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CROSSING BORDERS:

A Study of Transnational Living in Taiye Selasi's
Ghana Must Go (2014) and No Violet Bulawayo's
We Need New Names (2014)

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Abstract

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Abstract: A number of authors of African descent published 'Afropolitan' novels around the year 2010. Several of these diaspora novels dominated the literary scene and caused intense debates about the contested concept of Afropolitanism. The authors Taye Selasi and No Violet Bulawayo challenge colonial images of Africa in their writing. They ask the pivotal question: "Who Is an African?" while presenting immigrants of first and second generation who freely move from the African continent to the West and sometimes back again. The novels, *Ghana Must Go* (2013) and *We Need New Names* (2014) depict migrants crossing borders and describe the transnational subjects' views of themselves. In the first part of the essay, I discuss the trope of mobility in relation to feelings of anxiety and alienation in Selasi's *Ghana Must Go*, mainly from the perspectives of home, belonging, and estrangement. In part two, I discuss Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* from the aforementioned perspectives but with an emphasis on the crossing of political borders. This thesis contributes to the discussion of migrant theories that consider the physical and psychological effects of crossing geographical, political, social, and emotional borders. By applying multiple theories on transnational living in combination with Sara Ahmed's theories about estrangement, alienation, and dislocation and their impact on the body, my main argument, concerning these two novels, is that subjects change continually and gradually in a multidimensional process. Experiences of changing cultural and social contexts and practices within Africa and the U.S.A. make the fictional characters reconsider their self-identity, transform their subjectivities, and transfer idealized and imaginary localities between the continents.

Keywords: Taye Selasi, No Violet Bulawayo, Sara Ahmed, Afropolitanism, diaspora, mobility, transnational living

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1. Introduction

A new generation of writers of African descent has made a remarkable impact on the literary scene since 2010 when a number of authors published 'diaspora novels'. The genre of diaspora novels depicts immigrants of a first and second generation, living in the West, with emotional and familial connections to Africa. In these novels, the writers challenge the image of the colonial idea of a stereotyped black poor Africa. Some of these writers are labeled as 'Afropolitans' or 'Africans of the world'. These include for example, Teju Cole, Taye Selasi, No Violet Bulawayo, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, all of them claiming a space for an African identity, also for those living outside of Africa (Morales 2017, Eze 2014). Taye Selasi, pen name for Taye Wosornu, has an international background. Born in England, by a Nigerian mother and a Ghanaian father, Selasi was educated in the U.S.A. and now lives in Italy. (*TED* talk 2014). No Violet Bulawayo, pen name for Elizabeth Zandile Tshele, was born in Zimbabwe, by Zimbabwean parents. Since her educational college and university years, she has been living in the U.S.A. The authors have written two novels that in many respects have much in common, even if they, in other respects contrast each other.

Both novels investigate the trope of mobility set in a geopolitical context where the migrants in *Ghana Must Go* escape from Ghana to get an education and in *We Need New Names* from hunger in Zimbabwe. Both novels problematize the striving for acceptance and success in the new country, the construction of self-identities in the diaspora in relation to the African home country. In this way, Selasi and Bulawayo challenge the Western colonial stereotype of Africa. Selasi focuses on the conditions of the second-generation immigrants in the novel and relates them to different notions of Afropolitanism. By using the themes of 'the absent parent', 'the triumphant home-coming', 'belonging', and 'home' both novels describe physical and psychological reactions such as anxiety, anger, hate, shame, and betrayal as effects of displacement and estrangement. In the two novels, family and friends play an important part where the internal relationships are in focus. Photographs and memories connect the characters to their roots. Selasi contrasts the experiences of the first and second-generation immigrants while Bulawayo concentrates on the first generation. Bulawayo illustrates global inequalities and violence in the local society to a higher degree than Selasi, but in both novels, politics is an issue. Composition and use of literary techniques vary between the two novels, as do the presented views of imagined America and Africa.

In my study, I will investigate how crossing borders, geographically, politically, socially and emotionally relates to questions of identity, home, and belonging in these two 'diaspora novels': Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* (2014) and No Violet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2014). These novels depict complex relationships between African cultures and practices, and the migrant experience in the U.S.A. In particular, the novels emphasize the formation of subjectivities as an ongoing and dynamic process, challenged by numerous experiences of transgressing borders that are geographical and imaginary, emotional and embodied. This multiplicity of border transgressions affects the subjects in different and multiple ways, leading to a revaluation of self-identity, belonging, and home. The novels also describe imagined and experienced views of the West (U.S.A.) and Africa (Ghana), and an unspecified location that is presumably Zimbabwe. The novels describe how migrants' views change over time. This paper investigates how, and in what ways the novels illustrate, different concepts of 'Afropolitanism', especially the anti-nativist interpretation of African identity. The migrants' transgressing of borders raises questions about their identities in relation to 'home and belonging' that initiates processes of subjectivity formation. The paper discusses these processes and their relationships between migrant African experiences in the diaspora, in the diasporic exile, and the returning 'home'.

In *Ghana Must Go*, the reader meets an upper-middle-class family of six, economically independent, educated at top-ranked universities, where the parents as first-generation immigrants have striven for and succeeded to create a successful family, fulfilling their dreams of a better life in the U.S.A. The father abruptly abandons the family, fired from his job without cause because of a racially based decision by the hospital board where he worked as a highly appreciated surgeon. The wife and the children have to manage on their own. Silence tears the family apart and each one struggles with questions of identity, estrangement, and belonging. All children feel rootless and look for physical places or circumstances where they can feel 'at home' and emotionally safe. At one point, the twins Taiwo and Kehinde, spend a year in Lagos, living with an uncle who should take care of the two, but sexual abuse makes it horrific and traumatic. Family bonds break and searching for love becomes one of the main themes in the novel.

We Need New Names stands in sharp contrast to Selasi's novel and contributes to other perspectives on the 'diaspora' novel. A 10-year-old girl, Darling lives under very poor circumstances in a shantytown outside Bulawayo. She and her mates are roaming the streets,

very much left to their own. Adults do not engage in their upbringing, schools are closed, and most of those who are capable migrate to other countries to make a living. Through the eyes of Darling, Bulawayo pictures a society that is, politically in ruins. Darling and her friends know a lot about the practical effects of geopolitical and global issues. Told from their perspective, in a childish language, their reflections are also very funny. Darling is however, positioned by the novel as lucky, having an aunt, her mother's twin, in the West. Her aunt brings her overseas and gives her the opportunity for an education and later on the possibility to support herself. Darling repeatedly questions her identity, her feelings of belonging and compares the life in the U.S.A. with her childhood living in Africa, and with her initial images of America. One of the main themes in the novel concerns alienation and the effects on the individual who is crossing borders.

2. Aim and Research Questions

My aim in this thesis is to investigate the trope of mobility and effects of the subjects in the novels: politically, socially, and emotionally from the perspective of what feelings of displacement, anxiety, and alienation do with and to the body, physically and psychologically. I argue that the two novels demonstrate how the transgression of political, social, and emotional borders, encounters with strangers, and new environments causes a reconsidering of self-identity. This process, as proposed by Polo Belina Moji (2015), is demonstrated by the novels to be ongoing, multidimensional, and transforming the subject's view of the world, home and belonging, as well as how these subjects are perceived by the world. Living in multiple cultures creates emotions that affect the process of the formation of subjectivities. In this discussion of the effects of emotions, I draw on Sara Ahmed's theories of migration and displacement. Ahmed argues that relationships that evoke feelings of, for example, fear, hate, and disgust can cause bodily reactions leading to trauma and at the end physical and psychological illness. Furthermore, I argue that lived experiences and memories of the past, play an important part in the process of forming a self-identity as expressed in the novels that combine the experience of feeling 'at home', while being 'elsewhere' at the same time, thereby examining the multidimensional idea of belonging in 'Afropolitanism'.

3. Theoretical Framework, Afropolitanism and Cosmopolitanism

Building on a robust field of critical theory and scholarship in literary and cultural studies, my discussion of the concept of Afropolitanism in relation to literary representations of identity and the narrative shaping of subject positions expands on Eva Rask Knudsen's and Ulla Rahbek's *In Search of the Afropolitan, Encounters, Conversations, and Contemporary Diasporic African Literature* (2016). My study also examines Selasi's popularized essays on Afropolitanism, "Bye- Bye, Babar" (2005) and "African Literature Does Not Exist" (2013), in relation to the intellectual traditions of Cosmopolitanism and Pan-Africanism. For these concepts, I draw on Achille Mbembe (2001, 2002, 2007), Anthony Kwame Appiah (2006, 2008), and Simon Gikandi (2011) who have mounted a critique of Selasi's definition of Afropolitanism, describing it as a superficial and elitist view on Africans in the diaspora because it excludes others than well-educated middle-class people. Selasi's theory on Afropolitanism does not include migrants, who forced by economic or political circumstances, have to relocate transnationally within the continent. She does not take gender issues into account or questions of identity other than in relation to a combination of the Afropolitan's feeling of being global and local at the same time, stating that Afropolitan denotes a personal identity (Selasi 2014, Selasi TED: 2014). In that sense, she refers to 'Africa' in general. Mbembe, on the other hand, advocates for a broader understanding of Afropolitanism since Africa has been a continent with a cultural history that "hardly [can] be understood outside the paradigm of itinerancy, mobility, and displacement" (2007:27). Appiah connects Afropolitanism to Cosmopolitanism, emphasizing that places, defined by nation, ethnicity, or geography are not important, for a Cosmopolitan, nor an Afropolitan (2006, 2008). Simon Gikandi accentuates that Afropolitans in the diaspora seem to live with anxiety in a constant desire to construct universal space where the identity of the self is in harmony with the situated self. Within the continent, there are Afropolitans who cross imaginary borders mediated by the Internet (Gikandi 2010, 2011). Gikandi's idea of anxiousness is important to the investigation of crossing emotional borders in the novels, since the feeling of anxiety is focused in both novels. Gikandi connects to Sara Ahmed's theories of emotions, caused by migration and feelings of displacement. These ideas are important for the attempt to explain what emotions do to the body, physically and psychologically. Sara Ahmed elaborates these theories in *Strange Encounters, Embodied Others in Postcoloniality* (2000) and in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014), which I will

return to discuss in more detail later. To accomplish my investigation of *Ghana Must Go* and *We Need New Names* and discuss the novels according to my research questions I will combine several approaches to literary studies.

In Sections One and Two, I begin the inquiry by pursuing close readings of the novels as separate literary works. In the conclusion, I integrate a composite perspective that compares and contrasts the dominant themes, tropes, and theories of the thesis. The dominating tropes in the plots of both novels are home and belonging, the absent parent, the return, and the dream of a successful life in the diaspora. In particular, I relate these plot aspects to prevailing tropes that reveal the subjects' feelings of displacement and alienation, which often lead to agency, a reevaluation, and a repositioning of the self. For this discussion of literary strategy, the concept of a narrated identity is important as it consists of a hybrid of mixed narrations related to the self and the self to be. Lucia Artner and Achim Stanislawski, argue, in line with Paul Ricoeur, that role-models play an important part in the construction of a narrated transnational self (2013:47). For instance, Polo Belina Moji's discussion of Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* identifies that the transformation of subjectivities is a non-linear process rather than one based on an analogy of translating text from one language to the other. Moji emphasizes that those experiences of moving from one location to another mean that the subject changes not only the view of the world but also how 'the other' sees the subject as expressed in the literary text (2015: 182). This idea of mutual influences is also noticeable in *Ghana Must Go*. The representation of visual culture is also a part of how the novels construct multi-modal subjectivities as part of their literary strategy. Frequently, portraits and photographs play an important part in at least two aspects: on the one hand, subjects react to a representation of themselves as decorative objects, and on the other hand, they long for portraits as signifiers of genealogy. For this examination, I benefit from James Arnett's analyses of the trade of pictures in an African neoliberal economy, pointing out the objectified subject as a commodity (2016: 158, 159, 160). In addition, I integrate a study of the novels' fictional characters with attention to Selasi's and Bulawayo's choices of composition, style, and literary devices in order to investigate if these narrative elements are part of an aesthetics that can be seen as characteristic of diaspora novels.

The overarching literary interpretive framework for the close readings of the two novels and the implied comparison consists of Sara Ahmed's theories of emotions and estrangement caused by migration. Ahmed's framework will be mobilized to examine what

emotions do with a body in the transformational process of the self-identity in the novels. To address cultural, societal, and political questions raised by the novels the discussion of Afropolitanism will be a key. I combine theories presented in Knudsen's and Rahbek's investigation of Afropolitanism in literature with studies by Achille Mbembe, Anthony Kwame Appiah, and Simon Gikandi. In addition, I will use Homi Bhabha's concepts of Vernacular Cosmopolitanism and hybridity (2000). As relevant, I integrate the perspectives of other literary scholars whose studies illustrate and give perspectives on important aspects of the novels. These include Pier Paolo Frassinelli (2015), who discusses linguistic borders between immigrants and Americans while Anna-Lena Toivanen (2016) analyzes communication through the Internet that raises borders as well as tears them down. Crossing borders may well be, as Aretha Phiri (2017) points out, a transitional process that makes borders ambiguous.

4. Previous Research

Scholars have discussed the notion of Afropolitanism from various perspectives, in relation to the two novels. Some focus on the ideas of elitism, racism, and commodification, embedded in Selasi's statements in "Bye-Bye Babar", and represented in her novel *Ghana Must Go*. Marta Tveit (2013) and Minna Salami (2013), criticize Selasi for addressing a Westernized audience, repeating a neocolonial structure, and the categorization of people into groups. In line with these thoughts of categorization, Emma Dabiri (2014) warns against positing Afropolitanism as 'the single voice' describing African identity in the novel. The political perspectives are of high interest, especially in analyses of Bulawayo's novel. Isaac Ndlovu (2015) for example, argues that the novel presents an image of a poor Africa, seen from a Western perspective. In line with Tveit, who considers *Ghana Must Go* for being a commodified product, Ndlovu has a similar opinion of *We Need New Names*. In contrast to Ndlovu and Tveit, Joseph Arnett (2016) discusses the economy of taking pictures of poor people for emotional trade and that this trade objectifies and subjugates these people into a humanitarian commodification aimed at a Western audience, with an implied interpellation to the audience to feel superior. To some extent, Arnett explores political aspects in Bulawayo's novel that also engages Hazel Tafadzwa Ngoshi (2016), who emphasizes the political statements in the novel as expressions of a postcolonial, political protest. Ngoshi analyzes *We Need New Names*, from Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque. With that approach,

she also accentuates comical, ironical, tragic, traumatic, and comical elements in the novel. Other elements discussed in relation to Bulawayo's novel are transnational identities and subjectivity transformation as effects of border crossing. Lucia Artner and Achim Stanislawski (2014) focus on the narrative in an overview of Afropolitan novels while Pier Paolo Frassinelli (2015), analyzes the idea of subjectivity transformation in detail, arguing that another language or dialect often lead to 'a life in translation'. For transnational subjectivities in Bulawayo's novel, the process of renaming seem to be significant which Polo Belina Moji (2015) emphasizes in her analysis of the novel. Communication between the written and the visual representation is an interesting element in *Ghana Must Go* and *We Need New Names* that connects literature with art. In an analysis of ekphrases, Gabriele Rippl (2018) describes and analyzes their literary and symbolically functions. In Bulawayo's novel, especially, communication through the internet is essential, and Anna-Leena Toivanen (2016) investigates the effects of social media in the novels, arguing, in line with Gikandi, that e-mailing, and Skyping are expressions of a Vernacular Cosmopolitanism in the novels.

Achille Mbembe (2002, 2007) and Simon Gikandi (2011) investigate Africanity and Afropolitanism in the novels, from an ontological standpoint (2002, 2007), Appiah from a philosophical (2006, 2008) and Chielozona Eze (2014) from a moral viewpoint. Eva Rask Knudsen and Ulla Rahbek (2016, 2017) discuss the notion of Afropolitanism extensively and present their findings in an overview of various aspects of Afropolitanism in diasporic novels. They investigate *Ghana Must Go*, and *We Need New Names* with emphasis on aesthetics and the trope of mobility in relation to Afropolitanism. Christopher Fan (2017) discusses a Sino-Asian geopolitical influence in Selasi's and Bulawayo's novels arguing that Afropolitan literary characters tend to see themselves as 'oriental' to avoid the conflicting issue of an African race. Susanne Gehrmann (2016) focuses on the Afropolitan family's mobility in *Ghana Must Go* as a form of restlessness.

A number of scholars have researched Afropolitanism in diaspora novels, its aesthetics, and the transformation of subjectivities, but so far, only a few have connected the migrants' memories and experiences of border crossing to physical and psychological effects. Therefore, my research adds to the study of the literary characters in the novels. I will examine the processes of subjectivity formation and their relationships to migrant African narrative experiences in the diaspora, in the diasporic exile, and the returning 'home' and how

these experiences cause physical and psychological illnesses to characters in Taiye Selasi's *Ghana Must Go* and No violet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*.

In the first part of the essay, I will examine the themes of 'home and estrangement' in connection to effects of crossing geographical and national borders in *Ghana Must Go*. Then I examine the processes of subjectivity formation in relation to Afropolitans of first generation characters. I will proceed to second-generation immigrants and their relation to 'home and estrangement'. At last, I will investigate the themes of belonging, the absent parent, and the effects of crossing of emotional borders within the family and the importance of the landscape in that process.

In part two, I will examine *We Need New Names* from the aforementioned perspectives of border crossing, with the addition of imaginary national borders. Class, race, and political conditions will be an important part of the discussion of the processes of subjectivity formation in this novel as well as the themes of 'home and estrangement', 'the absent parent', 'belonging', and the crossing of emotional borders in relation to ideas of Afropolitanism and Vernacular Cosmopolitanism. I conclude that with a comparative discussion that contrasts similarities and differences between the two novels.

Section 1

5. *Ghana Must Go*, Overview

The novel is a story in three parts. The main characters are the parents Kweku and Fola and their four children Olu, Taiwo and Kehinde (twins), and Sadie, the youngest. This family is an over-achieving, middle-class, and highly educated family with all the prerequisites to become a successful unit with tight emotional connections. Instead, the novel represents them as disconnected and scattered, mainly because of their refuge into silence, caused by Kweku's sudden abandoning of the family. Part one 'Gone', describes Kweku's last minutes before dying in a heart attack and the family members' immediate reactions to the message of his unexpected death. In a non-linear, elliptical, and associative style, with frequent explanatory parenthesis about associated memories, the reader gets the history non-chronologically reversed. Kweku's most important memories in life pass by while he reflects on and regrets his fatal decision to leave the family in Boston sixteen years earlier, and to return to Ghana. He dies in the garden of his newly built house with the second wife, Ama, sleeping in the bedroom. In this first part, Selasi introduces objects that will appear later on in the novel. The

symbolic values of the slippers, the statue, the mango tree, and the plastic ‘Ghana Must Go Bag’ develop and get different connotations for each of the family members.

In part two ‘Going’, Kweku’s abandoning becomes the center around which Fola’s and the children’s memories rotate. In the same associative style, but less poetic, the reader gets the story of Fola’s Nigerian childhood, the twins’ horrifying year in Lagos, Olu’s following in his father’s footsteps and Sadie’s college years. For all of them, Kweku’s abandoning becomes a watershed that makes them reframe, reformulate, and divide their memories into ‘before and after’. The traumatic experiences drive them into silence and estrangement from each other, and everyone moves out, goes abroad for education and work. The family has not been in contact for many years when they gather at Kweku’s funeral in Ghana where Fola also has moved.

In part three ‘Go’, the silence is broken; traumatic experiences, feelings of envy jealousy, betrayal, shame, guilt, and homelessness come into the open and explain why the characters are bodily affected; Taiwo suffers from insomnia, Sadie from Bulimia, Olu from obsession with orderliness and Kehinde from suicidal thoughts and depression. To go, move on, and recover seems to be implicit in the open ending of the novel, suggesting a possibility for the family to bond anew, referring to the title of the novel and the last chapter: ‘Go’.

6.1 Crossing Geographical and National Borders, Home and Estrangement

In this part, I will examine how the first generation of migrants questions their identities after having crossed national borders and the process of subjectivity transformation. In this process, the relationship between location and home is essential. Folasade Somayina Savage, the mother, has crossed national borders several times, built up new homes, and left them before she relocates to Ghana because she inherited a house in Accra from her surrogate father Reverend Wosurni. He took care of her, when she, an orphan of thirteen years, had to flee from the Hausas in Lagos to Ghana (Selasi 2014: 98, 102, 105). In one of the first weeks in this house, she wakes up in the night in anxiety and remembers Lagos of 1966, and the loss of her father (98, 102, 106). She thinks about that moment as “a thing she recognized (tragic) instead of what she became: a part of history (generic)” (106). She realizes that she became “a native of a War-Torn Nation”, robbed, not only of her home but also of her identity as Folasadé Somayina Savage.

It wasn’t Lagos she longed for, the splendor, the sensational, the sense of being wealthy—but the sense of self surrendered to the senselessness of history, the narrowness and naïvité of her former

individuality. After that, she simply ceased to bother with the details, with the notion that existence took form from its specifics. Whether this house or that one, this passport or that, whether Baltimore or Lagos or Boston or Accra, whether expensive clothes or hand-me-downs or florist or lawyer life or death—didn't much matter in the end. If one could die identityless, estranged from all context, then one could live estranged from all context as well (107).

In this passage, Fola looks back on her life and realizes that losses of material possessions and former privileged life in a specific location do not count. Feels that she has been robbed of her identity and been made into an anonymous victim of the civil war in Nigeria, and to become one of the 'savages', the African stranger. This moment becomes crucial for her. Her name signifies qualities of her identity as the Nigerian daughter and in this moment of reflection, she realizes that she has come to terms with her painful relationships to geographical locations, belonging, and belongings. The transformation of Fola's self-identity is a long, non-linear process in several steps before she gets the insight into how to live "estranged from all context" (97-107). Moji points out that this process does not have a starting point where the subject is 'original' or 'authentic', but is continually changing. "Movement from the social matrix of one country to another to another (sic) changes the way the subject perceives the world and the way it is seen by others". Moji defines this process as "transnational subjectification — how the human subject experiences the world and names itself as a result of migration from one country to another — a translational process" (2015: 181, 182). Fola has been a traumatized victim of the war in Nigeria, a lonely orphan with foster parents in Ghana, a law student who "with a full ride to Georgetown" in the U.S.A. left the studies, satisfied with the decision to become a house-wife to support her husband in his career (Selasi 2014: 72). Then she became a distressed, abandoned, and divorced mother with four children to feed, and finally, a single independent woman back in Ghana. Fola reevaluates her identity and repositions herself in different contexts several times, oscillating between seeing herself as a self-reliant and loving parent and wife, to an insecure and incompetent provider. Fola's insight that she can live "identityless", is a positive identity marker, after several traumatic experiences in her life. In my interpretation, Fola does not connect home with a location.

The relationship between location and home is one of the main questions in narratives of migration and estrangement, according to Ahmed. She defines 'home' as the place where your family live: a house, a nation, or a native country implying boundaries that keep the stranger at a distance. 'Home' can also be associated with a feeling of safety and comfort. In that case, space is ambivalent, but connected to bodily sensations. "The subject and space leak into each other, *inhabit each other*". Home can be "*sentimentalised* as a space of belonging"

(2000:89 italics original). Ahmed compares the divide between home and away with a skin where the boundaries are permeable and consequently, “movement away is always affective: it affects how ‘homely’ one might feel and fail to feel” (2000:89). The stranger is the other that does not belong, is out of place, geographically, culturally or socially, implying that everyone who leaves his or her own boundaries or imagined space of belonging can be a stranger (2000: 22, 25). Fola identifies herself as a stranger. Politically, she is one of the thousands of anonymous witnesses of war and to her, living in the diaspora, as a Nigerian immigrant in the U.S. or in the diaspora in Ghana, seems to offer the same conditions where identity no longer is dependent of a location. However, the missing “smell of rum or posters of the Beatles or a kente blanket tossed across a king-size bed or portraits” are memories of things that signify a ‘home’ for her, alluding to her childhood in Lagos (Selasi, 2014: 107). Following Ahmed, ‘home’, in this situation means a ‘sentimentalized’ space. It can also mean that an internal home that is not grounded in a place moves with the subject, and may become a fetish for a global community in the meaning that memories or artefacts can signify belonging (Ahmed, 2000:86).

In the second part of the novel “Going”, in her new house in Ghana, Fola thinks about herself as a stranger in the eyes of the servants: “She is a woman, first; unmarried, worse; a Nigerian, worst; and fair-skinned. As suspicious persons go in Ghana, she might as well be a known terrorist” (Selasi 2014:100). “That she smokes. That she wears shorts. [---] That she wanders around in the garden [---] where she stands at the counter, not pounding yam, not shelling beans, but arranging *flowers*” (101, italics original). The habits and looks suggest that Fola crosses geopolitical, social, racial, and gendered borders within the house because her behavior in this situation differs from her earlier experiences of Ghanaian women’s behavior in general. She understands that her body signals that she is a stranger or a potential terrorist. She recalls her flight from Nigeria because then, she was identified as an enemy and a stranger. For the second time in her life, she thinks of her body as a symbol for the political tensions between Nigeria and Ghana. Therefore, she thinks that she is a threat to the servants. Fola’s solution in this situation is to “go slow, tread lightly” because she understands the servants’ Twi language (101). Furthermore, her westernized style, the shorts, the smoking, and the behavior invite an interpretation of the gendered body as sexualized which indicates that ‘the other’ can threaten her. The awareness of this demarcation of borders within the house makes Fola cautious and not willing to jeopardize the servants feeling of safety in her

home (100). By crossing borders, Fola has revalued and negotiated her self-identity, in relation to new encounters in different geographical, cultural, political, and emotional contexts and this process has been ongoing and non-linear.

Fola has lived in Ghana as an exile, but Kweku reconnects with his childhood in Ghana, another example of how crossing geographical borders affects the subject's feeling of 'home'. In his case, location matters, because the landscape and the house become important. In one of his last moments, he sees himself as part of the landscape, and especially of the garden "irremovable, a fixture in the landscape. Intrinsic to the picture". At first, he wanted the mango tree removed, but then he describes his need of roots in a parallel to what could have happened to the tree "[p]ulled up by his roots and replaced by a hole" (36).

In contrast to Fola's pragmatic decision to move there, Kweku has fled from, for him, humiliating treatment by his employers to a changed, but known location, a voluntary 'exile' from his family in the U.S.A. (Selasi 2014: 79, 81, 98). He has been dreaming of building a house since his first years in the U.S.A. when he sketched a plan for a house on a napkin during a coffee break (4). The house has "polished rock, slabs of slate, treated concrete, a kind of rebuttal to the Tropics, to home: so a homeland reimaged, all the lines clean and straight nothing lush, soft, or verdant". He considers it "the most beautiful thing he has ever created—*except Taiwo*". "It is the most beautiful thing he has ever created *alone*, he amends the observation" (5, italics original). In his vision, there were white pebbles around a swimming pool and no garden, which could make him think of Fola and her interest in flowers (22).

Kweku's idea of a homeland consists of memories of snow, glittering of the sun, memories of his childhood's ocean and the heat (Selasi 2014: 22). To Kweku, 'home' materializes in the house he has planned and built. It represents a mix of the West and Africa, with Ama, the new wife born in Kokrobité, the same village as Kweku, embodying the bridge between his split feelings of 'home'. Kweku returns to a once well-known, but changed environment, where he has felt at home. Kweku's mix of Ghana and the West, indicate that memories of the past play a crucial part in finding himself 'at home'. In Bhabha's meaning: "symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; [...] even the same signs can be appropriated, translated and rehistoricized, and read anew" (2004:55). The house carries the imagined homeland into effect as a hybrid, which means that Kweku has translated his transnational experiences of home and location into a whole. In this process of building a house that also became a home, memories of the past play an important part.

In encounters with strangers and new environments, memories initiate a reconsidering of the self-identity. In the first chapter ‘Gone’, Kweku reflects on his life and his view on himself in different situations. When he thinks back and important moments come up, he evaluates and reconsiders his life. The invisible photographer has followed him and made a ‘film’ with the title “the life of the Man Who He Wishes to Be and Who He Left to Become” (Selasi 2014: 44). In this imagined documentary, Kweku questions his self-identity. He presents himself as the son who fails his mother, who left her without saying a proper goodbye and came home too late for her funeral (52, 59, 60). His dream was to return to the village as the ambitious successful migrant (52), the superior surgeon (69, 74), the passionate lover of Fola (21, 73, 90, 91), and the caring and loving intelligent parent (14, 15, 47). The man who left was the disgraced professional (69, 72, 80) and the ashamed quitter (85, 87). The man he became is the proud landowner (4, 5) and the considerate husband (4, 50). In the end, he ponders over what went wrong and that it would have sufficed “[t]o somehow unhooked his little story from the larger ones, the stories of Country and Poverty and of War that had swallowed up the stories of people around him” (91). Here, Selasi stresses the importance of roots and of individuality even though Kweku regards his childhood as a common story, in spite of “loss of a sister, later mother, absent father, scourge of colonialism, birth into poverty [...] No one ever needed the details. [...] Nothing remarkable and so nothing to remember” (28). He shows matured insights into the effects of his decisions and comes to an understanding of what he has missed in his life. In the article, “From “African” Identity to the “Afropolitan:” Modes of Narrating ”Transnational” Identities” (2013), Lucia Artner and Achim Stanislawski argue, in line with Ricoeur, that personal identity is multidimensional. It consists of a “hybrid mixture of narrations: a narration that the subject uses to make sense of the complex and contingent events in his/her life, and another narration that is a generalizing story or mode of identifying him/her as a certain type of person” (2013: M47). Kweku’s way of viewing himself reveals that he translates his actions and feelings of anxiety into blueprints or role models that can help to keep him balanced.

To keep the balance when negotiating with Mr Lampteys ideas about the garden, Kweku has to reconsider both his idea of the Tropics and the imagined view of himself. The two men argue about removing the symbolic mango tree, which Mr Lamptey wants to keep. In a moment of anger, Kweku threatens Mr Lamptey with the police, but restrains his anger and looks at him seeing “the man —seventy-two now, half-naked, wearing a necklace of red

string with a bell on it—he couldn't” (Selasi 2014:34). He visualizes his inner cameraman filming a “Ghanaian sadhu dragged off by armed bribe-fattened cops while grim Landowner smiles from the mouth of his tent” (34). The old man wins. Kweku becomes the stranger in Mr Lamptey's eyes since Kweku does not appreciate the greenness of the Tropics. Kweku is also imagining himself as the stereotyped white colonizer with power over the poor, black Ghanaian. In this situation, Kweku's stereotyped images come from his first meeting with the handyman, “some bizarre sort of African Gandhi. With ganja” (31). He remembers his own absent father, and the childhood village and these scenes suggest that Kweku's experiences of the past's colonial hierarchy are present in his mind. Furthermore, the situation with the inversed power relations between Kweku, the imagined colonizer, and Mr Lamptey, the colonized, illustrates Homi Bhabha's discussion about ambivalence and mimicry. Mr Lamptey's gaze mimics Kweku's and the power relation changes when Kweku sees himself as a stereotype. “The *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority” (Bhabha, 2004:126, italics original). Kweku's colonial gaze transforms into uncertainty and he withdraws. He questions his own identity in relation to the image of a stereotyped colonized, represented by Mr Lamptey. In this passage, Ahmed's idea of homes is applicable. According to her, homes are changeable and dynamic constructions in spaces, where movements and encounters with strangers can infringe upon one's self-identity (2000:88).

Kweku adopts another stereotyped image when the newly born, not named Baby Sai's life is in danger, he reflects on the tradition of non-naming a neonate in Africa as a sign of a distance between life and death. Memories of his mother, burying a newly born baby comes to his mind and he concludes: “unavoidable, i.e., explicable. It was Life” (Selasi 2014:10). However, his parental emotions for his own 'Baby Sai' change his opinion, and trigger him to fight for the baby's life. Imagining himself as a rescuer, he “goes striding down the hallway to save his unsavable daughter. A Western. He wished he had a weapon. A little six-shooter, silver” (14). By acting like this, he illustrates what he earlier has thought about Americans, “for whom infant mortality was an unconceivable thing. [...] Conceivable in the plural but unacceptable in the singular” (9, 10). Not only does he adopt the American ideas, that he earlier has criticized, figuratively, he adopts the stereotyped myth of the hero in American Western films, heroes who rescue damsels in distress, or a cowboy, in the lexical meaning of

a “show-off or one who undertakes a dangerous or sensitive task heedlessly” (Webster Dictionary: 2003: 467). He uses a blueprint to identify himself as the person he wants to be.

Another role model that Kweku adopts is the patriarchal “considerate husband”. He emphasizes all the sacrifices he makes to please Ama (Selasi 2014: 46, 47, 49). It seems that the two have few interests in common, but she is “a woman that can be satisfied” and whose “thoughts don’t perpetually bump into his, causing all kinds of friction and firestorms” (51). He has become a man who knows “he’s enough, once and for all, now and forever” (51). She reminds him of his mother when she is sleeping “unplugged”, and of Taiwo’s “thin film of sweat above her ripe plum-brown lip and her breath sounding sweetly and loudly beside him” (51). The combination of Taiwo, representing modern times, and “a product of *there*” and Ama, “a product of *here*”, “West Africa, the perpetual past—wouldn’t otherwise touch but for Ama” (52, italics original). Ama is the bridge between his two worlds and his house is the hybrid manifestation of his transnational identity. Kweku identifies himself with actions and achievements. The imagined documentary shows that he sees himself in the eye of ‘the other’, portraying a distanced and objectified man, which signifies anxiety, and a longing for legitimization. In the next section, Fola’s and Kweku’s transnational identities will be investigated within the theories of Afropolitanism and Cosmopolitanism.

6.2 Subjectivity Formation, First-Generatiom Afropolitans

To a Cosmopolitan, in Appiah’s interpretation, the geographical position does not matter and Fola, who feels at home where she for the moment lives illustrates Appiah’s idea of the ‘global citizen’ who associates to a new community and combines the global and the local (2006: xiii, xv, xvii, xix). He questions the labeling of Afropolitans and in a discussion with Eva Rask Knudsen and Ulla Rahbek, he asks: “What are you asking them to do when you put on the Afropolitan badge?”. Thereby, Appiah criticizes the notion of Afropolitanism as a collective term for all Africans, claiming a space in the diaspora (Knudsen and Rahbek, 2016: 27, 148). In the discussion that follows, fiction writers are in focus, and he states that these writers are interested in “the space that is both African and European or North American” (145). Appiah considers the term ‘Afro’ problematic because it is ambiguous and denotes many different groups of people on the African continent as well as in the West. Furthermore, he points out that Afropolitanism has not been “taken up seriously by anyone that is African American” (146). However, he finds that Afropolitans and Cosmopolitans have a lot in

common even if he would like to add religious identity as part of the discussion of Afropolitanism (149). In some respects, Ahmed's and Appiah's Ahmed's views converge in the idea of an 'internal home', in the meaning that the home "moves with the subject [...] who allows the world to become home" and Appiah's idea of "global citizenship" (Ahmed 2000:86, Appiah 2007: xiii). To feel 'at home' is connected neither to a location nor to an identity.

In "Bye Bye Babar", Selasi illustrates her opinion on what it means to feel at home for an 'African of the world', who "belong to no single geography, but feel at home in many", referring to "the newest generation" of African emigrants. However, Fola represents the first generation, "the young gifted and broke [who] left Africa in pursuit of higher education and happiness abroad" (Selasi 2005). Literally, Selasi's stated difference between first and second generation immigrants to the West does not fit as Fola is, in this situation, described as an 'African of the world', an Afropolitan, but she is a first-generation immigrant.

In contrast to Fola, Kweku's regrounding in Ghana is dependent on his emotional, nostalgic memories of a past in the West and in Ghana. The landscape and the location are important to him when building a new home that is safe and where he feels emotionally satisfied. He illustrates the migrant of a first generation who "can claim one country as home", bound to a geographical location, which he demonstrates by the repatriation (Selasi 2005). In that sense, he is not an Afropolitan in Selasi's meaning as stated in "Bye Bye Babar".

Appiah emphasizes, in contrast to Selasi, that Cosmopolitanism includes the long tradition of mobility within Africa, and that Afropolitanism to him refers to well-educated people who are claiming "a space within the diaspora" (Appiah in conversation with the authors, Knudsen Rahbek 144). This is exactly what Fola does; she is also an example of a migrant and exile in the diaspora, within the African continent (Selasi, 2014: 109). Furthermore, Cosmopolitanism "begins with the simple idea that in the human community, as in national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence: conversation in its older meaning, of living together, 'association'". "[T]here are some values that are, and should be universal, just as there are lots of values that are, and must be, local" (Appiah, 2006: xviii, xxi). In Fola's new home, in a new community, she is very respectful and anxious to get along with her staff's culture and tradition and that applies to Kweku as well (Selasi 2014:100-102). In Appiah's words, they use their "*knowledge* about the lives of other citizens, on the one

hand, and the *power* to affect them, on the other” (Appiah, 2008:87 italics original). He stresses the ‘polis’, the Greek word for citizen and city/state as a shared community, meaning that the universal and the local are combined and necessary for being a global citizen (89). In this sense, Fola is a Cosmopolitan or a ‘global citizen’, while Kweku is not.

In the article “African Modes of Self-Writing” (2002), Achille Mbembe points to the future and to an understanding of a kind of Cosmopolitanism that acknowledges identity as “*practices of the self*”, and that those “forms and idioms are “mobile, reversible, and unstable (2002:272, italics original). Furthermore, in the article “Ways of Seeing: Beyond Nativism” (2001), Mbembe argues, “there is no single way of “seeing” Africa among those who have remained [...] plurality is the norm” (2001:2). Emphasizing plurality, he would like to see that ‘Africanity’ should include, for example, Europeans, Arabs, Asians, or Africans with multiple ancestries (2002: 256). In my interpretation of Mbembe’s vision, Fola fits in with her Scottish-Igbo-Yoruban-Nigerian background (Selasi 2014: 106). Mbembe’s idea of an Afropolitan identity formed by lived experiences applies to the example of Fola’s childhood and roots in Nigeria, but also to Appiah’s interpretation of a Cosmopolitan, since she regards herself “estranged from all context” (Mbembe 2002:272, Appiah 2006: xiii, Selasi 2014: 107). Gikandi presents another version of Afropolitanism, pointing out that people of African descent in the diaspora are defining themselves by nationality, not of the continent and that they have left their home countries for political, educational, or economic reasons. In the new country, the connection to the home country becomes important and to feel displaced may create a longing for roots and reconnection, especially for the second generation of emigrants. Even if Kweku belongs to first-generation migrants, he is an example of Gikandi’s interpretation. Pragmatically, Gikandi adopts Afropolitanism also for those who stay in Africa, suggesting that there are two groups of Afropolitans. “The non–elite group lives Afropolitanism through the imagination and the elite group lives Afropolitanism as an experience of being born across borders” (Gikandi in conversation with the authors, Knudsen and Rahbek: 48-49). The first group has access to the Internet and its Cosmopolitan world is mediated, not real and can be seen as a kind of false consciousness, since people in this group “want to possess gadgets that connect them to the real world”, while the other group seems to live the global life in anxiety (49). He distinguishes Afropolitanism from Cosmopolitanism, arguing that the Afropolitan, often a second generation migrant, has a “desire to find something universal that overcomes the differences that define them [in the diaspora]” (51).

Fola and Kweku move to Ghana, where they have lived. Fola, raised in exile, has learnt the Twi language while Kweku was born Ghanaian. According to Gikandi's definition, Fola does not belong to the collective of 'Afropolitans'. On the other hand, Selasi pictures Fola as an example of her idea of challenging the essentialized and stereotyped image of an African, which is one of Selasi's main indicators of being an 'Afropolitan'. Kweku's relation to the country, the landscape and to Ama show that he revalues his ideas of the 'African' identity, for example in the encounter with Mr Lamptey, but he also understands that he could be seen as 'the abandoning African father' (Selasi 2014. 87). In contrast to Selasi, Mbembe, Gikandi, and Appiah oppose the idea of an Afropolitan identity based on race furthermore, they argue that those who move between countries within the African continent can be labeled Afropolitans as well. To the second-generation immigrants in the novel, 'home' does not imply, other than indirectly, a relation to Africa. For them, feelings of home are more diverse.

6.3 Second-generation Afropolitans, Home, and Estrangement

The Sai children express their experiences of 'home' in relation to personal experiences of living in a family and in a country where they were born. When Olu, for example, gets the news of his father's death and that night returns to his home, he observes the clinical whiteness: "all this white is oppressive, apathetic; a bedroom shouldn't be an OR" like his workplace (Selasi 2014: 113). The feeling of distress, estrangement and displacement, suggests that his apartment signifies something infertile, and consequently a space where nothing grows. He is longing for roots, "for a *lineage*, for a sense of having descended from faces in frames" (251, italics original). Sadie connects the notion of a home with individual portraits of ancestors. She envies families with portraits on the wall, with a visible genealogy and with a "gravitational pull" in contrast to the Sais; a "scattered fivesome without gravity" (146). The feeling of home suggests that Sadie wants to be part of a family and that the 'pull', implies a longing for dynamic relations within the family. The emphasis on lineage, portraits, and similarity illustrate Gikandi's theory about second-generation migrants who are longing for roots. According to him, Africans in the diaspora rather connect with their ancestors' home-countries and not with the continent (2011:9).

Kehinde, on the other hand, finds himself at home in his workshop whether in London or elsewhere. He actively materializes the idea of genealogy and roots by painting his twin sister Taiwo in nine versions as the muses. These canvases indicate a desire to make a family

member present as well as it represents a symbolic reconnection with a missed sister (Selasi 2014: 174, 179, 180). Rippl argues that “Kehinde brings together the African features of his sister’s face with the Greek muses, thus rewriting the (allegedly) white Greek tradition while at the same time working through his childhood trauma (of sexual abuse by his uncle)” (2018: 277). Furthermore, portraits made of beads and mud-cloths connect to an African tradition and the “mixture of artistic traditions has its parallels in the ethnic mixture of Kehinde’s family”, a hybridization thereby producing a “cultural in-between space” (276, 277).

In Selasi’s meaning, Kehinde is an Afropolitan since he feels at home and ‘local’ in many places, but also in Gikandi’s because he shows, in his art, that the ancestors’ culture is important to him (Selasi 2005, Gikandi 2011:9). In contrast to Sadie’s and Kehinde’s visions of a home where a present and dynamic family is implied, Taiwo imagines a static, silent, and comfortable space. According to Ahmed, this construction of a home expresses a “way of being” meaning that engagement with others is limited and that the home has fixed boundaries. Ahmed states that homes are “complex and contingent spaces of inhabitation” that “always involve encounters between those who stay, those who arrive, and those who leave” (Ahmed 2000: 87, 88). Olu’s image of a home is an imaginary space in time, where his name can be a registered link in his family’s pedigree (Selasi 2014: 251). The children’s perceptions of ‘home’ are very different. Olu and Sadie are longing for roots, seeking lineage and genealogy, while Kehinde illustrates his roots in the artworks feeling at home both globally and locally. Taiwo, on the other hand, is looking for a space where a comfortable life without anxiety is possible. However, the feelings of ‘home’ are separate from feelings of belonging. To Olu, Taiwo, and Sadie ‘home’ means the houses where the family have lived in Boston and Baltimore, but it does not imply the feeling of belonging to each other or to their family.

6.4 Belonging

The four siblings in *Ghana Must Go* are Afropolitans according to Selasi. Olu and Ling, both doctors, travel worldwide helping people in poverty. Kehinde is a famous painter with workshops in Europe and the U.S.A. Sadie and Taiwo are as successful students as Olu and Kehinde, and they have attended universities in London, and at Oxford, Yale, and Columbia. They have spent time working, studying, and traveling and rarely been home, avoiding family gatherings. In the article, “Cosmopolitanism with African Roots. Afropolitanism’s Ambivalent Mobilities” (2016), Susanne Gehrman analyzes the novel from a viewpoint of

restlessness, and in this regard, she is close to Gikandi's idea of anxiety (67). The striving for success and upward mobility do not give Sadie, Taiwo, and Kehinde a secure foundation for building relationships. Feelings of insecurity and lack of self-esteem characterize their views of themselves as subjects that do not belong to a family.

Sadie distances herself in a sudden rebellious outburst towards her over caring-mother, claiming a right to live her own life: "I'm *not* a baby! I'm *not* a child. I'm *not* your replacement husband (Selasi 2014:156). Still the 'baby', at nineteen years Sadie does not know her father whom she refers to as 'the man in the photo' (149) and she does not really know her siblings either (150). Her reactions to the absent father, to the envy of Taiwo's looks, to the image of the perfect couple Olu and Ling (214), and to Fola's moving to Ghana are grief, loss, and betrayal that create great pain to Sadie: "the heartbreaking difference between what they've become and what a Family should be" (158). Her imagined concept of a family clashes with reality and in this conflict; the silence between the family members plays an important part.

On one occasion, Sadie gives voice to her reflections on belonging to a collective: "*all* [siblings] of them carry this patina of whiteness or WASP-ness more so: be they Black, Latin, Asian, they're Ivy League strivers [...] ethnically heterogeneous and culturally homogenous [...] she doesn't want to be Caucasian. She wants to be Philae", her white, rich, pretty friend (146). Phiri points out that Sadie here is striving for subjectivity, not identity. "[I]mplicit in her dismissal of race and racialized discourse, is the expression of racial self-loathing informed by and embedded within a white, heteronormative sociocultural metanarrative" (150). In addition, Phiri, drawing on Sartre, states that Sadie's rebellion against invisibility, her self-loathing of the body and bulimia is a protest of the feeling that the essence precedes the existence of her being (Phiri 2017: 152, Selasi 2014: 265).

To Olu, the feeling of belonging is most often present when he is physically close to Ling, his wife. When she wants to follow Olu to Ghana for the funeral, he denies her at first and replies that he will go with his family. Ling who counts herself in gets quite upset. Olu answers her: "you're better than that [---] I don't believe in family, I didn't want a family. I wanted us to be something better than that" (Selasi 2014:182, 183). Saying this, Olu refers to the disrupted connections between the family members, caused by his father's abandoning. Indirectly he assumes that a 'real family' has tight and emotional connections with each other.

Kehinde, on the other hand, is looking for visual traits and resemblances generated by genes in order to have a sense of belonging. He describes his siblings: Sadie has “tilting-up eyes set in valleys of bone”, “a lighter-skinned Kweku”, “classically Ga”, while Olu, “a darker-skinned Fola is a “classically Yoruba”, with “Ethiopian eyes, Native American cheekbones, [...] black hair/blue eyes of the Welsh, Nordic skin [...] a visual record of the history of a People, capital P, in the world”. His parents and siblings “bear the stamp of belonging” (166). Selasi referred in “Bye –Bye Babar” to “a scattered tribe” and brown-skinned people” and with Kehinde’s description, his parents and siblings are Afropolitans, except himself and Taiwo. The twins regard themselves as “aliens or adopted” signifying displacement and estrangement (167). However, in this respect, they are Afropolitans in Gikandi’s meaning, but Kehinde’s feeling of alienation indicates a reaction of having been excluded by the parents.

The parents’ silence about their history and African roots separates the family members from each other, and the siblings express their lack of knowledge as a longing for portraits of ancestors, a documented pedigree, or biologically defined family traits. Doubts about one’s roots are, according to Gikandi, a sign of anxiety that is characteristic for second-generation migrants in the diaspora (Gikandi in conversation with the authors, in Knudsen and Rahbek: 49). Anxiety makes the children question their self-identities, the silence creates a feeling that there are hidden stories in the family that make them feel insecure, and this insecurity does harm to their bodies. Sadie suffers from bulimia, Taiwo from insomnia, Kehinde is suicidal, and Olu suffers from extreme orderliness (2014:142, 122, 99, 163, 302, Phiri: 151). Kweku’s abandoning and the emotional consequences of experienced betrayal seem to be one of the crucial moments when they all, individually, start to question their self-identities.

6.5 The Absent Parent

In *Ghana Must Go*, the theme of the abandoning parent is central, because all, both parents and children react with pain, and divide the family history in ‘before and after’. Ahmed’s reasoning in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2014), in the discussion of what pain does to the body, starts with the following definition:

a) pain is subjective b) pain is more complex than an elementary sensory event c) the experience of pain involves associations between elements of sensory experience and an aversive feeling state; and d) the attribution of meaning to the unpleasant sensory events is an intrinsic part of the experience of pain (Chapman 1986:153, cited in Ahmed 2014: 23).

Ahmed continues: “the sensation of pain is deeply affected by memories: one can feel pain when reminded of a past trauma by an encounter with another” (25). Taiwo, for example, experiences several occasions of that kind when memories come up causing her pain. The first memory, as an adult, is when she gets up late in the night wandering about in the house when she suddenly feels that someone is watching her. Afraid, she is “clamping her hand against her mouth to stop the scream”. The sight of the stone statue of a mother holding twins seems to observe her. “It looked like a child between the silhouetted fir-trees, a four-foot-tall alien child, glowing pale gray” (Selasi 2014: 243). She remembers Kweku in his scrubs asleep on the couch in the living room, with a liquor bottle in his hand

he looks like a marionette abandoned by its manipulator [---] hand to mouth again to keep herself from crying out with a shock at all the bruises on the bottom of his feet [---] the urge to touch, to kiss his feet, to kiss-and-make-them better No Put her father back together. [---] She didn't know this father. [---] He had hidden his soles of his feet her whole life, for twelve years; he could hide (anyone could hide) anything else. And finally, that he'd tried, that he had a thing to hide, meant her father felt shame. Which was unbearable somehow” (44, 45).

Later on, when Taiwo gets to know that her father is dead her first question is “where were his slippers?” (37). The memory of her father on the couch and a memory from school when she mistook the interpretation of podophilia with pedophilia come to her mind “through a crack in the wall” of silence (39). She thought, as a twelve-year-old, that her father loved his children and his feet (40, 41). In retrospect, she concludes that he would abandon his children and that he hated his feet since he did not take care of his callouses (42, 44). Her longing for feeling close to her father stays without being satisfied and anxiety takes its toll in insomnia problems. The sensation of seeing her father as strange like a marionette, loose with exposed feet makes her feel pity and cry. He has failed to maintain “the very basis of his morality” signifying the trait that a decent family wears slippers at home (39). Taiwo transforms her view of herself into a subject that is unloved and alone. In my interpretation, the bonds between Taiwo and Kweku have been weak, since she reflects on her father as a representation of an unreliable man in shame. The slippers function as a fetish, but also a symbol for lost love. Taiwo knows that the slippers are important, but she does not know that the slippers signify his successful efforts to get away from poverty. Only poor people walk barefoot (37).

The feeling of being unloved affects her ability to stay in close relationships with other men and the memory of a love affair with the Dean of the Law School ends with a scandal.

She withdraws from the legal studies with a feeling of anger, of being betrayed, and objectified as the Dean's "great conquest". She wants him to "suffer" to know that he is the one to blame and that he has failed her "[b]ecause he let her" go (206, 207). So did her father, and she has dreamt of going to Ghana to tell him that "the girl he had left on a street in North America was not the one sitting on this stoop in West Africa, with boots propped on railing and a pistol in boots, that she'd died because no one would save her" (208). In her imagination, she is planning an act of revenge for wrongs done to her and she has, referring to Ahmed, transformed the wound into an identity as a suicidal victim, wanting to punish and make those who have hurt her feel guilt and shame (2014: 32). That 'no one would save her' alludes to the envy of Sadie, 'the baby', whom her father saved.

Even the tight bonds between the twins break. After the scandal, when Taiwo turns to Kehinde for solace, he, with a slip of the tongue, calls her a whore. (Selasi 2014: 177). His comment hurts her deeply since it reminds them both of the sexual abuse they suffered in Lagos, when Fola's half-brother Femi forced them to incestuous touching in front of others as entertainment (37, 288, 289). Femi was supposed to take care of the two and provide for their education since Fola, a single mother, could not afford to do so.

The twins experienced the year in Lagos as a year of distress, anxiety, and shame that splits their feelings of belonging to each other. This is the fourth situation that comes up as a stressful memory from the past. In Ghana, Taiwo realizes that Fola sent them away to a family member that she never had mentioned (168, 169, 274). Taiwo, as an adult, interprets these memories, which she was unable to understand as a child, as a betrayal by those she loved and regarded as family. She plays out her responses to these feelings in anger towards her mother, in violence towards Kehinde, in fantasies about revenge towards her father, and in self-punishment, in order to show that she feels herself emotionally neglected and that she has become like the "alien child, glowing pale gray", the ghastly and hated statue in the garden.

The bond between Olu and Kweku breaks as well. He chooses to accept Kweku's invitation to Ghana instead of celebrating his exam at Yale on his commencement day. Olu blames Kweku for not having remembered his children's commencement day and for living in this "hellhole, a prison of his making, in exile, cut off from the family and worse: with this look on his face of a man without honor" (254). Olu feels angry and the scene suggests that Kweku has abandoned not only the family but also his own principles of a decent life, a betrayal of ideas and for being "the African dad who walks out of his kids" (305).

Not only does Kweku disappear, so does Fola, which affects Sadie, who feels guilty, insecure, betrayed, and forsaken. She thinks that Fola, in anger, has moved to Accra because of her outburst and quarreling (195). Aretha Phiri points out that Sadie's anxiety materializes in bulimia and a ritualized compulsion to scrutinize her body, criticize her looks, comparing herself to Philae, her friend. She fights for recognition and a position in the world that changes the self-image. It is painful for her to be the youngest, the one who, at birth, was saved by the father, the one who was not meant to belong to the family, and the one less successful. Not until she meets with relatives in Ghana, is invited to a dance, and enjoys the rhythm and the drumbeats she feels liberated and filled with joy. (Selasi 2014: 269,270, Phiri, 2017: 151, 152). Sadie's reevaluation of her self-identity is a process of 'going black', in finding her ancestors and the African roots (Phiri, 2017: 152). According to Phiri, Selasi denies the critique of 'ethnic nativism', arguing that Sadie is a multi-cultural character (Selasi cited in Phiri 155, n. 9).

Bonds break between the family members, however, Fola relies on a mysterious capacity to feel Kweku's and the children's pain in her stomach. She has a pragmatic and distanced approach to her family's well-being, she feels safe, knowing that she, always, is always connected to them all and that they belong to her. She is convinced that she would know, instantly, if something happened to them, and if she would not find them "in the same condition as she delivered them (breathing and struggling)" (100). For example, she felt the suicidal Kehinde's pain when he had cut his wrists at the same moment as it happened (99). Selasi portrays Fola as an emphatic person with respect for integrity, but also as a traditional and sentimentalized stereotype of the good all-knowing and all-caring mother, emotionally attached to her family. She often cuts off a conversation about troublesome matters with 'I know, I know' (55, 64, 90, 155, 188). On some occasions, the narrator comments on the difference between knowing something intuitively and knowledge as an insight. For example, when Fola remembers the loss of her father, she "crossed the line between knowing and knowledge", or when Kweku is about to die: "He knows. But doesn't notice" (105, 21). With these comments, Selasi forebodes situations that develop in the last chapter of the novel.

The bonds between the siblings and the parents are broken because of absence and silence that have caused the children feelings of betrayal and anxiety. However, the parents experience betrayal and anxiety as well and have chosen to stay silent, but for different

reasons. Fola explains her silence and why she has been “alive in the present and dead to the past” and not even shared experiences with Kweku.

It was almost as if they had taken some oath—not just they, their whole circle at Lincoln those years, clever grandsons of servants, bright fugitive immigrants—an oath to uphold their shared right to stay silent (so not to stay the prior selves, the broken, battered, embarrassed selves who lived in stories and died in silence). An oath between sufferers. *But also between Lovers?* (197).

The choice to stay silent seems to be a reaction to a politically powerless situation where Fola’s pain turned into silence is a sign of her struggle against victimization; history has already appropriated “the native of a War-Torn Nation” (107). Before the emigration to the West, she looks forward to a future and assumes that the victim’s position would not do any good for her ambitions of a better life. Ahmed discusses what harm and pain do to the body and that “[b]ringing pain into politics requires we give up the fetish of the wound through different kinds of remembrance. The past is living rather than dead; the past lives in the very wounds that remain open in the present” (2016: 33, 34). In this respect, Fola’s silence has to do with her feeling of being excluded from a place in history and this has affected the next generation, giving room for anxiety and jealousy.

The reasons for staying silent in Kweku’s case have to do with racial, national, economic, and professional, conflicts. A patient, very important to the hospital as a donor, died during an operation because she was too ill. The Cabot family demanded the best surgeon and Kweku had to do it. He was then accused of not having appreciated and communicated the risks and to satisfy the Cabots, the hospital board decided, in an “oppressive Room of Judgement decor: polished wood, Persian rug [---] And white faces” that Kweku would be fired. (72). In the following lawsuit, Kweku suspects the judge, a former classmate of the patient, of being biased. His feelings are hurt on many levels: not only does he experience the insult of having the hospital president watching the surgery but also his pride: Dr Yuki, herself Asian and head of the board, “*knew* the great pride that he took in this terror, the joy—not just he but their whole prideful tribe. *She* [Dr Yuki] knew that the procedure had been flawlessly executed” (77-78 italics original). Furthermore, the Cabots reacted negatively when introduced to Kweku: “But he’s a — [---] And where did you do your training?” (74). Kweku’s answer is “Chimpanzees taught. Great instructors” (74). This indicates that the implied interpellation of the racialized colonial African stereotype makes him feel offended, and in Frantz Fanon’s words Kweku “act[s] as a cultivated person, he realizes that history imposes on him a terrain already mapped out” (Fanon 1963: 630). Kweku’s self-identity transforms, and in the eyes of white people, he has become the

racialized 'other'. His self-esteem is injured and he pretends that the firing from his job had not happened. Kweku, in a moment of despair, returns to the hospital to get a word with Dr Yuki, but she, "a Hong Kong mobstress" orders the security guard, "her henchmen" to show him off: "He's not a doctor here, excuse me! He was fired! Last year! Just as Kehinde appeared" (Selasi 2014:79). His son becomes the witness of this "walk of shame", instead of the desired walk of fame (80). At this moment, Kweku has crossed emotional, political, and economic, borders that make him feel himself defeated and ashamed. He doubts the image of himself on a number of issues; race, pride in professional skills, social status when exposed to a loved son. Humiliation and insults make him fight for reconciliation but after having spent thousands of dollars he cannot "Beat the odds" (86). He chooses to leave and abandon his family without explanations.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* Sara Ahmed discusses the physical effects of experienced shame pointing out that it "involves the de-forming and re-forming of bodily and social spaces, as bodies 'turn away' from the others who witness the shame" and that the "intense and painful sensation that is bound up with how the self feels about itself" (103). At the same time, "the subject's movement back into itself is simultaneously a turning away from itself. In shame, the subject may have nowhere to turn" (104). Kweku sees himself as the successful provider, and one of his most important missions is to be worthy of his "Pan-Nigerian Princess", Fola, whom he met in his home country Ghana, she, a refugee from Nigeria in the 1960s and he, a student in Accra (Selasi 2014: 91). The shame of not being able to keep being successful "in the imagined view of the other [is] taken on by a subject in relation to herself or himself" (Ahmed, 2014: 105). Shame works when the subject is interested in somebody whose views are important and Fola has given up her studies, given birth to four children, followed him from Baltimore to Boston, and supported his career and "he knew: that her sacrifice was endless. And as sacrifice was endless, so must be the success" (Selasi 2014: 73). Kweku has adopted the idea that hard work always pays off, and that it will "convert him into the alien race" and thereby accepted by the American society (69). "The hours he worked were an *expression* of his affection" for Fola and the children (47, italics original). He cannot imagine another way out of the shame than to disappear by telling Fola that the family would be better off without him (86). Kweku's shame is also connected to the immigrant's situation, to get new chances in life to succeed, and to be worthy of the new society, to escape from poverty, war and illiteracy. The imagined good life and the role

models of successful lives in the U.S. stand in sharp contrast to his siblings' lives in Ghana. Living in the diaspora is complicated and when Kweku feels that, he has failed to meet his own expectations he makes himself a victim by internalizing the image of the subjugated African stereotype. He sees himself as a victim, objectified by society, in which he has strived so hard for acceptance as a professional, fearing the society's image of the unwanted African immigrant. Illusionary images of the West and illusionary images of a worthy homecoming to Ghana have collided and left him in shame.

Ironically, Kweku solves the dilemma by doing exactly the same thing as his father did after having been jailed and publicly flogged. The reason was that the father hit a drunk English military who abused his wife; however, the punch in order to stop the violence, was for a good reason but the shame before others made him drown himself in the ocean (58). Selasi connects the father and Kweku pointing out the reactions to shame as linked to the colonial heritage of subjugation. Phiri, drawing on Fanon's notion of 'nervous conditions', points out that Fola's and Kweku's leaving their children in America is a sign of "the politics of their own previously orphaned status", translated from "the native parents and psychologically transmitted", a repetition of history (Phiri 148).

The theme of 'the Absent African father' is further elaborated in the passages where Olu meets Dr Wei, Olu's in-law to be. Dr Wei indicates that African fathers do not honor the family: "[t]hat's why you have the child soldier, the rape" (Selasi 2014: 120). His hostile view on Africans is stereotypical and he considers the African fathers being the cause for backwardness, poverty, violence and promiscuity while he, at the same time, is arguing that African young students are bright and the new model minority in the U.S.A (118-120). Here, Selasi sheds light on the individual's vulnerable position, often at risk to be part and guilty of the problems of a whole continent. Dr Wei is a Chinese professor and an immigrant as well and Selasi's irony works here in two directions: by the self-conscious way, and by his social status, he is explaining why Africa is dysfunctional, with arguments based on experiences of individual students. "It's not that I'm racist. Far from it" (117). In this case, Olu becomes a representative of a whole continent. On the other hand, Dr Wei's own position in the family is very weak: his daughters avoid him, considering him arrogant and indifferent (119). The power relations between Olu as the 'other' and Dr Wei do not only refer to race, age, position, and family, they are, as Ahmed points out, examples that involve the individual's self, thus

representing a national self. The action of badness becomes internalized and the self feels bad since others see it as bad (Ahmed 2014: 105).

Selasi challenges and criticizes the trope of the absent father as a stereotype in colonial discourses by juxtaposing the imagined self-ideals with experienced feelings of shame, loss, and pain. In this way, Selasi stresses the reactions as ordinary human experiences that have nothing to do with location, nation, or color. Olu's reaction to Dr Wei's hostility is telling: "[w]hat was it, 'the father is always the example'? Both of your daughters prefer something else" (Selasi 2014: 121). Selasi points out that success is not enough; warmth, caring, and love are qualities that count for more. Olu is hurt and speaks from his own experience of an absent father. However, when Dr Wei exposes his hostile thoughts of Africa he is a witness and part of an international society whose judgments affect Olu. Following Ahmed's discussion on witnessing national shame, Olu is compelled to share Africa's shame as his personal shame (Ahmed 2014: 105,108, 111). At that moment, he is loyal to and proud of his father's accomplishments, the Ghanaian origin and reacts by leaving the house in anger. In these examples, Selasi demonstrates and illustrates, that Dr Wei's prejudiced and stereotyped images of Africa are examples of opinions that have to be discussed in order to complicate the image of Africa.

Furthermore, Ahmed states that shame is ambivalent and reciprocal because in shame the self is "a failure through the gaze of an ideal other" and "idealization of another is presumed if the other's look matters" (2014:106). Love connects the ideal self to a community, for example a family." If we feel shame, "*we feel shame because we have failed to approximate 'an ideal' that has been given to us through the practices of love*" (Ahmed 2014: 106 italics original). Kweku's ideal self is demonstrated in several scenes, and in a memory from his visit to Kokrobité, for his mother's funeral, his ideal self as the son

returning home triumphant with a degree and a son, laying the American –born baby before the Ghana-bound grandma like a wreath at a shrine, 'See I told you I'd return' [---] A father and a doctor. As promised. A success. He imagined this moment every day in Pennsylvania, how his cameraman would film it, panning up to her face. Cue strings. Tears in mother's eyes" (Selasi 2014: 52).

The triumphant homecoming, the successful and respected doctor married to the job, the hero, the good parent and husband and not the least with life beyond poverty are the most prominent ideals shown by Kweku's imagined cameraman.

The contrast between Dr Wei's ideas about the 'absent African father', and Olu's critical view of his father make Olu negotiate and revalue his image of Kweku. Olu admires

Kweku's professional skills, wanting to be his equal, having "forgiven the sins in the name of the gift" (113). But, he also feels shame of a father who, in spite of being a knowledgeable surgeon, did not recognize a heart attack. Kweku should have known that he would have at least half an hour to call someone and get help (113). Olu's response to Kweku's death is a doctor's response, not a response from a loving son (110).

In the novel, Selasi has demonstrated that abandoning parents, create, not only a void but also a chain reaction of feelings of betrayal that breaks bonds. In this situation, all of them have to reconsider their self-images as well as the idealized images they have of each other in new contexts, wherein political, racial, and societal values have an impact on the processes. Emotions of pain, hate, fear, disgust, and love create feelings of anger, revenge, and sorrow that have to be negotiated. Furthermore, the pain causes bodily effects as in the cases of Sadie, Kehinde, and Taiwo. By being silent about roots and ancestry, the first-generation immigrants convey feelings of insecurity and anxiety to the second-generation Afropolitans.

6.6 Crossing Emotional Borders in Africa

In *Ghana Must Go*, Selasi gives a picture of an 'ordinary', partly dysfunctional family where Ghana, in the last chapter 'Go' plays an important part as a beginning of a healing process that might make the family members come closer to each other and bridge the gap between 'before and after'. Memories of traumatic experiences come up to the surface that makes the family break their silence, initiate a process of reevaluation of their views of each other and to some degree also of their African roots. The encounters with strangers in a new context can evoke memories that can be renegotiated, according to Ahmed (2014:25). The landscape, Kweku's home village, and the meeting with his siblings invite the children to explore and get knowledge about their father from those who have known him. The children are exposed to situations that create both curiosity and anxiety. For example, Sadie feels like a stranger in the family but when she meets her father's siblings in the village, she recognizes bodily features that are familiar and finds that Naa, Kweku's sister welcomes her as Ekuia coming back, the sister who died very young. Some other girls in the village invite Sadie to a dance with drums calling, and at that moment, she forgets the audience, her view of herself as being 'unpretty', giving in for the rhythm and dances "as she'd been born doing traditional Ga dance" (265, 269, 270).

Kehinde finds a connection to his roots in the meeting with the coffin maker, who in Kehinde's eyes is an artist like himself and when he learns that Kweku is said to have been an artist as well, drawing all the time, the feeling of being an alien in the family goes away. Furthermore, the landscape evokes all sorts of suppressed feelings within Kehinde. He talks to Taiwo about their year in Lagos and understands that the trauma they both suffer from is not their fault (297). His decision to make fantasy coffins for the homeless as his next art project, make things come together for him and he acknowledges feelings of home and love, 'grounded' in the sense that he finally understands that "his father that night in the Volvo, 'an artist like him', [is] not a stranger at all" (300).

The process of renegotiating memories from the past is hard for Taiwo whose rage and envy towards Fola and Sadie prevents her from participating in the activities in the village. She wanders away along the beach thinking of her father's life in the village. "*Poor little boy*, who had walked on this beach, who had dreamed of grand homes and new homelands, she thinks, with his feet cracking open, his soles turning black, never guessing his error (she'd have told him if he'd asked): that he'd never find a home, or a home that could last" (273). At this moment she comes to terms with Kweku's abandoning, suddenly realizing that it was Fola who sent her and Kehinde away. Now she understands that the rage has to do with Fola. (280, 281). Finally, Taiwo tells Fola the full story of abuse and what happened in Lagos. Then, Fola breaks the silence and reveals her own complicated feelings of insufficiency as a mother (291). Not only is Taiwo consoled, and able to reconnect with Kehinde, but Fola comes to an understanding of the scars that have prevented her from breaking the silence. She speaks about the difficulties of being a single mother, afraid of not being able to give what she imagined that the children deserved and of the guilt she felt for her mother's, Somayina's, death (291). They come to an understanding of each other, sharing the feelings of sorrow and anger. When Fola realizes what Taiwo has gone through, her feeling of compassion for Taiwo, reinstates the feeling of love (309, 310).

The desire to connect with roots and the longing for a lineage is essential for Olu and when Naa tells him about her childhood, the family life, and her father who left, leaving their mother in sorrow, unhappily still in love, he recognizes the pattern and the story, later repeated by Kweku and Fola. Naa also tells Olu about Kweku criticizing, like a white man, the house, and the village, complaining about the heat and the dust. "A shame, oh. So young.

My own junior brother. That foolish boy Kweku” (293). At that moment, Olu understands his complicated relationship with the father and his view on Africa.

You say that you’re African and you want to excuse it, explain *but I’m smart*. There’s no value implied. You feel it. You say ‘Asia, ancient China’, ancient India, and everyone thinks ooh, ancient wisdom of the East. You say ‘ancient Africa’ and everyone thinks *irrelevant*. Dusty and irrelevant. Lost. No one gives a shit. You want them to see you as something of value, not dusty, not irrelevant, not backwards, you *know*, Ling. You fear what they think but don’t say. And then, one day you hear it out loud. Like your father—[---] [My father] was that stereotype. The African dad who walks out of his kids.[---] I want to be proud of him. Of all he accomplished. I know he accomplished so much. But I can’t. I hate him for living in that dirty apartment. I hate him for being the African man. I hate him for hurting my mother, for leaving, for dying. I hate him for dying alone. (305, 306 italics original)

The ambition to show that the African man counts and has his place is crucial to Olu and when he realizes that Kweku has followed in his father’s footsteps, the disappointment and anger is based on Kweku’s lack of stamina. Olu has not forgiven his father; all he wants is to restore the pride of ‘the African man’, by leading another kind of life that is not ruled by fear of subjugation, or fear of being diminished, or an endless striving to be accepted, or by living with illusions about what a successful life in the West means. In short, he calls for a decent life where family bonds are strong, and where empathy, love and caring rule. In this respect, Olu speaks from the viewpoint of a middle-class second-generation Afropolitan. Through Olu’s reflections, Selasi illustrates the gap between first- and second-generation migrants expressed in “Bye-Bye Babar” (2005). The first generation looked for safety and had a geographical connection to an African country while the second generation “seek[s] to comprehend the cultural complexity; to honor the intellectual and spiritual legacy; and to sustain [their] parents’ culture” (2005).

In the last part of the novel, Ama, once again, function as a bridge. By bringing Kweku’s slippers in a ‘Ghana must go’ bag to Fola’s house, she symbolically unites Fola with Kweku. The bag reminds Fola of the forced flight from Nigeria as a refugee, and the slippers signify the flight from poverty into a middle-class life. The artefacts together with the picture of Kweku’s face, drawn in the sand in the garden, invite Fola to a conversation with Kweku. In a hallucination, Fola with the slippers in hand talking about the leaving, the children, and the teaching them how to stay. “Still there?” “*Yes. Forever*”. “You should go, she says softly” and he answers, “I know I know I know” (317 italics original). With this final imaginary meeting, even Fola has come to terms with the life they had together. The last scenes connect to the last moments of Kweku’s life and his attempts to reach Fola, symbolized by the statue in his garden (91). Knudsen and Rahbek analyze the very last scene in the novel, in detail,

where the slippers and the ‘Ghana Must Go bag’ handed over by Ama indicate a return of Kweku’s life to Fola (Knudsen and Rahbek, 2016: 116). The smell of the slippers evoke repressed memories of love and affection, and in the imaginary meeting with Kweku represented by Kehinde’s picture drawn in the sand they come to a peaceful understanding (Selasi 2014: 117). Immigrants “do what they know to do, they leave, yet the common hope for the parents can only be that their children will learn ‘how to stay’” (116, 117).

The landscape and the village invite the children to reflect on their father’s life, and their connections to each other. The beach, the heat, the huts, and the drums are props that play an important part for them to feel connected to their African roots. The environment of Kweku’s family and his childhood becomes visible and physically experienced, giving new insights that make the family open up and talk about suppressed feelings. On many occasions, Selasi has used ‘the drum beat’ as a foreboding sign, indicating that Africa is essential and the sounds as well (110, 139, 270). In this respect, Selasi’s metaphor draws on the stereotype of jungle drums calling, but in reality, they are heartbeats felt in situations of anxiety.

In this first section, I have investigated the trope of mobility and the themes of ‘return’, ‘regrounding’ and ‘the absent parent’ in relation to the multidimensional idea of Afropolitanism. Furthermore, I have investigated how political, emotional and geographical border crossing affect individuals and their identity transformation in an ongoing multidimensional process. The characters in the novel reconsider and transform their self-identities in encounters with strangers and new surroundings, where the feeling of displacement raises memories of traumatic experiences in the past or nostalgic memories of childhood. The seeking for roots is significant for the second-generation immigrants since the parents’ silence about their ancestry creates a gap in lineage and genealogy. Rootlessness and anxiety become signs of estrangement shown in the sibling’s view of the meaning of ‘being at home’. The implications of a home vary and relate to a feeling of belonging, in either an ontological or a biological meaning. In the integrational process, role models and imagined views of ‘the other’ initiate processes of subjectivity transformation, that often imply a struggle from an underdog’s position against stereotypes, for example, ‘the African father’. The Sai children are Afropolitans in Selasi’s definition, but as shown, the parents can be labeled as Afropolitans or Cosmopolitans, depending on their emotional relations to either ‘Africa’ in general, or a community that is not based on race or location.

Section 2

In this section, I will concentrate on the crossings of imaginary and social borders within Africa and linguistic and social border crossing within the U.S.A. in relation to Afropolitanism and Vernacular Cosmopolitanism.

7. No Violet Bulawayo, *We Need New Names*

With this novel, No Violet Bulawayo contributes to other perspectives on the ‘diaspora novel’ than Selasi. Bulawayo concentrates on low-class people and their experiences of crossing borders with the African continent and within America. The author wrote the novel in order to spread light upon the postcolonial, political, and social conditions in Zimbabwe between 2005 and 2009, thereby situating the story in an identifiable time and place. In an interview, Bulawayo admits that the “first part was hardest to write because it came from a real place, it was fueled by what my country was going through at the time and it wasn’t pretty [---] My prayer is that we don’t return to it, especially the years 2008-09” (Hartselle 2015:35). During these unstable times, the cleansing of slum districts takes place, leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless, while political movements work for new elections creating hope for change. Bulawayo addresses the political tensions between the Shona- and Ndebele-speaking people by, for example, using real geographical names. Named after the founder of the Ndebele nation, Mzilikazi road runs through an area occupied by Shona people. On the contrary, the Ndebele majority lives in a district where Chimurenga street is a Shona word while “Hope Street” crosses the two (Bulawayo 2013: 2, 5, Moji 2015: 184). “Fambeki Mountain”, indicates that the story is located outside Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (Bulawayo, 2014: 5, 1, 12). The geographical location and the political conditions are at center, in the article “Carnivalising Postcolonial Zimbabwe: The Vulgar and Grotesque Logic of Postcolonial Protest in No violet Bulawayo’s *We Need New Names* (2016)”, by Hazel Tafadzwa Ngoshi. She discusses how Bulawayo in a satirical, ironical, ‘grotesque’ way criticizes Mugabe’s politics of ‘Look-East’, by, for example, deconstructing the image of China symbolically, in a scene where the children go to ‘Shanghai’ to ask for trinkets, arguing that Bulawayo has voiced a political ‘postcolonial protest’ (Ngoshi: 64, 68, Bulawayo, 2014: 46, 47, 48).

Another scholar, Isaac Ndlovu, criticizes Bulawayo for writing a creative reportage, emphasizing that she pictures the African nation as dependent on charity and that the image of

the children as both victims and perpetrators fits in with the Western colonial idea of Africa. Furthermore, he states that Bulawayo “uses Darling to poke fun at or satirize the absurdities of life in the collapsed state of Zimbabwe”, by commodifying “tragic Zimbabwean stereotypes” to satisfy Western audiences. Ndlovu argues that she is following Wainaina’s satiric recommendations in “How to Write about Africa” (2016: 133,134, 135, 143). In a review, Helon Habila writes that *We Need New Names* illustrates “pity and fear, but not in a real tragic sense, more in a CNN, western-media-coverage-of-Africa, poverty-porn sense” (The Guardian 22 June 2013). Without a doubt, I find that it is possible to read this rich novel from several perspectives. In my opinion, the political perspectives of both Zimbabwe and the U.S.A. contribute to a wider understanding of the fictional immigrants’ conditions in the novel.

8. *We Need New Names*, Overview

Darling’s story is a first-person narrative about herself and the daily lives of her street-smart friends’: Bastard, Chipso, Godknows, Sbhoo, and Stina, who lives in ‘Paradise’, a satirical name of a poverty-stricken shantytown, contrasted with ‘Budapest’, a rich, white, protected neighborhood. As Darling and friends move around, they cross the invisible borders to ‘Budapest’ and ‘Shanghai’. In ‘Budapest’ they steal guavas to appease their hunger. In ‘Shanghai’, where a Chinese constructing firm is building a luxury mall, they ask for trinkets. The first part of the novel describes ‘Paradise’, where the inhabitants meet all sorts of atrocities in their daily life: hunger, abuse, rape, suicide, Aids, extreme poverty, and military violence. To the poor, black image of Africa, Bulawayo adds an NGO-organization, distributing necessities and cheap toys, while the BBC and CNN report (4, 136, 51, 46, 100). Schools are closed, parents are gone for work in South Africa, and religion plays an important part in the community. They know that better life demands leaving or emigration to the West for food and jobs.

Darling is the most fortunate of the children because she has an aunt, her mother’s twin, living in Michigan, who brings her over to ‘DestroyedMichygen’. She gets an education, an underpaid job, and when she has overstayed her visa, she is not able to return. She adapts to a teenager’s life in the U.S.A., to an extended family, consisting of aunt Fostalina, her partner and his son and many other people in the diaspora without papers. In the second part of the novel, Darling is a teenager and then an adult illegal immigrant. Three

inserted chapters: 5, 10, and 16, reflect the conditions of disillusioned migrants in general, told in a third person's collective voice.

9.1 Crossing Imaginary and Social Borders within Africa

The novel focuses on migrants' crossing geographical, social, cultural, and emotional borders, and my aim is to investigate how these border crossings initiate a reconsideration of the self-identity and how displacement, alienation, and feelings of estrangement affect the main characters, physically and emotionally.

In this novel, the encounters between rich and poor, white and black, powerful and powerless people are meeting points where the perspectives of the different conditions in the society, illustrate hunger as the driving force to cross geographical borders. Well aware of the global inequalities, they also know that a job abroad can take its toll and that it can be dangerous. Darling's father returns, ill with AIDS; her cousin comes back with destroyed hands from hard work in the mines; while Bastard's uncle does not return at all, having been killed by a soldier (Bulawayo 2014: 11, 13, 49, 100, 126). To the children, border crossing means that it is a necessity for getting food.

Throughout the novel, naming signifies a change of status, quality, location, time, or property. The importance of the name and the children's desire to migrate materializes in a country game where the inequalities in the globalized world are part of the game. The power of 'being the U.S.A.', one of the 'country-countries' and not a 'rag country' like Congo, implicates the power of names as property. 'Being Canada' boosts an imagined self-confidence and superiority that define the ranks within the local community as well as within the global world. "It's like being in a war; in a war you don't start to fight somebody stronger than you because you will get proper clobbered" (50). To situate the story in time, Bornfree indicates that he was born after independence, while the name Bastard, signifies the character's mixed race as colored. The novel suggests that he probably is given the ugly name to keep death away. Darling is the name of the most fortunate of the children because she has an English name, a faded picture of her father on his commencement day and an aunt in the U.S.A. (Moji 2015:183, Bulawayo 2014: 22). Darling's name alludes to the children's most desirable properties.

When the children move around and cross social and geographical borders their self-images change. The crossing of the invisible border to 'Budapest' make the social and racial

differences visible, “it’s like being in another country altogether. A nice country where people who are not like us live [---] the air itself is empty: no delicious food cooking, no odors, no sounds. Just nothing” (Bulawayo 2014:4). The children ‘own’ the trees, pick the guavas systematically in a raid, street by street. A pizza-eating, strange, white, woman appears, takes pictures, and makes the children feel objectified, although, at that time, unconsciously. The children shout insults and leave vomit uncovered to protest and mark the area as their conquered territory. “Budapest is now our country too, like we built it even, [...] spitting peels all over to make the place dirty” (6, 8, 9, 10,11). In contrast, Sbho blames her friends for staining the walls to ‘her’ house. She fantasizes about a future life in that house, when Bastard, the bully “with the faded orange T-shirt that says Cornell” announces “Budapest is not a kaka toilet to just walk in, it’s not like Paradise. You’ll never live here” (12). Imaginary prospects of a better future make them able to demonstrate that they are powerful and that they can conquer new spaces, which they symbolically express when Sbho starts to chant, “*Who discovered the way to India?* and the rest of [them] rejoin *Vasco da Gama! Vasco da Gama! Vasco da Gama!*” (2). Inspired by Vasco da Gama, the first representative of colonialism, they explore and occupy new territories by crossing borders and live their lives in translation, characterized by a feeling of displacement. Polo Melina Moji discusses effects of displacements in the essay “(Dis)location and (Re) naming in No Violet Bulawayo’s *We Need New Names*” (2015), arguing that the novel “depicts a cycle of displacement and ruptured kinships” that symbolically locate experiences of self-identity in a geographical place (182). For example, Darling’s father has migrated for work in South Africa and her mother is selling goods at the border, both forced by hunger and poverty, caused by the erasing of their first home. “It was a real house made of bricks”, with “real taps, and real running water, and a real toilet”, destroyed by bulldozers driven by men who laugh (Bulawayo 2014: 62, 63, 65). Darling’s memories of living a good life together with family members stand in sharp contrast to the shack where she now lives. The repetition of “real” suggests an interpretation that connects the space with Darling’s status as privileged and that she refers to that position, thinking what her life could have been. She has now renegotiated that view of her life: living in a “tin”, means degradation in society. Traumatic experiences of the bulldozing, screaming, violence, death, and blood, haunt her in dreams and as memories in her adult life (62, 65, 212).

In this society in economic and moral decline, criminal, emotional, and violent borders are crossed and the children experience, almost on a daily basis, child abuse, murder for political reasons, ritualized rape in the church, and unexpected discovery of a woman who has hanged herself because of AIDS (16, 40, 100). The children's personal experiences of their society and their global knowledge from, for example, TV make them translate global influences into local practices. Since the adults, in Darling's view are in the periphery and negligent, "the mothers are busy with hair and talk", the men's eyes "never lift from the draughts", they act by themselves (1, 2). On one occasion, the girls take on the responsibility to attempt to perform an abortion on Chipo, eleven years old, mute, and raped by her grandfather (40). In a terrible scene, they prepare for operation with a rusty clothes hanger, imitating the doctors' in an American TV-series, called ER. One of the girls, Forgiveness, takes the lead and declares; "to do this right, we need new names" (82). Then Dr Bullet, Dr Roz, and Dr Cutter play out their new identities and mimic what they have watched on television and what they have overheard from adults. "You can't do this without a clothes hanger, everybody knows that" (83, 85). In the last moment, Darling, Sbho, and Chipo hesitate, in fear of pain and blood. MotherLove appears in tears and puts an end to the operation (86, 88). The names of the doctors signify power, and the change of names transforms their subjectivities into 'being doctors'. Moji points out that the names "transact social value in a globalized world" and show the "permeability of the local space to global influences" and that the girls are partly aware of the 'play', but they cross the borders between fantasy and reality (182, 183). They have translated their subjectivities into imagined identities.

Another example of a mode of translation of subjectivities occurs at a funeral. The children have witnessed the shooting of Bornfree, an activist and a close friend working for 'Change'. After the funeral, they play out their frustrations in a game that Bastard spontaneously creates by shouting "I am Bornfree. Kill me!" (Bulawayo 2014: 140). The dancing and beating with weapons end in blood when he is silenced and unable to move. "We are proper drunk with verve; we are animals wanting blood" (140). "Sellout! Who is paying you? America or Britain? Friend of colonists! Selling the country to the whites! [---] You want Change, today we'll show you Change!" (141). Mourners are watching the game, in a "big black silence, like they are watching something holy. But we can see, in the eyes of the adults, the rage" (143). In Moji's analysis of the scene, she finds that the children, trapped

within the adult's world of violence, are able to understand, react, and visualize the disillusion of political change (2015:187). The present BBC- men take photos and ask what kind of game it is and Bastard's answers "Can't you see this is for real" (Bulawayo 2014: 144). Even at the end of this chapter, Bulawayo inserts an adult's perspective on the situation, this time demonstrating the journalist's view as ignorant in contrast to the children's knowledge. They have performed their understanding of the horror by imagining and translating others' subjectivities, into realistic identities. Their reactions to the harsh reality of violence are emphatic and knowledgeable. In this case, there is no border crossed between fantasy and reality, it is a reenactment of real events.

When political protests and participation in the movement for 'Change' are too dangerous, people turn to the healer Vodloza or to the church, praying for change. Darling's grandmother, Mother of Bones and MotherLove turn their eyes upwards, looking for salvation in other dimensions, arguing that the miserable conditions depend on sinners. To pray "is the least we can do because we are all dirty sinners and we are the ones for whom Jesus gave his life" (28, 22, 27, 19). Bulawayo ironically juxtaposes Jesus' death with Bornfree's, one sacrificed for the sinners and the other for the idea of political change. Mother of Bones argues that the work for 'Change' is like "yanking a lion's tail don't they know that there will be bones if they dare?" (29, 30). In Mother of Bone's view, intense preaching by Prophet Revelations Bitchington Mborro function as a remedy. On one occasion, Mborro announces that God has demanded him to exorcize a devil, in the shape of a woman (38, 39, 40). Darling describes these scenes as if she is watching a theatre performance, satirically commenting on Mborro's and the evangelists' appearance as "chief baboons" (32). Mborro is "thundering", "roaring", "jumping around as if he is itching where nobody can see", "drenched in sweat" (35). In order to heal the possessed woman, Mborro "puts his hand on her thing and starts rubbing and praying hard for it" and the church people are happy, Mother of Bones is happy, but [Darling is] sad", feeling sorry for the woman and Chipo who has told her about the rape (40). Ngozi analyzes the scene, drawing on Bakhtin's theory of the carnival, finding that "Darling exposes these religious activities as a sham" and that the priest's name, Mborro, "without the double r" is the Shona word for Phallus (56). A vulgar interpretation of the name refers to the quality of the character. With the name in combination with Mborro's gestures, as "signifiers of the aesthetics of the vulgar and even the grotesque", Bulawayo has undermined the power of the church as an authority in society, with an air of the ridicule and

the tragic. The contrast between Bornfree, the engaged and serious fighter for change, and Mborro, the false, violent, but powerful prophet, emphasizes Bulawayo's political statement of a society in decline.

Representatives of the church, the Police, and the Security are supposed to be trustworthy authorities in a society. In *We Need New Names*, they are presented as false, unreliable, and corrupt. Bulawayo criticizes these authorities by, on the one hand, make fun of their representatives, and on the other hand, show that they misuse and violate innocent people. On one of the guava stealing raids in 'Budapest', the children, meet a safety guard, poorly dressed, equipped with a baton, speaking formally as a bureaucrat and to the children looking like a prank. When the guard requests them to leave the area, by saying, "[e]xtricate yourselves from these premises and retreat from whatever hole you crawled out of", the mocking and teasing begin (105, 106). The altercation escalates, and the guard threatens with handcuffs and arrest, when Godknows, innocently and out of curiosity, asks him if he has a driver's license, and if it is true that beating and killing happen in jail. Sbho reports what she has heard about police actions and calms Godknows by telling him that the police only begged for a bribe (107). The power balance between the guard and the children is interesting because it shows that the children know how their corrupt society normally works. It demonstrates that they can see through the façade and that the guard has transformed himself into a stereotyped authority, legitimized by the uniform and the baton. He is as false as Mborro; therefore, they can mock him. The pretentious language and his powerlessness make Godknows say, "leave this clown alone" (111). Ngoshi argues, in line with Bakhtin, that this scene is an example of a "carnival moment in that they undermine [the guard's] authority by subverting both the social and the political hierarchy" (60). According to her, Bulawayo uses the distinctive features of the carnival to criticize the political conditions in the country (61).

A confrontation with real power occurs when the 'Blak Power' gang appears, supported by the police. Hidden among the branches of guava trees, the children witness the gang, abusing white people and their dog (Bulawayo 2014: 111, 115). Bastard thinks that the dog looks strange, "like a plaything" and that is exactly the gang's interpretation as well when they throw the dog between them like a ball in a game (116). "Budapest quivering with the sound of their blazing voices: Kill the Boer, the farmer, the khiwa! Strike fear in the heart of the white man! [...] Africa for Africans, Africa for Africans" (Bulawayo, 111). Everyone, except Bastard, is afraid, when the gang goes berserk, scornfully laughing, and hitting the

white couple. Bulawayo paints the scene in bright colors, depicting the status of the unstable conditions in the country where race and ethnicity are at stake. “I am an African, [the white man] says. This is my fucking country too, my father was born here, I was born here, just like you!” (119). He owns the property, has the papers, but the Police Commissioner who arrives does not pay any attention: “We know, sir, but it is just the times, you know. They are changing, you know” (117). The Change that Bornfree worked for stands here in sharp contrast to the robbing and stealing gangs with weapons, ruling the streets. Here, Bulawayo makes a statement about politics by contrasting the double meaning of change. Godknows asks Bulawayo’s pivotal question: “What exactly is an African?”. Sbho is crying for fear and answers Bastard’s question why she is crying for the white couple: “They are people, you asshole” (120). The gang leads the white couple away “herding them like cattle” then they go berserk, vandalizing their home (121). Bulawayo’s use of the children’s viewpoint in this passage, illustrates their adaptation to dangerous situations, emphasizing the tragic outcome, politically after Independence.

The narrative explodes in images of contrasts between the white world and their own when Darling and her friends take the opportunity to enter the abandoned house. The doormat welcomes with “Wipe Your Paws”, ironically pointing at the children as animals, but initially, probably meant as a humoristic remark from white people coming back from, for example, a game hunt. The narrative also suggests that their pedigree dog is like a human being who understands the imperative clause on the doormat (122). The dog counts and is taken care of, in contrast to the poor and hungry children.

In another allusion to dogs, Bastard covers his face with an African mask and barks. He is playing out a stereotype of an African while Darling, comments that only pagans use masks (123). She distances herself from the stereotyped image of the African, showing that she is knowledgeable and that she recognizes discriminating views of her people. Furthermore, she identifies Queen Elizabeth in a picture on the wall and claims that the queen has been in her house, thinking of the pictures of the queen on the invalid British money that Mother of Bones is storing under her bed (125). She knows that the queen’s crown is heavy and made of gold. She also knows how to answer the telephone politely in proper English and she is surprised when she, later on, finds out that a white person can speak her own language (127, 129). The friends are also pretending that they are knowledgeable of a milieu they

previously have known only from pictures and newspapers. Sbho, for example knows the word museum and Stina fills in with gallery.

Moving on to the kitchen, they find food in abundance. In this scene, Bulawayo elaborates the theme of starvation that runs through the entire novel.

We eat things we have never seen before, things whose names we don't even know. We fawgoat the fowks, wee fawgoat the fawks, Godknows says, sounding like a white man and we giggle. He starts towards the cupboards and rummages and rummages and rummages, and then he is back with the glinting forks and knives and we eat like proper white people (129, 130).

Ngoshi points out that in this scene the interpellation to mimic habits of white people is a part of the carnival moments (2016: 67). However, they know that those good manners are important in their own community as well. In my interpretation, the satirizing of the language minimizes the embarrassment because they all know that this performance is an enactment and not only mimicry. They have transformed their subjectivities into 'real' people. Previously, Darling has mentioned that if she were to live in 'Budapest' she would wash her feet and comb her hair daily "to show [that she] was a real person living in a real place" (Bulawayo 2014: 8). As noticed before, the children strive for better lives, to climb the social ladder, in order to escape poverty. When the children occupy the streets of 'Budapest' and mark it as their territory by spreading guava peels, it is a rebellious demonstration in order to diminish the rift between 'Paradise' and 'Budapest', the most desirable place for them to live in. Earlier, when Bastard suggested that they should advance from the stealing of guavas to burglary, Godknows answers, "No. We're not thugs". Darling feels relieved and Shbo agrees, "we're not those kind of people" (104). Now, in the white people's house, they understand that the gangsters have gone excessively far in abusive behavior and destructiveness. Socially, the children have defined themselves as morally good citizens, behaving as 'real people', not passing the border to criminality and violence in real life. In this passage, 'real people', mean role models that honor high moral standards, are educated, reliable, but not necessarily white. However, it is interesting to notice that none of the characters in the novel represents the black middle-class.

Bulawayo uses several techniques to illustrate history, political tensions, or the poor conditions in Zimbabwe. Sometimes, she describes visual representations of events or photographs. In the article "The Cultural Work of Ekphrases in Contemporary Anglophone Transcultural Novels" (2018), Gabriele Rippl analyzes the importance of corresponding

pictures that mark important moments in Zimbabwean history besides telling the family story from different viewpoints (2018: 272). Darling describes a photo of her father at a commencement ceremony and a photo of her grandfather “with a bone through his nose”, “wearing earrings” standing in front of “waist-high maize crops” (Bulawayo 2014: 24). The white minority killed him “for feeding and hiding the terrorists who were trying to get our country back from the white minority” (20). Ripple compares these hidden photographs with the photo described in the white man’s house in ‘Budapest’ where a soldier is pointing a gun towards a man standing exactly as the grandfather in the photo (2018:273). “Bulawayo’s technique of presenting two descriptions of photographs, taken at the same scene of a violent colonial conflict is an intricate way of “writing back to/gazing back at” the colonizers” (273). Indirectly, the ‘writing back’, means that she takes a stand against colonialism and points at the damages done to the people. Ngoshi’s points out that Bulawayo has used yet another way of expressing political statements. In comparison, Selasi uses photographs, paintings, and imaginary filming in *Ghana Must Go* to illustrate a hidden family genealogy or to negotiate and construct an image of an ideal life. Literally, there are many situations, pictured as scenes that suggest visual interpretations.

In a situation during one of the guava-stealing raids, Darling meets and describes a white woman in ‘Budapest’ eating a slice of pizza. She does not know what it is other than that it seems to be “brown bumps that look like pimples”, with “coin-like things on it”, and with the “color of burn wounds” (Bulawayo 2014: 6). Rippl interprets Darling’s words here as references to the violent circumstances (2018:272). These wounds as a sign of violence forebode and connect Darling’s experiences in ‘Paradise’ with new experiences in America as similar events occur in the two parts of the novel, mirroring each other.

Darling and her friend live in a society in ruins, characterized by hunger, poverty, abuse, governmental violence, and all sorts of atrocities that affect their perceptions of the world as dangerous but manageable. Mediated news and encounters with people from the West influence their transformation of self-identities, and in the creation of a dream view of America. To meet this imagined view, the children learn how to change their subjectivities, in order to fit in with an expected view of a ‘poor African child’.

Eventually, Darling is lucky to be able to escape poverty, Fostalina, her aunt brings her overseas. In Darling’s life in Michigan, the memories of ‘Paradise’ and her friends haunt her and become, for a long time, the reference point with which she compares home and

elsewhere while trying to acclimatize to life in the U.S.A. Bulawayo has in fact separated Darling's story by dividing it, literally, into two parts.

9.2 Crossing Geographical, Social, and Linguistic Borders in America

In this section, Darling's process of adaptation to a new life in America is at center. Darling experiences new social, linguistic, imagined, and geographical borders within America as well as between the homeland and America, and the crossing of these borders affects Darling. I will explore how she reacts to the difficulties she meets, how she negotiates the feelings of being elsewhere, and how she solves the problems, in order to live in harmony with herself.

The life in Darling's homeland is primarily based on the seeking for food to appease hunger and this is what Darling thinks of and remembers during her first time in the new country. She values the food and curses the weather. She fantasizes about snow in 'Paradise'. She misses her friends and thinks that snow would not prevent them to be outdoors there.

But then, we wouldn't be having enough food, which is why I will stand being in America, dealing with the snow; there is food to eat here, all types and types of food. [---] There are times, though, that no matter how much food I eat, I find food does nothing for me, like I am hungry for my country and nothing is going to fix that (153).

In this passage, Darling, clearly states that the feeling of hunger is constant, but she has changed the focus, from food to the home country. She transmits and translates her new experiences between the geographical and social spaces. The snowman becomes an American tokoloshe, hidden in the snow (157), and she feels displaced, being "in a terrible story", where, "[e]ven the stones know that a sky is supposed to be blue, like our sky back home" (150, 151). Things are out of place. She misses the sounds, the trees, the litter, the smells, the flying ants, and the games she played with her friends, The sky, the maize, and the fields back home are 'real', but the landscape makes her feel nervous, not knowing what to expect (164). Anxious, delocalized and confused, she tries to find signs of her friends from 'Paradise', but when her classmates tease her and mark her as strange, she comments: "I just felt wrong in my skin, in my body, in my clothes, in my language, in my head, everything" (165). Ahmed points out that "[t]he experience of leaving home in migration is hence always about the *failure of memory to make sense of the place one comes to inhabit*, a failure that is experienced in the discomfort of inhabiting a migrant body, a body that feels out of place" (2000: 91 italics original). Darling internalizes the others' view of herself and to fit in, she starts to change her looks and her language. She wears make-up, interpellated by images in

women's magazines, inspired by Fostalina. Dressed for a wedding party, looking at her face in the mirror, she ponders, "If I were standing outside of myself and saw this face I would maybe say, Who is that? [---] I've decided that come fall, this is the face I'm taking to Washington Academy" (Selasi 2014: 165). To learn the American accent she watches TV-series, while models in TV commercials and shops do the rest in the process of striving for acceptance by her teenage friends. Darling's method, to transform her looks, and the view of herself, in order to be one in the group, becomes a problem for her. The divide between friends 'here and 'elsewhere' becomes a problem.

In this strive to appease the hunger for the friends in 'Paradise', she often talks to them on the phone. The distance between them grows since they, by time, do not understand each other's circumstances. Darling feels divided: "It's hard to explain, this feeling; it's like there's two of me" (210). There are linguistic, social, cultural, racial, and class borders that are difficult to cross. Pier Paolo Frassinelli discusses the representation of the immigrants' life in Bulawayo's novel as an example of a "partial integration" with a painful disconnection to a motherland. Frassinelli emphasizes language as a prominent signifier for this process, giving the examples of the mother's and the friends' critique of Darling's language, "so you are trying to sound white now" (Bulawayo, 204) and the "stupid accent that you were not even born with, that doesn't even suit you" (286). Frassinelli states that the language reflects "a translated existence" and that "identity associated with the mother tongue" is a characteristic for Fostalina and uncle Kojo as well (2015: 717).

Language becomes a border between Africa and America, but it also works as a border to Kristal, her white American friend. Darling criticizes her saying: "when I first met you I couldn't understand anything coming out of your mouth, not a single word, nada, and you sit here and say you are American and speak English". Darling does not understand because Kristal speaks Ebonics. At the same time, she reflects on her own language, "I have to remember to slow down because when I get excited I start to sound like myself and my American accent goes away" (Bulawayo 221). Kristal ends the argumentation: "I beg your pardon, my ass, trynna sound like stupid white folk" (222). The scornful remarks from family and friends indicate Darling's position between Africa and America. However, Kristal is American and her remark points at Darling as a pretentious underdog and illegal immigrant, and that she has transgressed a social border within America, by trying to speak like white people.

In Frassinelli's interpretation, Darling's British English functions as a signifier for her being an educated African with higher status since she has learnt proper English. The argumentation between Darling, Kristal, and their friend Marina, clearly demonstrates that race, class, and social status are important markers within the group to establish the hierarchy between the immigrant and the American born in the U.S.A. (2015:719). The discussion reminds the reader about the country game and the difference between country-countries and rag countries (Bulawayo 2014: 49). Darling finds that when she speaks American English, she has to think before pronouncing the words, indicating that a spontaneous conversation is difficult (193). This is also an indication of a transformation of her subjectivity and the view of herself. She has to translate and negotiate her and her friends imagined views of America in their conversation.

In the composition of the novel, Bulawayo has used similar events in the two parts to illustrate how Darling lives in a transitional space. The inheritance from her home in Africa, the dream view of America, her daily life in Michigan and the sentimentalized view of 'Paradise' inhabit this space. Darling reflects, for example, on the things she avoids to mention to her old friends: hurricanes, the house made of planks, smelling of mold, gunshots in the streets, school shootings, and that a neighbor has drowned her children. These things "embarrassed me, because they made America not feel like My America, the one I had always dreamed of back in Paradise" (Bulawayo 2014: 187,188). In the dream America, stories about child abuse, violence, and slum districts are too similar to the stories from 'Paradise' she hears about from her mother. Arrested neighbors, crocodiles killing children, and the begging for dollars worry her (203). Anxiety affects Darling because she has difficulties to keep her two worlds together.

Inherited habits from 'Paradise' and American values clash when Darling struggles with fork and knife at a wedding in company with mostly white people. This scene stands in sharp contrast to the ceremonial enactment of a proper dinner, in the vandalized house in 'Budapest'. Darling practices to use the utensils, but it is difficult, because "in the house I eat with my hands, like how you're supposed to eat" (178). Furthermore, she slaps an unruly and spoiled child who has not learnt to 'read eyes' and behave (182). Darling shows that her upbringing standards are the ones that count and are 'real'. Now she idealizes 'Paradise' and the clash between this idealized 'Paradise' and her mother's and friends' begging for money

affects Darling emotionally and she distances herself, feeling alienated, anxious, and ‘othered’.

Darling identifies herself with her country, the mother tongue, and her African background, but when images of Africa turn up as symbols, pictures and identities, they are not ‘real’ to her and she cannot relate to them, because she cannot relate them to the location of her lived experience. In her memories, the idealized image of Africa is the ‘real’. For example, the pizza-eating white woman wears a necklace with a pendant showing a map of Africa. She seems very odd “like a caged animal”, with “skin that doesn’t even have a scar to show she is a living person” (8, 9). The white person is a stranger in Darling’s African community in Zimbabwe. In America, Fostalina’s former boss, Eliot, has an interest in learning Ndebele before going on a safari trip and Darling teaches him, and with a frown she comments, “I don’t know where my language comes in—like, does he want to ask the elephant if he wants to be killed or something?” (268). ‘My Africa’, according to Darling, has nothing to do, with the tourist’s view of Africa neither with the pizza-eating woman in ‘Budapest’.

Another white woman asks Darling, at the wedding, to say a few words in Ndebele, finding it beautiful, continuing with questions about atrocities that are going on in Congo, seen on the CNN channel. This situation illustrates the idea of Africa as a country, relating to the idea of a ‘single story’, transmitted by western media which Adichie elaborates in a *TED* talk (2009: Youtube). Two worlds collide in the conversation between Darling and the white woman, especially when the woman comments on pictures of children, taken by her daughter, working in the Peace Corps, “there was this little girl who was just—just too cute” (Bulawayo 2014: 176). Darling immediately recalls when the NGO-people appeared in ‘Paradise’ and how the children ritually ‘performed’ with singing and dancing, in order to impress and get more gifts (51). The men, anonymous in dark sunglasses, took pictures not bothering “that we [were] embarrassed by our dirt and torn clothing that we would prefer they didn’t do it” (52). At that time, Darling wonders who will look at the pictures and now she understands that they, spread all over the world, emphasize the image of victimized, poor, but happy African children. In Habila’s review of *We Need New Names*, he accuses Bulawayo of excelling in ‘poverty porn’ and that the novel represents “Caine-Prize aesthetics that has emerged in a vacuum” created for commercial reasons, emphasizing that literature should “transport us beyond the headlines”, not repeat the news (2013). On the contrary, Arnett criticizes this

statement, “Bulawayo’s critique of the developed world’s appetite for images of suffering is a funhouse mirror”, showing that the materialistic commercial trade is “grounded in the production and dissemination of telegenic images of suffering” and that it supports “the trade in postcolonial pain” (151,152). The mirroring technique, in the example, has a twofold effect: Bulawayo presents Darling as an example of the anonymous object, exploited for political and economic reasons because pictures were taken of her, thereby Bulawayo criticizes the commodification of the photos. These have a price and CNN has paid for them in order to inform the world about the conditions in Africa. The pictures become, on the one hand, a means to get people in the West to feel empathy and act by supporting the ‘other’ financially, but also as an invitation to silence their conscience. On the other hand, Darling and her friends are subjects who agree with the photographing, in exchange for more gifts. They also become objectified representatives for a whole continent while the white woman is a representative of the colonial idea of Africa. In this way, Bulawayo, once again, makes political statements by juxtaposing the events. In the narrative, Darling consciously negotiates the emotional experiences from her childhood, with the structural politics of commodification.

To some degree, Bulawayo elaborates the consequences of exploitation and appropriation of poor countries in a passage that parallel ‘Shanghai’, the Chinese project in Zimbabwe with the Mall in Kalamazoo. Darling imagines what the mall in ‘Shanghai’ would look like when ready built; bustling with life, smells, litter, and dancing to loud music. She translates the life back home to the present and this vivid image overwhelms her with a strange feeling of displacement (227). When she gets sight of a Lamborghini, first seen in ‘Budapest’, at that time claimed as her dream car, she yells with happiness until her friend Marina, tells her the cost “I’ll never own it, does that mean that I’m poor, and if so, what is America for, then?” (224, 225). Her remark will also apply to another example where the narrative suggests that Bulawayo contrasts and reminds the reader of the underpaid migrants’ work in the diamond quarries in South Africa. The exploited labor force has facilitated the making of a diamond ring seen in a showcase in the mall. Bulawayo contrasts the physical and economic costs of the father with his daughter’s notice of the insanely high retail value of the ring (229). In my interpretation, Bulawayo makes a political statement against global politics that encourages the deepening cleft between rich and poor countries.

Ndlovu does not recognize Bulawayo's political statements. In contrast, he argues that she follows Wainaina's satiric advice for writing about Africa by using "the so-called performing of African aesthetics of suffering for the developed world", thus claiming that she has "pay[ed] little attention to the complexities that determine African relations with Western nations" (2016: 144). In the aforementioned interview with Hartselle, Bulawayo emphasizes that she wrote the novel without addressing any defined audience, but to bear witness to the period around 2008 in Zimbabwe and that she wanted to depict the violence in different forms from an individual's experience, as well as in the voice of the collective (29, 35). I argue, in contrast to Ndlovu, that the examples mentioned show that the characters live transnationally, permanently in transition, moving between home and elsewhere, with clear borders in between. The novel does not give the image of Africa that Ndlovu suggests, but an image of migrants' different processes towards reasonable acclimatization to the conditions in the U.S.A. These processes deal with the two imaginary views of both countries, in contrast to real experiences that, simply put, means living at a four-way crossing. Ndlovu leaves out the double perspectives on Africa that Darling and the other immigrants in the novel revalue and negotiate.

Gikandi discusses the contemporary migrants' position in the chapter "Between Roots and Routes" (2010), stressing that people, forced to migrate often are "attached to the romance of the places they have left behind and [that they] seek to recreate locality in the metropolis", thereby keeping double perspectives (2010: 25). He marks the difference between globalization as an effect of trading and Cosmopolitanism in Appiah's meaning (2006), stating that "locality itself has been globalized" and that "production of locality is always surrounded by anxiety and entropy" (32, 33). Parallel stories and artefacts put in new contexts show these negotiations. "Bastards Cornell shirt", worn by Kate, Eliot's daughter, reminds Darling of Bastard and make her wish for his immediate appearance, and she thinks of sharing his story with Kate since they have this shirt in common. She refrains when she understands that the Cornell shirt signifies education and high tuition fees in contrast to her strong personal memory of Bastard (Bulawayo 2014: 267). She cannot bridge the gap and introduce Bastard into her life in America. In Eliot's house, which is very similar to the only house she has entered in 'Budapest', she sometimes works as a cleaner. In America, she is allowed to enter Eliot's house and in my interpretation, Bulawayo contrasts these two houses

to point out that Darling has taken several desired steps upward the social ladder, but not quite as many as she has fantasized about.

In America, hunger is still the main issue for Darling. The hunger for food has changed into a hunger for acceptance in the society that makes her transform her looks, habits, and subjectivity to fit in. To keep the feeling of a strong connection to her family and friends in 'Paradise', she transforms her memories into an idealized image and as Frassinelli suggests, she integrates with the American community only in parts, by letting the memories of a past substitute the present. In her mind, she lives with double perspectives of a 'here and elsewhere', and these perspectives are interchangeable.

9.3 Home, Belonging, Subjectivity Formation, Vernacular Cosmopolitanism

In Darling's process of adaptation to a life as an illegal immigrant in America, she has to reconsider her self-identity, revalue her position, and her emotional bonds to her homeland. In this section, I will explore how this process of subjectivity transformation evolves.

For any migrant, or traveler across borders, the demarcation between home, belonging, and away become important and positions that have to be negotiated. Darling's and her friends' feeling of home is strongly connected to the community. Even if they live in shacks, they are homes. To conquer 'Budapest' and to make it their property, they mark it with dirt. (Bulawayo 2014:11). Litter and dirt occur on several occasions to signify belonging, while houses 'within walls' are imaginary homes. "There are two homes in my head", Darling thinks, considering number one as the best because it was safe and there were plenty of food and clothes, her parents had jobs, a radio, and there were dancing and music in the evenings. After the governmental decision to tear down the shantytowns, they had to leave and build a house of tin plates (191). The chapter "How They Appeared" refers to those who had to find new homes. In a third person's voice, Bulawayo illustrates how the words of anger and frustration with the political conditions came back to the speechless "like tiptoeing thieves in the dark" (75). None of the homes that Darling mentions is the house where she actually is living. In this respect, she shares the demarcation between house and home with Taiwo, Kehinde, and Olu in *Ghana Must Go*.

To Darling, 'home' is a place she cannot reach, geographically, nationally, emotionally, and socially defined. Even if "the roads are like the devil's hands, like God's love, reaching all over, just the sad thing is, they won't take me home" (191). Darling realizes

that Fostalina has three and Mother of Bones four homes: one before the colonization, another during the British rule, a third after independence, and the present after the demolition (191, 192). “When somebody talks about home, you have to listen carefully so you know exactly which one the person is referring to” (192). Ahmed’s theory of the divide between home as a safe place and away as a feeling of estrangement is applicable in this situation (2000:89). Emotionally, Darling drifts away from reality, replacing the present with memories of the past, creating a transitional space where she moves back and forth across country borders. The feelings of home and away oscillate and sometimes, Darling lives in diaspora in her mind while ‘the real home’ is a location fixed in time, but experienced through her memories. In comparison, Fola’s home in *Ghana Must Go*, is internal, not grounded in a place, but moving with the subject, a fetish for a global community (Ahmed 2000:86, Appiah 2006). Ahmed argues that an individual can feel ‘at home’, displaced, or estranged within the same space (2000: 88). In some situations, Darling defines herself as the stranger and in another, when speaking with friends in ‘Paradise’, she becomes affected by a feeling of alienation in her own ‘home’. Ahmed discusses the notion of ‘home’ as “the lived experience of locality” and that “the locality intrudes into the senses: it defines what one smells hears, touches, feels, remembers” (2000: 89). When, for example, Messenger, seeks asylum in America and sends guavas to her birthday, the smell and taste put Darling into an almost delirious walk down memory lane, with a feeling of guilt for not having written to her friends. She misses all the people from ‘Paradise’, but is glad that they miss her and remember her (Bulawayo 2014: 188, 189).

Many migrants share the feeling of having been distanced by friends and family in the homeland even the migrant voluntarily has migrated to another country. Bhabha tells his personal story and experiences of moving from India to study in Great Britain. In the essay “The Vernacular Cosmopolitan” (2000), Bhabha discusses the notions of home and belonging, remembering that he “was searching for an active understanding of the living relationship, the unceasing movement, *in between* colony and metropole”, stating that the occupation of the space in between often is a result of “oppression and inequality” (2000:137, 139 italics original). Bhabha defines the minorities in Britain who maintain their culture as Vernacular Cosmopolitans, arguing that they are “translating between cultures, renegotiating traditions from a position where ‘locality’ insists on its own terms while entering into larger national and societal conversations” (139). The ideas of Gikandi and Bhabha are similar, but

Gikandi takes the reasoning a step further with the argument that the process of immigration involves anxiety.

Darling's space is transitional, characterized by her double feelings of being 'at home' when connected by telephone or Skype to people in 'Paradise'. The psychologically divided 'self' emerges when she enters the public space as part of the workforce. In this new community, consisting of migrants without papers, she, on the one hand, feels 'at home' because the collective shares an underdog position. On the other hand, she experiences emotions of alienation and estrangement within the group because they do not share experiences of her country, her language, or her culture. The narrative suggests that this division within the identity is an example occurring when values from her worlds collide in a four-way crossing: the imagined view of America, the real existence in America, the experienced world of Zimbabwe, and the idealized view of 'Paradise', shown in memories. In Ahmed's terms, belonging, home, and elsewhere have borders that are porous and permeable and that this creates the transitional space, where a new community of strangers in the diaspora is possible (2000: 84). To fit in with the new community, new names, created out of necessity, signify that the subject has to transform the view of the 'self' into an identity of being one in the collective of illegals, thus defined by the society and in addition, anonymized, called by their native or country names. As mentioned before, Gikandi has pointed out that migrants in the diaspora often define themselves by their country names, interpreting 'African' as denigration. By using a wide definition, Gikandi could say that Darling is an example of an Afropolitan, in the meaning that an Afropolitan is "connected to knowable African communities, nations and traditions," but that Afropolitanism also means "to live a life divided across cultures, languages, and states" (2011: 9). In this respect, Gikandi comes close to Bhabha's definition of Vernacular Cosmopolitanism. Crossing cultural borders "do[es] not necessarily lead to a cosmopolitan attitude (2010: 24). Toivanen argues, in line with Gikandi, that the novel "articulates a rupture in the entanglement of the local and the global which cannot be undone with the aid of new technologies" (138). Thereby she disputes the idea that technology automatically has the potential to make the world cosmopolitan, in the sense that it bridges the gaps between people of different cultures (138).

Telephone and Skype can, to a certain point substitute personal contact, but in Darling's case, she, and her friends are now grownups. One must remember that they were

about ten years old when they parted as the best of friends. Darling notices a gap in their communication and asks Fostalina for a flight ticket. Fostalina informs her about the consequences of her overstayed visa. As a result, Darling becomes more anxious when recognizing phone numbers from home. Speaking to her mother affects her emotionally. “Time dissolves like we are in a movie scene and I have maybe entered the telephone and traveled through the lines to go home. I’ve never left, and I’m ten again” (Bulawayo 2014: 205). The conversation with Shbo, Chipo, and Stina, reveals that they cannot locate each other. When Chipo tells her that the child’s name is Darling she reacts: “I don’t know how to feel about it, somebody being named after me, like I’m dead or something” (210). She has felt divided before, and now when she knows that she cannot go back, and feels, not only excluded but also nearly dead she is close to a breakdown. The appropriation of her name is important since it signifies that her character and properties are no longer hers (Mojji 2015:183).

Eventually, these emotions play out in a moment of frustration and despair over some homework in biology. She loses control and writes “iBioiyirabishi” with an ink pen on the wall in her room. She remembers the markers they got from the NGO-people, and how she wrote obscenities on the walls in ‘Budapest’, noticing that the letters are large like a first grader’s (Bulawayo 2014: 275, 276). Darling’s regression, shown by the large letters, the mixed language in ‘biology is rubbish’, and the memories from her childhood clearly indicate that she has lost her feeling of belonging in the present and that she transforms her subjectivity into the 10-year-old person she once was. To repair the damage and cover the wall she finds a “batik the size of a beach towel”, a “copper clock in the shape of our country” and a mask, all in a box marked “Homeland Decorations”. The batik illustrates a lively market with vendors selling all sorts of goods, and customers of all ages, “everybody, and everything alive under a bright blue sky” (282, 283). She arranges an exhibition for herself of all the items, commenting on the clock that “tells broken time” and the mask, “split in the center, one half white, the other black” [---] like it’s trying to tell me something that will take years to understand” (283). Symbolically, Darling has transferred an African home to America. In Gikandi’s words, she has globalized the locality.

Rippl interprets the ekphrasis in the novel as Bulawayo’s way to “enact the tensions between African and American experiences and to negotiate contradictory feelings of belonging and nonbelonging, identity, and otherness” (2018: 271). Furthermore, Rippl makes

an interesting remark on Darling's ignorance of the meaning of the "numerous crazy patterns" on the mask. (Bulawayo, 283). Rippl suggests that knowledge of the indigenous culture was lost during the postcolonial times and that this illustrates Bulawayo's political, critical eye, and that she 'writes back' (275).

Artefacts or keepsakes that remind of a missed place or culture often function as fetishes, representing a romanticized image of, for example, a home. When Darling arranges the exhibition, she has substituted 'Paradise' to feel close to her roots and comfort herself. Loyal to the society in 'Paradise', she expresses her anger with the leaders who have ruined the country, referring to news she has watched on the BBC. Chipo's sharp answers shock her "it's the wound that knows the texture of the pain; it's us who stayed here feeling the real suffering, so it's us who have a right to even say anything about that" (Bulawayo 2014: 285). The confrontation between Chipo and Darling shows the political tensions between those who left and those who stayed. Once, they had the same view on politics, but with time, Chipo has come to terms with the conditions. Darling, frozen in time, does not realize that she has become 'the other' when arguing that Zimbabwe is her country too. Chipo's remark that she, like the colonists, has left "the house burning" is painful, because the exclusion marks her as a traitor (286). According to Ahmed's idea that pain can be political and the narrative suggests that "the past lives in the very wounds that remain open in the present" (2014:33). Darling's memories of witnessed governmental violence, in 'Paradise', become the open wounds and since she identifies herself with the nation, her self-identity is wounded as well. Bonfree's funeral and the white man's claim in front of the gang in 'Budapest' echo (Bulawayo, 117, 119, 286). Feeling deprived of her name, her country, her identity, and an old friend, she, in anger and despair, flings her computer against the wall, crashing the mask, which symbolically represents her heritage (286). The wounds that Chipo mentions can also allude to Prince, who fled the country after torture, ended up in Fostalina's house, traumatized, with scars and burn marks (159).

Tshaka Zulu is yet another example of an excluded wounded character in the diaspora who, like Darling, has made the locality global. The picture of him, performing at weddings and on other special occasions, singing traditional songs, dressed in indigenous clothing and accessories, and with a shield and spear, gives an essentialized nativist's image of an African (177). He is a patient at Shadybrook, suffering from a mental illness, imagining that he is the founder of the Zulu nation (178). To remember his roots he has pictures of his extended

family, where each member has a special name, given to them over the phone. “You see, every time they are called by name and they answer, I am the invisible hand touching them and calling them my own” (236). The pictures are proof of his genealogy and the naming, metaphorically transfers the physical feeling of belonging. Fostalina and Darling work extra at Shadybrook, and when Tshaka Zulu is hallucinating, being in a tribal war, urged to fight for his people and empire, they are the only ones who can understand, translate from English, and calm him (269). Tshaka Zulu becomes a tragic example of migrants, severely traumatized and dissociated. Moji points out that the psychotic Tshaka Zulu imagines that he is Shaka Zulu, the legendary founder and warrior and that he, is “a somewhat essentialized representation of an ‘authentic’ or original African subjectivity” in the narrative (2015: 188). Furthermore, Moji emphasizes that the feeling of entrapment causes the dislocation of his ‘self’ and that his subjectivity is lost in translation (189). In his last delirious attack with the spear on an imagined enemy, a pizza deliverer, the police shoot him (Bulawayo 2014: 273). By giving the examples of the historic Shaka Zulu, Darling’s grandfather, and Tshaka Zulu, Bulawayo makes a political statement. Sanctioned by state-controlled violence against black people all three were assassinated by the British or the Americans.

Darling and Tshaka Zulu are not the only ones that have rooms of remembrance. Uncle Kojo keeps his son’s room cleaned and in order, anxiously waiting for TK to come back from the war in Afghanistan. In this room on a shelf stands an urn, in the shape of a calabash, with the remains of Tshaka Zulu. He wanted his ashes transferred to the home village for a proper burial, but since no one can go, the room of remembrance, dedicated to TK and Tshaka Zulu, functions as a sanctuary (287, 288). After the incident with the computer, Darling goes into the room to calm down, talk to Tshaka Zulu and by touching the urn, she feels physically connected to her country (287).

In the last chapter of the novel “Writing on the Wall”, things have fallen apart; Fostalina and Kojo live “like in neighboring countries”, she has an affair with Eliot, Kojo is drinking, TK is in Afghanistan, Tshaka Zulu is assassinated, Kristal is pregnant, and the old friends, in ‘Paradise’ are scattered. Only Chipu is left: Bastard went to South Africa, Shbo is traveling with a theatre group, Godknows is in Dubai, and Stina disappears for long periods (280,281, 284, 287). Eventually, Darling’s feeling of belonging transforms into remembering, evoked by sensory experiences or situations that revive the times in ‘Paradise’. She lives in transition transnationally and there are several examples of her divided presence. Ahmed

suggests that living in the diaspora, or in exile, becomes a question of memory and that migrants often form a new ‘community of strangers’ “*sharing the lack of a home rather than sharing a home*” (2000:84, 85, italics original).

In many respects, Ahmed’s theories connect to Bhabha’s idea of Vernacular Cosmopolitanism. Bulawayo illustrates this phenomenon in the chapter “How They Lived” by telling migrant’s stories in a collective voice. The “we”-form in the longer chapter “How they lived”, voices the anonymous illegal immigrants’ shared experiences as racialized foreigners with lost kinships, fearing the immigration authorities and the police, working hard in jobs, that Americans do not take (Bulawayo 2014: 242, 243). Bulawayo gives examples of the hardships that the immigrants meet in a tone of melancholy, in an elaborate poetic form. The individual experiences in the novel are transformed into a story that shows traits of a fairy-tale, or a fantasy story aimed at an audience knowing nothing about the adventure and the quest for survival and happiness. In general, one of the general purposes in traditional storytelling is to pass experiences on to the next generation and in my opinion, this is what the narrative suggests. The immigrants answer questions about their home countries that show ignorance and interest in speculations about the most scandalous and sensational reports from the news with a smile, but “we wept for our blessed, wretched country” (238). The English language prevents them from speaking their minds “what we wanted to say remained folded inside”; they crossed the border into criminality by working illegally on students’ visas; “[w]e dropped our heads in shame”, and when asked “[w]e hid our real names, gave false ones” (242). This process of ‘othering’ works through subjugation and anonymization. The individual, defined by the country of origin, becomes a representative of a ‘rag country’, thereby put into the lowest group in the hierarchy. This group has much in common, and in some respects, the feeling of estrangement unites them, “we were not altogether strangers” (243). “We swallowed every pain like a bitter pill, drank every fear like a love potion, and we worked and worked” in dangerous jobs, got illnesses, but never went to the hospital (244). The hunger for news about family, friends, and home, mediated by visiting relatives, Skype or phone, is like the constant hunger for food, at the time of the arrival in America, “we wanted to put our heads into their mouths to catch every precious word, every feeling” (246). With the second generation born into the American society and the parents’ dying back home, the feeling of alienation emerges. The plans of going back end, because there is no one to visit, the children do not speak the language and are not interested to learn about their ancestors: the

bonds to 'home' are broken and "[w]e convinced ourselves that we now belonged only with our children" (248). In the nightly dreams, parents and friends come to visit and when waking up "we see ourselves through searing pain" (250). Although entrapped in America, they stayed, "we chose to be prisoners and we loved our prison; it was not a bad prison" (247). In the collective voice, Bulawayo realistically illustrates challenges that illegal immigrants have to meet even if they, with the exception of refugees, have the choice of returning to the home country. In the novel, hunger is the driving force and with this Bulawayo describes the high price paid for having enough to eat. In a poetic style and with empathy she summarizes and takes her stand politically in the criticism of the conditions forced upon the migrants from countries in decay.

10. Conclusions

In this study, I have investigated two 'afrodiasporic' novels, *Ghana Must Go* by Taiye Selasi and *We Need New Names* by No Violet Bulawayo from different perspectives on migration, arguing that crossing of borders affects the fictional characters emotionally, socially and physically.

The novels have in common that the authors ask the question of who is 'African and who is not, challenging the image of the traditional, colonial stereotype of an African. They explore the effects of geographical, political, social, emotional, and linguistic border crossing and describe processes of subjectivity formation in relation to ideas of belonging. Furthermore, they describe migrants' positions, in the world seen from both global and local perspectives. Despite the many similarities, however, the two novels are in some respects each other's contrasts. *Ghana Must Go* deals with an upper-middle-class family. In *We Need New Names* Bulawayo describes poor, low-class people, exposed to violence in Zimbabwe and marginalized in America.

Taiye Selasi develops the trope of mobility in relation to feelings of alienation and anxiety, caused by silence, betrayal, and abandoning within the family. She describes abuse, from a relative and shortcomings in relation to an imagined idea of success and returns to a home country. Bulawayo develops the trope of mobility from the perspective of a metaphorical four-way crossroad. The imagined views of America meet experienced life in a junction where contrasting experiences of life in Africa crosses an idealized view of Africa.

Selasi has in my interpretation, created a novel with nuances that reach far beyond her statements of Afropolitanism. To count in the characters' anxiety and rootlessness, that in fact is major factors for establishing feelings of 'home and belonging', the notion of Afropolitanism is too restricted. Fola, for example, is a Cosmopolitan, with some roots in Africa, but to her, the roots are not as essential as it should be for an Afropolitan.

The fictional characters of second-generation migrants react to anxiety, displacement, and estrangement with illnesses, causing trauma. Selasi shows that transgression causes a reconsideration of the self-identity, leading to subjectivity transformation, and a reevaluation of the subject's interpretation of the world. Selasi has demonstrated that the crossing of geographical, social, political, and emotional borders initiates Fola's, Kweku's, Olu's, Taiwo's and Sadie's gradual transformation of subjectivities. Selasi points out that reasons for the characters' needs of change are subjugation to stereotyped role models, leading to illness (Sadie, Taiwo), flight (Kweku) or action to restore "the pride of the African man"(Olu). Fola, a victim of warfare and an exile, accepts the real conditions and that her suffering has become generic; thereby Selasi critically comments on politics and society's neglect to recognize immigrants as individuals.

In Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*, the primary focus lies elsewhere. Rather than presenting an in-depth psychological examination of multiple characters through a complex narrative strategy, political statements are foregrounded. Bulawayo criticizes the government, the police, the military, the corruption, the NGO-organizations, the colonizers, the church, and the economic exploitation of Zimbabwe. Bulawayo's critical novel depicts a country in ruins and is an example of the postcolonial 'writing back' genre. By, juxtaposing similar events from Zimbabwe and Michigan, she puts the main character, Darling, in situations where she has to reflect and compare her 10-year-old's experiences with her adult perspective. Bulawayo hereby illustrates intriguing dilemmas that demand negotiations of a self-identity rooted in 'Paradise', frozen in time and space. This applies also to Tshaka Zulu who represents a nativist's view of an African. Bulawayo shows the transformation of subjectivity as a process of multidimensional changes that lead to trauma. Bodily, culturally and emotionally estrangement is obvious when the distance between 'home' and away becomes impossible to bridge over the phone. Deprived of name, friends, and identity Darling and Tshaka Zulu drift away from reality, substituting the feeling of 'home' with memories. In this way, Bulawayo emphasizes that the fictional characters create a life in constant transition.

They cross borders between the diaspora in their minds and the ‘real belonging’ in Africa, represented as idealized memories. They have moved their local roots into America in the form of remembrances, which illustrate the concept of a Vernacular Cosmopolitan. In Tshaka Zulu’s case, it tragically leads to disassociation and death, caused by the police.

The two novels differ substantially in compositional technique and linguistic experimentation. Selasi tells the story in a reversed, broken chronology order in a third person’s voice, often interrupted by the different characters’ inner monologues and the narrator’s comments. To convey associative memories, she uses ellipses, comments within parentheses, images, metaphors, and symbols.

In contrast, Bulawayo’s novel is spatially organized with the plot divided into two parts where chapters, concentrated on specific events in locations are posited as separate: Zimbabwe and America. Three inserted chapters break this structure as these convey the migrants’ disillusion. The modes of expression differ between these inserted chapters, moving between imperative clauses, third person’s voice and a poetic we-form, respectively. These chapters emphasize Bulawayo’s political statements. In the mouth of the children, especially in the first part of the novel, the language is vulgar and colloquial and suits the descriptions of atrocities and violence.

In sum, both Selasi and Bulawayo question the image of the traditional image of Africa; they recognize the importance of a present family with genealogy, and the individual’s right to live a life free from abuse and violence. They develop the thoughts of subjectivity formation and anxiety as the consequence of border crossing. In both novels, the use of photographs, ekphrases, artefacts, looks, and naming contribute to an engaging illustration of the migrants’ lives in Africa and in the diaspora.

The analyses undertaken for this thesis have necessarily opened up new vantage points for the discussion of transnational subjectivities, border crossings, the shifting meanings of home and belonging, and multi-modal existence in a globalizing twenty-first century. For instance, it would be interesting to investigate diaspora novels from, for example, a Chinese-Ghanaian viewpoint, since the Chinese have established an economic basis for companies in Ghana and in other African countries, such as Kenya. Other migrants’ perspectives on migration within continents would be interesting as well, seen from the viewpoints of Cosmopolitanism and Vernacular Cosmopolitanism.

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