and Second World countries in search of better living conditions. Sorem captures this trend in a broader context when he records:

> Like no other, the 20th century is characterized by large-scale migration across the globe. Two world wars, processes of decolonization, and the emergence of totalitarian regimes have changed the perception and understanding of concepts such as identity, belonging and home. Bringing about waves of migrants, refugees and exiles alike, these historical and social events have made the migrant the protagonist of the 20th century. Naturally, the phenomenon of migration has influenced the different national literatures as much as postcolonial literatures (1).

Sorem's historical record here, no doubt, becomes useful for the understanding of how diasporic writing has evolved to attain the present day prominence in Modern African literature. The phenomenon of mass migration from post-colonial Africa that Sorem describes has resultantly produced writers of African descent but with western experience and hybrid sensibilities.

Unlike the 20th century African migrant narratives mainly preoccupied with the projection of the positives of African values to the world, however, contemporary diasporic African writings have shifted focus from holistic engagement with socio-political events in Africa. A new crop of young migrant writers has taken over the front line of the literary scene. Diasporic writers such as Taiye Selasi, Teju Cole, Noviolet Bulawayo, Chris Abani, Helen Oyeyemi, Chimamanda Adichie and others are gaining global readership for the distinct subjects that their works explore. These writers explore wider themes; they engage with representation of woes and struggles that beset the "motherland," struggles with displacement, exile and identity crisis. Beyond the themes common to previous diasporic writings, new migrant writers have their sensibilities molded by the contemporary notions of cosmopolitanism, globalization, and liminality. Several works, especially those published post-2010 re-present new relationships in diasporic spaces. This, of course, cannot be divorced from the new rhetorical order of hostility

over the discourse of migration, globalization and cosmopolitan values. Unlike their forebears who had less worries over the perception of their identities in their intellectual and professional spaces abroad, the new migrant writer is increasingly confronted with the need to create, construct, define, and substantiate the African identity in the diasporic spaces from a large corpus of migration discourse. The contemporary world order of transnational hostility and reinvigorated racial profiling necessitates that African migrants redefine their identity, rethink what constitutes 'home' for them and renegotiate the terms of their belonging to foreign lands. This research, therefore, investigates how these agenda find expression in fiction works of African diasporic writers.

Of the many contemporary migrant writers and their works, this study will examine Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011) and Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2013), to underscore the new tropes of redefinition of 'home', new attitude towards 'home' belonging and the construction of the identity of the contemporary Diaspora Africans, and the politics of belonging that run through new African diasporic writings. Both authors of the texts chosen for this study grew up in their natal home, have lived in different countries and even carry multiple passports of different countries. These writers are cosmopolitan writers and they attempt to redefine and reconstruct the issue of home, belonging and identity in their writings. The two works not only reflect globalization and the phenomenon of migration in contemporary time, they also engage globalization's attendant consequences of transnationality and trans-territoriality. With critical attention to the different ways identity is treated in these works, this study seeks to examine the ways new migrant writers have reflected how globalization result in more unstable identities in the age of increasing intolerance of racial and cultural differences.

My research seeks to explore the thematic shift from the somewhat Afrocentric, Negritudinal narrative of modern African migrant writers to the more contemporary engagement of the popular cosmopolitan ideals of the 21st century in their literary works. Of course, there has been huge scholarly attention focused on diaspora African writings, however, this scholarship has largely focused on the engagement of social maladies at home, nostalgic depiction of the African cultural past, the trauma of exile and longing for 'home'(which in the Afrocentric narrative of the past is necessarily Africa) in diasporic African writings. (Emeyonu 1999; Prieb 2005; Adesanmi 2005, Zeleza; 2005, Ojaide 2012) However, contemporary diasporic writers have treated the issue of migration differently in recent works. Because many of these writers are either born in the West (some of them to parents of different races and nationalities) or migrated from childhood and raised within Western cultures, their construction of identity and home has become fluid. This necessitates new readings focusing on the cosmopolitan sensibilities of these authors and their embracement of their multiple mores while they struggle to define their complex identities. Ojaide (2012) envisages that with time, diasporic African writers may develop their own diasporic identity, since globalization and migration have greatly impacted their literature so much that one may find it difficult whether these writers are still African writers or writers of a different socio-cultural reality. (38) This appears like a prediction but, interestingly, such identity development that Ojaide predicts had already been in existence for seven years at the time of this prediction. This identity has been tagged "the Afropolitan identity." Nonetheless, this distinct identity for the contemporary African diaspora, though it began to gain prominence in theory and philosophy since Mbembe's essay, *Afropolitanism* (2007), did not gain prominence as a critical tool for reading diasporic writings until more recently.

This study, therefore, attempts to add a critical voice to the relatively new view of diasporic African writing from the Afropolitanist critical perspective. It principally aims to examine new African diasporic writers whose works aesthetically interrogate such issues as the question of cosmopolitan hospitality, fluidity of home, and development of distinct identity. This group of migrant writers are regarded as Afropolitans. 'Afropolitan' is a term popularized by Ghanaian-Nigerian author and photographer, Taiye Selasi, who also considers herself a local of Berlin, New York, and Rome. The term, Afropolitan, therefore, is in part, a product of Selasi's interrogation of her place in her multiple worlds and her quest to offering an identity label for other African immigrants of cosmopolitan orientation who crave to understand their positioning in the world defined by identity politics. Selasi introduces the word Afropolitan in her essay, *Bye Bye Babar (Or: What is an Afropolitan?* (2005). In *Bye Bye Barbar, Selasi* comprehensively declares:

> We are Afropolitans - the newest generation of African emigrants coming soon, or collected already, at a law firm/chem lab/ jazz lounge near you. You'll know us when you see us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes. Some of us are ethnic mixes, e.g. Ghanaian/Jamaican, Nigerian/Swiss; others are merely cultural mutts: American accent, European affect, African ethos. Most of us are multilingual: in addition to English and a Romantic language or two, we understand some indigenous language(s) and speak a few urban vernaculars. There is at least one place on the Continent to which we tie our sense of self: be it a nation-state (Ethiopia), a city (Ibadan), or simply an Auntie's kitchen. Then there's the G8 city or two (or three) that we know like the backs of our hands, and the institutions (corporate, academic) that know us for our famed work ethic. We are Afropolitans - not citizens, but Africans, of the world. (36)

On the surface, this declaration from Selasi's seminal article could be interpreted as only an attempt at labelling a distinct group of immigrants in Europe and America, an attempt at defining the Afropolitan identity. But *Bye Bye Barbar* does not only offer a critical agency for self-understanding and self-interpretation for the Afropolitan, it also introduces a new theoretical

tool necessary for a radical break with a longer intellectual history of emancipatory politics in African studies. Selasi may have initiated the conversation around the Afropolitan discourse, however, Achilles Mbembe has densely theorized the term and offered it a footing in the interdisciplinary studies of literature, philosophy and identity politics.

At the center of this study, therefore, are the questions: How do global economic, social and political realities affect the acceptance and integration of African migrants into Western societies? How does diaspora African fiction complicate the contemporary relationships between previously colonized populations and the populations living in former imperial centers of power? Since Afropolitanism as a theory and philosophy suggests the idea of Africans belonging to the world while strictly maintaining their African identity, what implication does this have on the idea of globalization and cosmopolitan ideals? How does Diaspora African fiction constitute the literary and artistic front for the propagation of the Afropolitanist idea? To answer these questions, I will, in subsequent chapters, engage in critical textual analysis of the works of two contemporary diasporic African writers, Taiye Selasi and Teju Cole, with a particular focus on their respective novels, *Ghana Must Go*, and *Open City*.

According to Kinzel, contemporary issues in migrant writings reveal a fusion of the cultures that they have interacted with. As a result, these writings are defined by consistent chunks of hybridity, cultural pluralism, cultural polyvalence, multiculturalism, and the essence of these conditions in the global world. It is the inflexibility of the contemporary Western societies regarding the multiplicity of cultural forms and the necessity for the diaspora Africans to define and redefine themselves, and their home, that this study seeks to engage. Hence, works of postcolonial theorists like Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Frantz Fanon will be used as theoretical guides for this study. Homi Bhabha's *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of*

Colonial Discourse, Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?,* Fanon's *A Dying Colonialism*, and Said's *Orientalism Reconsidered* provide useful impetus for the understanding of hybrid identities, cultural polyvalence and reasons for the necessity for writers from postcolonial nations to assert themselves and represent their realities within the global community. While postcolonial theory and theorists are central to the study for their engagements with diaspora, hybridity, identity, and home, the twin theories of cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism provide useful theoretical guides to foreground the many layers of instability that have become prevalent in migrants' existence. Robert Young, in his essay, *Cosmopolitan Idea and National sovereignty*, raises several questions, most striking among which is "how new forms of belonging in a world marked by migration, diaspora and transnational labor might be understood in relation to those older forms of singular cultural identification." (137) This question makes a perfect theoretical compass for this study as its major aim is to reflect on how interracial, inter-ethnic, and international relationships could induce cultural dislocation and alienation in cosmopolitan Africans' psyche and cause them to attempt to renegotiate new ways of relating with the rest of the world.

Background to Diasporic African Literature

While I have selected only two diasporic African texts for this study, it is important to note that there is a plethora of fiction works by African writers resident in countries outside of the continent that have continued to put Africa on the map of global literature. These works continue to further major thematic issues in the genre known as Modern African Literature, or put in its more globally understood sense, post-colonial African Literature. For about two decades now, Diaspora African literature has made a strong impact on world literatures and cultures. Ayo Kehinde (2009) substantiates this claim with the argument that "the myriad of

Prizes that have been won by African writers in Europe *and America* (emphasis mine) and the growing interest in the reception of their works demonstrate the validity of the contributions of diaspora African writers to world literature." (1) In some sense, diasporic African narratives could be viewed thematically as a semblance of works produced by African writers resident in various African countries. Indeed, when the preoccupation of many diasporic African writings with the post-independence disillusionment in Africa is considered, one could safely argue that although diaspora African writers write from a different geographical space, they have tended to write on a similar literary and political space. However, given the socio-political realities of the foreign space from where they write, the plurality of experiences that they have to contend with as immigrants, diaspora African writers reflect motifs other than the reality of African situations in their works. Kehinde attempts a comprehensive critique of the complexity of matters in diaspora African writings thus:

> Diasporic African fictions (most especially of Europe-based writers) have taken three principal directions in recent times. One, there is the influence of the visionary style and picaresque narrative of Latin American magical realists. Such works now take African fiction into the once uncharted territory. The second variety of African fictions in exile comprises those that are preoccupied with social and political themes of a kind well established in African writings. The third category of African fictions in the diaspora initiates a new wave of critical thinking; the writers in this camp view their works as an unproblematic synthesis of the Western and the African modes of fiction writing. This blend of autochthonous and imported cultures allows the writers to patronize many of the conventions of '-isms' – postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, multiculturalism, cross-culturalism and feminism. (1-2)

Kehinde's explication of the many faces of diasporic writings here does not only emphasize the predominant matter and manner of the genre, but also attempts a categorization of diaspora African Literature's stylistic and thematic preoccupation. The second variety of diasporic writers that Kehinde refers to here represents African writers who had left the continent in the wake of

military dictatorships all over Africa to seek asylum because they were regarded as endangered species in their home countries. This category of writers continued to preoccupy themselves with criticism of neocolonialism in Africa while in exile. They demonstrated critical and aesthetic commitment to fixing their countries, employing literature to build consciousness among their countrymen with the hope of achieving a home worthy of their return. I must quickly clarify here, nonetheless, that while Kehinde's attempt at categorization succeeds in highlighting some of the fascinations of diasporic writing, such clear-cut distinctions in thematic concentrations in diasporic fictions seem to have been blurred in works that are more contemporary. The newly published work by the Nigerian-American novelist, Tomi Adeyemi, *Children of Blood and Bone,* offers us a fine example of the possibility of blending the African narrative forms, spirituality, and cultural space to project socio-political realities of a Western country like the United States. Adeyemi's novel employs magic and fantasy to construct an allegory of the modern black experience in America.

It is also worthy of note that diasporic African authorship is characterized by writers from different generations with different artistic commitments determined by the exegeses of the moment each generation narrates. Tanure Ojaide attempts a classification of the different generations of diasporic African writers into three broad categories- those born in Africa in the 1940s and 1950s, those born in Africa post 1960s and those born abroad. According to Ojaide, the first category grew up and schooled in Africa. As such, they tend to compare their native African environment to the new Western environment, engage Africa with a sense of nostalgia and often maintain an African identity in a foreign land. Diaspora writers in this category will include the Ethiopian Nega Mezlekia, the South African Zakes Mda, and others whose works- *The God Who Begat a Jackal, The Heart of Redness* respectively- are steeped in nostalgia and

grounded in the African folkloric traditions. Through these authors' arts, therefore, they maintain and project the African identity in foreign lands. (Ojaide 32-33) Adesanmi describes Ojaide's second category of diaspora African writers as "children of post-colony." (967) These writers, according to Adesanmi and Danton include diasporic Nigerian authors like Sefi Atta, Helon Habila, Chris Abani, Chika Unigwe, Helen Oyeyemi, Teju Cole, Unoma Azuah, Biyi Bandele, Maik Nwosu, Okey Ndibe, Chuma Nwokolo, Segun Afolabi, Uwen Akpan and Uzodinma Iweala. Others include Mengestu, Noviolet Bulawayo, Binyanvanga Wainaina, Claixthe Beyala, Syl Cheney Coker, and Doreen Bangana from different other African countries. These writers are African-born but domiciled outside their birth homes. Although born in Africa, many of them are children of immigrants who, by this fact, school in the West and as a result possess only vague memories of Africa's traditional environment and society. However, this category of diaspora African writers also have to contend with issues of belonging since they find acceptance into their various foreign countries difficult. Therefore, they also turn to Africa to draw narrative inspiration. Unlike their literary forebears, these writers reflect little sense of nostalgia for the continent's cultural and traditional past. Instead, they preoccupy themselves with reflections of the worrisome living conditions in their home country and the unwelcoming atmosphere in their host country, in their works. They consciously and consistently strive to maintain affiliations with their home country. These writers channel their creative energy towards portrayal of the realities in their natal homes as they constantly strive to give expression to their interest in the affairs of their home country from diasporic spaces. The contemporary diasporic African fiction with thematic focus on home, belonging and identity in a cosmopolitan world, therefore, constitutes the third category.

Historically, Modern African Literature is shaped by colonial discourse and criticism around this literary canon has been hugely anchored on post-colonial disillusionment and neo-colonialism. From its early preoccupation to its contemporary focus, African literary works either by writers resident in the continent or diaspora African writers, are largely wrapped in the theoretical concept of postcolonialism. Although postcolonial issues of race and identity still pervade contemporary diasporic African writings, Selasi's Afropolitanism however introduces a new critical and philosophical tool for the interpretation of the contemporary body of literary works produced by diaspora African writers, many of whom retain either residency or nationality of multiple countries.

To offer a rationalization and theoretical grounding for Afropolitanism, Achilles Mbembe interrogates the effectiveness of 20th century theories such as Negritude, Pan-Africanism, and Postcolonialism for the interpretation of new African fictions essentially preoccupied with the exploration of new ways Africa must relate with the rest of the world. (Mbembe 2007) According to Mbembe and Nuttall (2004), "In an attempt to overturn predominant readings of Africa, we need to identify sites within the continent...not usually dwelt upon in research and public discourse, that defamiliarize commonplace readings of Africa." For Mbembe and Nuttall, the contemporary Africa must awaken to the fact of its multiplicity, including racial multiplicity, which are also constituents of its identity. Again, the contemporary Africa must understand diversity of orientations in Africa after years of migration, intermixture and cultural transmission. As such, such philosophies that pigeon-hole Africa within the box of black solidarity only within the continent will have to give way for those that envision the future as a product of change and exchange.

Similarly, in their introduction to the 13th Issue of the *Invisible Culture Journal,* Maia Dauner and Cynthia Fao raise the question of how the methodologies of thinkers such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Edward Said, and Dipesh Chakrabarty (amongst many others) are being articulated today. Dauaner and Fao are essentially concerned with the possibilities and limitations that forms of theorization such as, neocolonialism, post-postcolonialism, or cosmopolitanism offer for the interpretation of contemporary cultural expressions. These include fashion, music, art, literature and matters of spirituality.

As a reaction to Dauner and Fao's concern therefore, I argue here that Afropolitanism as a theoretical conception represents one of the new ways of articulating the postcolonial as the theory is positioned as a subset of the cosmopolitan discourse. My argument here relies on Mbembe's description of the theory as that which recognizes "the presence of elsewhere here, the interweaving of worlds- the here and there," (105) caused by movement of Black, and non-Black people in, out, and throughout Africa." I argue that one major site where the Afropolitan politics finds deep grounding is in contemporary diasporic African fiction. This body of literary works is characterized with migration, hybridity and largely preoccupied with thematic concerns such as race politics in the West, interrogation of cosmopolitan ideals of world citizenship and hospitality, identity; and the ambivalence of the meaning of home in the cosmopolitan age. Even though many of the writers categorized as contemporary diasporic African authors avoid the politics of labelling that Afropolitanism offers, their works continue to betray Afropolitan ideals. For instance, Chimamanda Adichie and Teju Cole constantly express disapproval for any attempt to pigeon-hole them into particular labels, including being Afropolitan, yet they have demonstrated the Afropolitan character both in and out of their art. In an interview with NPR, United States, Chimamanda Adichie says: "I don't think of myself as anything like a 'global

citizen' or anything of the sort. I am just a Nigerian who's comfortable in other places." (NPR Author Interveiw, May 11, 2013) This remark clearly reflects one of the many Afropolitan characteristics that Selasi explicates. A critical exploration of works of these authors would also lend credence to their Afropolitan sensibilities, a preoccupation that is at the core of this study.

In the next chapter, this study will focus on a robust review of literature on the core theoretical concepts that inspire my reading of *Open City* and *Ghana Must Go*. I will concentrate the third chapter on the interrogation of the Afropolitan identity construction and the question of home and belonging in *Open City*. Besides attending to the Afropolitanist thematic content in the novel, I will take a critical look at the form and language employed by the writer and how this constitutes a way of defining the writer's identity as an Afropolitan.

The fourth chapter will focus on the examination of how Selasi x-rays and redefines the notions of home, belonging and identity in *Ghana must go.* In her novel, Selasi forcefully fights against the pigeon-holing of Africans into predictable labels and stereotypes. I will therefore concentrate my critical lens on how Selasi presents characters in ways that they represent new identity construction for the African immigrant. Selasi is a pathfinding voice in discourse creation and development of the Afropolitan theory and politics, therefore, this chapter on her work will focus on the interrogation of how her characters, themes, and narrative techniques synthesize to reflect her Afropolitanist politics.

Having critically analyzed the two texts selected for the study in chapter three and four, the fifth and the last chapter will summarize my findings and arguments. The chapter will bring the two texts into conversation in terms of the differences and similarities in how they engage issues of belonging, home, and identity in relation to the socio-political realities of the African

Immigrant. This chapter will also communicate my conclusion on the subject matter of this study

and, perhaps, suggest possible critical focus(es) for further studies.

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Postcolonialism, Cosmopolitanism and the Afropolitan Theory: A Review of Literature

Introduction

Diasporic African literature remains a subset of Modern African Literature, a sub-genre of literature in constant romance with the postcolonial theoretical paradigm. However, studies in contemporary literary criticism insist that postcolonialism has become irrelevant in efforts at making sense of issues in the contemporary era of globalization and new forms of migrancy. This raises a critical question on the appropriateness of postcolonial theory to unlocking issues posed in contemporary diasporic texts. Nevertheless, a deeper look at the tenets of theories such as globalization, cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and diaspora give the impression that these theories are deeply rooted in postcolonial theoretical postulations. Hence, my conviction that, though this study attempts a specific analysis of contemporary diasporic African texts in Afropolitan theoretical terms, there remains a need for recognition of the theory as a study in postcolonial discourse. In this chapter, therefore, I take a critical look at three theoretical concepts that constitute the theoretical framework upon which the textual analysis in subsequent chapters is anchored. Here, I examine the relationship between postcolonialism, cosmopolitanism, and Afropolitanism, while also foregrounding and making relevant connections between the literature on these three theories

Postcolonialism, Cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism: A Theoretical Background

In the wake of the concentration of critical discourses from different fields of intellectual enquiries on the subject of globalization and transnational relationships, there have been arguments that postcolonial theory has reached a dead end. Several critics aver that it is time to move beyond postcolonial theory. In their *Empire* Trilogy, Hardt and Negri claim that old empires perished long ago, and the postcolonial condition no longer explains the current global

order. (127-129) In a more nuanced position, Robert Fraser (2000) suggests that Postcolonial theory in the old sense is dead (230). However, critics like Diana Brydon find all such arguments premature. Brydon (2004) suggests that instead of declaring the theory dead, the project of postcolonialism only needs to be more fully articulated, particularly in relation to defining the goals of such work, its starting points, its shifting terminologies, and its limits, especially now that globalization appears to have appropriated much of its discursive space. Similarly, Stuart Hall (1996) also suggests the need to rethink postcolonialism in dialogue with globalization. Brydon and Hall's positions and the tasks they pose for contemporary thinkers on transnational relationship between the Third World and the West appear more useful than pronouncing premature obituaries for postcolonial theory. In essence, there is a connection between postcolonial theory and the contemporary theories of globalization, cosmopolitanism, and diaspora.

In her seminal paper entitled *Future Directions of Postcolonial Studies (2012)*, Janet Wilson details the versatility of postcolonial discourse, the relevance of postcolonial theory to different fields of discourse, and of course, the theory's utilitarian values to the contemporary world of movements, globalization, and their many attendant complexities. According to Wilson, postcolonial critics have a crucial role to play in introducing reading practices that identify literary strategies, and assess their effectiveness in pointing to a need for a reconsideration of social, political and cultural inequities on a global scale. Relatedly, Ania Loomba et al (2005) argue in their *Introduction to Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, that 'it is important to go beyond a certain kind of postcolonial studies in order to engage with the imperial formations and ideologies associated with globalization.' (9) This, perhaps, suggests the reason for the

encroachment of globalization, and ancillary theories such as cosmopolitanism and diaspora studies into the postcolonial discourse.

As much as scholarly and theoretical efforts at explaining events in the contemporary world of movement and economic migration have found theories such as globalization and diaspora useful and perhaps, more appropriate, the conversations continue to center around politicized issues of racism and neo-imperialism. The place of formerly colonized peoples and countries in the global order continues to be questioned, while restrictions and hostilities continue to define the experiences of immigrants from so-called third world counties. As such, new theoretical paradigms for the interrogation of international relationships among countries and peoples continue to revolve around the Center-Margin divide, therefore reflecting only a reinvigorated engagement with issues that have traditionally constituted the tenets of postcolonial discourse. By implication, therefore, the relatively new theories such as diaspora studies and cosmopolitanism only supplement the ethical import of postcolonial discourse and provide necessary readjustment to its focus as changes in situations demand. In recent time, postcolonial practitioners have focused more on the neo-imperial practices that define the new global condition. As Simon Gikandi observes, the temporal horizons of the field now focus less on 'the narrative of decolonization' than on neocolonial imbalances- inequalities, poverty and oppression- in the postcolonial present. In essence, Gikandi here admits that the new popular terms operate within the frame of postcolonial discourse, only with twists in focus informed by change in time and accompanying experiences.

The foregoing assertions have been given credence in the works of prominent postcolonial theorists like Fanon, Said, Spivak, and Bhabha. Although there are significant differences in the complexities of their individual work, these theorists' brand of postcolonialism

valorizes exilic, cosmopolitan, and diasporic perspectives and literary modes of reading the world as text. Homi Bhabha's focus on the "transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities" (1994:5) is worthy of reference here. Bhabha himself notes the changed basis for making international connections in the late twentieth century and sees postcoloniality as 'a salutary reminder of the persistent neo-colonial relations with the new world order and the multi-national division of labor.' Bhabha's interest in cultural difference, migrant sensibilities, performances of identity, and the "unhomely" as 'a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition'(9) therefore remains relevant to the contemporary exploration of transnational relationship. His notion of the politics of location continues to contribute to the blur between postcoloniality and such theories as diaspora studies and cosmopolitanism as they are recently popularly explored. Like Bhabha, Fanon also hints at the subject of migrancy and the troubles of the black migrant in his work, *Black Skin, White Mask.* While Fanon's work has been most popularly read as seminar in postcolonial theorizing, his critique of the white gaze on the body of black migrant's (From the Martinique) in France, in a way, connects with the contemporary outcry over racist treatment of the black migrant in the West. Fanon projects: "If my children are sniffed at, if the whites of their fingernails are examined. It will be simply because society has not changed."(179) This, I believe, could be Fanon's foreshadowing of the debate over when postcoloniality becomes irrelevant, with his contribution being "when global relations cease to be determined by racial differences."

Against this backdrop, my argument, clearly put, is that postcolonialism is yet to exhaust its energies and neither has it been normalized. Rather, the theory's critical edge is only undergoing a regeneration necessitated by time. Such regeneration, therefore takes different languages and terminologies, including cosmopolitanism, globalization, and diaspora. These

concepts have each emerged and touted as contenders for describing a new problem-space that might replace the postcolonial. However, I argue that they only expand the frontiers of the postcolonial discourse. This is considering that conversations around these concepts center on global opportunities and global imbalance; topics central to postcolonial concerns, especially as they touch on relationship between the center and the margin. That postcolonialism has outlived its importance, therefore, would be a fallacy as the theory continues to strive to accomplish the work it set out to do while embracing modifications necessary to achieve transformational ends. Thus, even though this study is directly rooted in Afropolitanism as a mode of theoretical interpretation of the selected texts, I must establish here, its background as an offshoot of postcolonial studies.

National Identity and Global Citizenship: Afropolitan Space in Cosmopolitan Discourse

Providing a conceptual root for cosmopolitanism as a modern European philosophy, several scholars have traced the word to a long history stretching back to ancient Greece and Rome (Nussbaum, 1997; Inglis and Robertson, 2004; Cheah, 2006). According to Cheah, the word 'cosmopolitan' derives from the Greek words for 'world' (*cosmos*) and 'city' (*polis*). Cheah therefore defines the cosmopolitan as "a man without a fixed abode, or better, a man who is nowhere a stranger," a citizen of the world. (487) Cosmopolitanism combines two ideas, of the world as a whole (*cosmos*) with that of the world as a political community *(polis)*. Deriving from this, cosmopolitanism refers to the idea of a global politics involving citizens of the world. In cosmopolitanism, therefore, is the embedded idea that citizenship can or ought to be founded on the basis of a global community composed of citizens of the world-cosmopolitans. An ideal cosmopolitanism would therefore be one characterized with the worldview that all humans have

a duty to be responsible for each other irrespective of geographical or political borders or cultural differences. In cosmopolitan thought therefore, the ultimate unit of moral concern are individual human beings, not sates or other specific forms of human association. Accordingly, cosmopolitanism suggests that humankind belongs to a single moral realm in which each person is regarded as equally worthy of respect and consideration regardless of national or cultural origins.

As scholars contend, over time, cosmopolitanism is multi-dimensional. Skrbis and Woodward (2013), for instance, identify four "acceptable" dimensions of cosmopolitanism: the cultural, political, ethical and methodological- all, though, delicately intertwined. In this part of this chapter, however, I shall concentrate attention on the ethical assumptions of cosmopolitanism both as a philosophical concept and as a theory, and how these assumptions reconcile (or fail to reconcile) with the experiences of African immigrants in the contemporary global order. The world is undoubtedly interconnecting and migration across borders is clearly on the rise. Some will also argue that the internet has also allowed for transnational interactions and cross-sharing of aspects of cultures and ideologies on an international basis. The questions, however, are: does this rise in transnational migration, physical and virtual, inevitably engender meaningful cosmopolitanisms in the robust sense of pluralized world political communities? Do transnational migrants enjoy, in the ethical sense of it, institutionalized forms of cosmopolitan solidarity? Apart from occasional institutional interventions on behalf of underprivileged migrant minority groups, to what extent is the 21st century world of constitutional nation-states committed to generating a genuine global community as distinguished from the defensive identity politics of ethnic, religious or hybrid minority constituencies? In recent time, the concept of cosmopolitanism has taken a plural dimension among scholars. This plurality is characterized

by scholars' withdrawal into regional enclaves while questioning the reality of their belonging in global schemes. What implication does this plurality have on the idea of the world as one and, all humans as citizens of one world? One regional variety of the cosmopolitanism whose popularity is recently rising is Afropolitanism, suggesting the idea of Africans belonging to the world while strictly maintaining their African identity. Does this reconcile with the cosmopolitan ethics of inclusiveness and possible disappearance of otherness?

Diogenes, Kant, Nussbaum, Derrida and the Cosmopolitan Ethics

The idea of cosmopolitanism is predicated upon openness to others and an ethics of inclusiveness. These principles preponderantly run through the history of cosmopolitan thoughts. From the ancient Greek Diogenes' stoic cosmopolitanism identified in Maddox (2015), to Kant, Nussbaum, and Derrida, cosmopolitanism emphasizes world citizenry, universal obligations of hospitality and objectives of peace and human dignity for everyone. Skrbis and Woodward note that cosmopolitan ethics have shifted, or rather, been modified, through historical stages represented by Diogenes, Kant and Nussbaum. While Diogenes' declaration of himself as a "citizen of the world" marks the first defining idea of cosmopolitanism, Kant's writings on the subject, expands the idea to include themes associated with peace in free states, republican form of government, equality of citizens, and hospitality and the right of strangers. According to Kant (1975), the right of strangers to hospitable treatment is a right derived:

> by the virtue of their common ownership of the earth's surface; for since the earth is a globe, they cannot scatter themselves infinitely, but must, finally, tolerate living in close proximity, because originally, no one had a greater right to any region of the earth than anyone else. (118)

Kant's conception of hospitality is, no doubt, informed by openness and moral ethic, nonetheless, his openness is quite a modified version of unrestricted universalism implied in Diogenes' "world citizenship". Kant's kind of openness is regulated in that it recognizes the regulatory role of the state over peace and hospitality.

In her essay, *Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,* Nussbaum (1996) argues for the need for cosmopolitan education. In Nussbaum's view, education, and by extension, individuals' worldview must be inherently international in orientation. She argues that the education system must be such that encourages students to learn not only about their immediate environment but also about other cultures, places and civilizations. Nussbaum's argument here relates with the Diogene's universal ideal tagged in Maddox (2015) as Stoic Cosmopolitanism, as it elevates humanity above local or national belongingness. Nussbaum's intervention, therefore, also rests critically on the idea of openness and universalism as reference points for practical ethical action.

We can argue, therefore, that the classical conception of the cosmopolitan ideal represented in Diogenes' proclamation of himself as world citizen, Kant's ideal of strangers' right to hospitality and, of course, Nussbaum's internationalism all converge around the notion of openness towards humanity. Despite the historical specificities that may differently underlie these thoughts, they all agree on the value of universalism and the need to engage humanity beyond local solidarity. And while these three cosmopolitan thinkers and the ideas they present are not exhaustive in the understanding of the concept, their thoughts illustrate the fact that openness to humanity and embracement of diversity constitute the fundamental ethics of cosmopolitanism, whether in the ancient time or in its current conception.

Jacques Derrida(2010) however relived Kant's idea of openness and hospitality as cosmopolitan ethics. In his essay, *On Cosmopolitanism*, Derrida argues for the return of the idea

of "city of refuge" as a means to deemphasize the authority of the state and prioritize "an audacious call for genuine innovation in the history of the right to asylum or the duty of hospitality. (413) He proposes that the "city of refuge" be independent of the state. For Derrida, cosmopolitan hospitality presents particular foundations that must be considered when addressing the present day issue of asylum. This argument is against the background of Arendt's (1965) reflection on how both nation states and international laws failed to provide adequate right for the vulnerable people that the World Wars of the 20th century rendered stateless. Here, Derrida identifies the "gap separating the great and generous principle of the right to asylum…and the historical reality or the effective implementation of these principles- controlled, curbed and monitored by juridical restrictions" informed by overt consideration for the "demographico-economic" interest of the nation-state that regulates Asylum. (416) This essentially justifies the limitation to the implied regulation of the state recognized in Kant's notion of cosmopolitan hospitality that I earlier pointed out. Whereas Derrida reminds us of Kant's pronouncement that hospitality is not a philanthropic gesture towards the stranger but his right to be treated "without hostility," he exposes how the state's interest may override such ethical consideration; thus, his justification for the independence of the city of refuge from the nation-state.

What is however missing from Derrida or Kant's consideration of hospitality as universal human right, but has dominated recent global discourse on human migration is the question of national sovereignty- and by extension the security concerns of a sovereign nation. Considering the contemporary reality of stiffened borders, Delanty's (2006) reminder that we should treat cosmopolitan ethics only as a process for acceptance and embracing of difference becomes instructive. Although cosmopolitan ethics may appear lofty, such a utopian possibility of human

movement uncontained by boundaries and borders does not exist in our world. As Delanty,

advises, cosmopolitan ethics of a borderless world could only guide our moral perspective, our

reality is far from such a utopia.

Moreover, postcolonial and cultural studies scholars like Bhabha (1996) and Appiah

(2006) approach the study and critique of cosmopolitanism by challenging the Eurocentric nature

of the idea, loosening it from Kant's or Derrida's strict universalism and maintaining that

universals are inevitably articulated from particular perspectives. Bhabha's postcolonial analysis

denaturalizes such concepts as global citizenship and global politics held by earlier scholars as

transcending boundaries of time and place. These scholars have contributed to broadening the

consideration of issues of ethics and cosmopolitanism while narrowing their research focuses to

bringing insights to bear on populations and human experiences that are often overlooked. To

Appiah and Bhabha, cosmopolitanism in the historical European sense propagating ethical ideas

of indifference to nationality and citizenship bear no valence with the current reality. Indeed, the

current global regime of nation-states and national sovereignty inevitably creates all manners of

gaps and cracks between cosmopolitan ethics and practical reality of border crossing and

integration of strangers.

Afropolitanism: A Paradox of the Cosmopolitan Ideal?

The term, Afropolitanism, as a conceptual paradigm for the definition of the African

migrant's way of belonging to the rest of the world has become popular in cultural and literary

scholarship around African migration since Taye Selasi's (2005) widely disseminated essay,

"Bye-Bye, Babar (Or: What is an Afropolitan?).The concept has, however, since then, been

further developed by Mbembe (2005, 2007, 2010, 2017), and greeted with publications of

several acclaimed literary works from years 2011 to 2013 by authors considered as Afropolitans,

followed by critical and controversial voices for and against the concept. It is no gainsaying that Afropolitanism emerged as an offshoot of cosmopolitanism, especially considering that cross-border mobility, whether digital or physical, is central to the concept. Afropolitanism is however, a concept emerging as an attempt at giving due visibility to Africa within the cosmopolitan order of the 21st century in which the African image is largely of victimhood.

According to Selasi, Afropolitanism is characterized with a romanticized rootedness in an African country or city, expression of authentic African mores while connecting with the rest of the world, critical stance on but refusal to oversimplify what is ailing in Africa "alongside their desire to honor what is wonderful, unique" in the continent. Afropolitans are also defined by their extensive narration and representation of Africans' capability for excellence and, rejection of the Western media's single narrative of Africa as a continent of perpetual blight. These Afropolitan characteristics interestingly bear some semblance, or at least, are not at variance with what Appiah's proposed as major virtues of the contemporary cosmopolitan: curiosity beyond the habitual (57), the capacity for conversation across cultures (85) and the will to respect pluralism (144). Critically, examined, therefore, Appiah's cosmopolitanism can be said to be an integral component of Afropolitanism; the distinguishing factor being the Afropolitan's compulsory bonding with the African root.

From the foregoing, Selasi's construction of the Afropolitan as diaspora Africans with deep connection to Africa, as they pursue cosmopolitan life and international career success becomes obvious. It is however necessary to probe into the psychology capable of producing such thoughts in species of Africans, born and raised in western cities. The first thing that readily comes to mind here is the politics of belonging; the problem that African immigrants compulsorily confront as they attempt to integrate themselves into the various western societies

that insist on their stranger status irrespective of their place of birth. The second reason for the

African diaspora to withdraw back to ancestral roots is closely linked with the first- s/he is never

fully accepted as part of the western society and the space s/he is identified with is constantly

associated with blight and chaos in the Western media. Hence, the Afropolitan identity becomes

necessary both as a definite identity for the African immigrant in the western world and as a

vanguard for the redefinition of Africa, its socio-cultural essence and its contributions to the rest

of the world beyond the singular narrative of strife and hunger within the global set-up. Selasi

offers validation to this thought when she explains that:

> What distinguishes this lot (in the West and at home) is a willingness to complicate Africa – namely, to engage with, critique, and celebrate the parts of Africa that mean most to them. Perhaps what most typifies the Afropolitan consciousness is the refusal to oversimplify; the effort to understand what is ailing in Africa alongside the desire to honor what is wonderful, unique. Rather than essentializing the geographical entity, we seek to comprehend the cultural complexity; to honor the intellectual and spiritual legacy; and to sustain our parents' cultures. (2005)

Nevertheless, some scholars of African culture have criticized Afropolitanism, as an

intellectual tool for cultural criticism of the position of Africa within a 21st century globalization

scheme. Largely, these critics deride Afropolitanism for its perceived commodification of

African material culture, the Afropolitan brand and, of course, the perceived class bias of the

Afropolitan lifestyle. The Nigerian-Finish cultural studies scholar, Emma Dabiri, appears one of

the loudest critical voices against Afropolitanism. But Dabiri's criticism of Afropolitanism is

solely based on her concern against perceived capitalist manipulation around the concept and her

interpretation of the Afropolitan identity as only representative of privileged Africans. In her

essay, *Why I am not Afropolitan*(2015), Dabiri writes:

> The danger of Afropolitanism becoming the voice of Africa can be linked to the criticisms levelled against second wave feminists who failed to identify their privilege as white and middle classwhile

> claiming to speak for all women. Because while we may all be Africans, there is a huge gap between my African experience and my father's houseboys. (105)

Here, Dabiri insinuates that the champions of the Afropolitan narrative of "how great everything is, how much opportunity and potential is available" (106) are the privileged few who may drown out the voices of a majority who remain denied basic life chances. Dabiri's criticism, however valid, appears deliberately reductionist. She preoccupies herself so much with moral condemnation of capitalism and the consumerist culture at large that she fails to read Selasi's Afropolitanism in the context of its claim to the necessity of creating a complex African narrative- understand what is ailing and honor what is unique- as opposed to the eternal rhetoric of Africa as "shit hole."

Mbembe (2017) probably expected Dabiri's kind of criticism when he argues that such overtly anti-imperialist solidarity fails to recognize the important social and cultural transformations taking place behind the world scenes. According to Mbembe, there is already a gap between the real life of the contemporary world and such ossified intellectual paradigm of Pan-Africanism and anti-imperialism that sticking with them "hinders renewal of cultural criticism… and reduces our ability to contribute to contemporary thoughts on culture and democracy." (102) Deriving from this, one can infer that Mbembe's favoring Afropolitanism as a new paradigm for the examination of Africans' relationship with the world is derived from his understanding of the imperativeness of a new, region-oriented cosmopolitan theory in a world defined by borders, nationalism, and yet delicately connected. Sharing his thought on the theory, Mbembe asserts that:

> Afropolitanism is not the same as Pan-Africanism or negritude. Afropolitanism is an aesthetic and a particular poetic of the world. It is a way of being in the world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity – which does not mean that it is not aware of the

injustice and violence inflicted on the continent and its people by the
law of the world. It is also a political and cultural stance in relation
to the nation, to race and to the issue of difference in general (106).

Mbembe, here, unequivocally conveys the philosophical depth and moral relevance of

Afropolitanism for Africans both home and in the diaspora. Afropolitanism therefore registers as

a useful tool of identity politics for diasporic Africans: "an idea that gives individuals who feel

rooted in Africa but live across the world, a sense of belonging and enables them to maintain 'an

"idea of Africa" at the center of their experiences." (Khonje 2015).

Mbembe's works on Afropolitanism have been critical in lending philosophical depth and

ethical weight to the concept. In Mbembe's view, it is important to valorize the vitality of

African urban and globalized cultures as decisive for a necessary transformation process of the

continent. This view therefore elevates Afropolitanism to a philosophical concept apt to lead the

way towards an integral transformation of identity politics. This way, Afropolitanism is divorced

from sole entanglement with the diaspora Africans' experiences and creativity. For instance,

Mbembe sees African based artists with transnational- though not necessarily diasporic - agenda,

as also forerunners of Afropolitanism (Mbembe, 2005, 2007).

Further, beyond the criticism of its superficiality, class bias and consumerism,

Afropolitanism as a concept challenges victimhood discourses attached to Africa and the Black

diaspora. Or as Eze (2014) puts it, Afropolitanism stands as a tool for the write-back discourse

and its attendant binary identity that implicitly welcomes victimhood as a starting point of

discourse and self-perception. (240).

Regarding literature, for Mbembe, Afropolitanism does not start with today's diasporic

stars of the global cultural scene. In his book, Critique of Black Reason (2010), Mbembe locates

the origin of Afropolitan reasoning not in the works of the popular diaspora African writer but

rather, with the generation of revolutionary Francophone writers such as Ahmadou Kourouma, Yambo Ouloguem and Sony Labou Tansi. According to Mbembe, these writers have been preoccupied with what is now popularly described as the Afropolitan sentiment since as early as the 1960s–1980s (221), yet they are resident Africans. Therefore, for Mbembe, who, himself, is an Afropolitan by the virtue of his physical and intellectual mobility, Afropolitanism does not only go beyond the question of diaspora vs African-based urban cultures as he explicitly includes both, it also transcends the question of race. White South Africans, Asian diasporic Africans and so forth could be part of Afropolitanism, as long as they identify with, and do not essentialize Africa. (Mbembe, 2017: 103).

I have engaged vigorously with the philosophical articulation of the essence of Afropolitanism by Mbembe here, to pose a reaction to such outright dismissal of the concept as consumerist, superficial and for a privileged few as Dabiri and others of her critical camp would argue. Beyond the urban lifestyle of Selasi and her Afropolitan friends described in *Bye Bye Babar!* is also an articulation of the need to rethink knowledge of African identity over and above the narrative of war and poverty. Dabiri's exclusive focus on Selasi's elitist Afropolitan lifestyle to literally dismiss Afropolitanism as dead on arrival is therefore, at best, simplistic. In her sequel essay to *Why I'm not an Afropolitan (2015)*, entitled *The Pitfalls and Promises of Afropolitanism* (2017), perhaps after having paid attention to the criticism that trailed the former as "an attack on Selasi's attempt at forging a contemporary black identity within the complexity of the diaspora" (Dabiri 2017: 202), Dabiri attempts a kind of damage control by explicitly conceding that Afropolitanism is not bereft of promises. While one may agree with Dabiri, and even Mbembe in their recognition of consumerism that comes with Selasi's Afropolitan assemblage, it is also important to note that Selasi in no way suggests Afropolitanism as a

consumerist culture. Essentially, therefore, the idea of the Afropolitan concept by some capitalist profiteers may not be enough to condemn the whole idea into uselessness as does Dabiri.

In *The pitfalls and promises of Afropolitanism*, Dabiri quizzes: "With the exception of a few well positioned individuals of African origin, who now have a larger market to which they can "sell" this image of Africa, who are the real beneficiaries of this commodification?" (205) while this question appears to be informed by a genuine sympathy with the underprivileged African, it is also suggestive of: (1) Dabiri's limited understanding of the 21st century Africa and African people; having lived all her life in the diaspora, her only touch with Africa seems to be from some Marxist theory texts and the Western media portrayal of Africans as extremely poor people without means of accessing the world; (2) Dabiri's reduction of the global market to the physical space of western city stores. My argument against this question is that the "image of Africa" is not copyrighted by any African and every African can "take it to the market." The claim that some Africans have "larger markets" to sell the African image than other Africans obviously either underestimates the global digital markets, or insinuates that the majority of Africans are too poor or technologically illiterate to take advantage of digital platforms. This is far from the reality, and at best, it could only be a thought emanating from Dabiri's over-consumption of the racial supremacist thoughts on Africa; the kind of inaccurate narrative that Afropolitans are hell-bent on correcting.

Connectedly, the claim that Afropolitanism only benefits the capitalist and consumerist few and does not help the African course is problematic. Dabiri, quoting Ogechi (2008), asserts that:

> Despite the international lifestyle enjoyed by the Afropolitans, most Africans have almost absolute immobility in a contemporary global world that works very hard to keep Africans in their place on the African continent (106)

I share Dabiri's sentiment about the contemporary world's resolve to condition Africans to immobility. However, this again raises the question of whether Dabiri considers virtual mobility of Africans as of any importance. If the idea of the internet being a global community, engendering digital cross-border activities is anything to go by, "most" Africans are effectively mobile. Every new statistic confirms that African youth population towers considerably higher than the population of older people in the continent. And in most African countries the youth and a large portion older people can comfortably access the internet, join global forums and market ideas. There is also the question of whether Dabiri recognizes migration across national borders in Africa and the plurality of cultures and nationalities of Africans in such cities as Lagos, Cotonou, Johannesburg, Accra, and Abidjan as cosmopolitan quality. If Afropolitanism is an idea whose material representation the world loves to consume as Dabiri and her co-travelers against the theory would contend, then it helps open up a new industry for the empowerment of more Africans, since African images and its materiality are nobody's franchise.

What is more important, however, in the midst of argument back and forth around Afropolitanism, is the recognition of the disappearance of cosmopolitan ethics of universal hospitality and openness in the contemporary world; a situation that necessitates new regional and national intellectual concepts for the rationalization of the contemporary global relationship. Paulo Lemos Horta (2017: 153) explains that "cosmopolitanism in its most vigorous form entails the willingness to be transformed by the experience of the foreign rather than just the comfort of belonging to a global elite." Obviously, that there was ever a need to construct such culture specific version of cosmopolitanism, as Afropolitanism, negates this. Afropolitans carry about with them, the thought of "home", Africa and insists on the maintenance of African mores wherever they find themselves in the world; validating the reality of the limitation of the

cosmopolitan ideal in the highly nationalist contemporary world. And as mentioned earlier, the trope national and regional solidarity, the identity of the African migrant and the necessity of a sense of home for the African has gained popularity in diaspora Africans' literature and other forms of expressive arts.

In the next chapter, therefore, I will concentrate my focus on exploring how the idea of western hostility to African immigrants and the exigency of the construction of ethnic identity for the diaspora Africans now predominates diaspora African literature. Using Teju Cole's Open City as my launchpad, I will examine the different ways the Afropolitan ideas are accentuated in diasporic African fiction.

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Open but Racist? Teju Cole's *Open City*, the Black Migrant and Cosmopolitan limit in Western Urban Centers

Introduction

In his introduction to *The Granta Book of the African Short Story* (2013), Helon Habila, recognizes the shift in national thematic focus of African writings in new stories by writers of African origin. In the essay, Habila applauds works of the new generation of African writers as self-liberating from "the often predictable, almost obligatory obsession of the African writer with the nation and with national politics" (viii). In other words, unlike their predecessors, and due to the phenomenon of cross-border migration, new generation of African writers engage with themes transcending national boundaries. These writers set stories in Brussels, New York, Washington, and other cities of the West, revealing their cosmopolitan outlook to the world. However, these works are not devoid of sentiments informed by the African identity of the writer, ventriloquized through the fictional characters, as the works engage the complications resulting from navigating the global world as migrants from Africa. Teju Cole's *Open City* is an example of such writings that reveal the Afropolitan bias in scope and subject. Although, Teju Cole has consistently denied any deliberate attempt at creating works Afropolitan in temper, in this chapter, I make a contrary argument to Cole's denial of the Afropolitan inspiration to his work. Through a close reading of *Open City,* This chapter establishes elements of sense of unbelonging, search for self-identity, and interrogation of the 'openness' of the city, and complication to the notion of home in prevalent Teju's art. Many scholars and reviewers analyze *Open City* as the author's exploration of the history, culture, and wonders of Western urban cities, suggesting that the work only documents the openness of the city through a flaneur character. I depart considerably from this mode of interpretation, arguing that *Open City* is an irony, an implied anti-thesis, right from its title. I argue that, with the experiences and struggles

of main character, Julius and other African migrant characters in the story, Cole demonstrates the openness of the city of New York and Brussels through the possibility of migration. In the same breath, Cole demonstrate the closeness of the city through moments of racial hostility and inequality, suggesting boundaries between the immigrant and the host population. As such, this chapter concludes that Afropolitan politics pervade Teju's work, against his constant denial of such temper and popular reading of the work as more cosmopolitan than Afropolitan.

Background to the Story

Teju Cole's *Open City* follows Julius' struggle for belonging and his constant search not only for an identity but also a wider web of connections in two Western Cities. Cole's narrator, Julius, is a New York-based psychiatrist who grows up in Nigeria with a Nigerian father and a German mother, and then travels to the United States for higher education, stays back for a psychiatry residency, and eventually joins a private practice in Psychiatry. Being of a mixed race, Julius revels in the wonderment and admiration that his fair skin color attracts from other children while growing up in Nigeria. As a result, he becomes conscious of his difference right from childhood. Apart from the fact that he is born and raised in an African country with an exposure to western civilization, Julius's fair skin enables him the cosmopolitan thought of being open and having stakes in western civilizations. His identity however becomes more complicated after he migrates like New York City, and to finds that he continues to be categorized as black, notwithstanding his near-white skin tone. To deal with the solitariness that defines his life in a highly individualistic city of New York and clear his mind from the pressures of his job, Julius takes up walking as a habit. He also employs this wandering to clear his mind of personal troubles, such as a recent breakup with his girlfriend, Nadege. As the story unfolds, Julius' wandering eventually becomes more than a habitual pastime of a loner, it becomes the writer's

way of revealing the vitality, yet hostility, of the western city to the reader, through several observations related by the protagonist, an African immigrant.

While at his usual wandering, Julius begins to recognize the melting pot that New York is in terms of cultures and ethnicities. However, Julius also notices the paradox in the city's openness to diversity and the crisp disconnection that characterizes the relationship among different ethnic groups. Julius constantly relates his experiences and the complexities that define his identity as he consciously notes how racial difference colors his relationship to and interaction with other people he encounters. He constantly expresses his feeling of loneliness and invisibility even when in a room with hundreds of other people. He relates this through his experiences whether in the theatre with many other moviegoers, or at the bookshop, or coffee shop, all crowded with people of different background with none really noticing his presence. And when he eventually gets noticed, it is either by some white children who show him gang signs because they assume him to be a gangster just by the reason of his skin color. At other times, it is by a Mr Gupta who notices his Nigerian accent and concludes he is African, a people at whose thought he "wants to spit" (30) because a Ugandan dictator once expelled hundreds of thousands of Ugandan-Indians. At another time, again, it is by the Caucasian Dr Maillotte who thinks "educated Nigerians are arrogant," (88) or by Afro-Caribbean Uber driver, Kenneth, who believes Julius' uptightness is arrogant as brotherhood among Africans must be immediate and automatic, wherever they meet. (53)

As Julius walks, he also thinks back to his childhood in Nigeria. He thinks about how he felt out of place due to his mixed race and light colored skin, even in the worlds where he supposedly belongs, Nigeria, but only black people seem to connect with him as he wanders around New York City. Being constantly disturbed by this complication, Julius seeks the other

side of his identity by tracing his grandmother to Brussels, a journey which opens his eyes to the race relation, racial discrimination, and inhuman treatment of immigrants in 'open cities' of Europe, perhaps worse than in New York.

By the end of the narration, Julius finishes his residency and moves into private practice. While it, at this point, appears that Julius has come to terms with some of the events in his life, he never fully addresses most of the issues bothering on identity and belonging for the African immigrant in Western cities raised through his fragmented accounts. Rather, he leaves most hanging, suggesting that the travails of the African migrant in the West continues, remaining unresolved. This is typical of the plot structure of the novel, in which no event or character, not even the protagonist, gets really fully developed. What defines *Open City*, perhaps most aptly, is that it is a story of struggles of African immigrants in Western cities told trough tiny details of various experiences.

Race and the Western City: New York, Brussels and the African Immigrant in Cole's Narrative

One striking theme in *Open City* is that of complexity of racial identity, especially for the race generically addressed as black. Cole explores how African migrant identity disrupts the monolithic characterization of the black identity in western cities. In *Open City*, Cole guides the reader to look at race as a complicated web, especially in urban cities. With Julius and other black characters, Cole invites the reader's attention to the disjunction between color and identity of the various ethnicities in an urban city. Specifically, *Open City* draws attention to the complex identity that blackness denotes in an era characterized by voluntary global migration. More significantly, the story illuminates on the generic understanding of the identity of black people in western cities and how this complicates negotiation of belonging for the African migrant. For example, Julius, the story's narrator and central character, considers himself a world citizen and

is fascinated by cultures and history of different races. However, his color distinguishes him as black (as in African American) in New York and he is greeted by that gaze every corner he moves to, both by white New Yorkers and African Americans. In reality, however, Julius exhibits no African American sensibility and refuses to be identified as such. Rather, he defines himself as a biracial migrant holding stakes in diverse cultures, geographies, and the accompanying diverse identities. The city is however oblivious of Julius' complex identity as a colored migrant. For this reason, belonging becomes a difficult task to achieve and he would rather observe what he sees as an explorer of the city, rather than a New Yorker.

More tellingly, through the complex character of the narrator, Cole demonstrates the invisibility of the African migrant in the racial configuration of western cities as their identity gets subsumed in the colored end of the default racial divide of western societies. The extent to which people are defined from the racial binary perspective is depicted in Julius' encounter with two young white teenagers at the theatre who, on sighting him, readily address him as African American. Julius narrates his encounter with the teenager thus:

> Hey mister, she said turning to me, wassup? She made signs with her fingers and, with her brother, started laughing. …Are you a gangster, mister? Are you a gangster? They both flashed gang signs, or their idea of gang signs. I looked at them. It was midnight, and I didn't feel like giving public lectures. I bet he's a gangster, her brother said, I bet he is. Hey mister, are you a gangster? They continued flicking their fingers at me for several reasons. (31-32)

This passage attests to the racist profiling of an average young African American, and by extension, every young black person in American urban centers. This popular lag in knowledge of the various possible identities that may define blackness than the racist association with gangsterism and other qualities considered as social vices essentially constitutes worry for the African immigrant. It, legitimately, constitutes social anxieties that consequently consign the

African immigrant either into a solitary life or into seeking refuge among people of similar concerns. Ultimately, for the African migrant, belonging becomes a constant question in the face of the city's racism and continuous misunderstanding of migrant identity. Yet, Cole masterfully instructs on the necessity of the African migrant to orientate their metropolitan hosts of their peculiar identity. As evident in Julius's narration of this encounter, had he not been already tired, he would have offered to 'lecture' the kids on the ignorance inherent in predicting people's values through their color. This is typical of the Afropolitan crusade- a movement towards ensuring a distinctive self-definition and identity formation for the African resident of global metropolises.

Although Cole would not strictly consider himself an Afropolitan, the author is also not uncomfortable with the label, as well as others such as "African, Yoruba, Brooklynite, or Black, or Nigerian. Whatever." (The Guardian, 2016: par 6) And *Open City* echoes this sentiment of an African comfortable in both his African heritage and cosmopolitan orientation to the world. In an interview with Taye Selasi published in the Guardian (2016), Cole expresses that even privilege may not immune a black man from racism. He enthused:

> Racism is not a matter of what one person does to another. It is the way the logic of a society excludes large numbers of people while allowing for a few modest exceptions from that group. You and I are often among the exceptions, though I've been chased often enough by doormen of hotels in which I'm staying (in France, in Brazil) to know that I have to stay alert and give an immediate account of why, being a young black dude, I am where I am. (The Guardian, 2016: par 7)

Here, Cole expresses the Afropolitan sentiment for the world to understand blackness from complex perspectives, and recognize the African migrants' peculiar identity. Further, he stresses the challenges that the African migrant consistently confronts in a global world that underprivileges and negatively casts the black race. When he is asked in the same interview whether he ever encountered any "anguish" in the course of his intellectual traversing of the

world, his response is an emphatic "travelling while black!" This sentiment flows through *Open City.* By this argument though, I do not intend that Teju writes himself as Julius in the narrative. However, that Teju's politics is audible in *Open City* may be uncontestable. As Julius moves from Nigeria to New York, through New York, and to Brussels, he continues to be reminded of his difference and all the negative baggage that the cities confer on his skin color.

As an addendum to his response to the question on what causes him anguish as he wanders around European and American cities, Cole states:

> sometimes you're out there on the street and people don't
> quite know how to read you. India remains a challenge. I
> had a terrible time in Vienna, years ago, and the same with
> Antwerp, also many years ago. (par 7)

When one critically assesses the experiences and anxieties of African migrant characters in *Open City*, one finds sufficient correlations with diasporic African writers' description of their experiences and anxieties, even as transnational intellectuals. As much as this category of black people embrace western cultures in which they share stakes mainly through their colonial heritage, they continue to be confronted with disillusionment that results from the city's hostility to their desired belonging.

In the first analysis, Julius' experiences project this sensibility. Despite his full awareness of the racial divisions in New York, he demonstrates a sense of difference that makes him feel exempted from such divisions. This sense of difference, of being a free man in an "open city," is not unconnected with his specific background as a well-educated man with a legitimate two-fold claim to a European heritage: A German mother and a Nigerian father. By the implication of his biracial birth, Julius is both European and Nigerian- also implying another layer of hybridity as a postcolonial subject. This background affords him a sense of distinction from African-Americans

of New York. As the story progresses, however, he learns that the society perceives him not differently from any other colored person. On another level, Julius enjoys the status of a well-educated, cultured psychiatrist with a good job in a respected profession. However, the series of encounters he has in the story proves that his perceived social status does not exempt him from racism. Examples of these include the earlier referenced encounter with the kids, Mr Gupta and, of Course, Dr. Maillotte, the Belgian lady who thinks "many Nigerians are arrogant" and Ghanaians are better to work with "because they don't have such a big concept of their place in the world" (88)

Another way *Open City* complicates the question of race in western cities in lieu of the African migrants' experiences is through Julius' interaction with Farouq and his fellow migrants in Brussels. In Julius' narration of his Brussels experience right from the moment he lands in the city, the reader's attention is drawn to the falsehood inherent in regarding the city as *open.* On the drive from the Brussels airport to his rented temporary apartment, Julius' landlady, Mayken, who offered to pick him up from the airport for a fee, informs him of the ethnic composition of the city. Mayken's 'information' is however laden with dissatisfaction with the presence of other ethnic nationalities outside of her own Flemish ethnicity in the city. Even though the Dutch-speaking Flemish constitute the ethnic majority in Brussels, Mayken would prefer a hundred percent Flemish city as she laments:

> The original idea of Brussels was that it should be equally Flemish and Walloon. Of course, it's not that way anymore…now, it is ninety-five percent Walloon and other French speakers, one percent Flemish, and four present Arab and African. (96)

Mayken's remark here hints on the perception of the average Flemish in Brussels who at given opportunities is quick to express frustration at the presence of people from other ethnic roots. As

Julius' narration would subsequently prove, Mayken's dismissal of African presence in the city

exemplifies the invisibility with which African and Arab migrants are regarded in European

cities. Julius corrects:

> I'm sure Mayken's "Arab and African" was intended to be snide.
> Even in the city center, or especially there, large number of
> people seem to be from some part of Africa, either from the
> Congo or from the Magreb. On some trams, as I was to quickly
> discover, whites were a tiny minority. (98)

Julius' observation quoted here does not suggest that Brussels is a city of majority immigrants. It

however corrects such impression of Africans and Arabs as negligible immigrant population in

European cities. If it is impossible to roam the city center without noticing the presence of

African immigrants like Julius observes, how come it is easy for white Brussels to condemn such

people to invisibility? Beyond number and visibility, Mayken's estimation of non-Flemish

inhabitants of Brussels as insignificant correlates with the way the city perceives and treats these

immigrants.

Following from this, *Open City* further highlights the disjunction between the identity

that "open cities" of Europe confer on African and Arab immigrants and the way these

immigrants define their true selves. Cole underscores this through Julius' narration of a series of

incidents that problematize the openness of Brussels to ethnicities other than people of Belgian

roots. One of such incidents is that of a mugging incident in the city of Brussels where a

seventeen-year-old is stabbed, bleeds to death with dozens of people around but none to his aid.

Following the boy's death, the bishop of the city, while giving his homily, blames the death not

only on the murderer but also on the people who assumed the role of mere onlookers while a

fellow human was struggling for his life. However, opinion molders in the city believe that the

people themselves are victims and should not be blamed for doing nothing while a crime occurs

in their full glare. According to Julius' narration:

> Well-known columnists took a wounded tone and complained of
> reverse racism. The victims were being blamed, they said. The
> problem was not with uncaring passersby but with the foreigners who
> committed crimes. One journalist wrote on his blog that Belgian
> society was fed up with "murdering, thieving, raping Vikings from
> North Africa." This was quoted approvingly in certain mainstream
> sources. …But the murderers, it turned out, weren't Arab or African
> at all: They were Polish citizens. One of them was arrested in Poland,
> his partner was arrested in Belgium and extradited to Poland. (99)

This kind of story, unfortunately, reflects the reality of the way immigrants from certain

countries and/or of certain colors are perceived in western centers even in the present climate of

much touted globalization. Several mainstream media platforms and right-wing opinion and

political leaders employ demeaning hate rhetoric to describe African and Arab migrants,

positioning them more as economic stressors and security threats to the host population. This not

only endangers such immigrants, it affects their psyche regarding whether they could ever call

their new country of residence a home. While this happens, they are constantly reminded of not

belonging to this city in whose mores they have been immersed.

Julius goes on to narrate how several incidents revealing hatred for black immigrants in

several cities in Belgium were recorded within the short time of his stay in Brussels:

> I was there at the very end of 2006, a year in which several hate crimes
> had ratcheted up the tension experienced by non-whites living in the
> country. In Bruges, five skinheads put a black Frenchman into a coma.
> In Antwerp, in May, an eighteen-year-old headed for the city center
> with a Winchester rifle, and started shooting. He seriously injured a
> Turkish girl and killed a nanny from Mali, as well as the Flemish
> infant in her care. Later on, he expressed a specific regret: for having
> accidentally shot the white child. In Brussels, a black man was left
> paralyzed and blind after an attack at a petrol station. The paradoxical
> results of these crimes was that even the centrist parties began to lean

rightward in order to cater to voter discontent about immigration. (99-100)

I have quoted this densely to underscore the exactness of these fictionalized incidents to the reality of the present 'globalized' world which conveniently cater to a race of people and deny others the fruits of true globalization. In January, 2018, the president of the United States was widely reported suggesting that America would be better allowing immigrants from countries like Norway instead of those from Haiti and "shit hole" countries of Africa. There have also been instances where the same president regarded Mexicans as rapists and drug dealers and Muslims as terrorists. This has generated pockets of hate crime, similar to those narrated in *Open City* against these immigrants.

Cole demonstrates that hate rhetoric in western countries and cities and the consequent violent attacks on immigrants that they generate inevitably result in dimming the cosmopolitan expectations and attitude of the African immigrant to the world, causing them to withdraw to the shells of national and regional sentiments. Despite Julius' solitariness in New York, despite a pocket of racist treatment he suffered, he maintained his cosmopolitan disposition to life. His travel to Brussels however awakens him to the limit of cosmopolitanism. Through his observation of several ugly but deliberate attacks on immigrants at different Belgian cities, Julius comes to the realization of the absence of true cosmopolitan ethics in western cities. More significantly, his encounter with Farouq, a Moroccan shop cyber café owner in Brussels helps him to process and make meaning of his New York life as not different from that of every other black man either in America or in Belgium. After a long conversation with Farouq, Julius becomes jolted to the question of identity for the African immigrant. He muses over the wide difference between the way African immigrants are readily perceived by their white hosts and the true identity of these immigrants. Although Farouq will only always be just "a man in the

shop" to the white host who might never be disposed to engaging him in any deep conversation,

he strikes Julius as an intellectual with a full potential to affect the city positively if welcomed.

Julius thinks:

> Here he was, as anonymous as Marx in London. To Mayken and
> to countless others like her in the city, he would be just another
> Arab, subject to a quick suspicious glance at the tram. (106)

But Julius explores this wrong profiling of the northern African immigrant in Brussels

more deeply beyond the "quick suspicious glance at the tram." This gaze at the immigrant is

informed by what Julius believes was a simmering, barely contained fear. He interprets this

suspicion of the immigrant more meaningfully as a product of "The classic anti-immigrant view,

which saw them as enemies competing for scarce resources, was converging with a renewed fear

of Islam." (106) This constitutes a significant turning point for Julius. Although he gives hints on

his feeling of unbelonging in New York from the outset of his narration through the solitary life

that he lives, it is at this point that he expresses a clear opinion on migration and his status as a

migrant. At this point, the cosmopolitan gives way to the migrant, awakening to his true status as

a stranger in a city that might never understand the essence of his complex identity. It is this

moment that his little confidence as a racial hybrid and postcolonial subject with a legitimate

stake in western civilization dampened, given way to reasons for solidarity with fellow black

migrants. In Julius' words:

> It occurred to me, too, that I was in a situation not so radically different
> from Farouq's. My presentation: the dark, unsmiling, solitary stranger-
> made me a target for the inchoate rage of the defenders of Vlaaderen. I
> could be in the wrong place, taken for a rapist or "Viking." But the
> bearers of rage could never know how cheap it was. They were
> insensitive to how common, and how futile was their violence in the
> name of a monolithic identity. This ignorance was a trait angry young
> men, as well as their old, politically powerful rhetorical champions,
> shared the world over. And so, after that conversation, as a precaution,
> I cut down on the length of my late night walks in Etterbeek. I resolved

also, to no longer visit all white bars or family restaurants in the quieter neighborhoods. (106)

Postcolonial African Diasporic Subjects and the Limit of Cosmopolitan Orientation: Home and Belonging in *Open City*

As I have argued earlier in this chapter, postcolonial diasporic African subjects usually demonstrate openness to global cultures and t various world civilizations. The reason for this is not far-fetched. Postcolonial Africans are socialized and educated to perform the hybrid elements of precolonial cultural traditions and those reflecting civilizations of their various European colonizers. Therefore, an average African is prepared by the experience of colonialism and its attendant corruption of African traditional values to be cosmopolitan in his engagement with the world. In essence, when Africans travel from home countries to urban centers of the world, they approach their new place with open minds and arms. They are eager to embrace the culture and the people in totality, while also demonstrating that they carry elements of the cities' civilization in them as well. Realistically, however, African migrants, more often than not, discovers painfully through their diasporic experiences, that the West only touts the maxim of all humans belonging to the village that the world supposedly is when it is convenient for the perpetuation of the global imperialist agenda. In reality, they find out that people and governments of various regions of the world are averse to difference, favor cities with monolithic identities. The hostility, activated by hateful political rhetoric, that attends arrival and habitation of the African diaspora in western cities therefore taints the west's claim to its adherence to tenets of globalization. This essentially contributes to the popularity of regional interrogation of the idea of cosmopolitanism in the arts and the social sciences.

Of course, the most dangerous opposition to the idea of a borderless world in which every human is a citizen, that cosmopolitanism engenders, came with the rise of totalitarianism in the

twentieth century when the likes of Hitler and Stalin declared cosmopolitan Jewish people as dangerous for German wellbeing. (Sollors, 2018:228) Corroborating this claim, Appiah (2007) describes Hitler and Stalin as "cosmopolitanism's noisiest foes." (xvi) However, even though Appiah vigorously decries toxic nationalism that was a potent weapon in the hands of totalitarian, he disagrees with what he termed "hardcore cosmopolitanism." Alternatively, Appiah favors what he calls "partial or rooted cosmopolitanism," one in which "we need take sides neither with the nationalist who abandons all foreigners nor with the hard-core cosmopolitan who regards her friends and fellow citizens with icy impartiality." (xvi-xii). Rooted cosmopolitanism reconciles universalism with the legitimacy of at least some forms of partiality. For Appiah, Some level of partiality, perhaps one towards family and nation should be a legitimate option for liberal individuals with rights to uphold their own difference while appreciating global values. In Appiah's liberal version of cosmopolitanism the choice is the individual's to be cosmopolitan. Appiah's definition of rooted cosmopolitanism is however instructive— celebrating the variety of human cultures; rooted— loyal to one local society (or a few) that you count as home; liberal— convinced of the value of the individual; and patriotic— celebrating the institutions of the state (or states) within which you live." In short, for Appiah, cosmopolitanism is simply "universality plus difference" (151). In light of this, I consider it safe to argue that Appiah's cosmopolitanism underscores the limit to universalism, an argument that Selasi adopts for the African cosmopolitan as Afropolitanism.

In *Open City*, Cole sufficiently positions the two variants of cosmopolitanism that I have discussed- the hardcore and the rooted- with a view to highlighting the folly in African diaporic subjects adopting a fanatic posture to cosmopolitanism and suggesting rootedness in African mores as the key to finding the self in a global world rigged against the black race. In the

character of Julius, Cole establishes the tendency for the African migrant to uncritically feel like a stakeholder in the project of global citizenship. Yet he creates a foil in Farouq, who appreciates openness to the western culture but stresses the need for the maintenance of his own difference in the multicultural city. Interestingly, It takes Julius' meeting and conversation with Farouq for him to understand the reason for his solitariness in a city whose culture, arts, and history he appreciates. Julius also needs a meeting with Farouq in Brussels to jolt him into the realization that his cosmopolitan idealism is all but a mirage; that his identity lies not in his thought, brilliance, and professionalism, but in the way he is perceived by the culturally dominant Other in the city. It takes him this meeting to be able to ruminate over the fact that: Although Turks, Arabs, Russians had all been part of the visual vocabulary of the 1430 Ghent of Jan Van Eyck, when the stranger was nothing unusual, the stranger had remained strange, and had become a foil for new discontents. (106)

Notable in Teju Cole's *Open City* is the novel's strong sense of movement, space, and place. Set mainly in New York, the story not only travels through Nigeria and to Brussels, it also records the narrator's interactions with these cities and the spur that they create in him as he struggles to navigate his belonging and cultural values. Essentially, *Open City* is a story activated by the narrator's immigrant experience and how the gamut of events that form this experience influence his worldview and affect his understanding of his complex identity. Influenced by his background having lived in Nigeria and later exposed to the western space at an impressionable age, Julius, the narrator, fits into the description of a cosmopolitan African, a keen and restless traverser of worlds of diverse cultural identities. Most of the novel details Julius' wanderings around New York and Brussels while at the same time giving the reader access to his meandering thoughts, appreciating and internalizing the various civilizations that the metropolis

has to offer. The reader follows Julius's train of thought, and is afforded the easy clue for reading his as a character of global worldview despite his African childhood. Julius demonstrates his intellectual immersion into western civilization that his residency in New York enables through a dense web of references to western high arts, classical music, Dutch painting, history, and literature and culture. Although Julius continuously questions the seeming lack of interest in his person and cultural identity by people from other ethnic backgrounds, an experience that conditions him to a solitary life, he appears unable to divorce himself from his western mores and cosmopolitan gaze at the world.

Of course, Julius' inability to block out the Other from visibility can be attributed to his own individual circumstances. In him, two civilizations, at least, are naturally embedded. Therefore, Julius also represents the caucasian Other, making it difficult for him to accept any kind of racial solidarity between him and other diasporan Africans. His encounter with Kenneth, a black taxi driver presents an instance for this. While Kenneth appeals to a bond of brotherhood between them, Julius simply rejects the implied offer of racial bond, a behavior for which Kenneth castigates him as rude. (53) It is also important to note that while Julius is critical of racist attitudes of the various ethnicities in New York against the other, he remains open to connections with other identities, and in search for the ideal cosmopolitan culture in which people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds truly interconnect. In fact, the few important encounters he highlights in his narrative are mainly with people who are neither black nor African.

Apart from his biracial identity, Julius' cosmopolitan temperament might not be disconnected from his postcolonial Nigerian upbringing. Julius grew up in Nigeria with a Nigerian father, and he is therefore more typically the product of a postcolonial culture and

education. Julius's character, therefore, becomes helpful in understanding black sensibilities in the American city, through immigration from Africa and the legacy of colonialism. The postcolonial African migrant is already intrinsically hybridized, already internalized multiple civilization long before he found himself in a Western city. In essence, the postcolonial African migrant is inherently cosmopolitan, and tends not to readily appraise racism the way African Americans or blacks in other western cities whose ancestry are traced to the Middle Passage would. Chude-Sokei (2014) amplifies this idea when he argues that African immigrants "do not necessarily experience or respond to racism in the same way or share the same notions of identity or affiliation as African Americans." (70) This somewhat indifference to racism in western cities and their cosmopolitan nature notwithstanding, African immigrants, like Julius, soon gets enmeshed in the mentally hectic societal force to assimilate either into white American hegemonic structures or into African-American cultures. This condition effectively complicates their identity and puts them in perpetual self-searching, hence the emergence of the Afropolitan identity and the popular debates on how this concept defines the African immigrant experience.

Essentially, therefore, another way to frame Julius's character is to consider him an Afropolitan. Susanne Gehrmann (2016) perhaps offers the most succinct but relevant definition of the Afropolitan, as far as Julius' character is concerned. Gehrmann notes that Afropolitanism, in its simplest form, is "a form of cosmopolitanism with African roots."(61) As demonstrated in the previous chapter, since the publication of Taiye Selasi's "Bye-bye Babar" in 2005, and the consequent introduction of the Afropolitan's arrival on the world scene, the term has generated ongoing scholarly debate and controversy. Grace Musila (2016), for example, argues that the need to define an African version of cosmopolitanism implies that ordinarily the African subject is excluded from the concept. Gerhmann also expresses objections to the term, citing reasons of

culture commodification and class bias. However, Julius' arguable lower class background before his movement to the United States and the fact that he has no link whatsoever with commodification of African cultural materials largely negates these criticisms. In fact, Julius' character variously exemplifies the Afropolitan features highlighted by Selasi. Although Cole's attitude to his protagonist remains contested, and it is difficult to determine the extent to which the author may be aligned with his fictional creation, critical interpretations of Julius reveals him as an embodiment of Selasi's Afropolitanism.

Admittedly, Julius is hard to read. He does not come across as the typical 'celebrate Africa even while in Western space' type of African immigrant, but his awareness of, as well as identification with, his Nigerian heritage and upbringing despite his investment in Western culture, fits him in Selasi's frame: "You'll know us by our funny blend of London fashion, New York jargon, African ethics, and academic successes." He is sufficiently appalled by the oppression his country has suffered under colonial rule, yet he is also proud of his own participation in and celebration of Western culture, to which his colonial past has given him not only access, but also a stake. He tells mythological tales from his Yoruba heritage and applies this to make sense of his experiences in New York. (24-25) He also relishes the Yoruba folklore and the memory of cultural exhibitions in Yoruba festivals that he experienced while in Nigeria just as much as he embraces Western high culture- music, painting, and literature. Claire Messud (2011) probably describes Julius most aptly as a "young African" and "a worldly foreigner." While he embraces western civilization, he continues to hold on to his African mores, typical of Selasi's description of who the Afropolitan is. Implied in Julius' Afropolitan value, however, is Cole's indictment of the western space and its failure to ensure belonging to forward looking young people from cultures that are not Caucasian, forcing immigrant to withdraw to cultural

roots. Irrespective of his cosmopolitan acceptance of the material aspects of world cultures, Julius constantly feels socially disconnected, continuously observing the western condescending, nay racist, attitude to Africa and Africans.

From the opening pages of the novel, Julius tells the reader that he does not listen to classical music on American radio because he dislikes the commercial breaks. (4) This implies an expression of lack of desire to be seen as American, a form of cultural nationalism. His knowledge of American history and the various culture therein, however suggest his great investment in his American life than he might care to admit to. As Vermeulen (2013) notes, Julius's "wanderings and ruminations generate a perspective that is both intimate and detached, engaged as well as estranged." (41) In other words, Julius' feeling about his American life is, at best, ambivalent. This ambivalence effectively explains the life of the African immigrant in western cities. It explains why the African immigrant must be able to define self in terms of a specific identity in order to live a healthy life in a western city.

Although Julius exhibits familiarity with, and embracement of, his African upbringing, he also longs for an unconditional acceptance into the Caucasian culture that is another part of his heritage. His wandering mind therefore stems from his quest for reasons why the acceptance of the complexity of his identity remains difficult in a supposedly open city. Cole therefore uses Julius's urban mobility to explore racialized spaces of New York and Brussels to serve as correlative to the narrator and other characters' two-fold predicament of being black and migrants. As black men in large American and European cities, Julius and characters like Farouq and his fellow Moroccans in Brussels are excluded respectively from social and/or official, spaces in their various cities. Cole, uses the trope of New York as an open city in order to unmask its cosmopolitanism and reveal its liberatory essence as facade. In essence, therefore,

with the experiences and struggles of main character, Julius and other African migrant characters in the story, Cole demonstrates the openness of the city of New York and Brussels through the possibility of migration. In similar vein, however, he demonstrates the closeness of the city through moments of racial hostility and inequality, suggesting boundaries between the immigrant and the host population.

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"Celebrate Our Ways": Africanisms as Resistance Tools to Culture Death in Julie Dash's
Daughters of the Dust

Several Scholars have studied various aspects of African cultural influences in African American culture. Lorenzo D. Turner's *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (1949) and John W. Blassingame's *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (1979) provide examples of early works studying the black diasporic traditions and mores in connection with their African root. In his work, Turner establishes that African-Americans preserved their African culture and traditions and mixed them with European American patterns to contribute to the formation of the New World cultures. He not only discovers many African elements in the syntax, word-formation, and phonology of African-Americans' speech patterns. He identifies in Southern black American vocabulary, words of African origin such as "guba (peanut- from the Kimbudu, Angola), gumbo (Okra- from the Tshiluba, Belgian Congo)" (194) and many others. Also, Blassingame, in his study, foregrounds the fact that the antebellum slaves were deeply rooted in their traditional African worldviews and folk rituals of courtship, wedding, drumming, and worshipping (159–176).

There are also a number of more recent works that have focused on the abundance of "Africanisms" in African-American literature. According to Amy K. Levin's (2003), "Africanism" refers to "the spread of African cultural values, customs, and ideologies into the Black diaspora since slavery" (9). According to Levin, the word "Africanism" refers to both African influences in the cultures of Blacks of the New World (5) and to African-Americans' perspectives "on or interpretation of African culture" (97). Scholars like La Vinia Delois Jennings (2008) and Therese Higgins (2011), interrogate the works of Toni Morrison with regards to the preponderance of African influences that characterize her artistry. Jennings argues that "rich, guiding African traditional cosmologies are at the core of Morrison's fiction and

warns that interpreting Morrison's literary art without attention to her reflection of these cosmologies diminishes the aesthetic, cultural, historical, and political force of the artist and her artform" (4–5). Drawing on Jennings, Higgins traces the "custom of chanting at funerals, of singing, and swaying while mourning the loss of a loved one" that Morrison features in several novels including *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* to rituals similar to those that anthropologists found in pre-colonial African traditions.

These studies serve as the background upon which my reading of Julia Dash' *Daughters of the Dust* lies. In this paper, I argue that Dash's film exemplifies a graphic retelling of the ways that African cultural patterns circulate through the networks of black transnational and intranational migrations. This paper interprets the Africanisms in *Daughters of the Dust* as tools of resistance against culture death and identity loss that racism, labor exploitation, and other forces of modernity strive to foist on the diaspora black people. I argue here that *Daughters of the Dust* archives a vast repertoire of trans-Atlantic memory, evidences the survival of African culture in African-American literature, and educates on the migrations of such aesthetic forms from the South to the North of America, and of course, to the rest of the world.

To begin with, Dash' *Daughters of the Dust* captures the lives of African Americans of the Island of Ibo landing through characters whose definition of personal and collective cultural and spirituality resonates strongly with traditional African Voodoo spiritual tradition. However, among the characters that Dash presents in the film are those who have either embraced the reality of cultural hybridism for the progress of diaporic Africans in the new world or strive to completely isolate themselves from the culture in pursuant of mainstream American culture and spirituality. This therefore presents the conflict between cultural puritanism of Nana, hybridity of characters like Eli, Eula and somewhat negligence of characters like Haagar, Viola, and Yellow

Mary. It raises the questions: what functions African traditional beliefs serve in the lives of those descendants of former slaves at Ibo landing? Of what value is embracement of the mainstream American culture to the empowerment of black Americans?

Dash brings attention to the essence of African traditional religion through Nana's spirituality which reflects the West African traditional belief in a Supreme God who delegates some lesser deities, to superintend over the affairs of men. Thus, practitioners of this religion invoke a pantheon of lesser divinities –spirits or saints – to assist them in exercising control over their lives. Nana's spiritual mode believes in the power of the ancestors to watch over the affairs of their living family. She believes that the ancestors should be respected as sacred and that when their spirits are invoked by the living descendants in times of need, they offer divine protection and support. Therefore, she continues to encourage the seemingly recalcitrant younger generation of the Pezeant family towards the memory of the ancestors and their spiritual essence, even in their impending journey into the multi-cultural world of the American North. Nana charges Eli:

> It's up to the living to keep up with those who are dead
> A man's power don't end with death
> We just move on to another place,
> a place where we go and watch over our living family
> Respect your elders. respect your family. Respect your ancestors.

Nana's statements, here, foregrounds that there is a mode of African spirituality which travelled to America with African slaves and was retained (is being retained) by generations of diaspora Africans long After slavery. I interpret this as Dash's embracement of this spiritual mode and resistance against the racist mainstream cultural narrative that discards African spirituality as paganism.

Creative engagement with the African spiritual beliefs abound in *Daughters of the Dust.* One of such examples is Dash's aesthetic representation of the power of the unborn to foreknow their family and follow through their ordeals and victories. The Yoruba people of Nigeria, for instance, believe that the unborn child and dead family members are spirits. They wander and hover around their living family, sharing in their joys and ordeals. Dash's employment of the unborn child as the narrator, and an active spirit with keen interests in the affairs of her would-be family demonstrates this belief.

A significant way Dash's *Daughters of the Dust,* mobilizes Africanism towards the emancipation of African Americans is her reinforcement of the myth of African slaves who walked on water back to Africa, refusing to be enslaved and have their future generation's history defined by zero resistance to captivity. Thus, African aesthetic of myth-making becomes a tool for Dash to engage critically with the significance of historical events in slave narrative to modern existence of the black diaspora. In this sense, Africans on Sea Island, who told the story of the Ibos who walked in the water in order to avoid enslavement in America used it as a means of empowering the future Peazant generations. Dash memorializes the Ibos' revolutionary actions with Eula's narration:

> It was here they brought them. As the boats docked, the Ibo took a look around…And they seen things that day that you and I don't have the power to see. The chains didn't stop those Ibo none. They kept walking like the water was solid ground all the way home to Africa.

Dash recognizes the inaccuracy of such story in the actual history of trans-Atlantic slave migration. Of course, for every mythical story about captives walking out onto the water or flying from the fields to begin their long trek back home, there are other stories about slavers outrunning the law and hastily dumping bodies in chains on the shore. This, perhaps, explains

Bilal's counter-narrative that the Ibo slaves did not walk on water; rather they walk into the water with chains on their necks and legs.

By revealing how a younger generation of Gullah remembers the self-sacrifice of early African captives, however, Dash reveals the retention at Sea Island of the Africans' belief in the capacity of bodies and souls to fly back to their homes. This myth is an African aesthetic that falls within the category of Trans-Atlantic practices which, as Roach points out, "recognize the Ceremony of Souls not as nostalgia but as hidden agenda" (34). Such an agenda validates the utilitarian purpose of reimagining African past not as mere romanticizing of black history, but as a subversive tool for the enhancement of the conditions of African Americans.

Further, the employment of aesthetics of myth and African spirituality in *Daughters of the Dust*, therefore, demonstrates the endurance of African aesthetics in African-American literature and culture where they serve as subversive tools against culture death. By choosing to foreground African aesthetics, Dash confronts popular media's narrative of the black identity in terms of drugs, violence, and physicality, and reasserts a more positive tradition of the diasporic black. Roach corroborates this argument when he interprets voodoo rituals in the Americas (such as those involving "the politics of communicating with the dead") as circum-Atlantic and resistance practices that "refer not only to a history of forgetting but to a strategy of empowering the living through the performance of memory" (34). Therefore, the predominant references to the overseeing power of the ancestors, the potency of the charms sourced from African herbs and roots among characters in *Daughters of the Dust* project the film director's culture politics; aiming to empower African-Americans, through cultural and spiritual rootedness, while also encouraging them to penetrate and enrich the larger American culture.

Another important aesthetic of Africanism that Dash presents in the film is the all-important communal practices that the film demonstrates of the residents of Ibo Landing. Even though the story revolves around an extended family, it manages to situate this family's close knit as a symbol of the African communal life. According to Bell Hooks, industrial capitalism was not simply changing the nature of black work life, it altered the communal practices that were so central to survival in the agrarian south. (38) One way to interpret Hooks' claims is as nostalgia for a Southern communal past, a romanticized connection between blackness and communality. Dash reliving this in *Daughters of the Dust*, could however be interpreted as a call to cultural revival, especially to black people scattered across cities.

Importantly, at the core of *Daughters of the Dust* is the imminence of cultural annihilation that migration portends. Ensuring that the self is preserved while interacting with the more dominating other in the course of migration is therefore, revolutionary. This I find central to Dash's preoccupation in the film. The characters of Yellow Mary and Viola provide a vivid example of how migration into a dominant culture portends great risk to the identity of the migrant. Viola's orientation changes having previously migrated to the Mainland and she describes her cultural and spiritual origin in the language of those of the dominant culture in the mainland. To Viola, black traditions only belong to the "barbaric" past and have no place in the future that she envisions for her people with whom she intends to travel back to the mainland. According to Viola:

> The past is prologue
> I see this day as their first step towards progress
> An engraved invitation to the culture,
> and education and wealth of the mainland…
> When I left this Island, I was a sinner and I didn't know it.
> But when I left this Island, touched that mainland,
> and fell into the arms of the lord

For Viola, moving to the mainland entails a Christian belief system as a necessary step toward

political emancipation and civic futurity. This obsession with progress dictated by the capitalist

culture of the North with little regards to the tradition and belief systems of the black people

however generates culture conflict between Nana and her disciples within the family and Viola

and others who share her thought pattern like Haagar. While Nana is not against Migration to the

North and seeking progress for the black people, she strongly believes that only way that

descendant of ex-slaves could survive in the new world is by holding onto their own identity

(and all belief system that comes with it) while they interact with other cultures of the North. In

Nana's strong philosophical world, such relationship of cultures that renders the African ways as

barbaric, paganist, and backward, should be resisted as brainwashing as true emancipation of the

blacks can only be sourced from their cultural history. The deep essence of Nana's foresight is

represented in Yellow Mary who, like Viola, believes that openness to the dominant culture is a

sure means to self-empowerment. However, Yellow Mary only meets her "ruin" in the course of

migration into the geography and culture of white civilization. Consequently, she decides to stay

back in the warm embrace of home that Ibo Landing provides her broken self. The character of

Yellow Mary therefore foregrounds the essence of native wisdom as requisite for survival in a

multi-cultural world.

Toward the end of the film, we come to learn that Yellow Mary turned to a life of

prostitution after being raped and "ruined" on the mainland. Eula defends Yellow Mary,

declaring: "Even though you're going up North, you all think about being ruined, too. You think

you can cross over to the mainland and run away from it?" Eula's position, here, corroborates

Nana's earlier warning that the North could never be "a land of (easy) milk and honey" for black

people. For Nana, there is the imminence of her children being disposed of their ancestral

knowledge and values. She fears that these children may become a people on the verge of forgetting where they come from as they transition into a new mode of life, thus, must be strongly encouraged to never let go of their ways even as they accommodate acculturate into new ways.

One significant scene that foregrounds Nana's predisposition to a future of hybrid identity for the Peazants is where Nana combines a charm symbolizing African spirituality with Viola's bible and requires that every member of the family kisses the portion to get fortified for their journey. Even though there are initial protests by Viola and Haargar, they both eventually kneel to kiss the portion in the belief that it is capable of ensuring safe journey for them. Nana assures them that "Dis will provide de sustenance to see you through de rough journey!" By conveying these words, Nana wants to empower the younger members of the Peazant family with the Transatlantic memory that can "sustain" their passage through modern America where they are bound to represent a culture that the mainstream society misunderstands or minimizes because of racism or willful ignorance. Through her reliance on the potency of herbs and roots as products of sustenance, Nana encourages the younger Peazant family to draw on the memory of their ancestors' transnational spiritual experiences in America, as a usable past that can sustain their struggles for survival and empowerment in America. This way, in the culturally hybrid world that Nana foretells as resultant of the great migration, black people can only survive by resisting cultural and spiritual deaths.

Conclusion

In her narrative of the myth of the heroic Ibo Landing slaves, Eula expresses that the captives walked on water chanting, "the water brought us, the water will take us home." But Africa in the film is not necessarily a site of healing because it represents a homeland to which

the Peazants must return, but is instead a reminder that black life precedes and exceeds the moment and space of the middle passage and racial capitalism. Ibo Landing, instead, marks an origin story of resistance based upon speculation and mythology. While others say that the Ibo drowned, or that they flew home to Africa, all the versions of the stories of slaves who landed at Ibo Landing articulates a refusal to submit to slavery. They reveal a kind of freedom march, reminding us that the enslavement of Africans never translated to absolute power over them because it could not control nature or divine spirit. Dash's picture of Ibo Landing serves as a reminder that though slavery experience dispossessed black people of liberty, they could not dispossess the Ibo of their ancestral spirits, cultural practices, belief systems, and ability to create new lives. The metaphor of water taking the descendants of those revolutionary slaves home that Eula draws therefore goes back to the idea of migration of black people throughout America and necessary retention of their native ways for survival. Eula's words in a way Echoes Nana's worldview of the earth, kinship, and belief systems in which spirits, gods, their unborn children and ancestors have traveled with the Peazants from Africa, and can continue to travel with them and help them survive in the New World**.**

The massive movement of African Americans across the United States defined by the Great Migration occasioned the creolization and diffusion of African aesthetics into different corners of the country. The forms that allowed such cultural inoculations including spirituals, folktales, literature, the ring shouts, jazz, blues, burlesque, and other artistic forms in which African aesthetics are tucked. Like Voodoo, these forms contain the African lores and tactics that were preserved in Gullah culture and were reinvented by slaves and their free descendants as tools against cultural and spiritual domination. In the film, Nana charges Eli as he prepares to go North:

> I'm trying to give you something to take with you
> Along with all your great big dreams
> Call on those old Africans, Eli.
> Let them old souls come into your heart, Eli.
> Let them touch you with the hand of time
> Let them feed your head with wisdom that ain't from this day and time
> Cause when you leave this Island, Eli Peazant
> You ain't going to no land of milk and honey…
> Celebrate our ways!

Through music, cinema, and other media, the African aesthetics have found their ways into American popular culture where they enhance resistance strategies employing satire, parodies, and other practices. To conclude, I find in *Daughters of the Dust* two connected projects: A representation of the tranquil, communal, aesthetic, and spiritual black life as well as a retracing of contemporary black culture to its Southern origin. For Dash, African-Americans have only survived through resistance to cultural dominance and expressions through African cultural modes. *Daughters of the dust* therefore presents another representation mode rewriting racist distortions in the American visual regimes that regulate black modern subjects as urban abject, and the black rural subject and their African Diasporic cosmologies as non-modern and savagery.

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