Poetics and Politics in Contemporary African Travel Writing

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Declaration

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Abstract

This study investigates contemporary travel narratives about Africa by Africans authors. Scholarship on travel writing about Africa has largely centred examples from the Global North, yet there is a rich body of travel writing by African authors. I approach African travel writing as an emerging genre that allows African authors to engage their marginality within the genre and initiate a transformative poetics inscribing alternative politics as viable forms of meaning-making. I argue that contemporary African travel writing stretches and redefines the aesthetic limits of the genre through experimentation which enables the form to carry the weight and complexities of African experiences. Drawing on the work of theorists such as Edward Said, Mary Louise Pratt, James Clifford and Syed Manzurul Islam, as well as local philosophy emergent from the texts, I examine the reimaginations of the form of the travel narrative, which centre African experiences. This study examines the adaptations of the traditional poetics of the genre within a spirit of 'writing back' in Binyavanga Wainaina's 'Discovering Home,' Sihle Khumalo's *Dark Continent, My Black Arse* and *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu*, and Kofi Akpabli's *A Sense of the Savannah: Tales of a Friendly Walk through Northern Ghana*. I argue that the practice of 'writing back' is both constrained and complicated by the conflicted histories of imperialism and neo-imperialism that surrounds the genre. This is followed by an exploration of Afrocentric interventions in the genre in the form of what I call the literary guidebook. In this section I argue for a reading of Tony Mochama's *Nairobi: A Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun*, Alba Kunadu Sumprim's *A Place of Beautiful Nonsense* and Veronique Tadjo's *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* as literary guidebooks that invest in the form fluidity capable of capturing the unstable textures of place within contemporary African urban and emotional geographies. The last section explores return as a distinct sub-genre of travel in Africa. By return, I refer to narratives where African subjects in the diaspora travel back to places of their ancestry within the continent. This section focusses on Leah Chishugi's *A Long Way from Paradise: Surviving the Rwandan Genocide*, Noo Saro-Wiwa's *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria*, Teju Cole's *Every Day is for the Thief*, and Neera Kapur-Dromson's *From Jhelum to Tana*. I argue that return travel is inflected by contestations of a past and a present of the travelling subject's psyche, from which stem losses and continuities, remembering and forgetting, revelation and concealment, all of which inform perception in the moment of return. Throughout this dissertation, a significant definition of the kinds of travel and travel narratives possible emanates from the complex position of the authors as subjects travelling spaces that refuse reductive reading. By paying attention to the intricate complexities of the locatedness of the travelling subjects, contemporary African travel writing expands the margins of the genre and the kinds of discursivity the form generates. This study

concludes that African travel writing is an interpretation of the genre that involves both a transformation of the form and a contestation of its politics.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Mapping African Travel Writing

'Writing up' a country or evoking a different culture has become a more tentative and ambiguous activity – one that often replaces confident encapsulations of cultures with more provisional, contingent or self-consciously 'partial' descriptions.

(Kowaleski, 'Introduction: the Modern Literature of Travel' 11)

A Contextual Departure for Contemporary African Travel Writing

On 1st July 2016, *The Telegraph* published an excerpt, "How my dream gap year turned into a nightmare" from Louise Linton's travel memoir, *In the Shadow of the Congo*, published in the same year. The memoir gives an account of Linton's travel to Zambia during her gap year in 1999. It talks of the narrator facing precarious situations such as the Hutu/Tutsi war and the Congo war. Linton explains how she is at one point forced to run away from armed militias for fear of being raped. In a move typical of the white saviour complex, she sets up a school for children and women under a tree and helps in taking care of Zimba, a HIV/Aids orphan. As the narrative ends, Linton is seen as the hero who has done her share of 'saving Africa' and has moved on to become an actress. This narrative, published seventeen years after the gap year, suggests an Africa frozen in time. This is implied by the narrative's regurgitation of stereotypes and imperial rhetoric about Africa. It places Linton as the archetypal Euro-American traveller that sees Africa through an imperialist lens of dominance and superiority.

Linton's travel memoir is a recent case of travel writing about Africa, which continues the hegemonic tradition of imperialist travel writing to essentialise complex and diverse cultures. What is significant about this narrative is the public backlash it received both from the wide readership of *The Telegraph* as well as the readership of the larger text. In fact, most of the backlash emerged after *The Telegraph* excerpt indicating the power of immediate circulation that the newspaper medium has as well as its receptivity to feedback. The criticism was mainly framed within the twitter tag, #lintonlies that was widely circulated. This backlash largely highlighted the narrative's invention and reproduction of stereotypes about Africa while making truth claims about the actual spaces where the author visited, thus misguiding readers about Africa.[1] This extensive social media reaction pushed the author and

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[1] Some of the fact-checking included Linton being criticised for mixing up the timelines and geospatial contexts of different historical events. For example, her mention of the Hutu/Tutsi war which was criticised. The Hutu/Tutsi war is historically documented to have ended in 1994, five years before Linton's gap year putting to doubt her claims of having experienced the war. When Linton talks of being in close proximity to the war, respondents note that she is stretching geographical distances too far as Rwanda and Zambia are separated by more than two borders of other countries. Her

The Telegraph to issue apologies, and forced the author to withdraw the narrative from the market.[2] This reaction is representative of the problematic nature of Eurocentric hegemonic narratives on Africa that permeate the global literary scene. It is also reminiscent of Binyavanga Wainaina's satirical piece, "How to Write about Africa" (2006), which emerged as a reaction to Eurocentric writing about Africa in *Granta 48*. In this article, Wainaina exposes the stereotypes about African that are propagated within Western narratives on the continent.

What both Linton's narrative and *Granta 48* demonstrate, is the persistence of stereotypes in travel writing and beyond, revealing the continuing existence of a discourse about Africa that feeds on alterity. In fact, as cultural theorist Stuart Hall observes, the media and other fields, such as literature and tourism, circulate and secure dominant representations of othered subjects leading to an entrenching of particular ways of seeing and knowing the other.[3] Wainaina's satire and #lintonlies as pushbacks against this hegemony are proof of the unacceptability of misrepresentations to pass off as truths in the contemporary times. There is an emerging critical African readership that confirms the impossibility of presenting Africa merely as a passive object for European and American interpretation. Mary Louise Pratt reminds us that when "colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's terms" they invite interactive possibilities that reveal the heterogeneity of perception and knowledge (9). I read different textual and extra-textual reactions as dialogic engagement that allows subjects to directly challenge representations that they do not agree with as well as initiate different ways of thinking and knowing them. For this reason, this study explores, to what extent contemporary African travel writing fashions itself as autoethnography that not only discounts misrepresentation persistent in travel writing about Africa, but also provides alternative representations that grapple with the intricate histories of travel and writing in the continent. I am fascinated by the way contemporary African travel writing enters the discursive space of cultural production and how, if possible, such writing challenges and reworks the limits of the genre of travel writing.

Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan in *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (2000) observe that travel writing is a powerful genre that has the

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foregrounding of Zimba the orphan is also seen as a strategy of reducing a complex and diverse people to types that fit a hegemonic master narrative of imperialism/neo-imperialism's dominance.

[2]The excerpt was pulled down from *The Telegraph* and the apology posted. See https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/gap-year-in-africa-book--telegraph-statement/?utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_source=Twitter&utm_term=Autofeed#link_time=1469023212

[3] See Stuart Hall's "Introduction to Media Studies at the Centre". See also Peter J Schraeder and Brian Endless's "The Media and Africa: The Portrayal of Africa in the New York Times (1955-1995)" and Susan L. Carruthers's "Tribalism and Tribulation" as examples of studies that explore the deep entrenchment of bias in media representation of Africa.

capacity to invent fictions of places. They contend that travel writing creates complex textual zones through a combination of knowledges, from "historical, political, anthropological, cultural, mythical and experiential" (Holland and Huggan 67). Contemporary Western travelogues such as Linton's feed off this long history of knowledge invention to reiterate stereotypes already existing within that discourse concerning Africa. Chinua Achebe through an examination of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), a text that is seen as an exemplar of the genre, interrogates how canonisation plays into the concretization of the tradition within the genre and Western imagination. Achebe parallels two encounters (one with an old man on campus and another through letters from high school children in Yonkers) with Conrad's text. He observes that in both cases, there is an underlying desire by the West "to set Africa up as a foil in Europe, a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest" (Achebe 783).

Achebe adds that the canonisation of key authors such as Conrad, affected the circulation and distribution of specific rhetoric both within academic and public circles more than, perhaps, the marginal authors within the tradition (Achebe 783). When authors are canonised within a developing genre, as travel writing, they are not only seen as pioneers but most likely their style and discourses end up framing the traditions that shape the conventions of the genre. This study's examination of Africans travelling and writing Africa is situated against this hegemonic tradition of Western travel writing about Africa that is proliferated with metaphors that position Africa as its antithesis. Part of what I examine in this study, is the ways in which Africans travelling and writing Africa unyoke the genre from the Eurocentrism persistent within and beyond the genre. Hence, I depart from the hypothesis that the genre as it is, is not conducive for a counter-discourse and contemporary African travel writers are forced to stretch and expand its limits in various ways to enable it capture the weight of African experiences of travel. I see the forms of travel writing from Africa as performing a double function: unyoking the genre from the biased tradition and creating alternate traditions of travel writing located in Africa which in itself enables a development of a distinct genre— African travel writing.

This thesis examines eleven contemporary African travel narratives. These are: Binyavanga Wainaina's 'Discovering Home' (2003), Sihle Khumalo's *Dark Continent My Black Arse* (2007) and *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu* (2013), Kofi Akpabli's *A Sense of the Savannah: Tales of a Friendly Walk through Northern Ghana* (2011), Tony Mochama's *Nairobi: A Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun* (2014), Alba Kunadu Sumprim's *A Place of Beautiful Nonsense* (2011), Veronique Tadjo's *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* (2002), Leah Chishugi's *A Long Way from Paradise: Surviving the Rwandan Genocide* (2010), Noo Saro-Wiwa's *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria* (2012), Teju Cole's *Every Day is for the Thief* (2015), and

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Neera Kapur-Dromson's *From Jhelum to Tana* (2007). These texts are but a sample that enable me to think through forms of experimentation informing an African poetics of travel writing.

I examine the ways that these texts as African cultural productions operate and are framed in a highly unequal marketplace. I explore the way the selected authors challenge the aesthetic traditions in the genre, and examine the nodes of invention and transformation undertaken to produce alternative representations of Africa located within African gazes. The texts selected are all post 2000 African travel narratives. In limiting myself to post 2000 African travel writing, my aim is to position the narratives currently emerging from the continent in dialogue with their contemporaries from the Global North as well as the tradition within the genre. I am aware that a history of African travel writing exists beyond the time-frame selected. Nonetheless, the post 2000 as my scope allows for a sustained examination of the selected period and texts.

The selected texts are by African writers whose mobility practices mark them off as transnational in thought and practice. They are complicated by notions of familiar/strange, rootedness/rootlessness, home/away, travel/dwelling, concepts that are the mainstay in travel writing. My approach to transnationalism is informed by Sam Knowles, who argues that the migration routes undertaken by subjects, their subjectivity, and geopolitics inform the way they position themselves. Transnational subjects embody multiple ambivalences that emanate within their location as "writers of doublings and near-contradictions: … 'writing selves' bound up with the concept of dichotomy, they are quick to contemplate the idea of being both one thing and another, and they demonstrate an ability to negotiate the boundary between different identities, affiliations, or homes" (Knowles 17). The selected authors demonstrate different degrees of transnationalisms. Alba Kunadu Sumprim, Leah Chishugi, Noo Saro-Wiwa, Teju Cole and Neera Kapur-Dromson demonstrate a complicated notion of identity emerging from a multiplicity of local and diasporic positionalities that impact their mobility practices and writing. Their writing manifests complicated notions of rootedness/rootlessness in the way they conceive of home/away and familiar/strange in their encounters. On the other hand, Binyavanga Wainaina, Sihle Khumalo, Kofi Akpabli, Tony Mochama and Veronique Tadjo participate in mobility practices and histories that though suggest a geospatial rootedness within a local grounding, their consciousness is inflected within an understanding of discourses and global networks of circulation of cultures of literary production.

All the selected texts with the exception of Teju Cole's *Every Day is for the Thief* and Binyavanga Wainaina's "Discovering Home" are marketed as creative non-fiction. However, since they all emerge out of actual journeys undertaken by the authors as the rest of the texts, I consider them as they participate in pushing the boundaries of the genre. All the texts selected reflect on actual

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experiences of place and displacement. In the critical analysis that I undertake, I consider all the texts one or other form of creative non-fiction.

In this study, travel is seen as a mobility practice contingent on a geospatial negotiation of places, but transcending it. This study approaches contemporary African travel writing as more than just accounts of journeys on the continent. I explore the extent to which these texts offer insights into the socio-political realities and diversities within the continent and locate such politics as having interconnections with the global politics. To unlatch this interesting dynamic within contemporary African travel writing, the genre demands to be read beyond its received status as 'minor literary genre' (Lisle 1). Therefore, I consider contemporary African travel writing a serious form whose aesthetics reveal deep socio-political concerns, demanding a sustained interrogation of the multilayers of signification in its representation poetics. While I focus on Africans travelling and writing Africa, the texts offer a diversity of forms of travel. From intra-city home tours (Mochama, Cole, Sumprim), Intra-national tours (Akpabli), intra-continental tours (Khumalo, Tadjo, Wainaina), to intercontinental tours (Cole, Saro-Wiwa, Kapur-Dromson), I read these texts as an exposé on an African poetics of travel.

Poetics and Politics in Travel Writing

This thesis takes poetics and politics as intertwined terms in the analysis of travel writing. Carmen Andras provides a useful shorthand for describing my approach in her overview of poetics and politics as methodologies of studying travel writing. The poetics of travel writing involve *how* travel texts "question, revisit, subvert or reject … key notions of travel" (Andraş 160, emphasis added). A poetics of contemporary African travel writing, for this matter, explores the strategies that the texts employ to push the limits of the genre and provoke alternative means of framing travel and thinking about journeys. It focusses on a concerted examination of the aesthetics of texts. The politics of travel writing on the other hand focusses on the meanings derived from travel writing in relation to all aspects of addressivity and ideological fashioning. This necessitates examination of the kinds of epistemic formulations regarding cultures explored and the kinds of knowledge suggested and invented by the genre. Politics entails exploring the elaborate negotiation of knowledge and meaning-making provoked by the narratives. Andraş insists that the politics of travel encompasses formation of knowledge about places, subjects and events (160).

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2003) is one of the earliest texts to locate travel writing as one of the tools that the West used in their formation of knowledge about the world. Said reveals how Orientalism is a thought system manifested through invention and circulation of ideologies the West had about the rest of the world. Pratt extends Said's idea by demonstrating how travel writing is used

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to manufacture and circulate Western conceptions about the world. In studies such as Said's and Pratt's, the connection between travel writing and discourse emerges. A study of the poetics and politics of travel, such as the one I am undertaking, is thus informed by the contestations of discourses about Africa and the extent to which they inform, are formed, or unformed in contemporary African travel writing. To achieve this, I explore the strategies the writers employ, which I argue, challenge the limits set by travel writing traditions as well as make an examination of the suggested epistemic nodes the texts produce.

Poetics and politics in travel writing inform and extend each other. While poetics of travel focusses on the aesthetics of a text, politics is ingrained in the tensions which characterise a text's functionality as a site of formation of knowledge. This study examines the selected African writers' interventions in the genre while exploring tensions invested in their reflection about knowledge of Africa. By laying emphasis on how the selected African travel narratives question, subvert, or remix the generic traditions, I interrogate the intricacies of representations and the centrality of travel writing as a site of knowledge about places both familiar and unfamiliar. To this end, I consider travel writing as an important resource and archive of cultural production. I thus concur with Kristi Siegel that travel writing "foregrounds many of the cultural and historical issues that currently dot our critical landscape" (8).

Defining African Travel Writing

A number of terms are used to refer to the genre such as 'travel writing', 'travel book', 'travelogue.' Jan Borm thinks of travel writing as a collective term rather than a genre. For Borm, the genre is limited to 'travel book' or 'travelogue' which he considers as, "any narrative characterized by a non-fiction dominant that relates (almost always) in the first person a journey or journeys that the reader supposes to have taken place in reality while assuming or presupposing that author, narrator, and principal character are but one or identical" (Borm, np). Borm's definition highlights an important aspect of the travel book, the journey. For the purposes of this study, I utilise the term 'travel writing' not as umbrella term for texts whose theme is travel, but as signifier for the genre as well as the texts within the genre, which will also be referred to as 'travelogue'. Mapping my parameters at this stage allows me to proceed with the awareness that the term could be taken to refer to larger, collective entities beyond my study. To make more sense of the nature of the genre in the contemporary space, it is necessary to factor in a sense of expansion of the limits of the genre. Thus, I follow Jonathan Raban's view of travel writing as a "notoriously raffish open house where very different genres are likely to end up in the same bed" (qtd. in Korte 9). Borm enables this study to locate the journey as a significant aspect of travel writing, while Raban allows me to factor in flexibility which is important for the core explorations I make about contemporary African travel writing. Although both Raban

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and Borm reveal major elements of the genre, their definitions still leave questions regarding the contested history of the genre.

Holland and Huggan observe how scholars' intellectualization and valorisation of canonical writers like Joseph Conrad and Graham Green has concretized the myth that travel is a "mostly white, male, middle class heterosexual" enterprise, an attitude that has marginalised other groups that fall outside this scope (viii). What such studies fail to recognize, is the fact that the non-European world has always travelled and has its own modes of travel writing which demand to be explored in their own right (Korte 152). There is a rich textual history of African-authored travel narratives dating to the pre-enlightenment period. From accounts of Ibn Battuta's travels in the 1300s to Sol Plaatje in the early 1900s, Africa is invested with a multitude of travel writing that participates in mapping regions within and beyond the continent in diverse ways.

For instance, *The Travels of Ibn Batutta* (1829), offers a recording of an oral telling of Ibn Battuta's travels to one of his assistants, Ibn Juzayy, who then documented the tales. The narrative documents Ibn Batutta's travels across the coastal regions of North and East Africa as well as his journeys to parts of Asia. Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* (1915), traces Plaatje's journeys across South Africa where he uses the travelogue form to discuss the implications of the Native Land Act hence could be seen as a political travelogue (Remmington 67–69). Another significant early travelogue is Ham Mukasa and Sir Apolo Kagwa's *Uganda's Katikiro in England* (1904). This travelogue was initially written in Luganda and later translated to English by Reverent Ernest Millar, the British minister that accompanied Mukasa and Kagwa to Britain. Millar's mediation makes the English copy of the narrative problematic as he is an imperial figure that invests a particular imperial ideologies into the text (Korte 156–57). Regardless, the text reflects the ambivalence of the travelogue form to not only praise benevolence of Empire in Uganda but also seek its interventions in development of Uganda (Kahyana 38–39). Travel was not limited to male subjects. *An African-Arab Princess in Europe* (1881) is a female African traveller's account of journeys and stay in Europe (Khair et al. 261–72).

These travel narratives and many others discount the long-held myths about Africa and its people through their travels. Moreover, accounts of slave movement within and beyond the continent through Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Saharan trade, migration, nomadism, and exilic movements within and beyond the continent, also reveal the long history and archive of travel writing in Africa. Nevertheless, travel writing from Africa continues to be marginalised within the genre. In this dissertation I seek to explore how the contemporary African travelogues are pushing back against this marginality, which can be claimed to be responsible for the Western hegemony in the genre. I also

argue that this marginality is also informed by a narrow definition of travel writing which poses a problem for the visibility of African travel writing.

Traditions within scholarship of travel writing privilege a Western definition. This concentration erases the fact that the rest of the world were not passive recipients of a Western worldmaking, but also undertook their own mapping of the world (Edwards and Graulund 2). Pratt makes note of how travel writing was used by the West to achieve "planetary consciousness" (9).[4] She observes that West-centric worldmaking was intentionally structured around enhancing belief in the West's position as authority that names and commandeers the rest of the world (Pratt 29–36). Pratt illustrates this through her survey of European travel literature on the Cape of Good Hope. She observes how Peter Kolb's *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope* (1719) uses extensive descriptions of the landscape of the Hottentots to paint the image of their land as potentially productive for the imperial mission. In the careful description of the landscape, the people and their way of life, Pratt affirms that Kolb defines "the Khoikhoi as cultural, political, religious, and social beings" (Pratt 48); but also signals the economic potential of the place which is part of his commitment to the imperial mission. Henry Morton Stanley's *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) is another case in point, where the potential value of the Congo region is stressed for the imperial world. In fact, after the publication of this travelogue, Stanley was subsequently considered an expert on Africa and was consulted by King Leopold Ⅱ before his occupation of the Congo (Newman 156–58). These and other Western travel narratives ground the idea that Africa is a "tabula rasa for the European imagination and representation, a place of many fantastic stories and beliefs whose appearance … had not yet been tightly fixed," and foreground the fact that writing is a task of inventing it thus making it knowable (Koivunen 3). This tradition positions Africa as the raw material onto which a Eurocentric gaze is imposed. This continuous exoticization of Africa by Western travel writers is occasioned by an experience with "moments in pre-modern history" (Kaplan 35). For such writers, Africa is a moment in time, in the distant past imagined as static.

Any attempt to define travel and travel writing from Africa is complicated by this biased history which controversially locates travel writing as emerging from a Western tradition. Bearing this in mind, it is not viable for the same tools to be effective in reading African travel writing. What is needed is a redefinition of the genre, one that offers a definition of travel writing that shifts beyond the narrow confines of the West-centric history. Postcolonial travel writing contests this view by

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[4]Pratt explores how 'Planetary consciousness' came to be Europe's imperial mission. She argues that travel writing was used to normalize Europe's domination of the rest of the world through construction of knowledge bases that systematically mapped the rest of the world as chaotic and in need of Europe's intervention of order.

pushing back through offering alternative representations that centre the previously marginalised subjects' self-representations.

Raban's open-ended definition of the genre invites an understanding that this permeability has the capacity to initiate an expansion of the boundaries of the genre, making it capable of representing the circumstantial realities of Africa. Nevertheless, to examine the trends of travel writing in Africa does not mean discarding everything regarding the histories of the genre, but making sense of them in relation to the complexities of the African form. It means being attentive to nuances that are specific to this context which inform my understanding of travel writing. I thus approach definitions of the genre today as complicated by the interconnections and contestations in the way African authors negotiate borders of discourses, linguistic dimensions and spatial realities (Kuehn and Smethurst 1–2).

To this end, Tabish Khair's introduction to *Other Routes: 1500 Years of African and Asian Travel Writing* (2005) provides a viable point of departure:

> Travel, it appears, consists of going from place to place. But the distance is measured not so often in kilometres as in languages and discourses, so that some movements might not get registered as travel …. To this I would add that travel writing also entails defining, consciously or unconsciously, the writer's relationship to a geographical area, its natural attributes and its society and culture; and, just as significantly, the writer's relationship to his or her own society and culture. (Khair 4)

I locate African travel writing as complicated by both the history of imperial domination over the genre and discourses on Africa as well as indigenous thoughts on mobility emerging from the texts. The authors grapple with geospatial, ideological, and discursive distances in their fashioning of an African poetics. All the texts selected for this study are in English. These texts and the forms of travel they narrate grapple with the complicated nature of the genre as a form that is characterised by alterity. In this regard, African travel writing in English navigates the limitations of language as a tool for ideology. These authors grapple with navigating a borrowed language and working through it to disrupt its history of misrepresentations while charting alternative representations that inscribe African thought systems and experiences on mobility. For the African travel writer, English language is both a space of translation and a site loaded with baggage. African travel writers thus wrestle with the baggage embedded in the language of imperialism and manipulate it to work for their agendas of self-writing. This thesis approaches contemporary African travel writing as a form that is multi-layered with the physicality of movement attached to the geographical places as well as linguistic movement; in Khairian terms where we are forced to explore distances in terms of discourse, linguistic nuances, and textual journeys.

Some critics of African travel writing believe that it can be read for more than insights into travel. Carli Coetzee, in examining Khumalo's *Dark Continent My Black Arse* argues that the text's connection to travel writing as a framework of investigation is "both obvious and limiting" (Coetzee 63). She identifies intertextuality as a more promising angle of interrogation. While aware of the possibilities that such a reading opens for Coetzee, I argue that what makes travel writing frameworks limiting is the concentration on a narrow definition which confines the options available to criticism of the genre. Coetzee's identification of alternative nodes of possibility suggests a need to rethink the limits of definition and maximize the potential plurality available in these narratives. This dissertation builds on Coetzee's idea by framing such extensions as part of how African travel writing operates. As this thesis will show, an acceptance of the permeable borders of African travel writing enables emergence of a more multifaceted form which provides a rich source of investigation of cultures and selves.

Aedín Ní Loingsigh's *Postcolonial Eyes: Intercontinental Travel in Francophone African Literature* (2009) offers a case in point of the possibilities within African travel writing. Loingsigh categorically spells out the fact that while a lot of studies on the genre are alive to the non-Western contributions, very few consider the important contribution of Africans to the development of travel writing (Ní Loingsigh 2). She interrogates the erasure of African travel writing in critical studies as a case of 'double absence' (Ní Loingsigh 16). In the case of African travel writing and its relation to criticism, there exists a "paucity of works that appear to fit the generic bill" and also there is a "neglect of works by Africans by contemporary critics of travel literature" (Ní Loingsigh 16). Ní Loingsigh notes that a lot of literature from the continent which qualifies as travel writing including slave narratives, im/migrant narratives, and narratives of intellectual movements are not seen as important contributors to the development of the genre. Ní Loingsigh observes that reading these texts as travel narratives opens an understanding of Africans as "mobile, critically reflective subjects" (Loingsigh 172). Ní Loingsigh examines a selection of francophone African travel writing where authors account for journeys to the imperial centre. In her analysis, she conceives of this kind of travel as an inversion of Eurocentric tradition. She also notes that in these narratives, African subjects focus on teasing out a commonality of humans rather than alterity as a principle of narration. While Ní Loingsigh examines journeys outwards, I am concerned with journeys inwards, journeys made by Africans either returning to Africa or travelling across the continent.

Rebecca Jones's historical survey on Yoruba and English print cultures in South West Nigeria locates itself at the opposite trajectory from Ní Loingsigh. She argues for forms of domestic travel writing as enabling subjects to engage in local and international debates (Jones, *Writing Domestic Travel in Yoruba and English Print Culture* 255–56). Her study reveals that domestic travel writing in Nigeria

not only participates in world-making but is an act of archiving the changing dynamics of the world in terms that privilege the local. Most of the travel writing she explores range from vernacular writing in the local print media, to novels both in English and Yoruba across the years. Her exploratory research confirms the diverse history of travel writing in the continent. Her recent publication, *At the Crossroads: Nigerian Travel Writing and Literary Culture in Yoruba and English* (2019) reiterates the urgent need for "new histories and methodologies" in the study of African travel writing (3).

By undertaking an examination of contemporary African travel writing, I build on Jones's assertion of a need for expansion of the genre. I take note of both Ní Loingsigh's and Jones' insistence that the limits of the genre need to be tested when reading African travel writing to frame my study as a 'testing' of the boundaries of the genre. Through a close textual reading of the selected African travel texts, this thesis hopes to illuminate the extent to which the authors push the limits of the genre in their explorations of African experiences of travel.

Chapter Framework

The thesis is organised into four core chapters. Chapter two offers the theoretical points of departure that inform analysis of the texts. In that chapter, I collate ideas about travel writing and discourse in order to initiate a theorization of African travel writing.

Chapter three, examines the limits and possibilities in 'writing back' to the imperial tradition of the genre. This chapter utilizes Binyavanga Wainaina's short story "Discovering Home" (2003), Sihle Khumalo's *Dark Continent my Black Arse* (2007) and *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu* (2013), and Kofi Akbabli's *A Sense of the Savannah: Tales of a Friendly walk through Northern Ghana* (2011). I examine the extent to which the selected texts engage with the imperial traditions to initiate a counter-discourse that centres African modes of self-writing. I particularly concentrate on the authors' [mis]appropriation of styles such as parody and ethnography as forms through which the selected authors reimagine African experiences of travel. This chapter has a twofold duty: to show the convergences that African travel writing demonstrates with the imperial tradition of the genre as well as interrogate the ways in which such writing breaks away from the traditions and what such break allows.

Chapter four offers an interrogation of how vulnerabilities in travel are negotiated within familiar spaces. I explore what I refer to as the 'African literary guidebook,' a sub-genre that though traditionally grounded within a dominant discourse of the guidebook, when reinvented through a vulnerable gaze, providing potential in the guidebook to map plurality and instability enabling a transformative understanding of space. This chapter concentrates on the way the selected writers perceive encounters to reposition the guidebook as a form that invests in the travelogue a depth

previously thought beyond its reach. In reading the selected texts along this line, I propose a scrutiny of the archival dimension of travel writing which has the capacity to capture the transient aspects of cultures, perceptions and realities. This chapter explores Tony Mochama's *Nairobi: A Night Guide Through the-City-in-the-Sun* (2014), Alba Kunadu Simprim's *A Place of Beautiful Nonsense*, and Veronique Tadjo's *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda*.

Chapter five interrogates return travel as a major sub-genre of African travel writing. I explore what may be revealed when texts previously read as migrant, diaspora and cosmopolitan are placed within the lens of travel. In this chapter I argue for a reading of return along the lines of the affective nature of place attachments. I think of return as a moment of encounter that offers a parallel through which socio-political realities of conflicted belonging and anxieties of selfhood can be explored. This chapter thinks through the following texts: Teju Cole's *Every Day is for the Thief*, Noo Saro-Wiwa's *Looking For Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria* (2012), Leah Chishugi's *A Long Way from Paradise: Surviving the Rwandan Genocide* (2010) Neera Kapur-Dhomson's *From Jhelum to Tana* (2007).

Contemporary African travel writing is doing fascinating things to the genre both in terms of form and content. The genre in the African context is manifesting as a significant space where complex issues of representation are questioned, challenged and reimagined.

Chapter Two

African Travel Writing: a Theoretical Perspective

> There is no "discourse" in the sense that there is a classical system of tropes known as "rhetoric"; there are only *discourses*, forming themselves according to the shape of their objects. To speak of a discourse is thus to express a critical attitude, a bias toward reducing utterances to their "paper reality," understanding them as contingent and overdetermined rather than necessary and immutable.
>
> (Miller, *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French* 61)

Introduction

This chapter gives a brief exploration of the theoretical arguments that influence the point of departure I take in examining poetics and politics in contemporary African travel writing. I trace how power and knowledge are embedded within discourse. I envision travel writing as cultural products in the service of world-making. I argue that traditional travel writing's affinity to poetics of alterity condition it as a powerful means of ideological acclimatization and entrenched ways of knowing. If the travel text is a cultural product, it is imperative to explore theoretical arguments regarding writing culture and its link to discourse. This discussion enables an exploration of the conventionality of the genre and the disruptions that arise in the process of counter-discourse.

In an attempt to pinpoint the tension between the travelling subject, the author, and the narrating subject, I also offer a brief mapping of travel writing as life writing. This is done to situate African travel writing as a complex genre that manifests at crossroads where every narrative choice and strategy informs the kinds of world-making therein. I also locate the discursivity of travel writing through the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism. I suggest that contemporary African travel writing expands the conceptions of the genre allowing for possibilities that break free of the boundaries traditionally assumed to reside in the genre's understanding of the culture of self and other. This mapping provides a framework for the study to explore contemporary African travel writing as situated within global politics of worldmaking through intra-regional and intra-local mobilities, and the implications of such on local and non-local readers, travellers and publics.

Travel Writing, World-Making and Discourse

In this section, I approach discourse as a systemic way through which exclusionary practices embed ways of representing self and others, becoming the norm for both the represented and the representor. Travel writing functions as a means through which readers (both local and foreign) make sense of their world and the connection they have to other worlds. This logic of text as world-making has been

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aptly captured by Said. In *Orientalism*, Said describes discourse as "a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought" (42). Said contends that Orientalism is a system of Western thought and understanding regarding the Orient. Said's understanding of discourse is drawn from Michel Foucault, who sees discourse as the system of knowledge making that is innate within the social sphere of a subject's psyche.[5] For Foucault, discourse is a practice of fixing meaning onto things in an uncontested manner. In his elaboration of Foucault, Said contends that for the Orientalists, the Orient is in opposition to the Occident and is explained by the constant need for the Orientalists to situate themselves as superior. The basis of Orientalism as a discourse is geography. Within this discourse, geography is transformed into a cultural and geopolitical entity in the Western imagination of the Orient. When converted through textual authority, geography becomes knowledge. Thus Said's view of the Orient as a 'textual universe,' a 'second-order knowledge' created through writing ranging from literature, history, anthropology and science (Said 52).

If Orientalism is a limitation to thought, then it is possible to see its antithetical nature as one that positions the Occident as dominant to the Orient. Granted, to understand the reach of Orientalism as a discourse, the cumulative nature of its textual tradition must be contemplated. Said observes how Orientalism developed through a process of incremental collective pooling of textual authority that over time has become an impactful discourse. He notes that this process entails "selective accumulation, displacement, deletion, rearrangement and insistence within what has been called a research consensus" (Said 176). What this means is that Orientalism has been built upon a tradition of citation, where antecedents are used to validate every claim latter texts make.

So far, I have tried to explain Said's understanding of Orientalism as a system of knowledge of the Orient in Western consciousness. A number of issues arise from Said that are important for this study. First, Said's identification of discourse as a limitation on thought. When applying Said on a wider scope, discourse implies knowability; however, the sense of knowledge implied should not be taken as a totality. Second, the understanding that Orientalism is grounded within textuality but not limited to it. Said confirms this in his observation that representations are always embedded in language, "culture, institutions and political ambience of the representor," hence any representation is complicated by the agendas and positionality of the representing subject (Said 272–73). This study explores this elaborate link between positionality and intentionality to see the extent to which the selected texts are constrained and complicated by discourse. The third issue of note is the citational practice of discourse. This is significant for this study as it maps a terrain of how texts gain authority

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[5] See *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) where Foucault argues that discourses be seen as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (49). What Foucault does is locate discourse as part of how defining and naturalisation of knowledge about objects is done.

while conferring legitimacy to a discourse. My discussion will attempt to show that the imperial citational practice within the genre persists in the contemporary period where writers allude to ideas, vocabulary and stereotypes raised by earlier writers whose representations have acquired the status of authority.[6]

It is possible to consider discourse a machine that invents 'truths' which are limited to the functionality they set out to perform. Once we understand discourse as a limiter of thought, it becomes easy to see its relation to geography as one steeped with power. The textual is a powerful mediation that makes the Orient intelligible, knowable, and familiar for the Western audience. Following the imperial citational tradition, the Oriental text invents a false real for the Occident. Travel writing forms part of this textual tradition at the core of Orientalism. Said holds that factors maintaining this cultural supremacy include Oriental consent and economic pressure (324). The Orient consents to this dominance through adoption of otherness and by not initiating organisations and disciplines to study themselves in their own spaces. This concession can be explained as constrained by the culture of consumption within literary marketplaces. As Sarah Brouillette and Graham Huggan respectively note, the politics of consumerism of literature within the Global North influence the tastes and values in the rest of the world. In this regard, the adoption of trends of travel writing should be explored with an eye to the politics of taste. As the Global North holds influence in the taste and currency of literary works, the production of representations which suggest otherness and exoticism has become a mainstay both in the Global North and Global South. This thesis will explore the limits of such repetition and the nodes of difference in the selected texts which may perhaps suggest a disruption of the canon. Be that as it may, this is just a point of departure and should not be taken as an indication of this dissertation's scope. This study though departing from this view, as will be explored in chapter three, extends to other forms the genre takes that are not constrained or limited by the Global North.

From these summations, it is clear that Orientalism is an intricate field. This study questions the extent to which textual works from the Global South, specifically Africa, disrupt the hegemony of this field through alternative representative strategies and ideologies. In exploring contemporary African travel writing, I agree with Said's contention that Orientalism needs to be challenged intellectually, ideologically and politically (326). Said proposes that writing from the Orient pushes back on the dominance of this discourse by initiating an oppositional critical consciousness as a measure of counter-discourse. Although Said confesses that his work pushed for an understanding of the complexity of the force of Orientalism as a discourse of knowing the other, I hope to think through

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[6] Said notes "the orient is … a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these…. [T]he Orient is a re-presentation of canonical material guided by an aesthetic and executive will capable of producing interest in the reader" (177).

him and with him about ways of initiating counter-discourses within travel writing in the African context. This begs the question, how can Said make sense for Africa? The first step in thinking through and with Said, is to accept the parallels that exist between Said's explorations of the Orient with Africa as well as the divergences inherent demanding alternative dialectical relations. Christopher L Miller, V. Y Mudimbe, and Kwaku Larbi Korang offer appropriate ideas of how to bridge Said for the work I am doing. Miller channels Said through what he refers to as Africanist discourse. He rationalises this bridging by pointing out the limitations of the binary mode that Orientalism is grounded upon:

> The two interlocking profiles of Europe and the Orient leave no room for a third element, endowed with a positive shape of its own; as on a sheet of paper both of whose sides have been claimed, the third entry tends to be associated with one side or the other or to be nullified by the lack of available slot in our intellectual apparatus. It is Africa that was always labelled the 'third part of the world,' and Africanist discourse reads as a struggle with the problems inherent in that figure. (Miller 16)

While Said envisions Orientalism as a discourse mapped by difference, Miller reasons that the binary of Occident and Orient erases Africa. Binaries imply absolutes and when a variant does not fit either space, it is obliterated from visibility, explained away as an anomaly, or collapsed into one of the two binaries. Miller reasons that if the Orient is Europe's other and Africa is the Orient's other, then by virtue of double negation, Africa becomes null (16–17).

To understand how the West imagines Africa, one needs to understand how nullity operates. Nullity in Africanist discourse embeds in the idea of Africa unknowability and mystery. Miller takes Said's identification of different degrees of East in the Orient which are implied by his constant reference to 'near East,' 'far East' and 'farthest East' to exemplify the way nullity is produced. To the different degrees of distance Said apportions the East, Miller asks, 'how far East is Africa? For Miller, the degrees of knowability seem to be directly equated to the distance one is from the Occident. In this continuum, we could perhaps establish the Orient as East and Africa as farthest East, thus farthest from the scope of knowability.

Some of the critical work that follows Miller's ideation of Africanist discourse has been done by Mudimbe who observes that Africanism "has been producing its own motives as well as its objects, and fundamentally commenting upon its own being, while systematically promoting a gnosis" which has given rise to a discourse of alterity (*The Invention of Africa* xi). Mudimbe traces this discourse to the colonial enterprise, anthropology, history, and other disciplines. Like Said and Miller, he insists that in the othering process where dominant discourses create representations of the other, the same is concretized. Mudimbe insists that "the explorer's text … brings nothing new besides visible and recent reasons to validate a discipline already remarkably defined" (*The Invention of Africa* 15). In

this discourse, African counter-discourses remain silenced. Mudimbe's interpretation of the idea of Africa in the Western imagination, confirms Said's argument that this is a discourse built on repetition (*The Idea of Africa* 29). Mudimbe observes that African literature can serve as a useful avenue for interrogating existing discourses and inventing counter-discourses. This dissertation approaches the African travel narrative as a commodity that functions as discourse. I therefore explore how the travel text initiates "processes of promoting constructs and … procedures of limiting [or in this case, expanding] the meaning and multiplicity of discourses" (Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* 178).

While Miller and Mudimbe transpose Orientalism for Africa through a mapping of Africanist discourse, Korang asks specific questions regarding how Said can be appropriated for the African context. What I find interesting in Korang, is his location of the African critic/writer at the centre of this appropriation, knowledge production, and criticism. Korang shifts the discussion from textuality to the role of the writer/critic in the production of an alternative discourse about Africa today. Korang is partly informed by the fact that Western imaginations are not limited to the West but are circulating even in Africa, a state that the writer/critic needs to be aware of. Korang's foregrounding of critic/writer defines the way I choose to read the texts in relation to the place the critic/writer takes in relation to his/her material. If Said in his postcolonial worldliness identifies as an ambivalent Oriental subject having the privilege of the Global North (Said 25), how then can we think of contemporary African travel writers or better still African critics today as subjects who are implicated by the traces of the discourses around them? Following Said, Korang proposes that we think of the "overlapping histories both produced and problematized [by] the relative and differential senses of the places and positions by which we apprehend who we are, where we are, what we do, how we do it, and for whom we do it" (Korang 26). In doing so, we are able to come to terms with our own ambivalences regarding African cultural productions such as contemporary African travel writing and the ways they inform our aesthetic and critical choices.

The contemporary African travel writer is a conflicted subject making deliberate attempts through textual rhetoric to locate Africa in the world and the world in Africa. Mudimbe dwells on this compound and contradictory position when he opines that "[d]iscursive formations in Africa or elsewhere do not constitute smooth genealogies of *savoirs* and *connaissances* but offer tables of intellectual and epistemological dissensions witnessing to fabulous acculturations" (*The Idea of Africa* 207). Epistemic systems about Africa do not emerge from a homogenous zone, rather, when attention is paid to the complexities of the region, and the reality of contested histories of colonialism, slavery, cultural divergences and convergences, one can identify a diversity of voices which add value to how knowledge about Africa emerges. These overlapping histories have to be considered in the process of mapping a representative tradition of any kind.

Achille Mbembe puts it aptly when he notes that:

> African identity does not exist as a substance. It is constituted, in varying forms, through a series of practices, notably practices of the self. Neither the forms of this identity nor its idioms are always self-identical. Rather, these forms and idioms are mobile, reversible, and unstable. Given this element of play, they cannot be reduced to a purely biological order based on blood, race, or geography. Nor can they be reduced to custom, to the extent that the latter's meaning is itself constantly shifting. (272)

Mbembe is in this instance referring to African modes of self-writing, a form that I trace contemporary African travel writing as part of. Writing Africa today involves teasing out the ambivalences or what Korang calls, crossroads of history, as constitutive of the process of inventing a discourse or counter-discourse. This thesis argues that African travel writing in the contemporary period is located in an ambivalent site of grappling with detangling itself from the othered history while finding space for thinking about Africa.

Writing Africa involves the writer/critic claiming the "I as other" (Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa* 35). Accepting difference as point from which the other can speak without limiting oneself to the given alterity, serves as a site from which both a disruption of dominant discourse and a teasing out of alternative possibilities of imagining Africa emerge. From this position, African writers/critics can invest their marginality with a critical pose which provides alternative ways of thinking about Africa. My reading of the selected texts considers the location of the contemporary African travel writer as a subject occupying the place of power within marginality from which s/he can, and does begin the work of disruption of dominant discourses in the genre concerning Africa. I envision this position as providing the necessary impetus from which to disrupt discourse from both the inside and the outside. Nevertheless, Said's caution concerning the force of Orientalist discourse and its impact comes to mind. Said's proposition of 'oppositional critical consciousness' is thus an important stance enabling the critic/writer to overcome the temptations to fall into the tradition of Orientalism. In the next chapter, while examining self-conscious counter-discourse, I will interrogate the blind spots in travel writing which propagate a repetition of the cultural dominance matrix.

James Clifford, an anthropology theorist, offers a methodology for thinking about the relation between culture and representation, which are at the core of how discourse functions within texts. In his early works, Clifford considers culture a slippery form that does not lend itself easily to the ethnographer, but rather, is open to possibilities. He observes that "[c]ultures do not hold still for their portraits" but are always in an ever-changing state due to the constancy of exchanges and flows (Clifford, "Partial Truths" 10). To view culture in Cliffordian terms of fluidity, is to imagine a plurality in the ways of seeing and writing culture. If Orientalist perception sees the other as a static entity whose fixity is affirmed by textual authority and citational tradition, it then follows that the

Other's culture is considered static. Clifford's definition of culture dismantles this logic on which Orientalist discourse is based. By extension, Clifford provides a useful framework from which new and diverse perspectives about culture and representation may originate. In this regard, forms of 'writing culture' such as travel writing, need to translate this plurality into the textual space. Bearing this in mind, I approach contemporary African travel writing as "writing about, against, and among cultures" (Clifford, "Partial Truths" 3).

Granted, we cannot erase the history of travel writing where cultural dominance and subjugation informs the way the other is framed. In conventional travel writing, the logic of plurality and fluidity in culture is silenced in order to privilege a homogeny at the centre of which the dominant discourse is manifested. Clifford is aware of this force of dominance as he notes that in spaces where Western imagination has erased marginal histories through its systems, the marginalised do not have the power to invent futures (*The Predicament of Culture* 5). Both Said and Clifford may be mistaken as prophets of doom who do not see any way out of such a situation. However, what they suggest is the presence of possibilities at the disposal of the othered to speak in a multitude of voices. Clifford proposes a counter-discourse within the practices of writing culture. For him, a transformative approach to fieldwork as a methodology has the potential to inscribe plurality in the way culture is written.

Clifford first describes the way fieldwork works in traditional anthropology. Fieldwork has and continues to act as authoritative knowledge formation system ensuring the persistence of a hegemonic narrative of the dominance of the Global North in representation of other cultures. In this frame, the fieldworker pitches his tent within the culture observed and through the method of participant observation makes notes about the culture. When the fieldworker moves from the field, his work gains a different texture which erases the voices of others that played a role in its construction. In this regard, Clifford thinks of the ethnographer as similar to the Orientalist who gives order and interpretation to the filed notes, an order that ultimately carries a single coherent intention (40). Such a representation of culture is invested with blind spots that frame cultures as static rather than "open-ended, creative dialogue of sub-cultures, of insiders and outsiders, of diverse factions" (Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* 46).

Clifford argues that contemporary ethnography looks at fieldwork as a collaborative and dialogic engagement. He observes that this perspective invests ethnography with heteroglossia. Within this idea is the assumption that the field is the site of travel, the elsewhere that is under the scrutiny of the ethnographer/traveller. The field as the site of travel is an active site for collaborative work where the fieldworker is but one part in the collective that involves different actors. If we transpose the notion of contemporary ethnography into travel writing, the assumption is that the travel writer is but one of the many actors in the space of travel. Clifford further notes that "[a] modern ethnography of

conjectures, constantly moving between cultures, does not like its Western alter ego, 'anthropology,' aspire to survey the full range of human diversity or development. It is a form perpetually displaced, both regionally focussed and boldly comparative, a form of both dwelling and of travelling" (Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* 9). This assessment suggests meaning not solely as located in the fieldworker's interpretation of the culture but as emerging out of the moment of encounter. In this regard, meaning is cultivated in the interactive process of travel.

One way through which we encounter this methodology in travel writing is in the sub-genre of dwelling-in-travel. In this dissertation, I explore forms of domestic travel as dwelling-in-travel where the travelling subject's field is his/her space of dwelling, as we shall observe in chapter four. This methodology demands a constant negotiation of the 'inside' and 'outside' positionalities regarding encounters and an acceptance of cultural contamination which requires a conscious observation of the events and connections with local and wider contexts of interpretation (Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* 34). It entails acceptance consideration of travel as emanating from such a background of blurriness of inside and outside as positions from which ethnographers/travellers observe and write the field into being.

Within the global openness of the 21st century advanced by technological developments and fast network of connections between cultures and spaces, Clifford allows me to imagine more than a binary of dominance/ dominated. This is not to say that such was not possible before; rather, this enables a consideration of ways of thinking that move beyond the binary system from the West. In a sense, it opens this study to other forms of knowledge construction, especially a consideration of the local epistemic formulations that the texts selected explore as viable forms of thinking about travel and travel writing in Africa. Clifford enables this study to approach the texts as instances where subjects (travellers) are "being[s]-in-culture" observing culture which is also in a state of flux (Clifford, *The Predicament* 9). Travelling subjects do not at the point of doing fieldwork, remove themselves from their cultural identity in order to approach the observed culture; but rather are subjects at crossroads who are informed by their cultural consciousness while observing other cultures. This is the paradox that Said envisions for contemporary counter-discourse work that is implicated in both dominant discourse and other discourses that enable a navigation alternative ways of thinking and writing culture.

Rhetoricity in Travel Writing: Dialectics of the genre

While Clifford situates plurality and non-conformity within any attempt to write culture, it is necessary to reiterate that in travel writing, aspects of cultural dominance manifest historically and remain influential today. Pratt locates this persistence within a historical development of the genre.

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Pratt's study takes us through the textual footprints that privilege dominance of the West over the rest of the world. Pratt situates the Linnaeus system of nature and the launching of scientific expedition around the world in 1735 as events marking a universalisation of West-centred knowledge about the world (15). The Linnaeus system of naming classified plants and animals according to their characteristics thereby creating a binary system. This system meant to introduce order out of chaos (Pratt 25). In other words, it was meant to make the other intelligible in a logic created by the West. This marked a new trend in travel writing, where descriptions were tailored to fit the binary system which situated everything in opposition. This systemic ordering of species constructed a European planetary consciousness and naturalised domination (Pratt 29; Spurr 156).

There are elements within travel writing that make it vulnerable to co-option by such othering projects. This othering discourse is authenticated by both scientific rationalism and the gaze of the traveller. Both Pratt and David Spurr note that in imperial travel writing, the gaze assumes a position of power and by extension the authority to name the other. Travel writing channels this through the image of a traveller as a "lettered, male European eye" (Pratt 31). Pratt notes that the narrative style in the travel text manifests this privileging of the gaze in a number of ways. One of these is the use of a narrator that is accorded authority of the gaze and experience. The travel narrative most often utilises the first person narrative voice that is invested with a godlike capacity that confers authority to textual representations of the other. This authority is drawn from another factor, that of description. Pratt observes that the descriptive logic of travel texts follows from the gaze of the traveller which accords value to places and things defined. Pratt thus suggests approaching the European traveller as see-r. Pratt's definition of the traveller as see-r literally collapses the gaze with power to name, define, and predict futures. The traveller by virtue of having the prequalification of being white and learned is in this case assumed to have "power … to possess [and] evaluate" (Pratt 201). In doing this, the gaze takes over the other and brings it to life through a descriptive logic. The viewer is accorded the power to translate the other for the Western audiences.

Another element is the claims to the real. The assumption within the genre is that the traveller has first-hand knowledge of the other by virtue of experience of travel, thus, the text is taken as an authentic translation of the other for the home audiences.[7] The traveller's view in the travel narrative is thus uncontested. It is obvious that these truth claims ensure travel writing is taken as authority on travelled lands. Part of this authority is drawn from the citational tradition, hinted at by Said who contends that:

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[7] Pratt's notion of figure of the monarch-of-all-I-survey positions the seer as invested with the power to name(Pratt 59, 198–201). This is also envisioned by Clifford's idea of ethnographic experience as validating the representations of culture offered by an ethnographer (*The Predicament of Culture* 36–37).

> In the system of knowledge about the Orient[Other], the Orient [Other] is less a place than a *topos*, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these (Said 177, Emphasis in original)

Through intertextual nods to other texts, or affiliative ties to places, texts, subjects, and so on, the travel narrative makes claims to the real or to authority of being taken as real, making travel writing both a realist genre and a vulnerable form that can be manipulated to solidify representations as presence. The masculine tendency in the genre also aligns with its imperial character of dominating and colonizing exotic lands thus promoting the gendered bias and view of otherness.[8]

Following Pratt, it is clear that the travel text participates in discourse. Although Pratt focuses on the texts that propagate imperial discourse, her outlining of a methodology of tracing the tropes that suggest cultural dominance is viable for this thesis. In identification of the way discourse is embedded in text, Pratt offers me an approach to trace codes that impart dominant discourse in contemporary African travel writing. Pratt further enables this study think about counter-discourse in travel writing. Pratt identifies 'autoethnography' as one strategy through which previously colonised subjects can initiate a counter-discourse. Autoethnography involves responding, rejecting, or revising dominant discourses from one's marginal position. I take contemporary African travel writing as a reaction to the prevailing dominant discourse within travel writing that maps Africa as other. Reading the selected texts through a lens of 'autoethnography' permits an interrogation of the way contemporary African travel writing appropriates the language and strategies used by the canon and adapts them for oppositional politics. This involves mimicry of the canon's style as we shall observe in chapter three or expanding conceptualisation of travel and by extension representation as chapter four and five will explore.

Another concept borrowed from Pratt that is useful in this study is the contact zone. Pratt defines contact zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination— such as colonialism and slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (7). If we take Clifford's view of the spaces of travel today as interactive spaces where cultures are always encountering each other and in a state of flux, then we must view the contact zone as evolving with the recalibrations of

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[8] For further clarification on the masculine notion of the genre see Pratt (209-223). Spurr also explores the significance of the masculine form as an equivalence that justified specific impressions about the East, contributing to the discourse of otherness underlying the genre. Another author that explores this is Anne McClintock who offers a gendered reading of imperialism and the textual practices surrounding the material practices of seeing and occupation of spaces. What all these authors, as well as others offer, is a significant delineation of how the discourse of otherness was coded onto the genre through the practice of travel as well as its appendages such as seeing, gender, and location of oneself in othered territory.

power dynamics of interactivity of cultures. Although the dominant discourse is part of the zone, within the subjugated cultures, other multilayers of power dynamics manifest which also influence the contact zone. Within travel writing, the contact zone emerges through the way encounters are framed, the traveller/travellee relations as they intersect with larger contextual issues such as gender, class, race, and culture among others. Pratt defines the travellee as the subject that is travelled to. This is not necessarily referencing a native, but it is a term that captures the specificity of the positionality of the other party in travel who do not necessarily have to be natives, nor dwellers. By calling them travellees Pratt deconstructs the notion of the traveller as always encountering a dweller, since dwelling and travelling are now multifaceted terms that are alive to the complexities of space occupation and utility.

This shifting of goalposts regarding the limits of travel reveals a rethinking of travel writing to incorporate texts previously considered outside the scope of the genre. At the same time, this nuanced understanding of fluidity in culture and contact zone redefines the way I approach travel writing. Swahili wisdom regarding travel expands my reading of travel writing. One Swahili proverb goes, *asiyesafiri taa haing'ari* [one who does not travel has no shining lamp]. This proverb may seem to perpetuate imperial understanding of travel which privilege mobility as a practice that enables one to gain insight about the other. However, if we relate it to other proverbs and sayings within Swahili cosmology, we come to a different understanding of how the Swahili view enlightenment. Another proverb goes, *ukungia jichoni huujui* [what comes into your eyesight is not necessarily known to you]. This proverb suggest the limitations of one's worldview to know. What these two proverbs when read together suggest, is the fact that travel implies more than just movement across geographical expanses. Travel entails seeing outside of one's perception of the world. If one does not get outside their boundaries of perception, then the possibilities of having travelled are limited.

Syed Manzurul Islam elaborates on this idea. He notes:

> [A]ny real movement never really takes place as the subject (same) goes to the object (other) only in pursuit of its own self-realisation. The subject (same) returns, after having enlightened itself to itself. The subject (same) in its movement *never really encounters the object* (other) and if it had, it would have been a movement of non-return. (Islam 44, emphasis added)

Islam is here alluding to what I have been leading to in tracing the limits of Orientalism and major theorizations of traditional travel writing where the purpose was to validate the Western gaze's planetary consciousness by affirming difference. He allows my evocation of the Swahili philosophy on travel to be foregrounded. Both the Swahili and Islam agree that movement alone does not qualify one as traveller. From Islam, although the imperial travellers traversed large geographical distances, they did not encounter the other hence cannot be said to have travelled. This is an exciting realisation

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that changes the trajectory of how chapters four and five of this study conceptualises travel writing. In fact, both the Swahili tradition and Islam seem to imply that the other is most often outside the reach of the traveller as outsider, hence, eludes definition (Islam 80–115).[9]

How can travel writing bridge this gap of definition and difference? Islam proposes nomadic travel, which involves a fracturing of boundaries (Islam vii–viii). This rupture is seen in the way the travel texts disrupt power dynamics, semiotic order, organisation of things and subjectivity (Islam 56). It goes without saying that travel is located in spatial negotiation. In this case, fracturing of limits of perception entails a disruption of the logic of space as it relates to the notions of power, order, meaning, and positionality. Nomadic travel happens when the lines of rigidity marking frames of reference in sedentary travel are broken leading to a multitude of possibilities. Such potential manifest in narratives when dominant ways of seeing and navigating spaces are disrupted and challenged by the initiation of alternative orders. In my exploration of contemporary African travel writing as a form that expands the limits of the genre, I interrogate the ways the African form charts potentialities for alternatives ways of travelling and writing

Pratt's idea of the contact zone when seen in light of Islam's restoration of nomadic travel becomes stimulating as a nuance of how counter-discourse is manifested in contemporary African travel writing. Within this changed dynamic, the contact zone still manifests the unequal power relations, albeit with a touch of fluidity informed by an unstable relationship between traveller and travellee as entities co-present in the sites of encounter, but still predicated by the global-local politics of race, class, and gender. At the same time, such a view of the contact zone provides a point of departure for this study to engage in exploring the extent to which travel writing within the continent writes outside of dominant discourse. In this reimagination of the travel text, the genre then expands itself from being in the service of imperial discourse to one that disrupts the norm. No wonder Said ends his treatise on Orientalism with the view that the literary text is a 'disturber'(Said 291). This notion of disruption informs my approach of the expansions initiated by contemporary African travel writing.

Self-Writing and Addressivity

All the selected texts loosely fit within life writing as they all emerge from actual journeys made by the authors. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, key life writing theorists, argue that autobiography encompasses different genres of life writing, one of which is travel writing. While most of the forms

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[9] In "Othering and the other" Islam explores the futility in the process of othering. He notes that the othering subject is, through the othering process, reaching for himself or his meanings. The mask of defining the other simply provides a shaky logic onto which the subject can claim knowability. In the real sense, the subject does not know the other, and is in no position to know the other without having encountered the other. Islam defines othering as a process of masking non-encounters as encounters. Islam uses Levinas's notion of 'anarchic obligation', Lyotard's 'pragmatic phrase games' and Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming' to expound on the the façade of othering.

of life writing explore the telling of a life, travel writing traditionally involves the self looking outwards, thus, much of its concentration involves the self's sight of the world. Smith and Watson note that the contestation of fact and fiction is an important feature of postcolonial life writing. Such an uneasy location of fact and fiction help in challenging the master narratives, leading to a rethinking of generic boundedness as well as representational practices within the specific canons (Smith and Watson, "The Trouble with Autobiography" 362). Considering the history of travel writing as a genre, this dis-ease with fact and its authority within the contemporary African form is a nuanced political statement that not only displaces the foundation of discursive nature of the imperial legacy in the genre, but also moves the genre towards aestheticism. It also causes postcolonial travel writing emerging as life writing to be seen as a form that defines agency for the dispossessed or the othered (Smith ix).

This again reminds us of Mudimbe and Mbembe's identification of the privilege in the intermediary location,—the 'I' as other speaking from the *exterior* position of power. I approach contemporary African travel writing as a form of self-writing, where the marginal position of 'I' as other is taken. In this regard, I think of the 'I' as writing within the margins of genre and its discourses, thus dispossessed of power; the 'I' is also an insider looking and writing about the inside from a place of privilege that creates other in the process of representation. This is a complex point of constant negotiation as we shall observe in the following chapters. Theories of life writing also position the collaborative effect of life writing as a significant step in the telling from the outside. It entails collaboration of medias, genres, subjects, stories among others to capture the tensions of sites which demand more than the self can offer. This dimension stresses the urgency of locating the narrating 'I' as a multifaceted figure that is embedded with other 'I's that are either voiceless or seeking agency. Such a complication of the narrating persona creates multiplicities of contestation for the imagined audiences.

Smith argues that in the traditional sense of the canon, travel writing has a distinct addressivity; it is meant for audiences back home (xii). Home in this case, being the traveller's point of departure. These audience[s] shape and are shaped by the text hence the making and circulation of representation as knowledge. Drawing from this identification of addressivity, I argue that the seeing act of the traveller, is grounded upon the expectations the reading home has concerning the other and thus journeying is a search for difference. In the contemporary case of counter-discourse where the notion of home is complicated by the instability of points of departures and complexities in contextual location and travelling, audiences have become complicated and interconnected by different networks of travel and access. Michael Warner notes that every writer imagines publics for their texts. Contemporary African travel writing as counter-travel imagines particular kinds of publics defined

by the historical circumstances in travel writing and the self location of Africans within it. In this case, I agree with Warner who claims that "when people address publics, they engage in struggles— at varying levels of salience to consciousness, from calculated tactic to mute cognitive noise— over the conditions that bring them together as a public (12). The complications of speaking outside of discourse become the complications of reading outside of discourse, imagining the self outside of discourse. Therefore, for contemporary African travel writing the idea of addressivity is central in the way the texts communicate. Warner insists that publics form part of the conditions of textuality influencing the language, narrative form, intertextual allusions (16) and worlding the text plots itself in. Therefore, addressivity is a central consideration in the way the travel text communicates and the kinds of discourses it engages in. When exploring the publics invited into a text, I insist on the need to question who the text claims to speak for, how the rhetoric of the text bring these publics into being and why (Warner 129).

Throughout this meditation on the theoretical pathways I intend to follow, I have foregrounded language as a significant marker of discourse or counter-discourse. Mikhail Bakhtin's work on the chronotope, dialogism, and heteroglossia are therefore key pointers to the way the textual interrogation of language in the selected texts is offered. Travel writing is by design concerned with spatio-temporality in its communication of representation. In this regard, Bakhtin's notion of chronotope enables an understanding of the time-space dynamics in the texts selected. He argues that the chronotope "[functions] as primary means for materializing time in space [and] emerges as a center for concretizing representation" (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* 250). This thesis sees the chronotope as spaces of concentrated time. From what we glean in Said, Pratt and other scholars who have explored the genre, there is a tendency in travel writing to locate representation of the other in terms that suggest stasis or a primordial time.[10] If this is taken as true, we might be tempted to read travel writing within the idea of adventure-time. The logic of exoticism and mystery prevalent in travel writing also go hand in hand with space-time dynamics of adventure-time. However, Bakhtin notes that this would be a mistake since travel writing discounts adventure-time's logic of abstraction of space. In travel writing, there is always a point of reference. For instance, in imperial travel writing, the point of reference is normally the author's home culture through which perceptions of the other space are channelled and mediated (Bakhtin 103). While adventure is part of travel writing, the notion of realism makes it follow a different kind of timeliness which map authenticity in the genre, something that I explore in the study.

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[10] Said argues that the Orientalists' conception of the world of the other that he represents most often takes on a frozen, and fixed identity.

Travel writing makes use of a number of chronotopes, one of which is the chronotope of the road. The mere fact of its concentration on a journey undertaken by an individual (both literal and metaphoric sense) demand we explore the spatial and temporal dimensions of the path undertaken in the journey and what that means. Bakhtin's idea of the chronotope of the road compels us to focus on the subject's movement across space in relation to the temporal where "events such as meeting, separation, collision, escape and so forth take on a new and markedly more concrete chronotopic significance" (*The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* 120). This means tracing the conditions and circumstances of interactions, historicity of the same and the context of happenstance as elements to define the spatio-temporality of events. Other forms of chronotopes within the travel text include the chronotope of encounter and chronotope of the hotel. This dissertation traces encounter as a significant element that defines whether travel does take place or not. My study also re-defines chronotypes of travel as metaphors that project images and allegories that negotiate understanding of cultures in spaces travelled. Furthermore, by locating the chronotypes in what James Duncan calls the "physicality of representation," the study will examine a multiplicity of chronotopes that negotiate spatial meanings (4).[11]

Bakhtin argues that the language of the novel is always in a tension between "centrifugal forces that seek to keep things apart, and centripetal forces that strive to make things cohere" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* xxi). This is more urgent in contemporary African travel writing which by virtue of positioning claims to challenge the canon. The work of disrupting the imperial logic of the genre, is not an easy one as the genre works towards a collective 'discursive consistency', a field that gains force an power through the multitude of individual and collective works that contribute to its consistency (Said 272–73). I read every individual text's disruption as an attempt at introducing inconsistency into this field as well as a contribution into another kind of discursive consistency; one where perhaps diversity and heterogeneity is the norm. The way Said observes the manipulative form that language takes in the Oriental text, is the same way I perceive it in the counter-discourse. This assumption situates my exploration within linguistic manoeuvres in the selected texts.

Bakhtin observes this semantic palpability in linguistic forms. Underlying these struggles are different discourses framed through the ideological consciousness embedded in language:

> The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially
> specific environment cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads woven by

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[11]James Duncan and Derek Gregory insist that in order to attend to the "physicality of representation" in travel writing, one should pay attention to the metaphors, valences and silences therein. These can be seen through the chronotopes utilised.

socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* 277)

Language in the literary text cannot be examined as innocent but is coded with idioms propagating a variety of discourses in a dialogic interplay. It is through an interrogation of language that the competing forces have a chance of being highlighted. In the travel narrative today, counter-discourse does not operate in unchartered ground. It emerges within a space where dominant discourses exist, and other discourses are silenced. Language within the counter-discursive text contests the dominant imperial discourses embedded in the genre. Every time the writer takes up a word, an utterance or a statement, it is already invested with ideological consciousness which carries the force of specific discourses. To make a word, an utterance or a statement speak for one's intention is what is important. Bakhtin extends his argument about the lack of fixity in language through the concept of heteroglossia. He notes that "every novel is a dialogized system made up of images of 'languages,' styles and consciousnesses that are concrete and inseparable from language. Language in the novel not only represents, but serves as the object of representation" (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* 49). This can be taken as the manifestation of discourse within artistic systems and genres. Travel writing as an open-ended genre provides for a multiplicity of genres, languages, and discourses to manifest. At the same time, the travel text contends with competing discourses within the narrating voice which is in itself informed by the complicated histories of its contexts. This bears reiterating the idea that the travel narrator is a being-in-culture encountering another culture. In this regard, Bakhtin's notion of dialogism works as a methodological strategy that enables this dissertation to tease out contestations of competing discourses, voices, cultures and ideologies at play within the travel texts selected. Bakhtin enables me to explore how texts act as active sites for personal, collective and ideological contests regarding knowledge of self and others, inside and outside cultures, centres and margins that the traveller navigates in the text.

Following Bakhtin, this study explores language as used in the selected contemporary African travel narratives from the level of grammar, symbolism, history, and context among others, in order to reveal the ideological dimensions carrying the force of discourse in the texts. Such an examination of language, I argue, will enable this thesis to account for the discourses that manifest in the selected texts. At the end, this analysis may aid in my interrogation of the degrees of counter-discursivity that may emerge and the limits of the same. In this regard attention to the choice of vocabulary, tropes and motifs will enable me to explore whether the texts participate in forming or reforming the genre's representational poetics. Language of a text does illuminate codes of representation and the implied assumptions, which then reveal the discourses informing the text and strategies of its embeddedness onto the text. This is the nature of heteroglossia in the novelistic form. Bakhtin thus concludes that

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methodologically, it is upon the critic to uncover the languages, "angles of refraction … dialogic interrelationships" and "determining the heteroglot background outside the work that dialogizes it" (416). Out of such an exploration can the underlying discourses in the African travel narrative be imagined. It is with this that I believe Bakhtin allows for the illumination of what contemporary African travel writing is trying to do.

This theoretical chapter raises more questions than answers regarding setting a framework for reading African travel writing. In raising issues with the traditional theorization on travel writing, I intended to illuminate the limitations of existing theories to capture African travel writing. This then allows for the subsequent chapters of this dissertation to initiate a re-conceptualization of the poetics of African travel writing.

Chapter Three

Politics of Writing Back in Contemporary African Travel Writing

> It is an interesting aspect of travelling to a new place that for the first few moments, your eyes cannot concentrate on the particular. I am overwhelmed by the glare of dusk, by the shiver of wind … by the vision of mile upon mile of space free from our wirings …. It occurs to me that there is no clearer proof of the subjectivity (or selectivity) of our senses than at moments like this. Seeing is almost always only noticing.
>
> (Binyavanga Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 13)

Introduction

Writing back within contemporary African travel writing involves a twofold mission. It entails 'writing back' to the canon which is highly West-centric in thought and ideology as well as 'writing back' to a diversity of publics. African literature has had a long history of writing back to both a Eurocentric tradition of exclusion and African publics. In the era of Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, African literature developed as a reaction to the colonial experience of erasure and exclusion. In essence, as Achebe notes, literature emerged as a means to locate Africans as having cultures and ways of life that were multifaceted.[12] As a number of critics have noted, most of this literature was encumbered by anthropological detail, which was most often claimed as a necessary detail intentionally geared towards Eurocentric publics' need to understand African cultures. In the phase that follows this, a rise in experimentation as a means through which African literature writes back to diverse publics is seen. African travel writing has from its onset developed with the progression trends in African literature. In this regard, I see the contemporary African travel writing as initiating a writing back trend which is geared towards a multitude of publics and follows a multiple form to achieve this.

This chapter explores 'writing back' as involving contemporary African travel writing interrogating the canon and the discourse of otherness propagated therein while addressing multiple publics. I explore contemporary African travel writing as a form through which the previously othered offers an autoethnography that contests the canon and its assumptions about Africa. If we conceive of travel writing as a form of writing culture (Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths" 10), then it is imperative

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[12] See Achebe's essays in *Home and Exile* where he extensively discusses the imperative to write back. Writing back involves 're-storying' and part of the process entails "drawing … from every resource of memory and imagination and from our history[ies], our arts and culture; but also an unflinching consciousness of the flaws that blemished our inheritance" (Achebe, Home and Exile 79). Achebe calls attention to the different realities that inform the development of genres in Africa as informing the writing back initiative. Bright Molande succinctly summarises the spirit of writing back in African literature as both response to misrepresentation and a political act of self-definition. For Molande, writing back emerged "in the aftermath of the colossal encounter of colonialism" (38). In African travel writing, the persistence of a West-centric hegemony in the 21st century is what informs the writing back style in the selected texts.

to think of the process of 'writing back' as one involving disruption of assumptions about cultures within the travel writing canon. In the process of challenging the canon, alternative ways of travelling and writing Africa emerge which expand the genre's limits. This chapter focusses on Binyavanga Wainaina's short story "Discovering Home," Sihle Khumalo's, *Dark Continent My Black Arse* and *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu*, and Kofi Akpabli's *A Sense of the Savannah: Tales of a Friendly Walk through Northern Ghana*, as contemporary African travelogues that 'write back'.

The selected texts reflect this dissertation's intention to examine African travel writing as a form that expands the limits of the genre to capture African experiences of mobility. I consider 'writing back' a self-conscious and deliberate inflection that informs the specific experimentations and interrogations that the selected texts participate in. I argue that the selected texts work within the traditions of the genre to challenge its limits. I therefore explore the extent to which these texts articulate alternative modes of travel writing and investigate any obstinate elements of the genre's conventions that remain entrenched in their work. I explore contemporary African travel writing's engagement with histories of imperial rhetoric from which otherness is accrued to the continent within travel writing and the extent to which they push back by offering alternative possibilities for imagining the continent.

The Imperial Tradition in Travel Writing

To situate 'writing back' as a process, I briefly revisit a contextualisation of the canon which has traditionally been built around the imperial heritage. Much of this contextualisation has been given in the theoretical chapter. However, I reiterate the codes to locate the writing back agenda in particular terms. Travel writing's history and discourses of otherness are inseparable. The contemporary genre of travel writing can be traced back to the Victorian period of exploration and discovery where the genre emerged as part of the textual forms used by the imperial powers to make sense of non-European world for Europeans (Pratt 3).[13] During this period, as Pratt notes, travel writing "made imperial expansion meaningful and desirable to the citizenries of the imperial countries" (3). These forms of writing offered an imagination of the outside world that was ingrained with cultural superiority of the imperial culture. This intent served the imperial mission of conquest and domination. Within this period, travel writing built itself by propagating tropes of alterity in the other. By constructing a field of knowledge based on alterity, the genre cemented the view of the European

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[13] Although I read the imperial period as a significant point in time in the development of the genre as we know it today, I am not oblivious to the presence and development of the genre in spaces beyond this period. Rather, I take this period as important since the concept I wish to foreground can be traced to the practice of imperial travel writing. In this regard, I am aware of travel writing existing even before this period and emerging from a multitude of spaces within and beyond the imperial period and inspiration.

traveller/reader as a superior being. Alterity has over time become a key lens through which travel writing frames unfamiliar spaces making travel writing ideal for the manufacturing of otherness.

Alterity is located on the travelling subject, a masculine figure that embodies the character of conquest and control (Pratt 31). Clifford explains that "[g]ood travel (heroic, educational, scientific, adventurous, ennobling) is something men (should) do" (31). The assumption in both Pratt and Clifford is that the genre is informed by a patriarchal order emergent within the practice of travel, which suggests the male subject as qualified to navigate supposed precarity in the unexplored, 'primitive' place of the other. Elsewhere, Anne McClintock insists that the power of imperial culture, and by extension travel writing, is vested in male authority. While elements of masculinity in the genre suggest a privileging of male travellers, studies have shown the prevalence of women travellers within the tradition.[14] Women travellers during this period and after were either relegated to companions or wives of the male travellers and even when they wrote about their exploits in the spaces of travel, they mimicked the masculine form or got relegated to the margins (Clifford, *Routes* 31–32; Smith x-xi). This masculine character of the genre is part of the way even in the contemporary space, travellers arrogate themselves rights to represent, judge and define sites of travel (Holland and Huggan 46).

Underlying the assumption of superiority on the travelling subject over travelled spaces, is the privileged gaze of the traveller. Pratt highlights this privilege when she notes that "the *viewer* is there to judge and appreciate [spaces], and the verbal painter who produces it for others" (200, emphasis added). Pratt foregrounds seeing as the significant in the creation of the narrative of the other. In this regard, the viewer (traveller) is the master-creator investing spaces with life through the textuality. This logic accedes honour to the traveller's eye, something that is equated to knowledge. Thus the imperial traveller emerges as an authority whose vision is uncontested in representation of the other. In the contemporary space, the authority of the gaze persists, albeit in new ways with travel writers utilising a host of allusions and aesthetic manipulations of language to infer authority. It is important

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[14] Many studies concentrate approach the genre as one where the masculine history was pre-eminent and women travellers were seen as a transgression of the character of the genre. Sara Mills' *Discourses of Difference* (1991) examines how women travel writing was informed by a patriarchal strain of the genre. In her analysis Mills extends this to point out the ways in which women travel writing is not only shaped by the masculine tendency but asserts itself. I find Kristi Siegel's *Gender, Genre, and Identity in Women's Travel Writing* (2004) informative in the way it locates the idea that "[g]ender matters, but it matters in a way that is irreducibly complex" (1). In her introduction to the text, Siegel insists that women travel writing has to be explored in a manner that takes into consideration the masculine trope as well as other complexities of space occupation. This is something that is noted by both Debbie Lisle in *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (2006) as well as Sidonie Smith's *Moving Lives: Twentieth Century Women's Travel Writing* (2001). Inasmuch as these studies identify women as central to the development of the genre, they are all mostly focussed on western women's travel writing. Rachel Moffat's study *Perspectives on Africa in travel writing: representations of Ethiopia, Kenya, Republic of Congo and South Africa, 1930–2000* introduces an African female traveller, Noni Jabavu in her last chapter. In this dissertation, I explore a number of African female travel writing in chapters four and five. In my analysis I consider these forms of writing alongside the male travel writing.

to note that in the process of seeing the other, travellers impose codes of reference from their backgrounds. In fact, Islam uses this transference of codes of perception to qualify imperial travel as non-travel. While Islam's argument raises the major problem with imperial tradition of travel, it does not omit the fact that neo-imperial travel and other forms in the contemporary space still follow the system initiated by the generic traditions emanating from imperial rationalisation of other.

Within the imperial tradition, travel writing functioned as a form of colonisation of the mind of the other by initiating a discourse of inferiority. The process of producing the rest of the world for the West was an intentional rationalisation of the colonial process. Texts such as Linton's in the introduction chapter suggest that even after the end of imperialism, the tradition of otherness still persists today. African travel writing as writing that contests this sustained heritage and pushes back against the aspects of the genre which enhance alterity utilises the same codes to initiate transgression. These texts challenge not only the embedded difference in the tradition, but also seek to expand interpretation of travel and travel writing beyond forms imagined by the imperial tradition of the canon. This chapter explores the extent to which contemporary African travel writing adapts the traditions of the genre for a counter-discourse.

In the first section, I explore Wainaina's use of a self-aware persona as traveller to debunk the myth of homogeneity common in the way travel writing frames African spaces. I examine how a self-conscious traveller enables Wainaina to not only question the tendency of travel writing to generalise but also allows him to offer alternative ways of thinking about the gaze, which remaps the relationality between traveller and travellee regarding the politics of writing travel. The second section shifts focus to Khumalo's parody of travel writing. In this section, I tease out the usefulness of parody in Khumalo's paralleling of his poetics with the conventional travel writing. In this comparative exploration, I explore the ways Khumalo's narratives foreground stereotypes and the rhetoric of the convention in order to discount them with his own experiences of travel. The last section explores Akpabli's use of ethnography, a canonised form of representing culture. I interrogate the extent to which degrees of insider[ness] enables Akpabli's ethnographic narrative to position an alternative poetics of Northern Ghana for locals. Through these close-textual explorations, I argue for an interpretation of African 'writing back' as a means though which authors question the assumptions within travel writing and its discourses on Africa and provide useful alternative ways of knowing Africa, ways that invest in the genre heteroglossia.

Refashioning the Traveller's Gaze in Binyavanga Wainaina's "Discovering Home"

Binyavanga Wainaina is a Kenyan writer and journalist. Wainaina's "Discovering Home" is a pioneer text within the post-2000 African travel writing. This short story initially appeared in 2002 in *The Guardian* after which it won the 2002 Caine prize of literature. It was later published by Jacana Media in their 2002 Caine prize anthology. Wainaina has also produced other works including: "How to Write about Africa" (2005), "Memories of the Future" (2006), and the memoir, *One Day I'll Write about this Place* (2011) to name but a few. All of Wainaina's works grapple with the politics of representation of self and space, hence my consideration of him as a post-2000 travel writing pioneer. Wainaina's work participates in a deliberate interrogation of the Africanist discourse, most specifically in the way travel writing propagates this discourse. For this reason, I see Wainaina as an author that is self-consciously invested in the way discourses function.

"Discovering Home" documents Wainaina's journey from Cape Town, South Africa to Kenya, and finally Bufumbira, Uganda to celebrate his maternal grandparents' 60th wedding anniversary. The journey's purpose is the first indication that this is a different kind of travel. Travel was initially undertaken for purposes of discovery and exploration (Pratt 15–16), something that has gradually changed with the changing times. In fact, Paul Fussell gives a chronology where he argues that there have been three stages of development: exploration, travel and tourism (37-38). Travel is then seen as existing somewhere in the midst of the extremes of exploration, with its notions of "formlessness" and tourism with its assumptions of cliché (Fussell 38).Contemporary travel is mostly conflated with leisure previously associated with tourism more than notion of work. Nevertheless, the elements of exploration, travel and tourism overlap in travel today. When Wainaina situates his journey as occasioned by a personal family event, he is enabling the reader to consider a functionality that brings into perspective an aspect outside of the scope of the genre's idea of travel. He suggests a contemplation of journeys made out of personal or familial volition as significant aspects within the genre. In his case, by foregrounding family, he allows us to consider the dynamics of familial ties as central in his positionality as traveller negotiating encounters in spaces deemed or expected to be familiar. Family informs the way Wainaina places himself and acts as building blocks of how he views his localness and non-localness as traveller.

The author's choice in terms of narrative style and tone also embodies this personal nature of his journey and offers a lens from which to engage the private and the public nature of his travels. The narrative takes the form of a diary, incorporating three entries. The diary as a form of autobiography is a very personal mode of self-writing that is highly subjective and vulnerable. Julie Rak in the introduction to *On Diary* (2009), opines that the subjectivity of the diary form informs the private life of the diarist but is not fully focussed on this (19). What she means is that, the diary focusses on one's

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self-development but in its published form acquires public dimensions beyond the self. In Wainaina's case, the narrative is not only the narrator's self-reflection representation as he travels to his maternal grandparents' anniversary, but also a political text that questions the way Eastern Africa region has been represented in canonical travel writing. In this way, the narrative is both a private and a public text that navigates the personal introspective realities of family alongside the politics of collective representation.

Part of the attraction of the diary form in travel writing is its capacity to "sculpt[s] life as it happens and take[s] up the challenge of life" (Lejeune 173). For Wainaina, this sense of timeliness is illuminated by the narrative demarcation of the events into specific timescapes. The whole narrative is divided into three journal entries documenting specific timelines of Wainaina's journey. The first section, "Cape Town, June 1995" (9) focuses on the narrator's journey from Cape Town to Nairobi and to his home in Nakuru. The second section titled "A Fluid Disposition: Masailand, August 1995" (13) highlights his travels in Narok and the last section, "Christmas in Bufumbira, 20 December 1995" (sic) (18) is an account of his travels across Uganda. Through this demarcation, the narrative suggests authenticity tied to the linking of experiences with time. This intimate diary-like address signals the text's intent to make a claim to reality, something that situates it fully within the genre.

The diary form also enables the narrative to fit within the sentimental form of travel writing. Pratt notes that travel writing within the sentimental form establishes the travelling subject as a central figure narrating his own account of journey. In the sentimental form, "[t]he textual space/time … corresponds to the space/time of traveling [and] is filled with … human activity, interactions among the travelers themselves or with the people they encounter" (Pratt 73–74). Wainaina's narrative partitioning into three journal entries give particularity of experience located within a specific understanding of time/space. In the entry headings is an inkling of the kinds of interactions Wainaina has in the moments captured. The journal form also creates the impression of intimacy with the addresser. It suggests in the implied reader, a voyeuristic peek into the traveller's journey thus creating impression of reality. This is the limit of convergence between Wainaina's narrative and the sentimental form. His narrative departs from the sentimental form in the way it approaches authority of narrative.

Pratt argues that the sentimental form draws on science to rationalise the representation offered in narrative form. Often, such a leaning is represented through ethnographic gesturing, which we will explore later on in this chapter. Such framing has for a long time positioned travel writing as a masquerade for truth, a view that has been criticized over time by scholars on ethics of travel (Fussell 60; Bruner 5; Huggan 189). In Wainaina, the claim to authority is drawn from a foregrounding of experience. The diary form sets Wainaina as mapping private experiences for the public. At the same

time, it is possible to locate Wainaina's intention to disrupt conventional travel writing within his use of the diary form. Philippe Lejeune notes that the diary is a site of freedom, a site that enables subjects interrogate their disquiet about humanity (335). The diary's focalisation of the subject's subjectivity enables Wainaina to reorient authority away from the travelogue. Through this form, Wainaina subtly gestures towards a reflective negotiation of truth.

Although Wainaina's use of the diary form hints a relationality with the conventional travel writing due to the commonality regarding making claims to the real, he intentionally situates himself as a transgressive subject, self-conscious of this positionality and its affordances. This is suggested through the sarcasm that emerges out of the narrator's remark, "[i]t occurs to me that if I was White, chances are I would choose to see elephants – and this would be a very different story. That story would be about the wide, empty spaces people from Europe yearn to get lost in, rather than the cosy surround of kin we Africans generally seek" (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 13–14). This comment is made when Wainaina visits Narok, which is in Maasailand, and a key wildlife tourism destination, with nearby Maasai Mara Game reserve. Within this statement is the allusion to the tourism discourses as well as hegemonic assumptions of otherness as a point of departure from which the narrator wishes to challenge. It is obvious that Wainaina is following the framework proposed by Mudimbe of claiming 'I' as other and considering the marginal point a site for transformational work.

Wainaina's mention of White ways of seeing is a metaphoric signalling towards the hegemonic logic of seeing African spaces. This narrative intentionally demands of the reader an appositional paralleling of White as conventional and other (Wainaina's preferred position) as disturber of the convention. The narrative thus is situated as emerging from the margins to contest imperial notions of seeing such as tourist discourses around conception of African spaces, which through a foregrounding of wildlife, erase the human subject. When forms of marginality are consciously cultivated, they function to "to uncover and challenge dominant structures of power" (Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* xii). In Wainaina's case, his positioning the travelling subject as a subjective character, within a subjective genre and intentionally taking up an oppositional stance, act as staging that then enables him to critique the conventions of travel writing. At the same time, in pointing out intention to offer a different way of seeing, this narrative invites different publics into the text. He is engaging with the publics that see Africa as other as well as the othered in their multiplicities. This addressivity is tightened by the positionality of the text both in *The Guardian* and Jacana. The politics of production in *The Guardian*, a Global North paper situate this text well within the Global North as address. More so, the literary prize that Wainaina won raised the value of the narrative in world literary circles. At the same time, the Jacana publication centres African publics as being the core of the narrative.

The narrator's nod to an alternative order of seeing, a non-White order of seeing, proposes a different order of representation. Wainaina parallels his narrative with narratives of Eurocentric travellers such as Karen Blixen, David Livingstone, Beryl Markham, Henry Morton Stanley, and most recently Louise Linton who intentionally build upon discourses of otherness through representing the wild in positive light at the expense of the people they encounter across their travels in Africa.[15] In their selective seeing, they act as inventors of narratives that commodify culture and market tourist spaces for specific foreign audiences. Wainaina critiques this imperialist tradition of seeing further when he notes, "[t]here isn't so much to look forward to at night here, no pubs hidden in the bamboo jungle. You can't even walk about freely at night because the areas outside are full of stinging nettles"(Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 14). The narrator is aware that some audiences have been conditioned to expect a travelogue about Eastern Africa to give flowery descriptions of the wild and exotic representation of subjects. He disrupts this expectation when he talks of stinging nettles as being the danger one is probably wont to meet in Narok thus deflating such stereotypes. This is a humorous view that laughs at the idea that one is bound to encounter danger in African spaces. Humour in this statement enables Wainaina to critique the genre's essentialism and generalisation of Africa. Wainaina is criticizing the way hegemonic travel narratives of Africa represent African spaces as encumbered by precarity.

Part of this alternative way of seeing involves restoring human relations as central to the way the space of the other is understood. In his travels around Maasailand, Wainaina chooses to see human subjects, a choice that allows him to counter Eurocentric canon's obsession with wildlife or marginalising human subjects. To locate this alternative sight, Wainaina begins by stating that he was in Masailand, but "[n]ot television Masailand" (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 13). This is, again, a rejection of the dominant discourse regarding the Masai in the media and other platforms such as travel writing which have managed to commoditize a complex group of people. Television Masailand is an aestheticized Masailand invented for consumption within tourism, literature, and media among other sites. Edward Bruner and Dorothy Hodgson respectively explore the extensive commoditization of Maasai lifestyle and culture within tourism and travel economies. For instance, within tourism, the Maasai have become "the quintessential pastoralists" and the Moran, "the quintessential Maasai" (Bruner 35). This image has textually remained static since the 18th century of European exploration

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[15] See for instance Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa* (1960) which often reduces the human characters to being part of the landscape while elevating the wild into the foreground. In describing Kamante, a Kikuyu boy, Blixen uses references to the wild and savage. In another instance, Blixen compares Kamante, to Lulu, an antelope she considers part of her household. In collapsing the human and animal together, Blixen fits the dimension Wainaina gives of imperial selectivity of sight. In contrast to this, she equates herself as the white saviour who is in Africa to cure the natives from all forms of savagery (Blixen 24–26). This and other incidences in the book indicate the trope that Wainaina satirises about the choices concerning what to see.

of the region when it first emerged in travel narratives (Laizer 1–2*).* In referencing television Masailand, Wainaina is citing a tradition of representations in the media and travel accounts such as Blixen's *Out of Africa* (1960) and Corinne Hofmann's *The White Masai* (1998) adapted into film by the same titles by Sydney Pollack (1985) and Hermine Huntgeburth (2005) respectively.[16] Wainaina notes that in the media-ted Masailand, discourses of exoticism are propagated ("Discovering Home" 14). In contrasting his Masailand with television Masailand, Wainaina's narrative becomes dialogic as he enters travel writing discourse by utilising its citational tradition so as to offer alternative perceptions of the spaces. Wainaina's intervention infuses the genre with a vari-directional angle that enables the narrative to speak to a diversity of audiences (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 194).

Wainaina chooses not to fall into the trap of objectifying subjects encountered nor does he see them as objects for pleasure as conventional travelogues do, rather he engages with them as complex humans with depth of character. He gives a detailed description of Ole Kamaro and his family. He develops the character of Eddah, Ole Kamaro's fifth wife, by giving the back story that explains her growth – from marrying young, to managing Ole Kamaro's lands and becoming the local chairwoman of KANU.[17] The narrative highlights the commercial success of Eddah, who had taken charge of Ole Kamaro's lands and businesses and within a few years had managed to multiply the profits. This representation is alive to the changing dynamics within Maasai society as similar to other societies where cultures adapt to modernization in various ways. The fact that the narrator's family leases out land in Narok points to the changing dynamics of agriculture hence the obsessive reified conception of Maasai as extreme pastoralists is deconstructed. Given the dimension of women empowered within the culture, the traveller participates in not only discounting the myths of living next to wildlife but also the primitivist narratives that locate Maasai culture in stasis. Through locating Eddah as an astute businesswoman the narrative interrogates the misconception of Maasai women, and by extension other women, in travel writing. Nowhere in the description of Eddah does the narrator fall into the common trend in travel writing to sexualise and objectify natives. The narrator also makes note of a practice among the Maasai where "women are released from all domestic duties for a few months after giving birth. The women are allowed to take over the land and claim any lovers that they choose"(Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 15). The narrative takes time to pause over this and other issues concerning Masai culture. This tradition is an example of why the reductive narratives of lumping Masai culture as overly patriarchal are constructions for a particular purpose, one of which

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[16] See also Anne Mungai's *Saikati* (1992) which gives a different perspective on the Maasai.

[17] KANU (Kenya African National Union) is one of the earliest political parties in Kenya.

is the extension of exoticism.[18] The African travelogue in this instance emerges as a critical form involving authors/travellers as self-conscious artists that challenge received knowledges.

While this representation of the Maasai suggests a shift in the way travellees are observed, the narrator's repetitive gazing on 'the Nandi woman,' a portrait in his family home in Nakuru indicate how reaching such an objective gazing is a complicated exercise of learning and unlearning one's discursivity. The narrator gives an account of his interactions with the Nandi woman over a period of many years. The portrait is part of the commodities that circulate within tourist and travel spaces and finds its way in domestic or public spaces. The narrator's repeated engagements with the portrait are different moments of journeying through interpretation; journeys that develop his self-consciousness.[19] The narrator reminisces about his early encounter with the portrait, "I was terrified of her when I was a kid. Her eyes seemed so alive and the red bits growled at me menacingly. Her broad face announced an immobility that really scared me. I was struck there, fenced into a tribal reserve by her features: rings on her ankles and bells on her nose, she will make music wherever she goes" (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 11). At this point the portrait is an enigma beyond the narrator's comprehension.

This impression is transformed as time allows the gaze to be schooled in a specific discourse informing the narrator's young-adult period:

> In my teens, I was set alight by the poems of Senghor and Okot P'Bitek, and the Nandi woman became my Negritude. I pronounced her beautiful, marvelled at her cheekbones and mourned the lost wisdom in her eyes, but I still would have preferred to sleep with Pam Erwing or Iman. It was a source of terrible fear for me that I could never love her. (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 11)

At this level, the narrator is afraid of the Nandi woman but has *allowed* her to transform into a beauty of unimaginable level. The Nandi woman has now been placed on a pedestal. What is striking about this teenage encounter with the Nandi woman is the narrator's use of received notions of beauty to describe her. Referencing Senghor and Okot P'Bitek frames the Nandi woman within a Negritude gaze. The reference to Negritude worship suggests a fascination with the Nandi woman's outward beauty where her blackness is a symbolisation of a particular notion of Africanness.[20] In the same

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[18] See Dorothy L Hodgson's *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development* (2001) on elaboration on 'Maasainess.' Hodgson argues that to be Maasai meant to be a warrior or to be conservative. Such conceptions portray women as nonentities in the power structures and limit the identity of Masai to those informed by the narratives perpetuates by the colonialists as well as the discourses of tourism which intended to portray Masai as the ideal exotic (Hodgson 2, 11–12).

19 We could spend time to explore the relation between travel and objects that circulate in spaces of travel such as souvenirs, mementos and other 'pieces of culture'. In highlighting this important entity in the space of travel and the domestic pace, Wainaina locates mementos as distinct to the politics of representation; hence the discussion of the same.

20 Wainaina's conception of intention to pronounce the beauty of the Nandi woman recalls references to Senghor's poetry and its concentration on the body of the African woman. Such references can be seen in Senghor's poetry including

vein, Western media and popular culture is also seen as a site which informs the narrator's perception of beauty. The narrator is thus introspectively criticising his Negritudist and westernised consciousness for trying to box the Nandi woman into a narrow frame of black women's supposed beauty. This critique locates a distrust in the gaze disciplined by discourse. What it implies is that any notion of boxing the gaze within a discourse limits the possibilities within the representation. It always leaves something outside of the margins of what it offers.

In the present time of travel, the portrait is seen in different light:

> Today I don't need to bludgeon my brain with her beauty, it just sinks in, and I am floored by lust. I feel as if I have lost something. I look up at the picture again.
>
> *Then I see it.*
>
> Have I been such a bigot? Everything. The slight smile, the angle of her head and shoulders, the mild flirtation with the artist…. Mona Lisa: nothing says otherwise. The truth is that I never saw the smile. Her thick lips created such a war between my intellect and emotions, that I never noticed the smile. The artist is probably not African, not because of the obvious Mona Lisa business but also because for the first time, I realise that the woman's expression is odd. (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 12, emphasis in original)

What exactly allows the narrator to *see* the portrait? It seems as though the traveller through a self-critique of the workings of dominant discourse and its influence on the gaze has gained an awareness that enables him to see the interconnections between discourse and representation. The narrator is now aware of the cultures of representation within Eurocentric discourses and uses the same codes to read misrepresentation in the portrait of the Nandi woman. The portrait suggests the duality of the burden of representation which is informed by both the artist/traveller and the reader of the representation. Every representation is informed by the artist's conception of the real and his ideological consciousness, the reading process, the reader's plane of consciousness, and network of connections within competing or conforming discourses. The mishaps in seeing, hence mishaps in rendering, denote the constant misrepresentations of the continent in Eurocentric travelogues on Africa. Such mistakes can get transferred to the reader as truths when they encounter the representation and have no self-conscious awareness mentioned by Said and Holland and Huggan about themselves and their spaces.

In critiquing the portrait, the narrator quips, "[t]he artist has got the dignity right, but the sexuality is European – it would be difficult for an African artist to get that wrong. … The lips seem too wrong.

"Black Woman" and "I will Pronounce Your Name." In connection to Okot P'Bitek, the Negritudist attitude also is referenced, most specifically in *Song of Lawino* (1966) where Lawino, the persona describes the beauty of an African woman in terms that foreground the blackness of her skin. These intertexts signal a connection with Negritude ideologies about pride in Africanness.

There's awkwardness about them, as if a shift of aesthetics has taken place … the mouth strives too hard for symmetry, as if to apologise for its thickness (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 12). Wainaina here attempts to nuance the misrepresentation in the portrait as located within the poetics of its formation as an art form. In paying attention to the aesthetics of the lips, he identifies the site of exoticisation in this representation. The many false readings the narrator makes imply the writer's acknowledgment of the way discourse shapes representations as well as lenses through which we apprehend texts. Wainaina is able to reflect on his own shortfalls in seeing as defined by his ideological learning by accepting vulnerability in himself as traveller and viewer. Through this interpretive description, Wainaina suggests that it is the work of contemporary African artists to identify such lines of error within texts and other forms of representation and debunk them. This process of unlearning, however, is not simple, it's an ongoing process, partly derailed by the difficulty in identifying lines of error in representation practices. It involves centring the African in debates on African spaces, subjects and objects of being.

Throughout this examination Wainaina reflects on the need to redefine the gaze. Of course, selectivity in seeing begins the process but, as seen in his contemplation of the Nandi woman, the notion of dominance is still maintained. Wainaina suggests thinking about the gaze as removed from this privilege. This proposition is encountered in his framing of an instance of initial encounter with Narok, a reflection that also functions as the epigraph introducing this chapter:

> It is an interesting aspect of travelling to a new place that for the first moments, your eyes cannot concentrate on the particular. I am overwhelmed by the glare of dusk, by the shiver of wind on undulating acres of wheat and barley, by the vision of mile upon mile of space free from our wirings. So much is my focus derailed that when I return into myself I find, to my surprise, that my feet are not off the ground, that the landscape had grabbed me with such force it sucked up the awareness of myself for a moment.(Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 13)

Conventional travel writing commonly relays such initial encounters with landscape in terms that capture a sensuality ingrained in landscape, which then temporally displaces the traveller and enables him/her to assume a "primal sense of oneness with the landscape" (Smith 8).While writing the same sensuality through description, Wainaina allows the description to lead not to a oneness with place, but an understanding of shortcomings of the traveller's gaze. If we read the gaze of the traveller, in the sense suggested by Wainaina where there is a displacement from the presentness of what is seen, and an overwhelming inadequacy in the gaze to capture every angle of that which is seen, then how possible is it to accord dominance to this gaze? From this description, Wainaina proposes acceptance of the limits of the gaze to see the spaces of travel which inherently mean that the fallacy of dominance accrued by the gaze is dismantled. This restlessness of the gaze casts doubt on imperial gaze as

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uncontested. The practice of seeing then emerges as one that involves a negotiation of competing images and one can either get lost in the multitude of visual aesthetics, or, as most Eurocentric travellers do (as suggested by the narrative) select images that fit the narrative they wish to impose on the space.

I read Wainaina's identification of vulnerability in the gaze as a significant aspect that redefines representation and authority in travel writing. This idea of vulnerability locates the traveller as a viewer that is limited by the plane of the eye (which in this section I read as both literal and metaphoric to reference ideological consciousness), something that dismantles the illusion of the panopticon gaze within travel writing.. Travel writing borrows the idea of the panopticon from Foucault's analysis of control in the prison which in itself is borrowed from Jeremy Bentham's design of the prison. Foucault uses the notion of panopticon to explore cultures of surveillance. My use of the notion of the panopticon originates from Spurr's translation of the term in travel writing, where he insists, that the panopticon applies to any event where the observer occupies a position of power and dominance from which he affirms a political order that enables this position (16).

In conventional travel writing, the panopticon works because the imperial discourse is in control, dictating the way travellers approach the spaces and confining their gaze as one that is filtered through this dominant discourse. In this case, then, the visual exercise of gazing and its related terms, writing and speaking, are a means through which the longstanding dominant discourse is manifested and circulated. Within this logic, travel writing is a "system of visibility" through which the power of the dominant culture is manifested in a visually ordered representation (Islam 29). The gaze puts the traveller and writer at a privileged visual and ideological point from which everything is observed and classified. Any "interpretation of the scene [seen thus] reflects the circumspective force of the gaze, while suppressing the answering gaze of the other" (Spurr 16–17). Islam sums the panopticon in travel writing well when he notes that "[n]othing escapes the eye of power; it sees and records in the automatic mode while remaining invisible" (28). Within such a logic of travel, the traveller maintains a detached approach to the spaces of travel while totalizing through textuality, an impression of the other informed by dominant discourse.

Wainaina's proposed restless gaze is a counter to this god-like dominant gaze that is the mainstay in conventional travel writing. Islam defines such disruption of the panopticon as 'heterotopia,' again, a term drawn from Foucault. Islam argues that heterotopia is "the space that slips through the net of power" (30). I propose reading Wainaina's concept of vulnerability in the gaze as a fracturing of a boundary in the fallacy of dominance of the gaze. By foregrounding the vulnerability of the gaze, Wainaina allows for a contemplation of a gaze that is removed from the god-like position of dominance, a process that frays the power dynamics in place allowing for alternative orders of

representation and seeing to emerge. The gaze is no longer all-consuming and self-serving, rather, it becomes a gaze that looks away from the self. We have to read this notion of the gaze as 'looking away' in metaphoric terms. In this case, I suggest thinking of this gaze as looking outside of one's codes of logic, reaching out for other frames of reference and initiating a dialogic interactivity. To be vulnerable thus becomes a way of letting go of one's control; it involves approaching journeys as transactional rather than sites of dominance; dissolving previous power relations and contact zones.

One site where the vulnerable gaze applies in this travelogue is in Wainaina's engagement with River Road, in Nairobi. The narrator observes:

> In the afternoon, I take a walk down River Road, all the way to Nyamakima. This is the main artery of movement to and from the main bus ranks. It is ruled by *manambas* (*matatu* conductors), and their image is cynical – every laugh is a sneer, the city is a war or a game. It is a useful face to carry here where humanity invades all space you do not claim with conviction".(Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 10)

The road's significance is signalled by the narrator's observation of *Matatu* culture within the space.[21] The location of River Road as 'main artery' of movement positions it as an important space in Kenyan road transport network since it serves as a link between the city and other parts of the country as well as to neighbouring countries. River Road signals a form of continuity in travel from the metropolitan centre to the margins. This node is similar to Michael Stasik's understanding of the Neoplan station in Accra, Ghana. Stasik argues that bus stations act as gateway that links the rural and urban zones enabling an understanding of the urban space that shifts to incorporate the diversity this mix produces ("Contingent Constellations" 123). It also initiates a different category of travel from the typical controlled system of imperial or tourist forms of travel which are mostly organised around tour-guided routes and predefined sites of experience. This road network opens the public transport space as a viable site for understanding mobility practices in African urban spaces. In highlighting the public transport space, Wainaina invites us to rethink the place of this form of mobility in Africa within the functionality of the genre.

The description of River Road given implies a certain understanding of the street as a contact zone. The public transport space is overlaid with different levels of power relations. While conventional travel writing locates the traveller in a position of dominance over the spaces accessed, the public transport space, or the African street for that matter, demands a different approach altogether. In this space, as the narrator notes, dominance and control are not a given, but positions that are actively

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[21] *Matatus* refer to the public transport vehicles used to ferry commuters around different parts of the cities in Kenya. The *Matatu* is at the centre of a vibrant pop culture that was initiated around the 1950's as competition against the government owned Kenya Bus Service (KBS) vehicles. *Matatus* are privately owned and cheaper means of transport.

cultivated in the process of interactivity. In other words, power is not a given for the traveller, rather, it is negotiated through movement and encounter. This site enables us to observe Wainaina's vulnerable traveller at play. At the onset, it appears as though power is transferred from the traveller to the *Matatu men* by virtue of the control they seem to wield over the *Matatu* space. Mbugua wa Mungai in *Nairobi's Matatu Men: Portrait of a Subculture* (2013) argues that "the *matatu* man is highly conscious of the material instruments with which he might transform his marginal social subjectivity" in the urban space (wa Mungai 98). This awareness allows them to refashion themselves through bodily gestures and expression and shift power in the urban space. However, on closer scrutiny of the descriptive order provided, power emerges as a form harnessed not only by the *matatu* men but also the different parties that occupy the space in different moments.

The power dynamic is determined by each individual party's performance of 'streetness.' Within this space, it is not only the *matatu* men that recreate themselves, but every subject within the street. The reference to the city as a "war or a game," envisions this need for the road users to get into character (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 10). This reminds us of Ato Quayson's idea of the "performative dimension" of 'streetness'. To perform is to earn the right to the street. The performance of 'streetness' involves interactivity of subjects with other subjects and objects that occupy different positions of dominance and subjugation within the space. In the process of this active negotiation and re-negotiation, positions change as dominance and subjugation become fluid sites. Wainaina notes that the rural folk visiting the city have eyes that "dart about, consistently uncertain, unable to train themselves to a background of so much chaos" while those who have been in business long enough know this street and navigate it with a sense of knowledge in their "take-it-or-leave-it voices"; voices that reveal command while concealing the fragility of the ties and ownership of the space (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 10).

These different subject performances of streetness through a dynamic negotiation of positionality suggests an instability to the city. Within this framing, the traveller is an active participant who negotiates 'streetness' through his gaze; he is a vulnerable subject that is forced to transact acceptance through an active engagement with other subjects in the street. When seen within the idea of the traveller as a figure that is both a viewer and a vulnerable subject negotiating his ownership within the street reveal the street as demanding a street gaze. In this regard, I see the different subjects' performances as street gazing which enables the acquisition of ownership through active seeing that is aware of the power dynamics at play. Quayson observes that it is in the active negotiation of the street that its dimensions are configured and re-configured. In this regard, the contemporary African urban street cannot be contained in reductive geographical descriptions common in conventional travel writing, but need to be explored through the performativity aspect. In the descriptive order

offered by the vulnerable gaze, the interactivity and possibilities of River Road as a melting pot emerge to negate the monoglossic representations so common in Eurocentric travel writing about African spaces.

The subjects that traverse River Road form part of the urban landscape that is *matatu* culture. Navigating the city streets where *matatus* are located, is to participate in the performance of the *matatu* culture. In Wainaina's narrative, the choice to account for local subjects' experiences within the space of the *matatu* and River Road is a deviation from the imperial canon. In most imperial travelogues, natives were pushed to the peripheries or were not featured at all in the traveller's observations. In the event where they featured, they acted in the service of the imperial subjects who were the focus of the narratives. For instance, in Blixen's *Out of Africa*, the narrator places herself within the city of Nairobi (she lives in Karen). While referring to the natives around her farm, she locates them as either house workers (Esa, Kamante), farm workers or sick people in need of her medical expertise. This kind of framing intentionally leaves the city as a space that is only suited for the whites. Mahmood Mamdani explains this peripheralization of natives in imperial times when he notes that marginalisation of natives was part of the economy of imperialism's assertion of dominance and control over natives (*Citizen and Subject* 200). Natives were considered "temporary residents" in the city and in cases where it was deemed necessary to allow them accommodations, 'satellite villages' outside of the city" were created for this purpose (Kurtz 78). In locating out-of-placeness of natives within the urban space, dominant discourse in travel writing positioned the imperial subject as the superior subject in charge of the urban spaces. When Wainaina extensively depicts natives at ease in the city, he is archiving the changes within the urban spaces in regard to access and power.

Wainaina is not necessarily implying that the 'native' traveller has better understanding of the native space, rather he is suggesting a redefinition of how the gaze approximates the spaces travelled. In a sense, he is revising the linguistic capabilities of the gaze to speak to more than the surface layer of spaces. This arises once travellers open themselves to spaces travelled by accepting and owning their subjectivities and vulnerabilities. Seeing then emerges as a reciprocal act. Reciprocity that involves an active exchange or negotiation between traveller and travellee (Pratt 79–83). In Wainaina unlike in the imperial travellers that Pratt examines, reciprocity occurs when power is redistributed amongst constituent parties within River Road. Wainaina makes the gaze a vulnerable figure that is acted upon as it acts on the spaces of encounter. However, inasmuch as the narrative tone may propose this redistribution, the reality of travel writing is that the traveller's gaze still orders the vision of River Road for the reader. This leaves Wainaina in a contradictory spot: powerless as traveller, powerful as author. This is the ambivalence of the contemporary African travel writer who seeks to challenge the

imperialist gaze, but is implicated in the materiality of travelling his native space, a complicated affair as he is also implicated in the genre and discourses which he sets out to challenge.

The paradox of navigating native spaces with a view of challenging the norm is explored further in Wainaina's description of the landscape in Bufumbira, the narrator's final destination at the border of Uganda and Rwanda. This site is native to the subject by virtue of the familial ties and estranged to him through a distance initiated by his rootedness in Kenya. In his travel and narration of the place, we could argue that Wainaina is returning to a rooting that is native to him but strange. Compounded with his intention to position himself as vulnerable subject in a genre that contests the said vulnerability, Wainaina's description of Bufumbira emerges as one layered with different tensions of estrangement and belonging, vulnerability and dominance, and anxieties of selfhood. Wainaina writes:

> There is an alien quality to this space. … The mountains are incredibly steep and resemble inverted ice-cream cones. A hoe has tamed every inch of them.
> *It is incredibly green.*
> In Kenya, "green" is the ultimate accolade a person can give land: green is scarce, green is wealth, fertility.
> Bufumbira green is not a tropical green, no warm musk, like in Buganda. It is not the harsh green of the Kenyan savannah ….It is not the green of grand waste and grand bounty that my country knows. (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 22 emphasis in original)

The narrator makes a deliberate choice to see different shades of green. Wainaina's selective focus on the mountainous nature of Bufumbira suggest a contested richness in natural aesthetic of the landscape. Here, Wainaina can be claimed to mimic the promontory descriptive style that Pratt notes as common in 'the monarch-of-all-I-survey' sub-genre of travel writing. This sub-genre was renowned for its "verbal painting whose highest calling was to produce for the home audience peek moments at which geographical 'discoveries' were 'won' for England" (Pratt 197). Wainaina is not travelling for the sake of it or for discovery, thus this description carries an ironic twist.

The focalisation of the physical description lives up to Pratt's notion of the power of narrative to manufacture, naturalise, and bring order to space through the gaze's systemic formation of meaning, a fact that is invested with an assumption of power in the gaze. Wainaina chooses to impose the space with an aesthetic value that paints the image of beauty within the landscape itself and not within the gaze as defining centre. This description while fashioning Bufumbira for aesthetic value also locates diversity within the landscape. This situates Wainaina both within, and breaking out of the tradition of description in travel writing. On the one hand, his reference to the landscape as having "an alien quality," conforms to imperial rhetoric of representing othered spaces in terms that foreground

exoticism. This is enhanced by the implication of remoteness suggested by the adjectival accreditation of Bufumbira green with 'scarce,' 'fertile,' 'wealth,' and 'ice-cream.' Descriptions of Bufumbira green as unlike the greens of spaces traversed such as Kenyan savannah or Buganda green, attempt to demonstrate the fact that Bufumbira is a rarity. Tristan Todorov observes that "exoticists … cherish the remote because of its remoteness" (qtd. in Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic* 186). In defining Bufumbira green as a rare kind of green, Wainaina uses tropes that align with the imperial tradition of describing spaces as fantasies that have an out-of-this-world quality. On the other hand, by insisting on the specificity of Bufumbira green, he is breaking with the tradition of generalizing Africa as one generic green, lush and wild and instead creates a plane of diversity that caters for the many versions of green he encounters across East Africa.

Thus, I argue that in this description, the ironical twist enables Wainaina to invest in the narrative self-exoticism which while at face value may appear to propagate an agenda that panders towards the literary marketplace's need for exoticism, deviates from it. Wainaina through the mimicry echoing of imperial order of description that marginalises Africa, critiques the genre's longstanding obsession with exoticism and uses the same to subvert the representational poetic. Through what Huggan calls an 'ironic self-consciousness,' Wainaina employs strategic self-exoticism as a self-empowering strategy of taking back the landscape and packaging it in a manner that introduces diversity previously missing in travel writing about African spaces. As a subject already translated by the imperial power, the African traveller as postcolonial subject is, to borrow Tejaswini Niranjana's framing, a subject in a state of translation and thus in writing himself and his space, he is tasked with the duty of not tracing the original "but rather to intervene as a means of 'inscrib[ing] heterogeneity, warn[ing] against myths of purity and showing origins as always-already fissured'" (qtd. in Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic* 25). In other words, the task of the postcolonial African travel writer is to inscribe previously erased or silenced realities of spaces, subjects and places travelled. Wainaina does this through self-exoticism that injects a diversity in the greens of East Africa.

Wainaina's mimicry of the tradition of imperial travel writing does not always succeed in initiating a counter-discourse. In some instances, this mimicry suggests the obstinacy of the genre and its incapacities to shift from manufacturing otherness. One of the instances where Wainaina struggles to detangle from the tradition is in his representation of female subjects that he encounters through his travels. In such descriptions, Wainaina falls into the trap of repeating the Eurocentric undertones. He affirms his masculinity through "purposes, activities, behaviors, dispositions, perspectives and bodily movements displayed on the road" (Smith ix). Wainaina upholds this masculine tendency through his representation of the Baganda women. While travelling in Uganda, the narrator confesses, "I find Baganda women terribly sexy. They carry about them a look of knowledge, a proud and naked

sensuality, daring you to satisfy them.… Their features are strong; their skin is deep, gleaming copper and their eyes are large and oil-black" (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 21). He draws conclusions about their sexuality through strong adjectives that eroticises them.

It is ironical that while Wainaina claims to have finally seen the Nandi woman due to the development of his consciousness about matters regarding representation, he is not able to see the Baganda women. The narrator repeats the imperial rhetoric of sexualizing female subjects by offering a description that caricaturizes or exaggerates their features:

> Baganda women will traditionally wear a long loose Victorian-style dress. It fulfils every literal aspect the Victorians desired, but manages despite itself to suggest sex. …To emphasize their size, many women tie a band just below their buttocks (which are often padded).
> *What makes the difference is the walk.*
> Many women visualise their hips as an unnecessary evil, an irritating accessory that needs to be whittled down. … Baganda women see their hips as great ball bearings; rolling, supple things moving in lubricated circles – so they make excellent Dombolo. In those loose dresses, their hips brushing the sides of the dress as they move, they are a marvel to watch. [22] (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 21 emphasis in original)

This description of the Baganda women's bodies mirrors the imperialist visualisation of the space of the other. While Pratt defines how the gaze apportions meaning to spaces, she does not delve into detail of the conquest metaphor implied by the gaze in relation to bodily perception. Spurr notes that the body in imperial discourses was part of the landscape that invited conquest. He notes that the body was seen as a metaphor for labour, artistic reflection, ethical, scientific, humanitarian, and erotic value (Spurr 22). The multiple ways of reading the body imply possibilities for dialogic negotiation. This narrative's description of the bodies of the Baganda women suggests a conformation to the imperial rhetoric of masculine dominance and a transgressive agenda.

First, Wainaina echoes the imperialist trend of demarcation of quantitative and qualitative meaning of landscapes. Pratt explains that in imperial rhetoric, "[t]he site is seen as a painting and the description is ordered in terms of background, foreground, symmetries," then meaning is accorded to the site and judgement given (Pratt 200). Although Pratt is defining landscape, the same could be applied to Wainaina's reading of the Baganda women's bodies. The first step arises from the declaration of the sexiness of the Baganda women. The quantification develops from the step by step delineation of the different body parts and the aesthetic appeal which ends up foregrounding the women's hips. From the description given, we can conclude that the narrator's extensive description

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[22] *Dombolo* is a dance style originating from Congo but popular in East Africa due to the popularity of Rhumba and Zouk music. The dance entails the gyration and twerking of the hips.

of the Baganda women's bodies alludes to the imperialist code of eroticising the female body. Through this erotic apportioning of sensuality, the male gaze approaches the female body as not only a work of art, but also object of sexual desires of the male traveller.

In characteristic imperial form, Wainaina projects onto the women motives and intentions through his apportioning the sensuality on the women themselves, rather than on the traveller. He does this through the usage of the phrases, "women *looked* upon their hips" and "Baganda women *see* their hips" to precede his gaze's claims of sexual connotations. The narrator as male traveller wants the readers to assume that he is a witness to the women's self-gaze. This transference of intentions of the male traveller onto the female bodies described restores the dominating power of the traveller's gaze on the travellee. The traveller thus emerges as assuming a detached position from which he observes the other and imposes his gaze on the other as natural. This order of representation culminates in a continuity of the masculine convention of travel writing. In this case, the gaze as a dominating and colonizing eye assumes the power to bring to life the other, an act that entails speaking for and about the other. While this may be true, we can also notice a transgressive agenda once we consider the author as implicated in the narrative and beyond it. Wainaina's sexuality when juxtaposed with the narrative tone used in the sexualisation of female bodies, opens a different understanding of the description. While it is an attempt at staged exoticism, Wainaina's descriptive logic is not convincing enough, probably because this description is a masking of his internal contestations regarding his own sexuality.[23] In this case, I argue that since this travelogue follows the diary form, a personal and subjective form that allows the subject to grapple with the human condition, then, the staged eroticisation of the Baganda is the author's means of masking his sexuality within a playful manipulation of a masculine form.

This section has extensively dwelt on the problematic nature of the gaze. In contesting the power of the gaze, this section has demonstrated how the vulnerable gaze becomes a viable point of redefining poetics in travel writing. Through a theorization of the centrality of choices of what to see, Wainaina reimagines East Africa as a space that is complicated by both the histories of imperial traditions on the spaces and counter-discourse interventions embedded within the deliberate self-conscious travelling of the contemporary African writer. Humour embedded within the narrative enables Wainaina to critique the imperial tradition of the genre in a light manner conversant with the diary form. However, as this examination has revealed, the imperial rhetoric sometimes overshadows the 'writing back' agenda. Thus, confirming Holland and Huggan's intimation that counter-discourse

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[23] At the time of publication of this narrative, Wainaina had not yet come out as gay. He publicised his sexual orientation through the publication of his lost chapter of his memoir, *One Day I will Write about this Place*, "I am a Homosexual, Mum." This chapter was published in 2013.

narratives are implicated by the traditions they set out to deconstruct. What we realise in Wainaina's writing back is that, writing against a tradition is still in some ways complicated by the imperialist tradition. The traveller is thus imagined as subject trapped in dominant ways of seeing however much he tries to de-tangle from them. Nevertheless, this discussion has introduced a significant aspect into travel writing, that of the gaze as vulnerable. The investment of the genre with a vulnerable gaze transforms it into a form that is open to the unstable nature of power and by extension the genre's conception of the contact zone. Wainaina's narrative is however, largely structured around a mimicking of the conventional travel writing which situates the gaze as a dominant aspect. Since, the rest of the texts in this chapter mimic the traditions of the genre, this aspect may not be visible in them. Granted, this view of the vulnerable gaze will be explored further in chapter four.

Parody as Strategy for Counter-Discourse in Sihle Khumalo's Travelogues

The previous section concentrated on the way the gaze of the traveller is reimagined in contemporary African travel writing. In this section, I shift focus to explore the way parody enables contemporary African travel writing to extend the limits of the genre through a paralleling of an alternative way of travelling with the conventional form. In this section, I examine the extent to which Sihle Khumalo's parody of conventional travel writing critiques the genre and offers a counter-discourse. Khumalo is a South African travel writer, whose journeys across the continent have resulted in four non-fiction travelogues: *Dark Continent My Black Arse* (2007) focussing on his travel from Cape to Cairo, *Heart of Africa: Centre of My Gravity* (2009) which explores Khumalo's journey through Central Africa, *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu* (2013) accounting for his journey across French West Africa, and *Rainbow Nation My Zulu Arse* (2018) which concentrates on his journeys within South Africa.[24]

I focus on Khumalo's *Dark Continent* and *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu* for two distinct reasons. First, Khumalo's first journey allows for an encounter with his initial writing while Almost Sleeping *My Way to Timbuktu* gives perhaps a more matured version of the writer. Having undertaken two journeys on public transport, it is possible that Khumalo, at the point of undertaking the third journey, has a different understanding of travelling Africa and is more experienced in writing. Secondly, *Dark Continent*, *Heart of Africa: Centre of My Gravity*, and *Rainbow Nation my Zulu Arse* focus on journeys across nations that are mostly anglophone. *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu* offers a different terrain (West Africa) as well as a different historical background, Francophone Africa, bringing a different dynamic of experience and history that is enriching in the interrogation of Khumalo's 'writing back' poetics.

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[24] In subsequent mentions *Dark Continent My Black Arse* is abbreviated to *Dark Continent*.

Like Wainaina, Khumalo's travelogues offer much needed intervention regarding representation of Africa within the dominant discourses surrounding travel writing. Khumalo too is a self-conscious traveller, as his texts directly critique the imperial tradition within the genre. While Wainaina in the previous section was seen to directly critique the genre through a focalization on the gaze, Khumalo utilises parody to engage with the dominant discourse about Africa within the genre. Parody in this case, involves playful intertextual relations of mimicry between Khumalo's texts and previous texts, traditions, practices, and styles of writing framing the canon of imperial travel writing. Gérard Genette argues for a functional classification of parody as a form of imitation that involves an element of transformation (27). While Genette provides a methodology for exploring textual forms of parody, Sam Dentith extends this identification beyond the text into the everyday notion of discourse, when he categorizes parody into specific (writing back to a text) and general (reference to a genre, style, tradition, culture). This distinction locates parody as both a textual and extra textual practice emerging from the socio-historic realities of everyday interactions and the ideological practices embedded (Dentith 14). In arguing for Khumalo's narratives to be read as parodies, I consider parody as the "playful distortion of a text [tradition, genre, register] by minimal transformation" (Genette 25). I argue that through parodying the genre, Khumalo not only writes back to the canon and its Eurocentric imagination of Africa but also to publics within the continent that have been, and are, continually imparted with these imperial discourses.

Narrative participates in the process of world-making. For travel writing, part of this world-making is the ability of narrative to draw from "citation of antecedent authority" (Said 176). In imperial travel writing, what ensures the believability of the impression of other, is the prioritization of discourse over events, establishing a hierarchy that takes the individual narrative to be in service of the greater system of thought about the other. When a narrative sets itself up as working towards a counter-discourse, as Khumalo's texts do, then it is important to explore the way in which the narrative disrupts the established dominant discourse. Khumalo disrupts the citational logic of travel writing through intentionally feeding off its authority of quotation. As a consequence, Khumalo dialogically situates his works as dismantling the idea of a dominant discourse naturalised through narrative.

Dark Continent is structured in a partitioned form where the narrative locates historical discourse, subject narration, and reflective commentary as separate registers framed as 'father of nation', first person account, and postscript respectively. The 'father of nation' segment provides the post-independent political histories of the nations traversed thus acting as contextual foreword for the actual accounts of travel which follow. The postscripts offer a humorous post-journey reflection on

the trips undertaken.[25] The three sections within the travelogue deploy different registers, each with different discursive tonalities which bestow internal multivocality. These registers suggest an internal dialogism within the travelling subject as they inform different perspectives (before, during and after journey) merged together in narrative. From this formulation, it is impossible to think of Khumalo's narrative as one carrying a unitary cohered meaning. Rather, the three sections emerge as different ways of thinking about and making meaning of places.

Although *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu* follows a different structural pattern, its multivocality is evident in the internal blend of historical discourse with commentary and narrative subjectivity. For instance, while narrating events on his journey through Burkina Faso, the narrator delves into the political leadership of the country via Thomas Sankara's contributions towards self-rule, before shifting back to the personal narration of his accounts of the journey (Khumalo, *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu* 180–81). Such intermingling of different registers invests in the narrative an internal dialogism; a double-voicedness where different discourses are comingling, creating and re-creating instability and plurality in the travel narrative. The consequence of this is a redefinition of travel writing as invested with heteroglossia rather than monoglossia commonly associated with the genre. Khumalo thus implies a historical depth to the spaces represented in the travelogue, something which is notably absent in conventional travel writing. Most travel writing on Africa position the continent as site for the imperial traveller to impose their narrative on. Notwithstanding, in cases where historical contextualisation is given, it is normally selective, minimal, and often steeped in prejudice and stereotype.[26] The incorporation of historical backgrounding offers a necessary missing link that locates the narrators as approaching spaces that already have a character of their own.

Khumalo's parody on Eurocentric heritage of travel writing can be traced right from the narrative titles that he uses. The phrase, 'dark continent' in the title *Dark Continent My Black Arse* is a direct reference to the stereotype underlying the persistent recycling of the phrase in imperial travelogues and the Africanist discourse which fixes a particular meaning to the phrase in in travel writing. Miller notes that, from Ptolemy's mapping of Africa as terra incognita to subsequent attempts to occupy the

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[25] Khumalo tells us in the beginning of his journey that his desire to see the present state of Africa inspired the 'father of the nation' segments preceding each chapter. This serves as contextualisation that is then interrogated in the subsequent personal subjective narration of the specified nations. In the 'father of the nation' segments in Zambia and Tanzania, Khumalo draws the relations between South Africa and these nations, regarding the anti-apartheid movement. These restorative histories of how other African nations helped South Africa are important as they demonstrate the connection that South Africa has had with the rest of the continent. They also emphasise his primary readership as South African publics.

[26] See Devla Murphy's *The Ukimwi Road* (1993) which qualifies as an example of contemporary imperial travel on Africa. The narrative makes concerted efforts to establish historical realities of the nations traversed. For instance, in Kenya, the narrative traces the oppressive nature of the Moi regime. Most of the historical information captured locates Kenya as a failed state. The one-mindedness of the narrative to focus on the spread of Aids within Eastern Africa all the way to Southern Africa also situates the narrative as part of the discursive system aimed to paint the continent in negative terms. See also Linton's *In the Shadow of the Congo* among others.

continent, 'dark' was used to symbolise a sense of unknowability (6–39). Within this discourse, language was used to name and bring forth to life that which was named. This is what Said observes as the collapsing of the referent/sign distance making the metaphor the real (54-55). In imperial discourses and in particular imperial texts, 'dark continent' traced Africa as primitive, uncivilised and Europe's antithesis. Noah R Bassil finds the popularity of this phrase within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries travel writing with texts such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* cementing the rhetoric of primitivity and savagery within the conception of Africa as 'dark continent' (377-379). Later texts that followed in the tradition such as Linton's *In the Shadow of the Congo*, extended the impenetrable metaphor which signified a sense of void marking the erasure or silencing of histories and knowledges from Africa while locating the white man as the benevolent power shining light on the continent (Brantlinger 176).[27] Darkness came to represent disappearance or loss while light or whiteness represented language or power to speak hence the equation of the White man's work as 'writing on the void' (Miller 84–85).

Bakhtin reminds us of this use of language where words are charged ideologically to convey specific meanings and perspectives regarding things, places and subjects (*The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* 276). This is how discourse works, through permeating things with a specific knowingness. When Khumalo harnesses the phrase, it is already populated with "socio-ideological consciousness" of the imperial discourses and socialisation and other forms of baggage (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* 276). The phrase already reflects an order of bringing reality into being within the imperial discourse (Pratt 25–30). Khumalo's invocation of the phrase in his title and within the narrative is a way of taking up another's discourse for one's own purpose (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 189). He is aware of the baggage the phrase carries due to its functionality within imperial and neo-imperial discourse. He thus "populates it with his own intention [and] accent" when he invests into the phrase a parodic transformation (Morris 77). The parody utilises humour and allows the phrase to turn on itself invoking an alternative vision in it for the counter-discourse purpose. In this regard, Khumalo's parody of the phrase is in a sense a "decrowning double" (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* 127). This does not necessarily mean that the intentions already populated in the word are erased. Rather, the parodic attitude initiated by the ironic twist of presenting a black gaze signalled by 'my black arse' as a parallel for 'dark continent,' enables the phrase to be inscribed with a black hero. Within the imperial context, 'dark continent' carried negative connotations which suggested the dominance of the white figure over the other. In Khumalo's

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[27] See also Miller's extensive expose on the textual footprints of the term in *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French*.(1985) Miller argues that the consistent repetition of the label in literary works and its metaphoric implication ensured the concretization of the myth into a reality that contemporary travel writers and different media invoke when talking about Africa.

deconstructive intention, the phrase becomes an avenue through which the subject previously muted in canonised works, gains a voice with which to challenge imposed otherness. The black man becomes the new hero of the travelogue. In this regard, there is dialogism in the title with the imperial discourse and counter-discourse counter-valuing each other. This dialogism manifests in the rest of the narrative.

While *Dark Continent* offers an overt dialogic interplay with the imperial tradition of the genre, *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu* takes the form of allusive parody in the title. This is a subtle but still effective parody of imperial travel where the travelling subject does not see the other although he traverses the space of the other, what Islam calls sedentary travel. The word 'sleeping' makes a mockery of the imperial tradition of travel where although subjects traverse large distances, they do not get outside their boundaries of seeing. Khumalo in this title hints at the trend of travellers to sleep their way through the space of the other and offer fictionalised representation to stand in place of the real. This practice resulted in the invention of pretentions of encountering Africa when in reality imperial travellers simply offer repetition of stereotypes passed down from other travellers who, as Said notes, visit the other to confirm the self. Imperial travel involves, "translating the other in terms of [Western] consciousness and need [which ensures] the other remains absolutely unknowable yet situated in a concrete face-to-face proximity" with the western traveller, his obligations to the other and his subjectivity (Islam 93).

Throughout both narratives, Khumalo references himself as a black man travelling the continent. In addition, he is repeatedly located within a collective, 'darkies.' In his constant reference to 'darkies,' Khumalo anticipates a black South African audience in addition to the other audiences his texts address (imperial publics, South Africans of other races, as well as Africans from the rest of the continent). For each of these publics, there are specific signifiers for their incorporation ranging from general discursivity concerning what travel is to the specific collective signalled by 'we darkies'. Part of this constant reiteration of the collective 'darkies' is a signification that was introduced in the title *Dark Continent My Black Arse*. In reiterating his blackness, the narrator is foregrounding his identity as a black man traversing the continent. Through this foregrounding Khumalo mocks the tradition of privileging the "lettered, male, European" traveller as the ultimate traveller and holder of knowledge on the other (Pratt 31; Kaplan 50). Khumalo thus sets himself as the antithesis to this figure; one that offers an expansion of the genre to include the black hero. By forcefully taking this subject position and investing it with blackness, Khumalo is reimagining the limits of the genre both aesthetically (by investing a black hero) and politically and challenging the racial dominance of the white travelling subject and discourses affirming it.

One concept he challenges is the power to define. This deliberate investment of the travelling subject as a black gaze flips the notion of the black man as dweller or spoken for figure (Pratt; Loingsigh 172), to that of a powerful speaking and seeing black gaze. This narrative focalisation while mimicking the white traveller's tone and gaze, through subversion of the racial expectation in travel invites a conceptualisation of the black hero as a travelling subject. The narratives identification of the narrator as a black South African traversing the continent also complicates the reading of the historical contextualisation offered in the structural multivocality of both narratives. A reading of the historical context devoid the positionality of the narrator erases a major relationality between South Africa and the rest of the continent, something that is central to the framing of the narrative. The author's South African background of apartheid and its racial educational policy on Blacks through the Bantu education system inform his dis-ease with the baggage of received discourse about blackness and Africa. The apartheid policy on education for blacks ensured limited consciousness among the black South African community regarding the rest of the continent.[28] Hence Khumalo's indication that before his journeys across Africa, he believed that "anything north of Limpopo [was] dark and dangerous" (Stupart, "An Interview with Sihle Khumalo"). Emerging from such an oppressive background, Khumalo's 'writing back' is both an assertion of his agency as a black man but also an activist move to reclaim South Africa's historical erasure of the rest of the continent. Therefore, his inflection of both narratives with historical contextualisation is a deliberate and self-conscious signalling of the historical relations and experience of black South Africa with the rest of the continent. In this vein, the historical contextualisation that both texts offer when read in light of the positionality taken by the narrating figure, serve as a tribute to the transnational relations of solidarity between South Africa and the rest of the continent.

To see the narrator as a black hero is to imagine a space for black travel writing within the canon. What then, is the significance of the black man as traveller? The narrator as traveller reveals convergences with imperial travel as well as points of difference, which work as points of expansion of the limits of the genre. Khumalo's narratives nuance these convergences and divergences within the narrator positioning of himself in the space of travel and his relation to the canonical practice. Part of these divergences emerge from socialisation regarding travel. In *Dark Continent* he remarks, "most people did not understand how I could leave a good job in such a good company with such good colleagues to 'do something so stupid and dangerous'" (Khumalo, *Dark Continent My Black Arse* 11). In this instance, Khumalo brings into the narrative a particular understanding of travel

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[28] See Francis Wilson's article, "Historical Roots of Inequality in South Africa" where he points out that the Bantu education policy was meant to "mould people for the bottom rungs of a racist political economic structure"(9) thus the education system was meant to cement the imperialist nature of the hierarchy of man. Bekisizwe S Ndimande concurs in his explorative study of the Bantu Education where he points out that the system was meant to churn out submissive and malleable subjects unaware of the knowledge about other independent African states (Ndimande).

within the black community. From the narrator's background, travel was for the reckless. Travel as already mentioned has since the late 19th century been reduced to an activity for the tourists or financially stable. For a black man emerging from a disenfranchised background of apartheid to claim to want to travel, it was seen as a reckless and selfish undertaking. Within a black South African perspective, it did not factor anywhere as the black man after apartheid was in a place where he was expected to carry the weight of the community. Leaving one's job to travel was unrealistic, since travel was seen as a leisurely activity. If travel was taken as an activity done for leisure, the black man in South African had a long way to go before embarking on pleasure for the sake of itself.

The narrator in *Dark Continent* positions black cultures of travel as being in resistance to White cultures of travel. In one instance, the narrator is quick to note that, "I saw a Western Cape-registered vehicle with the number CCK 6173 parked outside the customs office. It bore the South African flag and Mbeki's and Mandela's faces on the sides of the vehicle. Without seeing the occupants, I knew they were white because we darkies, besides being obsessed with soccer and guzzling large volumes of alcohol, do not travel" (Khumalo, *Dark Continent* 161). The narrator is demarcating what he sees as white and black travel, forms that appear as distinct from each other, each with specific ideological underpinnings. From this representation, Khumalo suggests that Whites travel within the touristic mode where they use private transport and perform their tourism. Khumalo is also satirically making a mockery of the way the canon conceived of blacks as non-travellers through imposition of stereotypes that either erase or silence forms of travel that are common amongst black folk. He makes allusions to the common mythography in travel writing of black people being considered travellees while whites are travellers.

The reference to blacks as obsessed with alcohol is also teased out in travel narratives which use inebriation to qualify blacks as lesser beings. In fact, Spurr notes that imbibing in imperial travel was equated to incoherence of thought hence a qualification of superiority of whites. In referencing this stereotype, Khumalo mocks the canon's prejudice which was used to ground superiority of the white man while suggesting the view of blacks being inferior. The same prejudice was responsible for erasing and silencing major forms of black travel.

The persistence of this ideology of black people as non-travellers is revisited in a discussion the narrator has with black people on board a cruise along the Zambezi (Khumalo, *Dark Continent* 43). When Khumalo tells his fellow travellers that he is headed to Cairo, they do not believe him. Through recalling this reaction, Khumalo suggests a certain complicity amongst black folk to sustain stereotypes. Foreign travellers to Africa are also seen as partly responsible for the spread of this stereotype. The narrator's encounter with an Australian traveller he meets in Cairo, who does not believe it possible that a black man can manage to travel from Cape Town to Cairo confirms this

notion (Khumalo, *Dark Continent* 201). The fact that this incident occurs when the narrator is about to complete his journey suggests the ingrained reality of travel as a 'white man affair' and its persistent erasure of the efforts of black travellers.

In the history of travel writing, foreign explorers always made use of local informants who were also travellers, but their role in travel was downplayed through the language that the discourse employed (Clifford, *Routes* 19). In this case, although Khumalo is not an informant but an independent traveller, the rhetoric of black non-travel within the canon as ascribed to by the Australian traveller and the black people the narrator encounters who do not believe that a black man can travel, works to subdue the black traveller even in the contemporary space. Be that as it may, Khumalo's repetitive reference to blacks as non-travellers in both texts is a mimicry of the canon. This mimicry becomes humorous if we pay attention to the fact that while reiterating it, Khumalo is actually travelling the continent. Parody, as we have already mentioned, works by mimicking a previous text, ideology, or style in order to invent a new text (Genette 27). Through reiteration and revision, Khumalo is participating in an active rewriting of black travel within his narratives. Through the repetitive mention of blacks as non-travellers, Khumalo not only highlights the prevalence of this view within the consciousness of black people, but also locates this ideology within the imperial legacy of the genre. By extension, his active process of travel is seen as an inscription of Black African travel as a significant sub-genre of travel writing.

These narratives inscribe black African travel as a form that may follow in the footsteps of imperial travel as Khumalo does, but is still inflected with a black gaze and black forms of travel. The narrator uses public transport in both the Cape to Cairo and the West African journeys. This form of transport is considered functional and not for purposes of leisure, thus conflated as non-travel in the canon. The centralisation of leisure in travel contradicts the imperial origins of the genre. Certainly, we could locate the explorers' journeys and the narrative manufacturing of otherness as aspects of travel as work. If we conceive of imperial journeys as meant for specific purpose of rationalising imperial dominance, it is impossible to then assume travel as an entity for leisure. Unless this view is drawn from tourist discourses on the subject. The narratives' engagement with travel and on public transport demonstrates the fact that a whole history and economy of travel exists outside of the canon. But because this movement is largely functional and not for leisure, it goes unacknowledged and hardly becomes subject of narrative. In fact, many African travellers do not follow up their journeys with textual accounts and writing is what separates them from the practice. When Khumalo undertakes travel from Cape to Cairo on minimum funds and no commission, he is indeed discomfiting the assumptions of the canon.

It is very interesting to note that both texts sets out to disrupt the imperial notion of travelling but still Khumalo situates himself as following in the footsteps of imperial travel writing. For instance, within the title *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu*, the invocation of Timbuktu draws a parallel between Khumalo's narrative and Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior of Africa* (1799). Both texts indicate a desire to travel to Timbuktu and in both cases, there is failure initiated by different factors. Timbuktu signifies a world of civilisation that the Eurocentric travel writing closed itself off to in their travel accounts of the continent. Timbuktu is one of the sites of Africa's earliest known civilisation and scholarship. Roderick J McIntosh dates this civilisation in Timbuktu and 'sister cities' around it to the first millennium BC, a period earlier than the imperial mission. The introduction of Islam by the Arabs around the fifteenth century catapulted Timbuktu into becoming a centre for scholarly excellence and trade. This emerged as one of the sights that the early explorers to Africa claimed interest in.[29] The many attempts by European travellers such as Mungo Park to travel to this civilisation were ironically thwarted by deaths due to malaria, hence the reference to the region as the white man's grave.[30] The constant reference to Timbuktu as impenetrable in narratives by Mungo Park and other imperial travellers added onto the growing discourse on 'dark continent.'

In the contemporary period, Islamist extremism and terrorism perpetuate an alternative narrative which extends the notion of inaccessibility. Situated in northern Mali, Timbuktu lies within an area of Mali currently under Islamist control.[31] The spillage of Islamist extremism from Algeria into Mali further complicated accessibility by enhancing the resilience of terrorism (Cohen).[32] This take-over of northern Mali today has resulted in the proliferation of drug trafficking, kidnappings and other illicit activities which in turn make the space a breeding ground for terrorism and impractical for tourism and travel. Khumalo's journey to Timbuktu is halted when Amadou, the narrator's guide's guide in Djenné says, "Tourists no longer come to Djenné; and no tourists at all go to Timbuktu since it is said that al Qaeda is catching tourists" (Khumalo, *My Way to Timbuktu* 137). Timbuktu is signalled as precarious, although in the current dispensation this precarity is located within terrorism. As a consequence, mobility is curtailed. The mention of the terrorist problem highlights neo-

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[29] Early accounts within travel writing considered Timbuktu an example of early civilisation. From Ibn Battuta's writings on Timbuktu civilisation in the 14th century, Leo Africanus within the 15th century (Khair et al. 131, 291) to Mungo Park and the modern writings, textual imprints magnified the view that a different kind of civilisation existed beyond Europe and it also fuelled the Western hunger for first-hand knowledge about Timbuktu.

[30] See Mungo Park's *Travels into the Interior of Africa* which extensively notes the prevalence of travellers to this region falling to tropical diseases. This and other texts initiated the discourse of seeing West Africa as the White man's grave.

[31] The post-independence Mali governments have also persistently alienated northern Mali economically translating into the constant outbreaks of violence in the north. The Tuaregs who live in northern Mali are claimed to be responsible for the constant violence. Through Tuareg rebellion and a group called Ansar Dine, they controlled northern Mali in the 80's and 90's.

[32] The Islamist extremism in Mali formed Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), which morphed into the Republic of Azawad after joining forces with Ansar Dine in the 2000s (Cilliers; Cohen).

imperialism as perpetuating discourses of impenetrability. The al Qaeda invasion of northern Mali hinted by Amadou in the narrative demonstrates the effect of interconnected network of terrorism across what could perhaps be referred to as the contemporary triangulated power play.[33]

Terrorism in the contemporary world is invented and circulated through metaphors that paint some heroes and others villains (Lakoff 25, 32).[34] It is interesting to see how different tactics of control perpetuate a narrative of impenetrability. For the imperial tradition, the notion of disease and precarity signal inaccessibility while for the contemporary period it is terrorism that propagate the same. In referencing Timbuktu as inaccessible due to the terrorism economy, Khumalo feeds into the global narrative on terrorism which identifies certain spaces as a threat to peace.[35] While not necessarily supporting the neo-imperialist narrative, Khumalo's mention and relation of the space with terrorism indicates the impossibility of counter-discourse to exorcise itself fully from the imperialist discourses at the centre of the genre's operation when certain realities of the postcolonial crises of nationhood permeate and inflect spaces in deliberate ways.

Khumalo's itinerary mimics the routes taken by earlier imperial and post-imperial western travellers to Africa. Khumalo parallels his journeys with those taken by imperial male travel writers like Peter Moore and Paul Theroux and Mungo Park. In fact in both journeys, he sees himself as succeeding where other imperial travellers do not. In the Cape to Cairo journey he places himself in opposition to Cecil Rhodes' dream of building a Cape to Cairo railway and observes that at least he manages to fulfil something Rhodes did not. On the other hand, in the West African journey, although he fails to reach Timbuktu. Khumalo deviates from these imperial predecessors through the way he positions himself in his journeys. For Khumalo, parodying the itineraries of imperial and neo-imperial travellers is an intentional which allows him to bring to light their representations in order to dismantle them.

So far, Khumalo's parodying of the imperial tradition in travel writing seems to intentionally suggest alternative ways of thinking about travel through a uniquely black African lens and ideology of travel. However, Khumalo's parody does run the risk to fall into the same binaries he challenges. For instance, when the narrator in *Dark Continent* categorizes travels as either white or black and

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[33] Terrorism is emerging in Africa as influenced by global political and economic forces (Giroux and Forest 10).

[34] The bottom line of such political machination is both the cementing of particular nations as super powers (see the US) and the imposition of one's power over others through cost-benefit analysis if terrorism. The reality of the US instigating wars through funding terrorist groups and invention of propaganda so as to exploit resources in such regions and initiate regime changes hint at a contemporary form of imperialism.

[35] See James J F Forest and Jeniffer Giroux's "Terrorism and Political Violence in Africa Contemporary Trends in a Shifting Terrain" where they discuss how terrorism is flagged off as a threat of violence used to gain political mileage and intimidation. They also explore how terrorism within the African context is informed by global geopolitical and economic forces. See also Caitriona Dowd and Clionadh Raleigh's "The Myth of Global Islamic Terrorism and Local Conflict in Mali and the Sahel where they explore how narratives of terrorism are invented for purposes of economic gain or political dominance.

concludes that white travellers have the financial capacity to travel while blacks do not, he is inherently becoming tangled within the same colonial discourse he set out to discount. He explains this pitfall in *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu* when he introspectively confesses, "[y]es, I am a child of apartheid: before I know what I'm doing, I'm trying to fit people into a race box. As a South African you don't realise how the system has messed you up until you travel outside the country" (Khumalo, *My Way to Timbuktu* 155). Black dispossession and the racial inflection of apartheid South Africa does inform how he sees spaces. However, it also leads him towards generalizations on the assumption of race which in turn prevents him from seeing the diversity prevalent within material practices of traveling the continent. It also suggests an acceptance of racial chauvinism supported by the world economic distribution of currency for mobility. Khumalo's conflation of black and white travel as two distinct points and styles of journeying falls into the genre's imperial rhetoric of binaries. While it is easy to conclude that this kind of generalized categorization runs the risk of undoing the critical disruption that the narratives have achieved, I argue that it demonstrates the ambivalent nature of parody where in the process of mimicking the other's discourse, the narrative ends up producing that discourse.

Khumalo's mimicry of the imperial tradition of travelling extends to the way he occupies space in both texts. In *Dark Continent* the narrator uses an anecdote of Colonel Ewart S Grogan to position himself as traveller. Khumalo writes , "It is said that when Colonel Ewart S Grogan wanted to marry the woman of his dreams, the father of the bride-to-be thought Grogan was not man enough. 'Will travelling from Cape to Cairo make me man enough to marry your daughter?'" (9). This anecdote concretizes the stereotype of Africa as impenetrable, and insinuates travel as a masculine venture. In this framing, Khumalo suggests that travel is a test of one's virility and masculine strength. In this case, Khumalo's quotation of Colonel Grogan is a nod to the tradition within the genre of framing travel as a masculine endeavour. This view is extended to the way the narrator's gaze approaches subjects in the space of travel, especially the gaze's encounter with female subjects. While quad biking in Namibia he notes:

> Along with a German couple, I was picked up from the adventure company's offices and driven to the launch site about a kilometre outside the town. … the German woman was struggling to keep pace with the three of us. Now and then we would stop and wait for her. I could see that her husband was not impressed. The entire trip basically consisted of driving up and down the dunes. I discovered that the dunes were getting bigger and more thrilling (read 'dangerous' if you're a woman). (Khumalo, *Dark Continent* 31)

This description positions the German woman as an anomaly in this space. This is outlined in the way the narrator sees her failure to keep up with the pace of her male counterparts. This failure implies a

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failure of women to live up to the masculine strength required within practices of travel such as quad biking. Khumalo, like Wainaina, expertly projects this displeasure away from his gaze. He imposes displeasure on the woman's husband (a white traveller himself), a transference that positions the imperial form as a problematic one. I read this transference as Khumalo's attempt to mask his masculine chauvinism within a conventional traveller, a white man.

While this transfer emerges as an instance of reiteration of masculinisation within the traditional imperial traveller, the narrator's sarcasm in the parenthetical annotation how a woman ought to read this scene puts Khumalo squarely within the tradition he set out to oppose. The narrator's humorous tone emerges as a playful critique, but it also signals a collapse in the parodic intent. In this case, I read the implied assumption of female subjects being outside of the knowledge shared (hinted by the parenthetical addition that reads like a footnote) as a complicity with the masculine nature of the form which excludes the female body from the space of travel.

Khumalo also exoticizes female subjects encountered in his trips. The postscripts at the end of every chapter are focussed on one or other remark about the women he meets in each of the countries he tours. Each of the remarks though given in jest, still carry undertones of exoticisation. In the chapter on his tours in Namibia, Khumalo writes, "to the woman I met on Swakopmund's beachfront: for just one day, I regretted having thrown away your phone number" (Khumalo, *Dark Continent* 38). This postscript makes reference to an earlier incident where the narrator meets the white woman at the beach. Khumalo describes his meeting of the woman:

> As she bent down to put on her shoes I naturally had to check her backside. To say I was disappointed is an understatement. In a flash I knew that my diagnosis that she had been disappointed by her man was right. This realisation came from the fact that she was wearing full panties. It was a real turn-off. At her age, she should have been wearing a G-string. I decided that I was not going to call her later. (Khumalo, *Dark Continent* 34)

While the postscript has an underlying playfulness to it, in this description the narrator approaches the woman from a dominant position which connotes control over the woman. The dominance is defined by the power the traveller possesses to define the woman in erotic terms. In describing her thus, his gaze imposes an order that justifies his underlying dislike. This description follows the exoticist trope "of a sexually available stranger" (Smith 8). It involves the traveller's gaze mapping the other in sensual terms and showing his control by overcoming the desires. For Khumalo, derision acts as his way of showing his dominance over his carnal desires, something that manifested in imperial travel writing.

This is a replication of the imperial practice of European travellers' vantage gaze on African bodies (Spurr 22); however, what is interesting about Khumalo's representation of female subjects, is the

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inverted pattern of travel (Ni Loingsigh 172). Loingsigh defines this form of travel as one where Africans views of other people is manifested. Most of the eroticised bodies are of white women. This seems like an intentional reversal of roles as the former object of the European gaze (the black body) has become the subject with the authority of the gaze while the tourist/ the 'ideal traveller (white body) has become the object of an alternative gaze. In the same fashion of imperial gazing observed in Wainaina's representation of Baganda women, Khumalo "proceeds systematically from part to part, quantifying and spatializing, noting colour and texture, and finally passing judgement which stresses the body's role as object to be viewed" (Spurr 23). The narrator's conclusion that he was not going to call the woman is based on the judgement he has made on her body as object of desire which has through rejection turned into an object of revulsion. Since Khumalo traces this revulsion within the touristic body, the narrative is turning the notion of imperial travel gaze on itself.

Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu follows another strategy in imperial travel writing of erasing or peripheralizing female bodies. The narrative has a dearth of female characters. The few that are mentioned are accorded an essentialism that reduces them to types. For instance, in the Senegal stretch of the narrative, all female characters are flattened into the *boubous* look.[36] They are only referred to in the general sense which in itself ends up supporting Wainaina's argument of Eurocentric travel writing necessarily making Africans appear as peripheral entities (Wainaina, "How to Write about Africa"). In Mali, there is a total blackout of female character apart from the foreign tourist from the US that he meets in a hostel. The narrator even goes to the extent of objectifying this lone female character when he is fascinated by her toe and nothing else (Khumalo, *My Way to Timbuktu* 109). In this instance, rather than using the typical sweeping gaze of the imperial traveller form that is used in the viewing of the lady in Swakopmund beach (see *Dark Continent* above), the narrator heightens the description of the toe through isolation erasing every other aspect of the female figure and in turn limiting the female subject to a caricature. Khumalo here may have as well followed the imperial tropes of objectified representation. The narrator explains this silence through his insistence that most of the women he meets are covered in *boubous* hence invisible.

This kind of scrutiny involving either hypervisibility, seen in *Dark Continent,* or invisibility, seen in *Almost Sleeping My Way to Timbuktu*, regards the female body as a site of male dominance and control as echoed by Spurr, who notes that the space of the other is explored through sexual tropes that imply need for possession and conquering (171). The fact that the selected texts are dedicated to the women in Khumalo's life makes us question the stance Khumalo takes regarding women in his journeys. In *Dark Continent*, the dedication reads, "for Nonkululeko "Lulu" Khumalo (née Matiwane)

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[36] The *boubou* is a long dress that is worn by Muslim women. It conceals the body.

– the wind beneath my wings." In *My Way to Timbuktu*, the dedication says, "to our two precious angels, Nala and Zawaadi." The assumption here as noted by Coetzee is that Khumalo's wife "allows" and "enables" his travels (Coetzee 67). Khumalo emphasizes this in the narratives, when in different sections of his journeys he keeps the wife informed of the developments he encounters and although she is positioned at home, she provides anchorage for him to undertake the trips. This assumption of privileging the wife's role in his journey contrasted with his masculine stance, leaves a lot to be desired. In this regard, then we are left with a curiosity as to why Khumalo exoticizes women.

While it is possible to read Khumalo's prejudice against the female figures he encounters in his travels as parody, it is imperative to contextualise the reach of the parody. When his parody on the masculine form of travel writing suggests a propagation of the same, it can be taken as a failure of the counter-travel discourse to initiate a transformative poetics of the genre. In this case, just like Wainaina, Khumalo is implicated within the tradition he set out to critique. Therefore, when his parody implies a doubling, it acts as a demonstration of the inculcated nature of the dominant discourses within practices of travel writing. Khumalo's counter-discourse is an example of the way the contemporary African travel writer is positioned as an ambivalent writer. The African writer is implicated in the history of imperial tradition and its discourses as well as the decolonial agitation of the present moment. As Mbembe reminds us, African writing in the present moment act as forms of practising the self. Such practices are complicated by the contestations of the histories of Africa's pasts, presents and any ultimate imagined futures. In this case, they are unstable (Mbembe 272). By not running away from the contentions that generate failures, these writers are highlighting the complicated task of stylizing African selves through travel writing. Nevertheless, Khumalo's parody makes a substantial contribution towards development of contemporary African travel writing. His constant reiteration of his blackness as an important aspect of his travel, point to the development of the black hero as a poignant figure in travel.

Ethnography as Counter-Travel in Kofi Akpabli's *A Sense of the Savannah*

In the two previous sections, I have explored self-conscious forms of writing back. These forms involve deliberate intentionality of authors to set themselves as challenging the traditions of travel writing as a genre in order to initiate a counter-travel that expands the limits of what is considered part of the convention of the genre. In this section, I shift focus to a text that mimics the ethnographic form prevalent in travel writing. It is interesting to observe the ways in which the African ethnographic travel narrative balances the genre's expectations with a local lens, from which spaces in the continent can be seen as more than generalised assumptions of otherness. In this section, I read

Kofi Akpabli's *A Sense of Savannah: Tales of a Friendly Walk through Northern Ghana* as an ethnographic travel narrative which is embedded within the conventional form, but still manages to initiate a disruption of the way the genre frames the continent due to the positionality of the narrator as a local subject, travelling and observing the local space.[37] Akpabli is a Ghanaian travel writer and journalist. Apart from the travelogue explored in this chapter, Akpabli has written three other books: *Tickling the Ghanaian: Encounters with Contemporary Culture* (2014), *Romancing Ghanaland: the Beauty of Ten Regions* (2014), and *Harmattan: a Cultural Profile of Northern Ghana* (2014). These texts are accounts of his domestic tours in Ghana and take one or the other form of the travelogue.

Akpabli's *A Sense of the Savannah* is organised in episodic narrative form where each episode can be read as a stand-alone independent tale. However, coherence is achieved through the continuous thread of travel in all episodes. The form is explained by the fact that the stories originally appeared as newspaper articles published by *Graphic Showbiz*, a Ghanaian newspaper. Within this form, the tales were meant for a purely Ghanaian audience.[38] Unlike 'Discovering Home' which focusses on the practices of seeing relating to (un)familiarities of home/roots and Khumalo's texts which parody itineraries of precursors of imperial travel in Africa, Akpabli focusses on the everyday lives of people across the places he traverses, affording the travelogue an ethnographic tone. As alluded in the title, the narrative dwells on giving the reader a sense of Northern Ghana. The narrative operates across a number of genres. It functions as a window into everyday life of northern Ghana, a travel guide for the hopeful traveller into the region, a travelogue relaying humorous accounts of what it means to travel to Northern Ghana, a tourist marketing tool, and publicity material offering a sneak peek into the diversity in Northern Ghana.

A Sense of the Savannah is an exposé into Northern Ghana, an area with three distinct regions: Northern region, Upper West and Upper East. Despite the vast area Northern Ghana covers, it is the least developed and least explored region of Ghana. This alienation arises from the fact that many of the publicised tourist areas in Ghana are concentrated along the coast and central regions of the country. Akpabli's act of travelling Northern Ghana and writing about it thus follows the conventional travel writing seeking out locations not yet incorporated into tourist itineraries, or those still deemed beyond the public reality. What is interesting about Akpabli's engagement with the traditional role of travel writing, is the manner of reflection and description of the cultures as well as, if we may borrow

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[37] In subsequent mentions, *A Sense of the Savannah: Tales of a Friendly Walk through Northern Ghana* isabbreviated to *A Sense of the Savannah*.

[38] A more extensive exploration of the connection between travel writing and the newspaper space is offered in chapter four.

Wainaina's concept, what he chooses to see and how he narrates the seen. The narrative follows the ethnographic narrative tone which has overly been popular within the genre of travel writing.

The ethnographic lens in travel writing was very instrumental in the development of the discourse of the West's superiority over the rest of the world. In taking this form, Akpabli aligns himself with the imperial travel writing genre where ethnographies offered windows into other cultures. They involved decoding and recoding, creating systems of order through interpretation, and mapping boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths" 2–3). In fact, Pratt argues that the "ethnographic gesture" in such narratives is responsible for how travel narratives homogenize diverse groups of people into "a collective they" which is further abstracted into a 'he/she' that is then taken to represent a whole and is frozen into "a timeless present tense" (62). The ethnographic narrative fits subjects/cultures into an order that creates the binaries central to the propagation of the dominant discourse. Clifford notes that this character of ethnography to work towards normalizing otherness was strengthened by its affiliation with scientific rationalisation which privileged its authoritative power. For Clifford, the colonial strain in ethnographic writing ensured the form was predicated on "invention" rather than "representation of cultures" ("Introduction: Partial Truths" 2). However, his interrogation of how the form is being transformed by contemporary ethnographers, travellers and literary writers enables this study to locate Akpabli's narrative within a writing back position. Clifford argues that in the contemporary space where the practice of fieldwork has changed to incorporate the reality of natives travelling their spaces of dwelling and writing their own ethnographies, the terms of the form have had to adapt to incorporate these changes (Clifford, *Routes* 55). One of these changes is the consideration of the literary text as an ethnographic text. It is for this reason that I read Akpabli's ethnographic narrative as a form of writing back which redefines the way ethnographic narratives are envisioned.

Akpabli locates himself as a contemporary ethnographer. He is investing a native authority within travel writing. This is signposted by both the narrative and the paratexts introducing it which give it a stamp of authority. This structure incorporates an authority impressed on a similar fashion to that of the ethnographic tradition within the genre. In early ethnographic narratives, the signalling of authority was done through the way the narrative made references to earlier texts or authority figures. Akpabli's narrative is introduced by a foreword and a preface by Ghana Tourist Board (GTB) and senior statesman respectively. These pretexts invest authority claims that privilege the narrative as an authority on Northern Ghana. Through this introduction, the travelogue rides on the political power of the state to make claims of authenticity.

This notion of a native authority is extended in the narrative proper, through the way the narrative gaze approaches spaces travelled. In a bid to give a sense of the savannah, Akpabli extensively uses

descriptive language which paints not just visual images of the savannah but also captures the sounds and tastes of the Ghanaian savannah. For instance, in the section, "Christmas in Hamile," the narrator offers a view of the culture of Hamile. Hamile is a border town in the north-west part of Ghana. It connects Ghana with Burkina Faso. The town hosts several communities found both in Ghana and Burkina Faso. What makes Christmas as an occasion significant is the fact that Hamile is largely a Muslim town thus an unlikely place for one to travel seeking excitement during Christmas as the narrator notes.

The narrator outlines the social organisation of the inter-religious space by locating Muslims' participation in Christmas. He notes that the only thing they do not partake of is "follow their Christian friends to church" (Akpabli 49). The border dynamics of cosmopolitanism in Hamile is strengthened by the friendliness of the communities to both locals and strangers as observed by the narrator:

> One thing I like about the pito affair in Hamile is that they really serve you as a king. First, they take a polite sip of your drink before bowing to present you with the stuff. The sipping gesture is to assure the customer that the drink is safe. Also here 'ansuma' does not only mean good morning. It also refers to the very first quantity of pito that is offered free to a customer. 'Ansuma' implies something like 'good morning faithful customer. Business is on today as usual; please drink this as compliments of the house and do come to buy more'. (Akpabli 56–57)

Although the narrator overlays the description with an aspect of subjectivity introduced by 'like', he falls back and lets the description that follows to emerge independent of his perceptions of interference by suggesting like or reverence for the culture. This ensures the description has a sense of non-interference which allows the reader to imagine an unfiltered access to the culture, creating in the readers have a feel of independence. The resultant effect is that the readers assume that there is no intrusive voice of the traveller acting as intermediary in their encounter with the cultural practice of ansuma. In this framing, Akpabli subtly writes within and against the ethnographic imperial tradition. On one hand, the maintenance of detachment from the space denotes dominance and control, grounded in the notion of imposing meaning on spaces described. On the other hand, the distance the traveller takes from the space enables the cultures of Northern Ghana to be foregrounded in and of themselves. At the end of the section, the reader gets a local culture that defines terms such as respect within its own plane of consciousness.

Ethnography today is a contaminated form that constantly revises its boundaries through transformational representation where a variety of genres are incorporated within it. When literariness enters ethnography as Akpabli's description works, the 'data' about cultures emerge as contested and multiple rather than rigid. From this description, Hamile emerges as a friendly, multicultural space. The sellers taking a sip of one's drink before offering is a sign of good faith amongst the different

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parties in the border town. Perhaps it could be taken as a clever way of the border town to ensure peace in a space that is bound to be invested with a lot of contestations. Pito is a famous local brew of north western Ghana. It is a traditional low alcoholic drink made from guinea corn (sorghum). In northern Ghana, Pito is drunk during rituals, entertainment and other social events. Another reference to pito is the prologue which is introduced by, "It began with pito" (Akpabli 5). Pito functions as an ice breaker in social events. Contrasted with 'ansuma' culture elaborated earlier, the traditional brews in northern Ghana inform how the locals are socialised. Beginning the tales with pito invokes memories of collective drinking as a social event. Another traditional drink explored in the text is akpetshie.[39] In other parts of the north, the narrator talks of how he is invited to partake of a sip of akpetshie. These traditional brews reference the friendliness and generosity of the locals to strangers.

The repetitive reference to traditional brews in this narrative highlights the significance of local brews to the culture of the communities in Northern Ghana. Although this is not a direct reference to the imperial tradition of travel writing or discourses of otherness, Akpabli's description of the cultures around local brews offers an alternative perspective to the imperial discourse concerning local people's relationship to alcohol, a perspective that highlights both the etiquette around relations and encounters as well as spirituality of the same. If we contrast this view with the imperial discourses around blacks and alcohol we see the suggestion the text makes of seeing Northern Ghana independently of preconceived notions. As already mentioned in the previous section on Khumalo, discourse around local brews within and even beyond travel writing within the colonial period demonstrates the deliberate efforts by imperial powers to manufacture otherness. In such writings negative attitudes towards local brews was used to elevate imperial subjects over others. Spurr observes how Darwin influenced this perception of alcohol. He notes that Darwin described his encounter with drunken Indians in South America and used it to define the other as debased. Intoxication is seen as a defilement of the body and an indication of the transgression between inside and outside, self and other; inferring immorality and savagery. When such tropes are used to refer to the other, symbolism is transferred. Colonial discourse utilised notions of debasement by alcohol to as evidence of the savagery of the other (Spurr 83).

Within the African context, Justin Willis in *Potent Brews: a Social History of Alcohol in East Africa* (2002) explores the way such tropes were used within European writing about Africa in the nineteenth century. Alcohol consumption in the colonies was associated with loss of control and primitive evolutionary processes. This theory was "easily inserted into European images of non-European

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[39] A local gin in Ghana made by distilling sugarcane or palm wine. The name is drawn from *Gaa* language to refer to the act of hiding as it was an outlawed drink. In northern Ghana, the narrator tells us that it is also distilled with sugar as base (23)

populations, who were assumed to be lower in the order of social evolution, less civilized, and therefore in particular danger from the temporary derangement of the cerebral cortex which alcohol wrought" (Willis 7). Emmanuel Akyeampong agrees with Willis when he notes that in Ghana, "alcohol has been an ideal metaphor for power because it encapsulates the spectrum of power relations – from empowerment to disempowerment" (xxi). From these scholarship on alcohol's relation to power, it is clear that alcohol has played in controlling and manipulating of people and how they are viewed.

Inasmuch as Akpabli represents the philosophy around alcohol in Northern Ghana, he does not make any reference to this long history of debasement that is seen in imperial travel writing. Khumalo's invocation of alcohol follows the imperial logic where he mock the Eurocentric discourses and how far-fetched they were. Akpabli's narrative tone suggests a powerful focus on decoding and recording the significance of local brews to the cultures of Northern Ghana. It is possible to claim that Akpabli's writing back does not necessarily need to foreground the stereotypes in order to debunk them; rather, he presents his understanding of the cultures of northern Ghana around alcohol as independent representations in their own right. By using a genre that has been instrumental in cementing the discourses of difference through tropes such as alcohol and debasement, Akpabli is engaging with the imperial discourse too.

Akpabli's narrative follows a participatory ethnographic style. Akpabli's deconstruction is affected by the unconscious reality of the genre and practices of seeing, which albeit different, still create insinuations of power and order. At the foreground of Akpabli's deconstruction is the practice of seeing as inferred by Wainaina. The ethnographic narrator gives different angles of Northern Ghana through different modes of seeing afforded by the different mobility practices and the implied occupation of space. Akpabli invests in his ethnography a participant observation which follows Clifford's delimitation of "embodied spatial practice" (*Routes* 33). He demonstrates a consciousness about his spatial practice through the narration where he carefully locates himself as both native and stranger within the spaces narrated. The field comes alive through the narration which reveals the interactive relation between himself and the space. This self-awareness of different degrees of insider[ness] of the native is the main element that sets Akpabli's ethnography apart from the imperial travel writing canon hence position him as an alternative ethnographer.

One of the instances where his ethnographic alternative is seen is in the way he writes about his navigation of River Volta. Akpabli's multiple ways of locating himself in space provide him with different trajectories of speed and movement defining the different modalities of distance and relations within spatial encounters. In the canoe ride in the Volta, a paced description of the scene

appeals to the real without the usual tensions which emerge from contesting images of the real. The traveller gives one description of an encounter with a hippopotamus:

> My guide drew my attention to a series of large muddy holes that led from the water and vanished in the undergrowth. He said they were the footprints of a hippopotamus. … The silence of the Volta was suddenly broken by a noise like the fast rush of water. Before I could ask, it came again; this time sounding like the puff of a heavyweight punch. I was not brave enough to turn and face Agbai for feedback. But I hear his 'yes, yes, yes,' over my shoulder. I opened my eyes wide. I saw nothing. Then the silence returned. 'A hippo is breathing', said my tour guide. (Akpabli 18)

The narrative situates the traveller as the body through which the reader experiences the space of the Volta. Although the narrator does not see the hippo, the descriptions given imply its presence. The pacing of the description echoes the calm movement of the canoe pushing to a crescendo with the intensity of the images overload. The images described do not just give a visual reveal of the space but also a sensual understanding which incorporate all the senses. When this scene is read within the signification in the title, this narrative seems to disrupt this seeming trope of emphasis on the environment by depicting environments as relational spaces A sense of the savannah emerges out of the moment of encounter where the traveller as embodied subject channels the space for the readers. The reader is invited to visualise the muddy holes and feel the texture and speed of movement through the language. Intimacy of sight with the object of encounter creates a personalized feel, devoid of dictation.

This is the life of the travelogue – its ability to capture the adventurous in the everyday hustle of the northerners and their environs in the world of fluid mobility. Akpabli manages to deconstruct the genre through descriptions that may be construed as objective hence not prejudicial about spaces as well as through humorous description of the everyday as adventure. The objective distance could also be construed to be informed by the proximity of the addressivity to the narrative through the newspaper space. If we are to locate Akpabli's narration as informed by care and respect for the narrated, it could possibly be a consequence of the close public informed by the everyday readership of the *Graphic Showbiz* where the narrative initially appeared. Such publics have a right of response afforded by the immediacy of the print media which puts the ethnographer to task over ethical representation of Northern Ghana. This connection is unlike Khumalo's narratives which do not emerge from the newspaper space. Khumalo does not have this immediate and intimate kind of relation with his publics he writes for in the spaces deemed outside of his familiar space of South Africa thus has no direct reciprocal relation in the space of the text. Although Khumalo offers his email address at the end of *Dark Continent*, the sense of connection between the text and the publics is still not as intimate as what the newspaper space enables. Circuits of production and circulation of

narratives are seen here as distinct entities informing the intimacy of encounters and representational politics accrued to spaces.

Akpabli's navigation of the River Volta also echoes Conrad in style, a sense that suggests a complexity regarding his vision of insider[ness]. He describes the canoe scene thus:

> The vehicle to accomplish the mission was not much; a narrow, 15 foot canoe made of mahogany. After travelling 900 Km from Accra, and after countless daydreams and night ones, my moment of truth came when we hit the river. It rolled out vast and as far as the eyes could see. I was first to face the Black Volta. Behind me, a file of four. These were men I had met for the first time barely an hour ago. But all were playing no small role in the expedition. (Akpabli 10)

Contrast this with *Heart of Darkness*, which begins thus:

> The Nellie, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. The flood had made, the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down by the river, the only thing for it was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide. …. The Director of the Company was our captain and or host. We four affectionately watched his back.(Conrad 2)

These parallels imply a quotation of the canon. Both texts depart from the point of the river. In both cases, the means of transport is foregrounded. However, the tone in each epitomises a difference in spatial practices undertaken by the narrators which in turn reveal the differences in their narrative encounters with the other. In Conrad, the narrator emerges as a peripheral force relaying the space for the reader. This narrative distancing suggests the narrating subject as localized at a distance from the narrated subject. In locating Marlow narrating his encounters about the Congo while in the comfort of the Thames, his detachment is foregrounded, something that pinpoints the Congo as a far off outside space which is prone to exoticism. In Akpabli, the narrator's position emerges through the phrase, "I was first to face the Black Volta." The narrating subject is seen as a subject intimately connected with the narrated subject by virtue of the collapsing of narrating and narrated times and spaces in to one space and time. In this way, Akpabli emerges as a participant observer, an insider that is opened to the space narrated. In Akpabli's case, the river is not a space in itself, rather, it emerges as a space through the active action of the narrator and the men accompanying him "discursively being mapped" through the narrative emplotment (Clifford, *Routes* 54).

Clifford notes that the space of the field, like the space of travel, involves assumptions of inside and outside which although blurred in the contemporary space of travelling, still do determine how ethnographers occupy and locate themselves (*Routes* 54-58). For travellers to cross beyond the familiar or what they consider the inside, there is necessity to bridge the gap of difference. This forms part of the contention that contemporary African travel writing has with the Imperial canon. To bridge this gap, is to encounter the other; not bridging it, however, indicates the beginning of violence against

the other that has been the norm through erasure or silencing in conventional travelogues. Akpabli's assertion of intimacy with the space of the river through both anxieties about the journey as well as direct contact, imply openness to encounter the other. By the open embrace of the river, Akpabli is creating a bridge to reach the other. On the other hand, in Conrad's case, the Thames as the setting of the telling of a narrative set in the Congo imply a closedness that does not encourage any encounter with the other. The river thus emerges as a means to an end and not a point of contact. What is revealed is the fact that for Marlow, both River Thames and the Congo are conduits for the fantastical narration of the Congo to be fulfilled. There is no bridge to encounters and no encounter, confirming Islam's delineation of boundaries of difference. In this comparative exploration, Akpabli suggests an intention to offer an ethnography that bridges the gap of difference initiating a different representation open to multiplicity.

This space of the river is significant as it marks the positioning of the traveller as an insider who is also an outsider, but one with close proximity to the space traversed. The narrator tells us in the prologue, the exercise is embarked on because of love — love for his country, its spaces, and its diversity. Akpabli positions himself as an insider in Ghana intending to examine the domestic spaces. This acts as a distinction between this traveller and the early explorers and travellers to Africa who mostly traversed spaces that were considered outside of their realm of home. Nevertheless, the narrative demonstrates that Akpabli's insider[ness] is not a given. For instance, his canoe journey to Wechiau suggests different degrees of insider[ness]. The comparison to Conrad suggest an intimate connection between Akpabli and the space of the river. However, when the Wechiau-Naa tells him, "every stranger's visit makes us feel important, thank you for coming" a sense of outsider[ness] becomes visible (Akpabli 30).[40] The narrator as traveller is seen to belong outside the scope of what the travellees consider part of them. The traveller is stranger by the virtue of being slightly removed from the everyday culture of Wechiau, even though he has stayed in the space and observed their culture. However, he is familiar in the sense of seeing Wechiau as part of the larger geospatial entity that he considers familiar to him, Ghana. Clifford observes that in contemporary ethnography where the notion of a native ethnographer is common, one cannot assume the inside as a bounded space. He gives an example of Kirin Narayan, an ethnographer that did ethnography in India, her native country. From Narayan's case, he comes to the conclusion that "there is no simple, undivided, 'native' position" (Clifford, *Routes* 77). Although, Akpabli is travelling Ghana, his nation of origin, Northern Ghana gives him glimpses of familiarity and strangeness, localness and foreignness, which destabilise his notion of belonging.

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[40] The Wechiau-Naa is the traditional chief of Wechiau. He is also a figure of authority on matters cultural and administration in the traditional sense.

Akpabli's notion of strangeness is different from Wainaina's, Khumalo's or even the imperial travellers. The imperial travellers, as noted in many previous instances, are outsiders by the obvious presence of boundaries on many fronts. They are removed from the space of the other by geographical demarcation of continental landmass, the cultural distance, socio-political perception and realities, political aims, norms and customs. The boundaries of difference are not bridged as the imperial travellers, like Marlow in Conrad, are not interested in seeing the other, but rather in affirming their difference through occupation of the space of power which erects abstract lines of boundary (Islam 34). While taking up a collective inside through references of 'us' to refer to Africa, and Africans (in Wainaina and parts of Khumalo) or Blacks (in Khumalo), both Wainaina and Khumalo exemplify an awareness of limits to insider[ness] through the descriptive and positioning strategies they embody. They create different frames of familiarity as the inside from which their journeys within the continent arise, but still, the fact that many failures of bridging the gap of their outsider[ness] within the continent as shown by their performance of masculinities within narration demonstrate the presence of rigid lines of difference that unconsciously position them multiply as insiders and outsiders. Akpabli is travelling within Ghana, which ideally positions him as a domestic traveller traversing spaces that would be deemed familiar. His degrees of familiarity and strangeness are not necessarily located by geographical or political boundaries anymore, but by constantly shifting trajectories of spatio-temporal, socio-cultural realities that are ever fluid. Islam notes that when the rigid boundaries of geography and geometry are eliminated, the reality of space as defined by relationships of occupation become inherent and possibilities for "mutual interpenetration" and intelligibility become infinite (Islam 21). Akpabli's practice of space occupation reveal the blurring of inside and outsider locations.

Akpabli's awareness of insider[ness] is disturbed by the statement given by the Wechiau-Naa. The travellee's reciprocation of the gaze of the traveller and the fact that the traveller pays attention to this answering gaze demonstrates Akpabli's level of intimacy in relation to the space of travel. The narrator here is pushed to introspective reflection about limits of what is opened to his gaze. This is an instance of complete encounter. The traveller has been seen by the travellee and his inadequacies pointed out. In Islam's iteration of boundaries as responsible for the difference in imperial and other travels, Akpabli here crosses the supple boundary of self/other by being invited in by the Wechiau-Naa. Let us not forget that the 'in' he is invited to is both his inner self as traveller (leading to the qualification of the tradition in travel writing that travel is always a journey towards self rather than other) as well as into the culture of the people of Wechiau, which begins with the understanding that he is not insider but outsider and can only get a sense of the space by listening to the other.

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Public transport space is a noteworthy node of travel in this chapter. As mentioned in earlier sections of this chapter, this node of travel writing has not received much exploration in travel writing as it has been seen as outside of the conventional ways of travelling. In his travel writing, Akpabli foregrounds this form that is prevalent in contemporary African mobility practices. While Wainaina observed River Road as part of the network of public transport in Kenya and Khumalo located his travelling subject navigating the site, Akpabli foregrounds commuting as a central form of travel in the continent. The narrator uses public transport buses to travel to and from Bolga to Kumasi. The narrative gives a detailed description of the parking yard of the GPRTU buses in both cities.[41] In Bolga, the narrator describes a filling station within the parking yard which services the buses. He also mentions the human traffic made up of the drivers, their assistants, hawkers and passengers. The Bolga station emerges as a site that connects northern Ghana to central and southern Ghana. In the Kumasi parking yard, Akpabli notes, "[t]his lorry station is also base to trucks and buses plying some major towns of the upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions. It also serves as the terminal for vehicles going to Burkina Faso and Mali" (112). From the description of both Bolga and Kumasi parking yards of the public service buses the narrator uses, it is clear that the parking yard is a space that incorporates a diversity of activities, cultures and people. These stations act as intricate but important working parts of the larger system of public transport as linking multiple but related nodes that connect Ghana to the rest of West Africa by road. Stasik observes that the bus station offers "a window into the workings of African cities and dynamics of everyday urban 'becomings'" ("Contingent Constellations" 123). Although his study is on Accra Neoplan station, I see a similarity in workings of the Bolga and Kumasi stations. The stations act as sites of transregional as well as transnational connection and at the same time enable an understanding of the Ghanaian urban culture. The heightened business is an effect of the high mobility of goods and people across the regions and commodity trade within the space. The two stations are nodes, contact zones – zones of transculturation in the contemporary space of travel.

Commuting embodies an important aspect of travellers that exemplify an essence of space in unique ways. These travellers are unified in the moment of sharing the space of public transport; beyond this parameter, they take up different identities. The narrative's exploration of the communities within the public transport system is an important deviation from imperial travel writing. Imperial travel narratives foregrounded the sites of travel rather than the communities within the spaces, in this way, they manage to foreground the white traveller and his expectations and perceptions of the other and downplay the fact that spatial realities are a consequence of the performances of occupation. Akpabli's ethnographic focus on the communities within the public transport system reveals the bus

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[41] GPRTU stands for Ghana Private Road Transport Union.

station to be a contact zone where shifting performances of ownership ensure a fluidity regarding the power dynamics. One level of this performance is suggested by the positionality of the different players within this site and their relation to the efficiency of the public transport system:

> Sitting on the cement floor close to me was a fellow all covered in a dark jacket. I murmured a greeting to him. No response. Quite a distance behind me was another bloke on a bench, smoking something suspicious. Far across to my right there were a few other folks lying on benches in the dark….I could see passengers still arriving with luggage. Drivers' mates go as far as to the streets to entice passengers to their bus. Pigs, jokingly referred to in these parts as 'Assemblymen' were also moving about….One group of people who would also not be left out of the melee was hawkers. With their wares balanced on their heads, they moved around the buses and mingled with passengers. (Akpabli 88–89)

This scene introduces the reader to not only the players in the space of commuting but also the different power relations within this site when conceived of as a contact zone. All the parties the drivers, the drivers' mates, the passengers, vagrants, hawkers, and loitering animals form part of the constellations of the bus station, however, the hierarchy of ownership is informed by the different notions of dominance invoked. In the description of the station, the side-by-side architecture of contrasting images allows one to understand the force of yoking opposites together. This paralleling of the events, activities and things of all kinds opens the travelogue to the extreme conglomeration of bodies in the space of commuting. It also challenges the peripheralizing element of communities of travel within canonical travel as it implies the relevance of this body of subjects in the kinds of encounters one has. By collapsing boundaries and looking at the commuter space as one infused with a variety of features, commuting becomes a form of travel which is informed by the diversity of bodies intimately connected and the difficulty of dispelling insider/outsider variants.

Within the interactions between the different parties as the narrator observes, what stands out as defining the power dynamics is the language and performance of ownership of the spaces. The narrator while on a bus from Bolga to Kumasi observes one incident where a female passenger accuses a young man of taking her seat:

> The accused, a young man sprang to his feet and spat out something in Arabic. He would show the ugly shrew that she was only a woman; nothing more. Our Madam countered that the man's wife (if he could afford one at all) must be a slave, no wonder he talked to women that way.
> The man became furious and threatened to slap the woman in the face. The woman pushed her face towards the man, 'Go ahead', she urged, 'it has been too long since I was last slapped!' (Akpabli 93)

This incident implies a masculine accrediting of power in the commuter space, something that concretizes this form of travel as controlled by the patriarchal order. Previously, we noted via wa Mungai how the public transport space enacts masculinity through performance. Similarly, as echoed

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in Stasik, the structure of the bus station as well as the performability of subjects within the space suggests masculinity ("Contingent Constellations" 124).There is a persistence of binaries in the way the different subjects frame each other and perform dominance within the space. Before this incidence, the entrance of the woman into the bus had been met by catcalls. This could also be read as a clear reflection of the masculine trope within the space of public transport. The constant push for dominance over women through linguistic and extra-linguistic signs of both the lady and the young man reveals the normalisation of masculinity of travel.

wa Mungai's observation of the linguistic codes in *matatu* culture, while centred on Nairobi, enables a reading of these codes as performances of power. wa Mungai posits that, "passengers hardly put up credible resistance to the linguistic excesses in *matatu* culture …. Indeed, it is doubtful that passengers are as wholly 'innocent' as they are usually presumed to be" (106). Passengers are complicit in the propagation of masculinization of public transport spaces. The two passengers involved in the altercation in Akpabli's narrative are performing linguistic gesturing afforded by the freedom of the space of commuting. Inasmuch as the man plays into the masculine trope by employing sexist language on the woman, the woman does the same by demeaning the man's wife abusively which is doublespeak. In highlighting what she sees as inadequacies in the man's masculinity the woman plays into wa Mungai's assertion of the *matatu* culture as characterized by performances of masculinity. wa Mungai repeatedly indicates that this space is one of transgressions and the woman passenger could be playing into the nature of the space as one which conceives of the female as an anomaly in this space, hence she is fronting herself as masculine female. At the same time, it suggests the dynamism of subjects to take up any role in a bid to outdo each other (Stasik, "Contingent Constellations" 124; Stasik, "The Popular Niche Economy of a Ghanaian Bus Station" 40).

From the gesturing, it is clear that the public transport space is informed by the different parties jostling for dominance. The resolution of the conflict between the lady and the young man in the bus reveal a multi-layered hierarchy of dominance. The narrator observes how one *matatu* man known as Macho intervenes and the bus leaves the station. Passengers do not step in to solve the problems; they allow the *matatu* men to use the incidences as reclamation of their masculinity. In this equation, the passengers in commuter space are vulnerable. *Matatu* men are the lords of the *matatu* space as they are seen to run interference where the different actors in this space have a conflict, however, their power is not assured as they are forced to initiate repeated actions that justify their dominance. wa Mungai and David A Samper note that there is an imbalance of power relations in the matatu space which keeps shifting depending on context and circumstance. Although the commuter space described by Akpabli suggests an orientation of the contact zone as a fluid navigation, emergent from the interrelations of the communities that interact within the space in narrative form is the fact that

Akpabli holds textual authority which in turn produces a different level of contact zone; one where the traveller/narrator is the dominant figure that controls what is revealed and concealed about the space in narrated form.

In reading this text via critics of commuting such as wa Mungai and Stasik who argue for a decoding of the performance of masculinity within the public transport space, the narrator's attitude becomes central in discernment of his positionality insofar as engendering of travel spaces is concerned. In his description of the dramas of the bus, the narrator is not trying to mock the subjects he observes, as Khumalo does. The ethnographic narrative tone gives an impression of an authoritative non-interventionist relaying of events through his positionality as a participant observer. This form of observation implies an objective distance at will to relay things as they are within the space without intervention. Such an insinuation of objectivity correlates with the narrative's intention of revealing Northern Ghana to the larger Ghanaian public that is aware of this space but have very little idea as to how the space functions. At the same time, it buys into the earlier assertion of the care the author takes in relaying such spaces due to the proximity with the publics afforded by the print cultures. We cannot simply point to the masculinised nature of the commuter space described as a means through which the narrator propagates masculinity embedded in the genre. The space lends itself to notions of masculinity due to its public performances of might. In addition, it is clear that the urban space of public transport is reflective of the urban space's unpredictability and fluidity. One can only map how subjects negotiate the unpredictable nature of their everyday negotiation of the city, which is what Akpabli does.

In Akpabli's representation of the masculine trope prevalent in the space of travel, he deviates from Khumalo and Wainaina's style of exploration. Khumalo and Wainaina's representation demonstrate cases of the narrator and author slipping into the forms of masculinities signalled by the imperial travelogues and imperial ways of seeing spaces. Akpabli's portrayal of the same suggests the spaces as imbued with a sense of masculinity rather than impositions emerging from the travelling subject. While Akpabli explores masculinity inherent in sites that the genre manifests itself, he rarely inserts himself nor his gaze as lens that imposes masculinity onto the sites. Rather, Akpabli's description centres masculinity in the public transport space as something that emerges out of the conditions of the way different characters negotiate this highly fluid and unstable space.

A Sense of the Savannah challenges the canonical travel writing where the practice of journeying is a means to an end and not the end itself. For this text, the different practices of travel are responsible for revealing different senses of the savannah in Northern Ghana. Akpabli's narrative thus serves as a gateway, and not a complete view into northern Ghana's diversity, friendliness, livelihood and realities. This text's contribution to the expansion of the genre of travel writing emanates from both

its concentration on narrating commuting as well as offering an Afrocentric ethnography of Northern Ghana.

Conclusion: Entanglements and Transformations

In this chapter, African travelling subjects that mimic the conventional form emerge as contemporary "postcolonial hyphens" (Pratt 217). Pratt defines this group of travellers as those that critique the empire through recognising the limitations of their gaze as informed by empire, however, still fall prey to the workings of empire by showing a nostalgia for it or reproducing the metaphors of empire about spaces of travel. Inasmuch as the selected texts succeed in noting areas of expansion, they also fall into the trap of the conventional travel writing. The failures in their intention to write back in some instances is informed by the overarching infiltration of the imperial consciousness in the way they approach spaces of travel as well as the writing process. It indicates the reality of African writers as implicated within Western notions of seeing in their approach to the sites of travel. The task of writing back is one implicated by the histories of imperialism and its discourses within Africa. To imagine a complete erasure of imperialism is to write off the historical embeddedness of the same in practices of seeing and writing in the continent. The authors are positioned in strategic ways that offer interventions from Africa regarding the way travel writing canon has conceptualised Africa.

We have already observed that Wainaina, Khumalo and Akpabli engage with the genre in different ways. While Wainaina and Khumalo offer more self-conscious forms of writing back, Akpabli is less concerned with the imperial form but is still implicated in it. Wainaina's journey introduces the notion of family and personal subjectivities about the gaze as central in defining travel. Both Khumalo and Akpabli travel for work. Through the distinct identification of travel as work, the different authors locate everyday spaces of the street and the public transport as valuable areas from which travel in contemporary Africa takes place. Within this foregrounding is the idea that such spaces revise the notion of the contact zone as well as adventure.

The public transport system emerges as a poignant space of mobility in Africa. It incorporates an unequal power dimension which is fluid and constantly changing. Wainaina, Khumalo, and Akpabli agree that public transport is a significant node within contemporary African travel and travel writing. These authors' attempts to centre this space which has received very little concentration in conventional travel writing archives a common form of travel practice within Africa; this form of travelling offers a unique lifestyle outside of the global culture of travel. By calling attention to this space, they are inviting creative and critical attention to the unique forms of seeing that such spaces enable, quaint notions of adventure that emerge as alternatives to conventional travel writing, as well

as alternative ways of engaging with travel in the contemporary space where a multitude of options are at the disposal of the traveller.

Central to these narrations of public transport spaces is a redefinition of adventure. In imperial tradition, which these narratives mimic, adventure is seen as emanating in novel and exotic sites. For these contemporary African travel narratives, adventure is seen as perpetuated within the everyday which has the capacity for humour and ephemerality. For these writers, adventure is fully realised through narration of the everyday. Be it the performances of streetness in different subjects we encounter in Wainaina, Khumalo's reimagination of the tourist spaces or Akpabli's navigation of the commuter spaces, adventure seems to exist in the everyday and it is upon the traveller to see differently in order to discern such. Humour as a mode of critique also enables the different texts to highlight the problematic nature of the conventions of the genre and critique it. The use of humour foregrounds weaknesses and socio-political realities of the contemporary African space of travel.

Khumalo enabled this study to contemplate the space of the black traveller as hero In illuminating a figure that was previously seen as outside of the scope of heroes of travel, Khumalo insists in the restoration of the black subject as an important gaze in African travel writing. Akpabli's narrative allowed us to contemplate the complications of native ethnographer as a figure that navigates different degrees of insider/outsider[ness]. Wainaina's idea of the vulnerable gaze is a significant idea that enables this study to begin to redefine the place of the gaze in travel writing. It enables a redefinition of power dynamics which in turn redefine the subject positionalities in the space of travel, especially regarding the notion of dominance and subjugation of gaze. Although it is a substantial transformation, it is imperative to indicate that Wainaina's idea does not work well within the texts in this chapter as they mostly mimic conventional travel writing which present the traveller as a detached dominant gaze. However, I wish to use the idea in the next chapter to see how far a vulnerable gaze redefines both space and interactivity in travel.

Chapter Four

The Shifting Sands of the Guidebook in African Travel Writing

> [T]he *Blue Guide* testifies to the futility of all analytical descriptions, those which reject both explanations and phenomenology: it answers in fact none of the questions which a modern traveller can ask himself while crossing a countryside which is real *and which exists in time*. To select only monuments suppresses at one stroke the reality of the land and that of its people, it accounts for nothing of the present, that is, nothing historical, and as a consequence, the monuments themselves become undecipherable, therefore senseless. What is to be seen is thus constantly in the process of vanishing, and the *Guide* becomes, through an operation common to all mystifications, the very opposite of what it advertises, an agent of blindness.
>
> (Roland Barthes, "The Blue Guide" 75-76; emphasis added)

Introduction

One Swahili riddle goes: *Kipo Lakini hukioni* ['It's here but you don't see it']. I begin this chapter with a detour through this riddle since I find it insightful in thinking about African travel writing as a form that foregrounds the vulnerabilities of the gaze. This riddle has two probable answers: the nape of the neck or eye lash. In the literal sense, both the nape and the eye lash, are parts of the body which are outside the realm of the gaze of the owner of the body, unless in reflection/mirror image. The most common interpretation of this riddle is that human beings have shortcomings and thus need to accept that they will not at any one point have knowledge of everything. Since riddles archive a society's philosophy of life, I draw from the Swahili philosophy of life to inform my reading of vulnerability in the gaze. This riddle suggests different levels of seeing and levels of visibility, each with borders regarding the seen and how seeing is enacted. The riddle locates the seeing subject as an active agent with presence and capacity for in/visibility. This riddle speaks to Said's claim that representation always involves both revelation and concealment.

I situate this paradoxical notion of the gaze within Wainaina's idea of the vulnerable gaze arrived at in the previous chapter to interrogate the ways in which contemporary African travel writing enacts an alternative order of seeing. In the previous chapter, I examined how Wainaina's theorization of a politics of seeing removes the gaze from its assumed position of dominance and inscribes in it a vulnerability from which a heterotopic understanding of traversed spaces may emerge. What was realised in that chapter, is that, seeing is often a political act informed by ideological background and consciousness of the see-r. While that chapter explored different forms of mimicry of conventional forms in contemporary African travel writing, it became obvious that since the authors were entangled in the discourses they set out to challenge, the notion of the vulnerability of the traveller did not

feature there. In this chapter, I set out to explore the extent to which vulnerability of the gaze initiates alternative codes of seeing which expand the limits of the genre.

In this chapter, I ask, if there are limits to seeing, how then does contemporary African travel writing navigate these limits through the use of a vulnerable gaze that teases out underlying invisible networks in spaces of travel, more so when they offer themselves as guides? I examine Tony Mochama's *Nairobi: A Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun*, Alba Kunadu Sumprim's *A Place of Beautiful Nonsense,* and Veronique Tadjo's *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* as contemporary literary guidebooks.

My understanding of the literary guidebook departs from the conventional understanding of the sub-genre of the guidebook but extends it towards the continuum of the travelogue. Tourism scholars, Anette Therkelsen and Anders Sørensen note that all forms of travel writing function as guidebooks for travellers (49). Nevertheless, the guidebook and the guide have a distinct history, dating to the beginning of travel, with Pausanias, a guidebook describing Greece to travellers in the second century AD, being identified as one of the earliest examples (Mazor-Tregerman et al. 85). During the imperial period, travellers used informants and pathfinders as guides to gain access to the spaces they 'discovered'. Travel writing most often silences this critical aspect of guides, informants and pathfinders who are active collaborators in the process of encountering the other (Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* xx). This led to the trend of homogenizing cultures in guidebooks. In the early nineteenth century, an upsurge in usage of guidebooks was seen due to the rise of mass tourism and increased middle class travel (Koshar 323; Smecca 110; Iaquinto 707; Mazor-Tregerman et al. 85). During this period, the guidebook became part of a modern culture characterised by ease in mobility around the world and consumer culture within tourism. Increased need for information about other places and ways of navigating them, made the guidebook a manual for the traveller. The guidebook thus became a form that translated places, subjects and things into commodities to be consumed by the tourists (Koshar, "What Ought to Be Seen" 339). More often than not, the guidebook became known as a text that claimed authority over spaces of travel, making it the ideal cultural product.

The functionality of travel writing as cultural product makes the guidebook a vulnerable sub-genre for subjugation and control of others through its representational logic. This view is informed by what Dean MacCannell observes as the power of the genre to maps spaces as worthy while actively erasing others (43-48). Through defining worthiness of spaces guidebooks play into the hands of dominant discourses which invest in them an identity that fits the hegemonic narrative of tourism culture. The guidebook works as a tool for controlling and limiting what can be seen and ways of perceiving spaces. In this vein, the guidebook performs a paradoxical function. On the one hand, it acts as an

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entity of control that dictates choice for the traveller (Therkelsen and Sørensen 48–51), which reminds us of Barthes' idea of the guidebook as an agent of blindness. On the other hand, it acts as an agent of freedom that accords the traveller power to take charge of their travels.

In expanding my reading of the guidebook, I wish to bring into the discussion the common understanding of guidebooks as agents through which dominant discourses map a reductive and homogenized reading of spaces, something that Barthes's epigraph introducing this chapter makes a note of. While aware of the formality of the guidebook as a text that offers an authoritative rendering of spaces, I deviate from it in my investment of the sub-genre with the term 'literary.' I argue that the literary guidebook is an artistic narrative of travel that lends itself to function as a guide about subjects or spaces. The literary guidebook deviates from the conventional guidebook in the sense that it takes a figurative rather than a literal form. This chapter interrogates the way contemporary African travelogues as literary guidebooks, disrupt the homogeny underpinning the way guidebooks operate. This examination is undertaken with a view to think of the literary guidebook as doing more than inscribing spaces with dominant discourses, cultures, and ideas. I argue that the literary guidebook writes previously invisible aspects that exist within spaces of travel into visibility.

The selected texts imagine multiple versions of readers as the authors grapple with their own limits as insiders and outsiders in the travelled spaces and tensions of knowing the spaces. The authors' conflicted positionalities produce multiple lenses that enables them to pay attention to specificities of encounters. I think of the literary guidebook as a meaningful form for both the traveller as viewer and travellee as the seen to be reinvented in the active interactive negotiation of places at moments of encounter. In reading these texts as guidebooks, I do not intend to confirm the argument raised by Barthes that guidebooks are agents of blindness. Rather, I explore how, in acceding to vulnerability, the authors inscribe in the form a powerful agency that produces multiple visibilities. I begin with the hypothesis that, if within the travel narrative, the temporal dimension which Barthes' insists is missing in conventional guidebooks is restored, the plurality and dialogic nature of places would be revealed leading to a different kind of guidebook. Therefore, in this exploration, I dwell extensively on the selected texts' attempts to offer evocation of 'that which exists in time' and resists tangibility within experience in the space of travel.

The set of texts in the previous chapter largely followed tourist routes, engaged with popular tourist representations of the continent and largely involved travellers moving away from their comfort zones to other familiar or unfamiliar terrains within the continent which they feel an affinity to.[42] In that

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[42] Khumalo explores Africa beyond his familiar space of South Africa; Akpabli negotiates northern Ghana which, though familiar through the collective national identity is still elusive; Wainaina on the other hand locates his journeys around

chapter, the travelling subjects maintained detachment from the spaces travelled where boundaries of difference were more or less maintained due to the distance between traveller as viewer and travellee as the seen. The texts in this chapter follow a different order of movement altogether. The selected texts represent travellers who are negotiating spaces that are somewhat familiar to them but hold a sense of strangeness emanating from the spaces' and the travellers' multiple histories, contestations and anxieties. Mochama travels in Nairobi, a city he has lived in most of his life, but in his travels realises the extent of unknowability of the city. Sumprim, on the other hand, is Ghanaian by descent, born and raised elsewhere before dwelling in the city of Accra. In her travels in Accra, Sumprim yearns for acceptance, but the spaces, just like Mochama's, defies easy negotiation. Tadjo identifies with Rwanda in the collective African identity and her travels reveal a nuanced and multivalent space that also defies easy essentialism. As I will explore, the active process of travelling destabilises their notions of knowledge regarding the familiar spaces, initiating a blurring of insider/outsider politics. The chapter is divided into three sections. I first examine how the invocation of the figure of the night runner as narrative persona in Mochama's *Nairobi: A Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun* enables the city to emerge as an unstable site that defies any concrete definition. Throughout that section I grapple with questions of the kinds of representations that emerge when instability is the norm. I then interrogate Alba Kunadu Sumprim's *A Place of Beautiful Nonsense* as a case where the conflicted persona of the 'imported Ghanaian' complicates understanding of transience in the urban space. While in both Mochama and Sumprim I examine the extent to which the texts as literary guides to urban geographies foreground unknowability, in the last section I focus on the heterogeneous nature of geographies of trauma. In this section, I examine how Veronique Tadjo's *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda* works as a literary guidebook that explores journeys across heterogeneous traumatic histories. In all these texts I dwell on how spatio-temporality of moments of encounter fashion the literary guidebook as a personal and multifaceted understanding of spaces as embedded with a temporal depth.

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spaces that are supposedly familiar due to his genealogical roots, but dislocation from the spaces complicates his sense of familiarity.

The Night Runner and Contestations of the Urban in Tony Mochama's *Nairobi: A Night Guide Through the City-in-the-Sun*

Tony Mochama's *Nairobi: A Night Guide through the City-in-the-Sun* most-faithfully signals the guidebook form.[43] This is flagged from the start by the title which openly invites a reading of the text as a guide to the city. Mochama, a Kenyan lawyer, writer, and journalist, works for *The Standard* newspaper, a Kenyan daily. This text is one of several books that Mochama has published.[44] It takes the form of 134 brief episodic accounts of the night runner travelling through Nairobi. The narrative emerges out of a weekly column by Mochama that ran from 2006 to 2012 in the pull-out magazine 'Moments' in *The Standard*. The narrative outwardly abides by the expectations of a travelogue in its faithful documentation of the narrator's accounts of places and encounters in the city. Mochama utilises the guidebook form to map the city for the would-be reader through evocative attention to the experiential. Despite this narrative's use of the frame of the guide, it deviates from the conventional expectation of the guidebook to foreground practical information about places, when the narrator dwells on the persona's experiences and interactions. This positions the narrative as a guide that does not necessarily offer the reader a clear itinerary of places to explore, but rather grapples with the traveller's anxieties as he attempts to grasp the character of the city. For Mochama, the geographical is an anchor that reveals a complexity underlying space such as the historical and the temporal which illuminate the socio-political, cultural and economic realities of urban spaces.

Mochama's *Nairobi: A Night Guide* is primarily meant for a Kenyan audience who form the core readership of *The Standard* newspaper where it was initially serialised. The newspaper brings into the narrative a particular character of addressivity which is uniquely identified with print media, something that Jones calls 'sociability of print.' Sociability of print is defined the character of the travel narrative in the newspaper to "creat[e] and display [of] networks of contacts"; personal, and professional networks spanning across and including the publics addressed (Jones, "The Sociability of Print" 110). This affords the narrative both the immediacy necessary for the intensity of the events and moments captured to be expressed in the same time-frame as that of the occurrence, as well as a personal relationality with the implied publics. I argue that this aspect of the print media is translated onto the book form and place specific demands on how we read the text as a guidebook.

The relationship between travel writing and the newspaper in Africa extends back to the emergence of the newspaper form in the continent, which cultural historians Derek R. Peterson and Emma Hunter

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[43] *Nairobi: A Night Guide though the City-in-the-Sun* is in subsequent mentions be abbreviated to *Nairobi: A Night Guide*.

[44] Mochama is an acclaimed author. He has won the Burt Award severally (2013, 2016, and 2017) and the Miles Morland Scholarship Award in 2014 for a book project that culminated in his Afro-futuristic novel, *2063: Last Mile Bet* published in 2018.

locate as the early 19th century. They insist that the newspaper medium initially provided African writers a space to experiment with different genres and forms (Peterson and Hunter 22). I take note of this space and the work it did in the development of travel writing within the continent. In fact, as Jones, in a study on Nigerian travel writing notes, the genre developed rapidly due to not only the experimentations enabled by the form but also the developing influence and connection the writers had with the readers ("The Sociability of Print" 105). In another study, Jones observes that Yoruba language newspapers offered writers a ready platform to experiment with different aspects of form while having a direct link to a readership that acted as a soundboard for the diverse experimentation (Jones, *Writing Domestic Travel in Yoruba and English Print Culture* 62).

While Jones concentrates on Yoruba newspaper travel narratives, this characteristic is true for the East African newspaper scene where Mochama's narrative emerges from. One of the earliest platforms for experimentation with travel writing in East Africa was the government controlled paper, *Mambo Leo* which appeared from around the 1920s to the 1960s in Tanganyika.⁴⁵ A recent example of travel writing in local newspapers to precede Mochama's "Night Runner" is Rupi Mangat's travel columns in *Saturday Nation* and *The East African*. Mangat has been writing on travel in the Kenyan newspapers since 1998. She also runs a travel blog, "The African Trotter" where her other travel writing can be found. All these travelogues take advantage of the flexibility of print to indulge audiences with wild experimentation anchored on the need to capture the experiential. The continuous appearance of travel narratives in the newspaper form as Mochama's and Alba Kunadu Sumprim's (to be discussed later in the chapter), point to an active interconnection between narrative, traveller, and audience. Jones argues that in the newspaper space, the travel narratives are hinged on social interactions which place the visited spaces and the people at the centre of the narratives ("The Sociability of Print" 110–11). This aspect of sociability of print is central in the tone and the nature of Mochama's narrative both in the newspaper space as well as in the anthologised form. The investment in maintaining a close relation with the readers ensures Mochama's text concentrates on encounters rather than physical descriptions of places.

Perhaps, the tone as well as the concentration on encounters rather than practical details regarding places could be claimed as responsible for the debates this narrative sparked on its publication in book form. It is interesting to note that while the column ran in the newspaper space it did not receive any backlash that I know of; but once it appeared in book form, a controversy played itself, ironically, in the print media. The debate ran in the two national dailies, *The Nation* and *The Standard*, for a span

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45 *Mambo Leo* published Swahili travelogues by writers including "Mtemi Balele Masanja's 'Safari ya Watawala wa Afrika ya Mashariki kwenda Mashariki ya Kati' [A Journey of East African Chiefs to the Middle East] and Pera bin Ridhiwani's 'Vijana 30 wa Mnyanjani, Tanga, Kwenda Kulizuru Kaburi la Sheikh Sayid Ahmadi, Mombasa' [Thirty Youths from Mnyanjani, Tanga, Pay a Visit to the Tomb of Sheikh Sayid Ahmadi, Mombasa]" (Geider 64).

of two months, with different scholars voicing criticism about both the language and content of the anthology.[46] In one of the articles, literary critic Evan Mwangi opines that the narrative fails to capture the profound issues of postcolonial Africa. He describes the travelogue as a collection giving the impression of emptiness (Mwangi). Contesting this view, Tom Odhiambo, argues that while the text may not reflect the philosophical poignancy that Mwangi expects, it mirrors the everyday experiences and realities of people in Nairobi and provides an archive of urban culture. Odhiambo's defence of Mochama is twofold; he rebuts Mwangi's argument by virtue of the direct connection he has to the text's production and his position as a literary critic. He is one of the main editors in the 'Contact Zones NRB Rogue' series that this travelogue is published under.[47] Looking at Odhiambo's defence within the parameters of the book series means thinking through the travelogue as a form that transgresses the expected. Mochama's guidebook, is not the conventional guidebook. While taking the form, Mochama stretches the possibilities of the form and through his accounts of movement across the city, reimagines urbanity.

I suggest that reading the text as a guidebook enables us to contemplate its working as an experiment and its "exploration of urban sensibilities" in Nairobi (Odhiambo; Mitoko; Nyanchwani). This controversy puts focus on the aesthetics of the text, something that could be explained by the journeys the narrative makes across genres (newspaper and book) by virtue of the style of writing used in both forms. The newspaper form where the narrative was initially published appeals to specific kinds of publics and styles which impose specific expectations on framing and functionality. In this section, I directly examine the form of the narrative in relation to the environments of its production. I argue that an understanding of the context enables the narrative to illuminate the specificities of the spatio-temporality at the centre of the events explored, thus, reveal an understanding of the city as multi-layered and fluid. A reading that is attentive to the contextual realities of environment of production and framing, demonstrates that the text is not just a guide about "hopping from one bar to another" as Mwangi observes, rather, the "hopping" serves to generate a map of the urban space which exposes how subjects negotiate urbanity in an era of complicated networks of exploitation and affirmation, pleasure and suffering. Mwangi's identification of 'emptiness' in Mochama's text is possibly drawn

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46 See Evan Mwangi's "On Tony Mochama and how to write even when one has really nothing to say," Stanley Mitoko's "Revealed: A dunderhead's guide to reading a booking with nothing to say," and Tom Odhiambo's "'Useless' writing has plenty of value for readers" all published in the *Daily Nation*, a Kenyan newspaper on concurrent Saturdays from September 26th 2015 to October 10th respectively; and Silas Nyanchwani's blog post "You should never listen to a book critic or a literature professor."

47 The 'Contact Zones NRB Rogue' is a book series which focusses on the complexities that the contemporary multiple new centres in the postcolonial space. The mandate of this book series hinges on marginal literature and forms that disrupt the accepted norms. By focussing on the night runner's escapades in the city, Nairobi is presented as "the vibrant metropolis in the East of Africa, a region that has always been a contact zone, buffering Southern Africa, Arabia and Asia via the Indian Ocean and connecting the North Atlantic centers and the Global South" (Mochama 141).

from his reading of the narrative within the lens of the conventional guidebook. Once one is removed from the constraints of trying to read the narrative within such a limiting framework, an extensive possibility of reading the city emerges.

Mochama frames the journeys around the city through the persona of the night runner. This figure is borrowed from the circulating public mythography in Kenya, affirming the interconnection between the reader, writer, and narrator. The night runner is a familiar figure in Kenyan public mythology due to the extensive circulation of myths, rumours and tales about the elusive figure. The night runner is originally seen as a mysterious character that "run[s] and danc[es] naked during the night with an aim of causing evil" and disturbance (Middleton and H.Winter 62, 225). Ethnographic studies such as Middleton and Winter's reveal the prevalence of this practice in the East and Central Africa regions. This definition locates night running within practices of the occult which serves as the background of how the idea is implied here. In calling the narrator 'night runner,' Mochama invites an intertextual relationality connection between the narrator and the mythographic figure, one that illuminates. A reading of how this mobile figure navigates the city. Mochama's claims of affiliation between his persona and the occultic figure of night runner draws attention to both a transgressive intentionality and a particular approach to seeing the city. Mochama taps into the figure of the night runner that has become part of everyday culture in Kenya and in the process address different kinds of publics, from the everyday readers of the newspaper to urbanites.

Warner considers publics to be metacultural; for him, publics cannot be limited to one viewpoint but are always put together by distinct conditions which shift all the time. Mochama's adaptation of a concept that circulates in Kenyan public spaces is an intentional fashioning of different publics for his narrative. This allusion to the night runner is a reference to the myths, rumours and tales within the public and private domains that reference the figure. Grace A. Musila provides a delineation of the networks of access public mythology opens up. In her critical exploration of the Julie Ward murder and the popular myths surrounding it, Musila examines how rumours and truths circulate and are interpreted in public spaces to create narratives that form part of the social reality of a people. She argues that in high profile assassinations in Kenya and political murders, myths and rumours "often serve to reinforce the shroud of fear and paranoia that haunts [such] cases" (Musila 38). Rumours and myths serve as ways through which the public intervenes in attempting to come to terms with their social realities and how certain events fit into them. Musila points to print media as one of the sites where such myths and rumours circulate and are updated forming part of what she terms "Kenyan public memory" (Musila 44). Following Warner and Musila, I read the figure of the night runner in Mochama as deliberate address utilising 'Kenyan public memory' on night running thus invoking and

inviting particular standards of approach and reading; forms that foreground transgression and masking as key entities of night running.

Print media has played a major role in formulating publics through the nodes of circulating myths and representations of the figure throughout the years. It is a common phenomenon to encounter stories of suspected witches and night runners being murdered or their houses being demolished in local dailies in Kenya.[48] The prevalence of such cases during election periods notwithstanding (Ogembo 9), such narratives are constantly framed and re-framed in the media through the ways in which the public interprets and translates the figure and the practice of night running.[49] "Crazy Monday," for instance, is a weekly magazine within *The Standard* newspaper that offers a rich archive of both fictionalised and real narratives concerning night running. When Mochama names his persona as night runner, he enters a field that is already permeated with narratives about the night runner and hopes to convoke different publics as voyeurs in his travels across the city.

Mochama takes advantage of the slippery identity of the night runner to interrogate stable notions of seeing and relating to the urban space. This elusiveness is traced to the affiliative ties Mochama's urban night runner shares with his occultic ancestor Nyamwamu:

> Nyamwamu, it is said, was born in the middle of the 19th century, and sometime in the 1890s, the man became … a Night Runner. The real deal. Nyamwamu had two wives and when the full moon rose he would order them to make erongori [porridge], kill a chicken and, leaving the flesh to them, he would mix the chicken's blood in the porridge and take it down in a slurp. Nyamwamu would then strip naked and go roll in black mud outside, before streaking into the darkness, howling at the moon as he ran! ... Nyamwamu would charge fully naked into these [beer parties] bashes [he] would then drink all the chang'aa …. The funny thing is, by day, he seemed to have no recollection of his nocturnal sprints and spirit stealing. Nor did any of the villagers dare to ask him. (Mochama 126)[50]

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[48] A search on night running within The Standard through its digital imprint (https://www.sde.co.ke) reveals a multitude of articles and news stories over the years on one aspect or the other concerning night running. One is bound to come across general news reports of suspected night runners being lynched and arrested, legal pronouncements and parliament discussions on bills relating to witchcraft and witch hunts, as well as fictional stories involving night running and uncanny phenomena surrounding the concept.

[49] See "Cultural Narratives, Violence, and Mother-Son Loyalty: An Exploration into Gusii Personification of Evil" where Justus M. Ogembo examines the Gusii community's involvement in night running and witch hunts that happened in 1990-92 period. While his article explores the disconnect between mother-son mythography connecting women and witchcraft, it is evident that there seems to be a close tie between the increase in witch hunts and politics of the day. The same phenomenon was experienced in Kenya during the 2007-08 post-election violence where a number of people suspected to be night runners and witches were displaced from their homes and their property burned down. While this is an interesting issue to explore, this study uses such manifestations as cases in point of the ways in which the myths and rumours surrounding night running and witchcraft find their way constantly into print media.

[50] Chang'aa is a traditional spirit made in many parts of Kenya. It is distilled from grains such as millet, maize or sorghum.

By relaying the story of Nyamwamu, the narrative suggests, that the urban night runner shares similar features. In this regard, the notion of realism becomes a complicated sense. Like his distant relation, Mochama's urban night runner, has a dual personality. Nyamwamu is a night runner by night and by day a different person who has no recollection of his nightly activities. The suggestion hinted by the ritualistic drinking of the concoction made of chicken blood is that, through this action, the night runner transcends the physical reality and accesses the magical realm during moments of night running. Perhaps the lack of recollection is informed by the fact that as a night runner he operates in a different realm. Similarly, the persona as night runner, embodies a split personality—the night runner and the journalist. For the narrator the night affords him a veil to shift from journalist to night runner. A closer look at the narrative focalisation in *Nairobi: A Night Guide*, confirms that for the narrator, the divide is not as clearly demarcated as it is with Nyamwamu. The consistency of the fluid shifting from journalist to night runner blurs the boundaries of real and fantastical simultaneously enabling the text to emerge as a complex shifting across realms.

The embodied personas of the night runner and journalist share curiosity about their environments, though manifest differently in the way they occupy space. The journalist approaches spaces with the mask of respectability and judgement while the night runner has none of these pretensions. The journalist persona also manifests an ideological leaning in his approach to spaces. This leads to the same pitfalls identified in Wainaina's in the previous chapter. In that chapter, I noted that in the repeated viewing of the Nandi woman, Wainaina demonstrates the centrality of discursive learning in the way people approach spaces. Discourses become embedded in the way subjects think, frame or relate to spaces. Thus to imagine an innocent vision becomes impossible. In this narrative, the journalistic aspect of the narrator reflects this kind of ideological leaning drawn from the West while the night runner embodies a rejection of such and an embracing of local lens learning. Both positionalities shape different ways of approaching the space of travel.

At a time when travel writing is obsessed with aspiring for realism, Mochama's use of this subversive figure as narrative persona challenges the guidebook's simple realism. This complication is directly linked to the way the night runner is positioned as a seer, in this regard, the night runner is seen as both witness and prophetic figure. The search for a connection between the author with his distant genealogical relation is a narrative sociability across time, something that links the two times in the act of night running. At the same time, it allows for an intimate relationality between the experiences of mobility in the modern city with its distant form. What is more, the identity of the night runner as a disruption of the real invests in the text a different order of visibility in the urban space.

The journalist is influenced by the background and expectations of his trade as well as ideological consciousness that is embedded in his psyche as he travels. He also embodies institutional power of

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the media. He thus operates on what Islam refers to as the rigid planes of travel. The rigid plane of travel involves movement conditioned by limits initiated by one's inflexible ideological learning, which frame the traveller's gaze on the spaces of travel. To borrow Pratt's words, the journalistic discourse in Mochama's narrative acts as the narrator's 'planetary consciousness' through which he accesses the city. This perspective is limiting, hence Mochama's adaptation of the night runner as alter ego or alternative gaze. The night runner proves useful as he is exempt from what is considered the normal order of perceiving things in the world. The night runner as a liminal figure, may be seen as a vulnerable gaze, which is unassuming hence becomes the node that initiates a fracture from the judgemental and ordered sight of the journalist. Framing the narrative through the contradictions in the persona's shifting identity ensures the reader is intentionally asked to question the representation given at every step. If we think of the city as one filled with different layers of fictions embodied in the urban architecture of places, then the shifting narrative persona serves as the perfect figure to explore the intricacies of the city (de Certeau 92). What I am saying is that, if the city is complicated by different layers of masking, then what better figure to trace its character than one riddled with similar complications like the night runner? The split persona works well for the urban night runner as it provides the option to adopt judgement or free oneself from such ties which may limit observation of the city.

The merger of the narrator and alter ego in the narrative is given subtly. In one instance the narrator observes:

> Unlike most others at the camp, I embrace the coming of the night— for that is when I am in my element. …. Like a shadow, the Night Runner lingers at the periphery of this human gathering, imagining the countless centuries of men and women before us who have crouched around fires at night for sanctuary. I know most of us think mobile telephony must be the greatest invention…the Night Runner will just take a glass of white wine and slowly move farther away from the others (who are telling camp fire tales) into the night. Maybe we will meet an animal, maybe not. But, whatever happens, the stars in the outdoors remain forever bright—like glass tears on a constellation chandelier. (Mochama 83-84)

The narrator effortlessly shifts from the "I" narrator to referring to himself in the third person when he takes on the tag "night runner". This representation allows him to occupy both the inside and the peripheral positions in this space. The night runner persona emerges as an out-of-body other within the psyche of the narrator. This complicates the descriptive angle given as the text suggests different layers informed by, in some instances, the night runner, and in others, the "I" narrator. The "I" narrator is positioned as part of the collective team camping by the fire and the reading public by extension. On the other hand, his night runner alter ego occupies an outsider's position. The duality of the narrator invests dialogism within the narrating subject. The narrating persona is part of the spaces he

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describes but also removed from them. The narrative merges these different perceptions within the same space in the representation. The night runner, the journalist and the traveller have different perceptions and positionalities in relation to encounters. The slippery nature of the narrator enables him to shift from a journalist to night runner fluidly thus providing the text with an internal dialogism that allows the narrator to reflect on tensions in spaces and within self.

This structure runs throughout the narrative with the first person narrating voice being permeated with third person phrasing such as, 'The Nairobi Night Runner', 'Night Runner', or 'the Runner'.[51] The fragmentation inherent in the split narrative personalisation suggests a difficulty in mapping the reality of the city as it is one space that is always in a state of flux. The complexity of the narrative voice also suggests anxiety within the narrator as a figure displaying his knowledge of the city. Mochama seems to be aware of the shortfalls of each of his persona's knowledge of the city. The split persona of the night runner/journalist serves as a critique of the reductive and monoglossic idea of the real in conventional guidebooks and at the same time, enables the narrative to lay claims of knowledge about the city within notions of unknowability.

The guidebook by virtue of its style utilises descriptive language to offer a visual representation of sites. The form is usually limited to capturing the experiences through invoking visuality. In privileging the visual order, guidebooks propagate "senselessness of geography" (Barthes, "The Blue Guide" 71). Representations that concentrate on the visual aspect of spaces sometimes run the risk of essentialism. Guidebooks, for instance, have been known to capitalise on out-of-city spaces which mostly lend themselves to such one-sided descriptions. A case in point is guidebooks on Kenya, which concentrate on sites such as the coast (beaches, resorts, Fort Jesus and Vasco da Gama Pillar), game parks and reserves, and natural attractions such as mountains and the Great Rift Valley as tourist worthy sites. In their descriptions of such spaces the historical is only added to enhance the commodity value of the spaces. Barthes in 'The Blue Guide' argues that when guidebooks concentrate on representing the visual, they erase other aspects such as historicity and temporality which are contingent on capturing the character of places. While the visual is a significant aspect of the seen, spaces embody more than that. Mochama's narrative subverts the nature of the guidebook to foreground the visual.

In concentrating on the urban, Mochama reimagines the dimensions of worthiness afforded to spaces. Mochama is joining a rising number of creative and critical scholars that are redefining tourist-worthiness of urban spaces. Through the shifting narrative voice, Mochama invests in the guidebook

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[51] In one instance, the narrator says, "the Night Runner blinked as he hit the paved streets of the city" (22); in another, "[t]he Night Runner knows a good night before it happens" (69); and yet still in another, "[t]he Night Runner only night-runs on Wednesday" (96).

the capacity to inflect historicity and temporality, aspects that redefine the city as a poignant site complicated by multi-levels of the real. In one of his journeys around Nairobi, the narrator reflects on what he calls the 'postcard city illusion.' This emerges as an observation of the city from the top of Chester House:

> The sun scintillates off Lilian Towers, making the building sparkle like bubbles in a champagne glass … the city seems awash with trees so that pink buildings in Parklands, like Stima Plaza seem to peer like a child's eyes between fingers out at the city. Red-bricked Norfolk Apartments too, is swathed in trees, at least from this eagle-eyes' point of perspective. The spire of St. Paul's, also tree-cloaked, looks like the proverbial red needle in the haystack. (Mochama 18)

The description maps the architecture of the buildings in relation to the urban plan of Nairobi. As the narrator notes, the image of Nairobi from the top is spread out like a painting, or a postcard that creates the illusion of magnificence. The descriptions give an impression of grandeur achieved by the architecture refracted through the angle of view and the setting sun. These descriptions mimic the conventional guidebook form which privileges visual sight that limits the city to an exotic image. They thus follow the wide brushstrokes that Wainaina's satire on writing about Africa suggest.

The postcard city has no character, rather, it is a mass of geometrical balance of modernity; the perfect illusion of progress in the African city. Mochama's 'postcard' city illusion can be likened to Michel de Certeau's image of Manhattan from a top the World Trade Center. de Certeau contends that the view of the city from the top is a fiction propagated by the architectural plan and its pretences of modernity. In reading the city through the top view, one runs the risk of flattening the city and erasing its identit[ies] as well as the identities of its occupants (de Certeau 91–92). Erasure in Mochama's top view of Nairobi is visible in the way the city emerges as a mass of buildings. This view suggests a totality; a panopticon where the narrator assumes a god-like position from which he through textual power of order, minimises the city to one panel—the postcard. Moreover, the image from the top creates in the viewer dominance and control over the city.

This top view emerges as a vertical gazing distanced from the actual space described. This distance puts in place a threshold between the gaze and the city hence initiates invisibility that prevents the narrator from seeing beyond the architecture. This distance is different from the one alluded to in the previous chapter where we examined distance in terms of geographical movement and ideological consciousness. While in that chapter the travellers traverse wide geographical distances in lived spaces, their boundaries were both of a geographical nature and ideological consciousness disallowing them from accessing the other. In this case, the distance is less of a geographical and ideological nature, and more of a purposive and formal nature which facilitates a certain kind of [in]visibility. The allowances subsumed by the wide brushstrokes of the metaphors accorded the

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architecture of the city (which emerge from the elevated positioning of the traveller) act as a means through which the city's complexity is erased.

This aerial view initiates what Johannes Fabian calls a "denial of coevalness" (26). This concept refers to the "persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s)… in a Time other than the present of the producer of… discourse"(Fabian 31). I read the aerial view as a frozen view that has become commodified through the tourist economy. In essence, the night runner's positioning atop Chester House simply enables a reiteration of this discourse through narrative form. The 'post-card city' view of Nairobi brings to mind modes of seeing which create a distancing effect that makes the representation read like something from a different time. Even though the narrator is located within the city and claims it as his space of dwelling, his distanced position deters him from accessing the city beyond the architecture. de Certeau argues that underneath the order achieved by the fiction of the architecture of the city lies a magnitude of disorder emanating from the 'plurality of the real' (94). Which takes us back to the concern of this section, how does Mochama map the city's reality using a form that while aligning itself to pretentions of the real creates a totality?

It is interesting than even as a dweller, Mochama still finds the city a complex space. We could argue that in invoking the night runner, Mochama is rejecting the conventional ways of seeing for the transgressive ones. Mochama reveals the problematic nature of this privileged view of the city when he offers a parallel view from his navigation of the city as a night runner. This horizontal view is constructed out of the practice of the traveller actively occupying space in a specific way, most likely by walking. To examine this notion of spatio-temporality, I propose thinking of the city in Cliffordian terms, as a field. This delineation is informed by the narrator's position as traveller-in-dwelling. In this section, I approach travel-in-dwelling through Clifford who identifies the reality of the 21st century where subjects use their spaces of location as sites through which their mobility is managed. For the travellers-in-dwelling, the space of dwelling is their field—their space of navigation as well as materiality informing their travel writing. The field is thus a space of work and any attempt to define it entails a clear understanding of its spatio-temporal dynamics (Clifford, *Routes* 21).

The city is the narrator's space of work, as such his active occupation and observation are interactive ways through which the city is mapped. Defining space in the city becomes contingent on social agents and their active interaction. For Mochama, space becomes through the processes "practiced by people's active occupation, their movements through and around it …. It must be worked, turned into a discrete social space, by embodied practices of interactive travel" (Clifford, *Routes* 54). Before examining the narrator's navigation of Nairobi, we make a detour to Islam in order to link the dialogic nature of spaces with encounters. Islam notes that the ontological dynamic of space is riddled with assumptions of power and knowledge as produced by the dominating factor in spatial definitions.

This makes parallels with the view of the postcard city as a fiction of architecture, one defined by the dominant gaze. To breach such a dominant discourse within the architecture of the city, the bottom in itself does not offer a revision, rather the breach emerges from the way the narrator navigates space as a vulnerable figure. Islam notes that the only way to overcome the rigid definition of space is by overcoming individualism (10). In this case, the traveller has to step down from the know-it-all attitude of the dominant gaze and approach spaces from a point of vulnerability where travel is a transaction. Once the traveller breaches this gap, then the invisible networks beneath the pretentions of the architecture emerge, and the city's character becomes visible. The traveller has to become an active agent that reciprocates the agency of the city which Quayson locates in the layers of signification underneath the official image (Quayson 17–20). In Quayson's contention, the African urban space always defies the institutional view grounded in the architecture.

This removal of the traveller's gaze from a point of dominance initiates vulnerability in the gaze as a strong point of negotiating meaning. I argue for a consideration of the adoption of the night runner as this stripping of the travelling subject of all sense of individuality making him feel as a vulnerable gaze. As a journalist, Mochama claims to know the city he navigates by night, however, in embracing the figure of the night runner, he intentionally opens himself up to the city. Navigating the city then becomes an experience which in itself is imbued with newness and not oblivious knowledge. The narrator argues that "[t]he reality on the ground is, of course very different …. Between the reality and the illusion lies a chasm, as wide as day and night" (Mochama 19). What this means is that the sight from the bottom, sight devoid of the privilege of familiarity and knowledge, opens possibilities, a challenge to the knowingness of the privileged defined by order and architecture imagined. The traveller then works to breach the threshold of invisibility demanded by the veil of modernity in the city. Hence the consideration of the city as the field—where the traveller is constantly drawing and breaching boundaries. To travel the city in Mochama's terms, is to live up to the idea of travel as travail. The work here being the act of pushing the veil of invisibility and letting go of one's assumptions of power in order to access the vicissitudes under.

One instance where the narrator navigates the city pushing the boundaries of the visible is given in his account about a visit to Modern Green (MG), a pub along Nairobi's Tom Mboya Street. The narrator observes:

> Half of them are prostitutes in short skirts or that trashy way of dressing that was last fashionable in the 1980s …. The barman is literally caged behind the counter .... His waiters hop about like vultures, and an old man with a sly face, adjusting liquor prices by the odd five or ten bob based on how inebriated a patron seems to be. The characters in MG almost all seem to be living on life's fringes. I notice an office-worker, a young man in a cheap suit, […] drinking cheap gin. It turns out he's just

been fired for unilaterally extending his New Year's Holiday by a week …. "Mdosi alinitumia SMS na hiyo bad news!" That's why he has bought all the day's papers—to check for job vacancies … both in the wanted sections and the obituaries.[52] (Mochama 10–11)

The narrator's description of MG is a shift from the suggestive tone of authority in the description of the city on top of Chester House. Here, the narrator locates himself as a peripheral figure observing the events from a marginal position. This description concentrates on the subjects inhabiting the space rather than the geometrical sense of the space. In foregrounding the subjects, Mochama reveals the socio-economic realities framing MG as a habitus for a particular client base. The tone constantly shifts from objective distance to subjective and reflective, something that can be attributed to the shifting narrative voice. The narrative simultaneously fuses journalistic tone which gives a detached view of MG's clientele with a vulnerability of the night runner which makes a personal and subjective critique of the nature of modernity embodied in this space. While it would be easy to assume MG's role as a place of urban leisure, the night runner reveals it as a site of extortion and exploitation. The old man is an embodiment of exploitation. By using the degrees of drunkenness of customers to determine the prices of liquor, he exploits inebriation for profits' sake. The reference of waiters as vultures extends this signification of exploitation. Using symbolism that alludes to animal references, Mochama's narrator presents this face of the city as a man-eat-man society that is complicated by the exploitative structures.

I read the description of MG along the lines provided by Said of thinking of travel writing as a genre that works through a citational tradition. In this regard, I see Mochama quoting from a vibrant genre of urban fiction in Kenya which became popular in the 1970s and 1980s. J. Roger Kurtz observes that the city is a site and symbol for the author's preoccupations. The city represents both the image of all the problems and successes of post-independence period (Kurtz 45). Mochama's description of MG echoes similar trends in urban novels by authors such as Meja Mwangi, Charles Mangua and David Mailu who were writing during this period.[53] His representation of prostitution in MG and the culture of drinking are a key focus of Mailu's *After 4.30* (1974) and Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* (1976). In this travelogue, Mochama's navigation of the city follows this earlier trend where the city was seen as a "space, a place, or a particular set of practices that govern[s] the everyday life of its dwellers" (Odhiambo, "The City as a Marker of Modernity in Postcolonial Kenyan Popular Fiction" 51). In describing MG, Mochama, captures the contradictions of the city as striving for one thing

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[52] The quote given in Swahili, a language spoken in East Africa translates to "No, the boss sent me an SMS with that bad news" (Translation in Mochama 11)

[53] Some of the works produced by these authors include *Kill Me Quick*, Going Down River Road, and *The Cockroach Dance*, David Mailu published *After 4:30* and *My Dear Bottle* among others. All of which were centred on Nairobi. Charles Mangua's *Son of Woman* focusses on Nairobi while his other text *Son of Woman in Mombasa* moves to a different urban space, Mombasa.

while propagating a different image. This history is represented in humorous language that illuminates the different regimes of value and meaning in MG and its patrons.

This space alone qualifies the view of the city as a hybrid space that is multi-layered with contradictory ideals, a situation that makes interpreting it all the more complicated. In this regard, the city is thus "a text in itself" and Mochama is grappling with interpreting this text (Odhiambo, "The City as a Marker of Modernity in Postcolonial Kenyan Popular Fiction" 55). Every actor and every space narrated is highly charged with dialogic capacity. The histories of MG and the lives of its patrons, for instance, suggest a layered sense of space and subject. MG – the morgue and the pub are symbolisations of the ambience of loss and dystopia. Both events do not seem to have connection to pleasure and leisure, expected in travel narratives. This is a transgressive reading of the urban pub, which has most often been seen as a space for leisure. The city is a site where a multitude of cultural codes, languages, and realities that intrude, inform, and challenge each other emerge.

The young man also demonstrates the contradictory nature of the city through language and actions. He uses sheng, "a mixed language that emerged from the complex multilingual situation of Nairobi city" (Githiora, "Sheng: Peer Language, Swahili Dialect or Emerging Creole?" 159). Early studies on Sheng locate the slang as originating in the Eastlands area of Nairobi (Nabea 135). However, recent research on the language show that the language use has spread to most urban and rural areas of Kenya, most predominantly among the youth, but also manifesting in other sectors (D. A. Samper; Githinji 130–32; Githiora, "Sheng: The Expanding Domains of an Urban Youth Vernacular" 111, 117). What this study finds interesting, is the link of Sheng to a growing sub-culture within urban areas. Chege Githiora defines this as a 'street language' ("Sheng: Peer Language" 160), a lingo that gives its users street credibility and insider status within the urban culture. Sheng forms part of the way in which urbanites navigate the harsh terrain of Nairobi. It is a language that affords its users the power to transgress the norms imposed by the city and the postcolonial pressures of life. This language form part of how subjects perform their credibility and authority in the urban space.

Mochama's descriptive tone juxtaposed with the sheng used by the young man as well as his preferred space of job search, the obituaries section of the newspaper, reveal the contradictory nature of the city and the ephemeral nature of struggles and negotiations undertaken by the different characters in the city. In this case, the young man's sheng manifests code-mixing where aspects of Swahili, for instance, alinitumia [he sent me], are mixed with English terms, such as, 'bad news' as well as a coinage, 'mdosi' [boss], to express the young man's positionality in the city. The young man is representative of the urban dwellers who are multilingual and manifest different degrees of competency. Sheng being the language of contradictions and tensions, frames not just the contradictions in the predicament the young man finds himself in, but also the general predicament

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of characters within the city. Sheng frames a "fluid, ephemeral identity that is constantly in the process of re-definition and re-negotiation" (Samper 4). Githiora argues that sheng is prevalent with "vocabulary of violence" which manifest the realities of its users as either involved in one or other form of criminality or as products of the culture of violence (Sheng: Peer Language 170). I read Mochama's representation of this young man as a suggestion of the urban culture in Nairobi as inflected with characters grappling with different dimensions of violence or violation in order to survive the space that in itself violates the subjects. The young man's expression of loss of job as well as the urgent need for another imply a continuity in the exploitation and violation of subjects in the city. When the young man turns to the wanted and obituaries sections of the newspaper, another level of violation emerges, in this regard, a violation of the dead. The coincidence of this event happening in a site that has historically been a morgue before makes the fluidity of urban spaces, and urban realities foregrounded. This plurality of MG is possible since the night runner's unassuming gaze approaches it on equal terms which allow him to see beyond the visual.

Mochama's city emerges as a site of complicated belonging and non-belonging for both the travelling subject and the other subjects that occupy the space. The city defies interpretation forcing the traveller to attempt to grasp it by invoking the liminal figure of the night runner. How does one offer a guide to a city that defies definition? This question is framed within the conventional assumption of the guide acting as a form of knowledge and authority about something. Mochama's insistence on using the night runner suggests an exasperation with knowability of the city. The city is seen as actively anticipating and rejecting any sense of knowability that the traveller claims about it. In this regard, then, the night runner as a liminal and shifty character works well to reveal the heterogeneity of Nairobi. This plurality is not only seen in places, but also extended to events which are contingent on a different dialectic of spatio- temporality.

Take for instance, the narrator's 'bar-hopping' which enables him to offer a uniquely African-city travel dynamic and mode of experiencing spaces. For instance, through his mobility practice across different night clubs, the narrator comes to an understanding of the soccer culture in Nairobi. Mochama frames 'bar-hopping' as ontologically determined by the relations of active occupation and processes of becoming embodied in specific time-planes rather than grounded in a geo-spatial reality. In one incident where the night runner visits a soccer club, he gives the following account:

> Inside, Hooters is empty .... The unforgettable memory from Hooters (Psys now) is from eleven years ago: the World Cup opening game where Senegal beat France with a single, unforgettable goal.
> After the game, we all raced into the streets —some of us as far as Mama Ngina, chanting "Se-ne-goal!" …. Today, as the English take on Paraguay, I can bet my last rouble that Hooters will be full to the roof …. After Hooters the Night Runner crosses over to the garden pub-and-restaurant at the

> Alliance Française building …. It used to be that there were these films called *Días de Fútbol*, from Spain. (Mochama 52)

The narrator maps soccer in Hooters through a dialogic interplay of forgetting, remembering and becoming which maps the space in a historical trajectory which foregrounds the many faces of the site. The only aspect of the present in Psys at the narrative time of account is absence framed by the noun 'empty.' In foregrounding emptiness, Mochama opens Psys to a historical multi-temporality which invites alternative imaginations of the place in its past as Hooters. Memory thus becomes a valuable source of making the past events part of the present of Psys. The noun 'empty' acts as an antecedent that enables interpolation of the past in the present moment of navigation of Psys. Thus, Psys becomes a site for negotiation of different temporal encounters with the soccer culture.

What is obvious in this incidence, is the fact of spaces being defined by the moment of encounter. It is interesting to note that in Psys, a multi-level layer of times is suggested. First, there is the narrated time which positions the narrator within Psys, the club that was formerly known as Hooters. The time of narration enables the narrator to transcend the present into the historical past of the same space in order to carve out a different but distinct reality of the space. The past carved involves the Senegal-France world cup opener in Seoul. This is the narrated time, which is in the past when the club went by a different identity and name. Contrasting the then of the club being filled with audiences spectating the match with the now of the narrator facing an empty club define the club as manifesting a heterogeneity of sorts. To add onto these distinct time zones is the present of reading process where a quick google search revealed that this particular pub was closed down in 2017 and the space taken up by a coffee house.[54] The city does not have a distinct culture and definition that is in stasis, rather, every space is always in a state of flux. From the name changes, the event specificities, to total overhauls, the city is a fluid space and in defining its character, it is necessary to archive this fluidity. Mochama's navigation of the different timescapes within the description of Psys (Hooters) captures the unstable nature of events and spaces. Popular culture and its consumption patterns differ across the spectrum. The night runner as a fluid entity manages to enter both scenes by virtue of his ability to shift identities and access different temporalities depending on the different personas of place.

When Psys and Alliance Française are juxtaposed as sites where soccer culture emerges in Nairobi, a socio-political dynamic of class in the way the city is mapped is revealed. The side by side description of Hooters and Alliance Française suggest the fact that different subjects negotiate leisure emanating from soccer in the urban space differently, and these different cultures of leisure are determined by not only the class stratification but also what Melissa Tandiwe Myambo calls 'cultural

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[54] See Silas Nyanchwani's article "12 Nairobi clubs that dies but still in our memories" in *Nairobi Cool*.

time zones'. Cultural time zones are microspaces where one space shares a proximity with another one; these are zones of similarity (Myambo, "Frontier Heritage Migration in the Global Ethnic Economy" 278). For Mochama, the shared relation is introduced through a virtual travelling contingent on the event of the actual match elsewhere which is accessed through virtual travel, another sense of travel-in-dwelling.[55] The audience in Hooters accesses the event of the game via virtual relationality. The different audiences across the world are connected temporally and spatially by the technological allowances of the virtual space in real time. This collapses the distances between the geo-spatiality of the field where the game is played and the geo-spatiality of the soccer club or other spaces where the virtual meeting happens. In this regard, the soccer club gains a commonality with imagined communities of soccer fans across the world who virtually travel-in-dwelling to the event of the match. The virtual space of real-time relay of the game serves to connect audiences all over the world to the event in Seoul and the celebration at the end emerge from the outcome of the event accessed virtually. This dynamic of relationality changes the relation between the local and the global (Myambo, "Fontier Heritage Migrants" 85–86). This is a case of the global network of interconnections between the different physical spaces all connected by the timescape of the event of the Senegal-France match.

The Alliance Francaise *Dias de futbol* events unlike the soccer matches in Psys, operate on reel time rather than real time, and thus carry a lesser intensity. The idea of narrativization of soccer when removed from the real time urgency still provides audiences with a sense of a community. In the film instance, the ambience is defined by the fictionality of the story, something the audiences are aware of as they encounter the event. While different cultural time zones could emerge from it, the live soccer event embodies a transience that is valued more for its fleetingness. This cannot be repeated since once it is repeated, it is viewed on a similar plane of secondary ephemerality as the film. The two scenarios offer different conceptions of the real focalised through different temporal frames.

An element of urban leisure emerges here. The mundane activity of watching a sport, when framed within the collective space of a club creates a particularly urban idea of leisure. In Mochama's case, he does not just locate the sporting event but its remote access as the event of encounter that is pleasurable. Leisure in this city space affirms Christopher M. Law's conception of creativity as central in urban tourism. Sporting events were not always central to the conception of leisure in the city but became part of the inventive entertainment cultures that redefine the city as a tourist spot (Law 88). The text's mapping of this event in a narrative present moment of encounter with Hooters

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[55] During that year, the World Cup was jointly hosted by South Korea and Japan. The France-Senegal match was played in Seoul, South Korea's capital city and when Senegal won the match it was considered one of the biggest upsets of the tournament.

suggests the fluidity of spatial meaning. Leisure emerges as an entity that transforms spaces and is transformed by space due to different logics of valuation in relation to forms of pleasure the different classes in the urban space need (Stevenson 360). Cultural studies scholar, Deborah Stevenson intimates that encountering and defining leisure is dependent on the different class distinctions and their idea about leisure.

Mochama's narrative suggests distinct class consciousnesses in relation to soccer culture in the city. The club appears as an open scene while Alliance Française is reserved for a select few who prowl the art scenes of the city. Regardless, each has an identity that is unique to itself and versions of pleasure derived from the scenes provide a diversity of sensibilities for the city. While club soccer culture is contingent on temporality of events, Alliance Française is valued more for the ambience than the event. Through this diversity we realise that there is no particular culture of soccer in the urban centre, at the same time, it is not possible to pin down the character of the city. The city is the site where the local meets the global both in the architecture, interactions, and events. Soccer culture is part of the everyday forms of leisure within the city which connect the local with the global. Sam Elkington, notes that sites of the everyday are constrained by both the "ordinary and self-evident" as well as the "extraordinary and opaque" (Elkington 36). In the urban space the possibilities for travel and leisure emerge from identifying creative ways to position oneself. In envisioning soccer culture as part of the pleasure components within travel around the city, Mochama is redefining travel and tourism within the notion of the everyday. The guide then becomes a reflection on the city and how it opens itself to different discourses and representative cultures.

Spaces in the city such as clubs and cultural centres embody a faster pace of temporal fluidity than those within the conventional idea of tourism. For such spaces in the city, pleasure emerges out of events that are constrained by time and spatial negotiation which is unique to every aspect of spatial work. At the same time, through an active negotiation of the spaces through bar-hopping, the narrative locates the club as a distinct vernacular of travel in urban spaces in Africa. Such spaces have a unique sense of spatiality which "enable their users to animate the space, allowing their mobility" and enabling a conflicted order of being to emerge (Ombagi 106). Although Eddie Ombagi reads the club as a queer space, I take up his idea of the club as an inherently transgressive space to tease out the possibilities of such spaces to constantly inflect a fluidity in the way subjects read them and locate themselves in them. The club is thus a site that enables travellers to come to terms with their mobility as well as the ephemeral nature of space.

Mochama demonstrates that every space is dialogic. One instance is in the paradoxical naming in Garage, Gachie. Gachie is situated in the outskirts of Nairobi. It is one of the outgrowing areas linked to the city. The narrator's impression of Garage is seen when he remarks that, "[n]aturally, there is

no garage in sight, just as there will be no water at a place called Kwa Maji, nor a slippery slope at a place called Mteremko Terere, nor a door of any kind in Mlango Kubwa" (Mochama 12).[56] This is a suggestion of the ambiguous nature of naming in the contemporary urban Nairobi, something that reflects the slipperiness of the city. While names of places suggest particularity of meaning, the places in the active act of occupation, disrupt the said meanings confirming Bakhtin's idea of words, in this case, names as contaminated by histories in the words and places. Such names signify transience within spaces. Psys and Hooters as names suggest a temporal journey across historical moments. Similarly in Gachie, the names are demonstrative of a submerged geography; one that has been overlaid by urbanity. The name Garage may be taken as a signification of the change the space has manifested due to the influence of urban planning and development. Such names are thus archives of unknown histories, histories assumed to have been erased but offering footprints of the past in the present. Still, as the narrator notes, a number of places embody the symbolism in the naming: "if a place, though, is called Kona Mbaya, don't dare loiter at night around there unless you fancy being mugged or murdered" (12).[57] What is suggested in the narrative dwelling in such contradictions in naming is that in Nairobi, things are not always as they seem and one needs to look beneath the surface to access the contradictions under. Every aspect of the city is not a given, but a play that one has to negotiate through encounter. Names create fictions of the real signifying presences and non-presences which the traveller affirms or disavows in the practice of spatial negotiation.

Naming is part of the organising principle at the centre of discourses on spaces; it is also the site from which 'things extra' emerge (de Certeau, 107). The general principle of naming in Gachie points to an incongruence that extends to the descriptive logic within the space. For instance, in one butcher's shop:

> A crude mural on the wall shows a fat cow 'talking' to a man…. The cow is complaining, 'We mchinga unaona nimenona, si uchinje mimi unipeleke kwa butchery ya Njuguna?' This is one bovine with suicidal tendencies, the Night Runner muses.
>
> On another wall painting that surely was not done by Michelangelo, an obese man asks an obscenely drawn woman, 'Wewe unajienjoy?' 'Naji-enjoy,' Ms Obscene's speech bubble confirms.[58] (Mochama 13)

The mural situates the ambiguity of Garage as manifested both in naming and lived realities. Through humour in narrative description of the butcher's shop, Mochama manages to situate incongruity as

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[56] The Swahili terms used translate as follows: 'Kwa Maji' translates to at the water, 'Mteremko Terere', a slippery slope and 'Mlango Kubwa' as big door.

[57] 'Kona Mbaya' translates to dangerous corner

[58] The complain of the cow translates to 'You idiot, you see I'm fat, why don't you slaughter me and take me to Njuguna's Butcher shop?' (Translation in Mochama 13). In the other exchange, the obscene man asks the woman if she is enjoying herself and she replies in the affirmative.

part of the atmosphere of the shop. The description of the mural locate the butcher's shop as reaching for a humorous understanding of characterizing the city. Notice the linguistic performance of humour through the usage of sheng and exaggeration. This version of sheng is as distinct as the version given earlier in MG, a typical urban space, giving a suggestion of there being dialects of sheng (Githiora, "Sheng: Peer Language, Swahili Dialect or Emerging Creole?" 160). The mural demonstrates a commodity culture in which sheng circulates through display and other texts within public culture. In this regard, I wish to make a note of the fact that Mochama extensively uses sheng throughout the text. The transformative capacity of the textual space – both of the mural and the literary text— suggest the shifting dynamics of sheng as more than just an urban culture. Sheng is becoming a phenomenon that cuts across different regions of Kenya, it has now become part of urban culture of transgression (Githiora, "Sheng: The Expanding Domains of an Urban Youth Vernacular" 106).

As much as this butcher's shop performs urbanity, it is still removed from the centre as it is only a peripheral space both in geographical location as well as performance. At the same time, it confirms what we have already pointed out regarding urban spaces—the city shows different spatial characters contingent on the geography and intercultural encounters. The caricature in the mural indicates the fact that Gachie seems to border on the profane. There is a macabre sense of humour in the way the mural of a cow asking to be slaughtered is displayed in a butcher's shop. In highlighting this mural, the narrator re-designs the butcher's as one place that transgresses the expected order. Everything about Gachie, operates on a different logic, one which mimics the urbanism of the city but still distinctly defies its architectural logic. It is clear that Mochama utilises Sheng mostly in spaces where he intends to describe or explore the transgressive. In this regard, Sheng becomes the language of transgression and disruption of norms of the day.

From these descriptions of moments of encounter and places in the city, Mochama suggests the city as a space that does not easily lend itself to description. Mochama's view of Nairobi is alive with cultures and personalities drawn from the many interconnections with other places. The night runner as a narrating persona enables this guide to negotiate the many layers of the city paving way for extensive networks of relations to emerge that give rise to alternative ways of seeing. Night running as a subversive subject-position on the margins provides a basis for travels against the grain of the official order. This is informed by the narrative's spelling that "[t]o be a Night Runner, you have got to rebel against the order of nature" (Mochama 35). In this examination, night running emerges as a form that involves the sensitivity to "stop seeing [urban spaces] as geographical locations and rather interpret them as lively expressive archives of urban realities" (Quayson 129). This involves letting go of one's conscious, ever-present judgemental nature of seeing spaces in order to really encounter them. This perceptiveness of the night runner is what qualifies this guidebook as more than an

accounting of the physicality of spaces, but one encompassing characterization, or what other scholars refer to as 'thick description'. *Nairobi: A Night Guide* works as a disruption of the order in the city and unearthing of the sense of the city, affirming the fact that the city defies interpretation.

This section has demonstrated how redefining travel through the figure of the night runner claims to offer an intensification of the experience of the city in the night. Through exploring spaces for their identity and aura, the night runner not only captures the geographical realities that the guidebook does but also gives a sense of the sociocultural identities of the places and the people as interconnected beings. What we then realise is that the city is full of contradictions which inform the realities of those living or traversing it. In the next section, we continue with exploration of how newspaper genre of travel writing informs experiences by turning to Alba Kunadu Sumprim's *A Sense of Beautiful Nonsense*.

The Imported Ghanaian as Narrative Strategy in Alba Kunadu Sumprim's *A Place of Beautiful Nonsense*

Alba Kunadu Sumprim's *A Place of Beautiful Nonsense* positions itself in a similar manner to Mochama's *Nairobi a Night Guide*. Both texts involve protagonists who travel within their urban place of dwelling. Mochama invests in a narrative persona that over-extends himself through his alter ego, a figure drawn from popular culture in Kenya. Sumprim, on the other hand, draws her protagonist from her conflicted history of belonging within Ghana. Sumprim is a Ghanaian who was born in the UK. She was raised and has lived in the UK, Ghana, Cuba, and Brazil. Her narrative, like Mochama's, initially appears as a serialised column for *Daily Dispatch,* a Ghanaian newspaper. The newspaper frame of initial publication locates Sumprim's narrative as primarily directed towards Ghanaian publics; the tone, contextual specificities, and narrative address imply as much. However, the anthologised book form that is utilised in this study enables the narrative to transcend to publics beyond Ghana, especially varieties of imported Ghanaians and other travellers interested in Ghana. The book form's order and culture of circulation paralleled to that of the newspaper enable the narrative to reach a wider range of publics in and beyond Ghana.

As confirmed in Mochama, travel writing in the continent has a close relation with the print media as a site of experimentation. Within the Ghanaian print media space, a number of notable authors have utilised the space. For instance, Togbi Yao, whose travel writing can be traced back to the late 1960s to 1970s in the *Sunday Mirror* wrote a number of travel narratives documenting his journeys within and beyond Ghana. The *West African Review* also published a lot of travel pieces in the period of colonialism both spanning domestic and intercontinental travel. For instance, 'A Soldier looks at

Takoradi and is Perturbed' by Moses Danquah was published in the magazine in October 1947. This travelogue details Danquah's shock at the transformations in Takoradi on his return from Burma.[59] Kofi Akpabli, discussed in chapter two, is another notable Ghanaian travel writer who uses the print media platform in Ghana. Akpabli runs a column, "Going Places" in the *Mirror* (previously known as *Sunday Mirror*) and contributes travel articles for *Daily Graphic* too.

A Place of Beautiful Nonsense is a series of first-person travel accounts in the form of intermediated satires incorporating prose and comics. The narratives relay Sumprim's experiences of travel in Accra, a city that she has dwelt in for a while.[60] The tales detail the Sumprim's frustrations with Ghanaians' way of doing things and her strategies of coping with the incongruities of living and travelling Accra. In reading Sumprim's narrative as a guide, I interrogate the way she balances her contestations about knowing the city and anxieties about unbelonging occasioned by her encounters with other Ghanaians. The narrative is focalised through the persona of an 'imported Ghanaian', a narrative persona that emerges from Sumprim's first text, *The Imported Ghanaian,* as well as her condition of belonging in Ghana. 'Import' infers strangeness. It suggests movement from an outside space into the inside space. Fundamentally, it suggests relocation, which when taken literally, gives the impression of the position of the narrator as foreign. Although Sumprim is Ghanaian, her transnational heritage informed by being born and raised in countries outside of Ghana disrupt her insider identity as her world view is informed by all her heritages. Sumprim uses the figure of the imported Ghanaian to trace her conflicted positionality as both insider and outsider. The phrase 'imported Ghanaian' suggests liminality where the narrator is both of, and not of Ghana, and her attempts to lay claims to a conviction of belonging. The guidebook form thus allows Sumprim to channel her anxieties about belonging and lay claim to a knowledge of Ghana.

In taking ownership of her position as an imported Ghanaian, Sumprim embodies vulnerability. By locating herself as imported, Sumprim is inviting a sense of error in the traveller as absolute definer

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[59] The travelogue makes note of the fact that African soldiers were conscripted to fight in the Second World War through the reference made about Danquah returning from Burma, which was one of the sites that many African soldiers were stationed. In recording the changing dynamics of Takoradi as an emerging urban centre, the narrative dismantles the notion within Eurocentric imaginary of African spaces as frozen in time. See Kwame Osei-Poku's "African Authored Domestic Travel Writing and Identity: A Returnee Soldier's Impressions of Colonial Life in Takoradi (Gold Coast)" for a longer discussion on Danquah's travelogue and others within the West African Review.

[60] The narrative also has a section documenting the narrator's travels in Lagos. However, this study concentrates on the larger part of the text that is dedicated to her journeys and dwelling around Accra. While this is the case, the conclusions I make about Accra are also true for her navigation of Lagos hence the omission in the discussion. At the same time, in excluding Lagos, I make the summation that a concentrated analysis reveals a larger argument that could be traced from the book to other travelogues that focus on the relation between the self and the space of encounter regardless of the context. In respect to the notion of dwelling in Accra, Sumprim points out that she has lived in Ghana for close to fifteen years. I am hesitant to refer to this move as 'relocation' or 'return' due to the fact that the two terms suggest a prior location in the place, which for Sumprim's narrator (as much as herself) is not true. The notion of 'return' will have an in-depth discussion in the next chapter where the distinctive disparity in Sumprim's occupation of Ghana and the selected texts in that chapter will emerge as well as the distinctiveness of the term.

and knowledgeable subject. The virtue of strangeness accrued by the notion of being imported, suggests a lack of complete knowledge which positions Sumprim in a vulnerable position that I consider as a freeing act, to refer back to Islam. In essence, the narrative establishes the traveller as one that is in the process of becoming, learning and knowing in the process of journeying. This perspective locates the traveller in the process of knowledge-making or enlightenment. By extension, it allows a convergence between Sumprim's dialectics of travel and imperial travel genre. It is interesting to note the narrator's insinuation of difference between herself as imported Ghanaian and the other imported Ghanaians by virtue of her prolonged stay. Throughout the narrative, Sumprim constantly references other returnees as 'they,' a signification that suggests a distinction between Sumprim and other imported Ghanaians. In locating herself as part of a 'we' that has assimilated in Ghana, Sumprim solidifies herself as a dweller, albeit different from the other dwellers that she refers to using the collective 'our people' or 'Ghanaians'. This multiplication of subjects within the space of dwelling into different degrees of belonging captured by the pronoun implications (they /we / our people/Ghanaians) suggest different degrees of familiarity which are seen as insinuations of claims to authority regarding knowledge of the place of travel. Sumprim is here echoing conventional travel writing where seasoned travellers lay claim to knowing the spaces of travel by virtue of their experience, either of travelling in general or of particularity regarding the space of travel. Nevertheless, her claim to authority is different from that seen in conventional travel writing because Sumprim does not claim a totality of knowledge. She does claim a privilege in her lengthy stay in Ghana.

A Place of Beautiful Nonsense advocates for possibilities of travel within dwelling. Clifford argues that dwelling when conceived of in relation to travelling implies a kind of competence (*Routes* 22). In this regard, we are forced to shift from a literal conception of travel to one that accounts for the "complex range of experiences: practices of crossing and interaction that trouble[d] … localism" (Clifford, *Routes* 3). Travelling here is seen as involving a range of "material, spatial practices that produce knowledges, … and other cultural expressions" (Clifford, *Routes* 35). In this intimation, I take the imported Ghanaian's complicated locatedness in Accra and her active interactions with other subjects in this place, politics of belonging and its anxieties, claims to knowingness and lack of it, as travel since they entail significant intercultural negotiation involving material and other practices of exchange. Travel happening in this manner nuances Islam's categorization of nomadism which suggests a bridging of the gap of difference by initiating alternative ways of seeing.

Although Sumprim's narrator is at times blinded by the claims of dominance as knowledgeable subject, she is a subject at crossroads. She navigates these mires of dominance through acceptance of vulnerability that frees her to access the multi-layered understanding of Accra. This new

understanding redefines the city as a contact zone, transforming the subject's understanding of travel, self and other. One of the poignant ways through which Sumprim makes a claim to defeat the limits of rigidity of sedentary travel is by the active negotiation of the everyday. The everyday informs the core of how subjects that travel-in-dwelling relate, interact and understand each other. Travelling in the everyday means seeing the mundane experiences as poignant surfaces for exploration as part of travels. An example of this is seen when the narrator gives an account of an incident where she sees a nice design of a jacket in *Cosmopolitan* magazine and takes the magazine to her tailor to have a replica made for her. After the elapse of the time promised by the tailor, she goes to pick the jacket and is surprised that the tailor has changed the design and made a different jacket. The tailor claims that "he had been a tailor for years and had sewn the jacket the way he always sews jackets" (Sumprim 129). This is an ordinary event that reveals alternate planes of discourse as informing the interactive processes of traveller and travellee. There is a dialogic tension emerging from the circulating local and global fashion ideologies. The narrator's desire for the jacket in *Cosmopolitan* magazine is suggestive of her intent to root herself as a local with a claim to global urban fashion culture. In the interest to adapt a design in a global magazine like *Cosmopolitan,* the narrator's foreign sensibilities manifest affirming her imported identity.

The narrator's frustration with the tailor stems from what she sees as the tailor's inability to transcend the local. In this incident, I argue that Sumprim suggests a perception of the tailor as non-traveller. This emerges out of her obstinate refusal to see the magazine's design. When the scene is analysed in totality, however, it is the narrator that does not travel. If travel is taken as a series of encounters, then the imported Ghanaian cannot be said to have encountered the tailor. It is important to also see the tailor's interpretation of the design as a means through which the local urbanisms asserting their own identity by transgressing the limits imposed by the global. The tailor's refusal to see the design in the magazine is a refusal to bend to Western modes of perception. Both subjects operate on a logic of boundedness which, as Islam notes, limit the interactive possibilities for both parties. They are travelling on rigid boundaries which essentially prevent any significant encounter. To breach the limits of encounter, there is a need to transcend individualism or one's sense of dominance (Islam 10). Islam reminds us that the process involves a lot of becoming, peeling off one's previous idea of gaze and seeing the space of travel with new eyes. I read Islam's suggestion as one where the traveller is expected to open themselves up to the other, they interact with. To be vulnerable to the other is to allow the other to see one's weakness; to let go of one's façade of control. This goes against the spirit of the guidebook to offer the traveller control. This incident is important as it enables the shortfalls of the dominant ways of seeing to emerge. It also allows us to comprehend the outcomes of such a limited way of seeing.

Sumprim also uses the story of her friend Alex, to demonstrate this failure of dominant ways of seeing. The narrator relays Alex's excited return to Ghana from the UK. Alex believes that as an imported Ghanaian she has the power to change Ghana. However, once in the country, she faces a lot of frustrations and finally packs her bags and returns to the UK. She is disappointed with the Ghanaians and what she refers to as their disregard for privacy. Noticeable in Alex's story is the way the narrative merges both comics and prose to narrativize this issue. The comic strip accompanying this prose account juxtaposes the dream versus reality of returning to Ghana condensed in fourteen panels. The comic strip collapses time through panelling and captioning. The panels make use of dialogue balloons, iconic and indexical signs to enhance interrogation of the encounters and meaning emergent from them. Situated within the comics is the fantasy that returnees have of changing the nations they return to. The same is seen reflected in the prose when the narrator talks of returnees expecting people to be grateful for their return and welcome them.

The comic strip does not just repeat the prose narrative, it also adds humour through the caricaturing of the iconographic reference to subjects. Such intermedia relations in the narrative enhance intensity of the narrated, achieving a greater impact than if it were just prose alone. Intermediality involves the "participation of more than one medium within a human artefact" (Wolf). Lars Ellestöm, notes that in examining intermedia relations it is necessary to identify modalities and qualifying aspects of the media and the way they relate to each other in order to reach a deeper understanding of the text as a whole (Ellestöm 13). The intermedia relations between the comic strip and the prose narrative in this particular case enable the text to translate abstraction to realism. The realism approximated here is one contingent on the reader transposing themselves onto the narrative space through the comics. This affirms Scott McCloud's assertion that iconography in comic strips acts as "a vacuum into which our [readers'] identity and awareness are pulled… an empty shell that we inhabit which enables us to travel in another realm" (41). Through these comics, other imported Ghanaians can see and be made to realise the fact that they are approaching Ghana through a different code which flags them as outsiders. The humorous representation invites publics made up of other imported Ghanaians as well as other travellers to laugh at idiosyncrasies of their imported perception about places they travel to. Their failure to assimilate is a failure to move beyond the limits imposed on them by their imported perceptions. Humour in this representation then becomes an effective mode of the narrator to critique her practice of travel and that of other travellers. In giving the story of Alex, the narrator is pointing out the problematic nature of travelling within rigid consciousness. This, however, does not necessarily explain how one ought to travel to overcome difference. This then enables this narrative as guide to serve as a manual for would-be travellers regarding how to approach spaces of travel. Sumprim suggests that travellers let go of their perceptions.

In representing Alex's story in a humorous manner, Sumprim manages to separate herself from other imported Ghanaian who fail to assimilate and paint an image of herself as a different kind of imported Ghanaian who successfully navigates the return. I find successes in some of her navigation of everyday encounters. This narrative proposes what she refers to as 'Ghana Moments' As a means through which travellers can overcome difference. The narrator's understanding of Ghana moments emerges in her conversations with Ghanaian friends. One tells her, "be thankful you are here, because this is one of the few places left on earth where every blessed day, you'll meet someone who'll do something you find so incredibly stupid or, and, side splittingly funny that you'd thank your lucky starts that you happen to be here …. You can complain all you want … or *find a way to enjoy it*". Another friend adds, "Ghana is a place of beautiful nonsense. If you don't want to lose it completely, *you have to seek the beautiful nonsense* at all times" (Sumprim 70, emphasis added). These conversations reveal Ghana moments as encompassed in the ordinary. Since the narrator's frustrations are located in the everyday, the implication here is that to reach for the Ghana moment, the narrator/traveller needs to see differently, thus approach encounters differently. The narrator's claim that "A Ghana Moment will be completely familiar to you …. A Ghana Moment can … *must* be found in every 'frustrating hair tearing out' situation" (Sumprim 70-71) indicates the fact that the change is within the self and not the other.

If we think of the traveller as the subject who makes choices regarding what to see, then the imported Ghanaian's choice to see Ghana moments is an avenue of fracturing boundaries leading to nomadism in travel-in-dwelling. For this study, I argue that Ghana moments unfold when the travelling subjects let go of their assumptions and allows for an interactive engagement with the other. Travel thus becomes a moment of becoming in encounter (Islam 114). Islam simplifies this when he notes that "the secret art of becoming a traveller [involves] …overcoming of 'individualism'" (Islam 10). It entails breaking free from the conventional ways of doing things, how to travel, how to see the other and allowing the self to be vulnerable in the moment of encounters. The narrator breaches the boundaries of difference through an embracing of the process of becoming which is conceived as the "process of self-transformation in the proximity of the other" (Islam 76).

Ghana moments frame a multi-layered view of places. The narrator's contested identity as insider/outsider enables an easier breaching of the boundaries of difference. As an illustration, the narrator uses the tendency of Ghanaians to gossip about someone they think of as outsider in their vicinity to locate Ghana moments. These tales, the narrator notes, are common cases that travellers encounter if they travel to Ghana, or any space for that matter. One anecdote is given where the narrator is buying coconut water. The seller and his business partner converse in *Twi* and intentionally

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plan to sell her product of poor quality.[61] They are unaware that she not only understands the language but is also Ghanaian. The expected reaction as the narrator points out, would be to lash out at the sellers' disregard of her insider status through their blatant assumption that she is foreigner, or insistence to justify and perform her Ghanaian[ness]. Another reaction would simply be to embrace the sellers' assumption of outsider[ness] and use the position to perform her power over the scene in her writing. At the core of these options is the need to prove her position as insider, which the sellers dispute. This incident is layered with discursive significance; the most distinct being the tensions of belonging that this imported Ghanaian struggles with and the paradox of her positionality as a subject at the threshold. Sumprim demonstrates a need to be embraced as an insider and mediates her disappointment through humour in the given encounter.

The narrator turns her frustration at exclusion through reaching for a Ghanaian moment when she calmly points out the sellers' duplicity in *Twi*. In her retort is not a need to assert or claim her Ghanaian[ness], she is aware of the futility of such an attempt. Rather, she provokes shock and shame of recognition on the sellers, a recognition that someone considered outsider could actually have access to their tongue. It turns an idiosyncratic moment into a moment of learning for both the traveller and the sellers as it opens the subjects to a transaction that changes the trajectory of their relationality. Recognition enables a bridging of the gap of difference which the produces an acceptance of similitude. In overcoming the rage of non-identification and obsession with being an insider, the imported Ghanaian removes presumption of privilege from this encounter. The space of encounter then becomes a viable site for more than just reiteration of difference, but a space of a multitude of networks. Both Clifford and Islam conceive travel as a transactional activity that is constantly negotiated. Clifford locates this view in his understanding of cultures as fluid (Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths" 10). Since travel writing is in Cliffordian terms writing culture, it comprises a bargain alive to the dynamism of cultural workings in space. The specificities of Ghana moments enable this ephemerality of space to be approximated. Sumprim's notion of the Ghana moments disrupts the internal ideological fashioning and opens the guidebook to a dialogic negotiation of traveller and dweller.

In other anecdotes narrated throughout the narrative, for instance a Christmas party or in another instance of a taxi ride, Sumprim is taken as outsider. In all these scenarios, people follow the coconut seller's trend and gossip in her vicinity about her nationality in *Twi* assuming she is not a native and does not understand the language. Instead of getting worked up about Ghanaians not accepting her as

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[61] *Twi* is a dialect of the Akan language spoken in central and southern Ghana. It is the largest vernacular language in Ghana.

one of them, she wears the foreigner label and is amazed at the direction her discussions take. The narrator observes that "[t]o get the best of both worlds, by being valued higher than you're probably worth and cashing in on as many 'Ghana Moments' as possible, it's best to keep the foreign accent and learn the local lingo. Why? It has been scientifically proven that the average Ghanaian will automatically presume you're unlikely to understand any of the Ghanaian languages" (Sumprim 61). Sumprim is advocating liminality as a space of strength where the travelling subject utilises their dis/qualification as a means of transgressing the assumptions of being in place. This marginality reminds me of Mudimbe's proposition that there is strength in the 'I' as other position. The narrative emphasizes the hybrid position as one that enables the traveller to transcend localism of the self. It is also a status that allows the subject to observe Ghana from a position of power, in the sense that the subject is both of Ghana and of outside and can use the threshold position to offer a doubly inflected seeing gaze.

Sumprim suggests a transformation of the contact zone. At the beginning of the encounter, the coconut seller and his friend assume a position of power which they use to exclude the imported Ghanaian by virtue of reading her as outsider. A complication of this position is seen in the accompanying comic strip which hints at the different rules of engagement the sellers have for the different categories of customers signalling different degrees of power flexibility. The comic strip juxtaposes the imported Ghanaian's encounter with the sellers, with another where the sellers interact with a white man. The sellers think the white man closer to achieving insider status since he speaks *Twi*. Until this moment, the sellers as locals emerge as gate-keepers defining acceptance or denial of access into Ghana. This juxtaposition signals the hypocrisy of those claiming the native positionality in relating with travellers. The sellers distribute assumptions about travellers in an ambiguous manner. It is ironical that they see the white man as approximating Ghanaian[ness] while excluding the imported Ghanaian. Perhaps the open embracing of the white man is a sign of the inherited hierarchies of difference within travel that privilege whiteness over blackness. This might be a sign of deeper socio-political embedding of the imperial logic at the centre of travel discourses and also permeating travelled spaces' logic of themselves and whoever they consider outsider. In defining the imported Ghanaian as non-Ghanaian, the sellers consider her transnational identity as separate and lesser than their Ghanaian identity. The narrator's blackness is both a sign of sameness with the sellers and an indicator of an assumed outsider position. Racial assumptions within the contact zone are seen as clear locators of acceptance and difference.

Intermediality in this instance pushes the interrogation of the contact zones to more than just a location with two distinct unequal relations. It enables a visualisation of the layers of domination to emerge and reveals the fact that in the contemporary space, dominance does not just involve white/black but

also black/black dynamics which are multi-layered. In enactment of a Ghana moment, the narrator revises the power dynamics through blurring of the planes of difference. In speaking to the coconut sellers in *Twi*, the imported Ghanaian collapses the sellers' frame of perception, which is used to dominate over her, and disrupts the contact zone as it were, inviting the sellers to reimagine their reading of the contact moment as one where parties of equal or close to equal power negotiate with each other on a more or less equal footing. The contact zone is thus transformed into one of transactional negotiation where improvisation carries the day. Nevertheless, the fact that the scene is relayed in narrative account reveal another deep-seated power difference between the coconut sellers and the imported Ghanaian. The narrating subject holds power as she negotiates the representational dynamics of the incident in textual form. This turns full circle back to Pratt's notion of the contact zone. The inequality in power dynamics within the textual instance is influenced by the textual authority which mediates the co-presence of the field through the eyes of the imported Ghanaian. Furthermore, in many other cases where Ghana moments emerge, the transformational dynamics of the contact zone in and of itself maintains Pratt's notion of the divide. In returning the balance of power, the narrator signals a fluidity regarding the way the asymmetrical power relations are distributed. This incident demonstrates the fact that the African urban space has pretences of logic and order, however, underneath the façade, lie different networks of interactions which when wielded by the different parties have the possibilities of shifting power and redefining the contact zone.

Ghana moments redefine the contact zone. Pratt's study locates the contact zone as demarcated by the dominant power, mapping cultural encounters through difference. In travel writing across the ages, the traveller is conceived as the dominant figure that sees and maps spaces. Travel narratives, more so guidebooks, position the travelling subject through which the narrative of the journey is most often relayed as the dominant subject. This power accords travellers license to read travelled to spaces in definitive terms informed by guidebooks and public discourse material on the same spaces. Pratt notes that travellees are active agents in defining their spaces. In reality, the contemporary contact zone is informed by different degrees of capital held by the different parties in the field. The traveller/ tourist holds economic capital by virtue of their access to money. The travellee on the other hand, holds both the social and cultural capital which the traveller/tourist seeks in their negotiation of spatial realities. Other active agents within the space of travel include the state and the landscape which also embody notions of power. The conventional guidebook through its informative angle enters this contact zone as a tool allocating the tourist with more power due to its delineation of the space. Granted, Sumprim's *A Place of Beautiful Nonsense* is not a conventional guidebook. The narrative complicates the notion of the contact zone through its representative style and its contextual negotiation in narrative form.

These incidents position the imported Ghanaian as appropriating the outside positionality which redefines the city as a contact zone. Gossip serves to immediately position the subject of the gossip as outsider; someone outside of the language and experience of the speakers, hence powerless. The gossiper is positioned as dominant figure. This serves as a departure from the colonial notion of the contact zone where the travelling subject is the powerful figure. The native has usurped power of the gaze from the traveller. Such a disruption can be seen as an attempt at autoethnography that accepts the reality of power being manifested in the travellees too.

The Ghana moments facilitate the traveller's self-transformation. They are moments where the transformation in the traveller's transactional habits change definitive ways of interaction with spaces. This change in turn informs them more about themselves and how they conduct themselves. In particular, this can be seen in another everyday incident where the narrator is puzzled by the service of carpenters. She decides to get furniture made by a carpenter that is located outside Accra, as her experiences of Accra services was dismal. The narrator takes an Ikea catalogue to the carpenter and waits for the furniture. Having learnt a few things about the way service is offered in Ghana, the narrator extends the deadline for picking the furniture and also ensures she pays deposit and not the full amount for the furniture. The carpenter makes excuses about the timelines which the narrator accepts having understood the way things operate in Ghana. Finally when she goes to pick the furniture, she realises that the carpenter, like the tailor before, has made a mess of the design. The expectation as before is to complain about the mess made by the carpenter. However, she is aware that the carpenter is going to stick to the belief that he has done a fantastic job. At this point, the narrator decides to initiate a Ghana moment by paying for the furniture and gifting it to the carpenter. She observes:

> He was shocked to say the least because, you can bet your last pesewa, it was the last thing he expected to hear. An unhappy imported customer paying for shoddy goods without kicking up a fuss? Something was terribly wrong. He began to stutter telling me he would re-sand and varnish the furniture. He even promised to get my design back from his boy and rework it to my specifications. (Sumprim 157)

The narrator in this incidence refuses to let her expectations lead her to frustration when the encounter does not go the way she expects. Instead, through flexibility, she charts a different end to the encounter. In this incident, the carpenter as evidenced by the shock and promises to rework the furniture, is remorseful. However, his remorse is informed by the unexpected reaction of the imported Ghanaian and not an internal transformation. This incident allows us to see the transformation of the imported Ghanaian who as the delineation of rules of engagement in Ghana show, is not dictated by them, rather she opens herself for transformation and flexibility having understood the nature of

spaces as not premeditated but fluid. In the end, the imported Ghanaian notes that "I began to accept the new metamorphosed person, who, insistent on staying, had accepted the unwanted but necessary little deaths" (Sumprim 157). This acceptance, I argue should not be taken as giving up, rather it signifies a willingness to take each encounter as a moment of becoming, dependent on what the encounter reveals and not any prior rules of operation.

It is clear that the space of contemporary travel as mapped by Sumprim, defies any contained framing. If we put into consideration Clifford's important identification of cultures, which form the primary concern in travel and travel writing, as unstable entities in the contemporary world, then we cannot think of the contact zone as site of stable power dynamics. Claire Lindsay in "Beyond Imperial Eyes" observes that the contemporary contact zone requires an expansion of Pratt through a "critical conversation … to advance a more subtle and appropriate method for the continued study of travel writing" (18). Her argument is informed by Ania Loomba's rationalisation that ideas developed by earlier thinkers need renewing and revising in order to extend the work that the models can do.[62] In respect to the contact zone, Lindsay follows Liz Stanley's view that the contact zone mimics the way subjects intersect in "interactive and improvisational dimensions" (Lindsay 25) The modes of movement and spatial relations in the contemporary contact zone are more transactional than binaries. For the contact zone to spring from the everyday, a lot of improvisation in interactions have to be factored in. This is because, the everyday, just as culture in Clifford's terms, "do[es] not hold still for [its] portrait" (Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths" 10). The everyday is transient and so are the power forces within the encounters in the everyday. Sumprim's imported Ghanaian highlights the instability of power dynamics in the contemporary contact zone through her insistence on flexible framing of her travelogue as a series of incidents in the city. By this organisation, she demonstrates that these are examples of what one may encounter in the urban space of travelling hence a need to be innovative in seeking Ghana moments.

The urban contact zone as captured so far in this chapter, is different from chapter three's conception. In chapter three, we encountered the contact zone that remains largely the same, with the traveller occupying the dominant position. This identity is drawn from the way the texts in that chapter positioned the travellers in relation to spatial dynamics. In that chapter, the travellers move across wide expanses of geographical space, but still carry with them rigid discourses regarding the said spaces. This is informed by their approaching the spaces of encounter as dominant subjects. This framing maintains binaries revealing a manifestation of the dominance/subjugation structure that Pratt identifies happening within the contact zone. In this chapter, so far, the contact zone is as

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[62] See Loomba Ania et al, *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* (2005) where they revisit ideas of early postcolonial thinkers in order to push the ideas beyond the conceptions given.

unstable as the spaces and the subject. The power dynamics are thus dependent on the interactive negotiation of spatial control by the different parties.

In defining the everyday as a site of travel where Ghana moments emerge as sites for renegotiation of the different subject positions, Sumprim reimagines the urban space and its relation to the travelling subject. In her narrative, she locates a transformative aesthetic on the travelling subject. By exploring the subject's occupation of space, Sumprim realigns the guidebook as a manual for the traveller. This inversion transforms the limits of the guidebook form to incorporate both an outward and inward looking logic. Sumprim's narrative reveals the central position the traveller occupies in redefining terms of negotiation and invention of spaces. In concentrating on the transformation of the imported Ghanaian across different encounters, this narrative acts as a guide to travellers on how to let go and be transformed by the spaces of encounter. To this end, the narrative becomes an exploration of the transformation of the traveller. While this section has focussed on the way the guide informs the traveller, the next section extends this by turning focus to how travellers negotiate sites of trauma.

Geographies of Trauma in Veronique Tadjo's *The Shadow of Imana: Travels through Rwanda*

Veronique Tadjo is an Ivorian writer who has lived and worked in several African countries. Tadjo has written a number of novels, short stories, and poetry.[63] *The Shadow of Imana: Travels in the Heart of Rwanda*, emerges out of Tadjo's journeys through Rwanda in 1998 as one of the commissioned artists in the 'Rwanda: Writing as a Duty to Memory' initiative.[64] The project brought together ten African writers from nine African countries with the intention to create "an imaginative response to the Rwandan Genocide and its aftermath" (Tadjo, "Genocide: The Changing Landscape of Memory in Kigali" 381).[65] The writers selected for the project travelled together across Rwanda for a period of two months visiting memorials and having conversations with survivors (Small 86). The project

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[63] Tadjo's other works include novels such as *Queen Pokou* (2005), *As the Crow Flies* (1986) and *Far from My Father* (2010); Short story collections such as *Chasing the Sun* (2006) and *The Blind Kingdom* (2008); poetry collections such as *If I were a King, if I were a Queen* (2002) which is a narrative in verse form and the anthology of Southern African poetry collection, *Talking Drums* (2000).Tadjo has also published children stories including *The Lucky Grain of Corn* (1996) and *Mami Wata and the Monster* (1997). It is important to note that while some of her works have been categorised here as one genre, she experiments with genre boundaries and it is possible to see some of her works as cutting across several genres. For instance, we could note that The Blind Kingdom is a series of related short stories; it could also be read as a historical novel.

[64] In subsequent mentions, *The Shadow of Imana: Travels through Rwanda* is abbreviated to *The Shadow of Imana*.

[65] These writers were: Boubacar Boris Diop (Senegal), Nocky Djedanoum (Chad), Koulsy Lamko (Chad), Tierno Monénembo (Guinea), Veronique Tadjo (Ivory Coast), Abdulrahman Ali Waberi (Djibouti), Monique Ilboudo (Burkina Faso), Meja Mwangi (Kenya), Jean-Marc Vianney Rurangwa (Rwanda) and Venuste Kayimahe (Rwanda). Meja Mwangi pulled out of the project. It is interesting to note that while the project's aim was to create works of fiction, the different writers came up with texts traversing different genres. Four writers produced novels, two produced travelogues, two essays and one poetry collection.

initiator, Nocky Djedanoum, notes that the mission was to acknowledge responsibility and thus make the memory of the Rwanda genocide part of the memory of Africa (de Beer 3).

Of all the authors in this chapter, Tadjo demonstrates a distinct but complicated relation with her space of travel and the guidebook form. The project's mission locates Tadjo as an insider by virtue of their identification of the memory of Rwanda as part of the memory of Africa. Tadjo approaches Rwanda as part of the collective Africa. In doing so, she claims an insider position in Rwanda. At the onset of the narrative, Tadjo invokes this collective identity through her remark that Rwanda had affected the whole of Africa.[66] Tadjo reaches for the idea of a collective identity of Africa in order to map Rwanda as part of the continental identity. While this is true, the memory of the Rwanda genocide does not lend itself easily to the narrator's grasp. It invites a multifaceted engagement and encounter, one that is different from the other two texts in this chapter. Mochama and Sumprim locate themselves within the everyday events in the urban spaces they dwell in. Their events and encounters are informed by what could be considered as banal and familiar, however, as demonstrated through the texts, the everyday is a flexible entity. Tadjo's journeys have a different dynamic and urgency of complexity which is informed by the nightmare that was Rwanda (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 3). Rwanda represents pain and trauma that the narrator struggles to understand and relate to in her collective identity as African. Tadjo's struggle to grasp the sense of the genocide is a struggle with her positionality as insider in the collective Africa and outsider in the experience of the genocide. Tadjo's insider/outsider politics is infused with an urgency that is not visible in the other two texts. This urgency is suggested by the intensity of the emotive nature her journey and the anxieties of owning the memory of Rwanda.

The Shadow of Imana incorporates accounts of travels to memorial centres, interactions with survivors (victims, perpetrators, expatriates), and oral myths circulating in the public space about the genocide. The narrative is divided into six chapters which detail competing narratives of the genocide. The first five sections are drawn from the first journey Tadjo makes with the other writers in the 'duty of memory' project. The last section makes an account of a second journey which it is not clear whether it was part of the project. I consider the different sites narrated as active spaces for mapping the emotional geographies in Rwanda. The narrative is framed around a first person narrative voice; however, unlike the previous sections in this chapter where the authors construct personas to narrate their accounts, here, we encounter the absence of a persona. Tadjo emerges as both the narrating and travelling subject. In this case, her positionality is that of a secondary witness to the trauma of genocide. The absence of a persona invests in the narrative a collapsing of the distance between

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[66] The narrator says, "what had happened there concerned us all" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 3). The 'us' referred to in this context is Africa as a collective.

traveller and author, most significantly, considering this is a semi-autobiographical account. The absence of a constructed persona heightens the personal angle that the narrative takes in travelling through traumatic sites.

At the beginning, the narrator's confession, "I did not want Rwanda to remain forever a night mare, a primal fear" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 3), gives a sense of the narrator and the author as consciously invested in accessing the memories of the genocide within spaces of travel. This statement locates the Rwanda genocide within the collective reality of the narrator. It forms part of what the narrator needs to come to terms with as an African. At the same time, the statement suggests an uneasiness with the circulated memories of the genocide, which the narrator intends to trouble. This distrust is alluded to the global politics of circulation, where certain narratives of the genocide are heavily circulated while others remain silenced. For this reason, this journey is for Tadjo, an opportunity to encounter sites of memories of the genocide and to participate in archiving the genocide for Africa.

Travel and tourism studies identifies sites of trauma such as Rwanda as encompassing what has become known as dark tourism. This form of tourism and/or travel involves "the presentation and consumption (by visitors) of real and commodified death and disaster sites" (Foley and Lennon 198). Texts from such sites, which Tadjo's narrative may be considered part of, also qualify as commodities that represent the spaces for consumption. They also form part of the textually circulated dark tourism. Like other forms of tourism, dark tourism frames sites around the consumption value and currency for tourists/travellers. As Bruner reminds us, this industry works through foregrounding and marking off certain sites to fit a particular master narrative that erases or silences others through an active performativity (Bruner 10). I read Tadjo's travelogue as entering into politics of representation archiving the genocide. Critical engagement with narratives on Rwanda genocide have revealed the capitalistic nature of the narratives to pass off specific agendas in the process of offering an archive. In mapping an archive of the genocide, a lot of narratives have actively participated in silencing aspects of the history of Rwanda (Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers* 7–8). Mamdani argues that most of the narratives about the Rwanda genocide reduce this multipart history to a binary about Hutu and Tutsi and fail to capture the historical density of the genocide. With such selective representation in narratives on the genocide, the urgency of the 'Duty to Memory' project cannot be downplayed. The writers within this project locate themselves as performing a specific function of thinking through their travels across sites of genocide as relating to the larger collective identity of Africa. Tadjo's complex positionality and agenda enable her to read Rwanda in a manner that defies the institutional narratives set in place regarding the Rwanda genocide. In locating herself as an

African that is implicated and disturbed by the genocide, she intentionally sets out to see Rwanda in a different light, one that does not just accept the surplus of narratives already in circulation.

The most compelling expression of Tadjo's quest is her choice of the genre of travel writing to relay her account of the journeys. This is a move away from the expected imaginative form ascribed by the project and used by most of the authors. Audrey Small notes that, Tadjo's use of an autobiographical form raises doubt concerning the possibilities of the novel to fully respond to the genocide (97). Travel writing's identity as a form of that makes claims to realism feeds into Tadjo's aim to be faithful to the reality of the genocide. This self-conscious intent to be faithful to the real is further manifested in the narrative through the narrator's plea, "[m]ay my eyes see, may my ears hear, may my mouth speak" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 10). In pleading a clarity of the senses, Tadjo affirms her purpose see the memory of the genocide through a plural lens. In using this form rather than fiction, Tadjo hopes to take advantage of the possibilities the realist nature of the travelogue enables to communicate the events of the genocide by making claims to the real and the authentic. While fiction would have worked well to represent the pain of others, it removes the author from any obligations about truthfulness or faithfulness to the real. Therefore, in making this plea, Tadjo qualifies the trauma of the Rwanda genocide as an uneasy space to navigate.

Sites of trauma are inherently multifaceted and contradictory and do not necessarily bend towards a homogeny. Tadjo reveals this through her description of both the conventional and the unconventional sites. The conventional sites are those sites which live up to the tourist economy's manipulation and perform a particular identity and narrative that mirrors the official statement of the dominant power. In Rwanda, Tadjo visits Nyamata and Ntarama memorial sites. Both Nyamata and Ntarama are part of the official sites where the genocide is memorialised. Nyamata and Ntarama are also part of the tourist economy's commodification of trauma since they embody specific performances of the genocide which foreground institutional narratives on the same. The narrative first gives an account of Nyamata memorial site. This memorial site is located 30 km from Kigali. It is set up in a church where it is claimed more than 50,000 people murdered during the genocide were buried. The narrator describes Nyamata:

> Site of genocide. /Plus, or minus 35,000 dead. /A woman bound hand and foot. /Mukandori. Aged twenty-five. Exhumed in 1997. /Home: the town of Nyamata. /Married. /Any children? / Her wrists are bound, and tied to her ankles. Her legs are spread wide apart. Her body is lying on its side. She looks like an enormous fossilised foetus. She has been laid on a dirty blanket, in front carefully lined up skulls and bones scattered on a mat. (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 11)

This section reads like field notes. A similar sentence structure is replicated in the narrator's visit to Ntarama Genocide Memorial Centre. The lists mimic ethnographic fieldnotes. What the use of listing

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does achieve, is the rawness of feeling in the display strategy employed in the memorials. The minimalist description suggests what one may assume as direct translation of the visual representation into text. Through understated usage of words, the narrative implies a minimal interference with the site; a sense to suggest a preservation of the event itself. Anne Rüggemeier in a study of lists in autobiographical writing observes the power of lists to suggest a powerful aesthetic. She argues that lists have the capacity to enable a visualisation of traces of absences (338). This means that lists enable the emergence of a dialogic interplay between presences and absences. The shift in description from the general details to the specific illustrations such as the woman's body in Nyamata or in the case of Ntarama, the shift from the general details of the display to focus on the guide suggests the power of the narrative as guidebook that invokes something extra within the pauses. This assumption of something extra enables Tadjo's field notes to capture what conventional guidebooks do not. It allows them to reflect on the plurality of narrative in this site of travel. Through cumulative narration, Tadjo adds emotional intensity to the guide enabling it to transcend flattening language so common in conventional guidebook form.

Tadjo's description of Nyamata foregrounds the body as an entity through which affective geographies of the genocide are articulated. Through selective linguistic pauses and incremental focus on the body, the text adds rawness of emotions to the reader travelling the site through the narrator's eyes. In this case, Tadjo transcribes the body's story of the genocide. She lets it tell of violence and rape, pain and suffering and how genocide erases identities and pasts; this body tells the culminative narrative of the Rwandan genocide on behalf of many other bodies. When the narrator names the body (Mukandori), familiarity for the reader is invoked. Mukandori is no longer just a body, but a knowable subject re-inscribed into history. Tadjo's incorporation of Mukandori, the name as part of the description of the body allows the traveller to encounter the person behind the traumatic death. In this case, the body shifts from a silent figuration to an active agent that reciprocates the traveller's gaze by pushing the traveller to ask questions about its characterization.

In Ntarama, a different but similarly powerful logic of description is used. Here, as the narrator notes, there is no attempt to give order to the display. The narrator in mimicking the display proceeds, "[e]verything is topsy-turvy. No names. No inscriptions. Outside, the sun is beating down. Inside, there is darkness. There is no electricity. Skulls on shelves, spiders' webs and dust, and yet more dust. Everywhere, the cold odour of frozen time" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 16). The narrative description of disorder suggests a non-interference with the site since the events of the genocide. If the space has not been touched, it is possible to interpret the disorder as a slice of memory of the event. Compared to Nyamata where the representation hints at a methodical mapping demonstrated by the careful display structure, the description of Ntarama suggests a mapping of the genocide

through disarray. Both sites as narrated by Tadjo offer potent signification of the pain of the genocide on both the living and the dead. This begs the question; how much ethical responsibility does the guidebook bear in representing the 'dark site'?

If we consider the fact that conventional dark sites such as Nyamata and Ntarama are already embedded with political and economic interventions of the contexts in which they appear, Tadjo's narrative journeys in the places reveal both the official and the othered discourses. This is done through the narrative's intentional mapping of the conspicuous and underlying discourses within this site. What emerges is the fact that dark tourism performance employs an organising structure to spaces which reveal a dependency upon the intended communication. In Nyamata, charting a method to how one ought to see the site is clearly a marker meant to incrementally elicit emotional connection. It is no wonder the narrator, at the end of the journey through the site is left speechless and lacks words to write in the visitor's book. The site's performance of emotional overload seems to have been achieved. Ntarama on the other hand, capitalizes on the disorder and sense of non-interference. The claim is that the space has not been interrupted hence the narrator's conclusion of the site as the "cold odour of frozen time" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana*16).

Tadjo's descriptive style in both Nyamata and Ntarama demonstrates awareness of the reality that Bakhtin mentions about utterances and objects as having "dialogic threads" within and beyond themselves into other socio-ideological consciousnesses (*The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* 277). When words or objects are given in different contexts, time-frame or spatial relations, they carry reverberations of their diverse histories and become wrought in an uncomfortable union. At the same time, as Bakhtin reminds us, utterances are inherently dialogic. Tadjo takes full advantage of the multi-layered nature of language to reveal the multi-layered nature of the sites. In her descriptive style, the sites emerge as contested by a diversity of narrative planes which conform to or disrupt the official narrative foregrounded. Tadjo locates this multi-layered spatial conception in coercive factors at play in sites of memorialisation. For instance, in describing Nyamata and Ntarama, one gets a sense that the sites still carry notions of their conflicted histories within them, which inform different ways of reading them as official memorial sites. To point a few of these, firstly, the sites were churches before the genocide. The narrative makes note of this important background in Nyamata through a break in the description, the narrator notes, "several thousand people had taken refuge in the church and its outbuildings" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 13). Once one makes the connection between the religious context and the event of mass murder that happened in the same space, the difficulty that Tadjo finds in coming to terms with the genocide becomes clear. There is a contestation between the Christian ideology concerning murder and the church as a site of mass murder.

Secondly, the coercive power of the institutional narrative of the museum display and the backing of the political power of the day emerge as a strong factor pushing for erasure of competing narratives in this site. While the coercive nature of the institutional narrative may influence the conventional traveller's reading of the site, Tadjo through observational strategies as a traveller initiates a more empathetic process of seeing. The manipulative essence of the politics of representation of trauma is suggested by the many hints to the active voices within the sites. As the descriptive narration demonstrates, Nyamata and Ntarama are enclosed around the institutional narrative of the ruling RPF and its narrative of the genocide. For instance, in narrating the display of weapons in Nyamata, the narrator observes, "[t]he machetes came from France and China" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 12). The narrator ascribes this information to the people she encounters in the space, most probably, the guides who are agents of the institutional narrative. In another instance, when retelling the narrative of the genocide, the narrator adds that "[s]urvivors hid there until 14 May, when the RPF, the liberation army arrived" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana*13). In both examples drawn from the official memorials, the Rwanda Patriotic Front's (RPF) perspective on the genocide is legitimized (Caplan 22). This institutional narrative is seen through the suggestive language that lay blame subtly on other governments while positioning the RPF as the saviour of the Rwanda people.

However, as Tadjo suggests here, through active archiving of other narratives within and beyond these sites, the propensity of geographies of trauma to question and critique official discourses is immanent. Tadjo, for instance, intrudes on the institutional narrative in Nyamata when she points out "these dead are screaming still …. This is not a memorial but death laid bare, exposed in all its rawness" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 12). This authorial interruption implies that although memorial sites are structured to reflect a particular 'truth' about a dark past, the objects and other agents in the space of display actively contest the official discourse. Naming of victims (see Mukandori) adds depth onto the bones, demanding a backstory which forces travellers to think about the character's humanity: life story, losses, what she left behind among others. This shifts the victim from being just a pack of bones, into a being given life in the present. In naming Mukandori, Tadjo "acknowledge[s] her abominable suffering, but more importantly, seek[s] to keep her disturbing past present and to refuse her social obliteration by those who silenced her (Dauge-Roth 136).

Tadjo stages the memory of the genocide in the present of travelling. This translates in the reading time an aspect of immediacy of the past. With the restoration of humanity of the character comes a history which provides layering for the texture of emotion regarding the display. In fleshing Mukandori through naming and the questions regarding her history, Tadjo's narrative allows us to think of spaces as more than the present narrated physicality. By investing Nyamata and Ntarama with an air of heavy emotion, Tadjo allows the past of Rwanda to have immediacy and urgency, thus

reconciled as part of the present consciousness of the continent. This positions the guidebook as an active interrogation of complexity in sites which the traveller needs to identify in a bid to understand the sites of trauma. It is a heavily dialogic site. In this case, the narrator is not just mapping geographies of emotion within the sites, but also allowing the traveller to know how to encounter such sites in order to see beneath the official narratives. *The Shadow of Imana* thus emerges as a guide on how to behave in such sites. The memorial sites as described by the narrator are contact zones with the different subjects/objects occupying different levels of power play in coercion of meaning. What Tadjo does in this case, is to foreground the different actors, allowing the space to emerge differently as a site of memorialisation of the genocide.

While the conventional sites of travel such as the memorials discussed above reveal both institutional and subversive narratives, all these are framed within a space that could be grounded in physicality. Tadjo extends her archiving to other sites that do not necessarily lend themselves to such a grounded landscaping. For instance, if we reflect on her first encounter with Rwanda, which happens in Durban, South Africa en route to Rwanda, it emerges that geographies of emotion are not wholly concentrated on the physical realm. In this instance, Tadjo encounters a Rwandan and remarks, "I only saw his eyes. They were covered in an opaque film. Nothing could be read in his deep, unfathomable gaze…. His eyes were those of a prisoner, eyes blinded by darkness and emptiness" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 5). Tadjo considers this an important location of the genocide. Subjects are active agents and sites for embodiment of histories of pain. In reading the memory of the genocide in the subjects who have an affinity or experience to the space, Tadjo maps the genocide as emerging from more than the physical. For an outsider, as the narrator is at this point, the man is veiled by a deep-seated darkness that is 'unfathomable'. The narrative's minimal information on the subject suggests a metaphoric premonition indicating that any attempt to see the space of the genocide of the other is bound by limitations rendered by their pain which is mapped in emotional sites that do not necessarily permeate in the physicality of place. What Tadjo is implying here is that to access spaces of trauma, travellers need to step down from the dominant positionality of gazing and put themselves on equal footing with the others encountered. Thus, this guide is more about opening the traveller to those other ways of engaging with geographies of emotion that manifest beyond the physical.

While Mukandori previously observed serves as a non-speaking archive, this man serves as a living archive in the present of the narrator's travelling. In describing him, Tadjo reveals that every moment of encounter in travel is a poignant dialogic site through which the socio-economic realities of people and places can be interrogated. Living bodies do not just act as agents through their muted expressions, the subjects Tadjo meets in Rwanda confirm that subjects are actively engaged in re-imagining the genocide in the present. They are active archives that bring memories of the genocide

into the everyday realities of their present living. In this manner, they contest and challenge master-narratives of the genocide every day. Tadjo's incorporation of narratives of others as part of what the site of trauma has to offer goes against the conventional travel guide that by all means avoids any aspect of witnessing. By the same token, flexibility in the travel writing form provides Tadjo with the poetic licence to merge genres (testimonial, travelogue and travel guide) as well as to foreground the competing discourses (official narrative of the genocide, survivor tales, oral tales, and myths) and open them up to scrutiny. Tadjo introduces the survivors' narratives, by asking, "Who can say what makes up the memory of a whole nation? What images carpet its unconscious mind?" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 19). Such questions reveal the gap in memorialisation. Furthermore, they allow Tadjo to use her travel to journey into the memories of others she encounters across Rwanda. Tadjo asserts the need to travel beyond the official memorials in order to legitimate building blocks of the memory of a nation. She suggests possibilities in sites that do not fit the conventional mode of museum by recovering subjects, objects and oral traditions as viable sites. The narrator then goes ahead to relay narratives drawn from conversations she has with survivors, expatriates, perpetrators and media personalities concerning the genocide and the aftermath.

Thérèse, one of the people the narrator encounters says, "[t]he Rwandan people are a nation of liars. They never tell the truth to anyone" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 20). Thérèse's statement is reminiscent of the narrator's earlier observation of the Rwandan man she encountered in Durban (5). The constant laughter that Thérèse, Constance (Thérèse's sister) and their families express, is seen as a veil that hides the painful past that all of them carry. Thérèse is separated from her husband and two of her children who fled the war to Congo Brazzaville and have no intentions of returning to Rwanda where she lives with her other three children. Constance on the other hand, lost everything during the war: her home, her husband who was jailed briefly after the war, and her son Isaac who has lost the will to live. Another survivor the narrator meets is Nelly. She runs a café-bar in Kigali and seems to be the epitome of recovery and rebuilding Rwanda. Her business acts as a way of picking up the pieces of her life. However, in the background she has a grandson, the result of her daughter's rape by the Interahamwe militias during the genocide. Nelly refers to one of her grandsons as "a gift from God", and of the other "born of the war. What are we to do with him?" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 35), foregrounding unfinished recovery from the war's traumas. Nelly's conflicted self symbolises the reality of Rwanda as a nation wearing many faces for the different kinds of encounters. This encounter with Nelly ends with her persistent call to the narrator, "[r]emember Nelly. Don't forget me. Times are very hard" (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 35). It is as if the narrator met and interacted with three different versions of the same person: Nelly the cheerful hostess of the bar, Nelly the

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grandmother who is conflicted about her grandchildren, and Nelly the scared subject who does not want to fade into oblivion.

These stories form part of the sites to travel when faced with traumatic events. They are presented as testimonials the narrator encounters across Rwanda. Stories of survivors infuse into the guide a dialogism of contested narratives which reveal geographies of emotion as complicated by the different agendas and realities of subjects. Each narrative is influenced by different spatio-temporalities which inflect it with unique notions of urgency and emotion. The display of Mukandori makes the present of visual encounter reimagine the past of the genocide thus heightening the emotive value of the encounter. This collapse of the different time-frames within the same space emerges from the visual encounter with the body and the instruments of torture as displayed. While this is Tadjo's encounter, the body of Mukandori is no longer on display, as such other narratives on the space may not capture the urgency that the body afforded the space through a collapsing of time (Hitchcott 144). The contingency of spatial definition on encounters is all the more visible. While the memorials present certain perspectives of the genocide centred on the past, the survivors add the reality of the present and the everyday to it. The war has made the everyday schizophrenic and guarded and to travel to such a site where trauma is still fresh one needs a way of bridging the façade in place. Merging the testimonial with the travel guide generates an inclusive form that is percolated with discursiveness hence open-ended. It makes the guide capture more than the practicality of logistical realities of sites (common in guidebooks) which erases its assumed boundedness. Delving into the stories of others is one such avenue of having a deeper engagement with the sites of trauma.

Public mythology enters the narrative as another aspect of narrative of others. Tadjo includes one story circulating in the public sphere in Kigali of a woman whose son was killed by their neighbour. After the genocide when one day the woman gets sick, it is the neighbour that takes care of her. A romantic relationship ensues causing outrage in the neighbourhood. Tadjo uses this oral tale to reflect on the reality of post-genocide Rwanda. As one of the many myths circulating within Kigali post-genocide, this story's trajectory implies that the reality of the genocide defies logic. Another section, 'The Wrath of the Dead' gives an exposition into mythology around the living dead and connection to genocide. It is claimed that the spirit of someone whose head had been cut off was tormenting people in the form of 'angry rain' (Tadjo, *The Shadow of Imana* 42). The narrator describes the diviner's performance of ritual and incantation to appease the dead. Turning to spirits to understand the natural phenomenon is a sign of the close connection between the reality of the day and the incapability of the real to explain the intensity of the impacts of the genocide on them. Myths as we noted via Musila, are a way through which the public intervenes and tries to come to terms with the complicated social realities of the day. In foregrounding the ambiguity in relations post-genocide,

these public myths indicate the illogical circumstances that survivors find themselves in. This narrative as well as the other testimonials locate the genocide within the everyday. Tadjo's incorporation of myths within public discourse suggests the public domain as an important site of archival. The availability of such stories within everyday conversations suggests a rich ephemerality within the everyday spaces of travel. It also implies a rich site that is mostly overlooked in conventional guides and yet it is an important entity that travellers ought to be aware of.

Every description of the sites of trauma does more than just give a feel of the space. The descriptive language employed taps onto the textures of emotion in the site of trauma. In taking the form of a guide, the narrative takes a stand to set Rwanda in Africa's immediate memory. The intent becomes capturing the visceral nature of the genocide. In this way, Tadjo faces the complicated nature of the genocide, thinking through it as part of the collective reality of Africa's past and present as well as how a future can be drawn from these complicated realities. In presenting her struggles with this site of travel as an insider as well as outsider, Tadjo demands of every reader empathy in seeing and encountering the space. One thing is clear in the multi-textures of trauma, none of these spaces relays one voice. They are all multi-dimensional and as empathetic readers of the narrative, readers and travellers alike are called upon to exercise care in thinking about what Rwanda means to Africa as a whole and how to encounter the space. The repetitive echo of sight throughout the narrative does not just hint at the need by the narrator to be faithful to the textures of emotion in these places; it also locates our attention to the significance of sight in any kind of travel writing.

Places have the capacity to arrest our attention to the point of initiating a certain kind of blindness (Wainaina, "Discovering Home" 13). Travel writing is prone to this overdependence on sight through its nature to offer representations that attempt to capture the real and mark off certain sites as tourist worthy and silence other sites. However, as this examination of Tadjo's narrative revealed, self-conscious seeing and willingness to be vulnerable to the travelled sites enables one to let go of assumptions signalled by institutional narratives, personal agendas and background, thereby initiating a transformation of sight as a negotiation of the in/visible networks in place. In Tadjo, this alternative positionality is a productive space that carries the weight of trauma in geographies of emotion enabling the traveller to navigate silenced sites that are important and central entities in understanding and attempting to archive the memory of Rwanda as part of our collective history of Africa. Tadjo's deliberate inflection of the guide with textualities of emotion revises the form and enables us to think of the guide as more than just a practical form that gives facts to the traveller. Her incorporation of narratives of others within the guide extends this engagement with trauma to the point where the reader can conceive of this as a guide not to places but to encounters. *The Shadow of Imana* is thus a guide to how one ought to behave when confronted with traumatic histories.

Conclusion: Note on Spatio-Temporality of Space in Travel Writing

This chapter set out to explore the extent to which the guidebook can through investment in spatio-temporality reveal the plural nature of spaces of travel. I have demonstrated that the inscription of the vulnerable gaze within the guidebook form enables authors to initiate an alternative way of seeing; one that incorporates other senses as well as a reciprocal approach to the travelled spaces thus leading to a transformative re-imagination of encounters. The texts discussed position the narrators as directly implicated by and in the spaces they travel, which inform their understanding and definition of the spaces. All the narrators are positioned as having a complex insider/outsider tension with the spaces they travel. Mochama's narrator, the night runner, is a dweller and traveller in the city. The same is true of Sumprim's imported Ghanaian. Tadjo's narrator on the other hand captures a similar insider/outsider positionality albeit complicated by her claim to insider identity through the collective African identity. In the interrogation of Mochama's negotiation of the city, it emerged as a site that is highly unstable. What was realised, is that the urban space is contingent on the moment of encounter to frame how the space is read and negotiated. In Sumprim's negotiation of Accra, another urban space, we shift concentration to the traveller and how the traveller's active negotiation of such unstable spaces as the city inherently becomes a plot to map the way travellers ought to encounter such an inflexible site. I concluded that the traveller's meaningful encounters in such a flexible site as the city, is conditional on the transformation of the traveller's embodied practice of dwelling/travelling. Lastly, in Tadjo, I engaged with how through a conscious transformation of self, travellers begin to see the different layers of discourses operating in sites of trauma which reveal a multifaceted geography of emotion.

The difference between this chapter and the previous chapter emanate from the different understandings of the ontology of space. While the previous chapter conceived of spaces as grounded in geographical and geometrical lines, this chapter reimagines space as defined by the moment of encounter. In the previous chapter, the rigid dimension of space informed the failure of the travellers to fully transcend the limits of the same boundaries impose on encounters. It is therefore no surprise that I concluded that boundaries of perception enact a repetition of the imperial logic and discourses which mar the intentions the texts had to challenge the tradition of the genre. The texts selected in this chapter approach travelling as less informed by geographical distances and more by the way travellers re-negotiate their being-in-space (Islam 10). In concentrating on the embodied practice of positioning of the traveller, it is revealed that spaces are not constant and fixed entities but sites of active negotiation initiated by all the subjects therein as active agents. In thinking of the traveller as a being-in-space, the traveller emerges as a being inventing space through the active process of

occupation and the work of interactivity through encounters. In this vein, I reimagine travelling as an act of not necessarily extensive geographical distances, but more a matter of freedom from limits imposed by geography.

Chapter Five

No Ordinary Return: Contestations of Place in Travel Narratives of Returns

> Rama, I have been weaving for you
> Take care. This is no ordinary cloth
> Each fibre in it is vibrating with my gratitude
> My love, my compassion, my prayer…
> (Kabir qtd. in Kapur-Dromson *From Jhelum to Tana* ix)

Introduction

Kabir, a 15th century Hindu poet sets the pace for the way I approach African travel writing in this chapter. It is said that Kabir addressed every customer who visited his shop by the name Rama, hence this incantation formed part of his veneration for customers who bought cloth from him. In this chapter, I consider return journeys as symbolically charged with intricate routes as Kabir's cloth. Return travel involves an investment that is both personal and collective encompassing a mix of both pasts and presents woven together in narrative form. I think of the readers of return travels as the 'Rama' Kabir references; as subjects charged with a duty of care for the interwoven narratives of the returnees which expose their vulnerabilities, something that rarely manifests in conventional travelogues. Return does not always manifest in the travel narrative as the assumption is normally that the traveller is returning to his/her safe zone— home. Ideally, 'home' is seen as the secure point of departure or frame of reference for the traveller's vision of the elsewhere travelled (Holland and Huggan 5). Even in cases where the travel texts question this notion of home, the frames of reference always follow this prescribed route of positioning home as the secure field. In this chapter, we are forced to come to terms with, a concentrated travelling in spaces that sit as uncomfortable homes. This emerges from the understanding of return travel as involving journeys to spaces of one's prior dwelling, which in the African context is complicated by the entanglements of history and socio-political realities of initial departures and moments of re-encounter.

There is a rich field of literary works in the continent that focus on the issue of return. African fiction has largely explored this form through imaginative narratives. Texts such as Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments* (1970), Nuruddin Farah's *Links* (1978), Sefi Atta's *A Bit of Difference* (2012) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) among others, demonstrate that return is a major theme in African literatures of dispersal. While fiction offers a viable space to explore return, I approach creative non-fiction travel writing as introducing a different lens into the idea of return. Within contemporary African travel writing, return emerges as a sub-genre that allows authors to

navigate the complexities of belonging within an understanding of the tensions of familiarity and strangeness that interplay in the doublings of past and present. I examine four contemporary travelogues by African writers: Leah Chishugi's *A Long Way from Paradise: Surviving the Rwandan Genocide*, Noo Saro-Wiwa's *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria*, Teju Cole's *Every Day is for the Thief*, and Neera Kapur-Dromson's *From Jhelum to Tana*. These texts locate the travellers returning to different places within the African continent, places they had been displaced from by a variety of postcolonial crises. In these texts, the subjects depart from locations in the diaspora and move towards the continent. This sets the travels explored in this chapter apart from the rest in this study. In both chapter three and four, the travelling subjects' points of departure and journeying is within the continent hence even when the subjects negotiate degrees of insider-outsider[ness], they are still defined by intra-continental mobility. In this chapter, the fact that the journeys involve subjects departing from an elsewhere outside the continent inflects their travels with a hybrid gaze that is informed by their identity as African and diasporic.

This chapter also links with the previous chapter by pushing the limits of travel writing. In the previous chapter, I explored how travel narratives as guidebooks redefine the limits of knowability of places and charges within them fluidity and plurality. In that chapter, I argued that a concerted effort to read spatio-temporality in the guidebook overlays in the genre a heterogeneity that provides for the texts to invest in travellers a moral vision for how to see spaces and by extension, space-vision becomes contingent on the moment of encounter rather than a frozen description in texts. In this chapter, I extend the transformational agenda by centring return as a significant sub-genre of contemporary African travel writing. I proceed from the view that texts that underlie travel offer possibilities from which valuable interrogation of experiences of travel that are marginalised such as return travel, can manifest and in turn enable a poignant understanding of the relation between place and subject, past and present, as characteristics of travel writing.

There is dis-ease with pinpointing a 'home' for these returnees because of complexities emanating from their postcolonial realities as travellers connected and dislocated from the places they return to. Return entails repetition. However, following Kabir's weaving, I see the narrative of return as encompassing different levels of returning woven together including: the problematic nature of returnees' initial departures, the changing dynamics of modernity in places, as well as personal investment in the way the places of return manifest the returnees' assumptions of progress and change. The selected narratives focus on different return travels that speak to and against each other in a variety of ways.

Apart from Saro-Wiwa and Cole, the rest of the selected texts have not been read within the genre of travel writing. Cole and Saro-Wiwa have extensively been read as diasporic writing. Chishugi and

Kapur-Dromson's narratives also fit into the parameters of diaspora; however, Chishugi has largely been read as war literature and Kapur-Dromson as migrant or East African Asian history. In reading these texts as travel writing, I hope to bring to the texts a travel methodology and explore to what extent this angle offers alternative insights. The trope of return is the self-evident travel background of the narratives and as such is an important factor to tease out. I also hope to reach an expanded understanding of the limits of travel and key concepts, such as home/away, familiar/strange in a manner that opens them for a reconceptualization of multiplicities. At the same time, reading these texts as travel enriches the critical process by opening recesses within the texts that were previously silenced.

The selected contemporary African travelogues emerge out of the crisis of post-coloniality. Part of the effect of colonialism and neo-colonial politics in Africa is the rise of enforced forms of mobility. Precarious political regimes have led to the rise of urgent mobility practices which are a necessity rather than a luxury. This in turn has removed travel from the confining parameters of financial stability and leisure into a necessary means of survival. The different texts explore diverse aspects of this postcolonial crisis where mobility is coerced by realities of the day. Chishugi's narrative brings to the fore the personal costs that political instability inflicts on subjects by initiating precarious forms of mobility. Saro-Wiwa also manifests precarity albeit on a different scale as the magnitude proportions of violence in her case is of a personal nature superimposed on the nation. Cole and Kapur-Dromson reflect a cultural and social crisis regarding personal restlessness emanating from disappointments with the postcolonial political and socio-economic African nation-state. For all these travellers, their conditions of departure are marred by one or the other postcolonial crisis of nationhood. In this examination of their return travels, I ask, to what extent do these diverse notions of precarity and affects of departure influence the subject's perception of place in the moment of return?

Clifford reminds us that sites of return are sites of historical negotiation. This means that the historical realities of the returnee's initial encounter have to be considered in reading their re-engagement with the places travelled. In the moment of return, a dis/continuity emerges that may reveal the conflict the returnees have with their historical attachments with place, something that is overlaid with their hybridity as subjects carrying both an inside and outside perception. These texts position the subjects as specific kinds of diasporas which in turn inform their returns in specific ways. While this chapter does not explore diaspora, I wish to take up Clifford's idea that each diaspora is conditioned by the socio-political and economic conditions specific to their dispersal to examine the specificities and how they impact on travel (Routes, 249). The Global North is the point of departure for most of the returnees—Cole's narrator is travelling back to Lagos, Nigeria from New York, USA; Saro-Wiwa

and Chishugi are travelling back to Nigeria and Rwanda respectively from Britain; and Kapur-Dromson is travelling back to Kenya partly from France and India. While these are the geographical points of departure and returning, as the analysis will demonstrate, returning is both a spatio-geographical and spatio-temporal activity.

The different positions of diaspora enable this chapter to meditate on the effect the collective versus individual burden of returning bears on the returnees and their travels. I will attempt to show how, this positionality as well as the desires and nostalgias the returnees have reflect on the way they approach the spaces of return. It will be interesting to note how these positions, socio-political realities and aesthetic practices infiltrate in the return travel and influence the positionalities undertaken by the travellers. Granted, travel writing is not just about seeing the variety in forms of mobility and displacement, it is also about exploring the connections between "aesthetics and political and economic material practices" that bear on the journey as well as the spaces of travel (Kaplan 8). With this in mind, I interrogate the narrative stylization of return as a form of journeying that is complicated by the socio-political realities of both the returning subject as well as the sites of return.

Ashcroft et al. contend that postcolonial literatures are concerned with the connection between displacement and place, a link that emerges because of the postcolonial crises of the nation. In the selected texts, this reality is embodied in the shared position of diaspora as well as haunting. In this chapter I think of haunting as the lingering affect the subjects have in relation to the initial departures from the spaces they return to. Sara Ahmed defines affect as that which "sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values and objects" (*The Cultural Politics if Emotion*, 29). The nature of the affect is that it positions itself in relation to the way the returnee interacts with place in the moment of return. Drawing from Ahmed, this study coins the phrase 'place-attachment' to refer to the emotive spillage in the active process of re-encounters that subjects travelling have with spaces that are familiar to them.

Studies in psychology define place-attachment as "the experience of a long-term affective bond to a particular geographic area and the meaning attributed to that bond" (Morgan 11–12). While psychology enables me to anchor the notion of affect to place, their concerns are limiting and may not be useful for the intentionality this chapter explores. Thus, they act as my point of departure but I wish to stretch the idea to encompass ties in subjects, histories, temporalities among other links that carry emotive connection. I approach return travels as forcing travellers to revisit spaces which they have emotional ties to in 'initial homes'. For some of these authors, travel to such spaces is physical, while for others it is a combination of physical, psychological, historical and, or genealogical. Return, I argue allows the narrators to have a bifocal journeying inflected with present and past, home and away, and the emotional entanglements of each on the moment of return. Such a re-engagement

reveals that returns entail both losses and continuities, remembering and forgetting, revelation and concealment, all of which inform perception.

This focus on return travel enables an understanding of the ambivalent position of the returnee in the place of return and hostland. It also allows us to think through the baggage, promise, and disappointments that accompany return. Throughout the chapter, I grapple with the fact that returns in postcolonial African travel writing illuminate the contestations that exist in places of travel where the travellers have a sense of history. This is particularly so in the case of African travel writing where these histories have a lot to do with the dynamics of colonialism and its outliers such as political regimes of war, economic instability and cultural violence. I therefore argue that while return journeys entail aspects of the travelling subject aspirations for control over the places due to prior encounter, places resist and disrupt such control revealing place-affectation as a significant entity of travel.

In the first section of this chapter, I explore Chishugi's *A Long Way from Paradise: Surviving the Rwandan Genocide* as a return haunted by the trauma of the Rwandan genocide. I examine the extent to which the haunting of the genocide intrudes on the return journey and how this intrusion defines travel for the returnee. The second section looks at trauma of a different kind in Saro-Wiwa's *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria*. I interrogate Saro-Wiwa's use of the itinerary as a form of control of emotional history. I contend that instead of controlling the emotive history, the itinerary maps the dystopic quest mediated by her haunted past refracted onto the nation. The third section extends the refraction of past hauts on the present journeys of return in Cole's *Every Day is for the Thief*. I examine to what extent the use of wandering as a conscious artistic and mobility practice lends the return a multi-layered historicization which extends to beyond the returnee, offering a multi-layered understanding of attachments in sites of return. The last section of this chapter explores the notion of intergenerational return in Kapur-Dromson's *From Jhelum to Tana* as a means through which the restless returning subject can trace parts of herself in previous generations of her family. This section provides this study with an opportunity to tease out place-attachment as a concept that transcends the returnee's place-memories.

Haunted Journeys in Leah Chishugi's *A Long Way from Paradise: Surviving the Rwandan Genocide*

The tragedy of the Rwanda genocide is framed as the cause of Leah Chishugi's dislocation from Rwanda and hangs as a cloud over her return. This section approaches Chishugi's memoir of the Rwanda genocide, *A Long Way from Paradise: Surviving the Rwandan Genocide*, as a travelogue

that gives an account of the author's displacement as well as return travels to Rwanda.[67] This narrative has extensively been read as a war narrative and much has been written on it regarding the trauma of genocide, narrative as witness, and testimony.[68] In reading *A Long Way from Paradise* under the rubric of travel writing, I hope to illuminate insights that a travel methodology reveals regarding the journeys undertaken in traumatic times and spaces. This may allow a different lens in exploring the postcolonial crises of nationhood. I argue that reading a memoir of war under the lens of travel offers insights about place and memory, aspects that may be underplayed in trauma studies, hence illuminating realities about the connection of mobility and space. At the same time, such a reading opens travel genre to journeys other than the traditional ones hence leading to a paradigm shift that can serve to build the genre's transformation in the contemporary literary space.

Chishugi is a writer and humanitarian. She runs a charity that supports women and children who are victims of rape in Eastern Congo. *A Long way from Paradise* is her first travel memoir co-written with Diane Taylor, a journalist with an interest in human rights. Collaborative authorship in this narrative enables it to appeal to a diversity of publics (Allison Mackey 102–05). G. Thomas Couser observes that the collaborative process in life writing can either be a constructive or destructive act (36). The degree of influence on the subject of the narrative by the collaborator is what determines the functionality. Following Couser, I do not see Chishugi's narrative as a "transparent lens" through which we access the travelling subject's experiences of return, but rather, a mediated narrative of return. The extent of the mediation is sign-posted by the autobiographical pact on the cover which implies the privileging of Chishugi as the sole author. Bearing this in mind, we can agree that Taylor's mediation is minimal. While Chishugi bears sole responsibility for the story, Taylor's mediation is perhaps at the level of aesthetics. In this vein I read the process of collaboration as one that aids the returnee to manage the affective spillage emerging from the returns—both physical and psychological at the textual level.

Chishugi's narrative traces her forced move from Rwanda to the UK at the onset of the genocide. It also documents her multiple returns to Uganda, Rwanda, and Congo. The narrative begins with a short historical background of Rwanda and the Congo which offers a contextualisation of the ethnic tensions in both countries emanating from the colonial period. As a consequence of the 1950s ethnic

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[67] In subsequent mentions, *A long Way from Paradise: Surviving the Rwandan Genocide* is abbreviated to *A Long Way from Paradise*.

[68] There exists a multitude of works on the Rwanda genocide both in literary and sociological studies. In relation to Chishugi's narrative see Nick Mdika Tembo's "Paranoia, Chosen Trauma and Forgiveness in Leah Chishugi's *A Long Way from Paradise*" which explores the correlation between the narrative's exploration of the trauma of genocide and its suggestion of healing and reconstruction as involving all parties (perpetrators and victims). Tembo's critique of the narrative offers a reading from trauma lens. Another article on the text is Camilla Haavisto and Mari Maasilta's "Towards a Journalism of Hope? Compassion and Locality in European Mediations of Distant Suffering" which offers a comparative examination of Chishugi and a film.

war between the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda, the narrator's family resettles in the eastern Congo where Chishugi is raised. Chishugi's family later on moves back to Rwanda but maintain a home in Goma. When the genocide erupts, Chishugi is in a café close to the airport where she is waiting for her husband. The rest of the narrative documents her escape from Rwanda, journey across several countries in Africa, and arrival in the UK where she is offered permanent asylum. Her first journey of return to Africa happens seven years after the genocide when her lawyer is notified that Red Cross has made contact with her mother in Uganda. She had initially lost contact with her family during the genocide. Her first return is thus not to Rwanda but Uganda. Her second journey of return happens once she is convinced by family to visit Rwanda in order to begin the healing process from her trauma. Her third journey of return takes her to Eastern Congo to bury her mother and to set up her NGO. Although this narrative traces both her journeys of departure and return, I limit my interrogation to the return journeys as sites that offer a nuanced transformation of the genre. However, in cases where need may arise, I draw from the initial journeys of departure.

In her return journeys Chishugi grapples with both a personal and collective memory of the Rwandan genocide. I consider the precarities in the trauma of her past an ever-present entity in the frame of her return journeys. Therefore, I read Chishugi's return as one heavily constrained with the trauma of the genocide. This positions return as interactive sites from which the textures of emotional geographies redirect the way traveller and places/subjects interact. Each of Chishugi's return journeys are inflected with different degrees of emotional attachment and re-memory depending on the degrees of trauma experienced in the prior encounters with the given sites. For this critical analysis, I concentrate on the second return, travel to Rwanda, for a number of reasons. Firstly, in concentrating on her return to Rwanda, I interrogate how the genocide clouds the way she negotiates the spaces on re-encounter. Rwanda holds a key place in the returning subject's sense of being since it was the site where the initial journey of departure began. Secondly, this focus allows this examination to tease out nodes of affiliation to place, which are relevant in the transformative agenda of return journeys. While Chishugi is an asylee in the UK, Rwanda is her country of origin. This return journey will allow me to tease out the complicated crises of belonging and anxieties of distance at the centre of such disruptive rooting.

One point of note I wish to signal before delving into the specificities of the return journey to Rwanda, is the contrast between these returns and the initial journey of escape. All these journeys – journeys of return and the initial journey out of Africa—are occasioned by events that propel the narrator to travel on impulse. Unlike the initial journey which complicated by precarities of war, journeys of return are compelled by urgent emotive factors. The initial journey across Africa is taken by hitchhiking or walking which is presented as the safest way of escaping the Interahamwe seeking out

those they deem as not belonging in Rwanda. Thus in her initial journey of departure, Chishugi is encumbered by an urgency to mask herself to ensure survival. In the journeys of return, invisibility is not demanded since the genocidal surveillance is no more. At the time of dislocation, subjects of war do not have the luxury of time to organise themselves and their finances. Moreover, within the conditions of the genocide, money gains or loses value depending on the ethnicity of the subject. Even if the narrator had money, the conditions of surveillance and negative ethnicity amongst the Interahamwe do not afford her free mobility across borders. Such realities of precarity locate this form of travel in opposition to most of the journeys explored in this dissertation which are voluntary and follow one or the other kind of itinerary (either planned routes, planned sites or planned timelines).

Chishugi's narrative thus traces mobility as contingent on necessity and not the ideals of financial stability, and access. In her journeys of return, access to a credit card offers previously inaccessible options. This access partly explains the hastened nature of her return journeys, which are also defined by urgent need to reconnect and purge herself of the traumas of her past. In her journeys of return, different levels of coercion manifest: her return to Uganda is encouraged by the discovery of her mother, whom she had long thought lost; her return to Rwanda is informed by the urgent need to heal from the trauma of the genocide; and lastly her return to Congo is informed by the death of her mother. In this case, it is impossible to collapse her return journeys as voluntary or non-influenced. These return journeys, like the initial journey of flight, are not occasioned by leisure as is usually the case in conventional travel writing. Chishugi's narrative thus destabilises the many traditions of travel.

Chishugi's first return to Rwanda takes place ten years after the genocide. On this journey, Chishugi is overwhelmed by anxiety:

> I couldn't bear to retrace those steps. I was agitated on the plane and clutched her hand tightly, just as I had done when I was a little girl. Now Maman was the stronger one again. I was shaking so much that she had to lay a steadying hand on my knee. She had lived in Rwanda after the genocide, so returning did not hold quite the same dread for her as it did for me. (264)

For Chishugi, returning is a step towards her fears and trauma hence the need to lean on her mother for emotional and physical support. The bond of filiation shared by mother and daughter allows the narrator to channel her mother's strength in her struggle to accept Rwanda. Pratt observes that moments of arrival hold important significance for the way the narrative of travel is framed. She insists that such sites frame "relations of contact" and set the terms of representation (Pratt 77). If we examine Chishugi's agitation along Pratt's identification of the framing of travels, this return emerges as an emotionally charged arrival and the returnee seeks the bonds of filiation as anchor. This is not in the sense of ordinary travels to an elsewhere. Since Chishugi is returning to a site that she has a

traumatic history with, the agitation marks her expectations regarding this return. When later on she notes that Rwanda has changed but still remains the same, Chishugi is implying the reality that for the returnee, the haunts of the past still act on the present dynamics of change.

In this return, emotional spillage from her past initially manifests through recurrence of flashbacks and nightmares. It is possible to interpret the recurrence of these as a means through which she is mentally working through her anxieties regarding reconnecting to the place of her initial wounding. One justification of such anxiety is the apprehension regarding belonging. Considering the fact that her dislocation from Rwanda was charged with non-belonging as ascribed to by the Interahamwe, this apprehension is well-defined. One physical place that the narrator returns to is Hôtel Des Mille Collines. This is a significant site in her initial journey of escape and returning to the hotel is bound to awaken memories of her past. In her dislocation, the hotel served as a place of refuge as well as a place where she observed many people losing their lives. The hotel has also amassed a mythical status due to repeated representation in narratives about the genocide. The famous *Hotel Rwanda* movie popularised it as a node of symbolic significance in the genocide. Chishugi's return to Mille Collines gives a perspective that adds onto the mythography and reconfigures the perception of the hotel. Many narratives around the mythography of the hotel centre the contestations whether it served as fortress or exploitative space, with a lot of the political conceptions stemming from the role Paul Rusesabagina, the then manager of Milles Collines played in the genocide. Lars Waldorf's "Revisiting *Hotel Rwanda*: Genocide ideology, Reconciliation, and Rescuers" and Jonathan D Glover's "Genocide, Human Rights, and the Politics of Memorialization: *Hotel Rwanda* and Africa's World War" situate the mythologies around Hotel Milles Collines within the movie Hotel Rwanda in their attempt to explore the contradictions within the mythography created around the hotel. They demonstrate that whether as a place of survival or exploitation, perspectives on Mille Collines are determined by the political stands of those that write them.

While in the current return the hotel has been renovated and is a site of luxury and leisure, Chishugi does not identify with this perception of the hotel. Her return is overwhelmed by memories of the past. She says, "[t]oo much pain, too many terrible memories. I know that some of those people I was crammed into the hotel with ended up dying. … Everything that had happened there flashed before my eyes and I wasn't able to talk about anything at all" (Chishugi 266). The passage of time and the reconstruction that have happened on the hotel are not enough to afford her a different perception as her mind is still clouded by the overwhelming sense of the past. This journey exemplifies what Sarbine Marschall refers to as "spontaneous recall" (3). The hotel as the site of trauma evokes visceral resurgence of past memories. The place of return, in this case, is a site of encounter with the trauma

of the past. This is evoked by the affective ties the returnee has with the place. This resonates with the idea of affect as something that "sticks, … or preserves the connection" (Ahmed 29).

In Chishugi's return, the encounter with the hotel initiates an affective connection with her past – place-attachment which produce a re-traumatisation that prevents her from fully seeing the present as different. The hotel triggers memories of the past leading to the identification of this place as a significant node in travel to her past. For Chishugi, her prior encounter with the hotel indicate a history from which her haunting of the genocide is routed. On returning, place-attachments are triggered by the affective connections she has with the hotel in her past. In this sense, I read place-attachment as the conditions that conjure up the affective ties with place. I do not read place-attachments as embodied within place nor within the subject returning, rather I see the encounter between the place and the returning subject as one offering conducive environment for the "materialisation" and "intensification" of place-attachment in the moment of encounter (Ahmed 24). For Chishugi, the moment of return trigger the past trauma thus foregrounding this as a place-attachment.

Chishugi's re-encounter with Hotel Mille Collines is reminiscent of Tadjo's travel to Rwanda, which I explored in chapter four. In Tadjo, I explored how spaces of trauma carry emotional baggage. I noted that Tadjo's assumption of a collective positionality enables her to tease fraughted textures and reveal that traumatic spaces as inherently heterogeneous. While Tadjo travels in the conventional order where movement leads to an elsewhere, even when she takes up a collective African positionality, her teasing of these forms of emotional baggage still reveal her incapacity to fully identify with them since she is an outsider. The trauma is part of Africa but outside of Tadjo's realm of experience. Chishugi's journey of return situates the returnee as subject intimately connected to the place of return. Chishugi is insider by virtue of the fact that she experienced the past she is forced to revisit on her return. This in turn invests in return journeys a double sense of emotional labour/entanglements which is routed through prior personal history, something that we do not see in Tadjo. For Tadjo, emotional heaviness is detected in sites themselves and not in an intimate interconnection between place and traveller. This is the difference between return journeys and conventional travels.

Return journeys introduce something extra, or to use Ahmed's words, something preserved, from the past that the returnee is cued to recognize in their present travels. For Chishugi, re-encounter with the hotel repositions the place as a contact zone where narratives of the past and the present, some of which are more privileged than others, compete with her perceptual reality of the trauma to map her return consciousness. Such a conflicted historicity in the travelling subject produces vulnerability that positions the returnee as a subject anxious for control but failing to achieve it. The place-attachments emergent within the re-encounter breach a boundary enabling the narrator to have a multi-layered

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contact zone (the past vs present via the notion of power and authority of experience; the internal dialogism within the conflicted travelling subject and his memories and presentness located via the anxieties and restlessness of belonging).

Within this narrative of return, place-attachments do not just emerge from connections with places in one's past. Inter-body networks also produce such affective links that have the possibility of returning the subjects to their pasts. The traveller's and travellee's bodies are archives onto which and from which layers of memory are engrained. This notion of the body as trigger for place-attachment is extended in another place that Chishugi returns to—the prison. Chishugi visits the prison to meet a perpetrator that was responsible for the killing of her family. She says that she expects "to see a member of the Interahamwe like so many I had seen at the roadblocks, hacking limbs off people, eyes blazing with hatred and arrogance" (Chishugi 268). Her hope is that this moment will provide her with the closure she needs from the pain of the genocide. On meeting the perpetrator, this imagined reaction fails to materialise as the perpetrator weeps and begs for forgiveness. In this case, her body becomes, for the perpetrator, what Mille Collines was for her—the trigger of the past. The node of recognition that her body offers, returns the perpetrator to his past. This reversal confirms my earlier contention that place attachments are not necessarily found within place nor within the subject but are drawn from the interaction itself. Søren Kierkegaard in *Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs* notes that repetition involves both encountering the old again, as well as the capacity for the emergence of an epiphany; something radical and new within the space of return. While Mille Collines is a space that takes Chishugi back to the genocide event, her body takes the prisoner back.

Return travels, as the two incidents demonstrate, can take the form of 'travel-in-dwelling'. What I mean here is that mobility is not limited to the spatial movement from point A to B. In travel we ought to also ask "what can a body do?" (Islam 60). Islam contends that such a question opens for us the possibilities for thinking about movement in terms of "speed and slowness" as well as in terms of bodies rubbing onto other bodies. In this conceptualisation of travel, spatial movement is acknowledged but not entirely the key concern as travel becomes more metaphoric than literal. Chishugi and Mille Collines and the perpetrator and Chishugi are meetings of bodies. In the moment of meeting, the different bodies are acted upon and act upon in each other in specific ways which trigger different reactions and capacities of seeing. For instance, in Chishugi meeting with the material space of the hotel, the presentness of the hotel is erased by the intensity of Chishugi's emotional geographies with the place. In that case, the narrative does not offer a representation that dwells on the present, but offers one that grapples with anxieties of the returnee's past regarding the place. The past is more pronounced than the present.

In the moment of encounter that Chishugi has with the perpetrator, the encounter offers for the returnee a chance to be an observer in someone else's return. Although Chishugi makes a spatial movement to get to both sites the interactions require very little physical effort. The intensity of the encounters are intimated by the rubbing of bodies. This identification of return travel reminds me of Islam's claim that "one travels by intensity" (60). Reading Chishugi's narrative as a travelogue has allowed this study to trace such forms of dwelling-in-travel, forms that are often not foregrounded in the genre's concerns. These are involuntary travels which are occasioned by the political instability in places of return and the traumas therein. Such forms of journeys are a reality of the postcolonial crises of nationhood in contemporary Africa. These marginalised forms of journeys demonstrate the need for a more wholistic definition of travel writing which is alive to the crises at the centre of mobility practices across the world. We need a definition that accommodates African experiences of travel, which are often initiated by necessity, even desperation; not luxury and adventure-seeking. Chishugi's narrative destabilises the idea of pleasure/leisure within travel. The journey explored here evidently evokes pain. The degree of familiarity with the place of return is what heightens the tensions and expectations of haunts in the returnee. This is with regard to the speculation about the way the past acts on the present of return. For Chishugi, this anxiety affords the narrative a different sense of adventure vested in probability of the unexpected to emerge as place-attachment.

While this section has demonstrated the contingent nature of traumatic histories to re-emerge in the event of return travels initiating a re-traumatization, healing, or a new perspective, the next section shifts into a different kind of haunting. In that section, I try to interrogate the possibilities of locating place-attachments in return journeys where the fabric of the landscape is not overly memorialised with this level of intensity of emotive ties.

The Itinerary as Anchor for Emotional Attachment in Noo Saro-Wiwa's *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria*

Noo Saro-Wiwa's return travels are situated within the background of her returnee's complicated relation with Nigeria. Saro-Wiwa is a British/Nigerian writer, and journalist. Her history with Nigeria, the place of her return, is clouded by a personal trauma transposed on to the collective. Saro-Wiwa was born in Nigeria but was raised and lives in the UK. She is the daughter of Ken Saro-Wiwa, an iconic Nigerian author and activist known for his literary masterpieces criticising corruption in the Nigerian dictatorial leadership of the 1980s.[69] Saro-Wiwa K championed the rights of the Ogoni

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[69] In subsequent mentions I abbreviate Ken Saro-Wiwa to K. Saro-Wiwa while Noo Sao-Wiwa to the surname Saro-Wiwa in a bid to eliminate confusion.

people against the autocratic government of Sani Abacha and the environmentally destructive oil extraction practices within Nigeria which led to his hanging by the Abacha regime in 1995. At the point of returning to Nigeria, Saro-Wiwa is haunted by the hanging of her father by the Abacha regime, a negative image of Nigeria drawn from this past, and an underlying rocky relationship with her father. *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria* is Saro-Wiwa's first book. She has published short stories, features and articles for different anthologies and international newspapers.[70]

Looking for Transwonderland traces Saro-Wiwa's return to Nigeria compounded by the complicated history at both the personal and the national level. This journey affords Saro-Wiwa a chance to come to terms with the complexities of desiring a Nigeria that her father fought for and she also hopes this journey will purge her from the trauma she associates the country with. In this positioning, Saro-Wiwa operates on a similar trajectory with Chishugi, one where return travels are seen as offering opportunities for recovery. Annie Gagiano opines that when texts entails healing, they act as "authorial searches for closure" ("Recovering and Recovering from an Afrian Past" 270). Such narratives offer both a personal and a public re-engagement with the places where authors are seeking a healing from. Gagiano's examination of Saro-Wiwa raises a significant issue that this thesis contemplates in examining travel writing. Gagiano notes that Saro-Wiwa's book offers "something more complicated than a travel book" in its exploration of the traumas of the family and critique of the nation (270). I approach this text with the view that recovery is part of the potentiality of travel and not removed or outside it. In doing this, I think about the connections between journeying and recovery and not as separate entities. By focussing on the returnee's contemplation of her pasts in the present returns, I argue that this reflective journeying is what initiates the recovery that the said subjects seek.

Part of this work of breaking out of the limits of travel genre is to rethink the key concepts of travel. I wish to position Saro-Wiwa's return journeys as framed around a specific routing informed by both her pasts and her roots. She approaches Nigeria partly as a tourist destination. Her itinerary is also informed by her previous understanding of the places heavily modulated by memories of her father or her fantasy regarding progress in Nigeria. Within travel writing traditions, the itinerary is traditionally seen as a means of controlling the space of travel by "fix[ing] itinerant geographies into a stable, imperialistic scheme" (Smethurst 9). In this framing, the itinerary not only conditions the traveller's journey, but also limits the travelling subject's engagement with the places travelled. Following from this I argue that Saro-Wiwa's use of the itinerary is an attempt to manage the emotive aspect in her return.

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[70] In subsequent mentions, *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria* is abbreviated to *Looking for Transwonderland*.

Saro-Wiwa's return journeys redefine the itinerary in several ways. Owing to her familiarity with the places of return, the itinerary incorporates her assumptions about the places. This aspect is common in conventional travel, albeit in those texts the assumptions are drawn from knowledge available regarding those spaces gleaned from other travellers. In Saro-Wiwa, her assumptions are mostly drawn from her previous experience with Nigeria. At the same time, the connection with the site of return instils in the itinerary a contestation of insider/outsider dynamic. At this point it is necessary to reiterate that the conventional itineraries entails the traveller moving from a stable homeland to an elsewhere that may necessarily be unstable. Return journeys do not have the luxury of such smooth demarcation of home/away or inside/outside. The tensions regarding these key terms of travel emerge in the way the returnee's anxieties about the return travels are framed.

For Saro-Wiwa, the presence of an itinerary may seem like an assurance of control, however, the nature of returns, disturbs this power dynamic opening the journey up for rediscovery. Saro-Wiwa's anxieties about Nigeria emerge at the onset of her journey when she notes that:

> Nigeria was an unpiloted juggernaut of pain, and it became the repository for all my fears and disappointments; a place where nightmares did come true. As a word and as a brand, it connoted negativity. … Nigeria sapped my self-esteem; it was the hostile epicentre of a life in which we languished at the margins in England, playing second fiddle in my father's life. I wanted nothing to do with the country. (7–8)

Just like Chishugi in the previous section, the returning subject's anxieties about the place of return stem from both the personal and the collective. Nigeria is symbolic of the returnee's pain regarding her past relations with her father and his death. While tracing her unwillingness to reconnect with Nigeria as linked with her trauma with her father, Saro-Wiwa insists that in this journey she is taking back control since she is making the decision of reconnection by herself. This is paralleled to other journeys she made to Nigeria in her teenage years which were enforced by her parents. She suggests that the voluntary nature of this journey of returns may change her perception. I read Saro-Wiwa's intimations alongside her fears of re-connecting and see a tension between the reality and expectation.

In typical travel writing fashion, Saro-Wiwa promises objectivity but fails to realise that return involves affective connections which intrude on the travels and perceptions about places. Saro-Wiwa's return travels take her through nine major cities in Nigeria—Lagos, Ibadan, Abuja, Kano, Jos, Maiduguri, Calabar, Benin and Port Harcourt. This account concentrates on how she re-sees Nigeria through the affective ties of self, father, and state within the petro-economy networks of connections visible in the space of return. I read these connections as affiliative and filiated knots that influence the returnee's gaze on return. In this regard, I interrogate the extent to which triangulating the itinerary through self, father, and state enables a nuanced critique of Nigeria. In doing this I hope

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to reveal that travel writing does serve as a way through which experiential realities of postcolonial African state can be teased out.

The most significant entity in the return journey is the returning subject and her sense of being-in-place as she travels across space. Part of this sense is the body, a moving or moved body. In recent years this notion of embodiment of the traveller has become important, especially in autoethnographic travel writing where previously marginalised subjects take up the language of the centre and position themselves as travelling subjects. For the conventional traveller, it is the gaze that is privileged as the point of reference and not the entire being. Although the imperial traveller is most often a being-in-place, the narrative conditions this being-in-place[ness] as something that is still enveloped in a separateness, visualised in the narrative privileging of the gaze. In pointing this out, I do not necessarily consider imperial and African travelling subjects as distinct categories fashioned by distinct positionalities, but rather I do this to highlight self-conscious awareness as a major node of positioning in which postcolonial African travelling subjects engage with the genre.

While in chapter three the self-conscious awareness acted as a deliberate step in 'writing back' and in chapter four emerged as part of the redefinition of how the practice of travel is reimagined, in this chapter self-conscious awareness begins from the point of how Saro-Wiwa roots herself to Nigeria. It begins with her name and the ties the name routes/roots in her sense of self and her connection to Nigeria. Saro-Wiwa's name 'Noo' translates to 'crude oil' in Khana, her mother tongue. Bearing in mind the connection between this to her father's activism and death, she sees her name as a heavy burden (Saro-Wiwa 289). According to the naming culture among the Ogoni, the father is conferred with the honour of naming the child. By naming her Noo, her father transferred the burden of oil onto her being[ness]. Considering the link the author's father has with the oil industry, this emerges as an intimate rooting of the national at the personal level. In naming the narrator, her father equates her with a cause he dies for.[71] In this regard, Saro-Wiwa's name becomes an embodiment of her ambivalence as subject with a loss and a cause. Naming, as one of the outward expressions of identity and roots constantly remind the narrator of her affiliation to Nigeria as well as the mess the oil economy has enabled. The name acts as a signifier of the discomfort of return and dis-ease associated with Nigeria. In this journey her discomfort is more pronounced as she comes face to face with the different webs of violence stemming from oil, which informs part of her being[ness]. Saro-Wiwa

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[71] Ken Saro-Wiwa's life was majorly devoted to fighting the environmental degradation on Ogoni soil caused by poor drilling practices of the oil companies in the area. It was also concerned with pushing for the oil companies to invest back in the regions where they drill oil. His work of pushing successive Nigerian governments towards ensuring environmentally friendly drilling habits and pushing oil companies towards corporate social responsibility to the host communities, demonstrates his commitment to Nigeria.

desires for Nigeria to be a beacon of progress but grapples with the way every place she returns to is marred with violence through the network of corruption enabled by the oil economy.

Although oil is entangled in her identity, Saro-Wiwa still places her desire for Nigeria within a utopic ideal. Part of this is framed within the trope of transwonderland[ness] introduced in the title of the narrative as a suggestion for a particular kind of Nigeria. The word 'transwonderland' is directly drawn from the name of an amusement park in Ibadan. The narrator observes that according to an outdated guidebook, Ibadan's Transwonderland Amusement park is the closest thing to Disneyland in Nigeria. From this narrative, this indicates a symbolisation for the desire the narrator has of Nigeria to reflect modernity and progress. The Disney-esque impressions suggests a prosperous utopian Nigeria. In her childhood, Saro-Wiwa believed that such fantastical representations were a marker of progress. However, in this adult return, she refers to these as "fake textures" which are beyond the realm of Nigeria's reality (Saro-Wiwa 98). Following this, I argue that when the narrative references transwonderland, it sets Saro-Wiwa's returns within a dystopic agenda of the fallibilities of Nigeria and a utopic ideal. Thus, Saro-Wiwa's quest for 'transwonderland' is a critical exploration of Nigeria that reveals the pretences of progress. With this in mind, I locate Saro-Wiwa's return as an 'affiliative critique' in Gagiano's identification of it as "a critique that balances national bondedness with lucid articulation of social flaws and damaging histories" ("Women Writing Nationhood Differently" 48). Saro-Wiwa not only roots herself to Nigeria but also exposes the problematic nature of the postcolonial Nigeria in her returns. Her return journey could therefore be framed as one where she grapples with the problematic nature of the postcolonial state of Nigeria while tracing belonging within the nation.

This critical consciousness emerges in her navigation of all the cities she returns. It is introduced right from the onset when she arrives in Lagos:

> Lagosians will be the first to tell you that their city is a disaster of urban non-planning characterised by overcrowding, aggressive driving, traffic 'go-slows,' impatience, armed robberies and overflowing sewage, all of it existing alongside pockets of dubiously begotten wealth and splendour. If Lagos were a person, she would wear a Gucci jacket and a cheap hair weave with a mobile phone in one hand, a second set in her back pocket, and the mother of all scowls on her face. (Saro-Wiwa 11–12)

This initial image of Lagos positions it as a paradoxical space. The same view is extended in the narrrator's exploration of parts of the city. In Victoria Island, Saro-Wiwa comes face to face with opulence. She observes that Victoria Island plays host to several embassies and foreign establishments. It caters for the expats and the rich class of Lagos. She remarks that "[h]ere, Nigeria dusts itself down and shakes hands with the world commerce" (Saro-Wiwa 38). Within this impression of progress is the assumption that Victoria Island is part of the success story of Nigeria.

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However, it is marred by inefficiencies and poor service. The narrator comes across inefficiency in Victoria Island when she decides to jet-ski and is informed by the manager of a boat club that "their engines had broken down and couldn't be fixed in Nigeria" (Saro-Wiwa 38). Victoria Island paints the impression that amusement parks promise, of a fantasy but fails to fully live up to the expectations it sets up. Tarkwa Bay, the other island she visits is situated across Victoria Island and characteristically denotes simplicity, which positions it as the antithesis of Victoria Island. It reflects the other side of Nigeria, personifying poverty and struggle. The narrator here acquires the services of a guide, Sam, to tour Tarkwa. Within tourist economies, guides act as mediators that stage tourist sites for the market (Therkelsen and Sørensen 48). Most often, the guide negotiates the site on behalf of the traveller. The nature of Saro-Wiwa's return as fraught with emotive entanglements locate the guide as a bridge through which Saro-Wiwa hopes to manage the affective ties to the places of return. However, as noted in the previous section on Chishugi, place-attachments at times overwhelm the control measures set up by the returnee and spill through from unexpected places and in unexpected ways.

It is ironical that Saro-Wiwa's first place-attachment of note stems from this controlled travel in Tarkwa. This trigger of the past and the fraught nature of Nigeria is revealed through the recognition of oil tankers passage through their channel in Tarkwa. The narrator's peaceful enjoyment of Tarkwa Bay is intruded when Saro-Wiwa sees oil tankers crossing within her line of vision. She realises that Tarkwa Bay is directly within the oil traffic route. This awareness together with Sam's (her guide) confession of his friend's death by an explosion force the narrator to come to terms with not only her past entanglement with the oil menace (in the form of her father's activism and death) but also a present reality of the violence it has caused and continues to on the masses. Sam informs the narrator that his friend died while trying to provide for his family by stealing oil. The failure of the state to ensure employment for the poor through policy strengthening and curtailing of corruption forces them to survive dangerously and sometimes, die. Saro-Wiwa affirms this problem through her declaration that such incidents were, "a stinging reflection of our worth in the eyes of the government and by extension, the world" (43). She takes up the collective position from which a collective probing of the violence the oil menace has had on both Sam and her. In this collective positioning, Saro-Wiwa gains an insider position by virtue of the shared loss. Here, place-attachment emanate from a coincidental gazing that provides perfect conditions for a collapsing of the past with the present senses of loss. Unlike Chishugi's place attachments which trigger memories of the past, for Saro-Wiwa, the past intrudes as a point of reference for acquiring the collective claim to the present wounding.

Abuja city, unlike Lagos, veils the haunted connections to oil within pretentions of progress. The description Saro-Wiwa offers of the city suggests a strict architectural design that gives a façade of

progress. The narrator notes that Abuja is 'broad', 'clean', and 'quiet.' The city's strict regulation is suggested by terms such as 'Land Use Act' and '*okada* ban' which signify measures the government has put in place to ensure a certain level of control and order within the city. This image is reminiscent of the kind of city Saro-Wiwa hoped for in her younger life; the city whose aesthetic was fixed (110). It is also reminiscent of Mochama's postcard city image where the city is reduced to a geometrical order. In this return, the narrator's self-awareness enables her to see beneath the manufactured architecture of order and expose the rot that Abuja is founded on. The first sign of the pretentious nature of Abuja is the way the city acts on the travelling subject. The narrator confesses her struggles to stay awake while on a taxi ride around the city. Saro-Wiwa compares the landscape to a Formula 1 computer game, a comparison that gives the impression of endless repetition which confirms Mabel's conclusion that "the city had no soul, no organic flavour" (Saro-Wiwa 111). For this returnee, Abuja is a pretentious city that does not work well for the people living there. What this implies is that the architecture of Abuja is a monotonous flow that is not attractive. It is a fallacy about progress.

The narrator notes that "after *siphoning* Nigeria's assets, politicians and other thieves bring the loot to Abuja where they've created a panorama of semi-laundered splendour— a world-class stadium, the manicured Millennium Park, … and millionaire mansions with giant model aeroplanes playfully attached to their rooftops" (Saro-Wiwa 112 emphasis added). The use of verbal terms that allude to oil is Saro-Wiwa's subtle way of linking the problem of corruption to the oil menace. According to Saro-Wiwa, Abuja tries too hard to reflect modernity by sanitising problems caused by thievery of the political class through its glossy impression, hence her conclusion that "[t]ry as it might, Abuja hasn't quite reached that ever-shifting benchmark of 'modernity'" (113). One cannot read Abuja's aspiration for modernity outside of its historical connection to the exploitation of the oil economy that it is built on. Neither can the other connection to the traveller's father's death be ignored; it seems such pretentions of modernity is what Abacha's regime killed him for. With this understanding, Saro-Wiwa's description gains a double-speak positioning Abuja as a translation of the ruling class's corruption and inefficiency deflected through a façade of progress.

Comparing Abuja to Lagos one notices diversities within African cities. In addition, there emerges differences in the veiling of the oil menace. In terms of planning, Lagos reflects the consequences of poor urban planning. Abuja on the other hand, being a city planned from bottom to top gives an impression of modernity. In both cases, the reality of the failures of the system is revealed. Lagos in many ways embodies the contradictions of the flashiness of oil money and the squalor that accompanies it; albeit, the city still captures Nigerians spirit of struggle through inventiveness in public interactions. On the other hand, Abuja is a public display of the sanitised oil money. It stands as a city that pretends not to have anything to do with the pervasive nature of the oil proceeds and yet

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it is built on exactly that. Since this is the same issue that marked the narrator's father's activism, the narrator's anger at Nigeria is explained. Abuja cleans up well; it is the embodiment of the fantasy her younger self aspired to. On paper it works very well, however, the reality of the exploitation that produced it denies the perfection it seeks. It is the epitome of the metaphor of 'transwonderland' as it portrays the fantastical—a form of progress that is imaginary. The extremes represented by the two cities foreground Saro-Wiwa's outsider status as well as the irony of it. Lagos with its 'all-over-your-face' manner conditions the narrator as an outsider. Abuja on the other hand is too pretentious for her liking. This discomfort in both Lagos and Abuja, which are totally diverse cities mark Saro-Wiwa as a 'familiar stranger.' This ambivalent position is informed by both her affiliative connection to the cities and degrees of distance informed by her cultural hybridity as well as her haunted connection with the spaces.

It is interesting to note that familiarity that Saro-Wiwa has with the cities emerge from the place-attachments the cities have with her traumas with the oil economy. The bitter tone she employs when castigating the political class for the misuse and public displays is a node of familiarity with the reality of the painful link the oil economy has had on both her life as well as the economy of Nigeria. Consequently, both cities do not just fail due to the realities exposed, they also fail due to what they took from her – her father. The petro-industry is seen in this narrative as responsible for both the past and the present. The past of the execution of her father and the present failure to achieve a modern city. In a study on petro-cities, Michael Watts indicates that cities are sites of "political and economic calculation" (97), I dare add social and cultural manipulation too. Such can be seen in the "network of flows and connectivity" that permeate the city-space (Watts 97). While Watts talks of rigs, pipelines and other networks of distribution and production channels, Saro-Wiwa's narrative, provides us with social and cultural networks. Saro-Wiwa's Nigerian cities offer a compound network involving the cartography of the flow of opulence vis a vis poverty connected by the petro-economy. The interconnectedness of the network arises if we conceptualise the site of return within the notion of 'global cultural flows' (Appadurai 37). While the masses get disenfranchised of their lands due to the laying of oil pipes and the spillage destroying farms, the cash flow from the oil industry is channelled to the creation of sites such as the sanitised city of Abuja and the high-end marked off sites like Victoria Island that are the domain of the international community. This leaves the masses whose land has become unproductive to seek other means of sustaining their livelihoods hence mobility to the cities and places like Tarkwa Bay where some end up like Sam's friend who is a casualty of the bursting of oil pipelines. At the end of the day, this tragedy gets marked off by the local and international media as another case of accidents and the underlying exploitative cause linked to oil economy is exempt. In tracing the interconnections of the different sectarian implications, Saro-

Wiwa's return thus becomes not just a quest for the pretentiousness of postcolonial Nigeria, but a critique of the nation.

The final stop-over in Saro-Wiwa's return journey reminds us of the beginning. It all began with oil, both in relation to her roots and her fears about returning. Her itinerary leads her to her genealogical roots. Port Harcourt and its environs offer a rooting to more than just the name and genealogy. This city is the capital of Rivers state, which is one of the largest oil producing regions of Nigeria. In returning to the city of her birth Saro-Wiwa outlines her connection with Nigeria and the oil menace as a personal one. She also visits Bane, a small village in Rivers State where her father was born. I read her travels to her roots as a desire for attachment with Nigeria. In many of the cities she travels across, a sense of outsider[ness] permeates her connections with both the places and people. In this regard, her genealogical journeys in the physical sense serve as quest for attachment. This desire is manifested in the way she approaches the place. One node of rooting is the house. Saro-Wiwa, in both Port Harcourt and Bane surveys the family homes as a way of connecting with her father. This positions her as having a huge feeling of loss as well as a desire for a reclamation of a connection. She finds an intimacy with her father through her tour of his office in their Port Harcourt home where she notices that they have similar tastes in books. Even with this sense of connection, she still observes that "[t]he emptiness of the house accentuated that sense of family depletion" (Saro-Wiwa 273). The Bane home on the other hand is a deserted house whose only sense of presences is the growing number of graves and the memories of her father's body in one of the rooms. Both returns to the home unveil discomforts of rooting that underlie such places and foreground a feeling of loss within presences. For Saro-Wiwa, the two 'homes' foreground the sense of loss that she now associates with Nigeria. Even though this is her 'home,' she does not feel at home. This confirms the reality of postcolonial dislocated subjects return to sites of previous grounding where Salman Rushdie insists on impossibility of return. A similar reality emerged in Chishugi when at the end of her return journey she notes that Africa is her mother's home and not hers. It is necessary to note that for these returning subjects, this realisation emerges out of the encounters and anxieties the return journey reveals.

The landscape of Port Harcourt and Bane is overwhelmed by a haunted aura that emanates from the oil economy. The narrative's description is overpopulated with effects of the oil menace: from the narration of the depletion of the fish population due to oil spills in the waters leading to loss of livelihoods for fishermen; reclamation of wetlands by the corrupt leaders who divert oil money for personal projects; to depletion of forest cover (palm trees) due to fumes from the oil production and reduced productivity of farm lands. In Saro-Wiwa's own words, "Rivers State felt like a feral place" (280). This description creates an impression of suffocation that emerges from the landscape initiating a place-attachment. Saro-Wiwa is overwhelmed by a visual imaging of the problematic

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nature of the oil economy on the social, agricultural and political wellbeing of Port Harcourt. This forces Saro-Wiwa to seek an escape, hence, "[s]leeping was the only way for me to escape the anxiety" (280). Returning magnifies the emotive entanglements due to the ever-present depiction which is not necessarily veiled by a façade as we see in the other cities she traverses. Thus, discerning what 'home' and belonging means for her becomes a complicated exercise hence her turning to language. Saro-Wiwa demonstrates familiarity with Bane in her claim that this is the only place where her name is pronounced correctly: "[f]inally, I was in the one place on Earth where everyone gets it right straight away" (Saro-Wiwa 289). This suggests that even in the rest of Nigeria, her identity is misarticulated. Language is here seen as an approximation of comfort or familiarity. The irony of the matter is that the same language is what excludes her from Bane. She is insider here because of the spark of recognition correct pronunciation of her name evokes. But she is outsider, by virtue of her exclusion from the same tongue. Saro-Wiwa is thus a familiar stranger, a complicated subject who cannot fully own her homeliness to this place and cannot fully unyoke herself from the same place.

At the end of the journey, Saro-Wiwa accepts her conflicted connection to Nigeria as part of her identity. She notes that while her travels to Port Harcourt was meant as a search for 'home' she does not necessarily feel at home there. The same is true for Bane. However, Saro-Wiwa's return journey reveals that uncomfortable belonging is also a sense of belonging. This realisation is the enlightenment she gains from the return journey via a new intimacy with her father. She observes that "[a]s much as he [her father] loved Bane, his attachment to the place was an emotional one that didn't require physical presence" (Saro-Wiwa 296). What this reflection means for Saro-Wiwa is a rethinking of home/away as terms of travel not necessarily grounded in geo-spatiality, but as terms defining a subject's intimacies to place, even when the place is re-routed through symbolisations that are not grounded in geo-spatial understanding of places. Travel writing has most often defined home as where the travelling subjects departs from as s/he begins the journey. For Saro-Wiwa, this is discounted as she has a conflicted history with Nigeria. Her emotional anxieties about Nigeria transform home from being conceived of as a stable point of departure, to an uncomfortable sense of [up]rooting. Home is not necessarily her genealogical roots, since she finds discomfort in both Port Harcourt and Bane. Neither is it a grounded geo-spatial placing as she does not easily accept her hostland as home. Rather, what emerges from this discussion is the vision of home as compounded by degrees of familiarity and emotional entanglements. Following Clifford, I perceive Saro-Wiwa's discomfort with location in the physical, as initiating an understanding of location as transcending the physical, thereby transforming the way the concepts are thought of in return travel where nodes of [un]familiarity complicates any reductive reading of journeys.

Saro-Wiwa's return travel narrative reveals that place-attachments emerge from an intimate connection between the returnee and the place of return. The entanglements of past haunts with present embodiment and desires the returnee has about the place of returning invoke an affective network that taps onto the physicality of places to suggest nuanced notions of comparative exploration which capture the disappointments the returnee has about the return. Thus return journeys emerge as overly layered with critical reflection which links the personal with the national. In the next section I still explore returns where the personal haunts is transposed onto the national in the case of Cole's protagonist and his travels to Nigeria.

The Wandering Returnee in Teju Cole's *Every Day is for the Thief*

Teju Cole is a Nigerian/American writer, journalist, photographer, and art historian. His writing is heavily influenced by his love for art. *Every Day is for the Thief*, Cole's debut novel reveals this through its experimentation between prose, photography and art history as embedded in narrative.[72] Cole's writing has received many awards over the years, a testament to the quality of his works.[73] In *Every Day,* Cole through the figure of the wanderer positions his protagonist as a character in control of his journeys. This places the returnee as a character that is anxious about the affiliative ties to the places of return. In this section, I explore the extent to which such a strategy of control, wielded within the narrative by the wandering subject can hold, considering the nature of postcolonial return as affected by intrusions from the complications of initial journeys of exit and the affiliative ties the returnee has to the place of returning.

Every Day documents the protagonist's return to Nigeria after an absence of fourteen years. It opens with a situation involving the narrator at the Nigerian consulate in New York having a difficult time in trying to get his Nigerian passport ready for the journey. He experiences bureaucratic delays occasioned by constant demands for bribes by the Nigerian officials at the consulate. Bearing in mind the narrator's dual citizenship (Nigerian-American), these difficulties reveal a deeper crisis about postcolonial nationhood. It is ironic that Nigeria as 'home' is an unstable entity that the narrator needs to bribe his way to get the right papers to return. This state of affairs marks the narrator's initial disappointment regarding Nigeria at the onset of his return. It also raises the anxieties the protagonist

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[72]The text was originally published by Cassava Republic Press in 2007. This chapter utilises the Random House Press version of the text which incorporates photographs of different scenes the author took during his visit to Lagos. In subsequent mentions, *Every Day is for the Thief* will be abbreviated to *Every Day*.

[73] Cole is the recipient of the Time magazine best book of the year 2011 for *Open City*, PEN award 2012 for *Open City*, Windham- Cambell Literature prize 2015 among others. His other writing include an essay collection, *Known and Strange Things* (2016) and Blindspot (2017) a text that fuses prose and photography.

has regarding Nigeria as it seems to already be unwilling to be moulded in any particular perception. The narrative also delves into the conditions that marked the narrator's initial departure from Nigeria. He was forced to leave when after his father's death by tuberculosis, he became estranged from his mother. The narrator notes that his mother's prolonged and obsessive grief over the death frayed ties that were already broken and marked the end of a relationship between mother and son (Cole 119). His departure was also propelled by the desire for a better life. This positions Cole's returnee on a different trajectory from Chishugi and Saro-Wiwa. Although all three authors grapple with different notions of loss and pain, the magnanimity of each inform their returns in different ways. Chishugi's loss and trauma is of a personal and collective level having both faced the genocide directly and lost family. Saro-Wiwa's loss is also of a personal nature in the sense that she loses her father and is distanced from Nigeria because of trauma related to this event. Cole's returnee's sense of loss and pain seems to be of a lesser intensity than Chishugi and Saro-Wiwa. This, however, does not evade the fact that the returnee is travelling to a site he associates with his loss and pain. Cole's protagonist is still haunted by the personal and public shortfalls that Nigeria has come to represent for him.

This narrative takes the form of short episodic accounts with each chapter offering the possibility of being read as stand-alone or part of a continuous narrative.[74] It is framed as a fictionalised autobiography where there is a close relationship between author, narrator and subject, complicating the reading. The careful association of author, subject and narrator charge the narrative with a contestation between memoir and fiction opening the text up to meandering the in-between space where fact is fictionalised and fiction is represented as fact. The freedoms in this in-between space allows Cole's narrative to challenge travel writing's traditions regarding authenticity of experience as the backbone of the genre. The narrator's return journey is mirrored on one of Cole's journeys of return to Nigeria. While publicised as fiction, the narrative is accompanied by photographs taken by Cole in his actual wandering around Lagos.

The photographs accompanying the narrative contextualise, authenticate, and complicate the way Cole's travelogue is read. Most especially, once we consider the images in relation to the prose as well as style of the photographs pushing the limits of making claims to the real. The narrative makes use of a total of nineteen photographic experiments accompanying the prose. Travel writing has always utilised paratexts such as photographs to suggest authentication (Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* 107–12; Sontag 3–6; Adams xv). Photographs prove that that travellers have been to the places they describe in their narrative. In Cole's case as noted by Yvonne Kappel,

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[74] This fragmentation is informed by the production of the narratives. Initially the narratives were an experiment in blogging that Cole undertook in 2006 when he returned to Lagos. It was a 30-day experiment where each segment was uploaded in a day.

the intertextual addition of photographs to the prose narrative invite a "re-membering of [the] genre" leading to different ways of thinking about travel and travel writing (67). In this way, the narrative participates in the reinvention of the genre of African travel writing. If we pay attention to Cole's photographs in line with the suggestion to see them as photographic experiments, we realise that Cole stretches the limits of what the photographs can communicate. These photographs push the autofiction contestation of the narrative of return. I recognise this as a sign of the restlessness that Cole has regarding facts and also functions as a strategy of magnifying the returnee's loss of control regarding emotional spillage from the past.[75]

In this return, the protagonist travels around Lagos city where traces of the past invade his thoughts taking him back to the initial haunting with Nigeria. The narrator's attempts and failure at controlling the haunts that affect him on this journey are poignantly revealed when he reflects on his mother:

> In this journey of return, the greatest surprise is how inessential her memory is to me, how inessential I have made it, even in revisiting sites that we knew together, or in seeing many people who knew us both. People know better than to ask about her. This is what it is to be a stranger: when you leave there is no void. Mother was a stranger here. She left no void after eighteen years, as if she had never been here. And I fatherless. Am also like a man without a mother, even if it is her face and her pale color that looks back at me from every photograph and reflective surface. (Cole 119–20)

The narrative suggestively uses haunting with his mother to locate both the literal and the metaphoric affiliations with Nigeria. At one level, this return brings forth memories of the narrator's estranged relation with his mother which to some extent led to his departure from Nigeria. We cannot read this estrangement devoid of the underlying pain of losing his father who from his reaction, seemed an important part of his rooting in the country. Thus in this return, the affiliative disconnections at the personal level become heightened and transposed onto the national fabric that he traverses. The narrator's desire for a home forms part of his reason to return even though he is aware of the magnitude of loss Nigeria represents for him. In this regard, this return is a way through which the returnee faces the frayed ties with the nation and himself while at the same time coming to terms with his anxieties about the place. I examine the narrator's anxieties with his personal struggles as a foregrounding of the disaffection with the nation.

Cole's choice of wandering also signals this desire for reconnection. Whether using the *danfo*, Aunty Folake's car or walking, the narrator is positioned as an urban wanderer.[76]When the narrator notifies

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[75] See his interview with Sean O'Hagan in *The Guardian* of 25th June, 2017 where he talks at length about the act of pushing limits of genre and experimenting which allows him to explore what texts can do when stretched to certain limits.

[76] This is an old beat-up bus that is used for public transport in Nigeria. Saro-Wiwa in *Looking for Transwonderland* defines the *danfo* as "condemned hand-me-downs from Europe, so decrepit that one can watch the tarmac moving beneath one's feet" (19).

his hosts, of his wish to wander the streets of Lagos alone, they all disapprove. They believe that his lengthy absence from Lagos has estranged him from the city. According to them, the narrator is a stranger in Lagos and needs to be guided on the dynamics of the city before he delves into it. At the core of this dis-ease is the view that to wander in Lagos is to position oneself as a vulnerable target. The narrator is however convinced that wandering in the city alone is key to an authentic interaction with Lagos. The need to navigate the city alone suggests his urgency to reclaim familiarity. The narrator remarks that his hosts, "don't understand that being there on the *danfo*, *being there on the streets, is the whole point of the exercise*" (Cole 34 emphasis added). For the narrator, the act of wandering is necessary to re-connection with his Nigerian identity. He insists that being in the streets enables him to see the city (Cole 128). To augment his conviction in the value of wandering, the narrator adds, "letting go of my moorings makes me connect to the city as pure place, through which I can move without prejudging what I will see when I come around a corner" (Cole 159). Cole's narrator suggests that wandering enables him to strip himself of preconceived notions, something that locates him within Islam's nomadic mode of travelling. He approximates wandering to an intimate interaction with the city which is at one level a raw encounter and at another inspires an unbiased reciprocal re-encounter.

Cole's wanderer offers a parallel flânerie, a common form of travelling in the urban space. An urban wanderer is a person that drifts around the city following "the moods that act upon the individual" (El-Azma 120). This can be contrasted to the act of flânerie which is conceived as "the activity of walking and strolling" where the subject loses himself in the crowd (Tester 1). Cole's wanderer is closely linked to the flâneur by virtue of moving around city-spaces but is ideally removed from him in the way he is embodied in the city. Cole's use of the wanderer is thus a domestication of the flâneur in the African city. Isabel Carrera Suárez identifies the distinctive ways that the postcolonial traveller adopts the flâneur. She observes that in postcolonial writing, travellers are "counter flâneurs/flâneuses writing against the grain" by virtue of being defined by the changing dynamics of "the urban discourses and genres from which they emerge" (Suárez 854). The flâneur takes up the position of a "secret spectator of the spaces and places of the city"; he is a figure fully in control, a detached observer (Tester 4–6), and a man of leisure (Murail 162). Cole's protagonist is an embodied subject who informs and is informed by the realities of the city and the hauntings he has with the place. Cole's wanderer is thus a domesticated flâneur that enables a close interpretation of Lagos's personality through teasing out his connection to it.[77] Wandering enables Cole's protagonist to open himself to

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[77] The idea of the flâneur which has extensively been explored by Walter Benjamin's exploration of Baudelaire's poetry imagines an aimless stroller within an urban space that is defined by how he manipulates the crowd as a veil. In this regard, the urban plan of the city plays a role in the way the flâneur occupies space in the city. Benjamin intimates that

be vulnerable to the city through active physical location and movement in Lagos. Cole's protagonist occupies the city space in a different manner to Mochama and Sumprim explored in the previous chapter. Both Mochama and Sumprim position their personas as characters that locate themselves as insiders within the everyday events in the city. They are typical travellers-in-dwelling. Cole's persona on the other hand, does not reflect any usual/ordinary positionality. He is aware of his loss of connection with the city by virtue of his prolonged estrangement, but still aspires to connection hence the proposition to wandering. He is also aware of the time constraints of his dwelling in Lagos, hence could be termed as dweller-in-travelling. Cole's wanderer is a temporary dweller in Lagos. Wandering thus serves as a means through which he can have pretentions of insider[ness] which still maintaining detachment. However, as the indication of haunting given above shows, this is an insurmountable task for the returnee as the return travel already implicates him as having place-attachments with the city.

I think of Cole's wandering through Merlin Coverley's understanding of Guy Debord's notion of psychogeography where place-attachments bear on the way the subject comprehends places. Debord defines psychogeography as the "study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment … on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (qtd. in Elias 821). Coverley argues that this form of experiencing place allows for new ways of apprehending our urban environment thus imparting the everyday with originality (14–16). Coverley thinks of urban wandering as a tactic of resistance against conventional practices from which travel writing derives— the practice of objective observation of spaces travelled which pit the travelling subject as the powerful centre from which the narrative emerges. In this regard, the wanderer as returnee is implicated by the affects the city evokes in him in his negotiation of the city and how he re-defines himself in the process of wandering.

Wandering in this text begins with enclosed spaces, which echo Walter Benjamin's notion of flânerie as also involving strolling through buildings. For Cole's protagonist, the first form of wandering is revealed in his stroll through his hosts' living room:

> The hallways of the house are bigger than they used to be. The floor is broad and covered with curiously soft white tiles. It is as though I have shrunk in the years since I was last here, or the house itself has gently expanded in the heat, increasing by small amounts in each month of my absence to reach these dimensions. The doorframe is wide and high enough for a family of acrobats to walk

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flânerie is impossible in the modern city due to the complicated and confusing urban plans that have foregrounded progress in the form of commodification of the city hence the denial of the flâneur a free reign of the city which may allow aimless strolling. This is why I talk of Cole's wanderer as a domestication of the flâneur; an adaptation of the figure in a manner that is alive to the constraints that the postcolonial urban places on the traveller as well as the aggression of the traveller on the same spaces.

through in formation. And there they suddenly are, in my presence, standing on each other's shoulders, their limbs in astral shape. They negotiate the opening, thread it. (Cole 22)

The absence of a crowd in this incident is replaced by an overwhelming presence of the walls which envelop him with an aura of suffocation. Cole does not just locate the apprehensions about change in the description of the walls but also in the emotive reaction the house provokes in the subject returning. For instance, his use of expansion adjectives to refer to the place, and adjectives of shrinkage to signify the returnee's perception of self suggest the narrator's anxieties about non-recognition as well as a foreboding estrangement. This incident signals an apprehension the narrator has of note measuring up to the changing dynamics of Lagos in this moment of return.

The returnee veils these anxieties about returning within intertextual allusions that imagine the hallway as "[p]art of this story has been told before: the broad door-way, the acrobats. These are incidents from a book I love. Incidents … from a dream in that book" (Cole 23). The overwhelming nature of the anxieties about venturing out force the returnee to see this place through another's eye. Cole is drawing connections between Aunty Folake's house and Michael Ondaatje's memorialisation of "the old governor's home" in his autobiographical narrative of return to Sri Lanka, *Running in the Family* (1982). In leaning on Ondaatje, Cole's narrative is following the tradition within travel writing of following a citational practice where, as Said notes, latter authors quote the prior authors, ideas or texts to suggest authorial network (177). Both Cole and Ondaatje are exploring return journeys and how they challenge one's understanding of the places of prior encounters. The metaphor of the acrobats is drawn from Ondaatje who uses the image of acrobats to suggest the enormity of the doors of the old governor's home. In referencing Ondaatje, Cole demonstrates how anxieties about inadequacies relating to representation of the local intrude on the returnee who feels as a stranger in this place that still hold a sense of the familiar. While in conventional travel writing citational practice fixes knowledge about places (Said 67, 177, 273), in Cole's case, it enables the returnee to approximate place and his anxieties about inadequacies regarding knowing the place of return to emerge. Cole affiliative connection with Ondaatje enables him to bridge the return through a commonality that suggests a bond of familiarity with anxieties elsewhere.

I wish to borrow the Bakhtinian concept of words being already invested with baggage and meaning when we encounter them to clarify how affect is transposed onto returned to places. Bakhtin argues that when words are taken up by artists, they are already "entangled, shot through with thoughts, points of view, alien value judgements and accents" (*The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* 276). In a sense, Bakhtin's idea of language being full of baggage to speak to notions about places and baggage. I think of places in similar ways in order to understand the power of prior encounter in the return encounter with places. For the returnee, places of return are sites that are invested with baggage

emergent from the mythography on those places, personal experiences, and the complexities of negotiation. This is the baggage that I refer to here. The idea emerging is that every occupation of space imbues it with meaning and when there are a multitude of ideologies, views and perception that spaces entail, then every new occupant should be aware of the baggage but still wield them to carry the weight of the meaning he/she intends for the space. When the collapse of pasts and present is done, a tension-filled image appears. In this case, there is an actual repetition causing memory and reality to merge.

The narrator's next excursion into the city reveals a similar kind of located returning where he is positioned as having mental mobility while grounded within a momentary stasis. The narrator is on a *danfo*, and he gets lost in the mass of people in the bus station when he chances upon a woman, in another *danfo*, reading Ondaatje. This chance encounter transposes him to an imaginary encounter with the lady. It is through this alternative reality that the returnee is able to move from being a stranger to a friend. The wanderer positions himself as having achieved re-insertion into the city through an imaginary encounter. Both the lady reading Ondaatje and the direct reference to Ondaatje are instances that I read as nodes in a route of return. The route is mapped by the recognition of the familiar within the spaces of return. These anchors in Ondaatje, could possibly be read as bridges that allow the narrative to contemplate experiences in the spaces of return. Katherine Hallemeier in her exploration of 'literary cosmopolitanisms' in Cole's *Every Day* and *Open City* concurs with this when she notes that physical journeys allow the narratives to delve into "frequent allusions" to other artists (Hallemeier 240). Ondaatje permits the narrator to approximate familiar connections by transposing the distant onto the local. In this case, the imaginative space acts as a means through which the local space of return can be apprehended.

If this were to be taken as fact, is it then not true to agree with the argument that return is an illusion (Rushdie 10)? For Rushdie returns can only be possible in the imaginative/fictional sense. In proposing this reading of return via the imaginary it may appear as though I am negating the claim I make at the onset of this dissertation to read encounters differently. I wish to reiterate that I still locate travel via Islam's nuancing of encounters. Islam insists that for the traveller to encounter the other, there is a necessity to breach a gap in the self so as to see the other. Cole's wanderer does not seem to approach the other. However, I wish to read Ondaatje again as the bridge that actively opens a fracture between the returnee and the lady. This point of convergence is what gives the returnee licence to see the other through imaginative extrapolation. Nevertheless, I do not underplay the reasoning behind such an interaction. Why does the returnee not approach the lady? We can as well insist that the fact that they are both situated within the mechanised transport space that initiates a physical perimeter (they are in different *danfos* heading to different directions) ensuring the

impossibility of a physical encounter. At this point I wish to reroute my reasoning through Islam's suggestion of the reality of encounters and say that a physical encounter does not necessarily confirm a real interaction, but the way bodies can offer poignant encounters.

By virtue of the imaginative encounter, the wanderer is a 'familiar stranger.' The imagination is a control mechanism that affords the returnee the luxury of accessing the place of return while silencing the undercurrent of anxieties and restlessness about return. This deflection is only possible to a particular level where the past intrudes on the present. When the past overwhelms the present imagination, the narrative then offers place-attachments grounded in the present navigation of place. One of the most evocative spaces where the complexity of return is revealed is the market. The narrator's wandering through a Lagos market, foregrounds the multilevel nature of spaces where a physical journey opens itself to a psychogeographical wandering. In true wanderer fashion, the narrator rationalises the propensity of marketplaces to accommodate strangers as well as its worldliness (globality) which provides him with a veil of acceptance the other places may not. However, the first instance in the market where the narrator assumes the insider position by speaking Yoruba to a seller is met with a framing of him as an "*oyinbo*, or an Ibo man,*" both, claims that pinpoint him as stranger (Cole 57). This reference denies him the insider position. Both *oyinbo* and Ibo exclude him from the inside in Lagos. *Oyinbo* is Yoruba word for white man. In being referred to as a white man, the seller intentionally locates the returnee as stranger in this place. Lagos is a cosmopolitan city which is originally considered as the ethnic home of the Yoruba. In referring to him as an Ibo, the travellee encountered considers him outside the ethnic demographic of Lagos. Through this one statement, the assumption of the urban space as cosmopolitan is disrupted to suggest different degrees of belonging and inclusivity.

The market is not only a cosmopolitan space where different layers of insider/outsider dynamics manifest, this diversity enacts the paradox of returnee as both stranger and familiar. In such a heightened contestation of belonging, the vulnerability of the returnee to his haunts with Nigeria emerge, albeit in the most incongruous way. The wanderer observes the textures of the market and notes, "[i]t was my favourite of all the markets for its coolness. The only movement here is from the standing fans. The concrete underfoot is curiously soft, tempered with use. Then I emerge to sunlight and the sudden hysteria of car horns and engines. Six roads meet here and there are no traffic lights" (Cole 59). Wandering allows for heightened observation. Cole's attention to detail reveals the different valences of this place. However, the past intrudes in the most unobvious ways through the narrator's reference to, "[h]ere I'm told, is where the boy was killed" (Cole 56). The emotive textural heaviness of this claim is captured in the way this one statement intrudes on the descriptive flow given in the narrative. Cole's style of writing enables visceral depth to be captured in this statement

in a seamless manner that creeps on the reader. The tone of narration immediately shifts from a simple observation of the market to a sombre one evoked by the mention of the death and linking it to the place of wandering. The demonstrative 'here' links the emotive attachment to the place of wandering in a manner that implies a grounding. This is the opening that enables an encounter with place that departs from the 'present-sense-of-being' of the return and weaves in history to the moment of encounter, a sense that conjures up place-attachment.

Islam insists that for encounters to be approximated there is a necessity for the travelling subject to free themselves from the boundaries of difference. Cole's protagonist is overwhelmed by anxieties of the past which expand how the present of returning is framed. The emotive memory of the place where the boy was killed in this case serves as the incident that enables the returnee to free himself from mechanical wandering and initiate a deeper encounter with the market. Islam insists that it is through the particularities of spatial location that the traveller can really bridge a gap into the other. This is a concept that I extensively explored in the previous chapter in relation to thinking about places as defined by the interactive negotiation. I expand from that to think about places and the way they act on the returnee.

Places in themselves do not act as bridges. However, the returning subject invests in places a depth of agency in relation to what the said places invoke in the returnee. Bear in mind that by virtue of returning, there is an inherent connection that the traveller has with the place. The sentence, "[h]ere, I'm told is where the boy was killed" is thus a fracture that disrupts the present event of wandering in the physical space and enacts a multi-layered wandering involving the physical, historical and the psychological planes which depart from the narrator's haunted past:

> It was like this the day I was at the *garri* stall with my mother. I could have been no more than seven. Cries of thief, thief. Then the chase that arises organically and with frightening swiftness out of the placid texture of the market, a furious wave of men that organizes itself into a single living thing. And then the capture of the felon —there is nowhere to run— his denials and, when those inevitably fail, his pleas …. All this I've seen, more than once …. If nothing was stolen nothing is returned, but the event must run its course. (Cole 59–60)

The returnee reconciles the event that happened when he was seven to the one that happened six weeks ago, and the one that may happen in speculative time. The triangulation of the distant past, immediate past, and imaginable future of the event of lynching in this Lagos market reveal the familiarity in place. In fact when the narrator says, "I know the rest, even before I'm told: I've seen it before" we get a sense of how the past in intruding on the present enables an encounter with the market beyond the superficial sensual plane (Cole 59). Cole locates this time-travel of the returnee within narrative digression. As pointed out, the emotive intrusion of the traveller's sense of place with

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the recollection of the death of the boy acts as the bridge into the narrative digression. Such digressions "afford the reader, both spatially and temporally, that sense of dislocation experienced by the characters" (Coverley 38).

Through time-mapping the repetitive nature of such incidents within the market space is foregrounded and the returnee is positioned as a subject contemplating socioeconomic realities of people in Lagos. Psychogeographical representation enables Cole to locate the subject actively navigating the market while reconstructing its architecture as well as the performance of the ritual of lynching a thief. His vivid description of the act of stealing, the chase around the street corners of the market, the capture, the beating, the resignation, dousing with gasoline, and the return of calm in the marketplace happens side by side with his active act of walking. This architecture is negotiated through several time-spaces at once: the recent past, the distant past, the speculative future, and the continuous present. The narrative's repetitive focus on the 'thief' and the mob is a clear demand for the reader to see the two parties and the frenzy surrounding such an incidence. In this case, as the rhythm of the events is mapped, a distinct dimension emerges when the camera is introduced as an instrument that archives the event. The wanderer's gaze identifies this as the additional entity in the crowd taking note of the events. The camera has the capacity to document in a single shot, the story of the lynching. However, as noted in the introduction to this section, Cole does not intend to stick to the conventional usage of the camera in travel writing. Rather, through blurring, he creates the impression of movement in the shot. In addition, blurring enables him to invest a heterogeneity in the way the image is read. One explanation for this experimentation is the need to capture multiple time-spaces. Thus, it is possible to conclude that Cole's use of the camera is also psychogeographical—he manipulates the camera allowing it to record speculation and anxieties about the city's knowability. In this moment of return, the familiarity of the returnee with the place is obviously seen in his re-mapping of the repetitive nature of lynching. When seen in relation to the returnee's anxieties about estrangement, it is clear that the city conceals as it reveals both a feeling of estrangement and re-connection.

This incident of wandering demonstrates the nature of adventure within return travel as contingent on chance-events. Most of the conventional travel writing establishes adventure as part of the desire and aim of travel. In such a mapping, the travellers are set as moving outside of their plane of the familiar where they encounter either adventure commercialised and packaged as a commodity for tourist markets, or exoticist forms of adventure framed around difference. Return travels do not anticipate the understanding of adventure as located within this notion of the strange. Most returnees travel to spaces they have different degrees of familiarity with. In such a case, then adventure takes the form of the ephemeral. For Cole's returnee, adventure is framed within the everyday events. The market is an ordinary space that provides chance-adventure in a manner that maintains the

travelogue's sense of intrigue. A similar understanding of adventure is seen in chapter four where both Mochama and Sumprim's personas are located within the urban space. In both cases the everyday events of dwelling-in-travel provide chance events out of which spring adventure. While Mochama's night runner navigates the nocturnal space and picks these in the entertainment spots, Sumprim's imported Ghanaian identifies adventure within the everyday events of navigating Accra by day. These manifestations reveal that in navigating the postcolonial African city, adventure is an element that occurs in the most mundane places and events.

In his navigation of Lagos, place-attachments do not just emerge from places where the returnee has previous memories. In this return, Cole also explores what I refer to as affiliative return. What I mean by this, is the notion of the narrator returning to memories of others, through laying claim to a collective history. Cole traces such returns within the returnee's physical negotiation of spaces infused with history in Lagos. While wandering through old Lagos in the rain, the narrator recalls the history of slavery that Lagos shares with New Orleans. He notes that Lagos was a port of departure for slaves and New Orleans, a port of arrival of slaves into America. Cole through this, suggests the returnee's claim of belonging to both Nigeria and America as more than just the dual citizenship he has, but something that is also grounded in a historical cultural zoning through slavery. The returnee is pulled into this memory by the event of the sudden rain that causes people to huddle together giving the returnee an imaginative bridge to slavery. Here, Cole uses a chance event (rain) to signal deep connections thus rooting adventure in the transient. Photographs accompanying the narration qualify and confirm his affiliative return to the memory of slavery. The impression is captured in the way subjects are drawn in a single file (figure 1).
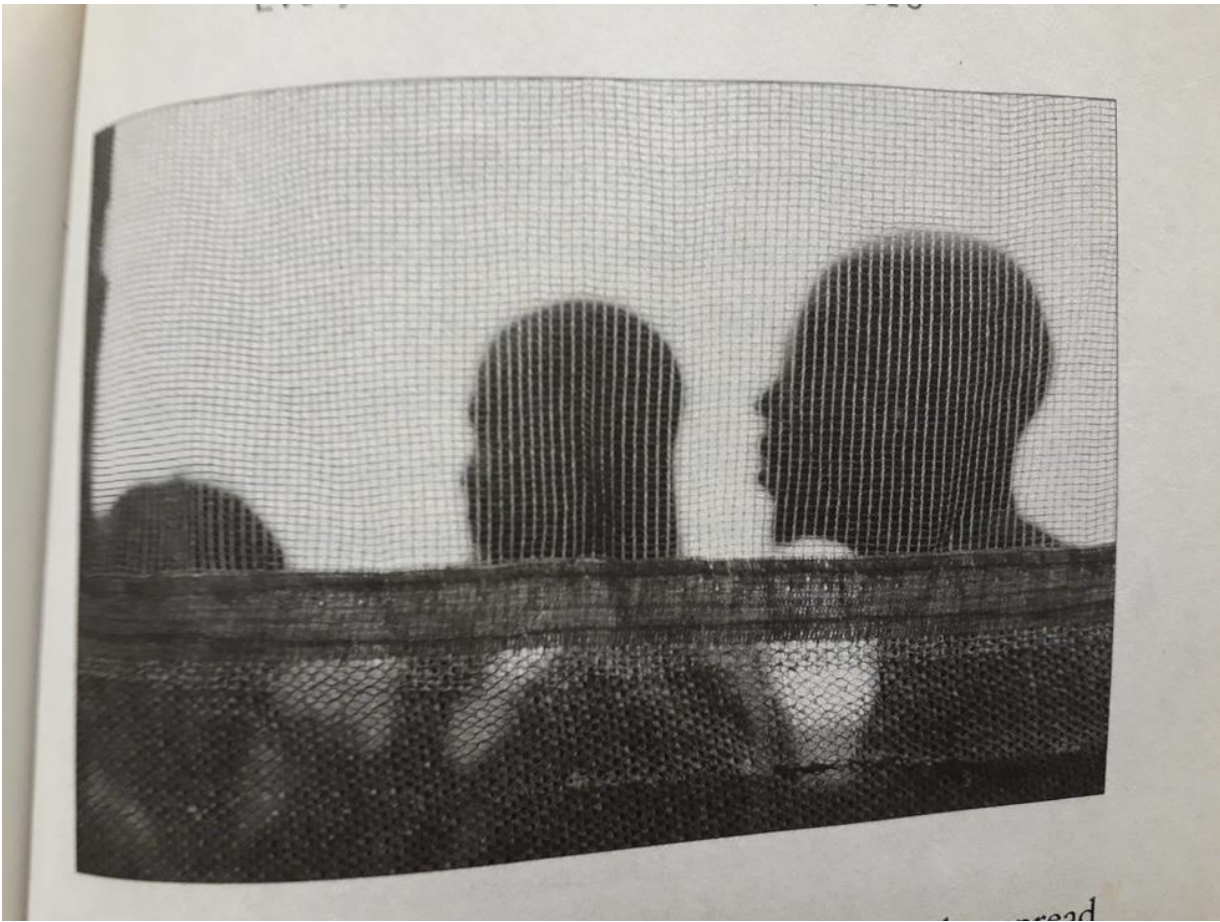
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Figure 5:1Photographic symbolisation of slaves in ships

The photo captures profile figures presented behind a net-like filter. This filter reminds one of the cracked glass photo introducing the narrative. It initiates a deception of perception which produces a multi-dimensional reading. The photograph suggests the haziness of the memory of slavery in the Nigerian culture. The photograph also intensifies the textual narrative on slavery in the narrated present of travelling. It complicates memory by heightening the emotive value through its approximation of the event. The single file representation of figures is reminiscent of the way the slaves were arranged and chained as they were headed to the slave ships. The rain and the crowds invoke in him the image of "chain of corpses stretching across the Atlantic Ocean to connect Lagos with New Orleans" (Cole 112). In this instance, the wanderer echoes Flaubert's delineation of the flâneur as an observer who is guided by the imagination (qtd. in Benjamin 448). The wanderer demonstrates an intuitive imagination that translates simple everyday events into deeply historical ones which transcend the present of travelling.

Through this chance memory, the narrator initiates an affiliative critique of Lagos's memory of slavery. He is disappointed in the realisation that the city has not done much in the form of preservation of this memory. The narrator observes that the city has erased the memory of slavery both in the geospatial sense as well as in its many forms of archive. The narrator rationalises the

physical erasure as a result of the port's natural accessibility as a "geographical peculiarity" that has ensured "little physical evidence remains of the long and bitter engagement. There is little for tourists to see here …. This history is missing from Lagos. There is no monument to the great wound. There is no day of remembrance, no commemorative museum" (Cole 113–14). The narrator is directly pointing to the landscape as an active instigator of the erasure. This is a signification of how terrains shape how history gets inscribed in a place. This affirms my argument that places are active agents that inform and invite the traveller's place-attachment in unique ways. Cole's engagement with slavery departs from the way travel writing invokes history in several ways. Firstly, his positionality as both Nigerian and American affords his return a personal vulnerability to the history of slavery itself. In many conventional travel narratives, the travellers have very little affective connection to the histories they refer to hence maintain distance in narrating them. In cases where emotion is invoked, it is mostly impersonal and directed to those affected and not the traveller. Secondly, the representation and engagement with the historical space is different. For Cole, the place of return invoke intergenerational memories about the history of slavery while for most travel writers, their journeys are already informed by history. Many a times, the traditional travellers would be guided to the historical sites by touristic narratives and performances around such spaces. In this case, then, it is almost impossible for a tourist or other traveller to draw place-attachments with history in an everyday occurrence like the rain as Cole does.

One last site of wandering that evokes a complex network of memorialisation and reflection is the docks where coffins are made. There is a network of connections which tie the returnee to the place. The narrator finds his way in the docks via an area close to a church. This place is fraught with a metaphysical element to it which derives from the atmosphere emanating from the description of the coffins, the boats, and the collective reference to the place as "dockyard of Charon's" signifying travels into the afterlife (Cole 161). Charon, in Greek mythology, is the traveller that carries the souls of the dead across to the afterlife. In invoking Charon, Cole positions the emotive aspect of the place as a poignant atmosphere locating the realm of the afterlife within this space. Although the description of the boats and the coffins is very functional and reveals the architecture of the dockyard, Cole infuses traces of the narrator's feeling about this encounter which add an emotive element to the return. The narrative's incremental description is paralleled with the suggestion of the returnee's loss of control. The place arrests the traveller's gaze and movement and dictates his steps. This place is populated by the carpenters, and other stakeholders such as insurance companies, morgue attendants, pathologists, funeral homes and many others who perform different functions in transitioning the dead to the afterlife. In addition it touches the core of human vulnerability against the tides of life.

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The descriptive style used imposes something extra into the place, something beyond what can be grasped by words. This kind of journey and issues around it is not a concern that travel writing traditionally deals with. Most often travel writing deals with physical journeys across spaces which when they shift to transcendental sites, involve mental and psychological journeys. When Cole explores the dock as a bridge to the afterlife, he is foregrounding metaphysical journeys. Cole extends this to discuss issues of human mortality and spirituality. Through exploring the metaphysical nature of the dock and illuminating it through the imagery of Charon, Cole draws a connection which links this site to the idea of slavery. In this regard, the dock is a symbolic location of the Atlantic as the door of no return. Though the African-Americans as descendants of the slaves cannot return to a prior home on the African side of the Atlantic, the returnee's position as a dual affords him the chance to root himself in both sides of the Atlantic. This journey is thus a bridge, a return, as well as indication of the [im]possibility of return. To make sense of Cole's representation of the protagonist's return in this case, means reading the different journeys of return as part of a larger idea of return where different nodes intersect, revealing different degrees of relationality that nuance the physical wandering to a deeper interactivity with the reality of the self, the state and the place of return.

In all of the wanderer's returns, the places of return initiate attachments which fractures encounters with place. As demonstrated in Cole's narrative, such connections are networked through the direct or indirect history a returnee has with the space of return. This connection significantly influences the way returnees navigate places of return and inform how they see and imagine themselves in the return journeys. Following from this, I insist that the reactionary or reciprocal nature of the encounter in return is not necessarily drawn from place as an independent entity, but rather from place-attachments linking the returnee to the placed. In the examples discussed, the place-attachments emerge either from the returnee's hauntings with the past which map a route of return that enables a complex re-negotiation of the place of return (see the marketplace) or from an affiliative past (slavery and dockyard). Place-attachments of subjects, histories, objects and connections allow places to be heavily invested with baggage which overwhelms the returnees as it forces them to come face to face with their pasts. Such incidences in the return journeys demonstrate the dystopic reality of sites hence clarifying the returnees' initial escape from the site of return. The Lagos that the narrator escaped from and the one he returns to are seen as overcome with exploitation and extreme squalor. This incident is an indication of how places act upon travellers in unique ways that lead to the connection of networks beyond those within the suggested time-frame.

Cole complicates all these sites with multiple readings that emerge demanding of the reader a realisation of the difficulty of return. Cole does not accept to be drawn to any one conclusion about what return means. Through the psychogeographical re-mapping of places in collages that draw from

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pasts, other worlds and texts, this narrative realigns the realities of what return allows. Cole reconfigures the notions of travel and extends it to include psychogeographical networks which transcend the physical and introduces time-travel across different historical moments. However, since all of his journeys are grounded in physical returns, for Cole, the physical space of travelling back acts as the site from which the multi-layered depth of places is revealed enabling a re-contemplation of the histories places have and the connection to present realities. The place of return thus is fraught with familiarities as well as strangeness derived from the changed perspectives of both the returnee and the baggage added onto the places. In the end, while the narrator's return is aimed at a search for home, his confession that "the word 'home' sits in my mouth like foreign food" (Cole 156), becomes a suggestion of the tensions within places which emerge from the affective ties marking the returnee's discomfort regarding locating 'home' as a grounded place. For the returnee, 'home' is a strange idea because in return, he has come to the conclusion that he is a 'familiar stranger' in both the place of return and the place of departure. In this case, then, places are not always what they seem, and by extension home is not always that easy to discern. The narrator's reluctance to name 'home' then is a suggestion of the heterogeneity of the concept in different circumstances.

I have shown that in using the wanderer as persona, Cole attempts to locate the returnee as subject in control but the haunting of his past intrudes confirming the fact that returns are invested with discomfort which inform the way the returning subject navigates the place of return. This section has demonstrated that returns are not limited to histories that are directly related to the returnee's pasts but also transcend into collective histories. In this regard, place-attachments emerge as networks of connections that extend into collective histories. Return journeys as affiliative critiques of the nation travel into different forms of histories to inform the returnee's critical examination of the place of returning. In the next section, I extend this notion of return into intergenerational returns in order to chart a map of the returnee's traces of the self transcendentally.

Intergenerational Return in Neera Kapur-Dromson's *From Jhelum to Tana*

Neera Kapur-Dromson is a fourth generation Kenyan of Asian origin. She was born and raised in Nairobi. She is an author, dancer and journalist. *From Jhelum to Tana*, her first book is a personal journey into her roots. Through her travels in Nairobi, India and Pakistan, Kapur-Dromson creates a narrative of returns that traces her genealogical roots. Most of the journeys engaged in this narrative transcend the physical through delving into historical timelines. In choosing to read Kapur-Dromson's text as travel writing, I consider the shape intergenerational travels take and the complexities surrounding such travels and enabling a re-interrogation of travel concepts such as dwelling/travel,

home/away, familiar/strange. The texts previously discussed in this chapter focus on return grounded within the material understanding of travel as a geo-spatial practice. In this section, I approach Kapur-Dromson's journeys as located partly in the physical, but extended to the intergenerational space that informs the returnee's conception of self. At the same time, while all the returns explored in this chapter invoke a haunting drawn from personal grief, for Kapur-Dromson, the haunting is drawn from restlessness regarding selfhood and roots. Thus, unlike the previous texts where return travel is seen as a necessity for the returnees to overcome the traumas of their pasts, in this section, return is framed as a means of finding and coming to terms with the self through teasing out traces of the subject intergenerationally.

This narrative has widely been read as a migrant /diaspora narrative. Many critics consider it a form of historicization of the Asian story in East Africa. Godwin Siundu asserts that narratives by Kenyan Asian women offer gendered interactions with history and culture that has overly been represented from a male-oriented perspective, a perception that is echoed by Felicity Hand. He positions Kapur-Dromson as offering a counter-historicization that re-inserts the female character at the centre of the immigrant narratives and by extension gendering history and politics (Siundu 128). Hand adds that writing by East African Asians problematize the ideas of diaspora. She insists that by virtue of their multiple migrations, East African Asians have become "immersed in a complex ontological puzzle as regards their identity and filiation" (Hand 67). Both Siundu and Hand while writing within a conception of the notion of East African Asian migrant narratives, are equally useful for my exploration of this text as a travel narrative. In examination of the way Kapur-Dromson positions herself or how she narrates her return journeys, I borrow from their intimations regarding filiation and complexity of identity. In the same vein, my reading of Kapur-Dromson follows Peter Simatei's advice that these narratives embody possibilities beyond historical reclamations. Such narratives capture a retelling which presents "versions [of experience that are] dynamic, multidirectional, and revolutionary" (Simatei 57). When read from the angle of travel writing, Kapur-Dromson's narrative opens possibilities for rethinking travel and its attendants.

Kapur-Dromson's complicated positionality affords this narrative a multifaceted reading of return. It begins with the narrator's return to Nairobi from India where her husband is posted.[78] However, the text does not demarcate a clear and straightforward place of departure which can aid in demarcating a clear place of return. In one of the paratexts to her narrative, she insists that she shares her time between France, Kenya and India. This intercontinental notion of dwelling and travel lives up to

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[78] Kapur-Dromson points out that her life traverses three continents: Africa, Asia and Europe. She moves across France, India and Nairobi with close frequency that to point out the place of departure in her journeys is not easy. France is her matrimonial home, India is partly her ancestral home, and Nairobi is her family's adopted home.

Clifford's ideation of travel and dwelling as increasingly untethered (3). Thus I argue that for Kapur-Dromson, it may be productive to think of her as located within a continuum where travel, as Clifford reminds us, is not a transfer but a 'troubling of localism' (3). This section concentrates more on a range of interactions that 'trouble localism' rather than the traditional identification of physical movement across space to chart a return. Thus I approach travel here as "a series of encounters" (Clifford, *Routes* 67). I approach the fragmented returns as departing from a geo-spatial notion of mobility.

The narrative is introduced by an extract from the poet Kabir which also introduces this chapter. The poem suggests Kapur-Dromson's intent to position herself as traveller into different historical times in order to weave the different networks of roots that those historical journeys yield. Therefore, this is not a conventional return where there is a linear progression re-routing the traveller backwards. Rather, even in her return through tracing herself in the different generations of her family, Kapur-Dromson takes a complex network of journeys fashioned by a diversity of material through which this self-cloth (to follow Kabir's example) is made. In this regard Kapur-Dromson sees herself as a weaver of the different returns and histories through language to create a coherent text of return. Her narrative should then be taken as a collage of journeys across different historical timelines, spaces and different sources woven to reflect a genealogy of her roots. Inasmuch as geographical travel is at the centre of this weaving, the narrator transposes into the historical time-space through archival journeying to access the intergenerational past.

This narrative gives an account of how her family patriarch, Lala Ramchand Kirparam travels from Jhelum to Mombasa, his work on the railway, and how he starts his business. She further delves into Kirparam's wife Hardei and her journey from India to Nairobi to join her husband. She traces their lives across generations, tracing it through their daughter Yashoda who marries another Asian migrant Lajpat. She progresses to the third generation and talks of her mother Mina and ends with her personal life journey. These journeys into history trace the lineage of Kirparam as well as the history of the fourth generation Kenyan Asians. I read this intergenerational return as a form of travel framed around anxieties about rooting. This return journey, thus emerges as an attempt to map Kapur-Dromson's roots, both in the literal and symbolic sense.

Just like the previous sections, Kapur-Dromson's returns are complicated by anxieties about roots and how routes re-imagine the travelling subject's anxieties of home. The narrator's many journeys of return are initiated by a restlessness regarding understanding her heritage and roots. Two kinds of journeys of return emerge in this narrative: physical returns and cross-generational returns. The physical journeys to Nairobi place the narrator within conditions that enable cross-generational returning to happen. In the narrative, however, there is a mention of only two specific journeys of

return to Nairobi: one involving the narrator moving from India and the other one from France. These physical journeys facilitate the intergenerational journeys as they position her within close access to the material that enables her intergenerational journeys to emerge. As I demonstrate, Kapur-Dromson's intergenerational journeys of return enable her to explore different journeys undertaken by different people in her genealogy as well as return to the previous generations and the spaces in which they lived.

In the epilogue of the narrative Kapur-Dromson remarks that while her ancestors travelled from Jhelum to Tana, she is consciously making the journey backwards, from Tana to Jhelum (419). This return journey is informed by a network of routes which are both in the geo-spatial as well as defined by other forms of memory mapping. Clifford refers to ethnography as a form of travel guided by fieldwork (Clifford, *Routes* 21–25). In Kapur-Dromson's case, Nairobi is the field that enables her encounters with the different generations of her ancestry. I locate Kapur-Dromson's as an ethnographic traveller, one that grapples with the inside and the outside, which for this section I see as a struggle to connect the personal with the collective.

The fact that Kapur-Dromson was born and raised in Nairobi enables her familiarity with the city to play an important cataclysmic role in speeding up the cross-generational travels. Familiarity allows her to be conversant with informants and archives from which a sketch of the route she takes in returning to her genealogical history. We are then forced to bring to the fore both Clifford's concept of dwelling-in-travel alongside Islam's criticism of sedentary travel. I mention Islam here because his criticism of imperial travel writing frowns upon the pretentious armchair travel. While the temptation is there to see Kapur-Dromson's intergenerational return travel as following a similar trend to the imperial armchair travel, I beg to differ. However, similarities exist in the two forms. Armchair travel writing involves writers representing fictional accounts of other and passing it off as fact. Most armchair travel writing involves authors doing research and using that to frame their narratives. Kapur-Dromson's return partly involves an archival journey, but extends to the physical exertion through actual movement to Nairobi. Islam argues that geographical distances in themselves do not constitute travel. Kapur-Dromson's returns involve extensive encounters with other in order to bridge the intergenerational divide, hence cannot be considered as armchair travel. For Kapur-Dromson, the filial relation with Nairobi prevents a detached notion of travelling. She is tracing her roots across the previous generations. This positions her as a vulnerable ethnographer that is implicated by the return journeys. In this regard, Islam's notion of bounded travel does not apply as she is forced to interact with her material at both the personal and the public levels.

It all begins with a portrait of Lala Kirparam Ramchand, the patriarch of her family that Kapur-Dromson encounters in her family home in Nairobi. She says, "[w]hen I was first introduced to Lala

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Kirparam Ramchand, I was forty-two years old. The portrait on the wall—an oil painting in colour by M Stano, an Italian prisoner of World War Ⅱ—showed a stern-looking, stocky man of average height" (Kapur-Dromson ix). The concept of 'being introduced' stimulates the action of initial encounter. From the statement, it is also clear that while this was the first introduction, it was one of many hence the repetitive notion of returning hinted at through the other sightings of the portrait. This portrait triggers an anxiety about rooting, "[w]here did he come from? How did I, an Indian, come to be here, as was my grandmother? … I had entered my history midway, but I knew that there had to be a beginning somewhere" (Kapur-Dromson ix). The photograph was done in Nyeri by a prisoner of war, when the British soldiers were stationed there. The reality of the economic needs of the soldiers necessitated a mutual relationship with Kirparam, who served as a trader providing them with a much-needed supply of foodstuff and other necessities. Curiosity and anxiety force Kapur-Dromson to embark on the return journeys of tracing her history. The inquisition forces the narrator to return to explore the journey of her great-grandfather to East Africa and the generations of her family that emerge through him. This narrative past is reconstructed through a combination of life histories, archival material which include newspapers, landscape as archive and mythography.

The narrator notes, "I flew down to Nairobi to talk to the family. This was my first serious attempt to listen to family stories. The probing has not been easy. Those who 'knew' are no more" (Kapur-Dromson 409). Most of Kapur-Dromson's journeys into the past take the form of inquisitions. Through interaction with subjects as repositories, the narrator manages to travel to the past while within the geographical space of Nairobi. Through family and friends' recollections about what 'they know' and recollections about what they were told by 'those who 'knew', much of the virtual journeys of return, the travel-in-dwelling journeys are reconstructed. The narrator positions herself as receiving the oral retellings from those who were told by those who knew. In this case, there are multiple repetitions here in the many retellings of which this text qualifies as another. At the centre of this notion of retelling is the idea of intergenerational memory which serve as nodes of place-attachment for the returnee. This type of memory is referred to as 'vicarious memory' because of the fact that it is not part of the immediate experience of the subject returning but rather a memory beyond this subject which informs the subject's conception of self (Fivush, Zaman and Merrill, np). In this case, then Kapur-Dromson's 'those who knew' as well as her confession to the fact that she catches snatches from different people" suggests the fragmented nature of this duty of memory (ix). While it may be conceived as an incomplete history, it aids Kapur-Dromson to trace intergenerational connections across time. In this regard, different forms of memory become a medium through which Kapur-Dromson achieves an intergenerational relationality. The concept of knowing is amplified by the fact that it refers to witnessing through lived experience and being a repository of knowledge.

Knowing is equated with being a library, a human archive. The narrator is appealing to the traditional conception of knowledge as memorialised in people. This nods towards the traditional African conception of history being memorialised through griots who through oral rendition allow different generations to know of the past and the present.

Knowing also as the narrative posits, points to acts of uncovering through what Marianne Hirsch refers to as re-memory. Borrowing from Toni Morrison, Hirsch defines re-memory as "memory combined with (the threat of) repetition; it is neither noun nor verb, but both combined" (96). Hirsch's definition of re-memory echoes the element of repetition which is important in return. Re-memory positions the process of returning through oral tales as well as other sites accessed in the digging of the past. It is regarded in relation to subjects and their acts of re-telling the past, object and place-attachments conjuring up memories, and the act of putting together the fragments gleaned from the various source points. Such a return allows this narrative to rise above the physicality of the grounded spaces (Nairobi and Jhelum) and open access to the historical past of her family. We are called to think about travels made by stories across generations; to think through how objects travel across space; how bodies negotiate mobilities in generic forms such as sailing – Kirparam and Hardei's journeys of migration to Kenya, and flying—the narrator's repetitive journeys to Nairobi from India and France; and how bodies negotiate mobility in non-generic forms such as dancing—the narrator's obsession with Kadhak and Odessi performances. I refer to this as a collaborative life narrative also due to the implication of subjects other than the author —those who 'knew'—in the production of the narrative. The ethical implications of the task of probing those who 'knew' is emphasized. The delicate balance of trust and vulnerability of 'those who knew' is explored when the narrator wonders, "who was I to demand that private lives be exposed?" (409). The narrator acts as a vulnerable observer implicated in the lives of those she intends to unearth. We can think of her returns as forms of collaboration with those present and those 'gone'. As the weaver Kabir's poem introduced her, Kapur-Dromson then becomes the glue that mediates across the various subjects/objects to tell a collective ancestry. Her return is thus a mediation that combines different sources and timescapes to trace a journey.

The narrator explores Kirparam's arrival in Mombasa and his contribution to the growth and development of the nation. The narrator says, "Bag, baggage, burdens and family—he left all these behind. He came alone. Anew. A new place invited a fresh start" (Kapur-Dromson 19). Kirparam is presented as an adventurous person that is attracted to travel to Kenya. He embarks on a fresh start. His act of moving from India is thus an act of uprooting his ancestries and re-routing them in Kenya. While this text traces Kirparam's arrival and work in the construction of the railway, it is important to note that Asian migration started earlier, some can be traced to as early as the 1400s (Delf 1; Ghai

2; Pascale 12). The Asians provided the British with the expertise needed in the construction of the railway. Herzig Pascale adds that Asians also provided skills in the medical and financial fields. Unlike imperial journeys where the aim was to define and dominate the other, for the first-generation Asians, their journeys of arrival were journeys undertaken for different reasons — Kirparam looking for a job, social reasons—Hardei joining the husband for companionship and cultural realities of family life. These journeys are not journeys of pleasure but of survival. They encompass the tumultuous nature of the oceanic movement and the problem of poor terrain. Kapur-Dromson's recollection of the first generation's arrival in Kenya echoes Marschall's argument that return is an act of reflection on the past. Kapur-Dromson uses this return to reflect on the place of Asians in Kenya and critique the politicisation of their identity. By sketching the initial migration, she calls to bear the temporal realities then and now to attempt to configure the position the Asians occupy. Her constant reference to historical facts and realities of the railway, settlements, political role and socio-economic foundations that the Asians helped to build in the making of the present Kenya, serve as pointers into the different forms of rooting the Asians have made in building the current nation.

In locating Kirparam within the mythography around construction of the railway, Kapur-Dromson lends the mythography a personal touch. Siundu notes that this personalisation of the collective narrative invests a social dimension which sheds light on the personal effect of such collective ideals. One tale told over and over points to an incident in the railway construction where Kirparam almost lost his life. In this incident, the person who had been sleeping next to him was attacked and dragged away by a lion. The narrator points to the reader that this tale has constantly been narrated in the family by Kirparam and later by the children and grandchildren. The same has also become part of collective mythology around railway construction in East Africa. Her relaying of it is occasioned by the availability of it within the family history. The oral tales, the myths and anecdotes are all different forms of oral narrations that are translated into the narrative. As oral entities, they carry a sense of immediacy and proof through subject liability. Through movement from one person to the next, one generation to the next, they manage to achieve the status of truth by circulation. This story has been memorialised through the film, *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo* (1997). The incorporation of this tale in this narrative serves two major purposes. Firstly, as a node within the journey of settling in Kenya that Kirparam makes, it invites us to think about the kind of return Kapur-Dromson may have had, if any, if her great-grandfather had been the victim. Had this incident gone any other way, we would maybe think about the patriarch that did not make it which in turn would affect the journeys the generations would make and probably it would be a different dynamic altogether. Secondly, Kapur-Dromson incorporates the mythography around the 'man-eaters of Tsavo' to reflect on the effect such had on generations and the journeys such generations make/would make.

In the reconstruction of these narrative returns into the different generations of her family, Kapur-Dromson extensively draws on life histories of the female figures in her family. This strategic inclination can also be seen as a case of "thinking back through our mothers if we are women" (Hirsch 93). While some people in her family are unwilling to talk about the past, her mother and grandmothers act as a constant repository. The narrative suggests a bonding together of women through the sisterhood pact of relationality to explore the past. This re-configures women in travel. Women become the most important node of travel, a disruption of the masculine tendency in travel differently. Kapur-Dromson echoes Smith's claim of women as subjects with a powerful role in travel. As travellers-in-dwelling, they act as a threshold that enables Kapur-Dromson to cross over generationally and return to the initial rooting of her genealogy. They also act as collaborators that provide the necessary bridge enabling the returnee to return to the past of her genealogy. Thus, I consider this women as mediators, collaborators in the weaving together of this narrative of return to the past.

Mediation in collaborative life narratives such as this one takes many forms. As mentioned in Chishugi, mediators can enact an erasure or inscription which influences the way the narrative is received. From a Cliffordian perspective, he narrating 'I' is the ethnographer that ties the different generations and their stories together, while the women across generations who tell their stories to her are the informants that have helped the narrative to be fleshed out. This then lives up to Smith and Watson's interpretation that in a mediated life narrative, the parties involved are the informant and the ethnographer. In reading the multiple sources of information as the subject/object informants and the narrator as the ethnographer this study then qualifies Kapur-Dromson's narrative as one reaching for a transformative look at ethnographic travel. As Clifford points out, the literary text enables the many voices that piece together an ethnography to manifest as plural and multiple voices in the narrative. Kapur-Dromson manages to inscribe this plurality through the many ways she signals these figures and acknowledges their role in the return journeys.

The traveller does not travel to far off places as what canonised ethnography has pointed out. Instead, Kapur-Dromson follows the trend that Ruth Behar and Francis Nyamnjoh talk about. Nyamnjoh pushes for an embracing of horizontal anthropology where culture is studied by a native. Behar, on the other hand, extends the idea by arguing that for cultural studies to break new ground in criticism, there is need to do more studies on issues that the researcher is directly and emotionally implicated in and this is where the notion of native anthropology comes in (Behar 34). Behar adds that while objective distance preferred in anthropological studies reveals much, much more is gleaned when the anthropologist gets in the thick of that which is personal to them. In this case, she intimates that when the anthropologist is vulnerable, a new kind of criticism emerges. I look at Kapur-Dromson returning

to a place she calls home and considering it as her field as one such study where vulnerability is central due to the implicated nature of the journeys. This traveller is already intimately connected to the site of travel by virtue of the way the literary text invests multiplicity.

When read as a travelogue, Kapur-Dromson's narrative is thus a shifting of the paradigms of virtual travel, place-attachments, affects and home. For the various returns explored to be read as transformations that inform the conclusions reached about home and travel, we need to see them in the light of what Edouard Glissant views as "return to the point of entanglement". Each of the transformational forms of return traces entanglements which then transform the notion of home/away. The narrator, a woman traveller connects the other journeys of both the male and the female ancestors in her family. Within these journeys, ideas about home are interrogated. While rooting in space serves a ritualised materiality that connects with the African traditional concept of the umbilical code being buried in place, another way of looking at it is in relation to the affects that places accumulate over time.

Home is not just where one is located, it is also where one has put roots. Home in the place they 'belong'; and in terms of national and ethnic identity, Kapur-Dromson feels at home in a place where her belonging is under question. The narrator says:

> Krishanlal and Muni saw themselves as Kenyan. They decided to stay and adapt to their new situation
> – as their ancestors had done … they sincerely believed that they belonged here. They had no other
> home. They were born here, as were their parents. The question of another 'home' did not even arise;
> their going to Britain was never discussed …. Kenya was their home, as even India could not be.
> (Kapur-Dromson 380)

While this is true, the reality of the Asian question in Kenya continues to trouble the narrator in her journey. In every return, what the narrative refers to as the 'Indian question' is explored.[79] From the Indians' arrival as indentured labourers to the development and their need to root themselves within the Kenyan psyche, the place of the Indian has been a big issue. Considering the gazette notice by the Kenyan government to recognise Kenyan Asians as the 44th tribe in 2017, the Indian question is valid even today.[80] In light of the constant contestations of diaspora identity that the return journey is

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[79]The 'Indian question' is regarded as a constant issue regarding the place of the Asian in Kenya in terms of location, acceptance and incorporation into the cultural diversity of the nation. It is a question that debates the position of the Indian in all sectors of the economy.

[80] The Gazette notice No 102 dated 21st July 2017 recognises the Indian community in Kenya as the 44th tribe (Special Issue).

framed, Kapur-Dromson's returns are thus journeys of introspection and quest for selfhood in a space that is politically charged with a multitude of images of how the Asian ought to be represented.

In political environments of this kind, the positioning of home/away for the returning traveller is contested and complicated. I affirm that the constant entanglement of home as being in place across the generations in Kapur-Dromson's narrative, upholds the need to rethink home/homing. When home becomes a political weapon that different actors employ to recalibrate materiality, then the traveller needs to chart a different grasp of the concept, one that may be beyond political machinations. In this regard, the narrator's contemplation becomes significant, "[t]orn between three cultures, problems of identity have haunted me for a long time. Kenyan? Indian? Kenyan-Indian? South Asian-African? Perhaps now I can say beyond the limits of geography, where space and time know no barriers, there my identity has been cast – in my state of mind" (Kapur-Dromson xiii).

Kapur-Dromson's return enables her to re-conceptualise home as existing beyond the grounded location in geographical rooting/placing. This realisation culminates in the full circle of understanding of home and belonging:

> My ancestors came from Jhelum to Tana. It took years to understand that I had to make the trip from Tana to Jhelum – *a trip in the memory of four generations* and three countries. The cycle is now complete. I offer it to the younger generation so that it may realize that a tree whose roots have not dug deep can easily be blown off by the wind—nor will it blossom (Kapur-Dromson 419 emphasis added)

She is of all the spaces that have made her, all the movements that influenced her and all the regions that claim her. This is the full circle here. She concludes by pointing out that home is the interconnectedness that makes us who we are. In this case, the mental capacity to see the routes taken in rooting self is key. The narrator is imagining a total transcultural interaction where one can hold on to cultures but still be integrated into the world to the point of fitting everywhere they decide to locate themselves.

I finally draw from two important metaphors of return and home to conclude this section: the ocean and Kabir's yarn. Let us first revisit Kirparam's return journey. In the narrative, we are told that his ashes are scattered on the Tana to begin their journey of return. Notice the fact that in death Kirparam manages to make the return journey. This is only possible if we conceptualise the physicality of the Indian oceanic travel through tributaries of which the Jhelum River and the Tana are. The narrator's tracing of Kirparam's journey to Kenya and deliberate mention of his ashes being scattered into the Tana allude to the immanent possibilities and cyclic nature of returns. The constant mobility of oceanic currents metaphorically situates Kirparam even in death to be in a state of constant travel in the wide ocean. He is memorialised as being larger than life. Ashes scattered on the Tana hint at the

oceanic connections. One little exercise here becomes important to explore the spread and the rhizome. Tana flows into the Indian Ocean, which can trace a clear journey of return to the shores of Jhelum where Kirparam originally came from. If we see returns as fraught with baggage and messiness, then we can realise that the ocean also echoes the same. It is a site of de-territorialisation where currents are moody and act and react on impulse. Kirparam as a restless traveller in his lifetime then is restless as well in his death. Restlessness is represented by both Tana's erratic nature and the ocean's wildness. Return in his case, which then becomes a reality of returns elsewhere is a journey fraught with vulnerabilities, subjectivities and intimate affections. If returns are troubled in this way, it becomes impossible to conceive of home as stable. The narrator's reference to Kabir's metaphor of the Ganga in her epigraph thus serves as a signification of the connotations of the interconnected nature of cultures and peoples in the contemporary space.

The Kenyan-Asian is one such character with ties in Africa, Asia, and like the narrator, Europe. In the same way, the waters of the Ganges connect diverse landmasses, so should the psyche of the contemporary African traveller. Kabir himself was an exemplar of the interconnectedness of man. Having been born a Buddhist, raised a Muslim and being honoured by the many religions while he critiques them, the narrator aspires for the Asian migrant in Africa, the capacity to "adapt, to react— rather than act" (379). In reading across geographical spaces, subjects and archives, this study has demonstrated that the space of return travel allows alternative modes of perception of place and relationality. If place is an unstable anchor, then other forms of anchoring are demanded, and home becomes a notion that transcends geography. The contemporary African traveller needs to transcend the limits set by genre and geography and locate themselves in the "Ganga of the mind" (421). This is the interconnected space of free mobility beyond the bounds of nation and legality.

Conclusion: [Dis]locations, Place-affects and Return

The texts examined in this chapter redefine the concepts of travel and how they operate due to the transgressive nature of return journeys. All the texts discussed identify travel as something that is not necessarily dictated by desires of leisure and pleasure. In these journeys of return, precarity is informed by the nature of haunting that each returnee struggles with. Granted, the physical domain emerges as the plane onto which the precarity is conjured. Return travel, as a significant aspect of African travel writing reveals returnees as not only familiar with the spaces of return but also having different degrees of affective relations emanating from past relations with the places that further complicate the connection at the moment of re-encounter. The said places carry specific kinds of affinity to the subjects which then bear on the way return journeys are conceptualised and represented

in their texts. The degrees of familiarity are responsible for the urgency and immediacy felt through the narratives. In spite of the different degrees of familiarity with places of return, all the narrators' attachments to the places unsettle any identification of site of return as home or familiar. They range from the notion of [un]homeliness, cultural and ancestral ties, haunting and so on. These ties are sticky connections that rear their heads in the journeys of return whether the subjects expect them or not. They challenge the intentions of the returnees and wrestle with their convictions about how to travel, what to see and how to experience. The specific re-encounters explored in the selected texts revealed something extra emerging from the emotional entanglements that depart from prior baggage with the places of return. Within these situations, I concluded that the 'something extra' which changes the way the returnee sees the space of return and informs the way they come to terms with their haunts is place-attachments. These place-attachments remind us of Kabir's verse opening this chapter and illuminate the idea that these returns which are complicated by entanglements are no ordinary returns. Each author expertly weaves the different entanglements together to frame the journey of return.

This chapter's focus on texts that push the limits of the genre through a concentration on texts that would normally not be considered as travel writing, has aided in the transformative thinking undertaken here regarding travel. The return journeys, as I have argued are imprints that merge degrees of familiar pasts with the present to unsettle and affect home. All these writers are deeply entwined with family, whether dead or alive. This ensured their travels are caught up within a familial network. Within the same plane, is the transposition of the familial to the national. Personal haunts become anxieties about the nation. From Saro-Wiwa's concerns with reading family trauma through national traumas of corruption and dictatorship to Chishugi's criticism of present Rwanda as a scaffolding of the ills of the genocide, these travelogues centre the realities of the postcolonial state. They directly engage the political within travel writing. In this case, then, we cannot downplay the significance of contemporary African travel writing to explore issues that are at the core of human experiences and social organisation. The writers' engagement with return demonstrates the irony that is the position of the returnee. They are returning not permanently, but temporarily because the returnees still have anxieties and disappointments about the political situations in the places of return. They appear to occupy both insider and outsider positions. The insider position allows them to tread on the spaces with vulnerability, while their outside status positions them as having a clarity of sight.[81] While this is true, the narratives suggest that the returnees occupy the position of a 'native stranger' to borrow Hall's' invocation. The space of returning becomes a contact zone where the initially

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[81] Kaplan points out that the distance that diaspora affords travellers is the incentive for clarity of perspective to see local spaces.

displaced and the other find new ways of relating and thinking through experiences, pain and reflection.

In this examination of return journeys, home emerges as a complex entity. The subjects' initial dislocation positions home as marked by different degrees of volatility. This volatility is validated by the place-attachments the various narrators have to the places on return. With each form of recollection and return, the degree of intimacy to place and pain is manifested. At the same time, the strategies of encountering and aversion the travellers employ point not only to their critical reflection on the place-affects but also their anxieties and revision of the notion of home. Saro-Wiwa and Chishugi seem to suggest that some place-affects are too extreme to allow the narrators to conceive of such places as home in the now. The constant refusal to see sites beyond the remembered pain extends the reality that Rushdie gives when he points out that home is a foreign country. In this chapter, home is seen as a very unstable entity. This instability can be seen as necessary in rethinking the notions of journeys and dwelling. Saro-Wiwa's decision to travel as a tourist – when she suggests that she is approaching Nigeria as destination – attracts a detached outlook on Nigeria. Even though the space invokes memories of pain in her past, the nagging reminder that this is a destination suggests a privileging of the hostland as preferred home while Nigeria is preferred destination, which in itself leads to an internal contestation regarding belonging of the returnee. Cole and Kapur-Dromson's conceptions of home are a reterritorialization that puts this concept into perspective. Instead of locating home in the comfortable binaries of here/there, Cole and Kapur-Dromson turn the binaries into multiplicities that open possibilities for heterogeneous imagination of spaces. Clifford points out that since dwelling is not simply the site from which one departs or returns to, there is a need to reconfigure it in line with the new transformations of travelling (Clifford, *Routes* 44). Cole's discomfort with the term home allows him to re-think its implications for creating a new way of seeing the term:

> I am in a labyrinth. A labyrinth, not a maze: I hadn't really thought about the difference before, but it has become clear. A labyrinth's winding paths lead, finally to the meaningful center ….when I enter a little sun-suffused street in the heart of the district, I sense an intentionality to my being there. It feels like a return, like a center, though it is not a place I have ever been before. (159)

Here, Cole suggests a re-thinking of home as a multiplicity — as a 'meaningful centre' where one achieves equilibrium. The fact that it does not necessarily have to be in familiar zones makes it, a creative involution, something that can be creatively invented or redefined by the traveller. Tying with Kapur-Dromson's metaphor of the oceanic flow and Ganga (the Ganges), home thus gains a higher meaning. Through this exploration of limits of geography, questions of 'home' and 'away' are manifested in ways that uproot the conception from grounded spaces to the flexibility that entails

more than that. Kapur-Dromson sums up the notion of home well when she refers to it as the Ganga of the mind.

Chapter Six

What Destinations for African Travel Writing?

Departures matter. Departures invoke questions that open spaces that were otherwise thought fixed and unyielding to contemplation of possibilities in the way travel is imagined, practiced, and written. Linton's controversial narrative of travel about Africa offered such a departure for me as it demonstrates the persistence of an imperial tradition of travel writing into the present. What is interesting about the present study is that I examine how contemporary African travel writing contests this tradition by offering alternative insights into travelling and writing the continent. This dissertation has shown the presence of a continuous, dialogic interactivity between African travel writing and the canon through the ways the texts disrupt and redefine the limits of the genre both in terms of aesthetics and content. Contemporary African travelogues variously adapt and appropriate the traditions of the conventional travel writing to locate African experiences of travel as valuable and valid forms of mobility practices, in the process they participate in the development of the genre of African travel writing. In this regard, this dissertation participates in decolonization of travel writing which Pratt insists involves understanding the modes of meaning-making within genre and its connection to ideology (3).

African travel writing is not only informed by the historical realities of the development of the imperial genre, but also experimentations within emerging autoethnographic texts that expand and define a distinct genre. Admittedly, contemporary African travel writing is a product of both the imperial travel writing tradition as well as the spirit of inventiveness that permeates contemporary African cultural productions. The texts studied enact decolonial acts such as mimicry, appropriation, and adaptation to redefine the norms of the genre. For instance, in chapter three, the focus on authors' mimicry of the traditions of the genre, revealed that in imitating the traditions, these African authors are implicated in the dominant discourses within the conventional travel writing. However, they invest a deconstructive attitude to their mimicry which produces transgression and in the process build a systematic counter-discourse that stands in its own right. Part of the expansions that emerge out of this disruption of the canon include the inscription of the black hero as a significant travelling subject.

The flexibility of the genre enables African authors to expand its limits through intermediality as well as other inter-genre expansions. Sumprim's narrative in chapter four merges prose with comics and Cole's in chapter five merges prose with photography. In both cases, intermediality enables the authors to grapple with their ambivalent sense of belonging as well as offer a means of contesting realism. In addition, the texts encountered expand their experimentation to include epistemic

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formulations from African traditions and public mythography as seen in chapter four. In that chapter Mochama adopts the figure of the night runner, an occultic form to nuance his interpretation of urban mobility while Sumprim theorizes the 'imported Ghanaian' as an ambivalent subject travelling the urban space. These forms of expansion, enable the African authors to imagine both a heterogeneous Euro-American addressivity and a plurality of African publics. At the same time, the expansions suggest that African travel writing as a genre cannot be limited as it incorporates diverse forms of inspiration to communicate particularity of experience.

In this dissertation, description emerged as the key form of representation. Through description, these texts tease out specific textures of African spaces. The texts in chapter three revealed a repetition of imperial codes of descriptions where the gaze appears as the ordering factor. The texts in that chapter fully mimicked the style of imperial travelogues. Part of the descriptive logic adopted is exoticism and exaggeration of difference. It is important to note, however, that African travel writing's use of exoticism differs from that of traditional travel writing in several ways. The texts explored reveal a reverse exoticism in Khumalo where the traveller's internal gaze exoticizes the Euro-American subjects he encounters in spaces of travel. This reversal enacts a ridiculing of exoticism as a feature of conventional travel writing. In Wainaina and Akpabli we encountered self-exoticism which I argued is a form of challenging the rhetoric of the genre to see the other as different. In chapter four, we encounter an interplay of ethnographic descriptive style which suggests objectivity as the logic of description and exaggeration which is done to create humour in the everyday. Chapter five utilised a more introspective descriptive style where the narratives simultaneously shift from the present and past in order to demonstrate the multi-temporality and multi-historicity negotiated by returnees.

There is certainly a significant dependence on humour within travel writing discussed in this dissertation. Both chapters three and four revealed a correlation between counter-discourse and humour. In the texts discussed in chapter three, humour provides a means of foregrounding persistent stereotypic tropes about Africa within the genre and in the process initiating a critique of the tradition. In chapter four, humour emerges as directed towards the publics and the travelling subject. In that chapter, I noted that humour is a means through which travellers expose their own shortcomings and those of publics who make up prospective travellers/travellees and puts them up for reflection. In this vein, humour functions as a means through which traditions, places, and subjects travelling are critiqued in a reflective form. Chapter five notably avoids the use of humour, something I explain by alluding to the emotionally charged nature of return travel.

By definition, African travellers are governed by the intricate positionality as African subjects and their relation to Africa as the material space they navigate. These travellers have different degrees of familiarity and strangeness in relation to the spaces they navigate. Familiarity creates intimate

relations which is a distinct element of African travel writing. Most of the authors explored in this dissertation occupy different levels of subjectivity in their relation of self to space. Self -writing thus positions African travel writing as a self-reflexive form where travel involves moving towards unyoking oneself and one's space from entangled discourses dominating the spaces and discourses circulating in it.

The complexity of subject-space relation within contemporary African travel writing leads to the emergence of a unique travelling subject – the vulnerable traveller—a figure first proposed in Wainaina's 'Discovering Home.' Within this subject, is the shifting of the power relations in the space of travel. Although this idea derives from Wainaina, the texts in chapter three are still located within the Eurocentric tradition where the travelling subject takes on a dominant position which assumes a detached gaze on the space of travel. As was explored, acknowledging vulnerability in the travelling subject removes the subject from a assumptions of dominance and the way the contact zone is shaped. In the process it leads to the emergence of a fluid and unstable contact zone. In positioning the travelling subject as a vulnerable subject, travel becomes an interactive and reciprocal activity where the traveller and travellees negotiate meaning in the process and moment of interaction. This position locates the traveller as a subject freed from the boundaries of selfhood and individualism (Islam 10), leading to a qualification of travel as "interaction that troubles assumptions" (Clifford 3). The vulnerable gaze initiates the examination of alternative ways of framing spaces of travel within notions of plurality and dialogism.

Complexity in the relationality of travelling subjects and travelled spaces is central in defining the kinds of travels that emerge from Africa. This study realised that inclusion and exclusion frame how travelling subjects locate themselves as well as the forms of journeying they undertake. This study explored different forms of African travels: from forms of domestic travels where authors navigate spaces that are part of their dwelling as we saw in chapter four; intra-continental travels involving subjects departing from a home/elsewhere in the continent to another space within the continent as seen in chapter three; to travels where authors depart from an elsewhere outside the continent towards the continent as explored in chapter five. These forms of African travel writing suggest a multiplicity in the way the continent is framed within degrees of localness and foreignness, creating insider and outsider dynamics that are multifaceted.

These different forms of African travels demonstrate a constant introspection of the subjects who variously claim African identities through different notions of belonging. One sense through which subjects define belonging is by charting localness as defined by degrees of insider[ness]. Chapter three explored travelling subjects that intentionally locate themselves as insiders who challenge the way the inside has been represented by outsiders. The subjects through active self-conscious

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ownership of different identities such as filial, black, or national identity, acquire authority to speak for themselves and for the collective against the outside force. For instance, Wainaina's iteration that he is travelling for a family event and his naming family relations across the East African region define his positionality as Pan-African. Khumalo positions himself as travelling within a collective black identity from which he highlights the stereotypes about blackness and attempts to discount them. Akpabli on the other hand insists on locating himself as a Ghanaian navigating northern Ghana. These collective and personal identities as the narratives reveal are not fixed but flexible forms that the different travelling subjects negotiate and rework with each encounter in the space of travel.

Sites of African travel are dialogic and contested. Inasmuch as subjects position themselves as holding or entering the narrative from particular inside/outside locations, these localities are in themselves fluid and are contested in the active process of interactivity. Chapter four enabled this study to tease out the ways in which travelling subjects negotiate and re-negotiate their insider[ness] with every moment of encounter. Through an interrogation of urban travel, this study revealed the nature of the city as a site that disrupts these insider identities of its travelling subjects. Urban mobility emerges as a distinct form of travel that involves the domestication of non/local forms of mobility to suit the African urban space. The different authors create hybrid forms which combine existing practices with inspiration from African traditions and experimentation. Mochama introduces mysticism in navigation of the urban space by merging the notion of the wanderer with an adaptation of night running, a notion from the African traditional spirituality. Cole on the other hand introduces a psychogeographical reading of urban spaces that is alive to the realities of the spaces as shifting and ever-changing. The nature of the African urban spaces as heterogeneous and distinct from other spaces is what informs this horizontal negotiation, which takes into account the historical realities and urban planning problems. The African urban space defies simple understanding or delimitation and the texts account for this complexity.

In this sense, the local space is to some extent unknowable even when the travelling subjects perceive it as familiar. The same is true of other sites of travel, including those pre-produced for tourists. Sites of travel are in themselves dialogic and contestable. Even when travellers assume knowability, or understanding, when a different lens is shone on them, they reveal layers of dialogism that defeat homogenous ideals common in tourism narratives and conventional travel writing. In this sense then, the travellers' anxieties of [un]belonging is a constant struggle that the different travelling subjects grapple with. In conventional travel writing, the travelling subjects as subjects moving to an elsewhere do not grapple with this anxiety as they are aware of their locatedness as outsiders within the sites they engage with. In this regard, African travel writing, as discussed in this study, is not located within home/away, familiar/strange as dynamics that are rigid but as terms that in Islam's

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words, have supple boundaries which the traveller has to be willing to fracture. The intensive mobile nature of not just subjects, but also ethnicities, identities, and other demographics within the subject travelling and spaces travelled have to be redefined. In this regard then, inside and outside are transient positionalities that are cultivated in moments of encounter. What is significant in this dissertation is the fact that the different subjects actively cultivate their positionalities in a bid to redefine their relation to that which they observe. Positionality is thus a political statement of fashioning the self and the local space for both the local and outside publics.

Return has emerged as a major sub-genre of African travel writing. Most often than not, travel writing fronts movement away from home and the assumption is that the subjects write in retrospect after returning home. This dissertation registers return travel as a poignant form that is different from other forms of journeys. Return involves a re-encounter which indicates repetition. When return is envisioned in line with the idea of vulnerability of the returnee, moments of return produce what I refer to as place-attachments. Many of these travellers return to sites that embody affective hauntings emanating from different postcolonial crises that produce their initial departures. In these return journeys, the subjects are thus negotiating not only the present realities of the spaces, but also their pasts in relation to the spaces. The return journey is thus seen as one that is heavily shrouded with place-attachments. In this study I considered place-attachments as the affective tensions emerging from the moment of re-encounter where the past intrudes on the present either through a nostalgic allusion, a haunting recurrence, or a déjà vu feeling. In all the texts studied in this chapter, place-attachments are initially mediated through a geospatial understanding of places, however, they transcend this and incorporate embodied forms of place-attachment (Chishugi), temporal (Chishugi, Saro-Wiwa, Cole), Intergenerational and historical (Cole and Kapur-Dromson). For instance, in Chishugi's return to Rwanda, the places of return carry the baggage of the genocide which the returnee re-encounters in nightmares and dreams, triggers that initiate a return to the past. In Saro-Wiwa on the other hand, literal and metaphoric references to oil evoke the affective tensions. In Cole and Kapur-Dromson, the place-attachments emerge not from familiar spaces but from spaces that are inherently fraught with baggage that is not necessarily directly connected with the travelling subjects but to their affiliative intergenerational ties in the past.

Leisure can be seen as an outlier of these African travels and not necessarily a definitive function. In this study, I explored how even in cases where the travelling subject has no luxury of choice, the idea of leisure and adventure emerges in defamiliarized forms. The study reveals that subjects do not always travel for the sake of leisure, rather leisure sometimes emerges as an offshoot of the travels which are in themselves constrained by more urgent realities of postcolonial nationhood. In the end, exploration and adventure derive not from unfamiliar territory being explored, rather from the

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familiar being approached in unfamiliar ways. Fussell in the early 20th century insisted that the age of discovery was over hence prophesied the death of the traveller. What he did not consider is the ability of travellers to invent creative ways of navigating spaces of travel. In his intimations, since the period of discovery and opening up of the interior of the world was done, travel was a dying practice and was replaced by tourism, which positions places as pre-defined for the tourist. While travel has conventionally been linked with far and exotic sites, the contemporary African form, most often foregrounds the everyday which has always been seen as outside of the scope of travel worthiness. In this vein, the texts lend to the genre a degree of novelty which emerges from a defiance/ disruption of the sites of travel. In the texts I explored, the different authors' frame the everyday in nuanced ways that foreground chance happenings and defamiliarization of the everyday.

Most of the kinds of travels mentioned emerge from specific contextual realities of the subjects travelling. Travel within the African continent most often involves degrees of compulsion ranging from the political, social, economic, to the cultural realities of the spaces the authors emerge from. In fact, this study revealed that compulsion as an entity of travel involves one or other form of enforcement. Some of these forms of enforcement are aggressive and violent as seen in Chishugi in the form of Rwanda genocide, or political persecution and its effects as manifested in Saro-Wiwa. Other forms are more subtle and take the form of economic incentive, for instance, commissioning as we encountered in Khumalo, Saro-Wiwa and Tadjo's narratives; or work obligations as we observed in Akpabli, Mochama, and Sumprim who travel and write as part of their work as journalists; still other forms involve personal compulsion in the form of family obligations as we encountered in Wainaina. Most of the narratives explored in this study are informed by two or more forms of obligation which dispel the view that travel is solely undertaken for pleasure. These forms of obligation reveal that African travel writing is informed by a range of reasons deriving from the authors' personal and collective realities, something that is not usually a factor in canonical travel writing. Indeed, the way travel is coerced is still dictated by regimes of power which complicate the possibilities of mobility that can be imagined in African contexts. While travel is int his study removed from the traditional concept of the genre's assumption defined by security and privilege (Clifford 34), it is defined by the logics of necessity.

In postcolonial Africa where colonial boundaries are part of the postcolonial realities, travel writing demonstrates the vibrancy and permeability of borders. Although colonial borders often manifest in travel writing through a bureaucratic process of access and denial at the physical border points, the texts explored show that these borders' demarcation of inside and outside are at times a futile exercise as subjects sometimes defy them in the practice of travel and claim networks across the boundaries. If we think of travel as "an increasingly complex range of experiences: practices of crossing and

interaction" that complicate simple dynamics of borders as this study demonstrates, we are able to identify the alternative inside and outside points of reference from which the limits of nationhood are circumnavigated (Clifford 3). The texts studied foreground different levels of [in]stability which highlight political, cultural and geo-spatial frictions within the colonial demarcations of nations. In chapter three, this instability is manifested in the way the authors collapse and fracture borders through affiliative networks of similitude and difference. For instance, Wainaina's travel across Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda disrupts notions of localness through his pan-African identity defined by trans-national rooting of his ancestry in Kenya, Uganda, and perhaps Rwandan—an identity that puts to question the national and geospatial colonial borders which continue to define the boundaries of postcolonial nation-states. Akpabli, on the other hand, exposes the fallacy of the nation-state as a homogeny when through his travels to northern Ghana he is seen as an outsider. Though he does not encounter the official bureaucratic complications of crossing borders, in his travels, Akpabli is more of an outsider than an insider, because of the cultural distance between him and the northern communities. Such disruptions reveal the complicated reality of the postcolonial nation.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, travel is not necessarily hinged on crossing geographical spaces, it also involves coming to terms with one's dislocations and uneasy relations with places which are at once [un]familiar and [un]stable. Postcolonial crises lead to different dislocations which produce amongst African subjects, asylees (Chishugi), immigrants (Saro-Wiwa, Cole and Kapur-Dromson), exiles and nomads who have distinct relations with previous and current 'homelands'. By virtue of these complicated dislocations and locations, travelling as mode of encountering and interacting with spaces emerges as a powerful way of interrogating the ties and/or the lack of ties that subjects have with spaces in moments of [re]encounter. At the same time, the multiple range of [dis]locations point to the fact that there are no more stable and singular identifications of 'homelands' which in turn suggest that subjects do not have one singular frame of reference from which their travels can be defined.

In conclusion, when considering the richness of forms of experimentation and debates within contemporary African travel writing, Linton's narrative that acted as a departure seems like a simplistic understanding of Africa in travel writing. Contemporary African travel writing demonstrates interesting expansions and disruptions of dominant discourse, something that Linton was oblivious to. At the same time, it is clear that African travel writing has a transformative capacity that scholars in different fields may find useful in interrogation of the place of cultural productions. This dissertation has offered a survey of the forms of expansions visible in the form today and can be taken as a much-needed intervention in thinking about a poetics of African travel writing.

Granted, considering the recent interest and increase in productions that form part of African travel writing in the post 2000 period, there room for further exploration. More focus could be given towards a sustained inquiry into the new texts emerging from the continent which have the potential to shift the genre further and in new and interesting directions. Perhaps it is time to see the promise in African travel writing as a rich source of rethinking politics of aesthetics and representation in Africa and beyond. At the same time, it remains to be seen how far the elasticity of the genre could be stretched. If the license the travel texts explored here reveal is anything, African travel writing in its many dimensions is a never-ending site that challenges, rethinks, reimagines, and reinvents the genre in a manner that exposes the blind spots and vulnerabilities of representations while at the same time finding ways of working around such limitations in both poetic explorations and introspections on the politics of discourses.

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