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“Bodies on the Move”: Examining the Quest for Migration in the Postcolonial Africa Novel

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The scholarship of cosmopolitanism and migrations, in many forms, narrative, artistic, and cultural continues to influence and inform our experiences as global citizens navigating an increasingly complicated global environment. This paper aims to re(map) these notions, which calls for reconsideration, re-evaluation, and emphasizing the importance of cosmopolitanism as reflected in literature. There has been an exponential increase in studies on cosmopolitanism in literature during the last two decades. This tendency is directly tied with transnational interconnection and experiences with a difference in a way that has never been seen before as a result of cross-border commerce, migration, mobility, media, and consumption. This paper interrogates *Open City* by Teju Cole; *We Need New Names* by No Violet Bulawayo, *Ghana Must Go* by Taiye Selasie and *Beyond Babylon* by Igiaba Scego to underscore how they use cosmopolitanism as the main idea.

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INTRODUCTION

This article examines the character’s motivation for migration in study; *Open City* by Teju Cole (2011), *We Need New Names* by No Violet Bulawayo (2013), *Ghana Must Go* by Taiye Selasie (2013), and *Beyond Babylon* by Igiaba Scego (2019). This paper theorises that the bodies on the move is the transitional migration intimated by the quest for individualism, cross-border business, mobility, and media consumption. Looking at the globalised Africans reveals the motivations, desires, and experiences that compel characters to seek alternative homes. In her 2005 article, ‘Bye-Bye Babar,’ Taiye Selasi constructed and expanded a theoretical framework for Afropolitanism, which served as the foundation for this research. Within this context, Selasi’s promulgated Afropolitanism stands out as particularly noteworthy. She names the unidentified generation of free African immigrants in her essay ‘Bye-Bye Babar’, which she characterizes as: “The generation of Babars.” The article examines the eagerness with which the new wave of African immigrants in America and Europe is forming their identities has created a route for a new generation of contemporary and outward-looking African authors, who have been dubbed “Afropolitans” (Dabri, 2016). The article fronts cosmopolitanism and transnationalism as the “push and pull” factors that initiate migration in the four texts under study.

Transnationalism and Cosmopolitanism as the Quest for Migration

This section explores the interconnected encounters that motivate characters to migrate. The discussion is based on Selasi’s (2005) explanation of the Afropolitan identity. According to the theorist, Afropolitanism demystifies how transatlantic blacks negotiate their transition as the Africans of the world and identity formation as displayed in literary works. Therefore, the paper employs

Afropolitanism themes as the anchor points to discuss characters’ desire to move out of their initial localities.

‘Ghana Must Go’, in its most literal meaning, displays identity development in the context of immigration while functioning on the Afropolitanism notion, which gives a basis for interpreting the identity of Black who “view themselves as part of the globe rather than as apart from it” (Balakrishnan, 2017, p.29). The novel’s division into the parts “Gone”, “Going”, “Go” create an atmosphere of movement and travel additionally secured by the title of the novel, *Ghana Must Go*. *Ghana Must Go* (2013) story opens with a narration of Kweku’s death and his family’s reaction as they try to negotiate grief and estrangement. Selasi, in the novel, offers insight into the feelings of each character and the consequences of Kweku’s decisions through multiple narratives.

Open City (2012) is a novel that follows no sequential flow of events but is centred on the main character’s personal life, Julius, a biracial immigrant whose story cuts across three continents. Julius’ thoughts are much centred on the globalization of the world as the internet much influences him. As a mobile character, Julius is constantly on the move trying to locate his lineage. This makes him traverse the world in the pursuit of locating his grandmother, whom he believes is from Germany. After a reasonable effort of finding his grandmother, he fails to achieve his mission. In Julius, we see an individual influenced by the mixed experiences of America, Europe, and Africa. He encounters people from different cultural backgrounds that shape his identity formation in his transatlantic endeavour. The leading argument is that migration is heavily influenced by the “push and pull” factors that motivate characters to move out of their initial localities. The goal of migrant writing is to demonstrate how the displacement of one’s identity, one’s sense of belonging, one’s exotic

sense of nostalgia, and one's cultural hybridity all play an important part in creating Afropolitan culture.

According to Binyavanga Wainaina's speech (2012), African literature has metamorphosized to include the politicized and contemporary "nay voices" he identifies as Pan-Africanism. Santana (2013) revisits Binyavanga's "Afropolitics" as the illuminating guide in understanding how the Afropolitan writer produces his fictionalized narrative in the globalized world migration. Wainaina points to the revolutionary effect that the internet has on African literary production, particularly via creating what he calls "digital pulp."

Binyavanga theorizes migration as a revolutionary attempt that broadens the locus of understanding of the ever-changing Afro-diasporic literature. Through his version of Afropolitanism, we trace how migration shapes the globalized African fluidity as marked at the cultural, geographical, and identity levels. In this study, migration is the leading lens for understanding how cosmopolitanism and transnationalism are constructed in *Open City* and its impulsive effect on characters. In describing migration, we borrow from Ayo Kehinde (2008), who argues that,

"To produce a body of fiction that may be described as essentially migrant in character. This development is part of what is known as a postcolonial impulse in contemporary third-world literature. It reflects, in part, the experience of the third-world peoples in the face of the increasing globalization, transculturality, and transvaluation of diasporic consciousness." (150)

Therefore, the diversity of cosmopolitanism is facilitated by the social constructs that play out in the transitional journey. In Teju Cole's *Open City*, migration is a dominant occurrence that compels characters to translocate, often changing their identities.

Migration stories of protagonist characters interweave in *Beyond Babylon*. The movement across the world signifies the dynamic nature of boundaries, thereby implying a shared characteristic. Being of African descent and living in Europe illustrates Scego's ability to capture the

variegated tapestry of what being an Afropolitan means. Selasi's (2005) account of Afropolitanism parallels Kasse's (2014) assumption and allows us to trace how migration simulates transnationalism and cosmopolitanism, characterized by cultural hybridity, multilingualism, and geographical location. In Igiaba Scego's *Beyond Babylon*, migration streams authorize altering character personalities.

Identity Formation

Identity formation is a significant theme in the texts under study, in *We need new names* by Bulawayo (2013). Central to her argument is that characters' migration stems from creating new identities that help heal their troubled lives. According to Selasi (2005), the Afropolitan can be categorised into cultural, racial, and national aspects. The scholar itemises the three levels of identity as the founding basis of understanding how migration is initiated in the journey of an Afropolitan. In this discussion, the paper reviews how characters are depicted as global citizens of the world as they seek to negotiate their national, cultural, and racial identities.

In *Ghana Must Go*, Selasi explores the theme of identity formation by constructing characters with conflicting personalities. Identity formation in the novel reveals an intricate pattern that centres profoundly on/around social fields and across boundaries. Afropolitanism suggests that individuals of African ancestry are diverse and multi-coloured, encompassing a wide identity that defies categorization by nationality. 'Afropolitanism must be seen for what it is: a simple attempt to comprehend the various nature of being African or of African ancestry in today's globe (Chielozona, 2014:239).

According to Afropolitan belief, therefore, the basic framework within which the dynamics of identity construction among those of African origin embraces the diverse nationalisms and experiences. Selasi, in the novel, presents characters born and living in multiple countries. Regardless, each character's locality gives an insight into their complex identities that arise from each culture and the resultant perceptions of transnational and cosmopolitanism that set off. *Ghana Must Go* opens with the drafting of a family tree, thereby stressing the role of the family in identity formation and

pointing to the novel's focus on a sense of belonging and search for a home.

Migration plays a critical role in the characters' identity formation. Their hastened journeys abroad are majorly pinned on the unsettled moments they endure and the globalization effect on their identities. The transnational experience invigorates their multiple identities acquired through displacement. Openly, the three characters narrate their troubled sense of belonging and the struggle to shake off experiences endured in their home countries.

Characters like Julius, Kweku Sai and Darling all have similar patterns of migration that reflect the movement across borders not limited to the physical geographies. Their burning desire to overcome the sorry state of their original homes motivates them to translocate to the western world since they believe it provides a more open space for them to thrive. Therefore, their identity formation process is based on the consideration of what Mbembe (2007) defines as

Character mobility, itinerancy, and displacement, [and] recalling the history of itinerancy and mobility means talking about mixing, blending, and superimposing. In opposition to the fundamentalists preaching 'custom' and 'autochthony', we can go as far as to assert that what we call 'tradition' does not exist (26–30).

In *Beyond Babylon*, Scego allows the characters to tell bits and pieces of their stories through various narrative sections in the novel, including generational migration roots. Scego gives voice to the characters and transnational identities in the process, showing that identity is not static; instead, it changes from context to context, from day to day, and something that does not exclude other expressions or feelings of belonging. The discussion proceeds with examples of characters drawn from the four texts.

Darling

Darling is the main protagonist and the firstborn child in her family. As a young girl, she faces an identity crisis pegged on the patriarchal cultural structure that expects the firstborn to be a male

child. Her interactions with her friend *Chipo* detail how she is not at peace with being a girl and the firstborn. This is evident during the conversation between the two friends “The first baby is supposed to be a boy” and then responding, “I said *supposed*, didn't I?” (Bulawayo 2013, p. 5). Darling's problem as a girl is captured when she struggles to understand why her father constantly refers her to a boy. The bestowal of adult duties further complicates her life as a child. As captured by the author, she is forced to undertake roles like looking after her sick father:

He coughs some more, and I listen to the awful sound tearing the air. His body folds and rocks with each cough, but I don't even feel for him because I'm thinking, I hate you for this, I hate you for going to that South Africa and coming back sick and all bones, I hate you for making me stop playing with my friends... In my head, I'm thinking, Die. Die now so I can go play with my friends, die now because this is not fair. Die die die. Die. (Bulawayo 2013; 98)

Globalisation plays a role in supplementing Darling's identity redemption. As a child born in the 2000s generations, she triumphs against the crossroads of socio-cultural impediments. Her world perception cuts an image of a liberated female who seeks to achieve beyond the structured gendered identity. Her resistance to the westernised gender identity is met with resistance when she is punished for defacing Mother of Bones' portrait of Jesus. Her answer to the exploitative nature of western ideals like Christianity is that Africans should practice an Africanized version of Christianity that captures Jesus of African descent. In this identity crisis, Darling emerges to represent a nation plagued with the white dilemma. (Nyambi et al 2020)

Even though Darling settles in the US with Aunt Fostalina, she is a character on transition who is always searching for her identity. She makes new female friends but struggles to get along with TK, with whom they share a home. Darling feels isolated in Uncle Kojo's home since she has no friends to play with.

From Darling's double viewpoint of the world, both in the established west and her troubled home country, we see the cosmopolitan individual who

tries to renegotiate the strong sense of belonging that cut across national borders. She appreciates the sophisticated world but analyses it as being so isolated and mean, thus rendering her a crisis of belonging.

Kweku Sai

Kweku's identity, at a young age, is rocked by destitution fuelled by the undying need to move from being unimportant and invisible to being a successful surgeon in his field in America. Regarding his sister's death as unfair due to lack of access to good health care, Kweku works towards eliminating the feeling of hopelessness and helplessness, the reason why he "cemented black over that part of his past" (Selasi 2013, p. 27), psychologically repressing memories of the motive behind his migration. Loss necessitates Kweku's migration, a tale that Selasi narrates as a haunting one. Kweku argues that "if it returned to him, caught up to him, bellowing forward from behind him like a tumbleweed in the wind, he would feel the only distance, the uncoverable distance, deeply comforting distance" (Selasi 2013, p. 28). Kweku negotiates distance and location as an escape and constructs a different identity, one dissociated from despair in Africa. He seeks a new identity and belonging within diasporic boundaries and finds it in Folasade Savage.

Kweku redeems his identity through the bestowed patriarchal role of being a provider. It is within the outlined gender role that Kweku finds satisfaction and purpose. His identity is pegged on the ability to put food on the table and ensuring his children receive good education and opportunities, ones he never had. Kweku triumphs against the notion of immigrant disillusionment and attain a sense of comfort and stability. By marrying a Nigerian woman and bearing four children, Kweku achieves redemption beyond the structured immigrant success. Hence, Kweku becomes a citizen of the world. Kweku blends with other immigrants in America, and his identity thus fuses with those around him.

He felt like an astronaut wearing astronaut-white landed recently and unexpectedly on an alien ship. Newly fluent in the language but still foreign to the locals and like a convert to the alien race. Later, in Boston, when he had finished his training, when he

had become a doctor, well-regarded at that, he would stride through the white and chrome halls at Beth Israel feeling part of the machine now and stronger for it. It was a feeling he never dared share with his colleagues, who would take his pride in the hospital for lack of pride in himself: that he felt so special, even superior, for being there (Selasi 2013, p. 69).

Kweku Tries to negotiate a strong sense of belonging beyond familial bonds and factors that impede his immigrant status. He carefully does so, bearing in mind the risk of discrimination. From Kweku's narrative, we see an individual trying to occupy a freedom space. His identity is shaped by social, economic, and cultural developments.

Julius

Julius in *Open City* emerges from the ruins of a botched relationship with his girlfriend Nadege and tries to heal his dented self. In his thirties, Julius is a psychiatric fellow in the university at the Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital and is inundated with the burning desire to fix his split identity crisis that stems from his biracial origin. Forced to migrate out of Nigeria in his youth, he migrates to America to pursue better life opportunities. After arriving on the US shores, he navigates through university and makes friends with different people who, just like him, have endured a troubled past. To circumspect his troubled personal life, Julius resorts to diagnosing the people around him in an attempt to vindicate his fragmented life. His candid interactions revolve around the intricate matters of personal bonds, shattered nationalities, and nostalgic memories.

Race plays a huge role in Julius' identity formation; as a free man in the west, his mission is to amend his troubled selfhood that is permeated with puzzles of missed affection. As an immigrant, his life in the US, Julius is constantly affected by the identity crisis that he tries to solve. Through mental and physical dislocation, Julius tries to heal and rediscover himself in the global space. The challenge of not being a native affects his social life, and sometimes, it pricks his identity, causing Julius to doubt his African heritage (Waters 2021)

To deal with the shame of being labelled as an "ugly" African, Julius details a brief historical

backdrop of the whole incident in Uganda as a strategy that helps usurp the construed image of Africa. He argues that the prevalent imagery documented in the west misses the whole story about the African people. Therefore, Julius tries to salvage the demonized image of Africa, which tries to rise from the ashes of a failed system.

Julius' mutative identity provides no solution to his narrative prowess that documents the psychological torture he endures from racially motivated jibe from his host. He likens Amin's atrocious treatment of his people as an act of revenge by his host on Black people. Julius also feels he is a target of racial inequality in America, a development that sees him become a victim of white prejudice. This is seen when coming out of a movie he is ridiculed by young children who within the vicinity of their parents wrongly accuse Julius as a dangerous person probably associated with a gang,

They now both turned to me. Are you a gangster, mister? They both flashed gang signs, or their idea of gang signs. I looked at them. It was midnight, and I did not feel like giving public lectures. He is black, said the girl, but he's not dressed like a gangster. I bet he's a gangster, her brother said. (32)

Julius's battle with self-identification means he cannot fit in the open space that he hoped to seek refuge. Unable to align himself to a specific ethnic grouping, he finds himself bumping into people with different social-cultural backgrounds. At times, he is on the receiving end of their hostilities. The two incidents of Dr. Gupta and the two young children who chide people of colour give a gist of how Julius's identity as a black man in the US affects his sense of belonging. The racial jibes directed to him collapse his effort to mend his ruptured identity.

Zuhra Laamane

Zuhra, the protagonist in *Beyond Babylon* precludes the story with a tale of her life as a black girl in Italy. Scego presents Zuhra's identity as is conflicted from the beginning. Zuhra oscillates in an uncertain identity crisis that Scego symbolically captures through her inability to see colour. Zuhra's sexual assault as a child at the hands of a white school employee causes her to lose her sense of colour.

When the novel opens, she recollects all colours but red. As Jhumpa Lahiri notes in the introduction, sensual and bloody hues run like a thread through *Beyond Babylon* as Zuhra searches for the right shade — in auburn facial and pubic hair, menstrual blood, notebooks, even Mogadiscio, the “red city” (Scego, 2008, p. 12-14). Zuhra “pities Spain”, and for that, she says it “reminded me too much of my exile from myself—something unfinished” (Scego, 2008, p. 6).

The colour red symbolizes life, death, anger, and love in the text. For Zuhra, her ability to see only “grey” can be interpreted as ambiguity or an ambiguous space occupied by the hybrid Zuhra. She allows herself to see only grey because it is a meeting point between her identity extremes in that effect. Zuhra confesses that “I am colourless” (Scego (2008), p. 7). In the introductory part, Jhumba contends that colour in *Beyond Babylon* stands for language, a perception that mirrors Zuhra's colour blindness. Subsequently, the notion raises questions of identity formation.

Zuhra's abject mobility is previously focused primarily on her troubled relationship with menses. The quotation above demonstrates that Zuhra's abject mobility is now revealed symbolically through labour and the final discarding of the metaphorical metal chains that have held her captive for so long. Another possibility is that Zuhra's excruciating pain is required to live and discover answers in her search for identity. As has been noted, Zuhra's identity (re)formation following trauma is triggered by the Arabic Language Course. In her epilogue, Zuhra draws parallels between the Somali language and parenthood and pregnancy:

I wonder if my mother's mother tongue can be a mother to me [...] In Somali, I found the comfort of her uterus. In Somali, I have heard the only lullabies she sang to me. In Somali, I certainly had my first dreams. [...] When she talks, my mother is always pregnant. She gives birth to the other mother, to her mother tongue. I like to listen to her. It makes me travel inside her. I want to be silent forever, just listening to her. Witness a mother giving birth to a mother. (Scego 417-419)

Scego returns to imagery of pregnancy and delivery. Still, this time it is the yearning to be reunited with

the mother's protective womb as a metaphor for going home and feeling at ease with the Somali language and culture, rather than the awful yet freeing birth of iron bars. When Zuhra hears her father's documented life narrative shortly after her return from Tunis and the dream mentioned above, the final piece of Zuhra's identity puzzle appears to fall into place.

Cultural Hybridity

According to Homi Bhabha in *Location of culture* (1994), hybridization transforms an individual to acquire binary identities, the amalgamation of the (global and local) which creates a third space. In this tripartite cultural space, the individual's identity aligns with the postcolonial nation's mixed match and the diaspora.

Therefore, balancing the sense of more than one cultural identity is the new norm in postcolonial writings that seek to challenge the old guard. Chielozona (2014) argues that the African identity has been transformed; hence it encompasses multiple lines defined through race, religion, and ethnicity. The new African family unit is multi-ethnic and multiracial, a hybrid phenomenon in this polychromatic set-up. Globalization has played a huge role in providing a serene environment for cultural hybridity. The cultural gap between individuals has shrunk due to new ethnic mixes, eating styles, and languages brought together by global universalism.

Bulawayo in *We need new names* crafts individuals with hybridized identities. The first instance is when Darling narrates that her desire to relocate to America is motivated by the fancier lifestyles that do not exist in Zimbabwe. Darling also narrates her experiences in Budapest's "Guava escapades" as a cross-border endeavour to upgrade life in Paradise. Budapest is a metaphor for the sophisticated western world that Darling desires to migrate to. Life in Paradise and Budapest offer a double experience for Darling and her friends. In Paradise, the order of the day is chaotic and unpredictable. The contrast of eating habits from the two worlds (Paradise and Budapest) articulates Darling's desire to escape from the desolate life. Shaped by the hybrid identity, she seeks an alternative home and remains unsatisfied in her transitional identity quest.

In her narrations, she fantasizes about life in the Western world; she vehemently describes the different affinities that play as the magnet that pulls her away from the single statehood to becoming a world citizen.

Characters in *Open City* are constructed as hybrids whose identities are shaped by migration. Julius's life is fragmented by mixed ethnicity, affecting his early life. After his father's death, Julius' relationship with his mother turns nasty. Julius negotiates multiple transnational boundaries to counter this development to bridge his African identity with the western world.

Julius's first example of cultural hybridity in *Open City* is exemplified by how his double heritage inundates the desire to escape his native Nigeria. When sent to the North of the country to join a military institution, Julius' loyalty torn between his two parents, who seem to be at loggerheads with each other at the time of his school admission. Julius discovers the underlying issues transfixed on his identity at this military institution. His cultural heritage renders him a nation-less a nomad whose motivation is to locate his lost grandmother in Germany (Grote 2010). As observed by person caught up in a world of polarized racial construction.

Caught up in the "in-between state", Julius opts not to associate either as German or Nigeria, a decision that is cemented by his ability to operate in the fringes of the "outsider". While in his global endeavour, whether in America or Belgium, Julius reluctantly identifies as an African. His conservative identity thrusts him into becoming Ferrer (2016), Julius attempts to navigate a double path that includes his African descent and life as an immigrant abroad. Caught up in the in-between worlds, Julius discovers how his self-identity crisis is parallel to the irreconcilable national identity of Africa and America. As Ferrer suggests,

When analyzing Open City, it is very important to pay attention to the portrait of America and Africa that we get through Julius to understand the internal conflict that this relationship represents. As we already know, Julius was born in Nigeria, but when he was just a teenager, he decided to move to America expecting to have more opportunities to have a better life. He

chooses to live in New York and finally studies psychiatry at university, fortunately allowing him to get a good job. At first, it seems that his impressions of New York and America are very positive. However, his irremediable connection with Africa and the discovery of American society's "dark side" absolutely change his conception and understanding of these two nations and what they represent for him. (5)

Julius' double retrospection is influenced by multiculturalism; in New York, he tries to rediscover his own identity, often placing himself as the outsider who tries to fit in the multi-layered environment with a long history of suppression. In his detailed account of America's role in causing pain and anguish to the African people over the centuries, Julius laments the exploitation Africans were forced to undergo through this dark period of history.

By operating under the parallels of his African America identities, Julius strives to locate his niche by being the flexible immigrant who tries to dodge the gory memories of the past. Hybridity helps Julius establish himself in multiple environment that seek to annihilate his desire to find answers on his lost grandmother. The open pilgrimages facilitate his thought process which transcends the physical geographies. Julius is able to collapse different locations in his imaginative narration. As a "mobile" character Julius structure his story to capture the nostalgic and inescapable reality that impounds transnational dream. In the end his failure to trace down his grandmother compounds his struggles of an immigrant who tries to reconcile his dented identity in the global space.

In *Ghana Must Go*, Selasi presents young culturally hybrid characters, Afropolitans, that depict certain features that illuminate their hybrid nature. In her discussion, Selasi (2005) cultural hybrids are ethically mixed, multilingual, have a certain dress sense. Lastly, they generally feel at home in many places, not necessarily in a specific location. Characters in the novel reflect a general culturally hybrid nature. Folasade Savage reflects cultural hybridity in the novel. Fola depicts several shocking characteristics to her African workers: she smokes, wears shorts, and arranges flowers instead of pounding yams or shelling beans. The workers

"watch as research scientists observe a new species, a hybrid, herbivorous, likely harmless, maybe not" (Selasi 2013, p. 101). The workers find it peculiar that an employer says "thank you" for services and "good mornings". This behaviour is weird, unexpected especially from an African woman. The workers' whispers about Fola do not affect her.

The workers' ignorance of Fola's experiences in America and Afropolitan history allows her to adjust and make a home in Ghana. Kweku's and Fola's born and raised American children reveal culturally hybrid features. The African dish, *Jollof, egusi* (Selasi (2013), 232) is not strange. Despite converging from different ends of the world, the peculiar comfort with African food in Ghana reflect the children's conversant nature to their African heritage. This reveals that Fola prepared this kind of food even in America. Secondly, the children's mannerisms in Africa compared to America show their culturally hybrid nature. For instance, Olu's interaction with his father, Kweku, in America, would be considered disrespectful in Africa. Olu's behaviour towards his father can be interpreted as the influence of American culture, which comes as a shock to Kweku, whose expectation was the opposite.

"Where is your mother?"

"She doesn't want to see you".

"Look at me when you're speaking to me".

"I don't want too either". Olu looked down, gripped the straps of his bag. Kicked the ground. Another bell. "I have to go". Walked away (Selasi, (2005) 88).

According to African culture, when an elder speaks, she requires eye contact as a sign of respect. Olu's angered reaction towards his father and, worse, the act of walking away could be considered outright distrustful in African culture. The interaction shocked Kweku, who expected his son, African by origin, to behave accordingly, instead did the opposite. Despite being raised by diasporan parents, Olu learns to react in the American way. Further discussion on this point reveals Selasi (2005) discussion on how Africans in the diaspora express themselves through criticism of Africa to celebrate

their origin and remember their Africanness. As Taiwo writes:

They felt like that, children, she thinks, during dinner, as watchful and rule-bound as Catholic school pupils--- and wonders why all of them do this, still now, even now, the African Filial Piety act? Lowered eyes, lowered voices, feigned shyness, bent shoulders, the curse of the culture, exaltation of deference, that beaten-in impulse to show oneself obedient and worthy of praise for one's reverence of Order (never mind that the Order is crumbling, corrupted, departed, dysfunctional; respect must be shown) (Selasi (2005), 233).

Taiwo expresses her frustration towards those of African origin, including herself, for maintaining a culture that was not there is, to begin with, them being born in the diaspora. The citation, however, reveals the effort of diasporic African parents to instil “African values” in their children to conserve African history. Disregarding their children’s hybridity, parents of African origin ensure their children carry mannerisms and attributes as depicted by Fola’s children in the novel, distinguishing them from other immigrants.

In *Beyond Babylon*, we trace culturally hybridized characters. Scego presents her protagonists with the same cultural background, experiencing similar challenges. Their ability to fit into foreign cultures entails adopting elements that demonstrate cultural hybridity. Among all the migration characters in the novel *Beyond Babylon*, Mar is the most conflicted character with her hybridity depicted with extreme difficulties on her mixed heritage. The in-betweenness trope in *Beyond Babylon*, especially in the protagonist characters, Zuhra, and Mar, plays out in the cultural context from the music they listen to, how they walk, and their sexual orientation. The characters’ cultural hybridity in the novel is also reflected in how they react to their skin colour their attitude towards it. Unfortunately, not all of Scego’s literary characters learn to deal with their multiculturalism; in other cases, the migrant character herself harshly judges the diversity that they experience every day, as in the instance of Mar:

Me, Mar Ribero Martino, what is the meaning with me? I am the result of the Third World. A black father, a mother who is the daughter of

Southerners. Pigmented by stains of slavery and exploitation. I am a land of conquest. Earth to crush. Colourless hybrid fruit. Without place. A half-blood that does not belong to anything. My blood is contaminated. There are too many others in me [...] Half blood. Seminegra. I’m ashamed. For the blacks, I’m not dark enough. For the whites, not quite clear enough (Scego 2008; 365-66, italics in orig.).

The two protagonists in the novel reveal the struggle of coming to terms with hybridity necessitated by migration and mobility and emerge as representations of realistic multicultural spaces. In their eyes, cultural heterogeneity renders them imposters in any geographical location hence the need to migrate and occupy a more cosmopolitan space accommodating their hybrid identities.

Multilingualism

Darling struggles to understand “cheese”, a moment that foregrounds the cultural gap prevalent in Zimbabwe. Their interaction with the white woman is a struggle since they cannot comprehend her language well. Later, while in one of their escapades to Budapest, Darling can converse well in English while answering a phone call when she responds with English etiquette using the words “Ma’am” (Bulawayo (2013)128). Conversing confidently with the White caller shows how Darling has been acculturated into the White culture. Her friend God knows also mimics the white accent as they ransack the broken house as stated:

Wee fawgoat the fowks, we fawgoat the fowks, God-knows says, sounding like a white man, and we giggle. He starts towards the cupboards and rummages and rummages, then he is back with the glinting forks and knives, and we eat like proper white people (Bulawayo, 130.)

Speaking and engaging in the urban vernacular is a moment of triumph for the young children who now see it as a functionary element of being absorbed into the cosmopolitan world. As Selasi argues, the quest to get absorbed into the world of the other presents the Afropolitan an opportunity to bridge the language gap; hence a hybrid identity is forged. Unlike her friends, Darling can converse fluently in English, a rarity in Paradise because of that; Darling

seizes the opportunity to bridge the cultural gap between Paradise and Budapest.

Darling's fluency in English is further cultivated in America, where she is trying to settle in the western world. She decries that for one to effectively communicate in English, it takes the full mastery of the language to survive in American society. Using English, therefore, denotes the privilege of the cosmopolitan world. It is also the perfect language that connotes elitism as Darling narrates; "The problem with English is this: You usually cannot open your mouth, and it comes out just like that – first you must think what you want to say. Then you have to find the words (Bulawayo, 2013, p. 193).

In *Ghana Must Go*, this aspect of cultural hybridity is not dwelt upon in-depth by Selasi. Selasi (2005) defines an Afropolitan as "multilingual". The first aspect is Fola's admission of her father's diverse multilingualism. Kayo Savage was fluent in major Nigerian Languages, French, Swahili, Arabic, and snatches of Twi (Selasi, 2005, p. 102). Learning from her father facilitated Fola to blend in Ghana after her father's death, in America with Kweku, a Ghananian, in Lagos and Accra. Fola's multilingual nature implies a diverse cultural identity beyond national physical boundaries to facilitate the occupation of multiple spaces past the ethnic, racial, and religious effects. Secondly, Selasi (2013) alludes to language when Fola speaks to her son in an indigenous language. Lastly, during Taiwo and Dean Rudd's interaction, she tries to impress him with her knowledge of Latin and Greek (Selasi, (2013 132). These instances relate to Afropolitan language abilities as Selasi (2005) discussed to speak multiple languages to fit in any cosmopolitan environment.

In *Beyond Babylon*, the multilingual practice among cosmopolitan characters denotes expressions of hybrid identity, and their ability to mix languages challenges the preconceptions of stable and unitary identities. Focusing on the primary protagonist in the novel Zuhra, whose command of several languages from Italian, Spanish, and her interest in learning Arabic, we locate Zuhra as a character who chooses several voices to become visible in a predominantly white Italy and Spain. The discussion of language in Afropolitan theory highlights the vitality of language as a tool at the

disposal of a cosmopolitan individual (Selasi, 2005).

Scego's *Beyond Babylon*, initially written in Italian, presents characters with a strong command of several languages cited in dialogues and narrative. The use of multilingualism by Scego reflects an Afropolitan linguistic ability that sanctions characters to question their hybrid identity. The novel's first evidence of multilingual practice is in Zuhra's prologue. The constant use of *wallahi billahi* in Zuhra's narration reflects multilingualism. Her speech offers the expression that reveals Zuhra's mixed origins both on linguistic and cultural levels. It is also possible to discern how certain instances of the Arabic language in the Italian text might be interpreted as reflecting the language usage of a foreign language learner who incorporates the foreign language into her conversation. To cite her prowess in code-switching, Zuhra narrates:

There's writing in every language saying I need to calm. Antes de emprezar, relajate. Nao` fiques Nervosa. Prenez vorte temps et detendez-vous. Rilassati. Rilassati. Relax. It is written everywhere. A mantra (Scego 2008; 17).

In the novel, insertions of phrases from different languages, especially in Zuhra's narrative sections labelled "The Negropolitan", mark Scego's multilingual practice. For instance, the Spanish words inserted in both Zuhra's speech as well as in the reported direct speech of others: "Ai tempi non c'era la mucca pazza, no nada de vaca loca, nada di vida loca (Scego, 2008, p. 14), "la terra della paella e della horchata de chufa" (p. 36), "Claro que si!" (p. 80), "Gringo" (p. 227), "Soy Luis, mi dice. Soy Cubano.... he oido que hablas espanol" (p. 169), mostly followed by in-text translations suggest expressions by characters as a way to identify and relate to other. The multilingual ability thus becomes a means to express identity in the novel. Zuhra can be viewed as an Afropolitan that devices modes of being understood as an individual of African descent in the world. Hence, embracing fluidity in language for Zuhra defines her as "a citizen of the world" while giving her voice and agency of belonging. Despite the multilingual ability, Zuhra occasionally finds herself held on the periphery of diasporic spaces, as in her experience

with the Spanish authorities, as cited in the previous section. Her nickname “Negropolitan” thus infers the many aspects she embodies of being an African.

Ethnic mixes

Mixed ethnicity is a characteristic identifiable with the cosmopolitan. Selasi (2005) describes this ethnic mix as the melting pot of different cultures of a world citizen. Ethnic mixing creates a marginalized space for the individual. The first instance of ethnic mixing is TK, borne by two migrants living in America and later own his father Uncle Kojo marries Aunt Fostalina. TK is neither familiar with the indigenous cultures of his parents. The multicultural identity side-lines TK that he only finds solace in playing video games in his house. Although he is slightly older than Darling, he does not want to play with her due to the language difference.

Selasi in *Ghana Must Go* explores the concept of ethnic mixing from multiple ethnic backgrounds. Selasi explains that Afropolitans are sometimes ethnically mixed. Folasade’s origin is Scottish (Grandmother) and Igbo (Grandfather). As a result, Fola’s mother is married Kayo Savage, a Yoruba. Distinctively, Fola bears the twins Taiwo and Kehinde, whose sticking features stand out from the rest of the siblings. Olu has a striking resemblance to his mother and Sadie, Kweku. It is undeniable that the Sai children are ethnically mixed.

Additionally, the children seem to be Yale, Harvard, and Oxford products, which adds to their diversity. However, their multi-cultured appearance is the source of insecurities for the children. Olu wishes he could be handsome like his brother, Kehinde. Sadie wants to be white and slender. She hates her physical features. Taiwo wishes she had straight hair thus grows dreadlocks, and Kehinde wishes he could either be black or white, not a blend of both. (Selasi 2013)

African Bond

The first scene of the African bond is when Darling describes the unity between her fellow Zimbabweans immigrants, whom she refers to as uncles and aunts, even though they share no blood. She posits that their gatherings create a cosmopolitan home where immigrants are united by language. Darling constructs the American home as

the point of convergence where cosmopolitans partially relocate their selfhood. The African bond is kept alive in America by eating and cooking indigenous African dishes,(Bulawayo 2013 161). The idea of food is central to the cultural signification of the cosmopolitan as Darling observes, “Then they carefully chew, tilting their heads to the side and then their faces light up” Bulawayo (2013) 161. By assimilating their African ways in their American lives, the cosmopolitan’s transit to a hybrid culture that is not tied to a distinct culture. Therefore, the African bond facilitates multicultural space that creates a berth between fellow cosmopolitans. For instance, when her fellow Zimbabwean migrants visit Aunt Fostlina, they communicate in their indigenous language, making Uncle Kojo feel isolated as stated:

Whenever they come, Uncle Kojo leaves the house for most of the time because everybody will be speaking our real language, laughing, and talking loudly about back home, how it was like when they were growing up before things turned bad, then ugly. They always forget Uncle Kojo cannot understand them and he sits there looking lost, like he just illegally entered a strange country in his own house. Bulawayo (2013) ,161.

In this scene, the African bond is the displacing factor that filters Uncle Kojo from his family. Further, the gatherings, as described by Darling, also African music. While the music is used to relive the home atmosphere, it only captures one geographical location that is from the Zimbabwean heritage. The African bond helps some cosmopolitans thrive. It creates multiple intersections of identities in constant transition. For example, TK and his father are the lone figures isolated by the cultural indifference of Aunt Fostlina’s entourage.

2.3.4 Dress sense

In this section, we discuss how the cosmopolitan sense of fashion ties him to the appeal of the global culture. Selasi (2005) describes the dress sense as a statement of cultural hybridity. The first example of dress sense is seen in TK, who says his trousers, revealing his underpants, which draws criticism from his father. Uncle Kojo criticizes his son’s mode of dressing heavily influenced by the hip-hop

culture in America, which is profane hence unwelcome according to his African background. TK's dress sense does not resonate with the cultural heritage of his father neither his mother.

TK's pursuit of identity is affected by the tripartite heritage of Uncle Kojo's family. TK is defiant to his father and uses "patriarchal motherfucker" when referring to Uncle Kojo. TK typical dressing nods to the cosmopolitan who is acculturated to the ideals of the African Americans who salvage their marginality using pop culture as a means of identification. Uncle Kojo likens his son to hip-hop adherents whose dress code evokes images of "spoilt brats" used by raggedy boys who pose around corners while cursing Bulawayo (2013), 152.

Geography

Geographical displacement aids in converging the shared experiences Selasi (2005) describes the Afropolitan as an individual not tied to a physical location but in a global space defined by cross-border migrations. In their conceptualization of home, the Afropolitan may be anywhere in the world and still be at home. In this hybrid situation, his diaspora experience is navigating a complex journey full of nostalgia. Bulawayo constructs how characters' quest for identity formation originates from their troubled origins in my America. In this case, we identify how Zimbabwe's xenophobia is later re-created in America. For instance, Darling's first encounter with xenophobia is illustrated in one of her escapades in Budapest when Black vigilantes attack white people they call "bloody colonists". In Black power, Bulawayo captures how the racial rift in Zimbabwe results in racially motivated attacks on white people. Attack on strangers, majorly the white in Zimbabwe, evoke an exodus of immigrants that seek alternative homes in different parts of the world. In the "Black power" scene, the white man spiritedly defends his Zimbabwean citizenship by arguing that his ancestral lineage is in Zimbabwe. The man narrates, "I am African, he says. This is my fucking country too, my father was born here, I was born here, just like you!" Bulawayo (2013), 119.

Later on, Darling and Tshaka Zulu share a common experience relatable to the Zimbabwean xenophobic crisis in America. Tshaka Zulu's character illustrates how Geography displacement nods to the

transitional journey of the cosmopolitan. Bulawayo, therefore, advances the similar and symbolic encounters that are not tied to the geographical location. The author uses two xenophobic experiences that are familiar in different parts of the world. In *My America*, the author offers Darling the opportunity to narrate her view on the American experience without interference. Black segregation in America. Tshaka Zulu, mad like antics, revisits the deplorable state of racial injustice that Africans endured in their homeland. Although he narrates his wrath from America, he powerfully protests how black immigrants are mistreated in the diaspora. Bulawayo crafts a hybrid home that brings together injured personalities together. As Selasi (2005) argued, Geography is not limiting in describing the cosmopolitan home.

In *Ghana Must Go*, Afropolitan characters consider many places home. For instance, Kehinde's life is hybrid. He won a Fullbright scholarship to Mali, works as a waiter in Paris, and showcases his art in London. Taiwo studied in England and lived in New York. For the twins, staying in Lagos with their uncle, Femi, which they once considered ensues resentment and hate. The twins consider many places home hence created their hybridized identities.

On the other hand, despite being born in America, Olu lives in London. The Afropolitans in the text reveal the complexity of "home", where they live is home and try to fit in, thus Olu's relationship with Ling, whom he attaches the feeling of "home" to. The Afropolitans reveal that physical boundaries do not impede a place from being considered home (Bulawayo 2013).

In an *open city*, the notion of geography is redefined through character mobility, as argued by Selasi's seminal essay *Afropolitanism Bye Bye Babar*. Teju Cole's novel takes the open plot form that constructs characters with open journeys that are not pinned to a single location. Teju constructs Characters who traverse several countries often displaced forcefully or by personal choice instances of geographical displacement in *Open City* through illustrative stories of Professor Saito Julius and Saidu immigrants to America. Professor Saito is a close friend to the narrator, whom they closely associate after meeting in the university. Saito traces his

abrupt dislocation from England during the Second World War. After that, the professor seeks refuge in Minidoka Camp in Idaho (9). In this flashback, we trace the earlier memories and journeys of the now aged professor. His narrations to Julius tell of an experienced cosmopolitan who is widely travelled across continents. The overarching effects of the war mean that Saito's studies at the university in England end prematurely. Although we are introduced to an aged Saito at eighty-nine when he makes friends with Julius at Maxwell, his story begins much earlier in the century. The professor's apartment is also decorated with artifacts from Papua, which manifest his revendvous journeys in the Pacific as stated:

In that room, which always seemed to flow a gentle and cool northern lightning, he was surrounded by art from a lifetime of collecting. A half dozen Polynesian masks, arranged just above his head, formed a large dark halo. (11)

His story suffuses a globalized connection that is interwoven with nostalgic experiences. Saito and Julius are characters with open journeys whose life trajectories are assimilated into an open space. Through character mobility, we trace how the displacement of Saito and Julius as archetypal cosmopolitans ejected from their original homes to the global space. (Teju Cole 2013)

Displaced and interned in a camp, Saito is ejected with his family forcefully. The professor is torn apart by the memories he has collected over time, while narrating to Julius, he recollects the events that transpired while he was in the Minidoka camp. "We were all confused about what was happening; we were American, had always thought ourselves so and not Japanese" Teju Cole(2013), 13. The gruelling experiences of dislocation play a huge role in the identity formation of Saito, whose memory behoves the journey of an immigrant. Cole uses Saito's story to show how global migration is the interconnect that creates multi-localities that shape character mobility. Thus, New York is the "nesting home" that provides characters with an open landscape devoid of contours that halt their identity. In his historical account, Saito's hybridity maps how historical displacement is displayed in the life voyage that eventually reduces him to living in a New York apartment with no relative by his side.

Selasi's sentiment that the Afropolitan identifies with no single geography, migrant stories give a gist of how many locations inspire shared. We also see parallels to Saito's transnational journey as projected through Saidu, who begins in West Africa, Spain, and Portugal and eventually reaches New York.

Multilingualism

In *Ghana Must Go*, this aspect of cultural hybridity is not dwelt upon in-depth by Selasi. Selasi (2005) defines an Afropolitan as "multilingual". The first aspect is Fola's admission of her father's diverse multilingualism. Kayo Savage was fluent in major Nigerian Languages, French, Swahili, Arabic, and snatches of Twi (Selasi, 2013 102). Learning from her father facilitated Fola to blend in Ghana after her father's death, in America with Kweku, a Ghananian, in Lagos and Accra. Fola's multilingual nature implies a diverse cultural identity beyond national physical boundaries to facilitate the occupation of multiple spaces past the ethnic, racial, and religious effects. Secondly, Selasi (2013) alludes to language when Fola speaks to her son in an indigenous language. Lastly, during Taiwo and Dean Rudd's interaction, she tries to impress him with her knowledge of Latin and Greek (Selasi, 132). These instances relate to Afropolitan language abilities as Selasi (2005) discussed to speak multiple languages to fit in any cosmopolitan environment.

Scego's characters' multilingual practices are statements of cultural hybridity, mobility, and migration. Additionally, the multilingual practice among cosmopolitan characters denotes expressions of hybrid identity, and their ability to mix languages challenges the preconceptions of stable and unitary identities. Focusing on the primary protagonist in the novel *Zuhra*, whose command of several languages from Italian, Spanish and her interest in learning Arabic, we locate *Zuhra* as a character who chooses several voices to become visible in a predominantly white Italy and Spain. The discussion of language in Afropolitan theory highlights the vitality of language as a tool at the disposal of a cosmopolitan individual (Selasi, 2005).

Scego's *Beyond Babylon*, initially written in Italian, presents characters with a strong command of

several languages cited in dialogues and narrative. The use of multilingualism by Scego reflects an Afropolitan linguistic ability that sanctions characters to question their hybrid identity. The novel's first evidence of multilingual practice is in Zuhra's prologue. The constant use of *wallahi billahi* in Zuhra's narration reflects multilingualism. Her speech offers the expression that reveals Zuhra's mixed origins both on linguistic and cultural levels. It is also possible to discern how certain instances of the Arabic language in the Italian text might be interpreted as reflecting the language usage of a foreign language learner who incorporates the foreign language into her conversation.

Although Scego does not explicitly state it, the continual incorporation of Arabic phrases into the Italian language reminds us that the cosmopolitans are of Somali descent. We learn about Zuhra's migration and upbringing via the use of a variety of languages. Zuhra's father, whom she has never seen, left Somalia before she was born to avoid the Siad Barre dictatorship. As a result, Zuhra converses in three dialects. She is fluent in both Italian and the Romanesco vernacular, and she is also able to speak in both English and Spanish with ease. It becomes evident that she is also fluent in the French language. She learned Portuguese from her mother and a little Arabic from her father before embarking on an Arabic language study in Tunis (Filiu 2011)

To cite her prowess in code-switching, Zuhra narrates in Scego (2008):

There's writing in every language saying I need to calm. Antes de empezar, relajate. Nao` fiques Nervosa. Prenez vorte temps et detendez-vous. Rilassati. Rilassati. Relax. It is written everywhere. A mantra. (p. 17).

In the novel, insertions of phrases from different languages, especially in Zuhra's narrative sections labelled "The Negropolitan", mark Scego's multilingual practice. For instance, the Spanish words inserted in both Zuhra's speech as well as in the reported direct speech of others: "Ai tempi non c'era la mucca pazza, no nada de vaca loca, nada di vida loca (Scego, 2008, p. 14), "la terra della paella e della horchata de chufa" (p. 36), "Claro que si!" (p. 80), "Gringo" (p. 227), "Soy Luis, mi dice. Soy Cubano.... he oido que hablas espanol" (p. 169),

mostly followed by in-text translations suggest expressions by characters as a way to identify and relate to other. The multilingual ability thus becomes a means to express identity in the novel. Zuhra can be viewed as an Afropolitan that devices modes of being understood as an individual of African descent in the world. Hence, embracing fluidity in language for Zuhra defines her as "a citizen of the world" while giving her voice and agency of belonging. Despite the multilingual ability, Zuhra occasionally finds herself held on the periphery of diasporic spaces, as in her experience with the Spanish authorities, as cited in the previous section. Her nickname "Negropolitan" thus infers the many aspects she embodies of being an African.

CONCLUSION

The paper's main goal was to establish the motivations behind character migration by demonstrating the patterns of characters' transitions to be transnational and cosmopolitan. Afropolitanism guided the study in analyzing the four novels; Igiaba Scego's *Beyond Babylon*, Teju Cole's *Open City*, NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, and Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*. The article used Selasi (2005) themes on Afropolitanism: identity formation, cultural hybridity, African bond, and geography in framing character mobility. Almost all novels under study have similar migration patterns necessitated by individualized quest and mobility across transnational borders. Identity formation as a theme has dramatically shaped how characters emerge as hyphenates oscillating in the in-between cultural space as they locate their identities. The desire to move out of the initial locations in the novels under study revealed that cultural hybridity plays a role in their displacement. Mapping their transnational journeys has documented how border-crossing, individual desires, and generational experiences compel them to migrate.

The paper established that the recurrent streams of migration, for instance, in Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*, presents an intricate web of generational stories laden with pain and loss of family, culture, sense of self, and alienation. Of significance in the novels discussed is the birth of Afropolitan youth that strives to live purposeful lives as they retrace their steps back to their African origins and culture.

Interestingly, within Selasi's (2005) Afropolitanism framework, the paper determined the voluntary and involuntary movements of the African continent penned out by characters attempting to forge new identity definitions within world cities. The urgency of identity formation, for instance, in Scego's *Beyond Babylon*, moves beyond the homogeneous framework of blackness and skin colour. As established, the first-generation African immigrants attempt to recreate a new African Diasporic identity and become voices for Afropolitan sentiment.

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